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## Combating the Uncertainty and Timidity of Isolation

Almost 70 per cent of Australia's 22 million people live in major cities, mostly oriented towards the coast. By contrast, just 491,560 people, or 2 per cent of the total population, live in remote or very remote areas of Australia; the remaining 28 per cent live in rural and regional areas of the continent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). In geographical terms, 70 per cent (over 14 million people) of the population live in a combined area of just 11,500 square kilometres, while the remaining 30 per cent populate over 7 million square kilometres (Infrastructure Australia, 2010). Australia ranks as one of the most highly urbanised countries in the world, with an urban density comparable to that of Japan and the United States of America. Contrary to the romantic image of Australians living and working in a wide, brown land, Australians are more likely to live and work in a city than their compatriots in France, Greece or Ireland. Figure 1 shows the percentage of Australia's population living in urban areas compared with other selected Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) countries.

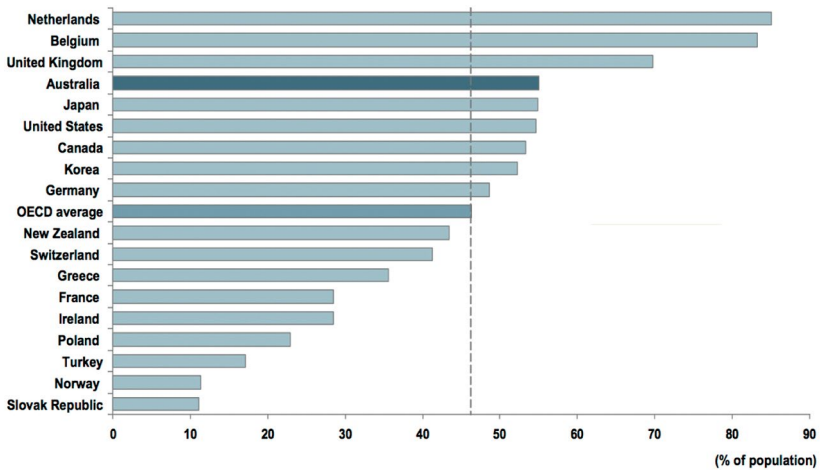


Figure 1. Percentage of National Populations of Selected OECD Countries Living in Urban Regions.

Source: OECD, 2007.

While Figure 1 uses population data to highlight the urbanisation of the Australian population, Australian poet A.D. Hope's *Australia* questions our ability to comprehend and appreciate the vastness and mystery of the continent equally compellingly but more imaginatively:

They call her a young country, but they lie:  
 She is the last of lands, the emptiest,  
 A woman beyond her change of life, a breast  
 Still tender but within the womb is dry.

Without songs, architecture, history:  
 The emotions and superstitions of younger lands,  
 Her rivers of water drown among inland sands,  
 The river of her immense stupidity

Floods her monotonous tribes from Cairns to Perth.  
 In them at last the ultimate men arrive  
 Whose boast is not: 'we live' but 'we survive',  
 A type who will inhabit the dying earth.

And her five cities, like five teeming sores,  
 Each drains her: a vast parasite robber-state  
 Where second-hand Europeans pullulate  
 Timidly on the edge of alien shores.

(A.D. Hope, 1955)

While Hope observes the overwhelming tendency of the Australian population to hug tenaciously to the coastline, his sense of the Australian psyche is that, historically and culturally, the primarily immigrant population of Australia remains uncertain, perhaps even afraid, of the vast interior emptiness of the continent.

While neither numerous nor populous, Australia's small, inland communities remain diverse and complex, each community possessing unique characteristics deriving from history, population, geography, size, demographic composition, economic and social infrastructure, and remoteness from the products and services of larger population centres. While the recognition of this diversity prompts caution against assumptions that all rural and remote communities share the same or even similar characteristics, there are nevertheless generic socioeconomic and demographic trends readily identifiable across many rural and remote areas of Australia. Firstly, rural populations tend to have more children but fewer young adults than urban areas (Argent & Walmsley, 2008). Secondly, people in rural and remote communities tend to have lower levels of education, partly because there is a limited range of professional opportunities in many rural areas as well as limited access to resources and higher education (Hossain et al., 2010; Reid et al., 2008). Thirdly, household incomes in rural and remote areas are generally lower than in metropolitan areas (Athanasopoulos & Hahid, 2003; Woodhouse, 2006).

As well as being geographically isolated and distant from services, many rural and remote communities have been affected by ecological threats and economic downturns. The impact of recent severe droughts in Australia, as well as other ecological threats such as flooding, salinity and fire, has placed significant financial stress on rural and remote communities. Public infrastructure and service closures, and restructuring of farming businesses, have resulted in further economic uncertainty (Cavaye, 2001), all of which contribute to population decline, making it even more difficult for rural and remote communities to sustain services and businesses (Beer et al., 2003). Inevitably, this leads to a cycle of decline with consequent unemployment and out-migration, particularly among young people (Cavaye, 2001). Limited entertainment, employment and further education opportunities exacerbate the likelihood, even inevitability, of young people leaving the area. Evidence also suggests that people living in inland rural and remote areas are overburdened and challenged by higher rates of injury,

diabetes, coronary heart disease, alcohol and tobacco consumption, and suicide (Bourke, 2003; Rajkumar & Hoolahan, 2004). Such social and economic difficulties lead to an erosion of confidence and the sense of community that has traditionally existed in and sustained many rural and remote areas. It is worth noting, however, that not all rural areas are experiencing decline; some coastal and mountain environments and urban fringe areas, for example, are experiencing real growth (Charbit, 2009). Those rural and remote areas more commonly affected by economic and population decline tend to be inland agricultural and pastoral regions, mainly because farming and grazing are no longer the sole pillars of rural economies (Macadam et al., 2004), although some of these are now experiencing consequential growth through expanded mining activity in rural areas.

Despite these challenges, there are also significant new opportunities for rural and remote communities. Increasingly, Australian rural economies of the twenty-first century draw heavily upon three key assets: natural amenities for tourism and recreation; cultural and historical heritage; and natural resources for farming, forestry, and mining (Macadam et al., 2004). Those rural communities currently experiencing growth tend to have successfully accessed or built upon two or more of these assets. Successful rural economies are necessarily diversified, rendering traditional economic development strategies less relevant as enterprising communities apply new business strategies to apply innovative approaches to meet changing market conditions (Chaston, 2008; Haggblade, Hazell & Reardon, 2010; Herbert-Cheshire, 2000). Such communities have overcome uncertainty and timidity to develop and apply innovative marketing of natural amenities, cultural heritage and other income-generating strategies to attract people and jobs (Blakely & Leigh, 2010; Woodhouse, 2006). They are developing new ways of generating income by building not only on their natural resources but also on newly identified community capital in the forms of historical heritage, cultural uniqueness, artistic capital, geographic distinctiveness and human talent (Daskon, 2010; Johnson, 2009; MacDonald & Jolliffe, 2003). In this way they diversify their economies, attract new businesses, and sustain their successes to provide a strong platform for continuous, ongoing growth. The appeal of new businesses using community assets in innovative ways also

leads to a greatly enhanced view of rural communities as places to live, retire, and holiday — all of which, in turn, enhance the quality of life for existing residents (Adams, 2009; Lee, 2010; Wolff, 2010).

## Increasing Community Involvement, Confidence, Power and Control

Contemporary evidence suggests that the strong and active involvement of constituent communities in development and growth processes has become a critical prerequisite to success and sustainability (Moscardo, 2008; Taylor, 2000; Wood, 2001). There is also strong agreement that communities must be involved in the development process from the outset (Campbell, Wunungmurra & Nyomba, 2007; Fagin, 1997; Geddes, 1995; Gregory, Hartz-Karp & Watson, 2008; Taylor, 2000). Specifically, they need to be involved in designing programs, creating priorities, contributing to management, and controlling budgets (Buikstra et al., 2010). The creation of strong and vibrant communities requires a powerful, knowledgeable and vocal community at the centre of the decision-making process. Real influence in decision making has been demonstrated to confer a sense of purpose and control on communities (Taylor, 2000), meaning that communities are consequently empowered in their relationships with external stakeholders and moved to exercise authority over key resources and assets in ways that have enhanced potential to sustain cohesive growth (Wood, 2000).

Researchers seeking to identify the specific benefits of community involvement have also amplified the message that successful and sustainable community growth can only occur when local people are not only involved in the process but also equipped with the skills to achieve a positive and sustainable outcome (Chaskin, 2001). The specific benefits of increased community involvement and enhanced community skills and expertise may include: (i) unique community perspectives to the specification of problems and the clarification of issues (Jupp, 2000); (ii) maintenance of focus on community needs to ensure that programs meet the needs of local people in comprehensive ways (Carley & Kirk, 1999); (iii) a higher level of acceptability in the community, with improvements having greater longevity because of higher levels of ownership (Taylor, 2000); (iv) the development

and application of new community skills applied across a range of activities and problems (Purdue et al. 2000); and (v) revitalisation of local democratic and participative processes (Newman, 2005).

Despite the strong and unequivocal emphasis on community involvement and empowerment evident in the literature, confusion nevertheless exists as to how these approaches might be implemented most successfully. A major concern is that many community developments over the last decade have been designed to support public policy, with the result that initiatives are controlled and managed by external agencies, usually government (DeFilippis, 2001). While external agencies have often provided opportunities for limited community input into planning and development, essentially they have exercised majority control over development agendas and exerted power and influence over communities (Cavaye, 2000). Other researchers also recognise that community initiatives designed, sponsored and governed by external agencies are unlikely to engage and fully involve community members in sustainable approaches to growth and development (Taylor, 2000; Wood, 2000). In a specific instance, Harvey and Shaw (1998) reviewed government processes in the United Kingdom and found that community groups were highly critical of the short time frames involved in the development of applications for projects as the pressure to meet tight deadlines actively worked against meaningful community consultation and planning.

Wood (2000) provides a further insight into the potentially negative impacts of the involvement of external agencies and, indeed, suggests that extreme care should be exercised by agencies and organisations engaged in working with communities, as local people may find the assumption that they need to increase their capacity insulting and patronising. Agencies and organisations supporting communities often assume that the infusion of training and support from the outside will automatically strengthen community participation (Henderson & Mayo, 1998). Such approaches underestimate the wealth of knowledge, skills and expertise extant within communities. Over the longer term, processes that seek actively to ensure that communities gain and retain influence, control and ownership must be adopted:

Unless communities feel a sense of ownership and control, benefits tend to be short lived ... Involving residents throughout the lifetime of the project was both time consuming and resource intensive.

But their involvement, based where necessary on providing tailored training and other support to those wanting to contribute to the process of regeneration, was critical (Barr, 1998, p. 6).

The problem of capacity-building agendas being controlled by external agencies is also evidenced in the literature through a critical mismatch between rhetoric and practice in the areas of community control and empowerment (Cavaye, 2000; Harvey & Shaw, 1998; Henderson & Mayo, 1998; Taylor, 2000; Wood, 2000). The balance between the capabilities of communities and those of external agencies has been tipped in the favour of external agencies, an imbalance that raises significant questions about the sustainability of many current community development initiatives and programs. Contemporary literature appears to have failed either to acknowledge or adequately explore the power relationships extant between external professionals and local residents. This is a complex process based on the development and maintenance of meaningful partnerships but, in many cases, the community's role in partnership development has been restricted to a very menial role focused only on meeting externally imposed criteria (Wood, 2000).

## Developing New Partnerships and Networks

The current community development literature reveals a lack of emphasis on the nature and scope of relationships between external agencies and local people in communities, which has led several researchers to observe that the role of community partnerships has often been overly narrowly focused and to have operated merely as an adjunct to the achievement of community objectives and outcomes, usually predetermined by external funding agencies acting as controllers rather than facilitators or partners (Chanan, Gilchrest & West, 1999; Harvey & Shaw, 1998; Taylor, 2000). While Wood (2000) stresses the need for strong and equal partnerships, the literature documents little in the way of specific partnership-building strategies. The best strategies on offer are limited to generic calls to overcome past failures and build meaningful, long-term partnerships as a way of ensuring that development is sustained once the initial stimulus for a project has subsided. Chanan, Gilchrest & West (1999) emphasise this fragility and argue for stronger and more balanced community partnerships, but fail to provide a detailed examination of

the complex issues involved in partnership building between groups or organisations with vastly different experiences, skills and power bases:

When the regeneration scheme ends, many of its initiatives will be at risk of disappearing with it. A scheme that has built up community involvement is more likely to be able to hand some of its components on to be maintained by viable, independent local organisations. Also if the community has been widely involved, it will be in a better position to help devise new programmes and press the local authority to keep the momentum of development (Chanan, Gilchrest & West, 1999, p. 8).

While the development of meaningful partnerships based on equal power, control and responsibility is stressed by many researchers, it is also the case that limited recognition of the importance of those partnerships is likely to place considerable new demands and responsibilities on communities and the external agencies involved in the community development process. Moreover, much of the literature focuses primarily on the demands and responsibilities of external agencies rather than on community organisations *per se*. It might be argued that such a focus serves to strengthen the power imbalances in partnerships by implicitly acknowledging a primary role for external agencies. For example, Duncan & Thomas (2000) point out that, in order to achieve sustainable development in communities, there is a strong argument in favour of developing the institutional capacity of external agencies and stakeholders, including government departments, partnership agencies and the private sector to integrate community-based approaches into their organisational and decision-making cultures. While such an approach has certain merit, it argues for action by stakeholders only on one side of the equation and, *ipso facto*, ignores the talent and skills to be found in communities. Chapman & Kirk (2001) present a more balanced approach by arguing that principles of conjoint working, common purpose and shared responsibilities are essential to the success of any multi-agency partnership. Nevertheless, currently the literature fails to detail principles that might usefully guide the development of community partnerships.

The primary economic emphasis on the roles and influence of external stakeholders seems to result from local community organisations coming to the partnership table without substantial financial resources. This is often compounded by a local community's failure to acknowledge



in any explicit way the breadth, depth and value of the resources it contributes to the partnership in the form of local knowledge, skills and expertise (Hounslow, 2002). As a consequence, the local community can become complicit in its potential marginalisation and exclusion from decision making. Henderson & Mayo (1998) are representative of mainstream community development researchers in their recognition of the problems associated with partnerships, focusing almost exclusively on changes to the behaviour of external stakeholders and organisations. They argue that external stakeholders need training in how to listen to and work with communities and gain the confidence to work in new and unfamiliar ways (Henderson & Mayo, 1998). There is certainly evidence in the literature to show that the majority of external stakeholders do not undertake any initial training with communities and have varying levels of commitment to working with communities on equal terms (e.g. Chapman & Kirk, 2001). A stronger and more explicitly articulated acknowledgement in the literature of the challenges associated with establishing balanced, productive partnerships is sorely needed.

Cavaye (2000) and Broughton & Chambers (2001) have recognised, against the trend, some of the problems in partnership building arising from within communities. Acknowledged community leaders whose power derives to some extent from existing institutional arrangements may not necessarily be welcoming of new ways of operating (Cavaye, 2000). In some instances, local people are reluctant to take control, expressing a wish to depend on external experts (Broughton & Chambers, 2001). In other cases, local people whose 'lives are already overburdened with responsibilities are afraid of what new responsibilities will fall on them if they become involved in the regeneration process' (Broughton & Chambers, 2001, p. 9). The key message from the literature is that the local community can become isolated from decision making due to the exercise of power and influence by external stakeholders, or the fear, unwillingness and reluctance of community members to engage with development processes. It is, however, noteworthy that the current literature gives unfair emphasis to the importance of the roles and behaviours of external stakeholders over the functions and responsibilities of people in local communities. In essence, the literature fails to address mechanisms to circumvent unequal power relationships and build mutual respect between external agents and communities.

Networking has also attracted attention as a significant strategy to build relationships and stimulate collaboration within communities, and between communities and external agencies. Some researchers perceive networking to be a core process of community development (Gilchrist, 1995; Gilchrist, 2009; Howe & Cleary, 2001; Littlejohns & Thompson, 2001). Robinson & Green (2010) predict that the recent widespread adoption of the technologies of social networking will provide new and powerful tools to assist community networking. It is widely seen as an important strategy because it allows information and ideas to flow to and from all those directly involved in the process of community building, thus enabling participants to share information, experiences and best practice, and to draw upon the experience of others in similar circumstances (Gilchrist, 1995; Gilchrist, 2009). The importance of networking as a strategy to facilitate partnerships has, however, been largely overlooked in the literature. Those researchers who have examined the role of networking have focused solely on the roles and responsibilities of external agencies and have not given equal attention to external stakeholders and communities. For example, Chapman & Kirk (2001) argue that external agencies have an important role in developing and supporting community networks, and identify two key aspects: improving access to information and networking opportunities, and helping communities to manage information.

However, the literature remains silent on the roles of communities in supporting and maintaining networks. Chapman & Kirk (2001), however, do argue that the information sharing and networking potential of information and communications technologies (including the internet) provides significant potential for communities and they point out that external agencies need to work with communities to reduce the digital divide and technological disadvantage. Successful networks evolve only when local people are involved in the process and equipped with the skills needed to have an impact. Researchers have identified the value networks as follows: (i) communities develop a direct perspective on relevant issues (Jupp, 2000); (ii) community involvement helps to deliver programs that accurately meet the needs of local people (Carley & Kirk, 1999); (iii) projects are more acceptable to community members, with improvements having longevity, because of community ownership (Taylor, 2000); (iv) active involvement helps communities to build valuable organisational skills applied across a range of problems (Purdue et al., 2000); and (v) community involvement helps to revitalise local democracy (Putnam, 1993).

## Building Human and Social Capital

In his landmark book, *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam (2000) identifies a decline in social capital in the United States of America by analysing quantitative data measuring civic engagement and social connectedness. He argues that this decline in social capital has resulted in a measurable decrease in the quality of everyday life. Over the last decade, perceived declines in social capital in communities have become a major concern for governments and community organisations, based on the premise that social capital is the bedrock on which communities can build and grow as, without a strong core of social capital, communities face a tangible cost to community well-being, health and wealth. As a result, the concept of social capital has grown in both breadth and depth and now dominates the community development literature. This has resulted in a concept characterised by many overlapping and related issues, including theories and practices of community development, community capacity building (CCB), social cohesion, community empowerment, and community well-being (Woolcock, Renton & Cavaye, 2004).

Social capital's connection with other theories and practices has resulted in a myriad of definitions rooted in specific purposes and approaches (e.g. Dolfsma & Dannreuther, 2003; Edwards & Foley, 1998). However, the similarities and commonalities across definitions focus primarily on social relationships that have productive benefits for both communities and the individuals that work and live within them (Knoke, 2009; Woolcock, 1998). Commonalities in the now extensive literature on social capital centre on how the accumulation of networks, skills, expertise, resources and confidence collectively facilitates the process of empowering individuals and communities (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 2000). While the commonalities are strong, different authors focus on the diverse aspects of social capital and the different contexts for social capital. Such foci have resulted in a range of perspectives on the real and potential impacts of social capital on individuals and communities. Table 2 categorises social capital theories in terms of their major foci and exemplifies selected theorists' views on the role of social capital.

Table 2. Scope of Social Capital Research in the Literature.

Authors	Date	Perspectives from social capital research	Key observations
Research focus: Social capital focusing on the role of individuals in networks			
Baker	2000	Social capital is the application of resources available to community members through personal networks including information, ideas, leads, and opportunities. Resources are not personal assets but can be used by individuals to pursue their interests. Access to social capital depends on who you know not what you know (human capital).	Social capital depends on the size, variety and quality of personal and business networks. Opposite of individualism but strongly connected with individual achievement.
Belliveau, O'Reilly & Wade	1996	Social capital is formed through an individual's personal network especially those that have elite professional affiliations.	Social capital is based on personal networks and professional affiliations.
Research focus: Social capital focusing on institutionalised relationships and networks			
Bourdieu	1986	Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources available through membership of institutionalised networks or relationships.	Social networks are a product of investment strategies to establish institutional relationships for short- or long-term gain. Networks are based on social obligations that are convertible into tangible benefits.
Bourdieu & Wacquant	1992	Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrues to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.	Sustainable networks and institutionalised relationships are important.
Research focus: Social capital focusing on support and brokerage			
Burt	1992	Social capital is a network of friends and colleagues (and other contacts) through whom opportunities are provided to use individual, financial and human capital.	Stresses the brokerage opportunities of social networks. Networks to support individual achievements are important. A facilitator is recommended for the development of human and financial capital.

## 2. COMBATING THE UNCERTAINTY AND TIMIDITY OF ISOLATION

Authors	Date	Perspectives from social capital research	Key observations
Research focus: Social capital as a process to gain access to information and resources			
Knocke	2009	Social capital is the process by which social actors create and mobilise their network connections. Connections operate within and between organisations to gain access to other actors' resources.	Based on strategic corporate interactions and benefits. Focused on professional and business outcomes.
Portes	1998	Social capital is the ability and aptitude of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures.	Social networking for professional or personal benefit is stressed.
Research focus: Social capital as a process for collaboration and cooperation based on trust			
Fukuyama	1995	Social capital is the ability of people to work together for common purposes in groups or organisations.	Based on unwritten or informal rules that allow and facilitate cooperation. Based on trust, not legislation or laws.
Inglehart	1997	Social capital is based on a culture of trust and tolerance, in which extensive networks of voluntary associations emerge.	Cultural focus on trust and tolerance. Volunteerism.
Putnam	2000	Social capital involves networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.	Strong focus on trust as the foundation of social capital. Communal cooperation and coordination. Community rather than individual benefit.
Woolcock	1998	Social capital is the information, trust, and norms of reciprocity inherent in one's social networks.	Reciprocity introduced as a key concept along with trust. Informal processes inherent in social networks.
Research focus: Social capital as good will, empathy and neighbourliness			
Duncan & Thomas	2000	Social capital is an intangible web of relationships that stimulates participation in communities and community organisations. Social capital is essentially good will, empathy and neighbourliness between the individuals and households who make up social units.	Intangible relationships as strong as formal networks. Focus on qualities of good will and empathy.

Authors	Date	Perspectives from social capital research	Key observations
Research focus:	Social capital as a process for collaborative resolution of civic problems		
Brehn & Rahn	1997	Social capital is the web of cooperative relationships between citizens that facilitate resolution of collective problems.	Focus on citizenship and political action. Social capital as collaborative, cooperative action at community level.
Thomas	1996	Social capital is formed through means and processes developed within civil society that promote development for the collective whole.	Focus on collective citizenship. Processes are both formal and informal. Emphasis on collective action and cooperation.
Research focus:	Social capital as a variety of different entities		
Coleman	1990	Social capital is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having characteristics in common.	Variety in the functions of social capital.
Research focus:	Social capital as an influencer of economic growth		
Pennar	1997	Social capital is a web of social relationships that influences individual actions and thereby affects economic growth.	Focus on the links between social and economic capital.

Source: Author's research.

Much of the contemporary literature on community development is defined primarily through the language of social capital researchers who emphasise concepts of community cohesion, trust, collaboration, reciprocity and tolerance. Duncan and Thomas (2000), for example, define social capital as an intangible web of relationships that stimulates participation in communities and community organisations. For them, it is essentially goodwill, empathy and neighbourliness between the individual and households who make up social units. Its most common definition, however, is in terms of the 'features of social organisations such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (Putnam, 1995, p. 66). The issue of social capital has become extremely popular in the community development literature, frequently being used as a catch-all phrase to address perceived core issues of community cohesion, networking and community empowerment. However, this tends to overlook issues relating to economic development, innovation and change management. Indeed, there is currently little evidence in contemporary community development literature of researchers exploring the links between social and economic capital.

Somewhat detrimentally, the community development literature also draws selectively on the arguments of social capital theorists primarily concerned with the degree of social cohesion extant in communities, the levels of cooperation and collaboration between people in communities, and the sense of empowerment and control felt by people in communities (Williams, 1995). In addition, community development also emphasises the social capital values of trust, collaboration, reciprocity, volunteerism and civic engagement (Hulse & Stone, 2005). Social cohesion and community empowerment are concepts that encompass the social connectedness developed through meaningful and sustainable interrelationships between the inhabitants of a community (Hulse & Stone, 2005).

From the 1960s and 1970s, such concepts have been utilised to focus on 'fostering the ability of people to take control over their lives and environments through working together for common goals' (Hounslow, 2002, p. 20). Consequently, the literature strongly suggests that existing community assets in the form of skills, knowledge, understandings and experiences provide the basic building blocks of community development, the inference being that communities need increasingly to identify and strengthen their own skills and

capabilities, and recognise these as the essential scaffold from which community growth and development can be stimulated. Indeed, Hur (2006) suggests that ever since the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire first introduced the term 'empowerment' into the English academic discourse in 1987, social scientists have used it to describe processes of community building.

Laverack & Wallerstein argue that 'the importance of community empowerment as a central theme in community development has been overshadowed since the mid-1990s by discussions about community capacity, community competence and community cohesiveness' (2001, p. 179). They also suggest that an advantage of empowerment as a key concept in community development is that it recognises the importance of power and authority residing within the community rather than just with external stakeholders. While some definitions of community development allude to the distribution and control of power, few give it specific attention. Yet a central concern of community development is based on ensuring that communities not only have the resources, skills and experiences to take action, but also have the power to make decisions, manage resources, and control outcomes (Taylor, 2001).

While the strong connection between community development and social capital provides many potential benefits, there are also significant challenges. The strong emphasis of social capital on networking and relationship building may actually strengthen exclusivity and contribute to the development of anti-social subcultures in communities (Hawe & Shiell, 2000; Ross, 2009). The literature suggests that some social capital studies focus too specifically on relationships while overlooking the structural conditions that impede effective community actions, such as the accessibility of resources (Wallerstein, Sanchez & Verlarde, 2005). Thus its usefulness in considering the physical, financial, technological and ecological aspects of community development may be seriously limited. For this reason, Wallerstein, Sanchez & Verlarde (2005) argue for a broader concept of social capital, which addresses the multiple dimensions involved in building capacity in communities. Hawe & Shiell (2000) have also cautioned that the concept of social capital may even dilute initiatives already in place under the various names of community development, regeneration, community empowerment and capacity building. The arguments of Wallerstein, Sanchez & Verlarde (2002), Hawe & Shiell (2000) and



others point to the need to develop new approaches to community development that recognise its dynamic complexity and multifaceted nature.

These issues aside, social capital nevertheless draws strong attention to social relationships as a key aspect of capacity building and, in doing so, offers a vital lens through which to examine those relationships. As one of the first authors to use the term to refer to those difficult to quantify aspects of community life that make some communities safer and more enjoyable places to live, Jacobs' (1961) concern was that much urban planning over-emphasises physical, financial and cultural capital, and ignores the valuable role of social capital in contributing to quality of life. It is interesting to note that Jacobs' (1961) concern to balance the social with the more tangible and measurable aspects is now in reverse; the emerging argument is in favour of rebalancing the social with the economic and cultural aspects of community development, reflecting the rapid rise over the last 40 years of social capital as a dominant trend in social science and public policy, a trend that has made it central to community debate and discussion to the exclusion of other forms of capital (DeFilippis, 2001).

Interestingly, Chenoweth & Stehlik (2001) argue that social capital provides a way of understanding the social ties between the state, private and non-government sectors within society. Social capital theories offer a 'challenge to current structural, more traditional, and economic rationalist approaches' (Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2001, p. 49). They provide a starting point to conduct more rigorous examinations of the interconnections between the social and the economic, rather than considering them as separate and unrelated. Additionally, a social capital framework provides an opportunity to recognise and analyse the effects of government policy and practice on people in communities (Lyons, Smuts & Stephens, 2001). This is important as a great deal of policy making can inadvertently subvert community growth and development. For example, Lyons, Smuts & Stephens (2001) discuss the damaging effects on community growth and social cohesion arising from the widespread introduction of competition policy in social and community services.

## Responding to New Economic Development Opportunities

The community development literature also stresses the impact of economic pressures on communities and the resulting potential for significant disadvantage in communities (Cavaye, 2000; Fowler & Etchegary, 2008, Hounslow, 2002). Cavaye (2000) especially sees economic forces as primary drivers of change in communities, citing as evidence the challenges being faced by rural communities in terms of pressures to shift from primary industries and manufacturing to knowledge-based industries. Other researchers also recognise the challenging effect of the rapidly developing trend towards the globalisation of national economies and the emergence of more complex and competitive economic environments on rural and remote communities (Herbert-Cheshire, 2000; Watkins, 2006).

Given the strength of the concern with economic restructuring as a major driver of community development, it is surprising that few researchers have seriously examined the potential of economics to provide genuine solutions to the problems facing communities. Those researchers who have considered economic development as part of the broader agenda have usually done so from the perspective of social capital (Duncan & Thomas, 2001; Healy, 2001; Howe & Cleary, 2001; Williams, 1995). However, while it is important to recognise the potential impact of improvements in social capital on economic growth and development, it is equally important to consider the potential for communities emanating from improvements in human and economic capital, especially in the forms of physical infrastructure, fiscal policies, and employment policies and programs. A more useful and equitable way to examine community development might be to consider it as the interplay of all forms of capital with the emphasis on particular forms of capital increasing or decreasing according to the context of the work under completion. The achievement of an integrated view of community development as the interplay of all forms of capital is necessarily dependent on the development of comprehensive indicators across social, human, cultural and economic dimensions. Yet this has still to be substantially addressed in the research literature relating to community development.

The problems arising in the contemporary literature from the singular emphasis on social capital at the expense of other forms of capital and its role as a key contributor to community building are examined by DeFilippis (2001). He argues that the meanings and uses of social capital as applied in community development are misguided because they fail to understand issues of power in communities and are divorced from other forms of capital, especially economic capital. This is not to argue that social capital is unimportant in community development, but rather that social capital must be 'reconnected to economic capital for the term to have any meaning' (DeFilippis, 2001, p. 798). Elements of social capital such as community networks and relationships are important foundations for economic growth and development, relying, as they do, on the development of trust and reciprocity.

Bullen & Onyx (1998) argue that where high levels of social capital exist, people are not only more likely to feel they are part of the community but also to feel useful and able to make a real contribution to economic development. Social capital also encourages community members to participate actively in local community networks and organisations, to come together in times of crisis, and to welcome strangers and participate in groups (Bullen & Onyx, 1998). These are key foundations for economic development, although definitive linkages remain largely unexamined in the literature. Conversely, Bullen & Onyx (1998) note that, in cases where communities lack social capital, there are limited opportunities for people to come together and work for the common good of the community.

The paucity of social capital is often linked to a number of interrelated factors including the lack of core community building blocks such as individual self-esteem, trust, and community communication skills. Compounding these can be inadequate material well-being in a community, inadequate physical infrastructure, and the lack of opportunities to develop networks between people (Bullen & Onyx, 1998). In short, economic factors such as material well-being and the provision of infrastructure are arguably preconditions for the development of social capital. To reconnect social capital with economic capital, mechanisms to allow communities to build networks to recognise the importance of achieving greater control and power over the flows of capital that shape communities must be developed

(DeFilippis, 2001). Many struggling communities have strong social networks and active community organisations but lack the power and related economic capital.

The current strong emphasis on social capital may also provide insights into the heavy reliance on anecdotal evidence regarding community development outcomes. While such information is not without value and can offer clues as to the identification, construction and analysis of more formal statistical information, anecdotes tend to be selective and hence convey a 'false message about the success or failure of programs' (Greenspan, 2005, p. 2). Since community-building initiatives often focus on traditionally underserved populations (which inevitably include rural and remote communities), formal, well-structured economic indicators, underpinned by anecdotal information, may improve the measurement and reporting of community development programs and offer new insights into the influence of programs. Indeed, the consistent and reliable measurement of economic and social outcomes is critical to a comprehensive understanding and reporting of community successes so that they can be emulated and failures reduced:

In the quest to do good for our society's most vulnerable populations and communities ... analysts must embrace the challenge to develop objective and quantifiable standards for assessing community development programs. Ultimately, research is the only means for determining whether we are making advances ... by improving access to economic opportunities for traditionally underserved populations (Greenspan, 2005, p. 4).

## Enhancing Cultural Developments in Communities

While many community development programs from previous decades have focused primarily on the social aspects of community development, thus reflecting the domination of social capital theory, recent research has extended the concept to include cultural aspects of community growth. New terms such as 'cultural capacity building' and 'community cultural development' have emerged in the literature and focused interest and research on the cultural and social outcomes of community development (Goldbard & Adams, 2006;

Grodach & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007; Matarasso, 1999). The processes associated with these new terms are centred on strengthening organisational capacity and community skills/talent to enable community cultural and artistic growth. Their goal is to stimulate new practices, policies and approaches through which communities can adapt dynamically to the ever changing conditions of producing, presenting, and preserving arts and culture (Matarasso, 2001). The emerging literature on cultural capacity building is important as it assists in broadening the scope of understanding about community development. However, there is an inherent danger that it may fail to recognise the relationship between cultural capital and other forms of capital. If it is to have ongoing relevance, research needs to take a fully integrated view of growth, based on the interplay of all forms of capital.

## Responding to and Managing Change

For many researchers, successful community growth and development is based on the premise that the 'community has the potential to cope with change' (Niland, 2000, p. 87). While a link between community development and change management theory has been identified in the literature (Blakely & Leigh, 2010; Robinson & Green, 2010), further work is required to explore the nature and extent of potential connections. However, it should be noted that the contemporary community development literature suggests that communities often struggle with the same kinds of problems as those identified in the literature of change management (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Hamel & Valikangas, 2003). These include:

- Changes take more time than allocated;
- Competing and unexpected crises distract attention;
- It is difficult to coordinate implementation activities;
- Those involved in implementing change often have insufficient capabilities and skills and have limited access to adequate training;
- Uncontrollable external factors can have a major adverse impact;
- Expectations and objectives are not defined clearly enough; and
- Those affected by change are not sufficiently involved in the planning and development processes.

The problems include several that could be described as unanticipated or unexpected, and thus reflect what is described in the change management literature as the random nature of change (Bridges, 2007). Despite this, there are some key aspects of success that have been identified as having influenced community development theory and practice. These include the formation of guiding coalitions, the creation and communication of vision, the empowerment of people to act and take control, and the maintenance and embedding of new approaches (Bridges, 2007).

The change management literature reports that, in successful transformations, a guiding coalition often comes together and develops a shared commitment to improvement and renewal. Community development literature reflects this strategy in terms of its emphasis on the importance of bringing together key people from within and outside communities to work collaboratively to manage and influence change (Henderson & Mayo, 1998). Another major mechanism for engaging communities in a change effort strategy is through the communication of a clear and compelling vision of where a change effort is required (Bridges, 2007). The change management literature also stresses that such a vision must show how individual projects and initiatives fit into the broader picture (Bridges, 2007; Stace & Dunphy, 2002). Without a comprehensive vision, change can easily dissolve into multiple confusing and incompatible projects that may have a negative impact on communities (Bridges, 2007).

While the community development literature stresses the importance of communication and community empowerment (Healy & Hampshire, 2002), vision development has not been a significant feature. A more detailed examination of the linkages between change management and community development may result in the adoption of new vision-setting strategies and approaches. The issue of sustainability is also important in the literature of change management (Hamel & Valikangas, 2003). In particular, the dangers associated with short-term achievements must be considered in relation to their active and strategic consolidation in a broad change framework so that changes become embedded and are less subject to degradation as the initial pressures for change subside. In stark contrast, the community development literature, while stressing the importance of sustainability, nevertheless still struggles with the identification of strategies and approaches that monitor and evaluate programs and initiatives over

the long term in order to embed change within communities and focus on long-term growth. There is little evidence in the community development literature of attempts to develop frameworks through which activities might be analysed and evaluated. However, research undertaken for the Victorian Government on community-building strategies by Howe and Cleary (2001) identified five key success factors for community development initiatives:

1. A focus on education and training and the development of human and social capital
2. A linked approach involving collaboration and coordination across all stakeholders (including government, business, community, and philanthropic sectors)
3. An emphasis on local democracy whereby bottom-up initiatives take priority over solutions imposed from outside, as well as the importance of local identity, leadership, knowledge and management being recognised as critical components
4. Flexible approaches that take account of the multifaceted nature of problems facing particular communities and emphasise the importance of continuous reflection and development
5. An emphasis on sustainable strategies, rather than one-off projects, in tandem with approaches that recognise the ongoing interdependency of social, economic and environmental connectedness.

A decade and a half later, there remains a strong need for further effort to build on the work of Howe & Cleary (2001) and develop strategic frameworks for the long-term evaluation of community development projects.

The literature on both community development and change management stress the importance of involving and empowering people in the change process. However, higher levels of engagement with change management processes and strategies have the potential to assist communities to not only better understand the change process but also to adopt and adapt useful strategies to manage change associated with community growth and development. Of particular relevance are: (i) understanding the perceived risks associated with

change; (ii) understanding and appreciating the inherent uncertainty around the outcomes of CCB approaches; and (iii) awareness of the costs and benefits of change to the community (Stace & Dunphy, 2002).

## Recognising Community Creativity and Innovation

Innovation has been one of the dominant preoccupations of enterprises throughout the world for the last 25 to 30 years. However, its importance in community development has not been widely recognised. Hawkes (2001) stresses that successful community development programs must be underpinned by a strong focus on creativity combined with optimism that supports innovative practices. While the importance of innovation in community development initiatives is limited in the current literature, there is relevant research emerging from the agriculture industry. For example, the Australian agriculture industry generates substantial economic value for the country; innovation, along with environmental sustainability, is seen as the key to continued export competitiveness. Gaining returns in investment in innovation in agriculture has been facilitated through a long-standing tradition of promoting and sharing best practice through the work of extension officers (Dickie, 2005). The agricultural extension officer is a combination of consultant, researcher, knowledge manager and educator — a person whose job is to find innovative and good practice, promote change, teach farmers how to implement new practices, and share the body of knowledge about effectiveness and efficiency (Dickie, 2005).

Recent research has generated statements of principle that appear to underpin the success of agricultural extension workers in encouraging farmers and graziers to adopt innovations (Fulton et al., 2003; Stone, 2005; Macadam et al., 2004). Dickie (2005) summarised these principles into 10 key statements that may well be applicable more broadly to the challenges faced by whole communities in adopting innovation and innovative practices in community development. Table 3 applies the 10 innovation principles summarised by Dickie (2005) and tests their application more broadly by substituting the term 'community' for 'farmer' and 'community development' for 'farming'.



**Table 3. Proposed Principles for the Adoption of Innovation in Community Development.**

Innovation in agriculture	Innovation in community development
Farming is a sociocultural practice.	Community development is a sociocultural practice.
Farmers are not all the same.	Communities are not all the same.
Adoption of change is a sociocultural process.	Adoption of change is a sociocultural process.
Profit/direct tangible benefit is not necessarily a driving force.	Profit/direct tangible benefit is not necessarily a driving force.
Doing the right thing is a motivational factor.	Doing the right thing is a motivational factor.
Farmers don't always distinguish innovation from good practice.	Communities don't always distinguish innovation from good practice.
There is a strong desire to leave a legacy.	There is a strong desire to leave a legacy.
Farmers' attitudes are not the problem.	Community attitudes are not the problem.
Farmers construct their own knowledge.	Communities construct their own knowledge.
Farmers have legitimate reasons for choosing not to adopt some innovations.	Communities have legitimate reasons for choosing not to adopt some innovations.
Top-down promotion of innovation is often not appropriate.	Top down promotion of innovation is often not appropriate.
Representation is not participation.	Representation is not participation.
The best method for sharing new practices is multiple methods.	The best method for sharing new practices is multiple methods.

Source: Adapted from Dickie, 2005.

Table 3 demonstrates that the principles for innovation derived for the agriculture industry are broadly applicable to innovation across the whole of community. This is particularly relevant when it is considered that the original principles were derived from the work of leaders/champions working as agricultural extension officers. Their potential relevance to community-based individuals or leaders who must perform broader but similar roles to agricultural extension officers must be considered. The role of community champions and leaders is discussed briefly in the community development literature (Duncan & Thomas, 2001); such individuals are usually self-employed activists who are trained to work with communities to support new and existing initiatives. They have practical skills and experience in tackling local problems and are appreciative of the sensitivities in communities. However, experience has shown that, where residents are trained and

employed as local facilitators for their own communities, tensions can arise (Chanan, Gilcrest & West, 1999). Nevertheless, if the principles presented in Table 3 hold true for communities participating in development programs, it may be possible to use them as a checklist for programs seeking to promote innovation and encourage adoption of new practices.

## Challenges and Opportunities for Rural and Remote Communities

For each challenge identified for rural and remote communities there is a corresponding opportunity, which, if taken, will allow communities to prosper and grow well into the future. This chapter has outlined major challenges for rural and remote communities, especially those arising from social, demographic, economic, political and technological change. It has provided a synopsis of the issues and opportunities arising from change, including the need for rural and remote communities to take control of change agendas, to identify existing community resources that may provide a platform for programs to address change, and to become active participants in planning and implementing change processes. The conclusion is that the major opportunity for rural and remote communities derives from the development of holistic community approaches that integrate all forms of capital (economic, human, social and economic capital) so that approaches span and incorporate the concerns of all community stakeholders. Such responses will provide significant and important opportunities for communities to grow and learn, and build approaches to ensure their future viability and sustainability. The next chapter identifies and examines major current approaches to community growth and development, and explores how these approaches have attempted to address the issues identified in this chapter.

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