

Part 1

The Problem Context

“New strategic directions and innovative forms of behaviour will emerge from the political interactions and learning activities of people in an organisation. In these conditions it is clearly stultifying if all adhere to a single (vision) of the future and if all strongly share the same culture, the same values and belief systems. Such consensus will block the perception of small changes; it will block the development of different perspectives. Without the continual provoking of new perspectives, an organisation will be incapable of creating its future; it will simply repeat its past instead”

Richard Stacey ‘Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics’ (1993:227)

Part 1 Consists of the Following Chapters

Chapter 1 Introduction: Planning for Complexity and Catalyzing Evolutionary Change

Chapter 2 The Problem Context, Challenges and Reflexive Learning Approach, used in this Research Project

Chapter 1

Planning for Complexity and Catalyzing Evolutionary Change

1.1 Chapter Aims

This first chapter outlines the scope and aims of this study, the research problem, the theoretical framework, underpinning epistemology and the conceptual and methodological contributions of this research.

This study focuses on articulating an inclusive planning process for appraising new enterprises and potential sustainable industry pathways at the regional scale in Australian landscapes. The planning process piloted here is explicitly designed to address the complex nature of regions, envisaged here as a type of self-organising, complex dynamic system or human ecology, encompassing a diversity of interdependent of social, economic and environmental communities. The focus of this study could then be termed ‘whole of regional community planning’ being inclusive of various human, place and habitat communities across regions.

The focus of the study concerns the collaborative appraisal, planning and concept design methodology for a sustainable nature based and ecotourism enterprise encompassing the New England – Coffs Harbour –Bellingen regions of New South Wales (NSW) in Eastern Australia. The study has piloted a community based planning approach that utilized a collaborative learning dialogue process. This process facilitated a shared vision and the design principles of a sustainable cross-regional tourism venture and the emergence of new regional community stakeholder agency partnerships. A key aim of this study was to investigate the potential of community based planning at the cross-regional scale to catalyze emergence, novelty and evolutionary transitions.

1.2 The Core Research Issues Addressed by this Study

At the heart of this research lie three core issues, which this study seeks to contribute some insights into. Firstly, how do we enable constructive social change (Lederach, 2005) without the usual debilitating conflict and stakeholder resistance that is associated with change? This involves how planners can better understand the existing ways, different communities and stakeholders perceive and know their region and can facilitate shared emergent ways of perceiving and understanding. Further, how can we enable shifts to new worldviews, ways of thinking and seeing that better equip communities and stakeholders to collaboratively appraise new sustainable enterprises and pathways at a cross-regional scale.

The third core issue underpinning this research is founded on a question posed by Sandercock (1998) who asked what was the future of planning beyond the modernity paradigm and how could this future look against the current array of planning practices. Her view is that cities and regions of the new millennium will be distinguished by their evolving multicultural nature and the rise of a new, insurgent cultural politics that have contested, at times, current planning practices. Sandercock further argues that the task for planners concerns developing a new planning paradigm that is inclusive, allows for difference and for living well together, empowers communities and enables sustainable futures. Earlier, Forester (1989, 1996) called for planners to become cognizant of, and to address, the power relationships involved in urban and regional planning and decision-making and to explore what planners actually do in practice, particularly their communicative interactions with stakeholders.

Planning now, however whether in the context of business organisations or regional tourism ventures, faces a new world and set of challenges. The development of a global market or globalisation, according to Stiglitz (2003), presently favours some enterprises over others, particularly in the developed world, with access to information flows and knowledge of changes in the market being the key factors in this. Business and organisational learning management theorists such as Argyris and Schon (1996) and Senge (1992) have argued that the increased competitive threat that has arisen with globalisation has meant that business enterprises have to be able to

deal with a new quantum rate of change and highly innovative competitors offering quality product and alternative niche services. Senge (1992) goes on to outline the need for enterprises to move beyond command and control hierarchical perspectives, to adopt systems thinking and team learning to both re-think currently held mental models of how a business operates and to build the adaptive capability of organisations. This same emphasis on capturing organisational learning and developing new adaptive strategies and innovation is shared by Brown and Duguid (1991, 1995) and Wenger (1998, 2000, 2002) who stress the importance of utilizing informal learning networks or communities of practice in this endeavour. New collaborative network organizations, Limerick (2000) argues are the sustainable organisational form of the future, allowing enhanced feedback and aligned, partnered responses in the face of increased uncertainty and change. Another business theorist, Stacey (1992, 1993, 1996), advocates the use of complexity science and the need to go beyond systems thinking to investigate how to engage and plan for the complex, rapidly changing business environments that enterprises now confront.

Planning is posed here as a socially constructed praxis, as different planning theories evolve to address new urban, regional, natural resource management and organisational problems. Each new planning approach is depicted as encompassing a modified narrative or different ways of storying and sculpturing urban, regions and organizations. The modernist project has been concerned more with economic development, growth and 'progress'. Planning for sustainability, while ambiguous, is more concerned with balancing the economic prerogative with the ecological and social imperative. Different planning approaches are portrayed here as arising out of different cultural-theoretical- epistemological configurations, termed here as cultural stories or projects, that underpin and shape specific planning practices and tools. The strategic planning cycle as outlined by Mintzberg (1975, 1985) typical of modernist planning, seeks to align, shape and control an organization growth or a local government council's spatial configuration towards a targeted future or vision. It employs a mechanical, simple system metaphor and carries assumptions that organizations and urban-regional spaces can be controlled, a far different understanding from a complexity science perspective. Modernist planning approaches, seek to accumulate value free empirical data, develop an assessment of an objective reality that relies on a linear understanding of causality. With such an

approach, assessing the feasibility of a regional tourism venture could then primarily become a desk-bound exercise concerned with making reliable predictions of possible market share, tourism visitation, income flows and expected likely ecological, economic and social flow-ons and impacts.

The need for an urgent re-appraisal of corporate thinking and planning approaches may also be argued for regional communities and the regional tourism destinations and enterprises they host. Regional enterprises also face similar challenges of increased competition, evolving markets and of having to navigate new levels of complexity and uncertainty. This study addresses the need for investigating new planning approaches that can collaboratively help regional communities; agencies and stakeholder industries make sense of this increasing 'complexification' (Cocks, 2003) and uncertainty. The Stern Report (2007) underscores the urgency of this task and the importance of industry to respond to increasing climate change and the economic flow-on effects of this.

The organisational learning theorists cited above stress the importance of team learning processes and informal learning networks or communities of practice, to drive adaptive and evolutionary responses by enterprises, to changing economic, environmental and social contexts. The issue here is to identify and develop a planning process that facilitates learning and adaptive responses across regional communities, stakeholders and agencies and better enable them to collaboratively develop their own sustainable regional enterprises including tourism ventures. Further, it questions how regional communities can develop a shared vision and design principles for a cross regional tourism enterprise that can support and align individual enterprises in an integrated regional service supply chain or network.

There are a range of literatures consulted in this transdisciplinary study from planning theory, organisational learning and systems thinking to the emergent science of complexity and adaptive management. It is a deliberately selective coverage of the relevant literature, rather than a comprehensive survey of these literatures. The latter task would constitute an overwhelming project in itself. Instead, the different literatures cited were those that helped inform the complexity framed, collaborative, learning dialogue, planning process in this thesis.

1.3 The Heritage and Rationale for this Study

This study is embedded within the transdisciplinary ecological economics project that is concerned with developing new ways of thinking and understanding complex systems and problems and secondly, of developing methodologies for enabling sustainable futures (van der Berg, 1995). Another ambition of ecological economics is to address the governance and epistemological issues that sustainability presents (O'Connor, 2000). Further, the Ecological Economics project sought to develop a post-normative science able to encompass the plurality of different ways of knowing and perspectives amidst the complexity and uncertainty associated with evaluating sustainable initiatives (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1994, 2003). Noorgaard (1989), in his foundational ecological economics paper, calls for methodological pluralism in seeking to facilitate and plan sustainable futures. This research study follows in this same vein but focuses on developing a multi-stakeholder conversational process to appraise sustainable regional enterprises, part of a new type of exploratory planning process for facilitating sustainable regional development.

Sorensen, Marcotullio and Grant (2004:302-307), similarly see the need for planners to go beyond the old planning ways and practices to develop an array of local, context dependent approaches in the face of deepening environmental problems and bureaucratic institutional arrangements. Their recommendation for planning sustainable cities and regions, is to couple a holistic or integrated ecosystem approach with adaptive planning, where plans once developed are modified in response to feedback and learning about what works.

The need for developing an adaptive institutional and stakeholder capability to sustainably manage regional scale, social economic ecological systems has also been outlined by Lee (1999). Dobbell and Martin (2001) re-affirm the importance of collaborative local networks and institutions or 'sound governance in developing adaptive responses and policies to manage regional ecosystems sustainably. Fabbro (2001) re-envision the focus of regional planning, not as controlling regional development but more as the building of local stakeholder capabilities and incorporation of local actor networks into new regional governance structures. Halme and Fadeeva (2000) cite a number of regional tourism case studies to demonstrate

how small and medium sized tourism enterprises networks have co-operated to help build sustainable tourism destinations and regional development. Halme also points out that this task appears impossible for individual enterprises acting independently

However, Faulkner (2002) characterizes regional destination systems and the global tourism market as one of turbulence or nearing the edge of chaos with asymmetrical futures rather than near equilibrium or states. This view is based on the increasing disturbance evidenced by increasing global competition, the advent of new global e-technologies, entrepreneurial innovation into new market niches and global changes including natural disasters. This researcher would add economic shocks such as oil price rises to this new scenario facing regional tourism destinations and their service enterprises.

Clearly, further research is needed to identify regional community planning processes that can catalyze the emergence of new governance structures, incorporating sustainable enterprise networks, new collaborative stakeholder behaviours; processes that enhance adaptive regional capability for this new age of transition and turbulence.

Also addressed in this study are the key themes identified in the dialogue around the founding of the Global Planning Education Association at their inaugural Conference in Shanghai in 2004 as outlined by Stiftel, Watson and Acselrad (2006). These themes included further examination of the relationship between planning, mixed land-use patterns, the economy, environmental conservation and the building of consensus. This regional community planning case study explores these same themes around the concept design and feasibility appraisal of a walking track based, cross regional sustainable tourism venture.

1.4 The Research Problem

The present focus of regional planning in Australia concerns facilitating regional restructuring, supporting new ventures and attracting new industries into regional areas as well as better co-ordinating state government programs and service delivery (Anderson and McDonald, 1999, Beer, 2000 and Teghe and Rolfe 2003). Recent

Federal Government funding has also focused on renewing infrastructure, particularly roads, in order to support regional development and reduce transactional costs. This study suggests the focus of regional planning in Australia needs to be widened and better informed as to the planning of how communities can appraise and support new regional enterprises and sustainable industry pathways in the collaborative re-design and re-storying of sustainable regions.

The research problem, addressed here concerns how regional community planning can catalyze the emergence of sustainable regions and new multi-stakeholder and community governance structures to support this evolutionary transition. This research then, seeks insights as to how regional community planners can better facilitate collaboratively developed strategies to enable the emergence of smart, adaptive regions and new diverse regional industry pathways such as the proposed sustainable cross-regional ecotourism regional tourism destination of this study.

Planning at a regional scale, whether of sustainable regions and regional enterprises involves and impacts on multi-stakeholder networks of different agencies, local governments, communities, enterprises and landholders to varying degrees. Freeman (1984) has outlined how the emphasis of strategic planning processes needs to be re-orientated towards meeting the various differing interests of stakeholders as opposed to the bottom line results of one particular enterprise or agency. Regional planning would benefit by being informed as to how new collaborative planning processes can help identify, address and then align the differing interests of its various communities and stakeholders. However, consideration needs to be given here to a wider sense of what constitutes regional and place 'communities' as human ecologies to include the interests of conserving other living ecological communities

This research also addressed the need for a planning process that is able to elicit holistic context dependent notions of sustainability and what constitutes a sustainable regional tourism venture or pathway for a particular Australian regional landscape. The study embraces and articulates a methodological framework through which to implement the notion of sustainability as an on-going learning process or journey (Meppem & Gill 1998). It also re-affirms the view that planners, need to be epistemologically reflexive and to integrate different community, place based, agency

and Indigenous knowledge (Manuel-Navarrete, Slocombe & Mitchell 2006). These community planning processes sought synergies across these diverse ways of knowing in co-appraising and designing a new sustainable regional enterprise and pathway. The conversational process in undertaking the above, deliberately sought to deepen our understanding of sustainability as a social learning process.

The study also addresses a perceived gap in the existing strategic planning cycle approach for enterprises. There appears to be an opportunity for a more inclusionary and in-depth scoping conversational exercise or process to identify or envision new possibilities for re-designing new sustainable regional enterprises; for repositioning existing enterprises and catalyzing evolutionary transitions and novelty. This view is supported by Stacey (1995) who argues that enterprises like General Motors and IBM still suffer from market share decline, despite their attempts at developing a better adaptive fit with their existing markets using strategic planning or ordinary management processes. Stacey calls for a parallel 'extraordinary management' process that examines and challenges existing assumptions, mental models and is capable of catalyzing innovative and adaptive responses to changing markets. Appreciative inquiries have employed positive futures thinking and envisioning to revisit what the core values of organizations are as distinct from problem focused and solving thinking. Other inclusive conversational processes have been employed to creatively re-think and re-mould new visions and possibilities of work in organizations of the future (Zeldin 2000). This study, like Shaw (2002) envisages this 'extraordinary management' as a self-organising conversational process intended to drive adaptive and innovative change management within organizations. ***This study asks then, what type of planning process can catalyze novelty that rather than represent versions of what already works, enables innovative breaks with the continuity of existing enterprises, tourism destinations and pathways.***

The study follows on from the task for those advocates of a new collaborative planning theory, outlined by Harris (1998) to demonstrate credible, workable and socially useful examples of how it can work in practice.

A central notion discussed in this study concerns the need to adopt more holistic, systems perspectives and planning practices that incorporate an ecological view

across local place and regional scales. The study focuses on outlining a collaborative learning dialogue planning process for the collaborative appraisal and design (co-design) of a sustainable regional tourism enterprise. This collaborative learning dialogue planning process addresses how regional enterprises fit into this regional human ecology.

One contribution of this study hopefully will be to start a conversation around the need for a new type of holistic systems planner and co-designers amongst landscape architects, architects and, community place and regional planners. In this way, this study seeks to promote co-design processes that can contribute to the 'ecological design' approach pioneered by McHarg (1992).

1.5 Research Aims

The research project outlines a new collaborative learning dialogue planning methodology conducted at a multi-stakeholder cross-regional scale. The study sought to build and field-test a methodological synthesis of collaborative discursive planning approach with complex systems thinking. It explores how planners can synergise social learning through a collaborative learning dialogue amongst stakeholders, agencies and concerned communities to appraise the feasibility of a new cross-regional ecotourism venture. In undertaking this cross-regional conversation, it also set out engage the different Aboriginal custodian communities at the design phase to unveil culturally appropriate protocols as to how to undertake a cross-cultural planning conversation around such a walking track based venture for 'country' across this cross-regional corridor.

Secondly, the research sought to discover whether a collaborative planning conversation methodology could envision and generate the design principles and an integrated or holistic picture of what a viable, walking track based ecotourism venture looks like and how it could be sustainably managed.

Thirdly, it investigates whether it was possible to catalyze novelty i.e. an innovative regional tourism venture concept and the emergence of a new regional stakeholder, local community and agency institutional arrangements and partnering behaviours.

The complex systems perspective, applied in this study, explicitly acknowledges and seeks to define the likely, non-linear interrelationships and future impacts across economic, social and ecological system domains involved with such a project. This conversational planning process sought to build an improved shared understanding in through this collaborative appraisal of the various issues and unintended consequences of such a regional tourism project. Both the negative social and ecological impacts and the positive benefits and economic feedback loops that could drive a successful development were considered. Expert driven concept development planning processes and appraisals don't necessarily build a shared and widespread understanding of the implications around the development of a regional tourism enterprise nor offer the opportunity for novel alternative designs to emerge as achieved in this case study. Similarly, existing planning approaches can eschew other knowledge process or ways of knowing that are 'culturally pluralistic' and incorporate values and attitudes that are distinct from seeking 'control of the environment' (Dyck, 1998:35-36)

Building a shared multi-stakeholder systems picture of such a venture, its issues and impacts was identified as a better way to develop shared understandings, test the feasibility of regional tourism initiatives and guide decision-making as to the design and implementation of such projects.

The pilot case study demonstration of this collaborative regional planning process constituted a hybrid open ended, exploratory visioning exercise and systems inquiry as to what type of walking track based ecotourism venture was considered viable and sustainable. Stakeholder and community conversations were mapped to identify the key inter-relationships, stakeholders and communities' aspirations and the key design principles as to what was needed to build and manage a sustainable tourism enterprise. This process deliberately sought to elicit other, stakeholder insights and advice as a way to evaluate and design a sustainable tourism venture including local place, experiential, agency technical expertise and Indigenous ways of knowing.

The case study implementation of this particular collaborative process articulated in this thesis, sought to generate insights and learning between stakeholders about what

sort of walking track was viable and could attract and support a cross-regional nature and ecotourism enterprise in the New England – Coffs Harbour regional corridor. The collaborative planning conversations across these two regions also inquired as to what a sustainable walking track venture would look like, how could it be managed sustainably and what were the key issues that needed to be addressed and how. The planning process was aimed to co-construct new shared understandings about how to link the various world heritage eco-assets, the scattered farm-stays, ecolodges and unique rural towns and places to become the basis of a new ecotourism industry and so enhance the robustness of the regions. The study also sought to identify what infrastructure and other key actions would be needed to leverage these linked regions into a world -class ecotourism destination.

1.6 The Research Questions

This study has investigated if and how a previously fragmented cohort of communities, government agencies, various stakeholders and landholders could collaboratively appraise and co-design a sustainable tourism enterprise along a cross-regional corridor, stretching over 650kms.

There are 3 interrelated research questions explored in this study;

1. Can, and if so, how could a collaborative learning dialogue planning process catalyze and contribute to the emergence of novelty in the form of a unique walking track based, cross-regional tourism concept?
2. Is it possible, using the same planning process to facilitate a shared and aligned vision of what a sustainable nature based - ecotourism industry enterprise would look like in the New England and Coffs – Bellingen regions? Further, can this process elicit and capture the essence, design principles and stakeholder advice underpinning this vision.
3. Could the same planning process catalyze the emergence of new collaborative regional stakeholders behaviours and the design principles of a new governance arrangement as to how to manage the proposed new regional tourism initiative?

This study then, reports on a case study demonstration that a collaborative learning dialogue planning process and conversational mapping tool, using explicit hermeneutical principles is an effective way to capture the essence, design principles and stakeholder advice about a sustainable regional tourism venture. Further, the study investigate that such an open, exploratory planning approach can co-ordinate a regional scale conversation, is capable of synergising collaborative learning and developing a shared systems picture between regional stakeholders, agencies, communities, landholders and Aboriginal communities.

1.7 The Theoretical - Methodological Framework and Contributions of the Study:

This research employs a complexity theoretical framework or way of knowing (Waldrop 1992; Tasaka, 1999) that envisages organizations, industry-markets, regions and cities as self-organising emergent, complex adaptive systems (Allen, 2004). A complexity systems framework and perspective, acknowledges the existence of non-linear interrelationships across economic, social and ecological system domains. These systems are shaped by both negative stabilizing and positive accentuating feedback loops, unintended consequences, lagged feedback effects over space and time from policy decisions, disturbances and the dynamic interrelationships with other nearby systems. For instance, property price rises and urban consolidation policies in the Sydney regional metropolis can encourage further population outflows to and rapid changes in the pace of development in other regions in NSW.

Ndou and Petti (2006) cite regional tourism destinations and enterprises as examples of complex adaptive systems. Such regional complex adaptive systems with their market situations typified by a high degree of complexity and uncertainty, with rapid technological and evolving markets, require new planning approaches with an appreciation of their nature as adaptive systems.

Complexity thinking is also concerned with the dynamics and emergence of both new structures and behaviours as a system adapts through countless small, ongoing interactions between its numerous elements to develop, new system pathways,

novelty or a new whole system structure and behaviours. Emergence concerns how higher order patterns, behaviours and structures come about and seeks to explain the evolution of a city, how ant colonies build giant nest structures, or the dynamic formation and the phenomenon of blue slime mould purposeful tracking its way through a forest (Johnson, 2004:5).

This thesis explores and advances a re-configuring or new conceptual way of seeing of regions and places as culturally storied, self-organising emergent complex systems thus building on the work of Allen (2004). These regional – community ecologies, envisaged as interconnected social, economic and ecological community systems, it is argued here, are storied and shaped by different, planning narratives and contesting cultural perspectives. However this research goes on to define regions as a particular type of complex dynamic system, namely co-evolving human ecologies. This work endeavours then, to contribute to a conceptual systems understanding of regions as human – ecologies as initially outlined by Catton and Dunlap (1980) and Stoddart (2006). The study proposes an interconnected human ecological or holistic model of regions that incorporates the diversity of human, social, political, cultural, economic, industry and environmental communities. These complex dynamic human ecologies entail an interconnected socio-cultural-economic-environmental system, being envisaged as both adaptive and capable of evolving in response to changes within their boundaries and in response to other regions, nearby metropolis as well as exogenous factors such as market and climate change. For example the regional governance and institutional arrangements are seen as being culturally shaped and both shaping and being shaped by feedback across its environmental, economic and social sub-systems.

This research into a new collaborative systems planning methodology has employed insights from both soft systems thinking (Checkland, 1999) and collaborative planning approaches notably Healey (1997) and Innes & Booher (1995). The study in field- testing the proposed bottom-up top-down regional community planning methodology, seeks to add to the ecological economics project outlined by Noorgaard (1988, 1999) and its quest to build a methodological pluralism.

This bottom-up top-down planning process explicitly addresses regions as self-organising, co-evolving human ecologies. The process was used here to collaboratively appraise and re-design a regional tourism enterprise through an inclusive dialogue with a wide range of regional stakeholders, communities and agencies. The bottom-up, top-down planning methodology facilitates and maps an open, self-organizing conversational process, with no pre-determined goals. It enables communities and stakeholders to explore, scope and co-evaluate other possible, emergent regional pathways, to generate or re-design novel enterprises, potential new collaborative governance- management network structures and stakeholder strategies. The planning process sought here, in this instance, to foster emergence and novelty as a way to help catalyze regional transformation. In contrast, top-down planning methodologies are characterised by expert-led strategic planning approaches involving setting a guiding vision; goals and strategies are employed to shape, align activities and resource allocation to drive and control the growth and evolution of an organizations, regions or cities. This type of strategic planning approach has instrumental rationalism as its guiding logic, assumes organisations, cities and regions are simple systems that can be mechanistically shaped with responsive linear mechanistic shifts from one near equilibrium state to another as a result of planning or policy initiatives.

This work sought to articulate a new way to collaboratively make sense of and generate social learning to better co-manage evolutionary transitions within these complex regional community ecologies. It seeks an alternative to the top-down mechanistic planning approaches.

In particular this regional bottom-up, top-down whole of community planning methodology draws on the soft systems “mudmapping” tools employed by Gill (2003) and Meppem (2000) in their earlier forays into planning for sustainable regional localities. Firstly, by employing the “mudmapping” tool within a wider cross-regional and deliberate self-organising conversational process. Secondly, by articulating the hermeneutical principles and process used to capture the ‘essence’ of these stakeholder-community conversations and the key design principles, community and stakeholder advice and any emergent, novel concepts for a regional tourism venture. In this way the collaborative conversational process can open up

new 'horizons' i.e. shared understandings about (Gadamer, 2004) and possibilities for sustainable regional development pathways. This process led to a re- design of the original, continuous long distance walking track proposal and a stakeholder informed, re-conceptualisation of what a feasible and sustainable regional ecotourism venture might look like. It helped build a shared multi-stakeholder systems picture to better understand a region's adaptive dynamics, its stakeholders, the key relationships and what type of regional tourism system would best fit in with and most likely work in this region. It enabled stakeholders to appraise and test the feasibility of regional tourism initiatives in this case and guide decision-making as to the best design and implementation of such projects.

The study is an exploratory probe into the notion of planning for emergence as an alternative to the top-down strategic planning and feasibility assessments into implementing a pre-ordained vision and enterprise. The study ascertains whether an inclusive regional community planning process could establish conditions able to catalyze the emergence of new stakeholder-agency partnership arrangements and co-operation in new governance structures. This approach contrasts with the simple systems thinking and the strategic planning approach assume linear causal relationships and that outlining pre-determined goals with aligned strategies can deliver planned outcomes. This type of instrumentally rationalist thinking underpins strategic planning approaches and relies on step by step methodologies and planning instruments; it assumes that self-organising complex adaptive systems can be controlled through the mere act of developing plans which contrast with the current reality for global and regional industry and markets outlined above (O'Loughlin, Taboada & Gill 2006).

The study also sought to explore and develop a more culturally appropriate planning process to engage with the rich complexity and uniqueness of Australian regional landscapes. Australian regional landscapes are portrayed as unique complex ecological, social, economic phenomena that are multi-culturally layered. Regional stakeholder groupings occupy varying hermeneutical circles, each with their own particular ways of knowing, seeing, thinking and sets of priorities (Gadamer, 2004). Regional planning conversations can avoid or deny this complexity of 'landscapes of difference' (Sandercock, 1998:107-120) or seek to engage with it. This exploratory

conversational systems picture building approach deliberately sought to explore this rich cross-regional complexity i.e. the specific local context this particular proposed tourism enterprise as well as ways to harness other, stakeholder ways of knowing and local situated knowledge to co-assess the sustainability of this regional tourism enterprise.

1.8 The Underpinning Epistemology of the Study

Chambers (1997) argues that planners need to be explicit and self-reflexive as to their underpinning epistemological framework and its appropriateness when engaged in planning or in undertaking research studies concerning sustainable development. At one level, a reflexive planning process entails outlining whether a research study or planning enterprise conforms to, say, a social constructionist or objectivist epistemology or way of knowing.

This study employs a social constructivist perspective, which sees new knowledge, perspectives, interpretations and reconstructed understandings about the world being developed through social engagement (Crotty, 1998). Thus sustainability is viewed here as a socially constructed notion that can be defined locally through a multi-stakeholder learning dialogue. Further, sustainability is envisaged here as both context, place and regionally dependent, a dynamic social construct that is an evolving learning journey as outlined by Meppem and Gill (2003) rather than a pre-determined operational destiny.

Likewise, governance structures are posed here as social constructs. For example the present centralised, hierarchical control state and regional institutional arrangements in New South Wales (NSW) represent one such typical model (Agranoff, 2001, Considine, 2002). This particular departmental or silo governance architecture in NSW has arisen over time to enable the state government's primary functions ensuring accountability in providing equitable government services across the state including health, schooling and technical training, regional support and infrastructure. New network learning governance models have been advocated for new more efficient government service delivery and for more effectively conducting the current war on terrorism (Considine, 2002). Multi-stakeholder place management

governance arrangement have been piloted most notably managing the commons of Sydney Harbour (Colebatch and Dawkins, 2001, 2006) as part of the state government's initial tentative forays into exploring other service delivery models. Such alternative regional, stakeholder learning network, governance arrangements may be better suited to facilitating adaptive and sustainable regions and development (Bellamy, Meppem, Goddard & Ross, 2002).

In this study, regional systems are seen as storied, shaped through contested planning narratives, deeper cultural stories and the different ambitions and social power agendas underlying the different types of planning conversations employed.

Modernist planning and decision-making utilize empirical, 'objective' studies; a type of knowledge creation using an objectivist epistemology and employ a positivist, reductionist science. Funtowicz and Ravetz (1994, 2003) point out that this approach is relevant for simple systems with low uncertainty and easily defined problems that differs markedly from the particular context and case study here. A post-modern informed perspective instead sees different 'knowledges' and ways of knowing as valid, different with each being relevant in planning conversations (Sandercock, 1998). This includes for example local place or experiential knowledge and modernist science with its positivist and reductionist way of knowing. Indigenous Aboriginal ways of knowing, are different again, for instance being partly based on deep and long observation and reading of 'country' (pers.comm.).

In this case study, regional planning conversations concerning sustainable pathways are envisaged as exploratory social learning processes. This pilot collaborative regional planning approach seeks to synergise both local stakeholder and community advice with agency scientifically assembled insights as to what type of regional tourism concept is feasible and how that can be managed sustainably. This process looks to understand the particular world reality and dynamics of particular regions to determine what is viable and sustainable.

Such collaborative planning conversations seek to create an open space for different perspectives and ideas to emerge and empower communities to explore emergent, novel, socially constructed creative designs and solutions, as is the case study

described herein. Alternatively, planning conversations can be restricted consultative exercises, narrowly focused on the planners set brief or concept proposal, seeking only comment, focusing on identifying obstacles and any issues that need to be overcome and design faults that may impinge on other stakeholders. Similarly, participative planning conversations invite stakeholders to discuss in more depth and input into an already similarly pre-determined proposal or plan. In both participatory and consultative planning processes, the power of stakeholders in decision-making is limited. Similarly, the ability of stakeholders and the communities to reject or dramatically redesign plans or development concepts and to oversight, partner and co-manage the implementation of a redesigned plan, is also restricted; the final design and decision usually reverts to existing institutional - governance arrangements.

1.9 The Structure and Style of the Study

This thesis is divided into four parts. Part One includes Chapters 1-2 and outlines the problem context. Part Two includes Chapters 3-5 and concerns re-thinking 'planning', regions' and 'sustainability' and outlines the complexity theoretical framework that underpins the study. This section deconstructs and assesses current planning approaches and outlines a conceptual model of regions as a type of self-organising emergent system; namely co-evolving human – ecologies. The notion of sustainability as a social learning process is also explored.

Part Three includes Chapters 6 -8 and discusses what characteristics or capabilities are needed in new types of regional planning methodologies that can facilitate social learning to enable regional communities, stakeholders and government agencies to collaboratively appraise and co-design sustainable regional enterprises. The need for new planning methodologies that explicitly address this complexity framed, ecological notion of regions is discussed in Chapter 6. A case is outlined in Chapter 7 for planning as a reflexive learning process in order to help devise new context and culturally appropriate collaborative planning methodologies for Australian regions. Chapter 8 considers the issue of how collaborative regional planning methodologies need to embrace multiple cultural frameworks and different stakeholder worldviews, ways of seeing, thinking and knowing that occur across Australian regions.

Part Four outlines the synthesized collaborative learning dialogue planning methodology and the hermeneutical principles used to interpret and capture the essence and design principles of the exploratory planning conversations conducted across regional communities and stakeholders. The case study discussion focuses on the key learning from field-testing this methodology and assesses the study in addressing the three research questions. The thesis concludes by discussing the new roles and capabilities involved for regional planners willing to embrace this complexity framed approach for co-appraising and redesigning sustainable regional enterprises and new industry pathways.

The thesis also documents the learning journey of this researcher and has been deliberately styled in parts as a reflexive process. This was in order to explain how the researcher came to both adopt a complexity theoretical framework and how the notion of sustainability in Australian regions involves both social learning and the need for a cultural evolution in planning to embrace diverse ways of seeing, thinking, knowing and new practices. This, at times, reflexive learning style was considered consistent with what the study was advocating and as a way to better embrace and outline the complexity occurring across Australian regions.

Chapter 2

The Problem Context, Challenges and Reflexive Learning Approach, used in this Research Project

2.1 Chapter Focus and Scope

This Chapter outlines the background to the planning project brief concerning the collaborative appraisal and design (co-design) of a sustainable cross-regional tourism enterprise on the east coast of Australia. It also outlines the challenges of developing a new collaborative learning dialogue methodology suitable for planning that is cognizant of the complexity within Australian regions.

The second half of this Chapter introduces the researcher's own voice. A reflexive perspective is utilized to frame the formative learning experiences that led to this study. The need for planning that utilises a reflexive learning process methodology is outlined to make sense of the complexity of Australian regions, their organisations, communities, cultures, different stakeholder agendas and worldviews.

2.2 The Project Outline and Planning Brief

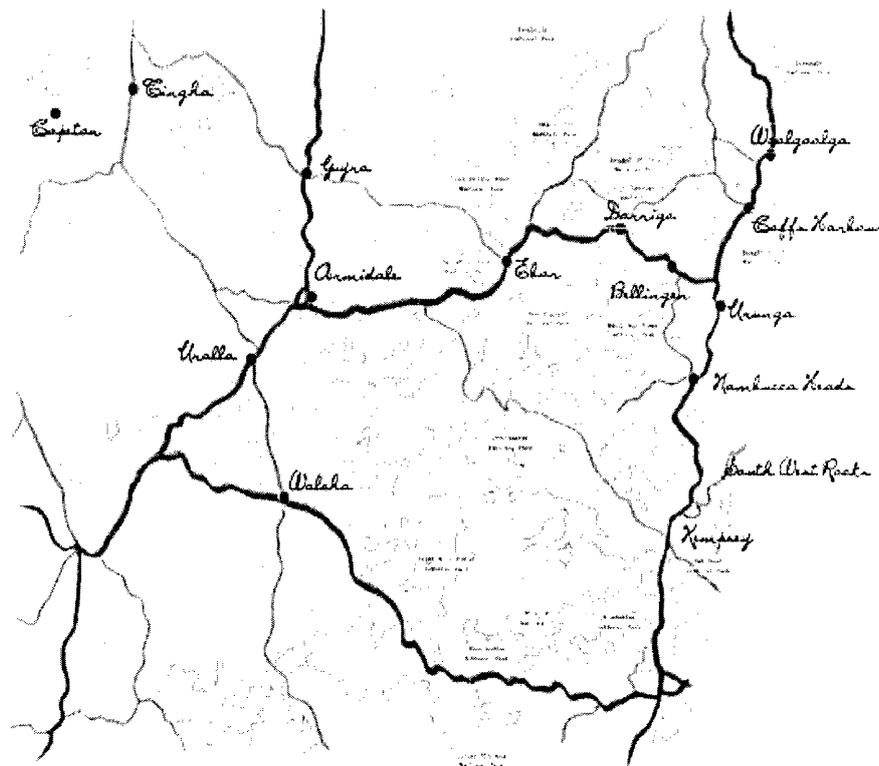
In 2002 the New England Ecotourism Society (NEES) in Armidale, Northern New South Wales (NSW), proposed the idea of developing a long distance walking track through the spectacular New England gorge country, down the coastal escarpment through the lush grazing pastures of Bellingen to finish on the sub-tropical coast at Coffs Harbour. The idea was to promote and give better access to the various World Heritage landscapes, open up the ecotourism potential of this cross regional corridor and to support and link the unique but scattered rural place communities. These landscapes include notable examples of the Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves (CERRA) and a number of NSW National Parks with remnants of ancient Antarctic Beech forests both wet coastal, temperate and dry rainforests as well as sub-alpine

tableland ecosystems. This idea sought to realize the possibility of building a local ecotourism industry. Armidale, the regional centre of the New England region of NSW, already hosted a nationally recognized eco-guiding centre but, as of then, had only had one graduate employed locally.

Four different, custodian Aboriginal Peoples have walked these regional landscapes from the coastal valleys to the tablelands for more than 50,000 years. This six hundred kilometre cross-regional corridor encompasses some of Australia's finest superfine merino wool sheep enterprises and sits adjacent and astride a steep escarpment down to glorious subtropical beaches of NSW mid-north coastline. It contains a diversity of ecosystems, distinct changing landscapes and huge variety of bird life, koalas and threatened species such as the yellow-footed rock wallaby.

Figure 2.1 The New England – Bellingen to Coffs Coast Cross-Regional Corridor

Source: Waterfall Way Brand Management Report 2007



Markedly different tourism markets and industry clusters characterize these two regions, namely New England and the Coffs Mid-North coast. The New England sub-alpine tablelands are extensively grazed for high quality superfine wool with a growing number of high quality niche beef enterprises. The regional centre, Armidale, hosts a number of secondary education schools and private boarding colleges as well as the University of New England. The region is also home to numerous national agricultural research centres including livestock genetics and breeding societies etc. The existing tourism market is currently centred around the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) and Meetings, Conferences and Events (MCE) business niche markets and hosts numerous events such as the national wool fashion awards and visiting residential degree programs. The key visitation segments and trends for the New England region are outlined in table 2.1 below.¹

**Table 2.1 Profile and Trends of Key Segments - New England North West
Tourism Visitation (year ending Sept. 2006)**

Domestic Overnight:	1.3m visitors down 6.9 % on 2005 4.1 m night stays down 5.6% on 2005
Market Share	7.3% of visitors and 6.7% of night stays in regional NSW
Market Segments	Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR) 37.7% dominated over Holiday/Leisure 34.9% and Business (MCE) 18.2% comprising self-drive 'touring travellers' 35% and 'family travellers 20%
International Visitors	50,900 down 12.4% on 2005
Market Share	Comprised 9% of international visitors to regional NSW and 5.8% of night stays
Market Segments	Holiday/Pleasure 76.4%, VFR 15%

Source: Tourism NSW 2007

¹ (Note that this data includes the adjacent region of North-West, NSW cotton, and wheat and grazing region; separate data for the New England region is unavailable at this stage.)

The Coffs Harbour – Bellingen Mid-North Coast and valleys have, in the recent past, depended on bananas and dairying but these industries have been heavily impacted by larger and efficient enterprises in both tropical Northern Australia and dairy farms in southern Australia. Coffs Harbour and the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales is a major tourism destination, however visitation is largely focused on the coastal beach resorts. The lush valleys attract many day visitors and when it rains on the coast, visitors usually drive up the escarpment to the national park rainforest centre at Dorrigo some thirty-five kms from the coast. The two regions while adjacent, have until recently not recognized the synergies of developing the corridor as a regional tourism destination with the diversity to rival Tasmania and initial co-operation around tourism was seen as depleting each other’s visitation and visitor days.

**Table 2.2 Profile and Trends of Key Segments – Mid-North Coast
Tourism Visitation (year ending Sept. 2006)**

Domestic Overnight:	3.1m visitors down 2.6 % on 2005 1.7 m night stays down 8.7% on 2005
Market Share	17.7% of visitors and 19% of night stays in regional NSW
Market Segments	Holiday/Leisure 57.6% 37.7% dominated Visiting Friends & Relatives 26% and Business (MCE) 8.9% Comprising ‘touring travellers’ 30%and ‘family travellers 24% while luxury travellers made up 16.7%
International Visitors	146,900 up 1.3% on 2005
Market Share	Comprised 25.9% of international visitors to regional NSW and 5.8% of night stays
Market Segments	Holiday / Pleasure 82% , VFR 14.3% and Business MCE 1.9%

Source: Tourism NSW 2007

From the data in Table 2.2 above, it is apparent that Coffs and the Mid-North Coast is an already established leisure holiday regional destination for both international and domestic tourism. However, the existing accommodation is heavily weighted on the

coastal strip, and smaller bed and breakfast operators and farm-stays located in the coastal hinterland valleys are less well known.

The challenges for both these regional tourism industry clusters were to become proactive, to diversify, to design new experiences, product and to re-orientate to build a new market segment that could create additional visitation and stays along the cross-regional corridor. The proposed long distance walking track proposal offered the possibility of developing a new nature-based and ecotourism market segment for both regions and presented opportunities for the smaller coastal hinterland and New England operators. Such a diversification strategy constituted a move to offset possible decline in visitation due to market turbulence through political and economic factors such as global terrorism and oil price hikes. Developing a collaborative enterprise and new alliances that could link the regional tourism clusters and build a new regional tourism destination with its own overarching identity, challenged existing mindsets across regional stakeholders.

A Roy Morgan Market Profiling Report in 2002 (refer O'Loughlin, van der Lee & Gill, 2003, Report 2:14-15) into visitation into the Big Sky Country of New England – North West region of NSW indicated that 17% of total visitors would like an ecotourism experience. The potential for a new ecotourism industry existed. I saw one of my tasks as a researcher – planner was to facilitate the collaborative design of a walking track enterprise that could realise this market potential and meet the different concerns and agendas of a host of stakeholders. The well-known walking track enterprises mentioned in Chapter 10 in Tasmania and New Zealand differed greatly to this proposed walking track enterprise. In their case, one land manager, usually a national parks government agency, had sole jurisdiction and control of the track enterprise, the provision of accommodation, licensing of guides, monitoring of environmental and cultural impacts and for setting caps on visitation. The New England Coffs Coast track enterprise instead constituted an unaligned multi-stakeholder grouping as the potential land managing entity.

2.3 The Challenge for a New Collaborative Systems Dialogue as a Regional Planning Process

The project brief commissioned by the New England Ecotourism Society (NEES) called for planning an ecologically and culturally sensitive single, connected walking track. To be considered viable, this long distance walking track design had firstly to reconcile the different interests of the various landholders, government agencies, the five local government councils, the myriad of local communities, other stakeholders and the custodian Aboriginal communities across this corridor. NEES realised the need for an extensive dialogue with the key stakeholders to explore the feasibility of such an enterprise, how it could be governed and managed sustainably, help rejuvenate local communities and honour the cultural heritages and People's of the regions.

The second challenge for this planning task involved catalyzing an aligned, partnered alliance network including participating landholders, relevant government agencies, local government councils and communities as well as an integrated supply chain of nature-based nature based tour operators, accommodation and transport providers. This collaborative planning process needed to produce an embryonic design as well as new cross-regional and agency stakeholder partnership behaviours which were conducive to subsequently establishing a governance and management structure and guidelines or rules for participating in the new enterprise. A cross-regional walking track enterprise such as this resembled what Ostrom (1990: xiv) has described as a 'common pool resources' management problem where self-organising stakeholders develop agreed arrangements and rules for the use of commons land and resources such as fisheries. The planning methodology had to proceed in such a way as to maximize the possibility of the emergence of a new type of collaborative governance structure and stakeholder institutional arrangements to facilitate collective decision-making (Ostrom, 1990:64) and to determine usage, caps on visitation and protocols concerning the enterprise and subsequently brand usage.

The feasibility of the new regional tourism enterprise depended both on whether a new collaborative attitude and mindset could emerge across regional stakeholders and on adequate existing and emerging markets to allow the growth of a new nature based and ecotourism industry that had previously struggled to be birthed. The failure of ecotourism guiding operations to thrive in this region had been diagnosed as due to a

lack of recognition of the region's eco-assets and potential despite the existence of three key world heritage rainforest areas. Coupled with this was the problem of having no overall recognised cross-regional brand and the expense for local operators to advertise in national outlets to build awareness of what is available, as compared to similar walking tracks in New Zealand (Milford Sound Trek), Tasmania (Overland Trail) and more recently Western Australia with the Bibulmum Track. The need for a collaborative regional partnership approach has been outlined by Bultjens, Tiyce and gale (2003) and Buckley (2004) as necessary to support a successful ecotourism industry elsewhere in regional NSW).

Initial discussions with key stakeholders revealed strong support for a walking track venture but the viability of successfully transforming conflicting agendas was rated as around 50% in a pre-feasibility study by a consultant previously engaged in developing the 550km Bibulmum Track in Western Australia (O'Loughlin, van der Lee & Gill, 2003:3). This assessment was based on the large number of landholders involved and the perceptions of existing conflicting agendas of different state agencies such as NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services, NSW State Forests, the lack of a state government strategy support for developing walking trails, unlike other Australian states. Added to this was the potential conflict due to the existence of a number of unmapped sacred Aboriginal sites in the area.

At the start of the project there were therefore a number of instances of potential conflict and opposition. These included the perception of existing regional tourism bodies about the possible undermining of existing regional identity and brands based on the present tourism market niches and the entrenched state government silo management arrangement and myopic organisational culture of key agencies. A key concern from within Aboriginal communities was the exposing and possible vandalism of the sacred Aboriginal sites that could come with a walking track. Resistance from within sections of the existing socio-political decision-making structures was anticipated as to what was considered a community initiated bottom-up collaborative planning approach, seen as infringing on the plans and budgets and ability to direct resources across the region. In fact, throughout the entire eighteen month planning phase and subsequently, the NSW Premier's Department as co-ordinator of meetings of New England state government agencies on regional

matters, refused to meet with me as planner-researcher and representatives from NEES to discuss the project. This was in contrast with the strong financial support from four regional Councils and three state agencies.

Lewin and Regine (2000: 234-5) tell the story of a Coca-Cola special event planner, Laura Odell, who outlined at a Complexity in Business Conference on self-organisation about the “system” that is relevant here. Odell described the system as the roles, rules, hierarchy and bureaucracy that people can hide behind, that limit and set barriers to people working together on new ideas. Existing institutional arrangements, like individual organisations, encourage behaviours around following the organisation’s rules and not disrupting the myopia around protecting one’s turf. My own organisational and consultant work experience supports Lewin and Regine’s view that this tendency to institutional conformance encourages inertia and staying within an organisation’s comfort zone of existing operations and ways of working. This entrenched behaviour, articulated by O’Dell above, can hold some organisations and agencies back from new initiatives and could be said, in this case to contain or bound a region’s evolution along new industry pathways and constrain the emergence of novelty in the form of new innovative enterprises. Again, Lewin and Regine (2000: 273-4) outline the need for organisational leaders to open up the ‘system’, to remain ‘accessible’, ‘attuned’ and to ‘allow’ the space and time to emerge so as to enable resilient organisations (and regions) to achieve their potential.

The third challenge for myself as researcher was to develop a collaborative planning methodology that explicitly acknowledges the complexity and cultural, institutional and environmental diversity at a cross-regional scale encompassed in this cross regional venture. This challenge is consistent with the theoretical constructs of regions being addressed in this thesis. This task encouraged me to undergo a reflexive journey to ascertain what was the appropriate epistemological stance underpinning such a new methodology and also to refine a systems mapping tool to elicit key design principles after extensive conversations with regional stakeholders.

Planning and managing complexity as Lewin and Regine (2000: 76-77) acknowledged, requires a ‘cultural transformation’, ‘a leap of faith’, trusting that a new strategy and pathway will somehow emerge out of listening to enterprise stakeholders. This community-led research project sought to explore a new bottom-up exploratory

planning process, shifting away from the existing top-down controlling management paradigm.

2.4 My Reflexive Learning Journey around Exploring a New Planning Methodology For Sustainable Australian Regions

Sustainability, as outlined in the Draft Strategy document on the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005), involves how re-thinking our world, about a new ethics and emphasis on collaborative communities and the need for open transparent institutions. It encompasses redesigning our existing individual and social practices, our communities, institutions and focusing on new environmental processes that favour biodiversity and life supporting processes. Meppem and Gill (1998) described planning for sustainability as a learning journey. This contrasts with the current business focus on sustainability as triple bottom line reporting defined as achieving additional environmental and social-community operational outcomes while making a healthy, rising economic returns and profits (BCA, 2005). Living sustainably, Hill, Wilson and Watson (2003) also suggests involves re-thinking how we see the world, re-educating and developing our individual, social and environmental consciousness and constructing wider notions of wellbeing. This dynamic evolving re-examination of our existing ways of seeing, knowing and thinking about our world is described as a 'learning ecology' according to Hill, Wilson and Watson (2003). Sustainability in this study is also perceived as a reflexive learning journey undertaken both as individuals and collectively necessitating a cultural evolution in how we see our world moving from the predominantly mechanistic to a deeply interconnected organically evolving, ecological model. Scott and Gough (2003) likewise viewed sustainable development as one of reframing issues and of learning more deeply about the connections between society and the environment, of mastering new literacies to better judge options for sustainable futures. It is for these reasons that the following section is included.

2.4.1 My Reflexive Learning Process

What follows for the reader is an outline of my evolving learning journey as a researcher-planner about sustainability. This is intended to provide a context to better

understand why and how I was motivated to explore a new planning methodology suited for the specific cultural context of planning across Australian regional landscapes.

Early in my research journey, I noted in my research learning journal,

‘The motivation to undertake this study and dissertation revolved around my interest in the dynamics, resistance patterns and conditions conducive to evolutionary transitions in complex systems like organisations, place communities and regions. I was perplexed at the seemingly impossible task of facilitating change in organisations without being undermined by stubborn resistance from some stakeholders and institutions, even when the ‘change’ was seen to be working. It was as if different stakeholders would always rise to resist their own evolution and that the issues of power and who controlled the organisation were paramount over a successful adaptive response or evolutionary change.’

June 2001

My previous work as an organisational learning facilitator had involved supporting major change and leadership development programs in the aluminium industry, local government and the vocational education tertiary sector (VET), in effect seeking to catalyze the emergence of learning organisations. This work involved a number of the biggest enterprises in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales on the east coast of Australia during the 1990’s. Australian industry, in a period of rapid globalisation had been forced to seek out new global niche markets, develop better quality and competitive advantage to distinguish their product-service range. The organisations concerned had to identify and operationalize new sustainable pathways in a rapidly changing landscape characterized by a highly competitive global market with rapidly emerging new technologies that threatened the local protected niche operations of the past. Regions, rural places and their traditional industry mix, face the same dilemma to identify potential new industry or face social and economic decline.

‘My PhD study was about realising a long-term interest and ambition of over 30 years to become involved in the planning and design of sustainable places whether across urban or regional landscapes.’

A further reflection about what influenced me to undertake this research was after working as a planning consultant, supporting the emergence of the Northern Tablelands Regional Aboriginal Community Planning Forum comprising nine regional place communities such as Armidale, Glen Innes, Inverell and Tenterfield. The NSW State Aboriginal Lands Council funded this project; being the peak body of regional community Lands Councils that administered much Aboriginal land across NSW.

‘I have been deeply influenced through this work, through 2001-2002 that sought to link and empower local Aboriginal communities across the New England and the wider Northern Tablelands Regions of NSW. It required me to re-think how planners work and how planning practices can be cross-culturally informed.’

‘This project required me to let go of agendas and timetables; to just sit and listen to what was emerging in the conversations across the communities; to abandon the ‘white fella’ way where planning conversations were goal directed and ran to some planned future agenda and timetable set somewhere else within some agency hierarchy. The Northern Tablelands Regional Aboriginal Elders group had agreed that it ‘was the right time’ for the Aboriginal communities to sit down and work together particularly to change the future pathways of the youth of the regions. What also impacted me was their anger about information for decision-making about future community services and programs was kept within key people in institutions and not given freely to the communities. This initiative called for a ‘new way of doing business’ between Aboriginal communities and both state and local government agencies. This was no mean feat given that the place communities consisted of ‘dis-placed’ Peoples from different Aboriginal Nations whose lands had been disposed in the colonial period. Aboriginal communities now are a mixture of different cultural and language groups unlike before colonisation. Communication and negotiations between government agencies and regional Aboriginal communities had been characterized by breakdowns with disputes over who could ‘speak for that

country’ i.e. who were the traditional owners and custodian clans of particular places.”

Other reflections at this time were,

“This Northern Tablelands Aboriginal community project represented a ‘whole of community’ regional planning approach. It also showed me the rich multicultural reality and cultural diversity of Aboriginal Australia where somewhere near 360 Nations and a vast array of language groups had co-managed the continent for over 50,000 years. These Nations and clans had followed complex protocols and used treaty negotiations to share access to ‘country’ and its natural resources in times of extended drought and natural disturbance.

Sandercock (1998) could have included this bottom-up, top-down planning process above, in her compilation of multicultural planning history. In this particular work of Sandercock, Holston (1998) discusses similar examples of ‘spaces of insurgent citizenship’ or what is termed ‘insurgent’ planning’ which can be likened to the case above of the Northern Tablelands Aboriginal Regional communities. Holston discusses the problem of how modernism and planning have grappled with ‘multiplicity’ and ‘other’ cultural groups in society. Woods (1998) points out how existing stakeholder power blocs have used regional planning and institutions like the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission to secure a particular path of regional development suited to the interests of the existing power bloc. Alternative regional planning initiatives were advanced by groups of African American insurgent citizens in the late 1980’s, helping re-shape the ‘New South’ identity of those regions in the US. Another example akin to the Australian Northern Aboriginal Tablelands experience in this study, is cited by Jojola (1998) who outlines how the Indigenous Indian Peoples of New Mexico have built confederations of regional Indian clans, based in pueblos, to advance their regional interests. It became clear on reading Sandercock’s history that there were numerous ‘invisible’ examples of similar Indigenous regional planning initiatives.

Further,

‘What also impacted me was the intent in these planning conversations to follow a deep democratic process where discussions would delve across different perspectives and go on until there was a shared understanding and agreement as to what needed to be done. I was also gaining an appreciation of the importance of an exploratory, open conversation as the basis for planning for sustainable futures.’

‘While being acquainted with systems thinking, I hadn’t really understood the holistic ways of seeing and the sense of deep interconnectedness that characterized Indigenous worldviews and decision-making. I was forced to grapple across a cultural divide. Whereas I saw the primacy of a healthy vibrant environment as underpinning sustainable regions and places, I was confronted with an alternative view that saw culture, its ways of seeing, knowing and thinking and the resulting social, environmental and economic practices, underpinning healthy ‘country and sustainable regions in the white culture parlance. Sustainability, according to this Aboriginal perspective concerned whether we were living in accord with the dreaming spirit that permeated and dynamically shaped the evolution and what was possible across ‘country’. The painstaking work of mentoring me requires me to acknowledge the patience and good humour that my friends and co-planners showed me notably Tom Briggs, Rose Lovelock, Steve Widders, Lee Paterson and Robin Neave from the various regional Aboriginal Lands Councils.’

Other influences on me included Anthony (1995) an Afro-American architect and urban habitat planner who helped me clarify the need for ‘white fella’ regional planners to confront the cultural complexity of Australian regional landscapes. His view is that we need to construct a ‘multicultural self’ capable of “harbouring the many different people and cultures” in order to effectively address the current ecological crisis. Anthony (1995:265) argued we need to go beyond the existing narratives, ways of seeing, knowing and being that characterize the ‘whiteness’ that permeates the predominant culture in the United States (and Australia) and in turn shapes how we story our cities, regions and places.

During this period I also read more deeply into complexity theory and the work of Wheatley (1992) and Arthur (2000) that revealed a new way of understanding organisations and economies as complex and self-organising emergent systems.

‘This complexity theoretical framework resembled my own grappling in trying to understand the seemingly parallel Aboriginal concept of ‘Country’ and ‘Dreaming’ as a dynamic living co-evolving entity and process way-of-being that humans are just one part of. Questions emerged in my mind about what new type of seeing, thinking and knowing can assist us to develop new ways of making sense of complexity and for new planning approaches that address this complexity at the regional scale.’

‘The story of a Wiradjiri Aboriginal man told me is instructive here in terms of the different Aboriginal stakeholders’ holistic ways of seeing and perceiving, mental models of places and types of thinking. As a Wiradjiri Man, he commented on how European Australians had noticed the beautiful plants and trees of a place. Instead of seeing *things*, he saw a newly constructed water lily pond slowly killing the surrounding tall gums close to its edge. The Wiradjiri Man focused on relationships, changing patterns and how one initiative can impact the whole place system. It was obvious to the Wiradjiri man that the lily pond didn’t fit in that place, that it was doing damage to its surrounding place ecosystem and wasn’t therefore sustainable. This way of seeing and thinking was akin to systems thinking and the new ways of seeing enterprises advocated in Organisational Learning. It was becoming apparent to me that planning conversations around sustainable initiatives needed to promote systems thinking and an inter-relationship focused perspective to better judge was type of enterprise would better fit within the capabilities of an Australian regional landscape.’

Sewall (1995) similarly argued for us learning to ‘perceive relationships’, to be able to differentiate between contexts and to focus on how different elements interface, as part of developing a new ‘ecological perception. To me, this new ecological or systems way of seeing seemed appropriate for regional planners considering, evaluating and planning what is a sustainable enterprise.

‘It was becoming clear that a new collaborative community based planning approach was needed; a new methodology that could facilitate a shared ecological systems way of perceiving regions and places across different stakeholder, agency and Aboriginal communities.’

‘These experiences have convinced me that we as planners need all the system stakeholders insights and a plurality of perspectives to gauge the sustainability of an enterprise as systems theorists such as Jackson (2003) have emphasized. Sustainability, in my mind, at one level, involved collaboratively re-designing enterprises that could better fit in with and could be sustained by both regional communities and their ecologies without draining their social, economic and environmental capabilities and cultural and bio-diversity.’

‘These experiences have also convinced me that planning is both a social and cultural construct. Planners need to be reflexive and ask themselves what planning methodology is culturally appropriate and relevant to the project task. We need to ask ourselves deeper questions about the planning process and to consider the type of planning conversation is needed in each project context. As a regional community planner, I realised, all stakeholders and I, needed to develop a far more holistic perspective and to consider what are the likely social and cultural effects across all stakeholders and communities, who, if anyone is being privileged and who decides on the planning agenda.

I had come to realise the need for planning conversations in Australian regional landscapes needed to explore beyond the confined space of just considering what are the extended economic and environmental flow-on effects or so-called carrying capacities.

‘Reflexive planning means us asking questions like; will this planning process empower communities? Will this planning process help support the emergence of new community leaders and capabilities to co-design regional futures? Or will it entrench the role of planner as expert, consolidate decision-making and existing visions of regional development that will benefit a few influential stakeholders? I had

come to realize the importance of inclusive planning conversations whether at the organisational, place or regional scale and of the power of engaging and honouring all the stakeholders and communities in appraising and co-designing sustainable enterprises and pathways. Zeldin (2000) for example had used an open conversation to explore, seek insights and to learn how 'work' in the future could be redesigned.' Reflexive questioning also require us to become conscious of our motivations in undertaking planning; why am I working this way, how will it impact and help re-shape this region. Further, how does my way of seeing and knowing influence my work as a planner. Reflexivity concerns knowing where I'm coming from, my world-view.

'However, the change and planning model I was familiar with revolved around experts scoping out new enterprise concepts and pathways, presenting and essentially selling and imposing this well worked out proposal or re-worked concept of organisational or regional change to the rest of the organisation. Stakeholders were then invited to participate in refining this new concept and strategy but essentially they were just engaged in identifying unforeseen implementation problems and ensuring compliance with this new way forward.'

'What I had experienced in working with these Aboriginal communities stood in stark contrast to expert directed, top-down planning methodologies and led change models. Under the top-down led planning change model, questions of process were relegated to the goal of achieving planned outcomes within an imposed timetable and predetermined agenda and set pathway.'

This is how I came to realize the need for to explore and develop a more culturally appropriate planning process to engage with the rich complexity and uniqueness of Australian regional landscapes, their communities and ecosystems.

'However, regional planning conversations involving multi-stakeholder groups, such as grazing landholders, rural small towns, agency bureaucrats and technical 'experts' along with Aboriginal communities, embrace a range of entirely different hermeneutical circles (Gadamer, 2004)) or cultural frameworks (Healey (1997). This poses a considerable communication effort to effectively engage and make sense of

not just the different perspectives, interests, differing values, issues and but on getting clear on different priorities and needs.’

Another milestone influencing my interest in exploring an alternative regional conversational methodology, involved the notion of a ‘therapeutic conversation’ introduced in workshop I attended, facilitated by two visiting psychotherapists from Europe in 2002 (pers. comm.).

‘This workshop has re-affirmed what I had earlier experienced in my training and work as a gestalt psychotherapist (Perls, 1976). Facilitating a client’s and group’s process had demonstrated to me how new, shared understandings, insights and possible life strategies emerged from within an open exploratory conversation. New gestalts or holistic perspectives and ways of being arose out of a facilitated but self-organising conversation that followed the client’s process and his and her unfolding responses. This contrasted with goal-directed conversations that seemed to mechanistically lead to the therapist-as-expert offering cognitive and behavioural advice to adopt programmed changes. I asked myself if this emergence of new understandings, insights and new strategies was also possible in cross-regional conversations?’

‘What I was now learning from my European colleagues was that you could employ a phenomenological gaze to look anew at your own identity and that you as therapist were there to help the client re-think and re-interpret and then to help capture the essence and insights of these therapeutic conversations. But how can we do this in a wide ranging planning conversation at a regional scale’

The basis of my research and focus for my research questions arose out of my experiences of the psychotherapy process where new understandings and insights coalesced and emerged through an exploratory conversation. Specifically I asked myself,

‘Could a new regional planning conversation catalyze this same emergence and novelty that I had witnessed regularly in psychotherapy through a facilitated exploratory conversational dialogue style?’

The research task concerned how to conduct a new inclusive and exploratory planning conversation that fostered a shared system's or ecological perspective and facilitated new-shared understandings and insights about what was considered sustainable. I sought to discover how to assemble local community place and stakeholder knowledge of the region and places together with scientific ways of knowing embraced by agencies about what type of enterprise would fit in and be sustainable in that regional landscape.

It was only later after undertaking the fieldwork and outlining this methodology did I become aware of the writings of Lewin & Regine's work (1999, 2000) and of Shaw (2002). Shaw in particular talked of utilising a similar exploratory conversational process in enterprises as a way to open up the space for new leadership groupings and novel initiatives emerging; to Shaw conversing was organising.

2.5 The Next Steps?

This Chapter is the start of an unfolding argument that planners need a reflexive process to better determine more culturally, place and problem contexted, flexible-planning methodologies. A reflexive process is defined in this study at one level, as self-reflexivity; learning about one's own motivations, way of working as a planner and the social implications. At a second level, a reflexive process is about deepening our understanding of stakeholder and communities behaviours arising out of their world-view and the particular way of seeing, thinking, knowing and being. Chapter 7 explores another layer of reflexivity that is more concerned with identifying and articulating emergent and novel concepts that may be embedded in regional stakeholder and community planning conversations.

What follows, is the story of the genesis and how this new collaborative learning dialogue as a regional planning process evolved and was successfully employed. This study then departs in places, from the traditional linear well-defined structure of a Doctoral Thesis.

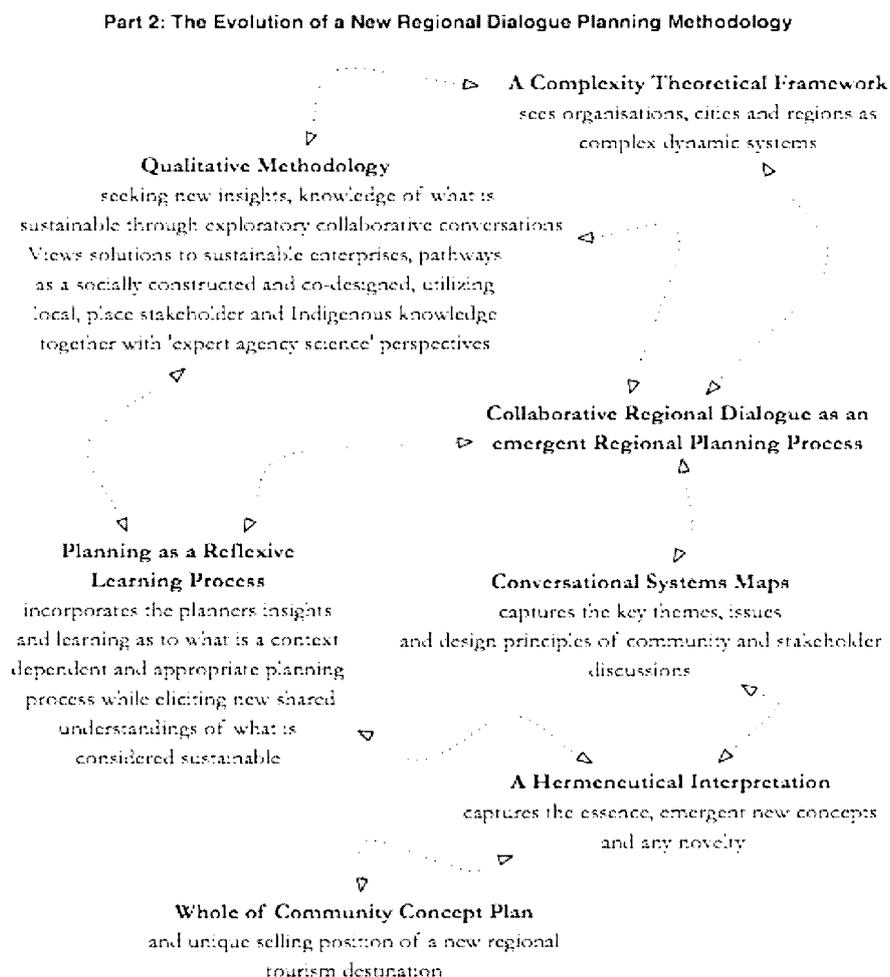
However, some clarification is needed of the different terms employed in this study. This study employs a qualitative methodology and explores and tests appraising and

design decisions based on assembling communities, local stakeholders and agencies knowledge and insights as to what constitutes a sustainable regional tourism enterprise. It can be distinguished from quantitative planning decision-making methodologies where feasibility studies rely on existing market and financial cost and investment data estimates. This study is instead underpinned by a social constructivist epistemology as a way of developing new knowledge, shared understandings and a way of co-assessing what constitutes a sustainable enterprise. Quantitative methodologies and studies instead rely on empirical and reductionist ways of knowing where decision-making formally appears to be made on categories such as likely tourism numbers, expenditure, economic multiplier effects, social costs and investment expenditure likely to be incurred by regional stakeholders and governments as for example in a cost-benefit analysis.

The theoretical framework of this study is informed and shaped by the new emerging new science of complexity and way of seeing organisations, cities and regions as complex dynamic systems. The development and refining of a collaborative learning dialogue as a regional planning process, was also shaped by the researchers own reflexive learning process that elicited both the researchers own insights from adopting a complex systems way of seeing regions and from examining what was emerging from community and stakeholder planning conversations across the regions.

This is illustrated in figure 2.2 below.

Fig. 2.2 The Evolution of a new Regional Dialogue Planning Methodology



The term 'process' is deliberately used in this study instead of 'method' to describe the new regional planning approach outlined here. Method usually denotes a fixed model or set of planning steps whereas process has a more open-ended, fluid meaning allowing planners to respond to local or place dependent contexts and their

own reflexive learning and insights as to what a better regional planning process may be in any situation.

While the planning problem and that of co-appraising and co-designing a sustainable cross-regional tourism enterprise was considered one of ‘complexity’, the refining and contextualising of the planning methodology was itself *an emergent learning process* for the researcher. There were two initial parameters guiding this process. First that all stakeholders needed to be invited and involved in an exploratory conversation about ‘what sort of track’ so as to gain a rich holistic picture and collaborative appraisal and concept design. Secondly, that these inclusive planning conversations needed to go beyond the usual regional stakeholders agency decision-making networks; to act as a type of ‘disturbance’ and in effect to be insurgent; this way what would be likely to work on the ground could be better identified.

This dissertation is written deliberately then as a learning journey. It is or the story of how the methodology and underpinning theoretical framework and concepts of planning, regions and sustainability were developed from a learning reflexive praxis or theory developed and refined through practice. This researcher didn’t have a pre-determined vision of a distributed governance model emerging from these planning conversations but instead sought to discover what stakeholders and communities’ thought would work best in their situation. In fact the researchers own ‘pre-judging’ often needed revising as was the case with the emergent concept of what a sustainable cross-regional tourism venture would look like and the later co-design of a regional governance model for this multi-stakeholder community partnered enterprise (see appendix 4). Such is the unexpected delight and risk of planning for emergence and novelty. This research study then constituted an *elicitive approach* with the refining of a planning methodology and the emergent designs, both being informed from stakeholder and community insights and advice as well as the researcher’s reflexive process.

2.6 The Challenges of this Study - Some Initial Conclusions

The challenges of this study were to devise and field-test a new collaborative systems dialogue planning approach that enabled these particular regional communities,

stakeholders, agencies and landholders to co-appraise the feasibility and then, collaboratively re-design if necessary, a sustainable regional tourism enterprise. This new planning approach also needed to engender a cultural transformation to a new aligned regional vision and collaborative attitude that would step beyond the existing fragmented, bureaucratic, siloed arrangements and separate stakeholder responsibilities.

The following Chapters outline the re-thinking of 'planning', 'regions' and 'sustainability' that accompanied the exploration of a new collaborative, complex systems framed methodology for Australian regions. These Chapters critically review our current ways of seeing and thinking in regard to planning and seek to justify the need for exploring and developing a plurality of new methodologies to engage with complexity. Specifically, Chapter 3 deconstructs the major planning approaches and outlines how its focus and underlying mental models of urban spaces, organisations and regions, can be re-thought and changed. Chapter 4 focuses on re-thinking our current notion of regions and their industry clusters as self-organising emergent systems. Here the notion of regions as human- ecologies is presented and the need for developing a complexity framed, collaborative regional planning methodology.

Part 2

Re-Thinking ‘Planning’, Regions’ and ‘Sustainability’

Part 2 Focuses on the Following Themes

- **The complexity theoretical framework that underpins the study**
- **A conceptual model of regions as a type of self-organising emergent system - co-evolving, human–ecologies**
- **Sustainability as a social learning process**

Part 2 Includes the Following Chapters

Chapter 3 Deconstructing ‘Planning’

Chapter 4 Exploring Planning for Regions as Complex, Co-Evolving Systems

Chapter 5 Planning for Sustainability at the Regional Scale As a Social Learning Dialogue

Chapter 3

Deconstructing 'Planning'

3.1 Chapter Scope and Purpose

This Chapter provides a broad landscape overview of different evolving notions of planning, their methodologies, planning tools and conversational styles. "Planning" is initially presented here firstly as being concerned with visioning and plan-making for the shaping and development of urban spaces, cities, organisations, regions and their natural resources. The second focus of planning is with the 'how' or strategy-making to allocate their natural, financial and human resources and capital to achieve these visions. Various critiques of the predominant planning approaches are cited. These critiques include calls for planners to engage with the diversity of communities across cities, regions and organisations, to employ inclusionary methodologies that embrace marginalised voices and to be cognizant of who wields power in decision-making around the planning and shaping of future pathways.

This overview of 'planning' is not intended as a comprehensive survey or detailed history of planning. Rather, it presents a critical reading or deconstruction of the major planning approaches and notions of what planning entails. This deconstruction surfaces the key assumptions, metaphors and cultural values, the underpinning theoretical framework, methodologies and epistemology of each of the key notions of planning.

The purpose of this overview and deconstruction is to critically examine the current 'planning' landscape and to assess the capability of the major existing planning approaches to address the new emergent world of the 21st century and whether they are capable of holistically and collaboratively appraising, in this case, sustainable regional enterprises and pathways. It is argued in this thesis that planners of regional communities face a new level of complexity with the vexing issue of sustainable

development, the appearance of a global economy, its unleashing of new social-economic forces and now, climate change. This increased global interdependence is likely to result in enhanced market uncertainty, accelerating challenges and turbulence. This dissertation argues there is a need to explore new planning methodologies that explicitly address this complexity at the regional scale especially in Australian regional landscapes.

This Chapter justifies this studies focus on developing a new collaborative planning methodology that encompass new ways of making sense and engaging with the social, ecological and economic complexity that planning for sustainable regional enterprises and in this case, regional tourism ventures entail. In particular, to justify a new planning approach for collaboratively appraising and co-designing sustainable regional enterprises that employs an inclusive, exploratory dialogue across regional stakeholders and communities that fosters and builds social learning. The study also seeks to add to Forester's (1989) notion of planning as about making sense of and listening to the meaning beneath the surface in stakeholder and community conversations. Forester initially outlined the idea of planning entailing a practice of listening, as a deeply hermeneutical activity of coming to better understand what stakeholders are saying and intend.

3.2 An Overview of the Key Different Planning Approaches

'Planning as a set of practices' has been outlined by Forester (1999) and includes envisioning or future making, resolving political differences, conflicts and plan-making. These planing practices map out new visions and directions as the basis for policy making with regard to urban and spatial planning. However there are a number of key different planning approaches that will be overviewed here.

3.2.1 Modernist Planning

Modernist planning, the predominant planning approach until recently, is exemplified in the strategic planning approach. However new notions of planning and planning approaches are now contesting these traditional top-down, expert-led, planning methodologies. In this study, the term 'modernist' is used to describe the

predominant 'planning as control' approach rather than its usual sense of describing certain artistic and aesthetic movements and architectural styles of the 20th century. Planning as control to ensure limitless progress and orderly development is depicted as part of the great post-enlightenment cultural project of modernity which recently has been critiqued given its failure around environmental damage and social alienation despite rising living standards in the European and north American world (Sim, 2001, Norgaard, 1994).

Strategic planning, for example, encompasses a coherent set of practices to manage, align, control, regulate or facilitate the future shape and pathways of enterprises, urban spaces, cities, regions. Strategic corporate planning can focus on re-positioning the enterprise into new market niches, aligning the different divisions across organisations, determining goals, key result areas or priorities, resultant strategies and allocating resources accordingly in order to achieve these goals (Bradford and Duncan, 2000).

Strategic planning typifies the predominant notion of 'planning as a rational technical stepped-process to both control and direct through a set of processes, zoning guidelines, planning regulations or follow up business - departmental business plans as controls. Strategic planning practices are depicted here as part of a command and control paradigm as outlined by Holling and Meefe (1996). This notion of planning is primarily concerned with and focused on shaping and managing the future growth and effective resource allocation to achieve pre-determined vision and goals, whether for an enterprise (Stacey 1993), urban space, city, regions (Healey, 1997) or for managing regional natural resources (Holling & Meffe, 1995) such as fisheries and forests.

A recent re-thinking of strategic planning theory has seen an emphasis on organisational planning as extending beyond the individual enterprise to engage key stakeholders with whom the enterprise has nascent business partnerships, obligations or whose operations impact on each other (Freeman, 1984). This expanded notion of strategic planning provides a new view of the organisation as being part of a network of customers and supply chain service suppliers and that planning needs to recognise

the whole business environmental landscape especially when repositioning and setting new strategic directions.

3.2.2 Collaborative Planning

The second, influential notion of planning is the ‘collaborative planning’ approach as outlined by Healey’s (1997). Collaborative planning is envisaged as a discursive or communicative process, the aim of which is to overcome the social fragmentation across modern societies, to build enhanced social relationships and networks to address ‘shared concerns’ in neighbourhood places and towns (Healey, 1997:61). Citing Amin and Thrift (1995), Healey argues that it is the quality of these place network relationships that constitute the ‘institutional capacity’ of a place community to address key planning issues such as sustainable development or ‘regional economic performance’ (Healey, 1997:61). Collaborative Planning to Healey by citing Bryson and Crosby (1993), is about ‘a shared-power world’ by giving a voice to stakeholders as well about facilitating and designing new governance structures with increased capability to manage places more effectively (Healey, 1997:5).

Collaborative planning as a theory is critical of the modernist planning approach and its reliance on accumulating scientific technical knowledge and its application of rational discourse as the basis for planning and decision-making. Healey (1992, 2003), in particular urges planners to develop and deepen democratic planning conversations across communities. Healey (1997) reaffirms Habermas (1984) notion of ‘communicative rationality’ and encourages planners to engage with their communities to collectively make sense and act together after widespread ‘debate’ and reflecting together. Habermas reformulates modernity’s notion of reason to encompass not just the subject-objective worldview and rational technical knowledge to include communication as knowledge making and creating new shared understandings from employing an inter-subjective worldview. This Habermasian perspective acknowledges other ways of knowing as informing planning and decision-making including local place knowledge and stakeholder intuitive knowledge based on their own subjective processing of new proposed planning initiatives.

Allemendinger and Tewdr-Jones (2002) state that the ideas behind the collaborative and communicative turn in planning needs to be refined in practice and that local

applications need to be tested as there are no clear methodological steps, it is instead more an outline for a new 'social process' as depicted by Healey (1997:83).

The real differences, recent focus and re-thinking of this recent planning discourse concerns more the 'how' of planning, namely the different planning methodologies as employed by planners. For example, notable critics like Sandercock, Healey and post-modern critiques (Brown, 2000) of current planning approaches have argued for planners to develop this communicative aspect of planning, for planners to undertake more inclusive conversations with marginalised groups and to become mindful of the ways in which existing power relationships are reproduced, and of the important role of language in this. However while many may agree with the aspirations of the collaborative planning theoretical agenda, there are both optimistic and pessimistic views of the likelihood of its success in making planning processes more democratic and open.

Like Healey, Hillier (2002) is concerned with developing a new more inclusive communicative urban planning and decision-making approach that reflects and weaves the diversity of actor-networks, their different perspectives and interests and especially engages the differentiated cultural other of multicultural and Indigenous Australia. Hillier (2002) citing Innes and Booher (1999) stressed the imperative of 'opening up the planning process' through communicative processes and dialogue to construct 'emancipatory knowledge and support citizen involvement and action. Hillier's work presents a case for a more democratic planning process that can address conflicts around different contesting interests. This perspective explicitly confirms the political role and agendas of planners themselves in this place actor network (Hillier, 2002). In this sense, Hillier details the social dynamics and forces that urban planners engage with while Innes and Booher (1999) argue that planning can achieve a social consensus across these social groupings and networks.

Martin (1991:771) advances another notion of collaborative or communicative planning stressing the key role of planners as educators and facilitators of communities involvement in water catchment planning, advocating a change from the previous expert led, top-down planning process.

Huxley (2002) presents a less optimistic view of the power of planners to influence the social agenda and has denoted the predominant planning approach as 'governmentality', another variation of 'planning as control' but more concerned with the exercise of reinforcing and maintaining existing socio-economic power relationships in society. This understanding of planning is based on Foucault's (2000) work on how power pervades through our institutions and that particular social and professional practices shape our existing social organisation and help maintain hierarchical governance structures. Smith using a Foucaultian perspective, envisages planning more as a 'discursive formation' embodying a set of knowledge and power relations that can help shape set social agendas.

In a similar light, Castell (1978) in one instance, presents planning as part of the power of a centralised state exercising control over its citizens. This notion of planning as facilitating capital accumulation through urban development is a classic Marxist understanding of how power is exercised as part of a capitalist economy. Castell's (2000) later work outlines how the new global information economy is re-moulding the new global mega-cities; planning is seen as an ally and or an obstacle in this process of re-shaping cities. Jojola (1998) and Woods (1998), cited earlier in Chapter 2, documented instances of 'insurgent regional planning' where colonized indigenous or Afro-American former slave populations have either had a pre-existing history of regional planning and have launched their own new planning agenda and priorities in opposition with the ruling elite.

Davidoff (1965) on the other hand, has a more socially optimistic view of planning as enabling a more democratic and pluralist society or 'polity' and as an opportunity to check the power of the dominating elites and to advance other social agendas.

Friedmann (1987) sums up this dual nature of planning cultures as either maintaining the existing social fabric and governance structures of cities and regions or seeking to advance a transformation in how cities are planned, designed and operate. Friedmann sees the potential for urban planning to empower communities and for community led or bottom-up interventions as against the usual top-down, expert led and narrowed agenda of existing modernist view of planning conversations. Dryzek

(1990) reaffirms the need for planning to embrace the notion of local democratic control by communities over the planning decision-making process.

3.2.3 Adaptive Planning

A third key planning approach will be referred to here as adaptive planning or planning as learning. Holling (1973, 1976, 1987), Gunderson, Holling and Light (1995) and co-workers have been instrumental in promoting this alternative environmental planning which they have described as 'adaptive planning' or 'learning through doing' approach developed for managing the resilience of regional natural resources such as forests, rangelands and watersheds. Here, plan-making and policy are seen as experiments in conservation management. A flexible, on-going, adaptive planning response is advocated for managing the evolving dynamics in response to feedback and changes in fishery stocks, species composition and regeneration rates. These changes could be due to changing fishing practices, new technologies and outside disturbance such as climate change. Adaptive planning has been primarily concerned with the resilience of systems such as forestry, rangelands and waterways. Resilience is seen here as not a return to an ideal equilibrium or stable state as with engineered equipment but concerns instead an on-going dynamic state that changes in response to disturbance but retains its ecosystem structure and function (Walker, Holling, Carpenter & Kinzig, 2004). For example, coral reefs may be impacted and changed by cyclones but their structure and function remains intact. Here, Lee (1995), Gunderson, Holling and Light (1995) are instructive, pointing out that regional natural resource institutional structures in some cases, represent barriers to planning and achieving sustainable resource outcomes such as in fisheries, wetlands and river systems. Lee describes how self-organising think-groups can develop innovative initiatives that can help overcome the inertia and myopia of existing multi-stakeholder regional resource management institutions. To Lee and Parson and Clarke (1995) social learning between stakeholders and regional management institutions plays a key role in moving the pathology of rigid rule-governing planning regimes aimed at managing natural resources as harvestable assets towards a integrated planning and policies for managing regional ecosystems sustainably. Campanella (2006) reviewing the aftermath of the devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005 has also stressed the importance of planning

processes aimed at bolstering the social resilience of a city. Campanella sees social resilience as the self-organising capabilities of neighbourhoods and cultural communities to develop local adaptive responses to events such as Hurricane Katrina.

Another variant of this notion of 'planning as developing adaptive responses' to changing circumstances was developed for business enterprises by de Geuss (1988) with the notion of scenario planning developed first at Royal Dutch Shell. Here management groups develop different likely future scenarios, assess each and develop planned adaptive responses. These adaptive planning processes for enhanced decision-making about future investment pathways have been piloted and used successfully by the Shell Corporation to respond to changing oil availability and price changes. This notion of planning as developing adaptive responses builds on the earlier work of de Geuss (1988) and his the notion of 'planning as learning' in organisational settings.

Also included within this adaptive learning planning approach are development theorists like Korten (1980) who pioneered the idea that planning and managing community development in rural regions as likened to a learning process. Korten argues that community and aid organisations need to facilitate 'village level learning laboratories' and focus on learning what is effective, efficient and how to expand community led development based around capacity building i.e. a bottom-up approach. Meppem and Gill (1998) have articulated a new notion of planning for sustainability as a learning process.

3.2.4 Planning for Complexity

A fourth more recent approach is termed here 'planning for complexity'. This nascent approach acknowledges the influence of complexity science (Gleick, 1998) and or way of knowing (Tasaka, 1999) presenting a view of cities, regions and organisations (Stacey, 2002) as different types of complex adaptive systems. Discussion of what this new planning approach involves has recently emerged across urban, regional and organisational planning literature. Innes and Booher (1999) pioneered the rethinking of metropolis and urban space in cities as examples of the case for developing a new approach to planning for complexity. Allen (2004) has also pointed out the complex

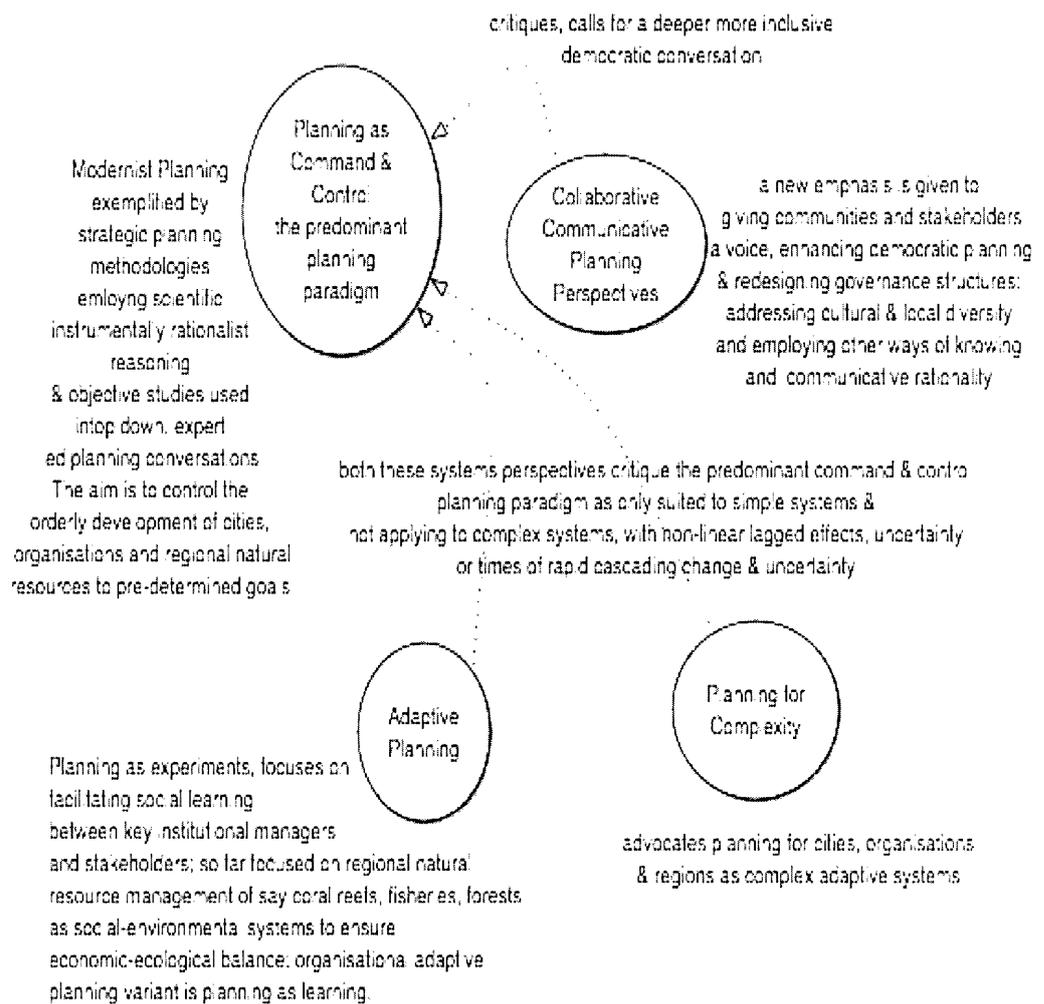
systems nature of cities and regions and that emphasis needs to be paid by planners to the unfolding emergent patterns and clustering that self-organise in spite of planning regulations and attempts at imposing a planned order. Nel and Serfontein (2001) discuss how planners need to respond to these unfolding self-organising urban patterns that also indicate feedback and responses to previous policy guidelines. Seel (2000, 2003) outlines the notion of planning for complexity as nurturing an organisational environment or conditions for self-organised criticality and the emergence of novel initiatives and new organisational pathways. An expanded overview and analysis of the 'planning for complexity approach' is further explored in Chapter 4 in regard to planning at the cross-regional scale.

The four key planning approaches outlined here in this study, seek to develop an extended but simpler version of the typography of urban planning as developed by Friedmann (1987) earlier. Friedmann argued that there are 5 main urban planning types including planning as social reform and planning as policy analysis for the provision of infrastructure and other services both aimed at the planned expansion and the orderly managed development of urban spaces. These two planning types concern the rational decision-making and technical knowledge application typical of the modernist planning approach. His next two categories are planning as social learning through transactions between planners and stakeholders or actors and planning for the social mobilisation and emancipation of communities against vested interests and the state. Later Friedmann (1996) added a fifth namely communicative planning an alternative similar name for collaborative planning.

The typography of planning developed in this study here however concerns both urban, ecological and organisational planning and incorporates the new emerging planning for complexity that is emerging across all three of these planning areas. As distinct from Friedmann's typography above, four major contesting planning perspectives are portrayed in this study and these are outlined below in figure 3.1. Collaborative and communicative planning approaches (outlined earlier in section 3.2.2) developed as a critique of modernist planning approaches and sought to address issues of power, inclusion of marginalised voices in the shaping of places.

This study sits within a complex systems theoretical framework but has synthesized and field-tested a new regional scale planning process approach drawing on the aspirations of collaborative planning together with the social learning priorities advanced by the adaptive and planning for complexity approaches.

Figure 3.1 The Contested Planning Landscape



Deleuze and Guattari (1987) liken knowledge building and the evolution of new perspectives, to the growth of a rhizome. The evolution of new planning narratives and notions of planning could be argued represent a similar evolutionary rhizome

growth pattern. New planning approaches first appear as critiques or contesting separate offshoots that may eventually influence, re-shape predominant traditional perspectives and even fuse. Two local planners remarked to this researcher that in their view, the collaborative planning discourse had resulted in them incorporating more local participatory and inclusionary planning approaches (pers. comm. 2003).

3.3 Planning as an Evolving Landscape of Contesting Narratives

Friedmann (1987) presents a dynamic mental model of planning as an ongoing, evolving landscape of planning theories developed to address new emergent problems across society such as empowering and giving a voice to disenfranchised communities and embracing social-cultural diversity in cities.

Harris (2000) similarly depicts a dynamic model of planning. But Harris views planning as an on-going discourse that allows both the reinforcement and contesting of current planning approaches, the most recent evolution being a 'turn towards communicative and collaborative forms'. A discourse is defined by Dryzek (1997:8) as shared ways of seeing, understanding or 'apprehending the world'. A discourse tend to bound its participants, has its own distinct language, terms, assumptions about the nature of the world as well as a defined corridor of agreements and disagreements about what is considered important. Different contesting concepts and metaphors of planning have arisen, part of an on-going normative discourse around ways or approaches planning can address new problems such as cultural diversity, social power and marginalised groups, the dominance of patriarchy and the need to enhance social inclusion as emphasized by Sandercock (1978). The differing notions or metaphors of planning each embody their own particular implied or explicit social vision and emphasize different methodologies for engaging communities and stakeholders, goals and social agendas for planners.

A new narrative metaphor of planning as contesting narratives is introduced here. 'Planning' in this instance, is then portrayed as different ways, stakeholders and communities contest in the storying or social construction, shaping and re-shaping the evolution of our cities, spaces, regions, organisations and places. For example, Healey's 'Collaborative Planning' advocates building a new type of enhanced

discursive community agency network capable of addressing the concerns of different place and regional neighbourhoods. This planning theory and approach sees an enhanced democratic and more inclusive conversation as the basis for developing communities' capability to plan to overcome the fragmented nature of cities and places and is seen as a precondition for tackling problems such as sustainability. Sandercock's (1978) notion of planning involves re-storying existing cities and regions towards a new Cosmopolis that recognises and embraces cultural diversity, the arrival of new migrations from the post-colonized terrains and a gender inclusive redesigning of how we presently live. The new 'planning' according to Sandercock, needs to include the community's desires, to go beyond just planning for social needs. Sandercock sees the changing cultural diversity of our major cities and urges us to embrace this new socially and culturally complex world. Different planning narratives in turn, encompass key assumptions about the nature of regions and cities, hold implicit worldviews, different epistemologies, social, economic and environmental priorities and values arising out of wider underpinning cultural stories. Each planning narrative can be seen as encompassing differing visions, statements of intent as stories and plots, a coherence manifesting as a set of methodological approaches and practices, distinct social, economic and environmental priorities and values.

Fisher and Forester (1993) in articulating their argumentative notion of planning also argued that plans and planning documents represent a weaving or coming together of different narratives around urban development.

The notion of 'planning as contesting narratives' used here, is a meaning making, interpretive device as articulated by Denzin and Lincoln (1997). Narratives are used in this study to help delineate the various planning approaches and practices and to help make sense of how planners socially construct their cities regions and places. The planning process is presented here as a contested conversational space where different actor networks and communities of interest attempt to re-story their organisations, urban spaces, cities and regions. This notion of re-storying arose from White and Epston's (1990) narrative work in family systems therapy where client families review, externalise, re-script their patterned ways of relating and so re-story their future lives. Re-storying has been applied in facilitating organisational change with Boje's (2003) notion of organisations as storytelling organisations. Boje sees

organisations as shaped by contesting stories about how they need to develop. Re-storying then is about how individuals, organisations, place communities and regional stakeholders choose to re-shape how they want to develop and their future pathways.

The various planning approaches, depicted here as narratives, are seen as being underpinned and influenced by deeper cultural stories (Boje, 1995, 1997, 2003, 2006). Strategic planning for example is concerned with controlling and managing the orderly growth and shaping of cities, regions and organisations and is portrayed here as being underpinned by modernity as a cultural story whose focus is progress and development through rational technical means. Collaborative planning has been influenced according to Healey by 'critical modernity' as enunciated by Habermas (1984). This new modified cultural story recognizes the modernizing project and its emphasis on social and economic progress is recognized as flawed but is still capable of fulfilling its mission by adopting ideal ways of communicating socially beyond the rational technocratic forms favoured by modernism. Planning for sustainability at the regional scale represents a new space in the planning landscape, which these planning narratives, with their different cultural worldviews, methodologies and ways of knowing, are now contested. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) liken knowledge building and the evolving of new perspectives to the growth pattern of a ginger - rhizome. The evolution of new planning narratives and notions of planning could be argued represent such an evolutionary rhizome growth pattern as adding onto traditional approaches as is depicted in figure 3.1 above.

A narrative can be defined as a story, incorporating a way of interpreting and being in the world (White and Epston, 1990), characterized as having both plot and coherence (Boje, 2003), being culturally and socially contexted with actors, a narrator or speakers who outline the story and scripts (McKee, 2000). McKee has outlined the principles of good storytelling as involving making choices around the resolution of dilemmas to enable an intended resolved future state; this seems to well describe the lived experience of planners.

This interweaving of contesting narratives depicts the challenge for planners to act as new 'symphony makers' (Pink, 2004) when facilitating a planning dialogue around sustainable regional futures. Planners in facilitating planning conversations, can

identify and surface the different stakeholder narratives or stories as to how a region, city or place could be developed and then can build a 'symphony' of these different community, agency and landholders stories, weaving their interests and perspectives into a new planning strategy for developing a sustainable future. This notion of planning builds on the conceptual work of Maines and Bridger (1992) who analysed how the different contesting narratives within a community shape plan-making and land-use decision-making. However, unlike Healey (1997) and Innes and Booher's (1999) call for planners to undertake 'consensus building', this new proposed planning competency of symphony-making, accepts that there will always be on-going differences or 'dis-sensus' in communities. This view here, re-affirms then the argument of Hillier that planners need to go beyond consensus building and that planning needs to address the complex reality of what happens across the landscape of different interests and social-political networks. Rather than seek to impose consensus as some top-down planning envisioning exercises appear to strive for, maintaining 'dis-sensus' is seen as a creative tension that can help stakeholders review and continually re-think new planned initiatives and development pathways. This possibility is discussed further in Chapter 9 where an agreed regional tourism concept was agreed on and supported as a worthwhile regional enterprise even though a number of landholders indicated their unwillingness to participate in the new 'symphony'.

The argument expressed here that there is no longer one predominant planning narrative but instead an evolving array of contesting planning narratives forms and that urban plan-making in particular is an interweaving of different narratives (Fisher and Friedman, 1993). Across regional communities, government agencies and stakeholders, some may want more growth for business, others want the relative seclusion and sense of place while others argue for restricting development given its potential environmental impacts. This view of planning outlined in this study, reflects the anti-foundational, postmodern perspective of Lyotard (1979). Lyotard argued that in this coming cultural age there would be many 'little narratives' and world perspectives shaping cultural life and society and that a new age of cultural and philosophical plurality needs to be acknowledged (Sim 1998).

The danger is that as planners, we can become prisoners of our own narrative discourses or stories (Boje, 2006) and can fail to understand the strengths, limitations and applicability of particular planning approaches, forms and methodologies across different circumstances. The following deconstructive analysis as advocated by Derrida (1976) is one possible way of better understanding the different planning forms and has been used to underpin a subsequent methodological synthesis to better plan and co-assess potential sustainable regional pathways.

3.4 Deconstruction as a Way to Understand and Appraise the Major Planning Approaches

Deconstruction as advanced by Derrida, was advocated as an analytical approach to unveil and then challenge the grand narratives of modernity, capitalism and communism and their cultural power in dominating western society and thinking. More specifically, deconstruction, as noted earlier in this Chapter section 3.1 is an analytical approach that unpacks the key assumptions, the underpinning metaphor and ways of seeing the world, ways of knowing (epistemologies) and ways of thinking (systems thinking or instrumental rationalist of either a particular cultural narrative, ideology or even 'scientific approach. For example behavioural psychology could be unpacked or deconstructed by identifying its particular mental model that emphasizes the importance of cognitive thinking processes, empirical studies with a positivist outlook that seek to quantify and measure types of thinking and mental states. Behavioural psychologists see a person's thinking as determining their emotional state and that a change in their thinking mode can lead to a change in behaviour. Another key assumption and worldview of behavioural psychology is that which cannot be measured is not important and so the inner emotional or transpersonal world is said to be either unimportant or non-existent. Deconstruction also allows us to better identify and understand different particular planning approaches, their assumptions about the world consisting of say simple systems that can be controlled through planning and their capabilities in dealing with complex systems during a time of rapid change and uncertainty.

An abbreviated deconstructive approach has been used here to undertake a broad assessment of the different major planning approaches. This deconstruction was

employed to better decipher the strengths and limitations of these different stances, the embedded values and intended visions of each of these planning narratives.

The three elements in this deconstruction approach include,

1. To identify the planning metaphor and key defining elements that encapsulate the essence or world-view of each of key planning forms or narrative, the values emphasized and the vision it seeks to build.
2. To surface the underpinning epistemology i.e. it's predominant way of knowing, the type of thinking and assumptions that underpins each and their limitations.
3. To outline the discursive form or conversational type i.e. expert led, privileged, consultative, participative or collaborative

These three elements were purposefully selected to provide an insight into the particular worldview perspective and priorities of the major planning forms as well as their applicability in different circumstances. Undertaking a deconstruction approach or critical review is consistent with 'ReStorying' as outlined by Boje (2005) as a facilitated process for enabling change in organisations that also relies on identifying and deconstructing the different stories that have and are shaping a particular organisations. The deconstructive approach employed here aimed to first clarify and then open possible new planning approaches or a new synthesis of approaches.

3.4.1 Deconstructing 'Planning as Control and Directing'

Planning as control and directing' is used here to describe much of recent urban space, natural resource and organisational planning associated with the dominance of strategic planning perspective. This 'planning as control' narrative seeks to regulate the orderly development of urban spaces and organisations. It exemplifies the late cultural project of modernity and its values aimed at ensuring progress, continuing development and rising standards of living. According to Healey (1997:18) "the idea of modernity entered into their (planner's) discourse through ways of thinking about

the shape and form of cities and the qualities of the neighbourhood organisation”. Healey (1994) describes the plot of urban planning as facilitating economic progress and ‘accommodating modern life (Healey, 1997: 18). In contrast with this dominant aspiration of modernity of development are alternative visions that stress a balance with and an emphasis on environmental and cultural values promoting a sense of community wellness such as Kothari (1979) as cited by Norgaard (1994).

This modernist construct or way of seeing, envisages organisations, cities and urban spaces as simple, machine like systems that can be commanded and controlled by planners and managers (Holling and Meffe, 1996). Natural resources are seen as passive assets, there to be mined or harvested and planning aims to ensure optimal yields, efficient resource and financial allocation; this view envisages ‘planning’ ensures as near as possible clockwork and regulated development towards a set or pre-determined vision.

However with urban planning in the British and Australian instances, little attention was paid to understanding the complex inter-relationships, dynamics and evolutionary change of urban or regional forms (Hall, 1983, 1999); the focus instead being on how planners can shape and direct urban and regional spaces and regulate the different social, economic – industrial and cultural activities into sometimes separate clearly defined zones. Urban planning has pondered how to create and sculpt different forms such as the ideal ‘Garden City’ advocated by Howard (Healey, 1997: 18) as opposed to the eventual dominant evolving city form of a central business district core with outlying commercial retail sub-centres and an expanding sprawl of dormitory suburbs. Urban planning still now ponders how to plan, manage and shape the ideal sustainable cities of East Asia and North America (Sorensen, Marcotullio & Grant, 2004) and whether the new best design forms are the polycentric notions of the mega city-regions such as Singapore and the Dutch multi-modal city-region of the Randstad including Amsterdam (Jenks & Dempsey, 2005).

Critics of these essentially top-down and expert reliant planning processes such as Healey and Hillier mentioned earlier, have emphasized the over-reliance on ‘instrumental rationality’ (Habermas, 1984) as a way of thinking and reasoning in this ‘planning as control and directing’ narrative. Instrumentally rationalist thinking entails

linear step-by-step methods and employs pre-determined tools in achieving pre-established goals; it is a simple linear systems view of the world where doing this leads near automatically to that. This kind of expert centred methodology, however, allows for very little involvement of the actors and stakeholder network, the changing mix of community coalitions, needs and desires throughout the planning process (Hillier, 2004, 1995), generating little ownership and limiting – to the design team – the possibilities of creative visions and alternative designs. The reliance on clearly defined, stepped processes and planning tools as opposed to more discursive and collaborative methodologies carries limitations. For example, Gill (2003) critically reviews the World Water Visioning process as a hierarchical top-down, goal driven process that assumes an artificial consensus but doesn't allow for the unexpected to emerge as say is possible from a more learning orientated, exploratory dialogue that instead seeks on the ground feedback from different communities. However, these bureaucratic rational processes centred on consultation with only key stakeholders usually address pre-set themes that according to Gill, reinforce existing cultural mind-sets and power relationships.

The underlying cultural worldview and epistemology for this 'planning as control' narrative could be described as mechanistic, reductionist and objectivist given its emphasis on quantitative studies and the focus on individual development applications in planning in the planning process and decision-making. Critics of this planning stance emphasize the need for a wider strategic systems environmental assessment processes that account for the bigger, more complex dynamic picture of localities (Bartlett, 2006). The language typically employed in planning approaches in this narrative includes planning 'tools', 'development controls', planning instruments and regulations; all are mechanistic notions. But the world is not characterized by simple systems. Instead, the real world is rather complex, planning and decision-making are subject to unintended responses and consequences; there are lagged effects and feedback to each new policy. The response by conventional planners is that these linear tools maybe the best we have to manage the orderly development of city-regions. The issue for planners now however, is that new complexity informed planning processes are needed that explicitly address the complex systems nature of city-regions. demonstrates the non-linear dynamics in the case study of urban renewal where the counter-intuitive solutions to slum renewal included supporting new job

creating enterprises rather than the logical, early solutions of providing new housing that only quickly reverted to slums without new community income streams.

Planning approaches under this umbrella of planning as control located within the cultural project of modernity could be described as a reluctance to address the complex systems nature of the world of urban spaces, regions and organisations. For instance, regional industries have been argued to resemble more the behaviour of biological ecosystems (Moore, 1996).

Hollings and Meffe (1996: 335) have outlined the pathology and limitations of natural resource management associated with a command and control, planning and management regimes. An instrumentally rationalist planned management regime for natural resources may aim to ensure predictable irrigation volumes, set timber and fisheries harvests for target species and so assure short-term economic returns.

However this can reduce the natural variation across these natural ecosystems and so threaten the resilience of river and forest systems to withstand disturbance and their ability of systems to avoid collapse of either parts or in significant changes in the whole ecological structure and loss of biodiversity (Hollings and Meffe, 1996:p330).

Hollings and Meffe are clear that river systems with pre-planned regulated flows and dam releases threaten the whole river ecosystem's resilience. It could be argued that instrumental and carefully regulated planning regimes could have helped produce an ordered sameness in both urban neighbourhoods, similar to the projected reduction in variation for say river systems.

Stacey (1992: 164-165) challenges the 'planning as control' perspective for enterprise planning and sees this approach as only applicable in closed situations and where there are clearly defined problems. The reality of planning in organisational settings now, is that linear cause and effects or responses are unlikely, that plans have 'unknowable consequences' with open-ended possibilities and scenarios i.e. the old notion of control is dubious in organisational contexts nowadays. The advent of global, open markets, rate of innovation and technological change reinforces this evaluation that planners face a new world of varying degrees of 'bounded instability' as opposed to near to equilibrium, stable situations (Stacey, 1992, 2000, 1996).

Planning and decision-making that relies on probable objective forecasts of likely customers or regional visitors, cash flows, sales, returns and environmental impacts in

decision can be considered unreliable to varying degrees. Instead of planning as control, organisations are delving into 'planning as learning' (de Geus, 1988) and coming to rely on strategic thinking being informed by learning groups making sense together of the changing patterns in their business environment and developing flexible, creative responses to feedback from their earlier initiatives and changing environments (Stacey, 1992: 176-177). Strictly adhering to fixed visions is inadvisable and illusionary according to Stacey, in this new complex world. Self-organising organisational learning groups are seen as one better able to develop new strategic initiatives as to how best to respond to changing circumstances.

Decision-making in the 'planning as control' mindset, whether in urban spatial planning, organisational or natural resource management are usually informed through assembling objective knowledge and the use of scientific technical reasoning and assessments usually via quantitative studies. Quantitative studies compiled by experts including Feasibility Studies are commonly used as planning tools and to aid in decision-making around investment and development of new enterprises. The decision to invest and build a regional transport museum recently in Armidale, New England, NSW was based on the success of similar initiatives in Europe, the availability of donated land and exhibits and the favourable predictions of the growth of regional visitors and 'likely' cash flows that are really only estimates of future possible scenarios. Modernist planning techniques and tools assume a high level of certainty such as in the example above where visitation and revenue flow are considered reliable, as an expert planner has assessed them, even though they relate to another context. The decision-making processes within the 'planning to control and regulate' narrative approach can be contrasted with other planning narratives that instead value discursive processes for making sense, developing a shared understanding between stakeholders and identifying socially constructed solutions as part of shared decision-making.

The discursive form of these types of planning processes in directing development and setting out the development pathways of enterprises could be described as predominantly top-down, goal directed, usually around set visions (Stacey, 2000), being centred around well defined processes and methodologies. This is illustrated in

the typical visioning and strategic planning process as set out for a regional enterprise such as the University of New England (UNE) below in Figure 3.3 below.

Figure 3.2 University of New England Strategic Planning Process 2006
Adapted from the Draft Strategic Plan 2007- 2010

Step 1: Review and Map Out the New Framework – analyse evolving landscape, stakeholder expectations, key planning assumptions including Government funding policy, changing customer base and potential markets / niches and identify capabilities; determine how the university needs to be repositioned

Step 2: Vision and Positioning – determine a vision and positioning statement for example “achieving regional and global impact through strong performances” building a “strong research based, teaching and learning university delivering outcomes in areas of strength to individuals and society”.

Step 3: Strategy, Action – key priorities or performance areas are outlined and strategies to achieve them

Step 4: Actions, Resources Timetable – draft discussion visioning and strategic planning paper to be consolidated into the final strategic plan for 2007-2010

Source [draftstrategicplan](#)

Using the ‘logic of normal strategic planning processes’ an outside expert consultant convened discussions within the leadership and key stakeholders represented in the University of New England governance structure. A top-down consultative communicative process followed with a second tier leadership across the university to draw up a discussion paper subsequently used to inform, involve and seek advice on any major problems but around an already pre-determined vision and repositioning strategy, senior leadership controlled agenda and perspective. This strategy was subsequently in-filled with priorities, strategies and actions following on from the refined visioning and strategic planning process.

The great power and effectiveness of strategic planning approaches is around aligning enterprises and resources, repositioning an enterprise after deciding on a better

adaptive fit and in achieving goals where project tasks and the problem context can be clearly defined. But approaches within this command and control planning narrative are limited in producing novelty and eliciting ownership from predominantly expert led, top-down, instrumentally rationalist planning processes. The typical consultative process, employed in the UNE example above is contained within and reinforces the existing top-down, hierarchical power relationships. New, tangential or oppositional approaches or ideas about an alternative re-storying of the future evolution of the University are hardly likely to emerge. The consultative process and agenda is tightly focused and far from an open space, in this researcher's view where new alternative, competing views and ideas are likely to be contributed. Again the reader needs to re-acquaint themselves with the earlier critique of Prahalad and Hamel (1996) of strategic planning as a top-down ritualistic process more likely to produce more variations of the same and not necessarily innovative re-inventions of an entity.

There are, however, two major variants of the top-down expert led planning conversations of the past with the more recently introduced namely consultative and participative styles, which prefigure in urban planning settings. Consultation essentially invites stakeholders, usually on a limited scale to comment on a pre-determined agenda or concept or planned proposal as outlined above in the University of New England example. Power over decision-making is kept within the expert and existing key institutional and stakeholder network and is just one step above informing according to Arnstein's (1969:216) ladder of citizen's participation. Participative approaches expand the decision-making network, widen community engagement and invite stakeholders into a planning conversation that field-tests a usually still pre-determined planning agenda. Plans can be modified to accommodate stakeholder concerns and there is some sharing in decision-making but only around the original agenda or planned proposals. As distinct from modernist planning, collaborative planning conversations as defined in this study, aspires to not just give a voice to communities but moves towards a more equal partnership between planners and stakeholders in decision-making and can involve the emergence of the unexpected, of new shared understandings and re-designed concepts and strategies. Another distinguishing feature is the knowledge used to guide action in collaborative

planning includes other local place and stakeholder ways of knowing besides scientific and technical reasoning as pointed out by Habermas (1984) earlier.

3.4.2 Deconstructing Planning as ‘Facilitating an Ideal Collaborative Communication’

The recent communicative and collaborative planning stances are included in this planning narrative. The metaphorical essence of collaborative planning is facilitating an ideal collaborative communicative and deepening democratic community as part of a new cultural storying of cities, regions and places.

‘Collaborative planning’ as advocated by Healey (1992, 1997) has been described by Innes (1995) as a new planning paradigm. Healey (1997:xii) defines the key principle of this new planning approach being about “how political communities may organise to improve the quality of their (fragmented) places”. Alleminder and Tewdr-Jones (1999:8) writes that this new planning theory is also a new ‘worldview’ or it could be said a vision of how places can be better planned in a more inclusionary and democratic fashion. Healey emphasizes the need for evolving new governance structures and relies on both Giddens’s (1990) social institutional theories and Habermas’s (1984) notion that the coming next late cultural period of modernity will see the rise of a new ‘communicative rationality’ and decision-making by discursive communities, contesting and superseding the old bureaucratic planning processes mainly based on ‘instrumental rationality’.

Cultural planning critics such as Sandercock (1998) also call for planning to recognize the great cultural diversity in the world’s city-regions with the influx of marginalised newly migrant peoples and new gender awareness in the new post-colonial landscape. Other key issues of concern in this planning narrative and its different adherents and critics, include the issue of where power resides and is exercised in the planning process and how language can be used to restrict and privilege planning conversations and the role of technocratic processes in decision-making and the local place environment.

Harris (2002) sees this as a 'form of planning' but indicates it is difficult to give concrete examples of particular planning practices or processes other than to say they entail more inclusionary and diverse planning conversations and that planners need to be more mindful of the power relationships involved in plan-making and strategy development. Yet this planning worldview and form appears influential in describing the evolution of planning practices and the trend towards encouraging more participatory conversations.

The influence of Habermas and his notion of 'communicative rationality' on collaborative planning theory and praxis has been described earlier in this Chapter. This planning approach or form denotes a departure from the classic epistemology of modernist epistemology and advocates incorporating other diverse ways of knowing and reasoning.

Collaborative planning steps towards a critical modernist cultural story that is more inclusionary, democratic and involving an intent to re-design of governance structures incorporating a wider spread of stakeholders and stakeholders. The collaborative planning conversation is deliberately democratic and seeks new, shared partnerships in redesigning governance structures and in building new capabilities to address emerging social, aesthetic and environmental problems around urban space. In contrast, the modernist planning conversation is posed here as a privileged conversational methodology that tends to reinforce existing governance structures and power arrangements where planning priorities and projects arise and unfold in a top-down manner. Collaborative planning is in effect a critique of modernist planning. This critique concerns the modernist planning procedures, language and conversational styles that are intertwined within a particular linear mechanistic, way of thinking and instrumentally rationalist way of knowing and seeing, its dualistic subject-object separation, that all contribute to reproducing the existing decision-making and power structures.

The limitations of relying on ongoing discursive communities, as a mechanism for collaborative planning, is apparent around the lack of systematic ways or processes for capturing the key themes and essence of these conversations. This study seeks to address this apparent weakness and poses a version of soft system mapping to

achieve this and capture the design principles and key insights of stakeholders and communities conversations. Secondly, discursive communities can tend to see their work as discussion and their outcomes as the conversation itself rather than as a guide to taking action; mapping the conversation is the basis for action planning. A third weakness of the collaborative planning approach to date is its lack of articulation of how this conversation is actually facilitated. Healey in one instance uses the term of a collective 'debate' but this particular collaborative communicative practice is argumentative and does not necessarily lead to either consensus or a re-thinking to enable novel concepts, redesigns and future pathways to emerge out of conversation. In a later work (2003:110) she emphasizes in a retrospective analysis of collaborative planning, the centrality of process in planning and how a planner's awareness of process and ethical considerations need to consciously shape our planning process and practices. This study developed and piloted on a collaborative dialogue and a systems process to both surface and test assumptions, to capture the insights of communities and stakeholders to co-assess, ground-truth and co-design what type of sustainable regional tourism enterprise would work in this instance. The exploratory collaborative dialogue methodology is articulated in Chapters 8.

However Healey (1999:111, 2003) in her later work opens a new doorway into how our planning perspective can evolve. Her unfolding critique of modernist and British planning practice is that it has been 'place-blind' and is at heart a governance practice. Planning according to Healey, can best be understood through her 'institutionalist' approach that focuses on the dynamic interrelationships and ways of thinking as to how communities shape themselves. Part of this perspective, is how institutions themselves are shaped by past power relationships and, in turn re-shape our social world. Her work on place is most relevant for this study. Healey (1999:111) calls for planning policy to become more 'place-conscious' and to become concerned with building 'governance capability' which in the context of this study, could be said to be the capability of regional stakeholders, agencies and communities to appraise, co-design and co-manage a sustainable regional enterprise. This study seeks to build on this suggested future directions suggested by Healey. Firstly on an emphasis on developing innovative planning processes that are culturally and place or context appropriate. Secondly in re-thinking regions along the lines suggested by Healey is needed for places. Places, according to Healey (1999:111) are an intersecting web of

relationships, power networks, policies and different cultural perspectives and meanings that interact and shape 'economic organization, social life and biospheric systems'. This study develops on this perspective advocating a complex co-evolutionary systems model of regions (and inferred places). Regions, in this study are portrayed as co-evolving human ecologies, a particular type of complex evolutionary economic, socio-cultural and environmental system (refer Chapter 4).

3.4.3 Deconstructing 'Planning as Adaptive Learning Responses'

Adaptive planning as learning, as articulated by Holling, Gunderson and researchers, explicitly sees regional natural resources like fisheries, rivers, forests, coral reefs etc as environmental systems inter-coupling with social institutional structures; as complex adaptive, social environmental systems. Much attention is paid by these adaptive environmentalist planners to ensuring balance between the environment and the economic priorities in sustainable regional resource management as opposed to managing and optimal yields of the old modernist approach. A key metaphor employed by the adaptive planning school of thought is that of the adaptive cycle of regeneration, consolidation, followed by disturbance causing collapse and re-organisation. The planning priority is to preserve system resilience in the face of disturbance such as climate change, changed technologies or weather events. The notion of complex adaptive systems is discussed at length in Chapter 4.

The underpinning theoretical framework underpinning adaptive planning as learning is complexity science and complex - systems thinking which embraces non-linear systems dynamics and feedback loops. The complex- systems thinking employed here explicitly focuses on analysing feedback and the unintended consequences of both planning decisions and implementation of policy unlike the instrumental rationalist thinking underpinning the modernist planning approach.

The conversational style focuses around systems thinking, the identification and analysis of system feedback and emergent patterns between key participating stakeholders and natural resource management experts and employs a particular new scientific technical systems language.

The key limitation of the adaptive planning approach concerns its lack of clear identification as to how the adaptive cycle of collapse following consolidation can be prevented by an evolutionary shift in thinking and a re-design of innovative ways of interacting across such regional social environmental systems. While this evolutionary shift to a new system pathway is acknowledged, the conditions nor any precise planning learning conversational process to enable this how this ‘double loop learning’ or change in paradigm approach, can occur has yet been articulated to this researcher’s knowledge. Insights into this possibility are located within the planning for complexity approach that is further explored and detailed in the following Chapter.

3.5 A Systems Perspective and Critique of the Predominant Planning Approaches

The modernist perspective is in stark contrast with that of systems thinking and its way of seeing the world (Macy, 1995, pp254). Systems thinking looks at interconnectedness, flows of energy, information and positive reinforcing or negative correcting or counterbalancing feedback loops (Jackson, 2000) in contrast with the mechanistic way of thinking and reductionist scientific worldview underpinning modernist planning. Much of modernist thinking and planning approaches instead perceives a world of things, spaces, separate organisational entities or resources earmarked for exploitation, a mindset that focuses on exploitation of nature,

Macy describes this other systems way of seeing eloquently;

“..open systems evolve in complexity and responsiveness to their environment”

and further

“the living system learns, adapts and evolves by re-organising itself”

(Macy, 1995, pp254-55)

The systems worldview undermines somewhat the classic Cartesian notion of object-subject separation and the reductionist scientific view, based on the perception of the world as things and resources as separate entities. Living systems, according to

Maturana and Varela (1987) such as cells and other living and human networks, organize, self-generate and perpetuate through cognition and as they describe this, through as a process of knowing This ‘Santiago Theory of Cognition of Living Systems’ developed by Maturana and Varela’s, as illustrated by Capra (2002), sees well beyond the linear cause and effect response of mechanical thinking. Living systems are interconnected with their ‘environment’ and according to this view can self-organise and re-arrange their system structure or ways of interconnecting i.e. their system behaviours. According to this living systems theoretical perspective, living networks whether neural biological or social, cognate, perceive, respond or not, adapt, learn new ways of interconnecting or change their structure in response to disturbances across their landscape environment. In this view, organisations, cities and regions resemble living systems. Again this complexity systems view will be further outlined in Chapter 4.

As outlined earlier in this Chapter, much of modernist planning practices, their focus on producing plans reinforced by planning controls relies on instrumentally rationalist logic that assumes the development of spaces, cities, places and regions or organisations will automatically unfold according to the vision and intent of the plans. However, if regions and places or cities are considered as particular, unique types of self-organising, living and adaptive systems, the implications for planners and planning practices are fascinating and far-reaching. Innes and Booher (1999) acknowledged this and recognized this new way of seeing the metropolis as an example of complex system dynamics and evolution.

It is apparent that across local government localities, places and regions that different stakeholders and communities do, at times, challenge, resist, ignore or attempt to change or circumvent different planning visions and regimes. An example of this is in NSW, with Armidale-Dumaresq Council for instance has one of the largest non-Council approved rates of building alterations and renovations. The NSW Lands and Environment Court is regularly besieged with contested development applications and much focus has been on addressing the number of contested applications and the backlist. Cities, their places and regions resemble living systems to the extent that these self-organising system behaviours are present. A NSW architect, Carrigan (2006) writes “a city is not made by design but by the sum total of incremental

actions by many over time in permitting all manner of projects to proceed". Cinner and Pollnac (2004) presents a similar view that the socio-economic status of various stakeholders in a community, their differing perceptions and their environments shape the management and planning of coastal reefs and that these stakeholder perceptions, values and attitudes make up the social aspect shaping behaviours across social-ecological systems such as reefs. Planning approaches need to take into account the complex, dynamic nature of the cities, organisations and regional natural resource systems they are directed at, including the resistance and self-organising responses of key stakeholders to plans and policy regulations.

Collaborative planning theorists have so far not explicitly or extensively addressed the systems nature of cities or regions nor the implications for how an ideal communicative process can facilitate and capture social learning about the likely system feedback and response to plan making when employing a collaborative style of planning conversation.

Instead of modernist planning as the top-down attempt to control and shape spaces, organisations and regions-places, an alternative possible approach is raised here of planning as collaborative effort to enhance system understanding or 'cognition'. Here, planning would become on-going, flexible and responsive; plan-making more exploratory, a collaborative process, less about a pre-determined vision and fixated with set outcomes. This new notion of planning would be concerned more with understanding the self-organising dynamics of its particular system, the on-going identification of internal changes and dynamic feedback loops and helping articulate and support stakeholders self-organising adaptive and evolutionary responses.

In this new proposed planning schema, new ways of seeing are needed, as to how our organisations, cities, regions and places are faring, understanding and assessing their unfolding systems states and dynamics. Sewall (1995) outlines the key skills needed for a new ecological perception or way of seeing in order to understand the ecological conditions and impacts from the inter-relationships between human and ecosystems. Planning then becomes more a process of reading and 'attending' to the unfolding system and its particular social-cultural, economic and ecological dynamics.

The need for explicitly planning for complexity has been articulated by O'Loughlin, Taboada and Gill (2006) using a collaborative dialogue approach involving community and stakeholder engagement to make sense of the complex systems, their interconnected nature of cities and place communities. This study has responded to this imperative for a new planning approach that recognizes cities and regions as complex dynamic emergent systems.

3.6 Questions Arising From Deconstructing Existing Planning Approaches

During this time of reviewing and deconstructing the existing planning approaches and their methodologies, a number of questions arose. Here I want to engage the reader in the questions that I started to become absorbed in as the study into a new regional collaborative dialogue planning methodology progressed.

“How do we capture the insights and learning of a multitude of regional communities, agencies, local governments and stakeholders as to the design and governance of a sustainable regional enterprise? Was it possible to undertake an inclusive, democratically engaging and collaborative planning dialogue at a cross-regional scale? How can we making sense together, assembling multiple perspectives and facilitate social learning to develop a shared systems understanding around how a new regional tourism venture could evolve along a sustainable pathway?” Further what new ways of seeing and thinking could we utilize to make sense of the complexity involved in this planning task and what other theoretical conceptions of a region, its industries, communities and spatial configurations could be employed in this new task?”

Our current planning approaches, their ways of thinking and seeing underpinning them, seem suited to another time before this time of increased complexification of increasing agencies, regulations and levels of uncertainty. (Cox, 2003).

“The tasks facing planners with the issue of moulding sustainable cities, regions and industry enterprises, to me seemed far different from 20 years ago. We now have an interconnected world where industry and enterprises compete globally against each other; for example regional tourism destinations are competitors not just within

Australia but also in a global market. There is increased market turbulence especially in tourism planning and destination management as Faulkner (2002) has pointed out. Planners now confront global climate change with its extreme weather events, prolonged drought patterns in Australia in particular and the need to reduce carbon emissions and now develop carbon neutral tourism options. Uncertainty and social turbulence also occurs with the threat and reality of terrorist actions that also impact on tourism visitation. Another uncertainty is the spectre of 'peak oil' (Leeming, 2005) i.e. increased demand and declining cheap oil deposits and so higher transport and transitional costs for industry enterprises. New technologies such as the Internet and direct e-booking have reshaped the marketing and destination decision-making of the mass tourism market of the period of the 1970 – 1990's. Potential tourists can research a destination, peruse different accommodation and product – experiences and self-organise their own itinerary as opposed to organised tour packages. Tourism destinations now compete in a highly competitive and changing market. Planning sustainable tourism enterprises also needs to account for the environmental, social and cultural impacts around their customers' visitation as well as the physical siting and design of any accommodation, transport and activities on the local communities and habitats.

Etherington (2004) has outlined the usefulness of a reflexive learning process as a qualitative research methodology as a way to develop and capture new insights and understandings. Healey (1997) also talks of the need of a reflexive planning practice as a way to better interpret the meaning of community conversations.

“My response is that the research task involves escaping our present disciplinary silos, our existing privileged epistemological positions, ways of thinking and conceptions of planning to develop and assess new planning methodologies that explicitly address complexity. To re-think past planning approaches and to develop a new collaborative systems regional planning process, required me to undertake my own reflexive learning process and these notes outline this journey as a researcher.”

However my own process came to parallel, inform and be shaped by the collaborative regional planning conversational process that unfolded in the study.

“I realised that communities, agencies and stakeholders were reflecting on and then co-designing a sustainable tourism enterprise based on what they felt and understood would fit in with and enhance the environmental, cultural, social sense of place and economic capabilities and that would retain the fabric of the regions. Planning as an inclusive, collaborative dialogue process about assessing and co-designing such an enterprise entailed a socially reflexive learning journey. As planner, I needed to make sense of the meta regional conversational process and this also entailed me undertaking my own reflexive journey and recording what I was observing”.

A second use of these reflexive learning notes was that they started to resemble and finally led to my realisation that I was exploring a phenomenological process to re-think what is a more appropriate theoretical notion of regions.

“ I also kept asking myself what was another, better way of seeing and understanding regions. I looked at regions anew as a phenomenon and wondered how else could we reconfigure regions as a different sort of entity in these times. I turned to reading the new complexity science and started to re-vision regions as a particular type of complex dynamic system. I wondered under what conditions regions were adaptive and what they needed to evolve along new sustainable pathways.”

Over time I realised that current planning practices were not really addressing the issue of enabling novelty and evolutionary transitions. Hamel and Prahalad (1996:x-xii) have noted that current strategic planning is “strategic in name only, ritualistic and formulaic, seldom deeply creative” and that we need new ways of “creating a capacity for continuous renewal”. Homer-Dixon (2006) outlined how our current globalised societies face huge stressors both environmentally, economically, socially and culturally and that our planning and management responses are either denial or only reluctantly manage new scenarios that involve the strong probability of slow decline or collapse in our existing regional economies Homer-Dixon (2006:21-22) urges us to consider resilience building strategies and ways we can proactively and creatively enable ‘creative renewal’ or ‘catagenesis’ as a way to avoid societal collapse or a slow decline under the weight of mounting environmental, economic and social challenges.

“I realised through this reflexive process that we needed to explore a new notion of planning as creative renewal through catalyzing emergence and novelty. But could a collaborative dialogue planning methodology catalyze a novel innovative and sustainable enterprise? Could this same planning process also catalyze new community stakeholder governance structures and co-operative behaviours to allow evolutionary regional transitions? Can a new planning approach, explicitly designed to address complexity, nurture a new environment to enable learning regions to emerge that can proactively shape their future along new sustainable pathways?”

My conclusion was

“To develop a new planning methodology explicitly for regions as complex dynamic systems I felt we need a reflexive process to go beyond the existing planning disciplines, approaches, their methodologies and underpinning cultural stories and epistemologies. Such a reflexive process as outlined by Etherington, requires the planner in recognising they are not only a part of but are inside and have been moulded by the current planning approaches and framework – we are insiders but we also need to become reflexive, outside observers to go beyond the existing methodologies. The task for me as a researcher was to see ‘regions’ and ‘planning’ again as if for the first time and to find an approach to enable this; eventually I was came to employing a reflexive hermeneutical stance.”

3.7 A New Direction and Focus for ‘Planning’

The deconstruction and critique undertaken here from a systems perspective of the predominant planning narratives and methodologies, typecasts the responses of both consultative, participatory and collaborative forms of planning as being attempts to manage new economic, market conditions and environmental stressors and social forces. The view expressed here is that top-down planning methodologies are appropriate in particular circumstances for simple industry or regional systems near equilibrium and where the problem context can be clearly defined. However, new planning approaches are needed for dealing with the new context of increasing complexity, raised uncertainty, disturbance and turbulence of coming times with more interconnected globalised markets and climate change. New planning processes

are needed to build a partnered regional, stakeholder adaptive capability. In particular, new planning approaches are needed that can catalyze novelty and the emergence of new reflexive governance arrangements as called for by Healey (1997) able to harness social learning for evolutionary transitions in our regions, industry and cities.

The existing conventional command and control mental models of strategic planning and managing are seen as limited in confronting the complexity entailed in the sustainable management of regions and their tourism industry. This researcher has argued in this Chapter, that there are limitations for all planning approaches that are underpinned by a western modernist or Euro-North American cultural worldview that doesn't address the evolutionary, complex systems nature of cities, regions and organisations. The collaborative, inclusive, exploratory planning dialogue process being field-tested and assessed in this study has been shaped to explicitly address the complex dynamic nature of regions. This collaborative planning dialogue approach sought to facilitate regional stakeholders and communities to co-assess and co-design a new sustainable regional enterprise and pathway, align a new tourism supply chain or network and so open up the possibility of an evolutionary regional transition. This cross-regional networking aligning and the building of a distinct regional tourism destination and brand have unfolded since the initial concept and feasibility planning of this study (refer Chapter 9 and 10).

Subsequently, it is considered important that planners be reflexive of the predominant cultural story or ways of seeing, thinking and knowing i.e. their underlying epistemological framework, and how these can shape the scope and boundaries of our current planning methodologies, 'conversations' and outcomes of these plan-making processes. One task then for of planner-researchers is to explore and develop new reflexive learning tools to enable us to transcend our current ways of seeing, thinking and knowing to assist the emergence of these new planning methodologies.

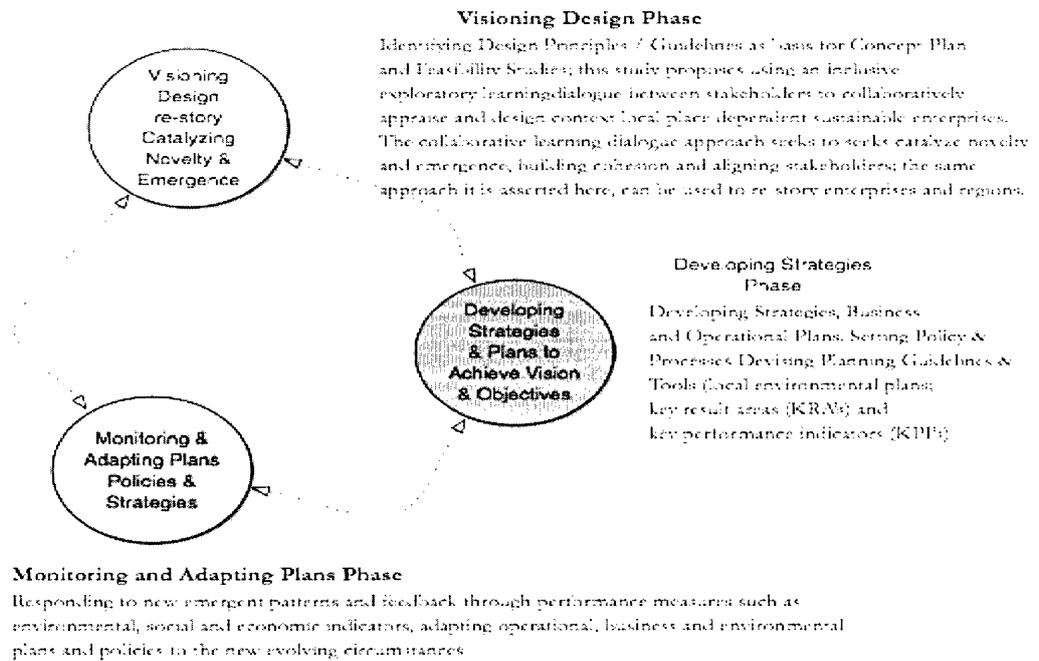
But planning in this study is envisaged as a three-phase process as outlined below in Fig. 3.3. Note this particular planning model differs from the existing strategic model of planning discussed earlier in two ways. More emphasis is given in this studies model of 'planning' to the collaborative, creative co-design process and to catalyzing

novelty and emergence of existing or new regional enterprises. Secondly, it explicitly acknowledges the need for an adaptive planning phase to account for feedback and new emergent patterns and unanticipated consequences from earlier plans and policies.

However, this study focuses only on the first phase of planning namely the visioning, design or renewal. Communities and stakeholders in this study, co-appraised or 'ground-truthed' an initial concept proposal (a long distance walking track) and then collaboratively re-designed (co-designed) what type of sustainable regional tourism venture will fit in and work in their regional context. This planning study was primarily concerned with catalyzing novelty through co-designing new enterprise concepts and future pathways that build on the attractiveness of the existing, regional tourism destinations.

The second planning phase depicted in figure 3.3 below concerns devising strategies needed to realize the vision and concept design and a third phase of monitoring and adapting plans to meet changing conditions and emergent patterns or system feedback. This second phase planning of developing strategies and business plans was undertaken subsequently but is not the subject of this dissertation.

Figure 3.3 The Key Elements / Phases of the Planning Process



3.8 The Context and Trends in Planning Practice in NSW Australia

The trends in planning are also shaped by wider political context and economic forces. NSW is now experiencing a time of turmoil with state urban and regional planning (Duffy, 2007). State planning authorities trying to accommodate rapid population growth with new cheap land releases, the problems of scarce and declining water reserves, demands to renew road transport and rail infrastructure while retaining green spaces at the periphery hinterland of its major cities of Sydney,

Newcastle and Wollongong. The latest metropolitan strategy for the Sydney metropolis reflects these concerns (NSW Dept. Planning & Infrastructure, 2005).

There have been three instances of major institutional restructuring and changes in planning approaches. The first change has been a shift to re-assert centralized institutional control by the NSW State Government in key areas whereas urban planning matters in the past have been delegated to locally elected council governments under the State Planning Act. This recent shift has been to more centralized control has been justified as being necessary to streamline major urban developments, to protect coastal environments from damaging urban developments and to make the urban locality planning process more effective. The State Planning Act now has a significant 3A clause allowing state government intervention into local government planning on matters around facilitating infrastructure, planning reform and other purposes as deemed appropriate by the State Planning Minister (Farrelly, 2006). Essentially this has been used to facilitate speedy approvals of major developments and to intervene in coastal development projects in cases of possible environmental and aesthetic coastal strip impacts. These counter-reforms are also recognition of the unsuccessful urban consolidation policy in Sydney, the resistance by local councils and communities to consolidation, the resulting delays in development applications and the failure to deliver new cheap land and housing initiatives (Searle, 2007).

The recent move towards more participatory and collaborative planning approaches under the Plan First planning reform model (DUA&P, 2001) have been reversed. This participative planning shift was undertaken as a quest to address a new social contract around the environment and pressure for increased community and stakeholder involvement in planning. The Plan First initiatives of the period 1999-2005, involved plan-making with a greater community involvement, more emphasis being given to place, allowing greater autonomy for local councils employing collaborative and participatory processes and support for regions to develop their own regional strategies. A notable example of a collaborative planning initiative (McGuirk, 2001) was undertaken in a major redevelopment and re-design of the harbour land in Newcastle the second largest city in the state as part of its supported

urban recovery strategy following the closing down of that cities major steel industry plants.

Similarly experiments in place management and the development of multi-stakeholder integrated place based governance structures for example with Sydney Harbour Catchment (Colebatch and Dawkins, 2002) have been abandoned. Place Management was an experiment in collaborative, whole of government approach with local stakeholders to address complex on-going social and economic problems and issues around ineffective service delivery of government services. Place Management represented an opportunity for communities to tackle on-going endemic problems such as crime and disadvantage and was piloted in the NSW regional town of Moree .

These changes have reinforced a return of urban planing practice and regional planning in NSW and governance concerns back towards the planning as control approach and with that, a reversion to consultative planning conversational style. In NSW urban planners' work is predominantly orientated to ensuring one off development applications compliance with policy and legislation. The focus has been on aligning development with local government strategic development plans and land-use as governed by Local Environment Plans and building codes. The predominant work of urban planners in Australia, according to one estimate by Winterbourne (2005) is still concerned post –strategic land-use planing with assessing compliance and decision-making around control documentation on individual urban developments. Increasingly urban planners in Australia are described as relying more and more on objective expert environmental, social and site engineering reports to assist in decisions development approvals (Winterburne 2005) being provided independently and assessed separately. There have been some steps towards Strategic Environmental Assessment, an integrated urban, environmental and social planning approach to local government development (Bartlett, 2006).

However, as one urban planner stated, the state government is primarily concerned with increasing the speed of development applications and not the outcomes that come out of the planning decisions (pers. comm. 2007). This analysis suggests that planning frameworks and decisions are shaped by political forces and contexts rather

than by just what planners either consider or advise on what constitutes 'ideal' or enhanced democratic' planning conversations.

3.9 Some Conclusions about the Future Direction of Planning

The focus of this chapter has been to both deconstruct and consider what new systems planning methodologies are needed beyond the existing, modernist strategic planning approaches. The case is made for new collaborative planning methodologies that can address the increasing complexity and uncertainty of the 21st century. Further, that planners need to explore new reflexive planning practices that enable us to discern new cultural narratives for sustainable futures that traverse the assumptions and goals of modernity.

Chapter 4

Exploring Planning for Regions as Complex Co-Evolving Systems

“As Stephen Hawkins says, this century is the century of complexity, and complexity and its associated technologies and theories of artificial life, agent based models, self-organisation and the science of networks will revolutionize the way science is done” (Head, 2007:27)

4.1 Chapter Focus and Aims

This Chapter presents a complexity theoretical framework and outlines how regions, their cities, rural places, ecosystems and industries resemble self-organising, social-economic-ecological, emergent systems. However this study suggests and advances a new complex dynamic systems model of regions as a co-evolving, human ecology. This research project both re-affirms and seeks to build on the work of Allen (2004), Batty (1995), Johnson (2004), Jacobs (1961) and Makse, Halvin and Stanley (1995). Similarly, regional tourism enterprises are also depicted here as an industry network or co-evolving ecology. These interconnected human ecologies, are said to follow their own adaptive cycle of expansion, consolidation, crisis and either collapse or can undergo evolutionary shifts in response to social, economic, market disturbance and environmental turbulence from across the global tourism market. It is not the aim of this thesis to analyse complexity in its entirety but rather seek to understand how the adoption of a complexity approach can enhance the planning of sustainable cross-regional enterprises and regions.

This Chapter explores four questions. Firstly, how can a complex systems framework deepen our understanding of how socio-cultural, economic and ecological systems behave at the regional scale? How can planning for regional complexity can be differentiated from the existing, predominant planning approaches? What does the

new complexity literature suggest as to the key concerns and capabilities for planning methodologies for addressing complexity at the regional scale? Fourthly, what are the implications for developing new planning methodologies, of this complex dynamic systems perspective, of regions as co-evolving human ecologies?

4.2 How can a complex systems framework deepen our understanding of how socio-cultural, economic and ecological systems behave at the regional scale?

Complexity has been described as an emerging theoretical framework of complex dynamic systems such as economies (Arthur, 1989) and adaptive social-economic-ecological systems such as rangelands and forests (Holling, 1976). There are however alternative formulations of complexity. One is provided by Tasaka (1999) who describes complexity as a new epistemological perspective or way of seeing and knowing about the internal dynamics of complex systems and how they behave in response to external disturbance such as organisations. Homer-Dixon (2006) suggests another notion of complexity as a new ontology of connectivity, suggesting new emergent, interdependent ways of being for citizens as a necessary response to the mounting economic, environmental and social stressors, societies now confront with globalized markets, climate change and terrorism. Complexity, in this study, however is depicted as an emerging theoretical framework and conceptual way of seeing and understanding cities, regions and organisations as types of complex dynamic systems.

Complexity thinking is portrayed here as going beyond its forerunner, systems thinking, being more concerned with system states, adaptive cycles and evolutionary transitions in social-economic- environmental systems such as ecologies, economies, organisations and cities. Systems thinking, as outlined by Senge (1992) was more concerned with a new way of seeing and thinking of organisations as systems, highlighted archetypal thinking and behaviour patterns in organisations, mainly as an aid to managing in a new global market environment or in developing and managing conflict. Systems Dynamics (SD) is more concerned with modelling how systems change to gain insights (soft system modelling) about managing changes or predicting changes (hard systems forecasting) whether at an organisational, social or global level. SD modelling first led to important insights about the unintended consequences of policy initiatives such as more public housing to eliminate slums and social problems.

Stacey (2002) has argued that systems thinking, is embedded with a theological perspective with some streams of systems thinking (functionalist) focusing on a return to efficient or optimal system functioning. Complexity thinking instead focuses on how to catalyze novelty and the emergence of new higher order behaviours (Wheatley, 2004) and more adaptive, resilient and sustainable system structures. But what are the key tenets of the complexity framework and what does this way of seeing and knowing tell us about the unique nature and dynamic behaviours of complex dynamic systems? There are 7 key features that characterise complex systems concerning environmental, social and economic systems.

1. There is a large degree of *interconnectivity* or inter-relationships between entities and agents. Machines maybe complicated in that they have large numbers of elements but are not complex as the causal relationships maybe linear and demonstrate little interconnectivity across the elements. In complex systems it is the density or high degree of connectivity and links between elements and sub-systems that is unique.

2. In complex adaptive systems, agents, entities or different species are *self-organising* and *adapt their behaviours*, rules and even the system structure can change either in response to internal dynamics impacting sub-systems or to outside disturbance (Holland in Gleick, 1998:147). There are numerous niches or specialist functions that can be exploited e.g. spaces for different species in a rainforest such as pioneer tree species that initially repopulate flattened and cleared spaces in rainforest after a cyclone. So too enterprises will seek to fill economic niches with specialist services needed in an evolving economy. An example here is the proliferation of new Internet on-line e-dating services. Further there are numerous opportunities and niches as one prey-predator relationship changes or predator is removed. In Australian rangelands the removal of dingoes has to some extent, created a new vacant niche for previously domesticated feral cats and dogs. New agents enter or depart, practices change such as existing grazing or crop regimes and technologies are developed in a economic or industry – market systems in *anticipation of possible changes* as stakeholders ‘eye’ and develop adaptive strategies to what

the future could hold. Stakeholders survey their landscape for example to the onset of droughts, the late arrival of the monsoon or the coming of new bigger competitors, novel products-services and possible market price fluctuations. The Internet with its vast power to link and connect multiple users and to enable new ways or services to satisfy a rapidly changing set of customer needs is an example of such a complex dynamic system. The Internet demonstrates how complex dynamic systems are characterised by the on-going quest for system stakeholders to anticipate and develop adaptive initiatives and evidence 'perpetual novelty' (Holland, 1978) unless stymied or bounded, by say, regulation.

3. Complex systems are *shaped by both negative and positive feedback*. Negative feedback tends to correct or re-balance a change and return the system back towards its original state. The body sweating is an attempt to cool, avoid overheating and return to its original temperature and so achieve a dynamic state of balance. Positive feedback enhances or accelerates a change. An example of a positive feedback effect with global change is the melting of frozen tundra in Siberia due to rising regional temperatures, which is now releasing more stored carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and is expected to accelerate the greenhouse effect and global warming at an increasing rate. The melting of the Arctic ice is also expected to trigger a positive feedback effect, accelerating global warming. As seawater has a lower reflectivity than ice and a higher absorption of sunlight, this will ensure further warming of the far northern regions in the hemisphere.
4. Because of the high degree of causal interrelationships between elements in the system, there is a wide range of possible *asymmetrical behaviours or non-linear flow-on effect or pathways*. As a result, flow-on effects are non-linear, small changes can at times have amplified effects especially at key leverage points or nodes where there are many connections with the rest of the system. Flow-on effects can also be lagged across space and time whereas simple systems can exhibit linear causality. Forecasting and predicting future outcomes is therefore problematic. This is exemplified with the weather or stock exchange market behaviour over time. Non-linear and unanticipated system behaviour is also evidenced in how policy initiatives can be resisted by self-organising stakeholders (system resistance) to preserve their own group interests and can often result in

unintended and unanticipated consequences such as enhanced legal action, costly delays and a skewing of planned urban development outcomes. Sterman (2002), describes instances of ‘policy resistance’ to top-down initiatives such as urban renewal schemes based on providing new public housing that either fail to achieve desired outcomes of eliminating slums. A change can also attract synergy, either positive or negative amplification, the classic example being the butterfly flapping its wings in the Brazilian rainforest resulting in chaotic system effects such as typhoons in Japan.

5. *Emergence* is another characteristic of complex dynamic systems where new coherent structures, behaviours and or patterns arise as a result of the self-organising collaborative actions of the elements or agents across a system (Johnson, 2006). Examples here include the giant termite structures of Australia that surpass any equivalent, human scale built structure in height and yet are designed and constructed by ants; they are air-conditioned, sturdy and have specialised compartments for nurseries etc. There is no single expert ant designer, rather the structure emerges from the efforts of individual ants co-operating. Cities are another example of emergence with distinct patterns unfolding with similar individuals or enterprises clustering together to form like communities and business enterprises in particular place localities that come to develop their own unique identity. Obvious examples include the ‘flocking’ together that led to Left Bank in Paris and the Village in New York or Chinatown in Sydney. A Sydney Architect-urban designer, Patrick Carrigan (2006) writes of how “a city is not made by design but by the sum total of incremental actions by many over time in permitting all manner of projects to proceed”. This perspective paints an image of a city as self-organising, emergent phenomena where streetscapes emerge despite the best controlling efforts of urban planners to enforce deliberate designs. Engels (ref) first noticed these emergent urban patterns in Manchester and Jane Jacobs (1961) similarly depicts the evolving dynamics of New York in her analysis of the ‘Death and Life of Great American Cities’. Emergent patterns can also be considered negative. The rise of slum –favelas and criminal gang behaviour along with rising inequitable income distribution in cities such as Rio De Janeiro exemplifies how cities as complex systems can adapt negatively. Holland (1995) indicates that managers or

agents have little control over emergent patterns and the complex systems they inhabit. Holland aptly describes complex adaptive systems 'as emergent patterns that persist even when you have a turnover of their constituent parts' (Lewin & Regine, 1999:382).

6. Complex systems are *relatively open* to effects and interactions with other environments or systems (Homer-Dixon, 2007). For example, regional weather in eastern Australia is affected by changes in sea temperatures across the Pacific. These temperature differentials have resulted in now increasingly fluctuating El Nino weather patterns that impact regional weather systems on either side of the Pacific with periods of drought or increased rain and flooding. Consequently farming operations in eastern Australia and regional economies have been dramatically affected. Another example how the 9-11 terrorist attacks resulted in new security measures and laws crossing over into other nations.
7. Complexity theory posits four *different complex system states*, namely near equilibrium, far from equilibrium, at the edge of chaos and chaos (Gleick, 1998 Waldrup, 1992). At the near the edge of chaos state, the possibility of creative re-invention or transformation of a system is enhanced in an organisation, city, region and regional industries as stakeholder - agents self-organise to avoid collapse. This can be in the form of restructuring, some stakeholders leaving, others looking for new opportunities or niches, technologies or adopting more efficient practices.; a type of creative renewal that happens in each recession or threatened system collapse. The adaptive management - resilience theorists including Holling, Gundersen, Folke, Maler and Walker, have explored and outlined the dynamics of complex adaptive systems. Their work has mainly focused on sustainable regional natural resource management whether it be for rangelands, water catchment systems, fisheries or forests. Their adaptive management learning dialogue conducted now through the on-line journal, Economy and Society, has outlined the adaptive cycles of complex systems as consisting of opening up opportunities for exploitation and growth, accumulation, collapse or release and re-organisation or renewal. *Turning or bifurcation points* arise as systems approach transitions across system phases notably where systems exist far from equilibrium at the edge of chaos states

(Gribbin, 2004). Examples of this include the transitions between succession states in a rainforest from collapse back to a mature forest structure after a massive cyclone disturbance or, the economic cycles from boom to collapse, re-organisation and renewal. Individuals across communities observe, interact, inform each other and develop adaptive responses; they re-think the future, seek new niches, cluster and swarm to take advantage of new opportunities. Human enterprises, can at these times, resemble bee colonies re-organising to seek out a new territory and hive. *Panarchy* is the term used to describe the particular on-going dynamics and *adaptive cycles* across the many layers of semi-autonomous dimensions and sub-systems or 'nested hierarchies' that typify complex adaptive systems (Gundersen and Holling, 2000).

Yet our modernist planning methodologies are designed for entities as simple systems, assumed to be at near equilibrium with linear causality and problems are assumed to be easily definable. The complexity framework sees organisations, markets and industries, cities and rainforests as dynamic complex phenomena. Boulding (1978) describes hierarchical or top-down approaches to managing the organisational dynamics of complex systems as inefficient. Complex systems need open communication to inform other agents or elements and aid negotiation of adaptive responses. Boulding points out that these two vital processes are controlled and 'economised' by the control planning approach. The task for planners is to go beyond simple mechanistic thinking to develop new planning methodologies that reflect the complex self-organising systems nature of our cities, regions and organisations (O'Loughlin, Taboada, Gill, 2006)

Arthur's (1989, 1990) re-thinking of economies as complex systems enhanced our understanding of how economies boom, sometimes collapse un-expectedly and evolve through both negative and positive feedback across a range of system states. Negative feedback involves a tendency to return towards equilibrium and ordered stability. For example, excess demand causes price rises that ration sales, the resulting price falls sees a return towards a new equilibrium price, excess production is sold and helps ensure a stable industry structure. However in reality, many other factors can either mitigate or enhance this effect including whether the market is dominated by a few large enterprises. Positive feedback effects, largely neglected in mainstream

neo-classical economics help explain runaway booms as say rising asset prices like housing, attract both more investors and lagged investment in new stock then, more buyers as they rush to enter a market they fear may soon be out of reach. National economies are now depicted as being only broadly guided or sculptured by long term policies that encourage new favourable investment climates and emergent economic behaviours. The idea of governments controlling economies with assured linear flow-on effects from their policies is now being challenged (Charlton, 2007). National and regional economies are instead seen as self-organising complex systems that grow, stagnate, decline and evolve as industry enterprises and communities respond to external or economic, environmental and social changes at the global scale. Industries and regional enterprises including those around tourism destinations respond to these threats or opportunities by restructuring, through innovation or closure. With the rise of globalisation, the new Internet communication technologies and global climate change, a new highly interconnected global social-economic-environmental entity has been ushered in with non-linear asymmetrical feedback effects acting as enhanced disturbance across all regions as Homer-Dixon (2007) has noted. For example, a sanction on exporting cashmere wool by China suddenly forced up the price of super-fine wool exports world-wide as it was seen as a substitute for fine fibre processors. This cashmere export ban by China rapidly reversed the immediate prospects of the New England wool industry in 2006-7. Regional tourism destinations and enterprises now face the same prospect as other industries in the new world of accelerating change, uncertainty and enhanced competition.

The increasing 'complexification' of now globally interconnected societies and economies according to Cox (2003:185) requires more energy, information and a more complex social organisation to run and co-ordinate society. Much of industry has adopted an alternative strategy and sought to implement flat, simplified flexible structures while some nations have sought to acquire new 'colonies' or security pacts that ensure more stable energy and commodity prices such as the Western intervention in Iraq. Another strategy has been the hierarchical re-organisation of institutions into an ordered network to streamline information and decision-making to centrally control and co-ordinate government responses such as in the USA government with the current war on terror (Considine, 2002). An alternative strategy Cox points out citing Boulding (1978) is to decentralize control and decision-making

rather than attempt to continue centralized decision-making. Building new local, adaptive learning networked organisations offers an alternative and is posed as a strategy for developing flexible, more adaptive and sustainable regional tourism enterprises according to Ndou and Petti (2006). These insights from the new complexity science help in re-thinking the question of how complexity planning can operate at the regional scale. But at the same time questions arise as to what is the new focus and capabilities required for planning new regional enterprises. If expert developed studies and plan-making can't necessarily ensure a viable regional industry enterprise, what should be the focus and system characteristics that planning methodologies need to nurture? If the global economy is an adaptive and learning process for its stakeholders as described by Holland as cited by Waldrop (1992:144) then how can planners help regional economies and say regional tourism enterprises to catalyze and mimic this feature of complex dynamic systems?

The complexity literature describes two broad categories of complex self-organising systems namely autopoietic and agent based systems (Cox, 2003). Autopoietic or living systems consist of many elements, sub-systems, their dynamics and unfolding patterns being primarily shaped by feedback effects. The systems pathways of autopoietic systems such as ecosystems tend to follow succession or adaptive cycles. However a flip to a new system structure is possible where there is sufficient disturbance that forces the elements self-organise into new arrangements to better adapt to sudden changes in their environment such as with sudden climate change.

Agent based complex adaptive systems include for example organisations, economies and industries. In these systems, agents interact and may, according to Stacey exhibit emergent patterns based around human's ability to intuit and seek to create a unique identity. These systems are capable of transformation and evolutionary shifts; this capability being connected to the diversity occurring across the system. This unique perspective advanced by Stacey, Griffin and Shaw (2000) outlines a transformative teleology where the purpose of such systems involves evolving towards unique identities and constructing novelty. This transformative teleology has been ascribed to how organisations adapted and then evolved at times. Systems thinking, according to Stacey, Griffin and Shaw is characterised by either a formative or rationalist teleological perspective more akin to a functionalist perspective. Here agents are

assumed to be uniform and are relatively compliant to changes such as new rules, processes as rationally determined by management, aimed at producing a more efficient or adapted organisational system. This same teleological perspective underpins strategic planning in that it seeks to control the development of a pre-determined future entity; there is limited space for stakeholders co-evolving a new different entity in response to the changing social, economic and environmental landscape.

The adaptive management or resilience school in their focus on sustainably managing regional natural resource or social-environmental systems such as rangelands, forests etc appears closer to an adaptive teleological perspective. This view holds that such socially managed regional natural resource economic systems (SES) follow an adaptive cycle and are follow a cycle of succession states in response to disturbance such as over-harvesting or cyclones etc. This is to say the system's structure and pathway is shaped and relatively fixed by the system's own self-organising in response to outside disturbance and its own internal dynamics. It is acknowledged that these self-organising systems can undergo system transformation due to huge outside disturbance (sudden climate change) or endogenous changes such as leadership undergoing double-loop learning. Double-loop learning is where system managers radically re-think their role and or change their mental model and assumptions about their organisation or a regional social economic system they are managing; it is about re-inventing and facilitating the evolution a new entity.

A similar transformative teleological perspective for regions akin to that proposed for organisations as articulated by Stacey, Griffin and Shaw (2000) underpins this thesis. This study posits regions as a particular type of complex self-organising emergent system, capable of evolutionary transitions that co-create their own novel identity like cities. Further that the various regional stakeholder agents can co-appraise and re-organise to take advantage of new ecological – economic niches and enterprise pathways for example developing a new ecotourism industry. This study successfully field-tested the notion that regional communities and stakeholders can co-operate and collaboratively plan strategies as an emergent process along the same lines proposed by Stacey (1993) for organisations.

4.3 What does the new complexity literature advise as to the key concerns and capabilities for new planning methodologies for addressing complexity?

This complex systems perspective paints a picture of complex adaptive systems being characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability. Bateson (1979) and others like Makse, Halvin & Stanley (1995) have argued that complex living systems like cities can't be controlled due to their nature as self-organising and non-linear dynamic entities. Bateson (1979) and Holling and Meffe (1996) both describe the continuing attempts to control complex systems as pathology. Yet the existing planning frameworks are characterized by urban and organisational planning as control, building regulatory frameworks and or devising strategic and business planning schemas to ensure a goal directed and orderly organisational development. Plans are fine tuned and kept on target by monitoring pre-set goals and performance indicators. The focus was on providing local infrastructure and the planned provision of transport, local government services such as sewerage, garbage and curbing. Single social and economic activity, urban and regional zoning could be said to produce mono-cultural patterning of industrial belts, central business districts and outlying, sprawling suburban dormitories. This is opposite outcome that is likely to emerge from encouraging eco-villages where local work opportunities co-exist alongside housing and urban food gardens, as a clustering of diversity in local social, economic and environmental ecology. Planning as control in organisations ensures alignment, efficient resource allocation towards achieving set goals but is not necessarily effective in promoting adaptive capability to respond to opportunities and facilitating 'perpetual novelty'?

Jantsch and Waddington (1976:3) describe this dilemma as the struggle between a western culture that is imbued with an 'equilibrium orientated structural thinking' and an emergent 'dynamic process thinking'. Planning, to Jantsch (1976:38) still lies within the engineering and stabilization focused paradigm, being more concerned with 'creating and maintaining static system states'. An alternative evolutionary systems thinking perspective was being outlined as early as 1975 by Jantsch and Waddington who realised system structures, including socio-cultural systems are continuously evolving emergent system states i.e. structure as unfolding process. Murayama (1976:204) outlines an alternative 'mutualistic' planning model based on

heterogeneous groups in a socio-cultural economic system, evaluating ideas and seek solutions that ‘satisfies all groups and or doesn’t ‘impose hardship on any one group’’. Planning, according to Murayama (1975:202) is to facilitate non-zero sum outcomes and to facilitate symbiosis in heterogeneous systems as ‘what survives is not the strongest but the most symbiotic’ as evidenced from his work on the evolutionary dynamics in biological and social evolution.

But what can be discerned from the literature regarding the key concerns and capabilities of a new planning methodology for complexity either for social – economic - environmental systems at either the organisational level or at the regional scale?

This study has identified four major focus areas for new planning strategies for addressing complexity including the capabilities to;

1. Facilitate self-organising stakeholder networks with the intention of collaborating for joint benefit (Wheatley and Frieze, 2007). Lewin and Regine (1999:10) write of a new ‘complexity guided management style’ that cultivates and fertilizes connections, mutuality of interest and trust across organisations and of facilitating an open space across deliberately inclusive diversity of stakeholders to interact and explore new possibilities and building trust diversity of views, perspectives, connectivity and mutuality. Shaw (2002:11) talks of a similar process of facilitating an open conversation as organising or rather re-organising and linking to make sense of their changing environment and to assess new possibilities. Seel (2003, 2000) also notes the importance of self-organising stakeholders of facilitating connectivity and information flows, embracing the diversity of stakeholders, of building a shared intention or vision of working together and of anticipating, being open and watching for new potential opportunities. Seel (2000:6) goes further to talk of how creating these environmental system conditions can assist ‘self-organising criticality’ where organisations change themselves through an emergent process as opposed to the current notion of change management where organisations can only be changed as a result of top-down planning. Moobela (2002, 2005) applies these ideas of facilitating connectedness to re-think planning for urban

regeneration. He cites the example of how self-organising residents and community stakeholders successfully re-designed slum areas in Manchester in the UK. The notion of conversing to facilitate a new distributed leadership to better make sense of a changing environment, to identify possible strategies and so influence how a complex system like an organisation responds and evolves is another common theme with a number of researchers into planning-managing complexity (Homer-Dixon, 2007, Shaw 2002. Wheatley (2007). These works usher in the new idea of an end to the old 'heroic' model of a great leader controlling complex organisational systems and outline the need for enhanced network organisations.

2. Enable social learning (Cocks, 2003). Social learning describes processes where stakeholders discuss, reflect and or dialogue to learn together from each other's experiences and by sharing their knowledge (Bandura, 1977) Researchers on complexity have outlined how social learning can be facilitated either through stakeholder conversations to develop new shared understandings (Wheatley, 2007:264?) or through storytelling and reflecting on stories to re-think new possibilities of working together (Denning, 2001, Seel, 2003). Wheatley (2007), citing Perot has noted a key strategic need for organisations, is to come to know them-selves. Hamel & Prahalad (1996) point out a key concern for organisations is to know their core capabilities and from that can determine what they are potentially capable of understanding what new enterprises they are capable of evolving into. Nel and Serfontein (2001) talks of the importance for planners of city-regions in South Africa being able to identify and understand the self-organising dynamics behind the patterns emerging across regional systems. This study argues like Nel and Serfontein that planners addressing complexity at the regional scale need not just be watchful of these patterns but dialogue with stakeholders to ascertain the key evolutionary drivers that are shaping the regional system dynamics. This means to use planning conversations to better understand together with stakeholders the key causal relationships shaping regions including the unanticipated consequences from both negative and positive feedback effects of planning policy from different stakeholder's perception to new policy, imposed or otherwise For example if urban sprawl

patterns were considered shaped in part by cheap oil and the predominance of automotive transport modes, isn't it important to understand what potential new urban-regional patterns and effects could emerge in a future period of peak oil and rising petrol prices? de Gues (2002) propose that organisational planners need to not just know but also develop foresight into what changes are operating and emerging across their regional landscape. Regions need to innovate like organisations and they argue that this can be done by nurturing more knowledge intensive forms of regional activity as part of a move towards building more adaptive learning regions and regional economies. This discussion gives rise to the notion of planning as facilitating social learning through supporting adaptive stakeholder – community – agency regional learning networks.

3. Re-think planning for complex systems such as city-regions, to move beyond our planning frameworks as control methodologies to collaborative methodologies that encourage, explore and help co-evolve new creative design options notably sustainable forms to suit particular local contexts. This means a new focus on influencing but not attempting to control complex systems (Bateson, 1979, Holling and Meffe, 1996). Pavolich and Kearins (2004) study on tourism networks and how they emerged around the Waitamo Caves Tourism cluster talk of how these macro-organisng network dynamics exhibit what they call structural embeddedness of a macro-culture with emergent stakeholder network values including reciprocal obligation for referrals to each others each product – service. This regional tourism destination evolved from a 'short stay destination' focusing on the caves, into a surrounding cluster of related complimentary adventure products but based around an evolving set of strategic alliances and collaborative efforts. This study suggests planning for complex systems needs to explore how planning methodologies can facilitate the emergence of these macro-network cultures and structural embeddedness.

Following on from this cross-regional planning exercise that constitutes the case study in this thesis, involved this researcher in a second stage, facilitating stakeholders, community, regional tourism and agency representatives co-designing a

Waterfall Way Regional Charter. This set of guidelines, intentions and ethos was developed in order to purposefully influence and guide, but not control the evolution of the new cross-regional ecotourism based tourism network as a re-invented cross-regional destination. This Waterfall Way Charter initiative followed on the example of the Cairns Charter in Northern Queensland as a supporting framework for a new ecotourism industry with similar principles and an agreed ethos, co-designed by stakeholders. This is to suggest that the evolution of complex regional network systems for example can be influenced through agreed collaboratively determined voluntary guidelines or framework rather as opposed to attempting to control such a network through rules and regulations.

A second example of how a stakeholder – community network can evolve is evidenced in the work around the emergence of a new paradigm in sustainable sub-tropical building and urban designs in Florida, USA. Abbate (2006) outlines how demonstration building designs and a new graded sustainable building design framework have encouraged a gradual system transition towards adopting sustainable designs more suited for a subtropical climate. To this researcher, Abbate's work is a highly successful example of nurturing a learning community across what he terms the 'developer community' of building developers, local government and house - apartment buyers. A similar initiative is being initiated in Queensland, Australia where the developer community has established a similar graded sustainability design framework to educate buyers and developers and guide housing development along a new sustainable design patterns more suited to local places and climate zones. At a recent Northern Rivers, NSW roundtable discussion on a transition to a sustainable region, urban planners from across five local government councils called for less planning regulations and regulations. Planners at this roundtable discussion, argued that regional development could be better co-managed by collaboratively developed guidelines and local place managers to co-ordinate between communities, developers and local councils, as a way to help the new sustainable form evolve. As one of Australia's leading architects, Glen Murcutt remarked, regulations only eliminate the worst examples of urban and building design, they don't promote the best designs.

This study has developed a new collaborative planning process that has sought to incorporate these planning for complexity capabilities. In particular to facilitate this

system connectivity and increased stakeholder buy-in through a self-organising conversation and exploratory dialogue around what type of walking track as an ecotourism regional venture would fit into this cross-regional corridor. This methodology is as outlined in Chapters 8 and 9. This methodology also sought to build a shared systems understanding of how this enterprise and how it could be managed sustainably. This researcher felt this shared regional systems understanding, stakeholder buy-in and alignment would best be achieved through a ‘whole of (regional) community approach’ where as many as possible stakeholders, communities and key agency people are engaged in a self-organising conversational dialogue. Jackson (2000) advises a systems understanding is best achieved by an inclusive approach where as many as possible viewpoints are needed to build a systems understanding. This study sought to also refine a soft systems methodology (Checkland, 1999) namely “mudmapping” (Gill, 2001) to develop this shared rich systems picture that embodies the social learning gleaned from stakeholders considering what is an appropriate sustainable regional tourism enterprise for this region.

There are two important implications arising out of this reframe of planning for complexity. First, there is a need for a change in thinking from that of problem solving to an orientation towards achieving a set of pre-set goals or vision of a region as a process of ‘creative thinking’ (De Bono, 1999). In this case, creative thinking is about exploring and co-designing new enterprise designs that are a better fit, more symbiotic with their local landscape and aspire to enhanced sustainability. Second we need to ask ourselves what then are the new roles suggested as an alternative to that of ‘planner as controller’ in dealing with complex systems such as regions, organisations and cities? This discussion suggests planners as catalyzing system connectivity through conversations and supporting networks, as facilitators of social learning and enabling self-organising stakeholder networks to develop and creatively design new enterprises under agreed guidelines.

4.4 Regions as Complex Dynamic Systems and Existing Regional Planning Approaches

The self-organising emergent nature and dynamic nature of cities and regions is now increasingly recognised in the planning literature. Innes & Booher (1999) were pathfinders in outlining the issue of sustainable development of a metropolis as an example of complexity and of dealing with complex systems.

Johnson (2004) more recently portrayed cities as self-organising emergent phenomena. Makse, Halvin & Stanley (1995) modelling work casts doubt on the effectiveness of top-down codified planning approaches to bound or shape the evolving structure of cities and calls for a re-thinking of planning to recognize the self-organising nature of cities and their regions. Batty (Batty, 1995; Batty & Longley, 1996) has written of the Fractal City and calls for more realistic planning approaches based on utilising these bottom-up self-organising processes that shape cities.

Allen (2004) using non-linear modelling has reproduced the self-organising urban clustering patterns and how these spatial patterns, population and job distribution disperse across cities and help define unique regional structures. Further, Allen's modelling of urban and regional development as complex adaptive systems shows the interaction and interconnection between cities with the wider regional system and how different regional and urban structures can co-evolve. More recently there is an increasing interest and recognition of the need for planning for sustainable polycentric urban forms to be undertaken at the city-regional scale such as with Green (2005) in the UK, Bertolini (2005) and Okabe's (2005) consideration of the Randstad region in Holland, encompassing major cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague. In this way planning for cities is seen as increasingly involving planning at the regional scale as evidenced in Australia with the advent of the South-East Queensland Regional Development Plan that considers and plans the urban expansion of cities such as Brisbane and the Gold Coast urban sprawl as it impacts its wider host region. Regions typically consist of cities, a mixture of different sized towns, smaller rural places and villages, rangelands with agricultural and grazing land enterprises, remnant vegetation patches and in Australia, larger tracts of relatively undisturbed wild lands, national parks and State Forests. The Australian regional

pattern is distinguished, say, from the United States with a relative scarcity of medium sized regional towns, sparsely populated rural areas and major metropolitan areas (Diamond, 2005).

Regions also resemble self-organising emergent systems due *to their emergent industry patterns* where increasing returns and ecological economic niches encourage ‘flocking’ of specialist enterprises such as with the NSW New England superfine merino industry and a concentration of a regional university, major rural industry research centres and high quality schools to characterise a renown regional education centre. The existing New England regional system industry structure is highly specialised and dependent on the utilization of rangeland grazing with fine superfine merino wool and beef grazing, the education and the specialised Visiting Conference Events tourism niches.² A number of New England stakeholders in this study expressed their desire to see a new ecotourism industry established to both build greater industry diversity and open up a new source of jobs and a new evolutionary pathway and opportunity. Communities and stakeholders also saw the existing but underexposed series of National Parks, World Heritage areas as important eco-assets that could help support an opportunity for a new ecotourism industry. This indicates regional stakeholders *anticipate the future and are willing to co-operate and to promote new opportunities*.

Regions resemble self-organising emergent systems and conform to the seven defining characteristics identified above. Using the New England region as an example it can be argued that there are large numbers of agents and entities and the degree of *interconnectedness* between them is high given how the different enterprises, urban city and towns form an integrated economic, ecological and social web. There are also *self-organising stakeholders and enterprises and emergent patterns* whether spatial or industrial across regions. The spatial, economic and ecological dimensions stretch and interconnect across the place, community, habitat, village, town, city and regional scale as outlined for a *Panarchy*. Regions such as New England are relatively *open* whether it be to disturbance from external factors such as

² During this particular regional planning study, a number of stakeholders expressed concern about the resilience of the region to possible commodity price falls (wool, beef) and tertiary education funding changes. It is difficult however to assess the regional system state in this case, whether it is approaching a far from equilibrium state and what type of disturbance it would take to propel the region into a near the edge of chaos state.

changes in commodity prices or as cited earlier, export restrictions on a competing cashmere fibre product from China or demographic changes with increased settlement resulting from high property prices and congestion in coastal and metropolis regions. There is *positive and negative feedback* as witnessed in the impacts of eucalyptus dieback disease and land degradation from over-clearing and over-grazing. Positive feedback is evident in the law of increasing returns seeing wool brokers and national wool fashion promotions and research centres locating in the regional centre Armidale. Agents and ecosystems across the region, *self-organise and demonstrate adaptive behaviours* in adopting new grazing techniques such as sustainable cell grazing and regional Land-Care tree planting initiatives in order to respond to the threat of extensive land and pasture degradation.

Figure 4.1 below, demonstrates the adaptive and evolutionary drivers associated with complex adaptive systems including economic changes (commodity price changes), social changes (demographic flows in and out) and social changes such as shifts to major regional centres from small rural places.

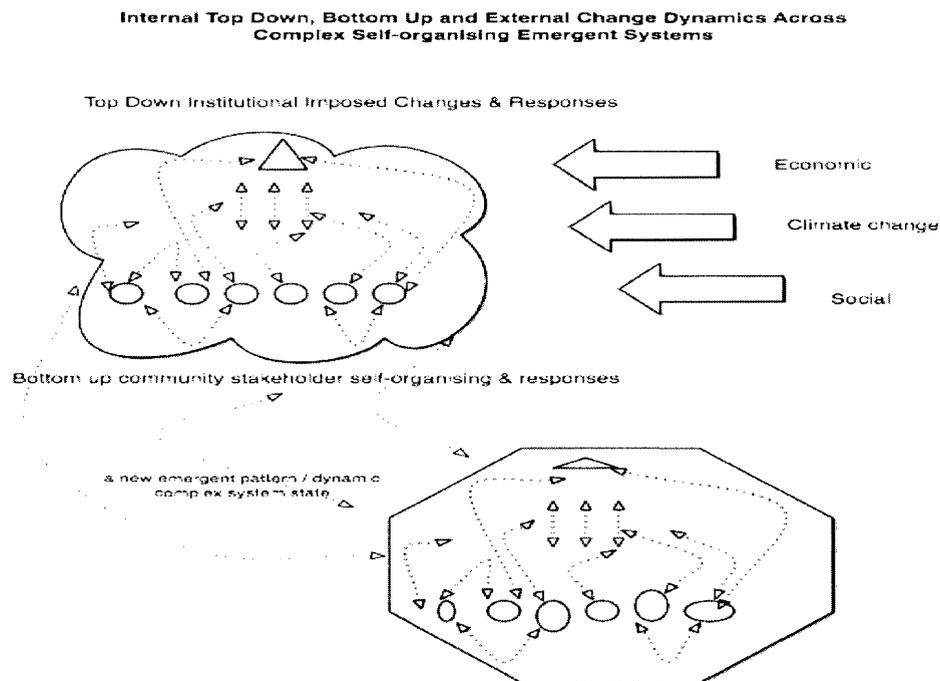
Regions are depicted here as shaped by internal and external causal relationships and bottom-up and top-down self-organising changes. These can include communities demanding for example, better infrastructure services, increased rural sub-division of rural properties, enabling eco-village developments or new agency policies around building codes and water use, regulations on private dams and recycling policies.

This new mental model or theoretical construct of regions and places as particular types of complex self-organising emergent systems contrasts with the view of cities and regions as urban regional spaces across which social, economic and environmental activities operate and need to be controlled through zone-based planning.

Regional planning approaches traditionally employed in Australia, reflect this planning as control approach and can be grouped into two categories. The first group of regional planning policies includes mainly economic policies encouraging decentralisation and later focusing on supporting regional communities and economies through economic restructuring and obviating against economic and

social decline (Teghe and Rolfe (2003). The Federal Government supported area consultative committees (ACC's) conduct regional planning conversations using a strategic planning approach aimed at identifying and supporting potential enterprises and community based projects that can stimulate the regional economy and or help preserve the regional social fabric. Other examples of recent Federal Government regional policies of this type, include funding for road upgrading, enhanced tourist signage on regional highways (Kamilaroi Highway in North-West NSW) and the establishment of Business Enterprise Centres to assist new regional enterprises start-ups. Prevailing regional economic policy approaches tend to focus on offsetting structural regional change; they appear piecemeal and only Western Australia has developed an explicit proactive approach or strategy for building sustainable regions (WA Premiers dept., 2003).

Figure 4.1 A Configuration of the External and Internal Dynamics in Complex Adaptive Systems: adapted from Iyer-Raniga & Treloar (2000)



The second group of regional planning approaches concern ensuring the orderly development of regions to cope with rapid population influx. This regional land-use planning is aimed at controlling through zoning the distribution of social, economic and environmental activities and that adequate infrastructure is available for orderly regional development. These regional plans are an attempt to co-ordinate and integrate the provision of land, services and infrastructure and to avoid the worst aspects of urban sprawl. Examples here include the top-down state planning approaches that consult with key agencies and developer stakeholders such as with the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy, the Northern Rivers Regional Growth Strategy and the South –East Queensland Development Growth Strategy and Regional Plan (2005) that has been designed to help the state capital cope with an expected additional one million people in the next 5 years, the second highest urban growth rate other than Phoenix Arizona.

4.5 Regions as a Special Type of Complex Dynamic System - Co-Evolving Human Ecologies

The notion of human ecology focuses on how human communities and their socio-economic behaviours, both interact, shape and adapt in response to changes across their natural environmental ecosystems and landscape. A human ecology perspective, as initially outlined by Catton and Dunlap (1980) envisaged social behaviour as being part of an on-going inter-relationship, adapting to feedback and changes in their natural landscape and ecosystems. Irvine went further to explore how this human – nature relationship is influenced and in turn shapes, political-legal governance arrangements, social movements and cultural perspectives and practices and, what this writer would add, ways of seeing and knowing as part of our collective psychological perspective. This ecological way of seeing human society as an integral part of its environment looks to empower communities to develop new adaptive strategies through education programs to better understand this pivotal inter-relationship. This later version of the human ecology model, unlike earlier sociological versions, envisages humans as just one of a number of interdependent species in human ecologies. Human ecology is a holistic way of seeing and thinking about human and environmental systems and how they interact. However the human

ecology perspective doesn't privilege human values over other non-human communities and is therefore decidedly less anthropocentric in outlook

This study proposes a model of regions as co-evolving human ecologies; a particular type of complex self-organising emergent system (see figure 4.2 below). Regions are seen as unique entities, both socially, constructed and shaped by their environmental landscape and the interactions and feedback across and from outside their social, environmental and economic sub-systems. They are depicted as having the potential of becoming evolutionary systems given the capability of some of its social actors and enterprises to identify opportunities, new enterprises and to re-think, appraise, co-design and re-story themselves along new evolutionary pathways. The model of regions proposed in this study, then extends the complexity theoretical framework to view regions as interdependent and co-evolving social-economic-ecological and cultural systems. This differs from an earlier notion of regions advanced by Allen (2004) who depicted them as only complex adaptive systems, their emergent patterns being primarily shaped by their agent's self-organising activity. This regional human ecology model, as noted earlier in the Chapter, adopts a transformational rather than an adaptive teleology as used by Allen (200?)

This regional human ecology model reflects Norgaard's (1994) co-evolutionary framework developed to explain the interconnected relationships and dynamics across ecological economic systems. Norgaard demonstrated how the governance structure and the regional economic system of enterprises in the Amazon developed around a system of ports, being shaped and having adapted to the dense natural landscape where the river became the focus of transporting and communication; roads being impossible to construct initially. This human ecology model of regions endeavours to reflect the 'evolutionary vision' systems perspective and way of thinking articulated by Boulding (1978) and Janstch (1981). They envisaged systems evolution as a holistic phenomenon emanating through co-evolutionary patterns interconnected across the biological, ecological, socio-biological, psychological and socio-cultural scales.

However it is important to point out that the initial influence on developing this particular model of regions was deeply influenced by the researcher's work and conversations with the Northern Tablelands Aboriginal community.

“Whenever we discussed ‘country’ I was reminded that it was an integrated notion; it was the one thing and everyone and everything was part of it and its dreaming; you couldn’t separate out the social, the economic and the environment like the ‘whitefellas’ talked about with the triple bottom line notion of sustainability. Further I was reminded that it was the culture that was the key to helping hold it altogether, to keeping it well.” (pers. comm.)

The particular regional model being advocated in this study, likewise, views the predominant cultural story, its ways of seeing, thinking, knowing (its notion of science and cosmology), as shaping the social political - governance structures, the type of planning and how regional ecologies are managed. For example, in Chapter 3, the predominant current cultural story and planning narrative was linked with hierarchical top-down planning approaches, mechanistic versus holistic systems thinking and a pre-occupation with ensuring and controlling orderly development and on-going economic growth. However the regional model, advanced in this study, poses that these social and cultural precepts or sub-systems not just shape but in turn are shaped by, adapt and at times either evolve or collapse in response to changes across its natural living systems (Diamond, 2005).

The human ecology model of regions is depicted below in figure 4.2 showing interdependent, co-evolving human and environmental communities.

In this model the cultural system is envisaged as a dynamic and influential part of the regional ecology, helping shape the institutional design, governance arrangements and particular decision-making processes.

Cultures encompass cosmologies as ways of making sense of the world, particular ways of seeing, knowing and thinking as knowledge systems or ‘science’ and ways of exchanging ideas (Davidson, 2006:v) Culture incorporates practices that encompass

worldviews, values around which societies and communities story their world whether it be through a quest for on-going materialist development, enlightenment or as nomads living in balance with their natural world. Culture here, is seen here as a dynamic evolutionary process being shaped by contesting cultural narratives, new emergent worldviews and ideas.

Figure 4.2 A Model of Regions as Co-Evolving Human Ecologies

Regions - their 'communities', ecosystems, industries and socio-cultural & governance arrangements as Co-Evolving Human Ecologies

a particular type of complex dynamic system that can grow, adapt, stagnate, collapse or evolve. At a particular system state such as at the edge of chaos, regions, their communities or aggregated into nation can evolve along a new attractor pathway or collapse into chaos and endemic conflict such as Zimbabwe currently

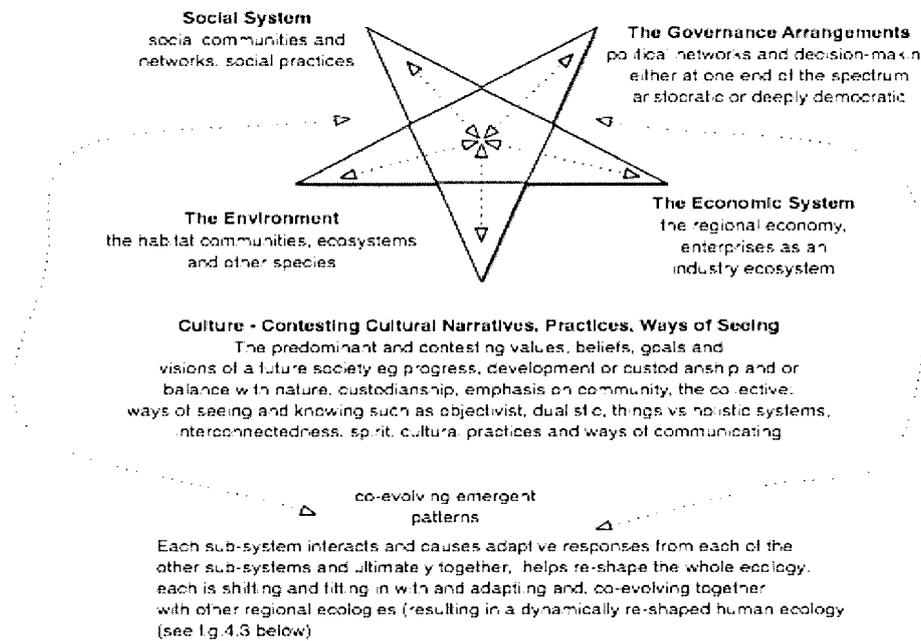
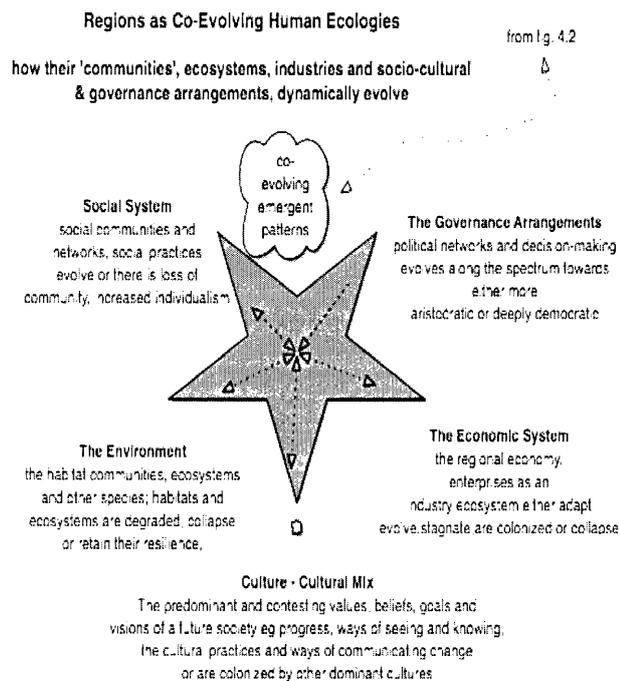


Figure 4.3 seeks to describe the dynamics of how a regional human ecology can evolve. For example the growth of a narcissist consumer culture (Lasch, 1980) it could be argued may reduce a sense of community, ramp up unsustainable levels of consumption, production and add to environmental pollution and degradation. A shift towards a more eco-sensitive and aware culture could reverse these trends.

Fig. 4.3 Co-Evolving Regional Human Ecologies



The building of eco-villages, their emphasis on renewing community and adopting more climate change neutral design and more efficient local, self-sufficient water and energy initiatives now, underway in some Australian regions is an indication of the latter cultural trend. Both trends it seems maybe operating in this time of social, economic and cultural transition.

Regional and place communities, as suggested above, are not homogenous but tend to consist of diverse groups of stakeholders and differing interests. Local communities can share some values such as the importance of preserving place and landscape and around the importance of providing jobs for the young and community services. But communities themselves have their own actor-stakeholder networks and may differ on matters relating to what type of development is needed. Communities and their ideas about what sort of development is needed constitute an on-going contested discourse.

This study, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, highlights, at times strong disagreement about what type of walking track was needed and where it could be routed. However while there was healthy dis-sensus, the regional communities in being given the opportunity to co-design what they considered a sustainable track enterprise were able to reach agreement about what would work and how it could be sustainably managed in this case. Regional community fortunes are linked to those of their regional industries and may decline as regional industry restructures. In this study communities realised new enterprise opportunities and industry pathways needed to be developed; the question was what type of walking ecotourism would fit in with the social and environmental fabric and how it could be managed.

Industry enterprises are envisaged as an integral part of the regional ecology but in this studies model, regional industry is depicted as its own co-evolving business enterprise community or ecosystem as outlined by Moore (1996). Moore sees regional enterprises competing but also co-evolving with each other. Moore (1996:7) argues that opportunities and new enterprise pathways in regions depend on developing new partnerships that build on the existing strengths and capabilities of enterprises 'to create more attractive futures' through innovative ideas. Moore provides an alternative ecological and emergent model of regional industry where sustainability depends on forging new partnered network arrangements. Regional planning needs to be reconfigured to enable this sort of on-going social and enterprise stakeholder dialogue that explores and facilitates the co-design of new enterprise pathways. A recent study on successful Australian industry enterprise points out that it is the 'system integrators' that are succeeding internationally (Gittins, 2007) whether it be in mining, construction or transport. Enterprises who succeed are capable of building

an ecosystem of system designers and specialist partnering service providers to build new enterprises that have to develop new local solutions as integrated supply chains or systems. This indicates the need for regional planners to re-think the old control paradigm and consider how new regional integrated system enterprises can be supported through new planning dialogues that mimic the self-organising dynamics of regional enterprises.

This particular co-evolutionary human ecology model of regions sees the socio-institutional governance arrangements as an important fifth tier in regional human ecologies. In Australia regional landscapes these socio-political governance arrangements have their own system architecture being characterized by a hierarchical government agencies and departments resembling silo operations of ministerial concerns. The decision-making process could be said to reside within aristocratic networks of key stakeholders, agencies and local government shaped by a predominant but contested modernist cultural narrative with set modernist agendas around progress and continuous growth. Buchannan's (2002) work on social network architecture indicates that a social - governance systems design influences a systems cohesiveness and adaptability to change. The existing institutional arrangements could be seen to entail a structural embeddedness, reinforcing the way business is done as usual. Researchers from the Resilience school have indicated how institutional arrangements, existing mental models, myopic perspectives, ways of thinking and managing, comprised the key obstructions and learning obstructions to managing these systems sustainably such as Lee (1995) mentioned earlier.

This human ecology model is seen as a better representation of a regional systems structure and of the co-evolutionary dynamics across their socio-cultural, economic and ecological sub-systems. It seeks to enhance our current understanding of the evolutionary dynamics of regions. Norgaard (2005, 1988) sees changes in values, developing new knowledge, technologies i.e. changes within social systems as capable of driving evolutionary change whereas Richerson (1985) sees changes in resource availability as bringing about social system change. The forecasts of 'peak oil scenarios' with the end of cheap oil and fossil fuel energy sources fits within this perspective. This particular model of regions as co-evolving human ecologies also sees the importance of cultural change as a potential driving mechanism for

evolutionary transitions. Cultures are seen here as dynamic, their world views, values, ways of seeing the world around them and their ways of knowing or epistemologies and ways of being in and in relation to their world as themselves evolving in response to other cultures they are in contact with. Cultural stories evolve and are superseded by others. Polak (1973) has outlined the cycle of cultural evolution and has pointed out that 'anticipatory' or visionary cultures can introduce a new social, economic and technological climate that can lead social change and development such as with the Renaissance. Markley (1976) suggests that new cultural stories emerge when the old dominant culture, its policies and structures are unable to address the key issues and problems of its time and suggests this time was nearing; this view could be re-affirmed with the advent of the current global climate change and other social-economic stressors articulated by Homer-Dixon (2006).

The holistic, co-evolving human ecology model advocated in this study seeks to build on earlier social systems theories notably Parsons, Giddens and Luhman and add to the structural understanding of regions in terms of the Panarchy model proposed by Holling. Talcott Parsons (1951) first employed a simple systems view of societies but this functionalist and socially determinist perspective explained social behaviour and roles were shaped and constrained to fit within societies' structure and to meet the functional requirements of its key institutions. Parsons was more concerned with the institutional make-up and how people needed to fit in to make a stable social system. Giddens (1990) outlines a social theory of 'structuration' of how social structures shape but don't determine social behaviours and roles. Rather that individuals employing purposive behaviour around new ideas can re-shape institutions, so facilitating new institutional responses and cultural change. Luhman (1989) according to Norgaard (1994) takes a co-evolutionary view where the social system is involved in a dynamic interaction with their ecological systems, developing policy responses to signals or environmental feedback. However Giddens (1990) also notes, a social system, including its communities, institutions and stakeholders can misperceive or have delayed or ineffective policy response to environmental feedback. The contested and delayed response to mounting evidence of climate change to date supports this co-evolving perspective.

The co-evolving human ecology model of regions advocated in this thesis, seeks to build on two sets of insights about social phenomena. Firstly, Luhmann's (1990) work on social phenomena that he saw as underpinned by self-organising, social networks that enable communication (and learning). Interconnections across new emerging social networks and stakeholders are also facilitated through the Internet electronically. Also influential here, is the work of Habermas who depicted social phenomena, as being comprised of two major processes namely social institutions as shaping society and its people's behaviours through rules and conditioning and, the 'life-world' or social processes where we engage across different ways of knowing and making sense of our world. To Habermas, the 'life-world' and communicative action is where we can develop new understandings and insights in a hermeneutical process. It is an arena or communicative open space for emancipating ourselves from our old ways of thinking and seeing the world. This presents the possibility and space for a cultural evolution that this researcher later argues is necessary for a transition towards sustainable futures. Capra (2002:200-212) outlines that such a transition entails mastering a new set of literacies is needed including eco-literacy, understanding the complex non-linear, cyclic and emergent nature of ecosystems and social systems as well as eco-design, the fostering of zero waste recycling and Type Three industrial, urban and food systems.

A human ecology perspective helps explain how Australian regions, their languages, cultural practices and ecosystems have evolved. Flannery (2004) in his classic study of kangaroos outlined how the introduction of the dingo in Northern Australia some 5000 years ago profoundly affected the large and diverse marsupial kangaroo populations that so dominated many of Australian regional ecosystems to the south. With an abundance of native flowering grasses from the decline in kangaroos, new seed cake foods became available. Trade increased, the number of archaeological sites and peoples rose and near 90 per cent of the Aboriginal dialects came to be derived from that time on, from one language group, the Pama-Nyungan thought to be where using the dingo to hunt was first mastered. Flannery likened it to the spread of the English language that resulted from English shipping and expanded trade across a global empire.. The introduction of the dingo from Indonesia triggered a time of significant cultural development; enabled bigger and more frequent cultural gatherings of Aboriginal peoples due the larger more diverse foods being accessed as

any group with access to dingoes could significantly increase their harvest of kangaroo.

One question posed in this study is whether the regional institutional arrangements and governance structures that have evolved to date may hinder or bound evolutionary transitions in the times ahead. In NSW, state and local governance arrangements have been more concerned with the provision and accountability of key social (education, health, sanitation etc) and industry infrastructure services (power, ports, rail and roads etc). The major changes to governance have been around the privatisation of services and via more efficient network service arrangements. But governance arrangements need to evolve to face the challenges of building sustainable regions, addressing cross-regional environmental problems and regional climate change. This study sees the importance of developing new regional planning methodologies particularly to catalyze the emergence of new governance arrangements including self-organising regional learning communities networks to better develop adaptive responses and evolutionary regional shifts towards sustainable futures.

4.6 A New Planning Focus for Regions as Co-Evolving Human Ecologies

Our understanding of complex adaptive systems has been much informed by the Resilience – Adaptive School project that has centred on the sustainable natural resource management of social-environmental systems such as regional fisheries, waterways and catchments, rangelands and forests. This group of researchers have focused on policy development to enhance the resilience of these systems, their adaptability and ability to undergo system transformations in response to disturbance and, in phases near system collapse and re-organisation such as over-harvesting, impact of new technologies, practices or climate change. Walker, Carpenter, Andies, Abel et al (2002) have emphasized managers and stakeholders need to ensure adaptive capacity to respond to challenges and disturbance by policy experiments and ‘flexible learning’. ‘Resilience being the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance, re-organise and yet persist in a similar state’ although its possible at times to undergo transformation into a new system state e.g. into a different forest system structure that could include new operations, practices and management arrangements

(Gunderson, Folke, Janssen, 2006:1). There are two major limitations of this Adaptive – Resilience management perspective. The first concerns the pre-occupation with resilience as a regional system goal. Embedded poverty for example may be a feature of a particular regional social-ecological system and an existing attractor state. A planning focus on resilience, in these instances, could reinforce or lock-in, degraded socio-economic or ecological system states. Adaptive planning with a focus on preserving resilience can come to resemble a functionalist approach with planning strategies being developed towards pre-determined rather than evolving system goals.

This dissertation has suggested that regions are a special type of complex self-organising emergent system having the potential to become evolutionary systems. Like all human systems, regional stakeholders have the ability to communicate new ideas, understandings and learning through experience, develop new technologies, practices. They also have foresight into potential changes and opportunities and are able to collaborate around new enterprises (Holling, 2001). This ability to evolve arises because regional stakeholders, communities and agencies have the self-organising ability at times, to re-think, re-imagine and re-invent themselves as some organisations have done. In regions, this can involve the interweaving of a new cultural story. Jaenstch and Waddington (1976) and Hubbard (1998) first outlined this potential for conscious evolution. Hubbard argued that conscious evolution is possible through stakeholder learning and the adoption of new cultural memes (coherent ideas or new cultural stories) and ways of seeing, knowing and re-thinking new potential pathways. An example of an evolutionary shift, for an organisation is evidenced, for example, in the experience of the Australian truck transport company, TNT, being first transformed by diversifying into a freight entity and then adding air and sea transport at a global scale. The evolutionary shift came with the metamorphosis into an international logistics entity, relying on strategic partnerships to deliver on-time inputs into their partner's manufacturing and service operations.

Florida (2002:216-7) gives the example of Pittsburgh, a heavy industry and steel manufacturing regional centre in the USA, endeavouring to re-invent itself into a new information services economy. The evolutionary shift came about from a shift away from economic policy incentives to cultivating new culturally diverse and accepting locales that would be attractive to the new information workers and the enterprises

they would bring. Florida showed how city regions can evolve successfully by consciously researching the critical success factors and re-thinking novel strategies such as the importance of specific cultural policy attractors. While resilience and adaptive capability may be at times important, enterprises and regions facing intensifying global competition, need to also foster the capability to evolve into new identities that foster novelty with unique selling positions, competitive advantage and whose structure, values, ways of seeing, knowing and being, are qualitatively different from before.

This study, in investigating planning as catalyzing emergence and novelty, explores the possibility of planning as enabling evolutionary transitions in regions. It is suggested here that there is a need for new planning methodologies to focus on fostering four capabilities amongst regional stakeholders, agencies and communities to support the potential for regions to consciously evolve. These include new collaborative planning methodologies that mimic the self-organising nature of regional systems, forego attempts to control and support 'evolutionability'. Evolutionability is termed here in this thesis as the capability of a system, or a regional human ecology in this study, to consciously evolve by;

1. Supporting self-organising, adaptive learning network across regional stakeholders, communities and agencies. Across Australian regions there have emerged a number of these adaptive learning networks seeking to redress the environmental land degradation and issues of salinity and protection of water catchments. These include the Australia -wide Land Care network of landholders, self-organising regionally in response to the theme of land repair through replanting native species as outlined by Ewing (1996) and Baker (1997). It also includes self-organising community, landholder, agencies and environmental philanthropists, collaborating around wide ranging environmental stewardship programs. Examples here include the Condamine Alliance in South-east Queensland (Davidson 2006), Binning and Feilman, 2000). Other examples of informal regional learning communities, what Wenger has termed communities of practice in disseminating organisational learning, are the various regional enterprises that have developed 'opportunistic farming practices' as a response to erratic rainfall and prolonged drought, including no till, direct drill

seeding and adaptive planting practices (Walquist, 2004). These informal, self-organising regional learning communities have self-organised in response to both prolonged drought, recent erratic rainfall and increased world competition across cropping, and grazing agri-industries in Australia over the last 10 years in particular. They provide regional communities and enterprises with the opportunity to develop a better understanding of their regions as unique systems, their potential opportunities and changing capabilities. The methodology in this case study deliberately sought to catalyze the emergence of a similar a cross-regional 'tourism' learning network through its regional planning dialogue approach.

2. Facilitating a self-organising conversational dialogue that supports stakeholders to deconstruct, re-think and re-story the dominant cultural and contesting planning narratives that have shaped the evolution of the region in the past. This thesis in Chapter 3, has similarly sought to extend the narrative metaphor to regions; regional planning being described as interweaving contesting narratives to shape the future growth and evolutionary pathway of regions. Regions, like Boje (2006) suggests organisations, have both dominant and marginalised narratives competing around a regional development; sometimes, competing narratives are blended. Waller (2003) in developing new regional planning methodologies for developing sustainable regions in Western Australia has used storytelling to help communities reflect on how their place communities have been shaped by different narratives. This process helps the different groups hear and make explicit each other's stories, including the Indigenous communities and to help build connectedness to place. The next stage is to ask these place communities to reflect on how they can re-story their region and communities sustainably.

3. Planning as a reflexive learning process to develop and refine new more culturally appropriate and systems orientated, collaborative planning methodologies as are discussed in Chapter 6 and 7.

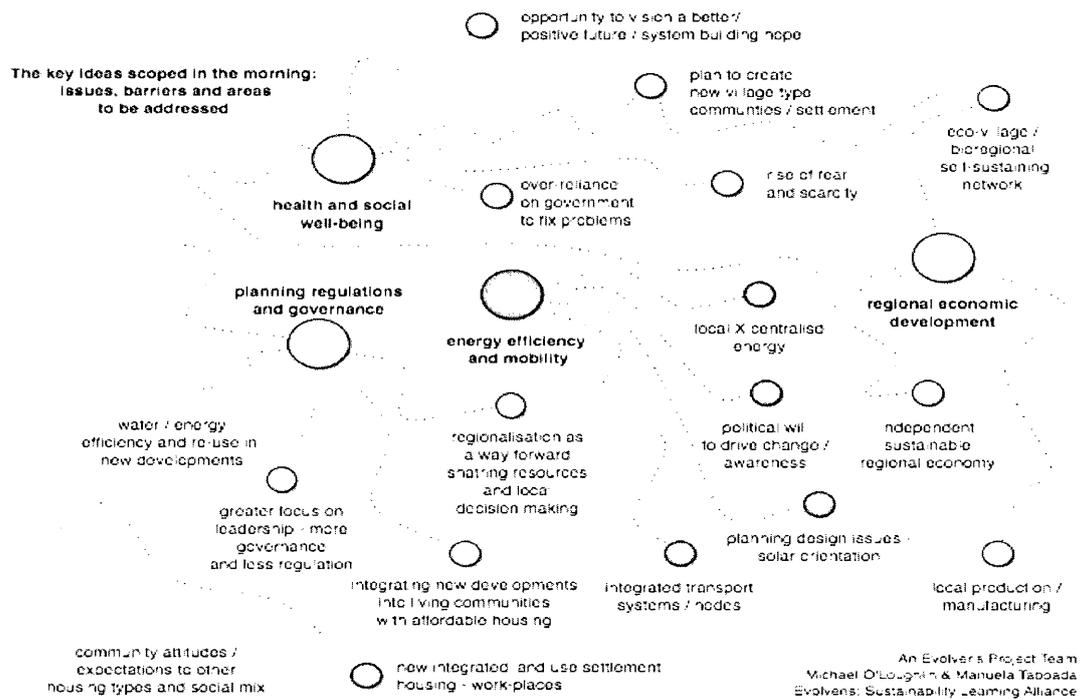
4. Supporting communities, stakeholders and agencies in these self-organising conversations or 'swarming' to co-appraise and co-design new regional

opportunities and industry pathways. For example this researcher has been engaged during 2006 in such a regional dialogue process, developing system maps to facilitate a conversational process about the theme of a transition towards a sustainable Northern Rivers Region in northern NSW.

Figure 4.4 details one of 8 roundtable conversations of regional community leaders, local government mayors, councillors from five local councils and enterprise industry stakeholders from the Northern Rivers region of NSW who gathered to reconfigure and map out a new story for the future sustainable development of their region. This particular conversation map in Fig. 4.4 is from the seventh regional roundtable discussion about designing a new pathway and outlines some of the key design issues these stakeholders considered pivotal in leading a transition to a sustainable Northern Rivers Regional Human Ecology (O'Loughlin and Taboada, 2006b). In this map, the key issues needing to be addressed for developing a sustainable regional human ecology included a focus on health and social well-being, re-thinking planning regulations and governance to allow for eco-villages and a new regional development that emphasized utilising local production and food. Further discussion was recommended across regional communities around existing expectations on housing types and encouraging a more diverse social and housing mix.

These roundtable conversations resembled a self-organising regional dialogue, a type of stakeholder self-organising or 'swarming' to re-think how the region could evolve differently.

Fig. 4.4 Northern Rivers NSW Roundtable Dialogue – Towards a Sustainable Regional Human Ecology



4.7 Some Conclusions

This Chapter has applied a complexity theoretical framework to regions and has outlined the capabilities needed for a new planning methodology explicitly designed for addressing complexity at the regional scale. An argument was presented that regions can be seen as a particular type of complex self-organising emergent system who's socio-cultural, economic and environmental sub-systems interact and co-evolve. This model of regions as self-organising, co-evolving human ecologies, it was argued, requires a new planning approach centred around supporting self-organising informal learning networks and reflexive processes that encourage stakeholders, communities and agencies to consider how they could identify and re-story new regional pathways.

However, this discussion of regions needs to be placed within the context of the 'new regionalism' that proposes regions as the new important, economic driving force and governance planning entities as globalisation undermines the power of existing national states. Regions according to this school of thought, exhibit geographical spatial and economic clustering patterns that can at times demonstrate extraordinary

growth and revitalisation such as Silicone Valley (Rainnie and Grobbelaar, 2006). Part of their focus is how to revitalize depressed regions and in developing new governance structures and practices to enable this. However, Davies (2007) views this emergent 'new regionalism' approach as failing to clearly define what regions are. This complexity-framed model of regions seeks to answer this criticism as well as provide some insights into what planning for regions as a particular type of complex co-evolutionary system can entail.

The following two Chapters explore what is required of a new, complexity framed collaborative planning approach for co-appraising and co-designing sustainable regional enterprises and pathways and what a culturally appropriate regional planning process could entail.

Chapter 5

Planning for Sustainability at the Regional Scale as a Social Learning Dialogue

5.1 Chapter Focus and Scope

This Chapter focuses on the issue of planning for sustainability at the regional scale using the example of a sustainable regional tourism enterprise as a case study. The ambiguous, contested notions of sustainability and sustainable tourism are explored and a case is presented for a holistic, context and place -dependent notion of sustainability. Included in this discussion is an exploration of what constitutes a sustainable regional tourism enterprise. A brief overview is given of the existing approaches to planning for sustainability and sustainable tourism. Regional tourism destinations are reconsidered as self-organising emergent enterprise, stakeholder and community system networks. The Chapter concludes on the need for planning for a sustainable regional tourism destination network to employ a social (systems) learning dialogue process building a regional knowledge ecology and outlines the need for developing new regional stakeholder partnered governance structures to enable this.

5.2 Contested Notions of Sustainability

Sustainability and sustainable development are ambiguous and contested notions as suggested by Meppem and Bourke (1999). The foundational definition of sustainable development by the Brundtland Commission suggests a general notion of economic progress meeting “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland World Commission on Environment and Development WCED, 1987:43). This broad -reaching definition of sustainability has seen a multiplicity of meanings emerge. These meanings range from the long-term viability of an enterprise to urban development that takes into account and seeks to minimize its environmental, social and heritage impacts and still

optimises the economic return as such suggested by the notion of 'smart growth' outlined by the US Environmental Protection Agency the USA . Goodland and Ledec (1987:36) paint a picture of sustainable development that concerns social justice in not jeopardizing the needs of future societies but that involves a pattern of social and structural economic transformations.

There is however, much rhetoric given over to the notion of sustainability especially concerning policy development in the state of NSW. A State Sustainability Commissioner was appointed in NSW to review and re-badge major policy initiatives to demonstrate that the State government was taking steps towards a sustainable future. This initiative was designed to assess the sustainability of state government initiatives and identified; the need for example to develop sustainable urban light rail transport systems and housing re-designs but these initiatives in NSW have been fragmented. Some effective initiatives in NSW have included the BASIX system that requires new housing to meet new standards on energy and water efficiency. Both initiatives have been under pressure in the face of on-going pressure to accommodate a rapidly swelling population of Sydney of and housing developers and the current Federal Government demanding the extension of growth corridors and cheap land. In contrast, the Western Australian State Government has adopted a sustainability strategy to guide sustainable regional development so that a balance is preserved between long-term economic growth, preserving biodiversity, ecological integrity and a sense of place and on-going quality of life for communities (housing, health, jobs, community). This notion of sustainability infers a balance focusing on a wider notion of human wellbeing. The Western Australian government has also supported research into community planning methodologies for sustainable regions. But Australian cities in particular face a water availability, clean energy and infrastructure crisis. What is termed sustainable in Australia currently is now a shifting, pragmatic and contested notion in the face of these various social, economic and environmental pressures. The question planners and stakeholders face now is how to identify pathways and strategies towards new sustainable city, regional entities and enterprises? Again, that depends on your formulation and understanding of sustainability

Early business thinking about sustainability involves an operational notions and goals typified by triple bottom line reporting as outlined by the Business Council of

Australia (2003). This mechanistic, performance reporting focuses on managing to pre-determined operational goals, achieving resource efficiency and effectiveness and proving their worth as a socially and environmentally responsible corporate citizen. This formulation seeks to optimise growth but to minimize both social and ecological and inter-generational impacts. This goal monitoring and reporting approach has been successfully used to both monitor and sustainably manage the Mt. Whistler ski resort complex in British Columbia in Canada (Waldron and Williams, 2002). Their sustainable management approach relies on a number of recycling practices and a pressure-state-response framework whereby policy initiatives are measured against their impact on nominated sustainability indicators. The sugar industry in Mossman, North Queensland also sees sustainable cane production as a formula of industry and local land-use practices to minimize soil sediment and nutrient run-off that has impacted on the Great Barrier Reef previously (Jones, 2005).

Portland, Oregon, a leader in developing sustainable cities and adaptive responses to climate changes encourages bottom-up community planning initiatives and demonstrates their success through sustainability indicators. These include reductions in city energy use, increases in commuter cycling and public transit usage, emission reductions and a transition over to renewable wind energy (Farrelly, 2007). Kruger (2001) helps clarify the dilemma around the ambiguity of sustainability in pointing out that only the implementation of sustainable practices can be measured as sustainability is a guiding narrative or 'fiction'. Her work in planning and decision-making around sustainable forest landscapes asks whether we are dealing with sustainable forest yields, sustainable forest ecosystem structures or a wider notion of sustainable forests and their surrounding communities (Kruger, 2001:174). Each different focus presents different strategies for sustainability.

Meppem and Bourke's (1999) environmental discourse analysis outlines sustainability as encompassing a range of responses to the present ecological crisis including both a quest for utopia narrative that can hide the different conflicting interests. The view articulated in this study, is that sustainability is a contested planning space into which planners, stakeholders, agencies and communities need to expand the horizon of our understandings as we re-think our existing planning narratives, methodologies and our underpinning modernist cultural story. As Cocks (2003:208) has outlined the

difficulty of planning for 'deep futures', sustainability and sustainable development is seen here as a type of 'wicked problem' (Rittel and Webber, 1973) where the problem is difficult to define; its formulation and parameters seem to change as each new policy solution creates its own feedback effects and where the problem itself seems to evolve as we expand our understanding of it.

Sustainability as an evolving set of smart design practices, siting options and energy and water saving technologies is evident in the discussion around sustainable housing (Fox, 2005). This is taken further in the emerging dialogue around 'eco-design' principles (ref) and 'mimicry' (Benyus, 1997). Biomimicry seeks to mimic the unique smart designs of nature to develop more energy efficient products and agricultural systems such as prairie grazing. This work draws on the wisdom of nature's systems designs designated as system types one, two and three. System One behaviour can be likened to some instances of human exploitation of a region's natural resources where a rapidly growing population of locusts consumes all the 'food' in a container and once it is used up either dies there or moves on. System Two behaviour is where the consuming species develops adaptive behaviours once the food source is being used up, looking for alternatives. System Three sees the consuming species proactively designing a sustainable or self-sustaining system where the waste is re-used as a food source for other food sources (Benyus, 1997). System Three designs require, a cultural shift in how we think, see and know our world, incorporating the value of recycling and mimicking nature's wisdom with such initiatives as zero waste manufacturing where all waste becomes an input for another enterprise.

Newman (2005) sets out an alternative dynamic process notion of sustainability that recognised complex systems and feedback processes in contrast with that of the goal focused notion of sustainability above. She advocates sustainable development based on developing innovations and exploring different pathways in a climate of uncertainty. Koontz (2006) sees citizen and community involvement and action as a critical element in sustainability and sustainable development. Sustainable Sydney 2030, the strategy for a sustainable Sydney articulated by their Mayor, Moore (2007) calls for collaborative process to re-think and re-imagine the city, its public spaces, renewable energy and water and integrated transport systems where citizens become creatively engaged in transforming their city. However this strategy faces an

enormous struggle against the entrenched power of a highly interventionist NSW state government concerned with appeasing major developers. Roseland et al (2005) envisage sustainable communities and urban development as a case of mobilizing the creative efforts of citizens and their governments to strengthen all forms of community capital which they define as human, social, economic, physical, natural and cultural capital. Camagni, Capelloir and Nijkamp (1998) discuss the notion of a sustainable process and fit based on implementing policy for developing sustainable cities as a balance and trade-off across the environmental, social and economic city environments.

Iyer–Rainiga and Treloar (2000) extend this co-evolutionary process perspective on sustainability. They cite examples of sustainability as a co-evolutionary process such as Wallner, Narodoslowsky and Moser (1996) where changes across both economic and regional environments necessitate changes in the structure of both the economic and social systems; sustainable ‘islands’ develop across regions influencing and demonstrating new sustainable practices and states. Similarly, Dovers and Handmer (1992:272) describe sustainable development as a ‘pathway’ of on-going adaptive changes. Iyer- Rainiga and Treloar take this co-evolving notion of sustainability further and *promote self-organising bottom-up community efforts as a key part of a successful strategy for developing along sustainable pathways and enabling new emergent states and cite Land Care in Australia as examples of such community self-organising.*

Wheeler (1998) presents a holistic notion of sustainable urban development based on building the social and ecological health of cities with compact, efficient resource use and, an emphasis good living amongst restored natural environmental systems and preservation of local cultures. Scott and Park (2000) in their study on sustainable rural communities in New Zealand, *identify locally defied notions of social participation, equity and livelihood as constituting social sustainability.* O’Hara (1995) in her countenance of planning approaches for a future sustainable South Florida stresses local community responses that focus on nurturing regional ecological and social functions that are characterised by ‘concreteness’, ‘connectedness’ and ‘diversity’. These conditions refers to the fluid social responses to ecological changes (connectedness) and feedback due to impacts from economic activity and the development of local strategies that enable social and environmental diversity and are

concrete in that focus on the local peoples' experiences say of the Everglades ecosystem as a place that needs to be preserved. Here again, Kruger (2001) is particularly insightful stressing that *the potential for sustainability depends on community involvement* for developing new strategies to be owned and to be 'effective on the ground' as sustainability is a local context and place dependent notion.

Local knowledge about a place, including the holistic experience, valued aesthetics and history of a place, helps determine what sustainable practices can work and are worth investing in to build their sustainable place (Brown, 1999).

Like O'Hara, Kruger emphasizes the connection and responsiveness between the ecological changes and the social, local response and relationship building as important for building sustainability. Kruger sees strategies for developing sustainable places (that include landscapes) being based on community involvement and social learning which concerns building a shared understanding of the uniqueness, importance, the key issues, stakeholder concerns and reflecting and working through together the possible local strategies for sustainability. Cocks (2003) in his research on strategies for a sustainable 'deep futures' concludes that social learning is the crucial strategy for developing the new necessary knowledge/s to enable this. Social learning refers to how people learn together by reflecting on an experience or issue (Bandura, 1977) and has been used in industry in team problem solving and learning what works best where and when. Korten (1980) sees it as way to generate new knowledge and action. Kruger views social learning as a deliberative deepening democratic process and contrasts this generative learning approach to the predominant expert led education around top-down developed policies as to what they think needs to be done.

This thesis advocates developing a holistic notion, including social, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions of regional sustainability that are place and context dependent. Further, this study like Kruger and Korten, advocates that solutions to sustainability can be socially constructed through a facilitated collaborative dialogue and social learning process with communities, regional stakeholders and agencies.

This reflects the learnt experience as cited by Diamond (2005) in the Pacific and New

Guinea of how communities successfully used their local knowledge of their place and ecosystems to talk through and review strategies to co-manage sustainable pathways (refer following section 5.3 for this discussion). What is considered sustainable then rests on assembling a shared understanding of the place or regional dynamics and how best to respond and adapt to feedback and changes in the wider surrounding economic, social and environmental landscapes.

Sustainability and sustainable development can also be seen as cultural constructs. An Australian Indigenous perspective presented by James (2003) talks more of how the Pitjantjatjara custodian responsibilities around nurturing, sustaining the patterns that connects all and helps everything to endure. This includes ceremony, singing, walking 'country' and the culturally shaped practices of burning country, maintaining water holes and respecting spirit and lore. This is a clear holistic human ecology example of culture and social practices deeply connected and co-evolving with land. The Wiradjurri Peoples perspective, expressed by Anita Heiss outlines the indigenous values in clear contradistinction to our modernist western societies as "prioritising the the community over the individual, responsibilities over rights and co-operation over competition" (Javin, 2006).

Meppem and Gill (1998) outlined planning for sustainability as a learning process and journey. Gill (1998, 2001) has worked with place and regional communities to explore what place qualities were considered unique and what needed enhancing as part of a sustainable place management strategy partnered by local government and the communities. Scott and Gough (2003) see sustainable development as an on-going learning process involving local action learning initiatives and capacity building in governance and where stakeholders can engage and dialogue across a diversity of approaches for sustainability.

The Adaptive Resilience Alliance emphasizes the importance of adaptive learning from policy-making experiments for sustainably managing social – environmental systems such as forests, fisheries, and rangelands and shared waterways. Their research emphasizes the importance of managing to enhance these systems resilience, for the managing stakeholders to build an enhanced adaptive capability to respond to environmental feedback and to overcome institutional blockages and myopia. Their

focus, as discussed in Chapter Four earlier was to develop a deeper understanding of the dynamics and adaptive cycle of these systems and in particular to avoid collapse from disturbance whether from the impact of new technologies, harvesting practices or climate change. They also seek to facilitate transformations or double loop learning (changes in the underpinning theory, mental model, assumptions or values) around how to manage these systems more effectively to avoid collapse. This school of thought represents a major evolution in natural resource management developing a holistic dynamic framework for sustainably managing forests and other regional resources as complex adaptive systems. Their emphasis on sustainable management as focusing on resilience is however problematic when the problem context concerns facilitating sustainable regions, cities and organisations. Chapter Four explored how these phenomena could be denoted as self-organising, complex dynamic systems with the potential to co-evolve or undergo evolutionary transitions under certain system conditions. Ecological resilience is important in coral reefs and forests to withstand disturbance from say cyclones and recover its ecosystems structure and function or at least enable a more adaptive changed system to be sustainable. Resilience to Holling (2000) is not an engineering notion of a return to some equilibrium or stabilized state as say with a manufactured material but a dynamic state that preserves or allows a change in system structure. Planning to encourage social resilience is certainly an important element in sustainable cities as noted in New Orleans where social resilience proved durable only amongst certain social-cultural communities such as the Cambodian community who were able to self-organise their own community food, health and refuge responses after Cyclone Tracey and survive intact as a community in their neighbourhood (Campanella, 2006). Homer-Dixon (2007) points out that planning to encourage resilient city-regional infrastructure and local food systems is needed given the what was learnt from disruptions to energy, fuel and food supplies experienced across for British Columbia for several days from the 9-11 crisis in the USA.

However this study suggests planning for sustainable regions and regional enterprises certainly requires enhancing system resilience to undergo disturbance. Planning also needs to focus on developing additional collaborative capabilities around learning to develop adaptive strategies to changing economic, social and environmental conditions. However planning to enable resilience alone is problematical. Existing

institutional silo and bureaucratic arrangements and the myopia associated with existing structures and management cultural mindsets may be highly resilient. But this resilience maybe inappropriate especially when there is a clear need for these systems to evolve. An example here is the deep resilience manifesting as a resistance to evolve associated with poverty and the cultural mindsets of the ruling elites and bureaucracies in some third world societies. Planning for sustainability, it is argued in this dissertation, needs to also facilitate evolutionary transitions.

The view expressed in this thesis is that planing for sustainability is an ongoing social learning process about developing shared holistic understandings of the dynamics of regions, cities and enterprises. Sustainable regional enterprises requires developing not just capabilities to develop adaptive strategies and responses but achieving competitive advantage through generating novelty and effective aligned supply chain and marketing arrangements.

Planning for sustainability in this thesis is depicted as a reflexive social learning and co-evolutionary process requiring not just new multi-stakeholder partnering institutional and enabling arrangements but also helping facilitate a cultural shift to enable new collaborative behaviours and environmental values. This view of sustainable development envisages new planning processes that incorporate and access a diversity of ways of knowing, including place or situated knowledge, are epistemologically flexible, incorporate new ways of thinking that are capable of generating emergence and novelty. From a cultural shift entailing new ways of thinking and knowing comes the possibility to collaboratively re-design governance structures with the adaptive and generative learning, foresight and design capability to enable sustainable development.

This section has deliberately used sustainability and sustainable development interchangeably whereas in some of the literature they are distinguished. The purpose has been to shed light on a number of different and recurring themes and formulations in both.³

³ A possible better term may need to be adopted involving possibly sustainable futures or sustainable pathways but this is beyond the scope of this study.

5.3 Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches to Enabling Sustainable Futures

The two major directions or responses to enabling sustainable futures can be characterized as top-down directed or managed and a bottom-up process of discovering local solutions approaches. The top-down approach describes the institutionally managed and directed approach from above under the direction of a government body. An example of a top down approach includes the recent Australian Federal Government response of centralising institutional control of water management along a key eastern waterway and river system, under a Federal government agency, involving the use of a water market and property rights. The second approach is based around bottom-up, community and stakeholder based responses that rely on agreeing on a shared understanding of the problem, appraising and finding local solutions together through social learning about what works and what will fit within the capabilities of the local human ecology – regional system (Easterly, 2006, Chambers, 1997).

Top-down approaches and responses to ensuring sustainable resource use, appear to have worked where there is centralised power or one land managing agency that has a monopoly in managing, say, a natural resource. Examples of top-down sustainable initiatives include sustainable forest management in Japan initiated in the Tokugawa Shogun era onwards, from late 1650. This period is nominated as a peak of deforestation for Japanese timber building construction, the extensive use of wood fuel and ‘green timber soil fertilization practices. Shoguns, during this era enacted a cultural shift based on Confucian values that emphasized “accumulating reserve supplies in order to protect the country against disaster” and to “limit consumption” notably around the race to construct competing monumental wooden castles and temples as outlined by Diamond (2005:294-305). Deforestation of old growth forests had led to soil erosion, increased fire regimes, declining crop productivity and famine. New sustainable land management practices included strict micro-control over harvesting and replanting of forest reserves, developing a sustainable silviculture based around protected plantations, supporting regrowth and an increased understanding of forest conservation. A second evolutionary shift involved increased reliance on sea transportation for both food supplies and fertilizer as well as trade for

food and timber supplies from the northern, yet to be annexed northern island of Hokkaido and its Ainu People. This cultural shift has resulted in Japan now being characterised by a dense population cover in only 20 per cent of the land area and reforested timber coverage on 80 per cent, where there is a low population inhabitation. However, as Diamond (2005:300) points out, this so-called sustainable forest management and Japanese society relied on conserving “Japanese resources by causing resource depletion elsewhere”.

Another current Australian example of the top-down institutionally managed approach includes the strategies for sustainable management of water across Australia’s biggest water catchment river system, the Murray-Darling system. The current strategy around sustainable water resources management is based around a neo-liberal discourse with property rights being established around water allocations for irrigation and environmental flows to protect key waterways, ecologically significant sites and towns along the river system. An initial over-allocation of water rights during a severe 5-9 year drought in some parts of the system has led to political bickering and a usurpation of the centralised role of water management by the recently established Murray-Darling Water Catchment Management Authority. The Federal Government is now attempting to seize control of this water management issue from four state governments while spending \$10billion in subsidizing improved irrigation practices, new technologies and the buy-back of over allocated water. This modernist response to more efficient water management and catchments has been problematic while the alternative collaborative, stakeholder and community place based learning community approach to sustainable catchment management has been rejected even though the trend in NSW has been towards local stakeholder water catchment management. The modernist response to sustainable natural resource management in Australia relies heavily on new centralized governance arrangements, funding new more efficient technologies and expert knowledge attempting to decipher the ecological impacts of climate change and how current industry practices impact across ecosystems. Postel (1992) appears prophetic in her vision that when water in these times is classed as an economic good then the

“The risk...is that water’s economic functions will be elevated over its life support functions, and that the three pillars of sustainability – efficiency, equity and ecosystem protection – will not be given equal weight.”

Postel (1992:127)

Another example of a top-down managed response is the establishment of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority that has focused on impacts from soil and nutrient run-off from the adjoining coastal sugar industry. Success in adopting best practice sustainable sugar industry practices has been evident in an alternative collaborative approach, where place based, community stakeholder and agency learning partnerships have led to reducing run-off and costs as in the Innisfail region in North Queensland.

An alternative approach is a bottom-up response, based around local communities and stakeholder knowledge identifying local, democratically agreed place strategies for sustainable development such as in the example above. Easterly (2006) outlines the need for an alternative bottom-up, community led solutions in addressing the health and sustainable development issues of the developing world. Easterley contrasts the ‘local problem solvers with the institutional-based planners who impose top-down great plans without much concern as to how grand plans and millennium targets can be achieved on the ground. Chambers (1997) has also advocated that planners engaged in sustainable development work, need to engage with the local, on the ground reality that is both complex, diverse, dynamic and full of uncertainty.

To Chambers, planners engaged in appraising and planning new development initiatives and enterprises need to rely on local knowledge as to what can work and how in at the regional, local community level. Further, Chambers argues, outside planners also need to be critically reflective of what planning approaches are appropriate in different social and cultural contexts. Chambers (1997:78) calls those holding power, ‘the uppers’; they tend to plan using standardized planning and set, top-down appraisals and planning methodologies, reflective of the modernist growth orientated planning approach. Korten (1980) was a forerunner amongst development researchers to advocate a community learning partnership with development agencies to identify local solutions and planning for sustainable futures. This study also affirms

the importance of a collaborative social learning approach to appraising and deciphering sustainable pathways and futures with regional communities and partnering stakeholders in Australian regions.

Another related example of a collaborative multi-stakeholder process seeking to integrate local customary with scientific knowledge is that of Naughton (2007) who cites a number of case studies of the collaborative zoning for Protective Area management. Naughton outlines how knowledge of key environmental, cultural and economic assets can be mapped across protected areas such as Biosphere Reserve Areas to allow multi-stakeholder negotiations to determine which activities are allowable in what zones and what constitute core reserve zones. This process is about mediating and encoding agreement around what activities are permitted where in Protected Areas.

An example of a successful bottom-up community learning approach is the Highland PNG valley communities of Wahgi and Baliem cited by Diamond (2005: 279-286). These communities developed sustainable integrated agriculture-silviculture practices including unique, vertical drains to manage extreme rainfall, refined some 1,200 years ago and still used today. The sustainable place management practices included planting a fast growing, local species of *Casuarina Oligodon* as both a source of firewood fuel and as a soil regenerator thereby offsetting the deforestation required to clear the valley for food growing. The bottom-up approach consisted of villagers and their 'big men' talking through responses and identifying sustainable environmental agricultural and social practices capable of supporting a high population density. This bottom-up approach relied on applying local knowledge and social learning about what is sustainable and included ecological and social practices including birth control. These communities realised that integrated practices were needed to sustainably manage their human ecology successfully.

A second example of a bottom-up approach to what this researcher terms 'sustainable place management' is outlined by Diamond (2005) based on the work of the anthropologist, Firth on Tikopia. This South-West Pacific Island of just under 2 square miles has been successful in self-supporting a population of over 1200 for several hundred years. The sustainable social and integrated environmental

agricultural practices evolved from a slash and burn culture to a unique orchard-rainforest and seafood economy. In both these case studies above, sustainable place management involved various integrated agriculture-silviculture, social and cultural practices including taboos to protect the environment, special food and animal-fishing reserves and population control. Local strategies were developed to survive disturbances to food gardens such as cyclones, volcanic ash dustings, frosts and drought including storage of food reserves (fermented breadfruit) and access to 'bush tucker' in times of emergency.

There are now numerous examples emerging of bottom-up community stakeholder led, regional responses to ensuring sustainable regional water catchments, rural lands and habitats in Australia. The Condamine Alliance is one such collaboration aimed at extending and deepening the sustainable resource management across the headwater water catchment of the significant Murray-Darling river system in eastern Australia. This alliance seeks to develop the resource management skills and capabilities of the community and regional industry enterprises, preserve biodiversity, manage salinity, weeds and pests, improve stream quality and water efficiency. This alliance incorporates strategies to build community participation and awareness of the key challenges to sustainable regions in Australia (Davidson, 2006). Binning and Fielman (2000) outline the importance of local community stakeholder initiatives in enabling shifts to sustainable rural land management and conservation of targeted habitats. These local community partnerships have the ability to deliver community volunteers and stakeholder co-operation whereas bureaucratic processes regularly struggle to achieve the same targets according to Binning and Fielman. Another Australian example here of community stakeholder initiatives for sustainable regional lands is the Australian Landscape Trust that has successfully focused on supporting sustainable land management in the Riverland region of South Australia (Davidson, 2006). These examples are in addition to the Australia wide Land Care movement, consisting of a partnership network of over 4000 local place based community and stakeholder groups who have self-organised to extensively revegetated rural lands and addressed sustainable management of streams and degraded habitats and rural lands (Curtis, Lockwood, 2000 and Curtis, De Lacy 1996). Landcare as a self-organising community and stakeholder bottom-up and government sponsored initiative has been seen to raise landholder awareness about sustainability and has built regional

social capital, enriching stakeholder relationships and local community networks and knowledge of effective local sustainability initiatives (Sobels, Curtis, Lockie, 2001). This is not to say that all bottom-up initiatives work nor do all top down approaches to sustainability fail. Bottom-up, community initiatives such as Landcare have been criticised for their over focusing just on tree planting as a one solution strategy and for the emphasis on individual farmers tackling the land degradation issue.

However, regional Australia, it can be argued, has a tradition of regional community, landholders and government agencies partnering in local, quasi adaptive learning networks, self-organising to identify what works best and where in sustainable land management. Included here is the long history of regional volunteer, bush fire fighting mobilisations.

These initiatives outlined above, are examples of what this researcher calls a bottom-up, top-down social learning partnership approach involving communities, agencies and stakeholders which is the underpinning model of this research study methodology

5.4 The Need For Going Beyond Existing Planning Approaches to Sustainable Regional Tourism Enterprises

Pleumarom (2002) outlines the need for a new holistic approach to sustainable tourism and regional development citing a number of disastrous developments in the South-East Asian region around the Mekong. A number of golf centred regional tourism enterprises in Vietnam, Cambodia and in Thailand have resulted in deforestation, the social displacement of the local villages due to damage and pollution to the fragile river systems and rice farming on which local communities depended. There has been a cultural clash between a nominally sustainable development based around modern tourism enterprises that have damaged the local environment, increased competition for now scarce water resources and degraded the cultural fabric of these regions according to. Pleumarom goes on to outline the reality of sustainable tourism as a vague concept incorporating a western notion of environmentalism that assumes goals of increasing 'prosperity' and 'development'. Both Hirsch and Warren (1998) indicate that there is only a rhetorical commitment to

the environment and a lack of acknowledgement of the realities of local economic and military power in regard to tourism in South-East Asia. Sustainable tourism is seen as opposing a livelihood-based environmentalism orientated to peasants struggling for local resources for economic and cultural survival.

Industry accreditation for sustainable tourism also indicates the need for sound environmental and social practices to both measure and manage the impact on their surrounding environment. The World Travel and Tourism Council have established the Green Globe accreditation brand to promote sustainable environmental, waste and social best practices across the industry. While small in number of participating destinations this accreditation and consumer education program shows that this socially responsible recognition is important for market leaders across the globe. (Griffin and Delacey, 2002). The Australian Federal Government's Green has called for new evaluation approaches for an integrated appraisal of the environmental, economic (infrastructure especially) and social impacts of projects as a way to encourage sustainable tourism. A Commonwealth Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism and a program in sustainable destinations has also been established. The rapid growth in ecotourism, a nature based market niche denoted by sustainably managed environmental and local culturally sensitive educational experiences also shows the need amongst tourism market and local communities for a new sustainable tourism agenda. Ecotourism and nature tourism is estimated at 7 per cent of the total mass tourism market of 663 million travellers and spending of US\$453bn (Lindberg and McKercher, 1997), with a growth rate between 10-30 per cent (Ecotourism, 2000) that has far outstripped the mass-market growth rate. Page and Dowling (2002) see ecotourism as part of the trend towards eco-products and the new environmentally aware traveller.

However sustainable tourism is a contested notion and a precise meaning is difficult to define as for 'sustainability' and sustainable development (Butler, 1999). Hunter (2002:12-13) points out there is a variety of different meanings ranging from deep green perspectives, being more eco-centric and stringently environmentally conservationist to lighter shades of green perspectives, being more anthropocentric, human economic centred. The lighter green sustainability perspective emphasizes the importance of environmental landscape conservation and tends to focus more on

effective resource utilization and recycling and energy efficiency as say for the Whistler ski resort in British Columbia, Canada.

Wahab and Pigram (1997) emphasize the importance of having a sustainable regulatory policy framework and set out a number of measurable parameters for tourism operations to ascertain sustainable tourism operations and to help limit tourism within the carrying capacity of a particular regional destination. Others like Hall (1994) emphasize the importance of local community participation and control over what can be deemed sustainable tourism enterprises. Butler (1999) emphasizes the supply side of sustainable tourism focusing on ensuring the conservation and regeneration aspects of the local ecosystems, communities, their lifestyles and include supporting regional infrastructure in addition to the tourism enterprises themselves.

Berry (1993) and Potts and Harill (2002) with their 'travel ecology' model acknowledge a holistic sustainable tourism framework needs to include social sustainability. Sustainable tourism needs to also encompass sensitive tourism developments that preserve a sense of place and address cultural sustainability i.e. preserving the cultural landscape, artefacts and acknowledgement of the local cultural mores and way of living. However Griffin (2002) points out the dilemma of this stance around cultural sustainability, in effect this may mean showcasing a cultural way of life that these communities may want to transcend and seek western living styles instead.

Planning for sustainable tourism has tended to be shaped by the predominant strategic planning framework and mindset of planning as enabling control of the evolution of an area or enterprise. For example, Ashworth (1992) calls for tourism planning that is based on goal setting and then the monitoring and performance management of these goals through key performance indicators including the environmental and social impacts of visitation. Dutton and Hall (1989) envisage sustainable tourism planning as a case of strategic planning that needs to be widened to be inclusive of other surrounding stakeholders. The NSW Far North Coast nature based and ecotourism regional planning process (1995) used the traditional strategic planning process of outside expert consulting with key stakeholders to define a vision, key outcomes, strategies and monitoring via performance indicators to ensure

the pre-set management goals are reached. Inskip (1991) urges a similar strategic planning process of setting objectives and identifying organisational systems to manage and monitor these objectives. Inskip stresses the organisational structures and business systems he sees as important in ensuring the maintenance of both environmental and cultural assets. Dowling's regional ecotourism development planning approach (REDPA) is another strategic planning approach to sustainable tourism enterprises development. Again this process centres on identifying objectives and significant 'resources' and critical areas to be protected through zoning to control what can be permitted where. Dowling through this process seeks to identify tourism development zones, where ecotourism activities can be conducted and the type of activities that will give both tourist satisfaction, environmental protection, preserve community well-being and be economically compatible..

Strategic planning tools included in this sustainable tourism framework include environmental appraisals (Stabler, 1997) and environmental performance measuring of the sustainability of tourism enterprises especially waste processes (Buckley, 1996). An environmental and social auditing tool, 'Earthcheck' has been developed by the Australian Sustainable Tourism Co-Operative Research Centre for Green Globe to help tourism resorts better manage their energy, waste, water and resource usage and their contribution to local communities. This evaluation tool has been used to benchmark luxury eco-tourism developments (Brace, 2007). Driml and Common (1996) have developed a rule of thumb for development in world heritage areas in Australia of ensuring a 'constant natural capital' as a measure of environmental conservation in particular preserving biodiversity. The Australian research organisation, CSIRO has developed a destination and management tool that seeks to measure the sustainable performance of a regional destination, in this case Kangaroo Island off the coast of South Australia. This tool seeks to optimise visitation levels and product against a set of socio-environmental and economic indicators (Beeton, 2006:69-70).

The predominant sustainable tourism planning framework, then, has come to acknowledge the need for a holistic approach emphasizing not just viable tourism enterprises as enabling regional economic growth but also of the need to balance this priority with minimizing the social, cultural and environmental impacts of tourism

development. Sustainable tourism planning advocates also realise the need for a wider consultation including not just the tourism enterprise and the tourist consumer but regional agencies and local communities.

An alternative framework for viewing sustainable tourism is that of 'travel ecology' as outlined by Potts and Harrill (2002). They apply the social ecological model of Bookchin (1996) to tourism and tourism planning to emphasize the priority of community development, of enabling an enhanced quality of life as well as the conservation of the environment as a new focus for developing new tourism enterprises. Potts and Harrill argue that this new tourism planning perspective goes beyond the integrative stance of sustainable tourism model. They stressing the importance of developing tourism initiatives for people in host communities, of nurturing a sense of mutuality as developing shared conservation values, respect and acknowledgement of the historical roots and development of a community. Their planning process 'Developing Naturally' starts with a public collaborative discourse of discovery that seeks to identify the shared resources, potentials and democratic decision-making around the planning of community tourism initiatives (Potts and Harrill, 2002:49-52).

Beeton takes the case raised by Potts and Harrill above, one step further by arguing communities need to be able to ask and determine not whether or not to encourage tourism but instead determine what type of visitor and what type of tourism the community feels it needs and wants. This is not usually the case with proposals and designs for tourism enterprises that are usually presented and argued as to their economic benefits, job creation associated with reassurances around environmental, social and cultural impact studies and that these impacts will be monitored and restricted.

This regional planning methodology in this dissertation, took Beeton's view that a whole of community dialogue was needed; that regional communities, stakeholders, government agencies, landholders and Aboriginal communities needed to be asked what type of walking track tourism venture would work, would fit in and could be managed sustainably. This is to say a social learning dialogue was needed to co-

appraise and co-design a sustainable tourism venture that would fit in with the regional social, economic, environmental and cultural fabric as Beeton suggests.

However the brief review in this Chapter, indicates the predominant planning approaches to sustainable tourism reside within the strategic planning approach and assume that tourism activities across spatial areas can somehow be ‘controlled’ by zoning plans and policy guidelines to limit flow-on socio-cultural, economic-environmental impacts across a region. This strategic planning approach as discussed in Chapter 3 is suited for well defined problems and simple systems and assumes there are little if any non-linear feedback and asymmetrical lagged social, environmental and cultural effects such as was the case outlined by Pleumarom in the case of South East Asian resorts.

However, there has been a re-thinking of tourism from a systems perspective. The first foray considering tourism as a system came with Hall and McArthur (1993) who painted a picture of tourism as a complex market system that placed the ‘tourism experience’ as the key driver of how tourism market evolves (as opposed to the tourism product). Murphy (1985) developed another system model of tourism but placed the communities at the destination at the centre of the model and urged communities needed to be involved in decision-making about developing tourism enterprises.

Faulkner and Russell’s (1997:42) tourism system model was more influenced by chaos and complexity theory and emphasized how small disturbances could significantly impact tourism enterprises and their operations or not at other times. Tourism was therefore seen as a complex adaptive system whose evolutionary development could be shaped not just by the market but also by other factors. Their work looked at how the tourism enterprise – product cycle of Butler with its phases of exploring and opening, development, consolidation, stagnation and decline or re-modelling and rejuvenation could also be affected by disturbance. Faulkner has gone on to describe how tourism operations in Australia are liable to be buffeted by the turbulence of outside disturbance such as social terrorism and say extreme weather events. Faulkner paints a picture of a tourism system and international market that is

highly turbulent at this time that requires tourism planners adopt more flexible market shifting market strategies and adaptive planning stances.

5.5 Planning Capabilities for Sustainable Regional Tourism

Halme and Fadeeva (2000) have discussed the efficacy of sustainable tourism networks across a range of countries and assert that individual enterprises alone cannot move society towards sustainable futures. Rather they see sustainable tourism as a case of facilitating networks of tourism enterprises acting and investing collaboratively.

The conclusions drawn from the discussion in Chapter Four about the requirements for a complexity framed planning methodology are also relevant here. Planning for complexity was portrayed there, as facilitating self-organising enterprises amidst a wider regional ecology of community, stakeholder, agency networks and ecosystems. The planning focus was around enhancing connectivity, mutuality and coherence around a shared vision or concept and agreement on how this commons issue could be co-managed (sustainably in this case) by this partnering network.

Ndou and Peti (2006) take the view that complexity based planning for tourism necessitates both a knowledge building, sharing and management strategy that also promotes innovation through this same knowledge networking process. Huovila (2007) outlines a similar strategy for sustainable development adopted by the European Union based on building a self-organising network of knowledge partnerships between European city –regions. Here the work of McElroy (2003), a former director of knowledge management at IBM is considered relevant. Like Ndou and Peti (2006), McElroy argues knowledge management as a strategy for competitive advantage and sustainable enterprises. However he describes the first phase of knowledge management strategies was essentially about collecting existing knowledge, developing knowledge banks; this is used essentially in problem solving. A second phase of deep knowledge management requires more emphasis on learning new ways to learn, assembling other ‘knowledges’, confronting epistemic problems, refuting old knowledge and conjecturing around new ways of knowing and seeing (McElroy 2007:7-9); more generative knowledge practices. McElroy advocates open self-

organising knowledge strategies for sustainable futures that also support a cultural shift towards deeper eco-centric or ecology perspectives and values away from the techno-centric, expert centred knowledge processes that assumes to control of enterprise and natural resource as assets. This research seeks to build on these perspectives. This study field-tests such a complexity framed planning methodology based around facilitating social learning dialogue that builds a 'regional knowledge network or ecology' based on local, place, stakeholder and agency knowledge/s and Indigenous wisdom about the nature and fabric of a cross-regional corridor as a place.

Planning for sustainability as recommended in this study, also requires developing new capabilities for regional stakeholders and communities to co-appraise and co-design new sustainable ventures that are considered appropriate for that regional place – context. The regional learning dialogue methodology piloted here in this study, sought to enable this by assembling this regional knowledge as embedded in the conversational systems maps as to what constituted an appropriate sustainable venture and how it could be governed through a multi-stakeholder, community, agency network.

Developing competitive advantage in a global market and enabling sustainable futures for enterprises also involves, it is conjectured here, catalyzing novelty. Strategic planning methodologies as discussed in Chapter 3 have limitations around catalyzing novelty as Hamel and Prahalad (1994) have suggested. Again a generative social learning dialogue was envisaged as a suitable planning process for exploring and co-designing a distinct and novel enterprise and attraction with a unique selling position

Another capability considered important for a complexity framed, collaborative planning methodology for sustainable regional tourism enterprises is the potential to catalyze the emergence of agreed design principles and an embryonic new multi-stakeholder community and agency governance structure to sustainably manage an enterprise. A second level of emergence is new stakeholder collaborative behaviours amongst stakeholders (local habitat, track, social sense of place) identify, co-manage feedback and develop adaptive capabilities. This was seen as part of building an aligned supply chain and supporting community agency partnership network.

Nurturing a new distributed leadership across local, regional stakeholder and

community networks opens the possibility of making sense together of both environmental, social and economic feedback across the region, any emerging patterns in tourism market niches and what responses are needed. These ideas of fostering a new regional governance network model and distributed leadership capability is considered important by other researchers for other reasons. Wheatley (2007) similarly sees the need for going beyond the old heroic models of leadership seen as too inflexible and lacking the creative capability for planning in the new era of complexity and uncertainty. Homer-Dixon (2006) sees the need for facilitating a new emergent leadership when societies and their economic systems as complex dynamic systems face turning points. A new distributed leadership network is seen as a way to help avoid collapse when facing social, cultural, economic and environmental stressors such as the current climate change and peak oil scenarios.

Florida (2005:165) characterises our time as that of the creative economy taking over in the USA from the past dominance of the industrial economy and that re-making regions needs to be more about making an environment for 'ideas to breed' rather than try to pick winning strategies like imposing 'high tech strategies'. However, the reality of the present institutional silo arrangements and sometime culture of 'squelchers' of new ideas and initiatives as Florida (1995:21) terms it, constitute substantial obstacles against a collaborative, whole of community, government and stakeholder partnered generative learning dialogue and planning approach.

One of the key tasks as identified in developing learning organisations and enabling competitive sustainable futures, is to facilitate informal learning networks or communities of practice and suitable knowledge management – social learning strategies (Wenger, 2000). The equivalent, in the case of sustainable regions and regional tourism enterprises, is to facilitate the emergence of learning regions and stakeholder, community learning networks.

However it is to Forester (1997) this researcher returns as the planner researcher who has pointed the way forward in planning as a decision-making process as to how to politically judge the balance between growth and conservation. Forester argued that planning has to be about astutely listening to stakeholders and facilitating a

transformative understandings through social learning processes or planning ‘ritual’s. This thesis looks at a collaborative planning methodology to open this possibility.

5.6 Sustainability as a Cultural Narrative for Re-Storying Regions along Different Pathways

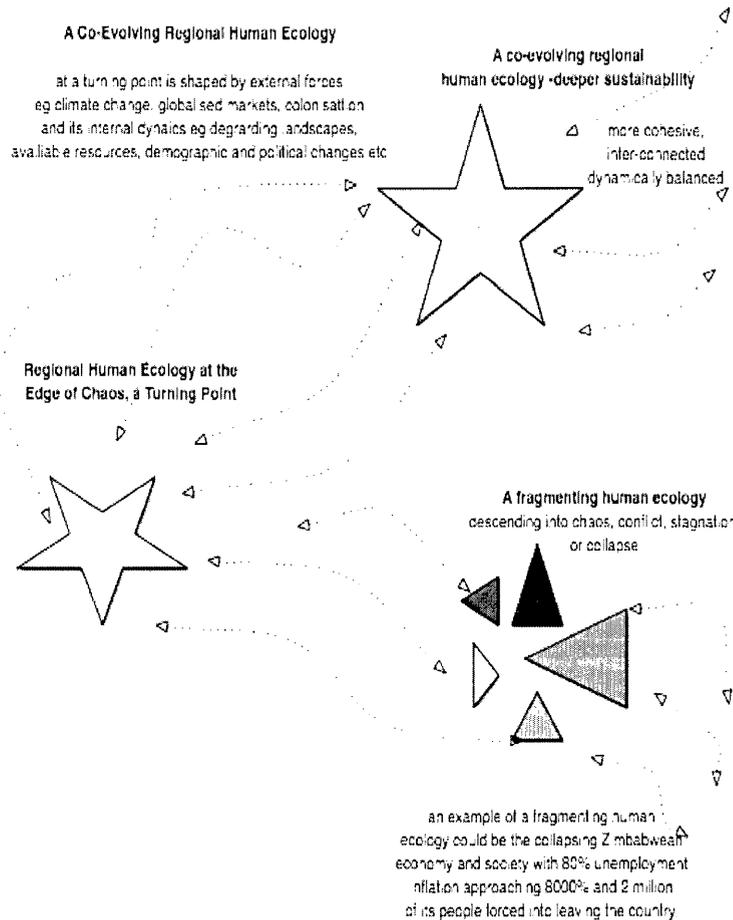
Newman (2005) sees sustainability as an alternative challenge to prevailing neo-liberal ideology and its economic growth narrative. But the view explored in this study is that cultures and cultural stories like modernity are dynamic and adaptive, seeking to incorporate challenges like that posed by ‘sustainability’ and the need for managing environmental impacts.

However, changing cultural and planning narratives can influence or re-story the evolutionary pathways of regions as co-evolving human ecologies either towards or away from sustainable futures. An example is that of Cuba’s near collapse and then reversal after a change from a top-down soviet planning style towards a self-organising community based initiative. In Figure 5.1 below, a diagrammatic presentation is given of how a national social economic system can follow a downward spiral towards fragmentation and social collapse as in the present example of Zimbabwe, being due to poor policy, inadequate governance and on-going drought. Cuba was at a similar turning point when its social-economic system had to respond in the face of the collapse of the then USSSR and the cessation of cheap subsidized oil and petrochemical imports. Cuban agriculture and food production was concentrated in large-scale soviet style farming operations relying heavily on synthetic fertilizer and pesticides. Facing food production shortages, new community initiatives were encouraged to grow organic food in cities, much less dependent on synthetic inputs and relying on bottom-up self-organising, community initiatives supported by outside organic, permaculture consultants. By 1991 food production in cities had risen fifty times, 90% of perishable vegetables and more than a million tons of milk, eggs and meat was being produced in cities and 80% of all food was organic. In addition to this social learning response to the fuel crisis, Cuba universities were decentralised to accommodate less transport and maintain student attendance.

What is being suggested in Figure 5.1 below and in the discussion in both this and the previous Chapter is that sustainability is both a focus on enabling a dynamic regional balance and an emergent quality arising out of self-organisation in a complex system. It is not a goal but an on-going learning pathway. However, a co-evolutionary perspective of regions-places as complex dynamic systems needs to acknowledge that their evolutionary pathways to sustainable futures can be bounded by an aristocratic social architecture network structure, silo institutional arrangements, reliance on expert agency knowledge and privileged planning conversations that tend to reinforce existing power relationships. Planning methodologies for sustainable regional enterprises and new pathways, from this complexity perspective need to both facilitate self-organising social learning conversations and widened, empowered networks across regional communities and stakeholders.

This 'new endeavour' for facilitating sustainability at the regional scale in this study advocates supporting local solutions, building diversity and collaboratively appraising and the creative re-design new sustainable destinations and enterprises. As planners, we need to explore how to catalyze this new order that is capable of adapting and evolving to suit the changing social, economic and environmental landscape.

Fig 5.1 Evolutionary Pathways for Human Ecologies - the influence of contesting cultural, social, political narratives



This study also suggests that a cultural evolution is needed to enable us to better plan sustainable futures. This will involve learning to understand and know more deeply, to co-design new enterprises that better fit and belong within a regional human ecology, its human and non-human communities. This cultural evolution involves exploring and developing new ways of thinking (holistic, complex systems thinking etc) and promoting new ways of seeing (e.g. an ecological perception of relationships) as suggested in this study. Further, it is suggested here that we need to undertake a reflexive review of our existing planning narratives underpinning cultural stories, our mental models and assumptions about regions and enterprises that shape how

planning occurs and what it is purported to achieve. Instead of privileging one way of knowing as now, the alternative is to follow the advice, advocated by Manuel-Navarrete, Slocombe and Mitchell et al (2006) to be epistemologically flexible in order to sustainably manage regional ecosystems and communities. The planning task of co-appraising and co-designing sustainable enterprises is to facilitate social learning through assembling other and new ways of knowing, including local, place, stakeholder and existing scientific agency or 'strategic knowledges' as Brown notes (1999). The collaborative planning conversations utilized in this study (see Chapter) aimed at catalyzing this social learning and the emergence of community stakeholder networks which in effect comprised regional knowledge ecologies or learning networks. An example of a self-organising, global knowledge ecology is Wikipedia where stakeholders voluntarily contribute their insights and expertise to develop an expanding and refined knowledge system. A 'knowledge ecology', in this case refers to the stakeholders who both collaborate and compete to have their expertise recognized and gain a place on the web site. This study used a particular planning conversation to facilitate the emergence of an informal learning network or stakeholder knowledge ecology in order to help regional stakeholders and communities to make a decision on what was sustainable for their place. Planning for sustainability then can be reconfigured as both a social learning and deep knowledge management process. Scott and Gough (2006) also address the importance of social learning for sustainable futures and how a possible shift is emerging away from the existing technocentric approaches that value the existing structures, expert led problem solving and management of sustainability. They envisage a possible co-evolutionary shift to a new environmentalism along the spectrum towards eco-centrism entailing holistic perspectives, a new economy with decentralized decision-making based around values favoring the environment. Homer –Dixon (2006:300) writes of an earlier time around 900-200 BCE of the 'Axial Age' of cultural and knowledge transformations across Greece, Eurasia and China and points out the possibility and necessity of such another cultural and values transformation for ensuring sustainable futures. He talks of the need for a new conversation that re-examines our existential values as to who we are and what gives us meaning as a way to assist this necessary cultural transformation. Boulding (1981:173) earlier had announced this present time as an axial age but warned of the 'deep structures' that inhibited an evolutionary shift in the way we think, learn and socially organize our

society. Maruyama (1976: 206) has criticized social planning and called for both planners and citizens to 'explore, discover, invent and reality test' new transdisciplinary epistemologies. Jantsch (1976, 1981) has outlined a new evolutionary perspective that unifies the socio-cultural, psychosocial, economic and environmental dimensions as part of an interdependent self-organising global system. These forerunners in complex evolutionary systems thinking have shown the new types of thinking and ways of seeing that could underpin the new cultural evolution needed for enabling sustainable futures.

Without this cultural evolution it is unlikely we will adopt new ways of being in the world or will re-think and contemplating changing our existing social architecture and present governance structures as learning network constructs. Without this cultural evolution, our regional systems risk being still bounded within the present cultural framework of modernism and we face the danger of prioritizing progress and the economic over all else.

Davidson's (2006) idea of culture as a dynamic, evolving set of values, cosmology, ways of communicating and knowledge systems has already been mentioned earlier; culture both shapes and helps story how different Peoples live and manage their environments and social structures and practices. Cultures also interact and shift in response to new challenges and undergo axial moments and transitions as noted above, opening up new evolutionary pathways and possibilities. Sustainability has been defined here as a local, place and context dependent notion involving a social learning process and now as entailing a cultural transition. But also part of the transition towards sustainable futures and a new peaceful world, according to Norgaard (1994) involves encouraging an 'evolving patchwork quilt' of a diversity of different cultures and communities learning from each other in an unfolding co-evolutionary process.

The danger for our societies and regional economies in these times of climate change and economic uncertainty and transition is that our response may become stuck in trying 'to manage our way through', only shifting slightly away from the present 'technocratic' expert led paradigm that sees humans still trying to manage the earth and its natural systems. Homer-Dixon (2007) in a recent conference conversation in

Brisbane Australia, pointed out this dilemma. He argued we need to focus on building resilience into our energy systems and national food systems, that are over-complicated and brittle; moving instead towards more localised and self-reliant systems versus the existing highly centralised national energy grids and national food systems. Using problem solving thinking and seeking adaptive solutions is only the first step towards seeking sustainable pathways through these coming times. The co-evolutionary systems perspective shows the next steps where collaborating regional communities learn to co-evolve and respond as the earth evolves into a new climate pattern and with that, helping co-create a new post carbon global economy and sustainable regional human ecologies. Enabling this requires a shift to a new type of cultural perspective and conversation as to how we are interconnected and can learn from the earth's evolving natural systems. Our task is to learn how to nurture bio-mimicing, self-sustaining System Three regions. To also master new eco-design literacies that can enable us as Benyus (2002) and Capra (2002:203) write, to creatively co-design our technologies and societies according to nature's principles about energy use and information flows.

5.7 Some Concluding Remarks

This Chapter has reviewed the notion of sustainability and how it can usefully be depicted as a holistic social-economic and environmental concept. Sustainability as outlined in this study, is seen as a context dependent notion being locally defined by communities and stakeholders; what is a sustainable tourism enterprise in one place isn't necessarily being considered sustainable in another.

Sustainability is also portrayed here as a new contested planning space about the re-storying how our regions, cities and places evolve. Sustainability involves weaving a new cultural story that will re-shape the future of regions and tourism development. The view adopted in this study is that any dialogue around sustainability needs to go beyond the perspective of the first wave of 'environmentalism' that sought to minimize the most glaring environmental and social impacts around modernity's quest for progress and continuous rapid economic growth (McKibben, 2006:2). Sustainability is envisaged in this study as a social learning dialogue, involving stakeholders in developing a holistic, systems understanding of regional

interconnectedness and dynamics that can help engender a new set of relational ethics. This perspective seeks to proactively managing the impacts of an enterprise on community and the local regional ecology; it seeks a socially negotiated balance between supporting tourism development that also ensures a sense of place is retained and key habitats are conserved. It involves a re-thinking and re-design of how we build tourism enterprises and how communities can collaboratively manage visitation, maintain the social, cultural and environmental fabric of a region and its communities. An alternative mechanistic interpretation of sustainability focuses on achieving pre-determined operational goals as ends in themselves; this perspective endeavours to optimize economic returns while seeking to minimize or offset environmental and social impacts. The neo-liberal narrative of sustainability favours technological innovation and market solutions. The view expressed here is that sustainability necessitates an on-going cultural evolution involving exploring and integrating other ways of seeing, thinking and knowing and from that new whole of community, collaborative design processes, different practices and ways of relating to nature and each other.

A sustainable tourism enterprise, given the perspective adopted in this thesis, needs to be collaboratively appraised and designed to fit into the regional, place and local environmental, social, cultural and economic landscape. Planning for sustainability at the regional scale, it is argued here, also needs to be concerned with how to catalyze the emergence of new partnered stakeholder, governance structures with the capability to develop adaptive and evolutionary responses to global market restructuring and climate change impacting on regional industry. Regional sustainability can be informed then by on-going social learning that is both adaptive and generative of new design solutions. The task is however what new planning approaches can engender the emergence of these adaptive learning networks as new network governance arrangements? Similarly, the quest for regional sustainability is about exploring and co-assessing regional stakeholder investment in new industry and enterprise opportunities or pathways such as the proposed Waterfall Track network and in building regional diversity and adaptiveness. In this thesis, planning for sustainability at the regional scale concerns the possibility of catalyzing novelty, unique regional enterprises that reflect the essence, embody the unique and distinctive characteristics and appeal of their particular region i.e. 'regionality'. As one

Armidale Councillor noted “it means we need to build these walking tracks using local stone and timber from each place we travel through” and “it also needs to tell our stories” (pers. comm. 2003). This particular notion of regional planning for sustainability seeks unique, regional designs whereas the current planning and design practices of modernity tend to reproduce current designs of what currently works. The result is a trend towards homogeneous tourism experiences and product but in different regional destinations; only the cultural and environmental landscapes and vistas seem to change.

The notion of planning for sustainability at the regional scale suggests a shift in the planning focus towards facilitating a new regional ‘evolutionability’ – the capability of regional stakeholders and governance structures to develop system foresight and evolve into higher sustainable forms. This approach outlined here constitutes a distinct move away from the command and control paradigm to a learning and emergent systems perspective.

The following Chapter 8 will consider how our notions of sustainability, in the context of Australian regional landscapes, needs to be cross-culturally informed and sustainable tourism cannot be so narrowly defined as to be at the expense of any one Australian Peoples, their cultural landscape or community.

Part 3 of this study explores this question and has devised and tested a collaborative regional dialogue planning methodology and a conversational systems mapping technique that can capture stakeholders and communities insights into what is such a sustainable regional tourism enterprise.

Part 3

Methodological Discussion

Characteristics and Capabilities of Collaborative Regional Planning Methodologies that

Part 3 Focuses on the Following Themes

The need for a new regional planning process that

- **explicitly addresses the complex dynamic systems nature of regions**
- **incorporates a reflexive learning approach**
- **allows for and embrace a diversity of cultural frameworks, worldviews and different ways of knowing, thinking and seeing**

Part 3 includes the following chapters

Chapter 6 The Rationale for Developing a Complexity Framed, Collaborative Regional Learning Dialogue Methodology

Chapter 7 The Need for a Reflexive Planning Process

Chapter 8 Planning as facilitating Evolutionary Socio-Cultural Transitions

Chapter 6

The Rationale for Developing a Complexity Framed, Collaborative Regional Learning Dialogue Methodology

6.1 Chapter Scope and Aims

This Chapter outlines the rationale for adopting a collaborative regional dialogue methodology that explicitly addresses the complex systems nature of regions and this problem context.

6.2 The Need for Developing a Complexity Framed, Collaborative Regional Dialogue Methodology

What is a sustainable cross-regional long distance walking track ecotourism venture in this instance was considered a question entailing enormous complexity. The planning approach adopted here in this study was to instead facilitate regional stakeholders conversing together in order to make sense of this issue as well as to elicit the design principles and essence of what such a venture would look like in this context and how the impacts and feedback effects could be identified and managed. How else could the range of questions be considered such as what levels of commitment to walking track and associated infrastructure investment would be required by agencies such as State Forests and National Parks and Wildlife Services across their numerous landholdings and local government to road improvement over the proposed 600km long track? What transport, environmentally sound sewerage systems and water provisioning would be required and could this be afforded? Are there enough world class walking tracks and vistas to attract sufficient visitors to warrant such a social and economic investment. How and who could maintain these walking tracks, and what sustainable business model would enable this? How do we protect a communities' sense of place from increased visitation and how will the various sensitive ecosystems be monitored and protected? How do we now where tracks may cause cultural insult in approaching secret sacred and special Aboriginal places unknowingly? A planning

approach that explicitly addressed this complexity was needed in this case as opposed to a strategic planning methodology that was considered only able to skim the surface and identify only some of the key issues.

Planning a cross-regional tourism enterprise in this case supported long distance walking track involves numerous place communities, towns, two major cities, tourism and other enterprises, five local government councils, at least three Aboriginal nations, their communities, hundreds of landholders, state government agencies with a range of jurisdictional responsibilities. It also involves ensuring the protection of a number of different and often fragile ecosystems, negotiating access across national parks, state forests and private landholdings and devising arrangements that help maintain a sense of place and the safety of visitors. It also requires developing co-operation across 4 regional tourism organisations and catalyzing an aligned supply chain network with the same vision, culture and values. The difficulty of planning and developing a regional enterprise sustainably involves multi-stakeholders with overlapping jurisdiction and interests. This makes the task certainly complex. However this researcher considered planning for this sustainable regional tourism enterprises an example of the need for a planning methodology explicitly designed for complexity. There are two major reasons for this.

This study sees regional tourism enterprises as an integral part of a region that is a complex evolutionary system or human ecology. Planning and visioning a sustainable enterprise that seeks a balance between and best fits within the different environmental, social and cultural dimensions or the regional fabric as one stakeholder described it and would enhance rather than strain the existing regional economies, is certainly an example of a wicked problem. Making sense of the possible interrelationships, possible impacts and social, cultural, economic and environmental feedback loops of such a venture, is an example of dealing with complexity.

Planning for a sustainable tourism enterprise of this type at a cross-regional scale also resembled a 'managing the commons' complex problem as outlined by Ostrom (1990). Traditional strategic tourism planning approaches have focused on the individual enterprise and may have involved environmental and social impact analysis if required by local government. But this traditional approach is a reductionist not

integrated approach that doesn't consider exploring the non-obvious and unanticipated feedback effects that may be lagged over space and time. These impact studies usually rely on imported, extrapolated data of similar existing enterprises and don't seek to collaborative creative discussions of other potential novel enterprises that could tap existing and emergent markets and fit within regional environmental and social fabric and builds on existing regional infrastructure and enterprises. Traditional tourism planning exercises tend to become persuasive arguments to influence local stakeholders in the efficacy of a pre-determined tourism concept and tend to avoid or deny the inherent complex nature of the task and region.

The second reason why planning sustainable regional tourism ventures – destinations needs an explicit complex systems approach is because they involve self-organising, emergent enterprise networks set within a wider co-evolving social, economic, environmental, political and cultural regional ecology. Faulkner and Russell's (1999) complex systems model of regional tourism was one of the first reconfigurations of this complexity framework of regional tourism as first discussed in Chapter Five. Zahra and Ryan (2007) have also extended this complexity-framed model of tourism to the context of New Zealand tourism. Ndou & Peti, (2004) have reformulated tourism as a particular type of self-organising, complex systems, more a network of co-evolving relationships. They call for a new dynamic systems approach to planning tourism and for a departure from the traditional strategic and 'mechanical' methodologies that don't address the complex systems nature of tourism; nor do they provide for flexible responses to the new environment of uncertainty and rapidly changing markets and technologies. Ndou and Peti's view of 'tourism', the enterprises, their markets and host environments not just as adaptive systems but co-evolving systems that are continually emerging shaped by feedback loops. This complexity notion and metaphor of tourism was previewed in Chapter Four in the discussion of the emergent cluster patterns evolving around the Waitamo Caves tourism destination in NZ. This notion of tourism is a departure from the traditional view of industry based on the neoclassical economic models of industry that envisages a simple system dynamics based around a return to equilibrium settings.

This study has adopted the Nedi and Peti conception of tourism and Moore's (1996) notion of industry as a co-evolving ecology that is more reflective of the Austrian School of Economics view of industry as a dynamic system (Stacey and Parker, 1994).

Planning sustainable regional tourism enterprises is more a case of facilitating partnerships across self-organising supply chain networks and co-evolving ecologies of customers, markets, new e-marketing initiatives and technologies across a regional ecology of communities both human and non-human.

The particular complexity framed, dialogue methodology employed in this research study was therefore purposefully designed to address the particular planning brief and the problem context of regions as co-evolving complex socio-cultural, economic environmental systems.

6.3 Justifying a Complex Systems Approach for this Particular Regional Problem Context – the Genesis of a Collaborative Learning Dialogue Process Methodology

Jackson's (2003) work on relating systems approaches to ascertain planning methodologies appropriate for different problem contexts were instructive in helping to identify the particular systems methodology adopted here. The schema developed by Jackson considers the type of systems being addressed i.e. simple to complex, together with the different behavioural relationships as a way of better defining the particular problem context and suitable methodological systems approach. System planners deal with simple systems through to different types of complex systems with many sub-systems, large numbers of interactions and varying groups of participants. The stakeholders either have agreed values and beliefs (unitary relationships) or are pluralist groups that though they differ in outlook and values, are still capable of reaching a shared view or agreement on a way ahead. Alternatively there are organisational or regional systems characterized by coercive stakeholder relationships where agreement on a way forward will not necessarily be easily reached given the differing world views, values and beliefs of the diverse groups of stakeholders involved. These different system states and participant relationships are outlined in Table 6.1 below.

The problem context in this study was determined as comprising a particular type of regional complex system with a pluralist array of stakeholders with the potential to develop a shared vision and agreement on a regional tourism venture.

The study sought to implement a soft systems mapping approach that would map the wide ranging conversations amongst communities and stakeholders so as to build a shared systems picture and understanding of what a sustainable regional tourism venture would look like in this situation as identified in category 5 in Table 8.1 below. This decision was based on an evaluation of the way regional stakeholders interacted in the pre-feasibility study discussions, showing their openness and willingness to further explore this possible cross-regional venture. Despite their diversity, it was felt that this plurality would be potentially constructive and that an inclusive planning dialogue with stakeholders could allow the key issues to be surfaced and addressed and that all stakeholders and communities would be heard. It was felt an open conversation would both allow stakeholders and communities to both explore and deliver an appraisal of the feasibility of the long distance walking track enterprise or not and that advice would be forthcoming on a possible of a new workable alternative enterprise concept. An assessment was made that a conventional, top-down, expert developed feasibility study that sought some limited consultation or stakeholder participation would be badly received by stakeholders and communities who could respond as if it were a pre-determined concept being imposed on communities across the region. It was agreed between the commissioning group, the New England Ecotourism Society (NEES) and the researcher-planner, that an enterprise designed by 'outsiders or experts' could exacerbate stakeholder conflict and render the enterprise unworkable even if it was seen as economically feasible.

There were a number of other additional reasons why this collaborative learning dialogue methodology, as a type of soft systems approach was adopted in this case. Jackson (2003) outlines that a soft systems approach that maps both stakeholders' and communities issues and ideas, allows the underlying assumptions to be surfaced and tested. This mapping or recording of the communities and stakeholders advice, it was hoped would enable a learning dialogue process to unfold. This self-organising conversation and facilitated dialogue was intended to capture both local place,

stakeholder, Indigenous and state agency knowledge across the region as to what was viable socially, environmentally and economically sustainable in terms of regional commitment of resources and what was needed to attract a new tourism stream.

This social learning dialogue approach was therefore adopted given the assessment that a shared vision could be achieved across this pluralist group of regional stakeholders and communities as designated as type 5 problem context in Jackson’s schema below in Table. 6.1.

This learning dialogue or social learning exchange was facilitated around the question of “what type of track’ would be considered feasible and sustainable as ascertained by communities and stakeholders. This learning dialogue unexpectedly led to insights into the types of new tourists regional communities and stakeholders felt appropriate and what they would be attracted to across the region, from their own experiences with visitors.

Table 6.1 The Genesis of a Collaborative Learning Dialogue – How Systems Approaches are Aligned to Problem Context - adapted from Jackson’s Schema (Jackson, 2003:18-24).

Participant Relationships

unitary stakeholder relationships pluralist stakeholder relationships coercive stakeholder relationships

1.Simple systems - unitary stakeholder relationships. <i>- suits quantitative, predictive or hard systems approaches</i>	2. Simple systems – pluralist stakeholder groups but able to develop shared agreement and vision <i>- suits soft systems approaches</i>	3. Simple systems – stakeholder relationships, decisions based around coercion and imposed power- <i>suits emancipatory systems thinking</i>
4. Complex systems – unitary stakeholder relationships. <i>- suits systems dynamics, organisational cybernetics or complexity theory</i>	5. Complex systems – pluralist stakeholder groups. <i>– suits soft systems approaches</i>	6. Complex systems stakeholder relationships, decisions based around coercion and imposed power- <i>suits postmodern system thinking approaches</i>

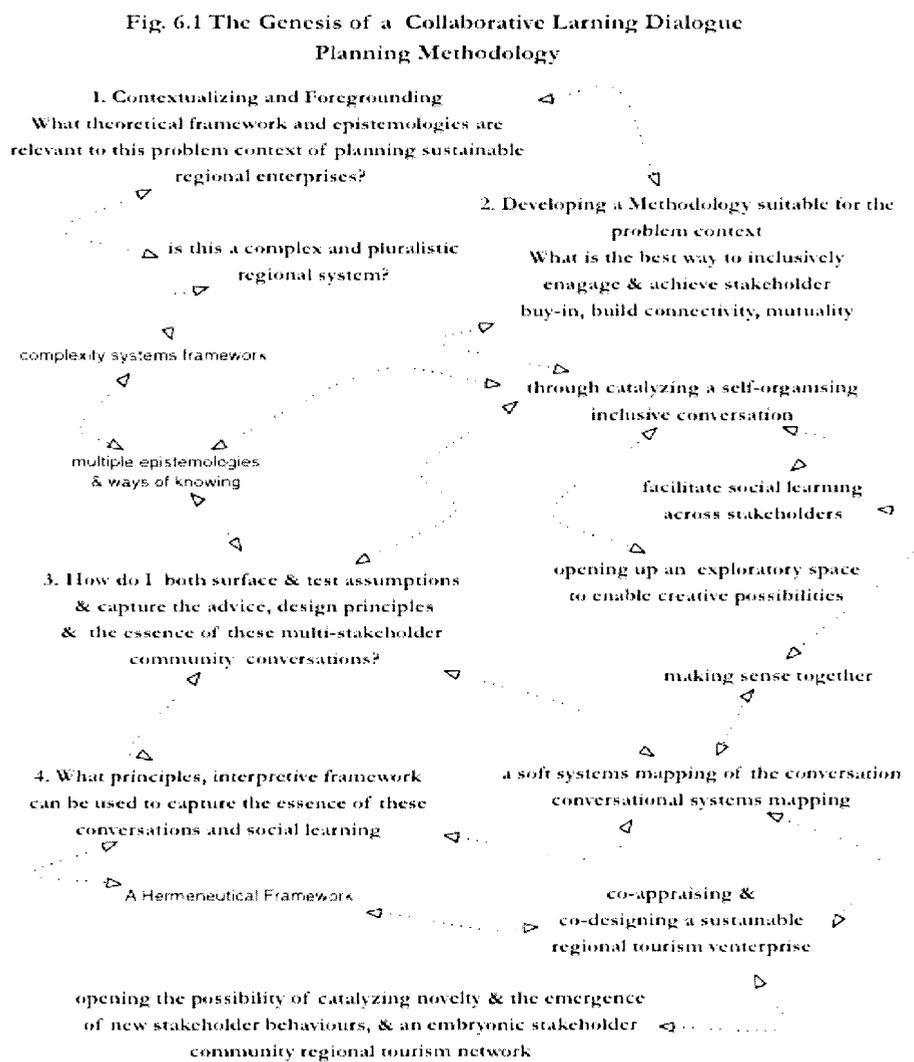
This study also employed a conversational systems mapping technique, a type of soft systems approach in community meetings to build a rich shared systems picture of what a sustainable nature and ecotourism regional venture would look like. This process enabled communities and stakeholders to explore and share insights and understandings of how such an initiative could generate social, economic, cultural and ecological impacts and how these could be lagged and spread across the regions. This particular planning methodology and mapping technique was chosen because it brings together both expert local place, stakeholder and agency knowledge to enable a co-appraisal and at the same time if needed, a collaborative re-design of the initially proposed concept proposal (a long distance walking track).

The reflexive process and pathway to developing this methodology outlined above, is illustrated in Figure 6.2 below. This indicates how a reflexive learning process was used to identify a new methodology that would explicitly address the complexity involved in this cross regional tourism planning brief and could embrace the different stakeholder worldviews and cultures.

A second rationale for developing and utilizing this collaborative learning dialogue and mapping approach was the possibility of building an embryonic stakeholder partnership group through the joint compilation and mapping of such a regional conversation. Shaw (2002) writes of the idea of conversing as organising'. To Shaw, facilitating conversations involves more than just a new assembling of stakeholder insights but also opening up the possibility of bringing together emergent leaders across an organisation by articulating and refining ideas about what new issues and initiatives or potential responses could be taken. The catalyzing of a network of new community and agency and stakeholder leaders was in fact enabled through this particular planning dialogue process used in this study (refer case study discussion in Chapter 9). Wheatley (1992, 2006, 2002) also discusses this possibility of self-organising, creative and transformational organisational transformations; employing a wide ranging organisational conversation creates new connections, more information flows and shared insights as to the possibilities for re-organising and doing things differently.

This particular type of soft systems picture building approach was also suitable to this particular situation where the principles and ethos of an enterprise such as this regional tourism venture, were vague and had not yet been determined. In contrast, functionalist or hard systems planning is more suited to studies seeking to optimise clearly defined goals such as increasing tourism numbers or achieving regional economic growth (Jackson 2003).

Figure 6.1 below outlines the genesis and key components of the collaborative regional learning dialogue methodology developed and applied in this case study research.



The methodology developed was contextualized to suit the complex systems nature of regions and the pluralistic nature of the regional stakeholder and community social system there. Chapter 9 will outline the three-phase process and how a self-organising regional conversation was utilised to synergise different stakeholder ways of knowing to co-appraise and co-design a sustainable tourism enterprise. Chapter 9 will also outline the conversational systems mapping technique and hermeneutical process that was used to elicit the design principles and what was to prove a novel and unexpected new regional tourism concept.

Chapter 7

The Need for a Reflexive Planning Process

7.1 Chapter Aims and Rationale

This study, has suggested the need for developing new collaborative planning processes that explicitly addresses the nature of regions as complex, self-organising emergent systems. Further, that these new methodologies are needed to better enable stakeholders and communities to co-appraise new regional enterprise opportunities and develop a rich holistic, context dependent notion or picture of what a sustainable regional enterprise entails for a particular region. This thesis, in Chapter 1, has also advocated and employed a reflexive learning style as a way to better embrace and outline the complexity occurring across Australian regions.

This Chapter goes further and argues for the need for planning as a reflexive learning process to help develop and refine, more appropriate planning methodologies to better engage across the diversity of stakeholder groups and communities involved in Australian regional landscapes and the different ways of knowing, seeing and varying cultural worldviews. Secondly, for a reflexive process to help planners make sense of what new insights, shared understandings and stakeholder advice is emerging across these regional planning conversations.

The need and rationale for such a reflexive planning process is supported by Chambers (1997) who argues that planners engaged in sustainable development projects, need to make explicit their own theoretical framework and their way of seeing and knowing or epistemology, so as to be cognizant of the appropriateness of their methodological approach. Dryzek (1997) and Gill (2005) likewise support this view and the need for a reflexive planning praxis.

This particular learning process is envisaged as a prompt for planners at the regional scale, to become more conscious of their professional practice and how it is shaped

by their particular cultural narrative and context; how this also shapes what planning methodologies are employed and what data or knowledge they are prioritising to assess the sustainability of regional enterprises, or tourism venture in this case. Secondly, a reflexive process can help planners be cognizant of how their own particular way of knowing and assessing and how this can contrast with that of other stakeholders and, in particular, Indigenous communities. There is another rationale for employing a reflexive learning practice when planning for sustainability at the regional scale. This revolves around Hamel and Prahalad's (1994: ix-xiii) argument for developing an enhanced planning processes for enterprises, which applied here to regions, re-affirms the need to cease being "protectors of the past", victims of our own myopia and of following standard "ritualistic and formulaic" strategic planning practices. Hamel and Prahalad call for facilitating new creative spaces that can foster a capability for renewal, for a new type of visioning and planning that can develop strategies that allow enterprise (and regions) to "create the future" and new "competitive advantages" beyond the old visions, incrementalism and orthodoxies of the past.

7.2 A Reflexive Learning Process for Enabling New Emergent Understandings

Bateson (1979) is instructive in the usefulness of self-reflexion. Addressing New York City planners about how to develop a healthy complex urban system capable of adaptive learning and change, Bateson urged that 'a process of systematic adjustment, would require self-observation and self-knowledge' was needed to better understand the nature of changes in the city and the rigidity of the political governance structures and current planning. Friedman (1987) in his deliberative take on planning, incorporated the idea of a reflective planning practice for planners as a way of helping to make sense of the deliberations of stakeholders across communities.

Perhaps the more compelling argument for a self-reflexive planning praxis comes from Seamon (1979), a phenomenological geographer. Buttner and Seamon (1980:171) also categorize much of conventional planning and planning research as being undertaken from the viewpoint of a 'detached observer' utilizing scientific methodologies and taking an 'objective stance on the data as he perceives'. Seamon

reaffirms this notion of planners as outsiders being the predominant perspective. He outlines the difficulty facing planners arising from their 'outside-ness' and their need to access and dialogue with the 'inside-ness' of those stakeholders better experienced in living in that region or place (Seamon, 1979, p.1). The difficulty of this outsider perspective, to Seamon and Buttimer is that planners see and tend to interpret from within their own terms or put another way, from their theoretical and planning framework. Their view is that planners need to understand the region or place from within, to access the insider knowledge of a particular locality or region. Relph (1976, 1993) like Seamon and Buttimer, writes of the importance of developing a phenomenological understanding of a place and that the depth of this understanding is related to the degree a researcher experiences this 'inside-ness'.

According to Seamon, this 'lifeworld' or insider experience and understanding of the dynamics and processes of how a place or region works, is a 'taken for granted' life experience; a tacit knowledge that needs to somehow accessed and made explicit. Their hope is to develop a new self-reflexive planning dialogue between planners and local stakeholders that helps make explicit this local knowledge and experience to develop together a better understanding of the dynamics, patterns and planning possibilities. Seamon asks how can researchers become more open so as to practically carry out this sensitive and necessary dialogue to develop these shared understandings (Seamon, 1979:2).

The reflexive learning process and the new regional planning methodology outlined in this study, similarly sought to transgress the outside-ness; to better develop an 'intimate connectedness', (Seamon, 1979:9) in this case between the planner-researcher and these other particular regional 'other' worlds and ways of seeing and knowing. Other researchers, most notably Etherington (2000) advocate this style of reflexive research process, using one's own inner self-awareness, lived experience and stories as a knowledge creating strategy. Moustakas (1994) was a pioneer of this approach, developing a heuristic mode of research inquiry employing the use of self as part of an internal search for new meanings and understanding. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) in their handbook of qualitative research methods outline the notion of researcher as 'bricoleur' being able to weave other voices, stories, perspectives and new ways of looking within an interpretative or hermeneutic framework such as with

the planning approach in this research study, which undertakes a similar interweaving of community and stakeholders perspectives and insights.

This particular reflexive learning process used in this study, builds on Schon's (1991) work that first outlined the need for a 'reflexive practice'. Uscher and Edwards (1994: 148-149,55) have also added to the call for professionals to undertake 'critical self-scrutiny' especially those in "epistemic communities" i.e. those undertaking research, teaching and facilitating new "knowledge generating practices". Bleakley (1999) has since urged the development of more rigorous reflexive practices than first outlined earlier by Schon and has called for a new holistic and critical reflexivity that can encompass the complexity of a professional practitioners' work. The aim in this Chapter, is to take up Bleakley's challenge to develop more rigorous and holistic reflexive process that helps planners to embrace a cultural diversity of other ways of seeing and knowing as appropriate for Australian regional landscapes.

7.3 The Philosophical Underpinnings of a Reflexive Learning Process

Gadamer (2004) as a hermeneutical philosopher posed that each of us views the world through their 'hermeneutical circle' which incorporates our particular ways of seeing and knowing which then shapes our way of being in the world. Gadamer's hermeneutics recognised that our previous understanding and thinking moulds our interpretive process and our task, as outlined by Denzin and Lincoln (2000:24), is to endeavour to become open to and seek to expand our present range of understanding as outlined in Gadamer's (2004:238) concept of 'Bildung'.

Gill (2005) outlines the importance of recognizing one's own and others hermeneutical circle and how this helps shape our chosen planning approaches and methodologies in regard to envisioning and planning for sustainable water. Gill argues, planners face the possibility of being locked firmly into one particular planning approach rather than to explore other different and possibly more impactful planning methodologies as to achieving sustainable outcomes. The World Water Council visioning process is criticized by Gill as being uncritically adoptive of a top-down expert led visioning process largely devoid and closed to other possible, bottom-up, visioning processes. This means that planners can lose the possibility of

incorporating the different communities aspirations and of harvesting unanticipated, emergent insights about alternative collaborative strategies and diverse local initiatives towards sustainable water.

The Gadamerian reflexive hermeneutical process, as applied here, seeks to prod and open an inner way of knowing and awareness as to what new ‘horizons’ of understanding were emerging in the course of the planning conversation that appeared as novel, new or somehow disjointed to our previous precepts. According to Gadamer, new understandings arise as insights are assessed against our existing pre-understandings and prejudgements or historical prejudices which then expand our horizons of understanding.

A hermeneutical interpretivist perspective underpins the reflexive learning process outlined here and is embodied in the regional dialogue planning methodology (in Chapter 8). As Norgaard (1994) points out, a hermeneutical perspective emphasizes the importance of the historical and cultural context for an observer-interpreter, as in the case here of a planner interpreting a regional conversation across communities and a diversity of stakeholders and cultural world-views. Planners, it has been argued in this thesis, work within both dominant cultural stories and contesting planning narratives. **A hermeneutical perspective emphasizes that the planner-interpreter needs to not just be aware of these cultural differences and world-views but to also engage and more importantly, learn from these other communities and how these non-human environmental worlds operate; hence the notion posed here of planning as a reflexive learning process.**

The reflexive learning process here, also reflects the gestalt psychotherapeutic model and understanding of change outlined by Parlett (2001) and Beisser (1970) that by being inquisitive, creating time and space and paying attention to a felt state and evolving awareness, there can occur a ‘spontaneous re-configuring – the destruction of a fixed gestalt, the birth of something new’ (Parlett, 2001:54). The self-reflexive questioning process outlined in Figure 7.1, seeks to redirect attention to an awareness of a possible new ‘gestalt’ emerging i.e. in this case, a new way of seeing and understanding how the intended planning process is unfolding and of any potential novelty that may be under the surface of the planning conversations.

This particular self-reflexive practice uses reflexive questioning and resembles a type of psychotherapeutic conversation (White and Epston, 1990) outlined earlier where space and time were created to explore, reflect, rethink, reorder and re-story a client's life patterns, albeit facilitated by a therapist-counsellor. In this case, the rethinking and re-storying is of the planner's own hermeneutic circle, culturally constructed perspective and planning practices.

The reflexive learning process articulated in this Chapter, also seeks to assist planners articulate new understandings from conversations with various regional stakeholders, to help planners identify their own hermeneutical circle and to become aware of other stakeholders hermeneutical circles and how they may differ from their own way of seeing and knowing. It employs a variation of Gadamer's notion of the hermeneutical circle as a circular reflexive learning process of developing new understandings, in this case to help ascertain from regional community conversations what a sustainable tourism venture could look like in a particular region – place.

7.4 What is Reflexivity and What Does a Rigorous Reflexive Planning Praxis Entail?

Schon (1991) outlined his notion of a reflective practice as an aesthetic or artistic process of reflection on one's praxis or theory as applied in action as opposed to a set methodology with pre-determined steps. Schon outlines two different notions of reflection, namely *reflection on action* that concerns ex-poste thinking and *reflection in action* which is thinking about one's praxis i.e. applying our theoretical- professional knowledge in practice and way of thinking as it is happening. Bleakley (1999) criticizes these two notions of reflectivity as vague notions, primarily concerned with thinking about one's own thinking with "reflective practice in danger of becoming a catch-all title for an ill-defined process (Bleakley, 1999:3417). Uscher and Edwards (1994:148-149) call for a reflective practice that also embraces a critical examination or "self-scrutiny" of a practitioner's epistemology. Bleakley extends on Schon's notions of reflection by proposing a third level namely *reflection as action* which prompts the practitioner to be reflective on oneself in inter-relationship with their environment, opening to become more open or sensitive to novelty or changes in their environment. Bleakley (1999:327-8) argues this third level of reflection opens a

practitioner to a different way of knowing. This different type and way of reflection, of “attuning”, questioning, observing and developing new understandings is more akin to Heidegger’s phenomenological stance of being-in-the world. This last level of reflection transcends the preceding notions of reflection that are more representative of different elements of the modernist discourse namely reflection as autonomous ego’s “thinking about their thinking” or as a technical, pre-determined methodology typical of instrumental rationalist thinking. Bleakley (1999:328) asserts that this third level practice entails a more complex and “holistic reflexivity” that encourages a new awareness to the cultural “other’.

‘Reflection’ then can be said to involve a critical re-examination of the assumptions that we hold as planners, of the theoretical constructs or mental models of how space, regions or regional industry such as how tourism is understood whether as a simple mechanistic system or as a complex adaptive and evolutionary phenomena. Reflective practices are defined here as either ex-poste or concurrent reflection on the effectiveness about how the professional knowledge of a planner is applied or put into action as well as the appropriateness of these planning methodologies and tools and the epistemology that underpins them.

For example, when we reflect, we look back and review our planning practices, actions, effectiveness as a facilitator, how a particular planning practice or how we acted, responded helped to achieve the intended outcomes. Reflection allows us to review and make better what we did as a planner.

However, ‘reflexivity’ is somewhat different to ‘reflectivity’ as Buckley has endeavoured to point out. Reflexivity encompasses a re-configuring of one’s notion of self, not autonomous subject standing outside an objective reality but as a self-aware observer and an interconnected part of our world as an evolving learning process. Reflexivity then is a practised sensitivity that enables a practitioner to attune to what new understanding is emerging, what other ways of seeing and knowing or new ‘horizons’ are being opened up or new-shared concepts and meanings are trying to be birthed.

Etherington (2004) supports this distinction in defining reflexivity as being self-aware of the influences on our internal responses and how this in turn shapes our way of interacting with the external and the way we are in the world. Using reflexivity in research conversations for Etherington (2004:47) “can help create a transparency and rigour as to what influenced the shape and outcomes of conversations and the co-construction of meanings”. For Etherington, a reflexive practice allows a researcher or planner in this case, a new space to review their subjectivity and projected objectivity. A reflexive practice allows planner-researchers to revisit their underpinning assumptions and chosen methodologies and on what basis they chosen as appropriate for selecting and interpreting the different data sets before them.

Reflexivity, as portrayed in this chapter then entails a deeper process than reflection. It involves the use of the ‘self’, of our ‘felt sense, an intuitive, feeling as well as just a cognitive thinking reflecting process. Reflexivity aims to elicit new understandings, new ways of seeing, perceptual frameworks say of regions and what is a sustainable tourism enterprise for this particular place and context. Reflexivity is opening to a potentially creative space to let alternative ways of seeing and how we can be in the world. This researcher sees reflexivity as the space – process whereby new mental models, innovative new concepts and business enterprise models can emerge as happened in the collaborative learning dialogue of this study.

7.5 A Reflexive Learning Tool for Regional Planning for Sustainability

Figure 7.1 below, outlines a reflexive planning praxis that goes beyond just making explicit the planner’s underlying epistemology and theoretical conceptual framework. This involves a series of reflexive questions or phenomenological prompts that serve to evolve new understandings and novel concepts as to what is trying to emerge in this cross-cultural planning dialogue. This reflexive-reflective planning praxis is based on and explores the reasoning advanced by both Habermas (1984) and Giddens (1990) that another inner or self-reflexive way of knowing is significant in how people develop meaning and make sense of the present social system and its constraints on peoples’ behaviour.

This particular, reflexive learning process operates at three levels and consists of a series of strategic and reflective questions to help prompt planners to review their praxis and to learn from what they have experienced. The first two levels correspond with the earlier defined notions of a reflective practice.

The first level suggests planners consciously identify and consider underpinning theoretical perspective, assumptions and mental models that they are being guided by; essentially to make conscious and to review their theory in action or praxis. This first level hopefully helps planners to reconnoitre the strengths, weaknesses as well as the how and why their particular resultant planning and visioning methodologies were selected for a particular brief. This level involves reflecting on where a planner is coming from and how past understandings have shaped our existing understanding about what we are planning (the nature or our mental model of regions) and how we plan (our usual methodologies).

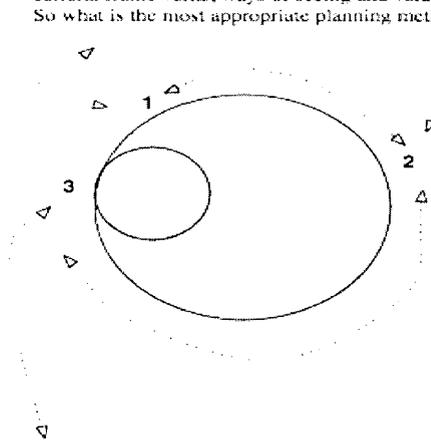
At the second level, questions involve planners reflecting and being mindful of the impacts on stakeholders of this planning praxis; to identify the possible effects of whether the planning methodology adds or depletes stakeholders ownership, whether the process is likely to access power in decision making. For example, whether a key outcome of the planning process is to also build stakeholder partnerships across the region. Whether stakeholders are more likely to be more or less involved in decision making as an outcome of the planning process? How is power reinforced or re-arranged in a partnering relationship with regional stakeholders as a result of the planning process? This type of second level self-questioning allowed the researcher to look at what social role and what type of planning practices could for example help build the adaptive capability and potential for social learning across the regional corridor.

Fig. 7.1 A Reflexive Planning Learning Tool – 3 Levels of Reflexivity

Level 1: Reflective

Questions to review my methodology, theoretical framework and underlying epistemology. Where am I coming from?

What theoretical framework underpins my planning praxis and my mental model of a region, place, city or organisation? What is entailed in my hermeneutical circle? What are the key assumptions I am making about this planning approach? What other hermeneutical circles and cultural frameworks, ways of seeing and values is involved? So what is the most appropriate planning methodology?



Level 2: Reflection on the planning process, its impacts and what are the aims of the process.

How will this planning process impact on stakeholders? Will it assist in building a more inclusive dialogue? Will the planning conversation be limited to a pre-determined agenda or will it allow for emergent, unanticipated outcomes? Will this planning process reinforce present power and institutional relationships? Does the process seek to build new regional stakeholder network partnerships? Will this work result in an improved capability for the regional communities to adapt and evolve along more sustainable pathways? What do I and other stakeholders want to come out of this planning process?

Level 3: Own Self-Reflexive Dialogue

What is my felt sense and experience of this planning process? To what degree have I developed an insider understanding or appreciation of the local stakeholder worldview and issues that need to be addressed? Do I feel this planning visioning process will properly engage and capture the aspirations of all the stakeholders? What do I feel is being dreamt here in this planning process? What is trying to emerge or be birthed here or is there something new and novel being suggested? This level involves interpreting, deciphering new shared understanding and novelty.

Engaging a deeper 3rd level of reflexivity is advocated once the planning process is underway. This level concerns being open about what I, as a planner are seeing and learning about what is and isn't working, what is appropriate culturally and around engaging with the stakeholders and necessary to achieve the flow-on effects of the planning process. Secondly what is emerging out of the planning conversations, what is novel and what is being discovered and learnt? Here a hermeneutical process is used to help planners interpret and develop new understandings from their own lived experience of what is happening during the planning process and what can be learnt

from this. The reflexive questions asked at this level focus on meaning-making, utilizing an inner self-awareness and interpretation of what the planner feels is unfolding and insights as to how they can modify or transcend their planning practices, agenda or timetabling. From the researcher's own experience, this self-reflexivity helped develop an awareness of one's own particular planning discourse but to also help transcend one's own cultural shaping and to explore another way of knowing.

A reflexive learning process was used by this researcher to become more acutely aware of the changing shape, depth and evolution of the unfolding regional planning conversations and of what new understandings were emerging. A hermeneutical stance and interpretive process was employed to define the essence of the stakeholder advice embodied in these regional conversations and what new conclusions and novel concepts, if any were trying to emerge or being birthed?

This reflexive process helped this researcher to realise a new understanding of what the collaborative planning conversations were achieving at another level.

‘The self-organising conversations across the adjoining regions about the idea of a single connected long distance track initially, was helping to link the different rural place communities across the cross-corridor of over 600kms. The conversations helped develop connections and a mutual interest around what sort of walking track was needed. But in effect, we were building a ‘place’ that was linked along this track corridor. This forced us to re-think what ‘places’; how they are emergent phenomena, partly socially constructed and not necessarily just located in one localised area; even a region could be considered a place This reflexive process helped me realise the importance of language and what ‘novelty’ was emerging in the text of these cross-regional conversations. Whereas the tourism industry discussed planning to build regional destinations that host a cluster of product and ‘experiences’, what we were doing was different; it was ‘place-making’.

This realisation came as I sensed more and more the planning conversations reflected the local concern about how ‘we’ need to host and look after

visitors as well as the local place communities and ecosystems. This reflexive planning practice was indeed hermeneutic in that as researcher – planner I was learning to take notice of the language and the different way it was being used as the planning conversation unfolded.’

This notion of ‘hosting would later surface to shape the brand principles underpinning the final regional tourism enterprise.

7.6 The Need for a New Reflexive Language; Reframing Subject and Object

At present, the modernist planning conversation is externally; focused on the ‘out there’. The landscape is seen as inert, full of natural resources to be managed. There is little engagement with the landscape which is seen as a backdrop which or may not assist with economic development in regard to topography, labour resources, amenability of certain infrastructure such as ports, airports, transport to valued destinations. Tourism is a product or at best, an experience of landscape as a visual backdrop, a service commodity to be consumed. Currently, planners as ‘outsiders’ and experts are asked to assess, advise and recommend on the viability and sustainability of regional enterprises

The reflexive, process learning tool proposed here, instead seeks to open up a new way of seeing regions and their places not as objects to be planned or a space / set of things but instead a set of interrelationships that include the planner. Reflexive questions such as ‘what is the nature of this place’; ‘what can be done that could sit with or be accommodated with the nature, fabric and aesthetics of this place and that the local communities would endorse?’ are ways, planners can engage with an emergent process of another way of knowing. Reflexive planning is then presented as a new inter-relational way of being, to help take notice of what is unfolding in the planning process as well as critical reflections as to whether particular power holders are being privileged or marginalised.

However, part of the difficulty of undertaking a self-reflexive praxis is that a new language is needed to describe this new way of facilitating and catalyzing an emergent process and to better understand this notion of the reflexive planning process.

Metcalf & Game (2002) write of a process of inter-being that goes towards describing how planners could engage with the presence and understanding of places (O'Donohue, 1997) and regions. A reflexive praxis as outlined here, is seen as a possible aid for planners to better engage in a new non euro-centric regional conversation. This reflexive learning process seeks to circumvent the underpinning notion of self in the western modernist conversation akin to subject-object separation with the planner as objective outsider and expert maker of development plans.

Current planning conversations around sustainability in Australian regional landscapes are problematic in another sense. There is a danger of being trapped within an anthropocentric gaze, attending to the dominating needs of only human communities. According to the deep ecologist perspective and prominent eco-psychologists such as Naess (1989) and Macey (1991) there is a need for a cultural transformation based around a new type of self emerging that is 'connected' with landscape and is able to see and understand the interrelationships across country, beyond the present euro-centric perspective. The reflexive planning praxis advocated here, encourages what Meares (2003) has outlined as a more notion of the self as an inner (reflexive) conversation which comments on outer world experiences and observes how different ways of seeing the world, shapes our life and how we design sustainable enterprises. A reflexive planning praxis could constitute a step towards cultivating the 'connected self' perspective in planning.

7.7 Conclusions

Reflexive planning is depicted here as a learning dialogue practice that can help the planner explore how to better reflect on and make explicit their own hermeneutic framework; to better engage with communities and other stakeholders different worldviews and hermeneutical circles. A reflexive learning process aims to enable a new type of conversation that delves into the mystery and meaning of the dynamics of a non-European landscape and its unique dynamics and of the possible, unanticipated social-cultural-ecological impacts of regional tourism ventures.

These reflexive practices are to intended to assist a more informed dialogue, to better listen to and to capture the essence of what these stories from stakeholders about the

what is viable and sustainable in a particular region. It is for these reasons that a reflexive planning process has been incorporated as a core-defining feature of the regional dialogue methodology as outlined in Chapter 9.

Chapter 8

Planning as Facilitating Evolutionary Socio-Cultural Transitions

8.1 Chapter Purpose, Aims and Scope:

This Chapter has two aims. Firstly to explore the notion of how existing planning approaches as advanced by Murayama (1976) are culture and paradigm bound and have difficulty in dealing with heterogeneity or the diversity of different worldviews, ways of seeing, knowing and thinking in society. This Chapter then, is firstly, an exploratory probe into the capabilities regional planning methodologies for identifying sustainable enterprise pathways could entail. For example, Murayama called for exploring trans-epistemological planning processes that would allow for alternative novel solutions to emerge as a result of a symbiotic interaction across different cultural groups in a society. A second reason for this discussion lies with the idea outlined by Manuel-Navarrete, Slocombe & Mitchell 2006 is that there is a need to develop place and context dependent planning methodologies for sustainably planning and managing regional natural resources with their stakeholder communities such as the Peten Forest region in southern Mexico. They argue that an integrated knowledge approach is needed where local place knowledge is synergised with a science informed perspective. This is to say, how could we plan differently in a way that synergises different ways of knowing and seeing? Further, what tools could be employed in order to facilitate the creation of new knowledges as part of the type of socio-cultural evolution suggested as important in Chapter Five for identifying and designing sustainable regional enterprises and human ecologies?

The second part of this Chapter then outlines the need for planning for sustainability at the regional scale to address the rich multi-cultural reality and complexity of Australian regional landscapes and their unique, sensitive local ecologies. The co-

appraising and co-designing of an environmental and culturally sensitive, sustainable regional tourism enterprise, it is argued here, involves asking what will fit in with this landscape, enhance its social fabric market, respect its cultural diversity as well as being market viable in the long-run. The present euro-centric cultural way of seeing regional landscapes and modernist planning conversations are seen as limited in the planning and designing of sustainable regional enterprise industry pathways as they do not necessarily involve a cross cultural dialogue about the capabilities of Australian regional landscapes.

The case is presented for collaborative planning across Australian regional landscapes to be inclusive of the different Indigenous cultural communities and cognizant of their different stakeholder world-views, cosmologies, values and ways of understanding of what is possible and sustainable in these landscapes. This entails investigating culturally appropriate collaborative planning processes involving new types of open, exploratory and inclusive planning conversation and dialogue across the different cultural frameworks that offer new possibilities of novelty emerging.

This Chapter also discusses the notion of Australian regional landscapes as unique, diverse human ecologies that have been culturally storied and shaped by euro-centric and Indigenous ways of seeing, knowing and being. The imported cultural values, modernist ways of seeing and knowing have deeply impacted these fragile regional landscapes through land practices and policies, causing considerable degradation (Diamond 2005, Anderson 2006, Main, 2005). These culturally layered regional human ecologies are described here, as encompassing a diversity of communities with the predominant euro-centric, anthropocentric worldview and natural resource focus, contrasting and overlaying the Aboriginal Dreaming cultural perspectives. The Chapter explores what other types of knowledge are needed to appraise and design sustainable tourism enterprises in these landscapes.

8.2 Collaborative Planning Methodologies that Embrace Cultural Differences and Worldviews and Enable Transition Across Social Systems

This thesis has advanced the notion that both social learning across regional communities, stakeholders and agencies together with a cultural evolution in our ways

of seeing, thinking and knowing will help facilitate the appraisal and design of sustainable enterprises and pathways. It has suggested a new notion of planning as catalyzing emergence and novelty. This implies a transition across social systems is needed as part of shift towards sustainable futures. Murayama (1976) and Boulding (1981) earlier asked what social planning capabilities would be needed to facilitate an evolutionary transition across our social systems.

Murayama (1976:207) argued for forging a new 'mutualistic' planning paradigm that could facilitate new symbiotic and polyocular visions from across a societies diverse social groupings and different cultures and ways of seeing and knowing. His argument was that the existing traditional planning approaches were underpinned by a 'unidirectional', 'atomistic' and 'uniformistic' logic or epistemological position. Successful social evolution could be enhanced, according to Murayama (1976:211) by facilitating learning conversations through networks of those willing to innovate from across different cultures and social contexts while avoiding excessive and inappropriate copying from each other.

Boulding (1981: 172-174) notes our existing ways of seeing, thinking and knowing or 'mindscapes' following on from Murayama, constitute 'deep structures' that both dominate and hinder stakeholders and communities ability to develop new 'knowledge stocks', social learning and evolutionary visions of the future. Further, that a key capability for enabling new evolutionary visions for what she termed then, 'the good society' is an 'evaluative capacity' that can nurture and appraise new visions of a better future society (Boulding, 1981:183).

These pioneering thinkers around evolutionary social dynamics may have pointed out what they considered the key elements of how to facilitate a social transformation that is still relevant in our discussion concerning sustainable regions and enterprises.

This thesis sought to undertake such a planning exercise, as a social learning conversation as to what was a sustainable regional enterprise and new pathway, across a range of different stakeholders, communities and cultural perspectives.

8.2.1 What Planning Tools Can be Employed to Facilitate and Capture the Insights from across a Heterogeneous Stakeholder Community Regional Discussion?

Murayama and Boulding's earlier discussion around the need for a new planning process asks of us, what new planning tools can facilitate socio-cultural shifts and new 'polyocular' shared visions?

This study developed a refined soft systems mapping technique namely a conversational systems mappings to capture the insights across a diverse group of communities, stakeholders and agencies with a range of differing worldviews, ways of seeing, knowing and thinking. This technique sought to capture not just stakeholder and community advice but to facilitate an emergent shared understanding and aligned vision of what a sustainable regional tourism enterprise would look like in the context of the New England – Coffs Coast regional corridor.

The conversational system mapping technique, its heritage and how it was employed is discussed in Chapters 9 and 10.

But what are the particular regional landscapes in this case study, how have they been shaped and impacted in the past by the dominant and predominant cultural perspectives and how do the different regional stakeholders, communities and agencies see, know and think differently? The following section seeks to contextualize this discussion so as to provide an example of what type of heterogeneous society and ecological systems this study incorporated.

8.3 The New England – Bellingen Coffs Harbour Regional Landscapes - unique, sensitive, ecologically and culturally rich.

A second capability outlined by Murayama above is the ability to transcend our cultural 'boundedness' that shapes our existing social planning practices. The study posits that regional planning across Australian regional landscapes can be enriched through incorporating a cross-cultural awareness and by consciously reflecting on other ways of seeing and knowing other than the initial euro-centric vision of the

land. But what are these other major cultural frameworks and diverse ways of seeing and knowing regional landscapes or 'country' as it is termed here.

Regional Australian landscapes are now being recognised as unique phenomena. Their flora, fauna, climate, weathered topography and soils are different to that of both Europe and the Americas. Many of these varied ecosystems are sensitive but resilient having adapted to the present dry climate and El Nino shaped periods of erratic rainfall (Horton, 2000). There is a distinct fire regime that interplays with the complexity of soil types, topographical landforms and erratic periods of wet being interspersed with the more predominant dry, arid periods. Horton (2000) typecasts this continental Australian climatic pattern as the bulls-eye model with a dry, red centre and the closer to the coast, generally, being wetter; the erratic rainfall pattern he described as resembling a drunkard's walk, a metaphor of chaos theory.

The particular cross-regional landscapes that constitute the case study of this thesis, however host at least five different ecosystem types within a corridor of six hundred kilometres from within the deep gorge and tablelands of the New England to the coastal zones. These range from sub-alpine and cool dry rangelands, dry temperate and sub-tropical rainforest gullies. The protected areas include part of the World Heritage listed Central East Australian Rainforest Reserves (CERRA) and a number of significant NSW National Parks and Wilderness protected areas. However little is known outside the region of these significant Australian eco-assets. Current visitation is low comparable to other national parks elsewhere in the NSW. Where there is high visitation such as the National Park sites at Dorrigo rainforest centre (130,000 PA), Apsley Falls and Wollomombi Falls, this consists of short-stopovers from vehicular traffic heading across to the coast at Coffs Harbour, north to Brisbane Queensland or southbound to Sydney on the major interstate New England Highway. Yet within this corridor there are remnants of Artic Beech Forests from the times of Gondwana quite distinct from the prevailing eucalypt forests types and deserts landscapes of the majority of Australia.

Numerous Aboriginal Peoples and language groups have lived and walked this country, constituting a rich cultural layering on these regional landscapes including the Anaiwan People of the immediate Armidale, New England locality as well as the

neighbouring Gumbaygirr and Thunghutti Peoples. At the time of European colonisation, Australia was host to 364 Aboriginal Peoples differentiated into numerous nations, clans with 250 languages spoken within 27 family language groups. Australia was a multi-cultural nation well before the increasingly diverse waves of subsequent migrations in the 20th century; its regions now culturally layered, holding stories about different peoples and their ways of living with this land.

The cross-regional landscape from the New England tablelands and gorges to the sub-tropical coastal valleys stores a rich cultural heritage. As Davidson (2006) notes, this isn't an example of typical "UNESCO heritage listing of grand monuments, beautiful constructed structures or sites with significant universal values. The cultural richness of this country is instead, embedded in the land and the stories of its Aboriginal peoples of country, of how they were custodians of the land for well over 50,000 years, their understanding and detailed knowledge of these ecosystems and long climate cycles. According to the Australian poet Judith Wright this country "is full of stories". Tacey (1995) supports this view and argues that the cultural richness of this country is in its 'mytho-poetic' landscape as he terms it; woven across its storylines, its bush tucker foods and the pathways of rare species needing to be preserved. There are significant Aboriginal sites, Men's and Women's meeting and ceremonial places across these regions but these are largely unknown, deliberately kept secret. In planning conversations with Aboriginal Land Councils representatives, it was revealed that significant finds of artefacts on some private landholdings, raised the possibility of them being covered up or destroyed out of fear of attracting subsequent land rights (pers. comm). This cultural heritage requires great sensitivity and respect when planning walking tracks and ecotourism developments as seen in the disputed negotiations around the citing of the Yarrandoo Eco-Resort near the town of Ebor in 1994 as related in private conversations with both local Aboriginal People and local landholders. Significant angst was caused over a previous negotiation around the location and development of an ecotourism lodge in the New England region as it was felt that not all the relevant stakeholders had been consulted or sufficient time given to consider all the ramifications for nearby special places and country. People from one particular Aboriginal People may not have known the significance of the location, being known only to the local custodian Elder group. This issue complicated subsequent negotiations around proposed walking track

routes through the area, whether tracks with world class potential could even be agreed on to go through the area let alone where they could be located without causing cultural insult.

However Aboriginal stories and knowledge of country, predating European colonisation and settlement represent a significant potential tourism market niche as part of an authentic Australian experience (O'Loughlin, van der Lee and Gill, 2003)). This planning study was aware of this dilemma and sought to explore a 'new way of doing business' with the region's Aboriginal communities to ensure not just opportunities for new tourism ventures but ways of safeguarding what stories and places and cultural knowledge was considered sacred by these communities.

8.4 Regional Planning as Weaving Contesting Cultural and Community

Narratives

Regional Australian landscapes are depicted here as unique, storied phenomena. Their landscapes having been shaped by the particular world-views and contesting cultural narratives of the different Peoples who have occupied this country over 50,000 years and now by different existing stakeholder interest groups and actor-networks within these communities. In this sense, these regional ecological-economic, social systems or human ecologies, are seen here as culturally sculptured and storied. Maines and Bridger's (1992) in their study of Manheim Township, USA have set out a narrative perspective as to how communities make land-use decisions and so story how regions develop. They outline the different contesting narratives used to persuade local government's decision on planning ordinances to tax and so hold back town development proposals. Communities are seen as storied; narratives are portrayed as socially persuasive acts or rhetorical practices utilized to shape social life, create meaning and to influence land-use decisions (Maines & Bridger, 1992). Krieger (1981) goes further, seeing planning as community narratives shaping futures;

“When we plan we write a narrative that says how things could be otherwise than is given by the usual account. A plan, a narrative that controls time is a re-working of everyday narratives to find a potentially truer, more comprehensive one that will be satisfactory as

we encompass larger numbers of projects. Planning commands time by taking the narratives we have in mind and refashioning them.”

Kreigger (1981:27)

Planning a cross-regional tourism enterprise involves a re-storying of the region and brings with it both social, environmental and cultural impacts as well as economic opportunities. Sustainability has been presented here as a new cultural storying of a region, emphasizing new values of environmental, social and cultural sensitivity and conservation in a dynamic balance with economic opportunities. The question of what is a sustainable enterprise concerns then how it fits within the social, cultural and environmental fabric of the region. The difficulty for planners is weaving a new aligned vision, or as Pink (2005) describes, the required competencies of sustainable organisations as symphony making to encompass stakeholders and communities concerns and aspirations. This process does not to push a contrived consensus, creates harmony yet allows dis-sensus or allowances for some enterprises, landholders and place communities to abstain.

However, what is considered sustainable depends on the stakeholders involved in the regional planning conversation and their cultural perspectives and particular hermeneutical circles, ways of seeing, knowing, their worldviews and values. This will entail a range of perspectives from the more eco-centric and priorities' favouring environmental conservation interests along a spectrum towards more anthropocentric views favouring more the economic interests of human enterprises. The interweaving of a new vision or 'symphony' about what is a sustainable regional tourism enterprise, may be discordant at times as there is an on-going tension between different cultural perspectives, values and priorities. What is considered sustainable will also evolve over time as sustainability is considered here, a social learning journey as first outlined by Meppem and Gill (1998).

If the task of regional planning for sustainability is seen as interweaving different community and their deeper cultural storying then we need to better understand how regions have been storied in the past and how past policies and planning has impacted on these unique environmental and cultural regional ecologies. Secondly, we also need to un-layer and understand the different hermeneutical circles, world-views

and priorities of the various stakeholder groups that arise out of these different cultural narratives. As Boje (2005) has argued with his work on helping organisations re-story themselves, this can only be achieved by surfacing and deconstructing the contesting narratives, major and minor that have shaped their past evolution. Only then can we, Boje argues, have a better chance of escaping the old narratives to invent a new aligned narrative and to play a new symphony.

8.5 The Modernist Planning Narrative and its Impact on Australian Regional Landscapes

Diamond (2005) outlines how imported euro-centric cultural attitudes and the land use and development policies arising out of them, have led to severe land degradation and exhaustion of soil fertility across Australia. This 'mining the landscape' attitude and the resulting government planning policies enabled extensive land clearances across regional landscapes. According to Diamond, these land clearances have heavily contributed to salinisation (currently at 9 per cent but potentially 25 per cent of land), exhaustion of water supplies and the depletion of fragile soils. These same, inappropriate cultural attitudes, around mining the regional landscapes, are seen as contributing to the depletion of fishing stocks, forest cover and native habitat ecosystems and numerous species. Little attention was given to other values and other cultural perspectives such as 'sustaining the environment'. The imported British narrative of opening up land development and rapid agricultural expansion was based on commodity production such as wool and wheat. This was in spite of the local Australian reality of erratic, unpredictable rainfall, intermittent drought cycles as opposed to the British vision of regular rain, fertile soils and on-going high economic returns on agricultural enterprises. An argument could be mounted here that the New England region is somewhat more climatically stable in terms of rainfall patterns.

Andrews (2006) also argues that Australian regional landscapes are unique phenomena. In particular, Australian rivers were characterised as slow flowing waterways, more a series of connected lakes and ponds, with naturally formed waterways retaining water and dissipating nutrient flow. The euro-centric vision didn't recognize this distinct regional landscape process that had co-evolved with the

dry erratic climate enabling sustainable landscapes over the millennia. Land clearing of the native cover removed much of the existing biodiversity and the moderating effect of forest cover and opened the landscape to the full impact of a harsh climate. Andrews model of Australian regional landscape's hydrological processes are only now being investigated by the CSIRO, Australia's premier research organisation. The long-term results of these regional land development policies are seen manifesting currently with Australia's key river system, the Murray-Darling being drained by over-allocation of water for irrigation and agriculture, now nearly empty, some of its ecosystems are nearing the point of collapse unless there is substantial rain this year after a five year crippling drought (Duffy, 2007). Regional development and the survival of some regional towns are now threatened as town water supplies reach crisis point.

The prevailing settler modernist narrative did not think of 'integrating agriculture in with local ecologies' as Main (2005:P83) has pointed out, nor was their consideration of what agricultural practices the 'country' could bear. Main paints a now familiar picture of the degradation of the South-West slopes region of NSW, characterized by industrial scale wheat – wool model of farming. This region was opened up by colonisation and the spread of the railway system, reinforcing industrial scale modernization and continuing expansion all underpinned by a reliance on scientific methods notably applying fertilizers and pesticides, which Main argues reduced local natural biodiversity. In contrast, the traditional Wirradjuri People as custodians of this 'country' valued the ecological integrity of the land, its biodiversity, health and the preservation of all communities, species and habitats as necessary for the well-being of all. According to Main (2005:8), the environmental problems being experienced across Australian regional landscapes needs to be viewed 'within the elaborate historical and cultural contexts from which they arise' and that pre-existing 'beliefs and attitudes block the emergence of alternative ways of seeing and engaging with the land'. Main (2005:8) quoting an Australian environmentalist historian Tom Griffiths, re-affirms that the main stumbling block to developing sustainable regional enterprises is 'cultural' and that coming to understand regional 'country' and ourselves is the way forward to developing a new cultural narrative of sustainability in Australian regions.

However, Diamond is optimistic for Australian regional landscapes as there is an ongoing re-thinking “ of the traditional core values’ and which particular attitudes to the land can be retained in the face of mounting regional and landscape environmental problems. Currently Australian regions are characterised by regional urban centres (the populations of Armidale 22,000, Coffs Harbour 40,000), declining rural place villages, few medium sized towns with states such as NSW being dominated by the huge megalopolis of Sydney-Newcastle-Wollongong (nearing 4.5 million people). The rise of large agribusiness necessary to achieve sufficient economic returns and reduced costs, means that regional job growth and population is generally declining in all but the regional centres and the state capital megalopolis. Building new sustainable regional enterprises and industry pathways is a serious issue in the face of these regional and rural dynamics.

This study is underpinned by the view that sustainable regional enterprises need to fit and be integrated into regional landscapes and the environmental, social, cultural and economic fabric of a region rather than repeat the damage of past development.

8.6 Understanding the Contrasting Cultural Framework towards Australian Regional Landscapes

A key difficulty for Euro-Australian planners in facilitating a planning conversation around regional sustainable development is that we have two major cultural frameworks, differing understandings, perceptions and or stories when viewing Australian regional landscapes (Tacey, 1995) as alluded to above. Gadamer’s (2004) notion of ‘hermeneutical circle’ is another way of describing the sense of these frameworks of seeing, knowing and being as expanding horizons.

An early euro-centric western cultural perspective saw the Australian landscape as ‘barren, empty unalive’ and as a ‘dead, objective background to our busy, ego-centered and self-propelling human lives’ (Tacey, 1995:148). This modernist euro-centric cultural story then looks to natural resource management employing the latest scientific methods; humans here have the power to control, shape and re-order the landscape at will. It is a human-centred, secular storying of the world.

This modernist rationalist way of knowing is about being apart from and having dominion over nature; it focuses on ‘things’ such as land, forests and water as resources. The ‘Other’ Indigenous stories shaping Australian landscapes, in contrast is about being deeply interconnected with and inside a larger psychological and spiritual dreaming of ‘country’.

Horton (2000) is instructive in arguing that Aboriginal Peoples as ‘hunters and keen observers’ and custodians strove to maintain biodiversity and the complexity of country, seeking out and harvesting the surplus foods in different place ecosystems. This perspective suggests a deep intuitive knowledge of country and climate change, taking advantage of fire regimes that produced a patchwork quilt landscape of place ecosystems returning to mature succession states. This approach of ‘sustainable maintenance’ as denoted by Horton, stands in deep contrast with the seemingly unmitigated push for maximising yields on tourism investment and increasing visitation numbers and until recently, the homogenisation of tourism product and experiences that is fostered by modernist planning conversation. Yet until recently, the significance of these other ways of knowing and managing country has gone unrecognised.

Flannery’s (2004) work on the complex interrelationships of changing regional landscapes and the decline and infertility of different kangaroo species attests to the need for undertaking a more evolutionary complex systems approach to enhance our understanding of the social-economic-ecological dynamics across regional landscapes. Modernist science in the past, has been “a conversation with nature” (Schaefer, 1998:57) but this ‘first’ scientific perspective’ operated within a framework of privileging one way of knowing, narrower than what was required to make sense of and to understand the new country and its unique ecosystems and climate.

The alternative Aboriginal Peoples’ Dreaming perspective, sees places ‘being animated by ancient spirits’ (Tacey, 1995:149) with codes of responsibility as lore that govern how places and country around custodianship. Knowledge of ‘country’ is passed down with an integrated set of practices around what places can be accessed, when and by whom; a set of fire regimes and practices for example is interwoven with kinship relationships around such matters as what can be eaten by whom, form a

small part of an intricate picture of how ‘country can be sustainably maintained (Horton, 2002). ‘Country’, the Aboriginal term of region or a nation’s land, embodies a dynamic dreaming of the land itself and its custodian communities; more than just a place where one’s ancestors lie and creation myths reside. To this researcher, ‘country’ appears very close to the deep ecology notion of an ecological or connected self, beyond the western atomistic notion of an individual self to encompass a wider identity and notion of self as part of the land. These divergent perspectives between a European concept of land and regional landscapes and, the Aboriginal notion of country, is best seen in the words of a recent song by Paul Kelly and Kevin Carmody from the movie “One Night the Moon”,

“This land is mine,
All the way to the fence-line
Every break of day
I’m working just to make it pay
This land is mine
Yeah I signed on the dotted line”

And the Aboriginal voice in retort sings

“This land is me
Rock, water, animal, tree
They are my song
My being is here where I belong
This land owns me
From generations past to infinity”

The notion of ‘Dreaming’ of Australian Aboriginal cultures presents a unique and valuable view of regional landscapes. In the ‘dreaming’, Aboriginal communities are deeply connected and are an integrated part of the on-going spiritual presence of landscape, their custodian role revolves around fulfilling obligations to the sacred, evolving slow dance of ‘country’. Ensuring limited access to sacred places through taboos on what can be taken by whom, ensured ecological refuges and the possibility of regenerating biodiversity during prolonged droughts.

A deep and lasting impression on this researcher when working in Aboriginal regional community planning as discussed earlier in Chapter 2;

‘was of a parallel planning process and cultural construct of ‘planning as dreaming’; that this regional planning conversation was somehow part of the on-going flow of the dreaming of this ‘country.’

‘This imbued me with the idea of planners needing to start to learn to listen to ‘country’ and its stakeholders as to what sort of walking track tourism venture and visitation levels, is appropriate, viable and sustainable.’

‘One of the issues for myself as a researcher then became how to go beyond the whiteness – to acknowledge and even if I couldn’t understand, then to respect this other cultural framework of regions of country as a dreaming process.’

The argument being developed here, however is not that an alternative ‘Aboriginal’ worldview and way of living with the land should be instead privileged over that of a so-called euro-centric perspective. There is instead a richness of potential learning through looking at a diversity of cultural perspectives in planning as a process of socially constructing ‘what is a sustainable regional enterprise’.

8.7 Un-Layering the Different Stakeholders’ Hermeneutical Circles, Interests and Aspirations

The particular regional landscapes in this study are host to a range of stakeholders with contesting interests and aspirations across its regional cities and towns, small rural place communities, a variety of state agency land managers and government policy and service providers, Aboriginal communities and landholders. These regions and their stakeholders, embrace a range of different interests, concerns and narratives around the idea of what constitutes sustainable development in their part of the world. There is a myriad of not just different interests but also different ways of seeing, knowing and thinking.

In the New England region, landholders in the main are engaged in various grazing activities such as fine wool production and beef grazing in the New England regions. On the tablelands, some graziers have expressed support for developing the proposed new ecotourism and walking track to the coast initiative; others are more concerned about new visitors disrupting their grazing and lambing regimes. Generally most acknowledge the need to add to the diversity of existing regional industry for job creation; to add another 'leg to stabilize the table' as it were.

The adjoining Coffs - Bellingen coastal regions incorporates a broader range of landholders and a more diverse community. There is an increasing number of recent settlers seeking to escape and or retire away from major metropolis such as Sydney, various horticulture enterprises including bananas, potato farming and some small scale beef grazing on previous dairy pastures. Many of these small rural enterprises near the coast are struggling to compete in market niches and in seasonal gaps with similar usually cheaper product from northern Australia. There is an established tourism industry on the subtropical coast that seeks to expand visitation. The community is contesting different notions of rural development, one narrative theme pushing for more development via opening up further rural sub-divisions for housing in rural hinterlands, offering an escape for struggling small scale rural farm enterprises. The existing new settlers are concerned that this will just reproduce the Sydney metropolis they left. The state government has so far resisted this further development and has rejected relaxing prescriptions on opening up extensive rural sub-divisions.

Previous community co-facilitation by this researcher, in developing the Coffs Harbour Rural Hinterland Strategic Plan (Gill, 2001) and the Northern Tablelands Regional Aboriginal Lands Council, helped acquaint this researcher with the myriad of issues and concerns facing stakeholders in the coastal zones of the cross-regional corridor. Of importance is the recent evolution of regional landholders mental model of regional landscapes and how landholders have challenged the predominance of the European perspective and scientific way of knowing as it relates to sustainable regional land management. For example, graziers on the New England Tablelands (or ranchers in north America) have had to learn to adapt and fine-tune their superfine wool operations to the cycles of the 'country'. Their way of knowing is based on

learning through long observation of what practices work and what stocking rates and property configurations etc are sustainable. Holistic cell grazing, pasture management techniques have recently been introduced into the New England region. These practices bio-mimic the herd behaviours that have sustained the great African plains ecosystems for thousands of years. A number of graziers have fine-tuned these sustainable practices through their informal learning communities of practice at gatherings such as sheep and cattle sales. This reflexive observational learning process develops another type of expertise about what is viable and what a sustainable enterprise in this country looks like. It is an evolving practical knowledge relying more on a felt sense of what will work best given their shared knowledge of place and past climate and economic cycles. This local expert knowledge of landholders builds on watching the effects of earlier stocking practices and tree clearing that led to soil erosion, eucalypt die-back in the 1980's and increased strain on fragile soils during drought periods. This landholder knowledge embodies a healthy scepticism of outside experts. Conversing with these stakeholders also requires respect and a deep listening to as to their knowledge and evaluation of what sort of regional tourism concept is viable and sustainable in their 'country'. A diversity of approaches and different stakeholder ways of understanding what is a sustainable enterprise will develop and inform each other. Planning as facilitating social learning around what is a place and context dependent notion of sustainable regional enterprise is seen as one way to develop this rich, diverse regional knowledge bank in the future.

Knowledge of 'country' (region and place) in Aboriginal cultures arises out of an engagement and deep listening or 'dhajirri' as the Bundjalung and Aboriginal People refer to it. This knowledge and wisdom of living with this 'country' for over 50,000 years from ages long observation, is passed down through cross-generational reflection and storytelling. This way of knowing is also a reflexive process, reliant on processing one's own and others in the community experience based around a connected notion of self in 'country'. These 'other alternative ways of knowing of Aboriginal cultures have a deep spiritual underpinning. The predominant values of these communities are culturally focused and revolve around custodianship and protection of all that is entailed in 'country'. This means that planners need to understand that the conversation will embrace a wholly different cultural frame of reference. This different way of knowing and gathering wisdom of country uses

mytho-poetic language and metaphors (Tacey, 2003) for teaching the interdependencies and dynamics of country through long periods of erratic climate cycles.

Sveiby and Skuthorpe (2006) outline how the Ngunnabarra People of north-west region of NSW saw 'country as a story' and that storytelling when walking 'tracks' or 'songlines' was a way of both gaining and passing on knowledge of the particular dynamics and cycles of country. They see *the Ngunnabarra socio-cultural structure, based on distributed leadership across 26 communities around a dynamic knowledge management of country as a most effective way of developing both a resilient society and sustainable country in Australia*. Responses to changes across country were based on supporting knowledge experts within their society who could decipher and had the know-how to identify what responses were required as the climate and ecosystems went into new phases. Sveiby and Lloyd (1987) earlier argued that know-how or the ability to applying knowledge to a new problem is a necessary capability for sustainable organisations. Sveiby and Skuthorpe see this distributed knowledge management model of leadership as an alternative to the command and control organisational model. Clearly there is much to be learnt about co-managing Australian regions sustainably from our Aboriginal Peoples experiences, their 'context specific' distributed leadership networks and knowledge based economies across 50,000 years.

Tacey (2003:64) comments on how the modernist secular perspective has discredited other ways of seeing and knowing in the past. Not acknowledging the traditional Indigenous owners and their ways of knowing, when undertaking regional planning projects, has important implications of both ignoring this rich accumulated knowledge of country and of furthering culturally insulting of what is considered sacred. Unless difference is respected, it is likely that valued Aboriginal communities will be lost as stakeholder community partner of regional tourism; yet their cultural diversity, deep understanding of country and what is sustainable offer deeply significant contributions to developing a regional tourism initiative. The secular rationalist conversation of the Enlightenment and modernist project, what is termed here as 'whiteness' has tended to dismiss Aboriginal mytho-poetic spiritual language and storytelling as a way of knowing; a type of false consciousness.

In the modernist planning conversation, the planner is placed in the role of the supposed objective outsider, an observer and expert maker of development plans that aim to shape and control the enterprise to meet pre-determined goals. Quantum physics and the experiments of Bohr have considerably undermined this notion of there being a separation from the system being observed. These and related insights from systems thinking, suggest decision-makers are part of the system they are attempting to manage, as the unexpected consequences, positive and negative feedback loops of their decisions will impact and re-shape the system; these effects being often lagged across space and time (Jackson, 2005). This dualism, or subject – object way of seeing characteristic of modernism, has meant a separation of the human endeavour from nature, from the ‘other’ where a landscape is assessed for natural resources, its vistas, or its aesthetic appeal and whether it adds to the attractiveness of a tourism destination or product. Connectedness and sense of belonging to place has somehow become secondary to the predominant values of economic development underlying the modernist planning discourse.

A collaborative regional multi-stakeholder conversation in Australian landscapes then presents the possibility of transgressing different cultural frameworks, mental models about land, country and place as well as different ways of knowing, seeing and thinking. CSIRO researchers are now researching new cross-cultural conversations as a way of engaging with the complexity and learning about the unique ecosystems and landscapes. For example, Parkin of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, participating in one such joint project, calls for a ‘big picture of NRM and including the overlooked social and cultural dimensions of ecosystem management’ as is the case with many regional nature based-ecotourism ventures (Ecos, 2005).

8.8 The Difficulties of Facilitating Multi-Stakeholder and Cross-Cultural Conversations for Planners – of Going Beyond 'the Whiteness'

The difficulty of undertaking an inclusive regional planning conversation across Australian regional landscapes is, as outlined above, that they need to cross a range of entirely different hermeneutical circles (Gademer, 2004) or cultural frameworks (Healey 1997) as they involve a range of multi-stakeholder groups, such as grazing

landholders, rural small towns, agency bureaucrats and technical ‘experts’ with Aboriginal communities. This poses a considerable communication effort to effectively engage and make sense of not just the different perspectives, interests, differing values, issues and getting clear on different priorities and needs. These conversations transgress the patterns and ways of knowing encompassed by the highly focused modernist style of conversation that seeks clear outcomes, aids quick decision-making and is based on rational logic and gathering demonstrable data.

There is a cultural shock waiting for planners used to the conventional, goal focused conversation, when first engaging in conversation with Aboriginal communities. To a ‘white fella’ intent on discussing a regional tourism development initiative, there can appear to be a seeming lack of priority around timetables, any setting out of and adhering to a clear agenda and seemingly interminable delays, given the importance attached to ‘waiting time’ so all can reflect on the inter-relationships and possible impacts across country of a new tourism enterprise.

A major difficulty, outlined here for regional planners is how to go beyond the euro-centric mindsets and bureaucratic instrumental rationality. Secondly, how to engage and embrace local stakeholders and indigenous knowledge of place and region to allow an inclusive and better informed evaluation as to what is possible and likely to succeed in terms of sustainable regional tourism ventures and how these can be best managed. Hill, Wilson and Watson (2003) discuss this dilemma about building an open dialogue with Australian landholders around sustainable regional farming practices. An emphasis is given to taking the time to be attentive, open, to listening and building trust rather than moving to impose an expert solution, to instead take the time to discover the context and landscape.

This view expressed here, about planners needing to go beyond euro-centric mindsets is supported by Anthony (1995), an Afro-American architect and urban planner, (discussed earlier in Chapter 2). Anthony writes about he need to embrace cultural diversity and richness in urban redesign. The same view could be argued for the multi-cultural nature of Australian regions. The reconstruction of neighbourhoods and places needs to occur within a new framework that is open to “the beauty of people from different places who have different stories” says Anthony (2005:276).

He argues the protection of urban habitats needs to engage with all the stories of the peoples in a place and to move beyond the control paradigm of 'whiteness'. Until recently, this social constructed notion of 'whiteness' in the USA envisaged only one story that coalesced a grouping of European peoples and juxtaposed one racial group against the 'other' which included African-Americans and Indigenous Indian Peoples. The sense of place to many of the 'Other Peoples' holds in many cases memories of forced displacement and violence, Anthony notes about the Southern USA. This same sense of place is still held by many in the local Aboriginal communities with massacre sites being sprinkled across the New England region (pers. commun. 2002).

Sandercock re-affirms Anthony, calls for an 'epistemology of multiplicity' and for planners to be 'sensitive' as to "other ways of knowing...without privileging anyone of them" (Sandercock, 1998:38). One of the key issues for urban and regional planners is how we respond to difference according to Sandercock. Her particular project is to build a new utopia of Cosmopolis, of socially just, multi-cultural cities and regions with "respect and space for, the cultural 'Other', and the possibility of working together on matters of common destiny, a recognition of intertwined fates" (Sandercock, 1998:125). She argues, that three socio-cultural forces unleashed with globalisation are disrupting continuing with the old modernist planning practices and style. These include notably the expansion of migration, the re-emergence of Indigenous Peoples, and minority groups with new political aspirations. Australian regional landscapes have similarly been reshaped by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Peoples new political ambitions and the resulting Land Rights Legislation and Mabo High Court decisions. Here Sandercock is instructive;

"To enter into negotiation across the gulf of cultural difference requires all participants to be fluent in a range of ways of knowing and communicating; from storytelling to listening to interpreting complex languages as well as tribal language. The old model of the expert planner arriving at the public interest through rational deliberation is irrelevant to the new complexities of land and resource management in multicultural settings." (Sandercock, 1998:217)

The reflexive collaborative conversational learning process, piloted in this thesis, sought to go beyond the privileged conversations and culturally constricted

‘whiteness’ of top-down planning, goal centred, visioning processes that seek feedback on a predetermined concept or agenda associated with both consultative and participatory approaches. This collaborative conversation was purposefully inclusive of all major stakeholder groups and attempted to undertake a cross-cultural dialogue with concerned Aboriginal communities. In this way, the planning process deliberately avoided a narrow or restricted planning conversation that would have privileged agency and regional holders of positional power and influence.

This piloted collaborative, exploratory dialogue and co-visioning process, deliberately sought opportunities to develop a new way of doing planning business that went beyond just assessing the viability of a nominated ecotourism project. It sought to explore ways to conduct highly inclusive regional stakeholder planning conversations and how the key themes and essence of these conversations could be captured. It also deliberately sought ways to engage and undertake a cross-cultural dialogue with Aboriginal communities regarding the proposed walking track development. It was hoped that this self-organising but facilitated cross-regional conversation would enable new regional stakeholder joint opportunities and partnerships

A key insight for this researcher as a result of this study and work with the Northern Tablelands Aboriginal Lands Councils has been that;

‘social sustainability in Australian regions involves for many euro-Australian rural place communities, the maintaining of a sense of place. But the equivalent for Aboriginal communities involves a much deeper process; it goes way beyond preserving vistas, an aesthetic or heritage look; it involves a deep responsibility, commitment to maintaining the ancestral spiritual presence and myths of place and hurt in seeing ‘country’ being violated.

8.9 What Can Assist Multi-Stakeholder, Cross-Cultural Regional Planning Conversations – Reflexive Planning and Discovering Place and Cultural Protocols

It is the view of this researcher that it is illusionary to think one can fully comprehend Aboriginal cosmology and the idea of the ‘Dreamtime’ and ‘Dreaming’. Instead as

one Aboriginal colleague suggested, ‘white fellas’ need to acknowledge and respect this ancient cosmology and the knowledge systems of how Australian ‘country’ evolves and its needs. Two initiatives are outlined here that can assist cross-cultural regional planning conversations in Australian landscapes.

These include a new self-reflexive planning praxis or learning process to enable planners become aware of their own cultural narrative or hermeneutical circle and how this impacts their choice of planning methodologies, the scope and style of their planning conversations and assessments of new enterprise developments. Secondly, the identification of place and cultural protocols which can help facilitate collaborative regional planning conversations

8.9.1 The Need for Reflexive Planning in Australian Regions

Dening (2004) is instructive in the difficulties of cross-cultural research work. He used a self-reflexive learning approach in his research and writing of a cross-cultural history of the Oceania, the expanse from Australasia across the Pacific but particularly of the Marquessas. This was to help make sense of and better understand the dynamics of this cross-cultural encounter. For Dening, history has to be written from an understanding of both sides or cultural perspectives and the researcher had to cross the ‘beach’ of their culturally constructed understanding. Similarly, it is argued here, regional planning of tourism ventures may or may not entail cultural encounters. In undertaking this research and consciously seeking a cross-cultural planning dialogue, this researcher faced a similar dilemma as Dening describes it “

“I was at the nadir of my understanding. I had beaches to cross”

Dening (2004:79)

An issue for regional planners, highlighted in this Chapter, is how to step outside and develop an awareness of how their planning practices and conversations are culturally shaped and constricted. Dening, in his history, wrote not just of the cultural encounter with the Oceanic ‘other’ since European first contact with Marquessans but also, of his own transition in cultural awareness from contact with his particular

‘other’. Denning writes of the need to go beyond modernity and its knowledge creating strategies of

‘perspective, exhaustive research, critical dialogue, disengagement as far as humanly possible from whatever filters that knowledge with prejudice and error’”

Denning (2004:12)

Denning suggests we embrace a new epistemology of neo-modernity as an continuing conversation or learning voyage that is enthused with a reflective imagination.

Like Denning, this researcher employed a similar self-reflexive process to help reach across this cultural space. The reflexive learning tool, used by this researcher to facilitate a planner’s reflexivity for developing better cross-cultural understanding and a process awareness of what is unfolding in the planning conversation, is outlined in the following Chapter

8.9.2 Identifying Place and Cultural Protocols

An understanding of cultural and place protocols became a important priority as this study unfolded as to how to best engage various stakeholder and Aboriginal communities in planning for regional tourism ventures. Mistakes were made during the planning conversations that re-affirmed the importance of respecting different communities sense of place. For example while it was important for the planning team to build respect, trust and get community buy-in by communities and stakeholders in the project

“However, the best laid plans can soon become unstuck. During the planning process, a major problem was encountered with the publication of photos on-line of walking expeditions that explored the ecotourism potential and some possible track routes. This alarmed some local stakeholders who as a result quite rightly feared that visitors would be trampling across their land, disturbing lambing, getting lost and incurring liability if they were somehow injured. This obviously violated certain place protocols and respect for landholder rights to participate or not in the track project.”

O’Loughlin, van der Lee & Chapman (2005:5)

Planning conversations in the New England region with Aboriginal communities sought to identify and follow certain cultural protocols; Elders were first approached according to the cultural practice of showing respect and then particular spokespersons and Elders were asked about the best way to proceed to discuss issues such as Aboriginal communities joining a regional partnership to co-manage the regional walking track initiative, developing particular walking track routes and support of Aboriginal Cultural Tourism initiatives. What was learnt from this study was that the Precautionary Principle used in appraising a projects environmental impact, needs to be widened to include cultural values and communities' sensitivities around place including aesthetic and cultural values and spiritual connectedness to place and region ('country').

Arising out of the planning conversation, it was realised this initiating this walking track project would need special protocol arrangements to meet the needs of particular landholders around access to country at lambing times for example. Similarly special guiding or access arrangements were considered for this track proposal to be viable so as not to incur cultural and ecological damage to places. Such considerations may be more common in Northern and North West Australia concerning access and sharing of 'country' but this is a new consideration in the New England- Coffs region.

8.10 Some Conclusions on the Importance of Engaging and Embracing Cultural Complexity

This Chapter has explored the need for an integrated planning approach for Australian regional landscapes to be epistemologically reflexive and flexible, capable of embracing and synergising the local, place, Indigenous cultural and 'scientific agency' knowledge. The planning process utilized here, was concerned with co-designing a walking track tourism venture that looked to the conservation of the regions sensitive and fragile ecosystems and a rich, veiled Aboriginal cultural heritage and the numerous special places that can be adversely impacted by increased visitation.

However, the planning of regional tourism ventures, while needing a cautionary approach can instead be considered an opportunity to engage with the rich multi-cultural presence of regional Australian landscapes. The notion of planning as revealing the rich cultural layering and diversity of Australian regional landscapes to facilitate a distinct 'regionality' is seen here as the basis for developing a unique tourism product in contrast with the tendency of global tourism towards homogenised experiences across different landscapes. Butina Watson (2006) has outlined this notion of 'regionality' and the importance of preserving a unique local identity in urban redesign projects around the globe. A similar notion of planning as surfacing the rich cultural storytelling has been undertaken in Brisbane, Australia where O'Brien (2006) have revealed Aboriginal places and walks throughout Brisbane city. This embracing of cultural complexity adds to the rich identity of city – regions and builds respect for cultural diversity. Further, this embracing of the rich cultural complexity of city-regional landscapes builds the unique selling point, the distinct novelty of places or unique selling position of regions as tourism destinations.

Florida (2002) elevates the importance of culture and nurturing culturally diverse places as an attractor and basis for the regeneration of cities in the transition from the industrial age to the new global information economy. The new information communication technology workers of the new age, Florida argues will gravitate to cities and regions that are culturally diverse and tolerant and that policies to support this are as important if not more so than policies involving economic incentives for relocating the new information industries. The argument presented in this Chapter is that honouring and nurturing the richness of regional cultures and stories will similarly result increased and return visitation to a cross-regional tourism destination; this was the view clearly articulated in community discussions in this study (refer Concept Plan in Appendix 1)

A second conclusion drawn from the discussion in this Chapter is the need for a reformulation, purposeful re-thinking of what constitutes science and scientific practices and therefore regional and tourism planning practices, in exploring holistic sustainable development. Manuel-Navarrete, Slocombe & Mitchell 2006 in their research into designing new sustainable, regional conservation initiatives affirmed the view that planners need to be epistemologically reflexive and to integrate different

community, place based, agency and Indigenous knowledge. As outlined in preceding Chapters, regional and tourism planning practices in the past have been shaped by the modernist notion of science. There has been a reliance on the use of expert conducted, fact-finding tools such as an economic cost-benefit analysis to suggest whether a regional tourism venture is viable or 'sustainable' in the sense of long-term survival of an enterprise. Traditional planning practices encompass undertaking environmental impact statements that determine the so-called facts of the ecological impacts of a development and, if that is not sufficient to determine an enterprise's viability, then a social and cultural impact study is carried out. There needs to be a re-think of the role of planners as the objective experts, directing and knowing what constitutes and needs to be addressed when undertaking a feasibility study of a regional or tourism development project as well as who to consult. This can result in narrow, planning conversations that privilege a particular way of knowing. Planners instead can be re-envisaged as facilitators of regional conversations and social learning, becoming more focused on what communities and stakeholders understand and know what will work and what is sustainable in their regional 'country'.

The prevailing empirical planning tools are viewed here as problematic in addressing the social, cultural, ecological and economic layers that constitute the complexity of Australian regional landscapes. Empirical and financial instruments certainly have their place in assessing the feasibility of regional tourism enterprises. Regional planning needs to be scientifically informed but any studies need to be tempered and subject to scrutiny by stakeholders with local, place knowledge. Appraising a sustainable regional tourism enterprise was envisaged in this thesis as a collaborative learning opportunity, enlisting a diversity of perspectives, ways of knowing both local, place, stakeholder and scientifically informed.

Part 4

A New Regional Planning Process for Co-Appraising and Co- Designing Sustainable Regional Enterprises - Collaborative Learning Dialogue

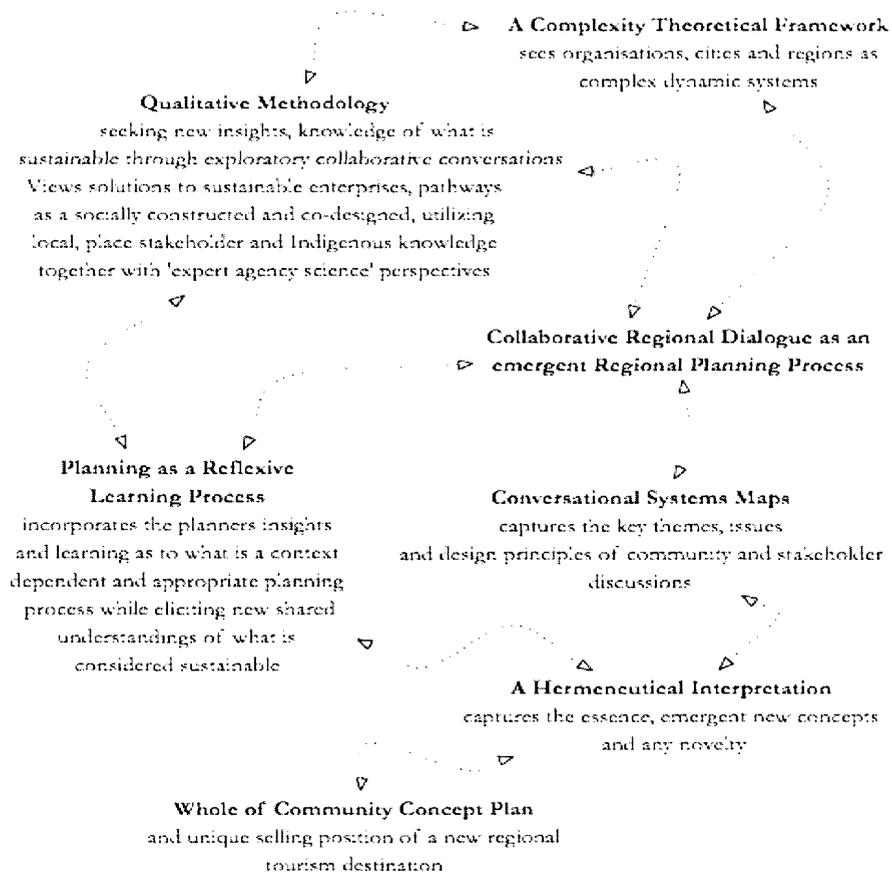
Part 4 includes the following chapters

Chapter 11 The Collaborative Regional Dialogue Planning Methodology

Chapter 12 Case Study Application: The outcomes and what was learnt

Chapter 11 Conclusions

Part 2: The Evolution of a New Regional Dialogue Planning Methodology



Chapter 9:

Collaborative Learning Dialogue - a Regional Planning Methodology

9.1 Chapter Aims and Scope:

This Chapter outlines the key tenets underpinning this collaborative regional learning dialogue planning approach employed in this study to co-appraise and co-design a sustainable cross-regional tourism venture. This whole of community, bottom-up top-down planning methodology utilized an exploratory and inclusive cross-regional dialogue that sought to assemble social learning about what constitutes a viable and sustainable enterprise. This collaborative process assembled and synergised both local place community, stakeholder, Indigenous and state agency knowledge in order to collaboratively or co-appraise what a sustainable tourism enterprise would entail. This synthesized planning methodology incorporates a modified, collaborative planning approach (Healey 1997).

Collaborative planning theorists such as Healey have advocated employing discursive communities and ideal communication to inform urban and regional plans. But the questions remain. How can planners facilitate a shared vision and enterprise design concept amongst multi-stakeholder and community groups across two regions? How can planners capture the essence, key themes, to extract design principles and to garner advice on what is the most creative and appropriate concept for a viable and sustainable regional tourism venture? This synthesised planning methodology sought to fill an identified gap in collaborative planning approaches namely, in seeking to map the scope, structure of regional stakeholder conversations and to capture the essence and design principles for a sustainable development initiative.

The planning process piloted in this study utilized and facilitated a self-organising dialogue in what can be termed a contested space as to what constitutes a sustainable regional tourism enterprise for this cross-regional corridor. A conversational systems

mapping technique was then used to decipher the essence of a new emergent concept, and the design principles identified in the planning conversations with regional stakeholders and the communities as to what constitutes a sustainable tourism enterprise.

9.2 An Outline of the Collaborative Learning Dialogue as a Regional Planning Methodology

The collaborative learning dialogue planning methodology has been developed to collaboratively explore, appraise, re-think and co-design sustainable futures and enterprises by building a multi-stakeholder, agency and communities learning partnership using a self-organising facilitated conversation as set out below in figure 9.3 below.

9.2.1 Distinguishing Features of the Collaborative Learning Dialogue Methodology

There are four distinguishing features of this methodology for co-appraising and co-designing a sustainable regional (tourism) enterprise that communities, stakeholders and government agencies consider worth investing in and partnering, where planners

1. Facilitate a self-organising dialogue style of planning conversation around what is in this case study, a sustainable regional tourism venture for this regional corridor;
2. Follow a collaborative approach and an exploratory agenda
3. Enable social learning by utilising local place, stakeholder and agency knowledge including indigenous knowledge of country; and
4. Develop system maps of community stakeholder conversations that embed community - stakeholder advice and design principles as to what type of sustainable enterprise is seen as appropriate in this particular regional context.

Dialogue, an exploratory reflexive process that seeks to surface assumptions and test the mental models underpinning a proposal, asks if not this, then what else could be

better? It encourages participants to re-think a proposal, explore and listen to alternative evidence for and against a particular enterprise or way of proceeding. Much conversation and planning conversations can be argumentative and adversarial resulting in either or reasoning and zero sum outcomes as stakeholders attach to a win – lose perspective. A dialogue explores other ways, seeking to establish what will work better in these circumstances, seeking win-win outcomes using creative thinking to problem solve and create new alternative options (Senge, 1992). Dialogue seeks to view other stakeholder perspectives, and respects collaboration as a means of resolving conflicts constructively and building new partnership behaviours. Dialogue unlike argumentative approaches that seek to win others to your viewpoint, seeks solutions and considers that everyone has a valid piece of the puzzle to contribute to a novel, more appropriate solution. Dialogue has no pre-set agenda and is an open creative process beyond winning and losing. Rod Eddington in his first three months leading British Airways (BA) in 2000 undertook a strategic dialogue with customers, staff, senior executives and suppliers exploring what each liked about BA, what they didn't and how they would change what was broken and what needed fixing (Maiden, 2007). Dialogue can be seen as a business strategy, helping define both a business problem and strategy.

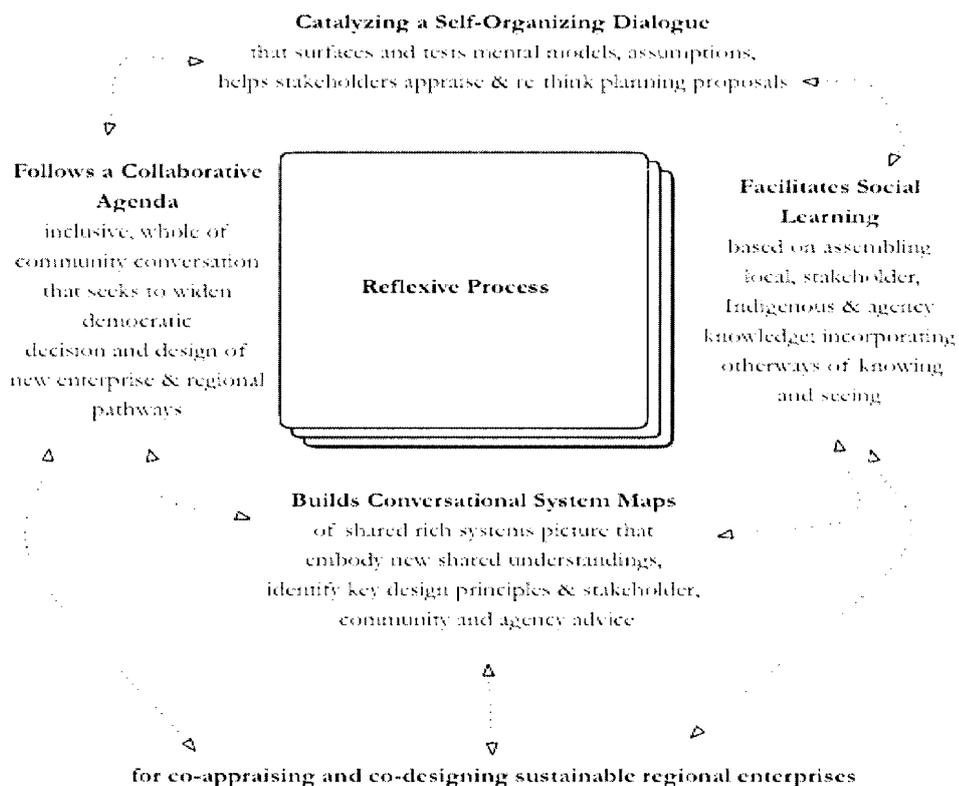
A collaborative planning methodology and agenda focuses on facilitating an inclusive, conversation that invites all concerned stakeholders, community members and concerned government agencies to partner an exploratory conversation. There is no set agenda or timetable, except that to engage stakeholders and communities on the question of what sort of venture is considered viable and sustainable for this regional corridor. It seeks to go beyond the technical rational and privileged conversations characteristic of modernist planning. It engages other ways of knowing including both local, place, stakeholder and Indigenous knowledge in addition to 'expert' agency knowledge and by doing so facilitates social learning. This approach seeks to equalise power relationships in decision-making regarding the appraisal and co-design of what is considered a viable and sustainable enterprise.

The planning dialogue process is one of stakeholders making sense together (Weick, 1995) and developing new, shared understandings by building a rich systems picture (conversational system mapping) of what a sustainable enterprise would look like and

how it could be managed in a new multi-stakeholder community network governance structure. The dialogue enables stakeholders and communities to learn together what is viable, sustainable and, what enterprise design is a better fit with the region and the aspirations of its communities as indicated in Fig. 9.1. Here Nonaka's (1994) insights on how organisational knowledge is developed, are instructive and affirm the learning dialogue approach adopted in this study. Nonaka argues that organisational knowledge arises out of an on-going dialogue where the tacit understandings, mental models and deep beliefs are surfaced, communicated and reviewed to become conscious. New concepts arise and a new shared view of reality and the necessary strategies to act are derived. Innes and Booher (2005) outline how collaborative dialogue can be used as a policy making strategy and set out the conditions for undertaking such an authentic dialogue.

**Fig: 9.1 Collaborative Regional Learning Dialogue
Planning Methodology**

The 4 Key Features



The researcher and NEES, the commissioning community group catalyzed a self-organising conversation across the regional corridor using a range of techniques (outlined in the following section). The aim was to open up a new wider dialogue that was intended to create disturbance across the system and to simulate communities and stakeholders ‘swarming’ and creatively regenerate their region economy and communities. This planning process is outlined in Figure 9.1 above.⁴

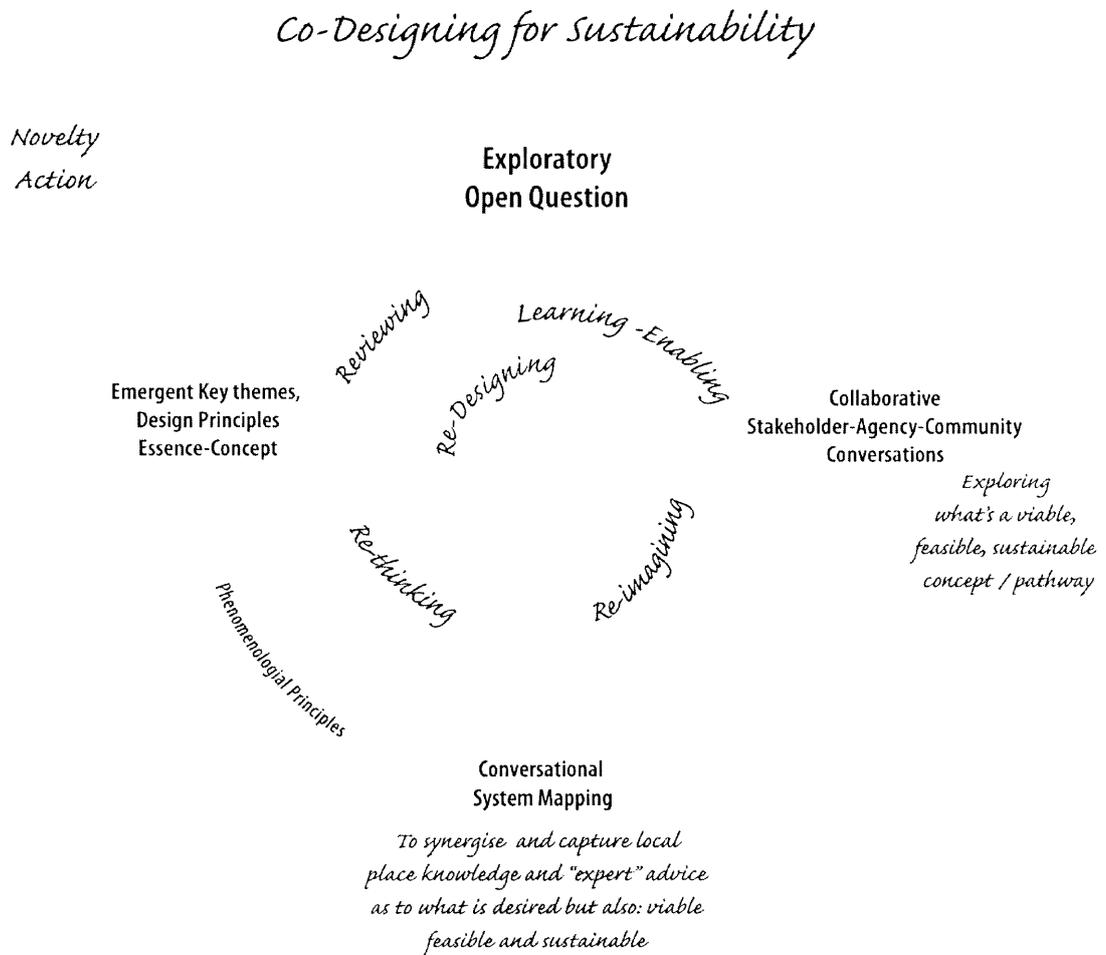
This planning process and the conversation system maps are intended to create an open space to allow for the unanticipated emergence of novelty both around what type of regional enterprise is deemed feasible and sustainable as well as the multi-stakeholder governance and management arrangements.

A whole of community approach refers here to including not just the concerned key stakeholders, regional tourism bodies and enterprises, government agencies and place communities but also agencies and community groups that speak for non-human ecological habitats and species.

The methodology is considered a flexible process, who and how they are engaged depending on the context. This responsiveness in a methodology is considered important and in this case incorporated following important cultural and place protocols and the adoption of an entirely new, novel enterprise design concept as opposed to the original pre-conceived notion of a long distance walking track, a mental model based on examples such as the Appalachian Trail in the USA which was considered inappropriate, non-viable and unsustainable.

⁴ Note that the eliciting of the emergent key themes, design principles and essence – enterprise concept, has been re-framed by this researcher as employing hermeneutical principles rather than as presented below in an earlier formulation in figure 9.2 below.

Figure 9.2: Co-Designing for Sustainability
 Source O'Loughlin, Taboada & Gill 2006



9.2.2 The Key Aims of the Collaborative Learning Dialogue Methodology

As a regional planning methodology explicitly developed for complexity such as planning for sustainable enterprises, the collaborative learning dialogue approach has four key aims.

These aims are to:

1. Facilitate self-organising, stakeholders, agency and community regional partnering networks
2. Enhance connectivity, mutuality and trust across these ‘whole of community’ regional networks
3. Share information and enhance social learning across the regional system for appraising new opportunities, co-designing new sustainable regional enterprises
4. Enhance coherence across these networks in the form stakeholder alignment around an agreed vision, ethos and strategic approach.

A collaborative regional dialogue seeks to catalyze new links and connect stakeholder community networks by sharing information and involving these groupings in co-appraising and co-designing a sustainable tourism enterprise (in this case). These dialogues are captured and mapped, aggregated and the condensed advice, key design ideas and principles are conflated into a concept plan, which along with each of the mapped conversations, are returned to stakeholders. The co-appraisal and co-design process seeks to build ‘mutuality’ or a mutual shared interest or ownership and trust around the development of the enterprise. Following place and cultural protocols, inclusively engaging regional communities and stakeholders in an open question also facilitates this mutuality around a regional enterprise. The aim of the methodology is to let everyone have a say, be heard, acknowledged and respected.

The conversation system maps aim to capture the local, place and stakeholder, agency knowledge about what will fit into the regional fabric, is viable and sustainable. In this sense the mapped conversations embody the ‘social learning’ gleaned through a self-organising regional conversation (refer the following section 9.4 in this Chapter). The methodology also aims to build ‘coherence’ across communities and stakeholder networks around an aligned vision and shared understanding of what new type of regional enterprise is considered viable and worth investing given the potential benefits across the region.

These conditions of enhanced connectivity, mutuality, coherence and increased information and social learning constitute the possibility of facilitating ‘emergence’. In this case, catalyzing the emergence of a self-organising stakeholder, agency and regional community network and new stakeholder behaviours around a shared intention to develop a regional enterprise and realise new opportunities across the region.

This methodology also seeks to catalyze novelty as stakeholders and communities are invited to contribute their ideas and visions in co-designing a viable and sustainable enterprise suited to their region. Compiling and fitting these design ideas together as a collective, regional design team, goes beyond problem solving thinking to engage in creative design thinking as outlined by De Bono (1999).

9.2.3 The 3 Phases of the Collaborative Learning Dialogue Planning Methodology

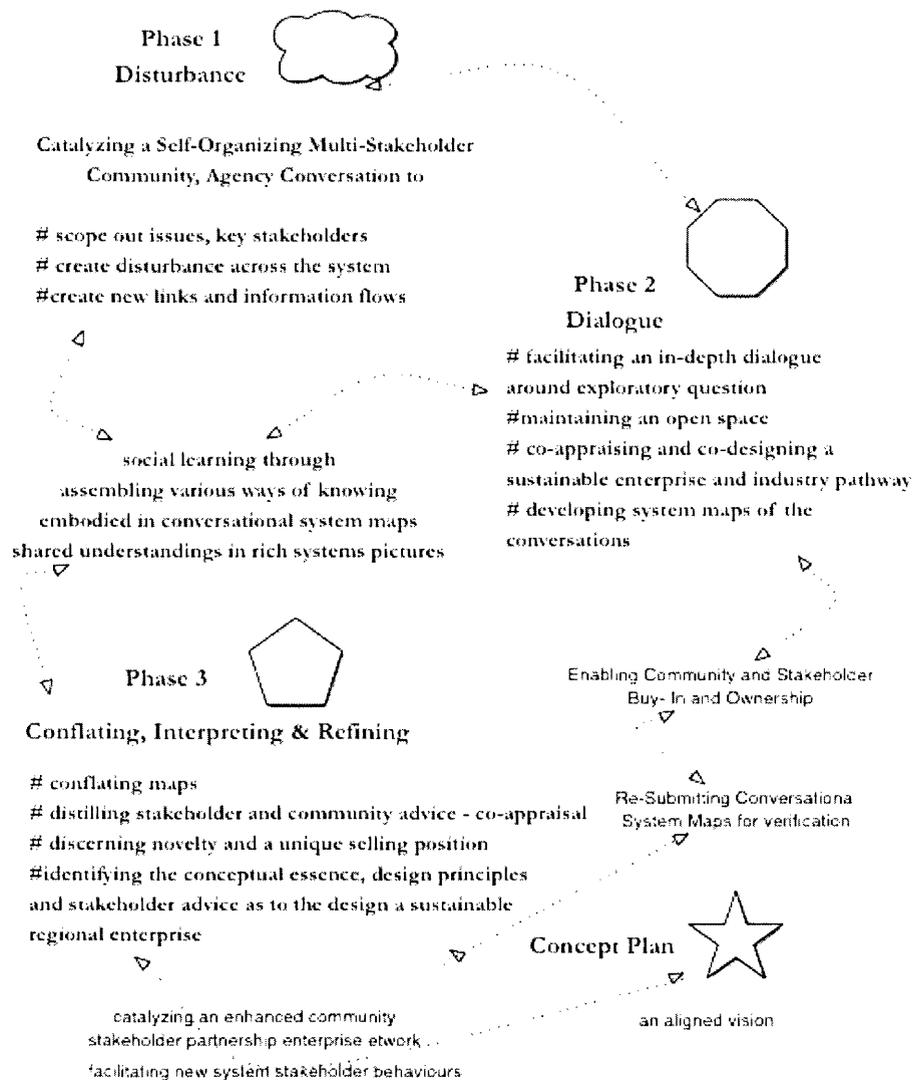
This regional planning methodology entailed three phases as outlined in Figure 8.2 below. The first phase involved scoping out the key issues and stakeholders that would be strategic in appraising and designing a workable walking track initiative. This entailed catalyzing a self-organising conversation across the regional corridor utilizing newspaper articles, exhibitions and a public meeting to canvass support and identify issues of concern. This phase lasted nearly 9 months and was initiated in the second half of 2002 and carried over until April 2003 and is outlined in Chapter 10 section 3.1. This phase was deliberately intended to create disturbance across the regional system, to initially canvas the idea, provide information and link communities, stakeholders and agencies in a conversational dialogue.

As indicated below in Fig. 9.3, a second phase involved in depth conversations with key stakeholders such as NSW National Parks – Wildlife Service and State Forest agencies, given their key role as prominent land managers as well as Local government councils. This second phase, outlined in detail in Chapter 10 section 3.2 ran for nine months and initially overlapped with phase 1.

Other key stakeholders included the place communities and stakeholders were invited to explore together a single open question namely ‘what sort of walking track?’ in

open public meetings organised across the cross regional corridor. Similar meetings were held with first the Elders and then representatives of the New England Tablelands Aboriginal Lands Councils.

Fig: 9.3 The 3 Phases of the Collaborative Learning Dialogue Methodology - a bottom up top down regional planning methodology



This entails an elicitive approach where the insights and local experiential as well as quantitative scientific ways of knowing are assembled to enable a co-appraisal and co-design of what type of enterprise best fits into this regional and industry context. It also seeks to surface the tacit knowledge of regional stakeholders and communities

(as outlined by Nonaka earlier) across organisations. Fazey, Proust et al (2006) also employ a similar, elicitive approach. They used open questions and discussions with conservation managers to review their assumptions and mental models of a wetlands system in Australia. In their study, the focus was on re-thinking how decision-making about effective water delivery was shaped by the wider social – economic system that these wetlands were situated in and impacted by. Fazey, Fazey et al (2006) and Fazey, Proust et al (2006) explore how ‘learning more effectively from experience’ can lead to ‘balanced judgements’ and can help develop an adaptive knowledge or expertise through stakeholders reflecting on and being ‘open to changing their current way of thinking’.

The third phase involved identifying the key themes, conflating stakeholder - community advice and interpreting the design concept essence from the community conversational system maps into a concept plan. This concept plan and all community conversations maps were resubmitted back to communities and the key stakeholders. A Feasibility Study and research into a sustainable business model for the adopted regional enterprise was then carried out once the communities and stakeholders accepted the revised enterprise concept as a valid representation of their discussions. Compiling and producing the Concept Plan from the conflated conversation maps took a month and further details are supplied in Chapter 10 section 3.3.

By starting with an exploratory open question, this methodology allow for a multiple array of un-predicted answers and un-expected emergent solutions for the issues at hand. There is no pre-defined agenda; rather it is established by the stakeholder-agency-community during the conversations. This model seeks to accommodate the concept of sustainability as collaborative learning process. The schema outlined above has the planner, facilitating a regional stakeholder and community conversation that allows them to review, re-think, re-imagine and co-designing a proposal for a new regional enterprise. It constituted an open collective process that enables the potential of the emergence of novelty and on-going stakeholder and community self-organised actions.

Wheatley (1992; 114-115) has advocated a complexity planning approach for organisations, using a self-organising conversational process for surfacing new

information and feedback between stakeholders in developing new visions and opening up future pathways. The open search conference process (Weisbord, 2007) and the open café process (Brown, 2005) similarly facilitates stakeholders self-organisation into focus discussions on stakeholder nominated issues, to also consider possible initiatives and new directions.

Wheatley advocates that planning for complexity needs to create an open space, to allow for an interweaving of new information flows and processes that offer the possibility for stakeholders across the organisation to re-think and create a new structural order and visions. The organisation, according to Wheatley, under these new conditions of information is not being controlled or channelled but is shared or networked, and more resembles a hologram where each part has access to a shared whole system perspective. New complex structures and visions emerge from 'generative processes' where an 'interweaving' of new information flows allows the arising of new understandings across stakeholders according to Wheatley (1992:115-116)

The collaborative learning dialogue approach aimed to enable a similar shared reflexive process to that outlined by Wheatley at a cross-regional scale that sought to enable stakeholders and communities to listen to a diversity of perspectives, to co-appraise and provide design ideas about a specific potential enterprise and future directions.

Seel (2000, 2005) in outlining the key parameters in a planning process to address the complexity of organisations, seeks to catalyze self-organised criticality and emergence, to allow the organisational system to explore and find its own new direction and form rather than to plan and impose change from above. This piloted bottom-up top-down planning process, through a wide-ranging exploratory conversational process sought to build links across regional communities and stakeholders facilitating buy-in, ownership and new partnerships to enhance connectivity across the regional human – ecology system. It also sought to facilitate the regional system to explore and determine its own best way forward in regard to a sustainable regional tourism venture.

Atlee's (2003) insights into a new systems view of politics and his notion of facilitating 'co-intelligence' are relevant here. Atlee has written of new ways of conducting community planning and envisioning that transcend the existing adversarial politics that seem sometimes embedded in local development issues. An example is cited by Atlee, where new community coalitions were nurtured in Pennsylvania's Mon Valley through a bottom-up coalescing of community organisations and top-down supported corporate and government partnered initiative around economic and housing development. Atlee describes these collaborative envisioning processes that build new community stakeholder partnerships as facilitating a new co-intelligence as to what is needed to revive and open new community potential pathways. Citizens deliberative councils is another bottom-up top-down dialogue initiative where local governments empower a local representative group of citizens to hear submissions and advice for developing a considered strategy for the community to consider around a local issue such as development guidelines, solutions to local sewerage or service issues etc. The collaborative learning dialogue and its conversational mapping technique constitutes a similar 'whole of community' deliberative process to grow regional 'co-intelligence' but in this case to appraise and co-design a new enterprise pathway. What this shows is that the collaborative planning vision of enhanced democratic planning can take a number of forms and that engaging and empowering communities and stakeholders can synergise new creative initiatives.

9.3 How is this collaborative learning dialogue planning different from participative and consultative planning conversations?

What distinguishes the collaborative learning dialogue conversation is that it is explicitly designed to collectively make sense of complexity and to creatively regenerate regional industry and add to its diversity; in this case the existing regional tourism niches and existing tourism pathway. It is an open exploratory conversational dialogue rather than focusing on, discussing and arguing around a pre-determined planned proposal. It seeks to collaboratively generate new adaptive options and novelty; to help re-position regional industries and co-design new enterprise pathways. It relies on capturing and distilling the advice from across communities and stakeholders about what type of enterprise will work best and fit into the region. It

assembles a range of different ways of knowing to collaboratively appraise and re-design a planning proposal based on the communities and stakeholders views.

As discussed in Chapter Three, consultative planning conversations usually invite key stakeholders and those aware that such a proposal is being considered, to comment on a pre-determined proposal and already pre-planned proposal. There is a set agenda. The power in decision-making is kept within the existing key institutional and stakeholder network and the brief is researched and designed responses developed by planning expert consultants. Participative conversations involve a wider community engagement; stakeholders are invited into a planning conversation still usually involves a pre-determined planning agenda or definite proposal. Stakeholder concerns may or may not be incorporated into a modified planning proposal or at least explicitly addressed and rejected or not. There is some sharing in decision-making but only around the original agenda or planned proposals.

This collaborative regional approach is explicitly based within a complexity theoretical framework and addresses the nature of regions as self-organising emergent social, economic and ecological systems. It utilizes a self-organising conversational process that seeks to deliberately open up new information flows, enable stakeholder feedback into the existing regional development agendas, tourism models and to widen out decision-making beyond the existing social coalitions and actor networks. It uses regional planning as an opportunity to catalyze novelty; in this case, an innovative tourism destination concept with a unique selling position and a new cross-regional identity. Secondly this regional planning approach deliberately seeks to generate social learning about what is a viable and sustainable regional enterprise, to open a new on-going conversation across the region about these matters as well as the emergence of new behaviours and embryonic forms of multi-stakeholder enterprise regional governance.

9.4 Mapping Community Stakeholder Conversations using the Conversational Systems Mapping Technique (CSMT)

The heritage of the conversational system mapping process, can be located within the soft systems methodology (SSM) developed by Checkland (1999a, 1999b) in the

1960's. Checkland's SSM was essentially aimed at better defining and exploring unstructured, difficult to define or 'soft' problems having a political, social or institutional dimension that are beyond the more easily defined 'technical' type problem. SSM was characterized by six process steps, aimed at developing a root definition of the problem and later identifying feasible actions that would lead to a rectification of the issue – problem to improve organizational performance.

Conversational System Mapping (CSM) builds on Checkland's SSM and seeks to formalise and extend what was known as "mudmapping" pioneered by (Gill, 2001, 2005) into a collaborative co-planning and co-design process. "Mud mapping" was employed to map communities, and stakeholders understanding of their place-region and the key leveraged actions (initiatives that will affect the most desirable change across a place system) they considered would help a shift towards an agreed sustainable future. Gill's approach was to facilitate a free ranging discussion among stakeholders, which centred on exploring an open question and to build a shared rich systems picture of what was unique about a place or region. For example Gill would ask an open question in a community meeting such as 'what is unique about this place?' All identified issues and ideas were recorded in relation to each other by the facilitator as a large systems map of all the inter-relationships of the place-locality with the community. A second follow-up public discussion, asked what stakeholders wanted more or less of and so a number of possible initiatives were articulated that would best enable or action this desired future sustainable state. These mud-maps included thinking about the likely positive and negative feedback effects. This shared understanding would form the basis for follow up formal plan-making via strategic plans. Gill's "mudmapping" approach facilitates shared understanding and learning amongst local stakeholders about the unique nature of their place-locality. Gill's approach has the planner-facilitator mapping the conversation with the community, capturing their ideas and identifying issues and possible initiatives, asking them where each idea – issue needs to be placed in relationship to each other as a system relationship diagram before them.

Conversational system mapping has extended on 'mud mapping' to capture the key themes, issues and design principles occurring across regional stakeholder conversations and refines 'mud mapping' by proposing an explicit hermeneutical framework and more reflexive questioning process to interpret the design essence

and principles from the compiled maps (see Section 7.4.2). Prior to this mud mapping in capturing the key themes but it tended to rely on the facilitator's subjective interpretation of what were the key distinguishing features to highlight. Gill has argued that the aim of 'mud mapping' in his usage besides eliciting the key themes and ideas in a facilitated 'mud map' is to identify the key leverage points from an analysis of the key nodes or where most of connecting inter-relationship lines in the system map, intersect. Key leverage points indicate initiatives once implemented have the greatest potential impact on changing a system. For example, a community at Bonville in their place planning deliberations and mud mapping exercise, indicated that rezoning to allow a coffee shop and seats nearby for older residents in an adjoining park would change their place community by creating a 'heart' or public meeting space that was until then missing (Gill, 2001). Identifying key leverage points has tended to be the focus of soft system methodologies like 'mud mapping' and is a powerful focus for helping to catalyze change across a place system for example in Gill's casework.

Conversational systems mapping was used in this case study however to identify the emergent essence or concept of what was considered a sustainable tourism enterprise that was being suggested across these regional community and stakeholder dialogue.

Conversational system mapping has also been trialed in other situations where the conversation system maps are compiled from groups feeding back to the wider discussion their considerations around particular issues arising out of an open space self-organised format discussion of regional stakeholders. An example is given below in Figure 9.4 of a conversational system map that captured the key design principles that emerged in a roundtable conversation of local community leaders. These included representatives from the six local government councils associated with the case study, including a number of mayors, councilors and planners as well as local enterprises, developers and architects from across the region; the conversation system maps embodied a shared understanding of a what would need to be entailed in any transition to a sustainable Northern Rivers region.

In this case the conversation was mapped from both the general group discussion and report-backs compiled from five project groups who self-organised around their

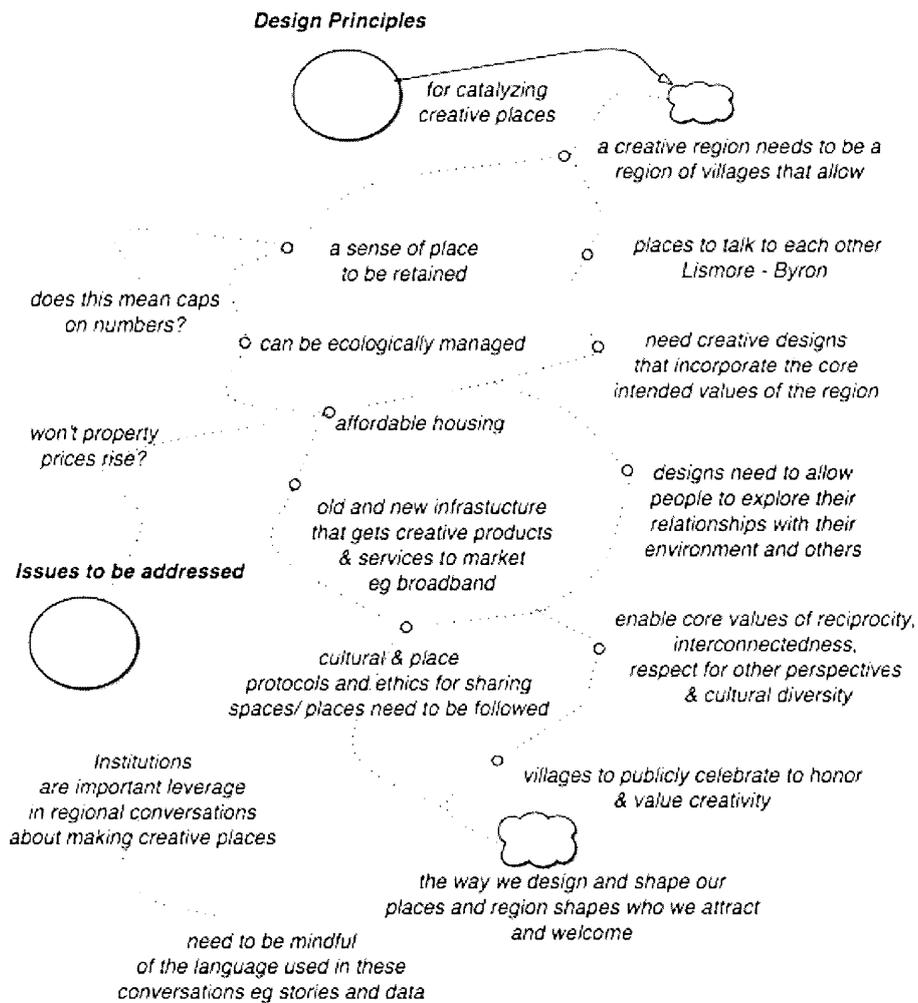
own prioritized issues and to address particular questions. Report-backs of the conversation system maps were subsequently provided to stakeholders on-line.

The conversation system map below is from one of eight Northern Rivers regional roundtable discussions. This series covered new energy, education, food systems, regional urban design patterns and how to regionally finance such a transition. The system maps presents a planning blueprint as to what a sustainable Northern Rivers region could look like and some of the recommended initiatives (Evolveris, 2006). The map constitutes a shared understanding and shows the key design principles and new initiatives needed as identified by stakeholders showing the relationships of ideas and existing system constraints. All the conversation system maps are returned to the community on an open access website (CLIC Network, 2006).

The theme of supporting a sustainable region based on connected eco-villages was a recurrent theme across a number of these regional roundtable dialogues that also identified the need to restore and upgrade to an integrated, regional light rail-bus public transport interchange system.

A number of other initiatives were identified as crucial to assist this transition to a sustainable region including educational reforms, supporting a local food producer - consumer network and a new partnered urban place management to guide local sustainable development.

Figure 9.4 Conversational Map of the first Northern Rivers Regional Round Table:
Towards a Creative and Sustainable Futures, Yamba, August 2005.
(<http://srn.civiblog.org>)



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9.5 The Underpinning Hermeneutical Framework of the Conversational System Maps – Further Building on Gill’s ‘Mud mapping’ Process

These conversational systems maps as explained above, capture the insights and reflections of regional communities and stakeholders either by a facilitator developing the map with the stakeholders or are compiled from verbal group report-backs presenting a summary of their thinking. The maps are based on a close observation of what is said in conversations and by careful identification and analysis of the key themes, advice and suggested design principles.

This Gadermerian interpretive framework was outlined earlier in Chapter 7.3 and concerns ways of identifying what new ‘horizons’ of understanding were emerging in the course of the planning conversation and that appears to either somehow disjointed or extending onto our previous precepts. **The conversational system mapping process employed in this study, employs an explicit Gadermerian hermeneutical framework and reflective questioning process to elicit the key design principles and any emergent and novel design concept within a multi-stakeholder dialogue (as outlined below in Fig. 9.5).** This entails an advance on Gill’s ‘mud mapping’ process and eliciting technique of identifying the key themes and key leverage points within a facilitated conversation.

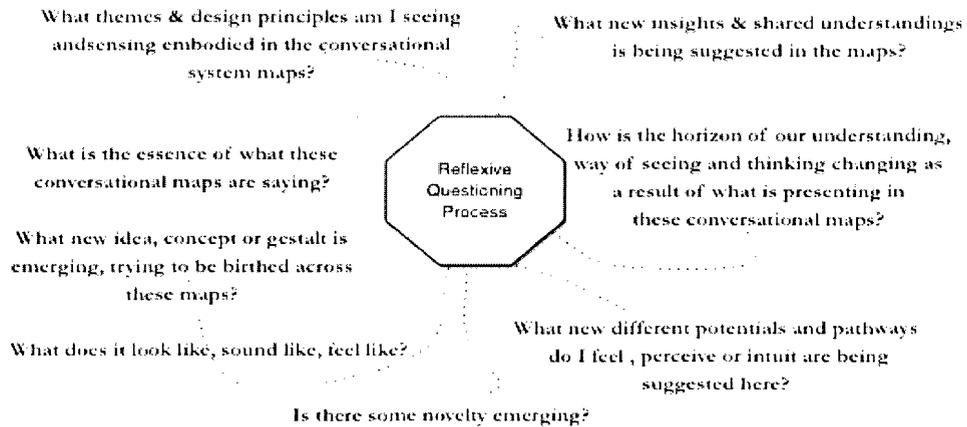
Flemming, Gaidys and Robb (2003) outline five key stages in undertaking a Gadermerian research process. These include deciding on a research question, identifying pre-understandings, developing new expanded understandings through dialogue with stakeholders, gaining understanding with through a reflexive dialogue with the text of the conversation and developing trustworthiness through the research process. This planning research study decided on an open question, “what type of track?” This question was designed to explore what was a viable, feasible and sustainable walking track enterprise for the regional corridor i.e. what was possible with stakeholders, landholders, communities, agencies, what was economic in terms of the targeted market and investment required and how it could be managed sustainably. The researcher followed a reflexive process to deconstruct his mental model of regions, regional tourism enterprises and how they worked and the dialogue with stakeholders was designed to both surface and test assumptions about what sort of track would work. The researcher’s dialogue with the text involved identifying the

essence of these conversations i.e. the design principles and advice about what type of enterprise was being suggested and outlined by the communities, stakeholders and agencies.

In dialoguing with the text, a number of reflexive questions were asked to both elicit and interpret the key phrases, possible meanings (Collaizzi, 1978) and design principles embodied in these conversations and system maps as texts. These questions, outlined in figure 9.5 below, are designed to discover and help clarify any new emergent notions, concepts, suggested different perspectives and initiatives, shared understandings, surprises and novelty arising out of these conversations. These cascading questions are designed to identify and interpret what is being said, or if it is implicit, what new concept, gestalt, way forward or, strategy is emergent and trying to be articulated.

Fig. 9.5 Hermeneutical Framework used to elicit the Design Principles, stakeholder community advice, learning and new concept 'essence' embodied in Conversation System Maps

As indicated below, a number of reflexive questions were used to elicit the social learning and essence of stakeholder community advice and the key design principles of what constituted a sustainable regional tourism enterprise as set out below.



Note: Gadamer's interpretive stance is aimed at 'texts' which is taken to include the conversational system maps in this study. Further this hermeneutical process follows Merleau Ponty's advice that we can also use our felt sense and intuition to help interpret what is emerging and whether it is different, novel etc

The reflexive questions ask the interpreter to use not just their analytical cognitive skills but also inquire as to their felt perception sense and intuitive ways of knowing or understanding what is presenting in the conversational systems maps. Merleau-Ponty (1962) of the French Phenomenologist philosophical strand, writes of how we are deeply interconnected, being 'intervolved' with the world, of being engaged in a 'perpetual enterprise of taking our bearings on the constellations of the world'. He writes that this engagement also occurs through our body or felt sense of knowing and that this can be pivotal in interpreting and understanding relationships and our world. These other senses or ways of making sense and interpreting the conversation

system maps became important for this researcher in helping articulate the novel concept that was implicit across the regional conversations as noted in Figure 10.5 above.

A colleague suggested that if it was difficult to put what was trying to emerge in the maps into words then maybe it would be better to draw it. After several attempts at drawing this as yet un-defined interpretation, it became apparent that the communities and stakeholders were suggesting a novel alternative of a 'total integrated regional tourism destination' based around a diverse network of walking track and regional ecotourism experiences that identified the unique nature of the regional corridor as opposed to other regions across the Southern Hemisphere. The conversation system maps developed in this case study had revealed an unexpected response and novel design alternative as to what was considered a viable and sustainable regional walking track enterprise as outlined in the concept map in Fig. 10.5 (see following Chapter).

This conversational system mapping technique clearly transcended similar soft system methodologies including 'mud mapping' in that it goes beyond employing just cognitive analytical skills to employ a richer 'felt sense' and intuitive perception as additional pathways of knowing as suggested by Merleau-Ponty above. The use of 'drawing' what was implicitly suggested across the 7 conversation system maps was how these other felt perception and intuitive senses were employed in this case. The final drawing and articulation of the emergent novelty is represented in the total regional tourism destination' concept in Figure 10.5.

The use of conversational system maps are deliberately employed because it is an explicit aim of the collaborative dialogue methodology to facilitate social learning about a regional system's dynamics and potential pathways and to facilitate this by collaboratively building rich systems pictures. Conversational system maps seek to build shared understandings of regions-places as particular types of system phenomena.

9.6 How is this conversational, system mapping approach different from causal mapping?

The conversational systems mapping technique employed in the collaborative learning dialogue regional planning methodology in this study differs from other mapping approaches including both concept and causal mapping approaches.

Causal Mapping (Cooksey, 2007) and Conversational Systems Mapping (CSM) are similar in that they are both interpretive, soft systems mapping approaches showing the relationships and unfolding of participants understanding. However, they have a different focus and aims. CSM is more concerned with collaborative conversations across regional communities and stakeholders conversing in groups around an open exploratory question as an aid to say co-appraise and co-design or, together devising a set of initiatives to build a sustainable enterprise or place (refer Figure 9.4 Northern Rivers map above). Both Causal Mapping and CSM assume a complex and therefore problematic reality and are tools to assist a deeper understanding by the researcher and the stakeholders concerned around a particular problem context or initiative. They both involve the telling of a story as to how participants see and understand their world. Sandall (2007), for example uses causal mapping to tell the story of the rollout of a strategic management initiative around native vegetation in NSW and how stakeholder perceptions and understanding either assisted or hindered the achievement or not of the various policy aims. CSM on the other hand offers an opportunity for stakeholders to re-story their regional development through co-appraising and then co-designing an enterprise or industry pathway. In this case study, stakeholders and communities were looking at adding to the diversity of an existing tourism industry, exploring the how of an alternative nature-ecotourism initiative to add to the visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and meetings conferences and events (MCE) of the New England tourism industry. Causal mapping is a way to observe and decipher a participants thinking and perspectives in an episodic manner (Cooksey, 2007). Conversational systems mapping aims to record a dialogue, where the underlying assumptions are surfaced as part of the co-appraisal process of say what is a viable and sustainable enterprise. Secondly, it is a facilitated process around an open exploratory question where the key ideas and design principles to address issues are thematically mapped in a collaborative conversation.

The focus and purpose of the conversational mapping technique is also to facilitate social learning and to assemble local place, stakeholder scientific ways of knowing in order to co-appraise and co-design a new joint enterprise.

In this regard CSM is similar to Participatory Rural Appraisal (Chambers, 1995) but is a technique to foster and build a shared understanding through developing a rich systems picture or holistic perspective of a problem. This methodology also deliberately sought to support the emergence of a new stakeholder network with an enhanced adaptive capability to envisage, re-design and implement a sustainable regional tourism venture. It was hoped that design principles for some sort of multi-stakeholder governance structure would emerge from these exploratory planning conversations and could be refined subsequently within this network if successful.

9.7 The Collaborative Learning Dialogue is about Facilitating the Re-Storying Human Ecologies

The Collaborative Learning Dialogue planning approach seeks to enable regional communities, stakeholders and agencies to re-story their regions and enterprises along new sustainable pathways by building adaptive capability to respond to social, economic and environmental feedback and disturbance. In this case study, planning a new nature based regional tourism venture sought to add to the diversity and resilience of existing tourism niche focus in New England and Coffs Harbour – Bellingen regions and their other industry focus including rangeland grazing operations and various farming enterprises.

This planning methodology has the potential, according to this researcher's speculation, for nurturing self-organised criticality or evolutionary system transitions across human ecologies (enterprise, industry, regions or societies) at the edge of chaos system states; what Homer Dixon (2006) refers to as creative renewal or 'catagenesis' or the creative re-design across society to avoid system collapse. However this researcher hypothesises that a critical element for this evolutionary transition to occur, requires an accompanying cultural shift in the ways of knowing and seeing and with this, new enabling technologies, new ways of co-managing with social learning being transmitted across new multi-stakeholder network governance

arrangements. The adaptive resilience alliance notes this transformative possibility for social environmental systems (as mentioned earlier in Chapter 4) but couches their explanation around 'double loop' learning occurring across the managing stakeholder agency group (change in mental model or paradigm and ways of knowing) refer Walker et al 2004). However they have so far not outlined a process to enable this double loop paradigm shifting so it appears as a random one-off happening. This is an area of immense importance, requiring a widened research and learning dialogue in itself given the climate change, peak oil scenarios and resulting social, environmental and economic turbulence our societies face. What this study suggests is that our planning for sustainability methodologies needs to facilitate self-organising, regional social learning networks and 'deep knowledge management' strategies (McKee, 2000) that assemble other ways of knowing and seeing 'ecologically' (Sewall, 1995). This idea discussed in Chapter 5, is envisaged as a process and step towards creating the conditions for double-loop learning to occur and a cultural evolution in our ways of knowing and seeing to enable conscious evolutionary transitions in our human ecologies such as regions.

This bottom-up regional conversational process was in some sense 'insurgent planning' as discussed earlier in Chapter 2 in that it sought to bring a new openness to and challenge the old established hierarchical patterns of both information and decision-making around investment in new regional enterprises usually conducted between key agencies and business stakeholders.

Waller (2003) also outlines how storytelling and community visioning can be used as planning methodologies for developing strategies for sustainable regions in Western Australia. The initial storytelling phase aims at developing a shared understanding of how regional communities shaped their places, to identify their core values and what stories and enterprises have helped define their sense of place. This methodology aims at enhancing the social capital or relationships across communities and provides a platform for developing together a shared regional vision of a future sustainable region and how the community wants their places to evolve. The re-storying approach of this study resembles the bottom-up community approach of Waller but has a number of clear differences; namely the underpinning complex systems view of regions, the emphasis on a exploratory, self-organising conversations, creating an

open space in order not just to creatively renew regions but to catalyze where possible, emergence and novelty; lastly the use of the conversational system mapping technique to capture the stakeholder advice.

9.8 Some Conclusions

This chapter outlined the key features of the collaborative learning dialogue as a regional planning process to enable communities, agencies and stakeholders to collaboratively appraise and co-design a sustainable ecotourism enterprise.

This 'planning as a social learning process' seeks to facilitate stakeholder and community buy-in and ownership of a shared vision for a new regional enterprise and industry pathway. This inclusive whole of community planning process sought to enable stakeholders and communities to re-think what type of enterprise best fitted into their regional landscape. In viewing regions as complex adaptive systems, this methodology sought to enhance mutuality, interconnectivity and trust across this cross regional social system of relationships across communities, various stakeholders and agencies.

The contribution of this collaborative learning dialogue methodology is that it helps push out the boundaries of new planning methodologies explicitly designed for dealing with complexity at the regional scale and complex systems such as regions. It also incorporates a refined conversational mapping technique for enabling co-appraisals and co-design of sustainable regional enterprises and new pathways.

The following Chapter illustrates how it was employed in this case study concerning the collaborative planning and co-design of a sustainable regional tourism enterprise.

Chapter 10

Case Study and Discussion

Applying the Collaborative Regional Learning Dialogue Methodology

10.1 Chapter Scope and Aims

This Chapter outlines how the collaborative regional dialogue planning process was utilized to co-appraise and co-design a sustainable regional tourism enterprise and demonstrates the notion of planning as catalyzing emergence and novelty.

The aims of this Chapter are fourfold. Firstly, it details the collaborative regional dialogue systems process and how it was used in this case study to elicit the essence and design principles of regional community and agency conversations.

Secondly, it identifies the key learning gained through undertaking this proof of concept study and to assess outcomes achieved against the research aims and questions detailed in Chapter 1. Thirdly, it identifies the critical success factors for conducting an effective regional conversational planning methodology. These include following cultural protocols about country and social protocols about place. These critical success factors include the accurate capturing of stakeholders views, providing feedback and respecting the various communities and agencies recommendations and aspirations as a way to build an effective regional stakeholder partnership. This case study also highlights a number of issues for planners engaging in a bottom-up top-down supported regional conversational process and illustrates how these self-organizing conversations constituted disturbance and re-alignment within regional systems including avoiding institutional capture. Lastly, it evaluates this planning process against selected qualitative research criteria in contrast with the traditional quantitative and empiricist evaluation criteria.

This Chapter concludes by discussing the potential of this planning methodology in catalyzing emergence, novelty and in adding to the capability of regional evolutionability.

10.2 Original Planning Brief and Objectives

The original brief from the New England Ecotourism Society (NEES) concerned the concept design and feasibility of an ecologically and culturally sensitive, long distance walking track across the New England Tablelands and gorge country to the sea on the Coffs Coast (some 600kms in length). In particular, the planing brief was to:

- identify the key stakeholder and community issues that need to be addressed and managed
- undertake a collaborative community stakeholder agency appraisal of the long distance walking track and enable stakeholder support and buy-in
- elicit ideas on how the track venture could be sustainably governed and managed
- seek advice on an environmentally and culturally sensitive track route
- appraise whether this cross-regional, long distance track venture would constitute a viable world class regional attractor and destination
- ascertain a sustainable business model and strategies for its implementation.

The 'track' represented a major undertaking akin to building a minor version of the Appalachian Trail in the USA, covering rugged isolated gorge country and sub-alpine terrain moving onto steep coastal descents and rainforests. It involved numerous landholders, state government agencies including Forests NSW, the National Parks and Wildlife Services of the Department of Environment and Conservation, NSW environmental protection agencies, designated wilderness areas, six local government councils, numerous communities and at least three Aboriginal National clan groups and communities. An earlier 2002, pre-feasibility study involving a meeting of key stakeholders, had been conducted by Jesse Brampton, a consultant who was the visionary and driver behind a similar, successful Bibulmum Track, a long distance walking track over 500kms in the South-West of Western Australia. Brampton rated the success of initiating this Waterfall Way Walking Track venture as about 50 per

cent given the huge number of stakeholders and communities that would need to agree and commit to such a concept and the daunting list of issues that would need to be resolved.

The initial proposal for a long distance walking track venture stands in comparison with other walking track based, ecotourism ventures in both Tasmania Australia (Cradle Mountain) and New Zealand where a single authority manages extensive walking tracks. The Pre-Feasibility Assessment had indicated that this Waterfall Walking track enterprise would be difficult to manage using a top-down management process given it involved a number of different land agency managers, a sizeable number of landholders, passing thorough numerous communities, Aboriginal country and places. Experience has shown that even with a single track-land managing agency and despite their best efforts to protect these pristine wilderness walks in both Tasmania and New Zealand, there is now growing evidence of walker dissatisfaction around environmental impacts and a growing sense of overcrowding. Walkers have reported a feeling of being rushed along a walking highway with set departure times that are eroding the wilderness experience as referred to in the Waterfall Track network Feasibility Study (O'Loughlin, van der Lee, Gill 2003:15). The management authority of these established southern hemisphere regional, walking track based, ecotourism ventures have had to balance the ecological impacts associated with the pressure of large numbers of visitors required for generating adequate income to ensure an economic return on the extensive capital investment. There are significant capital investments in this type of track infrastructure such as duckboards and other wilderness requirements such as the costly helicopter removal of waste. Wilderness tourism venture experiences based around single track developments appear problematic given their design and significant costs of development; sustainability here appears to be a design issue and one that the planning methodology in this case study had to grapple with (O'Loughlin, van der Lee and Gill, 2005).

The need for planning to catalyze buy-in and partnerships as the basis for a multi-stakeholder, community and agency, governance structure, has been discussed in the preceding Chapters. But what this multi-stakeholder governance structure would entail, would need to be elicited from the regional planning discussions and insights gained from stakeholders, communities and agencies.

This initiative represented a potential new regional pathway to the existing regional tourism markets in New England based around the visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and meetings, conferences, events (MCE) and Coffs Coast coastal holiday resorts tourism niches. The proposed track venture came, as a result of the planning conversations, to be recognised as a possible catalyst for cross-regional and sustainable development through supporting a new ecotourism industry. Stakeholders in these planning conversations indicated that the Waterfall Way Track enterprise could add to the diversity of the existing New England regional industry structure, characterised by high quality, fine wool, grazing and tertiary research and secondary educational, regional centre. Stakeholders and communities shared the view that there was a need to diversify and to develop a new pathway as their small rural places declined. Similarly stakeholders on the Coffs coast corridor also saw the Track enterprise as a way to diversify and help develop the struggling coastal hinterland communities; their industry base was centred on small landholdings that had focused on market niches including sub-topical bananas (that needed replanting with new varieties to meet changing market demand), fruits and grazing. Both regions faced the vexing issues of their youth leaving the area for work and on-going droughts. The economically viable size of rural properties had expanded in response to downward pressure on wool prices and competition from large-scale banana production in northern Australia. In both regions, there was a small fledging ecotourism industry with a few enterprises struggling to survive, despite there being a national ecotourism guiding training centre in Armidale, New England.

10.3 Implementing the Collaborative Learning Dialogue Process

The collaborative regional learning dialogue methodology was implemented in 3 phases as previously outlined in Chapter 9 Figure 9.3.

10.3.1 Phase 1: Initiating an inclusive, self-organizing conversation - creating disturbance.

This first phase was initiated in the second half of 2002 and carried over until April 2003, lasting nearly 9 months. This initial planning conversation employed numerous local newspaper articles to raise the idea of building a long distance walking track

across regional communities and public exhibitions to seek feedback on the level of support and potential issues that would need to be addressed.

A consultant undertook a pre-feasibility assessment (noted earlier in Chapter 2) and addressed a cross-regional local government and agency meeting as well as a public forum to discuss and seek feedback on the proposal. Local communities were also initially engaged with leaflets requesting their comments and what they thought of the concept.

The aims in this first phase were to scope out, identify and engage key stakeholders, communities and agencies who would be involved or impacted with such an initiative. Secondly, to facilitate an open space and enhance links across stakeholders, communities and agencies in order to inform each other of what they thought were the key issues and whether the concept of a long distance walking track was feasible. There was a deliberate strategy of going outside and well beyond the existing aristocratic or hierarchical social decision-making networks in this conversation; to meet directly with landholders and people in the communities and agencies and to create a disturbance across the wider range of community and social networks. This first phase also involved undertaking a situational analysis of what would be the key issues needing to be addressed, to also explore and gather ideas on how they could possibly be managed.

These stakeholder meetings, newspaper articles and correspondence and public exhibitions at community events such as Outdoor Exhibitions and market stalls, enabled community members and agency staff to develop a better understanding of the motivations behind the proposed long distance walking track proposal.

At each of these either formal stakeholder – agency meeting or informal style discussions, the proposed long distance walking track concept was outlined and reference was made to other similar, continuous long distance walking tracks ventures in Australia and New Zealand. Community members and stakeholders were then asked what they thought of the concept, what issues they thought needing addressing and who else would be interested or needed to be involved.

An additional 14 stakeholder exploratory meetings were held during this nine-month period with various agencies and local government councillors and staff that helped to identify the key issues and concerns. These stakeholder meetings included NSW National Parks & Wildlife Services, NSW State Forests, NSW Tourism, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Armidale and Walcha Councils, Coffs Regional Tourism Group and NSW Environmental Protection Agency. This period of discussions also allowed the space to approach the Northern Tablelands Aboriginal Elders group and to explore issues of concern with the regional Aboriginal Lands Council. This phase was a fruitful learning time for identifying cultural protocols that needed to be followed as well as determining who were the key agency and community spokespeople and the issues that needed to be addressed.

This first phase also helped develop a 'shared language' and understanding of what the initiating track concept involved. In particular some misconceptions were clarified about the type of track surfaces involved in different sections and their cost. These early conversations also helped clarify the motivations and attitudes of the NEES group towards environmental conservation and partnering versus imposing the proposed enterprise on stakeholders and communities. This self-organising conversational phase sought to build trust and supporting partnerships with communities, local councils, National Parks & Wildlife Services, Forests NSW and the NSW State Tourism organisation. Initial talks were held with representatives of the Northern Tablelands Regional Aboriginal Lands Council; their concerns were recognised and the idea of their partnering this initiative and possible spin-off 'guided walking enterprises' were discussed.

These initial conversations tended to focus on possible track routes, whether these constituted world class walking experiences, whether they would skirt or descend into the gorge country, the state of existing tracks and whether they could be connected into a continuous track. There was agreement amongst stakeholders that both regions' eco-assets of national parks, forests, rainforest reserves and landscapes were relatively unrecognised and under-utilized and the need to promote in order to conserve them. A number of issues were identified including the need to develop jobs for the region's youth and to support new ecotourism enterprises and bolster existing support enterprises. More contentious issues included some landholders

concerns over farm insurance to cover walkers, unimpeded access to landholders' properties, walkers' safety, the imposition of their getting lost and systems for them to be rescued out of rugged country. Stakeholders wanted a number of these questions to be discussed further and a range of solutions were canvassed including costings for insurance, provision of camp sites, water, radio coverage for fire season warnings and the design of stiles to get across fences and not let sheep or cattle stray. Other issues included the spread of weeds and disease by walkers and the disruption of lambing season.

Further concerns included track routes approaching Aboriginal sacred places and the need to protect artefacts. One land managing organisations expressed concerns that an outside community agenda could be imposed on them by this track proposal and budgets could be hijacked. There were also fears that scarce funding could be diverted onto track building and maintenance or promotional campaigns only to later find that this community initiative would only fail after five years. This particular agency management feared they would be committed to maintenance on little used walking tracks sections under their responsibility. However all stakeholders agreed that the concept plan and feasibility study needed to be funded and an in-depth conversation needed to be carried out. Other stakeholders looked to invest in new enterprises and accommodation. One place community meeting, agreed that something had to be done to support the increasing numbers of European travellers, the lack of suitable local accommodation but clearly expressed their view for 'no tourist buses' as it would undermine their sense of place.

The planning conversation in this case study, deliberately sought to avoid arguments for and against the track proposal instead, seeking feedback, indications of support or opposition and, to get clear on the key issues. This planning approach sought to engage stakeholders and communities to avoid outright dismissal and institutional capture and colonizing agendas by any one agency. This phase also sought to discover place and cultural protocols around organising the conversations. The only guiding parameters from NEES was that an environmental and culturally sensitive long distance walking track was needed, that this would hopefully support the fledging ecotourism industry and be managed by partnerships with agencies, communities and individual landholders that would respect and recognize the rights of these parties.

What is important in this first phase was that the exploratory conversations across communities and stakeholder agencies tended to unfold. Representatives would contact NEES and this planner researcher to meet and discuss their views and concerns. From these meetings subsequent discussions were either arranged in response or as follow-ups from NEES. **There was no pre-determined set agenda, timetable or scheduling of meetings. Meetings and exploratory conversations evolved, from one to another.**

This researcher recorded journal notes of both the key issues identified by the various stakeholders and in particular the perception and fears of both landholders and key agencies to both the auspicing track study body and the concept of a long distance walking track. This added to the reflexive learning notes of this researcher, some of which have been quoted earlier in Chapter 2.

This researcher has therefore deliberately termed this exploratory conversational first phase, a planning ‘process’ that needed to adapt and respond to stakeholders and community members. In contrast, a planning ‘method’ is depicted as a set of pre-determined fixed steps with a set timetable, which is in contrast to the open, evolving process employed here in this study.

Negotiations around two memorandums of understanding with two land managing agencies also commenced in this phase namely NSW State Forests and National parks and Wildlife Services. These negotiations concerned walking track development and recognised the shared visions, intentions and potential governance protocols for both NEES and these agencies.

As a result of the enthusiasm created in this first phase, a coalition of local government councils, Tourism NSW and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services was established and funding was secured for a Concept Planning, Feasibility and Sustainable Business Model Study. This stakeholder buy-in would later help ensure ownership of the revised and widened ‘track enterprise’ concept that would emerge from the community planning dialogue.

10.3.2 Phase 2: Facilitating a 'whole of community' exploratory dialogue

This second phase focused on undertaking a collaborative appraisal through facilitating social learning through assembling stakeholder, agency and community advice on the viability and sustainability of a long-distance walking track enterprise across the adjoining regions of New England and the Mid-North Coast.

Seven community meetings were held along the cross-regional corridor through May-July 2003 involving over 185 people. The place communities involved in the New England region were Armidale, Walcha and Ebor and the coastal regional communities included Belligen and Coffs Harbour. Two further stakeholder community meetings included the Armidale Regional Tourism Group and Council members as well as the Walcha Cheyenne Landholders Group. Key stakeholders in each community were asked what was the preferred venue, dates and times and how we could best invite people from the community. Local newspaper articles were used to advertise the meetings and their purpose regarding eliciting feedback and ideas on the proposed walking track enterprise. Flyers for each meeting were also produced and distributed to key stakeholders who were also contacted by phone to identify other potential interested parties. In the case of the Ebor meeting, flyers for the meeting were distributed to each landholder by the local postman. Stakeholders such as Local Councils and other community members were encouraged to contact those they thought would be either interested or impacted. Flyers were also displayed in local stores and pubs wherever possible. So these meetings could be said to be self-organising.

The largest meeting was in Coffs Harbour with 70 people and the smallest in a small rural location, Ebor, on top of the Tablelands with 25 people. Extensive notification was given of these meetings using local newspapers articles, local networks and even notices in the mail for landholders in one area. The meetings usually took around 2.5 hrs with a break for cups of tea and cakes but discussions continued after the meeting, in one case in the adjoining bar. These meetings were attended by a mixture of local landholders and community people who were either walkers, interested in ecotourism as a new employment / enterprise opportunity and the idea of opening up and supporting / partnering new walking / cycling tracks. Others included landholders with serious concerns about the possible impacts of walking

tracks in their vicinity and how it could impact their grazing enterprise or environment if not managed 'properly'. The Ebor community meeting for example was held in the community squash court, which was the warmest room in the community facility. This meeting was also unique as it involved small children who also drew their impressions of a walking track and the local countryside.

At each of these community stakeholder meetings a single open question was asked at the start of the meeting 'what type of track?' When questioned the question was further clarified with what type of track in your view / experience would be viable and sustainable as a cross-regional enterprise. These in-depth community and stakeholder dialogues were recorded on large white plastic wall panels (up to 9 metres in length); each idea or insight was mapped by a two-person facilitator team, clarified when necessary and located in relationship to other similarly themed ideas in a conversational systems map. The facilitators asked where does this idea, issue or advice fit in relationship to the other ideas recorded already and how and to what other ideas, issues should they be connected. The conversation maps recorded were then the ideas and a rich systems picture of the community stakeholders in that sense. These sessions then entailed both co-visioning and co-designing 'what sort of track?' was considered viable, worth partnering and secondly how it could be managed sustainably.

This conversational mapping technique then entailed a reflexive process centred using the open question 'what sort of track enterprise?' and sought to capture local place and community stakeholder knowledge and agency insights and learning as to what was and wasn't a viable track enterprise. The conversation maps then embodied the social learning that arose out of the learning dialogue in a holistic, rich systems map or 'picture' that showed the interconnection of ideas, insights and learning.

These exploratory learning dialogues invited the stakeholders, communities and agencies into a collaborative visioning and design process. **This collaborative design process, termed in this study, 'co-design', enabled communities to contribute and put forward for discussion, new additional features and design issues; to re-frame and re-design if necessary, alternative and better ways of en-visioning the Waterfall Track concept.**

These novel emergent design features included ideas like the **‘track as an outdoor classroom’** to learn about the unique ecosystems, endangered species and how the land had been utilized and managed differently over time. Another notion was of the **track as a journey where ‘travelers’ (not tourists) could learn of the different stories of this corridor including the history of each people**, their contribution, impact, how they managed the country and even the story of the geomorphology of the corridor as the rim of a giant ancient shield volcano. Gradually more innovative ideas appeared in the community conversations and maps while a number of key themes were being repeated until a new ‘track concept’ was being suggested although still implicit in the conversation maps. Seven community conversation maps were developed during the concept co-design process (refer Appendix 1 Concept Plan excerpts).

The Armidale community and the Coffs Harbour community conversational systems maps as examples are set out below in figures 10.1 and 10.2 below.

Fig: 10.3 Coffs Harbour Community Meeting Summary

What the Coffs Harbour Community Said...



Key ideas

- needs to provide a set of diverse experiences; not a fixed route but a concept
- a showcase educational experience -allows people to contact the deepness of places
- a marketing corridor of regional experiences
- for multiple track users & walker types; requires various types- accommodation etc
- code of ethics –aesthetics
- centrally managed by partners – community, stakeholders and agencies
- web based and Integrated VIC's booking system that ensures quality product

Participants at the Coffs Harbour meeting said that the Track needs to be a set of diverse experiences and tracks that provide for the different cross-sections of the community, from gentle walks to challenging hard walks; they need to entail a 'journey' and 'wow' scenic experiences. It is about building a diversity of walking experiences and not creating a fixed, single route track. For example there could be 3-4 routes into Coffs Harbour from Dorrigo. Some sections that traverse private landholdings need to be regulated.

The walking experiences should be an educational showcase about the region's natural and cultural heritage, the stories of the past and the places, its relics, the industries such as the timber, mining, hydro schemes and detail its geomorphological pre-history. It should allow all people to access the 'deepness' of ancient places and old giant trees. The Tracks needs to share the connecting theme of the ancient geological event that is the shield volcano that shaped these lands.

The different tracks that wind through towns, villages and cities would act as a platform for marketing a corridor of regional experience. These need to include decadent experiences like luxury walking products. These experiences can include sampling the world's best coffee, distinct regional cuisine; where the art and craft work is exposed to visitors along with opportunities for joined experiences such as bike and horse trail products. There needs to be a web based marketing and booking system, with integrated visitor information centre (VIC's) acting as visible regional nodes that ensures advance bookings, co-ordinates travel and accommodation arrangements and advises guides and other service providers in real time. The VIC's role could include products monitoring and ensure their quality. A total interactive map and notes, both print and web based needs to be developed to detail the different walking experiences, walking grades etc to assist walkers decision making about the most appropriate options. Access transport arrangements like TrackNet in NZ need to be explored. Different types of brochures need to be developed for the different track experiences available. Refer to track management below in blue on colour maps.

Track management needs to identify the core product and consider the appropriate walker volume and yield relationship eg environmentally sensitive areas would be suited to a low walker volume-high yield strategy and product offerings. Accommodation type and facilities need to suit the different walker and visitor market niches.

The Track needs to be centrally managed as a partnership with the communities and stakeholders driving it, with the different government agencies supporting it. Management of the different sections needs to be flexible but guided by a code of ethics; environmental impact needs to be monitored with an integrated, innovative system of risk assessments. Track franchises can contribute to the maintenance of tracks and studies need to be undertaken of best practices in relation to track management and maintenance models elsewhere.

Track design needs to cater for different walker types and capabilities (multiple users) and to ensure existing tracks are connected eg Solitary Island and coastal walks to provide loops and diversity. Self-guided and guided sections are needed along with wilderness experiences. See track design below, in green on colour maps.

10.3.3 Phase 3: Conflating, Interpreting and Distilling Community - Stakeholder Advice

This phase involved interpreting and conflating the key recurring themes and design principles across the 7 community stakeholder conversation system maps. This took and took approximately 2 months (August – September 2003) to both compile and return copies of the maps to the communities and those attending and interpret and compile the Concept Plan.

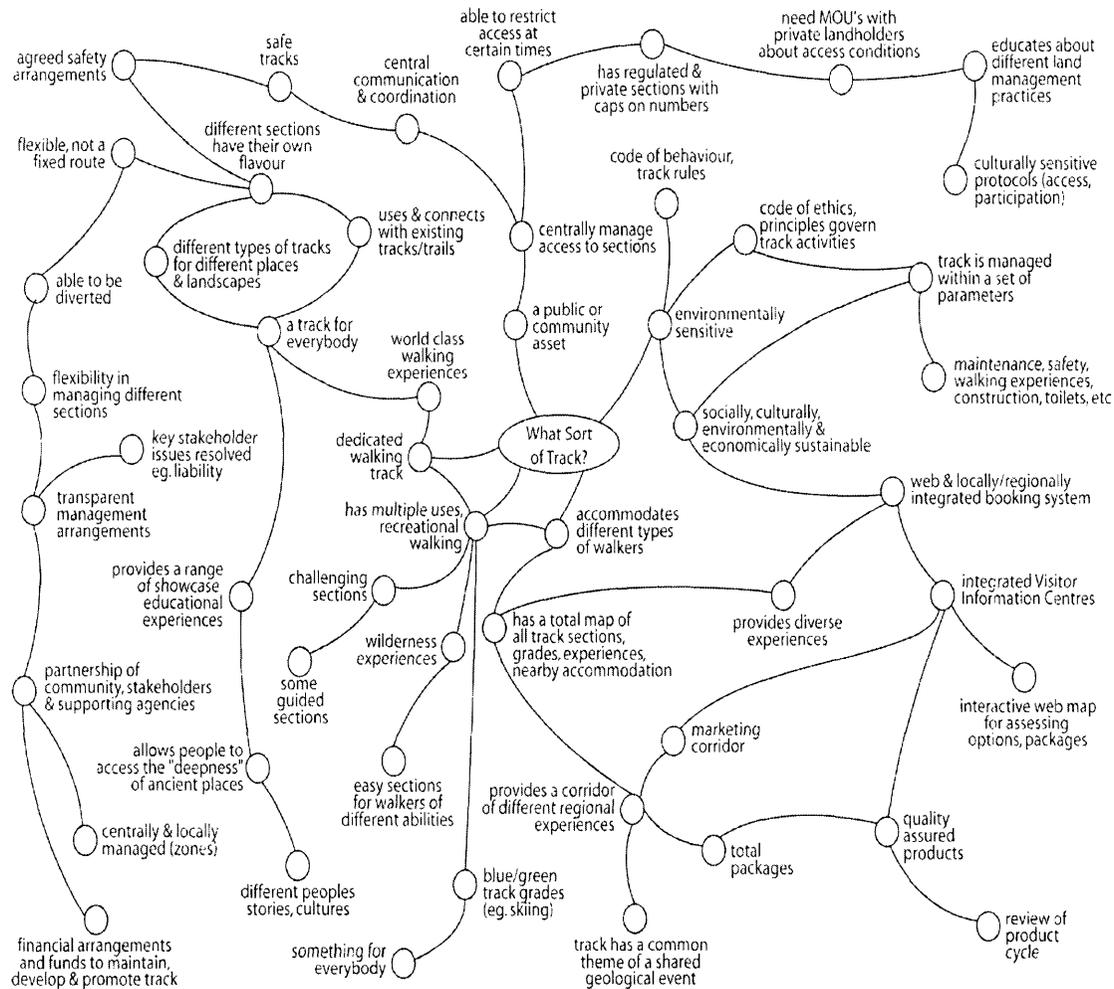
The first stage of interpreting the community conversations and system maps was to identify the key themes and common design ideas or principles and to conflate these onto a single concept map. These core themes, ideas and design principles are indicated as larger nodes in the system maps. The related ideas, design principles and other ideas were then incorporated to reflect the rich diverse systems picture that the community - stakeholders had been painted as set out in Fig. 10.4 and Fig. 10.5 below. This step was concerned with distilling the stakeholder - community advice and verdict on the proposed single, continuous long distance walking track.

The re-designed track concept that emerged from this collaborative dialogue was unexpected and a 'surprise' to both this researcher and the commissioning community ecotourism body, NEES. **The initial concept of a continuous long distance walking track was clearly rejected as both unviable and unsustainable.** But what was being proposed was initially unclear.

The next step was to decipher the different notion and whether this constituted 'novelty' as to what other regional tourism nature based track enterprises were already in existence in Australia and especially Tasmania and New Zealand, the major competitive market for ecotourism walking ventures.

Figure 10.4 clearly sets out an alternative to the initial mental model held by NEES for a single, continuous long distance walking track enterprise.

Figure 10.4: The Conflated Conversational Map derived from seven community-stakeholder conversational dialogues



The interpretive process followed here then, has already been outlined in the previous Chapter. *However, there was clear element of 'difference' and 'novelty' in what was being proposed, embedded in the advice and design principles in the conversation maps that went well beyond the idea of just a new network of diverse walking tracks* as set out in Figure 10.4 above.

However, to decipher the conceptual essence of what was being suggested, required the researcher to explore what alternative concept was trying to be birthed; to understand what else was being said, envisioned or dreamt; what else was trying to emerge. The story of the reflexive process and how the new novel concept was

clarified has been told in Chapter 8, section 9.5. This involved re-drawing what new vision was implicit or 'being dreamed up'.

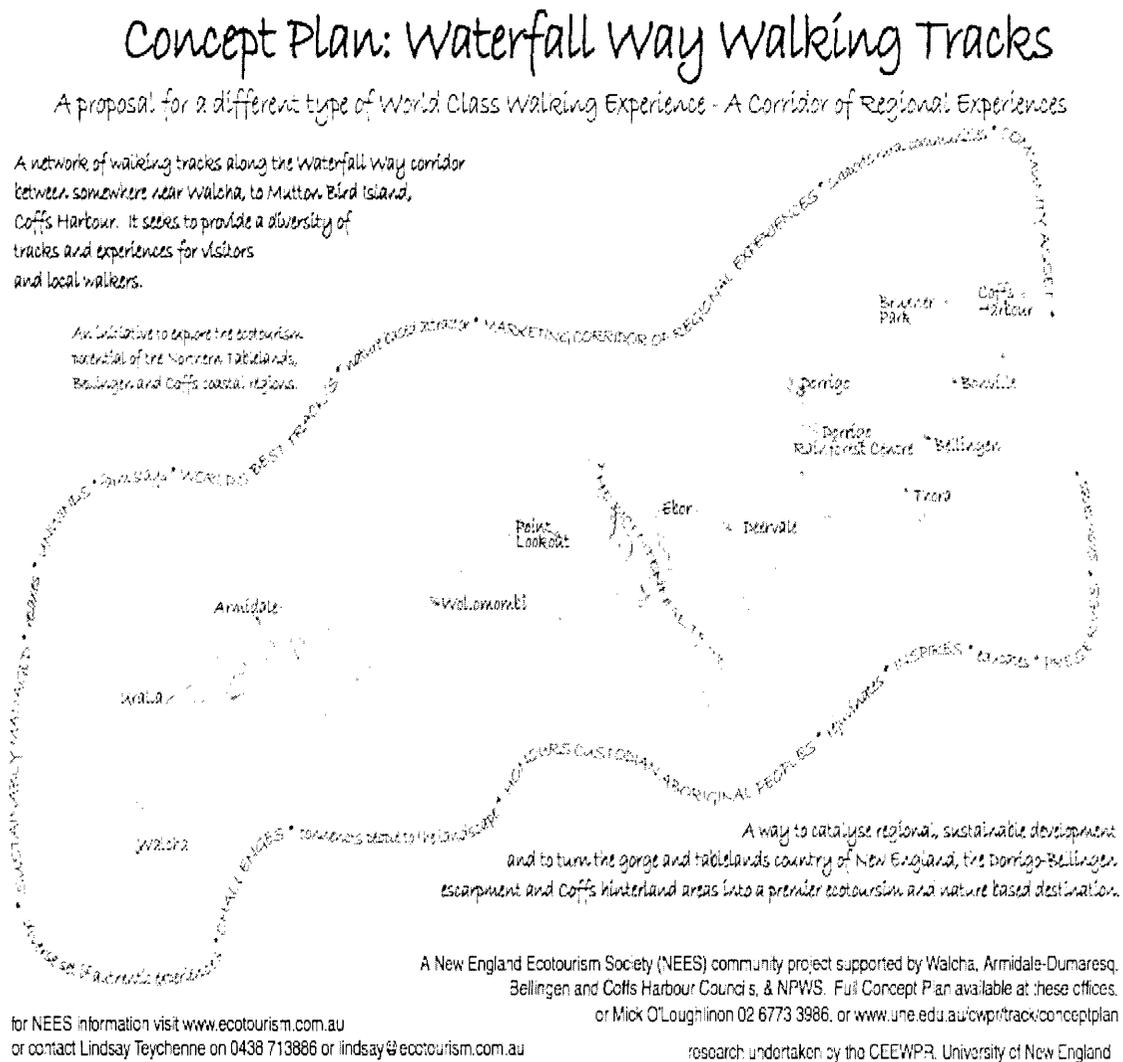
Essentially, the new concept and pathway being suggested was to build an evolving network of walking tracks for all types of walkers however this entailed an emergent novel ecotourism concept. **This emergent concept has been termed a 'total cross – regional corridor destination' of the Waterfall Way.**

Communities and stakeholders had outlined the notion that a sustainable partnered track enterprise needed to be a corridor of integrated regional experiences that contained the full gamut and diversity of stories and experiences of the country or landscapes, communities, distinct industries and cultures. This included tourism product based on experiences around the unique different ecosystems from sub-alpine, ancient remnants of Gondwana in deep gorges to sub-tropical rainforests onto beaches and islands of migrating birds from the northern hemisphere. The communities saw it important to highlight the unique merino wool, wagyu beef, sub-tropical fruit industries as well as the different cultural stories, local cuisines, wines and unique architectural styles of wool and 'alternative' country towns.

The conversation maps also told the story of how this new total 'track' and way of travelling should be guided according to conservation values and 'respect' for country and its different Peoples, their communities, stories and the rights of landholders. There was agreement around the need for a co-ordinated cross-regional development of the enterprise and it's marketing.

This emergent notion, arising out of the cross-regional dialogue amongst stakeholders is outlined in 10.5 below. The concept map encapsulates the local, place, stakeholder, agency and community wisdom and advice as to what constitutes a sustainable ecotourism enterprise for this regional place and context.

Fig. 10.5 The Waterfall Way Concept Map



The collaborative learning dialogue planning process then, involved two levels of reflexivity. First, a collective reflexivity involving the re-thinking and re-design of the original long distance walking track enterprise concept. This collective reflexivity involved community members reflecting on what type of enterprise would work and fit within this cross-regional corridor and in their place. This also allowed a number of stakeholders and landholders to reconsider their own relationship with the development of the regions and what was 'sustainable'. In this sense, these planning discussions sought to catalyze another level of re-thinking about not just 'sustainability' but about how all the regional communities and their economy, enterprises and ecosystems were interconnected. This collective reflexivity involved entertaining notions of tourism, their existing notions of regional development and

new ways of collaborating, beyond their existing ways of seeing or perceptual framework and their way of understanding their regional world i.e. hermeneutical circle. This collaborative learning dialogue planning process sought to emulate the reflexive hermeneutical process encapsulated by Gadamer in his metaphor of hermeneutics of extending our horizon of understanding in Chapter 7, section 7.3.

A second level of reflexivity was undertaken by this researcher – planner and involved eliciting what was implicit across the conversational system maps and what constituted new potential sustainable, regional pathways and enterprises. This reflexive planning practice was outlined earlier in Chapter 9, Figure 9.5. This reflexive process involved the planner in stepping out from the existing mental model of the proposed long distance, continuous walking track project to elicit what new concept was being proposed and was common across these community, stakeholder and agency conversations. This reflexive eliciting process employed by this researcher, involved an interpretive felt and intuitive sense about what was being proposed. This necessitated drawing and redrawing what was felt was being suggested and what emergent concept was being proposed. The story of this reflexive eliciting process as to what was an emergent, novel design was outlined earlier in Chapter 9 section 9.5. The total cross-regional corridor destination concept (in figure 10.5 above) describes the new shared understanding and design principles of what communities and regional stakeholders had advised constituted a better and sustainable ecotourism model.

Each community and all the attending stakeholders were given a copy of ‘their map’, the conflated map and concept plan entailing their re-designed vision of a sustainable ‘track network cross-regional destination’ for stakeholders to validate the planning conversation and the new wider concept. A number of communities wanted their map returned as soon as possible and to get details of what other communities had proposed. The concept plan was made available on the Internet and priority was given to returning the new, agreed alternative concept to the community. Meetings were then held to clarify what was being proposed. The auspicing body, NEES was gracious and agreed that the communities and stakeholders had advocated something quite different and that this was now the operational concept and agreed vision that

needed further investigation, particularly as to how it could incorporate a sustainable business model and could be partnered by both agencies and communities.

The new vision and Waterfall Way Track concept was well received by the supporting local councils, agencies and communities that this constituted unique, potential world-class regional tourism destination. Further that there was both an existing and emergent market that would find this destination attractive being midway between the major capital cities of both Brisbane and Sydney, closer than existing nature based regional destinations. A 17 strong stakeholder partnership of regional councils and agencies, together with the extended regional communities, was successful in seeking federal government funding to collaboratively develop the Waterfall Brand, Regional Charter and Protocols and business support, marketing strategies and kits, in 2006.

A model of the proposed Waterfall Way governance management structure based on the advice in the conversation maps was incorporated into the Feasibility and Sustainable Business Model Reports that followed on from the Concept Planning phase. This model was simplified and revised by a meeting of Waterfall Way stakeholders in April 2007 and it is expected that this initiating stakeholder – community governance arrangement will become operational in early 2008 with the new cross-regional brand to be launched in late 2007, early 2008. The April 2007 stakeholder, community meeting agreed that this governance model, could be modified in response to community and agency feedback and as new issues arose.

The Regional Charter and Code of Ethics (refer Appendix 3) is seen as an evolving guide to how partnering enterprises will develop the new Waterfall Way enterprise as aligned with the original vision of the Concept Plan. The new Waterfall Way brand is now, at the time of writing, seen as a sustainable initiative and complimenting existing place brands along the regional corridor (Taboada, 2007)

The study constituted a field test of a conversational, dialogue planning process that explicitly sought to surface and address the wide ranging issues, concerns and agendas of the large number of stakeholders involved in planning the sustainable development of a cross regional tourism enterprise. This planning process deliberately delved into complexity, rather than deny, assume away or sideline the uncertainty associated with

the potential non-linear and lagged social, economic and ecological impacts of such a venture.

The collaborative regional dialogue methodology was based on an inclusive, self-organising conversational process to engage as wide as possible, cross section of communities and stakeholders and agencies. This process sought to generate stakeholder buy-in, assemble a diversity of perspectives and creative responses to generate the key design principles of what was initially proposed, of building a single continuous long distance walking track venture but was to be replaced by an alternative concept of what was considered a sustainable cross-regional corridor tourism venture.

At another level, this particular conversational process seeks to elicit adaptive and innovative stakeholder responses by facilitating an open deliberative space with multiple entry points to catalyze a self-organising discursive community or a network of communities and stakeholders. It is seen as a new collaborative planning approach for enabling sustainable regions and regional tourism enterprises.

10.4 Appraising the Collaborative Learning Dialogue Process

Innes & Booher (2003) have outlined how an authentic collaborative dialogue can be employed as a 'policy making strategy' in a regional, water-planning forum in California. They distinguish an authentic dialogue as an experimental initiative, still far from being a mainstream approach as yet, being characterized by stakeholders openly advocating their interests rather than their rhetorical 'positions', both competing and collaborating for mutual gains. They depict authentic dialogue as balancing inquiry and advocating their interests, seeking allies and learning around win-win outcomes. The community, agency and stakeholder discussions, captured in the conversational system maps, were at times typically 'blunt' Australian discussions. Landholders, in the main, supported the need for some ecotourism initiative but clearly articulated their interests such as fear of disruption to lambing operations, weed infestations, potential insurance liability etc. One agency reported their fear of having their budgets and agency priorities hijacked. Yet each stakeholder realised this open, exploratory dialogue had the potential to produce something worthwhile for the region and would help address important issues such as rural communities in decline

and employment for youth. The dialogue focus became more around what type of nature based walking concept would work, who was willing to invest their support and partner the initiative and whether other stakeholders were free to abstain. The dialogue could be said to be 'authentic' especially given a number of stakeholders in the Walcha region frankly stated they would abstain hosting a from a long distance walking track. Yet others in another section of that same Walcha, proposed walking track zone, organised meetings to co-ordinate and initiate walking track and accommodation packages with the support of their council. A diversity of views and positions and dis-sensus was openly accepted; all stakeholder and community views were treated as valid in this regional planning dialogue.

The final concept plan articulated the stakeholder and community learning around what sort of walking track based, regional nature based enterprise was viable and sustainable and what was not.

The appraisal of the collaborative regional learning dialogue methodology however is based here more on whether the case study outcomes achieved, met the research questions aims and how it fared against a number of qualitative research methodology criteria as below.

10.4.1 The Waterfall Way Planning Case Study Outcomes Compared Against Research Questions of this Dissertation.

What follows is a discussion comparing the case study outcomes to the following, three inter-related research questions below.

1. Can and how could a collaborative learning dialogue and conversational mapping methodology at the cross-regional scale, catalyze and contribute to the emergence of *novelty* in the form of a unique walking track based cross-regional tourism concept?
2. Is it possible to facilitate *a shared and aligned vision* of what a sustainable nature based - ecotourism industry enterprise could look like in the New England and Coffs – Bellingen regions?

3. Could the same planning process catalyze *emergence* of new collaborative regional stakeholders behaviours and the design principles of new governance arrangements as to how to manage the proposed new regional tourism initiative?

The study has provided three instances of the emergence of 'novelty'. Firstly, the regional dialogue led to a different redesign of the original concept with a number of quite distinct points of difference. These different design principles included the notion of stakeholders, agencies and communities collaborating around building a diverse network of walking tracks as an 'outdoor classroom' for visitors and a showcase for the different Peoples' stories across the cross-regional corridor.

A second dimension of novelty in this new Waterfall Way enterprise vision arises out the diversity embodied in the new distinct, emergent enterprise concept over the original single, continuous long distance walking track. The Waterfall Way track network was depicted as both a platform and brand identity for promoting diverse regional experiences including nature based, ecotourism and Aboriginal experiences incorporated with the local cuisines, wines and the stories of different place communities across a variety of ecosystems and landscapes. The Waterfall Way was envisaged as a complete regional destination package' designed to encourage return visits. Originally, the Waterfall Way described the road that traversed the regional corridor. However this co-designed new enterprise concept both broadened and transformed the original notion. This new Waterfall Way enterprise concept also incorporates and promotes the existing cross-regional uniqueness; the particular regional heritage and evolving social and cultural mix across the corridor, the different architecture styles and local tree plantings including the unique local industries eg superfine wool and subtropical horticulture. The new concept seeks to build on what already exists to promote a new cross-regional identity.

The third distinguishing novelty of this Waterfall Way 'track' enterprise from other walking track based enterprises in Australia and overseas, is in how it has been a community and stakeholder owned and driven initiative that helps re-define the place identity of the case study cross regional corridor. Further evidence of novelty is that it

is to be sustainably and holistically managed and is a strategy for a cross-regional sustainable development aimed at revitalising rural communities and places.

It also became apparent, throughout the Concept Planning process, that communities' envisaged the Waterfall Track network as a type of social partnered enterprise (O'Loughlin, van der Lee and Gill 2003). This social enterprise notion was not just because of the support from key stakeholders, various communities, and Councils. A number of stakeholders and communities portrayed the Waterfall Way as a community or public asset that through increased tourism and visitation, could contribute to the regional economy, help support and protect the unique ecosystems and enhance environmental awareness. It was also made clear in a number of discussions that the new enterprise *should be designed to ensure important social returns as well*. These social returns include the Track network offering a learning opportunity or a new classroom to discover the distinct environments, rainforests, geomorphology and diverse cultural histories it connects, whether it is for the school children, students or adults of the region or its visitors. Similarly, the Track network would also provide opportunities for recreational, health and wellbeing. The Track network was also envisaged as an opportunity for visitors and local people, to experience the places, people, industries and products of these interconnected regions. The Waterfall Track network is therefore much more than an economic venture; it is a social enterprise that seeks to create an operating surplus, on-going economic returns as well as social returns for its various communities, rural places and towns. The Waterfall Way 'track' enterprise was a community development and regional linking exercise.

This emergent notion of the Waterfall Way as a social enterprise seeks to describe the notion of a commons enterprise as distinct from a corporate entity that seeks to maximize profits; a social enterprise seeks an economic surplus to achieve social, cultural and environmental aims much like a community service organisation provides community services. A regional social enterprise also relies on stakeholders, communities and agencies to partner and support the Track network initiative and in doing so, helps underpin each other's viability. It seeks to benefit its regional partners and to avoid harm and burden being imposed on any one stakeholder. The Waterfall Track network was envisaged in the community conversational maps, as benefiting

not just those working or walking on it and directly related Track businesses. It also seeks to link and rejuvenate local communities, catalyse supporting regional networks of sustainable businesses and help value the different cultural identities and histories. It is also an opportunity to protect and sustainably manage the different and unique ecosystems of our regions i.e. it is specifically aimed at sustainable regional development. The Track network is a regional social enterprise that seeks economic, social and environmental returns for its communities, places, peoples, businesses and its environments.

The co-design and subsequent adoption of the Concept Plan by regional stakeholders, agencies and communities, demonstrates that this collaborative planning process enabled a shared and aligned vision for this cross-regional venture. This research outcome is depicted in Figure 10.5. Further evidence of the emergence of an enabling vision is evidenced in the subsequent formation of a stakeholder cross regional partnership group and project management committee to successfully win a Federal government grant to implement the project concept.

Other evidence of new collaborative behaviours emerging across regional stakeholders from the collaborative learning dialogue methodology concerns the subsequent development and agreement on a regional charter and agreed guidelines to shape and guide the development of the Waterfall Way track enterprise. This is now supported by cross-regional stakeholder recommendations for new multi-stakeholder governance arrangements as to how to co-manage the proposed new regional tourism initiative. This evidence of new collaborative cross-regional stakeholder is provided in Appendices 3 and 4. The development of interim protocols on track route developments with the Northern Tablelands Aboriginal Lands Councils and negotiations on memorandums of understanding between NEES and both NSW State Forests and National Parks and Wildlife Services, indicate enhanced community and stakeholder buy-in and an on-going collaborative approach.

These ongoing self-organised initiatives also demonstrate an enhanced connectivity, mutuality and coherence across the cross-regional corridor that is in contrast to the

previous predominant fragmentation and attitudes of ‘us and them’ that saw their regional interests as divided.

10.4.2 Appraising the Methodology Against Qualitative Research Criteria

The criteria for judging a research study of validity, reliability and objectivity, it could be argued are relevant for assessing quantitative studies. The evaluation of qualitative studies findings according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) need to be based on four different criteria namely credibility, applicability, dependable and confirmable. The Collaborative Learning Dialogue as a co-design and multi-stakeholder appraisal process is clearly a qualitative process as opposed to traditional feasibility or quantitative appraisal studies as discussed earlier in Chapter 2 section 2.5. In this case then, qualitative criteria are more appropriate to appraise this planning methodology. Furthermore, the collaborative learning dialogue is termed here a planning process rather than a method. It would be impossible and inappropriate to apply the criteria for evaluating a set planning method with an unfolding process that seeks to adapt and respond to the particular stakeholder mix and unique regional and cultural context of this study. Instead of predetermined step by step planning methods, this study has argued for new planning processes that have a framework of phases and evolving conversational dialogues that better address both the reality of each region as unique complex, self-organising and emergent systems or human ecologies. Each regional planning dialogue will be different although the aim in this study has been to both capture and condense the ‘whole of community’ advice and employ a new soft system conversational mapping technique to elicit emergent and novel design principles. The collaborative learning dialogue methodology has been shown in this study to be an effective multi-stakeholder and co-design process.

In this case the more appropriate criteria to evaluate the collaborative learning dialogue planning process is considered to be the four criteria noted above.

Credibility concerns whether the findings are consistent with the lived experience of the participants and *confirmable* refers to how the findings and inferences can be seen to arise out of stakeholder conversations and conversational systems maps in this case. In this study, feedback from each community and participating stakeholder validated their conversation map while the agencies engaged in exploratory

conversations agreed that the planning outcomes and Concept Plan was a true reflection of what regional stakeholders were advocating. *Applicable* refers to whether the methodology can be applied to other similar circumstances as assessed by those able to apply the methodology. This Chapter sets to better define those regional system circumstances when this methodology could be applied elsewhere notably in section 10.4.4 and 10.6, which refer to the critical success factors needed for this methodology to be effective. The fourth criterion is whether a methodology or study is *dependable* and this concerns whether the methodology or study can be defended and is considered reasonable for that particular problem context setting. This thesis has already set out in detail the rationale why a complexity framed regional planning methodology and the conversational systems tool were employed to help make collective sense together of the complexity involved in collaboratively appraising ‘what type of track’ was a viable and sustainable venture.

10.4.3 Appraising Against Other Planning Methodology Criteria

Cooksey (2007, 2001) has defined ‘convincingness’ as an ‘over-arching meta-criterion’ of a research methodology as to whether the story of the research is convincing. This includes whether the research methodology species where it fits into and extends on existing methodologies, demonstrates contextual sensitivity, has both internal coherence, analytical integrity, handles unexpected research outcomes as well as fertilizes new ideas and acknowledges its limitations. The learning journey approach adopted in this dissertation was designed as a way to write a convincing story. The dissertation has outlined the development of a new, complexity framed, regional planning methodology and why it was developed in this instance.

10.4.4 The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Methodology

The methodology facilitates collaborative appraisals and creative co-designs to determine what type of enterprise is both viable, sustainable for that place and problem context while enabling stakeholder and community buy-in and ownership.

The collaborative learning dialogue as a regional appraisal and co-design planning process develops new shared understandings amongst stakeholders of their region and what type of enterprises and industry pathways, fit in across the regional

landscape. It does this through helping stakeholders and communities build rich systems pictures that help better understand the issues, challenges, potential impacts that a new enterprise can have at a regional or place scale and how it needs to be re-designed as a result. The collaborative learning dialogue process facilitates social learning about what is sustainable for that place and context particularly about the social, economic and environmental inter-relationships across the region as a complex system. This planning process not only lets regional stakeholders design and own their future but also has been shown to build a sense of mutuality, trust and new collaborative behaviours. A potential conflict about a new venture became a constructive and creative design issue and opportunity unlike many planning instances around smaller scale developments. This researcher as indicated elsewhere, witnessed new cross-regional collaborative behaviours with regular meetings of local council general managers and regional tourism organizations. It is hoped the first steps have been taken to build collaboration and an enhanced regional adaptive capacity to transcend the fragmented competitive attitudes of the past.

This researcher considers it helps communities and stakeholders to self-organise future regional enterprise pathways while the planning conversation aims at enhancing their capability to develop foresight and potentially self-organise both adaptive and evolutionary responses.

The methodology is however dependent on facilitation skills of a planner, their impartiality and ability to step back from shaping the conversation and taking a privileged position as an expert plus, their familiarity with a reflexive, hermeneutical process.

The major criticism is that this is an interpretive process of a wide-ranging planning conversation that seeks to develop and uncover new possibilities and layers of understanding. It stands in stark contrast with the more familiar expert-led planning conversations and advice available from the strategic planning approach and so-called objective advice from the standard social and environmental impact studies. Further, undertaking an exploratory conversation takes time, over fifteen months in this case but was deliberately designed to build 'connectivity' and trust. The open agenda planning conversation would not suit those tourism developers with a commitment

to develop a corporate tourism enterprise model and less willing to enter an open ended partnership with regional communities. The methodology could be said to be suited and therefore restricted to circumstances and possibilities for partnering regional 'social enterprises' or 'commons issues.

10.5 What Was Learnt from this Cross-Regional Planning Case Study?

The key learning involved in this planning case study, included the importance of the planner holding an open space and asking exploratory question such as 'what type of track' which allows communities and stakeholders to explore an open-ended agenda. A regional planning dialogue of this type also needs plenty of time to develop relationships, trust and shared language and understandings. An inclusive planning conversation can engage communities and key stakeholders initially through the local newspapers and now through even incorporate Internet forums. There is a need to engage Aboriginal communities in particular at the design stage rather than as a post concept consultation as has been the case in the past.

There is a need to accepting the importance of following stakeholder – place and cultural protocols for culturally appropriate ways of dialoguing stakeholders and Aboriginal communities.

Regional planning of this sort needs to be cognizant of avoiding institutional capture and moving around initial stakeholder resistance so that barriers and issues are just re-framed as opportunities for re-designing what will work and will ensure constructive conflict resolution. Planning in this instance needed to go beyond problem solving to creative co-designing a new way forward; this requires being open to a diversity of insights across regional stakeholders who have differing values as to what constitutes sustainability.

For planners with a social constructivist epistemology, a reflexive process can help alert them to their own and others cultural narratives, how this shapes their planning practice and to reconsider their own and other stakeholders' knowledge stock about what a sustainable tourism venture needs to address. For example, arising out of these regional planning conversations it became clear that different stakeholder groups valued different priorities around what constituted a sustainable regional

tourism venture. Aboriginal community members clearly prioritised social and cultural aspects of sustainability and emphasize the cultural preservation of certain place-sites, what stories of that land can be told and who can tell the stories of that land. A land management agency such as National Parks and Wildlife focused on the impacts of increased visitation on flora and fauna and the budgetary commitments from partnering a cross-regional walking track initiative. A place-community like Walcha for example focused on the economic development or projected new jobs created while another place community such as Wollomombi instead emphasised the importance of retaining a sense of place and community that could be lost with increased visitation and the arrival of busloads of tourists. A number of landholders, focused on the need not to have their sheep grazing and lambing practices disrupted. To incorporate these stakeholder concerns, instead of being perceived as an obstacle, can instead represent guidelines or design principles to re-design a sustainable regional tourism concept.

A reflexive planning process also offers the opportunity to planners to reflect on what new insights, perceptions and assessments are emerging in any regional planning conversation. This study points out the usefulness of such a reflexive approach to help redesign a regional venture that better meets different stakeholder priorities about what a sustainable enterprise looks like. Planners, with an objectivist worldview for example, relying on quantitative data sets such as visitation and regional economic flow-ons in their decision-making around assessing the viability of a tourism venture, could rethink in the light of these planning conversation insights above, of what a more holistic and shared notion or picture of what a sustainable tourism project entailed.

A major limitation in undertaking this study however was that both pre and post planning study interviews with key stakeholders was not undertaken. This meant that a formal research record was not taken to denote the shift in understanding and estimate the social learning about what would be a sustainable ecotourism enterprise along this cross-regional corridor. While research notes were journalised around key stakeholders initial ideas and notions, undertaking formal interviews would have constituted a better research process for this study.

10.5.1 The Unforeseen Cultural Complexity in Engaging in Regional Planning Conversations with Aboriginal Communities.

Planning conversations in the New England Region with Aboriginal communities sought to identify and follow certain cultural protocols. Elders were first approached according to the cultural practice of showing respect. Discussions were then held with particular spokespersons and Elders who were asked about the best way to proceed. These conversations sought to invite Aboriginal communities to join a regional partnership to co-manage the regional walking track initiative, in developing particular walking track routes and support for Aboriginal Cultural Tourism initiatives.

The level of social-cultural complexity encountered by this researcher deepened considerably as this regional conversational dialogue unfolded. Due to the forced displacement during the colonial occupation from 1840 onward, a region such as New England is now home to numerous Aboriginal Peoples, besides the custodian Anaiwan People. Planning discussions around a proposed cross regional walking track then poses significant difficulties as to which Elders, communities and their representatives it is appropriate to negotiate with, and what protocols need to be followed to show respect. This cultural complexity for Australian regional planners is compounded when walking track routes may transgress different borders that are still under negotiation between, say the Gumbaygir and Thunghutti Peoples in one instance such as in 2 of the 6 zones of the proposed walking track initiative. The Northern Tablelands Aboriginal Lands Council representatives indicated that the previous usual planning response has been to either initially disregard the need to identify and initiate discussions with the appropriate Aboriginal Custodian Peoples Elders or to negotiate an already determined enterprise proposal with a self-appointed group, which may or may not 'be able to speak for that country'.

The complexity of these planning discussions about whether there could be viable and sustainable walking tracks and ecolodge development were also threatened as the location of sacred places could not be revealed in negotiations to 'white fellas'. This is a common but often unrecognised problem. The reluctance of Aboriginal communities to engage in regional tourism planning conversations can be attributed

to the lack of respect shown to Elders, for following cultural protocols around country and for ignorance of the cultural responsibility. Planners do not recognise the potential conflict, engendered over revealing the spiritual custodianship of significant places. This research project sought to better understand and to find a path through this dilemma by developing protocols. It sought to develop an interim memorandum agreement on the design of track routes and, also guiding principles as to how to address significant issues of concern such as unearthed relics. A number of proposed track routes were renegotiated and designated interim track routes, recognising that there wasn't enough time to consider all the possible issues with appropriate Elders. An added difficulty is that some Aboriginal communities retain, varying levels of traditional knowledge of country. Willingness to partner an ecotourism walking track project then becomes problematic given the uncertainty and fear of undoing some custodian obligation unknowingly.

This planning approach sought to engage with Aboriginal communities at the design stage, seeking to facilitate regional partnering. The unfolding conversational process was initiated with this researcher-planner initiating discussions for the New England Ecotourism Society, as the track proposing group with the Armidale and Northern Tablelands Regional Elders Group and a representative of the Thunghutti Community. This was in order to recognize and show respect for the Traditional Owners and 'country' and to follow the cultural protocols as when undertaking treaty business. Further discussions were held with the Northern Tablelands Aboriginal Regional Lands Council (as it was then), a regional co-ordinating body. An understanding was reached about the intention and guiding principles for such a conversation about a possible long distance walking track proposal. On-going discussions and field visits were then held with a working party from the Regional Lands Council conducted in conjunction with Elders and a Aboriginal Thunghutti man. He came as a representative from the Indigenous Unit of State Forests, which were a key land manager of much of the proposed walking track initiative. These discussions went beyond consulting on possible impacts of such a development but sought Memorandums of Understanding, practical arrangements, ways to preserve artefacts and avoid hidden special places but also to identify and support Aboriginal cultural and guided tourism products through a partnership framework.

Further planning of additional walking tracks will be subject to on-going negotiation until a formal memorandum of understanding is established and trust is further developed between all the parties. An interim agreement outlining some of these principles and process constituting such a memorandum has also been attached (see Appendix 2). This regional researcher - planner became cognizant that these planning conversations were being held with the Peoples of sovereign nations who had occupied and walked the 'song-lines' or walking and dreaming tracks of these regions for over 50,000 years. Adopting this attitude of acknowledging and showing respect for this on-going custodianship was a critical element in enabling the successful planning negotiation.

To deny and ignore this rich social and cultural complexity of Australian regional landscapes when planning for sustainable tourism may cause unanticipated cultural and social insult to Aboriginal and place communities and further delay both reconciliation and any tourism enterprise.

10.6 Why the Collaborative Learning Dialogue Methodology Worked in this Instance - the Critical Success Factors

There appear to be three key factors that contributed to this planning project in catalyzing novelty and emergence. NEES as a community based organisation had and was able to enlist enough local champions to create and sustain a self-organising momentum along the cross regional corridor. This proved critical to both raising the concept and addressing issues in each place-community and to liaise with agencies and stakeholders virtually in the street. There were at least six key people drivers of the self-organising conversation who were able to build the connections and disperse information through the diverse local networks. Without them, the conversation would have been limited. There is an issue of burnout amongst volunteer community champions but in this case new champions were recruited to replace those who had to pull out. The process of rebuilding a champion team appears to be needed every three years or so in these regions and some of the old guard need to remain in a secondary role to mentor and to 'hold the community vision'. The visionaries conceived this initiative as a 30-year project. This meant that the right community stakeholder agency partnerships had to be built from the start.

A second factor was the importance of receiving some initial funding support from local councils and agencies. Without this nourishment, the initial volunteer effort would have petered out.

The third factor was that it appeared to be at the right time and the right conditions in the minds of stakeholders and communities. There was a perception amongst communities and stakeholders of an 'opportunity being unrealised' with the New England eco-guiding training unit in Armidale, world heritage rainforest reserves and the diversity of relatively unknown national parks and unique corridor of regional landscapes. It could be argued that these particular regional human ecologies were nearing a system state nearing 'the edge of chaos', being too reliant on specialised industries, needing more economic and social diversity to support local regional places and jobs for youth.

Industry research into long lived sustained and successful business enterprises by Collins and Porras (2002) suggest the existence of a clear defined, shared purpose and values, along with audacious long-term goals are, critical success factors. This has been the case with the founding partnership group in this project to build a sustainable, unique, world-class regional destination and brand.

10.7 Some Conclusions - Towards A Reflexive, Social Learning Dialogue Approach to Evaluating Sustainable Regional Tourism Ventures

The Waterfall Way planning study has identified a viable alternative to the high, capital investment cost business model managed by a single agency operator that characterize a number of competing, single connected high volume walking track regional nature-based tourism ventures in Tasmania and New Zealand. The novel model that emerged through these collaborative planning conversations here, instead focuses on developing a low volume, high yield operation that is ecologically sensitive and involves low capital investment cost outlays as it seeks to utilize and link existing tracks. Over time this track network, can be slowly extended into a diverse set of walking track experiences and supporting accommodation and infrastructure aimed at securing return business. This emergent, novel venture concept embraces a move

towards a 'total destination' of regional experiences based around a walking track network as one key attractor. Agreement to proceed with the track network concept was seen as conditional on establishing a new multi-stakeholder cross-regional governance structure. This new stakeholder community governance structure was to address emergent issues around track development and maintenance, uphold memorandums of agreements between stakeholders and so sustainably co-manage the new proposed venture and brand. Evidence of this regional planning methodology catalyzing emergence is seen in the impacts and flow-on effects including the development of memorandums of understanding being developed with both National Parks and State Forest agencies as well as the developments outlined below.

The collaborative learning dialogue methodology outlined in this case study, also depicts planning for sustainable regional enterprises as a reflexive learning process. This re-thinking of planning embraces a complexity-framed perspective and advocates planning for regional sustainable enterprises. It focuses upon catalyzing emergence and novelty. The case study also provides evidence of the efficacy of conversational systems mapping as a way to capture social learning that arises out of a community stakeholder agency dialogue. It also describes how a hermeneutically reflexive process can help reveal, and make sense of the different layers of understanding and novelty that may be embedded in those dialogues. The study outlines the importance for planners of embracing a reflexive praxis to assist multi-stakeholder and cross-cultural conversations to better communicate, hear and understand other parties' concerns, and identify new emergent possibilities. Planning for sustainability can then become a discovery learning experience. Planning needs to become more concerned with 'what is becoming', reflecting the new ideas of 'presencing' being advocated by Scharmer, Senge, Jawoski and Flowers (2007) and in fostering a new type of distributed regional community leadership of knowledge management outlined by Sveiby and Skuthorpe (2007).

Sustainability is about evolutionary change but, also, about striving for a dynamic balance around valuing the sense of place, community and the social, environmental fabric of a region. The study suggests sustainable regional enterprises need to be co-designed to fit in with, rather than be imposed onto, a regional landscape.

Sustainability may also depend on the degree of self-organising of its stakeholders and partnering communities and their capacity to disrupt and escape the lethargy, rhetoric and myopia of the existing institutional and narrow aristocratic decision-making networks. Secondly, as Norgaard (1994) has inferred, sustainability also depends on the capability for regional stakeholders and communities to undergo a socio-cultural co-evolution that is attuned with the changing dynamics of its ecological systems and to build a different story to that of 'modernity' that values and cross-fertilizes each other's social, cultural and environmental diversity. In Australian regional landscapes this means developing more culturally appropriate collaborative planning methodologies that go beyond the 'whiteness' of existing planning approaches and ways of seeing, thinking and knowing.

This case study and the collaborative learning dialogue methodology sought to explore and learn about how and why this could work at a cross-regional scale. It is envisaged here as a valid and effective collaborative regional planning methodology that can be used in a particular set of 'system' circumstances and hopefully paves the way for developing a suite of pluralistic methodologies as called for by Norgaard (1999) in the original vision for Ecological Economics.

This study also suggests a new set of roles for regional planners as learning facilitators and catalyzers of self-organising stakeholder, community and agency information and learning partnerships. It is also suggested that planners need to be able to deploy specific place contexted and integrated knowledge generating methodologies that are epistemologically flexible and pluralistic as suggested by Manuel-Navarrete, Slocombe & Mitchell (2006).

The following Chapter outlines a number of conclusions drawn from the research study.

Chapter 11

Conclusion

11.1 What this Research Study has Addressed

This study outlines a new planning methodology which enables regional communities, stakeholders and agencies to collaboratively co-appraise and co-design new sustainable regional enterprises and industry pathways through facilitating a self-organising dialogue.

The systems based planning approach, piloted in this study, has been explicitly designed to address the complex nature of regions, their enterprises and markets. Regions, their enterprises and regional tourism industry clusters as regional destinations are depicted as a particular type of self-organising, complex co-evolving system. The collaborative planning process, in this instance, demonstrated its capability to elicit the design principles of a sustainable regional enterprise, and garner stakeholder-community and agency advice as to how this enterprise could be governed sustainably. An underlying premise of this research is that we face a new world of increasing complexity, diversity, uncertainty and turbulence with globalized economies, their markets and societies approaching far from equilibrium system states. We therefore need new planning methodologies that address these new conditions.

This research is envisaged as a contribution to developing a methodological pluralism in planning for sustainable outcomes, in defining context and place dependent holistic notions of sustainability in the case of a regional tourism enterprise, and exploring how to catalyze an embryonic, multi-stakeholder partnered, network governance arrangements through a self-organising conversational process. These objectives address an integral part of the ecological economics project and agenda as outlined by Norgaard (1999) and Costanza (1992).

This study has also discussed a new complex systems notion or metaphor of regions as co-evolving human ecologies that are shaped by contested planning narratives and deeper cultural stories. Regions are seen here as storied. Sustainability presents a new contested space for stakeholders, agencies and communities to re-story their regions and enterprises. Planning for sustainability, this study argues, requires new collaborative regional adaptive learning capabilities and new planning processes that enable the co-appraising, re-visioning and co-design of sustainable regional enterprises and new industry pathways. Assembling new ways of thinking, seeing and knowing and new, partnered regional stakeholder learning network governance structures, are also needed to better plan and enable sustainable enterprise projects at the regional scale.

Further, the possibility of ‘planning as catalyzing emergence and novelty’ as posed in this study, is contrasted with the existing understanding and practice of planning as applying controls and the assumptions underpinning this mechanical modernist notion that the development of enterprises, regions and cities can be regulated and are predominantly shaped by top-down expert led planning processes. Instead regions, cities and places have instead been typified as a type of self-organising, complex dynamic systems as opposed to malleable entities or simple systems. This has led this researcher to explore new notions and planning processes that can enhance a shared systems understanding of regions and how to co-evaluate, re-design sustainable enterprises.

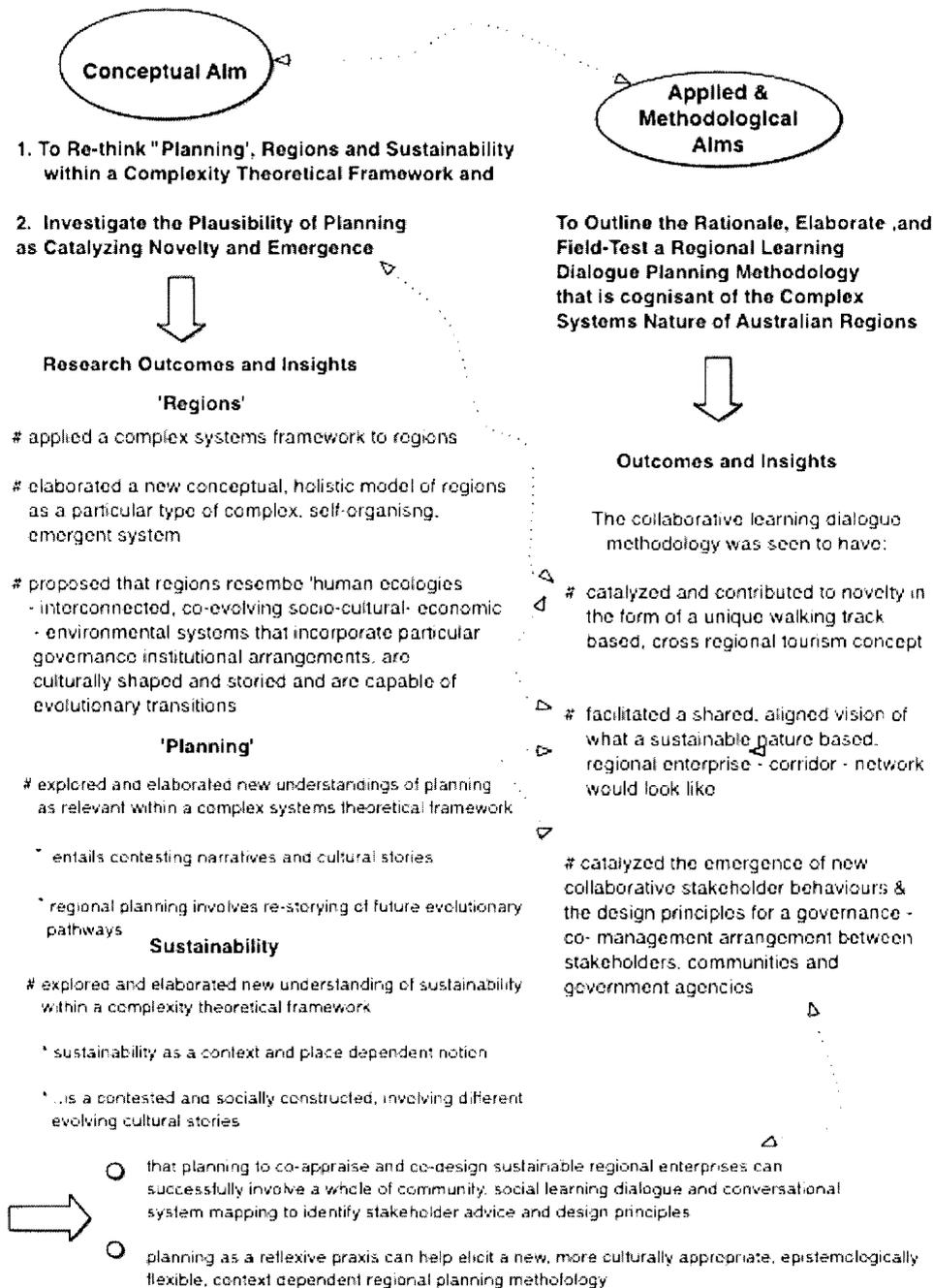
Planning methodologies for complexity at the regional and for sustainable regional enterprises, it is suggested, needs not to focus on controlling the evolution of a region or its enterprises and industries. Instead the view presented here is that a new planning focus be on facilitating an exploratory open dialogue providing information and feedback to nurture and link a self-organising stakeholder, community and agency network that can appraise and co-design new enterprise pathways. Regional tourism destinations are seen as self-organising cluster patterns of emergent enterprises. Planning to catalyze such sustainable regional enterprise or destinations need to focus on facilitating an on-going conversation that seeks to build connectivity, mutuality and coherence across such a network. Regional planning in this case is more about facilitating self-organising communities, stakeholders and

agencies and eliciting from them viable new pathways and sustainable enterprises for fitting into this particular regional socio-cultural, economic and environmental and global market context. The study undertook to facilitate such a dialogue to consider investing together in a new diversified ecotourism pathway. Regional planning is here more concerned with conversational processes that encourage reflexive systems thinking and foresight amongst regional stakeholders and communities asking each other about how a region could evolve along sustainable pathways. This approach seeks to facilitate collaboration, a creative and proactive regeneration as compared with the mechanistic thinking behind the modernist planning approach focusing on directing, controlling and managing a region as a simple system.

The research has also endeavoured to venture beyond the existing parameters of the modernist planning discourse. The research project has developed a reflexive learning process to assist regional planners to engage across other stakeholders' hermeneutical circles to encompass their different ways of knowing, seeing and thinking. It has sought to open up a new horizon of understanding beyond the modernist over-reliance on a science whose ways of knowing is objectivist, reductionist and privileges empiricist studies as the basis of decision-making and evaluating new enterprises. The study suggests a cultural evolution is needed around our understanding of the role of planning. It discusses what and how new knowledge such as complexity science and systems thinking, can help in this quest for a deeper, shared understanding of the dynamics way of how Australian regions are structured and can evolve. Further, this dissertation supports a re-think of the old notions of economic determinist notions of progress (Norgaard, 1994) and develops more epistemologically flexible and culturally diverse ways of seeing. It also develops knowledge processes about how to facilitate regional sustainability in Australian landscapes.

The conceptual and methodological aims and outcomes of the study discussed in this section are summarised below in Figure 11.1.

Figure 1.11 The Conceptual & Applied - Methodological Aims, Outcomes & Insights



The study also suggests that planning for regional sustainability needs to be focused on processes that help assemble social learning and build regional knowledge ecologies. Regional planning then can remain stuck in its top-down expert planner led paradigm or move towards collaborative sense-making and 'deep knowledge

management strategies that assemble local, place, stakeholder, ‘scientific’ agency knowledge and indigenous wisdom about the dynamics and social, economic and environmental capabilities of a region and what type and design of sustainable enterprise best fits at this time within that scope.

11.2 The Key Findings of the Study – How this Study has addressed the Research Questions

This study has demonstrated how a previously fragmented cohort of communities, government agencies, various stakeholders and landholders can collaboratively appraise and co-design a sustainable tourism enterprise along a cross-regional corridor.

Specifically, this study has addressed 3 inter-related research questions namely:

1. Can, and if so, how could a collaborative learning dialogue planning process catalyze and contribute to the emergence of novelty in the form of a unique walking track based, cross-regional tourism concept?
2. Is it possible, using the same planning process to facilitate a shared and aligned vision of what a sustainable nature based - ecotourism industry enterprise would look like in the New England and Coffs–Bellingen regions? Further, can this process elicit and capture the essence, design principles and stakeholder advice underpinning this vision.
3. Could the same planning process catalyze the emergence of new collaborative regional stakeholders behaviours and the design principles of a new governance arrangement as to how to manage the proposed new regional tourism initiative?

Regional tourism destinations in a global market, now need to be novel enterprises, develop unique selling positions to distinguish themselves and are best served by having a diverse set of regional attractions to ensure on-going and return business. Yet they also need to be flexible and adaptive in catering to new emergent market niches and the changing needs of tourism customers. This particular regional

ecotourism venture also needed to conform to a new social contract, to be ecologically and socially sensitive in design, portray and respect the unique Indigenous cultures and existing regional industry enterprise agendas most notably around super-fine wool production.

This planning project did, in this instance, catalyze emergence and novelty in the form of an explicit holistic notion of a regional tourism venture and an embryonic regional stakeholder partnership coalition across the Coffs and New England regions. The novelty arising out of these emergent conversations was evident in the re-designed project concept of a 'total regional destination' based around a network of walking tracks that featured diverse regional experiences, the stories of the cultural layering of regions, the history and evolution of the geology, people, ecosystems, towns, industries and places, the cuisine, produce and wines of the regions. This concept is seen as going beyond the present notion of landscape tourism as presently practiced in Tasmania, the walking track business models of New Zealand and what was originally envisaged as a long distance walking track project. This 'total regional destination' concept embraces a diversity of flexible regional experiences with the walking track network being a key attractor to this cross-regional corridor destination. This aligned vision, key principles and ethos has been adopted both by the commissioning community body, NEES and its coalition of funding Councils and key supporting agencies namely NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services and State Forests. Communities and stakeholders have been happy that their advice has been integrated into a set of design principles and a shared vision as outlined in the Waterfall Way Concept Plan. Representatives from the New England Aboriginal Lands Councils have indicated their warm approval that their communities have been invited into planning discussions at the design stage (personal communication); this is said to be a first, the usual practice being to consult only after a project concept and prototype development plans developed. A prototype memorandum of understanding was also reached with representatives of the Tablelands Aboriginal communities as to interim track development and handling of artefacts (see Appendix 2).

The emergence of new collaborative stakeholder behaviours from across the two coastal and New England tablelands regions, has been evident in the formation of a

seventeen-stakeholder group to successfully win substantial financial support from the Federal Government to develop the Waterfall Way cross-regional tourism destination and concept (reference). The emergence of new collaborative behaviours and an aligned vision can also be seen in the adoption of a Regional Charter, a set of guidelines for stakeholders, enterprises and communities to assist the co-management of the Waterfall Way enterprise as a sustainable enterprise. These new emergent relationships and embryonic aligned stakeholder network has also been demonstrated in the subsequent collaborative development and adoption of a Waterfall Way Brand concept and principles in 2007 that has entrenched this enterprise as a sustainable brand and enterprise. This researcher would argue that these flow-on effects demonstrate a greatly enhanced system condition of mutuality, connectivity, coherence and self-organisation amongst stakeholders and enterprises.

Evidence of the emergence of design principles of an embryonic governance model is seen in the Concept Plan and the subsequent refinement of these principles in a stakeholder community roundtable forum in May 2007 (Appendix 4). The Waterfall Way stakeholder community network now has an aligned novel vision and unique selling position, a brand and brand principles, regional charter and guidelines as well as an embryonic network governance structure that is soon to be formally established early in 2008. Business toolkits and marketing strategies are now being completed under the supervision of a cross regional Waterfall Way project management committee.

11.3 Regional Planning as Facilitating a Self-Organising, Open Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Process

An underpinning premise in this regional planning case study is that the success of a new regional tourism enterprise requires some degree of 'novelty' to attract a slice of the highly competitive global tourism market. The on-going development of such a regional enterprise needs collaborative support, buy-in and shared agreement to facilitate an aligned supply chain network of regional stakeholders and communities and supporting local government and state agencies.

A collaborative, multi-stakeholder dialogue planning process was envisaged as best suited to planning sustainable regional tourism projects where a new social, cultural and environmental contract is needed to allow the enterprise to be sustainably managed.

Further it was considered important in order to appraise and re-design a sustainable regional enterprise required a holistic knowledge of the particular regional system. Regional planning is then envisaged as being concerned more about better ways of accessing and synthesizing local, place, stakeholder, agency and Indigenous knowledge of country and what is locally sustainable.

In the language of the new complexity theoretical framework, this self-organising planning process sought to create a disturbance, a type of planning 'swarming' both within and outside of the present aristocratic social network decision-making structures and governance silo arrangements. This was a deliberate attempt to overcome the bureaucratic myopia and regional inertia with regard to initiating new regional enterprises. A key concern for the planning process was to avoid the institutional capture of established agencies and to develop a wider stakeholder and whole of community planning conversation to enable a deeper democratic appraisal, design and decision-making process.

The collaborative dialogue planning process facilitated a multi-stakeholder, learning dialogue. The planning process in this case study, has been shown to produce a shared, rich systems concept picture of a novel sustainable tourism enterprise; has ensured stakeholder buy-in, an aligned vision and an embryonic regional partnered coalition network capable of advancing the proposed re-designed regional ecotourism enterprise. This planning dialogue process surfaced and tested assumptions about the original long distance walking track proposal and enabled a re-designed, more embrative tourism enterprise concept with an enhanced possibility of on-going return business to the regions. Further research is needed to reconfigure planning processes able to generate adaptive capability amongst regional stakeholder networks. This piloted process highlights the possibility of this next step.

11.4 A New Focus for Regional Planning

One implication of this research is the new notion of regional planning encompassing a shift towards collaboratively evaluating new economic-ecological niche enterprises, supporting community, enterprise, agency stakeholders learning networks, assisting the co-managing of sustainable regional pathways and facilitating evolutionary regional transitions.

This study has pointed out that planning of regional tourism ventures can be part of this wider project to build sustainable regions. This study also raises the issue of planners needing to evaluate the present governance structures not just for capability to co-manage such partnered regional ventures sustainably but also for cross cultural community engagement. The study has argued the need for planners to be more concerned when addressing sustainable regional development to concern themselves with new ways to facilitate new collaborative enterprise networks, to develop regional adaptive capability and new, partnered network governance structures. Regional Planning in Australia has to evolve new culturally appropriate processes and sensitivity to the different Aboriginal communities, recognize the different Australian Aboriginal cultures and ways of knowing and how this adds to regional distinctiveness and diversity.

The study has posed a new notion of regional planning as facilitating collaborative conversational dialogue, that seek to support the possibility of evolutionary transitions of regional systems. This seeks to build on existing notions of regional planning as ameliorating and assisting regional restructuring. Further, this study points the way for regional planners to use new different, qualitative collaborative conversational systems mapping tools and hermeneutical interpretive frameworks to capture the essence of these conversations. A new role of regional planners can be to support the collaborative appraisal and co-designing of new proposed sustainable regional tourism ventures and sustainable industry pathways; going beyond consultation and seeking participation around pre-determined enterprise visions.

Regional planning as presented here, can focus more on facilitating multi-stakeholder discussions to help identify and understand social, environmental and social feedback, on helping stakeholders co-appraise and consider the appropriateness of social and economic investment and partnering potential regional pathways and evolutionary transitions. The study suggests reconfiguring regional planning as more concerned with facilitating evolutionary change and seeking a dynamic, shared stakeholder-community and agency notions of regional well-being than being single focused on crude measures of regional economic growth.

11.5 A New Mindset for Enabling Regional Sustainability as a New Cultural Re-Storying

The research and its particular notion of planning for sustainability at the regional scale, suggests sustainability as a new emergent cultural re-storying of regions and regional tourism enterprises. This notion is in contrast with the modernist project of 'progress', pre-existing notions of 'development' and setting pre-determined sustainable operational goals.

Sustainability is instead presented here as a collaborative social learning journey, an on-going socially constructed enterprise that explores local, context dependent solutions, new facilitated collaborative strategies and co-creative re-designs of regional enterprises. This view of sustainability entails developing new mindsets for planners as facilitating exploratory inquiries with local stakeholders and communities for place specific, context dependent solutions. This bottom-up 'co-explorer and co-learner' mentality differs from the top-down, expert led 'planner' mentality, characteristic of modernist planning approaches that can be seen as imposing top-down strategies on communities and stakeholders.

This study also suggests that planning processes for sustainability at the regional scale have the potential through a self-organising mechanism for regenerating regions and regional enterprises. Secondly, to also facilitate an enhanced stakeholder-community-agency capability for aligned adaptive responses, collaborative regional strategies and enhanced social connectedness.

This study also re-affirms the idea of partnered stakeholder enterprise networks to deliver sustainable development where partnerships co-manage sustainable futures by monitoring system feedback and developing new policy initiatives. The Waterfall Way enterprise shows the potential for the development of guidelines and subsequently co-management possibly involving flexible local measures including licences and or even seasonal caps on visitation and monitoring using place-based holistic indicators.

11.6 The Need for a New Regional Capability - 'Evolutionability'

The study raises the view that progress towards sustainable futures requires a cultural evolution to facilitate adaptable, smart, sustainable learning regions and regional enterprises. This cultural evolution concerns the way we think (holistically, complex systems), how we see the world (our mental models, interdependent self-organising systems whether markets-industry including tourism). The study has recommended planners engaged in projects and enterprises at the regional scale in Australia, access and synthesize different and deeper ways of knowing that encompass an eco-centric worldview beyond the current euro-centric perspective; to review how new ways of governance, employing for example multi-stakeholder learning networks.

'Evolutionability' has been used in this study (refer Chapter 4 section 4.6) to describe this capability for self-organising using transformative learning or conscious evolution in our way of thinking, seeing, knowing and being in the world. From this, comes the possibility for new multi-stakeholder network governance structures particularly with an enhanced adaptive capability to respond to economic and market changes, environmental impacts and social feedback effects or turbulence across the global market system. This notion of evolutionability embraces the call for developing a new ecological perception needed to better understand the dynamics of social-cultural-economic and ecological regional systems. This evolutionary capability poses a subtle shift outside the present thinking and emphasis of the adaptive management approaches to sustainability, on system resilience, adaptability and transformability or change in the structure of social ecological systems.

11.7 New Roles and Capabilities for Regional Planners.

The new roles and capabilities for planners of sustainable regional scale projects that emerged from this study include planners as *facilitators* of self-organizing, exploratory, open, exploratory regional stakeholder conversations and of emergent new understandings about their regions as complex systems. A second emergent notion of planners is as *catalyzers* of emergence and novelty through the building of partnered sustainable, regional stakeholder learning networks. A third emergent notion of planners is as *co-planners and co-designers* of intelligent regions and new sustainable ecological economic spatial forms.

These new roles for regional planners outlined above, suggest the need for training in systems thinking and in complexity science focusing around regional system dynamics. Secondly, in learning about facilitating multi-stakeholder, agency community and landholders planning conversations, the use of soft system mapping techniques and hermeneutical frameworks in capturing the essence, key advice and design principles of these conversations. Senior planners, potentially become learning facilitators and mentors supporting new planning methodologies for sustainable futures and social-economic and environmental 'forms' that are context and place shaped.

In this new planning approach, stakeholders become co-designers, enablers and partners in a regional conversational planning as collaborative learning process. Planners and stakeholders undertake co-appraisals, re-designing regional project concepts, learning together as to what will work where, are joint decision-makers and problem solvers as to what is a sustainable regional enterprise or strategy. Regional scale planning, with this approach becomes more about promoting and accessing a diversity of ways of knowing and not de-privileging one way of knowing over others; empowering communities and stakeholders incorporating them into new learning network governance structures. Planning in Australia would be much helped by cross-cultural learning programs to facilitate cross-cultural sensitivity, identify protocols to better dialogue with Aboriginal communities and access other ways of knowing 'country'.

Planning for sustainability and sustainable regional futures, it is argued here, can be better supported by planners being epistemologically reflexive, to become aware of the limitations of their own cultural framework and to develop more appropriate, problem contexted planning methodologies. The study findings also suggest regional planning for sustainability could be better served if planners are able to embrace the way different communities cultural ways of knowing i.e. be epistemologically pluralistic and flexible. This new regional planning process constitutes a step towards re-configuring regional planning as facilitating a “deep knowledge management” process about the changing dynamics of ‘country’ and its hosted living communities as against ‘surface knowledge management’ and discussed earlier in Chapter 5 (refer section 5.5).

11.8 A Conversational System Mapping Technique to Support Planning for Sustainable Regional Futures

The study has refined a conversational systems mapping process to capture local, place, stakeholder and agency knowledge, insights and design principles for a sustainable regional tourism venture using a hermeneutical framework. This planning process has been used to help make sense and to build a better shared understanding as to what constitutes a sustainable regional enterprise and potential pathway. This collaborative planning process has been deliberately designed to engage with the complexity of regional scale planning, the large number of stakeholders, communities and the different plurality of hermeneutical circles, worldviews and different agendas, cultural values and understanding of what is sustainability. The process aims to elicit place-regional or context dependent agreement about what constitutes a sustainable regional enterprise and is considered consistent and appropriate with the notion of regions as self-organising emergent systems.

11.9 Thesis Aims, Deliverables and Key Insights

This section recaps the thesis aims and the conceptual and applied methodological deliverables of this research study. It also summarises the key insights that have arisen from this dissertation documented as a learning journey.

The conceptual aims involved re-thinking the concepts 'planning', 'regions' and 'sustainability' within a complexity theoretical framework. The following new insights and conceptual understandings have emerged.

These include:

Regions

- The exploration and proposal of a new model of regions as complex, self-organising emergent, co-evolving systems, termed here **regional human ecologies** that are capable of evolutionary transitions towards sustainable futures.
- The reaffirmation of the **system conditions for emergence**, as articulated by Wheatley, Seel, and Shaw. It also affirmed that evolutionary regional transitions are contingent on enhancing mutuality, connectivity and coherence. The study proposes that **regional transitions** can be enabled through a self-organising dialogue that facilitates social learning across regional stakeholder, agency and community networks.

With regard to **Planning**, the following new insights and conceptual understandings have emerged:

- The viability of the concept of '**planning as catalyzing emergence and novelty**' at a cross-regional scale.
- The proposal that planning methodologies for sustainable regional enterprises and regions, besides being concerned with enhancing system resilience, need to **nurture 'evolutionability'**. This study suggested another system capability - the ability to harness transformational social learning through a cultural evolution and synergising of new knowledges. It is proposed that this needs to happen across the ways planners, stakeholders, agencies and citizens in different communities see, know, think and 'be in relationship with country'.

This capability involves regional stakeholders consciously co-designing type 3 self-sustaining, integrated human ecology systems.

Concerning **Sustainability and Sustainable Regional Development Processes**, the following insights included

- The importance for planners of **sustainability** as a place and context dependent notion, and of an **ongoing social learning process**. Further that progress towards sustainable futures involves **social constructed co-appraisal and co-design processes**.
- Another pathway to sustainable regional development **can entail bottom-up community and stakeholder instigated and self-organising local initiatives** that are **partnered and supported** by government agencies.
- The suggestion that **sustainable regional futures**, can involve collaborative, discursively engaged communities, stakeholders and agencies as opposed to only top-down managed approaches.

The following insights and new notions concerning **planning methodologies for sustainable regional enterprises** have been posited in this thesis:

- The viability of a **new regional collaborative learning dialogue planning methodology** that facilitates social learning, as captured in conversational system maps. This new planning methodology enabled communities, stakeholders and agencies to co-appraise and co-design a novel sustainable regional enterprise.
- The importance of planners being supported into new roles as social learning facilitators and catalyzers of self-organising dialogues. Secondly, the relevance for planners to gain a familiarity with how city-regions and places behave as complex dynamic systems and can possibly be better influenced by 'guidelines and considered adaptive and evolutionary responses rather than through additional controls.

- The notion that regional planning methodologies in these new times of uncertainty and climate change, need to be concerned with facilitating new collaborative, regional stakeholder, community and agency adaptive learning networks. This is to suggest a re-thinking of governance structures as enhanced democratic, social learning constructs.
- How a reflexive learning praxis both at a collective and individual planning level, can assist the development of new, context dependent, flexible collaborative planning methodologies.

11.10 A Concluding Remark

This research study is envisaged as step one in an on-going endeavour to develop and refine, an integrated praxis for a new regional planning approach to catalysing sustainable regional pathways. The first element has been to explore the viability and efficacy of a new conversational learning dialogue approach to help planners address the sustainability of regions and places as complex emergent systems. Other future priority research projects arising out of this study include the collaborative development of holistic regional sustainable 'system state' and feedback indicators for co-managing sustainable regional enterprises.

11.11 Epilogue: Where Can this Complexity Planning Framework be Applied?

There is a growing realisation that we face an epoch of global climate change. Emerging research indicates the growing likelihood of on-going disruption to regional weather patterns, sea level inundation of coastal lands and island states. This body of research also raises the possibility of the displacement and migration of Peoples across regions of the Pacific, Australasia and Africa. Regions across the Southern Hemisphere need the capability to co-plan, co-design, build and co-evolve new sustainable city-regions and industry pathways, in responding to this turbulence.

The study suggests a possible, new way of planning as a regional dialogue that builds a shared systems understanding of the evolutionary dynamics of regions in the face of social, environmental, cultural and economic disturbance. This integrated, bottom-up,

top-down collaborative approach to regional planning relies on facilitating a self-organising learning conversation and a ‘whole of community’, inclusive approach. This is in contrast to the predominant top-down, expert led, narrow planning conversations that characterise typical modernist planning methodologies.

In the new times ahead, everyone and every community can be a co-planner contributing their insights, ingenuity, local knowledge, ideas, and design principles to a collective social learning about what a sustainable city region needs to look like; there are few experts to guide or rely on in the new, uncertain times ahead. The complexity involved in re-thinking and co-designing new regional settlement patterns, sustainable building designs and siting, decentralized energy and water capturing etc, is huge. New collaborative planning processes are needed that can firstly, elicit the creativity of communities and catalyze novel solutions, adapted to different particular, regional landscapes. Further, new inclusive processes are needed that can facilitate the emergence of new multi-stakeholder community based governance structures that can learn how to adapt and evolve into the new times. To not explore these alternative collaborative approaches means we are condemned to the old ways of doing things that can marginalise communities, tend to privilege the existing order and may prove to be inadequate to the new task.

The regional community based, NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS)⁵ has initiated such a collaborative learning partnership with regional communities in the face of an increasingly harsher incidence of bushfires as an expected drier and hotter climate impacts the NSW east coast of Australia. This RFS fire emergency service is looking to capture the experiences and learning from a multitude of stakeholders and communities in devising new strategies and responses for these new times ahead. Regional communities and stakeholders need to decide and respond together or as Homer-Dixon (2005) calls ‘becoming drivers rather than passengers’ in responding to the array of environmental, economic and social stressors.

This study argues the need for more holistic systems perspectives and planning practices that incorporate an ecological view of interconnected social, economic and

⁵ This researcher has been involved in a leadership process mentoring role for several years with the RFS in NSW

environmental systems from the place to the regional scale. Further that planners need to facilitate a social learning dialogue around how regional enterprises fit into this regional human ecology. The study outlines a collaborative learning dialogue planning process for the collaborative appraisal and design (co-design) of a sustainable regional tourism enterprise but this does not mean that this complexity framed planning process is limited just to this type of application. The study cites another instance where a self-organising conversational and mapping process was used to elicit the key design principles for a transition to a sustainable Northern Rivers region in NSW. This researcher views this collaborative learning dialogue could equally be applied to the co-design of sustainable built environments at the place and city – regional landscape scale. It is the hope of this researcher to undertake such a sustainable place-making project in the future using this process.

There is a need for holistic systems planning and co-designing sustainable places - regions. Hopefully this study will help contribute to the emergence of a new type of holistic planner amongst landscape architects, architects and, community place and regional planners.

Another potential future focus for this researcher is developing new collaborative planning processes that are explicitly designed for edge of chaos regional systems situations such as in post-disaster, recovery planning. Climate change induced disasters and displacements of peoples, represent both huge challenges to adapt, rebuild and co-design new sustainable communities and regions. These situations however, represent opportunities for catalyzing adaptive learning networks around the collaborative redesign of sustainable places and city-regional corridors.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Extracts from Waterfall Way Concept Plan

Waterfall Way Walking Track Concept Study

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Re-Thinking Planning as Catalyzing Emergence and Novelty Michael O'Loughlin
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1.1 Background

During 2002 the New England Ecotourism Society (NEES) canvassed the idea of building a walking track along the Waterfall Way, starting somewhere near Walcha and finishing at Coffs Harbour. A series of awareness raising public exhibitions were then held. With local support, Jesse Brampton (a track consultant involved in the development of the Bibbulmun Track in Western Australia) was invited to attend a public seminar in Armidale in August 2002, along with affected Councils, stakeholders and government agencies. Significant local support for the proposed Waterfall Way Walking Track was expressed here and agreement was reached on the need to undertake a Feasibility Study. Subsequent discussions with the Director General of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), identified the need for an initiating Concept Study to define the nature of the proposed Waterfall Way Walking Track.

This Concept Study presents a synthesis of community-derived ideas in relation to the nature and organisation of a major ecotourism initiative for Northern NSW: the Waterfall Way Walking Track (“The Track”). This initiative has already realized support from Coffs Harbour City Council, Walcha Council, Armidale-Dumaresq Council, Bellingen Shire Council, NPWS and Tourism NSW. These organisations have committed funds and in-kind support to undertake both this Concept Study and a subsequent detailed Feasibility Study, both of which will be undertaken by the Centre for Ecological Economics and Water Policy Research (CEEWPR) at the University of New England.

1.2 Aims of the Concept Study

Developing a shared vision across a wide group of interested stakeholders about the nature of, and prospective uses for, the Track is one of the most critical parts of the overall integrated study. This Concept Study is intended to address questions such as:

1. Is the Track to be a single uniform engineered facility or should it be more a ‘managed coalition of related walking experiences around a defined geographical domain’?
2. Who are the prospective user groups for which the Track should be designed?
3. Will the Track be designed to appeal to specific target user groups or to a less well-defined and more diverse set of users?
4. Along those lines, will the Track become a locus for multiple uses or should it be designed to accommodate a select number of explicitly identified uses?
5. If the Track is designed to accommodate multiple uses, should the Track managers implement a staged and strategic focus on specific uses in sequence through which to build its identity over time?
6. What defining characteristics should become key components of the Track’s emergent identity (to distinguish it from other tracks in Australia and overseas)?
7. What general recommendations would the ‘concept’ of the Track have for its governance/administration?

8. Should the Track's identity reflect more a geophysical/engineered or a community sustainable 'place management' development perspective?

The complete resolution of all these questions will merge into the ensuing formal Feasibility Study, which is the second phase of this study. However, all elements of the Feasibility Study are entirely contingent on the clear preliminary articulation of a shared concept for the Track, which is the intent of this report. Defining the 'character' of the Track is both difficult and critical. The precise definition of a formal concept for the Track is also largely emergent, or will change with time as its identity is refined and confirmed by use and experience.

However, the key aim of this Concept Study is to articulate a 'catalytic' or 'starting' concept that will shape all subsequent progress in this regard. It is a critical stage in the evolution of this initiative.

1.3 Approach and Methodology

For the purposes of this Concept Study, the CEEWPR has applied the same approach that it has recently used to previously elicit a statement of 'community character' (as the foundation for formal regional strategic planning) from five different localities comprising the Rural Lands areas of Coffs Harbour. That approach was also used for the same purpose across five communities comprising the Upper Hunter Region of NSW. Both applications were templated by Planning NSW as best practice in its Plan First documentation in 2001.

In summary, the approach involves a series of specific locality/stakeholder group workshops facilitated via a particular 'interactive learning-orientated mapping approach' called mudmapping¹. The approach has been applied in this case to facilitate the generation of a 'shared vision' for the Track that embeds purposefully reflective understandings about the character of the initiative. Naturally, we did not anticipate a singularly unanimous 'shared vision'. However, we have attempted to articulate those elements of a collective vision that are common across the communities consulted and those other elements that might be more specific to certain groups or localities. Mudmapping was used to proactively coordinate the emergence and documentation of stakeholder perceptions in relation to the Track via carefully managed group interactive dialogue. The product of these workshops, as documented later in this report, reflects the learning and consequent improved understanding that has taken place as a result of the process. The most important deliverables include a catalytic community-wide awareness of the Track initiative with as large a community of interested stakeholders as will be possible within the limitations of the timeframe for the Concept Study programme. The other main deliverable is a carefully defined character or Concept Statement that can then be applied to all subsequent stages of the Feasibility Study. A further outcome has been the identification of key concerns and issues that affect the viability and progression of the proposed Track that need to be addressed in the ensuing Feasibility Study.

Mudmapping has been used to progress the evolution of a community developed and owned vision of the Track, and has not been used to coerce the acceptance of any specific group's perceptions relating to the Track. This is a critical distinction and attribute of the process we have used. This implies that we entered the process with no

real firm ideas of our own to 'sell' on behalf of the New England Ecotourism Society (NEES), as the initiator of this work. Rather, we have managed the generation of an 'identity' for the Track through the process. We did not know what the specifics of that 'identity' would be until we went through the process. At the same time, that same community involved in this process will carry a strong sense of 'ownership' for the ensuing Concept Statement and for the Track initiative as a community involved development. Through this process the communities, stakeholders and agencies concerned will have also developed a deeper, holistic understanding of what is involved in birthing this Track 'identity', its supporting services, design requirements and many of the key management issues. Note that 'Mudmapping' is a specific approach to facilitated group learning developed by a group led by Dr Roderic Gill who have worked both in conjunction with the CEEWPR and independently on related applications over the past ten years.

This Concept Study was undertaken through a series of steps:

- Facilitation of preliminary dialogue and concept mapping with government agency and other 'empowered' groups who had already identified with the initiative and/or have the relevant approval authority.
- On-going feedback sessions with an emergent 'Core Stakeholder Group' who will subsequently oversee progress in relation to the Feasibility Study (to include all financial contributors to the Feasibility Study). This exploratory dialogue was largely orientated to that Group's identification of 'first round' stakeholder groupings to be involved in the subsequent mudmapping workshops.
- First round of community mudmapping workshops were to articulate what the Track initiative might mean to the different stakeholder groups involved – e.g. What Sort of Track? These workshops facilitated the articulation of a community – stakeholder concept for the Track.
- Compilation and conflation of the first round mudmaps to articulate and detail the Track Concept and develop this Concept Plan Report.
- Subsequent discussions will be held to clarify and deepen a holistic understanding of the emergent Track Concept in close cooperation with the Core Stakeholder Group.

Following this Concept Study, the 'results' will underpin a subsequent detailed Feasibility Study. Here, the CEEWPR will distribute the Conflated mudmap to the same community groups involved in the first round meetings: these meetings will involve the development of a second set of mudmaps to articulate how NEES could, or should, proceed towards the realisation of the collective vision for the Track identified through the first round workshops. These workshops will articulate how the communities and key stakeholders think that its concept for the Track might be realized in terms of actions and structures. Note that there has been an initial exploration of this theme with the Walcha Zone 1 Winterbourne-Cheyenne Landholders Group, which is detailed in Part 3 of this Report.

The CEEWPR will undertake a concentrated process of research and further interactivity with stakeholders to address the concerns raised by agencies and community stakeholder groups, as outlined in Part 2 and 3 of this report.

1.4 Identified Stakeholders

The identified Core Stakeholder Reference Group includes the supporting Councils and Agencies namely Armidale-Dumaresq Council, Coffs Harbour Council, Walcha Council, Bellingen Shire Council, NPWS, NSW State Tourism. These entities have financially underpinned this Concept Development and the ensuing Feasibility Study.

This Core Stakeholders Group also includes the various communities and landholders within this corridor. State Forests of NSW, another significant stakeholder has informally engaged in dialogue around the notion of the Track. Within this same expanding Core Group are the different tourism groups, Armidale Regional Tourism (ART), Coffs Tourism, Bellingen Tourism and their various stakeholders, as well as the Regional Tourism Organisations. Other potential partners include the related tourism and ecotourism businesses, tourism accommodation, farm stays, service providers and new business enterprises. The Northern Tablelands Regional Aboriginal Lands Council, Local Lands Councils, Nambucca and Walcha Lands Councils, the Elders groups and Aboriginal Communities are also significant stakeholders especially with regard to track route planning, design, development and policy. A further group of potential stakeholders includes those government agencies that will have an important role to play in the potential development and management of the Track, including the Department of Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources (the former DLWC) and the Environment Protection Authority. Other stakeholder groups will no doubt emerge as the Feasibility Study proceeds.

1.5 A New Emergent Concept for the Waterfall Way Walking Track

A number of shared elements and themes about the character and identity of the proposed Track, have emerged out of this process of conversations, systematic dialogue and mudmapping sessions with the key stakeholders, communities and agencies. These address the aims of the Concept Study and our initial questions (in Section 1.2), which were designed to help clarify a shared vision for the Track;

1. The Track is viewed as a 'managed coalition of related walking experiences through the defined geographical domain' or corridor of the Waterfall Way. It is perceived as unfeasible to develop a single engineered, continuous, long distance track entity at this stage, due to the many issues that are at this stage unresolved.
2. The prospective set of user groups includes those seeking recreational walking opportunities (across all walking capabilities), those seeking ecotourism, nature based, cultural, adventure and wilderness experiences.
3. Subsequently, it has been proposed that the Track should be designed to cater for a wide cross-section and diverse set of walkers/users.
4. The Track is seen as a locus for multiple uses. Stakeholders and communities were keen that some track sections or options that include canoeing, rafting and the opportunity to join up with other activities like bike riding and horse riding trails are included. The perception is, that the Track is also an opportunity to promote a wide range of unique regional experiences, including local products, cuisine, the wines, art

and crafts and the diversity of accommodation opportunities.

5. If the Track is designed to accommodate multiple uses, should the Track managers implement a staged and strategic focus on specific uses in sequence through which to build its identity over time? This question is unanswered at this stage.

6. The new emergent concept or identity of the Track as ‘an evolving network of tracks within the Waterfall Way corridor’, suggests that some of this network can be birthed quickly, given that many of these tracks already exist. Over time this new identity of a network of track and regional experiences could possibly be realized through an integrated marketing strategy. But this assumes there is sufficient off-track infrastructure, showcase products, initial, viable demand and growing market niches, supporting funding to revitalize, develop and connect existing and new track sections with enough goodwill from key agencies to partner these tracks, to make this concept viable.

7. The distinguishing characteristics of this Track’s emergent identity from other tracks in Australia and overseas, is the notion of an evolving network of diverse world class walks and accompanying regional experiences; that it is a community and stakeholder supported and driven initiative, sustainably and holistically managed and it is a strategy for a cross-regional sustainable development aimed at revitalizing rural communities and places.

8. What general recommendations would the ‘concept’ of the track have for its governance/administration? So far, a preference for a centrally and locally managed governance structure that is bottom up, driven by the communities and stakeholders and supported by state and local agencies. There has been tacit acceptance of the notion of zone management (6 zones have been considered to date) although the final zone boundaries are expected to evolve over time. There has been some discussion and consideration of a place management governance model, along the lines of the Sydney Harbour, Place Management model.

Part 2 of this Concept Plan Report articulates the community-stakeholder concept of the Track that has emerged from the facilitated systematic discussions with the stakeholder groups, mentioned above. This new notion views - ‘the Waterfall Way Walking Tracks as an evolving network of diverse walking tracks and experiences along an east-west corridor offering recreational opportunities and is both a platform and brand identity for marketing regional experiences and various nature based, ecotourism, cultural, and adventure products’.

End of Extract.

Appendix 2

Walking Track Development - Cultural Protocols

Agreement – Interim Styx River Walking Track Route

The parties agree to mark an interim walking track route that respects and takes into account culturally sensitive areas of importance to the Aboriginal Traditional Owners.

The parties agree to consult and negotiate over any culturally sensitive areas to develop guidelines and protocols and to be guided by stakeholders as to a culturally and environmentally sensitive walking track route.

There will be no construction or forming of a walking track route until full consideration has been undertaken with the Traditional Owners, Lands Councils, State Forests, local landholders and other stakeholders concerned such as local communities and councils.

Interim guidelines need to be developed based on the precautionary principle regarding the safe storage of cultural materials, preservation of places and the sustainable management of the track route and its surroundings.

‘We, the undersigned, are members of the Aboriginal community who have been approached by the New England Ecotourism Society for advice and direction in creating a culturally sensitive walking track along the route of the Styx River from Forest Headquarters to Little Styx River cabins.

We acknowledge that we are not speaking on behalf of all the members of the Aboriginal community.

However, for the purpose of this project only, and on behalf of those people we can represent, we agree to the attached Agreement – Interim Styx River Walking Track Route.

We will extend the conversations around the project so that agreement is reached with representatives of all affected People.’

Note: This agreement arose out of discussions between NEES and stakeholders at the Yarandoo Ecolodge and during subsequent negotiations and site visits in 2004..

It was agreed that a set of cultural protocols be subsequently developed as to the handling of cultural artefacts and sensitive places. This agreement represents the underlying principles to guide track route design and complements the memorandum of agreements between NEES and National Parks and Wildlife services and State Forests of NSW.

Appendix 3

The Waterfall Way Regional Charter

Our Intention:

Build a world class, sustainable regional tourism destination with a diversity of unique regional experiences by driving, walking, riding, biking, and helicopter rides using the Waterfall Way Track network as a platform

Develop a coalition of partnered enterprises, our different local communities, landholders, councils, agencies and Aboriginal custodian peoples

Manage for the future while supporting our rural communities now

Outcomes:

- Generate additional local jobs and skills especially to retain the young people of the region
- Create new enterprises and opportunities including eco-guiding, Indigenous tourism and continuously improving regional tourism experiences / products
- Partner conservation projects
- Revitalise our regional and communities assets and infrastructure including existing tracks
- Inform our understanding of sustainability and how to plan and manage enterprises in harmony with our landscapes, places and peoples' aspirations
- Work towards a carbon neutral regional destination through a stewardship program to manage carbon offsets locally

Core Principles and Values:

- Foster sustainable development through a balance between regional economic development and the need to preserve the regional fabric, the local ecologies, the communities' sense of place, our stories, social values, cultures and the peace and solitude of our landscapes
- Respect and build custodian values for the places and peoples of the corridor
- Provide opportunities for learning for school, tertiary students, visitors and locals to get to know their country and to connect to the deepness of our country; to use our 'tracks' as a classroom

- continuously engage local stakeholders, listen to the regional and local agenda, address stakeholders concerns and issues and help communities to drive Waterfall Way projects and new experiences
- sustainably manage the additional visitation and the environmental, social and cultural impacts both centrally and locally; as partners monitor together and flexibly respond to protect and help places to recover
- attract a diversity of new visitors, encourage longer stays and regular returns in addition to the existing visitor streams while promoting our tourism as a cultural exchange
- help visitors to develop their own regional experience and flexible itineraries
- work together with each enterprise, zone and place community promoting each other as a part of the Waterfall Way
- recognize different ways of engaging communities, to follow agreed cultural protocols and to ensure compliance with memorandums of understanding with agencies, landholders and communities.

Unique Selling Position:

Diversity of regional experiences, unique landscapes, world heritage areas and ecosystems ranging from coastal beachfronts, hinterland sub-tropical rainforests to sub-alpine tablelands and wild rivers gorge country

Distinct stories, places and peoples of this nationally recognised cross-regional corridor

Ability to self-organise a flexible itinerary and opportunities for longer stays and return visits to experience other places in the corridor

Extensive signposting, integrated e- visitor information and local contacts to guide visitors

Action Plan:

1. Initiate an ongoing refining of the regional charter; distribute draft to all stakeholders and make available on a website for review and amendment by stakeholders.
2. Request NEES to initiate 2 new parallel projects

‘investigate and advise on establishing a Waterfall Way Governance Body, representative of all stakeholders, agencies, communities and

councils to address issues and develop policy as well as a secretariat group to promote regional experiences, product and to co-manage the brand and marketing plan

and to

promote codes of behaviours and policies for the environment, customer service, partnering stakeholders and cultural protocols and advise on a self-assessing and peer-reviewed, graded compliance Waterfall Way.

Appendix 4

Waterfall Way Governance Structure Extract from Waterfall Brand Management Report July 2007

Note that the stakeholder governance structure model outlined below was modified from an earlier draft proposal and finalised at a stakeholder- community representatives meeting in May 2007.

Report

Waterfall Way Brand Management and Stakeholder Governance Arrangements Dundarrabin Brand Design and Management Workshop May 1-2 2007

1. Stakeholders at the workshop recommended a simplified brand management and governance arrangement as set out below. They envisaged a single stakeholder group being formed to own and manage the Brand as either an unincorporated body or co-operative open to all stakeholders across the regional corridor. This group would also act as a cross-regional co-ordinating body to address community and stakeholder concerns and issues.

It was felt that having only one management – governance body would make it easier for operators, stakeholders including community and other groups to join and co-manage the Waterfall Way enterprise. This Waterfall Way body would have an elected committee of management and community - stakeholder working groups would need to be formed to address specific issues around brand and sustainable management.

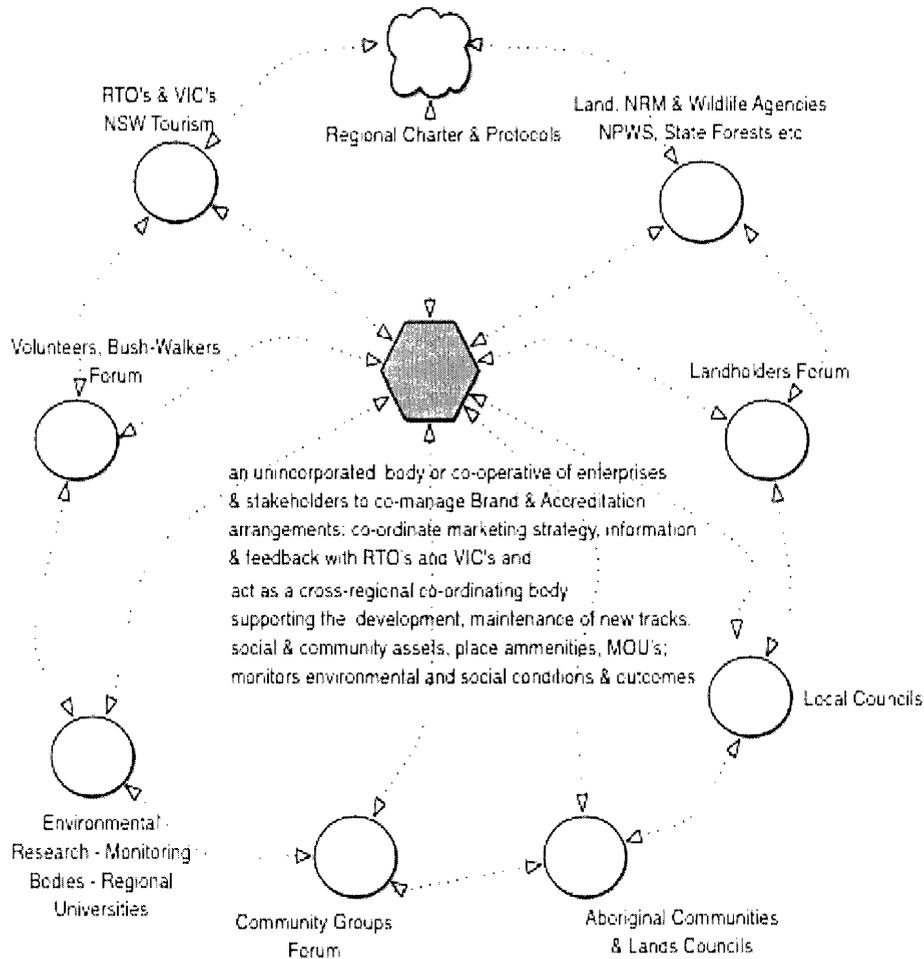
The issue of stewardship and ensuring that environmental and cultural custodian values being upheld, was considered best addressed by having the Waterfall Way body include a number of ‘outside stewards’ on the executive. These particular executive members would explicitly oversee adherence to the regional charter, any MOU’s and the foundational principles and ethos of environmental conservation and cultural respect.

Stakeholders felt that it was essential to appoint a full-time brand manager to specifically address these functions and that where possible working parties be compensated and recognised for their work and valuable contributions.

2. Brand accreditation arrangements, it was felt, while necessary and important, needed to be established, once this co-ordinating stakeholder body was formed and the brand was initially established. Decisions about whether there is to be a Waterfall Way accreditation system or to use another established accreditation system, the particular grading levels and peer review processes, could also be best decided then.

Waterfall Way - Envisioned Multi-Stakeholder Governance and Brand Arrangements

- The purpose of this governance structure is to
- # ensure the different stakeholder, local government & agencies issues are addressed,
 - # the brand is co-managed in accordance with the regional charter and accreditation arrangements decided on
 - # the environmental & cultural landscapes & nature-based & ecotourism experiences are sustainably managed in accordance with the wishes of the communities, stakeholders & agencies.



The governance and brand management draft arrangements are based on the findings in the Waterfall Track Network Feasibility Study, on-going discussions with NEES and the Dundurriban stakeholder workshop which recommended that the governance structure needs to be re-designed to a simpler, more workable form

Michael O'Loughlin May 14th 2007 CEEWFR - UNE

3. The key functions needed to be addressed by the Brand Management – Governance arrangements included;

1. Governance issues – addressing community and stakeholder issues, policy and practices to adhere with regional charter principles, enable sustainable management etc and MOU's with agencies, local government councils and Aboriginal Lands Councils for example.
2. Resource Funding - for marketing, development and maintenance of social assets and any track maintenance.
3. Brand Management and accreditation - including promotion and ensuring adequate infrastructure including signage and social assets. Building and improving the capability of local people in marketing and developing new enterprises and jobs especially for kids, was identified as important.

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