Community and Councils: an examination of sustainability-governance procedures in a Local Government Authority in Australia.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family: to my partner Erst and my children Dani, Jacinta and Adelina, and to my children’s little ones, should they come along to grace us with their questioning.
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All have helped me but the final responsibility is mine.
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree in this or any other institution.

Cesidio Parissi
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Abstract

In recent years a great deal of the effort in addressing environmental problems has focused on the interaction between citizens and the various institutions of society, often with regard to encouraging the public to participate in the resolution of the problems. Often it is argued that much of this effort of citizen involvement needs to be focused at the local level; in Australia this frequently means at the local government level. In order to help with the task of resolving the global issues through acting locally, the aim of this thesis is to answer the following research question: How effectively does a local government body interact with its community in decision-making processes aimed at achieving a more sustainable society?

Liverpool City Council and the community of the Liverpool area that form part of the western region of Sydney, New South Wales, provide the setting for this research. While the discipline of public participation has developed scores of tools for Councils to consider, so far these efforts have largely been limited to change in either the institution or the community as separate entities. In this thesis, the interaction between the two is examined together with the changes in notions of power which come with a deeper involvement of citizens in decision-making for the governance of local councils.

Since the thesis topic is complex, the study develops within a multi-faceted and multi-layered framework. In answering the research question, a transdisciplinary process drew relevant ideas from anthropology, the natural sciences, history, theology, sociology and politics. A trans-methodology included elements from Ethnography, Action Research, Grounded Theory and Case Study approaches to research. In order to gather triangulated data sets, a multi-method technique used participant observation, interview and document analysis. The data gathered from fieldwork and presented in narrative style, was subject to a thematic analysis that offers insights into the inter-personal and institutional interactions in a council/community participatory process. These include:
• Processes in public participation programs need to reflect the desired outcome, that is, practising what is preached;
• Passion and courage of the project team are important for a change program;
• Passionate teams still need to reflect on their own biases;
• Disciplinary and professional silos need to be permeable and accessible;
• A political culture of passivity requires change in community and Council;
• Sharing in decision-making allows for shared ownership and greater loyalty to the project;
• Shared teacher/learner roles between community and council are needed;
• Communication with and leadership from the powerful in council is needed;
• Legislative changes can provide assistance for overcoming problems in public participation programs; and
• Sustainability as a project outcome needs a concerted and continuing emphasis throughout the project.

Three models have been developed for better understanding Council/community collaboration. The first model is the Liverpool Model, in two versions. Version A is of the situation at Liverpool and Version B is a generic model of Council/community interaction derived from the first. Subsequently two further models were developed for the two contributing elements of the Liverpool Model, Council and the community, respectively. The Council action model, Integrated Strategic Planning for Liverpool Council, derives from the Council’s corporate development component of the research project. The community action model, A Community Engagement Strategy focuses on the community development and governance engagement aspect of the project. These models serve as lessons not only for the Council and people of Liverpool, but may well be of use to other institutions, and the wider community.
Chapter 1 – Introduction: the journey of this thesis

1.0 The personal setting for this thesis

This study began with an invitation to me to join a project team that was set up in Liverpool City Council in outer-suburban Sydney, Australia. My involvement later expanded to include interactions with members of the Liverpool community during workshops that were a part of the project. Acceptance into such a large organisation and its surrounding community, together with complete freedom in how I reported this story has been a great privilege. These are rare opportunities for researchers and I have also been fortunate in being able to share them freely and widely. So, alongside the concrete findings and conceptual models that I present in this thesis, I hope that some of my research journey’s less tangible benefits will also emerge. In particular, I seek to convey to the reader those insights available by joining with my journey within and beyond the glass doors of the Council building and, in particular, through viewing the workings of the Council’s project team of which I was an active member. A timeline for the project is found at Appendix 1.

The next section of this chapter very briefly introduces the grave social and environmental challenges that this thesis addresses and the literature within which this thesis is conceptually located. By drawing together real world challenges and conceptual understandings – including their apparent weaknesses - the subsequent sections explain the purpose of this thesis, its main questions and its particular research domain and terrain. In turn, this explanation allows me to introduce the overall structure of this thesis presented as a series of chapter abstracts.
1.1 What in the world is wrong? The problem and orientation of the thesis

My previous research (Parissi 2002) has led to my interest in the complexity of the terms of engagement at the interface between the human and the natural worlds. This is a terrain in which the growing discourse of sustainability studies has flourished. A particular area of its concern has been interactions within and between areas of society in the context of attempts to deal with a deteriorating natural environment. A central goal of this thesis is to examine theories in sustainability discourse, with the aim of improving them by untangling some contradictory and confusing understandings of sustainability-related concepts. In particular, my focus is to clarify areas of thinking which have received attention in terms of their readiness for application.

Not all experts accept that human society, through its over-exploitation of the Earth’s resources, has created the drastic environmental, social and economic consequences that are already facing humanity. Some may accept one aspect of this scenario, others none (Lomborg 2001; Calder 2007). Nonetheless, the overwhelming consensus of most highly-regarded scientists in relevant fields across the world suggests that there is, indeed, such a dire situation (IPCC 2007; Garnaut 2008; Stern 2006). In particular, they are adamant that the science indicates, in large part, that the origins of the impending crisis are ‘anthropogenic’, that is they lie in the realm of human society (IPCC 2007; Garnaut 2008; Stern 2006).

The much examined environmental problems of pollution of soil, air and water; loss of biodiversity and ecodiversity; desertification; overexploitation of fresh water resources and many other issues of the degradation of the natural environment are well established (Brown et al 2005; WRI 2003). In addition, there are social problems generated by the same cause, such as, increases in human diseases (Brown et al 2005; McMichael 2001); loss of community (Roseland 1998), and fatal impacts on aboriginal cultures (Bennholdt-Thomsen & Mies 1999; Raffaele 2003). Further, there are economic impacts, such as waste of resources, the likely scarcity of oil through ‘peak oil’ and overuse of, for example, fish stocks (Hawken et al 2000; Albert 2003). An overarching concern, and one that is increasingly more widespread
and receiving greater official legitimacy internationally, is that of anthropogenic global climate change due to an enhanced greenhouse effect. This particular challenge – like many of the others with which it is in some way linked – has ‘triple bottom line’ implications: social; environmental; and economic (Garnaut 2008; IPCC 2007; Stern 2006).

Grave crises that have been induced by human action are not new in our collective history (Wright 2005; Diamond 2005), yet the very scale, pervasiveness and complexity of the current crisis poses an enormous and vastly difficult set of challenges for the world’s population, their societies, institutions and organisations. An obvious conclusion flowing from recognition of the nature of this crisis, its causes and its gravity – and one that this study both accepts and adopts – is that related issues of environmental health and environmental management have at least as much to do with managing humans and their societies as they have to do with ‘managing the environment’.

These considerations generate questions directed at those terms of engagement at the interface between the human and the natural worlds that I mentioned above. In particular, from a social science and a social policy perspective, those questions need to also explore those very interactions, within and between areas of society, that are part of these terms of engagement. To address these sorts of questions, this thesis focuses on precisely this domain within the more general theme of ‘triple bottom line’ sustainability. It directs attention to the exploration of policy interventions in human society that seek to re-direct our energies towards much greater emphasis on achieving sustainability. Within liberal democratic societies, like Australia, this necessitates addressing the relevant interactions of individuals, social groups, organisations of various types, broader societies and their institutions.

In general terms, then, how can we effectively implement the changes needed after taking into account the increasing stream of scientific data relevant to environmental sustainability? Will enhanced levels of engaged public participation in decision making processes assist in constructively confronting our parlous global situation. If so, how can we best achieve this? Is there a mechanism of concept that more effectively connects the institutions of society with members of the community?
Given what we know about how people interact with social institutions, it seems particularly important that we address these questions to the local level. Indeed, among many concerned authors and organisations, in Australia and abroad, there is an increasing emphasis on policies and programs that aim to increase the quantity and quantity of activities at the local level in order to confront these global problems more effectively (Bertucci 2005; Brown et al 2005; WRI 2003).

There has, indeed, been much effort directed at improving public participation of citizens – in conjunction with various authorities and other organisations (Bertucci 2005; IAP 2005). However, much of this effort appears to have had little or no positive impact in remedying the mounting environmental problems and helping foster the creation of a sustainable society (Berry, Carson & White 2003; von Braunmuhl & Winterfeld 2005; Parissi 2003). As yet though, we know little of the fine-grained detail of the social processes that can contribute to either make or unmake relevant policy and program initiatives.

In general, many international, national and, in Australia, state authorities emphasise activity at the local level for activities that aim at resolving multi-faceted environmental concerns. The popular slogan for this is: ‘think globally, act locally’ (Brown 2008; Powell, Love & Sampson 1999; WRI 2003). In the context of this thesis, New South Wales (NSW) legislation places an onus on local governments to engage in the process of achieving a sustainable society (Farrier & Stein 2006).

In a previous study (Parissi 2002, 2003), I examined the diverse positions held within Sydney’s local government sector by those designated to assess the state of and, ostensibly, promote the move towards, a more sustainable world. The context of that study was the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) – which brought together nine local government authorities in Western Sydney – and its decision to employ a group of consultants to produce a report, the Western Sydney Regional State of the Environment Report 2000 (WSROC 2000). My earlier research examined the outcomes and aftermath of that report.
Specific findings from that research that are relevant to this study concluded that:

- Those professionals involved held a number of very diverse positions and attitudes relative to their brief;
- Some professionals manifest an internal tension between their ‘private’ approach to environmental issues and sustainability and their ‘professional’ behaviour. Particularly that institutional and political realities can restrict the capacities and hopes of professionals in performing their work; and
- Conflict often existed, among the professionals who participated in the research, when they assessed the active involvement and output of residents. These were residents who, in a non-professional capacity, participated in developing – for the WSROC report – visions, indicators, and goals for sustainability for their region (Parissi 2002, 2003, 2007).

One of the implications from those findings is that it appears that sometimes professionals find it hard to incorporate into their daily professional practice, notions of real partnership with non-experts from local communities. This thesis also responds to these problems identified in previous research, examining mechanisms to help resolve these issues.

Sustainability processes at a local government level, particularly the issue of resident involvement in decision-making, form the parameters of this study. Once again, this is an emerging focus in the scholarly literature (Brown 2008; NRC 1999; WRI 2003), and of the United Nations Organisation (UNO 2005). This thesis is an exploration of a large local government experiment that began in the domain of sustainability. Its findings therefore contribute – empirically as well as through theory – to efforts to improve local or community-level engagement processes that aim at shifting society towards environmental sustainability. The level of resources involved is also very significant. Local councils in Australia allocate approximately $2.5 billion per annum – or 13% of total local government expenditure – to environmental matters (ABS 2002). This research also has the potential to assist in the more effective and efficient allocation of these resources.
The general empirical questions this thesis seeks to address are:

\emph{In which ways has one local government body interacted with its community in decision-making processes that aim to help achieve a more sustainable society? How effective has this program been in terms of the initial aspirations for it? Which factors contributed to making the program more or less successful?}

Chapter 7, in analysing the evidence presented, answers these questions. I have also addressed a broader set of more conceptual questions in Chapter 8 that flow from those empirical ones:

\emph{First, how much can these findings tell us about the potential for this sort of program? Second, how can we conceptualise the processes involved, including those variables that impacted positively or negatively? Finally, is it possible to develop models for planning and implementing such programs effectively?}

1.2 How I got to Liverpool

A critical step in my search for a research project at began on 19\textsuperscript{th} November 2003 when I was invited to a meeting with two Liverpool City Council (LCC, or ‘Liverpool’) officers. They had come to our campus to discuss possible cooperative projects between the university and council and my thesis supervisor saw this as a good opportunity to find a grounded focus for my research. We discussed how their interests meshed with mine and the potential for collaboration on the LCC project that this suggested. The senior officer, ‘Veronica’, found some of the concepts that I presented interesting and invited me to meet with some of her colleagues early in the new year. At that meeting, we discussed my projected research as constituting an examination of aspects of the engagement between LCC’s Natural Environment Department and the Liverpool community.

After several subsequent telephone and email conversations, it was not until 23\textsuperscript{rd} March, 2004 that council officers were able to meet me again. In the meantime, however – on March 16\textsuperscript{th} – the State government had dismissed Liverpool’s elected Councillors, so only the two officers present at the initial meeting were able to meet
me. Nevertheless, we had a broad discussion but nothing concrete came up. In late May, I met with another Natural Environment Department officer to consider my being involved in the development of a LCC Waste Management Community Engagement project. All of these possibilities were pushed aside, however, when I received an invitation to consider a ‘much bigger’ project in Liverpool. This was described to me as an attempt to engage with the community of Liverpool in the Corporate Planning processes of Council. The project was eventually named the ‘Creating Our Future Together – Partnership Project’ (the ‘Project’) and this then became the focus of my doctoral research.

### 1.3 Structure and logic of the thesis

While the overarching motivation for this thesis is my interest in helping to address problems that we face in striving for a more sustainable global situation, this interest is tempered by the knowledge that it is a very broad area. Positioning this study within the domain of local government, together with a particular examination of the experiences of citizen and council in their participatory interactions, provides a centre point for this study. In finding a sharper focus for this thesis, I found that I still needed to acknowledge that it was a very complex terrain to study, one that became more involved as the study progressed. These multi-faceted issues centred on the notion that it was just as important to examine the social aspects of the global crisis outlined, as it has been to aim to resolve problems found where humanity and nature intersect. The human issues delved into included an exploration of social power, community and education, the nexus of social governance and government at the local level, and, the makeup of social formations and their relationships, among other matters.

The complexity of the study that I wanted to undertake was made more so because of the nature of the local government project that became the subject of this research: the sponsoring council wanted a participant researcher, which was in line with my own preference. The specific project was to find the community’s vision for Liverpool’s future that would inform the Council’s Management Plans for years to come. In exploring the human aspects of these matters, I adopted a qualitative framework for the research design, because I sought to establish a way to include as
many and as much of the human experiences that I encountered. Included in this aspiration was a wish to present the voice of my fellow participants in the Liverpool study, hence I learned some of the art in writing a narrative account of these experiences.

The complexity generated by this meeting of contexts and needs, in turn prompted me to look within a number of knowledge disciplines for information and inspiration for ways to approach the study. Hence I adopted a transdisciplinary, trans-methodology and multi-method set of responses for the research design of this thesis, as explained in the chapter summaries to follow, and in more depth in Chapter 3. My findings centred on the inter-personal and institutional interactions in the participatory project at Liverpool mentioned above. These included how trust can be transacted between community and council; the value of more deeply engaged participatory processes; the need to make disciplinary silos in council more permeable; and the need for enlightened and inspired leadership due to the enormity of the task. These findings led me to develop a series of three models that may be of help to the people and institutions at Liverpool, and possibly to others.

1.4 Outline of the chapters

This section of the introduction will outline the content of each of the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 2 – Frameworks of understanding: theory and theory building

This chapter presents the fundamental conceptual frameworks that provide the scaffolding for and underpin this thesis. It begins with a literature review that brings together relevant theoretical constructs and supporting factual information. These cover the environmental condition of the planet, notions of sustainability, and claims for the need for a paradigm shift in society. Within this discussion, the chapter also presents arguments about the very concepts that may be needed to achieve this paradigm shift, such as public participation and differing approaches to the notion of social power. Part 2 of the chapter examines possible sites of those changes that the literature calls for. Through theory-building, it then presents a new model that I use
throughout the thesis to examine data gathered in the field and to assess implications drawn from that data.

Chapter 3 – A Gathering of approaches: philosophy, methodology and methods
This chapter provides an exposition of the research design for this thesis. It begins with discussion of my philosophical stance, including statements about the epistemology and ontology of my position as these must have a bearing on the sort of research undertaken in the thesis. This leads to explanation of the notion of the thesis as a transdisciplinary study that incorporates concepts gathered from sociology, history, theology, philosophy and the natural sciences as well as other traditions. Explanation of my trans-methodology schema then allows for clarification of the techniques that I adopt for a multi-method research approach. This includes the non-software-based means of conceptual thematic analysis that I developed for this study.

Chapter 4 – An introduction to Liverpool
This chapter is a journey into the Liverpool region to engage with some of the necessary contextual information for the research. It starts by locating the local government area in its geographical and historical settings, then paints a picture of the locality and presents demographic information about its inhabitants. The chapter’s focus then narrows to governance structures as well as other matters of government, including some information about local politics. The chapter concludes with an account of the State government’s inquiry into Liverpool Council and its subsequent sacking, which were precipitating factors for this study.

Chapter 5 – Findings: participation in the Liverpool Partnership Project
Written in the narrative style, this chapter is divided in two parts, Part 1 details the story of the preparatory lead-up to a core aspect of the Partnership Project, the community Visioning workshops. It begins with an account of my initial introduction to the staff at Liverpool Council and my first impressions. The narrative progresses to deal with the interactions within the project team, as well as the team’s interactions with the power structures at Council and with sections of the locality’s community.
Part 2 of the chapter covers the workshops and their aftermath. It contains an account of the practical issues involved in producing a document from the community workshops as well as the internal struggles over style, direction and ‘ownership’ of the document, and the validation of the data gathered from the workshops.

Chapter 6 – Findings: corporate change: Corporate Plan and Cultural Change

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first two parts, again in the narrative style, are concerned with important aspects of the Project itself. They provide the story of the internal change program that was initiated by the project team for the Council. Part 1 includes an account of the coordinating work that was achieved within the project team. Part 2 is an account of the internal Corporate Plan/Cultural Change workshops themselves. Part 3 largely recounts how elements of the community tried to establish a voice in the governance of Liverpool, in their own right, beyond the Partnership Project. It thus considers the activities within parts of the wider community of Liverpool. It relies more on document analysis albeit presented in narrative style including a series of three vignettes.

Chapter 7 – Analysis of findings: a journey of paradox and progress

This is the first of two chapters where I extract meanings from the preceding chapters of narrative findings. I outline my approach of condensing the initial 44 themes into a list of five section headings under which the data is analysed. These headings are:

Values, ethics and passion; Structures and functions; Power and empowerment; Of process and outcome; and What happened to sustainability? Three elements emerge as meta-themes that figure prominently in holding clues for the major lessons from the fieldwork, these are: Community Development, Council Development and Community-Council Engagement. Chapter 8 develops these themes further.

Chapter 8 – Application of findings through the construction of models

This chapter sought to make the findings of the research more widely applicable through presentation of three models. Through the models, I made sense of my experience and data collection at Liverpool. The first of these models, ‘The Liverpool Model’ exists in two versions. The first version – The Liverpool Model

Chapter 9 – Summary and conclusion
This chapter addresses the ways in which the thesis responds to its research problem and answers its research questions. It presents a summary of the main findings and an argument for their significance, and validity. It uses this material to present a discussion informing the reader about what future prospects of this kind of research as well as the social action that it seeks to explore.

It is now time to begin the journey towards the theory-building that informed the fieldwork, and the model-building that was composed from a consideration of the implications of that theory. The next chapter will look at the former aspect, a review of literature, relevant theories that are applicable to the study, and the theory-building that resulted in a new model as one of the frameworks applied to the analysis of the results.
Chapter 2 – Frameworks of understanding:
theory and theory building

Part 1

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and critically examines theoretical frameworks relevant to the development this thesis. Many of these frameworks deal with concepts that relate to social change, a principal theme that traverses the thesis. Exploration of the need for change manifests in several ways and at different levels of analysis. For example, in terms of social action, the thesis presents arguments in favour of changes within broader society that allow human society to respond constructively to the emerging environmental crises briefly sketched in Chapter 1. Then, at the policy level, there is the perceived need for positive changes in the relationships between the Liverpool community and Council, the site of this research project. Finally, project participants at Liverpool sought changes at the levels of local institutions and community. The thesis also deals with questions of change at the conceptual level. In particular, conceptual discussion allows me to develop arguments for considered changes to some of the bodies of theory examined here. In this sense, this chapter deals not only with exposition and critique of theory but also theory building.

Since change is a significant theme for this thesis, there is a need to address pertinent questions starting with: why do we need to change? What sorts of changes need to occur? Who within society, and what parts of society structurally need to change? Who in society has the power to do the changing? Does the concept of ‘paradigm shift’, which comes up frequently within sustainability discourse, equate with the required changes? For the purpose of keeping theoretical discussion directed towards the thesis’ overall purpose, an exploration of these questions will occur within the following topics: sustainability, paradigm shift, power and governance, and, society.
In discussing ‘society’, this chapter advances a new model that may be helpful to those who are involved in the quest for a more sustainable society.

This chapter is divided into two. The first part examines those theoretical aspects needed for a study of the project in Liverpool. Part 1 will also inform the deeper study of society that forms the second part. Part 2 of this chapter examines social formations that the literature suggests are relevant to the question of sustainability. Another section of this part of the chapter postulates a new conceptualisation of a social formation that is put forward as necessary for the task of unravelling the problems that have led to the compromising of many aspects of global integrity.

2.1 Towards sustainability

Historically, the discourse of sustainability can be seen as one conclusion to a series of positions that began with environmentalism, continued through sustainable development and arrived at sustainability. As I have described elsewhere (Parissi 2007), and present in Table 2.1 environmentalism can be viewed as a ‘systems maintenance’ approach, sustainable development seen as ‘systems change’, while sustainability may be described as a ‘systems shift’ position. From this I found that it was not only to describe what is or was, and that more was needed than just to correct the mistakes of the past. What is needed to address the environmental situation and move towards a more sustainable world is to adopt a ‘systems shift’ approach, and that is what was attempted in the Liverpool project.

Each of the positions or categories described in Table 2.1 can be viewed as being discrete, in competition, or as nested within the other. However, I consider that they contain components of each other, depending on the use to which they are put. For the purpose of his study, it is accepted that the ‘systems shift’ position of sustainability needs to be founded on environmental science, for it needs to be informed from that discipline to remain grounded in the real world. This is a real world that has accepted, at the governmental-level, the limitations and contradictions of the ‘system change’ position of sustainable development. To that end, both environmentalism and sustainable development can be paths towards achieving a
more sustainable society, the importance of which is emphasised in a growing body of literature (Pezzoli 1997a, b). Sustainability is broadly understood here as a situation where the interactions between humanity and nature enhance life supporting systems so that they are maintained and improve over time, and on a global scale.

Table 2.1 The complex terrain of sustainability discourse
(Source: modified from Parissi 2002, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Examined:</th>
<th>Time Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Up to about 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory/Paradigm - Three Positions</td>
<td>System Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioners:</td>
<td>Environmental Scientists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A crucial feature of this definition is my acknowledgement that there are two basic elements – ‘human society’ and ‘nature’ – and that they are mutually inter-dependent. Inherent here is an explicit awareness that, setting aside theological considerations, nature is the most powerful factor on Earth. This means that it is incumbent on society to work with nature, not against it (Lovelock 2000; 2005). Also explicit in my argument is that various past approaches, while they may well have been necessary, have not been sufficient for the changes required for a sustainable global existence. This clearly means that new approaches are needed. I will make this argument more fully in the following passages.

The balance of evidence suggests that much of the considerable effort, which has been expended on environmental matters over the past few decades, has, on the
whole, not achieved its aims (Brown et al 2005; WRI 2003). Nevertheless, not all writers accept that position. For example, Lomborg (2001) suggests that the problems are strongly overstated and Buckingham and Theobold (2003) suggest that the time elapsed between the two United Nations Earth Summits – in 1992 at Rio de Janeiro and in 2002 at Johannesburg – is not sufficient to assess the relative success of the initial Rio policies and programs. The main argument of Lomborg (2001) – then an Associate Professor of Statistics – centre on his corrections of calculations made by various environmentalists as to the negative impact of human actions on a variety of environmental matters, such as air, soil and water quality. Although much more could be said, my main point about his data does not concern the correctness of his figures, as other critics take up this point (Fog 2008). Rather, I am concerned about the appropriateness of his qualifications for the way he uses the figures, and the validity of those uses. For example, Lomborg (2001, pp.110-117) correctly says that a commonly stated annual loss of tropical forests area of 1.5-4.6%, is really a loss of 0.46%. He then concludes that: “Basically, however, our forests are not under threat” (Lomborg 2001, p. 117). I question that one can trust such a conclusive inference from the statistics since Lomborg is not a forest scientist, an ecosystems specialist, or with other training that allows him to assess the value of the figures for the issues he examines. Any annual percentage loss of forest cover is significant, so he may well be correct in terms of tidying up the figures, but not necessarily in the meaning of those numbers. This makes his analysis unconvincing.

Events have overtaken Buckingham and Theobold’s (2003) argument that the time since the 1992 Rio Summit was insufficient to judge the success of its outcomes. While those authors may have been correct when they wrote other, more recent, studies, indicate a new urgency in the situation, and that there is not sufficient time to test their theory. Furthermore, the evidence in these more recent studies suggests that stronger measures are needed than proposed in 1992. I accept the broad thrust of these more recent studies on the state of the planet and use them to underpin my other assumptions in this thesis. Discussion of their main arguments follows.

More specifically, this thesis accepts and adopts a perspective regarding the environmental state of the planet and its people similar to that taken by the World Resources Institute (WRI), the United Nations Development Programme, the United
Nations Environment Programme and the World Bank (WRI 2003). In a joint publication, these organisations have concluded that at an absolute level, “Since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the capacity of Earth’s ecosystems to sustain human well-being has deteriorated in nearly every category measured” (WRI 2003, p. 23). This stance describes the integrity of life on this planet as not only being in a poor condition, but in decline, and that changing this situation requires urgent action (NRC 1999; WRI 2003; Brown et al. 2005; Preston and Jones 2006). Furthermore, this is a dangerous situation that affects both humanity and nature with triple-bottom-line (TBL) outcomes (McMichael 2001; Diamond 2005).

While the TBL consequences are interlinked, they can be broken up into the three constituent elements. The social issues include: the dissolution of community (Roseland 1998) and its disempowerment (Bookchin 2005; Ristock and Pennell 1996); degradation of aboriginal societies (Sinatra and Murphy 1999); the skewing of human ethics (Singer 2002); negative impacts on women (Sen 1994); adverse bearings on human health (Brown et al. 2005; McMichael 2001); and a worsening ‘North-South’ divide (Anderson 2000; WRI 2003). Effects on the natural environment are many, such as loss of biodiversity and ecosystems and pollution (IPCC 2007; Shiva 1993; Stern 2007; WRI 2003). Economic impacts include the weakening our economic structure (Albert, 2003; Hawken et al. 2000), but matters such as the various impacts on human health of climate change are also important with regard to their economic costs (Garnaut 2008; McMichael 2001).

More recently, sustainability discourse has taken on a renewed vigour particularly as a result of a dramatic turn in the Climate Change debate due to the release of an Academy Award winning documentary, An Inconvenient Truth (Gore 2006), and the publication of a series of reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2007), Stern (2007) and Garnaut (2008). All this has, to some degree, generally increased the awareness of governments and the public about the urgency of the situation. In part this is because, rather than political and public awareness being focused only on isolated environmental matters such as pollution, the issue of climate change has advanced a much bigger and more confronting scenario. This has stimulated some people, organisations and institutions to respond by recognising that
more fundamental transformations are required (Hartcher 2007; Sun-Herald 2007; Peatling, Frew & Chandler 2007; Wilson 2006).

The impact of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans in August 2005 also helped raise awareness of the larger issue of sustainability. Many observers did not immediately or strongly connect this disaster to the issue of climate change, and thus failed to link its lessons to the need to develop a sustainable society. It still may be too early to tell if the hurricane was connected to climate change, however, Gore’s _An Inconvenient Truth_ screened across the world’s cinemas and dramatically used the Katrina incident to lead into a discussion about climate change (Gore 2006). The film’s impact was in no small part because the director won an Academy Award and then its presenter shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for his work in raising awareness of the dangers of climate change (Nobel 2008). Despite containing a few factual flaws, the film generally represented the majority view of environmental and climate scientists, as compiled by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Fog 2008). For all these reasons, the film opened up the potential for people to make a link between natural disasters and climate change. It thus contributed strongly to stimulating a larger discussion on sustainable alternatives.

Soon after Gore’s film came the United Kingdom Treasury’s publication of _The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review_ (Stern 2007). _The Stern Review_ issued a series of dire warning about the economic impacts of climate change on the economies of the world. Receiving widespread front page attention from newspapers, it was all the more alarming for some because it had been a conservative financial institution – the UK Treasury – that had issued the report, rather than an environmental body. A few months later, in 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) presented its fourth review from the environmental and climate data of 2,600 scientists from around the world (IPCC 2007). The IPCC gave equally striking warnings to the Stern Review’s. In this case, the media drama was made all the more potent because, for the first time, the IPCC report stated that there was a 90% probability that climate change was anthropogenic in origin (Hartcher 2007; IPCC 2007; Peatling, Frew & Chandler 2007).
Within Australia, similar forecasts have been recently issued by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) (CSIRO 2007) and with the joint Commonwealth, State and Territory Government’s Garnaut Review (Garnaut 2008). Both the CSIRO and the Garnaut reports rely on the international studies that have been canvassed above, but include material that is particularly relevant to Australia.

Beyond the relatively well-documented issues discussed, newer concerns are also emerging in the literature, such as the possible effects of, genetic engineering (Shiva & Moser 1995; Joy 2000), globalisation (Korten 1995; Falk 1999; French 2000; Shiva 2000) and nanotechnology (Carroll 2000; Joy 2000; Walgate 2004). This is not to say that progress has not been made in some areas, however, major shortcomings are manifest. For example, despite the success of a few international agreements such as the 1987 Montreal Protocol to protect the Ozone Layer (Annan 2008), in general, legislation is often not effective, not effectively enforced or is subverted (Burgin 2002; WRI 2003; Yencken 2002). Also, although scientific information is becoming increasingly available, it can ossify in unconsulted volumes on innumerable shelves (Parissi 2002, 2003). Furthermore, seemingly worthwhile policies are formulated, but are not put into effect (Crowley & Walker 1999), and engineering solutions that sometimes fix one problem might provoke others (Taplin 1999). Overall then, it seems that we have been able to successfully identify many of the environmental problems, but have, so far, been relatively unsuccessful in identifying sustainable solutions (Costanza & Jorgensen 2002).

In summary the information presented above demonstrates that a global environmental crisis exists, that it’s causes are anthropogenic, and that it urgently requires attention from societies and their institutions across the globe. This social action is required both to alleviate the deleterious effects of past human impacts on the natural world, and to prepare for future environmentally induced negative consequences on society. These include Stern’s (2007) warnings with regard to economic effects. In the end, whether one accepts that humanity’s actions have precipitated climate change or not, it is wise to seek solutions for the causes of the problems, as well as technical answers for their effects. Accepting the scientific consensus of human causation of the environmental problems makes the complexity
and scale of the challenge highly daunting, especially for some. However it also
provides us with an easier path to find solutions than if the problems were purely
caused by, say, a wobble of the Earth’s orbit around the Sun. If human activity is the
cause of the problems, then possible solutions are within our own hands.

If the quest to achieve a sustainable world is at least in part socially located then it is
important to explore those disciplines that have already begun to examine the issues
and questions involved in social change. For example, we need to ask the
sociological questions: can society be changed by deliberate agency? If so, how is
society to change in ways to achieve sustainability? Who needs to change and who
needs to initiate change? These are issues that form the parameters of a more in-
depth discussion, below. If sustainability practitioners are to become, in part at least,
change facilitators, then they need to recognise and address these sorts of questions.

2.2 Paradigm shift

There is no special emphasis in IPCC (2007), Stern (2007) or Garnaut (2008) on a
need for a ‘paradigm shift’ in society’s approach to its collective impact on the
natural world. The authors of all three of these major documents position themselves
close to that of ‘system maintenance’, as previously described in Figure 2.1. In
contrast, much of the literature that deals with sustainability issues does refer to a
need for a paradigm shift in society. The term ‘paradigm shift’ was coined by Kuhn
(1970, 1996) to describe a new way of looking at the progress of scientific discovery.
Instead of the usual view of science moving along incremental advances in a linear
fashion, he postulated a more erratic path. Paradigm shift described the struggle to
establish a new way of perceiving reality and/or a new methodological approach: the
emerging paradigm. With this view, the abandonment of one scientific paradigm
constituted a revolutionary ‘jump’, and between these scientific revolutions, there is
a period of time needed to incorporate the new paradigm into general use.

More recently, the discipline of sociology borrowed the concept of paradigm shift
and then it flowed into sustainability discourse to designate a need for a radical
change, or ‘jump’ in perceptions and actions (Daly & Cobb 1989). McIntyre (1996)
provides an examination of the term ‘paradigm’ in sustainability literature. McIntyre
(1996) identifies three applications of Kuhn’s (1970, 1996) ‘paradigm’. First, ‘construct paradigm’ covers methodological considerations. Second, ‘sociological paradigm’ refers to constructions of research schools or disciplines. Finally, ‘metaphysical paradigm’ includes cultural values, beliefs in a world view (Weltanschauung) or, ideology. In accommodating and then expanding McIntyre’s (1996) arguments, Ife and Tesoriero (2006, pp.38-39) define paradigm as:

“…the world view within which theory, practice, knowledge, science, action and so on are conceptualised. The paradigm is that set of assumption, ideas, understandings and values (usually unstated) which sets the rules of what is to count as relevant or irrelevant … and what practices are acceptable”.

Within this context a ‘paradigm shift’ in society is called for if we are to move from a less to a more sustainable world (Henderson 1993; Ife & Tesoriero 2006; Finlayson & McCay 1998).

Findings from my previous research (Parissi 2002) suggest that, in particular, McIntyre’s (1996) ‘disciplinary paradigm’ needs to be focused on in the current study. In addition to other studies (Brown 2008; Orr 2004), my research has shown that professionals have been trained in, and work within a disciplinary paradigm that is sometimes too restrictive for them to operate effectively. In fact, at times, their disciplinary parameters restrict these people in achieving the ostensible aims of their employing organisations. In a case that I examined, conflict between professionals arose due to different perceptions between disciplinary paradigms. This inhibited effective action, as shown in the outcomes and aftermath of the Western Sydney Regional State of the Environment Report 2000 (Parissi 2002, 2003).

Sustainability literature contains many diverse perspectives about the call for a paradigm shift. Three are given here. Lovelock (2000, 2005) calls for a paradigm shift in the way we view the Earth, and particularly how scientists interpret their work. He proposes that any examination of nature needs to view the planet as a living entity that consists of interrelated series of exchanges of matter and energy through the rocks, water systems, life processes and air movements. Lovelock (2000, 2005) argues that these parts form a self-regulating whole: the planet Earth. In another view, Daly (1973, 1996) and Daly and Farley (2003) suggest that a paradigm shift is needed in the way we conduct human economics. Rather than the growth-
oriented economic systems of free-enterprise capitalism, command-economy capitalism, or command-economy communism, they propose a no-growth or the ‘steady-state’ economy, as an antidote to the environmental problems we face. A third example of a paradigm shift comes from Brown (2008) who asks us to consider a transdisciplinary view of ways to approach the sustainability problem. By this she advocates that it is not enough to simply work within one discipline, or to employ elements of various disciplines, but to incorporate different strands of knowledge into a whole approach. She does this by using the life and works of a great wholist, the ‘Renaissance Man’, Leonardo da Vinci, as a model, a source of inspiration and, as the subtitle of her book advocates, as ‘a guide to collective thinking and action’.

The above-mentioned calls by Lovelock (2000, 2005) and Brown (2008) concentrate on paradigm shift as different ‘ways of seeing’. The obvious inference is that changes in the way we see the world generate new knowledge that will lead to changes in social and individual behaviour. Daly (1973, 1996) and Daly and Farley (2003) in their call for a paradigm shift explicitly combine changed ways of seeing with changed ways of being. In this they confront not only economic policies and practices, but political ones. This brings to the fore questions of changes in relationships of power as means of effecting paradigm shifts in social practice.

In fact, many authors who consider a paradigm shift necessary also look at the notion of power, either implicitly or explicitly in their writings (Brown 2008; Ife & Tesoriero 2006). This is critically important, for an analysis of the motor force of change is necessary. Change will not occur without action, action cannot occur without a reason or motivating force and these notions are encapsulated within the concept of power as manifested in society. Furthermore, an examination of power cannot be conducted in isolation, for it is not just power as such that is important, but the relationships of power that exist within society that need to be included in the discussion. These are the matters that we shall now turn to.

2.3 Governance: public participation and power

Within the discourse of sustainability, there is an emphasis on actions-for-change at the local level where, in terms of civic governance, citizen and institution most
closely meet (Brown & Pitcher 2005; Harris & Chu 2001; Whittaker et al 1999). In this thesis, governance is used as a generic term and means ‘forms of decision making’. Under this definition, ‘government’ and ‘law’ are only one form of decision making (or governance), while many decisions made in society have little or nothing to do with either governments or law. As mentioned in the previous chapter, discussion of the emphasis on local action often comes under the rubric of ‘think global, act local’ (WRI 2003). A prominent manifestation of this is Chapter 28 of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit. Chapter 28 promotes the importance of sustainability efforts at the local government level (Adams & Hine 1999; Buckingham & Theobold 2003). This international-level direction continued at the 2002 Johannesburg Earth Summit. In particular, the United Nations International Conference on Engaging Communities, which I attended in Brisbane in August 2005, was the first UN conference devoted explicitly to exploring ways to develop “…capacity building for… engaged governance…” (Bertucci 2005).

These institutions and authors have added a commitment to striving for a more engaged relationship between institutions and the community to their belief in the need for adequate laws and technological solutions. They recognise that, in terms of seeking a more sustainable planet, the whole of society needs to be involved in the processes for that end. At the UN Engaging Communities conference, there was a special emphasis on exploring and promoting engaged governance procedures at the local level. This raises an important question. How does this impetus for positioning sustainability and governance at the local level manifest itself in terms of praxis, that is, in the terrain where theory, practice and effect interact? In looking at sustainability then, the link between the elements of its praxis may well be found in exploring who makes decisions and why, who should be included and why, who is excluded, how decisions are made and why, and how decisions are implemented – or not.

2.3.1 Public participation

One useful approach to the issue of engaged governance practice, is to examine the role, discourse and outcomes of the practitioners in the field of public participation. The practitioners are the people who work at the ‘coalface’ of interaction, for example, between local councils and their communities, usually via a participatory
process or program. First, though, what is public participation, and why is it important? Public participation can be understood as “[a process that uses]... a variety of techniques and strategies to enhance ... participation in decision making... in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that effect the public interest...” (IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation) 2005).

Harris and Chu (2001, p. 43), suggest that community participation “…provides a means to motivate individuals and communities and organise action”. These authors list four reasons for having a participatory process, and, while they are referring to the development of sustainability indicators, this rationale can be applied to sustainability processes in general. The cited advantages of participation are that:

• it increases the community’s understanding of local issues;
• a participatory approach can improve the acceptance of programs;
• it can increase the sense of ownership of the process, and,
• the approach fulfils ethical requirements to work in partnership with communities (Harris & Chu 2001).

An additional advantage of participation, in the form of community consultation, is given by the New South Wales Department of Local Government (DLG):

• it fulfils the requirements of New South Wales legislation, for example with the Local Government Act 1993 and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (DLG 1999).

Within the area of participatory discourse there is a growing body of practice and theory, with the one feeding into the other. Participatory practices have developed into an industry with consultants who specialise in preparing and presenting participatory events for organisations that wish to develop their engagement with their customer base or citizenry. Much of the industry deals with public institutions, and the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) acts as a professional body for many of the practitioners (IAP2 2008). Sarkissian, Cook & Walsh (2003, p. 19) also refer to the move towards engagement practices as inclusionary, or ‘participatory planning’, and detail scores of techniques and tools that participatory facilitators can use. Adding another dimension for consideration,
Carson and Martin (1999) advocate the use of random selection as the method of choosing the participants for appropriate participatory programs; they advocate that any selection of citizens, with enough support, can come up with valuable information or conclusions about an issue.

In looking at ‘participation’ from another angle, Thompson (2006) argues that it is important for planners and researchers to engage with the ‘subjects’ of an institution’s planning exercise or program. According to Thompson (2006) and Bartolomei et al (2003), approached in this way participation not only meets the needs of the institution, but it also helps the institution understand and include the needs of the community, or sections of them. These authors conclude that with this approach an institution could meet the specific needs of, say, migrant women and their desire to keep community networks accessible. Also, in what can be seen as a form of continuous community participation, Thompson (2006) and Bartolomei et al (2003) also emphasise the importance of institutions establishing community vegetable and herb gardens; their research indicates that this is important to many members of migrant communities. It is sometimes not good enough to just plan for a traditional local park, but that community gardens are also needed as centres of community development and a way that an institution and a community can have a shared interactive process (Thompson 2006; Bartolomei et al 2003).

Despite the apparent benefits of the rationale for participatory practices, and practical and theoretical advances, within the literature there is a considerable emphasis on how facilitators regularly use carefully developed consultative methods but with less than hoped for effect on project outcomes (Berry, Carson & White 2003; von Braunmuhl & Winterfeld 2005). For example, they conduct forums for various agencies, with the results virtually ignored (Hendriks 2002; Scott 2003). Or they produce visioning documents with caring detail only to see them shelved by local councils (Parissi 2003). Thus, the sustainability project has been, so far, less than a success in two crucial ways that have a nexus at the local level. First, the effects of sustainability policies and programs at this level have not been successful enough as demonstrated by the Stern (2007), IPCC (2007) and Garnaut (2008) reports. Second, practitioners have refined the theory and techniques of public participation, but often with little effect on final decisions.
It is useful at this point to begin to consider why participatory practices have not been successful in the past. If the outcome required by an institution is simply that consultation has occurred, then, does it matter if the results are ignored when decisions are made, or if the project document remains effectively unconsulted and sits on a shelf? In the end, is the process just a ‘tick-the-box’ exercise, or is there a deeper level of connection being aimed for?

For effective change to occur, it is not enough for an institution merely to content itself with the knowledge that ‘consultation’ happens, as is required by legislation. The effectiveness of that consultation itself matters because of its consequence on the success of a project, plan or program and, furthermore, it is essential. I am suggesting here that the level, or quality, of participation that is sought by the institution needs to be thought about. The first issue is to be clear about which ‘level’ of participation is being sought. Following this there should be a clarification regarding the nature of power as it relates to the levels of participation. To begin with, below are summaries of four views about ‘levels and types of participation’, Arnstein’s (1969) Ladder of Participation, the International Association for Public Participation’s (IAP2) (IAP2 2008) Spectrum of Public Participation, Brown’s (1994) Ways of Working with a Community, and Freire’s (1978, 2005) notion, derived from educational theory, that adopting a more egalitarian relationship between ‘teacher’ and ‘learner’ has significant advantages.

2.3.1.1 Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation

Sherry Arnstein (1969) developed a tool that can be used for both planning and evaluation of programs of engagement that organisations undertake. The tool is a hierarchically arranged set of descriptors that depict the quality of the relationship between a public authority, or private corporation, and the citizenry it is dealing with. It can also be seen as a set of descriptors for the power relationship that is being sought by such organisations and citizens. Although much of the more recent work on community development/ empowerment is presented with a more collaborative tone (for example Ife & Tesoriero 2006; Ristock & Pennell 1996; Rebick 2000),
Arnstein (1969) was writing at a time of great social unrest in the 1960’s\(^1\) and her approach to the relations of power in society reflect this. Nonetheless, it is still useful to consider the nature of power relations that do exist between social formations. Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of Citizen Participation is depicted at Figure 2.1.

Arnstein (1969, p. 216) defines citizen participation as a “…categorical term for citizen power” and usefully provides the following analysis of types of participation for anyone who is interested in empowerment processes. She describes the participation/non-participation ladder, in Figure 2.1, in the following ways:

- The two lowest rungs of ‘Manipulation’ and ‘Therapy’ are non-participation. The aim of these forms of interaction is “…not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable powerholders to “educate” or “cure” the participants”;
- The next three rungs ‘Informing’, ‘Consultation’ and ‘Placation’ are described as levels of tokenism that only allow “…the have-nots to hear and have a voice” but the citizens cannot ensure that their wishes will be taken into account, where citizens are allowed to advise but still cannot make decisions;
- The final three levels in the ladder describe more significant attainments of ‘citizen participation’ or power. ‘Partnership’ enables people to “…negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional powerholders”; ‘Delegated Power’

\(^1\) Here, one can refer, for example, to the feminist, student, people of colour, and anti-war protests in her homeland of America and the student-worker rebellions that raged throughout Europe in 1968-69.
and ‘Citizen Control’ respectively describe situations where relatively powerless people attain power, for example, via a majority of decision-making seats or full managerial power (Arnstein 1969, p. 217).

2.3.1.2 The Public Participation Spectrum

More recently, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has formulated a ‘spectrum’ of participation, rather than the hierarchically arranged ‘ladder’ of Arnstein (1969), as shown in Figure 2.2. An advantage of employing this spectrum approach is that it can fit in with a greater range of institutional needs, minimal legislative requirements, and it is more flexible in application.

The less judgemental tone of the language used in the spectrum may also assist in making it more palatable with institutions than other styles of analysis. In fact, the IAP2’s approach somewhat depoliticises the implications of the choices, compared to Arnstein (1969). Thus the IAP2 states, “The Spectrum show (sic) that differing level of participation are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made” (IAP2 2007).

Another advantage of the IAP2’s (2007) more collaborative approach is that it allows for an important innovation to be established. As described in Figure 2.2, the IAP2 advocates that the institution adopt an open and transparent model by establishing a social contract, a ‘promise to the public’. That is, besides the institution establishing a clear pathway and mode of participation, the institution also makes a clear promise as to the sort of outcome that can be expected by the public. This approach is particularly important to keep trust with those who involve themselves with a participatory process or program. From personal experience I can attest to the importance of this last point, having been involved in local council participatory events. As a resident who has given up a Saturday afternoon or week-day evening to participate in a council consultation process, I have been disappointed to not receive report-back information, despite having made numerous requests for that information.
2.3.1.3 Ways of working with a community

Another useful way of looking at the interactions of institutions and residents is with regard to what Brown (1994) has referred to as “Ways of Working with a Community”. Community, in general, can be seen as associations of people and groups, where the individuals and the organisations interact for a common purpose (Ife & Tesoriero 2006). Like Thompson (2006) in the discussion above, Brown (1994) urges professionals to consider their own relationship to the community in question, not only the relationship of the institution, which employs them, to the community. In addition to this, Brown (1994) has developed an important schema for understanding the nature of these relationships. While this example is aimed at the ‘researcher’, the researcher can be taken as a useful metaphor for an institution. In order to clarify one’s objectives and functioning in community work, the following issues need to be addressed by practitioners, for what one gets out of an interaction in a community will depend on how one becomes involved. This is an important issue, because, as Brown (1994) states:

- To ask advice from a community is consultation

Figure 2.2 The Public Participation Spectrum.
Source: Modified from, International Association for Public Participation (IAP2 2007).
• To work with a community is *participation*
• To work in a community is *partnership*
• To work as if it was your own community is *involvement*
• To work with a sense of community is *commitment*
• To work on a community is *exploitation*.

Brown (1994) here raises the important ontological question because a part of the nature of the reality of the research itself derives from the relationship between the observer/researcher and the observed – the participant ‘subjects’. The nature of that reality could be, for example, one of exploitation or one of a collaborative partnership. The nature of the relationship between the observer and the observed, between the researcher and the ‘subjects’, or participants, is important because a researcher is not immune from having an impact on reality, and thus eventually, on what type of knowledge can be derived from observations and interactions with the observed community or individual. Equally it can be said that the nature of the relationship between an institution and a community is also dependent on the nature of the participatory approach that is taken. Simultaneously, Brown also raises the significant epistemological question of the nature of the knowledge, or the sorts of knowledge that can be gained from the research situation, for the reality that is created due to the researcher’s approach, will influence the nature of the knowledge that is uncovered.

### 2.3.1.4 Everyone as ‘teacher’ and ‘taught’

One of the many important questions concerns the nature of the relationship between, both, the public participation practitioner and the citizen participants, and, the institution and the community they are targeting. Paolo Freire (1978, 2005) gives us additional insights into this question by addressing this matter in terms of educational theory, and I am suggesting that his concept is more than just applicable to practice of public participation, it is essential. By providing us with the notion that both the ‘teacher’ and the ‘taught’ can, and do, learn from each other, Freire (1978, p. 9, 2005) suggests that progress can be made in many areas. Mackie (1980) drives this point further as he sees Freire’s ideas of education firmly embedded in notions of education for change through praxis, that is, social change as being effected by the
agency of people who actively participate in change processes, and are not simply subject to those with more power, however good their intentions are. In making this point Mackie (1980) implies that, for example, an engineer can give good advice about bridge building to a community and, in return, gain valuable insights about the needs of the community or details about the locality of the bridge itself. However he goes further than this. The greater point made here is that an engaged praxis itself can lead to social change, that the experience of more egalitarian decision making processes can change both the teacher and the taught.

Once the practitioner and the institution accept that more can be gained from change programs by adopting a more humble approach, then a wide range of additional gains can be made. This notion that a sort of equivalence between the professional and the citizen can exist applies to a broad range of programs, such as educational matters of giving information, or deeper processes that involve some aspect of decision making. Some of these advantages have been mentioned above, such as, a deeper understanding and ownership of the issues by citizens (Harris & Chu 2001). In turn this approach can lead to activation of a community in accepting the need for and making necessary behavioural changes. This is most likely once they are an effective part of the process of coming to decisions about issues, and thus can conceivably attain change in places where laws and regulations sometimes find difficulty in reaching. Examples of such places are in the more private realm of the backyard, the kitchen and the bathroom. Another advantage lies on the other side of the equation, that is, with the ‘teacher’ as a metaphor for the institution. In this case, the institution can, for example, learn a lot about a locality and its needs, without employing an expensive consultant, or activate a community movement, such as Bushcare groups or more sporadic events like ‘Clean Up Australia Day’ (CUA 2008). While much information can be attained by random surveys and the like, the thrust of participatory discourse suggests that a more engaged practice is additionally useful.

To summarise the participatory frameworks discussed above, then, practitioners and other professionals need to be clear about what they want from public participation, as much as it would be useful for citizens to be similarly aware. If the change sought by an institution is simply for citizens to be more aware, then providing information
may be sufficient. This may well be enough for a simple matter such as a council changing the times that garbage is picked up, but if an engaged relationship is sought for more complex matters, such as a move towards sustainability, or an improvement in community development processes, then something else is required. In this latter case, for an institution that is seeking a collaborative partnership, providing information is, by itself, not enough. To achieve a shift towards a more equally engaged relationship between institution and community, where crucial decisions and decision-making capacities are more equally shared, their need to be a consideration of the relationship of power that exists between these two formations. This invariably involves reconsideration of, and changes to, the nature of the relationships between ‘the teacher’ and ‘the taught’.

As we have seen, the gap between the theory and practice of sustainability and public participation is wide, and it is contended here that the gap is maintained by an inadequate understanding, and a one-sided application of the concept of power. Arnstein (1969), as discussed above, has raised this matter, but much more clarification is needed, and a way to conceptualise power that allows us to improve on the current situation is also needed.

2.3.2 Power

The relationships of power that exist between institution and community, and between practitioner and community, can be further understood by incorporating them into the notion of governance. Within modern institutional frameworks, this notion of governance or, forms of decision-making, is often viewed by only considering parliamentary structures and the influence of powerful lobby groups on politicians where large scale decisions are made. But what of other, less powerful, sectors of society? It is a paradox that an issue that differentiates and separates the major elements of society, simply put here as the powerful and the relatively powerless, is also a matter that may be able to be used to unite them and progress a paradigm shift towards sustainability. That matter is power as the currency of governance and decision making. These issues will now be addressed.
When considering the proposition that “public participation is crucial to putting sustainability into effect”, then a core question arises, namely, how does the praxis of sustainability and public participation intersect and interact in respect to power? This raises the issue of who should be involved in making decisions about sustainability, where does power lie, and who should take part in governance processes, that is, in the power of decision making? Thus, together with the three usual suspects that are examined in the sustainability discourse, Economy, Environment and Society, Governance emerges as a fourth element, as shown in Figure 2.3.

![Figure 2.3 Governance added to the usual three elements of sustainability](source: C. Parissi, for this thesis, and reproduced in Parissi (2009)).

Of the four factors in Figure 2.3, decision making is left to ‘governance’ as a function of society, although it can also be thought of as a pilot of the economy, and can be influenced by environmental issues, upon which all the other elements rely. However, those who are in positions of authority are not outside of society, independent of the economy or unaffected by environmental matters, although some see themselves, and are often seen by others, as being above all the other elements. This problem is explored in a part of sociological discourse that describes society as a whole in terms of formal power structures: for those who have formal power, such as politicians and those who inhabit corporate Boards, usually make large-scale decisions. Yet, this model allocates the decision making processes to ‘Governance’ and not to ‘Society’ as a whole, and still maintains a series of hierarchical
arrangements of decision making. So, where does power lie, and who should share the responsibilities of decision making?

Power is not an uncontested concept, with two generally opposed views as to its nature. The more common and traditional view is that of power over the less powerful or the powerless. C. Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination* (1970, p. 50) is primarily concerned with the nature of power in human society, “Surely in our time we need not argue that, in the last resort, coercion is the ‘final’ form of power”. Besides coercive power, though, Mills presents evidence for two other types of power, as “Authority (power justified by the beliefs of the voluntarily obedient)” and “manipulation (power wielded unbeknown to the powerless)” (Mills 1970, p. 50). This exposition of power describes it as a predominately hierarchical transmission belt of ‘order/decision-giver’ and ‘order/decision-taker’. The dominant structures of modern bureaucratic States are commonly understood to function like this, but are also examined, described and extolled in this way by sociologists such as Max Weber (1947, 2006). In the view of Clastres (1987, p. 11), Weber’s hierarchical exposition of social relations allocates to State power “… the monopoly of legitimate use of violence…”. Other writers have a less hierarchical analysis of power.

Writers such as Foucault (1983, 1994, 1996) and Ward (1982, 2006) present a divergent analysis of decision making (power) in society, and locate it as a much more widely dispersed factor. Foucault (1983, 1994, 1996) looks at the higher level of State/bureaucratic manifestations of power and suggests that a locus of this power is spread throughout society. As Marshall (2008, p. 677) puts it, “Michel Foucault … maintains that power in the sense of ‘a mode of action upon the action of others’ is everywhere and cannot be escaped, whether in the arena of society or in the realm of knowledge. While the relations of domination can be changed, the relations of power will always remain”. This is a useful way of viewing the nature of power, with regard to Figure 2.3, for this dispersal of power can be seen as shared between ‘Governance’ and ‘Society’ and, furthermore, in all sections of society. In particular, Foucault states that this sort of social power exists (manifests) at the individual level, even if it originates in State, bureaucratic, religious or other social formations (Foucault 1983, pp. 211-226).
Likewise, Ward (1982, 2006) describes power as manifest in the many ordinary actions of ordinary people, such as sharing child care and helping older folk, as occurs at a neighbourhood level. He identifies the many decisions that are made outside of the State/bureaucratic structures as significant. Ward (1982, 2006) is supported in this view by other anarchist writers in this field, for example, Chomsky (1995, 2003), Bookchin (1991, 1997), Bhiel (1997), Albert & Hahnel (1991), Albert (1997, 2000, 2003). This is a philosophical position revolving around the human needs for self-determination, which seeks to place decision-making beyond the state, as a capacity of individuals and the community (Bookchin 1997; Ward 2006). In addition, Ward (1983, 2006) is also supported by anthropologists such as Barclay (1982, 1997, 2004), Clastres (1989, 2000) and Graeber (2004, 2007) who have examined societies without a State/bureaucratic structure, and posit that human society has survived without a State or bureaucracy, and suggest that this needs to be considered in our society. The implication of the studies of these anthropologists is that the State-oriented, hierarchical manifestation of power, is not the only way that power is activated in society. Since many societies exist now, and have existed for most of human history without the modernist bureaucratic State, or even without a State of any sort, as with tribal communities, then they put forward the idea that decision making capacities exist with humanity itself.

To a degree, the more recent deliberative democracy discourse has supported the views of Foucault (1980, 1989, 1994, 1996) and Ward (1983, 2006), by including the potential for the effective decision-making of the relatively powerless in society. Dryzek (2000, p. v) defines deliberative democracy as “…the ability of all individuals subject to a collective decision to engage in authentic deliberation about that decision”. Dryzek (2000) generally limits his discussion of ‘authentic democracy’\(^2\), to forms that include the state, “…we should not give up on the possibility of authentic democracy within the confines of the state, of the kind sought by liberal constitutionalist deliberative democrats” (p. 5). However, Dryzek (2007) does not limit deliberative democracy simply to electoral politics and promotes the idea that deliberative processes, which occur outside of the state or institutions, can

\(^2\) Dryzek (2000 p.8) defines ‘authentic democracy’ as “…the degree to which democratic control is engaged through communication that encourages reflection upon preferences without coercion…[that is without]…the exercise of power, manipulation, indoctrination, propaganda, deception…”
themselves promote a *democratisation* of society. Similarly, Cohen (1989) sees deliberative democracy in terms of an equality of power between participants, but does not give sufficient attention to the difference in power relationships between the participants in a deliberative process and the state or institution.

My analysis incorporates both the above formulations of power, that is, as manifesting in both hierarchical and diffuse forms within society, and thus re-interprets social power as manifesting throughout society, and will be discussed further in the next part of the chapter. While this is the case, acknowledgment must be made to the differing ‘strengths’ in the ways in which power manifests within the various formation that make up society. Newman (1999, pp118-119) uses the designators “structured”, “semi-structured” and “unstructured”; I have used the same idea but replaced his designators with, respectively, ‘formal’, ‘semi-formal’ and ‘informal’. The rationale for the change is because, in particular, the common understanding of the term ‘unstructured’ does not apply to social formations, at least not the ones being considered here.

The essence of the concept borrowed from Newman (1999) is that it consists of a series of hierarchically arranged designators that has ‘formal’ at the highest level, then ‘semi-formal’ and finally, ‘informal’. The factors that Newman (1999) used to analyse social formations into this hierarchy are:

- The level of power that the organisation has;
- The scope (size) of the organisation, and,
- The degree to which it is detached from, or is a part of, legal and jurisdictional governmental authority.

How society can be considered with regard to its components, with regard to power as discussed above, and including Newman’s (1999) conception of agency, will be discussed now. A new model that combines the above concepts will be presented in Part 2 of this chapter.
Part 2

2.4 Society

The study of society forms a complex discipline, or even a series of disciplines, and it is not the intention here to cover all aspects of that large domain. The concept of ‘civil society’ is one of the ideas within sociological studies that is useful to examine in this discussion. It is a concept that has come into prominence recently after years of obscurity following its use by Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century. A little more recently the term was reprised by Marxists such as Gramsci (1957, 1971) who wrote in the 1920s-30s. Decades passed and the term was again revived in trying to understand the origins and motor forces that were at work during the ‘people’s revolutions’ of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 (Taylor 2008). This concept is examined here as it pertains to finding reasons for, or paths towards, or, possibly even the terrain for change in society. For this reason the discourse of Civil Society is a useful beginning point for considering what might be a location for the needed changes in society, as well as for considering aspect of the concepts that have been discussed earlier in this chapter. Issues raised to this point and those in this chapter have led to a reconsideration of the usefulness of some aspects of the concept of Civil Society, in particular, in what it has left out.

The first task is to come to an understanding of the notion of Civil Society. There are at least three meanings of this term in the literature, and, depending on the author, these sometimes intermingle in use, or are employed in an apparently contradictory manner. These understandings are, Civil Society as a specific a-historical process (in Section 2.4.1, below); as a quality given to human relations, as in a ‘civilised society’ (Section 2.4.2), and, as a term applied to political events of the past thirty years (Section 2.4.3). The final part of this discussion (Section 2.4.4) will conclude with the proposition that the above formulations are incomplete if one wishes to find all the possible locations for change in society, and also in with regard to the necessary change in relationships between those sectors. From this, another aspect of society will be considered, one that includes a specific social construct that is given
the new term of ‘Informal Society’. As each understanding is explored in greater
detail below, it will be argued that the last formulation of an aspect of society has
great value for sustainability discourse and practice, and so should be included into
the discourse of sustainability studies.

2.4.1 Civil Society as an a-historical construct

Civil Society has been seen as an emergent condition of the developing modernist, or
bourgeois world. Enlightenment figures such as Hobbes (1588-1679), Locke (1632-
1704), Hume (1711-76), Kant (1724-1804) and Rousseau (1712-78), however
divergent they were on other issues, were fairly united in this (Tester 1992; Popkin
& Stroll 1993; Marshall 2008). The main figures of the Enlightenment acted as the
conceptual midwives to that modern world. Modernist writers such as Marx (1818-
83) and Gramsci (1891-1937) also used the term and in much the same way,
although not necessarily for the same purpose; the first aimed to build up the
bourgeois world, while the Marxists had the supposed purpose of destroying it
(Gramsci 1957, 1971; Tester 1992). The common element that unites these otherwise
divergent theorists is that they all view the modernist project to be, at least in part,
the development of a new aspect to social relationships among humans, namely,
‘civil society’. This new set of relationships was seen to be partly the cause of, and in
part the product of, the new modernist world, which was in the process of evolving.
This new world was defined by the concrete realities of the Agricultural and the
Industrial Revolutions that followed from philosophical, cultural and scientific
revolutions of the Enlightenment (Bookchin 2005). As a combined history, these
revolutions changed the affected societies from feudalism towards a Modernist world.

The feudal and absolutist past was understood, by the Enlightenment and its
modernist followers, to be defined by two things, firstly, a dependence and even a
subjection of ‘Man’ to the “…blind forces of Nature” (Marx, Capital Vol. 3, cited in
Tester 1992). Here humans were not so much ‘a part of nature’ but ‘in a state of
nature’, and the sooner this state of nature ended and civil society began, the better.
The second aspect of the pre-modern medieval past was that it was seen to be bound
by a specific, rigid and predetermined social relationship, that between a powerless
subject and the Regent as absolute authority. This was an authority that was ordained
by a god, and the relationship was viewed as being based on superstition and irrationalism. The modernist world saw that these (negative) conditions would be relieved by the development of Civil Society, which would produce, and be moderated by, another new formation, the modern state.

One of the foundations of the modern bourgeois state was the ‘freedom’ of private property and the ‘individualised’ individual, that is, the formation of the modernist ‘universal stranger’ as foreshadowed by Enlightenment thinkers and as created by the conditions of modernity itself (Tester 1992). People who knew each other as members of village communities were transformed into partly disassociated strangers in an urban sprawl (Tester 1992), thus began the, now, long-discussed separation of ‘town from country’ (Mumford 1961). In this way humans began to be alienated from both community and from a close association with Nature in their daily life (Bookchin 2005).

Given this scenario, then, Civil Society was seen by modernists as an expression of the liberating tendencies of modernity, and as a saving force. In this conception, Civil Society is seen as liberating because it freed humanity from the restrictions of the forces of Nature. Thus large numbers of people were ‘freed’ from the drudgery of growing food and were not as subject to the vicissitudes of weather for their livelihoods because they were now city dwellers who worked in the expanding urban industries. As a saving force Civil Society was posed, for example, by the modernist Karl Marx, as a way through which the now alienated and atomised individuals formed political and industrial associations with each other to advance their separate class interests (Gramsci 1957, 1971; Tester 1992). Sometimes this occurred when class interests combined, as with the Anti-Corn Law League movement of the 1840s (Thompson 1988). Often this was articulated in the form of associations that aimed to wrest some control or influence over decision-making from the absolutist monarchy. For example, as trade and industrialisation grew, this changing situation saw the emergent middle class develop as a force that demanded and won parliamentary reform and increasingly greater access to political power. Similarly, this process applied to the new industrial working class that more slowly gained similar effects, such as through the Chartist Movement of the 1830s in England, and the Trade Unions after that (Thompson 1980; Webb 1980).
This line of argument about the nature of Civil Society is also evident within another aspect of the discourse, namely, the ‘dark side’ of Civil Society. Certainly, it is not the intention of this study to put a romantic gloss on humanity, or the concept of Civil Society, for society may well manifest in unpleasant ways as well as in any other manner. That people have differences, argue, and fight is evident, and a deal of human endeavour is spent on attempting to reconcile or eliminate these differences. In particular, this growing literature on the ‘dark side of Civil Society’ includes a discussion on terrorist groups in a post-September 11 world (Rumford 2001; Anderson & Rieff 2005).

The wider discourse also includes those who support the fostering of non-state elements with critical agency to influence the decisions of governments (Kaldor 2003), as opposed to those who wish to support the pre-eminence of the state while still allowing a place for those from non-state sectors (Edwards 2004). While still other players in these debates see Civil Society in economic terms as primarily a forum for the actions for the elements of the ‘free-market’ (Palmer 2008). Other authors see Civil Society as a force in helping the United Nations to resolve major world problems, such as war, hunger (Newell 2006), or as a problem area with regard to gender issues (Howell, 2006).

Still, these views derive from the idea of Civil Society as used by Enlightenment philosophers and the modernist thinkers who came after them. While the discourse of Civil Society is acknowledged to be a highly contested area, this discussion is offered in the hope of clarifying some of the ideas within it. Also, the groundwork has been established to find a better way to use the wider concept as a useful tool for those who seek social change.

2.4.1.1 A-historicism as a flawed approach to considering civil society

The above version of Civil Society is flawed for two reasons that relate to its essentially a-historical vision, that is, the above formulation does not give Civil Society any antecedents. It seems that, in such a headlong rush to arrive at modernity, the Enlightenment not only wanted to critique the past, it wanted to disown it, which
was a pattern that was closely followed by the modernist writers. Although it may seem a harsh comment, the Enlightenment thinkers seemed to only consider the lower classes as a herd, a dumb mob with capacity for little other than obedience and acceptance of the “…life of man [as] solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.” (Hobbes quoted in Tester 1992). And also to quote from Rousseau (1968, p. 64) “The passing from the state of nature to the civil society produces a remarkable change in man; it put justice as a rule of conduct in the place of instinct, and gives his actions the moral quality they previously lacked.” A complex idea, such as this one, needs to be associated with a practical and conceptual lineage, as it seems unlikely that an important aspect of human society would appear out of nowhere.

There are at least two antecedents that can be associated with and counter the ahistorical version of Civil Society, one religious or conceptual and the other embedded in the physical and social structures of living organisms. The first of these antecedents has to do with the history of Judeo-Christianity or, more broadly, the ‘Abrahamic religions’ as Islam should also be included as it has the same origins (Peters 2004). Although it does not seem to be acknowledged, the Enlightenment’s continued division of ‘humanity’ from ‘nature’ can be logically traced back to the emergence of the monotheistic Judaic religion, with its metaphysical god that segregated its people from their polytheistic and pagan neighbours, and from their own past. This was a new direction that began with Abraham, for example, with his move from human sacrifice to animal sacrifice. The monotheistic and metaphysical aspects of this new direction were then codified by Moses in the Torah (Peters 2004). Pagan is here understood to mean theistic religious beliefs that are expressed through the worship of deities that are manifest in Nature, with term pagan meaning, in general, ‘of the earth’ (Higginbotham & Higginbotham 2002).

Whereas once the pre-Moses forebears of the Jews united with Nature in a pagan way (Peters 2004), the course of history changed and a fundamental division between humanity and nature began. Previous to this, humanity related to Nature not only by physical association but also through religious interpretation. Examples of the former are through the activities of hunting and growing, and also being subject to such events as weather, climate and illness, with few, if any, mediating factors. The latter aspect, as religion, demonstrated this intimate relationship, or dependence,
as expressed in the adoration of a pantheon of gods of the natural world, such as a
golden calf, the Sun, an animist spirit, or the Earth itself. Ultimately, this religious
alienation of humanity from Nature was transferred into the Christian tradition in a
bible that was largely interpreted as giving ‘Man’ dominion over the Earth
(Bookchin 2005).

Of course, the Christian tradition has also recently produced a sizeable body of work
that has vigorously re-interpreted the more traditional view of the biblical injunction
for Man to establish control of the Earth. The Christian religions are treated here in
particular, for it is more from that cultural background that the modern industrial
society originally emerged. Writers such as Birch (1975, 1993), Dower (2002) and
Engel (2003) firmly state that the biblical injunction needs to be interpreted as a
stewardship of the Earth rather than domination. To at least some degree this
position can still be seen to exist within the framework of a division between
Humanity and Nature for it can be interpreted as the (ethical) management of Nature
rather than the position of Humanity needing to be within and be a part of Nature.
With regard to the Enlightenment specifically, this division can still be seen as
reflecting the epistemologically famous Cartesian ‘mind – body split’ (Bookchin

The second antecedent that contradicts the a-historical view of Civil Society is
located in the very nature of sociability in so many life forms. An essential
component that is inherent in the notion of Civil Society is the cooperation that is
needed for individuals to come together to change society, but where did that
cooperative urge come from, did it simply begin with the modernist era? It has been
argued by some that cooperation, as a concept, is inherent within the evolutionary
change processes of life on a number of levels (Jones 2007; Margulis 1998). To see
this cooperation in living organisms, one only needs to consider the many social
aspects of much of animal life – termites, bees, schools of fish, herds of animals, and
so on. Furthermore, this is presented in the literature in a number of ways. With
regard to cooperation within species, Peter Kropotkin (1902) first wrote about
Mutual Aid being a factor in evolution, and as an ongoing factor in the interaction in

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3 However other authors have dealt with, for example, Islam (Khalid & O’Brien 1992).
and between species, including humans. Importantly, the idea has more recently resurfaced with newer considerations about the nature of cell structure (Margulis 1998), of whole ecosystems (Jones 2007), and in respect to the function of the planet as an entity (Lovelock 2000).

From the above analysis, three questions are prompted from the analysis of Civil Society to be the politically active elements that combined to attain greater control over decision-making, in their modernist attempts to wrest control from the all powerful ‘monarch’. Those questions are: ‘where did Civil Society come from?’, ‘what constitutes the rest of society?’, and ‘does not the rest of society have a place in sustainability decision-making?’. For the purposes of this study, then, another concept will be introduced into this discussion, that of Informal Society, which will be taken to include all those aspects of human life that are at the micro-level of society. This includes those categories of society that have existed, by definition, as long as human society has existed, and with their beginnings in an evolutionary history that commences even prior to that. Informal Society includes family, sharing child-care, mating rituals, friendships, neighbourhoods, voluntary associations and continues, with social evolution, through to the village market place, town life and the internet, among many other aspects of society. Together, these make up the many networks that are the ‘glue’ of society and, crucially for this discussion, each is a forum for much of the negotiation and decision-making that constitutes the governance of human life, and where, in the analysis of Foucault (1983, 1993, 1996) power is also situated.

Furthermore, it is the contention of this study that human Informal Society finds its precedence in Nature. So, what is taken here as the foundations of Informal Society, for the human world, is embedded in Nature, is part of the natural world and so, is a basis of locating Humanity in Nature. Certainly, what had its beginnings in Nature, and is now still a part of Nature, has changed with the evolution of associations that make up cells, organisms and ecosystems, and the evolution of the human species, into human society. In brief, the contention put here is that Informal Society as a human construct, as an intrinsic part of human society and sociability, is a connection, in an elemental way that still remains after the initial theological split was made between ‘Man’ and ‘Nature’.
The humanity-nature division may well be manifest in theology, philosophy and thus in society throughout history and pre-history, but it was not until after the industrial revolution that its global environmental impacts were felt on such a large scale in the natural and the human worlds (WRI 2003). For example, only after technological developments manifested in population growth, resource consumption and polluting industries, did the potential that was inherent in the idea of humanity’s separation from nature actually threaten the ecological integrity of the planet (Bookchin 2005). Previously this manifested only in local degradations, such as the impacts of European colonialism on aboriginal peoples and their lands, such as in the western Sydney Basin in New South Wales from the 1790s (Rosen 1995).

This discussion has shown that, in its classical use, the concept of Civil Society has been used in an a-historical manner by the Enlightenment and its modernist followers. Although the concept of Civil Society is still a useful one to consider in discussions about social change, it is limited by what it has left out. By placing the idea of Civil Society in its various historical frameworks, a foundation has been established so that the concept may become a richer and more useful tool for sustainability discourse and practice, the process of which is completed by adding the social formation of Informal Society. For it is the contention here that the division between humanity and nature needs to be mended for a resolution of the ecological, and thus human, problems to occur. For this to happen, an essential link between human society and the natural world, as manifested in the new construction of Informal Society, is needed to be considered – this discussion is provided in a later section of this chapter.

2.4.2 Civil Society as a quality given to human relations
The second way that the term Civil Society is used in the literature is as one or more of the desired qualities of, or as an attribute of, society: as in 'a civilised society' or a 'just society'. For example, Cox (1995) often uses the term in this way, "Unlike neoliberals, conservatives believe that order and control create civil societies and unfettered freedom evokes chaos." (Cox 1995, p.28). And again, “Trust, mutuality and reciprocity are the basic components of the truly civil society.” (Cox 1995,
p. 29). Cox (1995, p. 56) also closely associates the term with that of ‘social capital’:
“The continuous thread that runs through these components of civil society is the need for high levels of social capital derived from trusting others, mutuality and reciprocity”.

In being an acknowledged source for her discussion of Civil Society, Cox (1995) refers to the work of Robert Putman. Similarly, and significantly, Putnam and Goss (2002, p. 1) see social capital as a characteristic of Civil Society, social capital being “…social networks and the norms of reciprocity associated with them…”. Within an Australian context, Cox (1995) develops the concept of social capital and states that there are four types of capital, that is, financial, physical, human and social. Furthermore, she states that, in contrast to classical economic analysts, the development of all four types of capital is necessary for sound economic growth.

Thus, although Cox (1995), unlike other authors, uses the term Civil Society simply as a descriptive attribute of society, it is still closely aligned with the concept of social capital that has far more scope to be used as an analytical tool. It is unfortunate that Cox does not carry this potential through to its more self-activating conclusion. Her argument put was a polemic against social policy conservatives who were, and still do, argue for a reduction of state intervention into society. Cox (1995, p. 34), in contrast to the conservative neo-liberal view, argues that for a healthy social democratic system to flourish, the state needs to intervene into the social arena and develop social capital. She places the building of social capital in the hands of state institutions that “…develop voluntary, egalitarian relationships through which social trust and civic virtues can be acquired” (Cox 1995, p. 34).

Although Cox argues for a left-wing social democratic agenda, she ignores the self-organising capacities of Civil Society in espousing her position. For example, in a comment that can be taken as a reference to the ‘dark side’ of Civil Society, she states “The gangs and militia are uncivil societies. We need to remember this when the conservative right calls for less central government…” (Cox 1995, p. 36). In putting forward this position, Cox flips the understanding of the Enlightenment and argues that the state brings forth Civil Society, not the other way around. This is
because she begins with the premise that Civil Society is not a construct within humanity, but an attribute, a virtue.

In this regard, Cox (1995), Putnam (1995) and Putnam and Goss (2002) use Civil Society in a relatively passive way, when it comes to applying the term to Western capitalist social democracies. Even though this is the case, they still locate it as a site for activity, that is, where assessments of social capital can be made. In addition, what is termed Civil Society can be where programs, plans and activity may be sited so as to increase a community’s level of, or forms of, social capital (Cox 1995). Thus for her, Civil Society remains essentially a passive concept, and is only activated when acted upon, with the principal initiator being the social democratic state. This position also still begs the question of where Civil Society came from.

2.4.3 Civil Society as a term applied to political events of the past thirty years
Putnam and Goss (2002, p.1) have sought to employ the concept of Civil Society as a way to understand the complex changes that occurred in “…the difficult births of market-oriented democracies in formerly Communist lands…” One of the ironies of the use of the term for this purpose is that, in examining the emergence of liberal democracy in Poland in the 1970s and 1980s, Civil Society was seen as a social formation that was in opposition to the state. For example, Miller (1992, p. 1) states,

“The original application of the concept in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe by dissident intellectuals in the 1970s had tended to regard the promotion of civil society (loosely defined as a sphere of social activity free of the interference of the communist party-state) as a strategy for dealing with the problems of life under ‘really existing socialism’…”

With this usage, Civil Society does not become the harbinger or partner of the modern state, as interpreted by the Enlightenment and modernist thinkers mentioned above, but its nemesis. This conflict with the previous use of the term is maintained unless one restricts the term to being linked as the harbinger only, and strictly, of the private-property based, capitalist, parliamentary bourgeois state. In this latter case, it may be assumed that Civil Society is seen to support the modernist liberal state, but is opposed to the Communist or Marxist state. So, with this use, without onerous
qualifications, Civil Society can be seen as a place where a Marxist state can be challenged, and overthrown, but this begs the question of the usefulness of this concept for change within capitalist social democracies, besides also ignoring the origins of the entity.

In all three cases, in the Enlightenment’s formulation, as a social virtue, and as used to explain the fall of Marxist regimes, though, Civil Society is still viewed as a liberating force of some sort. This is especially the case when the concept is applied in pitting itself against the dominant power, be that an absolute feudal monarch or a Marxist Central Committee. However, all three points of view are formed by an ideological allegiance, rather than the use of the term in a definitional or generic way. The use of the concept of Civil Society in its sociological application to examine recent political events, still omits to provide any historical precedents, other than the general reference to resurrecting a term from the Enlightenment. As such the concept is useful but, by itself is limited in its application as a site for change in humanity as a whole, as the term is limited to certain constructions of society. The main problem with the concept of Civil Society is that it leaves out a great deal of society, in fact, most of society. Yes, it can be said that Civil Society organisations come from the citizenry, the vast majority of the general population: but who are these citizens, and how can they be included as a locus of change?

Broadly considered, the discussion of Civil Society introduces several matters of interest. Firstly, this concept is useful, for it brings agency and action to the notion of society, and locates that social formation as a site of change. Secondly, the discourse of Civil Society, even with the brief examination given here, shows itself to be highly contentious, difficult to define, and contradictory, a matter that is often mentioned by writers (Anderson & Rieff 2006; Falk 1999; Kaldor 2003). Thirdly, Civil Society, however it is used and however useful it is an instigator of change within those formations of society that have the most power, it is still limited to a part of society – usually described as Non Government Organisations. In this thesis, a new term is presented: ‘Informal Society’ which will be explored in the next sections, with a model presented to include all elements of society as an interacting set of centres of change.
2.4.4 Aspects of society as a universal and linked to change

The following discussion is presented in an attempt to reconfigure the general discourse of Civil Society and to place it within a framework that can be more useful to sustainability praxis. Some could argue that the primary emphasis in the quest for a more sustainable society should be placed with the most powerful in society: governments and large corporations, such as Hardin (1968), Bailey (1995), and Hawkins et al (2000). Other writers emphasise that technical tools, such as laws and engineering solutions, or the use of the corporate sector, areas that are currently employed, are necessary, but are not sufficient (Berry 1999; Ife & Tesoriero 2006). It is also contended that these approaches for solutions are limited in their potential for positive effect because they are often bound within disciplinary ‘silos’, whereas greater effect would result from greater interaction and cooperation between the disciplines (Orr 2004). In addition, there is an increasing body of knowledge which suggests that leaving these matters principally to professional people and only taking token notice of the knowledge of non-professionals, for example, of the knowledge of residents in a locality in the form of consultation, is not enough (Brown 2002, 2005; Carson 2005). In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that the class of professionals may sometimes be a part of the problem as well as a part of the solution (Orr 2004; Parissi 2002, 2003).

Overall, there is a growing body of evidence to support the view that the involvement of all sectors of society in a participatory process of decision-making is necessary (Allen 2002, 2007; Carson 2008; WRI 2003). Brown (2008) writes that a synthesis is needed that includes a transdisciplinary approach to solving global ‘wicked problems’, in a whole of community framework when putting policy into practice. These alternative positions point towards the need to establish a new entity and indicating it as a site for activating and empowering the least powerful in society.

The new term, Informal Society, is now being given a place to represent ‘the rest of society’, the social formations with the least formal power, the individual, the family, neighbours and neighbourhoods, friends and a whole array of other structures that are found in the ‘lower’ layers of society. Informal Society does not include the state and large corporations, or non-government organisations like trade unions, churches
or large environmental organisations. In establishing the difference between Informal Society and other social formations, a clarification needs to be made. As a concept, Informal Society is used here to represent the roles that individuals and groups of residents play within society, rather than the more deterministic notion of their class (or its euphemism: socio-economic background). This is not to deny a certain overlap between ‘Informal Society’ those of a ‘lower socio-economic background’ exists, especially when we later look at the particular instance of the site of the study conducted for this thesis at Liverpool, in Sydney’s western region.

The above clarification about Informal Society as a ‘role’, rather than a ‘position’ in society is required because there is need to acknowledge that, although we may well be describing people in their ordinary lives as residents or citizens, sometimes non-experts in one context may be professionals in another, although this can sometimes cause tension within those individuals (Parissi 2002). For example, within any group of residents who may be consulted by expert professionals as to their opinions regarding a development issue, there may well be a number of respondents or participants who are experts in another field, that is, one can be a professional or expert in one’s career and a non-expert as a resident. This position is not to deny the value of the non-expert’s opinion in their own right, whether they may consider themselves a professional in their career or not. For example, in establishing and expanding upon local knowledge one may be an accountant or a cleaner, but either’s local knowledge could be of huge value (Brown 2002; 2005). This local knowledge can be grounded in and derived from specific contexts, such as, place, gender, language, indigenous origins, sexual orientation, migrant experience, minority culture or a combination of these or other perspectives and can be seen as independent of a particular individual’s professional status.

All of these ‘lower level’ roles, sources of knowledge, and networks that people partake in are those that have the least formal degrees of social power, and are collectively described here as Informal Society. This new term is added to the other major components of society in the discourse, ‘Civic Society’ and ‘Civil Society’. These three elements are represented in Figure 2.4. The large pale-blue circles of Figure 2.4 represent the common blue planet that all facets of society inhabit as do, of course, all other elements of the global environment. The size of the three internal
circles designates the relative amount of social power that has historically accrued to
the three elements of humanity that are portrayed here. The three formations are the
mid-blue (Civic Society), pale-green (Civil Society) and light-pink (Informal
Society). Each of these three entities has a semi-permeable circumference that
signifies the non-determinist nature of this model.

In Figure 2.4, the yellow, dark-green and dark-blue circles, which are internal to the
three social formations, signify relationships, associations, networks and
organisations that form the matrix of contemporary human society. The dark-blue
circles represent the elements in (Formal) Civic Society, that is, the state and large
corporations. The dark-green circles represent the components of (Informal) Civil
Society, such as Trade Unions and Churches. The yellow circles stand for parts of
Informal Society, including family, individuals, and local activity groups. Although

Figure 2.4 Three elements of contemporary society: (Formal) Civic Society,
(Semi-formal) Civil Society and Informal Society.

In Figure 2.4, the yellow, dark-green and dark-blue circles, which are internal to the
three social formations, signify relationships, associations, networks and
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circles represent the elements in (Formal) Civic Society, that is, the state and large
corporations. The dark-green circles represent the components of (Informal) Civil
Society, such as Trade Unions and Churches. The yellow circles stand for parts of
Informal Society, including family, individuals, and local activity groups. Although
they are discrete social formations, these facets of humanity are not totally alienated from each other, so the region of the diagram that is inhabited by dark-blue, dark-green and yellow circles that have a red border, represents an arena of interaction between these three aspects of society, and indicates that they can sometimes move into and out of the larger formations. Finally, common within each of the elements of humanity are individuals who act as change facilitators, as represented here by small purple circles.

Formal Civic Society is the arena where higher levels of congealed power reside, and commensurate high levels of political activity and decision-making takes place. This is usually within and between large organisations, particularly with regard to the state and large corporations. This is a hierarchical arrangement where formal Civic Society has decision-making capacity that, on a day-to-day basis, is described as largely removed from reciprocal access by other elements of society. Generally it is an example of power that is expressed as large-scale control over others, with little, or sometimes no, recourse by those others on a day-to-day basis. This level of power is usually ascribed to the state (Miller 1992; Clastres 1987; Barclay 2003) but is increasingly being applied to the functioning and to the impacts of large private corporations (Korten 1995; Shiva 2000; Singer 2002).

Semi-formal Civil Society includes such institutions such as trade unions, churches, and other ‘non-government organisations’ (NGOs), and have a degree of social power and influence, but this usually means that they act as lobby groups towards the state and the corporate sector. These organisations may be closely aligned to Civic or Civil Society, or not, and can include organisations at the local, regional, inter-regional and global scales. Civil Society may be viewed as associated with local communities, but more often mediate between Informal Society and Civil Society. An institution of semi-formal Civil Society may have begun within Informal Society and then moved out of it to develop from a community organisation to a more detached institution, one that may well be on its way to being a part of the state apparatus, like a political formation may do. On the other hand, a similar entity may then move back closer to Civil Society. For example, an environmental group may have begun within Informal Society, established as a recognised NGO in Civil Society and eventually become large enough to have a transnational organisational
structure. The same organisation may, for some reason, then shrink back to locate itself within Informal Society. Thus both spatial and temporal frameworks need to be taken into account.

What is given the term Informal Society in this study pertains to the decision making aspects of the generally personal and informal realm of society, where lower levels of power are usually manifested in a dispersed fashion, as they often are in societies that have no state, but that also exists within modern industrial societies (Clastres 1987; Ward 2006). So, Informal Society can be understood as networks of social and decision-making relationships that manifest as organisation at the micro-level of society, and that, although they may have a relationship with the state (paying taxes and receiving benefits), are outside the state apparatus. Informal Society often manifests at the individual level and is small scale, its networks are commonly voluntary and non-profit, and usually operate in the personal and the local domains. Sometimes Informal Society can come together in very large numbers, such as in times of crisis, for example to tear down the Berlin Wall (Taylor 2008).

In concluding this chapter, I will undertake a brief review of the chapter’s components. The first issues canvassed were the environmental concerns that face global humanity; this was presented as the impetus for this thesis. The discourse of sustainability as the framework for methods to resolve environmental problems was examined. Sustainability looked not only at fixing the past impacts of society on the environment but looked to develop approaches to prevent them happening in the future. The discussion was grounded in an interacting triple bottom line approach that covered social, environmental and economic considerations. In addition to the TBL approach, another element was added, that of governance. It was affirmed as the position adopted for this thesis is that there are solid grounds for concern about environmental issues, in particular, that of climate change, furthermore, that there is an urgency to take action to change this situation.

When considering such changes to social behaviour and organisation, described as the need for society to undertake a paradigm shift, then an examination of components of this change was undertaken. This examination included what is required for change, and it was found that a change in the relationships of power
between the sectors of society would be useful, as manifested by using more engaged modes of public participation. This approach was supported by the theories of power that emphasised power as being widespread in, or diffused throughout, society. The discussion acknowledged that a hierarchical form of power also needed to be recognised.

In wishing to foster social change, then an exploration of the components of society was undertaken. Besides the more commonly referred to sites of Civic and Civil Society, a new designation was presented, Informal Society, to represent the other aspects of humanity, as a way of locating a large area for change programs. It was acknowledged that to adequately include Informal Society in change processes, a degree of power needs to be shared by those sectors of society with greater access to the disposal of power. This can be achieved through fostering public participation programs and activities that aim to more deeply involve citizens in decision-making processes, to broaden the governance procedures of our society.

The following chapter will introduce the approach that was taken in collecting ideas for a framework for my involvement with the participants at Liverpool.
Chapter 3 — A gathering of approaches for this study: philosophy, transdisciplinary methodology and methods

3.0 The structure of the chapter

This chapter will explore and explain the underpinnings of the approaches that I have undertaken for this research. Although there is significant alteration, the structure of this chapter broadly follows the research taxonomy as given by Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006, pp. 61-67), of ‘Research Family’, ‘Research Approaches’ and ‘Research Techniques’. These three areas cover the ‘methodology and methods’ that are under consideration in this chapter, while the ‘philosophical’ and ‘transdisciplinary’ considerations are additionally reviewed, and will be dealt with first. The Research Families are described as being “…general strategies for doing research…” and comprise of two sets: ‘quantitative or qualitative’, and, ‘deskwork or fieldwork’ (Blaxter et al 2006, pp.64-66). Research Approaches consist of a range of possibilities, such as action research, case studies, grounded theory and experiments, and the authors suggest that more than one may be employed within a single research project (Blaxter et al 2006, p. 66). Research Techniques within this schema describe ways that data is collected, examples given include: interviews, observations and questionnaires (Blaxter et al 2006, p. 165-182).

The structure of this chapter, as described above, has three additional sections. Firstly, I will explain my philosophical position in the form of a personal account of how I came to adopt my approach to this thesis. The second change is in introducing a discussion about the transdisciplinary method that has been attempted in this thesis. Thirdly, the last section of the chapter will deal with two matters: ethical considerations and the narrative style of data presentation.
3.1 My philosophical position

One of the areas of personal gain that I have found in completing this thesis is in allowing me to further develop my thinking about ‘data’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’, their interconnections, and the ongoing impact of this evolving understanding upon my research interests and approaches to that research. My understanding of these matters is influenced by both ‘scientific’ and ‘social’ or ‘philosophical’ approaches to research. I spent my undergraduate years in what is now called the ‘School of Natural Sciences’, where my outlook on the academic world of data and knowledge was largely formed by looking through the lens of ‘reductionist’ - ‘linear’ - ‘scientific’ - ‘positivist’ approaches to the world around me. My honours research saw a shift to include an element of qualitative thinking, and this current research wholly adopts qualitative approaches. Consequently, this shift encouraged me to review what I thought about the various transformations made when interrogating and interpreting data to turn it into meaningful knowledge. Furthermore, I needed to think about how to conduct an honest study so that I remained faithful to the people who I collaborated with and with the study itself, that is, to represent its meanings truthfully.

What is the relationship between the ‘data’ of this study and ‘truth’; are they one and the same thing? One resolution is simply that the accurate extraction of knowledge from data equals truth; I have come to think that the situation is not quite so simple. Although I may not have been able to clearly state it at the time, my scientific training at school and university had led me to believe that ‘accurate data’ and ‘truth’ were, if not the same thing, at least interchangeable concepts. I now find this ‘lumping together’ of concepts interesting, if only because I held what I now consider to be contradictory beliefs about ‘truth’ and scientific data. I was raised a Catholic and believed that Truth (with a capital ‘T’, meaning absolute Truth) was only to be found in the Bible, but, later, I also believed that scientific data represented Truth. Had I cared to reflect on my religious beliefs and their incompatibility with scientific Truth, the resolution may have been that all knowledge came from a Divine source and that science contained a valid, if only a poor, representation of ‘God’s Truth’. Those notions, however unreflected upon, coexisted quite happily as an unrealised and unresolved paradox within me for years.
At about the age of 18 I was introduced to the notion that absolute Truth was founded on faith, rather than facts, reason or argument, and that this was the only essential requirement. This realisation came as a shock when it was revealed to me that Transubstantiation was to be taken literally, that is, that the Eucharist, the bread and wine, actually transformed into the body and blood of Christ. The idea that the Holy Communion wafer I was taking at Mass was not a symbolic representation of Christ, but was his actual body, was beyond my belief. I realised that I could only accept this ‘transubstantiation’ as an act of blind Faith: no other source for such a belief would suffice, not proof, rationality, or logic, nor even hope, desperation or trust. To be accepted, it was simply something that had to be believed. Faith, based on Belief, equalled the Truth. It seemed a very simple equation, but one that I could not accept, even after all the thousands of times that I had faithfully repeated the Credo (the prayer, ‘I Believe’) in class and at church.

3.1.1 Scientific ‘Truth’?

What about ‘Truth’ and Science? One of the forces that created our current science came out of the Enlightenment’s attempts to establish knowledge on understandings of the natural world, as derived from experimental data, rather than the belief that knowledge came from divine revelation. This new approach came, for some, to be the source for a new Truth, a truth that I also unthinkingly accepted. But does ‘Truth’ equal the ‘data’ derived from experimentation? It came as a bit of a surprise to me to discover that the basis of science was doubt, not certainty, and science began in exploring ignorance, and ended not in ‘Truth’, but only in, at best, a lesser measure of the ignorance in which it began. This revelation came from reading some of the works of Karl Popper who wrote, “…what I really wish to suggest is that science should be visualized as progressing from problems to problems – to problems of ever increasing depth” (1972, p.222, emphasis in the original). Furthermore, Popper (1972, p. 256) suggests that science is not based on the proposition that it can prove its assertions (theories), rather that they can be falsified: science cannot prove that the sun will rise tomorrow.
At a more macro level, Kuhn (1970, 1996), who first published *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in 1962, demonstrated how the path of science was strewn with false starts, unresolved puzzles and partial resolutions that were waiting to be debunked. He also described how these stops and starts are bound by an unrecognised ‘paradigm’, a scientific ‘best of all possible worlds’, which is accepted until the realisation that the paradigm needs to be changed. This analysis was supported by Feyerabend’s (1993) analysis of scientific pursuit as being more like an anarchic procession of attempts to ‘break the rules’ rather than a need to follow scientific ‘certainty’. There is no single correct ‘method’, rather there is a multiplicity of possibly useful approaches: “The only principle that does not inhibit progress is: anything goes...The idea of a method that contains firm, unchanging, and absolutely binding principles for conducting the business of science meets considerable difficulty when confronted with the results of historical research” (Feyerabend 1993, p. 14).

Although the authors mentioned above disagreed with each other often (Motterlini 1999), for me, their points of coincidence outweigh their points of collision. My position is that science is useful as a way of finding out what is going on in the world; indeed it is a very useful approach, but highly complex in its composition. My position with regard to truth is that it is out there, that is, a real ‘natural’ world exists beyond my mind. Furthermore, that it is possible to discover the truths of the natural world, and we may even have knowledge of that truth, but we can never be certain if we hold the truth about something, even if we do hold it. In other words, data is something that we gather and use to make better sense of the world, it is the best we can do, but it does not equal Truth, because we cannot be sure of it. Perhaps a compromise is: divine Truth is believed to be absolute; scientific truth is believed to be possible but conditional, qualified and always open to challenge.

From the perspective being taken here, thinking about ‘truth’ and ‘Truth’ in respect to research, for me, means thinking about context, about social systems, and the power and politics of holding, discovering and making truth. Many social scientists describe power as diffuse (Foucault 1983, 1996), as exercised by institutions (Weber 1947, 2006), individuals and families (Ward 1983, 2006), at a group, neighbourhood, community, and national and international levels. In this study, exercising power
also includes sense-making, gathering data, generating knowledge and even the making of ‘truths’. The question is: how did this understanding of truth as something contextualised by its social setting inform my research, my data gathering and data analysis? My approach was to seek out data and knowledge at both the institutional and community level in Liverpool. The data of that research then became the basis for the production of ‘truths’ as they manifested. It became clear to me that the kind of truth I encountered was a paradoxical complex of many elements: ideological and functional, essential and optional, powerful and impotent. But most of all it was relative to its time, and place, and people. So the challenge was to respect this approach to data gathering as more than just represented by numbers, since this was central to my research ethos of collaborative participation.

All of this led me in the end to consider other ways to finding valid approaches to research since, if truth in numbers did not seem to me the best way to represent the complexity of human and human-institution relationships that I wanted to explore, then I would have to strive for integrity in other ways. In the end I decided that, although qualitative research could be very difficult and complex, that very quality of complexity was needed for a study of some of the human aspects of the sustainability problem. After all, humans are particularly complex creatures in their relationships and trying to understand various aspects of this area, as this study attempts, is a difficult task. Thus I have chosen not to simplify this task by using reductionist methods, but to locate the study within the complexity and explore the use of a transdisciplinary, trans-methodology and multi-method approach. These are factors that will be explored in the following sections.

3.1.2 Methodological paradigm: transdisciplinarity

The validity of the preferred transdisciplinary approach became clearer as my involvement at Liverpool Council, the project team, and the project, unfolded. Some of these indications were: the egalitarian nature of the project team, the wish for a more engaged participative process for the community of residents and for the community of council workers within the project, and the attempts to include cultural change processes within the project. In a different way, my approach was validated when I considered the difficulties of the task, especially the various
disciplines that were needed to be examined for this study. I viewed all this as rich experience in explorations to help to build a trans-methodology and perhaps a transdisciplinary framework of understanding, by not just incorporating elements of the various methodologies and disciplines, but by integrating those parts into more wholistic understandings.

Reciprocally, these understandings may also be of some value for the separate disciplines. In taking this approach I find value in the ideas within Article 3 of the *Charter of Transdisciplinarity*, which states that, “Transdisciplinarity complements disciplinary approaches. It occasions the emergence of new data and new interactions from out of the encounter between disciplines. It offers us a new vision of nature and reality. Transdisciplinarity does not strive for the mastery of several disciplines but aims to open all disciplines to that which they share and to that which lies beyond them” (de Frietas, Morin & Nicolescu 1994).

Guba (1990) suggests that it is important to understand, and to make clear to the reader, one’s foundations of understanding when undertaking a process of inquiry. In tune with the broad tenants of transdisciplinarity and trans-methodology, my approach to this study takes note of Denzin and Lincoln (2005, pp. 4-5) who suggest that there is value for the individual researcher to engage in “*bricolage*”. The term *bricolage* is taken from the tradition of the *Bricoleur*, the quilt-maker, with the analogy being to bring pieces of various approaches together to suit a particular context of research. In addition, Guba and Lincoln (2005), also contend that there is value to be gained from different research paradigms learning from each other. Although Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Guba and Lincoln (2005) do not explicitly make a claim for transdisciplinarity, the exposition of both sets of author’s can be taken as a beginning point for an argument for transdisciplinarity.

In Table 3.1 Guba and Lincoln (2005, p. 196) describe some areas where research paradigms converge or, to use their term, have “*accommodation and commensurability*”. These matters can also be taken as a beginning point for an argument for transdisciplinarity, although they do not explicitly make that claim. In an evolving process they reason that there is a blurring of the lines between different approaches to research and that, “*Inquiry methodology can no longer be treated as a*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Postpositivism</th>
<th>Critical Theories</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
<th>Participatory⁴</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of knowledge</td>
<td>Verified hypotheses established as facts or laws</td>
<td>Nonfalsified hypotheses that are probable facts or laws</td>
<td>Structural / historical insights</td>
<td>Individual and collective reconstructions sometimes coalescing around consensus</td>
<td>Extended epistemology: primacy of practical knowing; critical subjectivity; living knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge accumulation</td>
<td>Accretion – “building blocks” adding to “edifice of knowledge”; generalizations and cause-effect linkages</td>
<td>Historical revisionism; generalization by similarity</td>
<td>More informed and sophisticated reconstructions; vicarious experience</td>
<td>In communities of inquiry embedded in communities of practice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goodness or quality criteria</td>
<td>Conventional benchmarks of “rigor”: internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity</td>
<td>Historical situatedness; erosion of ignorance and misapprehensions; action stimulus</td>
<td>Trustworthiness and authenticity including catalyst of action</td>
<td>Congruence of experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical knowing; leads to action to transform the world in the service of human flourishing</td>
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<td>Values</td>
<td>Excluded – influence denied</td>
<td>Included – formative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Extrinsic – tilt towards deception</td>
<td>Intrinsic – moral tilt towards revelation</td>
<td>Intrinsic – process tilt towards revelation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inquirer posture</td>
<td>“Disinterested scientist” as informer of decision makers, policy makers, and change agents</td>
<td>“Transformative intellectual” as advocate and activist</td>
<td>“Passionate participant” as facilitator of multivoice reconstruction</td>
<td>Primary voice manifest through aware self-reflective action; secondary voices in illuminating theory, narrative, movement, song, dance, and other presentational forms</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Technical and quantitative; substantive theories</td>
<td>Technical; quantitative and qualitative; substantive theories</td>
<td>Resocialization; qualitative and quantitative; history; values of altruism, empowerment and liberation.</td>
<td>Coresearchers are initiated into the inquiry process by facilitator/researcher and learn through active engagement in the process; facilitator/researcher requires emotional competence, democratic personality and skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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a. Entries in this column are based on Heron and Reason (1997), except for “ethics” and “values.”

Source for the table: Guba & Lincoln 2005, p. 196
set of universally applicable rules or abstractions” (Guba & Lincoln 2005, p. 191). While they contend that convergence is a current trend, they limit their argument for commensurability because, “…at the paradigmatic, or philosophical, level, commensurability between positivist and post positivist worldviews in not possible…” (Guba & Lincoln 2005, p. 200). However, between these two sets of paradigms, methods employed (they use the term ‘methodologies’) can be similar: “…within each paradigm, mixed methodologies…[qualitative and quantitative]... may make perfectly good sense…” (Guba & Lincoln 2005, p. 200).

Although the case made by Guba and Lincoln (2005) above, is limited to that of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and even though they clearly define their own research preference as being in the Constructionist paradigm, the point they make is still important in general and is further extended. For instance, in Table 3.1 they additionally demonstrate that there is a degree of convergence within non-positivist research paradigms and that valuable lessons can be learned from this process (Guba & Lincoln 2005, p. 201). In Table 3.1 they show that on a number of criteria, non-positivist research approaches, which they define as Critical Theories, Constructivism and Participatory paradigms, have overlapping areas. These are, for example, the increasing levels of ‘action’ needed in evaluating the issue of ‘Goodness or quality criteria’ between Critical Theory, Constructivism and Participatory research paradigms; a similar progression applies to the issue of ‘Inquirer posture’ to the same research approaches; and convergence applies to the issue of ‘Ethics’ in viewing both Constructivist and Participatory paradigms.

3.2 Research families

In the taxonomy given by Blaxter et al (2006), the level of Research Families covers two alternative areas of thought within two categories about how to frame a research project: quantitative and qualitative, and, fieldwork and deskwork. Each of these categories will be dealt with now.
3.2.1 Quantitative and qualitative

Before exploring the notions of quantitative and qualitative research, it is appropriate to first make note of some relevant foundational aspects of the study’s philosophy. Since my overall strategy consists, not so much in unravelling the complexities of this research, as in revelling in their multiplicity, it is located in non-reductionist, non-positivist understandings of ontology and epistemology. The ontological basis for this study accepts a reality of existence that is beyond the self and is one which we can explore, but of which we cannot be certain about the findings of those explorations in any absolute sense. Thus the knowledge established is a series of tentative understandings that are founded on the extent, format and quality of the approaches of those explorations (Guba 1990; Guba & Lincoln 2005). In turn, this is based on an epistemology of a subjectively knowable reality beyond the self. This is a view that accepts that an active relationship exists between the researcher and that which is being inquired into, and this view also accepts that this relationship is more than just an incidental factor, but is a valuable part of the journey of this research (Guba 1990; Guba & Lincoln 2005).

In setting out to be a part of a group, namely, the project team at Liverpool, and my wish to represent our collective experience as authentically as possible, my aim was to find ways that would assist in, and be congruent with, this idea. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 10) state: “Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry”. Various aspects of qualitative literature were soon explored in more depth than I had done before, and it quickly became apparent that this was going to be one of the prime features of the broad setting for my research.

The qualitative facet of the frameworks used in this study will be examined soon, but first a word on its quantitative aspects for this is also a part of the multi-pronged framework used. Although qualitative research very soon became the dominant theme for the study, it was also soon clear to me that this did not exclude the use of numbers where they would be appropriate. A quantitative element has been employed in outlining the geography and demography of the study area (Chapter 4).
and, although it is lightly scattered, some statistical information is presented in both ‘results’ chapters (Chapters 5 and 6). This system of using both quantitative and qualitative data to add value to a research project is supported by several authors, including Blaxter et al (2006), Creswell (2003), Robson (2002) and Guba and Lincoln (2005). These authors suggest that using both qualitative and quantitative system enriches the research by adding a degree of depth and breadth. In my situation, this was achieved by adding background information and by giving some additional supporting numerical information when considering the qualitative data. The quantitative data was useful, but was not essential for the type of data analysis undertaken in this study.

However, gathering qualitative data and undertaking qualitative means of interpreting that data are essential components of this thesis, and this will now be discussed. Creswell (2003, p. 181-182) defines a qualitative study as being “…in the natural setting… uses multiple methods… is emergent… is fundamentally interpretative… views social phenomena holistically… [and the researcher]… reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry… uses complex reasoning that is multifaceted, iterative and simultaneous…” This approach allowed me to explore my aforementioned interest in the complexity of the human space that the participants permitted me to join with them in inhabiting. The ‘human space’ was filled with many factors, for example, that of the participatory experience of the community and council, the nooks and crannies of power relationships that became manifest, and the emotional reactions of members of the council project team.

I felt that these human spaces would be better explored by means other than those normally used in positivist research. I agreed with Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 10) that qualitative studies “…emphasise the value laden nature of inquiry” and this well fitted with the areas of, for example, power and politics, that were foreseeable elements and which did arise during the course of the research. This direction also was not one that emphasised the causal nature of the factors observed: it seemed more appropriate to explore how the social factors created the experience of the research project. I was not so much interested in proving that ‘a’ caused ‘b’ than finding more about the relationships between them. Of course, I did come to
conclusions in my attempts to find meanings in the data, and suggestions for areas of possible improvements.

3.2.2 Generalisability and transferability

Generalisability is an important issue and, although a causal approach was not adopted, this quality also needs to be addressed. This study is less about predicting what can be done by other councils or other organisations, and more about establishing credible findings that may be helpful for others to mine for useful information. As Creswell (2003, pp. 195-196) writes, “Overall … generalizability… [plays]…a minor role in qualitative inquiry…validity, on the other hand, is seen as a strength…[rather] …qualitative literature …speak to… terms such as “trustworthiness,” “authenticity,” and “credibility”. These are ideas that I have sought to apply to this study.

I make no claims for predictive applicability, but do hope for transferability: the possibility of the findings from this study being transferable to other social and institutional situations. My purpose for the study, in this regard, is for social usefulness: simply understanding the inner workings of this project may well be enough. As Graeber (2004) puts it rather nicely when he writes that one “…observes what people do, and then tries to tease out the hidden … logics that underlie their actions…try to figure out the larger implications…then offer those ideas back, not as prescriptions, but as contribution, possibilities – as gifts”.

3.2.3 Fieldwork and deskwork

In the case of this research, I undertook both fieldwork and deskwork. By far, fieldwork took up much more of my research time, even if simply measured by the 19 months that elapsed between my first meeting with the Liverpool Council project team and my final attendance at a team meeting. The deskwork consisted mostly of examining documents, which included newspaper articles and letters to the editor and Council publications. More details will be given about both of these aspects of my research design later in this chapter, in the section that reviews the specific Research Techniques that I used.
3.3 Research approach: towards a trans-methodology

Blaxter et al (2006) use the category of ‘Research Approach’ to cover the area of research design often associated in the social sciences with the term ‘methodology’. For those trained in the positivist sciences, there is only one methodology: that of the scientific experiment as derived from the Enlightenment, and methodology is just a collection of methods. For others, the matter is somewhat more complicated and some of this domain has been discussed already, such as, one’s philosophic approach in terms of the nature of truth, ontology, and epistemology. Methodology is understood here as Schwandt (1990, p. 258) uses the term to describe “…paths to inquiry…”, but are more than a group of methods, for they rest on and defined by, in Guba’s (1990, p. 17) words, “…a basic set of beliefs that guides action…within a disciplined inquiry”.

In this section the notion of developing a ‘trans-methodology’ will be explored. I have used the term trans-methodology to more explain a situation that I have found in with regard to my research, rather than the formulation of a new approach to research design, thus it is described as ‘towards a trans-methodology’. Although at the beginning of this research I had some basic ideas about what sorts of approaches I would prefer to take, I did not set out to ‘do’ a specific type of research. As the project evolved, I found that elements from several bodies of research design had relevance to my thesis, although none of the approaches are completely applicable. Having started the process of researching, I found myself not wishing to pre-determine what particular sort of methodology, or ‘Research Approach’ that I wanted to employ. Since it took a year for an appropriate site for the research to be found, my decision was that the place and its inhabitants needed to be explored before I decided what approach to take. For, as both Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and O’Leary (2004) suggest in their different ways, an appropriate set of tools that fit effectively with an acknowledged overall approach to a research project is needed more than pre-adopting a position on one side of the fence or the other in the qualitative and quantitative debate. For example, in terms of ‘methods’ or ‘techniques’, an interview may be the most appropriate tool to use for a given situation, however, the interview may be conducted with or without a formal scaled
questionnaire, and the data derived may be quantitatively or qualitatively interrogated.

For me, knowing the context first before making such decisions was an important step. I knew my preferences, but not what my research sponsors needed or wanted. At my first major meeting with people from Liverpool Council, after some introductory remarks from me and a brief description of the project from them, I suggested that there were three sorts of positions that I could take. These options were: I could sit in a corner of the room during meetings, with ‘a lab coat on’, and take notes; secondly, I could ‘sit at the table’ and take notes and ask questions; thirdly, I could actively participate as a member of the project team. I asked which they would prefer; after not much discussion they said that they preferred the last option. I gave a quiet sigh of relief, because that is what I was hoping for.

Once my role as a researcher was established, I could more deeply think about what sort of approaches would suit the research project. From the broad discussions that followed my introductory meeting, four areas from the literature of methodological research design seemed relevant, although for different reasons. These areas were: ethnography, action research, grounded theory and case study. The four approaches will now be dealt with in turn, and their relevance to this study established, in addition to areas of the methodologies that are not as applicable.

3.3.1 Ethnography

Viewing the largest framework of approach to research design used, I found that this study rests within the discourse of ethnography, that is, the study of a cultural group of real people in a real situation, from that group’s point of view (O’Leary 2004); my participation with the project team at Liverpool well fits this description. Ethnography has evolved from the positivist studies of the colonial anthropologist to the many types of social anthropology of recent times (Denzin & Lincoln 2005).

During this process of change within the discipline, ethnographic discourse has struggled with the problem of ‘the other’, that is, of the researcher doing research on other people. Although the intention, even of the colonial anthropologist, is to correctly represent the studied group, a critique of the approach is that it is still the
researcher’s values and subjectivity that remains in the written account, and thus the problem of validity also arises (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Because I accept the intimacy between the researcher and the subject of research, the first part of this problem dissipates: to me the subjectivity is a valuable asset, not a problem. However, the issue of validity does not disappear entirely, for I am still striving to be authentic with regard to the other participants, not just to myself.

My attempt to overcome the problem of ‘the other’ has three parts. Firstly, I have borrowed from the practice of ethnography the writing of my experience with the project team in the form of a narrative account. Secondly, by adopting the technique of participant observation, as discussed later, I have chosen to be one of and have been accepted as a part of the group. Because of this I feel my part of the story is a valid portion of the whole account. Thirdly, I have undertaken a successful validation exercise with the participants of the project team from Liverpool Council. This was achieved by giving each of the other team members a copy of the two narrative chapters (the ‘results’) and receiving feedback from them; this will also be discussed later, in a section of this chapter devoted to the validity of the data collected.

Another factor that allows for a certain congruence between the ethnographic approach and this study is the evolution of the practice of ethnography from being a static study of a presumed static society, through interpretative and critical studies, to being a part of the active research movement that seeks action for social change (Kincheloe & McLaren 2005; Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Kincheloe and McLaren (2005, p. 305) state that “Critical research can be understood best in the context of the empowerment of individuals”. As we will see later in this thesis, the concept of change was a prominent component of the project that I was a part of. This position is supported by Foley and Valenzuela (2005, p. 217) who examine the approach of critical ethnography and raise the point that “Critical ethnographers not only rejected positivism but also worked the divide between the powerful and the powerless”. The concept of power has already cropped up in this thesis, but we will meet it as it manifested at the sites of the field work. Thus, in various ways, the discourse of ethnography has been a valuable framework to search for ideas, approaches and techniques for this study.
3.3.2 Action Research

Thinking about the concept of social change as being relevant to my research, I further explored the approach of action research. Within the very first few meetings that I participated in at Liverpool, it became clear to me that the project could easily be seen to well fit an action research schema, and seemed relevant to this study in two ways, firstly because I was inclined towards research as a part of a change process. Secondly, this was the case because the nature of the research project lent itself towards this research approach, again for two reasons: the study itself was a change project and because the project was potentially iterative in nature. However, for reasons that will be explained shortly, this type of research was not formally adopted for this thesis, but first some basic understandings of the theory of action research, to establish a foundation for that discussion.

O’Leary (2004, p. 139) understands action research as “A research strategy that pursues action and knowledge in an integrated fashion through a cyclical and participatory process…process, outcome, and application are inextricably linked”. Each of the stated elements of this type of research is applicable to the Liverpool study: action for change in cycles that are based on participatory processes to gain new knowledge to improve the situation there. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005, p. 560) suggest three essential qualities of participatory action research as being, “…shared ownership of research projects, community-based analysis of social problems, and an orientation toward community action”. The Liverpool project adhered in many ways to these ideas: a shared ownership was certainly evident within the project team; it was attempted as a theme within the whole of the Council; and, it existed as a theme for the relationship that was being fostered between the Council and the community. Also, an overall initial purpose of the project was to collaboratively establish ways to solve community problems. Bradbury and Reason (2003, p. 201) define this approach as a cooperative and democratic process of worthwhile change within the group of participants who seek to “…reconnect action and reflection, theory and practice...”.

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That participative action research as a cooperative and joint project among all the 
participants as co-researchers, was arguably a valid aspect of the methodology that 
applied to my study. However, another key component that applies to both the 
structure of the fieldwork and to the writing-up of the findings was more problematic. 
The issue is that action research runs in an iterative and well defined series of 
learning cycles. These cycles have been described by Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) 
as having the following elements: a plan, enacting the plan, observing the outcome, 
reflecting on the outcome, the formulation of an amended or new plan, and so on.

While many of the other aspects of action research apply to this study, even if they 
do so imperfectly, its cyclic nature presented me with an issue that I spent a deal of 
time thinking about and discussing with my supervisors as to whether I should adopt 
this approach. The major stumbling block that caused me, in the end, to not adopt an 
overo action research methodology was that the planned iterative cycles would not fit 
into the limited time that was allowed for this thesis. Not only did it take a lot more 
time to set up the project and complete the first ‘cycle’ than originally anticipated, 
but the other cycles would comprise of at least year-long time spans, thus I could 
only study one complete iterative cycle and that was simply not enough for a thesis, 
nor for an adequate application of an action research methodology. In the end we 
concluded that it would be an excellent action research topic, but not for my thesis. 
Nonetheless, I accepted that there were many valuable lessons from that approach to 
include in my study: this was to be a part of the ‘bricolage’.

3.3.3 Grounded Theory
Aspects of grounded theory also apply to this study, which is both a method of 
generating the theory and the end result, that is, the theory is generated from the 
method applied in the study (O’Leary 2004). Broadly, the approach looks to 
formulating theory after fieldwork has been undertaken, rather than explicitly testing 
a theory from the beginning of the research. This aspect of the methodology is partly 
congruent with my approach, in that, while I undertook some theory-building during 
my early reading, the theory so created was not overtly used in the field as an 
experimental test. However, that theory was useful as a guide in understanding what 
going on during the research project and was certainly applicable after the fieldwork
was complete and my analysis began. Furthermore, that analysis did produce theory in the form of models of understanding (Chapter 8). So, in at least one sense, grounded theory was applicable to this study in that I did not seek to apply a theory, and I did generate theory at the end of the research process.

Although the general way that grounded theory research is structured matches the approach of this study, the origins of grounded theory do not fit with my philosophical leanings. According to Charmaz (2000, p. 510) grounded theory, in both its earliest formulations, is a positivist exercise, she states, “…[the]… positions remain imbued with positivism…with its assumptions of an objective, external reality, a neutral observer who discovers data, reductionist inquiry of manageable research problems, and objectivist rendering of data…” . Charmaz’s (2005, p. 508) denotes her own version of grounded theory as ‘constructionist’ for she recognises a link between the observer and the observed: “Our work results in an analytic interpretation of participant’s worlds and of the processes constituting how these worlds are constructed”. In this way, constructionist grounded theory is more applicable to this thesis, especially because this epistemological shift now allows grounded theory to “…analyse relationships between human agency and social structure that pose theoretical and practical concerns…” (Charmaz 2005, p. 508).

This change in the application of the methodology allowed for synergy between it and the change processes that existed at the core of the research project of this thesis and so allowed me to derive additional ideas for my approach.

All versions of grounded theory apply a highly structured way of collating and analysing the data gathered from the research. Although grounded theory does not begin with a theory, the process of developing it does commence as soon as enough data is gathered. This begins, for example, by using axial coding, open coding, and selective coding of data until each categories is saturated with supporting information so that a level of theory can be expressed at that point in the research (Creswell, 2003, pp. 190-193). As Charmaz (2005, p. 517) states, “Grounded theory is a comparative method in which the researcher compares data with data, data with categories, and category with category”.

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Another distinction between my study and grounded theory, although not a necessary one, was that computer software is often used to assist with the process of data analysis (O’Leary 2004, p. 199). This did not suit my preference for dealing with the data as I did not want an additional filter between me and the research. I wanted to remain as intimate with the data as I could be, for this was more in keeping with the ethos of my research philosophy, so I created my own conceptual system of thematically organising the data, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

So, grounded theory was useful for my research as it gave strength to the broad framework that I wanted for my research design. However, it was not used for the detailed structure of its form of data analysis.

3.3.4 Case Study

In many ways the schema of the ‘case study’ suits my research design, although as Stake (2005, p. 443) writes, this is not a methodology as such, but an expression of “…what is to be studied”. The undertaking of a case study is described by Robson (2002, p. 178) as “…a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence”. Creswell (2003, p.15) adds that a case study is research that is bound by time and activity, to which one might add the spatial dimension of place. Blaxter et al (2006) quote from Cosley and Lury (1987, p. 65) who state that “The case study uses … personal observation, which for some periods or events, may develop into participation…”. Thus the methods open to the researcher are be multi-faceted and, similarly, the focus of the study can also be quite varied, with Creswell (2003, p. 15) stating that the research topic could concentrate on “…a program, event, an activity, a process, or one of more individuals…” . Blaxter et al (2006) also suggest that the study may well be concentrated on just one element of an organisation. O’Leary (2004, p. 115) adds to the above aspects of the case study that “Emphasis is often placed on understanding the unity and wholeness of the particular case”.

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The value of treating case study as a methodology, though, is that it emphasises the value of the singular, of the specific – and thus is a particularly valuable research approach, in a similar way that action research is. So, one may well conclude that it is not possible to make generalisations from this particular to the whole, in any sense of it being measurably representative, but the value lies elsewhere, and in ways that a ‘shallower’ style of study often cannot attain. The particular value of this approach is that it has, yes, the limitation, but also the richness of detail in the depth of study. The value for others is in still in being an example of a larger whole, but the wider value of the study itself must rest as much with the reader as with the researcher. Any credit for such a study to be generalisable must stay, to an important extent, with the insight of the reader in applying any usefulness from the case study to another situation. As Stake (2005, p. 443) writes, the value of a case study is to “…optimize understanding of the case rather than to generalize beyond it”. This harkens back to Graeber’s (2004) notion of the meanings that a researcher can establish in the research finding as a ‘gift’ to the reader.

The importance of triangulation in methods of data collection allows for a richness of method that not all other approaches allow. This is particularly important with this type of research approach in terms of establishing validity of the data. Stake (2005, p. 454) defines triangulation as, “…a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation”. This has applicability for this study for I have employed a multi-method technique that includes participant observation, document analysis and interviews, as another way to ensure that my reporting and interpretation of various meeting and workshops was accurate. The particular details of these methods will be dealt with in the next section of this chapter, Research Techniques. In addition to the multi-method system used, I also sought to triangulate the data by examining two sets of data. These data sets were gained from the experiences of the community visioning workshops, and also from the internal corporate planning workshops, each set of data is given a chapter.

In conclusion, this section of the chapter has outlined the elements of various approaches to my research that enriched this thesis. Ethnography was presented as an over-arching construct that was supported with ideas, themes and techniques that were borrowed from action research, grounded theory and case study methodologies.
In this way, although perhaps more by accident and only partly by design, a path towards trans-methodology was explored.

### 3.4 Research techniques

Research techniques are ways that the researcher can collect data and are often referred to as ‘methods’ (Blaxter *et al* 2006). As mentioned above, a common qualitative practice is to use triangulation, or a multi-method, approach to strengthen the research (Stake 2005), and this procedure was employed here. For this thesis, the techniques used were, participant observation, interview and document analysis, which will be dealt with in turn.

#### 3.4.1 Participant observation

Observation was the primary means of collecting data for this research, as is commonly the situation in qualitative studies (Angrosino 2005; Robson 1993). O’Leary (2004, p. 170) defines the observation that a researcher undertakes as “A systematic method of data collection that relies on a researcher’s ability to gather data through his or her senses”. As described earlier, I was accepted as part of the project implementation team at Liverpool Council so my observational status became that of participant observer. O’Leary (2004, p. 172), describes the participant researcher’s role as needing, “…to become a part of the team, community, or cultural group they are observing”. In all, my participation included about 140 meetings with the project team at Liverpool (planning, data processing, and reflective-evaluation), 16 community visioning workshops, 10 corporate planning workshops and 6 public meetings. This occurred over a 19 month period, from June 2004 to January 2006. I also attended certain other meetings with some of the Liverpool team, after my involvement in the project ended: a celebration, a validation of my results assessment, and the final team meeting that I was invited to attend.

The primary locations for my participation were the planning and data processing meetings of the team, which accounted for the vast majority of the 140 gatherings, most of which lasted for two hours each. The other critically important sources of data were the community visioning and the corporate planning workshops. In all
these events I took hand written notes, as I thought that having a machine to record
the events would be a barrier to me being a just another member of the team, as I
would be the only one with such a device, however, with paper and pen, I engaged in
meetings in a manner that was similar to the others. In particular, having a recording
device during the very important Community and Council workshops would very
possibly be a cause of inhibition for both members of the public and officers of the
council, during their respective workshops. I also took written notes at the 6 public
meetings and other gatherings, where there was even less opportunity to use a digital
recorder, as they were raucous affairs.

It is important to acknowledge here that the taking of the notes formed the first way
that I sorted out my thinking about what was important in the events that I
participated in. Although I attempted to draw a “rich, thick description” out of my
observations, and include as much of the discussions, arguments, emotional reactions
and general atmosphere, it must be said that some things are inevitably left out
(Creswell 2003). This would have been the case even with recordings of the
meetings, for even word-for-word transcriptions also need to be filtered by the
analysis of those sentences by the researcher. How my accounts of the various
meetings and workshops have been tested for their validity is dealt with further-on in
this chapter.

Ensuring the accuracy of my written records for the team’s business meetings was
assisted by having comparative notes from the team member who provided all
participants with notes of the meetings. For the most part, I could trace these two
parallel records of the business meetings, although the ‘official’ notes did not start
until a few weeks into the series of meetings. Both sets of data corresponded very
well, though my notes tended to be fuller, more descriptive and analytical while the
official set were more practical and plain accounts.

My written records were impacted on by the subtle, but important, differences in my
participation in the various gatherings. At the ‘business’ meetings of the team I was a
full participant and my notes consisted of: disinterested accounts, recordings of
emotional reactions of participants, and interpretative analyses. These records were
made during the meetings, all aiming to achieve a ‘rich description’ of the events
(Denzin & Lincoln 2005). After the meetings I often added some reflective thoughts about all these matters, which might have contained links to some theories that I considered relevant, or perhaps the beginnings of the production of important themes for later analysis. As Angrosino (2005, p. 733) states subjectivity needs to be acknowledged, and furthermore “…pure observation…[is not possible]…to achieve in practice…”. As discussed earlier in this chapter, when research is undertaken with the premise that there is a connection between the observer and the observed, the ‘problem’ of objectivity/subjectivity, while needing to be attended to in terms of providing valid data, is transformed from a problem to a strength.

Notes taken by me at the workshops were subtly different from those taken at the team business meetings. During both sets of workshops, while I was accepted as a participant, including partaking in the various exercises, to some extent I was still an outsider: I was not a resident of Liverpool and I was not an employee of the council. As a result, I noticed that the notes from the workshops were of a slightly more detached and impersonal nature: there was not enough time to establish a rapport with the group in those situations, as was achieved over 19 months with the project team. The workshop notes can be described more as ‘reactive observation’ to use Angrosino’s term, for they were, “…based on the assumption that the people being studied are aware of being observed and are amenable to interacting with the researcher” (2005, p. 732). If for no other reason, the lack of familiarity with the participants of the workshops resulted in my notes not containing as rich a description as was possible with the team business meetings.

3.4.2 Interview

The interviews that I participated in were of two sorts, the first type was of the semi-structured and unstructured kind, and the second type was less an interview and more took the form of a dialogue, but is included here for simplicity’s sake. It is hard to estimate how many unstructured interviews took place, but it is reasonable to say that between 150 – 180 took place. This estimate is based on there having been about 140 planning meetings and I had a dialogue-style of conversation with a key informant at most of these. In addition, there were unstructured discussions with many other members of the project team, either before or after the formal meetings,
the workshops and the public meetings. One semi-structured interview took place, which was with the Administrator of Council, as an exercise in triangulating the data that I gathered. All the interviews occurred in a face-to-face situation, and all interviews of the first type were recorded by me in the form of hand-written notes during the exchange; the dialogues were written up after the event.

The organisation of the interviews followed the well know path of having an ‘introductory section’ that covers identification of the researcher, the application of ethical procedures, and the aim of the interview; a ‘warm-up’ set of easy non-threatening question; the main body of the interview; a ‘cooling-off’ question or two to conclude the questioning; and a ‘closure’ in saying thankyou and goodbye (Robson 2002, pp. 269-277). This process applied best to the semi-structured interview that I conducted, but elements of this structure were also applicable to any of the interviews. In general, as Robson observes (2002, pp. 273-274), all interviews are an attempt by the researcher to develop a “…kind of conversation…to try to get interviewees to talk freely and openly”. Chase (2005, p. 660) supports this attitude towards interviewing when she states “…in-depth interviews aim specifically at transforming the interviewer-interviewee relationship into one of narrator and listener”.

The main difference between the various types of interviews is in how they are organised and undertaken by the researcher, and how they are reported as part of research. A common way to categorise interviews is given by Robson (2002, p. 270) who describes a spectrum from “…fully structured… [to]…semi-structured…[to]…unstructured…”. In terms of classifying the types of interviews that occur, Chase (2005) adds another important dimension of how the interviews are presented, that of the researcher’s ‘voice’. Chase (2005, pp. 664-666) classifies the reportage of the interview in three ways according to how the researcher presents the material, that is, by using an ‘authoritative voice’, a ‘supportive voice’, or an ‘interactive voice’. Each of the types of voice that the researcher uses has a different purpose and any can be used within the one research project, or one can be exclusively employed. During the course of writing this thesis, I have used the semi-structured interview style and presented the material using each of the three voice types described above.
The unstructured interviews that I conducted were quite frequently held and usually occurred after one of the project team meetings, after a public meeting that council held, or during or after the workshops. These were commonly impromptu discussions when I wanted to ask one of the team members, or sometimes a member of the community, a question about some specific point, usually an issue that came up during the preceding meeting or workshop and on something that I needed some clarification about. The semi-structured interview consisted of a list of topic headings, or prompt questions, rather than a list of matters that warranted a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer; the question then led to a discussion. This interview was with the administrator of Liverpool City Council and happened on one occasion. The purpose of that interview was to get a point of view from the ‘top’ of the organisation so as to triangulate my sources of data, to ensure that I did not get too entrenched with only the views of the project team and of the community. It was a valuable experience.

Although quite similar to the semi-structured interview, the dialogues that I participated in occurred mainly with one person and were not impromptu, but were quite regular, although many other such discussions took place with other members of the project team. Soon after my involvement began with the planning meetings at Liverpool, I found one of the team members was particularly interested in all aspects of my participation. We established a rapport in discussing and analysing the project from a great many angles, and this occurred after almost all of the project group meetings. The situation was not one of me asking questions as a matter of course, as I did with the semi-structured interviews; of course, questions were used but they were not the main purpose of the encounters. I use the term ‘dialogue’ in following the analysis of Bohm (2004) who, put simply, makes a distinction between debate and dialogue: debate uses the dialectical approach of two conflicting elements to achieve progress and resolution; dialogue uses a probing empathy with the ‘other’ to achieve progress and resolution with regard to a topic or problem. We engaged in discussions of the issues and rarely came to conflicting positions, rather, we engaged in a ‘snow-balling’ of ideas, bouncing perceptions and ideas off each other to deepen our understandings of the issues at hand.

Within all these interviews, I played an important role as an inquisitive researcher. Inevitably, the questions I asked and the nature of the interactions that I had
influenced the process of the conversations and the data that was produced in written form. It was my aim to record as much as was possible, giving a ‘rich picture’ of the discussions, this was particularly possible with the dialogue material with my most regular key informant, for we treated one another as equals; it was not a situation of ‘interviewer’ and ‘interviewee’. I felt that this was the same situation when I entered into discussions with other key informants, which included several other members of the project team that I had more frequent conversations with.

3.4.3 Document analysis

Document analysis consisted of examining the output of the project’s steering committee, council papers, government records, and newspaper articles. As referred to above, the official notes of the steering committee meetings, which included the various sub-committees, were an important source for me to check the accuracy of my own notes of those meetings. Besides the record of the meetings, included in these official documents were budget spreadsheets, schematic diagrams, timing and activities schedules, and various other planning items. Many of these items, or elements from them, have been incorporated into this thesis, either as they were produced or as they precipitated the development of my writing.

Other council documents were also used in the construction of this study, such as the surveys that the council commissioned, one of them, the Auspoll Survey, is an annual study of the community’s assessment of the council’s performance (Auspoll 2004, 2005); another survey was commissioned by the environment section to assess the knowledge of and attitude of the community on environmental matters (IRIS 2004). Another commissioned survey was part of the validation exercises for the project’s final public document, *Liverpool Directions 2006-2026* (Evironometrics 2006). Each of these document were important sources of information for my thesis, but are only some examples of many other council publications that were used.

Government records, both State and Commonwealth, were accessed as sources of data as a part of this investigation. One of the most important of these documents was the report of the State government’s inquiry that led to the dismissal of the councillors at Liverpool in 2004 (Daly 2004a). This is the inquiry that precipitated
the project that is at the core of this thesis. Other state government documents include various pieces of legislation, while Commonwealth documents include information provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Local and metropolitan newspaper articles provided a very important source of information, both as supporting evidence for various matters, and as direct sources of evidence in themselves. Local newspaper articles were critically important in the latter regard, as they were used as part of the triangulation of data for this thesis. This was done by undertaking an examination of the letters columns in order to seek out what the concerns of the community were, and as a check on how, or if, the project that we were undertaking was stimulating discussion in the community.

However the use of the local media was not without its problems; there are two local newspapers, the Liverpool City Champion (Champion) and the Liverpool Leader (Leader). I have chosen to use the Champion and not consider the letters column of the Leader, although both are weeklies, for three reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, the weekly council notices appeared in the Champion for the whole of the time that I was involved in the Project, making it possible that citizen responsiveness to council issues may be more likely expressed in that forum. Perhaps due to the financial restraints that Liverpool City Council was under due to the Oasis situation, it ceased publishing notices in both papers within weeks of me commencing research at Liverpool. The ceasing of Council notices in the Leader coincided with the next point. Secondly, the Champion was available for me to pick up at the front desk of the council building where we held almost-weekly project team meetings, while the Leader was rarely there. Thirdly, besides the Champion’s wider general circulation, it put out a ‘sister’ paper the South Western Advertiser, from May 2005, that covered the rural western portions of the district. The Leader’s stated circulation areas covered only the urbanised eastern, ‘half’ of the Liverpool LGA.

The review of the letter columns covers the period from August 2004 to January 2006, in addition to one copy of the paper dated 17th March 2004. This assessment was derived from 50 editions of the Champion, or nearly 70% of the possible copies of the paper produced; so the information is derived from a reasonably representative
sample of the possible data set. In particular, 43 issues of the paper covered the period from October 2004 when the Partnership Project was formally announced by the Administrator in a press release, until January 2006 when I ceased direct involvement in the Project. It should also be stated that not all editions of the Champion had a letters column, and sometimes there were few letters, sometimes many. The examination of the letters column, as described above, is presented as the data that makes up Part 3 of Chapter 6 of this thesis.

3.5 Dilemmas of participation

It is also important to record another type of limitation to my written accounts, but this was in relation to the business meetings and was again due to the issue of being an insider, and not. The following account is from my reflective notes about an aspect of my involvement with the council (the reference to the ‘Time Tunnel’ is about a particular suggestion of mine to do with setting up the community workshops, and will be explained in more detail in a subsequent chapter):

“A dilemma of being in the team and not, that is, I was a member of the team and well accepted as such, but I was not an employee of the Council. Also, I was a student with a job to do – how far was I to argue my case for positions in the course of the development of the project at team or sub-group meetings, and to what extent was I to impartially observe the events of the Liverpool Council and Community interacting within the boundaries of the project? How far to get involved? How far to push my own barrows? Virtually all members of the Team pushed a barrow or two during the project, which meant arguing out positions with ‘opponents’, and virtually all played a role of pacifier and facilitator during discussions or arguments that other members of the Team engaged in, but they were not a major protagonist in. How was I to play out my role in all this?

With regard to the issue of emphasising sustainability, I would have liked to push ahead with the original Time Tunnel idea of ‘Liverpool: Past, Present and Future’, but practical issues overtook that argument. From that point on, the sustainability theme diminished within the Project. Graham often pointed out that it was not the job of Council to place a framework on the community, such as sustainability, but should see what the community came up with. Even so, once all
the data was gathered and analysed, a fairly strong Triple Bottom Line strand could be seen within the data, as most of the issues and positions raised in the workshops could be placed within a soft ‘sustainability’ framework inside which ‘Environmental, Social and Economic’ categories could be developed. Although it was not the whole picture, most Team members agreed that environmental and heritage issues often came up in all of the workshops.

In the end, I decided to press my position during the various discussions that came up, sometimes this would be as part of a ‘side’ that was arguing a case, sometimes I was the only one making a particular point. Either way, I decided not to push my own barrow very hard, see how others would react, and then proceed in one of two ways. If I was on a fairly weak side with only one or two proponents out of six to ten Team members, then I would withdraw my position after a relatively small amount of discussion when it seemed to me that I was not convincing anyone of the validity or virtue of the point. On the other hand, if I was part of a stronger ‘side’ then I would play my part in the discussion, but let others take over the leadership of the arguments. Nothing ever came to a vote, and decisions were generally arrived at through consensus, or sometimes, due to decisions from an authority higher up in Council.”

I do not want to overstate the difficulties of my involvement in the project team for, on the whole, significant difficulties did not exist. However, the points made above were real issues and need to be included as an aspect of the thesis. Perhaps with greater experience as a researcher, or had the project been, for example, a formal action research, I would have taken a more prominent role in discussions such as the one presented above. As it was, I felt constricted by being an insider who was partly on the outside.

3.6 My chosen narrative style of data presentation

In sympathy with my stance of holding agency, not only as a researcher and writer of that research, but as a participant within the research, I felt that a narrative style of data presentation was needed, whatever challenges it posed for me in adapting to a
new writing style. As such, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, both have the data from various sources, presented in a narrative form that also allows agency for the participants by using direct quotations from their interactions in the project team, with other parts of Council, and with members of the community. This is also congruent with the broad ethnographic framework used and with the elements of the various approaches to this research that I have borrowed ideas from, in line with Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005) *bricolage* style of research.

### 3.7 My schema for analysing the data

From a question of how I approached the study and represented the collected data of this research – as described above – the next issue was how best to examine that data for valid meanings. In writing two chapters of collected data in the narrative form, my hope was choose a style of presentation that helped me to more truthfully represent both my participation in the Partnership Project, and the separate reality of the Project itself. In addressing the problem of how to approach the extraction of meanings from the data, my conclusion was to not use a software package to organise and analyse the data. I did this so as to not put, what amounted for me to be, a ‘technical’ filter between myself and the data. My experience in the Project allowed for participation in the many pluses and minuses of human relationships as displayed by the people involved, including myself, so I wanted to select a more ‘personalised’ method of interpreting the data. To achieve this I decided to develop a conceptual thematic schema that used a series of examinations of categories of data to refine those categories into a useable form; this was not unlike the system that Blaxter *et al* (2006) advocate and that Creswell (2003) more fully describes. My system is described in detail in the following passages.

My first task was to examine the two chapters of data and identify the main issues that stood out for me. In doing so, I extracted 44 Themes, then developed a condensed set of seven Meta-Themes, and this was followed by an even shorter set of two ‘Super Meta-Themes’, a process that is presented as a diagram in Figure 3.1. A complete working-paper that holds all this information and annotations was compiled as a 20 page document for the purposes of presenting to my thesis.
supervisors for critique, and as an aid in my further writing, and is contained in Appendix 2. In addition to listing the Themes, I also developed a schema to identify where the relevant data was to be found for each Theme, this was achieved by noting in which chapter/s, on which page/s, and where on the page, the relevant passage was located for each Theme, as well as providing some additional annotations (Appendix 2, pp.1-6). The next step was to place the original 44 Themes and their annotations under each Meta-Theme. These Meta-Themes were always thought of as forming the structure for the next chapter of the thesis, while the Super Meta-Themes were of a more speculative nature and considered as a stimulus for thought, not necessarily to be used in their own right. Besides commentary received from my supervisors, the document was also part of a presentation at a Human Ecology Forum at the Australian National University, where additional valuable feedback was received.

Another round of discussions occurred with my supervisors, during which the titles of the seven Meta-themes were discussed and underwent a fairly long metamorphosis. To summarise this process: the original seven (“Principles & Passion”, “Process”, “Product”, “Power”, “Practical”, “People”, and “Politics”), then became five (“Principles, Passion and People”, “Power, Politics and Empowerment”, “Process, Product and the Practical”, “Planet and Place (Sustainability)”, and “Possibilities and Warning Signals”).

With further discussion and thought, five headings stood out to best represent the many themes of the study. During this last refinement of the themes, a sixth heading emerged, but its topic and contents moved to the concluding chapter, as it appeared to be more relevant there. This was felt to be necessary because the material under that heading “Signposts for the future” fell more within the area of implications. So the final five headings became:

1. Values, ethics and passion,
2. Structures and functions,
3. Power and empowerment,
4. Of process and outcome, and
5. What happened to sustainability?
3.8 Ethics clearance

My formal application for ethics clearance was sent to the University of Western Sydney’s Human Research Ethics Committee and gained approval in August 2004. I produced a letter of introduction, a consent form and a clear statement that if the participant had problems with the researcher’s conduct, that they had the right to independently contact the Committee; a list of contact points was given in the letter to the participant. At the first meeting of the project team that I attended, June 2004, I presented the ethics documents to each member and was informed that formal approval had been granted for me to be a part of the team. All Team members accepted my role as a researcher and openly welcomed my participation as a team member. At the semi-structured formal interview that I undertook with the Administrator I presented the ethics documents, and proceeded with the interview.
In order to maintain the privacy of the people who participated in study that lead to this thesis, part of the ethics clearance included the need to hide their identity. Within the entire thesis a pseudonym has been used for each of the named participants in this study. In addition, the gender of the person was also on occasion changed. The use of anonymity was not extended to the case where the people made public statements, such as when they composed letters for publication in the local paper or when they were identified in interviews for the paper. Anonymity was also not used when members of the Partnership Project Team made statements in their professional capacity, rather than within the confines of the meetings.

3.9 Validity of the data

Ensuring that the data that is collected is valid is a crucial issue in qualitative studies, at least as much as in other styles on inquiry (Creswell 2003). Validation of the data was conducted in two ways, firstly, the data gathered by Council through the Partnership Project itself went through a validation process; secondly, my own research data of observations of the Project underwent a validation procedure. Data that was gathered by the employed consultants who facilitated the Community Visioning Workshops was independently validated by another external consultant that was employed by Council. This point is important because some of that data was also a source of background information for this thesis; an account of the community workshops is a core element of this study, so some of that data is directly used in this thesis; and, of course, a confirmation of the validity of the data from the workshops reflects, in a broad sense, on this thesis because the Partnership Project is the topic of this study. Greater detail is given in the Chapter 5 about the external validation exercises that were undertaken as part of the Partnership Project.

My own research data was internally and externally validated. Creswell (2003, p. 196) gives eight possible ways that a qualitative researcher can ensure the validity of the data gathered, and suggests to “...identify and discuss one or more strategies...to check the accuracy of the findings...”. Of the eight possibilities, seven are accounted for in this study, and will be detailed below. The technique not used in this thesis is the use of an external auditor, as I did not have the funds for this. One of the eight
means of assessing the accuracy of the data is *triangulation* of the data sources. This technique uses evidence from a variety of sources as this allows for the more accurate evolution of meaningful themes. Internal to my thesis, the triangulation of data from different sources of information, my own notes, interviews, and by using documented notes of the meetings that were taken by the project manager as a way to compare the accuracy of my own notes. Quotations from both sets of meeting notes were used in the two narrative chapters of results.

The next of Creswell’s (2003) validity schema is *member checking*. After I had finished writing the narrative of results chapters, I sent the chapters to each member of the project team and asked for feedback. Specifically, I asked if my account of the meetings and workshops was accurate. Feedback came in the form of emails, in-person comments to me, and a validation exercise where I attended a specially convened meeting with several members of the Project Team. All these sources of feedback about the validity of my data confirmed that the chapters were an accurate account of the events depicted in them. There was no instance of any of the participants in the validation exercises contradicting the data, only a few minor editing comments were made.

Creswell (2003) also suggests that the use of *rich, thick description* allows the reader to develop a shared experience of the events so reported. This was a technique that I employed for both chapters that gave the results, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. The fourth way of introducing a validity check, according to Creswell (2003) is by the researcher clarifying his or her *bias*. I have endeavoured to include this form of self-reflective comment within my thesis, in particular, within the results chapters, I included some of my post-meeting reflective notes. Also, I included information about my philosophical stances and gave an account of my dilemma in being a participant observer, in this chapter. This reflective aspect of a researcher’s experience is also advocated by Brown *et al* (2005) both to enrich the research outcomes, and also for the benefit of the inquirer. In a similar vein, Creswell (2003) suggests that it is important to include *negative or discrepant information* in the study. I have included several items of this sort in my results chapters, such as examples of exchanges between project team members that were of a less than happy
sort, as well as giving accounts of the dominant cooperative nature of the team interactions.

Another validating technique that Creswell (2003) includes is the researcher having *prolonged time* allocated for the fieldwork. This was achieved in my study by me spending 19 months with the project team as a participant observer. The aim of this extensive time in the field is to allow the researcher to gain more profound understandings of the elements in the study, and to also allow for this to then be conveyed to the reader. The last of Creswell’s (2003) categories of data validation that is incorporated into this study is *peer debriefing*. My longest-running co-participant in the project team was also interested in sharing reflective dialogues of a more disinterested and academic nature. These occurred frequently and are reported in the results chapters.

In concluding this chapter, I have presented the philosophical basis for my approach to research through an examination of truth, ontology and epistemology. Furthermore I have proposed that a transdisciplinary stance has been introduced into this thesis, including consideration of aspects of philosophy, history, the sciences, theology and sociology, among other disciplines. In addition, a view to developing a trans-methodological approach has been incorporated. Various research approaches have been examined that were used in the execution and compilation of this study, including ethnography, action research, grounded theory, and case study. Also, the multi-method technique that has been used was explained. An analysis of how the themes that were derived from the data were arrived at was specified. Additionally, an examination of the validity of the data was given. Now that the ground work has been established, it is time to introduce the site of the fieldwork, in a chapter that, among other areas of interest, looks at the history, demography, politics and geography of Liverpool.
Chapter 4 – An introduction to Liverpool

4.0 Chapter structure

In the first two chapters I have introduced the thesis as a whole and set out the theoretical frameworks used. The preceding chapter examined my approaches to the research design that included considerations of philosophical underpinnings, a transdisciplinary and methodological context and the trans-method/multi-method techniques employed to gather data in this study. Now that the groundwork has been established, our journey to meet with the various communities that I joined to a greater or lesser degree, begins. This chapter will introduce the complex mix of factors that make up ‘Liverpool’. These factors were chosen because knowledge about them will be needed when issues emerge as the research project unfolds in the next two chapters.

Besides an explanatory introduction provided in the next section, the physical geography of the region is outlined, as well as its history and array of land use. The following sections will cover the demographic aspects of the Local Government Area (LGA) and then the issues of governance and politics are treated. The chapter concludes with an account of the precipitating event that brought about the council project that is at the core of this study. That event was the Daley Inquiry into Liverpool City Council of 2003-04 that resulted in the dismissal of the elected Councillors and the appointment of an Administrator by the State government.

4.1 Introduction

Liverpool City Council (LCC) area is made up of a complex and heterogeneous mix of many elements. It is an LGA that is located in the Sydney Basin and is a part of the metropolitan area of the city of Sydney, Australia (refer to Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3). The central business districts (CBD) of the cities of Sydney and Liverpool are
about 25 kilometres apart (LCC 2005a). The Liverpool LGA covers 30,607 hectares with an average population density of 5.02 people per hectare (LCC 2005b). Liverpool LGA is made up of two river catchments, that of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River and the Georges River, so that the locality is divided almost in two by high ground, the Blacktown Ridge, that separates the catchments (LCC 2005b). The Blacktown Ridge also very well coincides with the urban-rural division that occurs in Liverpool, with the urbanised sector to the east and the rural area to the west of the ridge (Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

In discussing some of the facts, including economic statistics and population figures that relate to the nineteenth century colonial period, some points need to be kept in mind. Examples of these matters are that the term ‘Liverpool’ meant different things over time and also held different connotations for various writers. In the early nineteenth century, the district of Liverpool included areas, such as ‘Cowpastures’ or Airds, which are now considered parts of Camden or Campbelltown LGAs, which demonstrates how the elongated nature of the LGA allows the western end to be closer to the centres of two other LGAs, than to the CBD of Liverpool. Furthermore,

Figure 4.1 Sydney Basin and its surrounds, showing topographic relief and Local Government Area boundary of Liverpool.
Source: Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC 2005b)
to one author, Liverpool could mean the ‘township’ and to another writer, the wider ‘district’ (Keating 1996). A brief historical review of Liverpool is undertaken, for it is also worth keeping in mind that, as with any locality, a historical perspective can help us when considering the present condition. The past has not only been instrumental in constructing the present, but understandings of the past help our understanding of the present and also contribute to constructions of the future (LeGuin 1974). Certainly, in terms of Liverpool, some of the issues that were relevant in colonial times still resonate today.

4.2 The physical geography of Liverpool

The Liverpool LGA can be simply described as a stretched out parcel of land that is approximately 30 kilometres long and is, except for the south-projecting Holsworthy area, about 10 kilometres wide, but the situation is a little more complex than that. The Liverpool LGA stretches in an approximately east-west orientation by its length, from the Nepean River, at the base of the Blue Mountains, in the west to the Georges River in the east (refer to Figures 4.2 and 4.3). It is situated at about Latitude 34 South and Longitude 151 East. Liverpool’s CBD is about half way between the coast and the Blue Mountains, has an elevation of 20 meters above sea level, and is located towards the eastern end of the LGA (BOM 2005). Liverpool City Council (LCC) area is made up of 38 urban, suburban, peri-urban and rural localities, 11 of which are only partially located within the Liverpool LGA (LCC 2005a).

Liverpool is at about the centre of a geological formation called the Sydney Basin (Figure 4.1). A significant formation within the Sydney Basin is the Cumberland Plain; although there are a few high points on it, the average altitude is about 30 meters (Keating 1996). The primary underlying geology of the Sydney Basin, as it is manifested at Liverpool, comes from Hawkesbury Sandstone and Wiannamatta Shale. Earths that overlay this bedrock generally carry typical Australian soil

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4 The suburbs and localities are: Ashcroft, Austral, Badgerys Creek (part), Bringelly (part), Busby, Cartwright, Casula, Cecil Hills, Cecil Park (part), Chipping Norton, Denham Court (part), Edmondson Park, Greendale, Green Valley, Hammondville, Heckenberg, Hinchinbrook, Holsworthy, Horningssea Park, Hoxton Park, Ingleburn (part), Kemps Creek (part), Leppington (part), Liverpool, Luddenham (part), Lurnea, Miller, Moorebank, Mount Pritchard (part), Pleasure Point, Prestons, Rossmore (part), Sadleir, Voyager Point, Wallacia (part), Warwick Farm, Wattle Grove and West Hoxton.
characteristics, that is, they are usually ancient and leached, which results in them having a nutrient-poor condition (Springett 1986). Although these soils are suitable for native vegetation that has evolved in keeping with those conditions, they are not as suitable for the farming practices as introduced by Europeans, with the main exceptions of the sandy loams, clayey loams and deeper alluvial deposits that are closer to the rivers, and more agriculturally productive. The other main soil type lies between these two waterways, where one finds much older and, in terms of agricultural value, much poorer soils that are derived from Wiannamatta Shale bedrock (Recher 1986; Keating 1996).

On these various soils, the original vegetation types comprised of riverine associations, the low woodlands of the sandstone areas, and the currently threatened Cumberland Plain Woodlands that originally dominated the Wiannamatta Shale - derived soils (NCC 1999). The better watered and more nutrient-rich alluvial soils...
that are formed closer to watercourses allow for denser, more complex vegetation communities, while the Cumberland Plain Woodlands are often described as open and ‘parklike’ in appearance (Kohen 1998), as depicted in Figure 4.3, below.

![Figure 4.3 Typical Cumberland Plain Woodland of the Sydney Basin.](source: NCC 1999)

The climate of the region is temperate with precipitation fairly even all year; there is no distinct dry season, as can be seen in Table 4.1, over page. Although the climate descriptors remain the same for all of the LGA, the western areas are in the relatively rain-shadow lands that are the furthest from the coast, near the Blue Mountains and thus are drier than the eastern areas (NPWS 2005). From Table 4.1, over page, one can note that the average annual rainfall for the region is 866mm, with a monthly range of 40mm to 101mm. Temperatures in this region range from 5°C to 28°C Celsius, as seen in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 Average monthly minimum and maximum temperature and average rainfall for Liverpool.**

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Source: Adapted from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM 2005)
4.3 History – Aboriginal and European

Although there is debate about some of the dates in the literature, it is indisputable that Aboriginal peoples lived in the Sydney Basin for thousands of years before European settlement. For example, Rosen (1995, p.2) states that the “…most intensive Aboriginal occupation of the…[Hawkesbury-Nepean]…catchment is believed to have commenced 4000 years ago”, and Attenbrow (2003, p.20) cites research indicating that the oldest rock shelter had been initially occupied “…around 14,700 years…” at Shaw’s Creek near Yarramundi. The same area, which is about 25 kilometres north of Liverpool LGA, holds primary evidence for the oldest Aboriginal artefacts in the Sydney Basin, these are items discovered in the gravel beds of the Castlereagh area dating from 28,000 years ago (Kohen 1993).

Up to the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 three aboriginal tribes, the Darug, Tharawal and the Gandangara, comprised the population of an area that they knew as Gunyungalung, a part of which is now more commonly known as the Liverpool LGA (Attenbrow 2003). Each of the three tribes traversed lands that were much larger than Gunyungalung, but on certain ceremonial occasions they met at the Dreaming site of Bent’s Basin, which forms the south-western edge of Liverpool, on the Nepean River; it is the only known Dreaming site on the Cumberland Plain of the Sydney region (Keating 1996). The Darug maintained the central region, the Tharawal areas to the south-east up to the Georges River and the Gandangara tribal lands to the south-west up to the Nepean River.

Pre-white population estimates vary greatly, with lower figures given for the western Cumberland Plain as between 500 and 1000 people (Rosen 1995) and 300,000 for the continent (Hughes 1987). Butlin (1983) suggests that the traditional basis for the low estimates of the Aboriginal population, such as those just cited, stem from the effects of introduced diseases, such as smallpox, and the disruption of tribal organisation that this devastation wrought. Rosen (1995, p.7) places the time of the first smallpox plague that affected the native peoples as occurring within the first 18 months of settlement, that is, by mid-1789, and refers back to Butlin’s (1983)
information. Besides the onset of introduced disease, other factors also affected the original inhabitants, these included loss of access to traditional food gathering places and warfare. Thus, Kohen (1998) states that, for various reasons as a result of their encounters with the British, between 50% and 90% of the pre-1788 Aboriginal population of south-eastern Australia had died by 1795.

European settlement first began along the Nepean during the 1790s, just a few years after the First Fleet arrived at Sydney Cove (Murray & White 1988). Besides the impact on the original inhabitants, this had an almost immediate effect on the hydrology and the ecology of the Hawkesbury-Nepean river system (Rosen 1995). Meanwhile, at the other (eastern) end of the current Liverpool LGA, the Georges River area was being farmed by the early 1800s as a consequence of settlers who sought to exploit the relatively fertile alluvial soils that the frequent flooding of the river provided (Rosen 1995; Keating 1996). Meanwhile important new decisions were being made that would alter the landscape of the ‘Georges River area’ in even more ways than had occurred up to the time of the first dramatic encounters. Lachlan Macquarie (1761-1824), had been appointed as the new Governor of the colony in April 1809, arrived in December of that year and stayed until February 1822 (HHS 2005). Within a year of his arrival, Macquarie went on an inspection tour of Sydney’s hinterland; on reaching at the western bank of the Georges River on November 7th 1810, the Governor began the task of searching out suitable land for a new township (HHS 2005; LCC 2005c). On being proclaimed in that year, Liverpool became the colony’s fourth town after Sydney, Parramatta and Hobart, and since the first three settlements were all initially established as penal centres and Liverpool was not, Liverpool became the first planned free community of the new colony (LCC 2005c).

Macquarie encouraged new settlers to move to Liverpool by granting ‘industrious and honest tradesmen’ an allotment for house and garden, a milch cow and grazing rights to a newly established commons; he was the first Governor who looked at the new colony as being more than just a penal settlement (Keating 1996). The best agricultural land around Sydney had been granted to white settlers by 1820. To some extent crop raising and animal production proceeded from this, but the difficulties of a strange land, few good tools and a myriad of other problems beset the early
colonists. Keating (1996, p. 28) states that “Despite Macquarie’s laws requiring the development of grants much of the Cumberland Plain was still ‘in a state of nature’”.

Keating’s (1996) contention that Liverpool was a ‘frontier town’ is supported by its early function as a staging post for goods from Sydney that were destined for the local district, and as a thoroughfare for goods and people from both the district and the farther interior that were bound for Sydney via the Georges River and what was to become the Hume Highway. But, while Keating (1996, p. 32) writes that there were “…perhaps only 30 houses in 1819”, the place was important enough to have, among other matters, a number of significant public buildings erected; two of these, from the plans of the famous convict architect Francis Greenway, were a church and a hospital. The author quotes from a diary entry of Macquarie in 1822 that, regarding Liverpool, he was responsible for:

“…a burial ground, market ground, hospital, store and granary, military barracks, parsonage, gaol, wharf, a combined school and courthouse, a stockade to house the gaol gang and the town gang, and a stable and coach house for the government…[and]…St Luke’s church…” (Keating 1996, p. 33).

Although planned for a greater potential, by 1830 the town of Liverpool was still primarily a stopover on the way to or from Sydney by either road or river, and the site of the administration of the convict system that provided virtually free labour to the farmers of the district (Keating 1996). After Macquarie left the colony, farming policy changed from his emphasis on smaller holdings and independent farmers who produced for their own needs and for the Sydney market, to a policy of larger acreages and a focus on an export market, for example, by 1835 wool had become the colony’s largest export commodity. While affecting land distribution and use around Liverpool, the new policy had two, even more, significant effects. The first was to align the local economy to the economic cycles of the comprador capitalism of a growing empire; thus occurred the dramatic local impact of the international depressions of the 1840s, 1890s and the 1930s. The second effect was in relocating the ‘centre’ of the colony out of the Sydney Basin to west of the Blue Mountains.

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5 The assignment of free labourers ceased in 1838 (Keating 1996) and transportation to NSW ended in 1850 (AG 2005). The last convicts to arrive in Australia were sent to the colony of Western Australia in 1868 (Hughes 1987).
thus Liverpool was reaffirmed as merely a transit and staging site for the needs of Sydney and its central government (Keating 1996).

This struggle for an independent identity and the tussle with the centre of power for recognition and a ‘fair share’ of resources was a theme that continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This was a strong sentiment even though it was also proudly stated by town elders of the time and by recent authors, that Liverpool had the first official post office after Sydney (1828), a hospital (1830), the railway as early as 1856, Australia’s first large-scale paper mill (1868), a gas-works (1890), reticulated water (1893), telephony (1907) and electricity (1925) (Keating 1996; LCC 2005c). Furthermore, Macquarie’s famous ‘five towns’ remained five in number as Liverpool is not considered one of them, despite having predated them (Ruhen & Adams 1970). Nevertheless, the people of Liverpool express their pride in their history and having a strong connection with Governor Macquarie in several ways, such as naming a main CBD street after him and having a monument to the governor on that thoroughfare.

Liverpool’s feeling of being left behind, or sidelined by the State government does not only apply to the Liverpool of the past: it is still a current issue, as it came up during the current research project and will be discussed later in this thesis. Also, a fairly recent publication of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, of which Liverpool is a member, begins with the statement, “Western Sydney has long had a cinderella status in relation to the big sister city [Sydney]…” (Clegg & Linsley 1982, p.1). Another recent author, Keating (1996, p.215), felt the need to make similar comments when examining issues that related to the identity of Liverpool in the 1990s,

“Liverpool was founded to serve Sydney and for most of its history the town has been allotted the role of peripheral provider of goods, services and cheap land to the centre. It has been consciously defined as a sort of frontier, a staging post, an edge between city and the bush, between what mattered and what didn’t. Once allotted this role, society then felt free to use this frontier to experiment with forms and structures that would be unacceptable elsewhere. Liverpool is still on a frontier and the experiments in social and urban policy continue to this day.”
4.4 Land use in Liverpool

Liverpool has a wide variety of land use forms, such as, wild-space, rural, peri-urban, suburban, industrial, commercial and the particular mix that is associated with a central business district. In addition to those more common land uses, the Holsworthy Military area covers a considerable portion of Liverpool, amounting to approximately 20% (see Figure 4.1). Besides its military functions, this area also contains a great deal of Liverpool’s wild-space, this is in part because its use as a military firing range has resulted in unexploded ordnance in some of the area, and is also due to its more rugged landform (Keating 1996). Other portions of native vegetation include significant stands of the little-remaining Cumberland Plain Woodlands that are situated across the north-south ridge that divides Liverpool’s eastern urban area from the western rural lands. These woodland areas form a part of the Sydney Regional Parklands corridor that arches across the western part of the Sydney Basin (LCC 2002). Another site of wilderness is on the western edge of Liverpool at Bents Basin or, as it is known by its Aboriginal name, the Gulguer Nature Reserve (Hinkson & Harris 2001).

It has been reported that in 1984, 61% of the LGA was classified as rural (Keating 1996, p. 209); although it is not stated if that figure included the, largely bushland, Holsworthy Military Area as part of the LGA. From Figure 4.4, it can be estimated that, excepting Holsworthy, approximately the same percentage of the LGA is still used for rural purposes; this includes those areas that have been indicated as ‘rural residential’. As mentioned previously, the rural areas are predominantly in the western parts of the LGA, and generally fall within the Hawkesbury-Nepean River catchment. The rural uses of the land include horticulture (with extensive greenhouse farming and open market gardens), animal production for the consumption of meat and eggs, and animal husbandry with horses, cattle and some dairy (Keating 1996; LCC 2002), for example, Liverpool is still the largest producer of fruit, nuts and berries in the Sydney region (LCC 2002). A not insignificant portion of the western lands of the region is designated as rural-residential, with many smaller lots of just a few hectares. Developments such as the Badgerys Creek airport proposal (LCC 2002) and new housing estates that come out of and are also separate from the NSW Government’s Sydney Metropolitan Strategy (DIPNR 2005) are in the process of
Figure 4.4 Rural and urban land use of Western Sydney, including Liverpool.
Source: Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC 2005a)
changing large parts of the rural landscape. This, as we shall see in the following chapters, was a matter of concern for many participants in the community workshops that were a part of this research project.

Increasingly as the twentieth century progressed, and perhaps more so in current times, Liverpool has been treated as an offshoot of the metropolitan centre to cater for its urban expansion (Keating 1996; DIPNR 2005). Three examples are: the Hammondville settlement of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the large public housing estate of Green Valley of the 1960s, and the new private settlements that are being constructed now due to the Metropolitan Strategy (Weir 1973; Keating 1996; DIPNR 2005). Each of these examples fit into Keating’s (1996) description of ‘experiments’ in urban and social planning. Due to this focus, and its practical manifestations, like the availability of roads and public transport links that are oriented towards the centre, the northeast part of the LGA houses the bulk of its population in a mostly suburban set of arrangements.

4.5 The people of Liverpool

The statistics used in this section have not been updated from the time that they were originally written, as they are appropriate for the time during which my research project occurred. These figures derive, for the most part, from the 2001 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, and from documents that have been produced by Liverpool City Council, most of which also use the 2001 Census data.

Census data reveals that by 1991 the population of Liverpool LGA was about 98,000 and grew to 120,197 in 1996 and was 153,633 at the time of the 2001 census (LCC 2005b, 2005c). This growth of about 30% of the population, in each of the five-year periods between the census dates, demonstrates the rapidly changing nature of the demography of Liverpool. The rapid growth can well be believed to be a constant challenge for the local council as well as for many in the community, as was demonstrated during the community workshops that were a focus of this research project. Future predictions suggest strong growth rates will see Liverpool’s
population climb to 230,000 in 2014 and something like 300,000 by 2030 as a result of the NSW State government’s Sydney Metropolitan Growth Strategy (LCC 2005b, 2005c; DIPNR 2005).

The population of Liverpool is perhaps even more diverse than the physical and political geography that has been described above. As explained in the LCC Social Plan: 2004-2005 (LCC 2004a, p. 5):

"- Liverpool is by far the fastest growing Local Government Area (LGA) in NSW;
- Liverpool is largely a city of young families and children;
- Over 4 in 10 people were born in a non-English speaking country;
- Residents come from 156 different birthplaces, including Australia;
- Nearly 1 in every 2 people speaks one of the 125 languages other than English spoken in Liverpool;
- 1 person in 5 speaks a language other than English at home;
- 1 person in 11 was unemployed in 2001; and almost half of all people of working age only achieved the HSC."

Table 4.2 allows for interesting comments, such as those made in the LCC Social Plan 2004-2005 above by allowing comparisons between the demographic statistics for Liverpool statistical area and those for the Sydney statistical area. An example of such a comparison is to note that there is a higher proportion of overseas born residents in Liverpool (38.1%) as compared to Sydney (31.2%). It can also be noted from Table 4.2 that the total percentage of the indigenous residents of Liverpool, described as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, is 1.3%; the concomitant figure for Sydney is 1%. This translates to a total current indigenous population for Liverpool of 2,038 out of a total of 153,633 people (LCC 2005b).
Table 4.2 Summary of demographic statistics for Liverpool Local Government Area.
Source: as modified from LCC 2005b

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<td>number</td>
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<tr>
<td>POPULATION</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total population*</td>
<td>153,633</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>119,793</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>33,840</td>
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<td>Males*</td>
<td>76,926</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>60,091</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>16,835</td>
</tr>
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<td>Females*</td>
<td>76,707</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>59,702</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>17,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous population</td>
<td>2,038</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2,074</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>-36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian born</td>
<td>85,484</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>73,525</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>11,959</td>
</tr>
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<td>Overseas born</td>
<td>58,463</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>42,218</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>16,245</td>
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<td>Australian citizens</td>
<td>130,536</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>103,208</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>27,328</td>
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<td>Australian citizens aged 18+</td>
<td>91,120</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>72,236</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>18,884</td>
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<td>Institutional population</td>
<td>2,368</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2,712</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>-344</td>
</tr>
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<td>AGE STRUCTURE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infants 0 to 4 years</td>
<td>13,519</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>11,057</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>2,462</td>
</tr>
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<td>Children 5 to 17 years</td>
<td>32,060</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>23,795</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>8,265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults 18 to 64 years</td>
<td>96,635</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>76,492</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>20,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature adults 65 to 84 years</td>
<td>10,458</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7,783</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>2,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior citizens 85 years and over</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSEHOLDS</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households (occupied private dwellings)</td>
<td>48,545</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>38,484</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons counted in households</td>
<td>151,919</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>117,485</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>34,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average household size (persons)</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWELLINGS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings (total)</td>
<td>50,879</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>40,620</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owned</td>
<td>15,069</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>12,034</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>3,035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing</td>
<td>14,958</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>10,804</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>4,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renting</td>
<td>14,678</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>13,357</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>1,321</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Excludes overseas visitors

4.6 Governance

There are many ways that the concept of governance has been manifested in Liverpool. In this section of the thesis two such ways are examined. The first type of governance is the formal structure of government, and second is another way that power is transacted between individuals and might be looked at as a form of the Dark Side of Civil Society (discussed in Chapter 2); often these two interact, as they
did in Liverpool. The connection between these ideas is that the term governance is understood here in a generic sense to mean forms of decision making, in other words, governance is the way that elements in society empower an idea or a wish. This empowerment can be through the structures of government, or via other means.

The difference between the first and second forms of governance mentioned above, reflects similar meanings as the uses of the term power by Weber (1947, 2006) and Mills (1970) on the one hand and Foucault (1980, 1983, 1989) on the other, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Weber (1947, 2006) and Mills (1970) broadly describe the term power as a hierarchy of systems and structures of decision-making, where those with power instruct those without. Differently, Foucault (1980, 1983, 1989) has power as a diffused quality throughout society. The first part of this section of the chapter will cover the formal governmental structure of Liverpool. The second part will explore a darker side of Foucault’s proposition, one where sections of Civil Society try to have an impact on formal governmental structures.

### 4.6.1 Governance: government structure

Government, which is understood in the Australian context as popularly elected parliaments that have the authority to enact legislation exist, at two levels in this country; these are the Commonwealth and the State governments. Local ‘government’ is not a legislative body, and only derives the authority that it has from legislation that is made by the respective State governments (Harding 1998, pp. 226-229). Local government is essentially a sub-committee of State government, even though the local Council, as the body is called in NSW, is controlled on a day to day basis by the decisions of the popularly elected Councillors who formulate policy for the direction of council officers (Harding 1998). The local Council can be dismissed by application of the relevant Minister, as occurred at Liverpool (Cuming 2004).

In NSW there are 152 local councils (LGSA 2008), of which the Liverpool City Council (LCC) is one. Councils in NSW are controlled by and implement many pieces of legislation, although the main framework for the operations that are carried out by local government, including its governance, is the *Local Government Act 1993* (LGA) (Harding 1998). Under the LGA, councils have been given a number of functions; broadly, these are of a regulatory, service, revenue raising and
administrative nature (LGA 1993). Critically, for councils, their main income, the level of Rates, which is a local tax for the provision of a broad level of services, such as garbage removal and the provision of parks, is determined by the State government. Also there is often an interplay between the functions carried out by the State government and councils, for example, major roads are the province of the State, while other roads are dealt with by councils; larger planning matters are determined by the State, while most planning issues, although smaller in individual scale, are decided locally; provision of sewerage is a State matter in the larger metropolitan centres, but can be a local issue in smaller rural communities. One area that has seen the emergence of councils to the forefront of expectations and to some extent, activity, is with environmental issues, a direction that has been given an impetus with the World Environmental Summits of 1992 and 2002 (Brown 1997; Harding 1998), a matter discussed in Chapter 2.

The structure of LCC as it was during my research project is provided in Figure 4.5. What the 2004 chart does not show is that the elected Council was replaced by an Administrator, who had all the powers of the elected Council and also acted as Mayor. During the appointed four year term, a Council meeting consisted of the Administrator being assisted by some council officers in a public meeting. Also missing is that an Executive Board, which consisted of the General Manager and the section managers, was also a part of the governance structure, and met regularly during the time of my research project, as will be detailed in subsequent chapters. A less formal gathering of the Strategic Board, which was the Executive Board plus the Administrator, also met on occasion to prepare for difficult Council meetings. During my research project the position of Deputy General Manager was created, and filled by a member of the project team. However, the position was not maintained when the original occupant left the council.

Other aspects of the governance structure at Liverpool not included in Figure 4.5 mostly concern aspects of community consultation. The term ‘governance’ is used generously here, for it has been defined as ‘decision-making’ and the following examples are more areas where Council gives out information; of course, information is essential for informed decision-making, but these gatherings are not an overt mechanism for governance. This is not to say that these structures are not
valuable in a great many ways, for example, they allow for community development, besides providing avenues for community participation in important work such as bushcare or community networking.

Liverpool has a system of community Forums which replaced the previously existing Neighbourhood Committees, as discussed later, this replacement engendered a deal of concern among participants at the community workshops. The Forums are regularly held across the LGA and are described on the Council’s website as providing “…all residents with the opportunity to be informed of changes in their neighbourhood, and find out what is happening in their area, share information with other residents and participate in the delivery of Council services and facilities” (LCC 2008). Despite its other advantages, the Community Forums do not allow for an engaged participation of residents in decision making and is, on the Arnstein (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation, towards the lower rung of ‘Informing’. Also, with regard to the IAP2 (2007) Spectrum of Public Participation, the Forums do not represent a more engaged or deeper form of Community/Council cooperative activity. It needs to be emphasised that other methods, which allow for some form of community participation in the governance structures of Council exist, these include Youth, Aboriginal, and suburb-specific forums. Additionally, other functional associations of residents and Council are encouraged, such as environmental and social groups (LCC 2007).

4.6.2 Governance by other means: a darker side of Civil Society

Besides the legislated structures and strictures that govern Liverpool, there is the web of power, and ambition for power, that exists, all of which influence what does and does not occur there. In this context Civil Society includes political parties as such, that is, parties as they exist outside of their functioning as a government after being elected or as they may exist, in part, within a parliament. There is some evidence to suggest that there was another cause, besides the financial mess, that precipitated the Oasis crisis, the subsequent Daley Inquiry, dismissal of Council, the appointment of an Administrator, and the resultant formulation of the Creating Our Future Together Partnership Project – matters that will be explored in more detail in a later section. That precipitating matter was an on-going fight between the Left and
Right factions within the Australian Labor Party (ALP) for control of Council, which may then influence control of the State and Federal seats of which the Liverpool LGA forms a part (Davies 2004; Keating 1996). Importantly, Liverpool has been an ALP stronghold for many decades, at Local, State and Federal levels, as has much of western Sydney (Keating 1996). However, at State and Federal levels, where Liverpool constitutes only a part of larger electorates, this dominance has recently been challenged by the Liberal Party due to changes in the demographic profile of what was once considered the outer ring of Sydney (D’Arcy 2005a).

In addition shifts in control between factions within the ALP have occurred at the council level. With regard to Liverpool, the Councillors at the time of the Daley Inquiry have been described as comprising of four Right ALP members (including the popularly elected Mayor), three Left ALP (including the Deputy Mayor), two from the Liberal Party, and two Independents (Cuming 2004). At the time of the planned 2004 Council election, Cumming (2004) stated that the Left ALP Deputy Mayor, Wendy Waller, had planned to seek preselection for Mayor. This was subsequently a position she attained after the tenure of the Administrator ceased with the 2008 elections (ECNSW 2008). Cuming (2004, p.6 (sic)) also maintained that the (dismissed) Mayor, George Paciullo said that “The current Labor councillors were banned by state ALP head office from running and he hoped a new-look Labor team would win the election and preserve the ALP hold on the region”. Cuming (2004, p.8 (sic)) also stated that, “It will be the longest term served by an administrator appointed to a dismissed council. Ms Kibble, 65, is the daughter of Sir John Kerr, the governor-general who dismissed Labor prime minister Gough Whitlam in 1975”. Together, these matters suggest that the Right-wing controlled state office of the NSW ALP was concerned that the Council may well have developed a leftward inclination with the 2004 elections. A move to dismiss Council and install an Administrator then, in part, amounted to an attempt to unsettle the incumbents, and hope for a better outcome for the Right faction at a later election.

Certainly, there have been many allegations about Left, Right and commercial jealousies within the ALP in Liverpool with regard to the Orange Grove affair. Hildebrand (2004) gives an account of some of these allegations that came out of the inquiry into the matter, which centred on Sam Bargshoon who lost a valuable
cleaning contract for the Orange Grove centre when it was closed suddenly by the State government; Orange Grove was another Liverpool scandal that overshadowed my research project. Bargshoon made public statements about counter-stacking prospective party members into a Liverpool Branch of the ALP on behalf of the Right, to offset a sudden Left recruitment drive (Hildebrand 2004). He also stood against the ALP candidate in a Federal election at this time as an (unsuccessful) Independent, but finally withdrew his allegations of branch-stacking.

This approach to ‘negotiations’ of power, within the Dark Side of Civil Society in the form of political parties, for control of Civic Society structures seems fairly common, and was casually reported in Mitchell’s (2007, p.22) account of the sacking of two councils in another part of NSW, the Murray-Darling. In this case, the State Member of Parliament for the Murray-Darling, Peter Black, was reported as being helped by the ALP in an effort to save his career. It was reported that “…Black hoped the sacking of his local council and the rubbing out of his bitter opponent, mayor Ron Page, would turn him into a local hero…”, presumably to ensure re-election (Mitchell 2007). Also, Frew (2008a) has written about the links of Labor Party Mayors in Sydney councils and their close connections with developers. Furthermore, Frew (2008b, p. 4) comments about development projects involving the Mayor of Fairfield, a council adjacent to Liverpool, and concerning land within Liverpool LGA, stating that,

“In 2003 Cr Lalich was a director of Tojomi Pty Ltd, with two other Fairfield councillors and two Fairfield property developers. The company was able to take advantage of a change in building height restrictions on land in the Liverpool council area, which the previous owner claimed had not been available to him. Tojomi made a windfall profit on the land”.

These sorts of political intrigues had an impact, not only on the Oasis and Orange Grove scandals, and the Daley Inquiry that formed a critical backdrop for my project, but also came up during the community workshops that were a part of my research. During the workshops several participants mentioned the need to regain pride in Liverpool Council and concern about the perceived sorry state of the southern end of the Liverpool CBD. Although these matters did not arise with the terminology that is used here during the workshops, and were by no means huge issues, nonetheless the
comments above will be useful as context to better understand some of the matters that will be explored in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

4.7 The ‘Liverpool City Council Public Inquiry’

The subject of this study, the Creating Our Future Together Partnership Project (the Project), came about directly as a result of the findings and recommendations of the Liverpool City Council Public Inquiry, commonly known as the Daly Inquiry, and referred to in this study as the Inquiry (Daley 2004). The Inquiry was established on the 5th of November 2003 by the Minister for Local Government as a result of a particular scandal that had engulfed Liverpool City Council (Daley 2004). The issue that sparked the Inquiry was the involvement of Council in a Public Private Partnership (PPP) venture with the Bulldogs Rugby League Club and Macquarie Bank (Daly 2004). This matter is referred to as the ‘Oasis’ project, for that was the name of the final development project, or with reference to the site of the venture, ‘Woodward Park’.

The findings of the Inquiry certainly was the impetus for the subject of this study, the Project, but the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry, in particular, shed a wider light on aspects of the Project as it eventually unfolded, and are given here:

“To inquire, report and make any appropriate recommendations regarding Liverpool City Council.

The Inquiry will have particular regards but is not limited to the following:

1. whether the council has exercised prudent financial management regarding the development and management of infrastructure projects such as those within the Woodward Park precinct (the “Oasis” project);

2. whether the council exercised appropriate openness and transparency in its decision making for approving and undertaking major infrastructure projects;

3. whether the council properly considered what impact major infrastructure projects would have on the ongoing ability of council to provide services to the community;

4. Council’s process of appointment and management of senior staff; and
Any other matter that warrants mention, particularly where it may impact upon the effective administration of the area and/or the working relationship between the council, councillors, and its administration.” (Daly 2004, pp. 3-4).

Point one (1) of the Terms of Reference is suggestive of the fairly precarious financial situation that Council found itself in at least until that matter with regard to the Oasis project was finally resolved, although its impact was longer lasting than that. The impact of this point on the Project was to engender an atmosphere of severe budgetary restraint for its own spending. Point two (2) is particularly relevant to this study, as it opened up a line of inquiry regarding the consultation processes that had existed between Council and the Community: it precipitated the Project.

4.7.1 The Oasis – Woodward Park affair

The site of the Oasis - Woodward Park affair is adjacent to the location of the Council’s main administrative building, which is at 1 Hoxton Park Road, Liverpool, a kilometre or so from the area’s CBD. Woodward Park was and still is a large open recreation space that also has constructed sporting facilities and buildings that contain space for community and council functions known as the E. G. Whitlam Centre as a part of the larger precinct (Daly 2004). The development originated with relatively modest plans in 1988 but became much bigger by the time the Oasis agreement was signed between the LCC and the Bulldogs Rugby Leagues Club and Macquarie Bank in 2001, known as a Public Private Partnership.

Without going into the details of a very complex plan, an outline of some of the main points of the Oasis development is given here. From Daley’s (2004, p. 10) Inquiry report, the final Oasis Master Plan arranged for, “…the utilisation of the park to provide

- Hotel, club and apartments on the former pool site in the north eastern part
- Waterpark and apartments in the north western part
- A multi-use arena, retail and residential development in the central part
- Residential, commercial and parking facilities on the site of the current council chambers in the south western part
- A roofed stadium in the central southern part
Indeed, this was a major development with, the entire series of developments that were a part of the Inquiry being stated by Davies (2004) to be worth $800million. It was unfortunate that LCC was in a poor financial position while these plans were being organised, due to the situation where “…total expenses exceeded total revenue from ordinary activities in every year …[1998/99 – 2002/03]…” (Daley 2004, p. 11). By the time of the Inquiry the financial loss for the Council due to Oasis “…would be over $22 million” (Daley 2004, p. 103).

Daley (2004) has attributed the origins of the Oasis troubles to financial mismanagement of Council affairs, as summarised above, but he also linked it to other, more emotional matters. In particular, these other matters included the feeling, which was widespread at Liverpool, that the LGA was having great demands made on it by the State government, but with not enough financial support for the increase in the physical and social infrastructure that was needed to support the huge increases in the population of the area. According to the General Manager at the time of the crisis, as reported in transcript, the passion for this project was being driven by, “…a social perspective about the importance of lifting the morale of the Liverpool community…” (Daley 2004, p. 48). The then Mayor, Mr Paciullo, was quoted at the Inquiry, from the Council’s 1999/2000 Annual Report, as stating that, “The City of Liverpool sustained its rapid rate of population growth during 1999/2000 with its population now nearing the 150,000 mark. …Liverpool’s population contains a proportion of young people well above the Sydney average. Yet, for far too long, …they and other residents have had to travel outside their area in order to have their sporting and entertainment needs satisfied” (Daley 2004, p. 12). The attitude that metropolitan politicians had taken Liverpool for granted for far too long was still evident although now, with the Oasis plan, it seemed that Liverpool was not going to wait anymore.

An even more powerful expression that people had been taken for granted was, however, made with the Inquiry’s report. One of the major points that Daley (2004, p. 386) made against the Council was that it did not adequately, and in some ways not at all, inform the public about Oasis,
“In its rush to be a helpful partner, the council seemed to forget that both the money and the land belonged to the community…The council was cavalier in its handling of those resources, and arrogant, to the point of contempt, in not properly and honestly reforming the community in what it was doing with the community’s resources”.

Another finding of the Inquiry concerned the secrecy that surrounded many aspects of the planning meetings for the Oasis development, “Every key decision in relation to the commercial arrangements with the private sector was made behind closed doors…In blocking the public from learning in full what the council intended to do with the community’s assets, the council argued that it was constrained by commercial-in-confidence factors. This was nonsense” (Daley 2004, p. 386). These are certainly harsh findings, and the main reasoning that finally resulted in the newly appointed Administrator to instigate the Partnership Project.

4.7.2 The atmosphere in which the Partnership Project began

Long before the completion of the Inquiry, Liverpool’s Oasis plans gained huge publicity from the local and metropolitan media, the latter included newspaper, radio and television news items. As early as 2002, a metropolitan newspaper exposed the over payments made to players in the Bulldogs Rugby League team, who had a salary cap imposed by the league’s organisation, the Australian Rugby League (ARL). These were funds derived from financial arrangements that were linked to the Oasis matter (Davies 2004). Davies (2004, p. 11) wrote, “…the Bulldogs were breaching the ARL salarycap, and that some of the payments to players were being made through the Oasis project…the Bulldogs were kicked out of the finals, the Oasis stalled, and the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) held an inquiry into several aspects of the…revelations”. No findings of corruption were made in the end. In another front page article announcing the Oasis Inquiry in October 2003, the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald declared “Flailing in the Oasis, Council Faces the Sack” (Davies 2003).

An example of this media attention at the local level was the banner headline of the Liverpool City Champion, (Cuming 2004, pp. 1):
This headline appeared the day after the Governor General made the announcement of the removal of the Councillors at Liverpool, which was at noon on the 16th March 2004. The Administrator was immediately appointed and soon thereafter, she directed that Council needed to respond to the findings of the Inquiry.

The hothouse atmosphere that existed with the genesis of the Project continued for some time. Just months after my involvement in Liverpool began, another crisis hit the headlines. This time it was the Direct Factory Outlet at Orange Grove, a retail complex that had been approved for operation by Liverpool Council, but this was later overturned by the State government (Davies 2005). This was particularly dramatic because the ICAC inquiry into the matter examined the input of the then Premier, Mr Bob Carr, who was put on the witness stand, as well as other Ministers, including Mr Joe Tripodi (Davies 2005). Many accusations were made, including, that “Orange Grove’s owner, Nabil Gazal, said last May that Mr Tripodi had told him the State Government was closing his centre as a favour to a nearby rival, Westfield, something Mr Tripodi denied” (Davies 2005, p. 1). The reference to Westfield is to a major shopping complex that took over the northern end of Macquarie St in the Liverpool CBD, a development that was often blamed by participants in the Project community workshops for the decline in the shops at the southern end of the street. As a final outcome of the Orange Grove affair, no findings of corruption were made, but in the course of the changing approvals, 450 people were put out of work, many of whom lived in the local area (D’Arcy 2005b).

As late as September 2005, the Oasis matter was gaining publicity, although not as dramatically as it had formerly achieved. At this time, one of the recommendations of the Inquiry came to fruition in the form of a set of guidelines from the Department of Local Government (DLG) for the involvement of councils in Public Private Partnership ventures. This included amendments to the Local Government Act 1993, with the DLG circular stating, “The Act brings into effect the recommendations of the … Liverpool City Council Public Inquiry, in relation to Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)” (DLG 2005, p. 1).
In conclusion of this chapter, it can be noted that a review of the setting for my study has been undertaken. This chapter has looked at the physical geography of the region, as well as its history, and the array of land use of the Liverpool Local Government Area (LGA). Also examined were the demographic aspects of the LGA, and then the issues of governance and politics were treated. The chapter concluded with an account of the precipitating event that brought about the council project that is at the core of this study: the Daly Inquiry into Liverpool City Council that resulted in the dismissal of the elected Councillors and the appointment of an Administrator by the State government. The next two chapters will provide the data chapters for this thesis in providing narrative accounts of two aspects of the Partnership Project. Specifically, the next chapter, Chapter 5, will deal with the Community Visioning Workshops and the production of their final output, Liverpool Directions 2006-2016, that provided information which the Council has used to help it in developing the budget document, the statutory Management Plan, over that time.
Chapter 5 – Findings: participation in the Liverpool Partnership Project

Part 1

5.1.0 Chapter structure
This chapter is divided in two; the first part details the preparatory lead-up to a core aspect of the Project - the community Visioning workshops. The second part of the chapter covers the workshops and their aftermath.

5.1.1 Setting up the Partnership Project.
After months of preliminary meetings and postponements, my field work began when I met with a group of Liverpool Council managers on Wednesday 9th June, 2004. Veronica, my main contact at the council, introduced me to Alex and Harrison as a potential addition to the steering committee that was to oversee a new community engagement project for Liverpool. Veronica, who was the Manager of the Natural Environment section, described the formation of the group as one of the tasks initiated by the recently appointed Administrator, this one aiming to establish better communication channels between Council and the community. The General Manager, through the Executive Board directed the Strategic Planning section to establish a project steering group. The task description was open ended and non-directive, with the members volunteering from several, though not all, sections of Council. The first meeting of the steering committee (referred to as the ‘Team’) was on 15th June 2004, for what was to become the Creating Our Future Together - Partnership Project, (or, the ‘Project’). I did not attend that first Team meeting due to a prior engagement, but notes of the meeting included the following comment about my prospective future involvement: “Sid seemed to have the skills and expertise to contribute to the process”. It’s notable that the group was prepared to have an
‘outsider’ included, they were looking for possible additional skills and were open to an ‘objective’ (or at least a different) point of view.

The voluntary nature of the group encouraged a ‘bias’ towards those who had some passion for the new undertaking, which was important because it would mean taking on additional tasks besides their daily workload. This approach also fostered an atmosphere of adventure and creativity; notes of the first steering group meeting, held as a brain-storming session, gives some sense of this mood:

“What will our corporate plan be like, what should it be
An open-ended discussion on characteristics (and principles guiding the process):
It’s a journey

Bright, racy, simple, lots of pictures which people like

It’s our strategic plan: what we would like to see, our plan, it will mean a lot and not just be nice, something we have faith in

Something to make decisions by, something to be reported on

All Councils have a similar range of objectives – how to make this one our own?

Slice it any way you like, something for everyone; can be anything from simple to sophisticated”

These notes reflect a high degree of excitement, hope and promise. There is an early demonstration of a will to maintain an ethical approach from the perspective of both personal professional practice and towards the community they were working for. This was not a group of people who wanted ‘to go through a tick-box exercise’, as a document from the Local Government Managers Association would latter refer to that sort of approach (LGMA 2005). The idea of including an iterative aspect to the Project came up at this early point, “...the journey doesn’t stop, there will be future renewal, keep people informed and involved even after the plan is completed and put out...”.
Another theme that arose was the desire to include all relevant potential participants and different interests in the engagement process. A broad listing of potential participants was made, including contributors “…from the cross-section of our population, involve the Administrator, residents and others…”. Another section of the notes mentioned possible constraining interests, “…budgets, State government decisions (eg Bringelly), inertia, status quo…”6. A note of cautious realism was sounded in stating that Council officers would “…take the vision for Liverpool and build solutions mediated by all sorts of practical, institutional, political etc constraints…”.

The meeting outlined a ‘Rough timetable’ that had the community visioning process completed by October 2004, that is, within four months. The associated Corporate Plan was to be ready by June 2005, namely, 12 months from conception. These details were recorded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 05</td>
<td>Adopt new plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 05</td>
<td>Draft plan out for public exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 05</td>
<td>Budget bids due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 04</td>
<td>Review outcomes of community consultation – decide on whether to incorporate in 05/06 corporate plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug/Sept 04</td>
<td>Community consultation on the vision for Liverpool”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This timeline proved to be too optimistic, as the gestation of the Project took much longer than expected and there were several organisational delays on the way.

5.1.1.1 The make-up of the Team

Only two of the four main divisions of Council were represented, but within those that did participate, a fairly broad range of officers attended or became involved as the project developed. All of those who were initially involved came from “Community and Environmental Planning” and “Support” (Figure 4.5). The sections of council that were not represented in the Project Team were “Assets and Infrastructure” and “Operations”. The two groups of council departments

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6 ‘Bringelly’ is a reference to a state government announced large-scale land-release for urban development that aims to house about 20,000 new residents over 20 years (Metro Strategy 2005).
approximately coincide with the academic paradigms of their disciplinary silos (Harding 1998, Orr 2004). Those silos manifest in the local government setting in the ‘old’ council functions (rates, roads and rubbish – or ‘planning and engineering’) and the ‘new’ functions of local councils (environmental, social and community roles) (Brown 1997; Parissi 2003). This division broke down slightly during the Project’s evolution, with a small number of personnel from the lesser-engaged sections of council becoming involved to some extent. In examining the Organisational Chart in Figure 4.5, one can see that it only approximately relates to the previous comments about the Project in strict functional terms. Clearly, some of the older functions of councils, such as ‘rates’ was functionally situated in one of the most Project-active sections of council – in Support. Similarly, some ‘new’ sections of councils, such as ‘Community and recreational services’ and ‘Children’s services’ were situated in Operations.

It is also important to note that the carriage of the Project was assigned to a small department of Council, namely, Strategic Research; a section with just two people in it. One of these people was the Project’s overall coordinator and the other later became the day-to-day Project Manager. This was significant because, although the overall nature of the Team was voluntary, there was still an allocated centre, and secondly, the section was not so large that the project got lost among too many competing needs.

5.1.2 Planning begins
The Team’s first full planning meeting was held on the 29th June. There were eight attendees, including me; the others were Alex, Veronica, James, Graham, Harrison, Robert, and Simone. Alex began by introducing me to the Team. Three main topics were covered: a discussion of different models of public participation; the extent and nature of the Project, and budgeting and staffing issues. The mood of the meeting was a mixture of trepidation, anticipation and a business-like attitude.

The trepidation seemed to be due to the nature of the Project, that is, the beginning of a new path that they had little experience in, and one that was unique in Liverpool’s history. This mood was evident in the discussion of the participation/visioning model
that the nearby Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) used, the ‘Oregon Model’ of Stephen Ames (Ames 1993; BMCC 2005). In that discussion one comment was “It would be great if that could happen in Liverpool, but people are cynical and apathetic”. Trepidation was also apparent in the comments about the criticism that they expected from the residents resulting from the sacking of the Council: the aftermath of the Oasis scandal was fresh in everyone’s mind. Robert made the comment, “If you want conflict, get into the detail”, that is, we should not be afraid of the backlash but plan for it, and use it constructively.

Anticipation was due to this being seen as the beginning of an exciting adventure, and for the challenges that the project presented professionally. Harrison said that BMCC had used the approach of “Community owned, but Council led”, which signified that the intention, and challenge, was to develop a broadly based community agreement on a ‘Vision for Liverpool’. “Bring in the kids” was stated as another way to get as broad a set of views as possible. This desire to go into uncharted territory indicated that this group was actively seeking several ways to challenge themselves professionally.

Once they had settled into the meeting, the business-like approach of experienced professionals came to the fore. Simone and Robert offered $13,000 and expertise with public relations. James offered about $10,000 and personnel for the project. Veronica offered to develop ways to bring sustainability principles into the project. Others wanted a bit more time to assess their contributions. An obvious difficulty was the restricted resource base as there was not going to be a newly allocated budget or exclusively dedicated personnel. My field notes describe a strong sense of the ‘hard-headed planning meeting’ and the ‘visionaries who wanted to change things at Liverpool’ - both these factors came up at this meeting. Firstly with the announcement that members of the group were to attend an external training program on Community Visioning, this demonstrated an open-minded but practical approach. Secondly, these factors came together when James, Veronica and I all come up with comments to the effect: “…and we need to change the culture in the Council too...”. I felt included in the discussions, not just in a technical sense of being allowed in the door, but as a participant.
In my field notes I wondered how long the apparent cohesiveness would last; as will be seen later in this narrative, some differences and misunderstandings emerged as the Project arrived at critical junctures. However, it did not seem to me that the nature of the group was to adopt an authoritarian model of organisation, rather they seemed to naturally fall into a pattern of cooperating to nurture each others’ ideas and roles.

5.1.3 The Project gets under way

July meetings focused on further developing frameworks and concepts. Thus, at the meeting of 7th July, which was run as a brainstorming/snow-balling session, Alex emphasised the need to be clear on what the outcomes were to be and Robert developed the idea calling it the ‘City Plan’, that is, it was the City of Liverpool’s plan, not the Council’s. Veronica continued on with this line of thought saying that it should include all the other Plans, such as the Social Plan and the Environment Plan, while James emphasised the need to be aware of the Councils’ statutory responsibilities in doing this. Alex added that the Project needed to show the community that the Council had ‘drawn a line in the sand’, that is, had demonstrated that it could now be trusted; this was a phrase that was often used in the first months of the Project. My notes record a discussion that concluded that there was a need “…to identify both community values and organisational values and the need to bring these into alignment”: ambitious indeed.

An interesting stage of my research occurred when I began to have informal post-meeting discussions with Graham. This was important as it allowed me to deepen my knowledge of the workings of Council, develop my thoughts on the meeting just held, and reflect on the Project as a whole. For Graham it seemed to become an allocated for time for more ‘academic’, reflective, and speculative discussion. We got on well and seemed to be on a similar wavelength in terms of our attitudes towards the Project. Both hoped to learn lessons about striving for sustainability within a locality and to seek genuine engagement with the community. For the first time I expressed my doubts about achieving a community vision by the end of 2004, which was the first time the matter was raised.
At the 23rd July meeting three issues came up, the first matter concerned more references being made about the community being cynical towards Council and being generally apathetic. My notes indicate that part of the discussion related to the highly diverse ethnic composition of Liverpool and its large proportion of newly arrived migrants. One conclusion was that the use of ‘plain language’ was necessary for all the material issued. The second issue concerned Graham’s suggestion to form two sub-committees, one called the Methods Subgroup and the other the Corporate Plan Subgroup. I was invited to join the Methods Subgroup that was to develop the approach to Council’s engagement with the community. Initially the group consisted of Veronica, Graham, James and me. Over the next 18 months, the general pattern that followed was for the subgroups to formulate issues for the Team to consider or to be given tasks by the Team to report back on. Another important development was Graham’s tabling of an embryonic diagrammatic schema for the Project. The key elements put forward were: the City Plan and the Corporate Plan. It is important to note that these terms changed, for example, the ‘City Plan’ became the ‘Vision’ and finally ‘Liverpool Directions’.

The 28th July meeting marked the end of the first month of my involvement with the Project and the first meeting of the new Methods Subgroup. The first part of the meeting was occupied with team-building and focused on developing shared understandings. This led to the point where Graham emphasised a need for qualitative approaches to the collection of data, as well as quantitative methods, this was accepted by the group. We also agreed that a specific outcome of the Project was a new structure of engagement between Council and Community. I again raised the need to include a ‘corporate change/cultural change’ aspect to the Project.

At the meeting of the 30th July, the Team was joined by Margaret from the media unit. Graham handed out two discussion documents: the ‘Community Engagement Model’ and ‘Planning Our Future Together Project Plan’. The ‘Community Engagement Model’ proposed a structure for the workshops, comprising of sessions on ‘Values Clarification’ and ‘Visioning’. The Project was to rest on a set of ‘Principles of Engagement’, namely:
• “Appropriate methods and language for community
• Inclusiveness
• Transparency
• Ethical”.

The methods used to gather the data would include these aspects: “Qualitative; Small groups in workshop mode; with Target groups being, women, youth, unemployed, senior, indigenous and small business”. In addition there would be a ‘Large group- community conference’ and ‘Interviews’. Simone raised the possibility of also using data for the Project from sources that Council already has access to, such as the annual Auspoll survey of community opinion of Council’s operations.

The other document issued was the ‘Planning Our Future Together Project Plan’. This presented the first comprehensive set of Project objectives and, while the other parts of the document were changed to meet the Project’s requirements, the objectives remained substantially the same and so are given here in full:

“By the end of this project and in collaboration with the community we will have…

• Facilitated the creation of a City Vision for Liverpool
• Created a structure to better engage the community in Council decision making in a sustained way including an on-going process for renewal of the City Vision
• Initiated a process for change within the community and within Council that enhances democracy and sets both on a collaborative journey towards sustainability
• Clearly identified the internal and external variables, constraints and opportunities
• Improved the community’s understanding of Council’s opportunities and constraints
• Given due consideration to Council’s fiscal position, legislative role, financial strategy and other relevant issues

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7 Auspoll is a contracted firm for local government market research that the Liverpool Council uses.
• Clarified and incorporated community and Council values into Council decision making

• Provided a process for better aligning Council’s resources with the community Vision

• Increased community members’ willingness and ability to actively participate in Council decision making that affect their future

• Incorporated interim outcomes into the completion of the draft Corporate Plan for 2004/5 by December 2004

• Completed the necessary processes and actions for the delivery of a draft Corporate Plan for 2005/6 by December 2005 that gives effect to the City Vision for Liverpool and that integrate the Social, Environmental and other relevant plans.”

A wide-ranging discussion followed that began with many doubts being expressed about how the Executive Board, comprised of department managers, regarded the Project. That such an open discussion took place was interesting to observe, considering that one member of the Team, who was on the Executive Board, was present. Another aspect of the discussion was the obvious but bald acknowledgement that the Team had no authority itself, and that the Administrator, the General Manager and the Executive Board were the high points of power in Council (hereafter these are collectively referred to as Senior Council). Disappointment was expressed that not all departments of the Council were represented on the Team, but all were on the Executive Board. Some questioned the extent to which ‘the engineers and planners’ were interested and supportive; this demonstrated the differences of paradigm between the ‘old’ council domains of ‘rates, roads and rubbish’ and the newer concerns of councils, such as social services and environmental affairs. Harrison summed up the feeling of the meeting when he said “We need to inspire the Executive Board to come along on this journey”; a meeting with them was proposed.

Harrison sought to stimulate more discussion when he asked a fundamental question, “Why do we think that Council needs to go along this particular path?”. Alex answered with these comments: since we did not have elected Councillors, we need another way of finding out what the community wants; we have a four year term
with the Administrator and this brings with it an opportunity to establish new systems, without ‘politics’ being involved (that is, without Party-political Councillors); and that the Project responds to one of the points from Commissioner Daly’s Report (DLG 2003; Daly 2004a). Veronica added that since Liverpool was such a fragmented and unengaged community, the processes of consultation needed improvement; that the Oasis and the Direct Factory Outlet (Orangegrove) affairs obliged council to try to regain the community’s confidence, and that there was a legislative imperative to consult with the community.

5.1.4 Is the Executive ‘on board’?

The Executive Board met on 3rd August where Harrison made a presentation that sought to secure the Board’s endorsement of the Project; a Methods Subgroup meeting coincided and was called into the Board meeting at an appropriate time. My field notes indicate that the presentation was received quite passively: a senior person left the room as it began and returned after five minutes, few questions were asked, and little enthusiasm was expressed. Coincidently, I sat next to Ben, a person from the implementation side of Council, that is, from the previously-discussed ‘old school’. I recorded a comment that he made to the meeting after Harrison finished: “Well, it doesn’t seem too radical”. The undertone of relief was evident, and carried the meaning that the Project outline was not too threatening, there was not too much to change and it was, more or less, ‘business as usual’. Ben’s expression of relief also seemed to me to reflect the Board’s response.

After the meeting Graham and I agreed that, despite these rather resigned and quietly acquiescent nuances, the main point was that the Project and all its components were accepted: the first hurdle had been successfully passed. We also discussed a possible broad framework for the Project, formulating its components as: the community’s City Plan, the Council’s Corporate Plan and the need to have an ongoing review of the process, together with a staged approach that iterates each few years.

August 6th had a Methods Subgroup meeting preceding a Team meeting. For the Subgroup, Veronica, James and Graham all produced discussion papers that synthesised our previous discussions. Although these were quite similar, James’
paper still had the consultation/engagement process as having been completed by the end of 2004. Much discussion ensued and my main comment was that the project was too ambitious in trying to establish a Community Vision by the end of the year; Veronica agreed with me.

The Team meeting debated the encounter with the Executive Board, with differing views as to the degree that they were now ‘on the journey’. Graham presented the latest version of *The Liverpool Plan*, containing various elements that were debated and modified since it first appeared. These elements were: inclusion of a qualitative approach, a broad range of data gathering exercises, using existing community forums, a community festival to launch the Project, an extensive communication strategy, the ‘Principles of Engagement’ and a two-stage Project. We went through Graham’s document at length and it was adopted. There also was discussion and excitement about an internal launch of the Project and for a public launch at Liverpool’s annual environmental festival in September, called *Bloomin’*.

My post-meeting conversation with Graham centred on the sections of Council that had not yet become involved in the Project. He wanted a strategy that oriented Council towards a well-planned and ordered change process and said that we couldn’t expect everyone to be on board this early. For him, the primary task was the need to get some ‘wins’ recorded for the Project that were well understood by all of Council.

5.1.5 The ‘Liverpool Model’ takes shape

It was apparent that Harrison and Graham had been engaging in fruitful strategic dialogue; thus Graham introduced, at the Methods Subgroup meeting of 11\(^{th}\) August, a discussion about *frameworks* and *timeframes*. These issues emerged: the Project was to be a staged process over years, the Visioning component was to be better integrated into the Corporate Plan, and acknowledgment of the mooted new community-council engagement structure. In our talk after the meeting, Graham and I discussed the framework and I sketched out a diagrammatic model of what was labelled “The Liverpool Plan”, which was itself based on a diagram that Graham produced two weeks previously. Graham further developed this diagram and, with
more changes from me, it became what I called “The Liverpool Model” (Parissi 2006). From the meeting’s input Graham worked on three important documents, firstly a more tightly drafted “Workshop Template: Community Engagement” paper; a fuller “Project Schedule for the Liverpool Plan Project Phase 2”, and his Liverpool Model that was entitled “The Liverpool Plan Project”. These were presented for the next Team meeting on August 13th and discussed at length. This was the first meeting to be minuted since 15th June. The minutes were taken by Graham, as for all subsequent meetings, and referred to as ‘Notes’ by him.

A debate began between Alex and Veronica, with Alex wanting to hasten the community Visioning exercise, and Veronica keen to strengthen the corporate change process. The outcome was that the community Visioning exercise would proceed concurrently with the Corporate Plan change program. The other items decided were: to begin gathering data from the Auspoll survey for assessing the community’s values and vision for Liverpool; that the Corporate Plan Subgroup would comprise of Harrison, Simone and Graham and include nominees from unit manager level, and that they would hold workshops with the unit managers on a new format for the Corporate Plan. It was also decided that the Project would culminate in the 2005/06 Corporate Plan. Thus the longer timeframe had been accepted and a firmer linking of the two fundamental elements of the Project was established.

5.1.6 Unfolding conflict with Senior Council
The 15th July meeting included discussion of a directive from Senior Council that the public ‘launch’ was no longer to be described as ‘drawing a line in the sand’, and would simply be an announcement and not an event as planned. There was a lot of anxiety about this change for, up to that time, the notion of Liverpool Council changing direction, onto a more transparent, collaborative and productive path was a central notion for the Team. The new emphasis fostered the idea that stable and responsible governance was the rule of the day, that moderate changes, with a ‘steady as she goes’ approach was the dominant theme. Although this may have been necessary for the image that Senior Council wanted to project to the public, it was felt by the Team to take away the sense of urgency that the previous image
conveyed. Graham changed the Project Schedule due to the removal of the launch: more delay.

The Team meeting of 20th August dealt with Graham’s revised Project Schedule; James pointed out the need for a better formulated communications strategy; Alex appraised us about updating Senior Council, and Simone introduced additional Project-oriented questions for the Auspoll survey. A major innovation was that the Team itself would have a facilitated workshop with the aim of advancing the Project. Lastly, an announcement was made that my sponsor into Liverpool, Veronica, was soon to leave the organisation.

The 27th August Team-workshop was well attended, with Veronica, James, Simone, Graham, Harrison, Alex, Robert, Margaret, Sue and me participating, while Joan facilitated the event. My field notes recorded some of the outcomes: a rewording of the Project’s main aim, namely, that “This project is to develop a city vision that is community owned and endorsed, and Council led”; finalising the Project’s page of questions for the Auspoll survey; and an important change in the wording of the Communications Strategy, from ‘How should we communicate to the community?’ to ‘How should we consult with the community?’; this was part of Margaret and Sue’s presentation of their marketing strategy and seemed to me to be quite advanced for a corporate Communications Strategy. There was also more discussion about how to encourage council Senior Council to adopt a stronger leadership role for the Project.

Figure 5.1 The Liverpool City Council Partnership Project implementation-team’s workshop, 27th August 2004.

Source: P. Lee, Liverpool City Council
5.1.7 Changes to the Team

My last Team meeting with Veronica present was on the 3rd September, she was there with her replacement, John, who as it turned out, would also soon leave the Council. We received news from Alex and Harrison about their meeting with Senior Council. The following is recorded from Graham’s Notes: “...[Senior Council]...had been briefed on the project the previous day and are in general agreement. [Senior Council]...supports the need for community engagement and increased staff involvement in corporate planning ...[and]... agreed to make a staff announcement in the near future and an appropriately timed public announcement ...”.

Another important hurdle had been passed: agreement at the most senior level of Council for two central aspects of the Project, that is, community engagement (not just consultation) and deeper staff involvement in corporate planning. Importantly, they also accepted a leadership role for the Project in terms of being its public face, both outside and within the organisation. Reference to ‘an appropriately timed’ public announcement had to do with a looming Federal election and consideration that the two matters may clash; this caused more delays and a reworking of the Project Schedule. The other major matters dealt with were: agreement on the content of the Corporate Planning Workshops; a detailed Marketing Strategy; and agreement on the ‘Leaders Workshop’, which were distinct from the resident-oriented Visioning events.

By the time the Team meeting of 1st October came around, an announcement was made that a Memorandum of Understanding had been reached between Council and Macquarie Bank that brought the ‘Oasis Scandal’ to a close. I wondered whether this development would allow for more attention to be paid to the Project or whether the external pressure would be off and thus the Project sidelined, but matters pressed ahead. A date was set by Senior Council to announce the Project to all 700 staff over three meetings on 14th October. There was a Team meeting on the following day where an optimistic mood prevailed; the general consensus was that all sessions went well, particularly the morning ones, and that having Senior Council address staff was very important; from my attendance at the two morning meetings I agreed.
Even though the Project was developing a momentum, with the regular Friday Team meeting, weekly Methods Subgroup and additional other meetings and workshops, delays forced major scheduling changes. Corporate Planning Workshops were put back to the end of October and November and, as a consequence, postponements occurred for the Community Leader Workshops, which meanwhile had been changed in concept to conceptually smaller ‘Stakeholder Briefings’, partly due to budgetary restraints. The public announcement for the community visioning workshops was now re-scheduled for 2005, and would follow the February Stakeholder Briefings.

My field notes for mid-October record using terms like ‘much enthusiasm’ and ‘launch buzz’ in referring to the staff launch that just happened and to the work being done to organise the expected public launch of the Visioning Workshops. Graham’s Notes of the 22nd October meeting exemplifies the feeling, but in his usually sedate and practical language, “2005 Formal Launch. … as a major event, the proposed launch required an event application … A suggestion to hold the event at a location such as the Westfield Mall … opened with some entertainment and … information stall and display.” In the midst of this enthusiasm questions were still raised about Senior Council’s attitude to the Project. Robert tried to put the difficulties into context by saying, at the Team meeting of 5th November, “If we had a Council [meaning elected Councillors] we wouldn’t be here now. We wouldn’t have a Partnership Project”. I understood this comment to mean that, even with the unplanned changes, it was still better than not having the Project.

5.1.8 Déjà vu
During the Team meeting of 15th October, I suggested making a purposeful effort to bring people into the Team from the sections of council that were not represented in any of our organising groups but Alex, James and Harrison disagreed. They thought that it would be more effective for these issues to be taken up during the Corporate Change processes, and that an influx of new people could upset the cohesion of the Team. The same matter came up in another way when Veronica left Council, and a series of replacements came into the Team and the Methods Subgroup (John, Joseph, Lucy and then Mario), and Joan also joined the Team and the Methods Subgroup.
That difficulties occurred because of the new people was not a matter of the individuals themselves, rather the fact that understandings had to be renegotiated and knowledge passed on; it was an unsettling process and there were some tense moments to come. For me it was a case of *déjà vu* as it reminded me of a matter that came up in previous research, that of problematic issues that arise from the unstable staffing situation in local government (Parissi 2003).

A second case of *déjà vu* was also connected to that previous research, this time it concerned the seemingly recurring problems of the lack of co-ordinating structures and processes between various government bodies and between different levels of government. At the Team meeting of 22nd October, the issue of the incompatibility of the geographical boundaries of various state government departments and that of the Council arose. In a discussion between Graham and Robert about aligning the outcomes of the Project and State government stakeholders, I recorded the following in my field notes, “*How are we going to expect ‘Health’ or ‘Housing’ to align its plans that cover several LGAs, to the Liverpool Plan? They have their own boundaries that do not necessarily coincide with Liverpool’s*”.

The matter was not resolved, but noted for further discussion when it came to engaging with other stakeholders.

### 5.1.9 What is ‘the Liverpool community’?

At the Team meeting of 1st December a discussion developed between Graham, Lucy, James and Joan about the nature of the Liverpool community and how best to present the Workshops so as to get the maximum numbers of people to attend. Two opinions became clear: that, with such a disengaged community, it would be very hard to get anyone except the ‘usual suspects’ to join the workshops. The other position was that we already had a great deal of community involvement, for example, with social, environmental and sporting groups. I suggested that both views may well reflect Liverpool, indeed that it may be better not to view the community as a homogenous entity from either viewpoint, that Liverpool was more complex than that.

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8 The reference to ‘Health’ and ‘Housing’ are to the respective departments of the State government.
Later, Lucy and James both mentioned their impressions about the acceptance of the Project by staff. Lucy stated that, among her peers, there was scepticism about meaningful change at Liverpool because they doubted the level of support from Senior Council. Referring to the Executive Board, James said, “…some of them had made negative statements about the engagement process”. This sort of discussion suggested a build up of frustration because much work, particularly publicity for the workshops, had been delayed for three months, to a perhaps uncertain future in 2005. The only exceptions were the internal launch and the Corporate Planning Workshops (detailed in Part 2 of this chapter), which had already taken place. At the next Methods Subgroup meeting, on 9th December, James stated that he was considering ending his involvement in the Project due to the delays, saying “I’m getting close to moving on from this project – have other things to achieve if we cannot move on.” Coming from James, this surprised me: I wondered whether the Christmas/New Year hiatus was going to be more than just ‘down time’ and develop into a dangerous stage of the Project, when it could unravel.

However, despite delays, disappointments, and the festive break, much was accomplished from late-November to early-February, although little of it was outside the council building, for example:

- Planning, preparing, undertaking and evaluating the Corporate Planning Workshops;
- Preparing presentations to Senior Council and the Executive Board;
- Planning and preparing for the Stakeholder Briefings, including arranging for Senior Council to sign 240 invitations that were sent out;
- Planning and preparing for the Visioning Workshops;
- Planning a system for Evaluating the Project, especially the Visioning component;
- Preparing a Budget;
- Preparing and negotiating the Public Announcement;
- Preparing a Brief for the Facilitation Consultant for the Visioning Workshops;
- Continually modifying the Project Schedule;
- Preparing for the Auspoll Survey and evaluating the results.
It is also useful to remember that the Team and the Project was being run by part-time, under-funded ‘volunteers’ and without an explicit Project Manager, although, in effect, Harrison and Graham co-ordinated the Project.

In briefly looking at one of the above issues, the Auspoll survey, it can be seen that even though consultants were employed by council, the Team spent several hours on the issue. The Team worked on its page of the survey, examined the results, developed themes that emerged, and ultimately used those findings within the Visioning process as one of the quantitative balances to the qualitative approach of the Workshops. At the 12th December Team meeting Alex mentioned that about 700 responses were received by Auspoll as compared to the 400-450 that Liverpool residents usually sent in; he related this increase in the rate of response to the interest that Oasis and Orange Grove generated.

The last Team meeting for 2004 was on the 17th December and focused on several of the above mentioned topics. Graham presented the latest graphical version of all the elements of the Project in ‘The Liverpool Visioning Process’. It was agreed that the Corporate Planning Subgroup would seek to encourage the Managers to incorporate the results of the Auspoll survey into the work of their sections. The final Methods Subgroup meeting for the year was on the 22nd where James gave an account of a meeting he had with an officer from a nearby council. He described the process and outcomes to date of that council’s visioning project, which had been conducted four years earlier; it was a cautionary tale. His main conclusion was that they had an excellent process, a well formulated set of documents but only one park bench and a disabled toilet to show in terms of practical outcomes. James said that his informant was optimistic that more would be done in the future. It was good to see that James was back in the thick of the Project and seemed to have gained confidence in it again; perhaps this came about from his exploration of the other council’s efforts.

We then concentrated on the content of the Visioning workshops, with James running a whiteboard brainstorming exercise. In doing so we further worked on the concept of a ‘Time Tunnel’ that I had introduced as a way to focus the participants’ attention in moving from where we came from and where we are, to where we would
like to be. The Time Tunnel was to be a prelude to a professionally facilitated ‘Values and Visions’ session, where data would be gathered. We wished each other season’s cheer and looked forward to progress in the New Year, having completed six months’ effort.

5.1.10 The New Year begins

Work resumed in January, with Methods Subgroup meetings on the 14th and 18th, where we prepared for the year’s first Team gathering on the 21st. Our major task was organising the Stakeholder Briefings and the Visioning Workshops. Graham announced that the number of invitations sent out to the Stakeholder Briefings had increased to 250, and there were 50 respondents so far; with a 20% return it was a good result. Graham also presented us with a number of re-worked documents such as a Project Schedule, The Liverpool Visioning Process diagram and a Community Engagement document. A passage from the Community Engagement document underscores the philosophy of the Team, and provides a background to tensions that later arose:

“A key factor in successfully engaging the community on a project like this will be the trust the community has that the vision will be acted upon. The current portrayal of Council (DFO, Public Inquiry etc) and the public perceptions that arise from this …will require greater effort on our part to create that climate of trust. … everything the organisation does in the future will need to be linked strategically to the vision … ” [emphasis in the original]. Due to the setbacks of November and December, one of the major challenges now was the postponement of the Community Visioning Workshops from February to May.

Lucy mentioned that the Project was taking up a lot of time from the demands of her other work commitments, again raising the issue of having ‘volunteer’ staff. Within this context I broached the matter of the almost non-existent budget; Joan supported my comments suggesting that we needed a Project Manager and funds for an independent facilitator for the Workshops. She said, “…if there was no budget for an independent facilitator, then this is a Liverpool City Council Corporate Planning Process with consultation, rather than a community participation project.” Graham offered to work on budgeting proposals for the Team meeting.
In our post-meeting chat I raised with Graham the issue of the sense of detachment that some members of the Team and Subgroup were expressing, such as Lucy, Joan and earlier with James. Another matter was the distance that the Team and Subgroups felt from Senior Council. He agreed with my observations and suggested that we should incorporate an element of interaction of Council officers in the Visioning Workshops. How to better engage Senior Council was a more difficult problem.

On January 21st, the ‘Time Tunnel’ concept, first formulated in the Subgroup, was presented to an enthusiastic Team. Graham presented a draft Budget for the Project, with $55,000 up to the end of June 2005 and $63,000 for the following financial year. Alex suggested that half of it needed to come out of current allocations because the Executive Board would not be able to find all ‘new’ money. James pressed the need for a dedicated Project Manager and Harrison nominated Graham for the job. Joan foreshadowed that Council needed a Consultation Protocol as part of the Council’s governance processes; it would take until the end of the year for her to find the time to begin developing this concept into a Council Policy Document and Toolkit.

At the Methods Subgroup meeting the following week, James made a critical announcement that, having explored the nooks and crannies of his section’s budget, he had found $50,000 of unused funding for the Project. Besides the budget, we also reviewed the Time Tunnel idea and further elaborated on it and examined Graham’s Facilitator’s Brief, while Margaret presented the details of her publicity budget, and we finalised the content of the four Stakeholder Briefings, scheduled for 2nd and 3rd February.

The Team meeting of 28th January covered a lot of ground: Harrison and Graham outlined their presentations for the Stakeholder Briefings, with Alex to do an introductory welcome; Robert found $7000 to put into the Project coffers, and the Corporate Plan Subgroup outlined their suggested changes to the Corporate Plan. Another discussion centred on having independent or internal facilitators for the Visioning Workshops. Some thought that internal facilitators would aid the
engagement process between Council and Community by including a broader range of officers as a part of the Visioning exercise. This was in contrast to the notion that, with a community that was so alienated from Council, the process needed independent facilitation, so as to secure the participants’ trust. The deliberation continued for another week, but concluded on the side of having an independent facilitator at the Methods Subgroup meeting of 1st February.

5.1.11 Engagement begins: the Stakeholder Briefing sessions
The four Stakeholder Briefing sessions went ahead, with two per day; I observed each meeting. Of the 250 invitations, in the end there were 52 responses and of those, 34 people came to the Briefings. The participants were made up of 19 men and 15 women, generally above 40 years of age but some were younger. They were mostly from an Anglo-Celtic background, with four or five from other cultural origins, including one from an Aboriginal background. Most were from Local, State or Federal authorities who were usually service providers, or from a volunteer Civil Society background, only four or five were solely from an Informal Society setting, one of those was a former Councillor. Alex gave a brief introduction while Harrison and Graham conducted the rest of the session, giving the Project’s history, working principles, aims, processes, expected outcomes, and the function of the Briefings within that structure. Then there was a break, a question and answer forum and a round table discussion. Finally, the participants were encouraged to go back to their respective organisations to promote the upcoming Visioning Workshops and to consider how their organisation could fit in with the Liverpool Vision’s implementation processes.

On 9th February the Methods Subgroup documented issues that came out of the Briefings and concluded that there were no major changes needed to the Project. The Team meeting of 11th February agreed to send the document to the participants for validation. Simone presented a compiled list of themes that she derived from previous Auspoll Surveys, which we reviewed. Although I agreed with the Team’s conclusion that none of the issues that come up in the Briefings contradicted previous Council studies, the one noticeable gap concerned environmental topics
which, while rating quite strongly in the other LCC consultation, remained greatly understated during the Briefings.

Other matters came up, such as Graham’s list of tasks that needed to be done and the associated personnel. We agreed that a Data Analysis Subgroup would be formed after the Workshops. Alex mentioned that three people, who he considered excellent candidates for data analysis, had recently resigned and, when I asked about the staff turnover, said that there was about a 10% change in staff per year. A little later Robert began a discussion about the Project still “…not being a part of the main game at council”. He stated that statutory obligations were still a higher priority than the Project, which had weak obligations under law. James reinforced the point but, as the keen observer of group dynamics that he was, stated that we had to focus on achieving milestones, such as incorporating the Vision into the Corporate Plan and thereby establish interest in the Project. Another topic was that of having the Visioning Workshops independently evaluated. Alex asked me if I was interested in undertaking the Evaluation; I said that I needed to think about it. We also found out that Graham had been appointed as the Project Manager.

Much time and creative energy was spent on the Time Tunnel Exhibition, for example, the 22nd February Methods Subgroup meeting examined how to make the exhibition as unbiased by Council as possible. Two views emerged. One was the need to establish a set of ideas from the community that were as unadulterated as possible. Another saw the Project as a process of ‘education’ with an overt didactic element that aimed to help change a ‘cynical’ and ‘disengaged’ community into one that was positive and engaged. The puzzle was to reconcile these two apparently contradictory but valid concepts. On being asked I stated my opinion that it was not possible to have a completely values-free situation, so it was not an ‘either/or’ situation. Graham continued this train of thought, saying that it was better to present a range of values, as it was a range that we expected from participants.

On 25th February Graham issued a Guideline for the Development of the Time Tunnel Exhibition that was discussed over the next two weeks. At the Methods Subgroup meeting of 15th of March, we looked at using an overriding theme, such as Ecologically Sustainable Development, to unify the elements of the Exhibit. James
suggested that this theme could be used as a link between the Vision and the Corporate Plan. But, was this too ‘biased’ or was it being ‘creative’? – much discussion ensued. The matter was resolved by Nicolai, one of two new people who came into the Project; the second person was Mario, Veronica’s permanent replacement. Nicolai, from the local museum, had been invited to develop the Time-tunnel exhibition. He proposed to gather comments about Liverpool’s past, present and future from the local community and historical documents, and put a selection of them on T-shirts that would be hung on a portable clothes line. The Team readily accepted the idea, as much for its unusual nature, as for the consideration that the, then current, May deadline for the Workshops loomed large. The critical point was the offer of an additional resource, Nicolai’s group, which would save a deal of time: this was an offer the Team could not refuse. Included in the offer was Nicolai’s approach that kept the Council’s ‘bias’ of the Past-Present-Future framework and put in a counter ‘bias’ of statements from the community. However, the overarching theme of Ecologically Sustainable Development was lost.

5.1.12 Validation and evaluation: a rocky road

In one of the many self-evaluative and reflective exchanges that occurred, the Methods Subgroup, on 2\textsuperscript{nd} March, produced an important discussion about the best way to validate the Workshops and how best to evaluate the Project. This centred on developing guiding principles that “…[from my notes] … measure not just what is done, but how effective what is done is done, that is, not just ticking off boxes…”.

They were striving to find, establish, and hold meaning in their work, not just earn a living/do a job. At this meeting we also learned that Alex had been appointed to a newly created Senior Council position.

A post-meeting discussion with Graham focused on him asking whether I was interested in taking up the offer to evaluate the Project, to which I said yes, but had thought about the notion and had come up with some new ideas. We talked about some of these, including me joining with a university colleague, Amanda, in order to expand the evaluation to develop a whole-of-council approach. I would focus on evaluating the workshop process itself and she would establish base line data to evaluate where the Council was with regard to sustainability using Triple Bottom
Line analysis, and then what effect the Project had in shifting the Council and the LGA to a more sustainable situation. Graham was interested and we met with Amanda the following week. When evaluation was discussed at the March 18th Team meeting, Alex brought up the issue by asking “…is the Evaluation the best way for us to spend $4,500?”. A brief discussion took place, without me taking part, and the independent evaluation did not eventuate as the Team felt the job could be done internally. In this way my reflections on what the original offer would mean in terms of changing my role in the Project from volunteer student to paid consultant, were obviated.

It was also at this meeting when Margaret brought up that Senior Council did not want a major public launch of the Partnership Project, as had been planned with much enthusiasm by the Team, but wanted ‘a quiet announcement’ in the local papers. In particular, there was to be no use of the notion of Liverpool ‘drawing a line in the sand’. Besides the Team members needing to reassess its approach to the Project, this meant that the timetable needed to be altered again. Margaret had to increase and re-schedule the promotional program to try and make up for the lack of impact that the new approach entailed. No-one was happy with the change, but Margaret’s suggestion to increase the publicity for the Workshops, was seen as the only way forward. On a more encouraging note, Robert offered to get schools involved in the Visioning; this became one of the main ways the Project accessed the views of Youth.

The Methods Subgroup met on 22nd March to face a major disagreement. James, Lucy and Joan had missed a meeting where a decision was made to reduce time spent in validating the outcomes of the Visioning Workshops. Since December 2004, there were two ways the Team planned to corroborate the Vision: a quantitative phone survey and a qualitative workshop. The latter was dropped because there was not enough time in the new Project Schedule to include it; the greater need was felt to be in ensuring that the Vision was integrated into the 2006/07 Corporate Plan.

When Lucy, Joan and James heard about this, they reacted strongly because they thought that the complete validation process was needed to ensure that the draft Vision was acceptable to the community. My notes state: “They got very upset
because they thought that this took away from the ‘community owned’ aspect of the Project. They asked, was it a council or a community Project?”. Joan and Lucy conducted a special Methods Subgroup workshop the following week to see how to resolve the matter, but to no avail. The matter then went to the Team meeting on the 1st April, with an alternative proposal from James, who was the only one of the three who could be present. James, who borrowed a comment that I had made, said that the Vision should take the form of a ‘Bill of Rights’ for the community and that a fully structured validation process was important to ensure this. The other side viewed the change as unfortunate, but that a more ‘perfect’ Vision was less important than securing its inclusion in the Corporate Plan as soon as possible, because enacting the Vision was critical to keep the trust of the community. The conclusion came with the adoption of the shorter validation process but more effort put into the quantitative survey. Despite this compromise Lucy, who was always a passionate and committed person to authentic public participation, was never again as involved with the Project, although she did subsequently attend some Subgroup meetings. After the meeting Graham asked me if I would consider being on the selection panel for the workshop facilitator as its external member, I said that I would.

5.1.13 More rocky roads and stormy times

The two months before the workshops actually began was a stormy time, both within and outside the Team. At the 8th April Team meeting the heated Collingwood Precinct public meeting was keenly discussed, as detailed in the next chapter. The Team meeting of the 15th revealed that Senior Council had vetoed the use of T-shirts for the exhibition, causing mild uproar. Timing was crucial as more changes would create another unwelcome delay. Graham took a matter-of-fact view - for him the main issue was developing a valid community Vision, and the Time Tunnel and the T-shirt Exhibition were secondary. Others reacted as though their work had been unjustly dismissed. Margaret informed us that the reason for the change was a concern that the T-shirts could be seen as a waste of Council money. The next week Nicolai met with Senior Council to explain that the aim was not to produce give-away T-shirts for the public, but only enough for the Exhibition display. In an interview I later conducted with Senior Council it was stated that the objection
occurred due to differing sensibilities and to a feeling that the Team had pre-ordered the T-shirts and presented the idea as a *fait accompli* (pers. comm. Senior Council, in-person interview, 20-03-2006). By the meeting of the 26\(^{th}\) April, the exhibition was on again, although its launch on the 26\(^{th}\) May was greatly reduced in scale, and to be referred to as an ‘opening’.

At that meeting, Robert described plans for the schools based data-gathering task, which consisted of a series of competitions with a total of $250 prize money for each category of entry. Two days later, the selection panel for the workshop facilitator convened, on 28\(^{th}\) April; we chose consultants that fitted in with the qualitative approach the Team had adopted for the workshops. This was quite a relief, after delays in waiting for applicants and in finalising the matter.

The Methods Subgroup meeting of May 10\(^{th}\) resulted in more tension about the T-shirt Exhibition. The mail-out for the invitation-only opening was cancelled by Graham because it would have meant delaying the launch and then delaying the Workshops that had now been advertised for June 2\(^{nd}\). Lucy, who was at the meeting, was upset saying “…we always end up dropping the ‘community’ bit but that’s what it’s all about.” Everyone agreed, but the practicalities of the situation that formed the bone of contention took over: there was no launch of the Exhibition, it was simply installed at the central library as a passive advertisement for the Workshops. Again disharmony arose because the Team’s decisions and subsequent arrangements were perceived to have been derailed by the action of superiors who the group perceived as being unsupportive. The central issues concerned internal democracy in decision-making and the establishment and maintenance of effective communication between the Team and critical internal stakeholders.

By the middle of May, with just two weeks to go, a few registrations had come in for the workshops, and on the 20\(^{th}\) the facilitators met with the Team to finalise the workshop program. During this time Margaret arranged advertisements in the local media and on the front page of the Council’s local-paper insert “*City News*”, 2,500 leaflets to be posted out, additional leaflets to be placed at Council buildings, and banners placed at prominent public locations.
Part 2

5.2.1 Creating a vision for Liverpool

On the 27th May a ‘pilot’ Workshop took place, consisting of Council staff who mostly lived in Liverpool. The Workshop went well and the data gathered was later collated with that from the 13 public workshops, the Team noting that both data sets were remarkably similar. The public workshops were held from 2nd June – 4th July. Three of the Workshops were cancelled due to there being not enough registrants and two of those were transformed from public forums into special interest Workshops, one for the Liverpool Youth Council, and another for migrants who were learning the English language. In addition there was another Workshop arranged for disabled persons that was held on 4th July. In the end there were 14 Visioning Workshops, including the pilot. I attended all events, except the one for disabled people, and was introduced as a participant and an independent ‘critical friend of the Project’.

Most workshops were held in Council facilities across Liverpool such as the administrative building, the CBD library meeting rooms, and the Green Valley and Bringelly Community Halls; the disabled person’s event was held at their premises in Liverpool. Two were usually arranged per day and they ran for three hours 30 minutes, with a break after an hour and a half. Each workshop was planned for 20 people, although the most that registered was 18, often there were people who did not show up, the range of actual attendees was three to 12. The sections of each workshop consisted of an introduction by the facilitator, and then exercises that explored these themes: ‘What do we value as a community?’; ‘If we were in charge, what would Liverpool look like?’; ‘Suggestions for ongoing ways of the Council and community to work together’; ‘Puzzle statements’; ‘Graffiti Board’ and, finally, a closing round-table discussion with closure.

In order to give the reader a sense of what happened in the workshops, information from five of them are given here. The first four were held on weekdays, and were variously located in the CBD, in the outlying suburb of Green Valley, and the fourth in rural Bringelly; the fifth was on a Saturday and held at the main Council
Administration building. The data comes from my field notes and the transcribed account of each meeting’s output as provided by the facilitator. The initial two accounts come from the first day of the public workshops, held in the Council Chambers, in morning and afternoon sessions. The participants were asked to fill out a survey sheet, visit the T-shirt exhibition and shown where the workshop was to be held. The morning session had 18 registered, 10 turned up, comprised of five men and five women. Eight of them seemed to me to be older than 40 and two younger. A self-identified elder of a local Aboriginal tribe attended, and two other people sounded to me as though they were from a migrant background. Two participants were self-identified non-council community workers and two were self-identified community activists, or ‘squeaky wheels’. The afternoon session had nine turn up, four were older men, with two older and three younger women. Three participants were migrants, one of whom was a multi-cultural officer from Liverpool Technical and Further Education; two were from a Civil Society group, the Genealogy Society.

Some of the values given by the participants in the morning were: “Multiculturalism … different but pulling together; Open spaces; Family; Waterways; …clean streets; Safe streets; Heritage/history; Representation of the community (quality)…”.

Visioning comments followed the facilitator’s statement: “In the future, Liverpool is a city…” and some responses from the afternoon session were: “That is proud of itself; Cosmopolitan; Safe and secure;… has youth programs; Our money is well spent; Urban planning – we need our fruit and vegetable bowl – sustainable;…”; comments often closely reflected the previously articulated values. During a discussion one participant said, “You need to talk to the NESB …[Non English Speaking Background]…in their centres.” This last statement was tied in with the value of ‘clean streets’, for some of the more established participants complained of the habit of some newer migrants in placing refuse on grass strips outside an area of high-rise apartments. The issue of safety was often in reference to drug dealers in the main street, but also to some of the public housing estates of the area. During open discussion in the morning, one of the community activists stated, while the other one voiced agreement, “Precinct Committees were run by the community and were too hard for Council to handle. They shut them down and set up the Forums that they could control …they need to come to us, especially the outlying areas.” Similarly, during the afternoon session, a ‘Puzzle statement’ was recorded as “Liverpool is a
vibrant city with less political interference, greater community involvement in decision making …”.

The third workshop was held at the Green Valley Community Hall on 7th June from 1pm. Five people attended, all males, with two identifiable from their accents as migrants, another was a Council community worker who lived locally and there were two, retired older male, self-identified Green Valley community activists. It is important to note that Green Valley originated as one of NSW’s social experiments: it was a 40 year old public housing development on what was then the outskirts of both Liverpool and Sydney that had a long, difficult and proud history (Weir 1973; Keating 1996). Some of the stated values were: “Teamwork; Diversity; Connections; Local employment; Caring for people; Good politics – participation, community action; The local environment”. Some of the expressed vision statements were: “A city with a good council; Not over governed – no council, but committees instead; Good entertainment for all ages…”. The two community activists introduced themselves as being on the executive of the Green Valley Precinct Committee and, although they valued the newer Forums, insisted on the value of the Precinct Committees. One stated that, in addition, “There is a 2168 Action Group that produces a newsletter.”
The fourth workshop was held on 16th June at the Bringelly Community Hall from 1pm. Three residents turned up, two retired older males and a middle-aged woman who was employed. Values that were expressed included: “Open space; Land use mix; Biodiversity; Cultural diversity...; Caring for...people; Security” and their vision included: “A city with distinct areas: high density, residential, village, farmland, vegetation; Has maintained the rural amenity of the western corridor – no new urban development; ...a healthy creek system; Bringelly gets its fair share of council resources...”. During the discussion session, participants made the following comments: “No one from the council ever comes out here – well, sometimes [......] comes out”; “I don’t really feel like part of Liverpool, the other side of the road is Camden Council”; “When the Forums started up 10 years ago we had a good round of people come out to talk to us...now we never know what’s going on...we don’t get the local paper.”, and “We pay our rates but get nothing for it out here”.

The fifth reviewed workshop was held on a Saturday, 4th June, in the hope of attracting ordinary working people, members of the ‘silent majority’. In this case, it did not happen, for the only ones who turned up were five retirees: two women and three men. One was a former mayor, and another stated that he had been involved in a Council program before and one migrant woman was a youth worker. Various matters were raised, similar to other workshops, however, broad governance and environment issues dominated. The former mayor said, “…we have planners who come out of university and who know nothing about what we want...” and later said, “…Parking and traffic is planned around Liverpool just to benefit Westfields”. One woman said, “…I moved to Liverpool for the open spaces and not for the slums that are being planned...”. Here governance, as an important right of the local Informal Society to determine the nature of their region, clashed with the power of Civic Society in the form of the State government and large developers, in this case Westfields.

From Graham’s ‘Demographics’ document of 15th July, 57% of participants of the Visioning Workshops were female and 43% male; their ages were, 16% 16-25, 9% 26-35, 16% 36-45, 16% 46-55, 23% 56-65 and 19% 65+. Also, 51% identified as being of ‘Ethnic Background’; 21% were unemployed, 61% employed/inccluding self employed and 18% with ‘other’ as their employment status. In the end,
approximately 320 participants in various events contributed to the compilation of qualitative data for the Vision:

- 30 people from the Stakeholder Briefings;
- 21 from the pilot Council-workers workshop;
- 79 from public workshops;
- 80 submissions from the Schools program;
- 110 people who were interviewed in person or on the phone by Graham, or who sent in written submissions.

Quantitative data came from two surveys conducted by Auspoll for 2004 and 2005 (Auspoll 2004; Auspoll 2005). These surveys involved a mail-out to 2,500 randomly selected people from the Council’s voters’ electoral roll, from which 720 responses were received in 2004 and 450 in 2005. The 2004 survey specifically had a section of questions that were formulated by the Team for the Project. Thus a total of about 1,490 members of the community contributed to the data for the Vision.

Despite the publicity, and the effort to include as many forms of participation as possible, that only 79 people attended the public workshops was disappointing for the Team. All the talk of having a disengaged, cynical populace seemed to come true. This disappointment was ameliorated by the knowledge that the work done in 2004/05 for the Project was not the end of the matter, but that the Project was iterative in nature and that these early steps would be built on over time. At the

Figure 5.3 Typical artwork submitted by school children as part of Liverpool City Council’s Creating Our Partnership Project, 2004.

Source of image used: P. Lee, Liverpool City Council
meeting of 27\textsuperscript{th} June the Team conducted a critical analysis of the workshops. It was stated that one ‘group’ of people were over represented, that is, the already civic minded, while we had not stimulated the ‘silent majority’ to attend. In addition, one group was under-represented, namely, ‘McMansion’ owners\textsuperscript{9} from Liverpool’s many new housing developments; during one workshop issues relevant to these new housing developments were raised, such as transport and access to services. It might also be said that the ‘noisy minority’, the squeaky wheels, did not attend in numbers.

5.2.2 Validating the draft vision – the first steps
The first stage of the validation of the draft Vision document began when the consultants returned to conduct a focus group on 16\textsuperscript{th} August with some of those who participated in the June program. A second validation exercise was held on the 25\textsuperscript{th} and, although participants were randomly selected from the residents of Liverpool, three of the 22 were ‘active citizens’ (or ‘squeaky wheels’). It was at this time that I attended the United Nations \textit{International Conference on Engaging Communities} in Brisbane from 14\textsuperscript{th} -17\textsuperscript{th} August in support of my studies (ICEC 2005). No strikingly new issues were recorded in Graham’s notes for the Team meeting of the 26\textsuperscript{th} that reviewed the outcomes of the focus groups, the only substantial criticism arising was that the formatting of the document needed some work and the concept of a ‘vision’ needed to be explained. On the whole, we agreed that the outcomes of the Visioning Workshops were modest and would probably be accepted by Senior Council. In an encouraging early use of the Visioning data, Graham reported that Senior Council recommended that major Council projects, in particular the ‘Re-development of the Liverpool CBD’, should make use of the relevant findings of the visioning data.

5.2.3 Developing a document
While June was largely given over to the visioning workshops, meetings for the period July to August 2005 concentrated on developing themes from the Visioning data and the composition of these into a document. After an initial draft was completed it went through a long process of re-formulation that continued into September to take advantage of Council’s Spring \textit{Bloomin’ Environment} fair and the

\textsuperscript{9} The term ‘McMansion’ refers to a trend of building very large houses on relatively small blocks.
feedback gained from residents. The process of re-working the document continued into 2006, until after the final validation was completed. This involved many drafts of several versions, with the different versions going through a number of ‘filters’. These filters were of various sorts, for example, one was the organisational structure of Council, with the Team being the next in line after the Data Subgroup and then

Figure 5.4 Participants in a validation workshop conducted for the Creating Our Future Together Partnership Project, Liverpool City Council, 2004.

Source: P. Lee, Liverpool City Council

Senior Council. Another sort of filter consisted of purposefully involving various people in Council who had not been a part of the Team. The aim of this second filtering was to assess various aspects of the document from a ‘fresh’ point of view - such as appropriate (non-jargon) language, duplication of themes, readability, length, formatting, and aesthetic appeal.

At the 5th September Data Subgroup meeting, a fairly heated discussion erupted because, by this time, two versions of the ‘Vision Document’ had evolved. One came more directly from the data as derived from the workshops themselves and the other was a far more refined version that had gone through the many filters described above. The debate began when James suggested that Council officers may not understand the authentic meaning of the Community’s vision in the refined document. I unwittingly became one of the protagonists in suggesting that both versions could be used, the less refined one being for Council officers to expand on
and to explain the meaning of the shorter public version. At issue was not that the two documents were in conflict, but that it may have seemed so to some community members. The matter was resolved by having both versions used but, to ensure that there was no hint of secrecy, both were available to the public via the Council website. Once again the temperature rose when people were defending what they believed to be the integrity of the Project.

5.2.4 Three outstanding issues – engagement, sustainability and action planning

Three outstanding issues that had been raised previously came up during September. At the Team meeting of the 9th September Joan again raised the matter that Council needed to develop a Consultation Policy, and that her department was progressing the formulation of a ‘Consultation Protocol Toolkit’ for use by all Council personnel. To discuss this initiative and to consider ongoing engagement between Council and Community, the next two Team meetings were dedicated to these topics, as outlined in more detail below. Another outstanding matter came up at the Data Subgroup meeting of 12th September about how to develop the theme of sustainability into the Vision. James said that it was not necessary to ‘put sustainability’ into the document, but that this had to be focused on later when progressing the concrete outcomes of the Vision, a point that he also made at an earlier meeting: a debate ensued. Graham, in particular, opposed the idea. Graham’s notes of that meeting stated that there was, “…some doubt as to whether the section on sustainability in the vision could be confidently said to represent the views of the community. This was because the concept of sustainability itself was not a strong theme, noting that there were many references to environmental issues and to nature that could be placed under this concept…”.

During the next two post-meeting discussions that Graham and I had, we further discussed the issue of the Vision, the community, and sustainability. As can be recognised from the above quotation, Graham held an advanced notion of sustainability, and distinguished it from environmentalism. He opposed my idea because of concerns that, in adopting my suggestion, the community’s hazily-conceptualised notion of ‘sustainability’ really reduced to ‘environmentalism’ and that this caused confusion and could be seen to bind both the community and
Council to a poorer outcome. At the next Team meeting, my field notes record that I suggested that we refer to the whole document as the community’s view of sustainability, *at the present time*. As such, sustainability was a notion that applied as much to the community’s understanding of sustainability as to the Council’s, in whatever way it was currently defined – and one that would change, in any case.

The fate of the relationship between ‘Sustainability’ and the ‘Vision’ came to a head at the Data Subgroup meeting of the 26th September. Tatania had prepared a review of Council’s previous Iris Sustainability Survey and its derived themes. They were assessed by the Subgroup and determined to be highly consistent with the themes from the Visioning process. Although many of the themes can be reduced to simply ‘environmental matters’, both sets of data were accepted as the community’s current view of sustainability; this was accepted after some debate as to what ‘sustainability’ meant. In the end, the compromise was that these issues were the best current representation of the community’s vision of a ‘sustainable Liverpool’; it was accepted by all that this could and would change over time and with more input from Council and other sources of information, and with the future experiences of members of the community. From Graham’s Notes of the meeting, data from the survey showed that a summary of the community’s sustainability views were comprised of: “The key elements:

- *Things survive – have an ability to keep going…*
- *Reduce waste…*
- *Protect and regenerate natural bush*
- *Balance development with environment… Local jobs…*
- *More use of public transport*
- *A better place for our children*
- *Preserving heritage/aboriginal history…*
- *Local control and action*”.

However, the Notes also record that the whole Vision document would now not be named as a ‘sustainability’ document: “…*this would remain … as a subsection under the existing heading rather than sustainability being elevated to the main heading.*”
In this way, although this discussion and decision was not intentionally a relegation of the Project’s overall sustainability theme, this was another way in which the sustainability theme was diminished from its position as a foundation premise of the Project. This was partly because the Environment section of Council had begun a process of formulating a Sustainability Policy and this was seen as an alternative that was intended to cover the whole of Council. However this approach saw the issue of sustainability relegated to stay within Council, rather than being in negotiation between community and Council. On reflection, I also thought that we could have foreseen the possibility of a clash between the community and Councils’ understanding of sustainability since the Council was bound by legal obligations regarding ESD (under the Local Government Act 1993), but the community was not. Had I argued the point more clearly, the resolution presented may have been viewed as a way to resolve the potential clash.

The third outstanding issue on the 12th September was James’ proposal that action planning needed to begin. Graham’s notes stated, “It was felt that strategic/action planning on the vision should be developed as a new separate phase by the full project team... as a first step, the data group should summarise the strategic directions already present in the data ...”. Thus the joining of the community vision to the actions of Council had begun to enter a new phase.

Consideration of Joan’s Consultation Toolkit and engagement structures came up again at the special meeting of the 16th September. The kit was to create a set of tools so that all council officers would be able to choose how to consult the community along a range of complexity from ‘informing’ to full ‘engagement’. The Toolkit was an important way to link the ‘external’ engagement processes and the ‘internal’ cultural change program. James summed up the group’s attitude when he said “The desire to be a consultative council needs to be embedded in all the Council.”

A free-flowing discussion occurred that explored practical grounding and frameworks for engagement. To that end I suggested that one framework may be to look at a multi-level or graduated approach. Thus our tasks could be seen as promoting ‘Information’ (to the community and them doing likewise), ‘Education’
(two-way), ‘Participation’ (engaged) and all of these leading to ‘Action’ (from all parties). Harrison suggested that these ideas needed to be tied to officers’ duty statements. Graham’s Notes recorded this, “One of the first … tasks was to improve the information made available on proposed Council actions or policies. But our…options need to go beyond just information provision to education, to participation and to action. The depth of engagement would depend, in part, on the issue at hand …”

Besides practicalities, ‘blue-sky’ ideas came up, such as Harrison’s possibility of “…heading towards each Liverpool City Council neighbourhood having a discretionary budget allocated by the community.” This impressed me as I had only recently heard a first hand report from a practitioner of the concept at the Brisbane International Conference on Engaging Communities. At the conference Olivio Dutra, the former Mayor of Porto Alegre in Brazil (and later Governor) described a pioneering form of participatory budgeting in that city (ICEC 2005). Another aspect of the discussion concerned the seemingly intractable issue of how to deal with the ‘squeaky-wheels’. My notes recorded Robert’s typically frank, self-critical observation “What do you do with the squeaky wheels? We ignore them, we only take into account the constructive outcomes that we want to take up. Otherwise we ignore what they say. Is that engagement? It’s not an easy one.” Thus, within the same conversation, arose both more idealistic notions and the practical result of working with strong characters in difficult situations.

5.2.5 Governance: budgets, autonomy, democracy, responsibility and power

Meeting on 30th September, the Team still expected the exhibition period for the Vision to be from mid October to the end of November, with the document being adopted by Council by mid December, and with Margaret’s publicity schedule coinciding. Robert suggested having a celebratory function before the Council meeting that would adopt the Vision but, as we will see, other matters took over. Graham gave a presentation about the state of the Project’s budget which, relative to its shaky past, was looking quite healthy. From his Notes, Graham stated, “…there is a total of $91,094 in the budget for this year. The original budget was for $73,000 and this included $25,000 for facilitation. We expect less than $15,000 to be spent on
facilitation…we have additional money to spend on items such as PR.” My field notes again express my surprise at how much continued to be done with such a modest budget, and that there was “…about $18,000 leftover”.

At the Team meetings of the 7th and 14th October, fundamental issues of internal governance arose and hopes for an agreed Vision document by the end of the year were dashed. Alex and Harrison revealed on the 7th that Senior Council had reviewed the latest draft of the Vision and questioned its language: major revisions were needed. By the meeting of the 14th October, Senior Council wanted more time to consider the document. Graham noted that, “As this will delay exhibition, it was agreed to extend the exhibition period to the end of January. This would mean submitting the revised version for adoption by Council to the February meeting.”

Another bout of strained relations came, as recorded in my field notes of 21st October, when several wording changes were made, such as taking out the collective pronouns ‘us’, ‘our’, and ‘we’; Senior Council also questioned the use of the term ‘Community Vision’ itself and wanted another expression used. We discussed the matter at the Data Subgroup meeting on 27th October, with Graham’s Notes indicating a strong reaction to the changes, “As expectations have been created regarding a “community vision” dropping this framework … runs the risk of undermining the community goodwill already created …and the considerable staff effort that has gone into … discovering a valid community view…[this]… undoes a key element of the project as originally designed and approved.” My field notes of that meeting recording Graham’s explanation of Senior Council’s reason for changes was so as not to be “…ahead of the game”.

At this point, members of the Team seriously considered whether or not to cancel the Visioning aspects of the Project to concentrate on Corporate Planning. Joan, Margaret and Tatania all said they did not want to spend anymore time on the Project unless these differences were cleared up as they did not feel supported by their superiors. My field notes record that Joan said “If they are not going to support it, what’s the point?”. Tatania stated “It’s going to be reduced to a tick-box exercise, just to respond to the Daly Inquiry” and Margaret said “I’m happy to spend hours on this, but only if the changes …come from the community, not from... [Senior
Senior Council also thought the document too idealistic, as interpreted by Alex in my field notes of the Team meeting of 21st October, “...so that when it goes to Council it does not continually conflict with other items on the agenda”. Harrison agreed, suggesting that Senior Council’s concern was “…about not locking-in the Council to a Vision that was undeliverable”. A clash of perceptions became clear, for Senior Council the Vision was primarily a planning document for professionals to use, while the Team wanted a document the community could relate to, and that Council officers would need to adapt to it. Of course both were necessary, but how were these apparently contradictory views to be reconciled when the protagonists seemed not to understand each other? A full meeting of the Senior Council reviewed the ‘Vision’; Graham noted that this meeting “…decided to use a title other than vision, rewrite the document in the future tense and remove all personal pronouns....” This time the conflict resolved quickly, by the meeting of 4th November the Team accepted the explanations that Alex and Harrison made on behalf of Senior Council. With regard to the term ‘Vision’, the Team came up with the acceptable alternative of ‘directions’ and the document was titled “Liverpool Directions 2006-2016”. Other changes were easily accepted, for example, the word ‘fully’ was removed from “Residents will be fully aware of government decision making”, as it was an impossible target to meet.

At the Team meeting of the 18th November, Alex reported that Senior Council’s preferred structure of the document was to begin with the community-derived Data, then the Direction the community wanted, next what Council could deliver, and then what Other Sectors (private and public) could be expected to deliver. This idea was readily accepted as a creative and useful suggestion and the changes made. Finally, Alex reported to the 5th December Team meeting that the reworked ‘Liverpool Directions 2006-2016’ statement was accepted by Senior Council. However, it was not to be a formal Exhibition but released ‘for public comment’: Council would now not ‘adopt’ the document but would ‘endorse’ the community’s document.
At about this time, progress in fostering a new engagement model became more complicated; a community action group appeared on the scene a few months earlier, the Liverpool Action Group (LAG), that wanted a ‘Citizen’s Council’ established (Stevens 2005). The LAG had not been involved in the Visioning workshops. Alex informed the Team meeting of 9th December that Senior Council had decided to postpone consideration of a new engagement model, he suggested that LAG was the cause of this decision. Indeed, the matter continued into January 2006 when an article appeared in a local paper in which LAG asked for residents to join its discussion of the idea of a “community consultative panel”; the same article stated that the “…council administrator…will consider the concept of a community consultative panel but says she can’t support it or refuse it “on the spot”” (Marchetta 2006, p.5).

In the end, Senior Council opted for the development of Joan’s Consultation Toolkit, together with the annual Auspoll survey, the council run locality Forums, the statutory exhibition of council plans, and the open forum that precedes Council meetings, as the preferred forms of public participation. I was surprised that the Team accepted this development calmly, as recorded in my field notes, for example, Graham said “Such a structure [an engagement model] may be seen as being forced by Council.” Alex stated “…that Liverpool was not at a mature enough stage for such a structure”. James came in a little late to the meeting, was appraised of the situation and surprised me by also agreeing with Senior Council on this matter. Perhaps they accepted the logic of the situation, as they expressed it, perhaps some accepted the inevitability of the decision as it came from Senior Council. But perhaps some also sympathised with the decision, as the issue of the ‘squeaky wheels’ and how to deal with them had not really been resolved by the Team. On the whole it was accepted that the activity of the LAG put the Administrator in a difficult position, because she considered that a community participation structure, if established, could be dominated by a particular group with a particular agenda.

The last meeting for 2005, and the penultimate Team meeting that I attended as part of my research, was on 16th December and it centred on Joan’s Consultation Toolkit. Graham’s Notes listed matters that Joan identified as needing our attention, namely, “Policy and Leadership; Education and on-going Support, and…[having a]…
Process of Cultural Change…”. Another discussion revisited the conundrum of having an authentic community document that also has the authority of Council. This began with James asking that our press releases be changed from “…Council approves the Liverpool Directions statement”, to say that “…it is submitted to Council”. With this the Team acknowledged that there was a power differential between community and Council, despite the rhetoric of democracy: one entity controlled the decision-making process, the other merely gave legitimacy at elections; one administered legislation, the other was administered by it.

In revising the Project schedule it became apparent that actioning the Directions document with the external Stakeholder groups would be delayed until after Council endorsed it, which was now scheduled for April 2006. At the end of the meeting, we wished each other well for the festive season and I announced to the Team that I would not be attending meetings after the first one of 2006, due to my own need to draw a ‘research line in the sand’: I had to focus on my write-up. Everyone looked forward to furthering the Project, and we parted ways until mid-January.

5.2.6 Finalising validation of the workshop outcomes

The final stage of validating the Directions document was conducted during November 2005 and January/February 2006. It consisted of four elements, as described in the document that was tabled at the Team meeting of 31st March 2006, “Adoption of Liverpool Directions 2006-2016: the Liverpool Community View on the Future for Liverpool”. The first element was an entry in the November 2005 Auspoll survey where respondents were asked about the Directions document; 70% agreed that 22 statements derived from the document were ‘important’ or ‘very important’. The other three elements of validation occurred in 2006 and were: three facilitated workshops (one with prior participants and two with others), a structured telephone survey that was conducted by a consultant company, and individual responses. All the 2006 validation happened after a draft Directions document, which had a response sheet attached, was issued to the public; this was by a letterbox drop to all households, advertisements in the local newspapers, placing quantities at Council facilities, and placing it on the Council website. The telephone survey generated 183 respondents and the other methods elicited 60, totalling 243
responses. In summary, the results well confirmed community support for *Liverpool Directions 2006 – 2016*, for example, 89% of the interviewees who partook in the telephone survey “…supported the directions outlined in the document” (Environmetrics 2006, p. 3). A copy of the *Liverpool Directions 2006 – 2016* document can be found at Appendix 3.

Validation also used previous Council information, namely, the 2004 Sustainability Survey that was employed as a triangulation method for those parts of the Vision that related to sustainability issues (IRIS 2004). That survey had a qualitative stage of four focus groups, totalling 37 residents from a cross-section of Liverpool and a quantitative second stage of a telephone interview with 505 randomly selected residents. The Team considered that the 2004 Sustainability Survey and the 2005/06 data on environment from the Project coincided.

In all, 2,251 people who either ‘lived, learned, worked or played’ in Liverpool were involved in the Project. This figure needs to be qualified for it is not possible to know how many people were involved in more than one exercise, with one Council officer suggesting that a discount of 30% would be in order (pers. comm., email, Phillip Lee, Policy Analyst, Liverpool City Council, 28-03-2006). Although I think that his suggested figure is too high, the point is well made and with 30% taken off, the figure would be about 1,576 participants, or with 20% discounted, the figure would be 1,801 participants. In either case it amounted to about 1% of the population of Liverpool.

### 5.2.7 My last meetings with the Team

The 13th January meeting focused on re-capping all the major elements of the Project that had been set in motion in 2005 and were still to eventuate. A large emphasis was on Joan’s Consultation Toolkit; we learned that already 65 comments had been received from her internal survey of the consultation practices of Council. Of those 65 responses, very few were from Assets and Infrastructure or from Operations. No one was surprised at this news and Alex said, “*This [Toolkit] needs to be ingrained into all that Council does*” (see Appendix 4 for the Toolkit). Joan commented that, “*Some people gave detailed and passionate responses to her survey, such as ‘I am*
ashamed of the little we do”. In order to develop the Council’s Culture Change processes, Joan suggested that Council needed to create a new position of Community Consultation Officer and the Team agreed to work towards this end.

Other matters were also considered, such as Margaret’s promotional program for the Directions document in preparation for its Exhibition, planning for the facilitated validation Forums, and discussion of the Stakeholder engagement process. At the end of the meeting I thanked everyone for their help during my field work and said that I would be dropping in from time to time, as I did for the final Team meeting on 9th October, 2006.

5.2.8 Celebration

Indeed, we next met on 19th April 2006 when Graham organised a lunch for the Team at the Casula Powerhouse Museum to celebrate Council having endorsed the Directions document on 10th April. Graham also arranged for this meeting to be the beginning of a self-evaluation of the Project and a way of focusing the Team for the coming challenges. The following email was sent to the Team:

Hi everyone,

I am just writing to advise that last night Council endorsed Liverpool Directions. This is a fantastic milestone in the Partnership Project. Whilst there is still more to be done I think we should all reflect on the hard work and effort that has been put into this project and the success that has been achieved. For the first time the City of Liverpool has a direction for the future set by the people themselves.

I would like to congratulate everybody who has been involved for your time, effort and contribution. It has been a great team effort.

Well done.

Mitchell Morley
Corporate Manager Support/
Assistant General Manager
Liverpool City Council
Chapter 6 – Findings: corporate change - the Corporate Plan and cultural change

Part 1

6.1.0 Chapter structure
In addition to the visioning-engagement narrative of the Partnership Project as detailed in the previous chapter, three other sets of data are of interest and each of these forms a part of this chapter. The first two are concerned with important aspects of the Project itself; the third section is largely about elements of Informal Society trying to establish a voice in Liverpool, in their own right, beyond the Project. The first part of this chapter is centred on the coordinating work that was achieved within the Team, both in full Team meetings and in the Corporate Plan Subgroup, to organise Corporate Plan/Cultural Change workshops. The second part is an account of the workshops themselves, which ran concurrently with the visioning-engagement process as previously described. The third section of this chapter is a consideration of the activities of parts of Informal Society in the wider community of Liverpool, as this provides an interesting backdrop from which to reflect upon the Project itself and is presented as a series of three vignettes. The Corporate Plan will often be designated as CP, below.

6.1.1 Formulating Corporate Plan/Cultural Change in Council
For this study, the terms ‘Corporate Plan’ and ‘Cultural Change’ are often used interchangeably or, more accurately, as subsets of each other. But the story begins by considering the Corporate Plan in its original use, as derived from NSW government legislation. Liverpool Council often uses the term ‘Corporate Plan’ for matters that are referred to in Chapter 13 of the NSW Local Government Act 1993 as ‘Management Plans’. In this sense ‘Corporate Plan’ and ‘Management Plan’ are synonymous in Liverpool’s context. Although more than just an accounting
document, in general, Management Plans deal with the collection and the dispersal of council’s revenue over at least a three year period, with annual and quarterly reviews (LGA 1993, s. 402). Matters arising from the Act include: a statement of principle activities, performance targets, capital works program, services provided, asset replacement, activities to promote ESD including a response to the State of the Environment Report, social and cultural matters including a response to the Social Plan, and revenue policy (LGA 1993). In addition, the Draft Management Plan must be publicly exhibited and Council must take any resulting submissions into consideration before adopting the document (LGA 1993, ss. 405-406).

The Corporate Plan/Cultural Change program of the Project began as a reassessment of the Council’s Management Plan. This arose from the newly appointed Administrator’s critique of Liverpool’s Management Plan to those who were to instigate the formation of the Team and the subsequent Partnership Project. The structure and content of the plan was questioned by the Administrator, and this acted as a precipitating factor for the Project. This was clear from an interview that I conducted with Senior Council: “The Corporate Plan was a difficult document to read, it was a mishmash of action points and strategy. It needs to be a strategic document – like a coat hanger with action points under it” (pers. com., in-person interview with Senior Council, 20/03/2006, Liverpool City Council).

The need for a Cultural Change program in Liverpool was introduced in the first full planning meeting of the Team, on 29th June, 2004. My field notes of that meeting record that Veronica, James and I contributed to a discussion of the nature of Liverpool’s community and that we “…need to change the culture in the Council too…” About a month later, two sub-committees were established: the Method Subgroup and the Corporate Plan Subgroup. While the Methods Subgroup dealt with planning for the community Visioning exercise, the CP Subgroup planned for and put into play the beginnings of the Cultural Change Program within Council.

Although ‘cultural change’ can be seen as a larger aspect of the Project, it certainly began with the more basic task of improving the format of the Council’s Corporate Plan. So the first task was a pragmatic, simple exercise to improve the efficiency of what was already done. In addition to this there was another aspect, which was to
also foster the movement of Council’s functioning onto another plane, with an intention of enabling cultural change in the way Council worked. The latter aspect included aiming for fundamental changes in attitudes and behaviour of staff that would lead to changes in the content, functioning and direction of what was done by Council. This second aspect can be seen to include a breaking down of the professional silos, developing strategic thinking and action, fostering of engagement processes between Civic, Civil and Informal Society, and the larger project of fostering a sustainable Liverpool. One of the earliest statements about the change program was presented to the 30th July 2004 Team meeting by Graham for adoption. Besides listing ways that community values would be incorporated into Council’s activities, the document listed the Project’s objectives, which included that it would initiate “…a process for change within the community and within Council that enhances democracy and sets both on a collaborative journey towards sustainability.”

To achieve the stated longer-term objective, the initial thrust was to re-organise the way the Corporate Plan was developed, its language, and the way it was structured. The first step in this program was to formulate how to make the budgeting processes of Council more efficient, and to simplify the end document, the Corporate Plan. Even at this early point, there was a need to break down council-silos to the modest extent necessary to get different departments to sit around a table together in order to begin the process. At the 20th August Team meeting Veronica made a statement, as recorded in my field notes, that “So far the Corporate Plan is just a collection of each of the manager’s documents stapled together”. The field notes also have my observation about the discussion of the Corporate Plan/cultural change exercise: “The old way is for the Corporate Plan to be developed separately from the Budget by people who sit at desks by themselves. The new way is to have people sitting around a table to develop the Budget as informed by the Corporate Plan and by the Community Vision”.

Just two months after the Project began, a Team workshop was held on 27th August where ideas about the whole Project were discussed. Graham identified, in his Notes of the workshop, an acknowledgement of the above mentioned more prosaic features of the Corporate Plan/Cultural Change concept, such as simplifying the language of
the CP, but also a more ambitious aspect: “... that a better corporate plan will flow from improving the engagement of staff in the corporate planning process...”. The key innovation here was that, besides the community being engaged with Council, there was an acknowledgment that within the Council more staff needed to be integrated into the Corporate Planning process. This can be seen as an attempt at becoming more efficient but also as an attempt to ‘democratise’ an important aspect of Council workings, as a part of a cultural change agenda. This reflected a point in the 30th July 2004 document that Graham presented to the Team for adoption, in which one of the stated objectives of the Project was that, by the end of the Project, it would have “Initiated a process for change within the community and within Council that enhances democracy ...”. The extent of this change would depend on how well it would be received from ‘below’, as well as how much support it would get from ‘above’.

My notes of the meeting record this observation from James, always the strategic thinker, “We need to change from achieving ‘50% more roads were fixed’ to ‘how have the roads you fixed improved the quality of life and the community vision and values outcomes’. It’s about the quality of outcomes, in a very broad sense, rather than the quantity of outcome”. In this comment, James is not only talking about the end product, the ‘outcomes’ in either sense that he elaborates, but about a wholistic change in the Council. His use of the term ‘rather than’, in the second sentence, itself describes a particular view of Council processes that, if it occurred, would define a dramatic shift in the way officers think about their role in Liverpool, their behaviour as Council officers, and about the culture of their work and their workplace. The comment is made much stronger because the more exclusive term ‘rather than’ was chosen, when the word ‘and’ could have been used. Although, it must be stated that James, being an outcomes oriented person but one who is interested in both ‘product’ and ‘process’, would believe that delivering the basics was of crucial importance. However he would also see a better process as being one of those outcomes – and an outcome that would itself bring about better ‘on the ground’ results.
6.1.2 Changing corporate culture at Council

The first Corporate Plan workshop sessions were held in October and November 2004, and will be elaborated on later in this chapter. At this point it suffices to say that a number of practical outcomes emanated from that workshop, which generated fundamental changes in Council’s budgeting documents, but the workshop also tentatively began a process of deeper cultural change. Much of the former work was done within the various Council business units in the following months. So, despite that early sortie into what might well be considered the terrain of an advanced cultural change program, the main aim of the initial CP workshop was to produce a user-friendly document that was technically more coherent. To this end, gradual changes were instituted within the organisation with each new phase of the Council’s Corporate Plan cycle, such as the CP review of early 2005 that followed the first workshop. At the 18th March 2005 Team meeting, Harrison gave an account of the progress of the Corporate Plan Subgroup, as recorded in Graham’s Notes,

“…considerable effort had been made by the sub-group in redrafting and liaising with managers to come up with a simpler and easier to read document…It was suggested that a special meeting of managers be held to review the draft [CP] to check for gaps. It was also noted that one-on-one meetings with managers on performance reporting were planned.”

In my field notes I reported a more candid comment from Harrison: “We’re running into …[corporate/disciplinary]…silos, especially from Infrastructure”.

Another problem arose at the Team meeting of 1st April, Harrison made a cautionary comment about the ‘fatigue-factor’, that is, having to return to the managers several times to ask them to have another attempt to attain a Corporate Plan document that was adequately unified and simplified. He stated, as documented in my field notes,

“Managers have done their bit of the Corporate Plan for the fourth time and are tired out by asking them to do it for the fifth time. But we still need to have the Corporate Plan look like one document and not like one written by 20 people.” Also at that meeting, a report from Graham about the Corporate Plan Subgroup stated, from his Notes. “…the draft…[CP]… had been reworked significantly for consistency and simplicity since last being discussed with managers. In some cases the result was quite different from the input made. It was noted that this might result
in some negative reactions that …[will]… be dealt with by the sub-committee as part of its communications efforts”. Some of this apprehension does not seem to have come to pass because, on a more optimistic note as recorded by Graham, Simone informed the next Team meeting on 8th April that “There has been some movement in beginning to dissolve the disciplinary/territorial silos within Council”, which was a reference to having managers constructively sitting around a table and working on the new Corporate Plan format. In addition, as documented in my field notes, Harrison stated that the Executive Board had a “… good strong look at the Draft Plan… it was a very fruitful, positive discussion…”. Graham’s Notes also stated that the Draft document “…would be submitted to the Administrator shortly.”

In order to keep the momentum going, a joint meeting of the Methods and Corporate Plan Subgroups was held on 14th April, with some additional invitees present. The aim of the meeting was to come up with ideas about how to foster public participation, to be presented to the next-day’s Team meeting. Most of the discussion centred on ways of stimulating community involvement and interest in the CP, so could be described more as part of a ‘Community-change’ program than of a Corporate-Cultural change program. To this end, Betty from the Environment and Sustainability group suggested using the existing community Forums as a way of promoting the Project, as was done with the development of the Council’s Biodiversity Policy. Graham’s Notes of 15th April Team meeting, recorded the outcome, “…[the meeting] had drawn up a range of new initiatives aimed at increasing the level of community engagement with the management plan…”

Although using existing forums was raised more than once, the idea was not put into practice in as many ways as it could have been, usually due to the limited resources of the Team. In the case of Betty’s suggestion, she soon left Council so, although implemented to some degree, her idea lost a deal of its momentum with her departure.

Simone’s document 2005/2006 Management Plan – Consultation Action Plan, as presented to the Team meeting of 6th May, contained several forms of consultation with the community. This included having a public meeting, placing the Draft Management Plan (CP) on the Council website, and posting out copies to those on Graham’s ‘interested parties list’; presentations to the established Forums during
their normal meetings in May, and having a feedback sheet as part of the printed version of the Draft. Included in this initiative were Margaret’s promotional efforts that consisted of announcements on Council’s website, press releases for the local papers and radio station, information passed on by Council’s call-centre, and producing information in languages other than English.

All of this came at a critical time in the post-Oasis relations between community and Council, so that the proud efforts of the Team in making the CP more accessible for the public were lost in a coming storm. The public meeting, as mentioned above, was held on 26th May and will be examined later as an example of what can happen to the best laid plans of mice, men and council officers.

6.1.3 Corporate Plan emerges

Although the Team focused for much of the middle of 2005 on the Visioning Workshops, and then developing the Vision document, nonetheless the unfolding of the Corporate Plan program continued. Just as matters were negotiated with Senior Council with regard to the Vision/Directions document, similarly, negotiations were needed with regard to the Corporate Plan/Cultural Change program. As early as September, 2004 Graham’s Notes of a Team meeting recorded that Senior Council “…supports the need for… increased staff involvement in corporate planning…” which, at least, implied a critique of the processes within Council up to then. In any case, by May 2005, Senior Council was well enough satisfied with the changes brought about by the Corporate Plan program that the Draft 2005/06 Management Plan was approved for exhibition from 9th May to 6th June, and so overlapped the beginning of the Visioning workshops that ran from the 27th May to 4th July. Thus the ‘Administrator’s Message’, as published in the Draft Plan in part stated:

“Council’s governance is another important theme. We seek better engagement with our community through information, consultation and participation in Council’s decision-making. It is important for Council to review and renew processes which support openness in decision-making.” (DMP 2005, p. 2).

Efforts to integrate various elements of the Project were being developed at this time. For example, as part of the corporate change program, by August, business units
were now expected to engage with major stakeholders as a matter of course with the aims of the Project in mind. The Team used the term ‘action planning’ to mean those actions that were needed to put the outcomes of the Vision into effect with government or business stakeholders as described in Graham’s Notes of 12th August, “… action planning…[was deferred]… until early next year on the basis that individual work units are now expected to do this as part of their business planning work for the corporate plan. It was also decided that we should initiate contact with key stakeholders this year as a part of the project to pave the way for this engagement”. It was also agreed to “…consider additional action early next year such as the originally proposed public meeting and or a breakfast high level briefing for stakeholders, perhaps combined with some other issues such as the metropolitan strategy …”.

Even with this optimistic outlook, Graham also recorded some doubts about the extent and depth of understanding within Council:

“It was suggested that we should begin considering the action we should take to ensure the output from the community is taken proper account of in implementation of current and new projects that may relate to it. The CBD project …should be coordinated with the outcomes of the …[Partnership]…project. It was felt that there were still areas of the Council that did not appear to be aware of the…[Partnership] … project and its outcomes”.

Indeed, at the next Team meeting on 19th August, Graham noted that, under the heading “Cultural change in the Council/Corporate Planning process”, he and Harrison were to “…attend [business] team meetings to engage staff with the vision and the planning… [and]… Following discussion it was agreed that [Simone] convene the Corporate Planning group as soon as possible to discuss the future program of the planning process with a view to identifying key points where the draft vision should be injected. It was agreed that the vision is circulated to all staff as a draft, following validation but before exhibition, and that comment be invited”. The democratic approach of consulting with staff and seeking feedback was an approach often employed by the Team.

This more engaged and democratic approach was enhanced during the following week when Senior Council accepted a Draft Vision document and directed that
aspects of it were to be incorporated into current Council projects. In my field notes of the 23rd August Data Subgroup meeting, I recorded Graham and Harrison informing us that “…a simplified version of the Vision was presented to…[Senior Council]… and they were OK with it. [Senior Council]… said that this had to be incorporated into the current projects, eg, CBD”. Several people expressed the hope that this level of leadership would help to broaden and deepen the impact of the Project in the daily workings of Council.

6.1.4 Linking the Vision and the Corporate Plan: problems and possibilities
The Data Subgroup further considered the linking of the Vision and the CP at its 12th September meeting. My field notes describe the wide-ranging conversation that took place, “Some discussion of a corporate change protocol – how will bits of Council implement the Vision, now? eg, [Mario] & his Sustainability Policy…the Corporate/Strategic Plan…the ongoing engagement process/structure. [James]… suggests a ‘new’ project – an ‘Implementation Project’ for the Vision. The Corporate Plan Subgroup will look at…[Council developing]… a ‘State of the Community Report’. Graham’s Notes documented the outcomes of the same conversation as follows, “It was felt that strategic/action planning on the vision should be developed as a new separate phase by the full project team. It was agreed that, as a first step, the data group should summarise the strategic directions already present in the data…” There was a determination to strengthen the corporate change process and look for processes to ensure that the Project would not enter into a ‘tick-a-box-project-completed’ mode. It seemed to me that, for the Team, it was not good enough to just produce a Vision document and say the ‘job was done’: they were still striving to implement their original aims.

This approach was strengthened at a special Team meeting on 16th September when, from Graham’s Notes, we met to “…consider the action required to introduce a new community engagement process including in relation to the Council Consultation Policy…”. Many aspects of these issues were discussed, as further recorded by Graham, including the need for “…a routine or on-going mechanism…” for community engagement and a Consultation Toolkit “…specific to the Council.”, and the need “…to go beyond just information provision to education, to participation
and to action. The depth of engagement would depend, in part, on the issue at hand with different issues requiring a different emphasis on the engagement continuum.” My notes of that meeting record James saying, “The desire to be a consultative Council needs to be embedded in all the Council.”, and Harrison stating, “[We]…need to tie all this to people’s… duty statements”. These early discussions of the Consultation Toolkit suggested that this was another way that the Team was fostering the Corporate Plan/Cultural Change program, by attempting to instil a consultation protocol into the daily workings of council officers.

At the 30th September Team meeting Harrison announced that he, Simone and Graham were working towards assembling the Managers again, with the aim, from my field notes, “…to get Managers together to workshop some of the Visioning outcomes” ; this was planned for November. Once again the Team adopted an approach that they felt would best foster an internal change in the culture of the Council workplace thus, rather than imposing something from ‘on high’, they chose the more inclusive, more democratic format of a workshop for November’s Corporate Planning exercise. In a similar vein, Graham’s Notes of the Team meeting of 14th October stated “It was suggested that the development of the policy should include engagement with staff at an early stage”. This highlights the impetus in the Team’s approach to internal change with regard to Joan’s new Consultation Toolkit and its accompanying Consultation Policy. In this way the Team strived to encourage staff to ‘have ownership’ of the process and then, hopefully, its outputs.

At the Corporate Planning meeting of 10th October, we discussed how to best transfer the themes of the Visioning Workshops and the Vision outcomes into the Corporate Plan. If the managers were to be asked to come to terms with the Community’s ideas, then it needed to be formulated in an easily digestible manner. Simone suggested using the headings of the Vision document as a framework for the Corporate Plan, as many of them coincided in any case and others fitted in very well, in any case. This was accepted by the group and later presented to the Team and accepted.
6.1.5 Tensions arise: opportunity or barrier?

Also at the 14th October meeting, two other issues were brought up that caused a degree of angst for some members of the Team. The first came from Graham’s report that during a presentation about the Project to managers, little enthusiasm was shown, in fact, one manager asked that his section be informed about the Project. At this advanced stage of the Project this request surprised us and we concluded that some staff were so engrossed in doing their jobs that the Project had still not ‘registered on their radar’: the corporate change program still had a long way to go. However, optimistic hope on the matter was expressed a week later, at the Team meeting of 21st October. My field notes recorded Alex’s comment, “We will achieve Sid’s cultural change issue when a capital works project is presented to Council with a bit that says ‘we consulted with the community in this way and our project reflects the vision in these ways’. This is a process that we head towards.” This optimism was expressed at a time when, as reported in the previous chapter, Senior Council had asked for more time to consider the Draft Vision, which delayed its exhibition to the community, caused the Project’s timetable to be rescheduled, and stirred discontent within some of the Team. Both Harrison and Alex reported that Senior Council had expressed interest in exploring the degree to which the management level of the council was “…locked into the delivery of the ‘Vision’”; to that end a meeting of the Strategic Panel10, which included Senior Council and other senior managers, was called. As Robert had mentioned at a previously reported Team meeting, this interest from Senior Council in the content of the Vision was a good sign of direct interest and involvement, and the concern to see if managers were supportive was also encouraging. However, in my field notes for that meeting I wondered to what degree the Team and Senior Council had the same purpose in mind, “…was the reason for the concern the same for Senior Council as for Team members, or are they aiming for different outcomes?”

The second source of tension had to do with having two documents from different origins, that some perceived as having different functions: one from the community

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10 The Strategic Panel was set up in Liverpool Council some years before the dismissal of Council in 2004 and consisted of two Councillors and senior managers; in 2005 it was the Administrator and senior managers. Its function was not to make decision, but “…a testing ground which improved reports/proposals before they were submitted to Council… it was resurrected for a brief time…[but not]…convened recently” (pers. comm. email, P.Lee, Policy Analyst, Liverpool City Council, 5/3/07).
(the Vision, a possible future) and one from council (Management Plan/CP, a legal document). Simone suggested a way to reduce this dilemma was by having the Corporate Plan use the headings (themes) from the Vision for the Corporate Plan, instead of its own council-produced set of headings. This was put into effect by Simone, Graham and Harrison for the Draft CP that Senior Council was to consider in the near future. This allowed the community Vision to become immediately useful to council staff in their pursuit of ‘core business’ by helping to better structure the Corporate Plan. Although this was not quite the hoped-for heights of creative engagement, it achieved a minimal purpose of allowing the more sceptical within council to make some practical use of the Vision.

Another aspect of this tension was to do with the power structures and relations that exist between Civic and Informal Society. The issue erupted to the surface at the 24th October meeting of the Strategic Panel, where specific consideration was given to the Draft Vision and its release to the community. While several points of critique were raised, there was one core matter, as documented in Graham’s minutes of the Panel’s meeting, “The … issue is the “vision” document and its form and style if the document is to be exhibited to the public as a Council document…The document needs to have the look and feel of a traditional Council document”. This was resolved by “Redrafting of the vision under a different name …”. This specifically raised the issue of whether the ‘Vision’ was a community document or a council document. One lesson to come out of the Panel meeting indicated the importance of developing a cultural change program that did not forget to include the very highest levels in an organisation. The other was the absence of well-tried mechanisms for combining Civic and Informal Society in an engaged, participatory process; this was most notably missing during the lead-up to the Oasis matter. A more speculative question tantalisingly presents itself, namely, how would have this discussion evolved if there were Councillors present instead of an Administrator? Would it have occurred at all? As recorded in the previous chapter, Robert had suggested that the Team was fortunate to have an Administrator rather than Councillors. So that, even with all the issues of hierarchical power relations and the associated decision-making structures that needed to be negotiated, the Team ‘at least had a Project’. The associated implication was that it was doubtful that they would have had a Project had Councillors been present.
The Team meeting of 4th November considered the Corporate Planning Workshops that were scheduled to begin in two weeks. During this very difficult time, the workshops provided a constructive focus for the Team, while the furore of the differing approaches to the ‘Visions’ (now ‘Directions’) document was going on. At the stormy Data Subgroup meeting of the 27th October, a list of options was formulated to present to the next Team meeting. One of the alternatives, from Graham’s Notes, was to “Cancel the project and proceed with the Corporate planning aspects”. It seemed to me that, at the November 4th Team meeting, Joan, Alex, Graham, Harrison and James all tried to put the recent disagreements behind them and focus on, from my field notes, “…how to get all this (Corporate change program and Liverpool Directions) linked to the way the department heads work”. They were orienting themselves towards an in-any-case necessary task, the next series of CP Workshops, this was something that at least some of the Team saw as a more fulfilling task than battling with Senior Council.

6.1.6 Intersections of power

Of course, different strands of the Project intersect at various places. One such junction came about with Joan’s Consultation Toolkit, as one of the Project’s original aims was to have an engagement structure to link Council and Community; this included the need to tie the outcomes of the Strategic Plan to community accountability. The following is from Graham’s Notes of the 5th December Team meeting.

“It was noted that this project… [community engagement] …had become more time critical as …[Senior Council]…had indicated to the Liverpool Action Group the Council will consider options for the establishment of a community advisory group…[however]… it is currently intended that the engagement project only produce a tool kit and a policy and not a new formal consultation arrangement.”

An important issue was raised once it was decided that there was not going to be an on-going structure for the community as part of the Project, at least for now. A part of the aim of such a structure was to allow the community to keep a check on how
Council was going about implementing the Strategic Plan. So, without that structure how was the community to keep a check on council’s implementation of the Strategic Plan? How was one of the objectives of the Project, to have a participative structure that the community had some control of, to be realised?

The result of these considerations came a few days later, at a special Team meeting on 9th December, as detailed in Graham’s Notes, “[Senior Council]… has decided to proceed with investigation of the tool kit approach … It was agreed the toolkit will provide an option to monitor and review such projects in the future.” Although originally staying open to the idea (Marchetta 2006), Senior Council had evidently concluded that the complication of the Liverpool Action Group and their push for a community-panel for Council had become too politically dangerous to be agreed to, and that the idea of an engagement structure being established out of the Project could not be supported. My field notes record Harrison’s comment that, “[Senior Council]… is concerned that the LAG will take over the community engagement structure and use it for their own ends.” Was this another instance of ‘fear of the squeaky wheel’ syndrome, and was this justified? In an interview I conducted with Senior Council, it was revealed that LAG had wanted a resident panel to have direct input into how Section 94 payments from developers to Council were spent (pers. comm., in-person interview, Senior Council, Liverpool City Council, 20th March 2006). In raising this matter the LAG presented to Senior Council a rudimentary version of the concept of community participatory budgeting, as previously discussed with regard to Porto Alegre (Doucet, 2004; Gret & Sintomer 2005). After the Team meeting of 9th December, at one of our discussions, Graham said that some in Senior Council were suspicious of LAG’s intentions in that they seemed to be positioning themselves for the 2008 council elections; this explained Harrison’s comment, as noted above, about LAGs intentions. It was more than a little ironic that a manifestation of Informal Society, which the Team hoped to foster and empower, would be the precipitating cause of an ongoing engagement structure being dropped, in favour of one that was almost fully in the hands of civic society.

I had expected a strong reaction from some in the Team, but my field notes record the following statements from those present at the 9th December Team meeting, “[Harrison] … says he thinks this is a good approach; [Sue] … ‘this is the way
Wahroonga [a council in Sydney] began anyway, so, this approach is a good start’; [Graham]… agrees and cites some disadvantages of Parramatta’s Panel model [a council in Sydney]; [Alex]… gives an example of Brisbane’s Green Bridge project and of a mature approach to discussion in the citizenry over the use of the bridge. ‘We are not in such a mature situation’. [My own comment was], ‘It again raises the need for a cultural change program inside and outside [of council]. [James]… came into the meeting a little late and said that he agreed with [Senior Council’s] approach.” In addition, my notes record my reflections on the discussion and decision, “…is this the reaction of a group of people who, after all they’ve been through, just find themselves at the end of a long year?” It may not have been the most that they hoped for, but they seemed resigned to accept what they thought was achievable; a pragmatic approach came through once again. However, hope for a fuller result was not entirely abandoned, at the final Team meeting for the year, on 16th December, James gave a report on behalf of Joan about the new framework for the Toolkit. Graham’s Notes document the comments made, “…is this the reaction of a group of people who, after all they’ve been through, just find themselves at the end of a long year?” It may not have been the most that they hoped for, but they seemed resigned to accept what they thought was achievable; a pragmatic approach came through once again. However, hope for a fuller result was not entirely abandoned, at the final Team meeting for the year, on 16th December, James gave a report on behalf of Joan about the new framework for the Toolkit. Graham’s Notes document the comments made, “[James]…read out some issues raised by [Joan] that need further discussion:

- Policy and leadership
- Education and on-going support
- Process of cultural change required.

It was agreed that these were important matters for the Team to address.”

Indeed, evidence soon arose of council staff who wanted a more engaged participatory process, as well as the more traditional approach of some of the silo-ed departments at Council. These matters arose at the final Team meeting that I took part in, which was held on 13th January, 2006. Matters relating to the cultural change program were again raised by Joan who gave a report of her recent survey of consultation practices used by staff. This included the following details as documented in my field notes, “There were 65 returns from 400 staff. Some people gave a detailed and passionate response, for example, ‘I am ashamed of the little we do’. Some sections, like… [Assets and Infrastructure and Operations] … have given few responses.” Graham more hopefully recorded in his Notes of that same meeting that, as an outcome of the November Corporate Planning workshops, “…the
Liverpool Directions document had been used already to create the draft outcomes for the CP framework for the 2007-9 strategic plan.”

I left the meeting, and the Team, with a hopeful feeling that despite all the delays and pitfalls, the Project provided many constructive lessons and useful outcomes.
Part 2 – Corporate Plan Workshops

6.2.1 Corporate Plan Workshops: I

The Team organised a series of four Corporate Plan workshops during the time I spent with the Project; I participated in each of them. Three of the four occurred before the public Visioning workshops. The first workshop had three sessions, each of which were facilitated by Simone, Harrison and Graham for both managers and interested staff; about 42 attended in all, from most sections of Council. The sessions were held on 29th October, 2nd November and 5th November, 2004. These workshops had, to my mind, four facets or aims: to simplify the language and the production of the Corporate Plan (CP); to change it from being a mix of strategies and activities to a strategic document with associated projects; to begin the process of having the CP changed from a cobbled together document to an integrated all-of-council document, and to establish a link between the CP and the Community-created Liverpool Vision/Directions. Put altogether, these elements could be viewed as being an Integrated Strategic Plan.

Introductions to both the Staff Launch of the Project, as described previously, and the Corporate Plan workshops were similar. They began with an acknowledgement that the Oasis and the Orange Grove matters had placed Liverpool Council in a difficult position regarding public confidence in Council, and that the financial situation was tight, though ultimately manageable. Furthermore, the point was emphasised that the Creating Our Future Together Partnership Project was part of the Council’s response to that situation, as a consequence of the Administrator’s aim to regain the trust of the community. In order to achieve it, and to respond to the Daly Inquiry, the approach included inviting the community to become directly involved in the process of creating a vision for Liverpool, unlike the Liverpool 2020 Vision for Oasis that originated and operated solely within Council. Preparatory remarks by Harrison at the workshops covered the recent history of Liverpool, legislative requirements for consultation, and an outline of the Project. Graham covered some of the philosophical underpinnings and presented a series of local government case studies of public participation. Simone outlined the new Corporate Plan structure and
explained Council’s new way of developing it. Questions were asked for and Graham answered one saying that, if there was no other reason to review the Corporate Plan, the lack of accounting for infrastructure maintenance and depreciation was an urgent imperative. As we will see, this matter erupted into prominence six months later.

A member of Senior Council, who was invited to attend the workshops, arrived to give a few introductory remarks but was only able to attend on the first day. Besides re-enforcing the need for developing a simpler and more efficient Corporate Plan, Senior Council described a personal experience of a less than satisfactory example of community consultation. Working in an engineering team, the job was to construct a bridge over a watercourse, as flooding was a regular occurrence that prevented access to and from the settlement. Plans were drawn up, exhibited in the usual way, and construction soon commenced. The engineering team thought of themselves as being worthy contributors to the community for, in their eyes, they had clearly filled an obvious need in supplying a required piece of infrastructure. Unfortunately, no one directly asked the community what they wanted; soon protest erupted. It seems that the community would have preferred that the local council had spent the allocated money on something like a child care centre that provided them relief each day of the year, rather than on the improvements to a bridge that became useful only every other year, and only for a few days as floodwaters rose and subsided.

The meaning was clear: professionals can work with the best of intentions but can miss the mark; however, with adequate public participation, or at least consultation, better outcomes can be achieved and with less potential for conflict. As the speaker from Senior Council said, “What we think best may not be what they want”. The impact of that homily was palpable, and I commented on it in my field notes that compared the tenor of the workshop before and after the story. The Senior Council member had arrived about 40 minutes into the session, due to another meeting that went overtime, stayed about ten minutes and then left for another engagement. Already a substantial amount of the workshop had been completed, which were group exercises that considered various approaches that other councils had taken to public participation. But, after the talk, the tone of the meeting changed; in the field notes I commented “…now there are lots of points made regarding community
involvement”. It was as though something had been released, it was like being given the authority to consider, to a greater depth than was usual, the matter and significance of community engagement. Furthermore, at the second and third workshops that Senior Council could not attend, the tenor of the discussion was similar to that at the first workshop before Senior Council’s homily, in that the response from the participants was far more tentative about the value of community engagement. The leadership shown by Senior Council on this issue was clearly of particular importance, and of a quality that was more effective than could be supplied by the facilitators of the meeting. This, of course, is quite understandable as it is a common issue for hierarchically organised leadership styles (Clegg 1990).

The exercises of the three workshops produced many suggestions for improvements; although the list presented below is a little ‘raw’, much like ideas generated in a brainstorming session, it is valuable as it gives the reader a sense of the range of thinking of the participants. From my field notes of all the workshops, some of the problems of process and outcome of the CP that the participants listed were:

- Long term forecasting for both income and expenditure was needed, especially in terms of maintenance and depreciation of infrastructure;
- Intranet and the web could be used for communication and exchange of ideas;
- Need to involve staff in planning at the business level and to develop a sense of wider staff ownership of the processes and the documents;
- Need to develop a system of incentives and recognition for innovation;
- Systems of peer review and community feedback are needed;
- Outcomes for the community need to be identified;
- It should be a transparent process, not the domain of a few, behind closed doors;
- The documents should be in plain English, both so that different sections of Council can understand it and so that the community can have a better chance of doing so;
- There should be a community-oriented summary that included financial information;
- The font and layout should be used to make the document accessible;
• Documents should be available on the Council website;
• Use of the current Forums is problematic, as they are often polarised; need to broaden their brief and to ask the community what sort of forums they want;
• That there was a need to develop a change-education program within council.

In a report back to the Team on 12th November, Graham provided a summary of the output of the workshops, as derived from the written work of the participants. In that document Graham listed the “Six strong and consistently re-occurring themes that cut across both process and framework…during the three workshops”. These were given as:

1. We need to make better links between corporate planning and budgeting
2. We need to do more and better consultation with the community
3. We need to involve staff more in the development of the plan
4. The plan itself needs to be better aligned with the target audience
5. We need to improve our accountability and the transparency of our performance against the plan
6. We need to take a whole of Council approach or corporate focus in formulating and in implementing the corporate plan.”

Sustainability was not a major theme brought out by the participants at any of the sessions, even though the facilitators used environmental examples to illustrate some of the points. My comment in the field notes from the first workshop stated, “Use of sustainability is not well or much done here. It’s been mentioned once or twice but it’s obviously not at the forefront of people’s mind”. During the first workshop’s introductory remarks, a comment that was made by a facilitator that an impetus for the Council’s engagement processes could be found in Chapter 28 of Agenda 21, within which sustainable development is linked to a local authority and the community acting together. In response to those comments one person, who expressed a lack of awareness of those matters and was in a group with me working on the next exercise, stated “God knows what that was about – but that’s what it’s based on”.

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As stated, the workshop focused on sorting out basic matters that any professional could easily identify with – action that improved the effectiveness of what they readily accepted as their work. Notwithstanding this more tentative approach of the facilitators towards corporate cultural change, sophisticated notions were raised by some of the participants. In one of the group-work exercises that I participated in, an officer suggested the need for an education process for all of Council staff about the aims of the Project, in particular about the “…new engagement processes that were now expected”. During a later exercise, another participant suggested that it was a good idea if “…Council staff also developed a Vision – a Corporate Vision”; others in the group spoke words of support and some nodded in agreement. This suggested to me that some staff had a ready acceptance of a more collaborative approach to the workplace and, perhaps, a willingness to move along a more advanced cultural change path. Interestingly, this suggestion was brought up even though a more complex cultural change program was only implicit in this series of workshops: the sessions were only designed to initiate a longer process. What made the latter comment even more interesting is that it came from a member of the Implementation side of Council. The tone of this later statement expressed to me a deal of enthusiasm and a hint of excitement, with an undertone of ‘this would make my work place and the job so much more interesting’. Although there was general agreement, the notion was little discussed in depth, as the assigned group exercise needed our attention.

6.2.2 Corporate Plan Workshops: II

About a month later, on 14th December 2004, the next Corporate Plan sessions were with managers, and used some of the approaches that were launched at the October/November workshops. These were more in the form of a facilitated Managers Budget Meeting but were referred to as workshops, and consisted of two events, with 21 managers in the morning and 24 in the afternoon. A little more than half had attended the earlier workshops due to some being on leave, or at other meetings, or because of changes in personnel. My field notes from the Team meeting of 3rd December describe some of the outcomes sought from the impending meetings as given verbally by Graham, such as “…getting out of professional silos, eg, departments/teams having a corporate/LCC outlook, not a team/desk outlook. To improve the structures for better corporate governance”. Simone, Harrison and
Graham organised the sessions and presented material, but Giaccomo’s lengthy and specialised presentations about budgeting and financial issues were predominant. Graham’s opening statements covered the origins of, and the legal, organisational and ethical necessity for the corporate change program, its connection to the community engagement initiative, a reiteration of the need to simplify the CP, and a summary of the Project so far.

The most important new information presented to these meetings, by Giaccomo, concerned an in-depth review of the financial situation that Council faced. Two major imperatives that necessitated changes to the accounting feature of the Corporate Plan were the losses associated with the Oasis scheme, such as the $3.89 million deficit of the previous year, and the recently accounted-for budgeting shortfall for the maintenance of existing infrastructure and assets, which was given as a preliminary estimate of $160million. The meeting was presented with the necessity of Council applying to the Department of Local Government for a Rate Variation, that is, an increase of the local government tax on land owners above the level permitted by the State government. In the following year, these issues came to the boil during meetings between Council and Community, and will be dealt with later in this chapter.

Most of the questions asked at the workshop were of a technical nature, such as “Given the financial constraints, how do we create new initiatives?” and “How do we project three and ten years into the future?”. My field notes from the morning meeting, which also applied to the later session, stated “Mostly a discussion of a) how to more efficiently do budgeting and b) dealing with the implications of the deficit from Oasis……Still no discussion of a sustainability framework – only ‘economic’ sustainability”. My sense of the discussions that occurred was that the managers were happy to have the financial problems sorted out, but were really interested in getting back to ‘business as usual’; there was virtually no time spent on calls for a new vision for corporate processes.

Given the format of the meetings, it is understandable that little creative discussion ensued. I felt that the same open and inquiring format for the November sessions that elicited feedback was missing from the second workshop. In my field notes for the
Team meeting of 17th December, I recorded a summary of a statement that I made to the Team, “I gave a critique of the format for the manager’s briefing – no workshop exercises held – was very directive, not collaborative…”. Perhaps this was intentional on the part of Corporate Plan Subgroup as they may have felt a need to ‘lay down the (new) law’, however it seemed obvious to me that the inclusion of Giaccomo, as a major figure in the meeting, brought in a new person and an old dynamic: a lecture format from someone who had not been involved in the formulation of the participative approach of the Team. I felt that an opportunity had been missed. Later in that same Team meeting Harrison undertook to confer with some of the managers during the end-of-year period; Graham’s Notes stated “...This should include further engagement with managers in workshop mode and or direct contact. In this regard it was noted that [Harrison] would consult directly with some executive managers before Christmas”. This last item was discussed in terms of the perceived need to approach some of the managers on a personal level, in a one-to-one situation; the rationale for this was that it would be another way of encouraging the entrenched disciplinary silos of Council to become more permeable.

6.2.3 Corporate Plan Workshops: III

The next Corporate Plan workshop occurred on 21st February 2005, with 25 unit managers from broad sections of council taking part over three hours, which Simone, Graham and Harrison facilitated. The meeting was held after the community/business/government Stakeholder Briefings, which ran earlier that month and were detailed in the previous chapter. The overt reason for this workshop was to incorporate the preliminary findings from the Briefings into the Corporate Plan process as soon as possible. Preliminary themes from the Briefings, as presented here from a report given to the Team on 11th February by Graham and given to the CP workshop participants were, in summary form:

- “The Community has a low level of trust in the Council…
- Council does not consult well with the Community…
- The community wants and will support the project…
- The community recognises that there are constraints on Council Action…”
• The community wants participation processes that are appropriate for it...
• The Council has to do more to deliver on the basics as well as deal with major issues…”.

In addition to the practical task of using data from the Briefings, there was another, underlying rationale, as explained in a comment to me by Graham just before the workshop began: “Our aim is to collectively come to a strategic plan among the unit managers – to break up the disciplinary silos”.

An introduction to the workshop gave a rundown of where the Project was up to; a few questions were asked, including one that queried the time frame as being too short. Another asked whether the participants of the Briefings could be considered representative of the community. The questions were answered convincingly, but this indicated that there was at least some scepticism about the Project. Simone then gave a presentation on the themes of the Council’s last Auspoll survey and demonstrated the similarity of those themes with the preliminary findings from the Stakeholder Briefings. One aim of the presentation was to prove the worth of the Project, and the nature of the questions asked by some of the participants appeared to support the need for that. Certainly, at a previous Team meeting, 11th February, there was discussion about the degree to which the Project has permeated the council organisation. Robert, for instance, raised the issue about “…the extent to which this project is still not a part of the main game within council”. James reinforced the point with a comment about “The importance of the … [workshop]… to find out where the corporate managers were at.” Joan provided another view on the matter, “Some people that I have been talking to said that this project seems secretive.” This latter comment suggested that some council staff were certainly aware of the Project, but were alienated from it. So, rather than not being interested in it, they may well have thought that the Project was not interested in their participation.

Much of the workshop focused on the basics of the Corporate Plan program, such as the structure and presentation of the CP document. However some progress was made in furthering the Corporate Change program, for the examples given in the workshop exercises came from the themes from the Briefings, to ensure the
community’s issues were absorbed into Council as soon as possible. This variety of approach reflected the make up of the participants, as divergent attitudes were expressed. For example, I recorded the following thoughts in my field notes, “Not much has come up about engagement with the community – although there is some, it’s often sceptical, eg, ‘how are we going to do this? – it’s up to us to do it, not the community’. On the other hand, as the exercises progressed I noticed that more ‘bigger picture’ issues were raised. For example, from my field notes, “One participant said that we should not look at the current council structures to determine the outcome of this Project, but be open to change the ‘structure’ of the council to meet the outcomes of the Project”. A bold statement, indeed, and one that could well have stood as a motto for the Project itself.

6.2.4 Corporate Plan Workshops: IV

Harrison and Graham facilitated the approximately three-hour workshops on 15th, 17th and 22nd November 2005; it was the last of the series of Corporate Planning Workshops that I attended. Importantly, this was the only one of the four that occurred after the Visioning workshops. A total of 32 managers came, with about half having participated in the previous year’s initiating meeting. Sections of the workshop included an introduction, two group-work exercises that took up the bulk of the time, a forward-looking conclusion and a participant’s evaluation. The overall theme presented had two prongs, the first was ‘the journey so far’, which aimed to build on the efforts of the previous workshops and showcase the results of the Project. Secondly, the aim was to develop a sense of ‘where to from here’, which sought to help cement the Project into the workings of council officers. In joining these two elements of the workshops, the introductory material demonstrated how much of the Liverpool Directions document related to the tasks already before Council. This was partly aimed to reassure managers that the Project did not mean much more work but that, with its cultural change aspects, it did mean working differently and collaboratively, with the community.

After the introduction we moved onto the group exercises to begin the process of developing a Strategic Plan for Liverpool, that is, of joining the community’s Vision for Liverpool to the Council’s Corporate Plan. The next task was to develop ideas for the individual Business Plans of the various departments. The Business Plans
included the expected outcomes of the strategies and the activities for each of the outcomes, including the expectation that this would follow on through to the individual Work Plans of council officers. The final session of the day presented the steps that were planned for the rest of the year and to June 2006 that would culminate in Liverpool’s first attempt at a Strategic Plan, as was ultimately adopted by Council in mid-2006.

On the whole, the response of the participants was positive, although some people expressed scepticism, such as one who, after the introduction, said “...if this is for the community, then it’s too cumbersome, too big... and it needs to have dollars allocated...” (from my field notes of the first meeting). Harrison explained that the program was over ten years and much of it would be a normal part of council operations. However, many insightful comments were fed back to the whole group after the exercises, for example, the following points were made by the participants, again from my field notes,

- “Need to have silos planning together across issues;
- Don’t create too big expectations to the community;
- More emphasis on need for collaborating to achieve outcomes; this needs to happen from the beginning, not re-working of plans that were developed (after long time and great effort) in silos;
- Need to have strategic council objectives, ie, a stronger sense of priorities from …[Senior Council];
- Between now and September 2008 we have an opportunity to get some processes and procedures for developing stability to get things sorted out and consolidated to be set up before the new Councillors. Or else new Councillors will re-organise again, we need to ‘bed-it-down’ or ‘concrete-it-in’.”

At the second meeting, Ben, from Implementations side of Council with an engineering background, who originally appeared as a major sceptic in this narrative, made quite a thoughtful contribution. This seemed to reinforce my previous estimation that was based on an earlier encounter (see Chapter 5), that his position had changed from holding an almost cynical attitude to the Project, to someone who
sought to understand it, positively contribute to it, and even to identify with it. He
could have simply remained quiet, but this was the second insightful comment
besides other contributions, from my field notes, “[Ben]…says that the diagram of
the ‘Corporate Planning Process and Product’ that’s been presented to the
workshop is a little simple and does not acknowledge the more complex iterative
nature of the Project.” Perhaps some of the impermeable silo boundaries were
becoming a little more porous.

Perhaps some people’s attitudes were changing as a result of the Project, however at
the third session, on 22 November, I was in a group from the same side of council,
and had a different experience. My field notes record the following,

“My group (implementation and planning people) had little knowledge
about the concept of sustainability – finally came out simply as need for built and
natural environments to have planning principles designed-in, eg, self-funding, low-
maintenance, long lasting – as a version of sustainability. One person (infrastructure)
suggested a major problem is that councils are expected to do more and more. For
example, councils should not have to do child care centres because they can’t spend
enough on road maintenance. This was supported by another, ‘Yes, just look at
where half the budget goes – social services’.”

The will to protect one’s own siloed patch was still a strong impetus among many; a
collaborative approach needed more fostering, and the cultural change program was
only just beginning.

In discussion after the workshop, it was felt that the Planning section was
particularly under-represented in workshops and the Project on the whole; Graham
and Harrison agreed to spend time with the section to try and foster an interest. My
field notes have a report from Graham to the Team meeting of 5th December, “The
extra one hour last Monday with …[George’s]… Planning group went OK. They
said all the right words, it was ‘…as good as could have been expected for those who
have not been involved in the Project so far’.”

With the conclusion of this series of CP workshops, the foundation was established
for Liverpool’s 2006-2007 Strategic Plan. Certainly, many other smaller meetings
and one-on-one sessions took place, but the bulk of the work to restructure the Corporate Plan and to include the Directions document in the Strategic Plan, was complete. However, much work was still needed to be done in order for a deeper cultural change program to take hold, and thus the journey continued.
Part 3 – Informal Society engages

6.3.0 Overview

In order to round out a picture of how council and community interact in Liverpool, three brief stories are given. They are chosen because, for the most part, they describe interactions that reflect in some way on the Project but are not a part of it. The Visioning workshops were important to the Project, but much happened outside of that framework that shed light on how Civic and Informal Society interacts in Liverpool at the local government level. It seemed to me that it was sometimes quite difficult for members of the Team to have ‘two masters’: the council as their employer, and the community they sought to champion. To be the midwives for an engagement process that aimed to foster an active community meant that they were sometimes both ‘midwife’ and ‘mother’. To use another image, members of the Team often found that they had to straddle two paths that the Team hoped would converge, but that often crossed in an abrupt way, often ran in parallel but in separate directions, or even at times went in apparently divergent routes. Although the Project itself was complex enough, these vignettes demonstrate some of this ‘bigger-picture’ complexity of the context in which it operated.

6.3.1 Vignette 1: the Collingwood rendezvous

What is known in Liverpool as the ‘Collingwood Precinct’ or simply ‘Collingwood’, is an area just south of the commercial centre of the city based around the c.1810 building, Collingwood House, and includes the Liverpool Regional Museum. A public meeting was called by Council on 6th April 2005 to report on the proposed rezoning of part of the historic area from ‘Community’ to ‘Operational’ land and another part from ‘Residential’ to ‘Recreation Public’. The meeting occurred as a part of Council’s consultation process for what was exhibited as Draft Amendment 103 for the Liverpool Local Environment Plan 1997 (Collingwood 2007). The Council’s proposal included moving the museum to another site and selling some of the land for residential and commercial development. Many believed that the primary impetus for the Council’s proposal was to help meet the costs incurred from
the aftermath of the Oasis matter (Kontos 2005; Charlton 2005). Although this was seemingly denied by a council officer (Marchetta 2005a), the officer’s statement could have referred to the proposal being ‘cost neutral’ for Council, as indicated by the Administrator’s comment a week later “...we are generating much needed income to fund improvements to the precinct...” (Marchetta 2005b). The timing could not have been worse, for the meeting was not long before the planned series of Visioning workshops. The acrimony and heat that was generated by the resident participants at the meeting came as a shock and disappointment for many in the Team.

I could not attend the public meeting, however, and more importantly, 150 residents of Liverpool did turn up. The information presented here comes from my notes of the Methods Subgroup meeting that was held the next day, a Team meeting held two days later and accounts in the local Press. On 7th April I arrived for our weekly Subgroup meeting and, unusually, encountered a knot of people in highly animated conversation about the Collingwood meeting of the previous night. James was quite upset and was trying to figure out why the previous night’s attendees were so hostile to what was, for Council, such a reasonable proposal. I was surprised to see this sort of feeling expressed by James as he was one of the Team who most vocally espoused the position of the community, who said in a fairly exasperated tone, “Don’t they understand the position we’re in?”

At the next day’s Team meeting, my field notes record that I thought the members were still “…very upset by it all”, with several people expressing resentment that they were given such a hostile reception by residents. Once feelings settled down, the meeting began to consider the implications for the Project. Graham’s Notes from the Team meeting state, “…lessons learnt from the recent public meeting on the Collingwood precinct...suggested that the Council should run meetings/forums for the disgruntled and vocal members of the public...”. My field notes record a variety of reactions, such as from Jane, “There was a general distrust of Council, residents think, ‘why are you taking this place from us?’, and ‘get your act together financially’.” Harrison attempted to retrieve something positive from what the Team considered was not one of Council’s best public meetings, by saying: “A lot were hot
Margaret tried to explain the reaction from a dispassionate point of view, suggesting that it was, in part, a result of media attention, “It’s at the top of their mind, the papers are full of Collingwood”. Certainly a number of articles and letters in the local papers confirm her suggestion, with headlines of the Liverpool City Champion on the day of the public meeting stating “United Stance, ‘Fire Sale’ Opposed”, the accompanying article detailing the opposition of five former mayors of Liverpool to the plan and giving the time and place of the public meeting (D’Arcy 2005b). The same issue of the paper had several letters to the editor and a series of interviews with ‘people in the street’, most of these indicated hostility to the proposal. This journalistic focus began in the same paper two months earlier on 9th February with a banner headline: “Collingwood - is it the new Oasis? Dollar Plans: Administrator’s museum plans shocks public” (Marchetta 2005f, p. 1) and continued for some time after the public meeting. For example, in the other local paper, the Liverpool Leader, letters opposing the proposal continued to be published weeks later, one asking “Do we need more bricks and concrete…? Please do not destroy the Aboriginal heritage we have in the area” (Hunter & Hunter 2005) and another stating “…why can’t the powers that be recognise the value of our historic buildings and open spaces?… our voices seldom appear to be heard” (Herron 2005). Not all letters and articles were in opposition, such as the editorial of the Liverpool City Champion on 30th March, which was headed “Collingwood plan makes dollars and sense” (Kontos 2005).

It is equally important to be aware that resident interest in the Collingwood precinct did not just begin with the Council’s announcement. Months earlier, in November 2004, a letter was placed in the Liverpool City Champion asking for volunteers to help with the site (Charlton 2004). A month later the same person elicited an article in the paper that raised concerns about the way the precinct was to be managed by the Casula Powerhouse and Arts Centre administration (Marchetta 2004). The source of both letter and article later helped found the Liverpool Action Group, in July/August 2005 (Stevens 2005; Marchetta 2005b).
In addition to the sustained pressure on the Administrator and council officers from residents which, according to Marchetta (2005d, 2005e) was long and sustained. Paul Lynch the Left-ALP local member of State parliament also weighed into the Collingwood debate. In a press release in the Liverpool City Champion on 27th April 2005 he is quoted as saying “Destroying the museum is unjustifiable…The council’s claims that they will … rebuild it elsewhere are unbelievable” (Marchetta 2005d). Of course, this may have had less to do with the debate over practical options about what do to with the Collingwood Precinct, and more to do with power plays between Left and Right factions with in the ALP. Nonetheless, this pressure on the Administrator and the rest of Senior Council had an effect on their regard for the permanent engagement structure that was originally to come out of the Partnership Project, as well as on the Collingwood proposal: the former was scrapped, the latter amended.

By mid 2006, Council had modified the original proposal in a number of ways, largely as a result of the community backlash. Council made a public statement on its website on 10th July which acknowledged this,

“… the community will have an opportunity to provide feedback in accordance with Council’s recently adopted Community Engagement Toolkit … Council made significant amendments to the Collingwood Precinct Master Plan, including a decision to retain the Liverpool Regional Museum at its current site and preserve open space…the result of listening to the community and seeking to achieve a sustainable outcome…” (LCC 2007).

6.3.2 Vignette 2: Budget meeting … when ‘the best laid plans…”

Another overlap of the Project with a more traditional consultation process was when Council called a public meeting on 26th May 2005, which I attended. The meeting was called for the community to consider, and to provide feedback on, the Draft Management Plan 2005-2006 (DMP 2005). This was on the very eve of the Visioning Workshops, which began the next day. Members of the Team were especially proud of the new format of the Management Plan, which included many of the outcomes of the Corporate Plan Workshops. However, it was most unfortunate that the new ‘simple language’ management plan was also accompanied with a
proposed rise in the council rates, and only a few weeks after the heated Collingwood meeting. As early as the Team meeting of the 6th May Margaret foreshadowed that, because of the anticipated rates rise, the public meeting, “...would not be a happy one”. Indeed, it was not.

Council had prepared for about 100 people to be there, so had seating and hired catering staff for the occasion. My field notes describe the attendance as being ‘about 15 residents...in addition there were about four journalists and 10 council staff...”. According to the attending journalist, Marchetta (2005b,p. 1), “...only a handful of people...attended the public meeting...”. It was a disappointing turnout, as several of the Team expressed to me on the night. Robert opened up the proceedings while Alex took up the main role of explaining the nature and purpose of the meeting. Soon a resident stood up and, in a fairly heated tone, demanded to know why there had not been enough notice given of the Draft and little notice for the meeting. Acting as the ‘chair’, Robert jumped in to the fray and asked the audience to keep questions until after the presentations. Next Giaccomo, Ben and Harrison filled in many of the details of the management plan. In particular, Giaccomo detailed how Liverpool had a $162 million deficit in the budget for the upkeep of the existing infrastructure and that this required a 10.2% increase in Rates. Alex summed up the information and asked for questions.

The first question was kept for the prominent member of the Liverpool Action Group, who had leapt to his feet earlier, to repeat his query; he did so, challenging the officials to explain why the notice of meeting, and the announcement of the rates increase was ‘hidden in the Council notices in the paper’. Alex answered by detailing the many and varied places that the Draft Management Plan was accessible to the public, and that there had been a mistake with the arrangements to publicise the meeting and apologised for that. Although several questioners returned to the vexed matter of the ‘hidden notice’, many other questions were also put. One matter that raised considerable interest was the budget item that detailed Council property that was going to be sold; this included a reference to Collingwood and to the old School of Arts building. Local history and heritage was still a hot issue in Liverpool and the sale of the School of Arts site surprised and angered a number of people. One woman asked why information about the Partnership Project was not in other
languages; Alex explained that there were 135 different cultures and 111 different languages in Liverpool and it was difficult to cover them all. Besides several indignant complaints about the size of the rates rise, other issues of concern were raised. Particular matters were, the outcome of the Oasis negotiations; the size of the budget allocation on the Casula Powerhouse corridor considering that it is flood prone (where Collingwood’s Regional Museum was to be re-located); a complaint that the notice in the paper was about the Project and was not clearly about a rates rise, and then a question as to why Council sold public land to Westfield when the expansion of that shopping complex was harming the ‘south end of town’ and its small shop keepers. In all it was a very lively gathering.

At the meeting’s conclusion, those present were invited to partake in the light supper provided; many people did so, but several people left. I was speaking to Robert about the evening and my field notes record my comments to him, “Spoke with [Robert] re the size of the meeting and said ‘what if, instead of Council saying that the budget’s infrastructure deficit was $162 million and that Council was going to solve the problem by applying for a Rates rise and to sell land, Council was in a position to say, ‘this is the problem’ and ask ‘how are we, council and community, going to solve it?’’. That would be an engaged process”. He looked thoughtful, but didn’t respond, giving me the impression of someone who was bound in the difficulty of wearing two hats. He often verbalised the need for an active citizenship in Liverpool and promoted the idea within the Project, but was someone who realised that his job required him to work within the institutional constraints of local government. In terms of Brown’s five voices (Brown et al 2005, Brown 2008) and my earlier analysis of the nature of Civil, Civic and Informal Society, his personal position (individual voice/role within Informal Society) and his institutional (professional-government/Civic Society role in his job) were apparently at odds or were struggling to be reconciled. Of course, he was not alone in this.

6.3.3 Vignette 3: Informal Society takes up issues

The local papers are an important source of information about the concerns and activities of various elements of Informal Society, and as some of these elements seek to transform into actors within Civil Society. This section of the chapter will briefly outline some of the concerns of these components of society, principally as
expressed in the letters column of the *Liverpool City Champion*, from August 2004 to January 2006. The letters, of course, were concerned with a wide variety of issues that are commonly found in a local paper, for example, neighbourhood matters, opinions on the youth of the day, comments on traffic incidents, reports on and from schools, and announcements by community groups. In addition there were comments on various elections that were held at Federal and State levels, and what was going to be the local council election of 2004, as well as observations on world affairs. However, many of the issues that evoked enough interest for a letter to be composed and printed, also related to the Project in one way or another, even if they did not mention it.

Some of the most popular topics related to the big issues of the day, such as Oasis, the sacking of Council, Orange Grove, Collingwood, the School of Arts building, and the 2005 Rates increase. The largest of this category of letters was the Collingwood matter, which elicited 22 letters during the period stated, followed by Oasis and its aftermath with nine letters. In particular, though, many issues that participants of the Project’s Visioning workshops brought up were also raised in many letters. These included Liverpool’s transport and parking problems, with nine letters, and various natural and built environmental topics, such as the state of the rivers, specific old houses that were destined for demolition, or particular stands of trees that were considered to be of value and under threat; on these topics there were 15 letters.

Of particular interest were subjects to do with the operation of Council, and a matter that did not garner a single direct mention. The tone of a great proportion of the letters, as just described, was critical of the operation of Council, for example, five letters directly complained of the perceived lack of accessibility to Council officers or of Council processes, that is, ‘of Council not listening’. One such writer, describing herself as a single mother with three children and two jobs, had an encounter with officials about a large private development in Hammondville. She described her reaction after she attended a Council meeting (before Council’s dismissal) as, “I went home feeling like I had walked through a revolving door of protocol and red tape” (Bosley 2004, p. 16).
The matter that hardly raised a letter was the Partnership Project itself. Perhaps this should not have been a surprise considering the Team’s limited resources, and Senior Council’s need to down-play the Team’s wish to emphasise that Liverpool had ‘drawn a line in the sand’. The only relevant letter seemed to make an oblique reference to the Project’s stated aim that Council wished to more fully engage the community. Although there were letters from time to time praising or thanking Council, the following is a more typical entry, and reinforces the numerous comments from Team members about Liverpool having a cynical and disengaged community. It was not a happy letter; it was published on 1 June 2005 (Bozetto 2005, p. 10), and is reproduced here in full.

Am I the only one who is getting fed up with hearing how Liverpool Council wants to hear from residents, that it values our opinions and wants to work with us to make Liverpool a better place to live?

Call me a cynic, but this is just one big public relations exercise. When the council has had the opportunity to listen to residents and make important decisions about the shape of our suburbs, it has been glaringly obvious to me that it really doesn’t care.

As a resident of Greenwood Close, Hammondville, the final straw for me was a letter from the council informing me that my close will be changed to an Avenue because of the Mirvac development that is currently being constructed at the end of it.

I have lived here for 16 years and we are now being subjected to a townhouse development of epic proportions.

Of course the council very kindly listened to all the residents’ concerns about this matter and then totally ignored them.

Cul de sacs are being opened to make way for progress, and all without a moment’s regard for the people who bought in this close after being promised one lifestyle are now being given another.

So I really don’t believe that the council wants to know what we think. What do I think?

Spend our money on fixing the Whitlam Centre, fix community services – don’t waste it on stupid name changes that only get residents off-side and make them even more bitter, leave us the one vestige of our former street you haven’t taken yet.

But you know what, I really don’t think council will listen. Call me a cynic – no make that a realist.

H. Bozetto
Hammondville.
Indeed, there was a long road to travel before all of Council adopted pro-active processes of public participation as a matter of course, and the community became a vibrantly active and engaged one, but the journey had begun.
Chapter 7 – Analysis of findings:  
a journey of paradox and progress

7.0 Overview of the chapter

While my journey with the Team had ended, the exploration of the meanings to be found in these experiences was beginning. As described in Chapter 3, I began this analysis of the data by again reading Chapters 5 and 6 and looked for significant emergent themes. This resulted in the production of a document that contained a compendium of 44 themes that I cross-referenced with the evidence in the data chapters. Each theme was accompanied by locations within the data chapters where there was evidence to support the theme category. This locational data was used in the current chapter to find the relevant passages and made it easier to register the site of that evidence, through a procedure that is detailed below. From the initial production of themes, a long and involved synthesising process was then undertaken which concluded with the production of five headings that stood out as best representing the many themes of the study. Although it is more of a working document than a polished paper, please refer to Appendix 2 for the complete document that charts the process just mentioned, and as more fully described in Chapter 3.

In the end, the final five headings that have been used as section headings for this chapter are:

1. Values, ethics and passion,
2. Structures and functions,
3. Power and empowerment,
4. Of process and outcome, and
5. What happened to sustainability?
Before addressing the themes, a brief guide will help the reader understand how the referencing is organised. Within this chapter, as well as other citation, reference will be made to the contents of the two previous chapters of my fieldwork data. The designation for the chapter citation will indicate which chapter, the part of the chapter, the section of the chapter, and then the paragraph number that begins the reference, thus: (6.1.4.7). In the case of this example, the reference (6.1.4.7) indicates chapter 6, part 1, section 4, paragraph 7. In addition, sometimes a brief quotation from the relevant chapter will be used to illustrate a point and this will be referenced in the same way.

7.1 Values, ethics and passion

One of the first things that struck me at the formation of the Team and the Project was the way in which the Team began, and largely continued: the steering group was made up of volunteers (5.1.1.1-2). This produced multi-layered roles that the Team worked within when, as individuals and as a group, they sometimes functioned as Civic, Civil or Informal Society members. In using the terminology of ‘Civic Society’ and ‘Informal Society’, there is a need to be careful in not using these terms in a deterministic a fashion, but rather as a tool, guide or framework. For instance, the huge near-rupture that was caused by Senior Council changing the ‘Vision’ document into more of a council document (5.2.5.2-9), shows that Civic Society is not a monolith. Although one could put the disagreement simply in terms of a squabble within Civic Society, it was more than that. Granted it was from their own point of view, but some people in the council were adamantly fighting for the ‘rights’ of Informal Society, of the community of Liverpool. The Project has been played out on a contested terrain that is far more complicated than it might at first seem.

This situation describes a further complexity of Brown’s (2005) Knowledge Cultures, where Team members often held the different positions as represented by Brown, but concurrently - such as when James and Lucy were fighting for a “‘Bill of Rights’ for…[Informal Society]…” (5.1.12.5), at the same time as they were working in and for a Civic Society institution. In this way Team members represented different Knowledge Cultures; sometimes they acted within the
Specialised Knowledge of their professional domain, and fulfilled their job-role in Civic Society, but sometimes they also expressed reactions from their Individual and Local Knowledge Cultures and thus more represented Informal Society. This sort of situation revived in me the powerful imagery of Michelangelo’s unfinished sculptures, where the figures struggle to escape their surroundings, yet that very situation gives the figures their power, or potential power, as art (Michelangelo 2008; Figure 7.1).

![Figure 7.1 The unfinished sculptures of Michelangelo. Source: http://iit-iti.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/vit-tiv/michelangelo_e.html](http://iit-iti.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/vit-tiv/michelangelo_e.html)

Similarly, the tension that was produced by the Team juggling such paradoxes within itself was often a source of great creativity and productivity: the arguments and discussions were as crucial to the Team’s effectiveness, as was its cohesion as a group. For example, at times members functioned in ‘opposing’ roles, especially when arguing out a point, such as the Time Tunnel and T-shirts issues (5.1.11.5; 5.1.13.1), or when facing the limitations of time and budget (5.1.10.2; 5.1.12.4-5). At other times, the Team acted as a fairly typical Civil Society action group when
developing the Corporate Change program in tackling current arrangements of the Council in order to make it more accessible and understandable for members of Informal Society, as well as helping the various disciplinary silos understand each other’s language (5.1.11.3; 6.1.2.1-2; 6.1.4.2; 6.1.5.2-3). At other times, usually when at the end of their tether, they accepted their role as employees of a Civic Society organisation, and ‘obeyed orders’ (5.1.6.1-3).

So, the figures in the unfinished sculptures suggest to me the nature of the different struggles of various characters encountered in the previous two chapters. I ask the reader to retain any impressions that the figures may suggest to them, both in reflecting back on the characters we have already met, and for the discussion to come in this chapter. In doing so, though, it needs to be noted that the experience of the people within the whole of the Project is wider and more complex than the characters in the images above hold, for example, the Team was more than just a collection of individuals, our interactions counted too. Our struggles were diverse: some of the experience was against the institutional, legal and disciplinary surrounds; another aspect of the struggle was within, at a personal level, and, some of the battles also occurred between the elements and individuals who inhabited ‘the Project’.

Furthermore, although this study does not emphasise psychology, it is useful to consider that some of these struggles were unconscious or, at least, were unobserved at the time. An example of an unobserved internal struggle was when the members of the Team were so disappointed that the residents of Liverpool turned on them in such and angry way at the Collingwood and Budget meetings. They saw themselves as striving to sincerely engage with the community and simply assumed that Informal Society would understand this. It may have simply been that the Project was at such an early stage that the Community had not built its trust in Council, but it was easy for even the Team to place noisy residents in the ‘squeaky wheel’ category and not consider them more positively as ‘active citizens’.

In any case, there were two qualifications to the Team’s voluntarist nature, firstly, the initial instruction from the new Administrator to the Strategic Planning group to establish a steering committee was an instruction, not a request, and secondly, when
officers who had volunteered for the Project left Council, the next incumbents automatically filled the position – whether they would have joined the team otherwise is unknown (5.1.7.1). The second point is an intriguing issue, for one may consider that expanding the core group of a project and getting ‘new blood’ in with the new infusion of ideas could produce constructive outcomes, but this was not always the case. It might be seen as a dichotomy of ‘stability and coherence’ versus ‘change leading to growth’, with the balance between these forces the matter that needs to be considered. The evidence here suggests that the voluntary nature of the formation of the group and the later inclusion of people, more because they were filling in a job position rather than being personally dedicated to the project, was a factor that affected the progress and outcome of the Project (5.1.2.2-3; 5.1.8.1).

The emotional commitment of staff that the voluntarist ethos demonstrated certainly had many benefits, however, there was an instance when it was less than beneficial. A negative impact occurred when one of its most passionate members, Lucy, effectively left the Project when she felt that too many compromises had been made to the ‘community owned’ aspect of the Project (5.1.12.5). This was a paradoxical outcome of the passion that was engendered by the voluntarist ethos of the Project: sometimes it mattered too much.

Nevertheless, a lesson that this example of voluntarism holds is important, especially considering the difficult circumstances of the Project, for example in terms of the complexities caused by Liverpool’s demography (Chapter 4) and the lack of a dedicated budget (5.1.2.4; 5.1.10.4), as compared to how well the Team functioned and the qualified, but significant, degree to which the Project was successful. The voluntary nature of the group fostered a ‘bias’ towards those who had some passion for the project, which was at least to some extent necessary, and it certainly was important for the individuals, because the Project meant taking on additional tasks besides their daily workload (5.1.9.2). This level of personal commitment was also important because, on a professional level, this was a risky undertaking – it was not the usual Council fare with which to advance one’s career.

Although it may be said that it was the Oasis scandal itself which created an atmosphere of crisis that subsequently allowed ‘space’ for a more democratic and
open operating structure for the Team, this approach is not sufficient to adequately describe this case. At Liverpool, for instance, Council could have decided on a more closed and defensive response, as exemplified by some in the Executive Leadership who preferred a ‘business as usual approach’ (5.1.4.1). As it was, a more democratic ethos prevailed in the Team, for example when they let an outsider (myself) in as a Team member (5.1.1.3). This ethos in turn promoted a strong ethical stance being taken with regard to what the Team felt was their duty towards the Community (5.1.2.4; 5.1.10.1). This approach was manifested by more than just recording the terms “…Inclusiveness, Transparency, Ethical…” in the Project’s ‘Principles of Engagement’ (5.1.3.5), however important that was. Even though these values were originally focused on the Team’s approach to the Visioning Workshops (5.1.10.2), it also applied to how the Team wanted to engage with the rest of Council staff, which was with an inclusive approach (6.1.3.3-4; 6.1.4.1&3). This ethos was also evident in how members of the Team sought to challenge themselves professionally (5.1.2.2-3).

The passion that the Team exhibited in defending the interests of the community within the Project occurred in two seemingly contradictory ways. Firstly, when the Team debated the wishes of Senior Council, such as over the T-shirts (5.1.13.1) or the wording of the Vision/Directions document (5.2.5.2-5), and also when the Team had internal disagreements, as with the ‘Bill of Rights’ debate when members of the Team asked, “…was it a council or community Project?” (5.1.12.5). This latter point was also raised in terms of the level of engagement that the Project aimed to establish, “…[is this]…a … Corporate Planning Process with consultation, rather than a community participation project” (5.1.10.3). Secondly, that approach contrasted with situations when members of the Team, and others in Council, were highly sceptical of the ‘usual suspects’ taking over the workshops (5.1.9.1) and of the ‘squeaky wheels’ taking over the Project’s outcomes (6.1.6.1-6). This developed into such an issue that the much discussed and hoped-for plans for a new structure of Council and Community engagement were abandoned (6.1.6.4).

With all its ‘pluses and minuses’, from the evidence gathered, most of the people who were involved in the Team became attached to the Project and were keen to help create meaningful outcomes for the community and Council, and thereby gained much job satisfaction from their involvement in this aspect of their work (5.1.12.1).
Despite the use of the term ‘Partnership Project’, the Team used the language of an iterative and collaborative journey rather than that of a time limited ‘project’: “…the journey doesn’t stop, there will be future renewal…” (5.1.1.3), which spoke of a long-term commitment. For the Team it was not just a ‘tick-box’ exercise. Perhaps this way of staffing projects could be more widely applied for, despite the difficulties, out of this emerged an atmosphere of adventure and creativity for the Team, potential benefits for the community and positive outcomes for Council.

7.2. Structures and functions

One of the standout, and recurrent, themes of this research has to do with the self-perceived functions that individuals saw as their role within the established structures of the LGA; the other side of the coin was those aspects of the structures that provoked such responses. These elements manifested in five ways: a) the impact of the physical and social nature of Liverpool; b) the marked effects that disciplinary silos in Council had on those who inhabited them; c) the innate passivity engendered by the dominant social democratic framework; d) the weight of past interactions between Council and Community as the lived experience of Liverpool, and lastly, e) the institutional space that allowed a challenge to the status quo from a small number of people. These aspects of the study will now be dealt with in turn.

7.2.1 The impact of the physical and social nature of Liverpool

Context can be everything, and certainly it is important when considering the Project; sometimes the context can be so obvious, though, that we do not sufficiently consider it. The physical and social nature of Liverpool, its geography and demography, provided a rich source of both difficulties and opportunities for the Project as well as, more broadly, for the Community and Council. For example, the simple fact, or accident, of history of the LGA having a long and thin shape (about 30km by 10km), divided not only the geography (as described in Chapter 4), but also the people, was brought up during the Visioning Workshops (5.2.1.4). Liverpool certainly has a mixture of metropolitan, suburban, peri-urban and rural land uses, which was seen as a valuable asset by participants in the workshops (5.2.1.4), but this also resulted in a degree of alienation of the western people of the LGA from the administrative and population centre in the east (5.2.1.4-5). This alienation was
manifest with the three sorts of outer western areas namely, suburban Green Valley (5.2.1.4-5), rural Bringelly (5.2.1.6), and the wealthier ‘McMansion’ owners of the new housing developments, which were now beginning to occupy previously rural lands (5.2.1.9). But it was not only a matter of these three outlying sectors having issues with the ‘centre’, there were also some difficulties between them.

The tensions that sometimes arose between the ‘regions’ of Liverpool was complex. These tensions were comprised of a mixture of Informal Society being dissatisfied with Civic Society, such as demanding “…a fairer share of resources…” (5.2.1.6), Civil Society wanting a greater degree of acknowledgement for the Green Valley Precinct Committee (5.2.1.4), and Informal Society having internal disagreements about newer migrants to the region. This latter point included both poorer migrants from overseas who lived in high density areas in the older parts of Liverpool and the wealthier internal migrants who lived in the growing areas of free-standing large houses on small blocks of land – the ‘McMansions’ (5.2.1.4-6). In particular, it was the new housing developments that were fairly frequently objected to by many of the other residents, as the urban sprawl was not a welcome feature (5.2.1.4-6). Also, there were several references to what some participants saw as problems of safety that emanated from some public housing estates (5.2.1.4).

Another issue of difference was between the habits of more recent migrants and those with longer antecedents: newer migrants from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background (CALD), were generally seen as providing valuable cultural attributes (5.2.1.4-5), but also in need of ‘training’ in the customs that the older migrants had already established (5.1.2.4). That Liverpool had such a high proportion of people who were born overseas, about 40%, was an issue that provided many challenges for the Project but clearly an even greater proportion, about 50%, of the community were from a CALD background (LCC 204a). Since the Project had such limited funds, it did not allow for promotional material to be printed in a variety of languages, as was needed, although the final Directions document was printed in several of the main languages (pers. comm. P. Lee, Policy Analyst, Liverpool City Council, 9/10/2006). Very few migrants attended the general workshops, with the vast majority of them being captured in a Workshop formed from an established English language class (5.2.1.1).
7.2.2 Disciplinary silos and those who inhabited them

One of the most basic features of the Team was its multi-disciplinary nature, that is the group was made up of council officers from many sections of Council (5.1.3.7). More than this though, it functioned for the most part as an interdisciplinary team in how it strove to develop an integrated approach to the Management Plan process: Liverpool’s new Corporate Plan was not to be as before, “…just a collection of each…manager’s documents stapled together.” (6.1.1.5). Furthermore, it was to be grounded in the Community-developed Directions Document, as stated in the Team’s Community Engagement Document, “…everything the organisation does in the future will need to be linked strategically to the vision…” (5.1.10.1). In addition, there was a deeper aspect, that of Cultural Change (6.1.6.3), as summed up in a comment by James, “We need to change from… ‘50% more roads were fixed’ to ‘how have the roads you fixed improved the quality of life’…” (6.1.1.7): this meant an attitudinal change about what was important. Thus, putting these elements together, the Council’s Management Plan approached being a document of Integrated Strategic Planning (6.2.1.1). Of course, it was admirable and appropriate for the Team to develop and hold these fine ideals and aims, however, the problem that was not fully resolved was how to convince all of Council to make this their own creative concern.

In striving to develop the Project within Council, the Team was assisted by not being directed by higher management in great detail, at least for the most part, in the beginning. While this allowed for a greater flexibility and creativity in what was attempted, such as the Time Tunnel and T-shirt ideas, and the more democratic methods within the Cultural Change program, it also had a limiting effect on the range of those who were involved. It was an ironic outcome of the voluntary, and to some extent self-managed, framework that the Team operated within that it facilitated greater participation of staff from any ‘level’ from within the sections that did participate, but not all sections participated (5.1.3.7; 5.1.4.1). Thus depth was achieved within some sections of Council, but not breadth within the Council structure. Had a more authoritarian approach been undertaken, all sections of Council could have been present within the Team, but tantalising questions present
themselves: had such an approach been adopted, would the Team have developed in such a creative manner? On the other hand, could the Corporate Change program have been a more deeply engaged process, earlier if all sections were directed to be involved? The Team and the Council, on the whole, proceeded with the more democratic intent (6.1.1.5-7).

That Council was bounded by disciplinary silos is demonstrated for example, by the comment of one of the Implementation side of Council at a Corporate Plan Workshop, who criticised the lack of funds for road maintenance by saying, “... just look at where half the budget goes – social services” (6.2.4.4). In addition, reticence for the Project on the part of the Executive Board has been noted (5.1.4.1-5) and some managers expressed doubts about its validity (6.2.3.2). Although this was the situation, the Team sought to change this state of affairs (6.2.3.1-2), and while this task was not easy, the evidence reveals that the silos were permeable, at least to some extent, for other members of the ‘old side’ of Council expressed support for the Project’s ideals (6.2.3.3). One such person said, at a Corporate Plan Workshop, that Council staff should have also “…developed a Vision – a Corporate Vision” (6.2.1.7). Another participant of one of these workshops expressed quite an advanced view that Council “…should not look at the current council structures to determine to the outcome of this project, but be open to change the ‘structure’ of the council to meet the outcomes of the Project” (6.2.3.3). In particular, the Executive Board member, Ben, who earlier had expressed much relief that the Project didn’t “…seem too radical” (5.1.4.1), and was a passive attendee of his first workshop, provided a creative and constructive critique at the second (6.2.4.4). In this way the silos showed themselves to be less rigid and more flexible, and less solid and more permeable than they originally demonstrated to me during my time with the Project: there was room for change and growth.

Of course, the functioning of the silos was also demanded by residents who just wanted the Council to ‘do its job’. Although it did not come up very often in the Visioning Workshops as feared by the Team, some did want the ‘roads, rates and rubbish’ attended to (5.2.1.5-6). The disciplinary silos were reinforced from without, as well as from within, which was another reason for having both Council and Community Cultural Change programs.
7.2.3 The innate culture of passivity engendered by the dominant social democratic framework

Another factor that reinforced both disciplinary silos and the unengaged patterns of behaviour of the Community was the view that saw the community as passive recipients of services provided by an active Council. This was something that applied to many in both the Council and the Community and was strengthened by the established patterns of social structure and power. As a Team member, Veronica, said “...there was a legislative imperative to consult with the community” (5.1.3.8), however, while the minimum extent of the consultation is explicit in legislation, for example in the Local Government Act 1993 and its Regulations, the nature or quality of that consultation is much more vague (LGA 1993). A notice in a newspaper may well be enough to satisfy the requirements of legislation, but is it enough to foster trust and collaboration between Council and Community? Another example is the nature of Council governance, in that residents are rarely required to involve themselves in local government decision making except by voting each four years. While many members of the community do involve themselves local activities more often than attending a polling station once in four years, these simple facts engender a culture of passivity within and between Council and Community. One may well decry the ‘silent majority’ or the ‘disengaged’, but when the dominant structures foster and reinforce that very circumstance, action needs to be taken to change the status quo.

Another interesting way of looking at both the distance between Civic Society and Informal Society, in terms of the degree of engaged collaboration that existed, and the situation within Council regarding the Corporate Plan Cultural Change program, is through the lens of Brown’s Knowledge Cultures (Brown et al 2005). Regarding the former, this can be represented by Brown’s (Brown et al 2005) Strategic Knowledge areas of government and the Specialised Knowledge areas of professionals that represent Civic Society, as distinct from the Individual Knowledge and Local Knowledge of residents that represent Informal Society, while the Project’s broad aims can be seen as attempting to achieve Brown’s (Brown et al 2005) Holistic Knowledge.
The distance between Civic Society and Informal Society prompted members of Informal Society in Liverpool to combine to form Civil Society associations to represent their interests. It was unfortunate that the dominant social democratic representative system was not challenged and changed, instead power stayed entrenched in Civic Society, where the representative system placed it. As a result citizens were left going to Council as squeaky wheels rather than working within a collaborative engaged structure. Examples of this situation are the maintenance of the Green Valley Precinct Committee, even after it was disbanded by Council (5.2.1.5) and the formation of the Liverpool Action Group (5.2.5.6). The passivity that was so often lamented by the Team sometimes erupted due to any of the many pressures that existed under the surface. A mechanism to allow for and to foster a critically engaged citizenry could have alleviated some of this tension and channelled it creatively.

Similarly, but not as dramatically, Knowledge Cultures (Brown et al 2005) can be represented as they are above, but within Council. In this view, various Specialist and Strategic Knowledge holders within their disciplinary silos also adopted some attributes of those who hold Individual and Local Knowledge. These Council officers promoted their ‘local’ interests in terms of their own work-related silos, which were barriers that the Corporate Plan program sought to break down in order to form a Holistic Knowledge base; this new approach was represented by the new-look Corporate Plan. Rather than having dramatic explosions of anger, as with Informal Society at the Budget Meeting (6.3.2.1), within Council the tensions produced by the passive situation manifested in terms of ‘protecting one’s own patch’ and fighting other sections of council for access to resources, rather than a collaborative approach to solving the problems of the LGA (6.2.4.4).

Another issue related to the topic of a passive culture, concerns much of what members of the Team described as the ‘disaffected’, ‘alienated’ or ‘cynical and apathetic’ nature of Liverpool’s populace (5.1.2.2) with regard to civic engagement. This is a matter that can be attributed to the disposition of decision-making power in the social democratic framework that defines the government of Liverpool. In order to encourage the citizenry to become more involved with Council their request that some power be relinquished (or shared) by the institution (5.2.1.4-5) needs to be
listened to. For, to expect residents to turn up to meetings and feel that they are subsequently be ignored (6.3.1.3-4), or to be frequently side-lined (6.3.3.1-5), is a way to discourage an active citizenry from evolving. This happened within the wider workings of Council, as evidenced above, but also existed in the working of the Project. This occurred both due to the actions of higher authorities to some of the decisions of the Team. Examples include the decision to not have a launch of the Project, not to refer to ‘drawing a line in the sand’ (5.1.12.3-5), and was manifested by disputes within the Team due to its decisions with regard to the Community – as with dropping the launch of the T-shirt exhibition (5.1.13.3). In these examples, the authority of Civic Society was maintained over what members of the Team saw as the interests of Informal Society.

Just as the struggle of members of the Team, as well as other Council officers, evoked in me a memory of Michelangelo’s unfinished sculptures (Figure 7.1), so too does the struggle of citizens to find a place under the warm and nurturing sun of engaged and collaborative decision-making processes. Each and every squeaky wheel needs to be more than listened to, Council needs to respect and nurture them, for they are at the forefront of an active citizenry. However, from the evidence derived from this study the question remains, not whether it should be done but how to do it, a matter that is addressed in the next chapter.

7.2.4 The weight of the lived experience of the people of Liverpool

The first point in this section is fairly simple, but was one woven into the background of the cloth of the Project, and occasionally came more into the foreground. As is noted in the literature, the history of being treated as an outpost of the Metropolis was a burden that many felt in Liverpool (Keating 1996). This was reflected to some degree during the Visioning Workshops with comments, for example, berating the quality of urban planning about the loss of farmland, which was largely a State government matter and the staunchness of community feeling from those living in the ‘experiment’ of Green Valley (5.2.1.4-6). In addition there was a feeling that Liverpool was being treated as a ‘second-class citizen’ by the State government as an outcome of the Oasis scandal, not the least of which was the resentment that some held about the appointment of an Administrator (5.2.1.4).
These points came up at one of the Visioning Workshops when participants said that they wanted Liverpool to be “…proud of itself…” and have “… [quality] representation of the community…” (5.2.1.5).

The depth of impact from the lived experience of members of the Liverpool community was also exhibited in terms of experience with Council. Given the trauma caused by the abolition of Liverpool’s original Precinct Committees (5.2.1.4), a fairly lacklustre involvement of people in the replacement Forums might have been expected, especially when they were seen as not being valued by Council (5.2.1.6). That some people had become disillusioned by the experience was evident (5.2.1.4), although others remained more resilient, such as the Green Valley residents who staunchly kept their Precinct Committee going against the wishes of Council (5.2.1.5). Despite this, or perhaps because of it, (5.1.1.1), the trajectory of the Project was towards a loosening up, or democratising, the established structures of control and patterns of behaviour that existed at Liverpool. The results of my review of the Visioning Workshops, with regard to those outcomes were mixed. Certainly there were issues that the Visioning Workshops generated for the actioning of Council officers, as well as there being people who wanted a greater share of the decision making apparatus: the former helped maintain the status quo of the relatively powerless ‘going cap in hand’ to the more powerful, and the latter represented attempts to gain a more engaged and collaborative arrangement of power in Liverpool. The Team, for its part, expected until quite late in its life that a structure of engagement would be established (5.1.3.6). The irony remained that an eruption of a Civil Society organisation, the Liverpool Action Group, curtailed what would have been an attempt by a Civic Society institution to install a collaborative engaged structure at Liverpool (5.2.5.7).

There was also another aspect to the nature of the aftermath of the shared experience of the Community with Council. Besides the experience of Oasis, Orangegrove and Collingwood, which were monumental matters that impacted on many aspects of the lives of people in Liverpool, there was also a notable effect in the level of trust that people had, or did not have, in the possibility of having a meaningful relationship with Council. Once the level of trust had been breached the task of re-establishing that trust was acknowledged to be much harder, as was expressed in the language of
the Team throughout the Project such as in the need to “Draw a line in the sand” about the Oasis affair (5.1.3.1). This was also evident in the degree of disillusionment that those who were the ‘squeaky wheels’ expressed, such as those who attended the Collingwood (6.3.1.1-7) or Budget (6.3.2.1-4) meetings, or those who had some involvement with the functioning of Council, as instanced by the letter writer quoted previously (6.3.3.5).

7.2.5 The institutional space that allowed the challenge to the status quo from a small number of people

For all the limitations that existed, and the particular circumstances of the situation at Liverpool after the Inquiry, acknowledgement must be made of the fact that the Project existed. Although it may be an obvious point, the challenge to the status quo that a small number of people sought to engender, to whatever extent it was successful, was initially facilitated by having the institutional space for it to grow. Representative social democracy was not entirely a negative terrain for participatory ambitions. However, even this observation needs to be tempered by the comment of one Team member who said, “If we had a Council…[meaning elected Councillors]…we wouldn’t be here now. We wouldn’t have a Partnership Project” (5.1.7.4). The question remains unanswered as to whether the Project, or something like it, would have been established under an elected Council. Another aspect of this point is that such a campaign as the Project entailed needed advocates and agitators both within and outside of Council; this it achieved very well in Council with the Team and only in a weak sense within the Community, as expressed by the relatively poor attendance of the Visioning Workshops (5.2.1.8-9).

These apparently contradictory considerations coalesced in what was going to be an ongoing guided change process, of which the Project was only the first part, one that was referred to as ‘community owned and council led’ (5.1.6.3). Perhaps the sought-after condition best approximates that of Paulo Freire’s (1978, p. 9; 2005) notion of a fruitful pedagogical situation being where the ‘teacher’ and ‘taught’ are seen as interchangeable roles (6.1.1.4). Had we canvassed these sorts of notions, the various discussions that we had as a Team about the degree to which the Project and Visioning Workshops were didactic or if the data gathered from the workshops were to be kept ‘pure’ of Council influences, could have been resolved more satisfactorily.
(5.11.11.4-5; 5.2.4.1-4). The Project could have been viewed with regard to this issue as praxis, that is, the area where theory, practice and effect meet. If this praxis had been accomplished to a greater degree, then the problem of ‘imposing’ Council values, or not, could have been transformed from a problem into a creative joint learning process – an imaginative use for the participatory space that could have been established by Council for the Project.

7.3 Power and empowerment

One of the many tracks that the journey of this study has often intersected, is concerned with power. It is an aspect of the Project that has often come up in this study but needs to be addressed more directly. In particular, issues about how power was manifested and transacted will be examined: the ebb and flow, and the cut and thrust, of decision-making. In exploring these matters, the following headings will be used: a) Civic Society and Informal Society; b) Hierarchies of power within Council; c) Legislation: what is possible and what is needed; and, d) Words as weapons.

7.3.1 Civic Society and Informal Society

When considering power and empowerment, two aspects of the relationship between Civic and Informal Society stand out. The first is when Council acts as a Civic Society institution in relation to the Informal Society of Liverpool and, secondly regarding the actions of large corporations in Liverpool and the resultant impact on the community. In both cases, reflecting on power can be approached differently. However, just as it has emerged in previous discussions so does it here that the landscape these notions inhabit is not neatly traversed by unambiguous lines of consideration. For it is not just the models that we construct that are of interest, as all sorts of structures can be created to partly represent all sorts of situations but, as important as they are, it is also vital to consider the people who work within these constructs. When the ‘notion’ of people is included, something that can become quite messy in itself, can cause havoc when considering a neat model. For example, as we have seen, the same Council officers can be Civic, Civil and Informal Society actors, all within the same Team, the same Project, and in the same Council. In addition to the complexity of ‘people’, so too can the elements of a model behave differently, as in the case of a Civic Society institution such as a council acting for the community
with regard to higher order Civic Society formations, like State government departments.

In thinking about the Team’s reactions to their experiences of the Collingwood (6.3.1.1-7) and Budget (6.3.2.1-4) meetings, the first sort of ambiguities become clear. Members of the Team were largely very defensive and feeling put-upon by those who turned up to the meetings, they particularly complained about the squeaky wheels who they saw as having their own agendas and barrows to push. As one upset Team member said in an exasperated way the day after the Collingwood meeting, “Don’t they understand the position we’re in?” (6.3.1.2). Many of the residents at the meeting were certainly squeaky wheels, but ones who had spent much time trying to protect the history and heritage of Liverpool – what sort of agenda were they pushing? Was it sufficient to assume that they were not disinterested citizens who were trying to be actively engaged in civic issues? On the other hand, was it worth the risk to assume that not all active citizens were ‘pretenders to the throne’, as some community activists such as those in LAG (5.2.5.6) may have been, and thus were perceived as only wanting to form a platform in order to launch a career as a future Councillor?

The matter was also acknowledged by a member of the Team in an important statement, “What do you do with the squeaky wheels? … we only take into account the constructive outcomes that we want to take up. Otherwise we ignore what they say. Is that engagement? It’s not an easy one.” (5.2.4.8). The matter was never resolved by the Team, who preferred to focus on the related, but different issue of how to involve the ‘silent majority’ or the ‘unengaged’. In the end, sometimes members of the Team may have been so sensitive to what they perceived as the negative influence of troublesome ‘squeaky wheels’ that they missed opportunities to establish nodes of activists who could have helped them in the tasks of promoting the Project and its outcomes.

Importantly, this lack of trust in the active citizenry of Liverpool critically included the attitudes of Senior Council when it came to decide about a structure of engagement. The matter had been foreshadowed in the early Team meetings and was in the Project’s objectives, which included wanting a “…structure to better engage
the community in Council decision making in a sustained way…” (5.1.3.6). After interviewing Senior Council, my perception of the dynamics of power at Liverpool changed and I could more easily understand the view point of someone who was not involved in the day-to-day development of the Project (pers. comm. Senior Council, in-person interview, 20-03-2006). It was clear that, for example, an Administrator who had been imposed on the local community and whose position was wholly dependent on the State Government Minister, needed to be very careful about impressions and perceptions given. The local papers, and perhaps the city papers, were ever ready for a story and the Administrator had to be careful about what stories came out. In the end, as discussed above, Civic Society, in the form of the Administrator, decided to cease having an engagement structure as an aspect of the Project and, as the evidence suggests, with that decision ended an important means through which Informal and Civil Society could have better engaged with Council decision making (5.2.5.7).

With regard to this decision of the Administrator, and however understandable it was, the hierarchy of power, as expressed by Weber (1947; 2006), was put into effect in this way to protect the person who occupied a Civic Society position. Ironically, while that decision protected the initiator of the Project and therefore the Project, in the end, it was to the detriment of the outcomes of the Project and denied one of its stated objectives (5.2.5.6-7). Thus, by the end of the Project a structure of engaged participation that had the potential for a slight shift of power from Council to the Community did not eventuate. Such a shift may well have given a nod towards allowing an expression of power, as extolled by Foucault (1994; 1996) and Ward (2006), as being both possible and beneficial. Power, in their analysis, resides in all sorts of places in society, it just needs a structure and will to motivate and engage it.

Sometimes a social formation can act in apparently contradictory ways. From the evidence gained at Liverpool, Council acted as both a Civic Society institution and also, in effect, in the manner of Civil Society. From very early in the Project, the Team feared that Council would not be able to attend to all the issues that would come up in the Visioning Workshops (5.1.1.4; 5.1.8.1-3). Although the Team held these fears that an impossible ‘shopping list’ would be created by the community the situation did not eventuate (5.2.2.1), as evidenced by Senior Council’s easy
acceptance of the contents of the Workshops (6.1.3.5). Nevertheless, such issues did sometimes arise, notably with ‘transport’ and ‘over-development’, and were prepared for initially by having a Stakeholders Briefing (6.1.3.2), and then Council officers having meeting with external stakeholders after the Directions document was endorsed by Council (5.2.5.9). In this way Council acted as a Civil Society representative of Informal Society in the negotiations with higher levels of government; of course, this was also a normal part of their work.

Data from the Visioning Workshops also indicated that Civic Society impacted on Informal Society in the form of large corporations. The issue came up most often in terms of what some participants thought was inappropriate developments, such as the large Westfields shopping centre and the ever-expanding suburban zones (5.2.1.3-7). One participant, a former mayor, specifically cited the impact that one large corporation had on the amenity of the Liverpool CBD and its undue influence in Council (5.2.1.7). Often Workshop participants raised what they saw as the impositions of the State government on their locality with the introduction of the Metropolitan Strategy (DIPNR 2005) in terms of losing their ‘open space’, ‘food bowl’, ‘environment’, and the encouragement of planned ‘slums’ (5.2.1.4-7).

This raises the interesting conundrum of two types of squeaky wheels: that of citizens who make up Informal and Civil Society, and those who make up Civic Society. The former has relatively little power, while the latter has much (Shiva 2000; Singer 2002). While members of the Team and others in Council often spoke of the difficulties of Informal Society’s squeaky wheels and usual suspects (5.1.9.1; 5.2.5.7), little attention was paid by them within my experience in the Project, to Civil Society’s more powerful elements, although this was brought up by Workshop participants (5.2.1.4-7). It may be that one or the other has more legitimacy from time to time but, as the saying goes, ‘money talks’ – and sometimes it screams and shouts to drown out the smaller voices in society.

7.3.2 Hierarchies of power within Council
As constructive as the voluntary approach to developing the Project was, as discussed above, it also allowed greater room for misunderstandings and conflict
between the leadership in Council and those in the Team. The point here is not so much the potential loss for Council in having what could have been a very expensive Project done inexpensively (5.1.2.4; 5.1.10.4-5), but the deflation of enthusiasm and the consternation within the Team that often came about when Senior Council’s decisions caused changes to the ethos, nature or direction of the Team’s plans. In the end, pragmatism about getting the job done usually won through, but not without occasional deeply felt angst (5.1.12.1-5). Whether this was a wise direction from Senior Council or not is one matter, for it may well have been considering the high level attention that the Council was getting from the State government and from the Sydney newspapers. Nevertheless, the impact of those decisions on the morale of the Team also needs to be taken into account, for the ethos of the Team was closer to a more fluid and egalitarian way of working and this sometimes conflicted with the more static and hierarchical ways of the Council’s given power structure.

Another way to look at this issue, of course, is to consider that this arrangement and its consequences is simply the norm for such a large organisation. From this position, as seen from a functionalist view of the council’s organisational structure, it was merely a matter of having to have a system of delegated responsibilities, with the Team being allocated some of those responsibilities. If this was all, then there should not have been a problem: people should have just done what they were told to do. The importance of this consideration is that, with the Team being a predominately voluntary formation, its members took on a more personal ownership of the Project. It was not merely the normal business of doing a superior’s bidding due to there being a command structure in place, the Team felt this to be their project and having it ‘interfered’ with was sometimes difficult to accept with complete equanimity (5.1.6.1; 5.1.12.5; 6.1.5.4).

However, it was not only the Team’s project. Despite being keenly aware of the disagreements and difficulties with Senior Council and striving to bring all on board (5.1.3.7; 5.1.4.1-5), in the end not enough was done to activate those in the higher reaches of Council. In discussing change, it is important not to forget all levels in the organisation for, of the three Senior Council decision making bodies, only one was represented in the Project Team. One lesson to come out of the Strategic Panel
meeting (6.1.5.1-4) was the importance of developing a cultural change program that did not forget to include the very highest levels of the organisation.

Another issue relating to hierarchies of power in Council was the distance between, and different functions of, the Council officers and the Councillors: this was a rip in what might look like, from the outside, the seamless fabric of power that made up Council. As mentioned previously, members of the Team and some staff who attended the Corporate Plan workshops thought the lack of Councillors for four years was seen as a golden opportunity to ‘cement-in’ new ways of working within the organisation (5.1.7.4; 6.2.4.3). This demonstrated that at least some Council officers saw themselves as more progressive than elected Councillors, in terms of deepening the involvement of Community with Council decision-making. This is in contrast to Carson’s (1996) experience in the northern NSW LGA of Lismore City Council, where she, as a Councillor, found council staff could also be major blocks to the introduction of more engaged processes of decision-making between Council and the Community. Some degree of complexity should be expected within such large and diverse organisations as councils however, this finding adds a significant factor to the sorts of complexity I discovered in previous research (Parissi 2002).

7.3.3 Legislation: what is possible and what is needed

Nominally in Australia the citizen is ‘king’, having chosen the make-up of Parliament at an election in the representative system. However, except for that fleeting moment while the citizen is casting a ballot, Parliament is actually the seat of power although moderated by the influence of the Crown, the constitution, the Courts, corporations, and perhaps occasionally, of the citizen. During the usually three or four year interregnum of the citizen-as-regent, small amounts of decision-making power are allowed to leak back to the citizen. In this section two aspects of this area will be examined, namely the limiting function of the existing legislative framework and secondly, the impact of the legislative framework on the relationship between Community and Council officers.

At the local level, legislation effectively limits the powers of the citizen by giving the authority to put into effect much of that legislation to Councillors and to council
officers. “If we had a Council…We wouldn’t have a Partnership Project” (5.1.7.4) – besides other matters, there is an implicit question in this comment of a Team member about the quality of the democratic process. Councillors are supposed to be the major expression of democracy in Local Government, but it is such a limited expression that the deepening of notions of democracy can be inhibited by it – as the above expression of a member of the Team states. That Councillors normally want to hold on to their power is obvious yet, as the study by Carson (1996) discussed above puts forward, in the case she examined it is not the Councillors who are the stumbling blocks for democracy, but the Council Officers. My conclusion from considering both Carson’s (1996) and this current study, is that it is the whole structure that is in need of re-examination.

In coming to terms with a major outcome of the Project, that is the Directions document, Council had to deal with this question: was this to be a community Project and document, or was it Council’s (5.1.12.5)? If it was of the community, then what power did it or should it have over or within the Council? What framework exists in NSW for the citizenry to create policy and have it enacted within a government system such as a council? Without adoption by Council, of what value is a document such as Liverpool Directions 2006-2016, besides being a worthy expression of a group of the community?

As happened at Liverpool, a body with legislative imperatives and obligations could simply adopt the output of the community. If community and council are in accord, then the matter is quite simple, the Council adopts the document as its own; but if there is discord between the two, how is the ‘will of the community’ expressed and implemented? The simple answer is for citizens to engage in the electoral process and seek to change the legislation or, in the case of councils, the way legislation is interpreted and dealt with. This way, the status quo is kept intact, and an unengaged council-community relationship remains in force because negotiating the terrain of decision-making is then left to the parliamentary sphere – or its local government surrogate.

A more complex approach to the problem of how to deepen citizen participatory processes is to adopt the notion of Noam Chomsky (1999 a, b; 2003) and ‘expand
the floor of the cage’, that is by using the room that the existing institutions and legislation allow for participatory processes, and then to struggle for more. In this case, that means in striving for more and deeper engagement processes and the shifting of some effective power from the more powerful to the less powerful – from Civic Society to Civil and Informal Society. With this approach, even though this does not alter the actual structures of power, it does allow for a slide or a shift of power, rather than its transference or abolition; it is more of a power-sharing arrangement. The Project was trying to not only involve the community in its own tasks but to help foster a greater activism in the government of Liverpool. Up to that point there was no legal way for this to manifest beyond the capacity for Informal Society or Civil Society to ‘petition’, cap in hand, the legal authority for attention to whatever matter was concerning a citizen or a group within the community. However, for more than this to occur, it needs both a willing ‘giver’ and a ready ‘receiver’, thus eliciting a process of transformative change: a situation for which the Project had a greater potential than was actualised.

The limiting influence of the legislative framework also impacted on the relationship between Council officers and the Community; with some Council officers, the law reinforced more traditional attitudes: “...it’s up to us to do it, not the community...” (6.2.3.2-3). How does one reconcile the legal authority and power, as vested and wielded in Civic Society, and the attempt by the Team to ‘invest’ some of that power with Informal Society by seeking to affirm the Liverpool Directions 2006-2016 as a community document? Given the current structure of our social system, Informal or Civil Society does not have the wherewithal to enact the vision, only the Council acting as Civic Society does. This reinforces the existing power relationships so that the people who most often did have the power to affect the document, that is Council officers, were sometimes of a mind-set where they were the professionals and the community were the passive recipients of their good works (5.1.9.2; 6.2.3.2-3). An attempt was made to challenge this when a Senior Council member, at a Corporate Plan Workshop, detailed his experience of community reactions to the building of a bridge and concluded by saying, “What we think best may not be what they want” (6.2.1.4). In doing so the Senior Council officer acknowledged that much work in the area of cultural change was needed in the local government context and that better ways need to be found.
7.3.4 Words as weapons

Words of course carry meaning, but sometimes the baggage contains more than just the sense that is provided by a dictionary. Sometimes the words also mirror a change in the nature of the matter being described. This came up as an issue in the Project several times in ways that both strengthened and weakened its outcomes. For example, the use of the term ‘Strategic Plan’ instead of ‘Corporate Plan’, which in turn was used instead of ‘Management Plan’, was a progression that had the purpose of representing a strengthening of the Project, for it reflected a key component of the Corporate Plan Cultural Change program (6.1.1.2). However, other modifications of terminology tended to have a weakening effect, such as with the use of ‘Directions’ rather than ‘Vision’ (5.2.5.4); having an ‘announcement’ rather than a ‘launch’ (5.1.13.1); Council having an ‘endorsement’ of the Directions document rather than ‘adopting’ it (5.2.5.5), and creating a ‘toolkit’ rather than an ‘engagement structure’ (5.2.5.6-7).

One of the principal ways that changes in the language was of benefit to the Project, related to the Management Plans that were called for by Legislation for councils in NSW (LGA 1993). At Liverpool, the term Corporate Plan was used to denote a more cohesive approach than just separate plans for each department (6.1.1.5). The Project called for a further improvement on the concept of having a corporate approach: the need for a Strategic Plan that incorporated the Community’s Vision for Liverpool, in addition to the corporate-coherence of the previous formulation (6.1.3.1-4; 6.2.4.7). In many ways this was the most comprehensively successful aspect of the Project when the Directions document was accepted as a framework for the Corporate Plan by the simple expedient of having the headings of the Directions document adopted as the headings that were used for the Strategic Plan model (6.1.4.4). Further advances were also achieved in having the contents of the Community document incorporated into the Council document (6.1.4.3).

Other instances of changes in the use of terms had the opposite effect in weakening the expressed objectives of the Project (5.1.3.6). For example, with the change from ‘Vision’ to ‘Directions’ (5.2.5.4) one view suggested that Senior Council was more
used to traditional Council ‘policy’ and ‘planning’ documents and having such an unusual approach as a ‘Vision’ took some getting used to (5.2.5.4). It was not common for a Council to use a community’s vision as a strategic document; as Senior Council commented – they did not want to “get ahead of the game” (5.2.5.2). To have the community creating directions for a Council in its day-to-day workings was also changing the direction of relationships of power; from power being given at election time to a set of Councillors for them to use as they see fit each four years, to having a community set the day to day agenda was a challenging concept for some.

The other side of the story about having a Community Vision contained a very practical matter: the ‘Vision’ needed to be a living, working document, therefore it needed to be intelligible to the professionals who would use it and not just a joy to be read by the Community (5.2.5.1-5). Other Team members saw this as a challenge to one of the main points that they had aimed for, that is, as a document that would retain the wording and tone of the community’s language and intentions. They wanted to ensure that it would remain an authentic document of the community (5.2.5.3). These conflicting points were a tension between idealism and pragmatism, after all it might well be as asset to have an authentic community document, but to place such ‘perfection’ on a pedestal and not have it as a functioning document would be in the end to negate its main purpose, which is to instigate change, to guide action - in short, to have effect.

Besides the emotional impact that the change from having a ‘launch’ to an ‘announcement’ had on members of the Team, it also had the practical effect of watering down the significance of the event and took away an opportunity to more dramatically open the Project, and for that matter the Directions document (5.1.13.1). The quieter approach lessened the impact that could have been achieved in both the Council and the Community. Similarly, having Council merely endorse the Directions document rather than the stronger action of adopting it, diluted its impact (5.2.5.5).

Having a toolkit without an engagement structure was the most serious matter (5.2.5.6-7). Once the ongoing engagement-structure was abandoned, the use of the Directions document was kept under the firm control of Council and council officers,
if there was not to be a counter-balancing community structure to keep a check on Council. Moreover, without the engagement structure, how was the community to become involved with the delivery outcomes of their original Vision? On whose terms were the outcomes of the Vision to be assessed: the Community’s, both Council and Community, or just Council? How was the potential of a Council Cultural Change program to have its greatest impact without the additional external impetus of the Community’s scrutiny? Of course the Community could always attend Council meetings, write letters to the paper, make submissions, and partake in any of the usual ways that squeaky wheels tried to make themselves heard but, in itself, that does not constitute a collaborative process.

Furthermore, the adoption of an engagement structure could have provided ‘squeaky wheels’ with a legitimate channel of communication to air grievances and to assist them in contributing positively to the operations of Council. Furthermore, such a structure could have been used as a vehicle for two way learning between Council and Community and aided in helping to move the ‘uninterested’, ‘cynical’, ‘apathetic’ and ‘unengaged’ members of the Community to a taking a more ‘concerned’, ‘active’ and ‘creatively critical’ role in Civic and Civil affairs of Liverpool. An engaged process of citizen participation can be a rough and rocky road, but if an institution wishes to move in that direction then this needs to be anticipated and planned for. Such a program needs to allocate adequate social and institutional space and allow for it to be creatively developed.

In the end, the new possibilities of engaging with the community that were originally planned were not taken up and the old structures of power had fairly well been re-asserted. Despite the final outcome for what was initially planned as one of the outputs of the Project, it was an attempt to move higher up the rungs of the Arnstein (1969) ‘Ladder of Public Participation’, or to a more complex position on the IAP2 (2007) ‘Participation Spectrum’. However, despite the setback other possibilities, other ways of structuring council decision-making at Liverpool had been forecast and significant improvements had been made in the evolution of the Management Plan into a Strategic Plan through the Project.
7.4 Of process and outcome

Process usually leads to outcome, and so it did with the Project. In this case the nature of the outcomes often reflected the approaches taken during the processes used. With the Team, a strong thread in its approach was the more open way that it set about constructing the Project. From the beginning, the Team’s passionate attitude to their task manifested in practical ways, such as its adoption of an iterative structure for the Project (5.1.1.3), and the willingness to use outside ideas, as expressed in their willingness to incorporate a student-researcher into the group (5.1.1.1), as well as looking at external examples like the Oregon Model that a nearby council adopted (5.1.2.2). With regard to the model used, it was decided not to employ an external consultant to ‘install’ an existing program. While this may have been primarily due to the non-existing initial budget (5.1.2.4), nevertheless, this situation allowed for an emergent model to develop (5.1.3.3). The new model will be dealt with in more depth, at a latter stage in this thesis. However, an unfortunate effect of not having an ‘off-the-shelf’ program installed, was that it took a long time to realise a realistic timetable (5.1.1.5). An initial twelve month task evolved to nearly two and a half years from the initial decision of the Administrator to the last meeting of the Team (5.1.1.5; 5.2.8.1).

Having a more open approach also manifested in a wide range of participants being sought for the Visioning and Corporate Plan Workshops. From the beginning of Team meetings, all those who ‘lived, learned, worked and played’ in Liverpool were encouraged to be involved in the Visioning Workshops (5.1.1.3; 5.1.3.5), although with mixed results (5.2.1.8-9). Similarly Corporate Plan Workshops were to include a wide range of staff, with an early call to “…involve the Administrator…” (5.1.1.4). This came about with limited success for, although Senior Council was involved in making decisions about the outcomes of the workshops (6.1.3.4), not all were involved in the workshops themselves (6.2.1.3-4). Among staff who were the focus of the Cultural Change program, that is, the indoor staff, the evidence suggests that there was significant interest in developing a more advanced engagement process between Council and Community (6.1.6.4; 6.2.1.5-6). An important point to note is that the Corporate Plan Workshops were only aimed at indoor staff, the office workers, while outdoor staff were invited to a series of meetings for the Staff
Announcement of the Project by Senior Council (5.1.7.1), they were not involved in the Corporate Plan Cultural Change program.

Another important element of the process involved how the notion of leadership manifested throughout the Project, which was in three ways: within the Team, between Council and Community, and between the Team and Senior Council. Within the Team, leadership was fairly loose in a structural sense, with a nominal Chair, but a definite ‘minute taker’ (5.1.5.1). As matters became more advanced, the need for a Project Manager was evident and was eventually nominated, although the small Strategic Planning section that convened the Team always co-ordinated the Project and one of its members later became the Project Manager (5.1.9.3; 5.1.10.4). While Team and Sub-group meetings used an agenda and formal report-back items, the freedom that the members allowed themselves in also using a free-flowing arrangement for the meetings allowed everyone to behave as though they were all ‘leading’ the Project; from the very beginning, items under discussion often opened up into brain-storming sessions (5.1.1.2). The three elements of leadership between Council and Community consisted of the Team having a motto that the Project was “Community owned, but Council led” (5.1.2.3); the second point is that members of the Team would often ‘go into bat’ for what they considered to be the Community’s interests, as discussed in more detail above, and the third point is that Senior Council agreed to be the Project’s public face (5.1.7.1). Between the Team and Senior Council, there were legislated relations of power that had a determining impact on the process of the Project, not just its outcomes, as discussed previously. This impact often manifested in the Team’s view in a negative way, for example, when delays occurred (5.1.7.1-3; 5.1.9.1-2), but was also viewed in a positive light, as demonstrated by the comment that without an Administrator, “We wouldn’t have a Partnership Project” (5.1.7.4).

Another, not unimportant, approach of the Team’s processes was to incorporate as many of the existing resources of the Council into the Project as possible. In this way more elements of the Council were included, which helped spread the word, saved on budget outlays and saved time. From this, a decision was made to incorporate the Auspoll survey data (5.1.9.3-5) and the Iris Sustainability Survey (5.2.4.3; 5.2.6.2)
into the output of the Visioning Workshops. In addition it was decided to use established Council-Community contact points to gather data and gain support, such as the Bloomin’ festival, which worked well (5.1.4.4; 5.2.3.1), and using the Community Forums as an access point, which unfortunately and importantly, did not work out due to staff changes (6.1.2.3). Even if the Engagement Structure had not been implemented with good reason, then the existing Forums could have been constructively used. Firstly, the Forums could have been access points for recruiting participants for the Workshops and secondly, they could have then been used as hubs from which interest and involvement could have been generated in the ongoing aspects of the Project. To the extent that citizens who were active in the Forums were also involved in the Project was due more to accident than design.

Another aspect of the processes employed by the Team was the use of various filters for the documents they produced. Besides the already much discussed impact of Senior Council and the Administrator on the structure and use of the Directions document, various elements of Council also acted as a modifying filter for the output of the Community. While Team members were quick to point out what they thought were the negative effects of this on maintaining the trust of the Community, although this was something that we were not aware of it at the time, much more subtle and just as important effects occurred (5.2.3.1). For example, the workshop facilitators, the Data Subgroup and the Team were filters as all needed to deal with the data and develop themes (5.2.2.1). In addition, changes were made when draft Liverpool Directions documents were sent to Council staff to undertake a jargon check (5.2.3.1-2). Each of these filters had an impact in changing the language that the Community originally expressed in the workshops (5.2.3.2). Although that point needs to be made, it must also be said that quite extensive independent validation exercises were fought for by the Team (5.1.12.4-5), and were undertaken (5.2.6.1-3); these confirmed that the final document was acceptable to random samples of the Community who were surveyed and who assessed the document at focus groups (5.2.6.1). Another point connected to this is the decision of the Team to use both qualitative and quantitative methods to compile data for the Vision, and to validate the outcome (5.1.3.4).
The outcomes of the Project were, of course, influenced by the multifaceted nature of the processes that were employed by the Team. In considering the concept of ‘outcomes’ at a broad level, then a product of our endeavours was the production, for the first time at Liverpool, of a culture of change as part of an engagement objective. The Project indeed had an ambitious objective, namely to “Initiate … change within … community and … Council that … sets both on a collaborative journey towards sustainability” (5.1.3.6). This was often enunciated by Team members, for example, “The desire to be a consultative council needs to be embedded in all the Council” (5.2.4.6). A participant at a Corporate Plan workshop expressed similar ideas, “…current council structures …[need to] …change…to meet the outcomes of the Project” (6.2.3.3). How well this was accomplished is one matter, as discussed above with regard to the implications of Council not having an engagement structure, but that it became a part of the discourse at Liverpool Council is important. Indeed, a recent report from a Liverpool Council staff member indicates that further progress is still possible, at least in some areas: “Strategic research has officially taken over the Corporate planning function and … have been working on integrating sustainability across the Council …” (Pers. comm., email from Liverpool Council officer, 17/11/2008).

Another outcome of the Project was the development of a unique model for Council-Community engagement. This began with a Team member, Graham, outlining an embryonic form of the model (5.1.3.3) that we later developed (5.1.4.2), and my production of that version in an early diagram that Graham further worked on that was accepted by the Team (5.1.5.1). This model further evolved when I used the concept as part of a conference proceeding and published paper (Parissi 2006), and will be presented in the next chapter of this thesis.

One solid outcome of the Project was the change in the way the Management Plan was produced. From being a “…mismash of action points and strategy…” (6.1.1.2) and being a document that was “…just a collection of each of the manager’s documents stapled together” (6.1.1.5), to one that was a cohesive corporate document: the Draft Management Plan 2005-2006 (6.3.2.1). This was followed by the critically important result that came about with the endorsement of the Liverpool Directions document by Council in April 2006 (5.2.8.1) and its incorporation into the
Draft Management Plan 2006-2007 (6.2.4.2) that achieved the Project objective of developing a Strategic Plan (5.1.3.6).

The final major outcome of the Project was the production of the Engagement Toolkit, which was mooted fairly early in the piece (5.1.10.4). This was progressed several months later (5.2.4.1) and a draft produced (5.2.5.8). Finally, and without the community Engagement Structure, the Toolkit was adopted by Council (5.2.5.7). Together with Council meetings, the annual Auspoll survey, the Community Forums and the other ways that had already been open for the Community to address Council, the Toolkit became the preferred form of ‘public participation’, with all the limitations that this entailed in terms of being in Council’s control without any necessary Community input, as already discussed. Please refer to a copy of the Draft Toolkit at Appendix 4.

7.5 What happened to sustainability?

To explore how Liverpool Council wanted to progress to a more sustainable position was the original notion that convinced me to locate my doctoral studies there, and the Partnership Project became the ultimate vehicle for that aspiration. That sustainability was looked at as a framework for the Project at the beginning was due more to the influence of another council, whose experience was examined by the Team (5.1.2.2), than the extent to which my involvement raised the issue. It must be clear, however, that sustainability was never the whole story of the Project, for addressing the Daly Inquiry was important in itself, and in any case, the term ‘sustainability’ was understood differently by various members of the Team, as well as the Community (5.2.4.1-4).

Thus, although sustainability rated significant attention at the beginning of the Project, its momentum petered out. This original momentum demonstrated itself in various ways, such as making the third point on its list of Project objectives (5.1.3.6). Also, not long after the objectives were adopted, a triple bottom line framework was suggested as useful for the Timetunnel and then the T-shirt Visioning Workshop elements, where one Team member suggested Ecologically Sustainable Development be used as a link between the ‘Vision’ and the Corporate Plan.
(5.1.11.5). Nevertheless, sustainability as a component of the Project declined in significance as time went on and, in the end, the Liverpool Directions document was not titled as a sustainability document, as was intended at one point (5.2.4.3). How and why did this happen?

The simplest explanation of why the carriage of sustainability as a major theme of the Project was not maintained strongly to the end, was a result of a simple accident of history: there were a series of events that were only just on the horizon, or beyond it. Hurricane Katrina’s impact on New Orleans in August 2005 was not yet strongly connected to the issue of climate change until the Al Gore film “An Inconvenient Truth” screened in cinemas around the world (Gore 2006). After this, newspaper articles appeared as headline commentaries in outlining major scientific reports that linked climate change to human activity and thus to the possibility of human amelioration of the problems by seeking a more sustainably based society. Such was the case when the British Stern Review was released, with major articles covering the predicted economic effects of climate change appearing (Wilson 2006; Sun-Herald 2007). A similar effect occurred when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report Climate Change 2007 stated, for the first time, that there was a 90% probability that the current climate impacts were human induced (IPCC 2007; Hartcher 2007; Peatling, Frew & Chandler 2007). Closer to home, the Garnaut Report had not come out during the Project’s life but, later, it also received great publicity (Peatling & Cubby 2008; Wilkinson 2008). It is interesting to speculate that, had the Project occurred during or just after this media attention, whether this aspect of the Project would have taken a different course.

Within the Project, one of the most important influences on the lack of maintenance of a strong sustainability theme was the changing personnel. Veronica, the Natural Environment manager who introduced me to the Team and was keen to progress this aspect, was soon replaced by five other people in succession (John, Joseph, Betty, Lucy and Mario). Some had as much passion as Veronica about the connection between the Project and its potential for promoting sustainability in Liverpool, but it was less so with others, and diluted over time.
In one way the original emphasis on sustainability was taken by some to conflict with the notion of the Community Vision being formed independently of the influence of Council (5.2.4.1), an issue discussed above. But, in contrast to one Team member who argued that it was not necessary to “put sustainability” into the document (5.2.4.1) my position was that it was already there, because the issues that were brought up at the workshops defined the Community’s position on the matter at that point in time – a position that would change and develop over time. Another Team member did not want the Council’s understanding of sustainability ‘watered down’ to that of the Community’s perception of only environmental problems, or with “environmentalism” (5.2.4.2). While still being seen as a snapshot in time, a sustainability-framed Vision/Directions document could have become even more of an action-oriented document, but one that would have had a Community and Council oriented sustainability dimension. Already Council was bound by legislation to incorporate ESD in its Management Plan, therefore linking the themes of the Vision in the same triple bottom line approach could have strengthened the process and included the Community. There was no such legislated obligation or any clear engaged pathways for the Community, so how was the Community to be involved? This was another way that the Community could have been included in Council’s decision-making processes, and with a combined vision that went beyond just ‘rates, roads and rubbish’. Again, the result was that power was maintained within the ambit of the duty statements of Council officers, with the Community waiting outside the door instead of being more a partner in the process of this aspect of decision-making.

Another way that sustainability was corralled happened when Council decided to develop a Sustainability Policy and that this was seen by members of the Team as a valid, if partial, substitute for the Directions Document also framed as a sustainability document (5.2.4.4). Instead of being a joint process between Council and community, ‘sustainability’ was sent back to the Natural Environment silo and sat there for a year. Of course, a Sustainability Policy would have covered all of Council and have been a very valuable item in itself, however the person who was charged with the duty to develop it soon left Council and was not replaced for a year. What could have been critical in strengthening the sustainability journey of Council
was unintentionally stifled by this change in personnel and at the crucial moment when the Directions document was being finalised, endorsed and published.

The final way that sustainability was muted occurred when budgetary problems came into play. When the Team decided to engage an ‘external’ person to evaluate the Project, I suggested that another element be added, namely, that a colleague be included to undertake a triple bottom base-line examination of where Council stood. After that exercise it would have been easier to monitor and judge the outcomes of the Project, both in Council and Community (5.1.12.2). The idea was dropped due to the $4,500 cost to the Project and the job was felt to be able to be accomplished internally, but was not.

By way of a summary conclusion to this chapter, the evidence shows that the Team handled the ‘psychology’ of the institution, that is, Council, better than that of the Community. They delicately and skilfully nurtured, mentored and nudged the council silos to become more permeable to other ideas, in understanding each other, and in acting together. This was in some ways an easier task, as Council had a well understood power hierarchy and had the ‘shame’ factor of the Oasis scandal as a prod for accepting the need for change. In the end, dealing with these issues within Council was easier, if for no other reason than because members of the Team could at least find a particular person in a particular ‘position’ and begin a dialogue of some sort. With the Community it was more like ‘herding cats’ and the task could have usefully been seen as a much longer, more complex project. The engagement structure itself would not have been a panacea, but it could have been a very good beginning place for building trust between Community and Council. These elements, Community Development, Council Development and Community-Council Engagement are themes that figure prominently in holding clues for the major lessons that may be gained from this study, and will be examined in the next chapter.
Chapter 8 – Application of findings through the construction of models

8.0 Structure of the chapter

The previous chapter had the qualities of paradox and ambiguity as defining elements, while this chapter is framed by the juxtaposed dual components of the reality of what is, and the possibility of what could be. This approach holds implications for now, as a transition phase in ‘expanding the floor of the cage’, as Chomsky suggests (1999a, b; 2003) and also has implications for longer-term consideration. This suggests that the current decision-making frameworks do not have successful models and to achieve what they ostensibly want to achieve with regard to a more sustainable society, and that the governance framework in particular is of crucial importance, now and for the future. In retrospect it is easy to say that some of these matters could have acted as warning signals to the Team (and the community) as matters that needed attention for a fully functioning Project. However, hindsight is easy, so these stand as signposts to the future but a future that could have already been. In this chapter I will present and explore three models that can provide pathways for entities such as Liverpool Council to further progress the advances that were made as a result of governance initiatives, such as the Project. The models provide clues to other organisations that lie beyond Liverpool, and possibly even beyond the local government arena.

The three models that I present have been constructed from considering the data that emerged throughout the course of the Project. With one model (The Liverpool Model, which is presented in two versions) this was achieved through interaction from a co-participant in the Team. The first model (Figure 8.1, The Liverpool Model ‘Version A’: Integrated Council/Community Engagement with Triple Bottom Line

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11 This should not be taken as a need to downplay other social constructions, for example forms of power differentials that are based on economics, gender, race, age, culture and religion, among other issues.
Framework), looks at the Project and its objectives as a whole, and as it stood. From that model, I have developed a generic version (Figure 8.2, *The Liverpool Model ‘Version B’, a Generic version: Council and Citizen Collaboration for Sustainability*), from which wider applications may be extrapolated.

The next models are derived from two of the major strands of ‘*The Liverpool Model*’, which are the Corporate Development program and the Community Development element. Hence this model, *The Liverpool Model* is in effect delved into more deeply when examining the next two models, which are derived from it. Consequently the second model, Figure 8.4 *Integrated Strategic Planning for Liverpool Council*, derives from the Corporate Development component (Corporate Plan/Cultural Change program), and the third model, Figure 8.5 *A Community Engagement Strategy*, comes out of the Community Development strand of the Liverpool Model. While it might be possible to refer to this graphical representation of the concepts as one model, I have chosen to identify them as three separate models, for each could be used on their own, although I would suggest that they are more effective if they are all taken into consideration. The three principal models will now be dealt with in turn, together with additional explanatory figures.

### 8.1 The Liverpool Model

The following passages give the reader a taste of the primary collaborative interaction between me and a member of the team, Graham, in the early evolution of the ideas for what finally became *The Liverpool Model*; the initial stages came out of a series of discussions that I had with Graham. It must also be said that although I sketched out the first diagram of the model, as a collaborative effort Graham produced the first printed-out more developed version from my sketch and then provided it to the Team where it was accepted as a reflection of the Project (5.1.5.1). Fairly early during my involvement in the Project, Graham and I had a long chat about the possible nature of a ‘Community Vision’, and the repercussions of the ‘validation debate’ (5.1.12.5), as it was still causing concern within the Team. The following is the reflective comment that I recorded in my field notes after the conversation:
“Both [James] and [Lucy] see a community-produced vision as almost cast in stone; as a ‘Bill of Rights’, as something that residents can claim as ‘theirs’ and point to in discussions with council. Both have their opinions and attitudes influenced, naturally, by their experiences. In particular, the visioning processes that their own councils (where they lived) undertook. Both saw/see important aspects of the Liverpool Partnership Project through that lens; both those councils have a different model to work with as compared to Liverpool. Liverpool began the project as an iterative, staged process (with outcomes, yes) rather than primarily as a process that was focused on a product, that is, the Vision document.

So, there seems to be a different model here from other community visioning processes: the Liverpool Model of Public Participation. The Liverpool Model consists of:

- A staged, iterative process;
- An engagement, not a mere consultation process;
- Whole of community –residents, stakeholders (those who live, learn, work and play in Liverpool);
- A community (though primarily for resident) visioning exercise;
- A Corporate Plan re-structuring, a whole of Liverpool document;
- A process of directly linking the Vision into the Corporate Plan;
- An ongoing participative structure involving residents;
- Acknowledgement of the legislative requirements of an elected Council,
  Council meetings, organisational structure of a bureaucratic Council;
- Adoption of the principles of inclusion, democracy, innovation, openness, in other words, trying to move a little further up the participation ladder…”

For some time, Graham and I worked on the model, both together and separately; Graham produced several versions for the Team and I continued developing the concept as I further reflected on the Project. About a year after the first sketch was made, I produced a model for a paper that was presented at the Australia and New Zealand Systems Society (ANZSYS) 2006 Conference, and which was also published in a book of proceedings (Parissi 2006); the model appears below in graphical form, in Figure 8.1 as modified for this study. This model was specifically
produced to include the elements that the Team put together for the Project at Liverpool.

Figure 8.1 includes the main ideas that were enacted at Liverpool in the Project but also contains elements that were not fully activated, such as the ongoing engagement structure, which is included at the base of the model. Two of the key components of the model are the Community Development and the Council Development strands. The other major aspect, the Engagement element, is a more complex component for it acted as a conduit, or mediating factor, between the first two components of the model, as well as being an internal part of each of the other two and also had a stand-alone aspect. Figure 8.1 also includes various methods, or tools, that were employed to put into effect these key elements of the Project, examples of which are given at the sides of each of the ‘development arrows’. Each of these three major components of the model will now be examined in turn.

Firstly, the Community Development component consisted of Council providing information to, providing access to information for, and encouraging the formation of community groups and associations within Civil and Informal Society at Liverpool. While the latter aspect of encouraging the formation of community groups was not well developed within the Project itself, the presence of stakeholder and resident groups in the Visioning Workshops, and the fact that associations of citizens had long been facilitated by Council, such as the Forums and Bushcare Groups, still stands as an embryonic form of this potential process. In this role, Council needed to act as ‘teacher’, ‘facilitator’ and ‘mentor’ for the citizens of Liverpool, as further explored and shown in Figure 8.5. However, in engaging with these individuals and groups the Council needed to act as ‘learner’ from them; in general, for Council this was easiest when the groups were part of an established Council network. The process became more contentious when groups erupted from Informal Society as Civil Society action groups, such as the Liverpool Action Group, independently from Council input, as happened during the Project. While this suggests that Civic Society, in the form of the Council, finds it easier to deal with Informal or Civil Society when it has some control of the groups or individuals, the Project did have an aim of trying to go beyond this, even if the permanent
engagement structure did not eventuate. Even given these limits, the Visioning Workshops were a strong attempt by Council to establish a channel of communication for the Community and gave it a significant input into the decision-making processes of local government.

Secondly, the Council Development component of the model was introduced by the Team to Council Officers in stages. Examples of those steps were: getting section managers to sit around a table as a first step, reorganising the language of the document, introducing the aims of the Project and then having the Direction document included into the Plan. These were all put into place over time; the managers were not given a formula as much as introduced to a new approach and were largely asked to find ways to implement it collaboratively. This part of the
Project ended up as its most developed and successful component, for it attained its early goals of reforming the way the statutory Management Plan was constructed, and had an in-built iterative element, in that this approach has become an ongoing way that Liverpool Council operates. This meant that the days of ‘stapling’ together the various department Manager’s plans, which was the way the Council worked before the Project, was at an end and the Strategic Planning approach had been adopted. The Liverpool Strategic Plan now also included the input from the Directions document and further evolved into an Integrated Strategic Plan, which will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter.

Thirdly, the complex Engagement component of the plan had a more difficult beginning and progression. The Engagement component consisted of three parts, namely, as a mediating factor between the components of the model, as an internal part of each, and also as a stand-alone feature. As a factor that acted between Council and Community, within the model, this is primarily seen in the Community-developed Vision that was incorporated into the structure of the Strategic Plan and was intended as a guide to the way the Plan’s budgeting aspects were to be conducted, or at least it was to be included into the Plan as a strong influence.

As an internal part of the other main components of the model, an Engaged approach was how the Team chose to foster Community Development through the Vision Workshops: it was not just going to be through an anonymous survey, but have a wide range of people who met face-to-face to discuss relevant matters. As the primary element of the Council Development component of the model, the Corporate Planning process was a part of the way the Team sought to introduce an engaged Cultural Change process into Council by workshopping the change process, not just having Senior Council issue fiats. This was also achieved by the challenging idea of including the elements of the Community Vision into the Corporate Plan workshops by having their output, the Directions document, placed into the statutory ‘Management Plan’.

The stand-alone feature of the engagement component of the Liverpool Model was its plan for a new, ongoing Engagement Structure to be established. Here, the aborted ongoing engagement structure, in allowing for a degree of power to be
shifted towards the Community of Liverpool, could have acted as a prompter for a paradigm shift. Had a system of (partly) self-regulated and independent processes been established, then the Community of Liverpool could have had a better check on the implementation of the Directions document into the actions of Council, as well as being a focus of increasing the engagement of Community with Council. This could have been done by using any of a series of established approaches and tools, such as the Citizen Jury, the Community Panel, or many others that could have been a part of the ‘toolbox’ of Liverpool’s engagement processes.

The need for a permanent structure for engagement was recognised by members of the Team and some Council Officers who attended the Corporate Plan Workshops, when they said that engaged processes needed to be ‘cemented-in’ before the new elected Council came into power. It was unfortunate that such a program was not realised at Liverpool as part of the Project before the September 2008 Council elections. In many ways ‘Engagement’ was the theme that connected the components of the Project’s model and contained the most potential for enabling the governance of Liverpool to approach attaining a paradigm shift, and perhaps also lead to a similar shift towards a more sustainable Liverpool: the potential is still there.

8.1.1 An evolution of the Liverpool Model

With more reflective thought, and some modifications to the varied elements that had arisen during the Project, I have formulated a generic model that may be of use to a wider range of councils and perhaps other organisations; it is graphically shown in Figure 8.2. This model has been constructed after having condensed the previously identified elements of the model into seven key factors that are needed to be considered for the better development of community and council/institution interaction, especially in terms of engaged processes of decision-making. While the key factors were first formulated for a conference presentation, the model below is derived from those considerations, and is given here for the first time.

The seven major elements of the generic version of the Liverpool Model, is represented graphically in Figure 8.2 and are given here in the form that they were
first collated in and given as part of a paper that was presented at the 2006 ANZSYS Conference (Parissi 2006):

- A Community Visioning process and document;
- A Corporate Plan/Council Cultural Change program;
- A Community Cultural Change process, with both the council and the community forming an evolving team where both are learner/teacher;
- Integrated Strategic Planning: linking the Community Vision to the Corporate Plan;
- A framework of the Triple Bottom Line;

Figure 8.2. The Liverpool Model ‘Version B’, a generic version: council and citizen collaboration for sustainability.

Source: C. Parissi for this thesis.
• An on-going community engagement structure, and
• A staged iterative process of review and development.

In the generic model, Figure 8.2, three of the core elements remain the same as given in the Liverpool specific model (Figure 8.1), that is Community Development, Corporate Development, and Engagement processes that include an ongoing Engagement Structure. Within the Corporate Development arm of the model a ‘Collaborative Integrated Strategic Plan’ has been added, and in that element is an internal link to an extrapolation of that part of the model (Figure 8.4), it is signified by the coloured circles. Similarly, within the Community Development arm of the model, a generic ‘Community Engagement Strategy’ has been indicated with a link to its extrapolation (Figure 8.6), as signified by the coloured boxes. Both these aspects of the above model will be examined later in this chapter.

Other aspects of the ‘Liverpool Model Version A’ have been modified in the generic model. An example of this is the emphasis here on the iterative Cycles that are needed in conjunction with ongoing Review processes; within the Project reviews were undertaken, but the Project itself only represented one Cycle event. While the review process was seen by the Team to be constantly in progress, as instanced by the Team’s Evaluation of the Visioning Workshops and the Project as a whole, the iterative Cycle aspect of the Project was looked at in a longer-term view. This process was described as each Cycle regenerating the initial Project after a few years, as its outcomes had been put into effect and as the population changed with the expected huge increase in population due to the impact of the Metropolitan Strategy.

Another change to the modelling was that in the generic model I have eliminated all specific references to the Liverpool Project. Also removed are the lists of particular methods that were employed during the Project, as these or any of a large range of approaches, can be used to provide the outcomes for each of the three major components of the model (Sarkissian et al 2003).

Particular approaches or tools may well be more appropriate in one location, or for one purpose; the context is critically important (Ife & Tesoriero 2006, p. 272). The
Team used a Visioning process that attempted to find out the wishes, wants, desires and hopes of a community about the directions that they would like Council to take, but there are many approaches that can be used by an institution to do this. The Visioning approach worked well for the most part, with the participants of the Workshops, even if the approach was eventually questioned by Senior Council. More generally, two of the most popular, although of the more disengaged types of methods that are employed are market research techniques and having political parties stand in elections on a platform that is formulated within the party and presented at election time to the electorate. Each of the methods is essentially a way for Civic, Civil and Informal Societies to gather data for decision-making.

Although any technique for gathering data will have some value, one of the outstanding differences between methods is how engaged the process is. For example, having an authority use a phone survey of residents is not the same as an active approach of having citizens gather to discuss and formulate ideas themselves in a meeting or workshop. Besides the Visioning technique that was used at Liverpool, other examples of engaged processes, which may be used for diverse purposes, are: the Charrette, the Open House, Search Conference, and the Accountability Group (Sarkissian et al 1997). Also, while the Project employed an open self-selection approach, when it came to finding participants for the Stakeholder Briefings and the Visioning Workshops there were other ways to involve community members, such as the use of random selection (Carson 2002).

8.2 Collaborative Integrated Strategic Planning

Collaborative Integrated Strategic Planning at Liverpool Council began with the commencement of the Project, and was put into effect to a large degree by the end of the Project. However interesting this major outcome is, the story of its evolution is also informative, as it is a progression from the existing Council Management Plan to a more effective adaptation called the Corporate Plan, to the combined all-of-council Strategic Plan to, the Collaborative Integrated Strategic Plan, using my term for the final version. Although the Team did not use all of those terms in exactly the way they are employed here, I do this for the sake of the clarity of the concepts used, as exemplified in Figure 8.3. For this reason, the elaboration of the changes from the
Confusion about these terms is easy because not only does Council publically use the term ‘Management Plan’ as required by law but also, as a result of the Project, the term ‘Corporate Plan’ was used in its place in the Directions document to describe the new approach of putting that document into the Management Plan. However, within the Team’s discourse and within Council, the term ‘Strategic Plan’ was used to describe the inclusion of the ‘Directions’ into the ‘Plan’. As a result of this confusion of terms a truthful, but ‘idealised’, chronology is presented in Figure 8.3.

Figure 8.3. The evolution of Liverpool Council’s Management Plan into a Collaborative Integrated Strategic Plan. Source: C. Parissi for this thesis.

Figure 8.3 also shows the conceptual evolution of the way Liverpool City Council reconstructed its Management Plan between the years 2003/04 and 2006/07. This was achieved by the intervention of the Administrator in the first instance and through the work of the Project Team as they fostered the acceptance and formulation of new ways of developing Council’s main budgeting instrument: it was a staged mentoring process that the Team used. Until this occurred, the statutory
Management Plan produced by Liverpool City Council, as prescribed by the Local Government Act 1993, was a ‘mishmash of action points and strategy’, according to the then Administrator (6.1.1.2). An additional critique raised by Council officers about the Management Plan concerned its language. These officers considered that it was difficult for one department to understand a section of the plan when it was written by another departmental silo (6.1.1.5). Also, the officers thought that the plan was difficult for the Community to read (6.1.1.5). Each of the steps in Liverpool’s evolution of the Management Plan still complied with the statutory elements that were required, such as reference to the State of Environment Report, the Social Plan and the need for it to be put on exhibition to the public and any resulting feedback to be considered by Council.

From the situation that presented itself to the Administrator in 2004, the first change that the Team fostered within Council was the production of a Corporate Plan, as indicated in Figure 8.3. The new Corporate Plan approach was realised during the first series of Corporate Plan Workshops when so much of the work of creating a more accessible Plan was achieved. This alternate approach included getting department managers to sit around the same table to discuss the Plan. The changes brought about due to this process included, simplifying the language used, such as having less jargon, and introducing the notion of strategic planning, that is, having a clearly articulated ‘coat hanger’ from which the action points then hung.

The next stage of the transformation was to a Strategic Plan which was the beginning of the conceptual leap that the Team were fostering through the Cultural Change process of the Project, and is the take-off point for the model in Figure 8.4, Collaborative Integrated Strategic Planning. However, this early stage of the process was only where corporate strategic directions were collaboratively developed by the department managers for the 2005/06 Plan, but did not yet include the Community’s Directions document. This first Strategic Plan included reviewing the preliminary data that was gained from the Stakeholder Briefings, and so introduced the concept of framing the Council’s budgeting with this ‘outside’ information, that is the data attained from the Stakeholders. From there, the final form of a Collaborative Integrated Strategic Plan was developed for the ‘2006/07 Management Plan’, as it was referred to because of legislative constraints. However,
the content of the document was vastly different from Liverpool’s un-integrated, non-collaborative and inadequately strategic Management Plan of old. By this time the Liverpool Directions document had emerged, its headings were used for the headings of the Management Plan and it was incorporated into this budgeting instrument to make a Collaborative Integrated Strategic Plan for Liverpool.

Figure 8.4, Collaborative Integrated Strategic Planning, is an extrapolation of a part of the Corporate Development component of the generic Figure 8.2, The Liverpool Model Version B, and may be useful to a wider range of organisation than Liverpool Council. The model has a wholistic approach as each of the four elements need to relate to each other. In developing this generic model of Collaborative Integrated Strategic Planning, the main components that comprised the Liverpool Model have been kept:

- Developing some form of Community input is crucial, if the aim is to foster a collaborative outcome. This input can be arrived at in any of a number of ways, although an engaged process, rather than simply gathering technical data is recommended as this fits in with the ethos of the model.
• Linking the Community input to an overall Strategic Planning process will help achieve the collaborative aim of the model. The Community input can also be integrated into any or all other plans, programs or instruments of the institution. This input also needs to be aware of and take into consideration the limitation of both the sponsoring institution and that of other stakeholders, including both Civil and Civic society. In this regard, it is pointless making demands on an organisation that does not have the legal coverage or the capacity to respond to a particular issue.

• Not only does the Collaborative Integrated Strategic Plan need to take into account Community input, but it also needs to be integrated with all the other plans of the institution and be mindful of the limitations of other stakeholders, such as State government departments. The adoption of this type of system aids in fostering a whole-of-government culture within the institution and with the organisations that it deals with.

• Not only is there a need to develop Community input, but there is also a need to foster cultural change within the organisation. Rather than being attempted by fiat, this could be more effectively achieved through a staged, collaborative approach by including staff beyond the department managers. The staged approach is needed to avoid provoking negative or hostile reactions from the staff involved. Such a reaction could occur because including more of the staff, necessitates a greater use of resources and this itself could result in unhelpful stress occurring due to fatigue. By adopting a more democratic, collaborative approach not only can a greater range of ideas be released, but the change process can be internalised and become a part of normal operations.

If implemented, this model of institutional planning could have a number of advantages, including:

• A saving of human and financial resources of the institution. With this approach the fostering of the collaboration of Community members may well lessen the disaffection of citizens over contentious matters, by involving them in the statement of problems, the examination of relevant issues, and having an opportunity to be a part of the resolution of the matters. Rather than consuming human and financial resources in battling with Community members, a
collaborative approach could well have those resources spent more positively. Of course this approach cannot be counted on to prevent all disaffection of the Community from the organisation, but does go some significant way towards fostering such a situation.

- Not only is there a possible saving of the resources of the institution, but on a more innovative note, huge creative potentials may be unleashed. A collaborative approach may well be able to employ the talents of a much wider range of people in gaining access to the full range of skills that are implicit in Brown’s five knowledge cultures: Strategic, Specialised, Local, Individual and Holistic bases of knowledge (Brown et al 2005). Rather than simply employing the usual method of the Strategic area directing the Specialised professionals to put actions into play, using the Local and Individual knowledge and skills of the Community constitutes what has been, up to now, a largely unexplored resource base.

- Implicit in this model is a way to involve the Community in what is currently a struggle to implement a ‘whole of government’ approach to projects. While it is a noble ambition, the major factor missing from that method is the Community. While a number of issues may well be resolved in having all levels of government involved from the start, this does not go far enough in resolving the potential for conflict with the citizenry.

- There are also some, more prosaic, advantages with this approach, such as the possibility of a more involved workforce becoming more stable, and with fewer staff changes, this would result in financial gains. Similarly, the ideas that can be released from a more creative workplace situation could also improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of programs.

The piece of the puzzle that is still missing from these considerations is an examination of a framework for citizen participation in the governance aspects of Community Development. This is a highly complex matter, and one aspect of a potential resolution of the puzzle arose during the Project that was further developed with reflection about my participation in that matter. The following section of this study consists of developing a model (Figure 8.6) that may help professionals resolve the paradox of attempting to stimulate community development by increasing the involvement of citizens in activities and in the governance procedures.
of an institution, despite caution about stimulating the ‘squeaky wheels’. In doing so it must be realised that an examination of the power relations between the institution and the Community needs to be undertaken and the degree, or the limits, of the power-sharing arrangements needs to be clear, agreed upon and enunciated.

8.3 Spectrum of Citizen Involvement.

The spectre of a paradox haunted the Project, the Council and the Team from the beginning. It was not a complex paradox, in some ways it was too simple for us to be truly aware of, and thus engaged public participation in governance was left without sufficient analysis. As I have argued, it was not adequately dealt with as a structural part of the Project. The origin of the paradox is found in an initial aim of the Project in seeking a better relationship between Council and Community when it came to public participation, and the various ways in which concern and foreboding entered into the considerations of the Council and the Team regarding the ‘squeaky wheels’, and the ‘usual suspects’. Throughout the course of the Project there was often a contrast being drawn within the Team between the noisy few on the one hand, and the ‘silent majority’ or the ‘disaffected and disengaged’ on the other. The nub of the paradox is this: whether for consultative purposes or for a deeper engagement, an overall objective of the Project was to activate the community to partake in the deliberations of Council, yet fear was expressed and actions were taken to limit the impact of the ‘squeaky wheels’- some of whom were the most active in the civil, civic and social life of Liverpool. However, could not an aim of the Project have been to create a whole community of ‘squeaky wheels’ or, preferably, a community of active citizens?

These issues arose in different ways within the Project, and were discussed from various angles by the Team, in the wider Council and in the Community. Four matters that are of particular relevance to my potential resolution of this conundrum are now to be examined. One came up before the Workshops, two from the Special Team meeting that was held after the Visioning Workshops and the fourth came from the data that has been presented about ways that the Community expressed themselves at meetings or in the local paper. All of these matters lead to the exposition of the final model of this study – Figure 8.6, A Community Engagement
Strategy. However we arrive at the last model, an explanation of how it was derived is needed, including an exposition of its antecedent, Figure 8.5.

Firstly, a discussion at a December Team meeting that prepared for the workshops moved on to the many reasons why some people were not involved at all, such as the language barriers of newly arrived migrants and the difficulties of being a single parent, or having a young family. It was agreed that all these issues needed to be addressed in the formulation of the Workshops’ promotion and structure. It was agreed that the ‘ordinary citizen’ had to be encouraged to attend the Workshops, instead of only the ‘usual suspects’. In the end, as discussed previously, few known squeaky wheels turned up to the Visioning Workshops.

Overall, this approach of the Team described a simple grading of commitment: active squeaky wheels, lesser active people who go to public events such as Liverpool’s Bloomin’ environmental festival, and those who are uncommitted. Alternatively, the Project may well have gained from developing a different approach. In this alternate scenario, the task would be to deepen the engagement of those already active, try to encourage greater involvement of those who show some commitment to Council events and stimulate some participation those who are rarely if ever involved. To some extent this approach most likely occurs to some extent already, the point here is to develop this into effective policy and concerted action.

Secondly, the Team acknowledged difficulties in the day to day experience of council officers, as expressed by Robert at the Special Team meeting, “What do you do with the squeaky wheels? We ignore them, we only take into account…[what]…we want to take up…Is that engagement? It’s not an easy one.” It was puzzling to me that so much thought and even mild anxiety was generated by the felt need to, not exclude, but limit the impact of the squeaky wheels – the ‘noisy minority’. Perhaps this perception arose because once a resident becomes more involved and confident with ‘gaining a voice’ and learning the administrative ropes, they are often the ones who put, what Council officers felt to be, uncomfortable pressure on themselves and in other circumstances on Councillors. Looking beyond the personal level of people not liking to be criticised, indeed wanting and needing to be accepted, appreciated and loved, perhaps there is an organisational aspect to this
consideration. After all, with the best will in the world from Councillors or Council officers, within the current system they must still fulfil their legal obligations and also carry out the instructions of their superiors.

In the end, there is little public participation that is an absolute requirement beyond voting each four years on the part of enrolled residents and, on the part of a Council, the legislative requirement that ‘consultation’ occurs. Yet, much more than that is useful, if one regards that engaged processes between council and community to be of prime importance. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, an examination of the relevant legislation and an inclusion of the requirement for more engaged processes of public participation in governance processes of public organisations, such as Councils, could be usefully undertaken. If such an approach was taken up by other levels of government, this would assist those who are attempting to strengthen the forms of Community engagement that are undertaken in a local context.

The Team also discussed the lack of response to the Visioning Workshops. Certainly there were the practical issues, such as an inadequate budget for advertising, constant delays to the timetable, and Senior Council’s emphasis on keeping the promotion low key. The matter of the squeaky wheels was a recurring issue in these Team discussions. My reflection on that topic was that the attitude among the Team of not seeking out the ‘usual suspects’ actually limited the scope of the Project, rather than enhanced it. Instead of a simple dichotomy of ‘unengaged’ Vs the ‘squeaky wheel’, the scope of citizen involvement can be seen along a continuum: ‘not interested’, to ‘cynical/apathetic’, to ‘concerned cynical’, to ‘concerned sceptical’, to ‘concerned active’, to ‘creatively and critically active’. Viewed in this way the static usual response now allows for the idea of an institution imaginatively engaging with the Community along a range of positions, that is it allows for an active context to work within, rather than a static and negative view of the nature of citizen engagement.

Thirdly, at a Special Team meeting Joan brought up her plan to develop an Engagement Toolkit and a lively discussion ensued. For my part, I suggested that a graduated approach needed to be adopted, “Thus our tasks could be seen as promoting ‘Information’ (to the community and them doing likewise), ‘Education’ (two-way), ‘Participation’ (engaged) and all that leading to ‘Action’ (from all
parties)” (5.2.4.7). Although the Engagement Toolkit did not eventuate until many months had passed, the problem of increasing Community participation in the Project was addressed by the Team in several ways. For example, participation was fostered by the Team’s attempts to maximise Margaret’s publicity efforts in the lead up to the Visioning workshops, in the vigorous efforts to structure the nature and timing of the workshops, and in the promotion of the final Liverpool Directions document. It was also addressed in the unmet plans for a continuous engagement structure and, of course ultimately with adoption of Joan’s Engagement Toolkit.

The fourth, and last point, comes from the data presented from the Community about the ways that professionals operated. Sometimes the problems of engagement were not due to the perceived nature of the citizenry; sometimes the elected officials and the professionals were the cause of the problem. The actions of Council can have a less than positive effect on the nature of Community and Council relationships. This was expressed, not only in terms of the impact of such a massive scandal as the Oasis affair, but also in the day-to-day interactions of Council officers and the public. In looking back on the Collingwood and Budget meetings, the way the Council organised matters created a reaction in the Community that was less positive than the Officers hoped for. With the Budget meeting, this happened simply because the advertising of the event was inadvertently limited. A similar reaction by a resident also came up in the example given of a letter from a resident about a local development issue; the letter contained the following passages: “Of course the council very kindly listened to all the residents’ concerns about this matter and then totally ignored them…Call me a cynic – no make that a realist” (7.3.3.5). Sometimes the actions of Council brought about the disaffection, it was not only because the writer was a single working mother or due to other socially produced reasons that cynicism, anger, other jaded responses were manifest or, perhaps why silence became a common reaction.

Of course the Team and the Project were not responsible for all these matters, but instead were trying to ameliorate the situation and, in the case of the Collingwood and Budget meetings, did encounter some simple bad luck. In any case, in reflecting upon all of these points I concluded that simple dichotomies like ‘squeaky wheel’ and the ‘silent majority’, or, ‘the engaged’ and the ‘disengaged’ were a good
beginning point but needed further examination. Any community holds many complexities, and one as large as Liverpool should be expected to hold many as well. Thus, not only is there in the literature the already described spectrums of citizen participation, and the range of participatory tools that organisations can use, but consideration also needs to be given to the range of involvement that members of community may choose to partake in. This view also needs to include the idea that any one person may well be at different points on a spectrum of involvement, depending on the issue being considered. Thus, one may well be highly involved with a school or sporting club’s community, or an environmental group, but may well not be involved in many other aspects of the broader community: one cannot be active in everything.

These four sets of observations lead me to develop a ‘Spectrum of Citizen Involvement’ in Figure 8.5 and its metamorphosis into ‘A Community Engagement Strategy’ model, Figure 8.6. With regard to Figure 8.5, it is unwise to assume that members of the Community are stuck in a rut of the ‘squeaky wheel Vs silent majority’, or, ‘apathetic/disengaged Vs concerned and active’, even if it seems that Council Officers are sometimes wedded to that view. Perhaps a core lesson that can come out of this experience is that a range of approaches is needed to encourage citizens to move from wherever they are, to a more engaged position. This may well mean from a very jaded position, via some experience, to one of seeing the need for concern and perhaps feeling the need to engage in a process of change. The main point I would like to make here is that a variety of programs and approaches may

![Figure 8.5. Spectrum of Citizen Involvement.](Source: C. Parissi for this thesis.)
well be needed to be undertaken within any single project, for maximum effect to be achieved with the greatest number of people. Thus, a single-approach program can be expected to have the least positive impact and a multi-approach program can be expected to have an improved degree of engagement.

The first two terms in Figure 8.5, ‘disengaged’ and ‘apathetic-cynical’ describe those who are not active members within Civic or Civil Society. This could be because they are newly arrived migrants, people from a disaffected cultural group, citizens who are simply happy to cast a vote once every few years and leave the rest to the elected, those who have been engaged but have withdrawn due to a poor or dispiriting experience, or for many other reasons. The term ‘concerned-cynical’ describes those who voice some interest in matters that concern them but hold a cynical view as to the prospects of effecting any positive change; these people may attend a meeting but may only be there passively. ‘Concerned-sceptical’ refers to those who express concern about issues and may join in taking some minimal or tentative action but, for whatever reason, remain sceptical about the worth of putting much effort in; they will probably not initiate action. Those who are ‘concerned-active’ are more likely to join in with the initiatives of others either in a relatively passive way, such as signing a petition, or more proactively, such as attending a meeting and voicing their concerns. Individuals who are ‘creatively and critically engaged’ have the level of confidence and concern about issues that encourages individual or collaborative action with others to start campaigns; they have the skills and the emotional drive to take the necessary steps to carry through with a task to some sort of a conclusion.

The Project had a hard time getting people to simply participate in the Visioning Workshops, so it is reasonable to assume that the process of facilitating the transformation of individuals through a spectrum of involvement was a much larger task. That transformational process can be viewed as beginning with, or being stimulated, by individuals in the community, by Civil Society participants, or by the institution of Council. Examples of this that have arisen during the course of this study are: letters to the local paper (7.3.3.5), the attempt by LAG to establish a ‘community consultative panel’ (6.2.5.6), and the Project itself. This transformative process can have particular force if both the Community and Council accept the
proposition that each can be ‘teacher’ and ‘learner’, and this can be further facilitated if structures are in place that foster that kind of relationship. It can equally be said the either ‘party’ can have a detrimental impact on such a relationship, as one or the other is not necessarily a hero or a villain of a particular situation. Additionally, such an impact on the part of one of the protagonists may well be unintentional, as with the effect that the LAG had on the Project’s aim of developing an engagement structure.

The complexity of these transformational processes is presented in Figure 8.6, A Community Engagement Strategy, which fits into the Community Development component of the Liverpool Model Version B in Figure 8.2. The elements in Figure 8.5 have been transposed into the Community Engagement Strategy model by Figure 8.6. A Community Engagement Strategy, an extrapolation from Figure 8.2. Source: C. Parissi for this thesis.
retaining the same descriptions and explanations that have been given above, for example, the description of the ‘Concerned and Active’ individuals. However, the new model develops the linear *Spectrum of Citizen Involvement*, that was previously represented in Figure 8.5, by transforming it into a more active and engaged process.

In addition to the factors that have been adopted from the spectrum of possible citizen activity, elements that represent institutional involvement have now been included in the new model. The first additional facet is that the ‘Creatively and Critically Engaged’ citizens have been given three possible pathways of activity: ‘Institutional Critic’, ‘Participation Mentor’, and ‘Transformative Change Facilitator’. The second major additional factor that has been added to the model is a range of both ‘inputs’ and ‘outputs’ that are included as the elements, ‘Information’, ‘Education’, ‘Participation’, and ‘Action’. All these factors have been derived from my experiences as a part of the Team and can be found in the data presented, mostly in quite a raw form, and this model represents reflective re-working of those concepts, a discussion of which follows.

Two comments need to be made at this point, the first is that although the flow of progression in the Figure 8.6 may be seen to indicate a prescriptive pathway, this is not intended. A member of the Community may well move from an ‘apathetic’ or ‘sceptical’ position to, say, becoming an active Institutional Critic or a Transformative Change Facilitator with regard to a particular issue, or in terms of that person’s general approach to participation. This decision was made because I felt that the model, as presented, is graphically ‘busy’ enough without adding another level of complexity. The second point of explanation is that I have chosen the term ‘Change Facilitator’ rather than the more commonly used ‘Change Agent’. To me, ‘facilitator’ is more suggestive of an equal and engaged process, while ‘agent’ suggests someone who is on a mission that is more uni-directional and more authoritarian, while ‘actor’ is suggestive of someone who plays a part that is not real – as in an actor on stage in the theatre.

12 This comes out of a discussion at the Earth Charter Conference in Urbino, Italy in 2003, which was held in association with another Conference I presented at in the same city at that time. During a workshop at the Earth Charter Conference a discussion ensued about the use of the term ‘agent’ as the word was critiqued as holding the notion of ‘government agent’ in some countries. Inspired by the discussion, I suggested an alternative, which was ‘facilitator’. The term ‘actor’ was chosen in the end.
The first new aspect of the Community Engagement Strategy model adds possible roles for the active/activated citizen. The term ‘Institutional Critiquer’ can be seen as a surrogate for ‘squeaky wheel’ but, hopefully, the term does not carry the same negative connotations of being a ‘pest’. What is meant to be included in the meaning are the two aspects of ‘critic’ and ‘critiquer’, for all organisations need to be examined by fresh and disinterested minds. Squeaky wheels are often viewed as perennial ‘critics’ as they are seen as people who simply want to be critics, without being helpful. But if an organisation had a mechanism for placing these critics into a process of developing solutions for problems, not just identifying the problem, then a very different dynamic is possible and a far more creative relationship may well ensue. Someone who provides a ‘critique’, however, is commonly seen immediately as not only identifying a limitation or fault, but one who also provides the direction for a solution, if not the solution itself. This latter view is especially the perception when professionals call on fellow professionals for help, but all too often does not apply to the input of the citizen. Indeed, institutions often pay huge amounts to professional ‘critiquers’ for evaluations of processes, programs and whole organisations, yet these same institutions may well miss on having much of this work accomplished for free, by community members.

The term ‘Participation Mentor’ acknowledges what frequently happens, in that citizens often are those who inspire their fellows to become active. In addition, the concept adds ‘the citizen’ to ‘the institutional professional’ as a source of sharing knowledge and skills, as an interactive process for the members of Informal Society, Civil Society and Civic Society. Finally, the role of ‘Transformative Change Facilitator’ can act as a node of cultural change for each of the Community and the institution, and also for the relationship between the two – in the role of initiator of activities and programs of transformative change throughout society.

The second new aspect of the Community Engagement Strategy model consists of a range of both inputs and outcomes that are possible. These exchanges are expressed in the model by the terms, ‘Information’, ‘Education’, ‘Participation’, and ‘Action’. These terms are both ‘inputs’ and ‘outcomes’ because, as inputs they can come from both the community and the institution. This can occur if both sectors are acting as
‘teacher’ and ‘learner’, so that both sectors can ‘input’ into each other. As outcomes, the exchanges can originate from either sector of community or institution and, as such, include Informal Society, Civil Society and Civic Society facilitators that act on any or all of the other social sectors. For example, an Informal Society member can have an educational effect through a certain program on members of Civic Society, and the process can work the other way around. In this model, any of the people can put into effect a positive role and so influence any other person, social formation or organisation.

An additional use of this model is that it could apply, not only as a strategy for engaging with the Community, but as a strategy for transformational change for use internally in an organisation. Just as there are individuals involved to a greater or lesser extent in any community, so can a similar situation exist within organisations. This was evidenced during the Project in that the Team, in some respects, acted as a Civil Society activist organisation within Liverpool Council, just as much as it attempted to fulfil this role with regard to the Community. In this role, it was behaving at various times in different roles for example, as an Institutional Critiquer for Council. A key aspect of the Team was that it often acted as Participation Mentor and as Transformative Changed Facilitator for both Community and Council.

An important concept that underlies this model is that power, as recognised in the Foucault (1983, 1989) or the Ward (2006) sense, needs to be acknowledged, understood and accepted. In particular, the notion of empowerment of the community by an organisation needs to be further developed and the notion of a self-empowered community needs greater expression and self-gained agency among members of the Community. For without such a view, where is the force to come from that will allow a transformative change in the way Informal Society acts in developing better paths for the future? Without such an acknowledgment, agency must be left to professionals and politicians, while the citizen need only to go to an occasional election booth and afterwards ignore governance issues.

Another importance concept that underlies this study is that all people have valuable knowledge to contribute, as Brown et al (2005) states. For example, in a practical sense and in terms of the Liverpool study, the trepidation that the Team felt about the
community developing a ‘wish list’ and of confining themselves to ‘pot hole’ issues was exaggerated. In this regard, professionals need to have more faith in the ability of residents to raise themselves above the rim of a pot hole and to have the ability to look to longer term issues. To continue the metaphor, the identification of the ‘pot hole’ may well be valuable itself, but members of the Community can also contribute to the way the problems that the ‘pot hole’ represents are resolved. The story of the engineer, the residents, and the bridge that was told by Senior Council to Council Officers in a workshop holds many lessons. Not the least of these is a warning that professionals may well find the best answer to the question that they asked of themselves with the best of intention, but the problem may be that they did not ask the right question in the first place. Surely one cannot find the correct answer, if the right question is not asked. Just as surely, the Community has a place in helping to formulate the questions when it is their own locality that has a problem.

As a conclusion to this chapter, two matters have emerged that can be of use to any reader. Firstly, there has been knowledge developed about the elements that are needed for an effective community engagement strategy. These elements are to do with having both a community development strand and a corporate development strand. In addition, these strands are best not left isolated but acknowledged that they need to have democratic and engaged processes staged within them and that an engagement process needs to be effectively made between those development strands. Preferably, all of the programs need a review structure that is independently arranged, and also that are part of a long term cyclic process of cultural change.

In addition to this new knowledge that has been attained regarding the Project, information has been developed into models that can be used by various organisations. The original *Liverpool Model Version A* may well be of further use to Liverpool Council as the objectives of the Project unfold further into the future. The generic models, *The Liverpool Model ‘Version B’, a Generic Version: Council and Citizen Collaboration for Sustainability*, Figure 8.2, the *Collaborative Integrated Strategic Planning* model, Figure 8.4, and *A Community Engagement Strategy*,
Figure 8.6, may all be of use to a wider range of organisations, both of a local
council nature and others that are beyond the domain of local government.
Chapter 9 – Summary and conclusion

9.0 Regarding the Partnership Project

The privilege allowed to me as a researcher in being invited to study the inner workings of a Council project as participant observer has resulted in knowledge that would be difficult to obtain through other means. The findings of this thesis stem from both my involvement as project team member and academic participant-observer during the Creating Our Future Partnership Project of the Liverpool City Council. Besides knowledge resulting from the study of what did happen at Liverpool, this thesis also informs the reader about the potential of what could be. Overall, both the obvious strengths and the apparent weaknesses of the Project’s implementation processes and outcomes offer opportunities for constructive learning. These lessons address the complex interactions of social, political, economic and technical factors that make up the sustainability challenges facing our world. Important aspects of these lessons involve structural components of successful public participation and what is needed for more effective corporate change programs. These matters constitute important messages from this thesis.

The Project and its outcomes did not change the established structures of power in Liverpool. Nor, consequently did it provoke any appreciable alteration in the relationships between Civic Society, Civil Society and Informal Society. Nonetheless, this thesis suggests how such a path towards those ends emerged from that experience. The participatory engagement structure mooted during much of the Project did not eventuate but, had it eventuated, it could have served to help achieve these ends and thus assist in providing the momentum to shift Council and community towards another level of involvement, to a more engaged relationship. The missed opportunity to establish this planned engagement structure was only due to the thinnest wisp of misfortune, not because of any structurally entrenched reason.
In fact, there is still a great deal of reason to hope that this aspect of the Project could still emerge in Liverpool.

The other major arm of the Project was the Corporate Change program. It had a considerable list of successes to its credit, including an increase in the permeability of the Council’s disciplinary silos and the adoption of an Integrated Strategic Plan. This new corporate planning structure at Liverpool still remains open to further development, particularly with regard to lessening the limiting effects of the entrenched professional silos within Council. The possibility of further opening the departments of Council to a deeper engagement with the community of Liverpool remains another rich area for developing Liverpool’s new approach to corporate planning.

Similarly, the Project could also have furthered major change with regard to sustainability. Once again, however, the outline of how to more effectively approach the problem has become evident. This approach could have begun with the maintenance of a major presence for the theme of sustainability in the Project and the Directions Document. This could have been strengthened by then linking the sustainability themed Directions Document to a permanent engagement structure that had major citizen input. Had this occurred, it could have provided a collaboratively-derived planning framework for Liverpool. Thus, once again, although several avenues of action did not eventuate, they still present us with the opportunity to envision and plan other, more productive pathways. As well, the failure to make use of these avenues in practice allows us to predict and diagnose other blocks to further collaboration among Civic Society, Civil Society and Informal Society.

9.1 The setting and the research questions

This study began with the presentation of a global set of problems that the introduction summarised as comprising of a ‘triple bottom line’ array of environmental, social and economic issues that together amount to an unsustainable situation of compromised global integrity. Not only is the situation of greatest concern, but the latest international and Australian data indicate rapidly worsening scenarios. Past and current approaches to ameliorate this state of affairs, while very
necessary, increasingly are seen as being insufficient on their own. Much of this previous effort has gone into fixing environmental problems produced by past human activity, such as degradation of soil, air and water. By and large, this important work responded to notions that ‘technical’ or legal approaches to these problems were sufficient. Furthermore, the assumption was that, once the problems from the past were being attended to, the situation allowed for a ‘business as usual’ approach to how human society interfaced with the rest of the natural world, to continue. More recently, within international, national and local levels of governance, there has been growing acknowledgement that not only do the physical problems in the environment need addressing, but that related societal issues also need attending to.

In recent years, therefore, people have developed a wide array of ways to deal with the sustainability issue through a societal orientation. These newer approaches to help resolve the global sustainability problem have come from the efforts of those in Civic Society (international, national, local authorities and private organisations), Civil Society (non-government organisations) and Informal Society (individuals, the family). Much of this effort has focused on promoting the interactions of citizens and the various institutions of society. There has been greater advocacy of the need for public participation including through engagement of citizens in the decision-making processes involved, particularly at the local level. In Australian practice, this largely means directing our attention and effort to the local government, or council, level of governance.

The discipline of public participation has, itself, developed numerous tools to provide mechanisms for interactions between institutions and citizens. These tools range, for example, from relatively impersonal quantitative telephone surveys to more personalised informal shopping mall booths, all of which aim to gather data for institutions to use. Other mechanisms employ more interactive processes such as face-to-face workshops or community panels that allow for more interactive and empowering processes. These more engaged methods often aim to meet two crucial challenges that until now have been seemingly intractable aspects of the sustainability problem. First, there is the challenge of finding ways to develop a sense, among citizens, that they ‘own’ the problems. The second depends on the first
and addresses the challenge of generating better community involvement in developing solutions.

It is unfortunate that so far these efforts have largely been limited to focusing on change in either citizen or institution and have been insufficiently successful in either case. Overall, this lack of effective impact on global and local sustainability problems is evident from deteriorating global triple bottom line indicators. Change is needed in how humanity addresses this situation. This thesis argues that a change in how we consider social power is necessary if we are to shift beyond the limitations of existing approaches so as to generate better sustainability processes and outcomes. The specific argument of this thesis is that there is a need to encourage both citizens and institutions to form partnerships to promote engaged processes of mutual support and critique as a way to facilitate change on this matter. This requires a transformation in notions of how we view and use power, including through deeper involvement of citizens in decision-making in the governance of social institutions. Given the focus of the project analysed here – Liverpool’s Creating Our Future Partnership Project – the focus was specifically in terms of local councils.

One purpose of this thesis is to bring academic rigour to an evaluation of an official program that has sought to confront global issues while acting locally. As such it addressed the central empirical research questions:

*In which ways has one local government body interacted with its community in decision-making processes that aim to help achieve a more sustainable society?*

*How effective has this program been in terms of the initial aspirations for it?*

*Which factors contributed to making the program more or less successful?*

These questions lead to more theoretically-oriented questions:

*How much can these findings tell us about the potential for this sort of program?*
How can we conceptualise the processes involved, including those variables that impacted positively or negatively?

Is it possible to develop models for planning and implementing such programs effectively?

This thesis has comprehensively addressed both sets of questions.

9.2 My approaches to answering the research question

To respond to the complexity of the area the thesis examines, Chapter 2 outlined a transdisciplinary approach for my review of relevant literatures and theories. Within this transdisciplinary schema, I drew on knowledge from anthropology, the natural sciences, history, theology, sociology and politics. The purpose of the schema was to serve as a framework for an analysis of society and of those elements in society that interact within a structure of governance and power: Civic Society, Civil Society, and Informal Society. Together with this structural understanding of society, Chapter 2 also examined two views of power as a motor force for change, decision-making, and governance in this society. This allowed me to develop an argument that, for effective change to occur, there was a need for a combination of the hierarchical/vertical view of power with another view that saw power as dispersed ‘horizontally’ throughout the community.

In turn, this framework allowed for an understanding of how the current stasis in responses to the sustainability crisis – the result of existing, more hierarchical forms of social interaction – might be modified and the sustainability project advanced. In particular, the thesis has included Informal Society as a useful construct for the embodiment of horizontally manifested social power and decision-making. In this sense, Informal Society has agency, that is, the potential power of being another motor force of social change. This thesis links all three identified elements of society explicitly in a new model – the previously well-acknowledged Civic Society and Civil Society together now with Informal Society. In addition, the thesis argues that such a framework for understanding is needed so as to enable more effective collaborative action towards achieving global sustainability.
In order to answer these questions, in Chapter 3 I explained how I was using a multi-pronged approach to cover four aspects of my research design: my philosophical position; which ‘research family’ the study was housed in; the ‘research approaches’ or the methodology; and the ‘research techniques’ that I used for data collection. In dealing with the first matter, my philosophical assumptions have been non-positivist and incorporate a critique of positivist inquiry in that, in this type of study, researchers themselves are an inescapable part of the research. In this case, I was not only an academic observer of the project studied but at the same time a participant actively and purposively dealing with real people in a natural setting, so the possibility of the researcher not influencing the study was remote. It proved far more effective to acknowledge this situation and to cater for possible effects, as much as possible, through validation measures.

The second matter of research design for this thesis concerned whether the research family adopted was qualitative or quantitative and also whether the research data primarily derived from field or deskwork. In keeping with the philosophical outlook previously explained, I decided to focus on qualitative research as more appropriate for framing and representing my participative involvement in the Liverpool project. My choice of qualitative research reflected a strong interest in exploring value-laden notions – such as power, politics and emotional interactions – as these issues emerged during the project/research. Importantly, this preference for qualitative research offered a better way to examine relationships among the various aspects of the study as they arose, rather than in proving that ‘a’ caused ‘b’. Rather than attempting ‘generalisability’, I strove for ‘transferability’. The qualitative schema was useful for both data gathering – my ‘research approach’ of participatory fieldwork – and for the means for interpreting that data – my ‘research techniques’.

The third element of research design was my choice to use a trans-methodological approach for two reasons. The first was my concern to actively foster and seek out emergent issues as the research progressed. The second was a need to fit in with the requirements of my sponsor, Liverpool City Council. I did not want to, nor could I, join as part of the project team with a pre-conceived notion of how to conduct my research. It was necessary for this to evolve as I met with the Council team, and it
transpired that trans-methodology would best suit my research needs. This meant that I included elements from Ethnography, Action Research, Grounded Theory and Case Study approaches to my research design.

The fourth aspect of research design adopted was the qualitative, largely fieldwork-based research techniques used for data collection over a 19 month period with the Council and the community at Liverpool. In order to gather triangulated data sets, a multi-method technique was employed that used participant observation, interview and document analysis. I made handwritten notes – contemporaneously – of my participation in meetings, workshops and interviews, and my observations of other meetings (Council’s public meetings and internal events), adding further hand-written, reflective notes after meetings and other encounters. Chapters 5 and 6 presented this data gathered from fieldwork as narrative. In addition, a section of the data presented dealt with letters-to-the-editor of a local newspaper.

Validation of the data was conducted in two ways. First, the data gathered by Council through the Partnership Project itself went through a validation process, including that gathered by the employed facilitators of the Community Visioning Workshops, which itself underwent independent validation by another external consultant. Second, my own research data of observations of the Project was internally and externally validated. Internal to my thesis, triangulation of sources of information was a validation procedure which consisted of creating my own field-notes, interviews, and by using comparative documents such as the official record of meetings and workshops. External validation consisted of sending two chapters of narrative findings to each member of the Project Team and asking for feedback about the accuracy of my account of the meetings and workshops. Feedback came in the form of emails, in-person comments to me, and a validation exercise with several members of the Project Team. All these sources of feedback about the validity of my data confirmed that it was accurate: there was no instance of any of the participants in the validation exercises contradicting the data.
9.3 Findings from my research

The presentation of my findings from the research data in Chapters 5 and 6 came in two forms. First, in Chapter 7, it presented a narrative account of the overall outcomes of the study. Then, in Chapter 8, it used this account in the light of the theoretical model building in Chapter 2, to produce concrete models that aimed at generating transferability from the Liverpool experience. In the next sections, I will present summaries and conclusions of those chapters. These constitute the major scholarly contributions of this thesis. The following section summarises the key findings as they were presented under the five thematic headings that were developed for Chapter 7.

9.3.1 Narrative presentation of findings

Following the writing of my narrative and the validation exercises for that data of Chapters 5 and 6, I undertook non-software, conceptual-based thematic analysis of the results. The themes that emerged from an analysis of the data gathered went through a process of refinement and were synthesised from an initial 44 themes to a final list of five themes that were used as headings for my chapters of data analysis. These themes, which are summarised in the rest of this section, were:

1. Values, ethics and passion,
2. Structures and functions,
3. Power and empowerment,
4. Of process and outcome, and,
5. What happened to sustainability?

The generation of commitment through the passion and courage of the members of a project team is an important quality and one that provides a strong - in fact, an essential – basis for leading a change program. Although corporate activity is not always associated with emotional motivation, the Liverpool experience showed that attachment to a project can generate the impetus for effort that needs an extraordinary personal commitment. An example of this was the courage of the Team’s personnel which was critical for the initial formation of the Team. During the hothouse period of great personal and political difficulty in which the Team was formed, it would have been professionally far safer for prospective Team members
to stay out of the Project. This commitment was also evident in that the Team was a
group of volunteers who attached themselves to the Partnership Project, even when
this meant a deal of extra work beyond their normal duties. Another sign of this
commitment occurred in the face of a budget that initially failed to allocate any funds
specifically for the Project. Although members of the Project Team faced problems or
concerns that needed addressing from time to time, their passion for the Partnership
Project saw it through many problems of an organisational kind, as well as of an
inter-personal and team nature.

Passion is crucial but passionate teams still need to reflect on their own biases. For
example, the Project Team needed to consider, at a deeper level than was achieved
during the Project, its own notions about the value of engaging with the ‘squeaky
wheels’ in the community. Instead of seeing all activists as a source of problems, it
would have been possible to view at least some apparently troublesome activists as
change facilitators, as nodes of radiating centres of change. Although a Team
meeting discussed and planned for just such a sub-project that included the existing
Forum structure to promote a more creative and adventurous response, it went no
further.

Throughout the Project, it was clear that disciplinary and professional silos need to
become more permeable to the ideas and methods of other areas, especially when
those areas inhabit a niche in the same organisation. Departmental, disciplinary and
professional silos also need to become more accessible to those outside their own
departments, disciplines and professions, especially if they are involved in a citizen-
oriented participatory process. This was a central aim of the Corporate
Change/Corporate Plan program part of the Partnership Project, and possibly the
most successful aspect of the Project.

Sharing power and decision-making allows for shared ownership of a project. The
Enlightenment’s trajectory of widening the scope of those in society who are
involved in decision-making needs extending beyond the usual political sphere of the
electoral cycle. It needs to include the many projects and programs that aim to
improve responses to triple bottom line challenges. The more widespread, many-
faceted, and frequent the engagement of a community – whether that ‘community’
means citizens in a Council area or the workforce of the Council – the greater is the possibility for a deeper level of ownership by that community. This nexus of participation, engagement and ownership applies to thinking about both problems and solutions. For example, a single visioning exercise is insufficient for cultural change to occur between a council and the community. However, an ongoing series of engagement processes, say each few years as was planned for Liverpool, could enhance this situation. This process can be further improved by a structure of engagement that provides for a shift of some power, or at least access to power, from the institution to the community. This was the aim of both the initial permanent engagement structure at Liverpool, which did not come to fruition, and the purpose of the Liverpool’s final Community Engagement Toolkit, which did proceed.

Current social structures foster a culture of political passivity that needs to be changed in both community and Council. Our society engenders the idea that democracy merely means voting once in each electoral cycle and rarely expects a higher minimum level of participation. Yet, given the enormity of the challenges apparent in the sustainability project, expectations are growing as to the urgent need for more engaged processes between institutions and citizens. Participatory processes are also important in stimulating trust, interest and passion for change within an organisation, as well as between institutions and community. Indeed, this was a foundational premise of the Partnership Project.

A shared acceptance of the need for interchangeable roles of both community and council is important; each should be able to take on the role of ‘teacher’ and ‘learner’ as needed. Such a transformation in the relationship between an institution and the citizenry, if managed well, can enhance the efficiency of the programs of the institution and the empowerment of the community. Programs that are based on this notion could also lead to a gradual process of engendering a more active community, one that is less ‘disengaged, cynical, and apathetic’, as the Liverpool community was originally often described by members of the Team. In fact, this negotiation of roles is likely to increase levels of knowledge, awareness and expectations within the community as to what and how much citizens can contribute. This can create a virtuous circle of engagement.
This will not happen merely through wishing. Communication with, and leadership from, the powerful in council is needed. Although higher authorities in the organisation cannot be expected to be involved in all projects on a daily basis, the lines of communication need to be carefully maintained in both directions: to and from centres of power. Even seemingly minor issues can lead to misunderstandings that cause delays and problems that hinder the stimulus that leadership provides and is needed to generate change in hierarchically organised institutions. Thus to maintain the momentum of a project, project teams need to be diligent in maintaining a strong relationship with significant leadership figures. Also, for projects that are as ambitious as the Partnership Project, the leader/mentor for the project needs to keep involved and abreast with its progress. That is, there is a need for the initiator or principal to nurture their leadership/mentoring role, as well as facilitating team members’ involvement and contributions.

Processes used in public participation programs, especially those aimed at creating more engaged relationships between Council and community, need to reflect the outcomes desired: ‘practising what is preached’. Open participatory means are crucial for engendering an atmosphere that promotes the more engaged ends sought. An example of this at Liverpool’s Partnership Project was the way that workshops were employed as participatory exercises, both in the Community Visioning Workshops and the Corporate Plan/Cultural Change Workshops.

Legislative changes can afford assistance to confronting the problems encountered with public participation programs. In New South Wales, legislation in the local government arena requires little more than the public to be informed. Sometimes there is a requirement that consultation be undertaken, although this is limited by the relevant authority only needing to consider the knowledge and information that is provided by the public. Improved legislation should allow for and support councils that seek stronger engaged practices within their domain.

As a project outcome, sustainability needs a concerted emphasis within project exercises and in the literature that these produce. It may also require an additional educational component woven into the various elements of a project. Although sustainability began as a strong theme in my initial contacts with Liverpool, and
continued to be an important concern for some time, the issue itself petered out later in the Project. In the end the final Liverpool Directions document, which was a major outcome of the Project, did not have sustainability as a part of the document’s title. This meant that Council did not adopt it as a strategic direction for Liverpool as an outcome of the participatory Partnership Project. Instead, at Liverpool, the Sustainability Policy of the Council remained a product of the Environment Department, one that was adopted by Council, but not one that was collaboratively created with the community. For sustainability to be a collaborative effort between Council and community, it primarily needs to be formed as the outcome of collaborative processes.

9.3.2 Findings: models from the research

An examination of the outcomes from the five themes, which were extracted from the data, resulted in the generation of three models in Chapter 8 of this thesis. The first model presented was The Liverpool Model which was in two versions. The first version was The Liverpool Model – Version A – it concerned the situation at Liverpool and described the project at the focus of this research. The second version was The Liverpool Model – Version B and demonstrated a generic model derived from the first. The other two models were each derived from one or other of the two main elements of the Liverpool Model. The second model Integrated Strategic Planning for Liverpool Council, derives from the Council’s corporate development component of the research project, and the third model. The third model, A Community Engagement Strategy, focuses on the community development and governance engagement aspect of the project. These models serve as lessons, not only for the people of Liverpool, but may well be of use to the wider community, and other institutions.

Liverpool Model – Version A provides an aid for the Team, others at Council, and community members at Liverpool, to understand the processes of the Project. It is an evaluation of what did happen, can help in any future attempt to repeat the program. As well, it can aid in modifying elements to improve future, different, incarnations of the Project. ‘Liverpool Model – Version B’, as the generic version, is intended as an
aid for other councils, and possibly other organisations, that wish to take note of and adapt the model for their own implementation.

The second model ‘Integrated Strategic Planning for Liverpool’ expands on those concepts in the corporate development strand of both versions of The Liverpool Model. The usefulness of this model is that it fosters a collaborative approach both within the organisation and between it and the community involved. This can help generate efficiencies due to a better allocation of resources. The other main arm of The Liverpool Model is concerned with community development and is represented in more detail with the third model A Community Engagement Strategy. Besides its usefulness in fostering the external community development policies of an organisation, this model also aims to help develop community inputs for collaborative inclusion into that organisation.

When combined, these elements suggest an empirically and theoretically grounded pathway to achieve a collaborative transformation of community and institution in a broad sense through their engagement with each other. As well they can be useful for more successful implementation of policies and programs that seek to achieve better sustainability outcomes through corporate and community development that collaboratively achieves a power sharing and shared learning environment.

9.4 Areas for future application and investigation

While the Oasis scandal was instrumental in precipitating the formation of the Project, and thus was a unique contributing factor to this particular Liverpool scenario, I have become aware that this study has the potential to be of use to a wider audience, both in terms of application and research. Many councils and other organisations are struggling with the issues that arise from the practice of consultation, public participation, and sustainability. The research-based lessons from the Liverpool Partnership Project are now available for use by the institutions of Civic Society and Civil Society, and in the arenas of Informal Society.

Future research into the issues that this thesis has raised can be divided into two parts: those solely within Liverpool; and those that also occur in areas beyond Liverpool’s
boundary. Firstly, within Liverpool, as some of the outcomes of the Project continue to be rolled out, further investigation could add to the knowledge already gained and so improve the continued evolution of the Project. For instance, a useful study could be undertaken into the application of Liverpool’s Community Engagement Tool Kit. Another fruitful area of research would be to evaluate the plan to continue with public participation in Liverpool to create a new, or add to the existing community Vision for Liverpool; this is research that could be taken up within Council as Action Research. It could otherwise be adapted for other councils or other organisations.

Another area of potential new knowledge concerns the degree to which Liverpool City Council has embedded the Corporate Change program into the nature of how it operates. These areas of research are related to a study of how effectively the Liverpool Model – Version A continues to be incorporated into the workings of, and relationships between, Liverpool’s Council and community. Of further research interest is how the new Councillors – elected 2008 – react to the outcomes of the Project and whether, or to what extent, they are sympathetic to, and are willing to enhance those outcomes.

Areas for further research that are of interest but are outside the domain of Liverpool, although not exclusively so, concern the models that were produced out of this thesis derived from the original Liverpool Model. Other councils, or other organisations, may find parts or all of the generic Liverpool Model - B useful for their endeavours. Similarly, the two models – Integrated Strategic Planning for Liverpool Council – and – A Community Engagement Strategy may be adapted or adopted by other organisations. The implementation of any of these models into the operation of other organisations would be appropriate areas for new research.
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Glossary

Administrator: a person appointed by the State government to oversee the running of a Local Government Authority in place of the usually elected body of Councillors.

Civic Society: social formation describing the higher orders of social power, eg, government and large corporations.

Civil Society: social formation describing the mid order of social power. Often referred to as Non Government Organisations, eg, trade unions, churches, social/environmental action groups.

City Plan: also known as ‘the Vision’ and ‘Liverpool Directions’. This was the main output of the Community Visioning Workshops and the basis for formulating future Corporate/Budgeting Plans for Liverpool City Council.

COFT – Creating Our Future Together: also referred to as the COFT – Partnership Project, the Partnership Project, or simply the Project.

Corporate Plan: by NSW legislation referred to as a Management Plan. At Liverpool City Council this was the term for the main budgeting/planning instrument at the beginning of the Partnership Project.

Business Plan: budgeting instrument for a department of Liverpool City Council.

Informal Society: the lowest order of social power, eg, the individual, family, neighbourhood.

Management Plan: in NSW this is the main legislated Council budgeting instrument, and is named as such in the Local Government Act 1993.

Governance: generic terms for any form of decision-making in Civil, Civic and Informal Society.

DFO/Direct Factory Outlet: a retail business in eastern Liverpool that was closed by the State government in 2004 on planning grounds. The event received a lot of publicity in the metropolitan media as 400 jobs were lost and accusations of corrupt behaviour were made. An Inquiry was held that exonerated both State government and Liverpool Council from any wrongdoing.

Directions Document: the final output of the Partnership Project’s Community Visioning Workshops. Formally designated as ‘Liverpool Directions 2005-2016’.

LAG: Liverpool Action Group – a Civil Society formation that occurred during the Project.
LEP: Local Environment Plan of a Council.

LCC: Liverpool City Council.

LGA – Local Government Area.

Liverpool Vision: another name for the output of the Partnership Project’s Community Visioning Workshops, also known as ‘Liverpool Directions 2006-2016’.

Liverpool Directions 2006-2016: also known as the ‘Vision’, the City Plan, the Community Vision, or the Liverpool Vision.

Orange Grove – see DFO. Orange Grove was the area where the DFO was situated.

Plan: This term is used for the following:
   Management Plan…
   Corporate Plan…
   Business Plan…
   City Plan…
   Strategic Plan…

Project: the Creating Our Future Together Partnership Project. Also referred to as ‘COFT’, ‘the COFT – Partnership Project’ or ‘the Partnership Project’. This thesis is my study, as a participant observer, of the internal workings and outcomes of the Project.

Senior Council: within Liverpool, all or part of the most senior decision makers at Liverpool City Council during the time of the Partnership Project. This was made up of the Administrator, the General Manager, the Assistant General Manager and the Executive Board.

Strategic Panel: an ad-hoc body set up within Liverpool City Council that met before contentious issues were put before the Councillors. It was made up of two Councillors and members of the executive officers of Council. It was put on hold when LCC was dismissed, but resurrected at infrequent times when the Administrator called for it.

Strategic Plan: the Management/Corporate Plan plus the Community Vision/Liverpool Directions document.

Vision: the outcome of the Partnership Project’s Community Visioning Workshops.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Timeline for the Creating Our Future Partnership Project

Appendix 2: Thematic Development Document

Appendix 3: Liverpool Directions 2006 – 2016

Appendix 4: Community Engagement Toolkit
Appendix 1

Timeline for the Creating Our Future Partnership Project

2003
- 5th November 2003, Daly Inquiry established by the NSW State Government to investigate Liverpool City Council’s involvement with the Bulldogs Rugby League Club and Macquarie Bank in the Oasis project.
- December 2003, I begin discussions with Liverpool City Council (LCC) officers re a project with them.

2004
- 16th March 2004: Liverpool Councillors sacked, Administrator, Gabrielle Kibble appointed for four years, until September 2008.
- 15th June, first meeting of the embryonic ‘Project Team’
- 29th June my first meeting with the Partnership Project Team – including the first timeline for the Project ending by Dec 2004.
- July-August development of the Project – formation of the internal & external components and other aspects.
- Formation of the Methods and Corporate Planning Subgroups
- August – Executive Board of LCC accepts the Project framework
- September – Ex Board accepts the link between internal change process and the formation of a Liverpool Vision.
- 14th Oct, Administrator has internal launch of the Project to all staff.
- 29th Oct – 5th Nov Corporate Planning Workshops.
- Nov. the Council formally endorses the Partnership Project.
- Nov – Dec Auspoll Survey is conducted.
2005
- Jan – Project Budget established - $55,000 to June, $63,000 for next year.
- Feb – four Stakeholder Briefings held.
- Jan – Mar Time Tunnel transformed into the T-shirt exhibition, with Administrator complaints.
- Mar-April first big internal fight re one or two-step validation process.
- April – fight with Senior Council over the T-shirt exhibition.
- No major launch of Workshops, just an announcement in the local paper, no post-out for a ‘launch’ – second big internal fight.
- 8th April – Collingwood Precinct public meeting.
- April – Facilitators contracted for the workshops.
- 27th May Pilot workshop with staff of LCC
- June – July – Public Workshops for Visioning.
- June – Data Subgroup formed to formulate and analyse the themes from the Workshop data (& other sources).
- July – November - much work on writing and re-formulating the Vision document & negotiating with Senior Council re title, form and content of the document.

2006
- January: my last meeting as a participant observer with the Creating Our Future Together Partnership Project Team
- Feb – March: presentation of agreed Directions doc. to the community and the validation procedure – qualitative and quantitative approaches.
- April 10th, Liverpool Council endorses the Liverpool Directions 2006-2016 document.
Appendix 2

Thematic Development

Index:

A. Themes from Results… p. 1
B. Meta-Themes….p. 7
C. Super Meta-Themes….p. 8
D. Placing the Themes into the Meta-Themes…p. 9

NB section A is the product of me going through the two chapters of Results (Ch 6&7); B is a listing and brief explanation of the Meta-Themes; C is the list and explanation of the speculative Super Meta-Themes and just sits there for the present; D is a compilation of the relevant Themes from A into the heading of the Meta-Themes of B.

A. Themes from Results

Key: <*> = top of page; <-> = middle of page; < _>= bottom of page; ! = important for this theme; !! = v. important for this theme.


Themes:

1. Timing - the Inquiry and Administrator (ch5, ch6 p1, ch7p2-3; Ch7p16*)
   Oasis re MOU Sept 04 ch6 p12-

2. Oasis and its continued aftermath: Collingwood, Budget meeting (Ch 7p26)

3. Professionals Vs elected Councillors (Ch 6p7 ; Ch 6 pp12-13; Ch 7p12-; !Ch7 p24—dot pt 5)
4. Volunteer (self-definition/selected) Vs Role definition OR Passion vs Function
OR Self-selected Vs Hierarchically-selected, [but needing a Project Manager
Ch 6p15]

5. Leadership – necessity of ch6 p1-2 ch6 p12 ch7 p10_ ch7 p16-17 ch7
p24*…AdministratorCh6p12, ch7p7ch7p14 – Ex Board Ch6 p7-8 Ch6p11
-- Leadership within the Team, re Project Mgr Ch6 p17- Ch6 p11-13

6 (a) Power and Hierarchy Ch6 p22-23; Ch7 p7-; Ch7 p13-; (re Civil Soc –
LAG- Ch7 p13, Sen Coun can’t allow LAG to become prominent, ie?,
gain power? – reasonable or not? ie, would it give LAG unfair advantage
over other groups competing at election time if, indeed, that’s what they
were after.
(b) Conflict between Team & Senior Council Ch6 p10; Ch6 p22-23=; Ch6
p29-30; Ch p32-33; Ch7 p7-; Ch7 p10-11*.; Ch7 p13=; Ch7 p31*

7 (a) Limitations of institutional & legislative arrangements Ch 6
p18*(stakeholders); Ch6 p 19-;
(b) Ch6 pp31-32(council doc/commun. doc – ‘endorsed not adopted’ – both
approaches have validity; Ch7 p11-

8 (a) Change of personnel led to decline in Sustainability as Project developed
Ch6 p11; Ch6 p13; C6 p19-; Ch6 p25-27(Betty goes & so does the
Council’s Sustainability Policy); Ch7 p6*; Ch7 p19-
(b) Decline in Sustainability as Project developed Ch 6 p6; Ch7 p3*; Ch7
p20_

9 (a) Silos as a block, an inhibitor of innovative approaches Ch6 p7; Ch 6 p8;
Ch6 p9-; Ch 7 p3=; Ch7 p5=; Ch 7 p10-; !!Ch7 p19-21; !!Ch7 p24-25;
(b) Silos Vs Whole of Council ‘Integrated Strategic Planning’ Ch6 p30-31;
Ch7 p3-; Ch7 p15-; Ch7 p24-25

10. Strict Budget/Time/Resources Ch6 p12; Ch6 p17=; Ch6 p22-23; Ch7 p6-; Ch7
p20-; Ch7 p15-16
11  (a) Using outside ideas, but developing own approach (Liverpool Model) Ch6 p3-; Ch6 p5  
    (b) Using outside Models Ch6 p3-; Ch? & p29 (Porto Alegre); in Ch 7 workshops in the exercises, comments from participants.  
    (c) The Liverpool Model Ch6 p9; Ch6 p15-16; Ch6 p16  
    (d) Academic input/external researcher (but not always there, much happened in Council, but not in meetings) Ch6 p5; Ch6 p19-;  
    (e) Role of Strategic Research Group Ch7 p19-  

12. Need for good lines of communication Ch6 p22-23; Ch6 p23_; Ch7 p10-11;  
    - Up Council Ch6 p10; Ch6 p11*; Ch6 p11_; Ch6 p12-13;  
    - Down Council Ch7 p24-  

13. Not just a project of the ‘tick box’ sort (also impt because this is why most volunteered)/ Ethical Framework Ch6 p1; Ch6 p17*--; Ch6 p26--; Ch7 p4--; Ch7 p6--; Ch7 p9=; Ch7 p9; Ch7 p10-11-(sort of compromise).  

14. Having a v broad approach (residents, ratepayers, business, govt stakeholders, NGOs) Ch6 p18*--; Ch6 p20_.  

15. Need for a realistic timetable Ch6 p5_; Ch6 p9; Ch6 p10 (used to be in CP);  
Ch6 p22-23(need for buffer time for emergencies/emergent situations)  

16. Professionals challenging themselves ‘if you want conflict..’ Ch6 p3--; Ch7 p17-18 & 19*; & the input from staff at the CP workshops Ch7 p....  

17  (a) The story of what happened to Sustainability Ch6 p6(dot3); Ch6 p26-27;  
    Ch 7 p3*!!; Ch7 p18=; Ch6 p9(originally to be launched at Bloomin’ Enviro. Festival; Ch6 p13; Ch6 p20-21(re Jenny’s base line analysis of Council re ESD);  
    (b) Connected to change in personnel [& this linked with point 8(a) & (b)]  
    Ch6 p4 & p6; Ch6 p25-27(again the pt that the Sus Policy was in the hand of Council, not the community);
18  (a)  (connected to pt 22) Internal Cultural Change Program Ch6 p14; Ch6 p19*-; Ch7 p18-19 & 22-(brought up by staff in CP workshops);
(b)  External Cultural Change Program Ch6 p?(the Vision being a community doc, not council doc) & the irony of Civil Society being marginalised by the ‘dispute’ with Administrator Ch7 p13-*-14.

19. How & why changes occurred, esp how major issues became watered down/less important:
(a)  ‘launch’ to ‘announcement’ Ch6 p12-13;
(b)  ‘Stakeholder workshops’ to ‘Briefings’ Ch6 p13;
(c)  ‘Vision’ to ‘Direction’ Ch6 pp…;
(d)  decline in Sustainability/ESD(also in 17, above) Ch6 p20;
(e)  External evaluation to internal Ch6 p19-; Ch6 p20-; Ch6 p20-21;
(f)  from ‘Structure of Engagement’ to ‘Toolkit’ Ch6 p17-; Ch7 p9-10; Ch7 p28;
(g)  ‘Drawing a line in the sand’ no more Ch6 p21*-;
(h)  Community owned Vs validation process Ch6 p22*;
(i) Community doc Vs Council doc Ch7 p11-12

20. Having a clear set of Project principles Ch6 p6; Ch6 p16-17*; C7 p6; Ch7 p10-11(for different interpretations of same list of aims & objectives);

21. Team had, at least in beginning, full confidence in each other/ Trust demonstrated in being so open in discussion Ch6 p7; Ch6 p13; loss of Lucy Ch6 p22-;

22  (a)  People change & silos are somewhat permeable/not all silos are impermeable & Councils are not monoliths (Ben) Ch6 p8 & !!Ch7 p24-; Ch7 p16-17; Ch7 p17-18; Ch7 p19-; Ch7 p21-; Ch7 p23-24;
(b)  Scepticism about the Project from Council officers Ch7 p21-22*--; Ch7 p23*;
(c) Not all councils are stuck in ‘rates-roads-rubbish’ – but there are some in both Civic and Civil society that hold that it is what Councils should do – that IS their job.

23. Using existing data sources, even if only for validation/corroboration Ch6 p6; Ch 6 p24-; Ch7 p22*.

24. Not a project, but a journey: iterative Ch6 p2; Ch6 p8; Ch6 p25-.

25. What is ‘community’ – what is Liverpool’s community?
   (a) The usual suspects/squeaky wheels Ch6 p14; Ch6 p29; Ch7 p13-15;
   (b) Alienated/disengaged community Ch6 p14; Ch6 p18- ; Ch7 Vignettes 2&3
   (c) & council disengaging the community (& the fights in the Team about this eg James, Margaret, Joan & Lucy) Ch7 Vignette2; Ch6 p22(loss of Lucy)

26. Consultation Vs Participation Ch6 p17-;Ch6 p22 (loss of Lucy); Ch7 p10-11 (different interpretations);

27. Project largely evolves as events unfold/preordained model not used (eg. AtKisson) –pluses and minuses Ch

28. Project Manager Ch6 p19-

29. Independent facilitation for w’shops or not Ch6 p18-

30. Creativity in presentation eg TimeTunnel/Tshirts Vs staid & formal. Also, publicly ‘drawing a line in the sand’ – to show acknowledgement of mistakes Vs not doing so.

31. Didactic educational change process (re sustainability Ch 6 p25-27) Vs pure statement from the community (Ch6 p19-20); [the resolution was a compromise that encompassed both ‘positions’. The community’s position will & should be expected to change (due to many inputs and experiences), so is a
snapshot. Council will be one of those influences, as will be changes in law, climate change etc. Also, it is part of this project that the other must be accepted too – council changes over time too, & one of the inputs is the community (both are learner & teacher).

32. (linked to 15?) Was Liverpool’s approach of not using an established model and allowing for a more free-flowing approach a better way? This allowed for a more ‘on the edge’ approach that elicited the potential and ‘space’ for novel ideas to develop, eg Time Tunnel & T-shirts & the various 7 elements of the Liverpool Model (or of them as a whole) Would it have been less vibrant the other way? On the other hand, if a ‘off the shelf’ package had been used, would this have lessened misunderstandings and conflict, eg, between Team & Senior Council? Ch6 pp19-20.

33. The need for saturation promotion Ch 6p24-25

34. (Fear of the) squeaky wheels/silent majority Ch6 p25=; Ch6 p32; Ch7 p13-

35. Filters of the Project (validation) filters Ch6 p26*;
   (LAG) Ch6 p31-32; Ch7 p13*-;
   (Toolkit) Ch6 p32-33;


37. Validation (Qual Vs Quantitative) Ch6 p33-34.

38. Confusion of terms – if the Project is in part an act of communication between Council and Community, then even the use of ‘Mgt Plan’ “Corporate Plan” can be confusing for the uninitiated resident, esp, the new migrant. Mgt Plan is use din published doc.s probably because it’s the legislated term Corporate Plan. CP used to describe an attempt to integrate the functioning of Council, but is confusing if, on top of that, the term ‘Strategic Plan’ is also used (MP/CP + Directions) then its even more confusing. Recommend simplification of terms, eg, MP SP Ch7 p1-2.
39. Democratising the CP process - & Team Building - Ch7 P3-_; Ch7 P10-(& toolkit, too); Ch7 p17-18(as a process of CP workshops); Ch7 p19-21(as not a process for the CP workshops).

40. Gradual but persistent Change Process Ch7 p4-5*

41. Not easy making silos more permeable (fatigue)Ch7 p5-

42. Using existing Forums Ch7 p6-

43. Team has Democratic approach, re engaging with staff Ch7 p8-; ch7 p10- (contradicting this Ch7 p14*-)

44. Deep cultural change !!Ch6 p4*-; Ch7 p9*-; Ch7 p10_; Ch7 p14-15

**B. Meta-Themes**

(in no particular order) Principles & Passion, Process, Product, Power, Practical, People, Politics. Some Themes occur in more than one Meta-theme. Most, and probably all, of these themes have both positive and negative aspects.

1. **Principles & Passion:**

   This is about the ethics that underpin the people who formed the Team and of the Project itself. Passion refers to the feelings that came out from individuals in the Team because they were so attached to the Principles of the Project, as they saw them.

   **Themes:** 4; 13; 16; 19(g)(h)(i); 20; 25(c); 26; 31; 43.
2. Process:
Process refers to the various elements of, and the way the Visioning and Corporate Plan strands evolved.
Themes: 11; 12; 14; 18; 19(a) (b); 23; 25; 26; 27; 29; 30; 32; 33; 35; 36; 37; 39; 40; 42; 43; 44.

3. Product:
This theme covers the shape and form of the final products, in particular the changed forms that they took, eg, the ‘Vision’ to the ‘Directions’ document; the ‘Engagement Structure’ to the ‘Toolkit’.
Themes: 19 (c) (e) (f).

4. Power:
This is probably the largest and most complex theme. Power covers the differences in the decision-making capacities and consequent influence on a variety of aspects of the Project. This includes the power differentials between the Team and Senior Council and the Executive Board, but also includes the power differentials that existed between the Team and the community. In one sense it is one way that to assess the way in which, and the degree to which, the Principles (1), above, actually worked.
Themes: 2; 3; 5; 6; 7; 9; 12; 17(b); 18(b); 19(c) (f) (g (h) (i); 25; 26; 30; 31; 34; 36; 38; 39; 43; 44.

5. Practical:
These themes covered the various prosaic matters that needed attention in order for the Project to proceed more smoothly. Covers issues like the need for a Project Manager, and a defined Budget stream.
Themes: 4; 10; 12; 15; 19(b); 28; 35; 38; 42.

6. People:
Broadly these themes cover some psychological and sociological issues that relate to the individuals in the Project, though, mostly have to do with the people in the Team. These matters then relate to various other issues and themes.
Themes: 5; 8; 17; 19(d); 21; 22(a) (b) (c); 24; 25; 26; 31; 32; 34; 39; 41; 43; 44.
7. Politics:
Although this Meta-theme crosses over with (and may be included into) Meta-theme 4 (Power), this more specifically deals with Legislation, political parties, and the State government.
*Themes*: 1; 2; 3; 6; 7.

C. Super Meta-Themes
The two Super Meta-Themes are “Challenge and Change”. I’m not really sure about what I want to do with these two, they may go into the Discussion chapter or they may be more useful in as a direction for Implications (I guess there will be ‘Implications’).
Under **Challenge** go the matters that relate to the theme of the reduction of Sustainability, from what started out as a strong aspect of the Project, and was reduced to a relatively small aspect of both the Directions document and hardly came up within the Corporate Plan/Corporate Change program.
**Change** covers the various drivers and barriers to what was, essentially, a Change Project. Included here are matters like the personal changes that the Team pushed for themselves, and how the Team dealt with the issue of trying to stimulate the community into activity from its well-enunciated passivity, yet they constantly baulked at all the Squeaky-Wheels – presumably the sort of person that they were trying to stimulate into being, into becoming the norm for Liverpool, not the exception.

D. Placing the Themes into the Meta-Themes

1. Principles & Passion:
This is about the ethics that underpin the people who formed the Team and of the Project itself. Passion refers to the feelings that came out from individuals in the Team because they were so attached to the Principles of the Project, as they saw them.
*Themes*: 4; 13; 16; 19(g)(h)(i); 20; 25(c); 26; 31; 43.
4. Volunteer (self-definition/selected) Vs Role definition OR Passion vs Function OR Self-selected Vs Hierarchically-selected, [but needing a Project Manager Ch 6 p15]

13. Not just a project of the ‘tick box’ sort (also impt because this is why most volunteered)/ Ethical Framework Ch6 p1; Ch6 p17*-; Ch6 p26-; Ch7 p4-; Ch7 p6-; Ch7 p9=; Ch7 p9; Ch7 p10-11-(sort of compromise).

19. How & why changes occurred, esp how major issues became watered down/less important:
   (g) ‘Drawing a line in the sand’ no more Ch6 p21*–;
   (h) Community owned Vs validation process Ch6 p22*;
   (i) Community doc Vs Council doc Ch7 p11-12

20. Having a clear set of Project principles Ch6 p6; Ch6 p16-17*; C7 p6; Ch7 p10-11 (for different interpretations of same list of aims & objectives);

25. What is ‘community’ – what is Liverpool’s community?
   (c) & council disengaging the community (& the fights in the Team about this eg James, Margaret, Joan & Lucy) Ch7 Vignette2; Ch6 p22(loss of Lucy)

26. Consultation Vs Participation Ch6 p17-; Ch6 p22 (loss of Lucy); Ch7 p10-11 (different interpretations);

31. Didactic educational change process (re sustainability Ch 6 p25-27) Vs pure statement from the community (Ch 6 p19-20); [the resolution was a compromise that encompassed both ‘positions’. The community’s position will & should be expected to change (due to many inputs and experiences), so is a snapshot. Council will be one of those influences, as will be changes in law, climate change etc. Also, it is part of this project that the other must be accepted too – council changes over time too, & one o the inputs is the community (both are learner & teacher).
43. Team has Democratic approach, re engaging with staff Ch7 p8-; ch7 p10-
(contradicting this Ch7 p14*)

2. Process:
Process refers to the various elements of, and the way the Visioning and Corporate
Plan strands evolved.

Themes: 11; 12; 14; 18; 19(a) (b); 23; 25; 26; 27; 29; 30; 32; 33; 35; 36; 37; 39; 40; 42; 43; 44.

11 (a) Using outside ideas, but developing own approach (Liverpool Model) Ch6
p3-; Ch6 p5
11 (b) Using outside Models Ch6 p3-; Ch? & p29 (Porto Alegre); in Ch 7
workshops in the exercises, comments from participants.
11 (c) The Liverpool Model Ch6 p9; Ch6 p15-16; Ch6 p16
11 (d) Academic input/external researcher (but not always there, much happened
in Council, but not in meetings) Ch6 p5; Ch6 p19-;
11 (e) Role of Strategic Research Group Ch7 p19-

12. Need for good lines of communication Ch6 p22-23; Ch6 p23_; Ch7 p10-11;
- Up Council Ch6 p10; Ch6 p11*; Ch6 p11_; Ch6 p12-13;
- Down Council Ch7 p24-

14. Having a v broad approach (residents, ratepayers, business, govt stakeholders,
NGOs) Ch6 p18*--; Ch6 p20_.

18 (a) (connected to pt 22) Internal Cultural Change Program Ch6 p14; Ch6
p19*--; Ch7 p18-19 & 22-(brought up by staff in CP workshops);
(b) External Cultural Change Program Ch6 p?(the Vision being a community
doc, not council doc) & the irony of Civil Society being marginalised by
the ‘dispute’ with Administrator Ch7 p13-*-14.
19. How & why changes occurred, esp how major issues became watered down/less important:
   (a) ‘launch’ to ‘announcement’ Ch6 p12-13;
   (b) ‘Stakeholder workshops’ to ‘Briefings’ Ch6 p13;

23. Using existing data sources, even if only for validation/corroboration Ch6 p6; Ch 6 p24-; Ch7 p22*.

24. Not a project, but a journey: iterative Ch6 p2; Ch6 p8; Ch6 p25-.

25. What is ‘community’ – what is Liverpool’s community?
   (a) The usual suspects/squeaky wheels Ch6 p14; Ch6 p29; Ch7 p13-15;
   (b) Alienated/disengaged community Ch6 p14; Ch6 p18-; Ch7 Vignettes 2&3
   (c) & council disengaging the community (& the fights in the Team about this
eg James, Margaret, Joan & Lucy) Ch7 Vignette2; Ch6 p22(loss of Lucy)

26. Consultation Vs Participation Ch6 p17-;Ch6 p22 (loss of Lucy); Ch7 p10-11(different interpretations);

27. Project largely evolves as events unfold/preordained model not used (eg. AtKisson) –pluses and minuses Ch

29. Independent facilitation for w’shops or not Ch6 p18-

30. Creativity in presentation eg TimeTunnel/Tshirts Vs staid & formal. Also, publicly ‘drawing a line in the sand’ – to show acknowledgement of mistakes Vs not doing so.

32. (linked to 15?) Was Liverpool’s approach of not using an established model and allowing for a more free-flowing approach a better way? This allowed for a more ‘on the edge’ approach that elicited the potential and ‘space’ for novel ideas to develop, eg Time Tunnel & T-shirts & the various 7 elements of the Liverpool Model (or of them as a whole) Would it have been less vibrant the
other way? On the other hand, if a ‘off the shelf’ package had been used, would this have lessened misunderstandings and conflict, eg, between Team & Senior Council? Ch6 pp19-20.

33. The need for saturation promotion Ch 6pp24-25

35. Filters of the Project (validation) filters Ch6 p26*;
   (LAG) Ch6 p31-32; Ch7 p13*-
   (Toolkit) Ch6 p32-33;


37. Validation (Qual Vs Quantitative) Ch6 p33-34.

39. Democratising the CP process - & Team Building - Ch7 P3-_; Ch7 P10-(& toolkit, too); Ch7 p17-18(as a process of CP workshops); Ch7 p19-21(as not a process for the CP workshops).

40. Gradual but persistent Change Process Ch7 p4-5*

42. Using existing Forums Ch7 p6-

43. Team has Democratic approach, re engaging with staff Ch7 p8-; ch7 p10- (contradicting this Ch7 p14*-

44. Deep cultural change !!Ch6 p4*; Ch7 p9*; Ch7 p10_; Ch7 p14-15

3. Product:
This theme covers the shape and form of the final products, in particular the changed forms that they took, eg, the ‘Vision’ to the ‘Directions’ document; the ‘Engagement Structure’ to the ‘Toolkit’.

Themes: 19 (e) (e) (f).
19. How & why changes occurred, esp how major issues became watered down/less important:
(c) ‘Vision’ to ‘Direction’ Ch6 pp…;
(e) External evaluation to internal Ch6 p19-; Ch6 p20-; Ch6 p20-21;
(f) from ‘Structure of Engagement’ to ‘Toolkit’ Ch6 p17-; Ch7 p9-10; Ch7 p28;

4. Power:
This is probably the largest and most complex theme. Power covers the differences in the decision-making capacities and consequent influence on a variety of aspects of the Project. This includes the power differentials between the Team and Senior Council and the Executive Board, but also includes the power differentials that existed between the Team and the community. In one sense it is one way that to assess the way in which, and the degree to which, the Principles (1), above, actually worked.
Themes: 2; 3; 5; 6; 7; 9; 12; 17(b); 18(b); 19(c) (f) (g (h) (i); 25; 26; 30; 31; 34; 36; 38; 39; 43; 44.

2. Oasis and its continued aftermath: Collingwood, Budget meeting (Ch 7p26)

3. Professionals Vs elected Councillors (Ch 6p7 ; Ch 6 pp12-13; Ch 7p12-; !Ch7 p24—dot pt 5)

5. Leadership – necessity of ch6 p1-2 ch6 p12 ch7 p10 _ ch7 p16-17 ch7 p24*…AdministratorCh6p12, ch7p7ch7p14 – Ex Board Ch6 p7-8 Ch6p11 -- Leadership within the Team, re Project Mgr Ch6 p17- Ch6 p11-13

6 (a) Power and Hierarchy Ch6 p22-23; Ch7 p7-; Ch7 p13-; (re Civil Soc –LAG-Ch7 p13, Sen Coun can’t allow LAG to become prominent, ie?, gain power? – reasonable or not? ie, would it give LAG unfair advantage over other groups competing at election time if, indeed, that’s what they were after. (b) Conflict between Team & Senior Council Ch6 p10; Ch6 p22-23=; Ch6 p29-30; Ch p32-33; Ch7 p7-; Ch7 p10-11*-; Ch7 p13=; Ch7 p31*
7. (a) Limitations of institutional & legislative arrangements Ch 6 p18*(stakeholders); Ch6 p 19-; 
(b) Ch6 pp31-32(council doc/commun. doc – ‘endorsed not adopted’ – both 
approaches have validity; Ch7 p11-

9. (a) Silos as a block, an inhibitor of innovative approaches Ch6 p7; Ch 6 p8; Ch6 p9-; Ch 7 p3=; Ch7 p5=; Ch 7 p10-; !!Ch7 p19-21; !!Ch7 p24-25; 
(b) Silos Vs Whole of Council ‘Integrated Strategic Planning’ Ch6 p30-31; Ch7 p3-; Ch7 p15-; Ch7 p24-25

12. Need for good lines of communication Ch6 p22-23; Ch6 p23_; Ch7 p10-11; 
- Up Council Ch6 p10; Ch6 p11*; Ch6 p11_; Ch6 p12-13; 
- Down Council Ch7 p24-

17. (b) Connected to change in personnel [& this linked with point 8(a) & (b)] Ch6 p4 & p6; Ch6 p25-27(again the pt that the Sus Policy was in the hand of Council, not the community);

18. (b) External Cultural Change Program Ch6 p?(the Vision being a community 
doc, not council doc) & the irony of Civil Society being marginalised by the ‘dispute’ with Administrator Ch7 p13-*-14.

19. How & why changes occurred, esp how major issues became watered down/less important: 
(c) ‘Vision’ to ‘Direction’ Ch6 pp…; 
(f) from ‘Structure of Engagement’ to ‘Toolkit’ Ch6 p17-; Ch7 p9-10; Ch7 p28; 
(g) ‘Drawing a line in the sand’ no more Ch6 p21*-; 
(h) Community owned Vs validation process Ch6 p22*; 
(i) Community doc Vs Council doc Ch7 p11-12

25. What is ‘community’ – what is Liverpool’s community? 
(a) The usual suspects/squeaky wheels Ch6 p14; Ch6 p29; Ch7 p13-15;
26. Consultation Vs Participation Ch6 p17-; Ch6 p22 (loss of Lucy); Ch7 p10-11 (different interpretations);

30. Creativity in presentation eg TimeTunnel/Tshirts Vs staid & formal. Also, publicly ‘drawing a line in the sand’ – to show acknowledgement of mistakes Vs not doing so.

31. Didactic educational change process (re sustainability Ch 6 p25-27) Vs pure statement from the community (Ch6 p19-20); [the resolution was a compromise that encompassed both ‘positions’. The community’s position will & should be expected to change (due to many inputs and experiences), so is a snapshot. Council will be one of those influences, as will be changes in law, climate change etc. Also, it is part of this project that the other must be accepted too – council changes over time too, & one o the inputs is the community (both are learner & teacher).

34. (Fear of the) squeaky wheels/silent majority Ch6 p25=; Ch6 p32; Ch7 p13-


38. Confusion of terms – if the Project is in part an act of communication between Council and Community, then even the use of ‘Mgt Plan’ “Corporate Plan” can be confusing for the uninitiated resident, esp, the new migrant. Mgt Plan is used in published doc.s probably because it’s the legislated term Corporate Plan. CP used to describe an attempt to integrate the functioning of Council, but is confusing if, on top of that, the term ‘Strategic Plan’ is also used (MP/CP + Directions) then its even more confusing. Recommend simplification of terms, eg, MP SP Ch7 p1-2.
39. Democratising the CP process - & Team Building - Ch7 P3-_; Ch7 P10-(&
toolkit, too); Ch7 p17-18(as a process of CP workshops); Ch7 p19-21(as not a
process for the CP workshops).

43. Team has Democratic approach, re engaging with staff Ch7 p8-; ch7 p10-
(contradicting this Ch7 p14*-)

44. Deep cultural change !!Ch6 p4*-; Ch7 p9*-; Ch7 p10_; Ch7 p14-15

5. Practical:
These themes covered the various prosaic matters that needed attention in order for
the Project to proceed more smoothly. Covers issues like the need for a Project
Manager, and a defined Budget stream.
Themes: 4; 10; 12; 15; 19(b); 28; 35; 38; 42.

4. Volunteer (self-definition/selected) Vs Role definition OR Passion vs Function
OR Self-selected Vs Hierarchically-selected, [but needing a Project Manager
Ch 6p15]

10. Strict Budget/Time/Resources Ch6 p12; Ch6 p17=; Ch6 p22-23; Ch7 p6-; Ch7
    p20-; Ch7 p15-16

15. Need for a realistic timetable Ch6 p5_; Ch6 p9; Ch6 p10 (used to be in CP);
    Ch6 p22-23(need for buffer time for emergencies/emergent situations)

19. How & why changes occurred, esp how major issues became watered
down/less important:
(b) ‘Stakeholder workshops’ to ‘Briefings’ Ch6 p13;

28. Project Manager Ch6 p19-

35. Filters of the Project (validation) filters Ch6 p26*;
    (LAG) Ch6 p31-32; Ch7 p13*;-
    (Toolkit) Ch6 p32-33;
38. Confusion of terms – if the Project is in part an act of communication between Council and Community, then even the use of ‘Mgt Plan’ “Corporate Plan” can be confusing for the uninitiated resident, esp, the new migrant. Mgt Plan is used in published docs probably because it’s the legislated term Corporate Plan. CP used to describe an attempt to integrate the functioning of Council, but is confusing if, on top of that, the term ‘Strategic Plan’ is also used (MP/CP + Directions) then it’s even more confusing. Recommend simplification of terms, eg, MP SP Ch7 p1-2.

42. Using existing Forums Ch7 p6-

6. People:
Broadly these themes cover some psychological and sociological issues that relate to the individuals in the Project, though, mostly have to do with the people in the Team. These matters then relate to various other issues and themes.

Themes: 5; 8; 17; 19(d); 21; 22(a) (b) (c); 24; 25; 26; 31; 32; 34; 39; 41; 43; 44.

5. Leadership – necessity of ch6 p1-2 ch6 p12 ch7 p10_ ch7 p16-17 ch7 p24*…AdministratorCh6p12, ch7p7ch7p14 – Ex Board Ch6 p7-8 Ch6p11 -- Leadership within the Team, re Project Mgr Ch6 p17- Ch6 p11-13

8 (a) Change of personnel led to decline in Sustainability as Project developed Ch6 p11; Ch6 p13; C6 p19-; Ch6 p25-27(Betty goes & so does the Council’s Sustainability Policy); Ch7 p6*; Ch7 p19-
(b) Decline in Sustainability as Project developed Ch 6 p6; Ch7 p3*; Ch7 p20_ 

17 (a) The story of what happened to Sustainability Ch6 p6(dot3); Ch6 p26-27; Ch7 p18=; Ch6 p9(originally to be launched at Bloomin’ Enviro. Festival; Ch6 p13; Ch6 p20-21(re Jenny’s base line analysis of Council re ESD);
(b) Connected to change in personnel [& this linked with point 8(a) & (b)] Ch6 p4 & p6; Ch6 p25-27(again the pt that the Sus Policy was in the hand of Council, not the community);
19. How & why changes occurred, esp how major issues became watered down/less important:
   (d) decline in Sustainability/ESD(also in 17, above) Ch6 p20;

21. Team had, at least in beginning, full confidence in each other/Trust demonstrated in being so open in discussion Ch6 p7; Ch6 p13; loss of Lucy Ch6 p22-;

22. (a) People change & silos are somewhat permeable/not all silos are impermeable & Councils are not monoliths (Ben) Ch6 p8 & !!Ch7 p24-; Ch7 p16-17; Ch7 p17-18; Ch7 p19-; Ch7 p21-; Ch7 p23-24;
   (b) Scepticism about the Project from Council officers Ch7 p21-22*; Ch7 p23*;
   (c) Not all council are stuck in ‘rates-roads-rubbish’ – but there are some in both Civic and Civil society that hold that it is what Councils should do – that IS their job.

24. Not a project, but a journey: iterative Ch6 p2; Ch6 p8; Ch6 p25-.

25. What is ‘community’ – what is Liverpool’s community?
   (a) The usual suspects/squeaky wheels Ch6 p14; Ch6 p29; Ch7 p13-15;
   (b) Alienated/disengaged community Ch6 p14; Ch6 p18-; Ch7 Vignettes 2&3 (c) & council disengaging the community (& the fights in the Team about this eg James, Margaret, Joan & Lucy) Ch7 Vignette2; Ch6 p22(loss of Lucy)

26. Consultation Vs Participation Ch6 p17-;Ch6 p22 (loss of Lucy); Ch7 p10-11(different interpretations);

31. Didactic educational change process (re sustainability Ch 6 p25-27) Vs pure statement from the community (Ch6 p19-20); [the resolution was a compromise that encompassed both ‘positions’. The community’s position will & should be expected to change (due to many inputs and experiences), so is a
snapshot. Council will be one of those influences, as will be changes in law, climate change etc. Also, it is part of this project that the other must be accepted too – council changes over time too, & one o the inputs is the community (both are learner & teacher).

32. (linked to 15?) Was Liverpool’s approach of not using an established model and allowing for a more free-flowing approach a better way? This allowed for a more ‘on the edge’ approach that elicited the potential and ‘space’ for novel ideas to develop, eg Time Tunnel & T-shirts & the various 7 elements of the Liverpool Model (or of them as a whole) Would it have been less vibrant the other way? On the other hand, if a ‘off the shelf’ package had been used, would this have lessened misunderstandings and conflict, eg, between Team & Senior Council? Ch6 pp19-20.

34. (Fear of the) squeaky wheels/silent majority Ch6 p25=; Ch6 p32; Ch7 p13-

39. Democratising the CP process - & Team Building - Ch7 P3-_; Ch7 P10-(& toolkit, too); Ch7 p17-18(as a process of CP workshops); Ch7 p19-21(as not a process for the CP workshops).

41. Not easy making silos more permeable (fatigue)Ch7 p5-

43. Team has Democratic approach, re engaging with staff Ch7 p8-; ch7 p10- (contradicting this Ch7 p14*)

44. Deep cultural change !!Ch6 p4*--; Ch7 p9*--; Ch7 p10_; Ch7 p14-15

7. Politics:
Although this Meta-theme crosses over with (and may be included into) Meta-theme 4 (Power), this more specifically deals with Legislation, political parties, and the State government.
Themes: 1; 2; 3; 6; 7.
1. Timing - the Inquiry and Administrator (ch5, ch6 p1, ch7p2-3; Ch7p16*)
   Oasis re MOU Sept 04 ch6 p12-

2. Oasis and its continued aftermath: Collingwood, Budget meeting (Ch 7p26)

3. Professionals Vs elected Councillors (Ch 6p7 ; Ch 6 pp12-13; Ch 7p12-; !Ch7 p24—dot pt 5)

6. (a) Power and Hierarchy Ch6 p22-23; Ch7 p7-; Ch7 p13-; (re Civil Soc –LAG-
   Ch7 p13, Sen Coun can’t allow LAG to become prominent, ie?, gain power?
   – reasonable or not? ie, would it give LAG unfair advantage over other
   groups competing at election time if, indeed, that’s what they were after.
   (b) Conflict between Team & Senior Council Ch6 p10; Ch6 p22-23=; Ch6
   p29-30; Ch p32-33; Ch7 p7-; Ch7 p10-11*; Ch7 p13=; Ch7 p31*

7. (a) Limitations of institutional & legislative arrangements Ch 6
   p18*(stakeholders); Ch6 p 19-;
   (b) Ch6 pp31-32(council doc/commun. doc – ‘endorsed not adopted’ – both
   approaches have validity; Ch7 p11- (could the Vision/Directions doc. ever
   be adopted under the legislation and the legislative system?)
Appendix 3

Liverpool Directions 2006 – 2016
Appendix 4

Community Engagement Toolkit