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Certificate of Authorship

I, Christopher Harrington

Hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

I agree that the thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the University Librarian for the care, loan and reproduction of the thesis.*

* Subject to confidentiality provisions as approved by the University
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Ethics approval

This research was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Charles Sturt University.

The Human Research Ethics Committee approval number was 2006/274
**Professional editorial assistance**

Dr Robert Trevethan from Written Impressions provided paid editorial services during the final weeks of thesis preparation. Robert was able to read all my chapters and provide suggestions and advice on areas where I could address (and improve) word usage, grammar, and punctuation. With a background in psychology and health, Robert no doubt faced some challenges with the terminology of environmental social science and public policy. Robert also provided additional information about the APA style and APA referencing, as both were new areas for me.

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Abstract

The concept of community has become a fundamental organising idea for the improved governance of natural resources in contemporary society. Institutional arrangements such as state-community partnerships and multi-stakeholder collaborations often structure governance in third way democracies like Australia. In multi-scale and multi-level NRM cases, various socio-ecological scales, political jurisdictions, and stratum of society need to be represented and integrated. As a result, governments often assemble different actors to speak for others and show a preference for governing community as a site of common association over a complex and diffuse society.

Informed by governmentality and actor network theory, and drawing on an in-depth multi-scale case study, this thesis critically examines the concept of community as a useful signifier for different forms of societal organisation and good governance at The Living Murray (TLM) during the policy implementation phase. The research focused on the Community Reference Group (CRG), a consultative group providing advice to decision makers about local and broader community interests in river restoration for Australia’s largest multi-jurisdictional river, the River Murray.

Analysis of documents and in-depth interviews with CRG members and government officials revealed different definitions of community. These definitions were often used interchangeably with, and blurred boundaries between, geographic areas, sectors, interest groups, and stakeholders. CRG members played different roles and community involvement was largely symbolic.
Definitional pluralism around community, and a lack of clarity on the CRG role and the desired outcomes of governance, resulted in tensions or paradoxes associated with community surfacing. In conclusion, I note defining and assembling community is important, especially if policy capture concerns and other unintended policy outcomes are to be allayed.

**Abbreviations**

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<td>CFM</td>
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<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
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<td>CRG</td>
<td>Community Reference Group</td>
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<td>ICM</td>
<td>Integrated catchment management</td>
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<td>MDB</td>
<td>Murray-Darling Basin</td>
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<td>MDBBC</td>
<td>Murray-Darling Basin Commission</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-government organisation</td>
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<td>Natural resource management</td>
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Introduction

The growing size and affluence of modern society has resulted in varied and complex forms of social, political, and spatial organisation for environment-society interactions. In advanced liberal democracies, socio-political organisation, interactions, and action can be conceptualised as a network of relations in and between the formations, divisions, and boundaries of the central state, market economy, and civil society (Rose, 1996b). Under advanced liberalism, effective and efficient forms of social, political, and spatial order are expected to emerge with the re-structuring and roll-back of the state, re-scaling of territory (particularly to the region), and re-leveling of society towards community (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999; Swyngedouw, 2005).

From the socio-political perspective, macro-societal structures or formal institutions (i.e., the state, market, and church), and micro-societal structures such as social groups (i.e., families, friendships, and associations) undergo constant reconfiguration within the network. Ostensibly, they do this to better represent the development of modern society. The process of reordering and restructuring reflects individual and collective interests, aspirations, and values and needs, along with threats to them (Beck, 1998; Habermas, 1996b). Currently, reordering and restructuring in state-society-environment interactions occurs largely around
sustainability and governance discourses, as well as through the institutional arrangements established between governments and their publics for power sharing and participation in policy decisions (Hajer & Wajenaar, 2003). The ability to exercise power beyond the central state characterises governance, with new governance arrangements and institutions of public authority emerging to operate in and between the central state and the rest of society (Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Howlett & Rayner, 2006).

As a policy response to the ecological crisis, the rhetoric of sustainability has been to address issues of societal order, action, and complexity by integrating and balancing environment, economy, and society for collective benefit while maintaining the current standard of living. Coercive policy prescription has rarely worked. Therefore, cooperative policy making and implementation between governments and the public is currently in favour (Gottweis, 2003). Here, the concept of community has become a central organising idea for governance under a modernised and cooperative agenda (Achterberg, 1996; Kenny, 1996; Summerville, Adkins, & Kendall, 2008).

The reinvigoration of community as a concept is advanced primarily along structural and functional lines where individuals are placed within the overall social structure as members of social groups or “communities” that, as interrelated aggregates, represent the values and interests of society (Giddens, 1998). In contemporary public policy these structural and functional elements have been advanced and embraced in the discourses of governance, community consultation, community engagement, and community building. In third way governance contexts fusing neoliberal and communitarian ideology as hybrid governance
(Giddens, 1998), community has come to represent a civic structure for organising social, political, spatial, and ethical action in a complex society (Reddel, 2004).

While sometimes embraced uncritically by policy makers, practitioners, and scholars, community as an organising concept can be problematic. For instance, prior to current incarnations of sustainability policy such as Agenda 21 (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992) that promote civic participation and government-community partnerships, Day & Murdoch (1993) noted that community had lost currency as a sociological concept. According to these authors, scholars generally agreed that community was “... a confused and chaotic concept, impossible to define clearly and carrying all sorts of dangerous and unacknowledged cargo” (p. 83). Others have noted that within the discourses of governance and community different forms of socio-political organisation, and their boundaries of activity and responsibility, are increasingly blurred (Curry, 2009; Herbert-Cheshire, 2006; Marsden & Murdoch, 1998; Stoker, 1998; Swyngedouw, 2005).

However, in many advanced liberal democracies the hybrid neoliberal-communitarian political rationality characterises governance (Rose, 1999). A growing number of scholars have used Foucault’s (1991) notion of government rationalities or governmentality as the art of government beyond the central state to theorise about the exercise of power in terms of governance and community. In particular, the contemporary preference for governing though community rather than through society has been proposed as a new governmentality of the third way (Amin, 2005; Herbert-Cheshire, 2006; Rose, 1996a, 2000). In a contemporary sense these rationalities and preferences mean that community concurrently
imposes social order and enables “... action at a distance” from government (Rose, 1999, p. 210).

Governmentality theory is increasingly recognised as a useful analytical approach for considering state, market, and civil society interactions in environmental governance (Bulkeley, 2005; Lockie & Higgins, 2007). Governmentality has also been used to examine concepts such as community and civic participation in sustainability contexts (Summerville, 2007). While governmentality theory often focuses on government or state power, shifting the focus to the structure and role of non-government actors allows consideration of power from below as well as from the sides (Herbert-Cheshire, 2006).

Community as an organising concept in natural resource governance has received less attention thus far within governmentality theory. However, community as a form of social, political, and spatial organisation is important for conceptualising and interrogating state-market-civil society interactions as well as the exercise of power. This is particularly relevant to natural resource governance in light of the community-based model for natural resource management (NRM) in places such as Australia (Lane, Wills, Vanclay, & Lucas, 2008; Lockwood & Davidson, 2010).

The aim of this chapter is to introduce community as a potentially problematic organising concept by first drawing on the social scientific literature, and then drawing on the NRM literature as a subset of environment and sustainability policy.
Using community as an organising concept

The idea of community as a social formation and way of organising for action signifies different things to different people, and therefore precise definitions have been evasive or even moot. However, it is reasonable to assert that that community is normatively understood as the sphere of activity outside government (Habermas, 1996a). Community is commonly seen as a primary site for social activity.

Community as a concept in social theory has been historically associated with common ties, frequent interactions, inclusiveness, and self-determination (Hillery, 1955; Tonnies, 1955). This historical and sometimes idealised view has been translated to contemporary theory by some scholars who see community as a potential solution to increasing societal complexity, social fragmentation, and unequal power relations (Giddens, 1998; Putnam, 2000). For these scholars the idea of community has been reinvigorated as a set of normative values for social cohesion, democratic practice, and power sharing.

The discourse of community permeates much of contemporary public policy in an attempt at social and political ordering and boundary making in advanced Western democracies (Gottweis, 2003). Community is a central organising element in corporatist theories of state-society interaction where the state associates specific social actors with particular interests who can be assembled to represent and negotiate the collective good (Streeck & Schmitter, 1985). The popularity of community in public policy can be situated broadly within the shift from government to governance.
**Community, governance and government at a distance**

Governance can be seen as a response to state and market failure where government regulation and market-based measures have not always produced the desired policy outcomes (Schmitter, 2002; Stoker, 1998). For instance, a lack of public input has resulted in poor public acceptance of some government policy initiatives. In addition, market-based measures that often focus on individual rights and ownership can be inefficient for producing common good outcomes by entrenching inequities between the haves and have-nots. The notion of community is often associated with acting for the collective or common good in an ethically acceptable manner, rather than acting in the interests of a few (Habermas, 1996a).

In terms of considering or representing the collective in state-society interactions, community is expected to shift the focus from the individual citizen to the group level. This is exemplified by those that argue that community:

... implies some sort of commonality and has integrative connotations. It expresses the existence of some common feature or interest. There can be communities of interest, based around some sort of common activity, communities based around identities of race and ethnicity, and communities of place, where identity is shared and forged around some sort of attachment to some territorial unit, most often (but not exclusively) neighborhood, town or city (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003, p. 5).

Therefore, mobilising collective interests, identities, and attachments is perceived as a way of re-scaling power away from the central state by enrolling active citizens and engaging communities in governance on issues of common concern (Swyngedouw, 2005).

Governance is defined specifically in this research as the structures and processes “... for dealing with a broad range of problems/conflicts whereby actors
arrive at mutually satisfactory and binding decisions through negotiation and cooperate to implement those decisions” (Schmitter, 2002, p. 53). The term actor denotes individuals, social groups, and other bodies or entities with agency or a capacity to act. Actors may therefore also include non-human elements such as legislation, policy documents, agreements, and components of the natural world (such as biophysical entities) that also have capacity to act (Callon, 1986; Latour, 2005).

Contemporary discourses of governance while varied, are increasingly referred to as participatory governance and good governance1 — notions grounded in the development literature to marry the concepts of governance, participation, and engagement (Fung & Wright, 2001; Reddel, 2004). Good governance while meaning different things in different contexts implies participatory, accountable, transparent, inclusive, responsive, efficient, and effective governance structures, process, and outcomes (Rhodes 1996). These forms of governance are synonymous with participation by multiple actors in governance arrangements. Those actors are often associated with the organisations in civil society, a normative conception of all the interests in society outside the state often invoked as a means to legitimate governance arrangements (Habermas, 1996b).

Organisations involved in governance do not have to be equal in size or capability, but they do have interdependent relationships (capable of helping or hurting one another) and are accorded a level of power in decision-making and action (Stoker, 1998). While there are various definitional controversies about the contemporary constitution of civil society, in public policy civil society can be

---

1 Other concepts such as collaborative governance, adaptive governance and representative governance are also used in a similar vein.
regarded as the sphere of activity beyond the central state made-up of organised interests, groups, and local communities. It sometimes includes the market sector; sometimes it does not (Shucksmith, 2009; Swyngedouw, 2005).

Participatory approaches to governance have been adopted by advocates of neoliberalism and communitarianism alike, as hybrid governance that can devolve state responsibility to broader civil society while still advocating market measures for effective policy design and implementation (Larner, 2000; Lockie & Higgins, 2007). There are potential benefits associated with devolving responsibility and on-ground action to civil society organisations and local communities. These benefits include policy coordination, problem ownership, learning, shared experience, and innovative solutions that lead to collective action.

Participatory governance is often linked to mobilising social ties and interaction. This is achieved by using and building human and social capital; the former being collective human knowledge and intellect; the latter relationships of trust and reciprocity in pre-existing social networks (Pretty & Ward, 2001; Putnam, 2000). These conceptualisations have resulted in a dynamic but somewhat muddled view of state-market-civil society relations. They have also resulted in public policy focused on citizen and community engagement, building social capital and community capacity at the local scale under the banner of participatory governance (Reddel & Woolcock, 2004).

Active participation in governance by citizens, during and between elections, is likely to increase public confidence and, in theory, it is also likely to increase efficiency in problem solving and policy implementation (Lidskog &
Furthermore, public participation and community involvement in governance are likely to increase the legitimacy of processes, or procedural legitimacy. Procedural legitimacy can be enhanced by introducing diverse knowledge and expertise; a community perspective on social problems; using community leaders to engage and represent their followers; and providing citizens an opportunity to express their preferences outside elections (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003). According to Creighton (2005), public participation in the policy process is important for addressing and integrating public concerns, needs, and values, and it helps to improve the quality of decision-making by elected officials.

The question of who participates in governance is one of full or selective inclusion expressed as “. . . participation by all or participation by some” (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003, p. 8). As it is rare that all actors can or will want to participate, principles of democratic equality such as participation rights and citizen representation become central issues in justifications of full or partial inclusion (Hendriks, 2009). Participation can also be based on the territorial principle, where those included in governance processes are considered members of the political community. A political community is a community designated to exist within predefined boundaries and having some form of common association (Dahl, 1989).

In representative democracies, citizens elect officials who, as formal representatives, are held accountable by their constituents. However, other forms of influence can be exerted by citizens and organised interests as informal representatives in public policy. These forms of influence include petitions, public
demonstrations, and lobbying (Lidskog & Elander, 2007). Representative systems are felt to be effective as long as channels are open and accessible to all members of the political community. According to Erling-Klausen & Sweeting (2003) the system of representation is said to bring political decision-making in line with public opinion through both formal interactions with elected representatives and informal channels such as lobbying. However, some interests are likely to have more influence than others, even if they are not in the majority. The dominance of particular groups and their power bases brings into question the principle of equality in representative democracies (Hendriks, 2009).

There is considerable variation in the structural forms that actors may take in modern participatory process. For example, social actors may be defined as individuals or as members and representatives of interest groups, the public, civil society organisations, communities (local or otherwise), or stakeholders. Social actors involved in representative governance rarely act as individuals but are more likely to be regarded as spokespersons for organised interests in non-profit, semi-public or semi-voluntary organisations that can influence, act on, or affect the actions of others (Curry, 2009).

There are also different forms of actor participation in decision-making processes and influencing courses of action. Participation is often located on a continuum from participants merely getting information, being consulted, to a middle ground of partnerships between actors, through to delegation of responsibility and control (Arnstein, 1969). Certainly, the contemporary discourse in public policy is that of governance based on active partnerships and collaboration between civil society, the private sector, communities, and
governments. This discourse is strong in environment and sustainability policy (Dovers, 2005; Kenny, 1996).

**Community, governance, and NRM**

As a subset of environment and sustainability policy, NRM aims to achieve sustainable resource use and biodiversity conservation. NRM in this thesis is understood as an integrated and interactive approach to land and water resources by which the biophysical, socio-political, economic, and cultural dimensions of resource use and conservation are considered and resolved (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005). NRM typically involves diverse and interrelated government and non-government stakeholders across various scales, often under the banner of environmental and/or natural resource governance.

The governance discourse in NRM now encapsulates public participation, partnerships, community involvement, and engagement as processes enshrined in policy. Environmental governance is equated with re-scaling power away from government towards its subjects (Bulkeley, 2005; Reed & Bruyneel, 2010). Consequently, much of the NRM policy rhetoric has been reframed in terms of governing specific communities and how communities are organised, engaged, and connected (Brown & Keast, 2003; Dovers, 2005).

Moreover, a key principle of integrated NRM is the need for community participation in decision-making and on-ground action. Among other things, the practice of integration in NRM calls for horizontal integration of sectoral and other stakeholder interests. Examples of stakeholder interests are resource users such as
irrigators, fishers and recreational groups, and environmental conservation groups. Non-government organisations such as peak bodies and local action groups need to be involved as they can influence environmental and resource policy, planning, and management. Horizontal integration assumes that these stakeholders and organisations have some form of interdependent relationship. In addition, vertical or hierarchical integration of all levels and scales of government — national, state, regional, and local — is required (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005; Howlett & Rayner, 2006; Sorensen, 1997).

It is the horizontal integration of the so called associational sector where community and stakeholder alliances are formed. The participation of the associational sector is expected to play a major role in reflecting and representing a number of different perspectives, common interests, and knowledge bases. These governance actors need to be connected across socio-political and socio-ecological scales, levels of organisation, and industry sectors. Through community and stakeholder involvement, interaction, dialogue, and cooperation a shared vision is expected to emerge allowing collective action on a growing number of environmental and socio-economic issues. From within this governance structure and process, better policy coordination, and society-wide outcomes are expected (Dovers, 2005).

A central question for governance in environment and sustainability policy that emerges is should social, political, and spatial organisation be designed around particular communities or should it be designed around particular policy problems (Hooghe & Marks, 2003). This question points to the significance of conceptualising how governance is organised and the outcomes desired. If
communities are the focus, how are they constituted and what role do they play in NRM. For instance, in Australia NRM largely adopts a community-based model for devolving power, organising, and acting on environment and sustainability issues, primarily at the local and regional scales (Lockwood, Davidson, Curtis, Stratford, & Griffith, 2009).

The community-based model has shown some promise at local scales and levels in voluntary initiatives such as Landcare in Australia, particularly for building human and social capital on NRM issues of common concern (Curtis, Lucas, Nurse, & Skeen, 2008). However, the local is better paradigm has not always produced the desired NRM outcome or mobilised skills, knowledge, and ties necessary for collaborative action (Lane & McDonald, 2005; Rockloff & Moore, 2006). Research also suggests that people do not commonly identify with the concept of community in NRM at socio-ecological scales such as the catchment or watershed (Broderick, 2005; Ferreyra, de Loe, & Kreuzwiser, 2008).

In its contemporary sense, community has become a popular but somewhat “. . . limited descriptor for a range of organisational forms. . .” (Reddel & Woolcock, 2004, p. 82). Those organisation forms can include different groups, networks, and alliances across all levels of social, political, and spatial organisation. Community in contemporary social theory is increasingly identified as a problematic and unstable concept because of its normative and ad hoc usage as a catch-all for various societal groups and scales. Community as a concept and discourse in this way can homogenise or simplify social structure and mask difference (Bryson & Mowbray, 2005; Liepens, 2000a)
Community has also been linked to new forms of democratic participation, theorised as a form of governmentality where governments engage community representatives to legitimise state power as experts for the collective in setting and implementing policy (Herbert-Cheshire, 2006; Rose, 1999). From this governmentality perspective Nikolas Rose proposes that community has constituted a new spatialisation for government, a resource to be mobilised by “... establishing links, networked alliances and conduits that in various ways allow action at a distance” (Rose, 1999, p. 210). Finally, the idea of a holistic and cohesive community is considered by some as a way of responding to the ecological crisis, state and market failure, bridging the policy implementation gap, and addressing collective action shortfalls (Achterberg, 1996; Dovers, 2005; Dryzek, 2000).

**Need for current research**

Community as a concept in public policy has been deployed in various situations and for different social, political, and spatial contexts. As discussed above, the concept of community can be potentially problematic within the social sciences and there is no reason to believe it is any less problematic as an organising concept in NRM (Berkes, 2004; Lane & McDonald, 2005; Rockloff, 2003). However, it is difficult to argue against the normative notion of community is an inclusive, cohesive, connected, and empowered actor. Conceptual and practical questions about community as an organising idea lead to questions of who is involved, and how those involved act for the collective good (Catt & Murphy, 2003).

An initial review of the literature relating to communities in NRM revealed that there are multiple meanings, interests, and power relations at play
(Harrington, Curtis, & Black, 2008). However, community in NRM is frequently seen as being the site for environmental and social solidarity and reinvigoration by drawing on and nurturing human and social capital through participatory approaches that result in progress toward environmental and social sustainability (Fung & Wright, 2001; Pretty & Ward, 2001). Nevertheless, there is limited evidence to support the notion that community can contribute to more coordinated, sustainable, or better public policy outcomes, either at the local scale or beyond it (Amin, 2005; Herbert-Cheshire, 2006; Reddel, 2004; Schmitter, 2002).

Commonly cited problems with the theory and practice of community in NRM include mismatches between social and ecological boundaries; lack of connectedness of socio-ecological scales and levels of socio-political organisation; upstream and downstream resource impacts (human and non-human); integrating multiple social and ecological values; unequal power relations (i.e., the domination of policy elites); and deficiencies in human and financial resources (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005; Lane & McDonald, 2005; Lockwood, et al., 2009). These problems can be exacerbated when the idea of community is used in multi-scale and multi-jurisdictional NRM initiatives such as river basins (Lane, McDonald, & Morrison, 2004). Therefore, community may be a limited signifier and organising concept for re-scaling NRM governance.

The Living Murray (TLM) was selected as a contemporary case of a multi-jurisdictional and multi-scale NRM program with the aim of recovering environmental water in the River Murray. TLM had a significant community involvement component that would enable me to explore of the concept of
Community and its application to multi-scale NRM. More detail on case study selection is provided later in this chapter as part of the research approach.

**Research questions**

An initial review of the literature, previous research and personal experience, discussions with my supervisors, and preliminary contact with government agencies indicated that community was an important focus and a potentially problematic concept in NRM. This led to the key research question: Is community a useful organising concept for good governance in multi-scale NRM? The following subsidiary questions were used to explore this key question:

1. Are different communities involved in TLM and how are they described?
2. How are communities involved in TLM?
3. What is the range of intended and unintended outcomes of community involvement in TLM?
4. Is community a useful organising concept for good governance in multi-scale NRM from a theoretical and applied perspective?

The overall aim of this study was to provide insights that lead to a better understanding of the concept of community as a social structure in multi-scale NRM, the role of communities in governance arrangements, and how different communities might affect NRM outcomes. These insights would help contribute to contemporary social and decision-making theory, public policy, and NRM practice.
Research approach

Within overarching public policy for a jurisdiction, separate policy subsystems may exist for particular issues and policy actors may coalesce into discernable policy communities (Dovers, 2005; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Policy network theory has been used as an analytical frame to explore the influence of various actors in NRM and environmental governance contexts (Ferreyra et al., 2008; Hendriks, 2009). However, more conventional policy approaches sometimes fail to adequately account for different actors and their power to influence policy outcomes. While the network metaphor is pivotal, I felt that insights from socio-political theory and qualitative research may provide the means to explore issues of difference and agency associated with the concept of community.

An integrated methodology was used to link socio-political theory and qualitative empirical analysis. Governmentality theory and actor-network theory (ANT) were selected as a potentially useful approach for considering and analysing the concept of community in NRM (Foucault, 1991; Latour, 2005). While ANT has been applied in several NRM studies to conceptualise and investigate environment and sustainability policy implementation (Beveridge & Guy, 2009; Davies, 2002; Kitchen, 2000; Lockie, 2007; Morris, 2004), I was unable to locate literature specifically in NRM that used governmentality and ANT as an approach for exploring the meaning and make-up of community.

Herbert-Cheshire (2006) successfully used governmentality and ANT in a rural development context to examine questions of government, community, and power. She found the approach useful for considering the exercise of power or agency of micro actors such as citizens and civil society groups, and macro actors
such as the state, as well as the interaction between the two. This micro to macro level perspective is consistent with the policy network approach. Therefore, I felt that governmentality and ANT could provide an analytical approach to help describe and understand the governmental rationalities acting in and behind multi-scale governance structures and processes. Jointly, governmentality-ANT would also assist in developing balanced power-based accounts of nature-society and state-society interactions by permitting exploration of the relationships between power, representation, authority, and legitimacy.

My research questions, the governmentality-ANT approach, and need to collect empirical data suggested to me that a qualitative research strategy would be appropriate. As Winchester (2000) recommends, the qualitative research strategy is suitable for tackling questions about social structures and the social processes by which structures are constructed, maintained, legitimised, and resisted. Furthermore, qualitative research emphasises multiple meanings and interpretations rather than imposing one dominant interpretation. This interpretive epistemology, coupled with descriptive fieldwork in a single case-study would allow me to consider contextual factors and interactions that might be affecting NRM outcomes (Yin, 2003).

Criterion sampling, or choosing a case that meets a predetermined criterion (Bryman, 2008), was used to select TLM as a case of multi-jurisdictional and multi-scale NRM with significant community involvement. TLM was a policy program focused on returning environmental water to six icon sites along the River Murray, Australia’s largest southern river located within the Murray-Darling
Basin (MDB). At the sub-national scale, TLM aimed to integrate, aggregate, and transcend state and territory jurisdictions.

TLM was a commitment by the Australian, New South Wales, Victorian, South Australian, and Australian Capital Territory governments to improve the health of the River Murray through significant investments in regional communities. An aim of TLM was to balance the interests of local communities with the national interest, ensuring fair and equitable outcomes. The communities affected were to participate directly in TLM. As part of the governance arrangements a Community Reference Group (CRG) was formed to advise a higher level Community Advisory Council (CAC) that advises the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council as the ultimate decision maker on policy implementation for environmental flows (see Figure 1.1).

![Diagram of MDB governance arrangements](image)

*Figure 1.1 — MDB governance arrangements*
The CRG and its members’ involvement, roles, interactions, and outcomes in TLM were the principal foci for my field research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted during 2007-8 with 32 then current and some past members of the CRG, CAC, and government officials involved in TLM. Qualitative data from interviews were complemented with participant observation at one CRG meeting in February 2007\(^2\), and attendance at a public stakeholder information session on TLM in March 2007. Analysis of policy and planning documents rounded out the research process.

The theory and literature reviewed thus far point to some problems with community as an organising concept at the local scale, and these problems may intensify when the concept is scaled-up, for instance to the region and beyond. In Australia, local communities are administratively defined spatial units, but multi-scale communities have to be made-up and assembled in new governance arrangements. As a student in environmental social science my training and focus is based on the human dimensions of environmental change. While I may have implied or skimmed across the concept of ecological communities, these communities are not discussed in detail in this thesis.

**Organisation of the thesis**

The concept of community and its general place in socio-political theory has been the focus of Chapter 1. This introductory chapter goes some way toward situating and defining some problems with community as an organising concept in the social scientific, public policy, and NRM literature. The preliminary analysis in

\(^2\) A request for ongoing attendance as an observer at CRG meetings was declined by the CAC Chair and MDBC.
this chapter helped frame the research proposition, research questions, and research approach. Chapter 2 provided a critical review of community theory and its application to contemporary ideas of organising governance. This chapter revealed while having a long theoretical pedigree, community as a concept continues to suffer from definitional controversy and some well-established paradoxes, even though it is often evoked in normative and common good senses.

In Chapter 3 the critical review was applied to explore how community theory is deployed in NRM. A number of NRM examples from Australia and abroad were cited. By drawing on these examples and participatory and good governance theory, community was found to be a potentially problematic concept in organising multi-scale governance. This was due to the conceptual couplings under hybrid governance that associate community with various values, forms of representation, scales, and socio-political organisations. The discussion in Chapters 2 and 3 affirmed the proposition that community may indeed be an under scrutinised or problematic organising concept for good governance in multi-scale NRM. In Chapter 4 I documented the qualitative methodology adopted and the case study background for the research.

Chapter 5 began the analysis of community as a concept in TLM. The focus for this chapter was the different definitions, frames, and socio-political formations associated with community in policy and planning documents and those used by CRG members and government officials. A community typology was applied to definitions in order to explore the nature of community in TLM. This revealed that additional concepts and tensions needed to be taken into consideration. In Chapter 6, the governance process was explored to determine
the rationale behind community involvement and the role played by the CRG in good governance.

Chapters 5 and 6 clarified that the CRG was regarded by decision-makers as representative of ‘the community’ but good governance principles such as legitimacy, transparency, and accountability were not widely applied. In Chapter 7 I considered the outcomes associated with using the concept of community in terms of policy objectives and participatory theory. While some procedural and substantive outcomes such as increased knowledge, trust, capacity, and policy support could be identified by CRG members, there was a general lack of satisfaction with what many members regarded as weak on-ground policy outcomes. From this analysis, I found that broader scale community involvement and engagement in policy implementation was not widely practiced.

Key research findings were discussed in Chapter 8 to extend both the theoretical and applied understanding of the concept of community in hybrid governance. In this chapter I identified a number of quasi-philosophical paradoxes relating to community or policy design trade-offs including representation-representativeness, common-good vested interest, active-passive, democratic-competent, and substantive-unproductive actor. I felt these paradoxes tended to be uncritically addressed in public policy implementation. In light of this contribution to existing community and governance theory some additional thoughts for future research were offered in the concluding chapter.
This thesis thus fills an important gap for critically assessing the usefulness of community as an organising concept for good governance in multi-scale NRM. The findings provide valuable insights for those implementing large scale public policy initiatives well into the future.
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Chapter 2

COMMUNITY AS AN ORGANISING CONCEPT: A REVIEW OF SOCIO-POLITICAL THEORY

Introduction

In this and the next chapter I will critically review community and governance theory and their application to NRM. In this chapter I will review the concept of community as an organising concept in socio-political theory and then consider the theoretical application of community in contemporary governance. In Chapter 3, I apply theory to NRM practice to explore how the concept of community is used.

Although community and governance theory have been critically assessed in public policy arenas such rural development, health and housing\(^3\), these theories have received limited critical attention with regard to environment and sustainability policy and even less in NRM. A critical review of theory and its application to NRM goes some way toward framing the context and response to the key research question: Is community a useful organising concept for good governance in multi-scale NRM?

Theoretical foundations of society and community

Describing and theorising the organisation of society have been a focus in sociology, human geography, and political studies. The concept of community as

a form of social order has been given significant attention in these disciple areas. Community has also been widely applied and embraced as an organising concept in contemporary public policy and participatory theory. So much so that some theories of socio-political order now promote governance and governing community over society as responses to complex, long-standing, and intractable social action and public policy problems (Rose 1999).

There are a number of theoretical positions that address societal organisation and action. For instance, Marx regarded society as being organised along the lines of class and capitalism. For Weber, society was organised along the lines of rational action and forms of organising toward that action, and for de Tocqueville liberalism and the modern democratic society guide social order (Aron, 1967). As I will explain, these sociologists along with a number of human geographers have had a significant influence in theorising the construction of modern society.

Weber (1978) believed that general societal organisation and action are characterised by social relationships. Those relationships determine how the collective or plurality of actors behaves in relation to each other, in particular, how they interact and the extent to which they are perceived to be legitimate. For Weber, social interaction may be regular, rational, and reciprocally oriented but not always harmonious. Interaction or social relationships are organised as being either communal or associative.

Weber (1978) regarded communal relations or community as a sense of belonging that are either affective or traditional, whereas social relationships were
associative when action was based on rational motivation or instrumental interests and consent. Associative relationships were regarded as free forming or voluntary associations based on self-interest, common values, and compromises played out between sometimes conflicting interests (Aron, 1967; Tonnies, 1955). Therefore, through social structure and interaction, actors were either integrated into community or society. Community is communal or collective integration, whereas society is social integration of individual interest (Aron, 1967).

The conceptual foundations of community can also be traced through the work of Hillery (1955), Tonnies (1955), and Durkheim (in Aron, 1967). These scholars drew distinctions between community as a geographical location, and community as a series of associations between actors with particular interests and identities associated with collective interactions. The classical distinction has been made between Gemeinschaft cohesive communal relations as a common way of life with central ties and frequent interactions as a form of natural will and Gesellschaft associations or dissimilar interactions based on rational will commonly associated with the concept of society (Tonnies 1955) 4.

However beyond society and community there are other levels of organisation. For instance, Weber (1978) identified the level of organisation following society and community as the group. In the group, social organisation could be either open or closed. It was open when it allowed participation by those wishing to be involved; it was closed when it excluded or limited participation by outsiders. The group could be closed for rational reasons, for instance if the

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4 Gemeinschaft (Community) and Gesellschaft (Society) are Tonnies’ concepts. For a summary of the theoretical/historical usage of community as a concept in sociology see Brint (2001) and Aron (1967). Brint, in particular, contrasts the two lines of development of the community concept between Tonnies and Durkheim
material interests of insiders in communal or associative groups were likely to be compromised by outsiders. Communal relationships therefore tended to be closed, and parties within closed relationships were called ‘members’ (Aron, 1967; Weber, 1978).

Action of the individual or participant in a group was often imputed with that of the collective as mutually responsible members (Weber, 1978). Group members were considered either active representatives or passive others as the represented (Weber, 1978). In this way, all members could be held responsible for the actions of the group and bound to a particular code of conduct (Foucault, 1991). Mutual responsibility and reciprocally oriented behaviour was proposed as being typically found in “…communal groups such as the family or kinship unit and in closed relationships of association such as for profit oriented enterprises and in some cases labour associations”5 (Weber, 1978, p. 47).

Relationships which were closed or limit participation were regarded as an organisation by Weber when regulations are enforced by specific individuals who have authority. For example, enforcement can be via a family head, government, executive committee, or company director with executive power for a particular type of order or conduct. Order could be imposed by way of voluntary agreement, or by administrative or regulatory orders (Weber, 1978).

Formally, organisations operating on continuous rational action were known as an ‘enterprise’. Whereas groups that claim authority over voluntary members and that form of authority accepted by those members was a voluntary

5 Translators noted examples Weber 1978
association. At all levels power is exercised and therefore a key ingredient in different forms of organisation and action (Aron, 1967).

The classic distinction of social organisation and action in sociological theory can be posited between society as a set of interest-based associations and interactions, and community as a set of common ties and interactions associated with a feeling of attachment and belonging (Tonnies, 1955). Such a distinction goes some way to explaining community as being common place-based ties and community as an interest-based set of interactions.

**Community and homogeneity**

The historical and conceptual foundations of community can be associated with the ties that bind individuals together in groups in collective activities and common interactions. Communal relations as a common way of life with frequent face-to-face interactions typify the traditional and idealised type of community. The ideal community is represented as a unified and cohesive entity that is self-contained and self-sufficient, a site of harmonious and consensual relationships, shared norms, and common interests (Hillery, 1955; Tonnies, 1955). In reviewing 94 definitions of community, Hillery (1955) found there was basic agreement that community is associated with social interactions and common ties but noted that the geographic area of interaction is equally important. Therefore, socio-spatial structure and relationships between space and place are significant factors when considering the concept of community (Liepens, 2000a).
Community and difference: Relational space and place

Individuals are often regarded as members of different social, cultural, and spatial groups that are often multiple and overlapping. Therefore, community could be constituted by relationships of difference, in and across space and place. For humans, space can be an abstract concept while geographic place is most often associated with human experience, meaning, and knowing, and a sense of attachment or belonging. Place is designated by social experience where common sets of beliefs, values, and symbols are created or constructed and reproduced by human activity (Relph, 1976; Soja, 1999; Tuan, 1977).

Therefore, space and place are not the same things. Space is a location to be transformed into place by people. Place consequently becomes a geographical relationship to space, a physical location for human experience, meaning, practice, and action. However, while human experience is centred around being in place, the physical setting also determines experience of place through concepts of centrality, size, natural features, or association with events of significance — what Relph (1976) regards as “placeness”. While place is regarded as the local, the particular, and the unique, relationships between humans, space, place, and non-human nature need to be considered, as do the divisions or boundaries drawn between space and place (Massey, 1999; Murdoch, 2006).

Inside-outside boundaries: Sense of community

To be inside or outside place orders space through boundary making and divisions that reflect differences. These differences are malleable depending on meanings, experience, and where actors centre themselves and their interests. Relph (1976)
describes the many dimensions of being inside and outside place, sense of belonging and place-based identities as “experiential geography” where communities give meaning to place. For Relph, being inside is the essence of place, which contrasts to objective outsiderness and instrumental rationality that discount subjective experiences of place.  

Brown (2003) has considered the possibility for a shared sense of place by noting individual identity and meaning are both inside and outside locality. For Cameron (2003) the personal, contextual and cultural components of place need to be considered by asking just who’s sense of place we are talking about. Cameron notes there are problems associated with taking an insular view so that one person’s or one culture’s interpretation is imposed on others. Place, community, and human experience are intertwined:

. . . to put ‘sense’ in front of it [place] brings attention to the individual experience, so that a sense of community means more than the concept of community, it means the way in which people experience a particular community, the feeling of belonging (Cameron, 2003, p. 3).

Place indeed appears to be a human construct. However, Hay (2003) recommends that the geography of place needs to capture its natural aspects such as the plants, animals, and landscape, along with the social and cultural aspects such as people and institutions as the relationships in the flow of life. Community theoretically brings people together in space and place for common ends that reinforce ties to each other that are reflected physically in the landscape and symbolically in social relations (Cohen, 1985). Theoretically, place is the locus for community (Harvey, 1996). Yet as people come together in different

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6 For a detailed discussion on the essentialist views on the phenomenology of place see Tuan’s (1977) and Relph’s (1976) seminal works in human geography.
situations, boundaries are enacted, inscribed, and transgressed which create social and biophysical divisions (Liepens, 2000b).

There are clearly conceptual challenges in grappling with a concept such as community, let alone dealing with the relationships between space, place, and different communities. For Harvey (1996), Massey (1991, 1999), and Whatmore (2002) these challenges are tied to addressing issues of difference, inclusiveness, power relations, agency, and action as sources of tension in the practice of place at different spatial scales. But place is more than just a physical setting — it is politicised, culturally relative, historically specific, and local. Place comprises multiple constructions of human and “... more than human worlds” (Whatmore, 2002, p. 146). No element can be examined in isolation, but bringing together the physical, biological, social, political, and cultural elements help to define different spatial relationships (Harvey, 1996).

When people interact with each other and their physical environment, a sense of identity develops. Through interaction and communication, symbolic constructions are made, relationships form, roles are assumed, understandings are adjusted, and negotiation takes place to form and reconstruct identities (Rose, 1999). Interaction in this context is emphasised as a social psychological process of social construction, practice, and connection to place (Liepens, 2000a).

Community as a utopian unified entity representing homogenous ties, cohesion, harmony, shared norms, and common interests might be considered a socially constructed symbolic object of desire and imagination (Anderson, 1983). The constructionist view favours a disaggregated exploration of micro structural
and cultural variables of community. For instance, Brint (2001) notes that definitional controversies cloud the concept of community and that community as a generic place-based concept is less significant in the modern world because place-based interactions are no longer common, frequent, or necessarily harmonious. Instead, Brint believes that communities are better defined in terms of aggregates of people who share common activities and/or beliefs. In these groups, people are bound together principally by relations of affect, loyalty, common values, and personal concern. Therefore, when regarding community as a typological construct for the collective, it is better to consider the context of interaction, motivation for interaction, rate of interaction, and spatial location of members (Brint, 2001).

More often than not, community represents heterogeneous values, beliefs, norms, and interests signifying difference, contestation, and conflict across space and time. Communities can be conceived of as diverse entities comprised of social, cultural, and political differences across different spatial scales according to the interests of those involved. The plurality of interests are contested, negotiated, and spatially constituted. They are, in sum, interactions and relationships mediated by power (Benhabib, 1996; Harvey, 1996; Jackson, 1989; Massey, 1999).

**Constructing scale**

The world is made up of and constructed from diverse and interrelated actors and interactions with different forms of power — humans and non-humans that are socially, politically, culturally, physically, and spatially related (Murdoch, 2006).
Questions of place and scale may be either real or socially constructed. Although place and space are important concepts, there needs to be a way to break through such a socio-spatial divide. In order to transcend this divide, Soja (1999) proposes thinking about space and the construction of scale in terms of a thirdspace. Thirdspace thinking adopts a hybrid view to reject structural distinctions such as real-imagined, social-spatial, open-closed by considering the relationships between space and scale and how they might be co-constructed and transcended (Latour, 2005; Soja, 1999).

There is considerable debate regarding the interactions between different levels of social organisation and scale, for instance whether community as a social construction is best conceptualised as being an ordered hierarchy, a nested entity, a cross-scalar relationship, or a variation of these (Ostrom, 1990). Demonstrating complex scalar connections between people, place, nature, and social transformation can be accomplished by adopting a relational or networked view as a way to conceptualise and link scale, place, and organisational levels (McMaster & Sheppard, 2004). Networks of people, entities, and techniques are felt to transform and transcend space by cutting across social and spatial boundaries as well as collective identities and interests, thus mediating power and forming new associations (Latour, 1986, 2005).

Before exploring linkages between place, space, scale, and level more extensively, it is useful to consider the impact of political theory on ideas about social organisation and action — in particular, how theory may drive definitional controversy over community meanings. As Hillery (1955) notes, various
definitions of community coincide with society, the group, and spatial formations such as the city, village, and neighbourhood.

**Democratic theory and state-society interactions**

**Aggregative democracy and pluralism**

Democracy is a key belief system or set of ideas, values, and practices associated with modern state-society interactions. While democracy may take different forms in Western industrialised societies, representative liberal democracies predominate. Classic liberalism gives primacy to freedom — individuals’ civic freedom, free enterprise, free trade, and freedom in political participation. Liberalism’s fundamental and contemporary concerns emphasise justice, conscience, liberties, and the right of individuals to be consulted on decisions that directly affect them. The relationship between government and its citizens as subjects is one of government as the allocator and distributor of goods in society to citizens who then pursue and maximise self-interest (Miller, 1999; Rawls, 1971).

Citizens as individuals can be organised into particular constituencies or groups to represent an aggregate for collective decision-making. Under liberalism, those groups can be understood as comprising interest groups or stakeholder groups that are many and plural, with membership being voluntary and overlapping. Groups form and associate freely with each other without state interference, and no one group has representational monopoly. Pluralist theory assumes an adversarial model of community, where groups represent discrete sectors and interests. Under this model, groups are assumed to share equal power,
are able to contest ideas, and collaborate on solutions to serve the collective interest (Dahl, 1989; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

In addition to the interest or stakeholder group, citizen representation also occurs within politically defined boundaries, considered to be the political community (Dahl, 1989). Theories of state-citizen interaction, such as public policy development and implementation under liberalism, see socio-political boundaries as important because defining the boundaries of the population (society or citizenry) enables preferences to be further aggregated thorough the notion of a “. . . self-contained, self-governing community” (Dryzek, 2000, p. 152).

Social choice theory underpins this form of interest aggregation. Social choice theory presupposes that political and policy processes, such as public consultation, provide reliable information and perspectives from individual citizens as well as from public and private interest groups within predetermined boundaries. The public policy process is considered to be a social choice mechanism through which the interactions of a large number of actors form collective choice. Furthermore, the aggregated approach is assumed to be democratically inclusive of the groups in society where views and needs are articulated and prioritised by elected officials or their representatives as a form collective decision-making (Catt & Murphy, 2003; Dryzek, 2000; Munton, 2003). Additionally, the aggregative approach appeals as a means to lower the transaction costs of government-society interactions because the collective can be assembled through representative societal intermediaries (Ostrom, 1990).
Liberalism’s individualistic tendencies have been widely critiqued for not accounting for societal difference in terms of group plurality, multiple identities, and limited power to participate in democratic process (Benhabib, 1996; Young, 1989). Theoretical development and empirical evidence in pluralism suggests that some groups will always be more powerful than others (Young, 1989). Inequities are likely to exist between different social and cultural groups. Furthermore, sectoral and business interests can be privileged when promoting a growth agenda, while those not promoting the agenda are seen to heighten conflict and constrain progress. Moreover, not all groups have equal financial and intellectual resources or access to decision makers.

Pluralism might be applicable in countries such as the United States that have models of democracy that include both direct and representative modes, but countries such as Australia with solely representative models may lack the types of groups and political processes conceived by pluralists. The political and policy process under liberal pluralism is therefore a process of government-interest group interactions. However, in terms of representing and arbitrating collective interests, there may be a significant role for other actors (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

**Associative democracy and corporatism**

In contrast to pluralist theory where free-forming interest groups interact directly with policy makers, according to corporatist theory groups do not freely form and associate with each other. Instead, groups rely on the state to recognise them as having a role in the policy process and the state acts as an intermediary to facilitate and mediate interaction between groups them (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Schmitter, 2002). This is sometimes referred to as cooperative policy making,
where bargaining takes place between government officials, leaders of business, and other social actors beyond parliamentary democracy (Dryzek, 2000).

Therefore, public policy is shaped by the interaction between the state and the groups it recognises. While corporatist theory and practice has focused mainly on European countries such as The Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden, it has some applicability to Australia which currently favours a hybrid representative aggregative-associative democracy involving the state and civil society (Reddel, 2002).

Associative democracy has been advanced to temper liberal individualism by balancing the interests of the individual citizen against that of the community as a whole (Hirst, 1994). Such a process can be achieved through a reinvigorated civil society, as the associational social arena of interactions outside the state. The notion of associational life or civic association is seen as a way for people to develop a stronger sense of community through connections of trust, political participation, and civic engagement (Putnam, 2000).

Critiques of representative liberal democracy and pluralist and corporatist theory have led to calls for more direct opportunities for citizen or public participation in government decision-making processes (Dryzek, 2000; Munton, 2003). I have outlined above some problems with liberalism’s focus on the individual and pluralism’s lack of attention to mediating power between different societal groups. Shortfalls that Howlett & Ramesh (2003) and Dryzek (2000) have identified with the corporatist approach include corporatism as being a descriptive category for state-society interactions but providing no rationale for policy development or process, a vagueness about the definition and role of the interest
group, a focus on economic interests and producer groups that passively excludes other civil society groups, and secretiveness. It is from within these critiques that the contemporary trend favouring the discourse of governance rather government has surfaced as a new way to reconcile state-society interactions through more inclusive and participatory public processes (Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998).

**Participatory democracy: Government to governance**

Participatory democracy has been proposed to deepen the practice of democracy by broadening public participation which in turn creates active citizens, civic mindedness, and a predisposition to grass-roots action, resulting in the process of rebuilding community (Fung & Wright, 2001). The call for greater democratic participation by advocates of participatory democracy has resulted in a shift away from governing by central government to governance through and by a range of societal actors (Kooiman, 2002).

Governance is commonly defined and characterised as an interactive process. Characteristics of governance include:

1. horizontal negotiations rather than hierarchical relations;
2. joint problem solving;
3. functionally differentiated negotiating arenas, where participants vary according to the issue; and
4. horizontal networks of organisations centred around the issues where negotiated settlements are key. These networks are often justified in terms of their ability to address cross-cutting issues (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003; Schmitter, 2002; Stoker, 1998).
Governance signifies a system of decision-making that is not purely consultation but instead shares responsibility for resource allocation and conflict resolution between multiple government and non-government actors. Governance is therefore associated with the delegation or devolution of power beyond the state for some particular purpose (Stoker, 1998; Swyngedouw, 2005). Negotiation, bargaining, and compromise characterise governance, and according to Schmitter (2002), under neo-corporatism the trick is to “. . . compose governance arrangements from a small group of self-interested actors, or stakeholders who can produce a decision that will prove acceptable to those who have not participated” (p. 59).

Governance arrangements can be defined in terms of the totality and variety of actors involved as well as the degree of power, or at least influence, they have in decision-making processes. Those arrangements are normally initiated by a process of political design where a particular issue or a policy arena is seen as appropriate for governance arrangements, for example, where it is deemed that government regulation or market competition is not the best way of dealing with the problem or conflict. Through the process of assembling a particular composition of autonomous actors in deliberation, conflicts can be resolved, resources provided to deal with the issue and collective decisions seen as being legitimate. However, the matter of who gets to participate in governance is not always clear (Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Schmitter, 2002; Stoker, 1998)

The question of inclusion is a choice of participation by all (full inclusion), or participation by some normally in the form of organised representative actors (selective inclusion). Actors participating in governance might comprise
individual citizens, the public, communities, and organised groups. While participation can be seen as a right, it is rare that all can participate (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003).

In representative political systems, participation can be based on the principle of democratic equality. This principle presupposes that suitably qualified citizen representatives are placed on an equal footing with each other in an accessible and open process of governing within the boundaries of the political community (Dahl, 1989). Therefore, participation may not be based solely on rights and ability to speak, but also on the territorial principle where representation is restricted to those residing within defined boundaries of the political community and nested scales within those boundaries (Hooghe & Marks, 2003).

Public participation in governance can be seen as a response to elements of state and market failure. While public participation is not always government’s most preferred policy strategy for solving problems or addressing conflict, a governance approach is seen as an alternative to state and market failure (Schmitter, 2002). This does not mean that state and market power are abandoned; they are merely assembled in different ways for two main reasons.

First, although the central state may prefer using hierarchical power as a legitimate policy tool, a poor level of public acceptance of its decisions might lead to policy failure. Policy failure is often attributed to a complex and fragmented modern society that doesn’t respond well to centralised, hierarchal control associated with representative government (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003). Instead, multiple actors must be involved and engaged in decision-making. The
benefit of the governance approach is that it assumes that no single actor can address or solve many societal and policy problems (Kooiman, 2002). Governance engenders cooperation among actors, making the actor assemblage theoretically better equipped to deal with “wicked policy problems” that exhibit characteristics of complexity, intractability, contestation, and multiple causes and effects (Rittel & Webber, 1973).

Second, in advanced Western democracies, governments have been keen to withdraw from interventionist action — a process commonly associated with the roll-back of the state (Rose, 1999). Limited government intervention and withdrawal from some areas of service provision reflects a governmental preference for using economic measures to allocate public resources, a process that has resulted in the privatisation of some government enterprises. However, economic measures have not always produced desired policy outcomes, the result of market failure (Schmitter, 2002). Therefore, the governance approach theoretically offers an alternative solution to organising collective needs and action by facilitating the horizontal coordination of public and private actors while dispersing power to multiple centres where authority and resources can be pooled (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003).

Involving multiple public and private actors in horizontal power sharing arrangements is often referred to as networked governance (Brown & Keast, 2003). The use of networked governance arrangements can demonstrate the independencies between public, private, and voluntary actors as a new form of ordered rule and collective action. An aim and outcome has also been the blurring of boundaries between public, private, and voluntary sectors (Stoker, 1998).
Networked governance will be examined in more theoretical detail later in this chapter and its practical application to NRM will be examined in the next chapter. For now, the preceding discussion has established that the governance process ostensibly aims to move government closer to the people by providing greater and institutionalised opportunities for participation in the political and policy processes. In turn, it is expected that this will mean that government is able to better reflect the goals and preferences of citizens (Barnett & Low, 2004; Catt & Murphy, 2003).

Governance can be conceptualised as the arrangements by which power is shared between government and its citizens, and the way societal preferences are articulated and organised. Citizen participation is translated to action by providing increased opportunities for public, private, and voluntary sector involvement in strategic decision-making and service delivery that were once the realm of government (Shucksmith, 2009; Stoker, 1998). Some guiding principles for governance have been decentralisation, subsidiarity, representation, and openness (Dahl, 1989).

In order to understand the translation of participation in governance, it is useful to consider some guiding ideologies influencing contemporary ideas of collective socio-political organisation and action. These ideologies relate to broader liberal theories of democracy outlined earlier in this chapter. The way societal preferences are considered in democratic theory reflects the different governance modes or systems of organising governance.
Organising for governance

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism has had a significant impact on forms of organising for contemporary governance. Neoliberalism focuses on the market and use of economic instruments as a process for governing individuals and the collective (Rose, 1999). Rather than direct government intervention, neoliberalism seeks to mobilise non-government actors in governance as a form of indirect rule (Peck, 2004).

Critiques leveled at neoliberalism as a market-based governance mode include its individualistic tendencies and the privileging of economic interests (Cheshire & Lawrence, 2005). In particular, the liberal model makes a universal claim that underlying human preferences, motivation, and behavior as being based on self-interest, and that beyond the individual, groups are also made up of sectional or vested interests (Etzioni, 1985; Miller, 1999). These critiques, when coupled with the roll-back of the state, go some way toward explaining the current preference for governing community over a geographically diffuse, self-interested, and socially fragmented society (Cheshire & Lawrence, 2005; Rose, 1999).

Social fragmentation is said to have resulted in the loss of community that has occurred through societal modernisation including globalisation, technological advancement, and the proliferation of different groups in society (Giddens, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Connections to place are no longer as strong as they once were as the populace has grown and become more mobile. In order to redress social connection and fragmentation problems, communitarians advance the reinvention
of communal values and practices through the creation of a reinvigorated civil society.

**Communitarianism**

As a form of social and political order, modern communitarianism shares some of the ideas and attitudes of conservatism and its modern incarnation in neoliberalism. Contemporary communitarians such as Etzioni (1985) and Putnam (2000) have drawn on traditional conservative philosophies often ascribed with the Catholic Church (Bellah, 1995). As socio-political philosophies, both communitarians and conservatives have sought to build institutions in civil society associated with authority, morality, stability, continuity, and tradition. These institutions are seen as an alternative to state authority and economic individualism.

Although some communitarians may partly support the neoliberal view, overall they argue that as societies grow in size and complexity they are becoming more fragmented and less oriented toward common ways of life (Putnam, 2000). The communitarian solution to societal fragmentation advances community as an old and tested form of order, which as the reinvigorated site of social activity can temper liberalism’s individualistic and interest-based tendencies. As a contrast to liberalism, communitarian organisation and action focuses on unique and particular aspects as well as social attachments to place and groups of people (Etzioni, 1995).

Communities are made-up of people with shared or common values, goals, and norms, and these people also share a moral responsibility towards each other.
Under the communitarian doctrine, a whole-of-community view can be achieved by giving citizens opportunities for more direct participation in democratic processes where they will balance individual interests against the community as a whole while engaged in debate (Low, 1999). Therefore, community, according to democratic theory, is often normatively associated with the notion of common good (Habermas, 1996b).

Demonstrable linkages can be made between different strands of liberalism such as neoliberalism and communitarianism. For instance, Bellah (1995) accepts the state and market as key elements of liberal societies and is not opposed to free-market neoliberalism or welfare state liberalism. Instead, a democratic communitarianism is advanced as an approach to common problems. Democratic communitarianism as framework of values posits that:

1. individualism is important, but individual aspirations can only be realised in and through communities that are strong, healthy, and morally vigorous;
2. communities are characterised by solidarity and reciprocity;
3. communities can form and reach beyond small-scale organisation through the process of common association, and therefore individuals can belong to many communities, which is a positive good;
4. participation in community is both a right and a duty; and
5. by drawing on the principle of subsidiarity, groups closest to the problem should attend to it, receiving help from higher levels groups only if necessary (Bellah, 1995).

As part of the response to state and market failure, the democratic modernisation process has brought together elements of neoliberalism and
communitarianism under the auspices of the “third way” (Giddens, 1998). The third way has been a particularly influential governing mode in advanced western democracies throughout Europe and in Australia.

**Organising a third way: Hybrid governance**

The third way has been described as a form of politics and governing mode that incorporates an amalgam of free market neoliberalism and morally responsible communitarianism as “. . . a way to reframe society” (Rose, 2000, p. 1395). As a hybrid governance mode, the third way of governing is seen as a response to the increasingly plural and fragmented stakeholder society where powerful individuals, groups, and other interests are able to dominate the political and policy process (Catt & Murphy, 2003). The third way is centered on a preference for governing community over society because, as Rose (1999) puts it, “. . . government through community” (p. 176) means government and its programs can be tailored towards collective identification and existence in a variety of different communities.

According to Cheshire & Lawrence (2005), governing through community “. . . encourages citizens to align themselves with the broader socio-political objectives of late capitalism in order to secure competitive advantages for the community(ies) that command their allegiance” (p. 436). In their critical assessment of the shift to governing community, Cheshire and Lawrence regard community as not so much a space for critical action and alternative politics; instead, it is a moral site for engendering particular liberal values that produce new modes of rule for social and economic relations.
Therefore, the third way of governing has encouraged economic growth, development, and entrepreneurship coupled with social and environmental justice, social responsibility, and community-based ethics (Amin, 2005). It’s governing mode appeals and aspires to a normative social contract of moral responsibility, mutual obligation, and power sharing between governments and their citizens. Citizens as subjects are given agency or capacity to address potential policy or market failures. Subjects are to be understood and governed as collective entities:

. . . as citizens, not of societies as national collectives, but of neighborhoods, associations, regions, networks, sub-cultures, age groups, ethnicities, and lifestyle sectors – in short, communities (Rose, 2000, p. 1398).

Communities are not only collective entities, but interactive spaces in a normative civil society into which the individual can be aggregated and made a responsible subject. As Rose observes further on the designation of citizen as subject in unified communities:

. . . the subject is addressed as a moral individual with bonds of obligation and responsibilities for conduct that are assembled in a new way – the individual in his or her community is both self-responsible and subject to certain emotional bonds of affinity to a circumscribed network of other individuals – unified by family ties, by locality, by a moral commitment to environmental protection or animal welfare (Rose, 1999, p. 176).

Therefore, the aspirational social contract can be achieved only by governing through communities in which active citizenship, social solidarity, and government-community partnerships result in social progresses toward a civil society. In this sense, the politics of the third way aspires to form “. . . new relationships between individuals and community, a redefinition of rights and obligation with a motto of no rights without responsibilities as an ethical principle” (Giddens, 1998, p. 65). In terms of the third way, civil society is the
space where individuals form uncoerced or voluntary associations and establish plural relations based on affinity and common interest outside the formal structures of government (Giddens, 1998; Putnam, 2000).

**Civil society capital and community**

To enhance the possibility for a civil society as a normative value and a deepened democratic practice, public processes must be open and accountable (Fung & Wright, 2001). Social change can be achieved through devolution and volunteerism in civil society which plays a role in the societal reform agenda by cultivating human and social capital. Human capital is defined in terms of collective intellect and knowledge, and social capital relationships of trust, connectedness and exchange within social groups and networks of interaction. It is the social relations between people, communities, and society that allow them to act collectively and share knowledge, skills, and learning (Giddens, 1998; Putnam, 2000).

Social capital is central to the practice of community. Social capital is located in individuals, social relationships, collectives, and networks of interaction that act as a resource for social action (Putnam, 2000). As a concept, social capital gives centrality to local place as the locus for community. Community is realised through active participation and exchange in civil society associations where bonds of solidarity reinforce ties in intra-community networks (bonding social capital), and can bridge or link actors across extra-community networks (bridging social capital) (Amin, 2005; Putnam, 2000).
While community and social capital are often accepted as being linked by academics, policy makers, and policy implementers (Adams & Hess, 2001), some of those connections may be questionable (Bryson & Mowbray, 2005). In their critique of the coupling of community and social capital Bryson & Mowbray (2005) note that the shift to community has been an attempt to simplify social structure and social phenomena. Simplification has been popular with policy makers because the communitarian view offers a low cost solution based on rational collective choice and has “. . . the appearance of giving legitimacy to the non-legitimate, viz that locally based activities can solve fundamental problems . . .” (Bryson & Mowbray, 2005, p. 101).

Many elements of the communitarian view tend to stress the normative or value-based characteristics of the community that have been widely applied in the practice of community development and place-based management (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Reddel, 2002). Although concepts like social capital have been widely embraced, some critics point to a dark side, or an uncivil society (Lován, Murray, & Shaffer, 2004), where issues of difference are poorly recognised. Simplification of social structure fails to account for and address different forms of societal organisation (such as citizens, communities, and civil society organisations), their social capacity (socio-economic, cultural, and physical capacity to participate), their agency as both capacity to act (skills, time, and confidence) and motivation to act (for different economic and power-based ends) all of which can present barriers for good policy outcomes (Bryson & Mowbray, 2005).
Nonetheless, the contemporary public policy discourse is framed around government-community partnerships, community renewal, and capacity building by harnessing and protecting the local sphere and its initiatives and by involving the third sector (or community sector) to bring about a renewal of civil society (Adams & Hess, 2001). Community in third way governing is therefore seen as a fundamental precondition for local renewal and for exerting downward pressure on other community members. The feeling of community is generated in small groups of people with similar concerns, whose agency resides primarily with both the social collective and the moral voice of community (Giddens, 1998). However, social simplification has meant that social formations other than those traditionally associated with community have been recast in the guise of community.

**Organising community boundaries**

While the division between government and civil society seems relatively clear in terms of a state-non state actor, the boundaries between different groups and other forms of organisation in civil society are not obvious (Amin 2005). The community of the third way sits somewhere between government and the private sector, but it also sometimes encompasses the private sector. For government, it is both a space to be governed and self-governing without government (Herbert-Cheshire, 2006).

Thus community has assumed preeminent status in contemporary studies of state-society interactions. According to Amin (2005), community has been designated as the new social, the local, and the site for social and economic
regeneration. Public participation results in a sense of community, trust, civic regard, and active citizenship. However, community in its modern sense is not just something that is easily identifiable or out-there. Instead, community as a third space has to be made-up. “Boundaries and distinctions are to be emplaced, these spaces have to be visualised, mapped surveyed and mobilized” (Rose, 1999, p. 189).

Community boundaries and distinctions are not always clear in hybrid governance. The blurring of boundaries between the public and private sectors is a stated aim and outcome of governance (Stoker, 1998). Blurring has resulted in new and imagined spaces. For example, the rise of the third sector has been seen as a space somewhere between the free market economy and public sector, sometimes known as the social economy (Giddens, 1998). To complicate matters terms such as the third sector, civil society, and community are often used synonymously (Lovan, et al., 2004).

The community of the third way can be regarded a constructed space, both real and imagined. According to Rose:

The community of the third sector, the third space, the third way of governing is not primarily a geographical space, a social space, a sociological space, although it may attach itself to any or all such spatializations. It is a moral field binding people into durable relations. It is a space of emotional relationships through which individual identities are constructed through their bonds of micro-cultures of values and meanings (Rose, 1999, p. 172).

Therefore the challenge for governance is to mobilise those identities and bonds to govern through community.
Community experts

Community and civil society are advanced as meaningful organising concepts due to the apparent naturalness of associations between actors. As a third way of governing, the “technologies of community” are mobilised through creating new forms of authority by enrolling experts in community (Rose, 1999). Those experts are able to provide advice on community values and how to govern communities as self-managing entities. Therefore to govern communities, connections must be made to those who have, or claim to have, moral authority in the community (Rose, 1999).

Organising experts to speak for communities is perceived as enhancing the legitimacy of governance. Experts can bring professional knowledge and expertise, community knowledge on local problems, and leaders who can represent and engage their groups. Bringing community expertise to governance arrangements is seen as underpinning legitimate decisions, giving legitimacy to problems, and elevating leaders to a legitimate position of speaking for others. The process of legitimation secures the consent of the governed through procedural or input-oriented legitimation. On the other hand, output or functional legitimation can be achieved though policy outcomes which meet public needs and wants (Boedeltje & Cornips, 2004).

However, a lack of definitional consistency and boundary blurring on presupposed social formations such as civil society, community, and the third sector have led to concerns about who gets to legitimately participate in governance. This raises the question, who has a legitimate claim to authority in the community? Legitimacy concerns have led to calls for:
new techniques of legitimation such as focus groups, citizen juries, boards of directors chosen to represent different sectors and interests, partnerships of all sorts between public and private, profit and not for profit organisations, professional and lay person, political institutions and voluntary organisations, new hybrid mechanisms, more flexible and close to local needs (Rose, 2000, p. 1405).

In terms of organising to meet local needs, ecological communitarians have a particular perspective on environmental or ecological modes of governance.

**Ecological communitarianism**

Political and social ecologies are fields of study guided by ecological principles which seek to understand inadequacies with existing political, social, and economic institutions. Although sometimes focused on small social units with non-authoritarian structures and high levels of participation that devolve power to people at the local scale (Hay, 2002), they recognise that political foresight and will are often lacking to address large scale environmental problems (Walker, 1994). Grassroots harmonious relationships and action at relatively small social and spatial scales sit at the centre of the communitarian ideologies of social and political ecologies (Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2003; Dryzek, 2000; Robbins, 2004).

Political ecology is particularly concerned with democratic processes that seek to understand decisions that communities make about the environment and how unequal relations affect the environment, its management, and transformation (Robbins, 2004). Any democratic or ecological deficits can be addressed by extending “. . . the understanding and boundaries of the moral community to
include both the human and biotic community” (Eckersley, 2004, p. 10). Such a process is said to result in a redefinition of the political boundaries of governance.

Although similar to social and political ecologies, from a bioregional perspective it is argued that human-environment interactions should not solely focus on issues of morality (Sale 1985). Instead issues of scale are more important, with the bioregional vision framed in terms of connections between human and natural components that form part of a larger holistic community (Hay, 2002). Connections and interactions in this context can be achieved at a limited or local scale. Structures are sufficiently small where they can be controlled and used by individuals for the purpose of empowerment (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006).

The bioregional vision is that socio-political units should be focused on living in place, with the natural world determining the boundaries of regions and communities (Sale, 1985). Place is the primary organising principle for bioregional approaches with small scale autonomous local communities of between 5,000 and 10,000 people the desirable political unit for trading, networking, and sharing resources with each other (Hay, 2002). Both the ecological and bioregional perspectives emphasise shared power to the people and deliberation over issues. Differences are settled and courses of action taken within local communities.

Communicative and deliberative democracy based on Habermas’ (1984) theory of communicative action are proposed as a way of bringing a number of

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7 Dahl (1989) argues for a political community of 50,000-200,000 as a desirable unit in the United States to make effective citizenship possible but large enough to retain authority over a broader agenda of important areas for government such as education, planning, development, etc.
societal actors together where differences can be discussed, information exchanged, and collective issues addressed (Dryzek, 2000; Habermas, 1984). Participatory and direct democracy\(^8\) have also been linked with attempts to engage in more ecologically informed styles of democracy and governance. Ecological democracy has attempted to counter the failings of liberal democracy in considering or meeting the rights and needs of both the human community and biotic community (also referred to as non-human nature) under the paradigm of sustainable development policy (Dryzek, 2000; Ekersley, 2004).

The notion of community is central to participatory democracy and is often regarded as local and place-based. However, Dryzek (2000) argues that confining democratic processes to predefined communities, spanning community boundaries, or undertaking consultation where no established community is present are challenges for democracy. Moreover, Kenny (1996) proposes that community has some inherently undemocratic implications as a local scale and bounded entity. For example, not all local community members may have equal status and those outside community boundaries are excluded.

Due to social complexity, spatial diffusion, definitional controversy, blurred boundaries, and legitimacy concerns, involvement in governance by the populace can be problematic for those designing governance arrangements. For governance to be successful it must provide opportunities for citizen input and represent a range of societal interests while producing desired policy outcomes. Bringing actors together to discuss and even contest issues, advance ideas, and participate in making binding decisions are critical processes in governance.

\(^8\) For an analysis of different forms of democracy such as direct versus representative democracy see Dryzek (2000)
(Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003). Clearly defining who gets to participate remains a challenge in governance design.

**Participation, public policy, and hybrid governance**

Governance is about managing a network of actor interactions (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). In terms of public policy, governments make policy but often require the input and support of a number of actors. Therefore, public policy can be influenced by a variety of actors comprising individuals and organised groups (Dovers, 2005; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). For instance, Pal (1992) has suggested that actors in policy processes can be categorised as:

1) governmental to include political parties, ministries, and government agencies;
2) associational organisations or pressure groups such as peak bodies and professional associations; and
3) the attentive public comprising interested individuals.

Public participation in the policy process is important for addressing and integrating public concerns, needs, and values that help improve the quality of decision-making (Creighton, 2005). However, participation and who is involved will differ depending on the phase of the policy cycle (Figure 2.1).
Public participation might be considered in terms of the public, civil society, and communities. Dovers (2005) defines the public as all those within a jurisdiction affected by a public policy and decisions of the government, or who might be regarded as citizens. Dovers defines civil society as the level of society between the general public and state made up of organised groups that represent a defined interest and participate in political and policy debates. Finally, he sees communities participating in terms of local place-based collections of people, or communities of recognisable groups defined by commonality of interest (Dovers, 2005). The question for me is how the organised groups of civil society are separated from communities of recognisable groups. I can only assume that they are less organised.

The timing of participation may also differ. For instance, the general public, interest groups, and local communities may be involved in problem identification whereas local communities may be involved in policy
implementation and evaluation (Bridgman & Davis, 2004). The degree of input and influence over policy therefore varies according to the stage of policy cycle and the participatory techniques being used.

Participation in governmental processes such as policy formulation and implementation can take a variety of forms, with power sharing arrangements ranging from placation to self-determination. Participatory techniques may vary from informing, consultation, collaboration, partnership up to actual decision-making and control (Arnstein, 1969; Bishop & Davis, 2002). The techniques used determine if public involvement, participation, and engagement occur. However, these techniques and their outcomes are not the same. For instance, the public can be informed, consulted, and involved, but it does not necessarily follow that they are engaged. Engagement implies direct involvement in a process and shaping an outcome, such as decision-making and implementing an action (Brown & Keast, 2003; Reddel & Woolcock, 2004).

A further differentiation can be made between governance arrangements and participatory processes that are state-led or community-led (Rockloff & Moore, 2006). A middle way is the government-community partnership that involves government and non-government actors such as citizens and interest groups in all aspects of governmental decision-making. Non-government actors typically influence decisions rather than make them, with common participatory or procedural instruments for policy formulation and implementation being deliberative forums, advisory boards, committees, and policy communities (Bridgman & Davis, 2004: Howlett, 2000).
**Participatory instruments: Advisory groups**

Deliberative forums are associated with more participatory or direct forms of democracy. They are used as participatory instruments to deal with democratic deficits such as limits to participation, representation, information flow, and accountability in policy processes (Bishop & Davis, 2002). Governments may create these forums to bring together different social perspectives and claims from “... disparate actors such as culprits and beneficiaries, experts, laypeople, indigenous, and ‘settler’ communities into an open and constructive democratic dialogue aimed at reaching broad social consensus” (Eckersley, 2003, p. 492). These forums are sometimes known as advisory committees, stakeholder groups, and policy communities.

Advisory committees or advisory groups\(^9\) have a long pedigree in public policy. As early as the 1970’s\(^10\) the international experience shows advisory committees emerged at all levels of governments, in private enterprise, and in the public arena, to perform a variety of tasks ranging from decision-making to administration (Brown, 1973). Their emergence as an institutional arrangement to structure public input into public policy processes in the United Stated led to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (1972) which governs the operation of government advisory committees.

Governments and their agencies form advisory groups comprising individuals considered to represent various groups, interests, points of view, and fields of expertise. These groups can be used in forums to deliberate on issues and

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\(^9\) This term will be used throughout the thesis to include reference to advisory committees.

\(^10\) See Howlett (2000) for an overview from the 1970’s onwards of procedural policy instruments in modern governance.
advise government on its programs and proposed actions (Bridgman & Davis, 2004). According to Creighton (2005) advisory groups are effective in
government-community relations because they can provide:

1. a cross-sample of public views and concerns;
2. information to group members about issues and the consequences of
decisions;
3. a place where personal relationships develop within the group leading
to a deeper understanding of the concerns of others;
4. a means for moderating more extreme views; and
5. a communications link, through groups participants back to the
constituents they represent.

However, enrolling representatives and assembling groups in these groups
raises questions about who can speak for the public or community (Bridgman &
Davis, 2004) and what are these people are representing (Hendriks, 2009). For
instance, there may be a particular bias towards specific interest groups. This
raises concerns that forums can be subject to domination by the powerful who
articulate sectional or vested interests and who may be privileged in governance
design (Eckersley, 2003).

As instruments of democratic modernisation these groups raise a number of
issues. For example, issues about who gets to participate, and whether they act as
representatives of an interest group or whether they are expected to be
representative of the public or a particular community (Barnes, Newman, Knops,
& Sullivan, 2003). Therefore, in assembling advisory groups the question is one
of representation or representativeness (Munton, 2003).
Dovers (2005) has observed that a crucial variable in participatory governance design is representativeness. He suggests that a pitfall in participatory approaches is that a subset of a community might be engaged but not adequately represent the full range of interests. As the concept of community is scaled-up beyond local administrative areas, for instance to the region, representativeness has become a major issue for participation (Broderick, 2005). This can be a particular problem at higher levels of policy participation where governments select the range of organised interests under a corporatist model of participation. For instance, “Government appointees to management boards or advisory committees may or may not reflect the relevant communities or be viewed as representative by those communities” (Dovers, 2005, p. 154).

Questions over the way appointees are expected to, or can, act, and for whom, can be raised by those inside and outside the participatory arrangement. Appointees’ ability to speak or act for others raises legitimacy concerns, especially if appointees act as informal representatives in the sense that they are not publically elected, and their role is not clear (Hendriks, 2009). Without such a democratic mandate, individuals cannot represent or be representatives of groups in society (Dovers, 2005).

In terms of informal representation, Hendriks (2009) distinguishes between substantive and descriptive representation. Under substantive representation, “...the role of the informal representative is to act for the interests of their constituents. In descriptive representation the representative does not act for others, but stands for them” (Hendriks, 2009, p. 691). In descriptive
representation the emphasis is on whether a representative reflects the diversity of demographic characteristics of those being represented such as age, gender, ethnicity, and so on. Descriptive representation may also be symbolic where representatives are emblematic of, and can defend, the interests of a particular group, for instance minority groups such as indigenous people. The symbolic representation of a diversity of actors and interests helps secure the democratic legitimacy of advisory groups (Hendriks, 2009).

Actors can assume different roles depending on policy goals and the stage of a policy cycle. In policy development and implementation (refer to Figure 2.1) those involved is providing public advice are sometimes known as policy champions, facilitators, or entrepreneurs (Hemple 1996). They can be scientists, industry leaders, lobbyists, local government councilors, or community group leaders who are useful for facilitating and coordinating coalitions and action in response to a policy problem. However, they can also exploit events to focus on their own interests, for instance using the media to promote their views. They may even act as policy saboteurs who block policy and its implementation. Nonetheless, their leadership is often perceived to be instrumental for influencing policy in ways that facilitate change and action (Hemple, 1996).

In large scale public policy initiatives, actors may not seek to govern in their own right. Instead, actors may come together for a variety of reasons and in an array of different assemblages. For example, government may be seeking ideas or an understanding of what a particular part of the public/community is thinking; pressure and interests groups may want to put a particular perspective forward for their collective members; groups and individuals might be seeking information on
the aims and progress in policy process; and individuals and groups come together in public policy subsystems as policy communities and policy networks (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

Networked governance and third way boundaries

Policy communities can be related to self-governing networks that are not involved only in influencing government policy but also “... taking over the business of government” (Stoker, 1998, p. 23). They often comprise elite actors with leadership roles in their communities and also have an established role in making choices and governing decisions for their locality. The dilemma for community leaders is accountability to individual constituents and those excluded from the network. Networks are to a degree exclusive and self-interested, and that can be overcome by bringing back government in some form (Stoker, 1998) such as by including department or agency personnel to represent the public interest.

The concept of the network is useful in helping to understand why individuals come together to exert influence. In theory, the value of networks is an ability to cross boundaries. Networks also provide the opportunity for information exchange and relationship building opportunities (Rhodes, 2001). However, on the downside, polarisation between individuals, groups, and organisations may occur within the broader network (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

At a general level, policy networks are said to encompass a set of government and non-government actors that are related, mutually dependent, and connected, possibly through resource dependencies (Cloke, Milbourne, &
Policy networks can be considered as a form of interest intermediation, or as a specific mode of governance. The network model of interest intermediation is considered an alternative to pluralism or corporatism in which interdependencies are established between actors and their interests (Ferreyra et al., 2008; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

Policy networks may also provide a greater ability for power sharing among government and non-government actors, thus transforming the way public policy is made and implemented (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998). In the network sense, the policy process is conceptualised as a multi-level network of interdependent actors who are engaged in interactions of problem definition, negotiation, and collaboration (Cloke et al., 2000). This form of networked governance is a way of managing actor structures and processes to provide an alternative to markets and state-based hierarchies (Ferreyra, et al., 2008).

Networked governance might even be considered a fourth way of bringing together the state, market, and civil society actors to articulate and address wicked policy problems. In terms of participatory effectiveness, policy communities and networked governance need to:

- identify the relevant actors,
- understand the motivations and beliefs of actors,
- assess the resources of actors, and
- negotiate with actors within a particular arena (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Rhodes, 2001).
In terms of governance arrangements, there are clearly difficulties in mediating relations between public interests and the state. Pluralism is a group model in which interests compete for advantage. Corporatism is a cooperative model where decision-making provides room for negotiation and compromise for those groups privileged in political design (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003). The network and partnership are seen as alternative modes of governance beyond the state and market. The network can be conceptualised in terms of vertical interactions between levels of authority (e.g., governments) and horizontal interactions among different actors sharing similar authority, or vying for it (e.g., interest groups). In common pool resource theory, these governance arrangements are sometimes referred to as multi-level governance and polycentric governance (Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Ostrom, 1999, 2002). In particular, coordinated interaction between public and civil society actors is associated with more participatory forms of governance in polycentric governance arrangements (Schmitter, 2002).

The concept of participatory governance is increasingly popular as a means of capturing the concepts of participation, governance, and engagement as a governance arrangement (Reddel & Woolcock, 2004). In participatory development, participatory governance is described as a cross-sectoral partnership where arrangements focus on devolved responsibility, participation, and development partnerships. Participatory governance is seen as a process of actively involving stakeholders in decision-making to deepen and broaden participation (Eversole & Martin, 2005).

While participatory governance can be advanced to address democratic deficits such as limited interest representation, it also increases problem of complexity and
politics (Bishop & Davis, 2002). Despite the fact that these problems are obvious, the role played by representatives for citizens and stakeholders is not clear cut. Moreover, ‘. . . a crucial matter of controversy concerns how affected stakeholders are to be defined’ (Schmitter, 2002, p. 57). Stakeholders are presumed to have a right to participate, are affected in some way by decisions and outcomes, and play a role in negotiating policy and its implementation.

From a policy and public administration perspective, Reddel and Woolcock (2004) differentiate citizen engagement as influence in decision-making whereas participatory governance is an active collaboration between civil society, the private sector, and governments. Lovan et al (2004) conceive policy in terms of the state, market, and associational sectors. These authors see civil society and the associational sector as inseparable in participatory governance. As the third way of governing society, they feel:

. . . there is a growing appreciation for the idea of civil society based on communal relations, dutiful citizenship in the form of obligation to others and partnerships between the associational sector, the state, and the market. Active participation by the public is an intrinsic feature of the public service ethos. Civil society has the potential to confront uncertainty and disillusionment and be the engine for civic renewal (Lovan, et al., 2004: 8).

The definition proposed by Lovan et al alludes to the popularity of participatory governance in third way circles and the need to draw on human and social capital in civil society as a means for providing better collaborative efforts, actions, and policy outcomes (Giddens, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Schmitter (2002) believes that participation in governance consists of the horizontal interactions that provide for “. . .a regular and guaranteed presence when making binding decisions of representatives of those collectives that will be affected by the policy adopted (p. 56)” . Those who participate are largely associated with civil society.
What seems apparent from this discussion is that social collectives can take various forms and are hard to define. They can comprise citizens, stakeholders, geographic communities, civil society associations, cultural groups, indigenous people, and variations thereof. Interestingly, all or most collective forms of organisation might be associated with the notion of community in contemporary society.

Revisiting social order and community theory

Community as a concept has a long tradition in social and political theory. Traditional theories of social organisation and action differentiate between community and society, with community considered to be a social assemblage structured around a sense of belonging and affective ties to place. While society can be regarded as the sum total of social interactions, over time this distinction seems to have been translated to concepts such as communities of place and communities of interest. Furthermore, a distinction can also be drawn between communities in theory as homogenous social order and interaction, or communities as disharmony, limited face-to-face interaction and unidentifiable size (Brint, 2001). It appears that those advocating homogenous and cohesive “whole of community” approaches fail to adequately consider and account for social, cultural, and spatial differences and power relationships (Benhabib, 1996; Harvey, 1996). In its contemporary sense, the concept of community (or communities) is concurrently both a theoretical construct and empirical phenomenon (Brint, 2001).
In contemporary socio-political theory, the corporatist model of citizen aggregation has come to represent social order in representative democracies such as Australia. Here the interest group and community have been connected to represent individual alliances as being collective, which are in turn perceived to be representative of citizen preferences (Dryzek, 2000; Streeck & Schmitter, 1985). Associative democracy and hybrid governance have coupled voluntary association with personal choice and sense of community as a way to articulate divergent interests in society (Achterberg, 1996). This corporative-associative order is based primarily on interaction within and between interdependent social and political groups and how their interests are affected (Streeck & Schmitter, 1985).

Theorists of communitarianism and the third way have recast community as an ideal ethos to temper liberalism’s individualism. The conceptualisation of community within the third way as a hybrid mode of governance is tied to communal identity, moral responsibility, and mobilising human and social capital. However, there are various social formations and constructs beyond community, with the discourse of the public, stakeholders, and civil society organisations largely subsumed within the discourse of community (Catt & Murphy, 2003). Definitional controversies with community as an organising concept have led to some well-known paradoxes that include community as one-many, normative-descriptive, real-imagined, scale-level; place-interest, standalone-networked (Anderson, 1983; Kenny, 1996; Rose, 1999).

Whether a construct or empirical phenomenon, a place or interest, something real or imagined — communities are in favour with governments. The governance perspective provides a way of theorising about blurred boundaries
such as those between the public and private sectors, and civil society and community. These structures and their activities pose important questions about the changing nature of power, decision-making, and actor interactions in networked governance (Cloke et al., 2000; Stoker, 1998).

How the public is perceived in governance often reflects perceived group commonalities, preferences, and representativeness. Community can be conceptualised as an inherently political entity. The politics of community is encapsulated and characterised by groups of actors struggling to live in a particular way or act in the perceived public interest (Kemmis, 1990). The contest and negotiation of ideas, meanings, knowledge, and interests is often considered a form of community micro-politics (Herbert-Cheshire, 2006; Kenny, 1996; McAreavey, 2006; Pirie, 1988).

Tied up in the micro-political struggle, Fraser (2005) posits that while community might be place-based, interest-based, or even circumstance-based, difficulties emerge when teasing out how communities are identified, the way groups inter-relate, and how power, conflict, and decision-making are characterised. Community can therefore, take on a diversity of identities, meanings, and practices. Although often used as a means to simplify social structure, in its many guises it adds extra layers of complexity to social structure (Liepens, 2000a, 2000b). Rather than considering communities as a normative and homogenised construct, groups structured around notions of difference may better reflect the diversity of modern society and the status of those group members (Benhabib, 1996; Harvey, 1996; Young, 1989).
Conclusion

In this chapter I have revealed community to be a heterogeneous, complex, and potentially contested organising concept in contemporary society and public policy. In the next chapter I apply those insights to the social formations and practices of NRM. In doing so I aim to consider how community theory and practice might play out in environment and sustainability policy.
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Chapter 3
APPLYING COMMUNITY THEORY TO NRM PRACTICE

Introduction

In the previous chapter I reviewed the general theoretical development of societal organisation and community using perspectives from sociology, human geography, and political studies. This review established that the concept of community in contemporary governance is linked with third way or hybrid modes of governance. In this chapter I apply the critical review of community and governance theory from Chapter 2 to the NRM literature. The aim of this chapter is to explore the application and practice of community theory to NRM.

Community and organising for NRM

Third way modes of governance promote the active participation of communities and civil society organisations as the site for social association and democratic renewal (Rose, 2000). The third way mode of governance, when applied to NRM, also means that “...community describes a collective entity that plays a simultaneous role in establishing ethical standards and collective identities” (Lane et al., 2008, p. 1307). Active citizen participation in social groups and government initiatives has been described as a new paradigm for fostering the strong involvement and collaboration between civil society organisations and
Consequently, an increased role for interested citizens, non-government organisations (NGOs) such as not-for-profit agencies and voluntary groups, and local communities in public deliberation is a feature of contemporary NRM policy. These individuals, organisations, and groups may also participate and collaborate in service delivery and community development, as well as in building a culture of civic engagement (Moore, 2005; Summerville et al., 2008). Community involvement and collaboration have been mainly at local and regional scales (Lockwood & Davidson, 2010).

The success or failure of collaborative NRM processes is said to lie in existence of the “civic community” (Lubell, Sabatier, Vedlitz, Focht, Trachtenberg, & Matlock, 2005, p. 271). The notion of the civic community draws on third way and ecological communitarian ideals of a social order including association and self-determination. Here citizens are activated as agents on issues of common welfare, engagement in community associations, tolerance to opposing views, generalised trust, and egalitarian relationships. These characteristics of the civics model emphasise collective intelligence and education (human capital), social relationships and networks (social capital), individuals influencing political decisions, a belief in the power of collective action, and legitimacy as moral acceptability of particular policy institutions (Lubell et al., 2005).
Furthermore, the civics model is said to be oppositional to one of self-interest. Under the civics model collective organisation and action are both ends in themselves, and a means to better policy outputs such as plan formulation and project implementation (Lubell et al., 2005). In a similar vein, in Australia a normative environmental civics and eco-civic governance has been advanced as a more inclusive public or community-based model that mobilises local residents, different skills, interests, and knowledge from citizens (Brunckhorst & Reeve, 2006; Dovers, 2005). Community-based models have appeal and some application at local scales and for particular local outcomes, but might be limited where multiple scales and levels of social organisation need to be brought together (Marshall, 2008). The application of community-based NRM models at different scales and levels of organisation are investigated in the following section, primarily from the perspective of the Australian experience.

The shift to community-based NRM

In Australia, the shift to a community-based collaborative model for devolved environmental and natural resource management and governance has occurred through the AUS$3 billion Natural Heritage Trust (Lockwood et al., 2009). Up until June 2008, the Natural Heritage Trust has been the dominant response for addressing environmental problems such as land degradation and biodiversity decline in Australia at local and regional scales (Lane & McDonald, 2005). After June 2008, a further AUS$2 billion was earmarked under the new ‘Caring for Country’ (http://www.nrm.gov.au/index.html) NRM program which emphasises
the achievement of national environmental targets. Both NRM programs were founded on the community model\textsuperscript{11}.

The community-based NRM model has been framed around integrated and participatory approaches to conservation and development, as well as to the devolution of power to local communities (Nelson & Pettit, 2004; Ross, Buchy, & Proctor, 2002). According to Lane and McDonald (2005), there are several benefits associated with using the community-based model. These benefits involve integrating and using local social and ecological knowledge, having a greater responsiveness to local contexts and priorities, and providing greater efficiency in policy implementation by harnessing local capacity.

Similarly, Lockwood et al (2009) observe that proponents of the community-based NRM model feel it is more capable of integrating social, environmental, and economic issues; improving investment efficiency; establishing successful power sharing and partnership arrangements; providing on-ground outcomes; and building community capacity and learning than a government or technocratic model. However, as I revealed in the previous chapter, community has not been a stable and easily quantifiable concept in the social sciences. It is therefore unlikely to be any less a problem in NRM.

A common critique of community in NRM is that the concept is often used to portray communities as being unified, organic, and homogeneous wholes. Conceptualising communities this way fails to recognise the complexity, diversity,

\textsuperscript{11} It was beyond the scope of this thesis to provide detailed material on these programs. More extensive information and analysis on the NHT can be found in the work cited here by Lane & McDonald (2005) and Lockwood et al. (2009) and many others. As a relatively new program the Caring for Country web site provides a useful overview of the program background, goals and aims.
and differences found within communities and how these aspects affect NRM outcomes (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Kearney, Berkes, Charles, Pinkerton, & Wiber, 2007; Lane & McDonald, 2005). Theorists who are critical of the community-based model point to limited devolution of power, accountability concerns, stakeholder exclusion, and lack of horizontal and vertical integration (Lockwood et al., 2009; Moore & Rockloff, 2006). Interestingly, although the concept of stakeholder has not been widely used within government NRM programs, in NRM stakeholders are defined as those who are able to affect, or have their interests affected by, NRM decisions and actions (Chevalier, 2001).

The following three contemporary community-based NRM examples are used to explore such issues.

**The Landcare experience**

Landcare has been a major response in Australia to declining environmental and social sustainability, especially in rural areas. As a community-based NRM program, Landcare has focused on land conservation with private landholders and other volunteers in local place-based communities to achieve NRM outcomes, ostensibly as partnerships for collective action and public benefit. Landcare’s approach is largely centered on third sector volunteerism and outcomes based on a logic that creates pathways to civic engagement by encouraging dialogue, learning, and action in the local community. Generating bonding social capital for local scale issues, and bridging social capital to address issues beyond the local scale has been a focus (Curtis et al., 2008; Sobels, 2006).
Landcare has had some success in mobilising local farmers and agricultural enterprises in more sustainable land management. Curtis and Lockwood (1999) suggest that this is because most farmers have a strong land stewardship ethic, and that moral considerations are an important influence on landholder decision-making. These facets of Landcare, coupled with state sponsored community participation, have resulted in widespread public acceptance and legitimation of the program within the rhetoric of devolved power to local people (Lockie, 2000). However, while more sustainable agricultural land management has been a result of some Landcare initiatives, other legitimate outcomes such as biodiversity conservation (Curtis, 2003), or meeting indigenous people’s land management needs, have not been a feature (Lane & Williams, 2009). One reason commonly advanced for such failings has been the need to address such issues in an integrated way at broader or landscape scales (Curtis & Lockwood, 2000).

**Regional land and water management**

Catchment management in Australia, and watershed management in North America, are regarded as holistic, integrated, and coordinated approaches to environmental decision-making for land and water management. They incorporate a range of values, interests, and scales through community bottom-up grassroots participation (Ewing, 2003; Ferreyra et al., 2008; Sneddon, Harris, Dimitrov, & Ozesmi, 2002). These holistic and integrated approaches are premised on the basis that catchments, watersheds, and or/regions have identifiable and distinct communities of place and interest (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005). Integrated catchment management (ICM) has been part of the Australian policy response to ecologically sustainable development, with catchment
management arrangements adopted Australia-wide for natural resource policy-making and implementation. While there is some variability in arrangements from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, catchment management is considered to be “... a community-based collaborative model of governance to address natural resource problems of mutual concern” (Bellamy, Ross, Ewing, & Meppem, 2002, p. vi).

ICM has been a key policy approach for addressing NRM issues associated with ecological scale, socio-political jurisdictions, and human involvement. Human involvement focuses on voluntary place-based participation and action at both local and regional scales. Coordinated biophysical and social outcomes are achieved across landscape scales by government agencies that link places and their communities as a collective (Rockloff & Moore, 2006).

Catchment management is regarded as being a participatory approach where government acts as enabler and facilitator to support a more empowered industry / community alliance that articulates context-dependent catchment strategies. The government-community partnership is regarded as including a broad array of stakeholders. Partnership aims range from information sharing and community acceptance of decisions, to performance-based outcomes such as improving overall catchment health (Head, 2005).

Participation occurs through a representational system at the regional scale “... where members are chosen primarily to represent different stakeholder bodies. An alternative is an expert approach where catchment committees comprise members primarily for their expertise’ (Bellamy et al., 2002, p. vii). The expert approach is often described as a skills-based model that provides a range of
voluntary expertise in areas such as science, farming systems, NRM, governance, and financial management (Curtis et al., 2008).

The catchment partnership and representational system is seen as an inclusive way of involving all those in the community who need to participate and be engaged in decision-making and action (Aslin & Brown, 2004). This has resulted in heavy demands being placed on voluntary non-government members, who either advance themselves or are put forward by others as representative of their community (Bellamy, et al., 2002).

There is recent evidence to suggest that combining the concepts of community and participation may result in less than inclusive arrangements in regional catchment and watershed management. For example, Broderick (2005) found that, although considerable focus has been on farmer participation, there are diverse stakeholders with interests in NRM issues. Recognition of broader identity and interest groups is important for fleshing out a more extensive and inclusive view of community. Moreover, most people do not identify with the concept and boundaries of a regional catchment or watershed community (Broderick, 2005; Ferreyra & Beard, 2007).

To better include those within catchment boundaries, Broderick (2005) suggests that participation must be tailored to particular spatial and social characteristics of a community. However, this is likely to result in a process whereby people who are inside social, ecological, and political boundaries are included in order to articulate their values and interests, while people who are outside those boundaries are not included (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005). This
exclusive process raises questions about representation, fairness, and accountability, while opening up claims for contesting inclusion, articulation, and protection of values and interests (Rockloff & Moore, 2006; Sneddon et al., 2002).

*Forest management*

In NRM around the world, the policy arena of forest conservation and development has been particularly charged. For instance, in Australia powerful conservation and forest industries have been at loggerheads over forest use and conservation for many years (Mercer, 2000). To assist in resolving differences, regional forest agreements (RFAs) have been created. These are intergovernmental agreements between the federal and state governments used to mediate conflicts between divergent values and interests (Stewart & Jones, 2003). Decisions made by governments incorporate ecological, social, and economic values by involving relevant stakeholders such as governments, the community, and industry in consultative processes consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development. Although partnership models and multi-stakeholder committees have been used in some circumstances, the RFA process is regarded as a less than participatory process because to a large extent it involved only the most powerful and vocal stakeholders (Lane, 1999; Mobbs, 2003).

Due to policy shortfalls with the RFA process, community forest management (CFM) has been trialed in Australia as a way of circumventing the dominance of government, industry, and other powerful actors in decision-making. CFM is seen as a more participatory model, conducive to whole-of-forest sustainability and more inclusive of the whole-of-community interests by adopting a bioregional perspective (Nelson & Pettit, 2004). CFM has also been a popular
approach for ecosystems management in developing countries where resources such as forests maybe communally owned, shared, and managed (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Berkes, 2004). However as Flint, Luloff, & Finley (2008) observe, this is rarely the case in developed countries. In developed countries such as Australia, USA, and Canada the goal has been to engage people in collaboration, working towards common goals, and empowering local people and forest users to be involved in practices such as restoring ecosystems and improving local community well-being (Flint et al., 2008; Nelson & Pettit, 2004).

The three examples discussed above demonstrate that community-based NRM models have attempted to engage, integrate, and reconcile different interests, while mobilising a range of knowledge and skills. There has been some success in local communities at small scales such as with local Landcare groups or communally owned resources in developing economies. However, ICM and CFM are examples of complex and emotionally charged NRM policy arenas where a range of geographic, social, environmental, and economic interests are often at odds.

The application of community as an organising concept idea in NRM at broader scales such as the catchment, ecosystem, and landscape has revealed that social identification with place and the concept of community is weak in developed countries. Community may therefore have limited application for addressing problems associated with collective NRM action at these scales (Broderick, 2005; Ferreyra et al., 2008). The problem with community at these scales, as Broderick (2005) observes, is that “Some people define community spatially, some conceptually and some structurally” (p. 292). While it is broadly
recognised that NRM problems often arise from outside local places (for example, upstream water use has an impact on downstream ecosystems and resource users), there remains a need to address and link environment and sustainability problems and issues across multiple social, political, and ecological scales and levels of organisation (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005; Sneddon et al., 2002).

**Multi-scale NRM: River basins**

Community-based NRM beyond the local scale (and often also at the local scale) is concerned with integrating multiple levels of social, political, and spatial actors; vertical and horizontal interactions; and proving multiple outcomes. As discussed briefly in the previous chapter, the process of vertical and horizontal integration is known as multi-level and polycentric governance. This mode of governance is particularly favoured by common pool or shared resource theorists (Berkes, 2004; Neef, 2009; Ostrom, 1990, 2002). Its application to NRM is now explored in more detail.

River basin management is an example of large interactive multi-jurisdictional and multi-scalar NRM. River basins may span different but interrelated social, political, and administrative boundaries such as states, territories, and local municipalities, as well as ecological scales such as the bioregion, watershed, sub-watershed, local area, and patch and combinations thereof. The basin-wide or macro perspective provides some understanding of linked ecological processes, but does not necessarily address different geographical scales, levels of social organisation, interests, historical processes, politics, and micro-interactions (Sneddon et al., 2002).
Networked governance can be applied to NRM as a means of providing social coordination that spans the boundaries of public, private, and voluntary sectors, while also assisting with policy formulation and implementation. Networked arrangements are often described as being polycentric where there are horizontal and vertical relationships between government and non-government actors. Polycentric governance aims to address those relationships by nesting levels and scales, devolving power to local communities and facilitating co-management of resources (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005; Ostrom, 1990, 1999; Rhodes, 1996).

In Australia, Davidson, Lockwood, Curtis, Stratford, & Griffith (2006) note that NRM decentralises strategic planning and delivery responsibilities to the regional level while retaining roles for state and national governments. This has been a feature of new NRM governance arrangements, and attempts to address cross-boundary problems. By establishing polycentric arrangements power is dispersed away from centralised top-down sources to multiple decision-making centres. Power therefore moves across actors and scales in recognition that intelligence is distributed throughout the system (Lockwood, Davidson, Curtis, Stratford, & Griffith, 2010). However, a critique of the devolution model has been a lack of attention to shifts in responsibilities away from government and towards non-government actors. As a result, calls to bring government back in certain cases arise (Bell & Park, 2006).

To bring non-government actors together, Duane (1997) advances the primacy of horizontal networks as power mediating devices between place-based
and interest-based communities. Horizontal networks bring together agents of equivalent status and power, whereas in vertical networks agents have unequal power and are aligned in asymmetrical relations of hierarchy and dependence. For Duane (1997), only the horizontal networks constitute true networks of civic engagement and cooperation.

A challenge for multi-scale NRM and networked governance is connectedness between diverse actors and interests, at different scales and across jurisdictions (Lane et al., 2004). Also, the role of citizens can be limited due to dominant interests within the network, information restrictions, limit to citizen knowledge, conflicts over accountability, transparency, and openness (Chenoweth, Ewing, & Bird, 2002; Lockwood et al., 2010). Bulkeley (2005) believes that social networks may transform space by cutting across boundaries. Supporting this view, Lane et al (2008) suggest that these cross-cutting networks may play an important role in building knowledge or epistemic communities that share a common understanding of public policy issues and problems. However, both these authors note the socio-political nature of these interactions, and point to the need to consider scalar power relations in the context of collective identities and interests.

As I noted in my concluding remarks of the previous chapter, the micro-politics of different beliefs, ideas, knowledges, and interests have to be advanced and negotiated in public policy (McAreavey, 2006; Stewart & Jones, 2003). Governance potentially provides an interactive arena for people to come together, interact, and deliberate over community micro-politics, for example:

1. to present and advocate positions;
2. to make sense of different positions; and
3. in the case of those with environment and sustainability interests, to learn more about the substance of the issues, and how they can be best understood and addressed (Dovers, 2005).

However, interactive and deliberative approaches have not always produced the desired NRM outcomes (Craig & Vanclay, 2005). Failing to address micro-political interactions can limit participation by some actors and stall or hamper outcomes for others. For instance, an unsettling perspective on public participation and consultation is that it can be used for purely political purposes such as an exercise of tokenism, or to legitimise the actions of governments or industry interests (Creighton, 2005; Lane & McDonald, 2005; Lockie, 2000; Wallington, Lawrence, & Loechel, 2008).

As public participation is a necessary precondition for governance, questions arise about who can or should be involved, how, and at what stage in consultative public processes (Catt & Murphy, 2003). There is a potentially a complex array of citizens, groups, organisations, stakeholders, and communities to be involved and roles to be played. Added to that, the boundaries between these entities and the relationship between government and non-government actors’ roles are easily blurred.

**What role for government and non-government actors**

In public policy development and implementation, government might act in a role as an enabler or catalyst by providing leadership, building partnerships, and
promoting participation opportunities. Government’s role is to identify key stakeholders and develop linkages between them, steer relationships to achieve desired outcomes, undertake systems management that thinks and acts beyond local subsystems, avoids unwanted side effects, and coordinates governance structures and processes. Faced with the complexity and autonomy of multi-scale and multi-level governance, governments have a strong tendency to impose order and issue directives in ways that do not move beyond the principle-agent problem (Stoker, 1998).

Mercer (2000) observed that there have been important critiques regarding public participation in environment policy. These critiques include the environmental movement organising along professional corporate lines, disputes that identify categories of stakeholder such as experts and narrow interest groups, and subsequent management of the processes around those lines and interests. Such stakeholder processes can be seen as exclusive. They often marginalise the vast majority of the population as the corporatist model of selective inclusion is designed to suppress opposition, and pays little attention to power imbalances between interests. A potential remedy has been to move away from the interest-based model toward a values-based one. Under the latter model, conservation and development proposals can be evaluated against the “... community good and the agreed community yardstick” (Mercer, 2000, p. 87). Such a model would need some guiding principles for good practice.

**Participatory logic and good governance in NRM**

Collaboration has clearly become the guiding paradigm in NRM where collective problems, and solutions to those problems, can be pursued at a number of socio-
ecological levels and scales (Margerum & Whitall, 2004; Plummer & Armitage, 2007; Singleton, 2002). The state-community partnership has been a way of coordinating public participation to help address NRM issues. As a cooperative approach, that partnership conveys a commitment for sharing power between actors, achieving joint outcomes, and operating on the basis of democratic objectives. The popularity of community collaboration as a discourse in NRM can be attributed to the states’ limited success in coercing citizens into unpopular conservation and development programs (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999) and the appeal of devolving power to familiar forms of social organisation such as communities (Lane & McDonald, 2005). The rationale behind public participation is that people should have a say in decisions that affect their lives (Creighton, 2005; Dovers, 2005).

Community consultation is a policy instrument used to gain stakeholder input or to inform stakeholders about decisions. Consultation rather than genuine engagement in decision-making is cited as producing community involvement failure in NRM (Ross et al., 2002). For example, stakeholders may be able to delay decisions due to them not having a say or being heard (Boully, 2003). Engagement implies stakeholders such as government, business, civil society organisations, and geographic communities have direct involvement in a process and in shaping an outcome (Head, 2005).

An important distinction has been made between outcomes that emerge as part of a policy instrument choice and process, and actual policy objectives (Bishop & Davis, 2002). For example, Webl er and Tuler (2006) differentiate between process-based outcomes and substantive outcomes in participatory
decision-making. Process based outcomes enhance participants’ social capability, for example by improving actors’ skills to participate and understand issues, improve trust between community and government, and mitigate conflict. Substantive outcomes might include a clear plan to achieve outcomes, actual progress on policy objectives with organisations being accountable, and satisfaction with and acceptance of decisions taken (Webler & Tuler, 2006)

By differentiating between participatory process and outcomes in governance arrangements, policy instruments can be enhanced and evaluated. For example, Grant and Curtis (2004) list participatory process criteria as the need for representation of the affected (stakeholders), an ability for them to influence decisions, and the need for constructive interaction between stakeholders (such as getting views across). Participants should have equal opportunities in decision-making and agreed standards for integrating their skills, knowledge, and values. Grant and Curtis list building capacity for future cooperation, addressing individual and collective needs, demonstrating the influence of different knowledges, and the ability to reach an enduring and widely supported plan as substantive participatory outcomes.

Aslin and Brown (2004) advance a set of participation and community engagement criteria based around inclusiveness, representation, networking, equity, trust, scale, and openness. Like Grant and Curtis, they note that process-based issues such as transparency, power sharing and diverse knowledges are important, but they point out that tangible outcomes must also be realised. These outcomes include the extent of power sharing and responsibility for on-ground action. Pitfalls include communities being over involved or democratic deficits
such community members being selectively consulted or involved (Aslin & Brown, 2004).

**Good governance and participatory policy instruments**

Good governance is allied to best practice in public participation. Good governance is particularly relevant to multi-scale NRM where governance actors and arrangements need to be connected across a number of socio-political and socio-ecological scales, levels of socio-political organisation, and industry sectors (Howlett & Rayner, 2006). Good governance arrangements involve issues of power distribution among interdependent actors, representing diverse and geographically diffuse actors, and consultation which leads to stakeholder engagement. A set of principles for good NRM governance have been developed by Davidson et al. (2006) and Lockwood et al. (2010) which are summarised in Table 3.1. Within the table I have noted some key issues for further consideration under each principle.
Table 3.1 — Good NRM governance principles

(adapted from Davidson, et al., 2006; Lockwood, et al., 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</table>
| **Legitimate in the exercise of authority**   | Legitimacy *conferred* by election and legislation. Legitimacy is acquired or *earned* through efforts in leadership, effectiveness in producing outcomes or generating consensus in a constituent group  
*Issues*: representation, transparency and accountability |
| **Inclusive in engaging people affected**      | All those with a stake need to be involved and be able to engage on an equal basis  
*Issues*: representation, integration, engagement |
| **Fair and equitable in sharing costs, benefits, and responsibilities** | Sharing responsibilities and the exercise of power.  
*Issues*: who is responsible, how are roles and responsibilities defined |
| **Connected functionally across governance institutions** | Actors connected across different scales and levels of government, policy sectors, and locations, building shared understanding of interdependencies among people and NRM issues. Institutional arrangements link formal and informal NRM institutional process vertically and horizontally  
*Issues*: integration needs to be effective and efficient |
| **Consistent across institutional actors and instruments** | Measurable objectives and strategic direction vertically consistent with arrangements at other levels and horizontally consistent with policy and management instruments  
*Issues*: coordination |
| **Competent and effective in delivering outcomes** | Functional effectiveness for achieving objectives i.e., resource condition improvements. Ability to negotiate diverse interests, manage conflict, handle trade-offs, implement NRM outcomes, promote cooperative dialogue, and reconcile diverse spatial and temporal objectives  
*Issues*: inclusiveness, transparency and accountability |
| **Well informed** | Informed by a broad range of knowledge – scientific, on ground management & traditional knowledge. Information flow, effective communication & education. Knowledge/expert input into key decisions  
*Issues*: transparency |
| **Responsive and self-reflexive** | Ability to adapt to changing circumstances, new knowledge, and different performance requirements. Learning needs to take place  
*Issues*: adaptability and learning |
| **Durable** | Account for varying temporal scales in social, institutional, and biophysical processes. Long timeframes need persistent policy and institutional settings, financial and other resources, political commitment, and reporting  
*Issues*: adaptability and accountability |
The good NRM governance principles in Table 3.1 underscore a need to deal with issues of representation, transparency, integration, and accountability. In addition, stakeholder consultation and engagement, information about decision-making, knowledge integration, and connecting scales and levels of government and non-government actors are practices necessary to apply those principles (Lockwood et al., 2010). Dealing with these issues is imperative for delivering policy outcomes. However, as noted above, diverse interests need to be negotiated, conflict managed, trade-offs made, and complex scales and time frames considered. Here consultative groups or advisory committees are currently in vogue as a means for gaining strategic public input into NRM policy development and implementation from multiple interests, sectors, and places (Chenoweth et al., 2002; Lynn & Busenberg, 1995; McGurk, Sinclair, & Diduck, 2006).

**Consultative and advisory groups**

Under new governance arrangements in NRM, Howlett and Rayner (2006) note that procedural policy instruments such as advisory committees or interest group facilitation can be used either formally or informally. Advisory committees are set up and used formally when they are established under legal or regulatory frameworks; they are informal when such frameworks do not exist. Howlett and Rayner note that the procedural or process-based focus of these groups can sometimes take precedence over substantive policy outcomes.
In NRM, advisory committees are typically convened by government. In the United States and elsewhere around the world, they are increasingly used by governments as institutional arrangements for public input into forest management (McGurk et al., 2006; Parkins, 2010); for watershed initiatives at local, regional, and sub-national scales (Dakins, Long, & Hart, 2005; Chenoweth et al., 2002; Lynn & Busenberg, 1995) and to broadly inform environmental policy (Howlett, 2000; Koontz, 2005). The widespread emergence of citizen advisory committees has brought about opportunities for more cooperative policy-making and policy implementation between government and public actors.

However, while advisory committees are often formed by government to represent a broad array of societal interests, problems may arise in group structure and process (Howlett, 1990). For example, McGurk et al (2006) identified accountability, coordination, membership, and decision-making power as weaknesses in advisory group process. Trust, or distrust, in group membership and advisory group process can affect group effectiveness and outcomes (Parkins, 2010). Outcome weaknesses might include a lack of broad community involvement and influence over decisions and on-ground action.

Although new measures for policy coordination and integration are needed, the roles for civil society actors and institutions may be largely symbolic (Howlett & Rayner, 2006). The problem of symbolic versus substantive representation in advisory groups was discussed in the previous chapter. That discussion established that there are issues of democratic legitimacy for informal representatives, for example who can speak for whom, and what role can representatives play in the policy process (Hendriks, 2009). These types of
problems may come to the fore when representatives are assembled under the banner of, for instance, community advisory groups.

**Community in multi-scale NRM**

The critical review of community theory in Chapter 2 and its application to NRM practice in this chapter point to a number of potentially problematic issues when conceptualising community in multi-scale NRM. These issues are outlined in detail below.

**Community: Scales, levels, and networks**

At regional and sub-national scales, environmental governance needs to capture the multi-scalar dimension of resource conservation and use (Morrison, 2007). How horizontal and vertical relationships in networked governance are structured and mediated between scales (i.e., regional and sub-national), and levels of government actors are highlighted as affecting outcomes. In terms of outcomes, Lane et al (2008) found that in large scale river basin initiatives, environmental conservation outcomes are not always translated to action due to different identity formations for non-government actors and their scales of power relations. There are widespread calls for further research about how to successfully manage the multi-scalar relations of environmental governance and public policy (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005; Ferreyra et al., 2008b; Lane et al., 2004; Morrison, 2007).

The examples cited in this chapter point to important questions about the construction of social identity and geographic scale. Those questions can be
framed in terms of how and why societal groups organise to address NRM problems. Although community might be socially constructed around different identity and interest groups, there is a need to accommodate social and spatial variability within and between communities. Added to that, communities have different environmental relationships, NRM issues to address, and desired policy outcomes. Reconciling differences between different communities, such as those of place, interest, and identity, is also largely a political challenge for democracy (Duane, 1997).

Networked governance is advanced as a way to transcend social and geographic scale mismatches and power imbalances. Horizontal models of networked governance at best assume that non-government actors share equivalent status and power (Duane, 1997) or at least have interdependent relationships with other actors. It is more likely that with large networks some actors will be less articulate and influential than others (Lane & McDonald, 2005). Networked governance as a process of democracy needs to be understood in relational terms by “. . . considering who actors act for, engage with, influence and remain accountable” (Barnett & Low, 2004, p. 7).

Blurred boundaries and representation

For NRM, as levels of social-political organisation, spatial scale, and connectedness between scale and level increase, so does the complexity of problems and coordinating responses to those problems (Dovers, 2005). The creation of institutional structures and processes in multi-scale NRM, like elsewhere in public policy, raises questions about who is involved, who represents
them, how they are chosen, and who acts for the common good (Catt & Murphy, 2003). Here a number of challenges can be identified.

Under the corporatist model of state-community relations, community leaders can be enrolled and mobilised as expert intermediaries between perceived community interests and the government. Those intermediaries can become powerful actors who act as “conduits to allow action at a distance” (Rose, 1999). As a new space for public authority and action, they act as a surrogate for their collective interests. However, the boundaries and relationships between citizens, local communities, stakeholders, interest groups, and civil society organisations is blurred (Lane et al., 2004). Although civil society organisations are regarded as representing a particular interest, according to Lane & McDonald (2005), non-government organisations, private organisations, and community-based associations “. . . cannot be used as a surrogate for place-based communities or the representation of multiple interests” (p. 714). Nor, in aggregate, do they necessarily represent the community as a collective entity.

In civil society organisations, tensions can arise between different groups due to ambiguous motivations for participation and unequal power dynamics. Boundary drawing, decision-making, participation, and accountability are political processes (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005). Therefore, macro and micro politics must be considered, and accounted when assembling the collective (McAreavey, 2006). Limits to participation and the blurring of actor representation and representativeness raise questions of who is responsible, what role they play, and at what scale or level of societal organisation NRM issues should be addressed (Moore, 2005; Rockloff & Moore, 2006).
I have discovered that in both theory and practice there is a difference between the concepts of representation where an individual is mandated to articulate and advocate a point of view for others, and representativeness where an individual is perceived as being typical of others (Barnes et al., 2003; Hendriks, 2009). A problem with the corporatist aggregative interest model is that one voice does not represent, nor necessarily speak for, others because interest or stakeholder groups are likely to have multiple perspectives and interests. The problem of representation-representativeness is typified in Australia’s Murray-Darling Basin where indigenous people distinguish between a community of traditional owners, and the local indigenous community. Traditional owners are not necessarily members of local communities and vice versa (Morgan, Strelein, & Weir, 2004). Nor are traditional owners representative of all indigenous people. Therefore, different communities of interest must be represented, but individuals might not be representative of a particular group or collective views.

In NRM governance, whether actors are to be representatives for, or representative of, different communities and scales raises questions of legitimacy, accountability, and transparency (Lockwood et al., 2010; Wallington et al., 2008). For example, there is an assumption that community and civil society are democratic spheres of social practice. If so, are community members accountable to local populations, and are civil society organisations accountable to diverse constituencies (Lane et al., 2004). After all, both can be used to inform and therefore influence decisions. Members involved in decision-making are often regarded as community leaders and tend to be drawn from an elite group of
individuals. This means that community leadership can be interpreted as elitism (Gray, Williams, & Phillips, 2005; Rockloff & Moore, 2006).

**Reconsidering community, scale, and democracy**

The community model of social organisation and its corresponding networked governance approach is now widely portrayed as the new answer to old and intractable NRM issues (Brown & Keast, 2003). It is worthwhile to reconsider Kenny’s (1996) proposition noted in Chapter 2 that community deployed as a normative, descriptive, transcendent, transformative, and locally bound entity for action in environment and sustainability carries some highly undemocratic implications. Understandably, local groups may focus on parochial concerns that do not account for broader environmental impacts or produce wider public benefits.

Indeed, the “local is better paradigm” has not proved to be successful in addressing multi-scale and cross-scale social and environmental systems decline (Eckersley, 2003; Lane & McDonald, 2005; Lane et al., 2004; Morrison, 2007). Nor has the local scale been successful in garnering successful public participation to mobilise the range of skills and experience necessary to consider and address multi-scale cross boundary resource use and conservation issues (Rockloff, 2003; Rockloff & Moore, 2006).

Democratic decentralisation at the regional scale, although having high levels of upward governmental accountability, does not deal with unequal representation. Horizontal accountability between non-governmental actors and
representatives’ acting for particular groups, organisations, and communities in networked arrangements appears to be problematic (Lane et al., 2004). In short, power differentials in the network are poorly accounted for and effective partnerships arrangements are put at risk when strong vested interests and communities are in conflict (Moore & Rockloff, 2006). Problems of social complexity, uneven power relations, and environmental conflict are most evident in NRM programs where the state assembles actors to either represent or be representative of the community as an aggregate of the populace within a broad network of scales and levels of organisation (Rockloff & Moore, 2006).

Theoretically informed empirical analysis exploring the concept of community as an efficient and effective level of socio-political organisation and a geographic scale for NRM is important for understanding the structures and processes of representative governance (Lane & McDonald, 2005; Lockie, Lawrence, & Cheshire, 2006). In particular, there appear to be tensions and gaps in the theory and practice of community when used for an array of different actor formations and outcomes. The community discourse presents a notable tension in organising for NRM by raising questions about what constitutes legitimate social formations, accountable representation, and open and transparent governance arrangements.

In light of some of the problems with community as an organising concept outlined in this and the previous chapter, and the contemporary disposition in NRM policy to scale-up the concept of community, this research investigates the question: Is community a useful organising concept for good governance in multi-scale NRM? The study aims to fill a conceptual gap by considering state-
market-civil society associations, interactions, and their impact on NRM outcomes. The results can help clarify whether natural resource governance and management should be organised around particular communities or around particular policy tasks and problems (Hooghe & Marks, 2003).

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have explored the application of community theory in NRM. A number of potential problems relating to community scale, representation, and power sharing were identified. These problems are likely to be exacerbated in large multi-scale NRM policy programs. The next chapter describes the research method employed and the background for the case study on which the empirical research was based.
Introduction

In this chapter I outline the overall methodology and theoretical framework that determined the way I conducted this study. An integrated approach was adopted. This drew on socio-political theory and qualitative empirical analysis as an iterative process. A descriptive and explanatory single case study was used for data collection. Methods included semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis. The data analysis was based on discourse analysis.

Environment and sustainability

Contemporary discourses of nature-society interactions centre on sustainability, with sustainability policy framed around anthropocentric concerns for ecosystems and their health. Those ecosystems and their health contribute to human well-being through the services they provide such as clean air and water (Millennium Ecosystems Assessment, 2005). However, there is an increasing body of evidence showing that natural ecosystems are in decline, at risk, and in even in crisis (The World Conservation Union, 2006). With a deepening ecological crisis, grand narratives claiming universal truth or fundamental realities, along with certainty, and proposing narrow views of societal progress under the banner of sustainable development, have done little to address the ecological crisis (Hajer, 1995; Mercer & Marden, 2006). Issues concerning pluralism, ambiguity, limitations of knowledge, human agency, and a focus on more than merely human worlds, are
not widely considered in the analysis of the contemporary ecological crisis

An alternative ontological stance to a purely anthropocentric or social view is an ecocentric one (Eckersley, 1999). Ecocentrism holds that “. . . the earth and its bounty are not the sole preserve of a single species, homo sapiens, and that the key ecological insight that all life is interconnected should inform conception about what is good behaviour” (Hay, 2002, p. 18). Although ecocentrism is largely an ethical stance, nature-society relationships now often focus on social structures, economic systems, socio-political power, justice, and “. . . emergent democratic forms of civic process” (Hay, 2002, p. 18), rather than on morals and ethics.

One challenge associated with taking an ecocentric position in contemporary society is to link ethics, structures, and processes within socio-ecological systems, while promoting respect for non-human nature (Eckersley, 1999; Sutter, 2001). The hybrid constructivist view of actor-network theory (ANT), which views the relationship between the social and natural as a form of generalised symmetry, ensures that the power of both entities can be considered (Latour, 1993).

Community is regarded as a meaningful and powerful social formation, association, or phenomenon of relevance for the pursuit of sustainability (Achterberg, 1996; Dovers, 2005). Theoretically, community has been advanced as a useful signifier for scale, meaning, difference, and negotiation in post-structuralist thought (Liepens, 2000a, 2000b). In conjunction with post-structural
theory, ANT can help to uncover and interpret the social and spatial construction of meanings, practices, and associations in different entities by considering interactional relationships of difference, identity, and power (Latour, 1986, 2005; Murdoch, 1998, 2006).

**Research objectives**

The overall goal of this study was to provide insights that would lead to a better understanding of the theory and practice of community as a social structure in multi-scale NRM. A particular focus concerned how the concept of community is applied for good NRM governance. Specifically, in this study I aimed to reveal how communities are described and involved in multi-scale NRM, what interactions occur between actors, and what the outcomes of interaction are. These insights would contribute to socio-political theory, public policy, and NRM practice.

The research questions and data collection methods that were employed to provide such insights are outlined in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 — Research questions and data collection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Data collection methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are different communities involved in NRM?</td>
<td>Literature review, document review, interviews, and observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are communities described; are there existing community typologies; and do they adequately describe communities?</td>
<td>Literature review, document review, theory, interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are communities involved, and what is their role?</td>
<td>Literature review, document review, interviews, observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the range of intended and unintended outcomes of community involvement?</td>
<td>Literature review, documentary data, interviews, observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the theoretical, policy, and management implications of the key findings?</td>
<td>Analysis of all the above applied to theory and practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research strategy

As a social science researcher, I was faced with choosing between quantitative or qualitative research strategies. Although I felt my research might contain both quantitative and qualitative data, quantitative and qualitative strategies can be distinguished in several ways. Quantitative research is often associated with post-positivism, deduction, and theory testing — with research designed around experiments, surveys, and multi-case analysis to generate statistical data (Gray, 2004). This type of approach has been applied widely in institutional design and policy analysis to test common pool resource models (see Ostrom, 1990).

I did not feel that the quantitative strategy would yield the in-depth insights and understanding about the structure and practice of community which were the objectives of my research. Furthermore, I was not seeking to prove, disprove, or test any particular theory associated with community. Instead, I was interested in exploring how the concept of community is used in a contemporary social and political sense. Strategies used in qualitative research such as in-depth analysis of narratives or discourse and meanings attached to them, along with intensive observation in a single case (Bryman, 2008), seemed more likely to generate rich data about the structure and practice of community in NRM policy.

Therefore, a qualitative research strategy was chosen to explore the concept of community. Bryman (2008) advises that a grounded and inductive approach is appropriate for the qualitative strategy. Added to that, I regarded a descriptive and explanatory policy study as being able to provide an opportunity to think about public policy formulation and implementation.
Policy studies according to Hogwood and Gunn (1994) is an approach that marries both policy analysis and evaluation. Policy studies allows the researcher to focus on the structures, process, and effects of public policy, with an emphasis on how polices achieve particular goals (Dovers, 2005). I felt that by describing and explaining policy structures, process, and outcomes, the power relations at play could be revealed in a particular case. This could be achieved by considering the groups involved, how they described themselves, their definition of the situation, their interactions, and their role in NRM policy — all in a real life situation (see Yin, 2003).

The research questions and methods that are contained in Table 4.1 provided a framework for collecting, describing, analysing, and interpreting the data that I obtained. A policy studies approach seemed complementary to the qualitative strategy. Blending a policy study with a qualitative strategy would enable theory construction in the group context by adopting an inductive method and the theoretical frame of pluralism/corporatism (Dovers, 2005). I believed that the research strategy would allow for theory development around structural and procedural factors in policy processes, and for theorising how those factors might influence policy outcomes.

**Governmentality and ANT**

ANT was selected as a useful approach for exploring and analysing the concept of community in multi-scale NRM. It is important to clarify that ANT is not a theory as such, but an approach for exploring and understanding society (Law, 2004; Latour, 2005). Using ANT as an approach would enable the concept of
community to be analysed in terms of post-structural assemblage theory. Post-structural theory recognises that multiple and conflicting meanings and discourses may be present, and that there is a struggle between actors to have their positions heard and privileged. Thus power relations are constantly at play (Latour, 2005).

The ontological stance of ANT is an agnostic one. It views the world as being made-up of heterogeneous entities and processes that are socially, technically, and naturally related. Therefore, social structure as a collection of actors materialises from different interactions, whereas social processes are ordered by the arrangement or assemblage of actors, both present and past (Latour, 2005). Collective entities, identities, and associations are interwoven in networked power configurations that can be described and analysed in networks of human beings, texts, and geographical representations (Law, 1999; Murdoch, 1998). Key questions raised by ANT relate to how, and for what purposes, things are brought together in heterogeneous associations that extend across space and time (Burgess, Clark, & Harrison, 2000; Murdoch, 1997a).

The ANT approach is one of constructivism. Constructivism is an interpretivist epistemology where different realities may exist, for instance, a natural reality and social reality. The constructivist position would allow me to adopt interpretive flexibility to explore, interrogate, and understand structures, processes, and meaning as multiple, real, and imagined. The ANT approach would enable me to see how things are made-up or assembled, how and what is being brought together or connected, and what the skills of those involved are (Latour, 2005). In this way, ANT provided me with the ability to view the
collective as a constructed entity, or an actor constellation enmeshed in a network of interactions.

Like others, I felt that ANT was well suited to help me explore and explain structures, processes, and modes of action in NRM (see studies by Armstrong & Stratford, 2004; Beveridge & Guy, 2009; Burgess et al., 2000; Davies, 2002; Kitchen, 2000; Lockie, 2007; Morris, 2004; Selman & Wragg, 1999). Many of these studies used ANT as an approach to help identify and describe key people in different groups, their issues of concern, their responses to concerns, their negotiating positions, and their interrelationships. In addition, some studies used stakeholder analysis in conjunction with ANT to perform similar tasks (Pouloudi, Gandecha, Papazafeiropoulou, & Atkinson, 2004; Rockloff & Lockie, 2004). All these studies focused on the relative power and influence of different groups, and how they influenced outcomes within a network of interactions.

ANT is also sometimes known as the sociology of translation. The sociology of translation can be used to explore and analyse the translation process by which actors’ interests, identities, and practices are represented, re-represented, and reordered in actor-networks. According to Callon (1986), the processes of reordering and translation involve actors in problem framing, negotiation, enrolment, and mobilisation. The four phases of translation in ANT are described by Callon in terms of the following:

1. **Problematisation**, which refers to problem definition and framing undertaken in connection to other actors. A potential solution is indentified and an obligatory passage point is constructed though which all
transactions, representations, and meanings must pass and common goals can be identified.

2. *Interessement*, is a process where meanings and identities are defined, and lead actors construct networks, seek alliances, and address different interests.

3. *Enrolment*, where lead actors attempt to consolidate and coordinate the network through negotiation, relationship building, and alliance formation — for instance, through formal management processes such as committees.

4. *Mobilisation*, which secures the roles of representatives to ensure that they are perceived as representative and legitimate — for instance, how they come to speak for place (Kitchen, 2000). Mobilisation builds partnerships and ensures that differentiation is made, results in purposeful and collective action, and in turn ensures the network is made and remade.

The phases of translation in ANT provide some broad conceptual categories to analyse the structures, process, and outcomes of community in a policy study. I felt these categories could be used in the first instance to think about the data generated and to structure my analysis. For instance, how community actors are assembled and represented, how they are enrolled in a network as representative and legitimate actors, and how policy is translated to action (Kitchen, 2000). It would also be critical to consider the role of community intermediaries in policy implementation.

**Intermediaries translating change**

A central feature of the ANT translation process is the role of intermediaries. Intermediaries may be individuals, groups, organisations, or institutions that act as
the interface between policy and practice. Recent research on water reform in Europe revealed that intermediaries perform a critical role as conduits in governance between actors and policy, and therefore are “. . . integral to the way in which objects and practices are translated and realised” (Beveridge & Guy, 2009, p. 70). Intermediaries, as actors, are crucial in configuring the relationship between economy, environment, and society, and between different scales, social contexts, technologies, meanings, and sets of interests (Moss, Medd, Guy, & Simon, 2009).

ANT has been applied in many of the environment and sustainability studies I cite in this chapter to conceptualise and investigate policy and its implementation. However, many of these studies have focused on process and the local scale (Armstrong & Stratford, 2004; Davies, 2002; Kitchen, 2000). Interestingly, I was unable to locate literature or studies specifically that used ANT as a framework for exploring the make-up, power, and meaning attached to the collective engaged in negotiating change.

A criticism levelled at ANT has been its focus on process, individual actors, and networked flows, rather than on wider institutional and structural factors and action (Davies, 2002). By considering structure in terms of the different actors engaged in negotiating change, the concept of community as a collective entity could be explored. By selecting a case with local to national interests and agendas at play, I could explore structure beyond a local scale. In sum, ANT would enable me to consider the structural factors, arrangements, and interactions associated with community (Beveridge & Guy, 2009). However, I
also wanted to address the structures and interactions associated with government and non-government actors in policy processes.

In rural development, Herbert-Cheshire (2006) successfully used governmentality and ANT to problematise questions of government, community, and power. Herbert-Cheshire found the governmentality-ANT approach useful for analysing the exercise of power or agency of micro actors (such as citizens and action groups), and macro actors (such as the state), as well as the interaction between the two. While governmentality theory has largely focused on government or state power, shifting the focus to the structure and role of non-government actors would allow consideration of power from below and at the sides. Moreover, the creation of social order through civil society by associating order with the practices of inclusion, mediation, knowledge production, and norms of self-rule such as civicness, has recently been regarded as ‘civic governmentality’ (Roy, 2009).

ANT could therefore help me develop social and political accounts of change and power relations in NRM (see Lockie, Higgins, & Lawrence, 2001). Governmentality when joined-up with ANT provided the means to account for power relations in nature-society and state-society interactions. This dual approach could also help explore the relationships between power, authority, and the legitimacy of the collective. Furthermore, when used in conjunction with geographical theory, ANT could be used to problematise and address issues of social, political, and ecological scale, representation, and boundaries (Kitchen, 2000; Liepens, 2000b; Murdoch, 1997b, 2006). A focus on intermediaries would
reveal the range of actors, forms of interaction, and contests over roles and outcomes (Beveridge & Guy, 2009).

In keeping with ANT, and following Kitchen (2000), and Beveridge and Guy (2009), a case study and actor oriented method was adopted. A case study would facilitate description of the collective’s make-up, its boundaries, and power relationship in an NRM program that sought environmental and social change across multiple scales. The actor oriented approach would help describe and discern the levels of social organisation or other things being brought together to make-up the collective.

In order to capture these structural elements, and the process by which they surfaced, I used interviews, participant observation, and documentary data. These methods allowed me to describe and explore the type of actors involved, their roles, how they interacted, and the outcomes that resulted, in particular their potential to exert influence.
Case study selection and background

I decided that a contemporary real life case study would be the best way to generate data. For instance, a case study could generate new and rich empirical data which could be used to explore, describe, and explain the concept of community in multi-scale NRM. Yin (2003) considers descriptive and explanatory case studies as an appropriate method to answer how and what questions. In this instance I was concerned with: how communities are described and involved in multi-scale NRM; and what are the outcomes that result from potentially different community descriptions and community involvement techniques.

Adopting a case study approach required me to locate a multi-scale and multi-jurisdictional NRM policy program where the empirical data on community seemed to be incomplete (see Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Lane & McDonald, 2005). Therefore, my unit of analysis would ideally span socio-ecological and socio-political scales, different levels of social organisation, and the boundaries between scales and levels. Scale could be considered in terms of a common property resource (such as a river), and the level of population studied could include resource users, local communities, stakeholders, townships, and program participants (Ostrom, 1990).

My research questions, the governmentality-ANT approach, and need to collect new and rich empirical data suggested to me that qualitative research would be appropriate. Winchester (2000) recommends the qualitative approach is appropriate for tackling questions about social structures and the social processes
by which structures are constructed, maintained, legitimised, and resisted. Furthermore, qualitative research enables the in-depth study and holistic understanding of multiple meanings and interpretations, rather than imposing one dominant interpretation (Mason, 1996). Interpretation is a primary method for identifying patterns within structures and processes. Qualitative research, coupled with descriptive fieldwork, in a single situated case-study, would allow me to consider contextual factors and interactions that might be affecting NRM outcomes.

Yin (2003) regards cases as examples of processes and structures that can be theorised by adopting an inductive approach and multiple methods such as interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. For Yin, the case study can be broadly generalisable to particular locations or population groups, but is more likely to be representative of particular sites or groups. As the concept of community in NRM is often used in a representative sense for various social structures and process, the notion of representativeness seemed a particularly important for theorising about the make-up of socio-political spaces and groups in particular cases.

By adopting inductive and multiple methods I would be able to contribute to theory, policy, and practice. By observing and analysing the structures, processes, and meanings used to negotiate outcomes, NRM policy implementation can be better understood (Gill, 2006). The qualitative and inductive approach would allow me to apply case study findings to theory.
As a distance, off-campus student at Charles Sturt University, I was not familiar with the university’s geographic and research focus. I had recently been a participant in community forest management where I lived, and I had worked in community-based NRM as a Landcare coordinator in a remote rural setting. My master’s research project revealed a degree of tension between rural communities of place and urban communities of interest in NRM (Harrington, Lane, & Mercer, 2006). As a consequence, I was interested in pursuing the concept of community as a line of inquiry for my doctoral study. I discussed this idea with my supervisors and we confirmed that this would be an appropriate and useful topic for further inquiry. The topic seemed to be especially relevant in light of the contemporary policy emphasis on place-based community NRM (Brunckhorst & Reeve, 2006; Lane et al., 2004).

Developing the research proposal reaffirmed the local placed-based community emphasis in NRM. There was a limited number of studies that considered community as an organising concept at scales beyond local ones. However, the literature available revealed issues of scale, power, and difference were poorly addressed despite being increasingly important, both theoretically and empirically, in NRM. A case study could therefore make a useful contribution to knowledge. We decided that the criteria for case study selection would be a large multi-scale NRM program. That program would ideally span social, political, and ecological boundaries, and have high environmental and social values, with multiple issues to address. Australia’s Murray-Darling Basin (MDB) is one example where large multi-scale NRM is in practice.
The nature of NRM problems in Murray-Darling Basin (MDB)

The MDB covers approximately 1.1 million square kilometres, or 14 percent of Australia (see Figure 4.1), and it has a population of over 2 million (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2002). The basin spans four states (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria) and one territory (Australian Capital Territory). Each jurisdiction has responsibility for managing its own natural resources (Crabb, 2003). The MDB incorporates 70 per cent of Australia’s irrigation enterprise and provides over 40 per cent of Australia’s gross agricultural output, with an overall annual economic output around $A 23 billion per year (Scanlon, 2006).

![Figure 4.1 — Map of MDB](image)

(Map prepared by Simon McDonald, Spatial Data Analysis Network, Charles Sturt University).
As a multi-scale inter-jurisdictional river basin, the MDB has a diversity of natural ecosystems, including wetlands of international significance listed under the Ramsar Convention (Moles, Fletcher, & Hankinson, 2008). Major NRM problems confront governments. Major NRM problems also confront the basin community, a community regarded to include the population residing in the MDB, and also some people outside it.

Many of the NRM problems facing governments and communities are attributed to excessive water being extracted from the basin for irrigated agriculture, other industries, and for domestic water use (Scanlon, 2006). Those problems include ecosystems degradation, declining productivity, and environmental health problems. Basin communities are particularly affected by irrigated and dryland salinity and declining water quality. While these social, economic and environmental issues are also problems for governments (amongst other things), governments work with communities to specifically address water overallocation, water trading arrangements, and ecological health issues (Scanlon, 2006).

In order to address social, economic, and environmental issues, a number of governance arrangements have been employed to involve local and regional communities and various interest groups. The governance arrangements for NRM in the MDB are briefly described below.
Governance arrangements in MDB

The Murray-Darling Basin Agreement (Council of Australian Governments, 1992) established the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council), the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC), and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) as governance institutions for implementing the MDB Agreement. The federal and five state and territory governments are represented on the Ministerial Council which considers and determines major policy direction. As the chief decision-making forum for the basin as a whole, the Ministerial Council comprises up to three ministers from each of the basin governments who are appointed by the prime minister or premier of each jurisdiction (Council of Australian Governments, 1992). The Ministerial Council is chaired by the commonwealth’s lead minister, and, as a chiefly political forum, its decisions must represent a consensus of government opinion and policy (Bouly, 2004; Connell, 2007).

The CAC advises the Ministerial Council on NRM issues in the basin and is regarded as representing the views of the basin community (Scanlon, 2006). Advice on community engagement, perceptions, consultation, and communication across the MDB is provided to the Ministerial Council by the CAC. The CAC was formed in 1986 and although there have been various adjustments to its composition and role, a past Murray-Darling Basin commissioner believed that the CAC comprises state-based and peak interest groups (Scanlon, 2006).

Under the MDB Agreement, the MDB Initiative (Council of Australian Governments, 1992) is regarded as a cooperative partnership arrangement between governments of the MDB and the basin community. The MDBC is responsible for
operational decisions and management under the MDB Agreement. The MDBC implements an integrated catchment management (ICM) approach under the agreement which seeks to achieve goals of ecologically sustainable development. Those goals are articulated in terms of healthy rivers, ecosystems, and catchments; innovative, competitive, and ecologically sustainable industries; and healthy regional communities (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2001).

Partnership principles include integration which aims for holistic management and decision-making in the use of land, water, and other environmental resources. Through integration, the effects of resource use on people within the MDB catchment are considered. In addition, principles of accountability, transparency, effectiveness, efficiency, full accounting, informed decision-making, and learning have been adopted (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2001).

Within this context, a range of jurisdictions, organisations, and groups have different and complex roles and responsibilities in the MDB (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2001). Those roles and responsibilities are outlined in Table 4.2.
Table 4.2 — Actor roles and responsibilities in MDB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Roles and responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| State/territory governments          |   | **Legislated responsibility for NRM within their state/territory boundaries**  
|                                       |   | **Provide leadership**  
|                                       |   | **Plan and promote natural resources use with territorial boundaries**  
|                                       |   | **Coordinate policy**  
|                                       |   | **Review state/territory policies, legislation, and mechanisms**  
|                                       |   | **Establish and coordinate catchment approaches with boundaries**  
|                                       |   | **Determine trade-offs between competing catchments**  
|                                       |   | **Generate and share knowledge**  
|                                       |   | **Act to achieve agree outcomes and monitor progress toward outcomes**  
|                                       |   | **Ensure local government capacity to carry out its responsibilities**  
| Local governments                    |   | **Coordinate policy with state/territory governments**  
|                                       |   | **Generate and share knowledge**  
|                                       |   | **Integrate land use planning with catchment planning**  
|                                       |   | **Key role in land use planning**  
|                                       |   | **Act to achieve agreed outcomes, and be accountable for investments and outcomes**  
|                                       |   | **Review and evaluate local government policies and mechanisms**  
| Commonwealth government               |   | **Provide leadership on matters of national interest, including international obligations**  
|                                       |   | **Coordinate policy across commonwealth government portfolios**  
|                                       |   | **Generate, coordinate, and share knowledge**  
|                                       |   | **Be involved in setting national targets for priority national outcomes**  
|                                       |   | **Act to achieve national outcomes using a range of government mechanisms, including providing information and investment**  
|                                       |   | **Be accountable for investments and outcomes**  
|                                       |   | **Ensure basin, state, and catchment frameworks are adequate to deliver national outcomes**  
|                                       |   | **Monitor progress toward achieving outcomes**  
|                                       |   | **Engage key partners**  
|                                       |   | **Review and evaluate commonwealth government policies, legislation, and mechanisms**  
| The Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council |   | **Provide leadership on matters of interest to the basin**  
|                                       |   | **Coordinate policies of governments involved in the basin**  
|                                       |   | **Generate and share knowledge**  
|                                       |   | **Set basin wide targets and priority outcomes in consultation with all partners**  
|                                       |   | **Coordinate activities of governments involved in the basin to achieve outcomes, including communication and engagement of partners**  
|                                       |   | **Ensure appropriate accreditation are in place to deliver on basin strategies and agreed targets**  
|                                       |   | **Implement basin decisions with state/territory and commonwealth jurisdictions, ensuring consistency across the basin**  
|                                       |   | **Monitor progress toward achieving agreed targets and outcomes**  
|                                       |   | **Monitor ICM approach and its effectiveness at achieving outcomes**  
|                                       |   | **Determine trade-offs between competing interests between states**  
<p>|                                       |   | <strong>Review and evaluate the Ministerial Council policies and mechanism.</strong>  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Roles and responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Advisory Committee</td>
<td>Provide advice to the Ministerial Council and leadership on matters of interest to the basin community&lt;br&gt;Monitor the ICM approach and its effectiveness in achieving outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catchment management authorities</td>
<td>Provide leadership on matters of interest to the catchment&lt;br&gt;Be involved in setting targets for national, basin, and catchment outcomes&lt;br&gt;Develop, advise, coordinate, and manage the implementation of catchment strategies and action plans to achieve outcomes&lt;br&gt;Assist the catchment community to achieve outcomes&lt;br&gt;Ensure the catchment community has sufficient capacity and resources to carry out its responsibilities&lt;br&gt;Advise on, or determine trade-offs between competing interests with catchment, guided by government policy and targets&lt;br&gt;Generate and share knowledge&lt;br&gt;Ensure adequate communication and engagement of all partners, and act as communication channel between community and government&lt;br&gt;Provide information to catchment community&lt;br&gt;Enlist government, industry, and community support to achieve agreed outcomes&lt;br&gt;In some circumstances be accountable for investments and outcomes&lt;br&gt;Monitor and report on progress toward outcomes&lt;br&gt;Review, evaluate, and report on policies and mechanisms affecting outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community groups</td>
<td>Promote management of natural resources of their local areas in line with catchment strategies and action plans&lt;br&gt;Generate and share knowledge&lt;br&gt;Evaluate and report on outcomes of activities in their local area&lt;br&gt;Advise catchment management organisations on issues or concerns to the community&lt;br&gt;Be involved in catchment planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry groups</td>
<td>Act to achieve agreed outcomes using a range of industry mechanism&lt;br&gt;Provide information and investment&lt;br&gt;Develop environmental management and accreditation systems for their industries to promote sustainable practices and land uses&lt;br&gt;Advise catchment authorities and governments on issue of concern&lt;br&gt;Generate and share knowledge&lt;br&gt;Be involved in catchment planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landholders and land managers</td>
<td>Act to achieve agreed outcomes using a range of mechanisms&lt;br&gt;Seek information to protect natural resources within their care and those affected by their actions&lt;br&gt;Provide investment&lt;br&gt;Plan and manage properties in line with best practice for their sub-catchments and industry&lt;br&gt;Consider changing land use where necessary&lt;br&gt;Generate and share knowledge&lt;br&gt;Comply with regulations regarding the use of natural resource use for their areas&lt;br&gt;Be involved in catchment planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2001
NRM outcomes

NRM outcomes in the MDB result from the decisions made by governments in the basin and catchment communities on a catchment by catchment basis. Agreed outcomes are to provide a level of protection for environmental, economic, and social assets. Those assets include wetlands and vegetation, water and infrastructure, rural and regional communities, cultural values, and tourism sites (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2001).

NRM outcomes can span local to international scales, and local to national levels of government. Although outcomes might be decided and delivered on a catchment by catchment basis, those outcomes should reflect national priorities such as the protection of internationally listed wetlands and global agricultural industries as part of Australia’s national interest (Connell, 2007). Under ICM, targets have been the principle way to measure outcomes. In the basin it is acknowledged that all targets need to be reached to achieve the desired outcomes. Adaptive management, with a focus on learning from mistakes, failures, and interactions, is considered a desirable outcome for those involved in basin issues (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2001).

Within this NRM and governance framework, and bearing in mind the multi-scale and cross-scale nature of socio-ecological issues in the MDB, The Living Murray (TLM) was selected as the case study for this research. A brief background to the case study is provided in the following section. In order to further to clarify governance arrangements specific to TLM, additional background information is provided throughout the analytical chapters.
The Living Murray (TLM)

The River Murray is in the southern MDB (refer to Figure 4.1). With a length of 2530 kilometres, it is one of Australia’s largest rivers, rising in the south-eastern highlands and discharging into the Southern Ocean (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2002). The River Murray suffers from significant environmental problems due to river regulation and water overallocation. After several years of community consultation, in 2004 the federal, New South Wales, Victorian, South Australian, and Australian Capital Territory governments gave a commitment to address water overallocation problems in the River Murray through TLM (Council of Australian Governments, 2004).

Criterion sampling, or choosing a case that meets a predetermined criterion (see Bradshaw & Stratford, 2000; Bryman, 2008), was used to select TLM as a multi-jurisdictional and multi-scale NRM program with high environmental and social values. Notably, TLM had a significant community involvement component. An aim of TLM was to improve the health of the River Murray while balancing the interests of local and regional communities with the national interest, ensuring fair and equitable results. The communities affected were to participate directly in TLM (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2002).

As a unique single case, TLM was a large scale policy program focused on recovering and returning environmental water to six icon sites with significant environmental and social values along the River Murray (Council of Australian Governments, 2004). At the sub-national scale, TLM aimed to integrate,
aggregate, and transcend several state and territory jurisdictions, as well as basin communities. Community involvement in decision-making and other governance issues was primarily via the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, the CAC, and TLM Community Reference Group (CRG). Refer to Figure 4.2.

![Diagram of TLM decision-making process]

Figure 4.2 — TLM decision-making
(Source: Murray-Darling Basin Commission 2007b)

Multiple stakeholders and interests were assembled in the CRG to advise the higher level CAC, which then advises the Ministerial Council on policy implementation for environmental water recovery and flows in TLM (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2002). Figure 4.2 shows the linkages between different groups that have some influence and role in TLM decision-making processes. In the figure, emphasis is given to the CRG because that group is the focus of this study / research. As shown in the figure, advice and information flow between the CAC and CRG are expected to provide the means for wide community input into TLM decision-making. Principal decision-making power
resided with the Ministerial Council (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2005). I was unable to obtain any detailed information, either in the documentary data or from interviewees, about TLM Committee during the research process.

As suggested by the literature in Chapter 3 and earlier in this chapter, there have been only a small number of a theoretically informed empirical case studies dealing with multi-scale NRM. The reality of implementing water recovery in TLM is that implementation occurs through mediated community relations in the CRG. Therefore, TLM is a case where “... the descriptive information alone will be revelatory” (Yin, 2003, p. 43). Consequently, the descriptive information collected, and its analysis, would contribute to theories of socio-political organisation and action in large-scale NRM programs.

A diverse and rich mix of actors, identities, and interests were represented in TLM as a constellation of significant ecological icon sites, patterns of human settlement, economic development opportunities, and culturally important places. The interaction among these elements may range from direct collaboration to conflict. To capture the diversity of actors and interests, collecting data from multiple sources would be necessary.

**Data collection**

I decided that by using interviews, participant observation, a research journal, and documentary data, I would be able to triangulate the data gathered (Yin, 2003). The process for data collection and analysis is described in the following sections.
Interviews

The CRG was the central focus for my field research. I decided to use in-depth, semi-structured interviews based on research theme areas with current and past CRG members, as well as with other key people involved in TLM. Interview questions were generated in consultation with my supervisors to address gaps in the theoretical literature and empirical findings. Theme areas explored were: how community(ies) were defined, issues of representation or representativeness, the role and function of the CRG, decision-making and group interactions, and the outcomes of community involvement. These theme areas offered an analytical framework which would provide insights on theoretical and empirical gaps (Bryman, 2008).

Although semi-structured interviews allowed a number of questions to be presented in a predetermined order, I allowed interviewees scope to address issues that they felt important or of interest (Dunn, 2000). In particular, my interview approach was to treat participants as active subjects who were able to act as narrator or witness of their own experience, and in their own voice. Gaining human ethics approval for the research helped me recognise and address the potentially challenging nature of social research. For example, participants might have varied experiences and values, strong opinions, and social and cultural attachments, and some might be more confident and articulate than others. I needed to be conscious of issues such as participant subjectivity, as well as my own subjectivity while interacting with research participants and collecting and analysing data (Slim & Thompson, 1993).
Questions of objectivity and subjectivity were addressed through critical reflexivity, a position requiring reflection and self-critique which acknowledged the social nature of the research. For me, the process of reflection and self-critique was a recurrent process undertaken during fieldwork, while working with data, and when writing up results. It involved me constantly considering questions about what was happening in a particular situation, what social or other relations were being enacted, and whether something was likely to affect the data (see Dowling, 2000). Guiding the social nature of the research were personal principles such as truth, honesty, integrity, humility, and respect. Interviewees were given the right to refuse to be interviewed, or to withdraw or ask questions at any time during the interview.

In order to test questions and the interview process for methodological suitability, and to ensure that the appropriate data was generated to answer the research questions, a pilot interview was undertaken with one CRG member (see Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The pilot interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. I reviewed the data generated from that interview with my supervisors to ensure I would be able to obtain the data required. The pilot interview seemed to supply the necessary data and therefore pilot questions formed my interview guide (see Appendix 1). The guide provided a general structure from which to conduct the interview, but also permitted latitude so that I could ask further questions in relation to significant replies (see Bryman, 2008).

After the pilot interview confirmed that I would be able to generate the data necessary to answer the research questions, I contacted the CRG chief executive officer in writing, and then by phone, to seek assistance with my
research. I introduced myself, requested a list of contact details for CRG members, and sought agreement to attend a CRG meeting as an observer. The executive officer was unwilling to supply a contact list. I discussed this with my supervisors and we agreed that, as CRG member information was publically available, it would be possible to get their contact details via web sites and phone books, or from other CRG members.

My intended sample was current and past CRG members and other key people involved in TLM policy development and implementation. The selected people were sent an information sheet (see Appendix 2) requesting an interview during the first half of 2007. After about one week, I made a follow-up phone call to prospective participants to ascertain if they would agree to being interviewed. This approach resulted in a total of thirty two formal and three informal interviews being conducted during 2007 and into early 2008. Members interviewed were from different groups. These are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 — Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>CAC-CRG (n=7)</th>
<th>CRG (n=20)</th>
<th>Government (n=5)</th>
<th>Informal (n=3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number interviewed</td>
<td>4 then-current, 3 past</td>
<td>All then-current</td>
<td>4 then-current, 1 past</td>
<td>1 then-current, 2 past</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the seven CAC members interviewed, five were CRG members during 2006-08, with two acting as chairs of the CRG during that time. In addition, interviews were conducted with twenty then-current members of the CRG. Five interviews were conducted with government officials, one past Murray-Darling Basin commissioner, and another then-current deputy commissioner. Three informal interviews were conducted with a federal government agency staff
member, a past MDBC staff member, and a local government association officer. Informal interviewees provided additional background about TLM and the CRG.

Most interviews were conducted face-to-face, in a conversational style, and in the setting of interviewee’s choice. Conducting interviews in a semi-structured and conversational style allowed interviewees to raise issues of particular interest. This style also allowed for follow-up questions at the end of the interview (see Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). I introduced myself, provided a brief background to the research, and asked interviewees to sign an informed consent form. Interviews took between one and one-and-a half hours on average to complete. Due to the extensive distances between towns and sites where CRG members and government officials worked or lived, and the heavy commitments of many people, six telephone interviews were necessary.

In addition to the multiple sources of evidence used, all interviewees were asked if they would agree to interviews being taped. All agreed and interviews were transcribed verbatim. I supplied their interview transcript to all participants so that they could check what they had said for accuracy, and make any comments or amendments if required. Three interviewees made comments, but all others were happy to leave the transcripts as they were. At the beginning of the interview I assured interviewees that personal details would be masked to ensure anonymity and protect their identity so that they would feel comfortable to speak honestly without fear of being identified. In the analysis chapters CRG members are denoted by the initial M followed by a number (i.e., M22) and government officials B and then a number (i.e., B5).
After each interview, I recorded personal thoughts, feelings, and missed opportunities in my research journal. Doing so enabled me to be critically reflective and to scrutinise what had transpired.

**Participant or direct observation: Insider-outsider**

Although interviews are a source of rich information, they are a controlled interaction that is not part of everyday life. I felt that participant observation would complement the interviews, provide additional triangulation, and help me analyse actors’ experiences and understandings of context and social structure (see Kearns, 2000). As a research method, participant observation is often associated with symbolic interactionism, which focuses on social behaviour and meaning. According to Gray (2004, p. 21) the basic principles of symbolic interactionism are that:

- people interpret the meaning of objects and actions in the world and then act on those interpretations;
- meanings arise through the process of social interaction;
- meanings are not fixed or stable but are revised on the basis of interaction and experience; and
- people develop a sense of identity through their interaction with others.

Participant observation and listening would assist me with understanding the structure and context of the CRG, the activities of the group, and the social process by which actor identities were being represented through interaction with others (see Gray, 2004). I contacted the CRG executive officer who suggested that I contact the acting CRG chair for agreement to attend one meeting as an observer.
A written request was made, and agreement was secured from the acting CRG chair for me to attend a CRG meeting in the role of an observer. The meeting that I attended took place in Albury, New South Wales. It was held over two days in early 2007. I was allowed to observe the meeting on the condition that I would not be directly participating — i.e., I would not be presenting information or involved in the general meeting discussion or deliberations. However, I was able to take notes and speak with members if they approached me. My involvement in this case might be better described as formal direct observation (Yin, 2003) rather than observer-as-participant (Kearns, 2000).

I was a little hesitant about attending the CRG meeting because of my outsider status. Because I was not part of the CRG circle I felt out-of-place due to my lack of familiarity with the people in the group. Moreover, I did not reside near the River Murray. However, to some degree I was being given an opportunity to become an insider by observing a meeting (Gray, 2004). I was introduced, along with another person from a federal government agency, as an observer before the meeting commenced.

Attending the meeting positioned me from outsider to insider, and presented a potential opportunity to interact with CRG members. I had limited time and opportunity to build rapport and secure access to members and government officials as the meeting agenda was full, the meeting was highly structured, and people were coming and going. I was also reliant on members and officials approaching me. This did happen, with several people inquiring about my research during meeting breaks. I also had informal discussions with some CRG
members and other people from government and research agencies who attended a CRG dinner that night.

Although my attending the meeting was useful for what Kerns (2000) refers to as “seeing is believing” (p. 104), it was hard to gain a deep understanding of the structures and process at play in the group in such a short time. Nonetheless, the opportunity provided an opportunity for me to verify whether interviewees’ observations and descriptions were accurately portrayed regarding group structures, processes, and outcomes.

As I was not actively participating in the meeting I was able to take detailed notes. I was given a copy of the meeting agenda, and I made a record of the members present. I was able to check members attending against an information sheet showing photographs and background information about CRG members. I organised my notes around the agenda items, the members participating in discussion, and members or other people who raised issues. I was particularly focused on how the concept of community was being deployed, the language used, and the general meeting process. From my meeting notes I produced a transcript that I subsequently analysed. I also recorded impressions and thoughts about the meeting in my research journal.

Unfortunately, a written request for ongoing attendance as an observer at CRG meetings was declined by the gatekeepers: a newly appointed chair of the group and a senior official within the MDBC. As Kearns (2000) and Yin (2003) both note, gaining ongoing access for participant observation to groups is a well-noted problem in case study research. Instead, I would need to fall back largely on my
interview data for the insider perspective. Questions of interaction and outcomes would also be left largely to analysis of interview transcripts and documentary data.

In addition to interviews and observation at the meeting, I attended some meetings and tours associated with TLM. Due to the geographically dispersed nature of the towns and places of interest in TLM, I could not easily obtain information about local events associated with TLM. In March 2007, I attended a public meeting in Melbourne, Victoria titled ‘The Murray and Coorong in Crisis’. I found out about this meeting though the email list of the two NGOs: Environment Victoria and the Australian Conservation Foundation. The meeting was sponsored by Environment Victoria and the Earthwatch Institute. Two presenters spoke about the plight of the Murray River from their own perspectives. One presenter was a CRG member who discussed TLM in general terms, river health, and working with communities. A particular focus of the discussions was on the dire condition of the Coorong and Lower Lakes in South Australia. Approximately sixty people attended.

As part the research strategy to familiarise myself with TLM program and its six icon sites, and as part of the interview process, I visited all icon sites and most regional towns where CRG members lived or worked. Early in the research I went on a one day field trip involving a boat and bus tour at two icon sites in the Barmah-Millewa Forest and Gunbower-Koondrook-Perricotta Forest. This field trip was organised by a local government association. Its purpose was to see firsthand the condition of these forests, their waterways, and hear about their management problems.
I also attended a public consultation in Echuca, Victoria, as part of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) investigation into current and future public land use of Victoria’s river red gum forests along the Murray valley. These consultations sought community and stakeholder input into the use and reservation of significant forests and wetland ecosystems on the Victorian side of the Murray River. The investigation sought a high level of community involvement that was defined in terms of local residents, indigenous people and groups, commercial and industry interests, and conservation and recreation groups. Community consultation in the VEAC process was seen as particularly important for community acceptance of the investigation’s recommendations (Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, 2006).

I spent about two hours at the local venue where VEAC consultations were taking place. While there, I spoke informally to a government officer and two VEAC members who were available for consultation. During my time at the local venue I noted that four other people came to speak with VEAC members. At all the meetings and trips I attended I took notes on presentations made and questions posed, and I made personal reflections in my research journal.

**Documentary data**

In order to provide background and contextual information for the case study, and to augment and corroborate interviews and observations, I accessed publicly available documents and other written information about TLM. These documents formed part of my triangulation strategy. The value of this documentary data
included my having the ability to repeatedly refer to, and review, information. Documentary data was particularly valuable for background information about TLM and for locating group details, checking correct names, exploring group composition, and capturing the language used for different group formations.

I was conscious that documents might not always be accurate, or might contain bias (Yin, 2003). Reading, re-reading, and deconstructing the content of documents helped me reveal different meanings, interpretations, and discourses (see Forbes, 2000). A number of publically available policy, planning, and management documents guided the structures and process associated with TLM program. These documents provided me with a source of more general information.

There were a limited number of documentary sources that chronicled the activities of the CRG. However, higher level groups such as the Council of Australian Governments (CoAG), the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, and the CAC provided a rich source of policy documents and communiqués. Policy documents and meeting communiqués were publically available on government web sites such as CoAG (http://www.coag.gov.au/) and the MDBC (http://www2.mdbc.gov.au/). The items discussed, decisions made, and outcomes sought from policy implementation were provided in summary form in communiqués from CoAG, the Ministerial Council, and CAC. This included information about the water reform process in general, and more specifically about water recovery for environmental flows in TLM. The CoAG and MDBC web sites also provided access to information about organisational composition, governance arrangements, and group functions.
A number of planning and management documents relating specifically to TLM were accessible on a TLM website (http://thelivingmurray.mdbc.gov.au/). For instance, on that site there were detailed reports about icon sites, the ecological objectives of TLM, and the expected outcomes specified by the Ministerial Council. Implementing operational arrangements for water recovery, water application, and planning and management were established in TLM business plan. The business plan also provided details about the arrangements for forming the CRG as a consultation reference group (Murray-Darling Basin Commission 2004; 2006). Management plans for each icon site were available and they contained largely technical and ecological information.

In addition to the above sources of information, I was able to access a total of five communiqués for CRG meetings spanning the period 2006 to 2008. Agendas and minutes for CRG meetings were requested in writing, but this request was declined by the group chair. Both the MDBC and TLM websites were deactivated in December 2008 with the transition to a new Murray-Darling Basin Authority. However, both sites are still available as archives with no new material added.

The transition to a new Murray-Darling Basin Authority marked a change of government in Australia, a shift in water reform policy, and a change to the Murray-Darling Basin governance structures. December 2008 marks the cut-off date for this research as it has been difficult (if not impossible) to access information on the activities of the CRG due to the deactivation of websites. A
selection of the types of documentary data gathered during 2006-2008, and their content, is summarised in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 — Selected documentary data TLM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of information</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Information source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TLM CRG communiqués (2005-2008)</td>
<td>Summary of main items discussed and information provided to members at each meeting (where provided), site and date of next meeting, and a list of all CRG members.</td>
<td>TLM website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLM business plan (2004, revised 2006)</td>
<td>Policy implementation, setting-up the CRG, policy coordination</td>
<td>TLM website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icon site management plans (2005-2007)</td>
<td>Technical information about each icon site; also contains details about icon site CRGs</td>
<td>TLM website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, interviews, observation, and documentary data formed the basis of the material gathered for data analysis. The data analysis process is described in the following section.

Analysis

Discourse analysis

The analytic approach adopted for this study was a discourse based one. My approach drew on Hajer’s (1995) definition of discourse, “As a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorisations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices, and through which meaning is given to
physical and social realities” (p. 44). In this context, discourse analysis is used to consider the way in which language is structured and knowledge is deployed as a way of understanding meaning, conflict, and practice.

Discourse can be studied by analysing and uncovering different ways of speaking and thinking, the language used to represent concepts, the assumptions that frame an issue, and the way that knowledge comes to be regarded as established fact (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Discourse is not a passive medium or agent. Rather, discourse is an active or discursive means by which actors construct and negotiate their world through different identities, meanings, and practices. Through discourse, actors can either exert or receive power. This is consistent with the approach taken by Foucault (1972) who emphasised the role of discourse and language as a power resource — an approach often described as critical discourse analysis (see Bryman, 2008).

Discourse analysis would allow me to explore the way in which social and environmental problems and issues were constructed, their scope, how they might be addressed, and how subjects of governance are constituted, represented, and interpreted (Hajer, 1995). Ideas, concepts, and categories are potentially multiple and can be reproduced through social choice and practice. Both the social discourse and policy discourses are discursive constructions among actors. As Hajer (1995) suggests, social construction becomes a focus for discourse analysis. For example, social formations such as community can be discursively created in different ways by particular actors.
Critical discourse analysis helps reveal meaning (both past and present) and how discourse gives meaning to social life. Discourse can also be used as an agent, to make action possible and to legitimise actors’ positions and actions. Critical discourse in this Foucauldian sense views objects, subjects, knowledge, and power as being produced through heterogeneous relations and interactions (Foucault, 1972). As an analytical tool, critical discourse analysis reveals how particular meanings become privileged, taken for granted, and even marginalised (Bryman, 2008). Discourses can be explored through narratives (both present and absent) using interview and observational data. Discourse can also be traced in the documentary data.

The discourse of community reflects the different constructions associated with social structure and process. Community is regarded as a construct of increasing relevance to rural societies (Liepens, 2000b), and the vocabulary of community is strong and equally relevant in environment and sustainability policy and practice. In terms of a community as a discourse, Liepens (2000a) notes that communities can be viewed in terms of both their material (and real) and imagined forms. Communities can also be analysed in terms of context and power. Contexts might include geographic localities, interest representation, and the capacity to address a particular problem. Finally, community may be constructed as an ethical discourse, a way of acting in the world (Lane & McDonald, 2005).

Therefore, the way context and meaning are constructed around different localities, interests, and ethics provides a means to consider structure as pliable. The discourse of community might therefore reveal real and imagined social structures, representations, meanings, and capacities as being spatialised, interest-
based, and aspirational processes. Thinking about meaning and practice in social, environmental, political, and cultural contexts unpacks individual and collective constructions, how constructions are brought together (or co-constructed), and how power can be evoked in language.

Although the discourse of community participation is strong in environment and sustainability policy, Murdoch and Abram (1998) note that community has been a limited organising concept in certain policy sectors. They note that, in policy sectors associated with public interest or public good, the state, not the community, needs to impose the dominant strategic line. Therefore, it is important to analyse the policy discourse to reveal the perceived structure of community and the role of community inside and outside the central state.

Public policy discourse provides a window into the formal political perception of social structure and the way structure, process, and boundaries become inscribed (Gottweis, 2003). For instance, in advanced economies, neoliberal governmentality provides a strong rhetoric or discourse of decentred or decentralised power toward communities. However, the state retains some degree of control over its subjects through various forms of economic rationality (Foucault, 1991; Rose, 1999). The neoliberal mode of governing shifts risk to the collective via the discourse of active individuals. Murdoch and Abram (1998) describe this process in terms of the enrolment of “. . . active citizens as either individuals or groups who play a role in keeping government in tune with public aspirations” (p. 42). The discourse of active citizens and engaged communities is now commonly evoked as a new form of partnering with government in NRM as discussed in the earlier chapters of this thesis. These types of partnerships are
commonly defined in terms of local and regional communities and other representative interests (Davies, 2002; Day & Murdoch, 1993).

Not only are structures and processes important for discourse analysis, but different types of knowledge should also be considered. The policy discourse reflects knowledge as a power resource that is both constructed and produced (Foucault, 1972). Policy processes and documents give actors authority or legitimacy to shape or implement policy, thus articulating power and inscribing socio-political order (Gottweis, 2003). The focus on governance rather than government within the analytical approach of governmentality-ANT provides the opportunity to examine the structures of politics, power, and knowledge both within and beyond the state. In particular, there is an emergent discourse based around expert knowledge in civil society that can be mobilised to potentially make things more governable (Herbert-Cheshire & Higgins, 2004; Rose, 1999). Considering different forms of knowledge and their power bases as discourse is especially relevant in NRM where scientific, technical, local, indigenous, expert, and lay knowledge are to be integrated (Dovers, 2005).

**Case study analysis**

The descriptive and explanatory case study was guided by theoretical propositions from the literature on community in NRM. I was particularly interested the proposition that community is a meaningful, efficient, and effective form of organising for NRM, which conceptually might be applied at scales beyond the local area (see for instance Broderick 2005; Brunckhorst & Reeve, 2006; Marshall, 2008). I felt that in a scaled-up context, community might have limitations as an
organising concept for good governance, but this proposition needed to be explored.

According to Yin (2003) developing case descriptions can help develop causal links to be analysed. Yin notes for instance, that the complexity of implementation programs could be described in terms of the multiplicity of decisions that need to occur for implementation to succeed. This descriptive approach could be used to identify the overall pattern of complexity, which in turn could be used to explain the outcomes that resulted from policy implementation in TLM.

**Data analysis**

Textual data were generated from typed verbatim interview and observational transcripts. Word processed transcripts were imported into NVivo 8 software for content and thematic analysis. Key policy and planning documents were also selected for documentary analysis. NVivo 8 was used for computer-based data input and analysis as I felt the software offered versatility and interactivity with the data. That software enabled me to create and review transcripts, categorise and code data, and build theory (Gibbs, 2002; Richards, 2005).

Transcripts and observations were coded and analysed to generate key themes for thematic analysis (Bryman, 2008). This was achieved by exploring the content of transcripts in relation to the main research questions to discover how the concept of community was being used and interpreted by interviewees. In
addition, I analysed how the discourse was being deployed, and how people, places, and things were being represented in the data (see Forbes, 2000).

The initial analysis of interview and observational transcripts was performed by searching for particular words or terms (such as community) in NVivo 8. However, words or terms did not always reveal context or meaning unless they could be read within the broader context. I therefore found it useful to read individual transcripts in their entirety which provided a broader context, along with other transcripts, documentary data, and notes and observations in my field journal. As policy documents, interview transcripts, and observations were being read, new themes emerged. Those emerging themes provided a framework for analysis as I looked for repetition of topics, common or unfamiliar expressions, metaphors, similarities or differences in topics discussed or terminology used, missing data, or theory-related material (see Bryman, 2008).

The process for indentifying themes was to read, reread, and index or code data from TLM policy and planning documents, interview transcripts, and observational data. Free nodes were created during the initial stages of coding. Free nodes were independent pieces of data with no logical connection or observable structure in common to other nodes (see Gibbs, 2002). Free nodes were added as further coding and analysis took place. For instance, free nodes were added if, at the end of the interview, interviewees raised new issues that they felt were important. Although I found creating free nodes useful for starting the analysis, as I became more familiar with the data and started to get a feel for usage of the term community, I felt that analysis was a little too ad hoc. However, some
themes were emerging and I thought it would be useful to structure themes more specifically around those from the literature review and interview questions.

To provide a more structured analysis I decided to create tree nodes. Tree nodes are described by Bryman (2008) as having a tree-like structure in which there are connections between the nodes under each branch. The interview questions provided specific theme areas or branches where interview responses, observations, and documentary data could be coded. The general themes created were:

1. TLM, CRG, and community: What is the background of CRG members? How did they get involved in TLM? and How do they describe or define community?

2. CRG involvement: What was the governance processes? What role did CRG members play? and

3. Outcomes: What outcomes resulted from CRG members’ involvement in TLM?

Tree nodes were coded in relation to participants’ background and involvement in TLM, how they defined the concept of community, CRG member roles, community representation and CRG function, member and group interactions, and outcomes of involvement. The tree nodes provided a hierarchical structure to include each general category or theme area, and then more specific categories relating to those general theme categories (Richards, 2005). New nodes were created from CRG members’ descriptions under general themes. Coding at multiple nodes became established practice to explore where content, context, and
theory might overlap, and where new ideas or theories might be emerging. Free and tree nodes were both descriptive and conceptual.

The language used in interview transcripts was used to reveal different interpretations, meanings, discourses, structures, and processes associated with the concept of community. Analysing similarities or differences in the data, reflection, following up on themes, developing a set of themes, and applying those themes to the literature were used to help develop theory.

**Conclusion**

Qualitative research is interpretative by nature. The constructivist position I adopted in this study means that there are potentially multiple meanings and knowledges in action. Governmentality and ANT were applied as an analytical approach to describe and explain who and what was assembled in TLM under the banner of community, the translation process by which social actors gain the rights of representation to speak for others, and how actors were assigned particular forms and roles (see Callon, 1986). This analytical approach assisted in describing how different concepts were defined, their range, how action occurred, and how choices were made (see Burgess et al., 2000; Morris, 2004).

The multiple sources of evidence provided rich and varied empirical data on which to build common and unique themes. The findings and analysis are detailed in the next three chapters to assist in answering questions about how community is defined, the role of the CRG and its members, and outcomes of
community involvement in TLM. Table 4.5 provides a summary of the data sources used to answer the main questions in the following chapters.

Table 4.5 — Content of subsequent chapters, main research questions, and data sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Main questions</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 Findings</td>
<td>Are different communities involved in NRM? How are they described?</td>
<td>Typology, discourse in documents, interviews, observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities described</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6 Findings</td>
<td>How are communities involved? What is their role?</td>
<td>Thematic analysis from documentary data, interviews, and observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities’ role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7 Findings</td>
<td>What are the intended and unintended outcomes of community involvement?</td>
<td>Thematic analysis from documentary data, interviews, and observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8 Discussion</td>
<td>What are the theoretical implications of key findings</td>
<td>Literature review, discourse analysis, and theory development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9 Conclusions</td>
<td>What is the significance of this research for theory, public policy and NRM? Are there future research prospects?</td>
<td>All of the above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The focus for the next chapter is the formation of the CRG, members’ backgrounds and their descriptions / definitions of community. There I have applied a typology that I developed from an initial literature review for this study.
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Chapter 5

ASSEMBLING COMMUNITY IN MULTI-SCALE NRM: SOME CONCEPTUAL ISSUES AT TLM

So I think this notion of community is overused. I don’t think anyone understands what it means to be honest because I think we all have a different definition of it. (M3)

Introduction

In representative democracies, public participation in NRM decision-making under an aggregative-corporatist model reflects decision makers’ perception of social structure. That perception influences who is represented and who participates in the policy process (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Actors either participate directly in decision-making or are consulted. Those actors are frequently organised along group lines in order to aggregate and represent the preferences of different territories, interests, and sectors (Catt & Murphy, 2003).

The different groups involved in the policy process bring issues of representation and representativeness to the fore. The concept of representativeness is important because it infers that individuals are chosen for their ability to “. . . reflect their constituents, community or geographical area . . .” (Rockloff, 2003, p. 209). It also suggests that members’ specific interests can be balanced against that of the group. Issues of representation-representativeness and a lack of clarity about those issues lead to questions about who legitimately represents interest or preferences; who is accountable; whether all societal perspectives are present and given equal weight; and what constitutes an
acceptable decision (Munton, 2003; Rockloff & Moore, 2006). In these instances, openness and transparency become critical elements for understanding governance structures and good governance practice (Lockwood et al., 2010; Wallington et al., 2008).

Community is a key organising concept used to structure NRM in Australia. It is therefore important to conceptualise and describe different communities involved in NRM and who they might represent. This chapter applies community theory to a contemporary multi-scale, multi-jurisdictional, and multi-use NRM program to investigate whether different communities are involved in TLM and, if so, how they are described. TLM was chosen to explore this question because policy implementation aims to balance community interests in an environmental water recovery process. As outlined in the previous chapter, the CRG was formed as a participatory policy instrument to advise and inform TLM policy implementation process.

Through an initial review of literature for this research, a typology was developed as a means of describing and analysing different communities in NRM (Harrington et al., 2008). The aim in developing this typology was to clarify my understanding of community concepts and develop a tool that would assist my exploration of the nature of community in TLM. I begin this chapter by briefly revisiting TLM governance structures and process. I then introduce my typology to set the scene for an exploration of community in TLM. My discussion of interview data is structured by using the typology as a framework for how CRG members described or interpreted the concept of community. Additional common themes that emerged from the analysis of interview data in NVivo 8 are then
presented. I close with a reflection about the usefulness of the typology as a way to structure an investigation concerning the nature of community in NRM.

**Framing community in TLM**

The key policy goal of the TLM was to recover water for environmental flows in the River Murray. Water recovery would impact on a number of individuals, groups, and geographic communities. The communities affected were to participate directly in TLM through a community engagement process that engendered “...understanding, extensive discussion and debate, followed by sound decisions” (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2002, p. iii). The engagement process would enable decision makers to access a wide range of local and broader community views and values on how river health could be restored (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2006a). As pointed out in Chapter 4, the Ministerial Council is the principal decision maker in the MDB, and its decisions can be influenced by a range of community groups, including the CAC.

The CAC fact sheet of 2007 showed that the CAC was composed of 22 members plus an independently appointed chairperson (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2007a). The fact sheet indicated that members were chosen from around the basin as people who had current and significant involvement in basin issues. Members were selected for their skills, expertise, networks, and commitment to the sustainability of the MDB. For example, their listed skills included governance, natural resource planning and management, community engagement, business, scientific expertise, social and economic expertise, conflict resolution, and leadership. Equitable representation was said to be achieved in the CAC by choosing members based on their geographic location or on the basis of
their areas of interest, including indigenous representation (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2007a).

The Community Reference Group

As explained to me by interviewees, CAC members did not feel they had specific and sufficient knowledge and expertise on the River Murray and its NRM issues. Therefore a community reference group was to be formed specifically for TLM.

TLM business plan specified the arrangements for reference group composition, role, and duration:

The Community Advisory Committee may establish a reference group with broad membership from a range of sectoral and community interests to provide advice on implementation of the Living Murray initiative, including acting as a consultation group for development of the Living Murray Environmental Watering Plan and the River Murray Channel Asset Environmental Management Plan. The reference group will exist until June 2009 with individual membership for two years, with consideration for reappointment (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2004; 2006).\(^\text{12}\)

The reference group was formed as the CRG in April 2005. The CRG’s role was to provide advice to the CAC on community views in TLM with the aim of integrating community knowledge, values, and aspirations (Council of Australian Governments, 2004). It was anticipated that the CRG would meet approximately three times per year — roughly at 3 to 4 month intervals (or as necessary). Meetings were not open to the public. As a sub-committee of the CAC, the CRG was formed ‘using a matrix’ whereby members were selected from different areas, sectors, knowledge bases, and so on:

*So we had geographic representation from one end of the Murray to the other. All industries were engaged, all sectors, so you had fishing, environment, local government, and tourism, etc. There was also a skills*

\(^{12}\) Clause 124 in 2004 Plan, Clause 170 in 2006 plan
matrix as part of that. As you know its 30+ people that we thought would have the skills and the local knowledge and be able to represent the interests of their communities plus be able to report back to their communities. (M7)

The CRG met for the first time in May 2005 with its principal responsibility being to provide advice to the CAC on implementing TLM business plan. A key objective of the business plan was to establish a consultation process. Consultation was intended to ensure not only that individuals and groups that were likely to be impacted upon, or materially interested in, activities under the business plan would have an adequate opportunity for input into decisions affecting them, but also to meet any legislative requirements. Additional objectives listed in the business plan included ensuring that relevant information and a diversity of views were considered in decision-making, and increasing awareness, understanding, and support for TLM (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2004; 2006).

In 2004, TLM business plan (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2004; 2006) identified groups for consultation in terms of those shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 — Groups identified for consultation in TLM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Rural and urban communities inside and outside the Murray Darling Basin, and metropolitan areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business (production)</td>
<td>Water authorities, irrigators, irrigation companies, commodity groups, processing companies, and commercial fishers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business (service)</td>
<td>Financial, rural services, tourism, and recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Commonwealth government, state / territory governments, MDBC, catchment authorities and local governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>National, regional, and local groups / interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Indigenous nations, Indigenous agencies and councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>Scientists, engineers, environmental and social scientists, economists, farm managers, agronomists, and horticulturalists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, the revised business plan of 2006 (superseding the 2004 plan) did not contain such a list. Instead, the 2006 business plan stated that consultation and communication would be conducted by:

Ensuring that communities and stakeholder groups with an interest in the implementation of this business plan have opportunities to provide input to the process and receive clear, concise and up to date information on the activities being undertaken (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2004; 2006, p. 15).

The arrangements that structured the governance in TLM were complex. For example, the CAC comprised jurisdictional and interest-based representatives who were regarded by the ministerial council as representative of the basin community. The CRG reported to the CAC and was to seek out local and broader community views specific to TLM. The CRG comprised a broad range of sectoral and community interests who possessed explicit knowledge and capabilities in NRM issues associated with the River Murray. Types of social organisation included and consulted in TLM were communities, sectors, industries, and stakeholder groups (Table 5.1). This represented a somewhat multifarious and muddled social structure to be assembled under the banner of a CRG. In my view, it was difficult to differentiate clearly between these different forms of social organisation and who they represent. This proposition is explored in more detail in the following sections.

**Organising community in TLM**

In recent times a common usage, and hence contemporary viewpoint, is that community is associated with a range of economic, social, cultural, political, and
local structures, processes, issues, and spaces (Amin, 2005; Day & Murdoch, 1993). Figure 5.1 attempts to break down the different affiliations, interests, groups, and views that structure the membership of the CRG. CAC membership is shown on the right hand side of the figure where information has been sourced from member profiles contained in the 2007 CAC fact sheet (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2007a). While CAC membership was not the primary focus for this research, seven CAC members sat on the CRG.
CRG Sectoral and community affiliations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation farming</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water advisory groups — e.g., Snowy, Murrumbidgee, Goulburn Rivers</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catchment management (chair, board, committee)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation company (chair, director, CEO)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAC member</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation industry groups (director, board) e.g. irrigator councils</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water boards (director, board)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental (3 with doctorates)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry research &amp; development — e.g. CRC (director, board)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other industry groups — e.g. Industry association, producer groups</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government mayors, councillors, associations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landcare</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General community group (Apex, Rotary, arts, hospital)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community (action) group</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing — commercial and recreational</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications or education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.1 — Organising community in TLM

Source: CAC & CRG information / fact sheets and personal interviews (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2006a, 2007a)

13 Representatives are placed in multiple categories in this table
In terms of CRG membership (Figure 5.1), member affiliations are less clear than are the affiliations of CAC members. In the first instance, member profiles from CRG information sheet were used to determine the community views or interests in the group (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2006a). Subsequently, CRG member descriptions from personal interviews relating to community definitions, representation, and involvement in the TLM were used to assist in identifying affiliations.

The data presented on CRG members in Figure 5.1 show a strong presence of irrigation farmers and irrigation companies. Under TLM business plan 2004, these members could be described as being affiliated with business (production) groups (Table 5.1). There is also a strong presence of water advisory groups (business production - Table 5.1) and catchment management authority members (government groups - Table 5.1). There is considerable cross representation between the irrigation, water, and catchment groups (sixteen of twenty seven members interviewed). Interestingly, catchment authority representatives are described as community NRM representatives in the CAC, but as government representatives in TLM business plan (Table 5.1).

Industry and environmental interests appear to represent a median in Figure 5.1. Categories such as industry, business groups, and environment groups appear to be self-explanatory categories. Local government (government group -Table 5.1), community groups (rural and urban communities - Table 5.1), indigenous (indigenous groups - Table 5.1), tourism and fishing (business groups - Table 5.1) have less presence in Figure 5.1.

It might be assumed that each CRG member represents a particular area or interest. However, it was explained to me that was not the intention:

*I can understand that they [CRG members] would think, or may think, that they are there as a representative of a particular constituent group. But that is not the case.*
I was told that at the outset, when the CRG was set up, that there was never any question about needing X number from each jurisdiction, or so many from that one and another from another one. It was a case of people will be selected to inform the CAC purely on the basis of their knowledge and skills and to provide that input into the process — not as a representative of any particular jurisdiction. I can understand how community members may think that way. (M6)

It is useful to refer to Table 5.1 for guidance and an appreciation that groups to be consulted in TLM in 2004 were organised in terms of geographic communities, businesses, government, and groups with environmental, indigenous and technical knowledge.

Figure 5.2 — Sectoral & community interests TLM CRG
(Source: CRG information sheet (Murray Darling Basin Commission, 2006a) and interviews)
Note: Numbers indicate the total number of CRG members
Figure 5.2 shows a dominance of sectoral groups that could be described as business groups (i.e., forestry, irrigation, commercial fishing, and tourism) in Table 5.1. It is difficult to determine with any clarity if the environment category is a sectoral interest. Local government and community action groups seem to be the most likely candidates for community status, but may also have links with sectoral groups. For instance, some local government members are involved in irrigation farming, irrigation companies, and water advisory committees (M2, M21, and M30). For current purposes, I will not regard the indigenous group as a sector but a community group.

As explained to me by various interviewees, CRG members are appointed by the CAC with Ministerial or government approval to provide advice on TLM policy implementation. There appears to be a cross-section of societal interests represented in the CRG, more so from sectoral rather than community groups (Figure 5.2). However, appointment procedures were less than open, and the extent to which appointees are representative of societal organisations or interests somewhat debatable (see Howlett, 1990).

From the analysis it is difficult to determine with any precision how the concept of community is defined and applied to TLM CRG. However, TLM business plan identified community as a group for consultation. The 2004 business plan defined community clearly as rural and urban communities inside and outside the MDB, including metropolitan areas. To assist with clarifying how the concept of community might be applied in TLM, I now turn to my typology which was developed from the theoretical literature.
Communities in NRM: A typology

Contemporary community theory draws a division between community as a placed-based entity (communities of place) and community as an interest-based association (communities of interest). However, organising concepts such as communities of place as a bounded geography, or communities of interest as an unbounded interest, reflect multiple, contested, and overlapping elements in modern society. Communities of place might be relatively easy to identify within predetermined political and administrative boundaries, but communities of interest might be more geographically diffuse and difficult to define.

To provide some clarity, a typology (Table 5.2) was developed from the literature to describe a range of communities in NRM. The typology is underpinned by five related community concepts associated with the concept of communities of interest. Additional concepts of affected communities, communities of identity, and communities of practice are also introduced.
Table 5.2 — Communities in NRM typology

(Source: Harrington et al., 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Concept</th>
<th>Geographic Concept</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community of locality</td>
<td>Inside space</td>
<td>Regarded as communities of place within political, social or physically defined boundaries, — e.g., towns, local government municipalities or regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affected community</td>
<td>Outside space</td>
<td>A space or place outside the community of locality; a non-local reference point, place, space or resource affected by external impacts — e.g., downstream towns, landholders, resource users or ecological communities on a waterway who have no control over non-local factors such as upstream resource use or impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcendent communities of interest</td>
<td>Boundless space</td>
<td>Collectives / groups that have some identified ‘stake’ in a particular issue, place, space, or practice bound by shared interests, values, and concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Special interest groups</td>
<td>i. (Formal space)</td>
<td>i. Politically active formal groups that aim to connect to the ‘state’ — e.g., Australian Conservation Foundation; National Farmers Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. General interest groups</td>
<td>ii. (Informal space)</td>
<td>ii. Groups that are semi-formal or informal, do not have the primary aim to connect to the ‘state’, and are activity based — e.g., Rivercare or Landcare groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities of practice</td>
<td>Inside and outside space</td>
<td>Groups organised around an activity or common practice such as biodiversity conservation and / or agriculture who are often locally or regionally based, but sometimes spatially diffuse — e.g., conservation communities; irrigation communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities of identity</td>
<td>Inside and boundless space</td>
<td>Groups that can reside in and transcend space, either bound or separated by common identities as relationships of ‘otherness”: structured around aspects that include culture, class, age, gender, networks, politics, and practice — e.g., Indigenous people, youth, greens, farmers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To help clarify my understanding of the concept of community in TLM, and therefore the community views that the CRG brings to the CAC, the typology was used to assist with describing and analysing how the concept of community(ies) might be applied in TLM. To explore the concept of community as an organising concept in TLM, I asked CRG members how they defined community and whether they represented a community in TLM. The following data describe the responses to these semi-structured questions. Additional themes are documented as they arose in the data analysis.

**Exploring community in TLM**

**Community of locality (inside space)**

In my typology (Table 5.2), a community of locality is frequently conceptualised as a place-based geography or locality. Locality might be a territorially-based residential, political, or administrative unit or scale (Brunckhorst & Reeve, 2006; Cheng, Kruger, & Daniels, 2003). From the data analysis, some CRG members certainly felt that community could be described in terms of different administrative and scalar configurations. These included local (government) areas, places, and river reaches as a location defined by social, economic, cultural, or political activities in relation to the River Murray.

**Representing communities in TLM**

Both M3 and M21 spoke about their involvement as local government councillors in representing their local communities. Both of these interviewees had substantial
involvement in local government and therefore felt that community and local
government are strongly linked:

Local government is about representing community. When I was nominated
[to the CRG], I was deputy mayor. I think they were looking for local
government involvement . . . and [with] my interests and broader community
involvement, I think I was in a good position to give a good representation on
the CRG. (M21)

As a past local government mayor, M3 felt community is understood, represented,
and given voice by local government:

I believe if you are talking about community the only people who can properly
represent community are local government. They are the only people
elected by the whole of the community. They are the only people who can claim to
truly represent all of the community . . . If you want to talk to community go
and talk to local government . . . I am quite well qualified to speak on behalf of
the community. (M3)

With his background in local government, M21 flagged the need to consider
what he felt were other communities within the local community:

We have to remind ourselves that it is not just the community and the farming
community. There are other communities that make up Renmark. Like, small
business, hotels, clubs, and other communities make part of this community.
(M21)

One way of conceptualising these different groups organised in and around place is
via the concept of nested communities.

Nested communities have been defined in terms of socio-ecological scale —
for example, small areas contained within larger areas or locations, which typically in
NRM include the boundaries of sub-catchments, catchments, and bioregions
(Brunckhorst & Reeve, 2006). Nested communities can also be conceptualised as an
ordered hierarchy where different levels of socio-political organisation and decision-
making take place — for example, individual landholders and socio-economic groups
which are commonly considered the community level (Ostrom, 1990). M7’s
definition of community reflected the scaled and nested level vision:
So I think when we say we represent ‘the community’ or ‘a community’ they are kind of nested. So the whole Murray Valley community, then the Shepparton community, or the Berri community, or the Albury community, and you can go down in levels of detail at each one of those sites. (M7)

Other CRG members felt that place as a location rather than an administrative or nested entity were important aspects in defining community. One CRG member reflected on the need for a greater connection between what she considered ‘the ecology and economy of place’:

I think there is the aspect of talking about your local place because place is part of community. I mean the Coorong, the Lower Lakes, these hills where we are now, and the tributaries of the Murray-Darling Basin which are often forgotten. I think there is an aspect of speaking for place. (M9)

As a government official, B2 regarded community as being local and felt that ‘local people know what the local issues are and the best way to address them. Local reference is the most important’.

**Geographic spread and river reach**

While recognising the importance of local place, a challenge in multi-scale NRM is to capture and connect the difference and diversity of interests within a large geographic area. Nesting areas and socio-economic groups within a larger community is one way of putting boundaries around social organisation and NRM issues. Those boundaries can help to define community and with whom to talk. A former CAC and CRG chair articulated the need for the CRG to address geography and difference by capturing a diversity of NRM views and interests along River Murray:

*Geographic spread was very important for a number of reasons – you have different issues depending on what reach of the river you are on: different agricultural practices, different environmental challenges and so on.* (M14)

In a similar vein, another member felt proximity to the river was particularly important for structuring CRG membership. This member felt ‘there was a 50
kilometre syndrome; people only knew within 50 kilometres of where they live what happens with the river’.

As illustrated by these interviewees’ views, community as a locality offers a variety of perspectives. Placing boundaries around an NRM problem and conceptualising community as local place or bounded geographic area with proximity to the River Murray does not necessarily connect diffuse places to NRM problems or deal with causes and effects. In such cases, it is common for parochialism to dominate (Lane & McDonald, 2005). Conceptualising community as a local entity in multi-scalar NRM means that external impacts and those affected outside the boundaries may not be considered or engaged in making decisions and taking action.

**Affected communities (outside space)**

To consider community as more than a local place, affected spaces, places, groups and communities (Table 5.2) need also to be involved in NRM. Proponents of the nesting principle, such as Brunckhorst and Reeve (2006), feel that community involvement and engagement in NRM might be enhanced by selecting functional landscapes that reflect social and ecological areas of interest to residents. This provides a means of ‘scaling-up’ the concept of community to address critical NRM issues. However, these authors continue to emphasise geographically bounded local and regional spaces. Bounded spaces do not always reflect and account for different land uses, tenures, boundaries, rights, cultures, interactions, and networks such as cross-jurisdictional or cross-border ones. Experience in community-based land reform affirms the need to distinguish between the purely geographic and broader functional communities. The latter can comprise seasonal residents who live and
work elsewhere, recreational interests, and conservation trusts and their constituents who have legitimate claims and interests in a geographic place (Bryden & Geisler, 2007).

In NRM, social, cultural, and environmental interests are likely to span broad geographic communities, particularly where ecological assets of national or international significance exist. For instance, the River Murray passes through some of Australia’s most significant wetlands. Those wetlands have international protection under the Ramsar Convention, recognising both their ecological and cultural significance (Moles et al., 2008). Over such vast distances, upstream water users are unlikely to recognise and consider the downstream impacts (Connell, 2007). Thus, affected communities, including ecological and unborn generations, need to be considered and can be included by the formation of a “...community of fate held together by the potential to be harmed” (Eckersley, 2000, p. 119).

Affected communities in TLM

In NRM, the concept of affected communities is comparable to that of stakeholder. Stakeholders are generally defined as those who are able to affect, or have their interests affected by, an NRM decision and action (Chevalier, 2001). Communities can be considered stakeholders when there is an impact on particular locations, individuals, and groups of people, as well as entities such as towns, resource owners, and industries, including those downstream (Aslin & Brown, 2004). Therefore, impact or effect may be measured in terms of threats to the way towns and industries function, for example, ongoing access and use of a resource and an ability to conduct business as usual (Ostrom, 1990).
As pointed out above, TLM business plan defined those to be consulted in terms of impact or effect. This was “To ensure that individuals and groups who are likely to be affected or materially interested in activities under this business plan have adequate opportunity to input into decisions affecting them” (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2004; 2006). As the most recent CRG chair noted, the concept of affected communities is an important one in determining the CRG membership and member involvement. He affirmed that the concept of affected communities can be used interchangeably with the notion of stakeholder:

*The CRG is to seek out the views of the interest groups of the affected communities. . . What all members of the community need to do is draw on the views of all affected stakeholders or the communities, however you want to put it.* (M6)

From a sectoral perspective, M11 stated that she represented an industry not a community. When asked where the notion of community fits in with her involvement in the CRG, she identified community as those people affected by changes to the forest industry — and moreover, that those forest communities would be affected in terms of limited resource access that would be a threat to their future socio-economic function:

*Well there are major communities along the river. I think you would be pushed to find communities in Australia that have been more affected over the last 20 years than forest communities and that by environmental and other issues there’s lots of communities that have been basically closed down by the diminishing availability of forestry resource.* (M11)

Irrigation communities were introduced as a socio-economic group along similar lines. Irrigation communities were defined in terms of their location or place-based characteristics, for example, proximity and access to water resources. This seemed to imply certain functional and practice-based characteristics (see

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14 Clause 120 in 2004 Plan & Clause 166 revised plan 2006
Transcendent communities of interest (boundless space)

Transcendent communities (Kelly, 1995) have been defined as groups situated in multiple spaces with ties that bind across physical geographies. This contrasts with the purely geographic view of communities of interest as formal and functionally bounded areas or regions (Lieb, 1998). Here, a transcendent community is comprised of distinctive social, cultural, and political groupings that extend beyond geographic boundaries but are considered in Table 5.2 to have a stake in a particular issue. Like affected communities, transcendent communities might also be regarded as stakeholders.

Sets of shared common values, interests, and concerns, rather than specific geographies, are the defining features of transcendent communities of interest. For example, they may be formal or informal groups that join together to negotiate collective action. While mobilising communities and groups is a focus for innovative policy initiatives, a distinction can be drawn between geographical communities and transcendent groups, as the former are “. . . fluctuating social forms with multiple
interests, whereas groups tend to be formal or semi-formal and organised around a particular interest” (Relph, 1976, p. 57).

**Special interest groups (formal space)**

A further distinction can be made between social movements as an umbrella for a range of organisational interest groups. Peak bodies, advocacy, and lobby groups are regarded as the organised associations in civil society formed around common interests and goals that aim to directly influence or connect to the state (Dryzek, Downes, Hunold, Schlosberg, & Hernes, 2003). Yet they form only part of the larger interest group community. Peak and lobby groups can be organised around industries such as agriculture, fishing, forestry, and tourism. Other groups or organisations, such as environmental and conservation groups, play a critical role in representing distinct interests, thus presenting an alternative to productivist interests and the dominant modes of neoliberal rationality that have been slow to absorb new ecological values, ideas, and practices (Eckersley, 2004; Mercer & Marden, 2006).

The role of formally organised interest groups is vital for both balance and integrative potential in the common or public interest. Public interest or public good can be considered equivalent concepts where governments are expected to ensure public good outcomes for common resources such as water that span geographically diffuse boundaries (Ostrom, 1990). However, definitions of public good, like communities, are variable and contested. Failures to advance the common interest are more conspicuous than successes with local and larger community interests rarely aligning and thus resulting in conflict (Bloomquist & Schlager, 2005).
General interest groups (informal space)

While formal groups might aim to connect to the state and influence policy, there is a broad range of organisations and groups that are less politically active. These groups are often voluntary and activity-based around on-ground action, recreational pursuits, learning, networking, and exchange. Examples include friends of groups, monitoring and survey groups, bushwalking clubs, Landcare groups, and conservation networks. Sometimes local in origin, they might participate in diffuse settings depending on the activity of the group. While considered part of the community of interest, they might also be regarded as a community of practice (see Table 5.2).

Transcendent communities of interest and TLM

The concept of transcendent communities of interest has some application to TLM. For instance, M7 felt that particular types of communities may transcend a location:

*I guess there would be the fishing community. That transcends a location. I guess what we think of the environment community. Most of the environment representation on the TLM doesn’t even live on the Murray, it’s in Melbourne. I guess we could talk about the irrigation community, the environment community, the tourism community – to remove from a particular location and define by a particular suite of interests.* (M7)

As far as I can tell from documentary sources and interviews, approximately nineteen of the thirty CRG members at the time of field research had some formal involvement in national, state, or local industry, advocacy, environmental, and action groups. This included farmer federations, irrigation councils, industry bodies, environmental foundations, and tourism and recreation associations (see Table 5.3). These members claimed to represent diverse areas and interests. For example, M10 described himself as an environmental water campaigner for a state environmental
organisation. With a doctorate in environmental history, he said ‘I represent a diverse community of people who live next to the river, a 100km or 300km away, who want to see the river system given a right to water and to sufficient water to restore it to health’. When prompted further about how he defined the concept of community in TLM he said ‘I define my community by interest in the river’:

So my community of interest is anyone that wants to create genuinely sustainable irrigation systems, who want to have choices about how the land can be used in the future. (M10)

Other members were involved in semi-formal and informal groups such as Landcare, bird watchers, hospital boards, arts boards, and Apex and Rotary groups. Although these groups might not formally represent a particular interest, they are often considered community-based (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). However, as summarised below in Table 5.3, these affiliations were relatively small in number compared with those involved in more formal and high level irrigation, water, catchment, and environmental organisations.
Table 5.3 — Transcendent Communities of Interest (CoI) - Formal & Informal Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRG members CoI</th>
<th>Affiliations- State connections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>President Ricegrowers; chair NFF Water Taskforce; board NSW Irrigation Council; board Snowy Mountains Hydro Scheme; Member Irrigation Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Chair irrigation company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Chair CMA; board irrigation company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Chair irrigation company; director irrigation committee; member irrigation council; board Snowy Mountains Hydro Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>CEO community action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Environmental campaigner ; board environmental group; member rivers network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>CEO forest industry association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Managing director irrigation farm; member irrigation council; member NRM advisory committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Board Fishing Industry Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y Y</td>
<td>Chair wetlands group; board irrigation trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y Y</td>
<td>Mayor local government; hospital board, school board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y Y</td>
<td>Board CMA; board rural water company, bird watchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y Y</td>
<td>Executive, member irrigation company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y Y</td>
<td>Local government mayor; board CMA ; hospital board; arts board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y Y</td>
<td>Member recreational fishing body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Director wine company; director cooperative research centre; director state wine industry committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Councillor; local government association; member state NRM committee; representative meat industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>? Y</td>
<td>Member NRM committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>? Y</td>
<td>Private NRM consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>CMA board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>CMA board; Landcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y Y</td>
<td>Local government deputy mayor; director irrigation trust, hospital and school board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>CEO irrigation trust; board NRM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y Y</td>
<td>Landcare; CMA committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Chair indigenous group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Campaign director, environmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Chair irrigation company; board CMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Chair irrigation council; director irrigation company ; chair water users group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Indigenous NRM board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Chair NRM board and forum; deputy chair CRG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3 shows that the CRG has a broad representation of members with involvement in politically active groups that have direct connections to the state. In Table 5.2, these groups were defined and characterised as special interest groups, including peak and lobby groups that might be able to transcend local and other boundaries. While at least ten of the thirty CRG members in this table (twenty seven were interviewed) could be directly associated with national or state-based peaks, another five members were involved in state industry advisory groups.
There was strong presence of members with regional and local group affiliations. Regional affiliations included roles as chairs or board members in (privatised) irrigation companies or catchment authorities and other government advisory groups. There were three members with elected roles in local government, one of whom had involvement in a local government association.

Eight members identified involvement in what could be considered general interest groups of a less formal nature. Rather than aiming to connect to the state, these groups were organised around a common activity or purpose in their communities. Although these eight members were also involved in more formal groups, they described their community activities as occurring in Landcare, recreational clubs, and on hospital and school boards.

Although most CRG members appeared to have broad and multiple involvement in various groups and organisations, local and otherwise, some members felt that their involvement in TLM was narrow. For instance, M16 had been involved in groups around the Barmah-Millewa Forest for over 20 years, dealing with issues that included irrigation and the environment. However, in terms of the CRG he said ‘I don’t really pretend to represent anything other than irrigation landholders, landholder based’, with the caveat that ‘Most of those irrigators have kids that go to school, wives that work in town, and they do business in town, so you never say that you are not aware what is going on [in the community]’.
**Vested interests**

The notion of vested interests was a strong and somewhat unexpected theme to emerge from the data. Vested interest is commonly linked with self-interest and personal benefit, usually financial benefit (Miller, 1999). In a similar vein to the concept of affected communities, vested interests are regarded as having a right or stake in something such as a resource (e.g., water) allocation. They too could be considered stakeholders (Smith, Nell, & Prystupa, 1997).

The concepts of personal and financial interest are inscribed in documents such as the TLM business plan (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2004; 2006). The business plan stipulated that consultation was to be undertaken with individuals and groups ‘likely to be affected or materially interested’. Material interests here can also be interpreted as a right or allocation to a resource such as water.

The discourse concerning vested interest surprised me in terms of defining community. This is because the idea of community as Gemeinschaft structures and relationships invokes notions of inclusiveness; common and frequent interactions; and collective rather than individual interests, identities, and sense of belonging (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Tonnies, 1955). However, M20 described his (and the CRG membership structure) as a suite of different and disparate interests:

*With upwards of 30 of us, it allows I guess what I consider people who have got a vested interest, where they can be represented. It’s a forum where vested interests can be quite openly displayed and discussed. I think that’s the whole purpose of it, because if you are talking to the community you are talking with people who have vested interests. People like rice growers, viticulturists, orchardists, irrigation CEOs, etc. (M20)*

Several other members agreed that their participation in the CRG was a (self-) interest based one that could be considered a Gesellschaft motivation (Brint, 2001).
M14 felt that ‘Anyone that joins a group like this, any group, is motivated to some extent by self-interest’. M1 asserted that ‘Every one of us has a vested interest in anything we want to participate in’, which was confirmed by M16 who said ‘I don’t pretend to represent anything other than irrigators’. According to M10, community used in this sense is a dubious concept:

*I think it is a pretty shonky sort of term really. In the Murray-Darling Basin the community is often used as a way of everyone who lives near the river and is a member of the local farmer representative organisation. That’s the community. In some ways it’s a badge that gets stuck on a particular sectional group that has a loud voice or a particular vested interest that it wants to protect.* (M10)

Community conceptualised as a set of vested or material interests is counter to the third way ideal of community as a moral and ethical subject. This raises the issue that, if community is regarded as a set of vested interests, how does community reflect the collective or common interest (Achterberg, 1996; Ostrom, 1999)? If the interests assembled and represented in TLM are used by decision makers to aggregate and balance individual interests — presumably against the national interest — then how is the common or national interest realised? For instance, how are Australia’s national and international environmental obligations met in a bounded and vested interest context (Moles, et al., 2008)? Therefore, community conceptualised as a bounded place or interest-based association may be a limited signifier for governing collective social, economic, or environmental needs.

**Communities of practice (inside and outside space)**

A community of practice is generically defined, as reflected in Table 5.2, as a group of people interacting and engaged in an enterprise and activity that results in collective learning (Wenger, 1998a). The enterprise might be work-, education-, or
hobby-based. Notably, a community of practice is different from a community of interest or a community of place, as neither of the latter two implies a shared practice. This implies that communities of practice are based on rational interest rather than on emotional bonds (Wenger, 1998b). Community is central to social theories of learning, with some scholars arguing that social integration and change must be focused on, and initiated at, the community level (Brown & Pitcher, 2005).

The NRM community of practice is activity- or practitioner-based, with knowledge exchange emphasised but of variable importance depending on the interest of the group and the desired learning outcome. In Australia, the concept of a community of practice has been widely applied to rural and regional development in agricultural enterprises, river basin management, and local government to involve multiple interest groups in negotiating conflict and change (Keen & Manhanty, 2005; Kilpatrick & Vanclay, 2005). Groups are often based in a locality, but can also be multi-scalar, encompassing place-based and non-place-based participants. Examples include groups of farmers engaged in a particular practice such as irrigation, or NRM extension officers involved in biodiversity conservation.

The concept of a community of practice was not used specifically by interviewees in TLM. CRG members were engaged in a broad range of sectors and practices associated with NRM including irrigation, water and catchment management, industry associations, local government, environmental groups, and cultural groups (see Figure 5.1). Each of these practice groups and enterprises could be regarded as activities, which no doubt results in some form of learning. Therefore, each could be considered a discrete community of practice.
The concept of irrigation communities was cited often by interviewees, especially in relation to affected communities. Although M3 had previously defined community in terms of place and believed that she represented the community in local government, she went on to state that in the CRG ‘I represent an irrigation community. I do my best to represent the irrigation community of Northern Victoria.’ The complexity of defining community is demonstrated by the notion of irrigation communities which can be regarded as a community of locality, affected communities, transcendent communities of interest, and communities of practice in the typology. Irrigation communities could also be defined as an identity group.

**Communities of identity (inside and boundless space)**

As is evident from Table 5.2, communities of identity can comprise members who are tied to each other in a group, or divided from others by certain socio-cultural characteristics that may transcend place (Duane, 1997). Communities of identity are likely to overlap with transcendent communities of interest and communities of practice whereby identity is formed through participation in a shared activity. As I have claimed earlier in this chapter, irrigation communities are an example of a community defined by locality, interest, practice, and locality — as could a fishing community or farming community.

Identity can be formed by particular or situated experiences that create a sense of belonging or allegiance to a particular community. Those experiences might be associated with community of place. In terms of local community, identity, and place, Eversole (2005, p. 47) observes is that “. . . outsiders’ understanding of local identity and needs may contrast markedly with those of local people”. Identity can
also be evoked as a form of nationalism (Achterberg, 1996). For instance, TLM Discussion paper (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2002) refers to the Australian community as a means to evoke an inclusive national identity and sense of ownership for policy development and implementation.

Identity is also constructed in relation to others as a form of communal identification through social practice, culture, networks, politics, gender, age, class, and institutions such as the family. Identity groups might comprise Indigenous people, youth, women, or conservation, agricultural, or urban collectives. These groups can reside inside a community of locality and outside it, but they are bound together by what is assumed to be mutually constructed identities.

Contemporary notions of community applied to NRM draw on collective and personal identification with place, interests, industry, and culture (Lane et al., 2008). However, identity can be particularly difficult to pinpoint because people may situate themselves in multiple communities and identities at different times and places. The possibility for actors to hold multiple identities was captured by M15 who believed he was in the CRG ‘. . . representing South Australia, representing irrigators, representing farmers, representing regional perspectives, a whole range of things’. This scenario also brings to the fore a tension between representation and representativeness, where people may identify with multiple entities but may not typify them.

This tension is further highlighted in evocations of a personal identity tied to a cultural identity. For example, an Indigenous CRG member noted the problematic nature of bringing representativeness, identity, and community together:
I identify myself as Barapa person and have various links to other clan groups. I always have, and always will, claim to be Barapa. I have always battled all this cultural heritage stuff, this multi-representation. I am just dead set against it. I think you cannot go and identify yourself as multi-clans. You identify yourself with them, but it doesn’t mean you represent them. That’s the trouble we had as Barapa nation: We had people representing us at meetings that we didn’t even know were there doing it. (M13)

Community beyond typological constructions

Additional community themes emerged from the analysis of interview transcripts in NVivo 8. These themes were not dealt with in the typology but are established in the socio-political literature. These include the themes of inclusion, representation, obligation, and participation. These themes are now considered to move beyond any limitations with the typology.

Community is everyone: The inclusion and exclusion dichotomy

Community can be used to signify an inclusive and aggregative governance structure. As pointed out above, communities of identity is one way of invoking national identity, as is the practice of aggregative-associative democracy discussed in Chapter 2. As a past chair of the CAC, M1 felt that while ‘. . . there is a need to put boundaries’ around TLM, its governance structures and process, community can be used as an inclusive way of structuring this because ‘I see community very much as everyone’. M7 reflected a similar view, namely that the different actors in the CRG act as an aggregative and inclusive whole:

I think the mix of people, whether they represent a community, sector, or whatever, what we end up with is very well rounded. We get advice that has been considered by everybody that gives a toss about this. So in the broadest possible sense it’s about the general community, everywhere from Albury to Goolwa. (M7)
In theory the concept of community can be associated with attempts to create a more inclusive NRM structures and processes (Broderick, 2005). However, some CRG members noted that community may ‘. . . also be an exclusionary device . . .’ whereby community consultation is ‘. . . about pacifying the disconnected and disenfranchised’. M14 pointed to the problematic nature of using community as an inclusive concept to structure community input:

*To communicate and consult with the community is almost an impossible thing to do. So the best you can do is consult within the spread of the river. You find the key people involved in formulating views in decision-making, in thinking. You identify those people and get them involved, and hope that if you spread the mix well enough you will encapsulate all the views within the community.* (M14)

In governance theory, partial inclusion is exclusionary by nature (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003). The implications for the practice of partial inclusion in groups such as the CRG is that members must either act as representatives of particular interest groups, or be symbolically representative of certain groups in society (Hendriks, 2009). Membership is also selectively representative. As M26 put it, ‘I only represent responsible fishermen’. In the CRG it seems that the structure formed by government is intended to be symbolically representative of different opinions within the area bounded in different ways to the River Murray:

*I have been told that the CRG represents a cross section of community views, but it doesn’t necessarily represent the community. There is a representation of the diversity of the basin.* (M3)

**Community is connection and active membership**

While the idea of community may invoke notions of inclusiveness, it can also signify interdependent interactions between people and the natural environment. This is
particularly important for ecological communitarians (Eckersley, 2004). For M10, the idea and practice of community in an ideal world would be along these lines:

> Community implies a series of interactions and obligations existing between people, among themselves, between the land, the river, and themselves perhaps, between past, present, and future generations perhaps. Not that people think in those terms, but that’s what it is sort of getting at. In terms of those sorts of relationships, the individuals I have profound respect for are people who recognise those lateral and horizontal connections between themselves and other species and the place in which they live. That’s maybe what the word community means, what it should mean. (M10)

On the other hand, M3 described herself as an active member of the community where she was born and has lived all her life. She has worked as a schoolteacher, small business owner, and flood recovery worker, and had served in local government for six years (three years as mayor). She was appointed to a regional catchment authority board, served on the arts festival board, and chaired the hospital board. This member noted with a laugh ‘I am firmly embedded in this community. I know a lot about it. I feel that I am quite well qualified to speak on behalf of the community.’

For some, community membership carries duties and obligations that can be realised only through active participation in the community and the processes of democracy (Giddens, 1998). M21 reflected this view. He felt allegiance to community. He felt his membership in the CRG was tied to notions of social justice, such as advocacy and fairness:

> If you get supported to be nominated, then you have a duty and obligation to see the CRG has a balanced view at the end of the day. To make sure decisions are well discussed, and make sure everybody gets fair opinion — to make sure they are fair decisions, never forgetting the community we come from. (M21)
Legitimising structures

If they are not conferred legitimate status through election or in law, governance structures are said to earn legitimacy by introducing diverse knowledge and expertise, a community perspective on social problems, using community leaders to engage and represent their followers, and providing citizens an opportunity to express their preferences outside elections (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003). Community can also be used to legitimise state power by engaging community experts to act at a distance from government (Herbert-Cheshire, 2006; Rose, 1999). The following quotation illustrates how the concept of community may also be used to evoke and legitimise serving the common interest:

Calling it a community group satisfies the bureaucrats and, more importantly, the politicians. If you call it a stakeholder group, while technically it’s probably better to call it that, it then has connotations of too much self-interest and that sort of thing. Within that stakeholder group we cover a fair bit of the community because you can argue if you throw in local government you are encapsulating everyone in the community. It’s a bit of a stretch but that’s just a warm and fuzzy thing. Community is a word that bureaucrats use when they don’t know what else specifically to use. Politicians love the notion of community for obvious reasons. Six to one half dozen the other, but it is essentially a stakeholder group, and so it should be. (M14)

Community is advocated by third way proponents as a potentially apolitical arena of social practice (Giddens, 1998). Although M10 said, ‘I define my community by interest in the river’, he went on to raise the point that community might be used to mask the political nature of negotiating environmental change for different stakeholder interests:

The other issue that is in your question is who has the power to define community? You know the CRG, it’s a political animal. It’s basically stacked with irrigators mostly from NSW. There’s a whole lot of political argy bargy goes on around it. (M10)
As exemplified in the socio-political literature, the politics of community are poorly recognised and dealt with in public policy, as is the interplay between macro and micro-political structures (Catt & Murphy, 2003; Herbert-Cheshire, 2006; Kenny, 1996). By drawing on community theory, these examples illustrate some of the problems associated with deploying the concept of community in multi-scale NRM contexts. I briefly summarise and reflect on some of these problems below.

Some reflections on community in TLM

CRG members had different definitions of community depending on their personal affiliations. For example, members associated with local government felt that local government represents community. Other CRG members felt that community was a local area, whereas others felt that community included everyone. One CRG member noted that defining community was difficult, but felt that interests were a way to represent the community and ‘so you set up a CRG that represents all of those interests and do your best’. This view is consistent with corporatist theories of state-civil society interactions which take an interest-based perspective as a way to reconcile differences between different communities of interest (Schmitter, 2002).

Community as an organising concept in the CRG was used to signify everyone within a selectively defined boundary in an inclusive manner. However, socio-spatial theory suggests that, by definition, boundaries separate local and affected communities (Benhabib, 1996; Sheppard & McMaster, 2004). From the data I collected, it is not clear who draws boundaries or defines the community, but the CAC appointed CRG members on the basis of their skills and experience. Boundaries determine or structure who is involved in governance, and many
interviewees regarded concepts such as stakeholder and affected communities as interchangeable.

Generally speaking, most societal interest groups (for instance social, economic, and environmental ones) were present in the CRG, albeit in a simplified representative form. CRG members gave voice to different communities of locality, interest, and identity. However, some communities or stakeholders were underrepresented. For example, although irrigators were overrepresented, Indigenous people and fishers underrepresented, and some with a future stake in TLM, such as youth, seemed to be missing. All CRG members exhibited strong connection with the state and formal groups.

The typology developed to describe communities in this chapter was a useful descriptive tool for starting to think about the concept of community. The typology had application to a range of different forms of socio-spatial organisation in the CRG. Descriptive categories such as communities of locality, affected communities, and transcendent communities of interest seemed to be used and understood by members and government officials. However, communities of practice and identity were problematic in terms of clear definitions and memberships.

Conceptually, community as an organising concept for good governance in multi-scale NRM is a complex subject due to a lack of common or shared meaning. Its ad hoc usage for other forms of socio-spatial organisation is exemplified in the following quote:

*I belong to the community of Ardmona, that’s where I live. Everybody knows me. I door knock for Red Cross. If I don’t turn up, people worry where I am. Having said that, I also belong to the arts community which is a completely different group of people, and I belong to a health network which is a...*
community in its own right. So I think this notion of community is overused, and I don’t think anyone understands what it means, to be honest, because I think we all have a different definition of it. (M3)

Conclusion

Community has widespread appeal as an organising concept for government and some parts of society. Difficulties associated with clearly defining the concept means that community may be a limited descriptor for good governance in multi-scale NRM. In the next chapter I investigate TLM governance processes and the roles played by different actors in the CRG to further explore the usefulness of the concept of community for good governance.
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Chapter 6
ENROLLING COMMUNITIES IN TLM PROCESS

The community group is an important part of the process. You can’t make these decisions based on engineering and science and no other inputs because communities feel a very deep sense of ownership of their river. They will react pretty quickly if they are not part of the process. They need to see that they are represented in the process, that there is a voice on behalf of their location, their commodity, or their interest group. (M15)

Introduction

In the previous chapter I explored the way that community was described and assembled in TLM. This revealed that community was defined in various ways in policy and planning documents. From the interview data I found that CRG members sometimes used the concept of community interchangeably with different social, spatial, and political forms of organisation. This included geographic areas, socio-political groups, and industry sectors. The concept of stakeholder seemed to have considerable currency with many CRG members. This stakeholder concept seemed to be an appropriate one for TLM in view of the multi-scalar, multi-sectoral, and multi-level involvement of both government and non-government actors (Head, 2005; Morrison, 2007).

From the analysis in the previous chapter it also became clearer to me that the concept of community was applied to the CRG as a collective entity. The analysis also began to reveal that community was assembled by the CAC and government to represent different geographies and interests in TLM. However, I still felt that issues of representation and representativeness needed further investigation in order to better
understand the usefulness of community as an organising concept for good
governance in multi-scale NRM.

This chapter examines TLM governance process to explore how CRG
members were involved in TLM, particularly the roles that they played. Some
background literature sets the scene for understanding the significance of community
as an organising concept for good governance in TLM. I then present the themes that
emerged from the NVivo 8 analysis of interview transcripts from CRG members and
government officials.

**Actor roles in multi-scale NRM**

Associated with the shift from centralised government to more participatory styles of
governance has been an increased demand for public participation in policy choice
and implementation. Public participation in policy processes is said to result in
understanding, influence, and engagement that leads to better policy outcomes
(Dovers, 2005). Participation is often cited on a continuum of power shared between
government and their public. Power is low when the public is merely informed or
consulted. Power is shared in partnerships, and power high when public actors are
delegated responsibility and control for decisions and action (Arnstein, 1969; Bishop
& Davis, 2002).

The amount of power shared and exercised by actors is underpinned by the
process of good governance. Principles for good governance, among other things,
require inclusive, legitimate, transparent, accountable, and fair processes (Lockwood
et al., 2010). Similarly, the practice of good community engagement requires fair and
balanced representation; integration of different skills, knowledge, and values; setting of realistic expectations; and ensuring informed and collaborative involvement (Aslin & Brown, 2004). Addressing issues of inclusiveness; actor roles, responsibilities, expectations, and capability; cooperation; and coordination are important for process integrity (Sidaway, 2005). According to a number of scholars (see for instance, Grant & Curtis, 2004; Lockwood, et al., 2010; McGurk et al., 2006; Webler & Tuler, 2006), the types of criteria\textsuperscript{15} that might be used to consider the process of good NRM governance can include:

- shared vision;
- clear goals and a written plan;
- inclusive participation, representative of affected interests;
- connection between actors;
- open, accessible, and transparent process;
- consensus-based decision-making;
- decisions being regarded as fair, with agreed standards;
- opportunity and capacity to influence decisions;
- opportunity for constructive interaction; and
- different and integrated types of knowledge/expertise.

Partnerships between government and non-government actors are key governance arrangements used to structure multi-scale NRM, particularly for problems stemming from multiple and interdependent issues of resource ownership, resource dependency, overuse, and conservation (Lockwood et al., 2009; Morrison, 2007). Devolution of power through partnership arrangements has brought about the need for diverse roles to be assumed by government and non-government actors (Bulkeley, 2005). For instance, “Governments see their role as providing a forum for discussion, ensuring participants are representative of the broader communities”

\textsuperscript{15} The synthesis of criteria for good NRM governance has been sourced from the authors cited above.
interests, and proposing policy ideas that can be debated, modified, and adopted with some measure of common support” (Bishop & Davis, 2002, p. 20).

In multi-scale NRM partnerships, government typically takes a steering role to facilitate and coordinate the involvement of business and community groups, non-governmental organisations, and other stakeholders (Bell & Park, 2006; Bellamy et al., 2002). For instance, in the MDB, partnerships can include all levels of government, community groups, industry groups, landholders, and land managers (see Table 4.3). These arrangements are expected to provide some measure of joint or collective decision-making between actors.

In partnership style consultations, a representative governance model can be adopted by appointing individual public actors to advisory groups to represent particular interests and geographies — ostensibly to speak for community as a collective entity (Bishop & Davis, 2002; Lynn & Busenberg, 1995). Public actors are appointed to these groups as leaders on the basis of their skills and experience, and the understanding that they bring of their respective communities (Bridgman & Davis, 2004). Leaders are enrolled by government to articulate community views and act as a conduit to different networks and alliances. Those networks and alliances can then be used for policy consultation, preference aggregation, and policy coordination (Herbert-Cheshire & Higgins, 2004; Rose, 1999).

Consensus seeking, or at least a high level of public acceptance, is often the aim of public consultation (Bishop & Davis, 2002). The use of advisory groups in policy consultation processes is useful for government to get a range of “direct and unfiltered views from community representatives, while allowing policy makers to
explain their approach and objectives” (Bridgman & Davis, 2004, p. 84). This process implies that information flows freely between government and the community.

In a two-way information flow, advisory group members in state-community partnerships play various roles. These roles might include providing a cross sample of public views and concerns, becoming informed about decisions and their consequences, developing relationships and a deeper understanding of the concerns of others, providing a moderating influence on more extreme views, and serving as a communications link back to their constituents (Creighton, 2005). While government may retain final decision-making and authority to act, the public gets a level of influence over the decision, albeit not directly. As not all interested parties can participate and have their voice heard, openness of structures and processes is critical (Creighton, 2005).

As indicated in the literature reviewed and affirmed by one CRG member in the previous chapter, the question of who defines the relevant community dictates who gets to participate in governance, actor roles, and ultimately if the processes results in good governance (Bishop & Davis, 2002; Schmitter, 2002). In the following section I explore TLM governance process and the role played by CRG members. Documentary data, direct observation at a CRG meeting, and in-depth semi-structured interviews are used for data analysis. The thematic data analysis is informed by the governmentality-ANT frame and principles for good governance.
TLM and CRG: Process and roles

TLM sought to involve all levels of government, community groups, industry groups, landholders, and land managers that would be affected by decisions taken by the ministerial council. At the community level, CAC members were formally appointed representatives of basin communities. CAC members were to disseminate information about decisions taken by the ministerial council to their communities. The aim of informing communities was to promote a clear understanding of issues and decisions that would enhance community ownership and adoption of policy (Boullly, 2003).

The CAC formed the CRG to provide advice on the implementation of TLM business plan. In order to provide advice, the CRG terms of reference\textsuperscript{16} stipulated that the CRG would:

\begin{enumerate}
\item receive briefings on all aspects of TLM;
\item seek out the views of a wide range of interests within affected communities;
\item provide advice on the River Murray Channel Icon Site Environmental Management Plan; and
\item provide advice on TLM Environmental Water Plan.
\end{enumerate}

CRG members would therefore receive information about TLM, hold a range of views from affected interests, and provide advice on various environmental plans. In order to further assist with my understanding of TLM governance process and the role of the CRG, I was permitted to observe one CRG meeting.

\textsuperscript{16}The terms of reference (ToR) were not publically available at the time of interviews. The CRG supplied me with a copy and the ToR was subsequently made available on TLM web site.
Observations from a CRG meeting

I attended a CRG meeting in the regional centre of Albury/Wodonga on 20 and 21 February 2007 as a direct observer. Although CRG meetings were not open to the public, they provide an opportunity to inform CRG members about progress being made with TLM implementation. This was the seventh CRG as far as I could ascertain, as there was only one publicly available CRG communiqué from their July 2006 meeting (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2006b). As an outsider to TLM and the CRG, my observations focused on who was involved in the meeting, the process, and the role played by participants.

At the meeting that I attended, 20 of 33 then-listed CRG members attended (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2007c), with four staff from the MDBC, an observer from a federal government agency, and me. CRG members and MDBC staff were seated in a semi-circular arrangement with the acting chair and CAC executive officer at the front to facilitate the meeting. As a non-participant in the meeting, I sat behind the main group. A meeting agenda was circulated, and the meeting commenced with reports from members.

First, updates came from members who identified themselves from the Murray and the Shepparton irrigation areas. Both these members reported that ‘things were not good’ in terms of water issues in their areas. Members from local, state, and national groups then raised concerns about the security of irrigation water, acquiring environmental water, indigenous engagement and cultural water flows, a perception that CRG recommendations were being vetted, and the need for better communication and community information. Not all members attending the meeting made reports.
The acting chair then announced:

*The CRG terms of reference are to extend the reach to the community by seeking out community views, input, feeding back to communities, and advising the CAC on TLM.* (M28)

Those at the meeting then heard a number of presentations from government agency staff about water recovery. This was followed by a discussion led by the acting chair on CRG membership to clarify that the CRG was a skill-based group with representation across the southern basin’s geographic and stakeholder groups.

I attended an informal dinner that night with CRG members and key people from the Albury/Wodonga area. I estimate that there were over 60 people present. During drinks I spoke with a local government official, a CAC member, and a government agency staff member. I discussed my research when asked, and inquired about people’s background and involvement in TLM. I was invited to sit with a group of primarily CRG members who had involvement in national and state environmental organisations, catchment authorities, and a wetland group. I observed that people seemed to sit within their geographic and interest-based cliques. For instance, CAC members sat together, as did those with local government backgrounds, and people with an interest in environmental issues. Brief presentations were made by the acting chair and a past CRG member on River Murray tourism and about TLM and its progress. Members spoke informally at their tables over the meal, with most leaving by about 11p.m.

The meeting recommenced the next day with a presentation from the general manager, Natural Resources MDDBC on the broader policy context for TLM. He
stressed ‘the need to keep going’ with TLM and disregard some of larger political debates around an proposed national water plan. He stressed that for TLM, and water reform in general, ‘the issue is really about governance’. Another two MDBC staffers reported on environmental works, water recovery measures, and environmental management. The final agenda item titled ‘involving communities’ was presented by a staff member from a local government association. This presentation centered on progress in community engagement, exposure in the local media, and some discussion about whether CRG members should be reporting back to their communities.

After each presentation, CRG members were able to raise questions and briefly discuss any issues. At the completion of the meeting, all members were required to provide joint written advice to the CAC who would then consider that advice. Issues for CRG advice were displayed on an overhead projector with the opportunity for open discussion that lasted about 15-20 minutes. There was a requirement that the advice generated be unanimous. It was understood that the CAC would pass advice as noted on to the Ministerial Council. I noted that the advice related to:

- social responsibility for community impacts, and potential unintended consequences of recovering water for the environment, needing to be thoroughly considered;
- the need for community education;
- community input and advice which was framed in terms of government policy versus operational outcomes. For example, local / regional issues such as the Barmah bypass cannot undermine TLM objectives; and
- environmental management needing to ensure and maintain community confidence and functionality.
**Sharing information and consulting the CRG**

There is a difference between being informed and consulted. CRG members may be informed about an issue or action without having all their views taken into account, whereas consultation is a purpose driven process that seeks particular views and advice from all affected participants. Furthermore, as one CRG member noted ‘consultation is not negotiation’; consultation is largely informational, whereas negotiation enables people to influence an outcome.

Therefore, consultation in the CRG was expected to be a two way process whereby those consulted have their interests taken into account and in return give a commitment and take a sense of ownership of the process (see Catt & Murphy, 2003). As belonging to a consultation and advisory group, it would be reasonable to assume that all CRG members expected to voice their views, and have those views taken into account. Because not all CRG members were present, and not all of the members who were present participated in the discussions, not all views were accounted for or considered.

My overall observation was that the CRG meeting was largely informational. Information was presented to the group, primarily from government agencies, in the form of technical details and issues regarding the water buy-back process, and environmental management. One member said in a later interview that CRG meetings play an important role in keeping members updated about any progress being made:

*You get presented with a lot of information, most of it technical. Then you go away and then you come back again. So consultation can be useful in getting information on what the hell is actually going on and building some other alliances that might be there.* (M10)
By formulating advice from the information presented, consultation is said to take place through the collective voice of the CRG:

*The CRG [has] a collective role. It has some quite talented people up and down the river. Those people have different knowledge bases and skills, but collectively they are able to cover, I am very confident, all the stakeholders’ interests.* (M25)

Seeking advice from CRG members as a community group in a collective role was an attempt by government to be inclusive, open, and transparent. Informing members about policy implementation and progress would help ensure TLM process was transparent for those attending the meeting. However, with less than three quarters of CRG members present, and even fewer participating in formulating advice, it would be difficult to regard the process as being fully, or equally, inclusive. The short time available for formulating unanimous advice limited opportunities for discussion, placed members under pressure to think, and resulted in those who were more vocal and articulate having greater input (pers. obs. CRG meeting Feb 2007).

It was somewhat surprising to me that the acting chair spent time providing clarification that CRG was a skill-based group with geographic and stakeholder group membership. Doing so implied that members were uncertain of their role in the CRG. There was a strong rhetoric of encouraging community input, seeking community views, and considering community impacts in the meeting. Although not specified in their terms of reference, CRG members were also expected to act as a link between government and their stakeholder groups.
CRG as government-community intermediary

As a mode of socio-political organisation, TLM governance process can be conceptualised as a networked interaction. As a representative structure and processes for the community collectively, the network helps to translate policy into action through the CRG. In their advisory role, CRG members act as an interface between their different groups and policy implementation. In these intermediary roles, members provide a critical function in formal governmental processes where they may act as conduits to different scales, social contexts, technologies, meanings, and sets of interests (Beveridge & Guy, 2009).

In light of the principles of good governance and the potential role of CRG members as community intermediaries in policy implementation, various themes and issues emerged from interviews. The following sections describe and analyse governance in TLM to contribute to the limited empirical evidence that documents the processes and roles of consultative groups (see McGurk et al., 2006). Key themes that emerged were CRG members acting in communicative roles as information generators and sharers. Added to that, some members took an active role in representing different interests, whereas others seemed to be more passive. In order to justify and legitimise policy implementation decisions some positions were moderated.

Information and communicative roles

Communication is a particularly important aspect of consultative processes. Communication between actors frames individual and collective problems, helps articulate concerns, assists in reaching a shared understanding, and keeps
stakeholders informed. Good governance requires both the generation of, and access to, high quality information that helps ensure the legitimacy, openness, and transparency in processes (Lockwood et al., 2010).

**Conduits: Transparent flows?**

According to the terms of reference, the CRG was to seek out the views of a wide range of interests within affected communities. As a senior government official pointed out, it was important for CRG members to understand the purpose of the group to avoid confusion about their role. Noting that this can be daunting in large public policy processes, the government official felt that an effort was made to explain to CRG members how consultation groups work, and who the CRG was to advise:

_So there is an element of it’s a big and complex challenge, and their frustration in terms of how it fits together, how it works, and who is in charge. That is an important feature of the community. So leaders can go back to their home towns and say I am involved with the committee — to explain we might not agree with it, this is what happened, X, Y and Z, and this is the way it works._ *(B3)*

In particular, B3 noted that group members need to understand if they are ‘there to throw views into the ring, or whether they are there to take the word out again’.

Several CRG members understood that they were to establish information exchange between government and their groups. M8 felt that the CRG process ‘should be a two-way process, being a conduit for information and advice, both from our stakeholder groups at a grassroots level, up to ministerial council via the CAC, and back the other way’. The CRG chair viewed the process as a one way flow where members would bring messages on ‘community perceptions about what is a good or bad thing and the steps that need to be taken’ for policy implementation.
Several members stressed the need to provide information to government and communicate with communities about proposed actions for implementing TLM. M19 felt that the members’ role was to gather information and communicate issues back to the CAC. However, this member felt that there was a need for members to relay any issues back to their areas:

*I mean, we have found problems with what they’re looking to do. We have often talked about how they need to communicate that to communities. I think that has been one of the most important things.* (M19)

Some members expressed uneasiness about taking information back to their communities. Some felt that there were mixed messages from government about their role in the CRG and communicating with communities. Others felt that it was not their role at all to communicate back to communities at all. Notably, some members from local communities along the river felt that, due to drought conditions and social upheaval, they either did not want to bring up the issue of environmental water, or felt it was too difficult to talk about. In these cases, the members did not feel that they had the confidence to deal with such ‘a hot topic’.

*The drought is causing a lot of pain right here and right now, and that’s probably the topic people want to talk about. I was never given the impression early that we would have to give feedback to the community. But in the last 12 months I have picked that up more.* (M19)

From another perspective, M16 noted ‘the local community around here is hurting like mad’ due to a lack of water for irrigation and general consumption. Therefore, he believed he should be offering advice ‘in an indirect way on the resolution of some of these social tensions’. However, a CAC member said ‘We [the
CRG] do not provide advice on this [social tensions], but we do hear about it, and take it into account in our discussions’.

The CRG was to provide a mix or amalgam of community advice to the CAC, but CRG members expected that advice to flow to decision makers. Some members expressed concern that this advice might not be getting through:

Yes that’s been a real issue for people who don’t sit in the CAC in that they don’t understand what the process looks like. Even though we do, after its been to ministerial council we provide them — what went — maybe not exactly what CAC advice to ministerial council was but certainly an overview of what was in it. It kind of looks ‘wishy washy’ by the time it’s been massaged into MDBC speak. (M7)

However, this member went on to explain that this was the rationale for CAC members sitting on the CRG — to take the message back to the CAC, and therefore the governmental decision makers. Nonetheless, some members felt that they ‘not getting as much information coming back as I would like to see from the CAC’.

These issues imply that, as information flows vertically through the different level governance structures, advice and messages get blurred.

Some members felt that their role was to improve the knowledge of the TLM at the community level and to ‘provide advice up on the interests of the respective communities that we come from. Our role is to improve the knowledge of the program in communities’. With involvement in local government and in various local groups, M21 felt that his role was to disseminate information in a more horizontal fashion:

[My role is] to spread the messages in the community and spread the discussion. It’s an important role for those representatives on those bodies [CAC & CRG] when they do come home, to put up your hand, and pass good information to the community, so your local community knows why you are on the body — because he talked to us and gave us some information, for
instance. Twenty members of the Lions Club will spread the message to another twenty members and the messages do go out there. (M21)

These responses point to the potential role of CRG members disseminating information through their networks.

**Networked flows**

M18 felt that by using existing networks CRG members were expected to bring a community perspective to government. As a past CRG chair, M14 described the rationale for formulating the CRG membership in terms of these network linkages. ‘We were looking for people that were keyed into key networks, irrigation, environment, that sort of thing’. He felt that networks provided a way for members to bring different views to the table, and in return members would get a better understanding of different issues. This was based on the assumption that ‘I think the more views you get on a different subject, the better you are, and more empathetic you are to the different regional issues you hear of’.

However, a CAC member noted that CRG networks do not guarantee a consistent flow of information back and forth:

*Whether they [CRG members] are then doing the networking down to their local levels, all comes back to their individual commitment to the project. And some do it better than others.* (M25)

A past CRG chair noted that network connections can fall short in spreading messages, depending on the commitment of individual CRG members. Therefore, member networks do not guarantee identical or horizontal information flow to different communities:

*You hope that people disseminate both ways, up and down. But networks can only reach so far. Some are good as disseminating information back into*
their networks; others don’t do it at all or see it as their role, which I find disappointing. (M14)

CRG information is not for public consumption. But how do you expect the community to know what we are deliberating on? If someone is not linked in, how do they have input into the process? (M14)

It is worthwhile to note that CRG members are one avenue for information flow. Within the MDBC there was a communications and consultation manager for TLM who described her role as being ‘. . . to communicate and consult on TLM as set out in the TLM business plan’. That role involved ensuring input was obtained from all groups affected by decisions on water recovery and water application. She was also responsible for providing accurate and up-to-date information on TLM and reporting to the CAC on communications activities (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2004; 2006).

The CRG provided a forum for social, technical, and political information exchange within the group, as well as between the group and government. However, CRG members were not clear about how information flowed between the CAC and other governance structures. From the interviewees’ perspective, there was limited information flow back to the CRG and to their communities and/or stakeholders groups.

Although detailed technical information was presented to CRG members, time to digest and discuss that information was limited. The technical and sometimes political nature of the information regarding water recovery and management provided to CRG members made it difficult (and sometimes inappropriate) to convey information to stakeholder groups. Information provision to groups appeared to be
performed by some members, but not by others, and that potentially raised questions over openness and transparency in the consultation process.

**Expert knowledge and skills: Competency-based roles**

In regional and larger scale NRM programs, knowledge-based and competency- or skills-based representation is a common prerequisite for advisory group members. Typically in NRM, advisory groups comprise people from the community (rather than government), with members selected on the basis of a range of skills and knowledge rather than direct stakeholder representation (Bellamy et al., 2002). These advisory groups, sometimes known as expert groups, share some characteristics with the concept of communities of practice introduced in the previous chapter (refer to Table 5.2).

As also indicated in the previous chapter, all CRG members were involved in a range of formal and informal groups and organisations with sectoral or geographic affiliations (see Figure 5.1). Several members spoke about their role in these groups and how this led to their inclusion in the CRG. As M8 noted, her role in the CRG is knowledge-based where appointment is for ‘your own personal knowledge and experience, not your organisational affiliation’. However, the CRG membership brought different organisational knowledge, skills, and experience that were allegedly representative of the community.

While the CAC acted as a higher level strategic group, some in the CAC felt specific types of knowledge were required in the CRG to assist with TLM implementation. For instance, CRG members needed direct experience with the
social, economic, and environmental issues affecting the River Murray. Members also needed an understanding of the communities of locality, a background and understanding in broader governmental processes, a technical understanding of water issues, and the capacity to articulate and add to existing knowledge. Jointly, these skills, knowledge, and understanding would provide a collective community perspective:

*The CRG was formed to get a cross section of people able to provide community input into the issues around the implementation of TLM. Their role is to provide their technical expertise, community expertise, their knowledge and experience, to assist in getting the message from their community as a whole to decision makers.* (M6)

However, knowledge alone would not be sufficient to obtain a community perspective. Members would need to seek out knowledge, articulate it, and demonstrate its significance to decision makers. When asked about the role of the CRG, M17 stated in a matter of fact fashion that ‘the group is the skills of the community’. In this context, knowledge and views were mobilised from different geographic areas as each CRG member was expected to possess ‘different opinions, viewpoints, experiences and different knowledge of our areas’.

**Expert local knowledge and connections**

As a past CAC chair who had been instrumental in setting up the CRG, M1 acknowledged that ‘the CAC needed to have people closer to the ground with more local knowledge about water issues’. Another CAC member noted that expert knowledge on the River Murray would be important to get different perspectives and therefore messages across:

*So the CRG has a lot more expertise on a range of things. People who know a lot about the fishing industry, 30-40 years of experience; people who have doctorates in ecology and understand the whole spectrum of how things*
interact from the Coorong all the way up; people with a deep understanding of how the irrigation industry operates. (M7)

With a doctorate in ecology, M9 felt that she played a role informing the CRG on local issues in the lower reaches of the River Murray. This member worked as an environmental consultant with agricultural groups and resource management boards. She noted that in those roles ‘you go and speak with local community, they know [that] I know a lot about the Murray and they ask you questions and I pass on information’ to the CRG.

Some members considered their role in the CRG in terms of local resource knowledge and participation in NRM groups. M23 described himself as being ‘really interested in how local communities hold together’ and heavily involved in catchment authority and Landcare groups. He said ‘locally I have been involved in them all’, and that involvement ranged from trees and vegetation strategies for the catchment, to waterways, and irrigation reconfiguration. He felt that his involvement and interest in local NRM was important for successfully discharging his role in the CRG:

You need a great deal of knowledge, and you need to know the contacts and know where you can get knowledge from. I often tell the story that I live near the Goulburn River and I always judge it this way: If the Goulburn River wasn’t healthy I wouldn’t be here, I’d go somewhere else. On the other side, if the Goulburn River is healthy and our productivity systems are unhealthy I wouldn’t be here either. So to me it’s a balance. To get that balance right you need to have a lot of knowledge, in-depth knowledge. (M23)

In terms of balancing views and issues, M17 believed that local knowledge was an important factor in CRG deliberations, particularly for advancing local issues and interests. As part of TLM process ‘unless you have your own local knowledge, it’s very hard to argue against somebody who has had time and devoted resources to gather that information’. M24 felt that advancing and understanding local issues and
perspectives was the main role of the CRG: ‘I am there to put this area’s perspective forward, but to bring back perspectives of other areas as well. It works both ways’. These comments suggest that members advance their areas, issues, and local interests so that decision makers can make trade-offs between differing geographic perspectives.

Although local knowledge is important for gaining different perspectives about geographic issues, CRG members play multiple roles in mobilising different types of knowledge. M9 alluded to a dual role where local or emotive issues could be balanced by drawing on technical expertise:

*I think I am probably there because of my local community connections — because I live in the basin, in this part of the river — but also because I have a fairly good scientific understanding of the basin itself, which does help with interpreting information and providing a level to the discussion that hopefully is reasonably sensible, rather than just emotive.* (M9)

**Technicalities of river management**

Clarifying the different roles performed by the CRG, M16 explained that the members were to act as advisers on environmental plans for the River Murray channel. He felt the CRG had a stronger and clearer advisory role in this capacity:

*To the extent that community people deal in technical issues they will offer advice on how to manage the river. It’s not their task to offer advice on every icon site; it is on the actual river channel and how those icons are linked together. That’s one of its narrow contexts.* (M16)

Few other members spoke about their role in environmental management as specified in the CRG terms of reference. However, some members involved in irrigation felt that they could provide expert advice about how to use and apply water for environmental flows. This issue was discussed at the CRG meeting I attended. For instance, M16 felt that if authorities wanted to ‘know how to move big amounts
of water they should talk to rice growers’ because they do that on a regular basis and have the technical knowledge required. As an irrigator chairing a wetlands group, M18 felt he could ‘offer some useful advice on how to irrigate a wetland’ (pers. obs. CRG meeting Feb 2007).

**Cultural flows: Traditional knowledge**

An indigenous member of the group felt integrating traditional knowledge was important. For him, indigenous people are key stakeholders in TLM process:

> We believe as indigenous people we have knowledge about country. We have knowledge about our geography. We have knowledge about ecosystems. We have a role mandated through our cultural responsibility to ensure our country and our waterways are efficiently operated and with real security. At the moment we don’t see that. (M12)

This member clearly felt that indigenous knowledge was not well recognised within the CRG or broader TLM process. His plea was to be on an equal footing with other stakeholders, especially with regard to input about the process for water recovery and use for what he called ‘cultural water flows’. A non-Indigenous CRG member felt she could assist in getting this message across:

> I think the Indigenous input is difficult to keep consistent because of the pressures on Indigenous people to be there. So I think part of my role is also to try and bring that ecological perspective and at times give it a cultural flavour. Not that I am Indigenous. But I have worked with Indigenous people and try to remind people when they are not there that Indigenous issues are important and there is a spiritual aspect to this as well as an environmental aspect. (M9)

Knowledge integration is an important part of being heard, and of having different areas and interests represented. The process of knowledge integration may help members gain a sense of process and problem ownership. However, the assumption that knowledge integration empowers people by providing them with a
greater say overlooks the foregrounding of particular types of knowledge, experience, and skills over others (Herbert-Cheshire & Higgins, 2004). For instance, the analysis thus far shows a strong presence of local knowledge over other types of knowledge (e.g., Indigenous). The privileging of particular knowledge can therefore be tied to particular forms of scalar and interest representation.

**Representational role: Process legitimacy**

Participatory policy processes such as TLM are likely to exclude some actors due to the way that problems are framed and organised (Dovers, 2005). For instance, TLM focuses on the River Murray at the sub river basin scale. Therefore, a particular constellation of scales and suite of interests is included and given voice through selective inclusion, while other constellations may be excluded. Those actors who are given a voice play important roles in procedural or process legitimacy where it is assumed that decision makers have secured the consent of those being governed (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003).

As identified in Chapter 5, the membership of the CRG comprised a selection of people from different areas and interest groups. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume members play a role in representing those areas and interests. The CRG chair explained that members were in the group ‘for their knowledge and skills’, but a deputy MDB commissioner expected the group ‘to represent the interests of different regions, different industries, and different interest groups’. In the following section I will describe and analyse the potential role and input of group members in terms of geographic and interest-based representation. This section extends the preliminary
analysis from Chapter 5 about community representation and definitions in greater detail.

*Geographic representation*

During interviews I asked CRG members about their background and involvement in TLM and if they felt they represented a community. As most interviews were conducted at members’ homes and/or places of business, I noted the geographic representation of members. For those not interviewed, the CRG information sheet was used to gather geographic data (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2006a). Table 6.1 summarises each member’s background and geographic representation.
Table 6.1 — CRG members’ background and geographic representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRG Member background &amp; place of origin</th>
<th>Geographic representation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ex CAC Chair, Queensland</td>
<td>N/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMA Board, Victoria</td>
<td>Local and region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local government and CMA, Victoria</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial fishing, South Australia</td>
<td>Local</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community action and communications, New South Wales</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRG Chair and farmer, New South Wales</td>
<td>N/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAC and Environment, Queensland</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental peak, Victoria</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment, South Australia</td>
<td>Local</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment, Victoria</td>
<td>State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest industry, Victoria</td>
<td>State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous, South Australia</td>
<td>State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous, Victoria</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRG chair, Irrigation, Victoria</td>
<td>Resigned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irrigation company, South Australia</td>
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<td>Irrigation farmer, New South Wales</td>
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<td>Irrigation farmer, Victoria</td>
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<td>Irrigation farmer, Irrigation Council, New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irrigation farmer and CMA, New South Wales</td>
<td>Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreation fishing group, Victoria</td>
<td>State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tourism and local government, Victoria</td>
<td>Local</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMA board, acting CRG chair, Victoria</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation farmer, New South Wales</td>
<td>Not interviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government association and CAC, New South Wales</td>
<td>Not interviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism, Victoria</td>
<td>Resigned</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRM board, South Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irrigation farmer, Queensland</td>
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<td>Irrigation farmer, South Australia</td>
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<td>Irrigation farmer, New South Wales</td>
<td>Resigned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous, New South Wales</td>
<td>Resigned</td>
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</table>

(Source: CRG Information Sheet and Interviews)

Of 27 CRG members interviewed, 13 associated geographic representation with the local area, four directly identified the region and six a state. No members explicitly identified with the national scale. CAC members’ geographic representation is not considered in this analysis because CAC members are appointed under different jurisdictional or interest-based criteria. Figure 6.1 shows the spatial distribution of CRG members.
Figure 6.1 — CRG member locations

(Map prepared by Simon McDonald, Spatial Data Analysis Network, Charles Sturt University)
The discourse of the local was strong in terms of representation, with 13 of the 27 members interviewed talking about representing communities of locality. Therefore, many CRG members believed that they were appointed to the CRG to represent local areas:

Everyone is positioned in the group in one way or another to represent their area — to make sure the interests of their area are well explained to the rest of the group. (M23)

I go along to do that parochial thing, to protect my local area. (M16)

As Table 6.1 shows, members who were involved in irrigation farming, as well as those involved in local government, seemed to consider their involvement in the CRG as representing and advancing local community issues. Local representation is consistent with the points raised in the discussion of CRG members in the preceding section about communicative and local knowledge roles.

As might be expected with the regional NRM model in Australia, the regional perspective would be an important one in water recovery and environmental management for TLM. A regional perspective was something that B4 expected CRG members to bring to the group, with nine CRG members holding positions on regional catchment boards and committees. I was surprised to find that the regional discourse was not as strong as might be expected. While members sometimes talked about the regional scale, they often did so in terms of local issues and industries. For instance, M3 thought that:

social issues need to be dealt with on a much smaller scale . . . I think it needs to be handled more at a regional level than anything else. I think we could do it locally. Unfortunately, you know, the country is divided up along the silliest lines. (M3)
Another said, ‘I think there is a whole number of communities in this region based on irrigation, and it’s those whole communities that have a vital interest in TLM’.

Decision makers in the MDBC hoped that CRG members would reflect regional difference. M27 saw the regional perspective as lowering the costs for decision-making by bringing different opinions and knowledge together, by ‘tapping into a whole lot of different regions without physically having to be there’. However, M21 felt that, as a more regional perspective emerged, it added another layer of opposing views within and between regions and local areas:

_We do have separate views specific to those regions. I think we need to trim it down. We have three representatives from the Riverland: myself, [and two others]. One should be sufficient to put the views of this region._ (M21)

State scale representation was provided by members with formal industry, peak body, and lobby group associations. As a campaigner with a state environmental peak body, M10 noted that the ‘rhetoric is that you don’t represent a community, I am on the CRG because I was nominated Victorian representative by Victoria’s minister for water’. As a campaigner with a national environmental peak body, M8 noted that appointment to the CRG was on the basis of skills and experiences. However, noting that she represented a state, she said:

_It was an appointment made by [State] minister for environment and water. So I was appointed as a Victorian representative. Clearly he was looking around and being advised on a range of people to sit on the CRG from Victoria._ (M8)

As president of a state irrigation council, M22 noted that participation in the CRG was based on expertise. That was perhaps used as a means of diffusing particular entrenched positions:
I was put on the original one [the CRP] because I was an irrigator...but now you are supposed to be on it for your expertise. I try and see the big picture. I mean, my heart is with irrigated agriculture to a degree, but I am not adverse to what is going to happen with the environment. (M22)

The analysis concerning 33 CRG members in 2007 revealed that at a state level, 13 were from New South Wales, 10 from Victoria, 7 from South Australia, and 3 from Queensland. Given this geographic representation, it is interesting that South Australia, at the end of the Murray River system and containing some of the most affected communities, is underrepresented.

It is interesting that no members directly associated themselves with the national scale (although at least two members were directly involved with national lobby groups). It is worthwhile remembering that the River Murray has national and international significance environmentally, economically, and culturally. However, there was little association or representation with this scale. On the other hand, it might be assumed that government officials and politicians would be responsible for representing, negotiating, and realising the relevant national interests (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2002).

As with communicative and knowledge-based roles, the local discourse was a strong one for legitimising particular types of geographic representation in the CRG. Geographic representation could be considered problematic in terms of privileging the local over the broader interest. This in turn raises issue of fairness and equality for the wider community. Much of the local discourse emanated primarily from those who were materially affected by the recovery of environmental water.
Fair representation

Fairness is a key element of good NRM governance. Procedural fairness calls for an equal representation of the participants affected, and the affected broader communities, with an emphasis the public interest over self-interest (Bloomquist & Schlager, 2005). Distributive fairness implies that costs and benefits of decision-making are considered and shared equally. Good NRM governance principles require diverse values to be considered. Those values include ecological values, as well as the values of current and future generations (Lockwood et al., 2010). Issues of procedural and distributive fairness applied to multi-scale NRM governance require that those participating have equal opportunity and power to participate (Rockloff, 2003). Interest and values should be equally represented, but that is rarely the case in public policy (Eckersley 2003).

Several CRG members spoke about the issues of fairness and equity, often in the context of particular geographic or affected communities. The fairness discourse was invoked for striking a balance between different and sometimes competing uses for water. For instance, M17 as an irrigator who lived in area commonly identified as an irrigation community felt that ‘there has been no talk of equity, putting balance to the rivers resources. Everything we do in the CRG is one sided to the environment.’ I asked why he believed this might be the case. He responded that there were many interests to be accommodated, and irrigation communities should not bear the full brunt of decisions:

We need the community, we need irrigation, we need industry, and we need the environment — working out a balance in equity to distribute the water for the different needs. There is also cultural water for Aboriginal need, which needs to be taken into account. So we need a redistribution of water that is not solely at the irrigators’ expense. (M17)
However, as one member said, irrigation water and industry needs are outside the terms of reference for the CRG:

*It’s only objective [the CRG] is to give advice on obtaining water for environmental purposes at the icon sites and that’s it. Comments about rice growers, general water, groundwater, and anything else is outside that.* (M26)

While there are clearly social and economic tensions associated with environmental water recovery processes, and procedural fairness is an important component for allaying members concerns, some CRG members believed that their role was to make sure the decision-making process was fair and balanced:

*You have a duty and obligation to see the CRG has a balanced view at the end of the day: to make sure decisions are well discussed and make sure everybody gets fair opinion and to make sure there are fair decisions – never forgetting the community we come from.* (M21)

*I think irrigators are so much more broadly represented. You know there is at least half a dozen of them or something, and representing much more geographic and broader industry interests from the farming point of view and pastoral points of view.* (M11)

Interest-based and geographic representation was also a procedural issue for M10. He felt that CRG processes were not equal because ‘the CRG is basically stacked with irrigators, mostly from NSW’ and ‘processes are stage managed to shunt decisions around’.

In terms of affected interests, of the 33 members, 15 could be directly associated with irrigation and another 4 had family ties to irrigation farming or industries. The remaining 14 members had no direct discernable association with irrigation. Their affiliations were environmental (5), recreational (1), commercial
fishing (1), Indigenous (2), catchment authorities/CRG chairs (2), forestry (2), and tourism (2).

Representation clearly favours particular geographic communities based around the irrigation industry and irrigation interests. Therefore, the CRG’s role could be interpreted as being to advise decision makers about fair and acceptable decisions for the irrigation communities. From the governmental perspective, officials were hoping to get advice about locally acceptable ideas and decisions. As B3 stated, in their advisory capacity the CRG is ‘representative of the leaders in the basin and they are probably representative of the 10% of people that really care about this sort of stuff’.

Indeed, by seeking advice from leaders in irrigation communities, particular kinds of advice would be forthcoming. As an irrigator, in an irrigation community, M24 certainly felt that the CRG’s role was to advise decision makers on what would be acceptable decisions regarding those communities:

*We are contributing to the knowledge and what can be achieved and what can’t. And the community will be having input all the time: what is fair and just, what outcomes they want. All based on a bit of shared knowledge about the whole resource.* (M24)

With a relatively high powered group of individuals from irrigation communities taking a leadership role, a range skills and experience in lobbying, negotiation, networking, and politics were brought into the group. Although M8 was employed by a national peak organisation, and understood that involvement in the CRG was in a ‘hats-off position, it was interesting and amusing that some people took that very seriously; other people disregarded that completely’. For instance,
some might use the group as a forum to air their particular issues, and hope to persuade others in that process:

It’s more of a chance to talk to other groups and to try and influence other groups to some extent. Clearly, in the catchment the people up the top know what all the solutions are for the ones at the bottom. And the ones down the bottom know what all the solutions are for the ones up the top. So it’s a forum where people get to understand some of the other issues. (M24)

The narrow scope for inclusion in the CRG in terms of geographic representation, assumed leadership status, and particular skills and experience, results in the possibility that members with capability or competency deficiencies might feel out of their depth. M26 expressed this concern:

I didn’t know what I was doing in the group, whether I should be in there. I looked around and saw some of the people in there and thought, this is outside my range of expertise. I don’t have the large network of people like other members. I don’t speak very much at the meetings, only when it’s worth saying something. (M26)

M4 also noted that he might not possess the confidence and skills of others:

There are some really clever people there. Not me. I’m not clever at all. I just bumble along. There are some really clever irrigators there and they can handle themselves —no doubt about that. And some really good greenies too. (M4)

It is presumptive to assume that skills and experience of CRG members would be equal. Some members have organisational roles elsewhere as industry leaders, lobbyists, board members, and so on. Those individuals may be more adept, qualified, articulate, outspoken, and politically savvy in government representational processes. Ensuring that all members have equivalent opportunity, capability, and competency, while addressing uneven power relationships between competing stakeholder interests, is crucial for ensuring procedural legitimacy of advisory groups (Creighton, 2005).
Representing values, hearing voices

In order to deal with potentially uneven power between stakeholders, CRG members were expected to represent a range of values rather than interests. Members were also assumed to have the capacity to reflect and speak for those values:

They [CRG members] had to be people who could articulate very clearly whether they were speaking for the environment or small towns or irrigation, etc. So that’s one way of giving a range of values voice, rather than a range of stakeholders. (M1)

Some members believed that their role was to give voice to those less able to do so. Although M9 noted that she was in the group for her ecological expertise, she also felt that her personality enabled her to bring other perspectives forward:

I think personality is part of it. I also try to give voice to other people that might not feel that they can speak up. It might help them to speak up if I am strong within that group. So that way you facilitate other people’s involvement. (M9)

Other members spoke about the importance of having a range of voices. This included voices from particular locations, interest groups, industries, and the environment. By representing multiple interests and giving them voice, M15 felt that the CRG, as a representative structure and process, was a way of managing risk:

People who live in communities close to the Murray have a deep sense of ownership of the river want to be part of the process. They will react pretty quickly if they are not part of the process. They need to see that they are represented in the process, that there is a voice on behalf of their location and their commodity, or their interest group. (M15)

Certainly at the time of interviews, there was considerable community unrest and resentment about recovering and applying water for environmental purposes. This unrest was due to an ongoing lack of water in the River Murray and its tributaries. Concerns about the environmental recovery process were voiced by some active and outspoken individuals.
Moderating role

CRG members have implicit leadership status associated with their active participation and networked roles in their respective communities. In this way, CRG members might be regarded as legitimate community representatives. For example, individuals might be indirectly conferred legitimacy by appointment to advisory groups, or earn legitimacy through their community connections and activities (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003). In their communicative, knowledge-based, and representational roles CRG members are assumed to provide a link to affected communities.

Leading mediation

As individual leaders in different geographic communities and interest groups, government officials expected that CRG members would act in various roles to assist with TLM implementation. Although B2 was responsible for building community support for TLM, she hoped that CRG members would act as ‘local champions’ for the program. With their various skills, knowledge, and connections, B5 believed that CRG members provide an important connection to local places and different interest groups:

As local leaders [CRG members] give confidence, credibility, and provide a moderating influence in their own places and within their groups. [They help] make things locally acceptable and provide the ‘right’ information. (B5)

The practice of CRG members acting as moderators is similar to the process of mediation. Sidaway (2005) describes mediation as a form of collaborative interest-based negotiation where parties explore and understand each other’s interests.
Mediators have no authoritative decision-making power; however, those involved in the process of mediation are given a degree of control by deciding about terms of agreement. Consequently, those involved gain a sense of ownership through the collective negotiation process, but they don’t propose outcomes (Sidaway, 2005).

One CRG member strongly reflected the moderating role. For him the CRG process ‘puts many ambassadors out there in the community, moderating views in the community’:

*In the last two weeks I have done 12 public meetings. In my role doing all this sort of stuff, that does not mean I stand up and say I am a member of the CRG. I don’t. I am a CEO of a water company. But it comes through in my views and my understanding of what’s happening in other valleys and other parts of the river. It does moderate your thinking.* (M15)

In the CRG process, M9 believed that part of their role was to be ‘as radical as I can, and then try to moderate it’. For instance:

*Some people will say all the water should stay in productive use. That’s an extreme perspective. It helps me understand they are thinking about the export deficits, or some crazy stuff that I am not thinking about at all.* (M9)

Through the process of making ambit claims, some members felt that they could ‘find middle ground’ between perspectives.

Obtaining a clear and diverse understanding of different perspectives inside and outside the group was important for CRG members. That understanding enabled members to report to their groups and assisted in addressing any accountability and legitimacy concerns. In order to be accountable and perceived as legitimate, M8 believed that CRG members needed to provide a good rationale and explanation to their respective stakeholder groups, ‘to represent and explain the how, and the why, of the implementation of the First Step decision, to make implementation decisions acceptable and palatable to stakeholders’.
However, the notion of an acceptable and palatable decision is a problematic one. It is problematic because it raises issues of legitimate for whom (representative legitimacy) and how (procedural legitimacy). Legitimacy in this sense implies some form of agreement and accountability between CRG members and the groups they represent for a particular process and outcome.

**Unifier and consensus seeker**

Consensus seeking is a process of negotiation in which different interests are recognised and respected in collective decisions, whereas consensus is a mutually agreed decision and therefore an outcome (Sidaway, 2005). According to Blomquist and Schlager (2005), there is much to recommend consensus seeking processes in multi-scale NRM, particularly for reaching common ground among those with diverse interests. However, there is evidence to suggest that individual interests can be used to veto or override particular interests and outcomes. Moreover, complex stakeholder process and negotiations can defer and subvert decision-making (Curry, 2009).

Several CRG members believed that it was their role to work their way to a common position. However, from a deputy commissioner’s perspective, government did not want the CRG ‘to come with a consensus opinion’. Although CRG members ‘have to be accountable for what they say’ officials did not want opinions compromised for the sake of reaching consensus:

*That’s the role of elected officials, which happen to be the ministers: to make trade-offs, rather than the CRG on behalf of their communities. I think they [the CRG] are really there to provide input from the various industries, or interests, or regions — what they want to see out of it.*  (B1)
As M15 noted the CRG is only ‘part of the process’. Again a senior government official made this clear:

*I see community consultation as really important. And you should have ongoing institutional connections with the stakeholder groups. And there should be processes were people can raise things and influence events. But at the end of the day it’s one piece of advice into a process. It’s advisory; it’s not decision-making.* (B3)

Therefore, the CRG has an important role in providing information and direction to influence the ultimate decision makers. Elected politicians are legitimate representatives of the public. Elected officials are accountable for decisions and for action on those decisions. Nonetheless, one way of ensuring that decisions are implemented with a degree of political expediency is for the advisory process to result in clear advice. This was the case for acquiring and using an amount of environmental water during 2007-2008.

**Co-opting community**

Several members felt the CRG acted as a sounding board. In the role of sounding board, CRG members thought that the group was most useful when it offered unambiguous advice, in particular about what constituted an acceptable decision for recovering environmental water:

*We have a whole variety of opinions and knowledge. I think they [the CAC, MDBA, and the Ministerial Council] use us as a sounding board. We give our feedback on their issues and ideas. That’s our role.* (M27)

The CRG’s advisory and consultative role helped legitimise decisions to recover water for environmental purposes for local communities along the River Murray. Many members stated that their role was to give the government confidence to recover, and then use, the environmental water. For instance, six gigalitres of
water were made available for environmental flows during late 2007 - early 2008 (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2008a; 2008b). There was considerable anxiety in some localities where limited water was available for production and consumptive use. M18 cited this as an example of a case where the CRG played a significant role in mobilising the water for an environmental flow:

*It was said at the CRG last meeting we will co-opt the community leaders to conduct a campaign to make it more acceptable to people to put environmental water in, in these troubled times.*  (M18)

In the above contexts, the CRG played a role in moderating views in local communities and legitimising the use of water for environmental purpose. Moreover, in TLM the CRG played a key role in providing the government with confidence in the policy process:

*There are people that look to us within the [government] structure to provide that advice. The amount of effort the Commission puts in, they obviously value us, and that to me is important. If our only role is to provide them with the confidence to keep going, at a time when there is little water around, then that’s a good thing.*  (M9)

Seeking community input into social and environmental problems is expected to result in better outcomes, rather than relying solely on regulation or market-based measures (Schmitter, 2002). However, community input is only part of the process that provides direction to decision makers. As a conclusion, the following section summarises the role played by CRG members in contributing towards good governance in TLM.
Conclusion

The table below summarises findings from this chapter in terms of some relevant principles of good NRM governance identified by Lockwood et al., 2010 (see Chapter 3, Table 3.2.)

Table 6.2 — Good NRM governance and TLM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good NRM governance principle</th>
<th>Good governance and TLM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legitimate</td>
<td>Power sharing arrangements not clear. Skewed representation to particular places, groups, values and skill sets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive</td>
<td>Relatively inclusive of places and groups with an interest in TLM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair and equitable</td>
<td>Skewed representation raises questions of fairness and equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>Wide range of geographic and interest-based communities within a network, but connections between them not well demonstrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Difficult to identify how values were being represented. Accountability between different group levels poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent</td>
<td>Information flows limited. Governance processes lack openness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountable</td>
<td>Group roles and responsibilities not clear. Reporting to respective communities selectively undertaken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In inclusive, fair, and equal representation of interests and values is an important normative element for good governance and legitimate decision-making processes (Lockwood et al., 2010). There was a range of geographic communities and interest-based communities represented in the CRG. Affected local communities and irrigation interests were most strongly represented by what appeared to be relatively skilled group of people. While it was difficult to identify how values were represented, those who believed that they spoke for areas and interests might be assumed to represent different values.

CRG members played individual, group, and collective roles in TLM governance process. By enrolling community representatives, different networks,
knowledge, skills, influences, and channels of communication were mobilised. However, in terms of good governance, members’ roles and responsibilities were not always clear, representation was skewed, information flows were limited, and there was a lack of accountability and transparency in the governance process.

Not adequately addressing power sharing arrangements, accountability, and transparency issues are likely to result in process and problem ownership failure (Dovers, 2005). Some concerns might be raised about the legitimacy of the CRG as a representative structure that links individuals to community allegiances. That structure might raise conflicts of interest between vested or self-interested actors and common good outcomes such as environmental water acquisition. These types of outcomes are analysed in the next chapter, in which I consider the policy translation process and governance outcomes.
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Chapter 7
NRM OUTCOMES: POLICY TRANSLATION AND THE PRACTICALITIES OF COMMUNITY

I think we are doing it because it looks good that we are doing it, and it would look very bad if we didn’t. What have we got out of it? A whole lot of advice that government, decision makers, have chosen to ignore. On the other hand, some useful relationships have been formed and I actually think it’s incredibly powerful when you get irrigators, greens, and fisherman saying we have a problem and this is what we want you to do about it. (M7)

Introduction

Natural resource governance outcomes are the result of social and political interactions that are often described in terms of process-based and substantive outcomes (Grant & Curtis, 2004; McGurk et al., 2006; Webler & Tuler, 2006). A tension frequently exists between having a good process and substantive on-ground outcomes (Grant & Curtis, 2004; Morrison et al., 2004). Furthermore, it can be difficult to differentiate between total policy success and failure, instead the outcome is likely to fall somewhere between the two (McConnell, 2010).

The literature I reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 indicated a gap existed in assessing the impact that different forms of social organisation have on multi-scale NRM outcomes (Rockloff, 2003). For instance, how the structure and processes of representative advisory groups might affect NRM outcomes (McGurk et al., 2006). In this chapter I explore the outcomes that resulted from CRG advice and interactions.
The outcomes of good governance

Good NRM governance, among other things, requires the legitimate exercise of authority for public good outcomes (Lockwood et al., 2010). As discussed in the previous chapter, the application of good NRM governance principles such as inclusiveness, fairness, connectedness, transparency, and accountability determine the types of outcomes that result from governance. In order to consider the different types of outcomes that emerged from members’ involvement in the CRG, the evaluation literature provided a set of criteria for assessing outcomes. Those criteria are summarised in Table 7.1 and inform the analysis for this chapter.

Table 7.1 — Evaluation criteria for outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedural</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governance process</td>
<td>Increased skills such as problem solving and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants gained knowledge and understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved capacity for dispute resolution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substantive</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governance outcomes</td>
<td>A clear implementation plan, widely supported and enduring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creation of changes to existing institutions or new institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual and collective needs addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence of different knowledges/expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building of a capacity for future cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationships built or strengthened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progress on policy objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promises followed through and organisations being accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptable for community and government (satisfaction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Environmental outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental outcomes</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved habitat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land protected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed environmental management practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biodiversity preserved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water resources conserved</td>
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</table>

Adapted from (Ferreyra & Beard, 2007; Grant & Curtis, 2004; Webler & Tuler, 2006)

Process-based outcomes in collaborative governance are regarded by Webler and Tuler (2006) as enhancing social capability to deal with complexity and uncertainty. Process outcomes include improved skills to participate, knowledge
about the issue at hand, enhanced trust between government agencies and the community, and conflict mediation. In advisory groups, process-based outcomes include improved information and communication between stakeholders, as well as increased trust and accountability between actors (McGurk et al., 2006).

Substantive outcomes are likely to be the product of both a participatory process and policy objectives. For example, a substantive governance outcome might be a clear plan to implement a decision. This might include an understanding of who is responsible for different actions and who is accountable for their implementation. Participants should be satisfied with the decision and take concrete action towards solving the defined problem (Webler & Tuler, 2006). A capacity for future cooperation, building long-term relationships and alliances, addressing individual and collective needs, demonstrating the influence of different knowledge, learning, reaching an enduring and widely supported plan, and broader community involvement are also substantive policy outcomes (Ferreyra & Beard, 2007; Grant & Curtis, 2004; McGurk et al., 2006). In theory, the realisation of both process-based and substantive outcomes circumvents the lack of policy action that often characterises multi-level and multi-scale public policy implementation (Curry, 2009).

**Desired outcomes in TLM**

The integrated model of NRM in Australia has been associated with some significant social and institutional outcomes. According to Bellamy et al. (2002) and Curtis et al. (2008), this has included mobilising communities and laying the groundwork for improved community participation, predominately at localised scales. These outcomes are said to have resulted in greater public ownership of issues, enhanced
stakeholder cohesion and capacity, and consensus to act on NRM problems (Bellamy et al., 2002). However, as NRM policy is scaled-up to include diffuse geographies and levels of government, proving integrated outcomes for multiple and conflicting interests is a challenge for successful policy implementation. In multi-scale cases, the ultimate goal of environmental change and on-ground outcomes — such as improved resource and environmental conditions — have been less than satisfactory. This has led to calls for a shift from process-based activities to performance-based achievement (Lockwood et al., 2009; Morrison et al., 2004).

The primary purpose of TLM First Step decision was to address water overallocation and the declining health of the River Murray system (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2002). An intergovernmental agreement established eligible measures for addressing water overallocation and for funding water recovery and management (Council of Australian Governments, 2004). The policy priority was to recover 500 gigalitres of permanent water to meet agreed environmental objectives and outcomes at six icon sites. Under the intergovernmental agreement, water recovery measures were to include investment in water infrastructure, purchase of water through market-based mechanisms, investment in behavioural change, and regulation (Council of Australian Governments, 2004).

The intergovernmental agreement was implemented through the TLM business plan. The business plan detailed actions and milestones for water recovery, volumetric targets, financial commitments, and activities associated with water recovery and application (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2004; 2006). In acquiring water, a range of factors were to be considered. These comprised social and economic impacts, salinity and water quality outcomes, additional environmental
benefits, and third party impacts. Community consultation and engagement was regarded as a key outcome in developing and implementing eligible measures for water recovery, application, and management (Council of Australian Governments, 2004). The rationale for providing an integrated environmental, social, and economic policy framework was that better outcomes would result than if each policy element was treated in a piecemeal fashion (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2004; 2006).

The initial focus for TLM was to maximise environmental benefits and outcomes at icon sites. As well as recovering water and keeping the Murray mouth open (Table 7.2) additional environmental benefits and outcomes included an increased number of water bird breeding events and healthier wetlands and river red gum populations (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address water overallocation</td>
<td>500 gigalitres environmental water acquired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community consultation and engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social &amp; economic impacts considered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third party impacts considered</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Improved environmental outcomes

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water applied at icon sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental objectives and targets met at 6 Icon sites Environmental watering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray mouth open</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sections provide an analysis of the outcomes, based on interview data that resulted from CRG members’ involvement in TLM.
Governance outcomes: Insights from TLM CRG

Interviews with CRG members and government officials explored current and expected outcomes from TLM. From the NVivo 8 analysis and personal reflection, themes emerged around both process-based and substantive outcomes. Initially, most CRG members felt there were either no or limited outcomes that could be easily identified. However, when encouraged to do so, the members were able to identify a number of outcomes, namely supporting policy implementation, reaching shared understanding, building trust, demonstrating interdependencies, and learning.

Supporting implementation

TLM aimed to address social, political, ecological, and spatial complexity and conflict through the CRG by representing different interests and values. The CRG as a new governance structure offered integrated on-ground advice, information, and knowledge to decision makers in an accessible way:

“If you put in an environmental flow it just doesn’t affect that wetland. Every other group along the river is affected. So how do we collect all the knowledge and the effects and make better informed decisions? (M27)

The advice or recommendations provided by CRG members to the CAC influenced decision makers to an extent. One member thought that a reasonable amount of influence was exerted on the CAC, and that ‘the CAC in turn has a reasonable voice all the way to Ministerial Council’. However, some members felt communication and reporting between these groups was poor and wondered if their deliberations were of value. It was difficult to gauge the level of influence on strategic or operational decision-making due to a lack of feedback between governing
structures. However, members presumed their advice was being integrated by decision makers:

So maybe we are altering key decision makers to options that otherwise they wouldn’t be alerted to. I mean that is possible, and therefore we should take some heart from that. (M11)

Many CRG members felt they provided important feedback to government about proposed water recovery and application measures. Advice was provided to government about communicating with communities, and about proposed activities for applying and managing environmental water. Communicating the ‘right’ messages to communities and managing risk associated with unpopular or contentious implementation were particularly important for managing this process:

See this environmental watering, now: we said all hell will break loose if you start watering red gums. Irrigators’ properties are dying. They said well we need to communicate this better. We said, you certainly do. They said we will do this, this and this, and we said that’s fine, 50% of people might understand it; for the other 50% all hell is going to break lose. It’s important they know that because when you get the backlash you sort of half expect it. (M19)

Anticipating the potential implications for a given decision is part of managing the macro and micro politics of policy implementation. When complex and potentially far reaching decisions are made, knowing the likely and unforeseen reactions and consequences can be important for deciding to proceed in full, partially, or not at all. Groups like the CRG can play a significant role in either enabling or preventing action:

There is no way the ministers will be comfortable with any decisions until they get some sense of how the community is going to react to this. So if it’s working well it should provide a good litmus test to inform the decision makers or inform the key advisers to the decision makers, to give them an impression of the likely impacts of a particular action or particular decision not to act. (M6)
Building trust and forming alliances

Building and increasing trust among governance actors is a commonly cited aim and outcome of collaborative governance (Singleton, 2002). There is often an inherent mistrust between competing or conflicting interests, and that creates a need to build public confidence in government decision-making. Trust is therefore seen as a critical element for ensuring public acceptance of decisions and for the effective implementation of policy (Lockwood et al., 2010).

New linkages for collaboration were built between individuals and organisations in the CRG. Some CRG members were critical of the level of consultation provided by the CAC, the Ministerial Council, and government officials. Those who were more critical felt that they were just being presented with a lot of information rather than being consulted or having the opportunity to negotiate. However, M10 regarded meetings as ‘useful for building alliances’. The formation of new relationships and alliances, while not necessarily challenging the status quo, established more tempered relationships between actors:

*Some useful relationships have been formed between people in the CRG, and [it’s] not just the greenies being thick with one another. Now there are good relationships between irrigators and greenies and fisherman and irrigators and so on.* (M7)

The relationships formed among CRG members helped coordinate and guide decision-making while creating synergies between actors. Members were also used to test the credibility of information. Many members found it difficult to clearly identify outcomes, observing instead that the group had ‘tended to steer direction rather than deliver specific outcomes’. Others noted that some useful networks were established for improved information and communication between members:
I do think there is a group of people in almost every community along the Murray-Darling who belong to this network and who can go to someone to ask: Is the story we are getting about Mildura right and how can we work together better? (M3)

Even though there was some level of conflict in the CRG, especially early in its life, many members felt that the group was becoming more cohesive and tolerant of different perspectives. Some felt the group was quite functional in terms of getting ‘people to think about things together’ and making decisions:

*We have gone from aggressive meetings where everybody was working against each other to coming together work as a team.* (M4)

The interactions between CRG members showed promise for building and strengthening relationships for future cooperation. However, questions were raised about the level of trust in the group by government. The following quote from a CRG member illustrates that trust needed to be conferred if good governance outcomes such as openness and transparency were to result:

*I guess the Commission is getting to know us a bit better and maybe feeling more comfortable and more trusting of us. So they have actually given us more detailed information. Asking us for strategic input, [for example] we will brief you further and then you can give us some really explicit advice on what should be done. So there is now quite a healthy relationship between the Commission Office and CRG (M7).*

**Converging opinions and learning interdependencies**

The CRG comprised a wide spectrum of people with diverse and divergent views. Showcasing and airing these views both advanced and shifted the debate within the CRG. There is evidence that this situation tended to persuade members to reconsider entrenched views and positions:

*You need to hear each side of the argument, to realise that your argument can be a little specious. This happens in the CRG. Opinions can change dramatically on various things. I used to be one of those ones that thought*
cotton growers are ruining the country but my attitudes have changed a little bit. (M26)

By airing views, building of relationships, and enhancing communication between CRG members, opinions within the group were converging. The CRG was formed by government to obtain a cross-section of opinion from different interests, areas, and industries. However, an unintended outcome was that the group often reached consensus. Reaching consensus was what one CRG member called ‘the forming of more of a communal opinion’. Certainly, communication and building relationships between members helped lay foundations for finding areas of agreement and interdependency:

*I have seen an amazing change and acceptance of people’s ideas. I think the group has probably come a lot closer with the understanding of what is happening.* (M5)

The environmental and socio-economic problems associated with TLM are significant and geographically diffuse. The rationale for forming the CRG was to get a whole-of-community perspective. There is a history of conflict between different areas and interests along the River Murray, particularly over water access and use. Exchanging different perspectives between CRG members helped shift the focus from individual positions to a broader consideration of issues and places:

*It brings a broader understanding of the issues, and those people go back out into the general community and can see the various sides of the argument rather than just push their own view.* (M20)

By advancing and considering different sides of issues, a more moderated view emerged in the CRG. One member felt this meant that the group ‘ended up with a soft opinion’ when formulating advice and therefore substantive outcomes were ‘thin on the ground’. Another member commented the CRG provided ‘well-rounded advice but the deliberations result in lowest common denominator’ outcomes. On the
other hand, the understanding and acceptance of other members’ positions resulted in a ‘cross-fertilisation of understanding’ between interests and areas:

If ever I could wish for something, I would wish we could get bus loads of farmers and take them to other regions so they could come to the same position — so they do understand. (M15)

Several CRG members cited visiting icon sites and other regional centres as a beneficial way of improving and broadening the understanding of those areas and their issues. This helped members reflect on the multi-scalar interdependences between different areas and interests, and how they are affected by water availability. Certainly, CRG member rhetoric reflected a shift toward a more holistic and integrated view of the River Murray and its affected communities:

It’s about the best outcomes overall. It’s not just about the best outcomes for your own area. (M24)

[The CRG is] making us think about the fact that we belong to the Murray-Darling system, rather than we belong just locally. (M3)

Information, knowledge, and interest integration are practices consistent with the adaptive management approach adopted in TLM. A commonly cited and intended outcome of adaptive management is social learning, often at the community level (Brown & Pitcher, 2005). However, in multi-stakeholder advisory groups such as the CRG, the focus is more likely to be on individual actors learning to deal with, and take advantage of, diversity and difference (Ferreys & Beard, 2007).

Learning and education were cited by many CRG members as outcomes that resulted from interactions with other CRG members. Learning resulted from meetings, receiving information and briefings from government, and participating in field visits. Learning provided members with enhanced social capacity to deal with
conflict and uncertainty. CRG meetings and group interactions were seen as being educational by members, particularly for dealing with local issues and gaining specific knowledge about what was happening in other areas:

To me the CRG has been more to my own personal benefit, and a learning experience. I found that the most useful, and I can feel confident standing up when someone makes an outlandish comment. I can point out some of the facts or issues rather than some of the emotional stuff from people just confined to their own areas. (M20)

Broad-based communication and learning within the CRG allowed individual and collective concerns to be addressed. Communication and learning enabled members to gain more accurate knowledge about other areas and concerns. Although self-evident, learning was limited to a relatively small and select group of actors. Some CRG members felt that, in a collective sense, their knowledge and ability to provide community information, communicate clear messages, and reach common ground gave government increased confidence in the group. This offered government officials extra guidance in implementing acceptable water recovery measures. However, the acceptability of an outcome is a relative concept. Certain decisions and action are more acceptable to some groups than to others:

So what we are talking about is a situation where power exists and it is exercised. What you are chipping away at is a phenomenally important - powerful agricultural lobby that squatted on the water and has converted those squatting rights into a tradable permanent entitlement, and says come-and-get-it, get-it-if-you-can; no you can’t have it - but what we would like you to do is pay for the upgrade of all our irrigation infrastructure that we have been unable to pay for, for the last 50 years. (M10)

Mobilising a ‘new water’

The initial emphasis for water recovery in TLM was based on the development and implementation of infrastructure projects to reduce water loss, particularly from evaporation. Over time it became clear, however, that infrastructure projects would
take too long to develop and were costly to implement relative to the market price of water (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2007d). To complement infrastructure projects, the Ministerial Council agreed to buy some water to assist with reaching the 500 gigalitre water recovery target (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2008a).

Overwhelmingly, CRG members felt their major achievement was to formulate ‘close to consensus’ advice on how to proceed with policy implementation. That advice coalesced around encouraging government to enter the water market and buy environmental water. The message conveyed to the CAC and Ministerial Council from the CRG was that too much reliance was placed on efficiency measures such as infrastructure improvements for water recovery:

*We gave them some very, very clear unequivocal advice: to get in the market now, buy water now, buy water from willing sellers. (M7)*

Embracing market-based instruments could be considered an unintended outcome in the water recovery process. For instance, there was concern among irrigators and irrigation communities that using market-based mechanisms would distort the price and availability of water. There was also concern that water would be compulsorily acquired. It seemed that the CRG was able to alleviate irrigation communities’ fears that this would be the case:

*The consistent advice that comes from the CAC and CRG is that we should be entering the market and using market-based instruments, provided it was voluntary. That is what gave them the comfort to say OK let’s have a pilot project. (M8)*

Certainly, market-based mechanisms are specified as an eligible measure for water recovery under the TLM business plan (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2004; 2006). Using market-based measures was regarded as a fair and equitable way
of acquiring water by irrigators, local community leaders, and the environmental lobby. The CRG gave clear advice that water purchase was the best way to proceed with policy implementation. However, a government official felt water purchase or buyback was the easy option. This official felt the group shifted the policy focus:

*I think it’s put a focus away from undertaking structural works which I still think and believe (as do a fair few others) is the preferred option, albeit not necessarily the easiest Economics 101 outcome. What we do is compare the megalitre of water recovered, the cost per megalitre, against market based mechanism. While it’s an easy and more cost effective way to recover water, TLM has turned into a purely water recovery project rather than looking at the broader objective of improving the environmental condition of the rivers and streams throughout the basin. (B1).*

The CRG felt the government was being ‘a little tentative’ about entering the water market. On the advice of the CRG, the government agreed to conduct a pilot water purchase to buyback 20 gigalitres of water in the southern MDB from willing entitlement holders at the market price. Water would be acquired through non-binding expressions of interest, submitted by prospective willing sellers, during August and September 2007. The MDBC Office was inundated with sellers. The pilot was oversubscribed, and it was closed four weeks into what was anticipated to be an eleven week process (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2007c):

*I think people were really surprised at the outcome of that tender process and how much water was available — from everybody’s point of view, right to the top — of how quickly it was filled. (M23).*

Many interviews were conducted around the time of the pilot water purchase. The pilot was seen as being a good social and environmental outcome by some CRG members. Others felt that getting to the pilot stage had taken significant time and effort for the limited environmental outcome provided:

*We fought so hard last year to get them to go and buy the water. And that message was quite clear and almost unanimous, a consensus, as close as you can get to it... It was a clear message to the government. They have done the*
Due to limited progress, a number of members felt that the process was ‘an inordinately bureaucratic’ one.

There was considerable consternation between government and river communities about using water for human versus environmental benefit. Deciding to proceed with environmental watering at a time of drought was another strongly cited example of a small, but substantive, policy outcome. The CRG was successful in putting ‘its stamp on the fact that the environment does have a right to allocations and a right to use that allocation’. The CRG ‘agreed unanimously to go ahead and use environmental water’. The group then provided advice on ‘how to manage concerns within communities about the use of environmental water at a time when there was no water for production’. This advice was seen as giving the government confidence to release water for environmental flows:

The CRG, as you would probably know, provided the advice to unanimously agree to use the limited environmental water, whatever is available must be applied...That advice was acted on, taken up immediately, and there was some environmental watering [that] occurred in the Wakool and Merran Creeks. There was a great trepidation about that — about what level of community kickback there would be around that. It was a fairly effective strategy used to get the message out. (M6)

CRG members felt that the CRG had some influence with decision makers and helped provide some limited environmental outcomes. Additional governance outcomes included providing information and knowledge, building trust, building individual and group capacity through learning, and reassuring government to take action. However, achieving these outcomes entailed a significant amount of CRG members’ time and effort. There was a degree of anguish from some members who,
due to the negligible on-ground outcomes, wondered why they were in the group at all:

_You could not sustain a group like that purely for cross fertilisation and common viewpoint. It also had to see some improvements._ (M15)

**Lost in translation**

Total policy failure or success is rare (McConnell, 2010). However, for some CRG members the lack of success in meeting agreed policy objectives resulted in policy disappointment (Dovers, 2005). The lack of progress in achieving implementation outcomes could be associated with weak communication between governance levels, the pace and transparency of decision-making, a lack of tangible results, and accountability concerns:

_It’s really disappointing and as chair[person] it was a constant battle. At each meeting I would have people come up to me and say we are wasting our time here...So you try and prove worth and relevance. But policy developers don’t wish to complicate things further by getting the community involved because they might want to do things differently...We will use groups like the CRG to rubber stamp the whole thing._ (M14)

**Providing real outcomes**

The initial policy decision negotiated between communities and government would provide a weak environmental outcome. The 500 gigalitre implementation target was at the lower end of three water recovery reference points. Under those reference points, the change of environmental outcomes was low at 350 gigalitres, moderate at 750 gigalitres, and moderate at 1500 gigalitres (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2002). While many CRG members recognised that policy implementation was an initial step for water recovery, and that the 500 gigalitres target would provide
very limited environmental benefit, a implementation evaluation noted that the target would not be achieved (KPMG, 2009).

Purchasing small amounts of water from willing sellers and applying small amounts of environmental water can be regarded as key achievements or outcomes that resulted from CRG advice. However, the process was protracted and outcomes were less than definitive. Some CRG members felt that it was difficult to engage and commit to a policy program where on-ground outcomes would take a long time and benefits would be hard to discern. A lack of information and communication flow between different governance levels meant that decision-making lacked transparency and accountability:

*When I took over as CAC chair... it became clear to me that the CRG wasn’t receiving any feedback about the advice they provided. So they were getting frustrated because they felt they were having these meetings, providing input, and it wasn’t going anywhere. There was a level of frustration.* (M6)

Several CRG members felt that TLM was a good policy framework but delivered poor on-ground outcomes. The understanding from CRG members was that the implementation process was to deliver ‘real water for environmental management’:

*A framework is only as good as its implementation and its outcomes on the ground, and so far the First Step hasn’t returned a drop of real water.* (M8)

Although there was an increased understanding and convergence of opinion for some CRG members, their interactions were not always productive. Some CRG members felt that unproductive interactions or deliberations such as ‘being led down blind alleys’, and defending not hurting ‘people and communities’, were purposely staged by irrigation interests. Unproductive interactions were seen as hindering implementation and tainting outcomes achieved:
I had seen before that what could be interpreted as some delaying tactics by some participants. That’s the way I read it. Often the same things would come up two meetings in a row, sometimes a third. The same issue...I have got to say that early this year I wondered: Is this going anywhere? If you were looking at outcomes they weren’t very thick on the ground. I didn’t think. (M2)

Sometimes I get very frustrated and I think the irrigators are trying to block anything happening that might damage their interest. They probably think the same thing about us greenies. (M7)

Either engaging in constructive interaction or alleviating unhelpful ones may not be sufficient means for providing the desired natural resource management outcomes. For instance, while it was imperative that CRG members were given recognition and a sense of achievement for contributions to decision makers, there was a need to realise more substantive outcomes such as the acquisition and application of significant amounts of water. As of October 2008, only 133 gigalitres of the 500 gigalitres to be acquired was approved for purchase via a TLM process. This limited outcome was attributed to some groups engaging in ‘efforts to stymie water recovery’ (Moles et al., 2008, p. 12).

Many CRG members were perplexed about why more water was not being purchased at a time when there were many keen water sellers. Indeed, purchasing water was felt to provide a good social and environmental outcome:

In a social context, at a community level, we have never had a better opportunity to have the structural adjustment process happen appropriately. People can get out with some dignity, without an adjustment program. I think that’s fantastic. (M1)

Buying out water entitlements was considered to give dignity to those who wanted to exit the irrigation industry. Nonetheless, government had a different view of the buyback process and its implications:

You look at the demographics of the farming business and they say if the price is right we will pack it up — even one of the industry leaders I work with on a day to day basis...That might give you some dignity, but removing that amount
of people has a flow-on effect. The challenge then becomes for government what you do to provide the economic driver. (B1)

The lack of satisfaction with higher level decision-making, the pace of policy implementation, and moderated on-ground water outcomes led some CRG members to the conclusion that they might be wasting their time. Others in the group felt that the focus should move from merely attempting to recover water towards having an input into the way the water was to be used:

*I think there is a much clearer outcome now that you have got to manage the water. I think that’s the sort of understanding that’s starting to build now... Each river has its own rights, but you have to coordinate the water in each river for the environment.* (M24)

One of the roles of the CRG was to provide advice on environmental watering plans (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2004). It became increasingly apparent that, due to severe climatic conditions, only small amounts of water would be available for environmental use. Many CRG members were regarded as experts in on-ground water management and their input into environmental watering plans was seen as a way of improving policy coordination and operational decisions. However, these outcomes are not easily measured:

*The Commission came up with an environmental management plan for the channel, and the CRG went through that with a fine tooth comb and made recommendations about how it might be improved...The plan was out of sync with the water year, water released for irrigation, those sorts of things. I think they are useful outcomes.* (M7)

**Who is accountable: Policy capture**

Clearly, different sorts of outcomes were desired by CRG members, river communities, and governments. The provision of outcomes and their acceptability raise issues, such as who has the authority to make decisions on behalf of others, who is accountable; who provides leadership, and whether there are any conflicts of
interest. Some CRG members felt that TLM had been captured by particular interests to provide better outcomes for some, but not others.

Although unanimously agreed within the CRG that water should be purchased and used for environmental benefit, there was considerable tension in river communities about using water for environmental purposes. In order to make implementation decisions acceptable to affected river communities, the outcome of consultation and advice has been the need to moderate on-ground outcomes even further. In particular, there has been a shift in the program focus to compensate those willing to provide water:

*The community has to start to agree on what outcomes they want. Then it’s a case of who should pay to get those outcomes and what will the community fund... that’s where the whole community has to decide just how much — what is fair and just.* (M24)

Through the process of sharing information; building understanding; balancing issues of fairness, equity, and rights; reaching agreement to act; and providing on-ground outcomes, one CRG member felt that TLM had ended up ‘to some degree a structural adjustment program’ for water entitlement holders. As a surrogate structural or economic adjustment program, the acquisition of water via voluntary measures or regulation was largely circumvented (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2004; 2006):

*We argued earlier that if the environment wants more water, then it has to go out and buy it. That created a lot of discussion at the time. The environmental movement to begin with was vehemently against it, but over time they came around to agree with it. Speaking with some of them privately, they believe in the term social justice. If you are going take someone’s property away you have to compensate them.* (M22)

In terms of good governance, actors are expected to exercise authority with integrity, declare any conflicts of interest, not seek to manipulate outcomes for
personal advantage, and behave honestly (Lockwood et al., 2010). Unintended structural adjustment and a lack of on-ground achievement bring into question the procedural and substantive legitimacy of the outcomes produced in TLM. As with any good process, a lack of transparency and accountability, and the overrepresentation of certain actors within the CRG challenged the group’s democratic legitimacy and the outcomes produced:

There are some good people there. Well meaning people there. And, as with any of those senior advisory committees, the irrigators get more than a fair go. It’s supposed to be a democracy and there is nothing democratic about that. (M18)

Issues of democratic legitimacy are tied to questions of representation—for instance, who can make decisions and be held accountable. From a government perspective, the CRG is expected to augment the legitimacy of government decision-making (Catt & Murphy, 2003). By holding CRG members accountable for the advice provided and outcomes recommended, government is able to argue that the decisions taken and outcomes delivered are legitimate:

I think one of the things this has done, is saying this is the CRG, that stands up and needs to be accountable for some of the things they recommend, for some of their diverse opinions. (B1)

Some CRG members felt they needed to be accountable to their communities for the advice they provided and the outcomes that result. On the other hand, they felt that government needed to be accountable:

I am there making sure, whatever we decide,...that we are accountable to the community. This is the stuff the community is facing and they are asking why the government is not being more accountable. (M21)

CRG members were placed in the difficult position of advocating and being accountable to their communities. Potential conflicts of interest can arise for these members between providing social and environmental water. In this case, some CRG
members noted individual and collective limitations in providing substantive environmental outcomes:

*I have reasonably low expectations about improving outcomes, but I think that if it is able to provide a forum for constructive discussion and building of understanding between different groups then that’s a positive.* (M10)

*You just need a strong government who says we are going to fix the Murray.* (M4)

*I think somebody needs to put their head up, quite possibly have it cut off. 500 gigalitres is not enough, it’s not going to save the Murray. 1500 gl is what’s required and somebody has to lead the process. They have to take all the abuse and the political nastiness that goes with it; somebody has to have the courage stand up for the Murray. You don’t have to consult with the winners because they are happy with it. When you are talking about community consultation you are talking about pacifying the disconnected and disenfranchised. I don’t know who our leadership is. Where is the leadership that’s going to say TLM needs 1500gl of water, and it needs it now?* (M3)

**Community involvement: The expectation game**

One might expect, as a group of community leaders with networked connections, CRG members would garner more extensive and improved community involvement in TLM. As described by a past CRG chair, the vision for TLM ‘is a shared responsibility with shared outcomes; that’s where we want to be engaged’. One government official felt that the CRG provided an opportunity for the community to get to know how policy was developed and informed while government officials could build relationships and an understanding of community issues.

Certainly, there was an expectation from government and community leaders that the CRG process would enable river communities to have real input and engagement with policy:

*Engagement of community is introducing them to the policy side of things, all the different aspects of river management and what’s going to be achieved out of TLM and how that fits in with the overall management of the rivers in each*
of the jurisdictions: to let them in, to have involvement, to provide a different alternative in the way we make decisions on those policies. (B1)

Government is trying to articulate the broader community view to that river community, to look for engagement that gives the community an opportunity to be part of solutions, to have ownership of the problem. It should be a great opportunity to bring about and advise on what the best solutions are because these are people on the ground and working with the resource all the time. They do have knowledge beyond the bureaucracy’s, and they can advise on what will work, what will and won’t be adopted. (M25)

Most CRG members noted that they either had no, or very limited, knowledge or involvement with community reference groups established at some of the icon sites. Information, knowledge, policy integration, and coordination were therefore lacking between TLM CRG and the lower level local groups:

They’ve had interactions with the SEA [icon site] community reference groups. I believe that’s only been limited, but my intention is to increase that level of interaction. (M6)

The rhetoric of broader community involvement and engagement is consistent with the rationale that local and affected communities need to be part of the solution. Broad community engagement in decision-making and problem ownership would therefore be expected outcomes of TLM, and be regarded as part of the whole-of-community approach adopted under ICM. Unfortunately, it was not possible for me to track broader community involvement for this research project due to the diffuse geographic spread of settlements. Although several CRG members felt community consultation was about being inclusive and pacifying the disenfranchised, many members intimated that they rarely consulted or involved their broader communities.

As far as I can ascertain, wide reaching and meaningful community engagement in TLM was limited. Instead, government used the CRG to lower the costs of community consultation and undertake selective engagement. However, I
would note that broader community involvement and engagement was conducted prior to TLM First Step decision. Therefore, more selective community involvement was probably appropriate for expediting policy implementation:

[CRG members] are in a position to provide pretty good advice, and they’re also in a position to provide advice as to say is what you need to do is talk to these community groups there, here and there, or you need to engage these communities. (M6)

Broad scale community involvement and engagement was not a feature of the TLM policy implementation process. CRG members played an advisory role for river communities with an interest in TLM and therefore have to be recognised as playing some kind of representational role. As one CRG member put it, ‘There will be some people who think [they] are not represented or certain interests aren’t represented. But there are people there that do understand issues and they are raised.’ However, he did note that the concept of community suggests certain forms of organisation, involvement, and outcomes:

It’s implied it’s a community group, but it seems more a skill and experience-based representation of various interests. Maybe community is confusing things when you think about it in those terms. Maybe it creates expectations. (M25)

**Conclusion**

The CRG provided advice to the CAC about TLM policy implementation. Some of the stronger intended outcomes that were described by CRG members included integrating differing perspectives, reaching a shared understanding, and shifting individual attitudes. Building group cohesion, trust, and learning provided a capacity for future cooperation between government and non-government actors. Although unintended, the group was able to reach consensus. However, as at the end of 2008 there was a lack of on-ground environmental improvements or substantive outcomes.
In the next chapter, I discuss the findings from Chapters 5, 6, and 7 in terms of both theory and practice.
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Chapter 8
COMMUNITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN MULTI-SCALE NRM: HYBRID PARADOXES

Introduction

The guiding question for this thesis has been: Is community a useful organising concept for good governance in multi-scale NRM? In this chapter I discuss my main research findings in terms of hybrid governance theory and practice (Lockie & Higgins, 2007; Lockwood & Davidson, 2010). I highlight that in advanced third-way democracies like Australia, the hybrid model throws-up a number of paradoxes when applying normative good governance principles, as well as in the practice of governance. These paradoxes present a set of quasi-philosophical dilemmas which can be also conceptualised as challenges for institutional design.

Community paradoxes such as one-many, normative-descriptive, real-imagined, scale-level, and place-interest are well established in socio-political theory (Anderson, 1983; Kenny, 1996; Rose, 1999). This research has revealed additional paradoxes such as representation-representativeness, common good-vested interest, open-accountable, active-passive, democratic-competent, and substantive-unproductive are emerging. Both established and emerging paradoxes may surface in governance arrangements, but tend to be uncritically addressed in public policy design and implementation. It is the latter emerging quasi-philosophical paradoxes that are the focus of discussion in this chapter.
Community: Representation-representativeness

As I discovered in Chapter 3, normative good governance principles can be used to consider and guide representation and the exercise of authority in NRM (Lockwood et al., 2010). Principles such as legitimacy, fairness, inclusiveness, integration, transparency, and accountability are especially relevant in a pluralistic multi-scale context such as TLM. Such principles are important because there is a wide range of affected and interconnected areas, groups, and interests, that either need or wish to be invited, or are invited, to participate in governance. This constellation of actors can be conceptualised as a multi-stakeholder partnership or collaboration (Margerum & Whitall, 2004). However, in TLM, different areas, groups, and interests were considered by decision makers to represent ‘the community’ (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2002).

Community representation-representativeness under hybrid governance can be linked to concepts such as communities of place, communities of interest, and communities of identity. These community concepts ostensibly represent different localities, non-government organisations, private enterprises, sectors, and other common associations and group memberships, as collectives in society. Community concepts can also be used to represent different preference choices (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005; Eckersley, 2003).

As noted throughout this thesis, representation implies that an individual is mandated to articulate a point of view for others, whereas representativeness infers that an individual is typical of others due to some identifiable and relatively common shared characteristics. While this depiction seems relatively straightforward, issues of community representation and representativeness in NRM decision-making have
been widely identified as problematic when individuals are said to represent a particular place or cohort under the guise of community (Broderick, 2005; Lane et al., 2004). For instance, research indicates that regional NRM representatives do not, or cannot, fully represent those they are said to represent (Lockwood et al., 2009; Moore, 2005). Nor can representatives meet the expectations of those being represented (Rockloff & Moore, 2006).

A polycentric-corporatist governance model was adopted in TLM. This model was underpinned by a rationale that multi-stakeholder involvement would stimulate and engender collaboration and power sharing between government and non-government actors (Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Rhodes, 1996). However, the potentially problematic dichotomy of representation-representativeness identified above is likely to be exacerbated in multi-scale NRM where population, constituency size, and spatial scale increase. Although the political community denotes a bounded area and social constituency (Dahl, 1989), in the case of TLM there were no clearly defined political or administrative boundaries to neatly encompass the River Murray. Instead, according to a past CAC chair, ‘. . . community was a way of putting boundaries . . .’ around TLM.

Interestingly, the lack of clearly defined social and political boundaries meant that other than two local government officials, few CRG members professed to represent a particular community. Instead, many members noted that affiliations existed with particular areas, industries, sectors, and interest groups. Although several members commented that they had a good understanding of particular communities of place, most said that they expressed personal views and opinions in
CRG meetings. Therefore, few claimed to legitimately represent or be representative of any particular community (see Rockloff & Moore, 2006).

Much of the theoretical and policy literature supports the assumption that individual citizens are members of a community of identity. Members of a community of identity are regarded as having a common and shared, social, spatial, cultural or other characteristic with which they self-identify (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Harrington et al., 2008; Lane et al., 2008). Many CRG members affirmed attachments or ties to place, socio-economic, socio-political, and socio-cultural groups, but that did not mean they represented those places or groups. An indigenous member clearly articulated this point of view when stating that, while you might identify with a particular cultural group, ‘. . . it doesn’t mean you represent them’. These findings suggest that the democratic legitimacy of collective identity groups as a surrogate for representing preference choice is somewhat dubious (Wallington et al., 2008), especially as individual and group identities are inherently socially and politically constructed (Liepens, 2000a).

The constructed nature of community enabled different and selective definitions to be adopted. For instance, according to one CRG member, ‘I only represent responsible fishermen’. The multiple and selective definitions of community employed in the CRG confirm that it is difficult to claim that community can be used in a representative and integrative sense (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003). Indeed, another CRG member explained that community was an ambiguous concept because ‘. . . everyone has a different definition of it . . . ’.
The assumption made by a senior government official that the CRG was a microcosm of the community is problematic. He believed that the CRG ‘... is representative of 10% of people that really care about this sort of stuff’. However, with around thirty members sitting on the CRG and selected by the CAC, it is difficult to claim that the CRG encapsulates a full spectrum of societal views and interests. Selective inclusion can undermine the legitimacy of decisions; it can also undermine claims that the consent of those being governed has been secured (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003).

**Community: Common good-vested interest**

The CRG membership was dominated by sectoral groups and geographic communities along the River Murray. This privileged the irrigation interests as the largest water user group along the river. A recurrent discourse that emerged from the analysis of interview data was the view of community associated with vested interests. This conception is largely at odds with communitarian notions and good governance principles, which link community (at least normatively), with positive and common good (Bellah, 1995; Habermas, 1996a; Lockwood et al., 2010; Putnam, 2000). However, as I discovered in Chapter 2 when presenting the literature that theorises governance under advanced liberalism, that literature sheds light on how community and vested interests have become allied concepts.

A common critique of neoliberal governance is its individualistic tendencies and the privileging of economic interests and policy preferences based on an instrumental rationality (Cheshire & Lawrence, 2005; Rose, 1996b). As noted in Chapter 2, the liberal model of self-interest makes a universal claim that groups are
also made up of sectional or vested interests (Etzioni, 1985; Miller, 1999). It is noteworthy that resource user groups in NRM are commonly regarded as stakeholders, and that stakeholders can be defined as vested interests that have a social or economic stake in the outcome of governance (Sorensen, 1997). Affirming that the concept of communities and stakeholders might be interpreted as interchangeable in TLM, the most recent CRG chair noted that what all members ‘... need to do is draw on the views of all affected stakeholders or the communities, however you want to put it’.

Towns and geographic areas that are reliant on water access for their social and economic prosperity can be regarded as stakeholders in TLM, as can communities of interest such as irrigators with water access rights. However, using concepts such as community and stakeholders interchangeably in environmental water recovery efforts raises concerns that advisory groups under the banner of community can be unduly influenced by powerful, articulate, and organised, sectional or vested interest groups. These groups may be particularly privileged in neoliberal governance design (Eckersley, 2003). Under hybrid governance logic, it is assumed that in representative community groups (such as the CRG), communal interests will override self-interest. Added to that, any conflicts of interest can be managed through the “third space” of community (Rose, 1999), where local, regional, and other communities take a more active and responsible role in managing themselves (Herbert-Cheshire, 2006).

As explained by a past CRG chair, the vision for TLM was that the social, environmental, and economic pillars and obligations of sustainability policy would be equally met (see Dovers, 2005). However, different voices were not equally heard or
considered in the CRG. As an Indigenous representative commented, ‘We
[Indigenous people] have a role mandated through our cultural responsibility to
ensure our country and our waterways are efficiently operated and with real security.
At the moment we don’t see that’. This point suggests that some group preferences
may be advantaged, whereas other groups have limited agency to actively manage
resources, influence outcomes, or meet particular obligations and responsibilities
(Wallington & Lawrence, 2008).

**Community: Open-accountable**

Transparency and accountability in participatory decision-making processes are
expected to promote public awareness and collective capacity to act, and to improve
the acceptability of decisions and long-term action (Margerum & Whitall, 2004). The
widespread distribution and disclosure of information are fundamental preconditions
for meeting the principle of transparency (Lockwood et al., 2010; Wallington &
Lawrence, 2008). Access and disclosure of information is particularly important in
consultative and advisory processes such as TLM where all interested stakeholders do
not have direct access to, or a clear understanding of, decision-making processes
(Catt & Murphy, 2003).

Active participation in a range of groups and organisations is considered to be
an ideal quality for NRM representatives, who can then be used as intermediaries to
communicate information (Rockloff & Moore, 2006). Intermediaries can also help
lower the costs of engagement (Crase, Dollery, & Wallis, 2005). Many CRG
members believed that they were better informed by participating in the CRG. They
also noted that participation resulted in a shared understanding of problems that, in turn, assisted members reaching or approaching consensus on some issues.

Nevertheless, the closed nature of CRG meetings limited public information about meeting agendas, deliberations, and outcomes, making it difficult to characterise TLM as open or transparent (see Margerum & Whitall, 2004; Milich & Varady, 1999). As I found in Chapter 6, information flows and dissemination of information back to communities was selectively undertaken. This suggests that the use of community representatives as intermediaries might not be the answer to systemic representation and information transfer deficiencies (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005; Crase et al., 2005).

Accountability is regarded as both an important component, and an outcome, of multi-scale governance, which can be linked with normative notions of community responsibility and mutual obligation (Stratford, Davidson, Lockwood, Griffith, & Curtis, 2007; Wallington & Lawrence, 2008). For example, accountability as a good governance principle in NRM refers to “(a) the allocation and acceptance of responsibility for decision and actions; and (b) the demonstration of whether and how these responsibilities have been met” (Lockwood et al., 2010, p. 993). Accountability can also be conceived vertically as a principal-agent relationship between different levels of government and between government and community intermediaries. In addition, or alternatively, accountability may be horizontally oriented between actors of equivalent status, depending on how responsibilities are accepted, information exchanged, and expectations responded to (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005).
Experience from regional NRM in Australia shows that there is a lack of downward and upward accountability between governance levels and territorial scales, and also that there is poor horizontal accountability between governance actors and the groups they are said to represent (Lockwood et al., 2009; Wallington & Lawrence, 2008). According to Lockwood et al. (2009), “... formal accountability may not be necessary, providing NRM bodies can demonstrate a high level of earned legitimacy ...” (p, 176). However, some form of answerability between governance actors is critical if governance processes and outcomes are to be perceived as transparent and fair (Wallington & Lawrence, 2008).

Although CRG member roles and responsibilities were not always clear (to them at least), government expected members to provide community feedback on issues and concerns, while also building community support for policy implementation. Here procedural legitimacy was brought into question because member roles and responsibilities were not clear, resulting in questions of who would be accountable and for what. CAC members were appointed by the Ministerial Council to represent their basin communities. However, the CRG was a reference group reporting to the CAC, but it relied on informal and ad hoc connections within local communities and stakeholder groups to perform different roles for different groups. Some members felt they were accountable to communities, others did not.

Many CRG members expressed frustration with the feedback between governance levels. Deficient feedback to the CRG led to a lack of understanding and satisfaction from members with higher level decisions (or lack of decision-making). This resulted in cynicism, dissatisfaction, and lack of trust in governance processes (see Craig & Vanclay, 2005). Cynicism and dissatisfaction could be attributed to
upwardly oriented information flows between the CRG, CAC, and the Ministerial Council. Paralleling this, the flow of information back from the CAC and Ministerial Council was regarded as poor by many interviewees. This lack of downward accountability blurred messages coming back to the CRG from the CAC, and, as one interviewee indicated, CRG advice was seen as a ‘. . . rubber stamp used to legitimise policy actions’.

Bringing together multiple levels of government across jurisdictional and departmental boundaries is likely to complicate accountability issues (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005). So, too, is assembling a large number of ill-defined community actors to cross territorial, scalar, level, and contextual boundaries, despite bearing community interdependencies in mind. The notion of active individuals as community leaders is likely to further confuse representation and accountability. Associating community activity and leadership status is also likely to blur any potential conflicts of interest between individuals, communities and their representatives, depending on how active community membership is conceptualised (Lockwood et al., 2009). The following section draws on participatory theory and practice. In doing so, it sheds further light on some benefits and shortcomings with community as an organising concept under hybrid governance.

**Community: Active–passive actor**

Within TLM policy and planning documents, it was implied that there was an active, inclusive, empowered, and effective community engagement process. For example, a key document described that the TLM was intended to include ‘. . . a community engagement process that engenders understanding, extensive discussion and debate,
followed by sound decisions ...’ (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2002, p. iii). The reality was that CRG membership was selective, and only prospectively affected, materially interested, active, and competent agents, capable of articulating community values and opinions, were consulted.

This contrast between rhetoric and reality demonstrated that, although the community and participatory discourses might evoke images of inclusion and autonomy, the CRG membership was a largely passive as a consultative actor (see McGurk et al., 2006). This suggests that, under hybrid neo-corporatist natural resource governance, the conflation of community and consultation is an attempt by government to offer solutions that are more palatable than unpopular policy choices such as state regulation or market-based instruments (Cheshire & Lawrence, 2005; Summerville et al., 2008).

It is under the guidance of the state that local, regional, and other communities as subjects of governance can be made more responsible and aligned with policy. Aligning community goals and expectations with government policy can be accomplished by consulting community leaders and incorporating their knowledge, skills, and expertise. Such a process can allay concerns and might assist communities take responsibility for managing tenuous relationships between different, and often conflicting areas and interests (Rose, 1996a, 1999).

**Community: Knowledge-expertise**

Knowledge construction can be conceptualised as a social, spatial, technical, scientific, and cultural process that legitimises and gives authority to people, places, and policy outcomes (Latour, 2005). Prima facie, the CRG appeared to be a genuine
attempt by government to build and integrate different knowledge and expertise through a River Murray epistemic community (see Bulkeley, 2005; Burgess et al., 2000). Integration and exchange of knowledge helped assign roles and responsibilities to CRG members. Some members were eager to provide advice to government about social tensions and technical advice about how to move and use water more efficiently.

Through their appointment, CRG members were assigned leader status and identified by the CAC and government officials as repositories of community knowledge and expertise. Members were therefore indirectly conferred authority or legitimacy to speak as experts in community (Rose, 1999). This third way notion of a community expert is largely a question of perceived legitimacy. In the CRG, perceived legitimacy implies that members bring social connections, civic norms, and trust. Added to that, members are also recognised has having some type of leader-follower relationship (see McAreevy, 2006). Some CRG members were well connected and assumed community leaders, others were not, and for those outside the TLM process it was difficult to determine who particular followers might be.

Even though some CRG members were well connected, and interacted in local communities of place and NRM communities of practice, one of the CRG’s more specific terms of reference was to provide advice on environmental and water plans (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2004). Because the principal role of the CRG was to provide policy implementation advice, knowledge and expertise of a technical nature was privileged. That enabled communities of practice associated with irrigation, water, and catchment management to dominate the process. As several members and government officials assumed, ‘the group collectively’ has
knowledge of all the industries and businesses that rely on water and need to be heard as ‘legitimate stakeholders’. However, that is a rather naive and skewed position. This is because industry and peak groups are not likely to represent all interests or different types of knowledge, nor is their knowledge and expertise typical of others (Doherty & Doyle, 2006). Instead, seeking this level of collective knowledge excludes those without the requisite stores of human capital sought by decision makers (Hendriks, 2009).

The privileging of technical knowledge is a commonly cited cause for policy implementation failure (Berkes, 2006). A focus on technical knowledge also means that longstanding socio-political issues and tensions — for example, those associated with the agency of interdependent and affected communities to act beyond the local scale — are often given superficial treatment through technological fixes (Latour, 2005). Interdependent communities of locality were often in conflict over water access and management. For instance, those downstream often thought that their knowledge and concerns were not well integrated, and several CRG members felt that indigenous knowledge and concerns were not equally heard (Lockwood et al., 2009).

Underpinned by a technocratic rationality, government officials required CRG members to have a good understanding of water management and existing NRM policies at local and regional scales. Members also needed an understanding of how those policies fit within TLM implementation framework, as well as an understanding of MDB governance arrangements. Understanding such a complex and interactive policy framework is a challenge for experienced policy professionals and scholars (Connell, 2007). It is difficult to envisage that community members without strong state connections could hold such knowledge and understanding.
CRG members as experts in community provided the means by which government could test the credibility and acceptability of decisions based on the assumption members posed the requisite community knowledge and expertise. In this way, CRG members provided a ‘risk assessment’ measure for particular courses of action (Herbert-Cheshire & Higgins, 2004). How community knowledge was acquired, the level of community expertise conferred, and how messages were being conveyed by these experts was difficult to determine.

Nonetheless, according to several CAC members and a senior government official, opinions and feedback sought from CRG members had some impact. One example cited was giving government and water manager’s confidence to purchase and release small amounts of environmental water into the River Murray during 2007-08. This was achieved by CRG members providing opinions to decision makers about the community backlash anticipated during a time of drought and hardship.

On the one hand, community knowledge and expertise enabled government to glean insights for implementation issues and problems to be addressed (Barnes et al, 2003). On the other, the emergence of the expert in community potentially marks a diminished and blurred role for citizens as members of society because individuals are included in advisory groups in new professionalised roles (Lockwood & Davidson, 2010). The hitch is that interested community members are deemed capable to engage with community experts to articulate particular issues and concerns. Individual community members are also expected to acquire information and knowledge from experts (Curry, 2009).
Community: Democratic-competent

Allied to active citizenship and expert knowledge, competency is also regarded as an ideal quality for members in representative NRM groups such as the CRG (Rockloff & Moore, 2006). Although it might be desirable for CRG members to be both representative and competent (Barnes et al., 2003), one member felt that ‘. . . a truly representative body is maybe very democratic, but does not necessarily bring the most skilled people to the table’. This comment illustrates the familiar tension between representative- and competency-based NRM models (Bellamy et al., 2002; Rockloff & Moore, 2006).

The democratic-competent tension could be considered a meta paradox for natural resource governance, encapsulating elements of representation-representativeness, common good-vested interest, open-accountable and active-passive paradoxes discussed thus far. The democratic-competent paradox also points to the tension between conferred-earned legitimacy in advisory groups, where membership in the CRG is earned through members' experience, capability, and knowledge (Lockwood et al., 2010).

As noted earlier in this chapter, CRG members were required to receive and deliberate on largely technical information. They were also required to formulate a position to discuss within the group. Although members were not formally elected to undertake these tasks, and therefore could not speak for the community, by sharing information and articulating different points of view a level of shared understanding and group cohesion emerged (see Creighton, 2005). In Chapter 7, gaining
knowledge, increasing trust, and reaching shared understanding were cited as procedural outcomes of the CRG. Substantive outcomes that were identified included integrating different knowledge/expertise, building capacity, and, to some extent, learning about policy. However, environmental water recovery outcomes were moderated by some influential voices in the CRG and progress on policy objectives described as ‘painfully slow’ and ‘weak’ by other members. These outcomes and the pace of progress suggest that many members in the CRG had limited power to effect change.

**Community: Coopted-placated**

Community involvement in the MDB occurs within the rhetoric of participation and partnership between government and community (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2001). However, CRG members appeared to have limited influence over key decisions. Participation, like representation, could be described as somewhat tokenistic, falling somewhere between being informed, consulted, and placated (Arnstein, 1969; Bishop & Davis, 2002). As one interviewee said, consultation in the CRG was ‘. . . about pacifying the disconnected and disenfranchised’, whereas another noted that ‘. . . consultation is not negotiation’ on policy outcomes.

The largely passive role of the CRG reflected the participatory dilemma associated with citizens acting in advisory roles (Arnstein, 1969). Certainly, findings from Chapter 6 showed that participation in the CRG was somewhat tokenistic. Members were presented with significant amounts of information and consulted on some issues, but there were no guarantees that their concerns would be taken into account or that information would flow in both directions (i.e., up and down). In
such an instance, Arnstein (1969) provides an important insight about the gap between policy rhetoric and practice in TLM. For Arnstein, consultation can be construed as higher level of tokenism when advice provided by representatives does not necessarily equate with direct and inclusive citizen participation, decision-making authority, or the capacity to negotiate with decision makers (Arnstein, 1969).

Whether intentional or unintentional, participation couched in terms of those deemed representative and competent to take part as experts in community is at best selectively inclusive (Erling-Klausen & Sweeting, 2003), at worst exclusionary (Barnes et al., 2003), and does not account for those who are unable to participate or choose to opt out (Doherty & Doyle, 2006). CRG members, as non-elected representatives chosen on the basis of their social status and competency, are not democratic and have no mandate to speak for, or represent, the opinions of others. Instead, their earned status results in what could be considered the legitimisation of “bottom-up elitism by community leaders” (Rockloff & Moore, 2006, p. 665).

Problems, such as policy capture, that are associated with consulting policy elites are widely documented in NRM decision-making (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005; Lane & McDonald, 2005; Singleton, 2000). However, left to act on behalf of others and without their consent, the credibility and role of community leaders in legitimately representing the public interest is tenuous (Kemmis, 1990; Moore, 2005).

**Community: Substantive-unproductive**

The rationale behind good governance is that it will produce superior policy outcomes for citizens over other legitimate forms of authority such as governments and markets (Schmitter, 2002). The CRG provided the CAC with a community
perspective on the acceptability of TLM implementation decisions. The CRG was therefore an important site for horizontal power interactions.

A strongly cited outcome of CRG interactions and advice to the CAC was the mobilisation of so called ‘new water’ through market-based measures. Although some irrigators and irrigator groups argued that market-based measures would distort the price of water, a government pilot project to purchase water, and discussion between CRG members, allayed the concerns of sceptics. It was agreed within the CRG that market-based measures would be the best way to acquire environmental water. However, at the CRG meeting I attended, MDBC officials and the Ministerial Council were requested to consider their ‘... social responsibility for community impacts and the potential unintended consequences of recovering water for the environment’. This request had an important bearing on policy implementation outcomes, which ultimately influenced the water recovery process.

Advisory group interactions are often conceptualised as horizontally or evenly oriented (Reddel & Woolcock, 2004). Nonetheless, many CRG members were frustrated with the protracted process, moderated environmental water recovery targets, and a lack of substantive on-ground outcomes. The stymieing of both process-based and substantive outcomes could be attributed to unproductive interactions or delaying tactics adopted by certain actors (see McAreavey, 2006).

The ability of more powerful actors to evoke the social justice discourse and to adopt micro-political delaying tactics brings into question the integrative capacity of horizontal interactions that are expected to help transcend entrenched power differentials (Blomquist & Schlager, 2005; Howlett & Rayner, 2006; Rockloff &
Moore, 2006). This discussion suggest that a lack of state intervention, a principal-agent relationship between government and communities, a focus on process rather than agreed outcomes, and a lack of transparency and clarity about accountability, left the CRG open to capture by powerful interests. This in turn led to a perception from some members that the group might be indeed a “forum for inaction” (Singleton, 2002, p. 55).

**Conclusion: Is community useful, or is it confusing things?**

The public policy literature recognises that conceptualising communities as agents or intermediaries for government can lead to the community model of policy consultation being left open to a market-based rationality (Adams & Hess, 2001; Reddel & Woolcock, 2004). Conceptualising and involving community this way enables policy to shift its focus to the more instrumentally-based Gesellschaft societal associations and memberships (Brint, 2001; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Tonnies, 1955). This is not to say that the small-scale community Gemeinschaft social order is abandoned. Instead, the Gesellschaft logic as applied to NRM programs such as TLM means that community represents social and spatial simplification through an aggregative-associative social order on the one hand. On the other hand, this social order masks power relations. This is in contrast to a model of social order that reflects the extent of complex, multifarious, and politically dynamic social interactions (Bryson & Mowbray, 2005; Liepens, 2000a).

This shift in the logic of community in multi-scale NRM under hybrid governance reaffirms the view that community is indeed a potential recipient for a new governmentality that aims to make subjects more governable and manageable.
(Lockie & Higgins, 2007; Lockwood & Davidson, 2010; Rose, 1999; Swyngedouw, 2005). However, this form of governmentality raises particular tensions and potential objections for those being represented. As the case of the CRG illustrates, the usefulness of community as a representative organising concept can be brought into question when characterised by the over-representation of instrumental interests, a lack of transparency and accountability, tokenistic participation, and largely symbolic outcomes.

Community is clearly a useful organising concept from the perspective of elected officials and government agencies wanting to aggregate preferences and discharge the burden of participation. It is also a useful concept for representing and including various local and regional areas, knowledges, and expertise needed to improve policy implementation. Nevertheless, local and regional scale research increasingly identifies community as a problematic representative socio-spatial concept in NRM (Lockwood & Davidson, 2010; Summerville et al., 2008).

In the case of TLM, community representation, geographic or otherwise, was practised selectively to include those within the boundaries of a “community of preference holders” (Eckersley, 2003). Community was also used to selectively include those with particular skills, experience, and knowledge who were capable of articulating certain preferences. However, as no clearly delineated socio-ecological River Murray unit existed, the relevant socio-ecological interactions potentially extended outside the “... geographic and temporal boundaries, across society and into the future, and well beyond ...” the membership of the CRG (Moore, 2005, p. 129).
Although there are inherent democratic deficits representing community preferences through select advisory groups, decision makers are increasingly seeking the input of competent community experts as a means of enhancing the legitimacy of policy outcomes (Boedeltje & Cornips, 2004; Schmitter, 2002). The output-legitimacy based model is consistent with an emerging trend in NRM, and public policy more broadly, where consultative groups such as the CRG assume new professionalised roles to speak for community (Lockwood & Davidson, 2010). However, it should be noted that community input is only part of the process and there are some significant tensions to address when a select group of individuals are assembled by government to speak for community.

In light of this discussion, I now return to my key research questions in the concluding chapter to review the usefulness of using community as an organising concept for good governance in multi-scale NRM. Particular attention is given to the theoretical, policy, and management implications of findings, and some thoughts for future research.
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Chapter 9
COMMUNITY AND ITS USEFULNESS FOR GOOD
GOVERNANCE IN MULTI-SCALE NRM

Introduction

In this final chapter, I outline the significance of this research by returning to the main question: Is community a useful organising concept for good governance in multi-scale natural resource management? Insights gleaned from the thesis are assessed in terms of the sub-questions that assisted in answering the main research question. Those sub-questions were:

1. Are different communities involved in TLM, and how are they described?
2. How are communities involved in TLM? and
3. What are the intended and unintended outcomes of community involvement in TLM?

In addition to addressing and reviewing these questions, I provide some reflections about the research, its limitations, and the implications for socio-political theory, public policy, and NRM. I close with some thoughts for future research.

Were different communities involved, and how were they described?

The review of socio-political theory in this thesis clearly demonstrated that community has a long tradition of scholarly analysis, along with a history of definitional controversy. Traditional theories of social organisation differentiated
between society, community, and other organisational levels such as the group and enterprise (Weber, 1978). However, this traditional notion of social organisation seems to be less the case in contemporary society where community is a key organising concept used to structure governance and participation in public policy (Herbert-Cheshire, 2006; Kenny, 1996; Rose, 1999, 2000).

In the applied NRM literature, the concept of community was used at multiple scales ranging from, and across, local areas, regional catchments, bioregions, and up to sub-national river basins. Community was also used for, and comprised, different levels of socio-political organisations. Levels included individual citizens who could be aggregated into citizen groups such as voluntary associations. Other groups and levels of organisation included NGOs, not-for-profit organisations, networks, private enterprises, and sectors. With such a complex array of scales and levels it is not difficult to understand why common or precise definitions of community continue to be evasive.

Through my review of theory I collaborated in developing a typology of communities in NRM (Harrington et al., 2008). The aim of developing the typology was to provide some clarity about how community terminology and concepts might be used in policy and practice. The typology contained five descriptive categories. These were communities of locality, affected communities, transcendent communities of interest, communities of practice, and communities of identity. As a descriptive tool, I believed that the typology provided a useful starting point for my exploration of different community concepts in TLM. The typology also provided a guide for upfront thinking about who might be involved in governance, as well as for problematising issues representation.
The empirical focus for this thesis was the CRG. As a community consultation group, the CRG was formed by the higher level CAC, to provide advice on implementing TLM business plan. The typology was applied to analyse CRG and CAC membership. As a result of my analysis, I found that communities of locality and affected communities were concepts with which CRG members and government officials frequently identified. Theoretically, some CRG members could be linked to the concept of transcendent communities of interest due to their strong formal state and private enterprise connections. Fewer members could be associated with the less formal, or informal, memberships that often characterise community groups.

This research has revealed that the concept of communities of identity can be a problematic one. This is because of individuals’ multiple, complex, and overlapping associations. For instance, many CRG members identified with different social, spatial, cultural, political, and practice groups. However, I found that identification with a particular group does not necessarily mean that an individual can either represent, or be considered typical of, that group. Although the concept of communities of practice was not a concept used by interviewees, theoretically the CRG could be considered an epistemic community in the River Murray. There was some evidence that as an epistemic community, the CRG was able to bring together, and transcend, socio-spatial divides through the process of dialogue and learning (see Bulkeley, 2005).

The analytical approach of governmentality-ANT enabled me to critically analyse notions of community that are often taken for granted. This was achieved by considering how different social, political, cultural, and spatial concepts were
deployed by government and non-government actors under the guise of community. In retrospect, methodologically ANT provided a useful starting point for thinking about socio-political networks, categories, and power relations. However, the governmentality approach seemed to have more currency in theorising about community and governance in a contemporary sense.

In particular, the analytics of governmentality provided an insight into the instrumentalisation of community as a Gesellschaft organising concept for governance. Community conceptualised in terms of Gesellschaft rational interest raised significant questions for me about how a consultative and advisory group defines and represents the values of the community (or public). Moreover, I needed to ask how, if conceptualised in terms of an instrumental rationality, community represents the more inclusive notion of the common good or public interest.

Some theorists argue that the instrumental logic associated with community reduces its credibility, and therefore its usefulness, as an organising concept. It is also argued that this logic diminishes social cohesion and trust, civicness, responsibility, and public good outcomes that are often associated with the concept of community (Cheshire & Lawrence, 2005; Lockwood & Davidson, 2010). Additionally, the insights contained in this thesis demonstrate that a lack of clarity about the structure and role of community groups, and their domination by powerful and elite actors, also diminishes the credibility and usefulness of community as an organising concept for good governance.

Community was used in a selectively inclusive and representative way by many interviewees. Selective inclusion was used to refer to those individuals and groups with an interest or stake in TLM, and for those able to represent a particular
preference for policy implementation. CRG members seemed to fall within a selectively defined (but largely indistinguishable) socio-spatial boundary associated with the River Murray. For me this highlighted that community provides decision makers with the power to impose socio-spatial order by defining the subjects of governance (see Rose, 1999), and not vice versa. Of course, defining and making up community in this way means that those outside constructed boundaries are not able to participate or express their preferences. For good governance, this insight demonstrates that community is indeed a closed and exclusionary entity.

As participation in governance is a way for citizens to express their preferences outside elections, and because all those interested are unable to participate, community could be described as a representative ensemble of actors who are associated with the organised groups in civil society (Stoker, 1998). Imposing social order through the organised groups in civil society cannot be used as a surrogate concept for community because not all members of a community are connected to, or can participate in, organised groups. Nor can those groups be said to represent the diversity of all places and interests. Research findings affirm that the boundaries and relationships in civil society are easily blurred (Lane et al., 2004; Stoker, 1998). The blurring of social, political, economic, and spatial boundaries generates the possibility of confusion from the interested public about how community is defined and constituted in public policy.

As discussed in Chapter 8, the definitional pluralism associated with community presents a number of new paradoxes. The representation-representativeness paradox made it difficult to clearly describe why community was being assembled in the CRG. For instance, few CRG members claimed to represent,
or be representative of, a particular community. Instead, the vested interest discourse surfaced when members described the concept of community. This presented the additional community paradox of vested interest-common good. Although community was deployed by decision makers and the CAC to evoke notions of unity and common good, the common good was difficult to define because the concept of community was being coupled with notions of self-interest.

Community was used by decision makers, government officials, and CRG members in a normative and collective sense for all people who were outside government. However, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, community descriptions were multiple, ambiguous, and included a range of organisational forms. There was significant slippage in the terminology about community. Therefore, the usefulness of community as an organising concept for good governance in TLM is limited.

Although not as palatable to some due to connotations of self or vested interest, the concept of stakeholder better describes and defines many of the groups and associations in TLM. The stakeholder concept is a more accurate, inclusive, and encompassing one for multi-scale public policy (Schmitter, 2002; Swyngedouw, 2005). Well established tools such as stakeholder analysis are available for use in governance design to define and determine consultation group membership.

**How were communities involved?**

While my field research focused on the CRG, I acknowledge that broader community involvement may have taken place in TLM. My understanding was that local icon
site CRGs were to be formed, and local and regional community meetings held, outside the CRG process. However, due to the geographically diffuse state, regional catchment, and local government boundaries, and the various towns and sites of interest along the River Murray, I was not able to track and follow the wider community involvement process. As I was also denied ongoing access to CRG meetings, I confine my conclusions about how communities were involved in TLM to the CRG as an intermediate governance actor that operated in and between communities and the CAC.

The rationale adopted by the CAC for appointing CRG members was to obtain opinions and expert views from the community about implementing TLM. As one CRG member put it, community input or voice on ‘behalf of locations, commodity, and interest groups’ into decision-making was an important part of the governance process. Likewise, being represented in the process, engaging the community in policy, and providing information to communities about policy implementation was seen as important by CRG and CAC members, as well as by government officials. However, due to skewed representation of irrigation interests, it was difficult to regard community involvement as being fair and equal. Overrepresentation, like underrepresentation, is likely to negate the acceptability of decision-making to the broader public.

CRG members were appointed by the CAC as repositories of expert knowledge about the River Murray and its communities. However, the role of the CRG collectively, or for individual members, was not always clear. From a governmental perspective, the CRG was a collective entity representative of the leaders in the basin. As government-community intermediaries, MDBC officials
wanted CRG members to act as local champions and ambassadors. Many CRG members did not believe that to be their role. MDB commissioners wanted members to represent their areas and interests, and while many members were keen to represent their places and interests — for example by providing advice about local social tensions — a CAC member specified that this was not a role for the CRG. Some members expressed the view that they were not exactly sure why they were in the group, but felt that they were better to be there than not. The Ministerial Council wanted to know what constituted an acceptable decision, but one CRG member had the impression that the process was being ‘stage managed’ to defer decisions.

CRG members were expected to access personal networks for communication and information flows. However, this relied on access to pre-existing networks that often aligned with government and professional groups. Government and formal group connections appeared to be vertically oriented and therefore enforced the status quo (see Howlett & Rayner, 2006). Several CRG members voiced concern about a lack of information flow from higher level governance groups such as the CAC. Lack of information exchange between governance levels blurred messages between the CRG and CAC. However, as shown in Figure 4.2, the CAC was not responsible for providing information back to the CRG, and that resulted in communication and information exchange being less than transparent.

Publically available information about the CRG, its meeting process, and the issues discussed in the CRG was limited. Moreover, the quality and quantity of written information available outside the group was generally poor and lacked detail. As commented on by several CAC members, and government officials, CRG information was not for public consumption. However, it would be reasonable to
assume that, for a group formed under the banner of community, there is an
expectation that the community will at least have some understanding of the
governance and consultation process, what is being discussed, and what decisions
have been taken. Not meeting expectations is likely to hinder citizen engagement,
resulting in a disenfranchised and disconnected public with less trust in government
processes. Moreover, various local and regional communities, as well as stakeholder
groups, are affected by decisions in TLM. A lack of information about decisions and
proposed courses of action compromised the procedural legitimacy of TLM
governance process.

The competency set required by CRG members limited participation to those
already actively involved in NRM. Conceiving participation in terms of those
competent to take part in governance serves the argument that in third way contexts
community is biased towards involving well-organised actors and being selectively
inclusive of the policy elite (Rose, 2000). I identified this as an additional paradox
for community involvement that frames community in terms of those who are expert
and competent. Competent involvement seems oppositional to the rhetoric of
inclusive democratic participatory governance. In combination with increasingly
complex systems of decision-making, limiting community involvement to those
competent to take part reduces the legitimacy and usefulness of community as a
concept to collectively represent social structure in public policy.

As far as I could ascertain, broad community involvement in TLM was
limited. Limited community involvement at the implementation phase of the policy
process might be considered appropriate due to competency set required to
understand complex policy processes (see Bridgman & Davis, 2004). However, the
CRG included a significant amount of policy expertise which was used in a largely tokenistic capacity (see Arnstein, 1969). Such an outcome may lead to the perception that decision makers are merely going through the motions of community consultation. These instances illustrate a gap still exists between the rhetoric and reality of participatory governance and the government-community partnership.

**What were the outcomes of community involvement?**

Participation by a range of actors in governance is expected to result in better NRM outcomes (Dovers, 2005). In terms of good governance, substantive and intended outcomes might include shared responsibility for a course of action, and transparency and accountability in policy implementation (Lockwood et al., 2010).

A number of intended outcomes resulted from individuals’ involvement in the CRG. Those outcomes included the CAC and the Ministerial Council accessing integrated advice and information, testing the acceptability of decisions, and acquiring an understanding of potential impacts of implementation measures on different geographic communities and stakeholder groups. There was some evidence of new relationships forming between CRG members, and between members and government officials. These relationships helped guide and coordinate policy implementation. There was convergence of opinions between CRG members, and that resulted in the group reaching a close to consensus view on some issues. Several CRG members noted that they gained a better understanding about the issues faced by upstream and downstream towns, and about the impacts of certain decisions on ecological sites. Collectively, these outcomes resulted in individual learning for CRG members.
Through the CRG process some members believed they were able to give decision makers a degree of confidence that it was publicly acceptable to proceed with implementing a pilot water purchase and releasing a small environmental flow. It was agreed among government and non-government stakeholders that 500 gigalitres of environmental water would be recovered by the end of June 2009 as a first step in restoring flows in the River Murray. As noted in Chapter 4, targets have been the primary way to measure outcomes in the MDB (Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, 2001). Although significant progress had been made in water recovery, the 500 gigalitres target was not achieved.

There were a number of unexpected or unintended outcomes in TLM. Many CRG members felt that policy implementation was weak due to a protracted and overly bureaucratic process that favoured interests seeking compensation or wanting to delay water recovery. Weak information and communication flows between different governance levels made it difficult to identify if, and if so, how, influence was being exerted on decision makers. This lack of transparency in the exercise of power raised concerns over the acceptability of decisions and who was accountable for providing particular outcomes. A lack of accountability left implementation open to the unintended outcome of policy capture.

Although it was not an aim to conduct evaluation research, these intended and unintended outcomes reveal some valuable insights for evaluators. For instance, groups such as the CRG can be useful for reaching a level of shared understanding and for facilitating social learning, albeit for a select group of individuals. However, a lack of attention to fair and equitable representation meant that an instrumental
rationality privileged those who were able to demonstrate a socio-economic interest in TLM. Policy capture by particular interests led some CRG members to believe the group was ineffective for enabling on-ground action. These outcomes demonstrate that power was not evenly dispersed in the group. Water recovery outcomes were resisted by those seen to have the voice of the community. Resistance produced a degree of policy contradiction in that substantive environmental outcomes were further moderated during the course of CRG consultations.

**Lessons learned and future research**

This research has provided detailed insights into the mechanics of a large multi-scale NRM policy implementation program and some of the conceptual tensions associated with deploying community as an organising concept. Community is clearly a useful organising concept for elected officials and government agencies wanting to aggregate preferences and discharge the burden of participation. It is also a useful concept for representing and including various local and regional areas, perspectives, knowledges, and expertise needed to improve policy implementation. However, when characterised by an instrumental rationality, community as an organising concept for good governance in multi-scale NRM has limitations for articulating and realising the common good in an open and accountable manner.

Community is an important subject for public policy. As an organising concept, it is used to encapsulate different scales, levels of population, and interests to be served. However, clarity about the organising terminology needs to be provided by those designing governance arrangements. This is important as large public policy issues associated with climate change, emission trading, renewable energy (e.g.,
community wind farms) and NRM, will operate across similar scales, have high levels of importance, and wide-reaching effects well into the future. Such issues often seek community views and even consensus about how to proceed with policy implementation. Upfront thinking and precision with the terminology should be used to clarify who is to be involved, and for what purposes, in governance.

Some valuable lessons can be learned from this research. First, concepts such as community, public, and stakeholders should not be used interchangeably. Each organising concept carries with it different connotations and therefore has the potential to create confusion among the citizenry. For example, public is an all inclusive concept; stakeholder is selectively inclusive for those affected by a decision or action.

Community, as I believe I have demonstrated in this thesis, while often used to imply an all inclusive entity, is notoriously difficult to define and creates expectations for those being governed. As theory dictates, community is in fact a closed and exclusionary entity. From the point of view of community consultation, community involvement and engagement is primarily a process of expectation management for those being governed (Reddel & Woolcock, 2004). Therefore, where government retains principal decision-making power, future research might consider the following questions:

- What are the expectations of those being governed, and how can government better address those expectations?
- How can a broader range of non-traditional, non-elite policy actors be included in governance? and
What new sources of authority and legitimacy can be accessed by decision makers to extend the way collective decisions are informed by public opinion?

Second, and related to the issue of expectation management, there is a need to address good governance principles such as accountability and transparency in a more comprehensive manner. Although it is unlikely that advisory committees and consultative groups will be abandoned in decision-making processes, greater public access to these participatory forums is necessary. Future research could explore the practicalities of holding advisory group meetings in public. Added to that, providing meeting agendas (in advance), minutes, and other targeted information via emerging information and communications technologies could promote accountability and transparency. In addition, more attention needs to be given to horizontal accountability between representatives and those they are said to represent.

Finally, as an alternative to community and governance theory (with their inherent bottom-up power sharing connotations) large multi-scale policy process might be better focused on policy subsystem theory (Ferreyra et al., 2008; Hendriks, 2009; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). A focus on policy networks would provide an opportunity for micro-level analysis of policy community interactions, as well as the institutional design trade-offs involved in policy implementation. Shortfalls in advisory group membership and composition reflect deficiencies in representing certain societal interests, while closed selection processes raise issues of legitimacy, accountability, and transparency (Howlett, 1990).
This thesis has made a significant contribution to the discourse about community and NRM, in particular how governance actors construe and apply the concept of community. Although public participation and community representation may never be perfect in public policy, research findings raise additional questions as to whether current governance models and process are improvements on previous ones. As demonstrated by this research, stakeholder analysis, network theory, and governmentality provide the critical tools for developing new understandings of policy structures, process, and outcomes.

In conclusion, this thesis has revealed community to be a confused concept that is difficult to define and carries a range of connotations and expectations in multi-scale NRM. Conceptually, community is implicitly a socio-political construction. This construction poses a number of new paradoxes for policy implementation and institutional design. These paradoxes are cast with the overarching dichotomy of community versus the state. In large multi-scale NRM cases, where substantive social and ecological outcomes are required, we should not forget that the central state has a legitimate role in protecting the common good, both in the present and into the future.
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Appendix 1 — Interview guide

Intro - My background and the research

Do you have any questions please sign CONSENT form.

1. Tell me a bit about your **background** and how you got **involved** in TLM
   a. Why did you get involved
   b. How long have you been on it; how many meetings attended.

2. What is **your role**
   a. Do you represent a community
   b. How do you define it
   c. Why is the concept important

3. What do you think about the **function & operation** of the CRG
   a. What is its role & function
   b. How influential is it
   c. Do you think you influence decisions and outcomes

4. What things have **happened from your involvement**
   a. what are the formal & informal ways you interact with
      i. other crg members
      ii. your & other communities
      iii. CAC or MDBC
   b. What sort of things did you expect to happen
      i. What outcome have there been
      ii. What sort of outcomes are you looking for
   c. Has anything surprising happened from you involvement

5. Is there **anything else** you would like to say


Appendix 2 — Information sheet

On Charles Sturt University letterhead

20 June 2007

Request for an interview about The Living Murray Initiative

‘Exploring communities, public participation and natural resource governance in The Living Murray’

Dear Chris,

I am undertaking research as part of a PhD at Charles Sturt University. My supervisors are Professor Allan Curtis and Dr Rosemary Black. The aim of the study is to provide insights that lead to ideas for improving community participation in Natural Resource Management (NRM). For instance, there are many different types of overlapping communities involved (such as communities of place, interest, identity, affected and practitioner) and I am interested in how this affects participation, what interaction occurs between communities and the outcomes that might result.

I would like to speak with people who have been involved in The Living Murray Initiative, particularly with the Community Reference Group. A personal interview would be between just you and me and will take about 1 hour.

If you agree to an interview, I will arrange a convenient time to talk with you. The topics I would like to discuss are:

1. How and where have you been involved in The Living Murray and the Community Reference Group?;
2. What do you think about the function and operation of The Living Murray Community Reference Group?;
3. What sort of things have happened from your involvement in the Community Reference Group?;
4. Does interaction occur between different communities and representatives, how does this happen and why might it be important?; and
5. Any other issues or thoughts on the Community Reference Group and public participation in The Living Murray?

All responses will be treated as anonymous and confidential. If you agree, I would like to tape record interviews. From these tape recordings I will produce interview transcripts that I will provide to you. I will use these transcripts to identify themes for analysis in my Doctoral research. All data and tapes will be securely stored in accordance with Charles Sturt University procedures.

Please note that participating in this study is purely voluntary and you may withdraw, or ask me to withdraw at any time, without any negative consequences.

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The findings will be published in my Doctoral thesis. If you are interested in the results of this study, I will be happy to provide you with a summary of findings as they become available. It is possible that research findings will be published in academic journals and I can advise you if/when this occurs.

My contact details are listed below if you have any questions or would like to discuss the project further. I thank you for your time, interest and co-operation and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Yours sincerely

Chris Harrington
PhD Student
Institute for Land, Water & Society,
School of Environmental Science,
Charles Sturt University.

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NOTE: Charles Sturt University’s Ethics in Human Research Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee through the Executive Officer:

The Executive Officer
Ethics in Human Research Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795

Tel: (02) 6338 4628
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Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

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