CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the relative importance of place-based communities, represented by established neighbourhoods in Sydney, Australia's largest city, by comparison with other types of communities not limited by geography. It also explores the salience of factors for generating a sense of belonging to place and impacts on human wellbeing. In effect, it is an examination and elaboration of Melvin Webber's (1963) "community without propinquity" (CWP) hypothesis as it relates to contemporary Australia. Four decades ago, this prominent North American planner-social scientist challenged notions about society by predicting that a condition characterised by CWP was emerging (Webber 1963). By this he meant that close social ties between individuals in the places where they lived would be superseded in relevance by people's involvement in potentially overlapping interest-based communities not necessarily located nearby. He argued that the move towards increasing levels of interaction in such communities must be recognised and the phenomenon incorporated in future urban planning. Whilst the contribution made by Webber to the community debate has been acknowledged, the topic of CWP itself has received limited attention in the intervening years.

Webber (1963) recognised that communities included a range of non-place cultures and activities and argued that involvement in CWPs would be encouraged, in part, by transformations in technology. In his view, improved methods of transportation and communication would expand people's activity space, in effect making redundant restrictions on social interaction imposed by geography. At the time Webber promulgated this idea, he recognised that many males in professional groups in North American cities enjoyed such levels of interaction (Webber 1963, 1964b, 1968). His view was that these patterns of behaviour would eventually extend to other groups, partly because expanded educational opportunities, not restricted by cultural or social background, would lead to more egalitarian and affluent societies, with increased leisure time for individuals. These factors would facilitate and encourage interaction with more distant social contacts.

It is not only appropriate but also essential that an investigation of CWP occur at this time. Indeed, the world's foremost geographer-planner Peter Hall has argued, in an Australian context, that it is time to revisit and re-evaluate Webber's work (Hall 1997). The reality is that some elements that Webber identified as catalysts for CWPs, together with the impacts

of globalisation and economic restructuring, are changing the nature of Australian society and the way people relate to the places where they live.

1.1   Type of study

The locus of the thesis is within the broad field of human geography in that it addresses the spatial organisation of society and the relationships between people and their environment (Johnston, Gregory & Smith 1994). Because the topic tackles many contemporary issues, it has a somewhat multi-disciplinary relevance, embracing other branches of geography as well as the social sciences generally. However, boundaries of investigation have been defined to make the project achievable. The temptation to incorporate many concepts currently being debated in relation to "community" has been generally resisted other than to acknowledge, where appropriate, their existence and the fact that they are beyond the scope of this research project.

The study is unique in its investigation of the significance of place-based communities in the lives of contemporary Australian urban dwellers. It is not a traditional community, neighbourhood or locality study as such in that is has not attempted to provide an in-depth account of how residents have mixed with local people or participated in local affairs. Similarly, it does not probe in detail residents' views about their local area. This more "traditional" approach to community studies has mostly been carried out under the auspices of sociology or anthropology, to a limited extent in Australia but also in other developed countries such as Britain and the United States (Bryson & Winter 1999).

Rather, this thesis is a piece of quantitative social science research that studies people's activities, close social ties, interactions and associations outside the nuclear household. This is appropriate because it enables the measurable concepts highlighted by Weber to be focused upon and provides some long-neglected baseline data currently missing with respect to an Australian metropolitan context. Not only are connections within the places where people live taken into account but also activities within other locations and communities of interest, not necessarily spatially defined. The intent is to see if place-based communities have been relegated to roles of comparative unimportance or even irrelevance, dominated by involvements elsewhere, with other activities facilitated by greater mobility with respect to both time and space.

1.2   Scope of the study

Despite the amount of literature that has emanated from within Australia but more particularly from Britain and the United States, current knowledge and understanding of the ways in which people function within communities is still relatively limited. This is especially so for Australian communities where only limited research that focuses on urban communities has been carried out. Perhaps this is not surprising given the difficulties associated with conducting investigative field work in metropolitan areas, home to over 70% of the Australian population. In addition, research into communities tended to go out of favour during the period from the mid 1970s until it regained currency in the 1990s. Yet the need for research, especially of a verifiable and repeatable nature, into all aspects of community living has long been recognised and is no less important than at the time of Webber's initial CWP proposition.

This thesis supports the view that, within the Australian urban context, "community" still conjures up images of neighbourhood for geographers, social scientists, planners, politicians, and the general public (Fagan & Webber 1999; Horvath & Tait 1986). For this reason, the term "neighbourhood" is used synonymously throughout this thesis to refer to place-based communities. Residents of neighbourhoods are not limited, of course, in their close social ties to interaction only with those who live nearby. In fact, many of their day-to-day activities are dependent on accessing resources that are outside the local setting (Fischer & Jackson 1977).

Communities consist of kinship, friendship, workplace, interest and ethnic groups, as well as neighbourhood connections, some or all of which may concurrently overlap to varying degrees. As Hampton (2002) pointed out, the combination of an individual's interactions within each different community forms their social network and provides them with aid, support, social control and links to multiple milieux. Within different groups, people use a range of methods for keeping in touch, such as face-to-face meetings, telephone (land and mobile phones, including voice and text messaging), postal mail, electronic mail (emails) and facsimiles. Use of the internet for emailing and also for chat room and discussion group interactions has encouraged the more recent emergence of "virtual communities", a term coined to describe non-place cyberspace meetings of people with common interests, not constrained by spatial or temporal limitations (Rheingold 1994).

Looking for community in one setting at one time (whether in neighbourhoods, in dispersed geographic locations or in cyberspace) is inappropriate for determining the relative extent to which people are involved in communities with or without propinquity. Therefore, the approach taken by this project has been to seek out information about close social ties and activities that occur within the whole gamut of community types. This permits comparison of levels of interaction within different communities and consideration of impacts upon wellbeing when juxtaposed against the innate need for a sense of belonging. At the same time, the thesis explores the extent to which identification and place attachment occur within neighbourhoods.

1.3   Justification for the study

Interest in studies focusing on urban communities has fluctuated, particularly over the past half century, in spite of repeated appeals for empirically based research of this type. In more recent times, recognition of a desperate need for information about community life that is verifiable and repeatable is surfacing both overseas (Hall 1997) and in Australia (Bryson & Winter 1999; Gibson & Cameron 2001). The need for studies such as this one is demonstrated in a general introductory way in this section, firstly looking at a global scene and then focusing on the local Australian scene within the framework of international work.

The global context

Over half a century ago, Hawley (1950) observed that more exploratory research was required into the structure of community and the relevance of individual participation. Whilst community structures exist independently, withdrawal of or participation by individuals had the potential to influence a community's essential functions and interrelations in ways that were not understood. By the mid 1960s, the sociological understanding of community was considered by many to be still at a fairly primitive level, in part due to the recognised complexity of community interrelationships (Schnore 1967). Schnore reiterated Hawley's (1950) earlier call for analysis of the structure of community, identifying this as an important area for research.

Pahl (1968a) stated that empirical data on patterns of social relationships and activities within identified localities were urgently needed, particularly the study of personal

networks. Pahl (1968a) supported Webber's (1963) notion of impending change by flagging the possible emergence of a new milieu as a result of the juxtaposition of different lifestyles within a locality, caused by variations in access to and use of computer technology.

In the early 1970s, Bell and Newby (1971) described social networks as increasingly becoming less locality-bound, less close-knit, and more complex. They believed that 'detailed and painstaking empirical work' was required to discover how these changes were impacting upon communities (Bell & Newby 1971: 53). They identified the need to distinguish between the structural characteristics of networks and their content. By the end of the 1970s, continuing urbanisation in an increasingly industrialised society was often regarded as largely responsible for loss of the local neighbourhood community. However, some landmark empirical studies, such as those by Foley (1952), Gans (1962a), Kasarda and Janowitz (1974) and Wellman and Leighton (1979), documented different outcomes that suggested the persistence of local community within urban society. The methods used by these researchers have provided valuable background to the present study.

Hunter (1975) questioned the seeming reluctance of researchers to examine this apparent loss of community. He was especially critical of the fact that analyses were often not focused on community itself and also that longitudinal studies which explored the dynamics of community over time were not available. Hunter suggested that decline in use of local facilities and levels of informal neighbouring, together with a weakening of sense of community, could be causally interrelated with loss of community. He replicated Foley's (1952) neighbourhood research to test community dynamics and the hypothesised loss of community. Hunter's (1975) research findings rejected the notion of a decline in the *importance* of community as an area of primary social interaction and suggested there may have even been some slight increase. The notion of a decline in the *sense* of community was even more strongly rejected in spite of some downturn in the use of local facilities.

In the late 1980s, locality studies emerged (Cooke 1989b). Instead of focusing on a social system remote from the wider society, this type of study placed localities or neighbourhoods within their wider regional, national and international contexts, an approach crucial to the analysis of contemporary communities.

Towards the end of the 1990s, Hall (1997), an eminent British geographer-planner with extensive experience both in the USA and Western Europe, described the preceding half-century as a period of unprecedented urban diffusion brought about largely by massive changes in transportation, communication and technology. He reflected on speculation from academic and entrepreneurial sources about the ability of future information "superhighways" to contribute to the loss of significance of traditional locations such as suburban neighbourhoods. Hall looked back on Webber's pronouncements regarding CWP and argued that reassessment of potential ramifications of the 'new informational world' was timely, not only in the context of British communities but for Australian ones as well (1997: 89). He is one of many who have recognised the need for such research in an Australian setting, albeit justified for different reasons, as exemplified below.

Australia in the international context

In the mid 1970s, Dalton and Dalton (1975) examined the sociological definition of "community" and its relevance to Australia. At that time, they judged that the term had reached a high level of use and a low level of meaning: this was a criticism repeated a quarter of a century later by Gibson & Cameron (2001). Dalton and Dalton (1975) observed that any attempt to clarify community was thwarted in part by lack of empirical research, with too few of the theories relating to community having been tested through fieldwork. Arguments used by Dalton and Dalton advanced the view that "traditional" communities were unlikely to occur in urban Australia. This was largely due to the mobility of people, in terms of class and status as well as in a geographical sense, which was seen as working against the formation of interlocking bonds other than as communal relationships. These academics identified the description of patterns of existing communal relationships as the valid basis for a research program. Awareness gained from such research could be used to focus community development programs towards strengthening such relationships. In time, this fostering would encourage, in their view, preparedness for leadership, greater autonomy, and acceptance of more responsibility for future direction at the local level. Similar intentions for encouraging self-sufficiency and commitment within local communities are used to support contemporary "community" programs in Australia, developed, for example, by governments (such as Marrickville Council's *Belonging* program(2002a; 2002b)) and philanthropic organisations – the Williamson Community Leadership Program (RMIT 2001) – although empirical data on which to base assumptions remains elusive.

Also on the need for additional research, although with different emphases, Pacione (1984) stressed the importance of understanding the size of the perceived home range of individuals in terms of both area and population, not least because of implications for the economics of service provision. He called for empirical studies to inform the extent to which local areas were perceived as meaningful entities, something which is relevant in the Australian context. Walmsley (1988) highlighted a gap in empirical studies of a different kind: understanding city dwellers' emotional relationships with their place of living and what was important for the promotion of acceptable levels of wellbeing. He maintained there was the need for a theoretical framework which would help to explain how people adapted their behaviour within the opportunities and constraints afforded by city living.

By the early 1990s, there had been a revival of interest in Australia, as elsewhere, in the concept of place and attachment, not restricted to the importance of having a sense of place (Allen & Massey 1995; Jackson & Penrose 1993). Stewart-Weeks (2000) described this resurgence of interest as a paradox of globalisation, giving individuals connection to something more local and accessible over which they could perhaps exert some form of control. There was also general acceptance by this time that communities without propinquity existed. This was endorsed by Flanagan (1993) who drew attention to the significance of determining whether propinquity played a significant role in constructing people's social networks. Flanagan called for contemporary research to be directed towards studies that would examine not only the relevance of place to individuals but also determine whether place of living influenced the spatial distribution of social relationships.

The shortage of Australian studies researching people's relationships with the communities in which they lived is generally recognised. Some research has been conducted which concentrated on historic or issue-based matters (for example, Brennan 1973; McCalman 1984; Peel 1995; Powell 1993). Interestingly, most Australian community studies have been of rural areas or regional towns (Dempsey 1990; Walker 1994; Williams 1981) where more involvement in local social interaction beyond family and kin is generally thought to occur. Studies of urban communities have been in the broad tradition of community studies (Bryson & Thompson 1972) or locality studies (Bryson & Winter 1999; Richards 1990).

Extensive contemporary Australian literature has discussed issues associated with globalisation, economic restructuring and the growing disparity in levels of wellbeing (Connell 2000b; Forster 1999; Hamilton 2003; O'Connor, Stimson & Daly 2001; Walmsley & Weinand 1997). This has extended into studies contemplating the future direction of society (Mackay 1999; Waldren 1999) which attempt to explain the potential consequence that these economic changes could have on the nature of communities in cities. Walmsley (2000) responded to Hall's (1997) challenge for a re-evaluation of CWP by outlining the possible social impact of cyberspace. Walmsley warned that claims about the liberating effects of advanced telecommunications and the internet, which enabled intimacy in CWPs, should be treated with caution. He called for cross-disciplinary academic research to explore the changing nature of community in contemporary society, arguing that place and local community would have continued significance in cities of the future.

Study of the role of community in overall wellbeing was evidenced in a Working Paper produced by Onyx and Bullen (1997). This tackled measurement of social capital in five communities in NSW (including both metropolitan and regional centres) in such a way as to encompass community belonging. In addition, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) conducted its first General Social Survey (GSS) in 2002 in recognition of the fact that aspects of life important to wellbeing include, among other things, family relationships and engagement with wider social networks (ABS 2003b). Recent surveys of "middle Australians" in focus groups (Pusey 2003) similarly showed that the space and amenity of the local suburban neighbourhood, especially the streets in which people lived, figure prominently as influences, particularly for families with children.

The current research project set out to redress to some extent the lack of knowledge about the ways that people interact with each other within functioning communities. The results will be of relevance not only in an Australian context but also in a global sense. By focusing on individuals' close social ties and activities, on the relative importance of interactions within neighbourhoods by comparison with other types of communities, and on salient factors for belonging and impacts on wellbeing, the applicability of Webber's concepts for CWP within contemporary Australia have been explored. How this was achieved is outlined in the objectives which are defined in the following section.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The research project had four specific objectives:

1. **To examine levels of identification with local neighbourhood areas by urban residents**

   Since attachment to place is predicated on identification with a particular location, it is imperative to determine if and to what extent individuals are able to identify with, and have feelings and thoughts about, a particular area or "home patch". This is the first step towards ascertaining whether place-based communities have relevance.

2. **To investigate the extent to which types and intensity of activities are concentrated within neighbourhood areas by comparison with elsewhere**

   Changes in the way people use and relate to the suburbs in which they live (and their mobility within and external to them) can alter the intensity of neighbourhood living and the ways in which place-communities develop. Appraisals of the extent to which neighbourhood areas or, alternatively, other localities altogether are used for a range of different types of commonly sourced shops, facilities and services, together with an appreciation of activity levels within and outside neighbourhood areas, can provide vital information in this respect. Patterns of use can contribute to an understanding of factors that define neighbourhood boundaries.

3. **To explore levels of social interaction in communities with propinquity (neighbourhood areas) and without propinquity with respect to formal and informal associations**

   The establishment of close social ties is dependent upon the development and maintenance of relationships with other people including kin, friends, work colleagues and neighbours. For this to happen within neighbourhood areas also requires opportunities for new associations to be formed, perhaps through casual neighbourly interaction or through membership within formal groups. Examination of how, where and with whom different types of close friendships and social contacts are maintained can contribute to an understanding of perceptions of neighbourhood areas and the

relative position of the place community *vis-a-vis* other types of communities in contemporary Australian life.

4. To identify salient issues for a sense of belonging to place and impacts on wellbeing through neighbourhood experiences and activities

A deep-seated human need for attachment to place is generally recognised (see, for example, Walmsley & Lewis 1993). Membership in CWPs to the exclusion of place-based communities might overlook this instinct to the detriment of wellbeing. Important issues for establishing a sense of belonging to place need to be appreciated for levels of attachment to the home patch and concomitant impacts on wellbeing need to be investigated.

These objectives were achieved in the context of a contemporary Australian setting by studying a selection of urban neighbourhood areas in Sydney, Australia's "world city".

1.5　The thesis structure

The thesis has ten chapters. Chapter 2 evaluates the CWP question within the wider context of the overall community debate and reviews the conceptual framework that underpins the study. It elaborates the CWP hypothesis to take stock of societal changes since the hypothesis was first formulated and places it in the context of contemporary Australian society. The methodology adopted in the empirical part of the thesis is outlined in Chapter 3, including the rationale for selection of survey locations, the structure of research design, and the procedures for data analysis. In Chapter 4, survey locations are placed in context and independent variables describing the profile of survey participants are extracted from the data set, analysed and examined within the context of the overall population of the survey locations, to provide an appreciation of the representativeness of the final sample.

The next four chapters follow logically from the research objectives. Chapter 5 addresses the issue of identification with neighbourhood (Objective 1), whilst Chapter 6 explores the extent to which different types of shops, facilities and services are used locally and the intensity of activities within neighbourhood areas by comparison with elsewhere (Objective 2). Interactions and patterns of connectivity within neighbourhood areas as

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well as in other places are examined in Chapter 7 (Objective 3) through exploration of associations within formal groups, with close friends and with social contacts. Chapter 8 assesses topics relating to neighbourhood attachment, the salience of issues for a sense of belonging to place and aspects of neighbourhood living that impact upon wellbeing (Objective 4). Whilst the notion of CWPs is explored in Chapters 5 through 8, locational differences between the survey locations are highlighted in Chapter 9.

Chapter 10 places the results in context by drawing together significant elements relating to communities with and without propinquity, facilitating an evaluation of the CWP hypothesis as it relates to contemporary Australia. The thesis concludes with a summary of research findings, including a discussion of implications for policy and planning, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY REVIEWED

This chapter commences with an introduction and appraisal of Webber's CWP hypothesis in the 1960s and considers the types of relations envisaged by him as being affected by the phenomenon. This first section also documents some of the early interpretations of the hypothesis and reactions to it. Concepts of community and its changing nature have been widely debated since the latter decades of the 19th century. An understanding how this defined the intellectual context in which Webber worked is pursued in the second section.

Webber's notion of CWP was outlined around the time of the emergence of the post-industrial phase of societal organisation. The impact of this transition on the shape of urban communities since the 1960s is explored in the third section. The fourth section examines ways that post-industrial changes in transportation and technology have influenced the structure and functioning of society. This section also pursues notions about the ways in which one of the most conspicuous advances, computer mediated communication, has affected communities and people's lives.

Social capital is introduced in section five. The comparatively recent recognition of the potential for its accumulation in communities for benefit in social relationships, environments and human wellbeing, together with its prominence in contemporary debate about communities and society, justifies its consideration within this review of the literature. A longer tradition of importance to communities is accorded to attachment to place, an emotion that bonds people to a geographic location. Processes of place attachment and how this relates to the importance of belonging are explored in the sixth and penultimate section.

The seventh and final section examines fundamental issues that are important to human wellbeing, and discusses recognition of wellbeing as a valuable life component. Historical and current indicators for measuring social conditions and social policies and associated difficulties are outlined. The chapter concludes by drawing together elements of the community debate, posing various interpretations of how and to what extent the literature has suggested CWP might be manifested within contemporary Australian society. In other words, this review of the literature sets the scene for interpreting in a meaningful way the results of this current research and its findings.

2.1 The "community without propinquity" debate

The nature and significance of community and its relevance to place has received ongoing although sporadic interrogation and analyses for well over a century, with Webber's (1963) notion of community without propinquity contributed over four decades ago. As noted in Chapter 1, Webber argued that place-based communities had been superseded in relevance by interest-based ones with non-locational dimensions, and that there must be recognition of, and planning for, such communities. Whilst Webber's contribution to the community debate, in particular its visionary qualities, has continued to be acknowledged during the intervening decades, the topic of community without propinquity itself has subsequently received limited attention.

At the time of Webber's declaration, there was a common tendency to exaggerate loss of community, particularly within cities, with a widely held view of the time that 'modernity and the metropolis could only be sites of impersonal anonymity', subsequently popularised by Calhoun (1998: 374). Whilst Webber's approach supported the concept of the decline in relevance of place-based communities, its overall tenet promoting the importance of community, albeit in an altered form, was at odds with many contemporary notions about the reality of life in an urban environment. It is perhaps for this reason that Webber's ideas seemed controversial.

Webber's hypothesis

Webber's (1963) original use of the term "community without propinquity" referred to people's participation in interest-based communities not necessarily spatially limited or concentrated. (The word "spatial" and its derivations are synonymous with "geographical" throughout this thesis.) He attributed the emergence of such communities to a variety of factors resulting from cultural and technological change. Webber deemed that the dispersed spatial patterns of urban settlement in North America in the early 1960s would be a continuing feature of future urban landscapes. He observed that these changing relationships had been made possible to a large extent by a series of technological developments in transportation and communication during the preceding half century.

These developments were also considered responsible for the diminution of distinguishable but separate cultural traits historically ascribed to city and rural dwellers. The continuing

breakdown of these physical and cultural boundaries was believed to be producing a different type of social system with increased levels of complexity and diversity.

In recognition of these emerging processes, Webber advocated a different approach to urban planning 'in which space is distinguished from place, in which human interaction rather than land is seen as the fruitful focus of attention' (1963: 25). Acknowledgment of the significance of the social as well as the spatial environment was further reinforced by Webber's (1963) confronting of the notion that urban and rural living formed a dualism. He saw the rural-urban distinction as nothing other than a geographical phenomenon, doubting its relevance as a sociological variation in the post-industrial society. Gans supported this view, observing, '... ways of life do not coincide with settlement types ...' (1962b: 643). This is understood to mean that the physical characteristics distinguishing cities did not necessarily imbue inhabitants with a sense of urbanity: nor did occupation necessarily define place of living. Recognition that the essence of urbanity was not necessarily spatially determined further contributed to the blurring of physical and functional boundaries of separation between "urban" and "rural". Webber referred to this as the 'unhitching [of] the social processes of urbanisation from the locationally fixed city and regions' (1968: 1092). He envisaged that these evolving patterns would increasingly present greater opportunities to individuals for social, occupational and geographical mobility not constricted by predetermined factors associated with cultural and social background. In the long term, this would have the prospect of producing 'a maze of subcultures within an amazingly diverse society organised upon a broadly shared cultural base' (Webber 1963: 29). Furthermore, he argued affiliation within each subculture could be independent of spatial propinquity.

From this perspective, Webber justified his assertion that urbanity was embodied in a quality and diversity of life distinct from and, to some extent, independent of location within a metropolitan setting. At the same time, he acknowledged that spatial arrangements afforded by the city structure facilitated communication, subsequently declaring, 'cities have utility precisely because they are rich in information' (Webber 1968: 1096). For instance, variety and volume of information flows were most conspicuous within large cities where ease of access enhanced communication. However, Webber pointed out that profuse flows of information also occurred between people who were spatially separated. Technological advances in telecommunications and transportation were increasingly making it easier for people with common interests to interact at a

personal level. As a result, spatial separation was becoming less of a barrier; this change facilitated a closer affiliation of people within communities of interest. The feature of these communities of interest, emphasised by Webber, was that they were not necessarily spatially concentrated, a defining characteristic of place-based communities.

As an extension of this contention, Webber argued that individuals would become more closely associated with interest communities comprised of other participants sharing common views than with communities based on place. He believed propinquity would no longer be the major determinant of social networks. Instead, people would have greater freedom in social interaction because they were not constrained to the same extent by spatial distribution. Indeed, he lamented, '… because urban societies used to be exclusively city-based, we seem still to assume that territoriality is a necessary attribute of social systems' (Webber 1968: 1093).

Importantly, it was Webber's recognition of the significance of technological advances in different forms of information and opinion exchange that has given his work of the early 1960s contemporary currency in the new millennium (Little 2000). Certainly there has been a resurgence of interest in Webber's ideas. Hall (1996), for example, suggested that Webber may have been a prophet ahead of his time. As accessibility becomes less dependent on propinquity, participation within a community is less confined by physical location. As a result of these trends, Webber (1964b: 109) formulated the concept of a "non-place community", in which a shared interest, not spatial proximity, was the necessary condition for membership. For example, members of the same profession could be members of the same non-place interest community. Each member could, in addition, be involved with other non-overlapping groups, none of which were necessarily limited by physical location. In contrast, Webber saw traditional place-based communities as tending to be comprised of people, perhaps with a variety of interests, but linked by a shared common geographical location. Webber (1964b: 111) promoted the view that these place-based communities represented 'a limited and special case of the larger genus of community'. Such communities (in Webber's view) derived their basis from the common interest that attached to propinquity alone and were therefore not typical of the sort of communities that were likely to emerge in a society characterised by easy information exchange.

Webber's urban realms

Webber (1968) imagined a continuum representing the huge array of different types of interest communities, each with different criteria for common connectivity. He positioned specialised professionals belonging to non-place communities at one pole of this continuum. The spatial distance over which people interacted was, in Webber's view, potentially greatest for those within a community without propinquity and shortest at the opposite pole. Thus peculiarly specialised skills (such as astronomy) were associated with communities operating across the globe. Many other association patterns could be categorised at various stages within the continuum, with varying common interests and levels of skills but with diminishing scope in terms of spatial field. National professional organisations, for example, clearly operated on a more limited spatial scale than astronomers. Traditional place-based communities occupied the opposite pole to global networks, a position where pursuit of overlapping interests at a common localised place was the binding feature.

Individuals were, of course, able to participate in a number of different communities across Webber's hierarchical continuum. At each point on the spectrum, any number of interest communities could co-exist. Webber used the label "urban realm" to describe such spatial fields. He compared these realms with urban regions, with each having a similar function but a different structure. However, whilst the urban realm was not limited to a particular geographical location but was linked instead by an ability to communicate through space, the urban region was comprised of a discrete fixed territorial location. Its composition was determined by an identifiable resident population within geographical boundaries. Webber's proposition that urban realms were composed of non-place communities evolved as a consequence of his previously conceived perception that urbanity was not spatially limited. It is, of course, important to note that Webber recognised that occupation of an urban realm was potentially transitory, in part due to interest subjects changing and fluctuating but also because of changes in the current activity or role being pursued by participants. Consequently, urban realms were likely to have unstable population composition as participants shifted from one community of interest to another.

CWP and the specialised professional

In the early 1960s, Webber regarded complete participation in CWPs as being primarily reserved for male specialised professionals. It could be claimed, of course, that gender

exclusion of females solely reflected academic writing styles of that time, when reference to males ostensibly encompassed all humans. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that, in 1963, most professionals and those in executive positions in North America were males. This also most likely contributed to Webber's gender-specific references with respect to memberships in CWPs. Webber pointed out that, at that time, it was specialised professionals alone who had the economic resources and occupational incentives that provided and encouraged mobility within communities of interest. Without question, there have been substantial changes in social attitudes and levels of accessibility to professional accreditations over the past forty years. Nevertheless, scrutiny of the qualifications that Webber either implied or stated were necessary for membership of these interest-based communities and consideration of whether they contained exclusionary or non-complying categories appears justified.

When the types of people that Webber envisaged would be attracted to interest communities are examined, it appears they were exclusively specialised firms or individuals. Whenever households and business establishments chose to remain in close proximity to metropolitan centres instead of taking advantage of the perceived freedom now available as a result of enhanced transportation and communication methods, Webber offered as justification the desire by individuals to maintain existing levels of cultural and economic wellbeing that were available in the city. In other words, he saw CWP as an option taken up by some at the same time as most others were bound by inertia and remained living within the cities.

Because Webber saw information flows as central to economic success, he considered his interest communities were, to a large extent, industry- or business-driven. However, he went further and regarded the extent to which information, ideas and goods were distributed as providing a measure of cultural and economic income. This is important because Webber saw CWP as being peopled by individuals at the higher end of the socio-economic scale. Therefore, he promoted as a measure of general levels of affluence and wellbeing, the proportion of the population participating in CWPs.

Webber failed to allude to a number of other factors recognised even then as influencing wellbeing, such as elements of social belonging and equity (Mathers & Douglas 1998). Nor did he discuss household and family requirements and living conditions, and obligations associated with education, children, shopping, health care and other social

services, as components of wellbeing. Whilst it would be another decade before the

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published its schema

of fundamental social concerns, consideration of quality of life issues had received

considerable exposure in the United States through extensive discussion generated by the

1960 publication of *President's Commission on National Goals* and its consideration of

critical aspects of American life (Bauer 1966). Goal areas identified by the President's

Commission are listed in Table 2.1.

Table 2-1: "Goal areas" identified for wellbeing in the United States - 1960
(Source: Bauer 1966)

	Identified goal areas
1.	The individual
2.	Equality
3.	Democratic process
4.	Education
5.	Arts and sciences
6.	Democratic economy
7.	Economic growth
8.	Technological change
9.	Agriculture
10.	Living conditions
11.	Health and welfare

Perhaps for these reasons, Webber limited his discussion about the types of interests

pursued by prospective members of non-place communities to functional ones associated

with culture and profession, based on 'occupational activities, leisure pastimes, social

relationships, or intellectual pursuits' (1963: 29). In short, Webber's views were perhaps

blinkered in the sense of focusing on professionals and individuals with high levels of

wellbeing defined in a very particular way, although this exclusivity was not necessarily

explicit.

The implied membership exclusivity of Webber's communities without propinquity

became more evident in the latter part of the decade when Webber revisited the debate and

stated:

> The capacity to interact intimately with others who are spatially removed depends, of course,
> upon a level of wealth adequate to cover the dollar costs of long-distance intercourse, as well
> as upon the cognitive capacities associated with highly skilled professional occupations. The
> intellectual and business elites are able to maintain continuing and close contact with their
> associates throughout the world because they are rich not only in information, but also in
> dollar income... To be sure, as [the professional] plays out other roles – say, as citizen,
> parent, laboratory director, or grocery shopper – he is a member of many other communities,
> both interest-based and place-defined ones. But the striking thing about our [professional], is

both interest-based and place-defined ones. But the striking thing about our [professional], is how little of his attention and energy he devotes to the concerns of place-defined communities ... the city is but a convenient setting for the conduct of his professional work; it is not the basis for the social communities that he cares most about.
(Webber 1968: 1097-9)

This clearly shows that Webber's (1968) "functional relations" applied in the main, in his view, to professional and business associations and did not embrace other commonly recognised household and family functions or responsibilities. Consequently, it could be argued that Webber's CWP theory is limited in its interpretation, to the exclusion of many of the functions occurring within traditional placed-based or neighbourhood communities. From this perspective, Webber's CWP could be seen as an epiphenomenon peculiar to only a small, rich and mobile section of society.

That there are limitations to Webber's interpretation of CWP is supported by Calhoun (1998) who construed Webber's interest communities as meaning no more to him than clusters of personal relationships characterised by some common identity and perhaps some emotional warmth. He contended that a notable flaw in Webber's argument was that he did not distinguish the sense of feeling and of belonging to community from its network structure: nor did he differentiate between the kinds of relationships only likely in face-to-face interactions and those readily achieved through other forms of contact, such as by computer mediated communications. The extent of attachment within cultural and socio-spatial enclaves in metropolitan areas was also obscured by Webber's concept of CWP and, accordingly, he was criticised by Calhoun for failing to clarify differences in such patterns of relationships that might vary with propinquity (for example, their density or social complexity). In short, whilst Webber's views might have been considered proactive and thought-provoking at the time of writing, they were later sometimes dismissed due to their perceived limited relevance in society generally. It is therefore appropriate to probe his ideas further, notably in relation to the context in which they appeared.

Interpretations of Webber's notion of CWP

It is important to note that Webber's views did not occur in a vacuum and that contemporary writers dealt with similar themes, sometimes drawing explicitly on Webber's work. In the 1960s, Richmond (1969) was a supporter of Webber's ideas that community interaction would increasingly occur through social networks not limited by propinquity. Whilst Richmond did not reference the work of Webber, he did propose a

parallel theme of a totally mobile society. He presented a multi-dimensional community-association continuum that included social networks as the typical way of interaction. Standard forms of network interaction would use (in his imaginings) the telephone, teleprinter and television, and high-speed transport, such as aircraft and spacecraft. Relationships would not be dependent on a geographical base or face-to-face contact: nor would they involve participation in formally structured organisations. Instead, activity would be governed by a constant feed-back using established data bases, described as 'highly efficient information storage and retrieval processes based upon diffuse networks of interdependent communication systems' (Richmond 1969: 278). Richmond saw these networks emerging during the transitional phase of the new society, with their full impact and relevance not becoming apparent until much later.

Bell and Newby (1971), in contrast, seemed to interpret Richmond's (1969) proposition and Webber's notion of CWP in a literal sense. Rather than recognising the multi-dimensional and simultaneous aspects of networking that might be pursued to varying degrees by individuals within a series of urban realms, they instead criticised the concept of the diminishing importance of *place* within communities. Whilst Bell and Newby (1971: 47) validly pointed out people still 'live and breed' within place-based communities, they apparently failed to appreciate the extent to which individuals could belong to meaningful interest-based social networks not limited geographically.

Similarly, Everitt (1976) reflected on Webber's ideas. He also limited his interpretation of Webber's concept of CWP, suggesting that participants' interaction within such communities could occur only within geographically dispersed (rather than confined) metropolitan areas, and did not extend beyond. In other words, "place" intruded to a degree in Everitt's acceptance of Webber's ideas. In particular, he argued that familiarity with places (or lack of it) could put some limits on interaction, restricting people's images of the city and thus their behaviour within it. This view was based on the premise that socio-cultural factors were the most important elements influencing the geography of people's contact, with physical factors apparently mainly significant for directional bias.

This misunderstanding of Webber's broader concept of CWP was implied by Everitt's (1976: 106) criticism that '... less place urban realms may be more realistic than the non-place realms that Webber has suggested as the areal expression of community without propinquity'. However, in a sense, this apparent misinterpretation perhaps resonates with

from global to local, from vast distances to areas with minimal spatial separation. Strictly speaking, an urban realm *could* have a degree of spatial affinity. Its field referenced the entire spatial area over which each community within the realm interacted. The point is that it was not necessarily limited by people's physical mobility, as apparently was the case in the view espoused by Everitt. Similarly, Everitt appeared not to have allowed for an individual to be a member of a variety of different communities, with each community possibly operating within a different realm and hence at a different stage within the continuum. Nevertheless, Everitt's (1976: 106-7) recognition that any investigation of the community without propinquity concept should incorporate the selection of '... a group [or locality] which has the potential but not the certainty of [containing] "non-place" people, and a group which has the possibility of significant behavioural differentiation based upon subculture', contains merit.

2.2   Concepts of community pre-Webber

Webber was not, of course, the first writer to focus on the concept of community. It has been a closely scrutinised field since the latter part of the nineteenth century. A full appreciation of the significance of Webber's work therefore requires consideration of the intellectual context in which he wrote and the ways in which communities change. Such has been the variety of usage of the term "community" that Hillery (1955) famously identified ninety-four meanings. It is not surprising, therefore, that the concept has continued to attract further interest and analysis although community began to lose popularity as a unit of investigation by the early 1970s. Hillery, perhaps ironically, declared that the single characteristic which all community definitions had in common was a reference to people. This section provides a brief review of concepts of community up to and including the 1960s, around the time of Webber's proposition for CWP.

At the broadest level of analyses of community definitions, Hillery's (1955) classification presented the rural-urban distinction commonly expounded to that time. It also produced a number of definitions where concepts of community were not restricted to place-based associations. In short, the non-place component of communities was recognised at least a decade prior to Webber's declaration of CWP. This recognition reflected division in community studies between those focusing on people and those that focused on territory. To a degree, this division might have been an expression of the independent paths of

differing academic research to that time, with minimal crossover between the humanities and geographical studies.

Place-based communities within continua

Webber's conception of the rise of placeless communities, concomitant with the demise in significance of place-based ones, was presented at a time when there was a general tendency to associate cities with loss of community and to view them as locations for impersonal anonymity. This attitude of *gesellschaft* was at one end of a spectrum, opposed by the *gemeinschaft* way of rural life. This distinction reflects Tonnies' 1887 work, consistently incorporated into many analyses of community construction most likely in acknowledgment of his being one of the first to identify the rural-urban dichotomy and two extreme types of communities (Bell & Newby 1971; Hunter 1975; Kasarda & Janowitz 1974; Walmsley 1985; Warren 1963). At one pole was the rural community with its perceived benefits of *gemeinschaft* (translated as "community") and its linkage with place. Involvement in *gemeinschaft* society was regarded as providing intimate, enduring and secure relationships. These were based on ascribed status within a relatively fixed situation in both a social and a locational sense. Sharing of common interests and responsibilities in respect of a particular territorial area encouraged continuation of traditional and sentimental attachments within a relatively homogeneous culture, with members interacting in close proximity to one another. Conflict was avoided and loyalty reinforced by the convention of members "knowing their place" both within the social and territorial structure.

Gesellschaft, meaning "association", was the antithesis of the concept of community and was usually associated with a decrease in the level of social cohesion (Walmsley 1988). Thus *gesellschaft* societies emerged as a result of an expansion in impersonal and contractual ties. They tended to promote the individual at the expense of the community. Human activities were perceived as evolving in this direction in a society that, towards the end of the nineteenth century, was becoming increasingly industrialised (Bell & Newby 1971). *Gesellschaft* and *gemeinschaft* can, in simple terms, be thought of as poles in a continuum of social change; for decades they provided sociologists and geographers with a basis for distinguishing between an essentially *rural* lifestyle and one that was labelled *urban*.

Tonnies (1963 (1887)) was not, of course, the only one to argue that occupational, residential and cultural mobility provided people with the ability to reach outside their previously limited sphere of existence. Around the same time, Durkheim (1933 (1893)) also proposed a bipolar theory within a functional- and temporal-based evolutionary scale. Within his spectrum, group members were unified through "mechanical solidarity" in a *gemeinschaft*-type community that occupied one pole position. This was opposite to the "organic solidarity" that had emerged in *gesellschaft*-style industrial communities. Durkheim argued that the centripetal forces which helped define individuality could not operate at the same time as centrifugal forces. Centrifugal forces resulted in mechanical solidarity, with the individual conscience being transformed into a collective way of thinking, or consensus. Durkheim presumed that individuals were different and had a personality and claimed that the division of labour produced the type of solidarity that he labelled organic because it made unity out of the elements of a living body. Thus as labour became more divided, individuals depended more on cooperative interaction within the society and also became more specialised within their own operations. Unity in the latter larger, mobile, industrialised society was, therefore, the result of division of labour rather than consensus.

In a variation on this theme, Wirth (1938) saw essential changes in the character of society as responsible for the substitution of secondary for primary relationships. This included weakening of kinship bonds and decline in the social significance of the local community, thereby creating greater relative isolation and mutual aversion in cities more than elsewhere. Wirth (1938) also argued that living in a socially heterogeneous society such as that offered by an urban environment made people more tolerant of different points of view and lifestyles.

A later application of the bipolar component of earlier theories was presented by Hawley (1950). His classification of independent (*gemeinschaft*) and dependent (*gesellschaft*) communities was developed according to the extent of their self-sufficiency. Hawley supported the argument that the effective element of a community was not the individual but rather some combination of individuals, which he labelled "units". The structure of units determined the essential functions by which a community maintained itself and existed, irrespective of the particular individuals present at any one time. He argued that these units developed from two prevalent types of relationships and were either symbiotic or commensalistic. On the one hand, independent symbiotic relationships were based on

familial, associational or territorial connections. There were few units of any one type within a community and there was minimal centralisation of control. On the other hand, dependent commensalistic relationships were based on common interests, with networks of intra-community exchanges. They tended to be driven by technology and were marked by pronounced central control.

In a further variation of this approach to the rural-urban continuum, Nisbet (1966) depicted the traditional family as epitomising community. The market served as the classic example of non-community, where relationships that involved competition or conflict, convenience or contractual consent, were the norm.

A number of other scholars, including Bell and Newby (1971), Redfield (1947, 1955) and Richmond (1969), adopted and persisted with the rural-urban distinction (or variations of it) to differentiate types of community. The general proposition was that, as communities became more populous, they appeared more heterogeneous and hence more urban. This trend was regarded as being responsible for weakening the corporate nature of daily social life, ultimately reducing the quality of social relations (Fischer 1977c). At the same time, however, many writers criticised use of the rural-urban typology on the grounds that it positioned social relationships in a specific location and focused attention on the city as a source of change, obscuring the range of values and operations at both poles of the continuum. Redfield (1947), for example, recognised that these typologies were impressionistic and that both urban and rural units were often imbued with features of both community types. Thus, although Redfield (1947: 293) argued that an understanding of society could be gained 'through construction of an ideal type of primitive or folk society as contrasted with modern urbanised society', and although he characterised urban society as being large, non-isolated, literate, heterogeneous, and lacking a strong sense of solidarity, he did recognise that '[i]n every isolated little community there is a civilisation; in every city there is a folk society' (Redfield 1955: 129-30). This view is important. It shows that none of the bipolar typologies could be genuinely representative of communities past or present. Rather, they were very much caricatures of traditional and industrial societies.

Rural-urban continuum debunked

By the late 1960s, criticism of the use of a rural-urban continuum and its associated typologies as a way of understanding society was growing. It became increasingly apparent that certain categories of people enjoyed urban living and the variety it offered whilst others did not, whatever the settlement or social patterns. As the result of a survey conducted in Australian urban communities around that time, Martin (1967: 63) suggested that '... communities contained viable elements associated with the "folk" society as traditionally described, and that the postulated polarity of "folk" and "urban" types has now served its usefulness as far as urban research is concerned.' Pahl (1968a, 1968b) also questioned the existence of the continuum, observing, '... some people are in the city but not of it ... whereas others are of the city but not in it ...' (1968b: 273). In his view, the terms *urban* and *rural* were '... more remarkable for their ability to confuse than for their power to illuminate' (1968b: 263). Instead, Pahl (1968a) emphasised the influence of fundamental local and national social processes on community. He ascribed support for the existence of a continuum to misinterpretations resulting from the difference between small- and large-scale societies. Pahl (1968b) maintained that the temporal element had been inadequately considered previously, with past typology concentrating on spatial aspects rather than the social processes which he considered were responsible for differentiation. Pahl (1968b) also stressed the futility of linking particular patterns of social relationships to geographical location, instead identifying groups or individuals as being affected, rather than whole communities. The debate on urban characteristics was later taken up by Krupat (1985) who similarly refuted the existence of a single rural-urban dichotomy. Instead, he acknowledged a number of rural-urban continua, with a variety of different qualities typifying different communities.

Thus it can be appreciated that distinguishing features between, and variations of, *gemeinschaft-* and *gesellschaft*-type societies have received considerable attention in the social science literature although the terminology used has varied considerably. The dichotomies discussed here, whilst not in any way comprehensive, are representative of the breadth and diversity of debate. They are summarised in Table 2-2. In spite of subsequent divergences of opinion over their validity, these typologies proved useful and popular for distinguishing the bipolar options for the classification of social structure and the analysis of community. However, there is now general recognition that multi-dimensionality characterises most communities within contemporary society, with varying degrees of

overlap between characteristics evident in different communities. It is appropriate, therefore, to focus on the changing nature of urban communities.

Table 2-2: Summary of key rural-urban typologies

Author	Date	Rural or non-urban category	Urban category
Tonnies	1887	*Gemeinschaft*	*Gesellschaft*
Durkheim	1893	Mechanical solidarity	Organic solidarity
Wirth	1938	Primary relationships	Secondary relationships
Redfield	1947	Folk	Urban
Hawley	1950	Independent	Dependent
Nisbet	1966	The family	The market

Urban communities

As has already been indicated, and as will be further elaborated in discussion of methodology, this project has confined its investigations to the contemporary Australian urban environment as represented by Sydney. This limitation was largely directed by availability (or otherwise) of resources and also to the perception that CWP, if applicable, is more possibly a phenomenon of modern cities than rural or regional locations, at least in its initial promulgation by Webber. The preceding discussion regarding historical distinctions between rural and urban communities offers support for this premise. For this reason, and also in recognition that some constraints need to be imposed on the breadth of this review (due to the immense scope of the historical concepts of community), further analysis essentially discusses, although is not exclusively confined to, urban environments.

Natural communities

In the 1920s, the concept of urban communities operating in a manner analogous to *natural* plant communities was promoted by what became known as the Chicago School of Human Ecology and, in particular, by three men: Robert Park, Ernest Burgess and Roderick McKenzie (1967 (1925)). Their urban ecological theory proposed that cities were governed by many of the same forces of evolution that affected natural ecosystems. They saw cities evolving as a result of competition, ecological dominance, invasion and succession, with respect to scarce urban resources – especially land. Park, Burgess and McKenzie (1967 (1925)) developed a model known as the concentric zone theory of city structure, where a city's central business district was its most desirable, contested and rent-expensive area.

The Chicago School's approach subsequently received considerable criticism as being theoretically flawed. It was also criticised on empirical grounds, with research often failing to substantiate the validity of the concentric model (Valentine 2001). In spite of this, the School's influence on community studies lasted through to the 1960s and 1970s, and arguably inspired substantial empirical research directed towards defining and assessing the relevance of neighbourhood communities (Gans 1962a; Hunter 1975; Kasarda & Janowitz 1974; Warren 1978; Young & Willmott 1962). Indeed, it is in part because of the work of the Chicago School and the concomitant emphasis on areal differentiation within cities that attention in urban studies focused not just on communities but also on neighbourhoods. This distinction between something that may or may not be place-based and something that most definitely is a place crops up many times in the literature on urban life, right up to and including the work of Webber.

Suburbanisation

One of the most dramatic changes to be evident in twentieth century cities was suburbanisation. Wurster (1963) used the term "centrifugal forces" (favoured much earlier by Durkheim) with reference to the dominant trend towards suburbanisation within cities. He argued that such forces resulted in the expansion of urban areas; he saw suburbanisation as a response to the selective push for private space. This expansion was sometimes by choice but it also encompassed compulsory movements associated with the concentration of cheaper housing in the urban periphery. Suburbanisation has, of course, been commented on very extensively in the literature (Bell & Newby 1971; Davies & Herbert 1993; Forster 1999; Gans 1962b; Hoyt 1939). What is important here is not the extent so much as the implication for the structure and functioning of urban society.

Structural and functional relationships

Around the time of Webber's presentation of his theoretical concepts of CWP and urban realms, Warren (1963) discussed the emerging vast network of national government departments in North America. He also recognised a boom in non-public organisations having governmental characteristics and organised upon an interest base rather than on a territorial one. These organisational networks arose, in part, from the need to exercise central control or management over the vast expanses of metropolitan areas brought about by suburbanisation. These views are relevant to this discussion for two reasons. Firstly, Webber (1968) subsequently expanded on this theme, interpreting such structures as

manifestations of the post-industrial national urban society. He recognised they increasingly occupied national realms and influenced the structural composition of local community services and facilities, often substituting national provision for local resources. Secondly, such elements arguably have relevance for the contemporary Australian setting within which the current research is conducted.

Warren (1963) was concerned with structural and functional relationships, as was Webber. He regarded the geographically based functional interrelations of social systems as a special characteristic of community; one that was perhaps changing due to evolving government and non-public organisational activity. Warren devised a schema of national and local dimensions of interrelations positioned within vertical and horizontal patterns respectively. He defined a community's vertical pattern as the structural and functional relation of its various social units and subsystems to other-place (such as regional, national or global) systems. The horizontal pattern represented the relationship to each other at the local level.

The existence of the vertical pattern reflected, in Warren's (1963) view, the fact that such structural and functional relationships often involved different hierarchical levels, whilst within the horizontal pattern they tended to be at approximately the same hierarchical level. He used the term "pattern" to refer to the types of relationship within which all units within a community operated in some manner. Some individuals (such as Webber's specialised male professionals) would be strongly oriented vertically in community participation, whilst traditionalists typically had a more horizontal leaning.

Warren (1963) was concerned that participation within the vertical pattern was occurring to the detriment of local communities. An increasing orientation away from local community participation was seen as being responsible for a corresponding decline in community cohesion and autonomy. In this sense, Warren did not envisage people contributing independently to vertical and horizontal patterns or different networks at the same time. Rather he saw involvement in the other-place or vertical system as creating '…differentiation of interests and associations' (Warren 1963: 62). He considered this had the effect of dissolving the significance of interests based on locality and was thus responsible for weakening an important basis for cohesion. A concomitant tendency was for the individual to unconsciously favour the specialised vertical systems as the more important reference groups and to be guided by role expectations from that system, with

potential conflict with the best interests of the locality. As a result, the principal emphasis for individuals' social participation would shift from locality to selected interest.

The vertical pattern advanced by Warren might be compared with Webber's nationwide urban realms although, as is apparent from earlier discussion, they differed in their interpretation of the extent to which individuals might (as proposed by Webber) or might not (Warren's view) interact multi-functionally. When Webber (1968) revisited this theme, he noted the growing importance of governmental and non-governmental organisations structured upon interest-based rather than territorial associations. He saw these emerging configurations as '... manifestations of a society rapidly moving into the post-industrial post-city stage of its development' (Webber 1968: 1107). In short, Warren's views are important in highlighting features – suburbanisation and the rise of public and private organisations with complex structures – which were not prominent in Webber's thinking. Warren's work was also significant in that it acknowledged concerns about what the changing nature of urban communities might do to the quality of urban life.

In the Australian context, it is worth noticing that Wild (1985) envisaged people belonged to a series of encapsulating communities, depending on the social context. These progressed from very complex multi-issue relationships at the local level to much simpler patterns at the regional, state, national or global level. Wild (1985) asserted that the tendency to ascribe certain interests to particular localities was diminishing in significance, as most popularly supported organisations promoted themselves through regional, national or global networks that transcend geographical boundaries. He foresaw, in a way that is reminiscent of Warren's (1963) concerns regarding factors influencing the formation of North American communities, the possibility of conflicts developing between different interest groups within the same locality, such as between those who were for or against a particular development or protection of the natural environment, due to the increasingly pluralistic nature of communities.

Alternative terminology

In trying to understand the changing role of community in urban life, Stacey urged avoidance of the term *community* altogether, instead referring to locality based and interrelated institutions as a 'local social system' (Stacey 1969: 135). Stacey argued that it was possible to identify the types of institutions and services that should, in principle and

most desirably, be present within a locality, based on an established model social system. Clearly, the nature and configurations of the model would have to be diverse to respond to the overall structure of the society and the relative importance of each node within it. Using such a system, identification of essential services could be undertaken with reference to what individuals nominated as being essential for their wellbeing. This would, it was argued, include a variety of institutions such as medical facilities, retail outlets, employment and social security services, and public transport. Using Stacey's (1969) concept, it would be possible to identify whether a particular community was serviced by the appropriate variety and level of services. Whilst the totality of services would not be included in every locality, Stacey saw this model as a way of achieving accessibility to services at an acceptably equitable level. This, then, represents a rather different approach to urban change to that adopted by Webber and Warren. Instead of theorising about the changing nature of community and its impact on wellbeing, Stacey (1969) is interested in residents themselves specifying their needs in a changing world.

Stacey's (1969) preference for using the expression "local social systems" appears to be in response to an increasing tendency that continues to this time for "community" to be used as a vague and loose shorthand expression for various social groups (for example, residents of a planning area or of institutions, including prisons and hospitals) and for relationships such as non-work based ones. Whilst discussing services and facilities that could, if present, contribute to wellbeing within a place-based local social system, she unfortunately circumvented other important aspects of wellbeing that might be attributed to place.

The theme of service provisions was also taken up by Pahl (1968a) who supported Webber's (1964b) acknowledgment that advances in technology had diminished many of the previous advantages of city living afforded by a concentration of facilities, services and activities that permitted ease of access and use. According to Pahl, this contributed not only to society in general increasingly attaining aspects of urbanity but also to people playing more roles with greater levels of differentiation. Within this process, varying patterns were produced according to the density of these roles. Pahl (1968a: 34) referred to this as the "density of role texture". His concept for analysing the varying levels of this density was the social network. These networks reflected the actual social relationships that people maintained, regardless of whether they were limited to, or ignored the confines of, territorial area. In other words, Pahl recognised that the varied nature of modern urban life meant that individuals had both local and non-local linkages.

A decade earlier, Bott (1957) had also identified the significance of people's social networks, defining the immediate social environment of individual members of urban families as a network rather than the local area in which they live. She depicted the connectedness of the network (the extent to which the same people overlapped from one group to the next) as depending on a complex combination of economic, social and geographical factors, as well as the personality of individuals. These forces did not necessarily always work in the same direction or permit network characteristics to be predicted. Instead, they varied from locality to locality, with the range of each network (or the spatial field of Webber's realm) also varying from participant to participant. Bott (1957: 59) introduced the terms "close-knit" and "loose-knit" to describe the density of overlapping relationships between the component units of a network. She argued that the complexity and variability of social networks were a direct consequence of the extent of development of a society's division of labour. Consequently a greater degree of complexity might be expected the further society became removed from *gemeinschaft-*towards *gesellschaft-*related activities.

In short, by the 1960s, several researchers of community began to realise that, contrary to many views previously expressed (Simmel 1950; Tonnies 1887; Wirth 1938), large-scale social transformation in post-industrial times had not destroyed small-scale communities within urban areas. However, change was most certainly occurring. The results of much of their work suggested that the city offered the opportunity for specialised social contact as well as the aversion others had predicted. Others focused on changing community needs. It is not appropriate to undertake a further review of this literature in this thesis. Instead, attention now turns to examination of the character of urban communities after the time at which Webber set out his ideas on CWP.

2.3 Post-1960s urban communities

It has been demonstrated that, prior to the notion of CWP, much writing on the changing nature of community had contrasted two perhaps ideal-type societies: *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*. The emergence of a third type of society, post-industrial society, was discussed by Webber (1968) in the late 1960s. This nomenclature symbolised the decline of the manufacturing industry as the dominant economic force and the rise of the service and information economy. Richmond (1969) joined the debate regarding the potential

impact of post-industrialism upon communities, with both scholars nominating advances in transport and communications technology as driving forces in the transition towards this form of society. The post-industrial phase, translated as a *verbindungsnetzscaft* societal organisation by Richmond, subsequently developed and its impact on community and influence on the direction of related intellectual debate has been substantial. The distinguishing characteristics of the three types of community – traditional, industrial and post-industrial – are presented in Table 2-3.

Table 2-3: Distinguishing characteristics of types of society
(after Richmond 1969: 272)

Characteristic	*Traditional*	*Industrial*	*Post-industrial*
Form of organisation	*Gemeinschaft*	*Gesellschaft*	*Verbindungsnetzscaft*
Typical locus of interaction	Communities	Associations	Social networks
Principal mode of production	Agricultural	Mechanical	Automated
System of stratification	Quasi-feudal	Class	Meritocracy
Main means of communication	Oral	Written	Electronic
Main means of transportation	Horse and sail	Steam-propelled	Jet and rocket
Population movement	Rural-rural	Rural-urban	Inter-urban
Type of migration	Forced (push)	Voluntary (pull)	Transient (two-way)
Mode of coaptation of migrants	Assimilation/ isolation	Pluralistic integration	Active mobilisation

Within many North American cities, post-industrial society was changing the structure of urban living. No longer did people generally live in suburbia and commute to employment nodes in city centres. Instead, metropolitan areas were taking the form of what has been labelled "post-suburbanism" (Kling, Olin & Poster 1991). This term recognised the fact that employment was becoming increasingly scattered within sprawling multi-centred urban regions (Forster 1999). Hart (1991) called these centres "urban realms", with each realm having 'its own nucleus, few ties with the traditional core of the city, and virtually none with other realms' (1991: xii). Clearly there is little similarity between these largely territorial urban realms and the urban realms composed of non-place communities imagined by Webber (1963). In this regard, use of the term is unfortunate and confusing.

Application of a post-suburbanism label to Australian cities does not appear warranted, given the general tendency that exists within its major cities for labour catchments to overlap. Instead, most writers recognise change but associate it with broader economic conditions. For example, Forster (1999:106) described the period of economic, technological and demographic change that has developed since the early 1970s as a manifestation of the 'economically polarised diversity and disorder of the post-modern

era'. This phase was characterised within the urban environments of some post-industrial societies by '[an] assembly of retail super-malls, technology parks, entertainment theme parks and edge-cities...' (Forster 1995: 68). However, such characteristics of a post-modern urban environment are perhaps not as dominant within Australian cities as in North America. Again, this is a reflection of the existence of widely separated primate cities.

The consequences of the emergence of post-industrial and post-modern society are as yet not fully understood and implications for community continually develop. Further development of the community debate during these phases of societal change as they relate to the urban environment are considered next.

Changing concepts of community

As has become apparent in this literature review so far, the issue of the territorial basis of urban life has been researched by several writers in addition to Webber (1963, 1964a, 1964b, 1968), people such as Bell and Newby (1971), Blowers (1973), Stacey (1969), and Warren (1963), all of whom explored the continued relevance of place-based communities. In 1968, Webber went so far as to suggest it might not be long before the vernacular meaning of community would be archaic and disappear from common usage. He made this suggestion because the term was increasingly being used in the wider sense, to include his communities of interest that effectively functioned over much larger areas up to and including the global level. Gold (1980) corroborated this argument and asserted community was no longer very meaningful as a spatial term and a unit of investigation.

In the mid-1980s, despite this demise of interest in place-based communities and at a time when very little attention was being given to community *per se*, Cohen (1985) called for the continued centrality of community as a key concept, with a system of values, norms and moral codes that would provide a sense of identity to its members. Cohen placed emphasis on understanding the experiential meaning of community in an attempt to sidestep definitional problems, contending that structural models of community did not themselves create meaning. For Cohen (1985), members of a community had something in common, or an aspiration to common interests, that distinguished them from another group. This implied simultaneously similarities and differences, with boundaries, real or imagined, enclosing elements that were alike. He described what he labelled

"communities of care" as invested with all the sentiments traditionally attached to place-based communities, including kinship, friendship and neighbouring. Alternatively, Cohen's "communities of convenience", similar to interest-based communities, were obligation free, with no strings attached. The implication here was that different community types could clearly vary in the degree to which they were territorially linked. In other words, it could be that communities were becoming increasingly varied in character.

Cohen's (1985) concept of community provided an arena in which people could acquire their most fundamental and substantial experience of social life outside the confines of the nuclear family. This involved learning the basic symbols of the society to which the individual belonged and included discovering the meaning of kinship and friendship, management of social relationships, and culture of the society. Of course, in providing his meaning of community, Cohen promoted a definition himself, something he was ostensibly avoiding. At the heart of Cohen's thinking was a desire to describe the changing nature of community, the very same thinking which underpinned Webber's publications.

In addition to sound intellectual interpretations, "community" has also become associated in contemporary vernacular with a variety of meanings. For example, "the community" has been mobilised in different ways by political parties, social movements and groups of citizens for their own purposes (Valentine 2001). In some usages, community appears to have lost meaning altogether or to have become synonymous with reference to the general public. Politicians and media commentators frequently refer to the requirements, demands, expectations or interests of the community, without the nature of that body being necessarily clear. "The wider community" has become a term that has been interpolated in a number of different ways, none of them with precise meaning. Some government and philanthropic organisations have designed programs to create community as palliatives to anomie and alienation. Cohen (1985) predicted failure for these types of programs. Indeed, such failure almost seems inevitable when the core concept is so varied in meaning.

In a somewhat different vein, Anderson (1991) depicted all communities (other than historically traditional ones that afforded face-to-face contact) as "imagined". By this he meant that communities should be distinguished not by their falsity or genuineness but by the style in which they were imagined. He portrayed them in this way because members

could never recognise each other – they had not met with, talked with, or had a mutual awareness of other community members – and yet each person held an image of their unity. In other words, the demise of place-based communities was drawing attention to the experiential qualities of the communities that replaced them. In a similar vein, Valentine (2001) proposed that, since around 1990, the notion of community has largely been promoted as a structure of meaning, interpreted in the sense of being something fluid or contested but still important to its members. This almost implies an elusive and illusionary concept, summarised by the cliché 'I don't know what it is, but I'll recognise it if I experience it'. If this is the case, perhaps the word has indeed become meaningless, as Webber (1968) foretold.

Cooke (1990) lent reluctant support to Webber's main thrust for CWP, lamenting the fact that individuals in modern society were no longer bonded to community in the old sense of everyday relationships focusing on family, relatives, cooperation and custom. He regarded the currently accepted *gesellschaft* approach to living that promoted the individual at the expense of the general community as self-perpetuating of the new value sets. He reproached 'modernity' for being responsible for transformation of society from a caring one to one in which industrial capitalism extracted the vitality from communities, leaving a 'residual husk' (Cooke 1990: viii).

The growing haziness of the concept of community is clearly widely appreciated. An emphasis on variety, communication and experience means that the place-based component of community life is nowhere near as prominent as it once was. This raises the question of what has happened to the associated concept of "neighbourhood". Is this place-based entity still important?

Neighbourhoods

Prior to the changing perceptions about the functioning and reality of community in an urban society, there was considerable intellectual interest in place-based relationships. In the early 1970s, the "neighbourhood community" (or simply "the neighbourhood") began to replace the community as the unit of interest. Recognition of four factors prompted the emergence of the neighbourhood as a unit of research: the importance of proximity for maintaining face-to-face social networks; people's desire to identify with a particular area or territory; social homogeneity deriving from mutual interests and shared experience; and

the development of social solidarity or mutual affinity over time (Valentine 2001). The extent to which community discussion appeared to be replaced by this interest in the neighbourhood was also perhaps linked to a perception that it was easier to identify its geographical and functional characteristics than it was to focus on the rather elusive concept of community. This was despite the fact that, in urban areas as distinct from rural areas, boundaries were difficult to perceive or were non-existent.

It was generally understood that the term "neighbourhood" described a geographical unit and applied solely to a localised area. In a metropolitan context, it excluded people who lived any great distance away. It was possible to talk of "local neighbourhood" (although this was almost tautological) and for it to have meaning for most people. Blowers (1973: 60) defined the local neighbourhood as '... a close-knit, socially homogeneous, territorially defined group engaging in primary contacts'. He refuted claims of the time, suggested by Webber and others, that it was no longer a relevant entity, instead allocating importance to it as the area in which people essentially interacted and, as a result, formed allegiances.

Gold (1980: 109-10) described a neighbourhood as 'a bounded residential area that is delimited by specific criteria', with cognitive areas defined by individuals according to their personal experience and feelings. This approach recognised the fact that all individuals have their own conception of what constitutes their neighbourhood, which quite possibly fails to coincide with a formally designated area. In this sense, the extent of neighbourhood could also be expected to vary from individual to individual because of its relationship to personal experiences and networks.

In an attempt to generate debate on the importance of the urban neighbourhood and to tie it in with the previous body of work on communities, Wellman and Leighton (1979) proposed a trilogy of types from a network analysis of community, based on arguments for communities being lost, saved or liberated. Their network analytical perspective began with the search for social linkages and the flow of resources. The "community lost" model was characterised by sparse networks and was associated with the weakening of primary ties in modern society and an absence of local solidarities. Wellman and Leighton (1979: 371) recognised that neighbourhood communities were commonly being despaired of as '... privatised, isolated and alienated'. However, they noted the failure of empirical data to confirm this conception. Rather, there appeared to be abundant surveys and fieldwork (Gans 1962a, Greer 1962, Jacobs 1961) supporting Wellman and Leighton's argument for

"community saved" – communities that had survived through persistence. However, many of these studies identified the need for active community intervention if threatened neighbourhoods were to be rescued from urban renewal. In the process, existing communal interests could be defended. Such neighbourhoods were recognised by other scholars including Pacione (1984) and were variously described as having dense networks, generally with limited external ties, but remaining viable, useful and important. The description "community saved" seemed appropriate to such cases.

Wellman and Leighton's (1979) third case was that of a "community liberated". This supported Webber's concept of CWP in that they maintained that modern urban communities were not necessarily organised on a neighbourhood basis. Rather, in this element of the typology, territoriality had diminished relevance. They identified network ties that were dispersed from geographical confines, as had Webber in 1963. They too attributed this to structural and technological developments influencing ease of communication, location of workplace and kin, and rates of social and residential mobility. They echoed Webber's 1968 assertions that the "ramified" networks of liberated communities were associated with affluence, mobility and an abundance of resources. Wellman and Leighton cautioned, however, that promotion of the liberated model might unintentionally neglect the relevance of accessibility and a sense of place afforded by and within the local neighbourhood. They acknowledged individuals could be members of both saved (with propinquity) and liberated (without propinquity) communities simultaneously and thus exploration of both neighbourhood and community was of relevant concern to all researchers interested in urban affairs.

Krupat (1985) provided a useful summary of the community and urban neighbourhood question as analysed by a number of researchers, including several already discussed here, and introduced some of his own views. He observed, perhaps cynically but to some extent realistically, that membership in a community liberated, as proposed by Wellman and Leighton (1979), with its concept of a number of cross-cutting communities, meant that no single community could make unreasonable demands upon the individual because escape routes were provided for those who needed them. Relationships would be formed that resulted solely from choice rather than circumstances dictated by place of residence. These comments also applied to Webber's communities of interest. Similarly, Kasarda and Janowitz (1974) identified a trend towards what they labelled the "community of limited liability" in which people developed attachments and participated in local activities but

were prepared to withdraw physically or psychologically if and when local conditions failed to satisfy their needs and aspirations.

Krupat (1985) presented the view that, in many instances, communities of interest were "homogenous communities", comprised predominantly of people with like-minded views about the issue that united them. Only occasionally would these also be communities of residence, as might occur within neighbourhoods where many of the residents shared the same ethnic origin. Krupat also highlighted concerns about "communities by constraint", occupied by people who did not easily assimilate or who perhaps faced discrimination. In the Australian context, this might apply to recently arrived migrants belonging to ethnic minorities (such as in Cabramatta or Lakemba in Sydney), to Australian Aborigines in Sydney's Redfern or, in some locations, to gay communities. It might also include less independently mobile members of the community, such as the young, people with a physical or mental disability, and aged people. Krupat envisaged that the urban and perhaps, more particularly, the rurally remote poor might also be categorised in this way.

The third type of community Krupat (1985) described was that formed by "commitment". This corresponded with the neighbourhood community where functional relationships were to a large extent formed between people who appeared to have a financial stake in maintaining physical and social structures within the area. This might encompass families with young children or, alternatively, homeowners (as opposed to tenants).

At the conclusion of his review of empirical literature relating to neighbourhood, Krupat (1985) judged that urban people did not appear to have fewer or less satisfying attachments. Rather, the distinguishing aspect of these attachments was their difference in terms of spatial distribution. He identified three cohesion-producing factors, namely family, proximity and common interest. Attachments formed as a result of interests in common were highly satisfactory to some whilst, to others, they did not provide a bonding of sufficient strength to endure the passing of time or stress. In short, Krupat, like others, recognised that locally-based neighbourhood communities were only one of several possible types of communities.

There have been a number of different disciplinary approaches to exploration of neighbourhood, with geographers and other social scientists having long used the term in research about urban patterns and behaviour. Its historically synonymous use with the

term "community" has been commented upon by, among others, Gold (1980), Mercer (1975) and Stilwell (1992). This perhaps highlights a problem with operationalising both terms and with an apparent difficulty in achieving complementary approaches to cross-disciplinary research. Meaning and definitions provided by any selected group of researchers would undoubtedly vary depending on individual perspectives and disciplinary backgrounds.

Wellman and Leighton (1979) addressed this tendency for studies of community to substitute the concept of neighbourhood and advocated that sociologists' examinations of community be separated from the study of neighbourhoods. These two scholars attributed the overlap principally to an emphasis on common locality in many definitions of community – as Hillery (1955) had demonstrated – and also to the emphasis, albeit to a lesser extent, on perceived solidarity shared by neighbourhood members, perhaps as a result of particular locality status characteristics such as ethnicity, religion or education. This is important because the process of residential differentiation within cities leads to people being sifted and sorted into different geographical areas on the basis of socio-economic characteristics like ethnicity, occupation, age and income.

In this context, from a sociologist's perspective, little importance was attached to purely locational factors as major influences determining people's behaviour. Sociologists tended, in Wild's (1985) view, to be more concerned with patterns of social relationships and their associated belief systems that might or might not be locality based and interrelated. Support for this approach is to be seen in Gans' (1968) hypothesis that ways of life in modern society could be better understood if analysed in terms of class and life cycle characteristics.

The difference between a geographical emphasis on place and a sociological emphasis on networks is clear. Stilwell (1992), an economist, recognised the difficulty with operationalising concepts, hypothesising that the basic problem was defining the relationship between social process and spatial form. He argued that "neighbourhood" lacked clarity whilst "community" had an elusive spatial aspect. Stilwell offered use of an alternative term, "locales", with these defined as '... physical regions that provide the settings for social action, ranging from a room to a nation' (Stilwell 1992: 21). However, this was subsequently rejected because the term was thought to be too spatially focused at the expense of the inclusion of social processes. Cooke (1989b: 12) proposed "locality" as

the preferred expression. Locality was defined as '... the space within which the larger part of most citizens' daily working and consuming lives is lived. It is the base for a large measure of individual and social mobilisation'. This is, of course, part of the enduring geographical inference problem of relating spatial structure to process in such a way as to bring out their interdependence and mutual causality (Walmsley & Lewis 1993).

Clearly, disciplinary background affects both the salience attached to issues (with geographers tending to focus on neighbourhood and sociologists on communities) and the approach adopted. There is, nevertheless, some degree of convergence in how the two concepts are approached, with increasing emphasis on the experiential dimension. One major thrust in research over the past half century has been to focus on networks.

Networks

As previously mentioned, Bott (1957) initiated discussion about networks within communities with her treatise on the significance of social relations within close-knit and loose-knit associations, the formation of which was not necessarily dictated by locational factors. The topic has continued to receive attention, as has been demonstrated above.

In a slightly different view of community and networks within them, Sarason (1974) argued that each community was more than a political or geographical area in that it also contained a variety of institutions, groups and resources. Different components could be formally or informally related to each other (or not related at all), be transient or permanent, and vary in size, power and composition. In other words, he saw a community as a variety of networks variously resourced and operating independently of each other but often interlinking. Sarason (1974) also placed emphasis on the relevance of a community's history, stating that it was crucial for understanding some of the present qualities and social characteristics that make each one distinctive. In more recent times, networks completely removed from spatial or temporal constraints have developed through computer-mediated communications. Prior to attempting any discussion about these types of networks and their significance within the community debate, a brief examination of various interpretations regarding network structure is warranted.

Human social organisation has been described as a complex series of interactions between people with singular but more usually a series of interest-based networks (Walmsley &

Lewis 1993). Historically, there has been a strong tendency to categorise social networks within dual typologies that can be applied simultaneously to geographical localities or across space. The two types of network interaction have variously been labelled as being close-knit, densely structured or expressive, and loose-knit, open or instrumental (Flanagan 1993; Granovetter 1982; Walmsley & Lewis 1993).

Flanagan (1993) characterised networks as resource structures that can be accessed on a selective basis depending on an individual's need for information, support or social interaction. The network links were classified as both direct and indirect, with the interconnectivity afforded by a loose-knit approach potentially providing access to a large pool of resources in the form of members of the extended network. Alternatively, close-knit networks were more limiting in their extension, albeit more emotionally supportive. The latter were more akin to Walmsley & Lewis's (1993) expressive networks, categorised as involving primary level contacts with relatives and friends. Their description of instrumental networks can be likened to Flanagan's (1993) loose-knit arrangements where non-elective interactions were likely to be associated with work or non-social power play and interests.

These distinctions resonate with Granovetter's (1982) closed and open networks. He used the term "strength of weak ties" to indicate the continually expanding operational zone of open networks, the interconnectivity deemed so important by Flanagan. Closed unitary network membership within a theoretical *gemeinschaft* community might be envisaged as being introverted and stagnant. Conversely, *gesellschaft* associations enabled open multi-membership network activity, with exposure to constantly evolving and reinvigorating procedures being the norm.

Flanagan (1993) also recognised that the social network concept had contributed in an important way to our ability to create a mental image of urban social structure, where an individual's social network might resemble an intricate pattern of paths and interconnecting lines. Flanagan's book also discussed how choices available to individuals were limited due to structural constraints imposed by national and international policies and economies. He affirmed that community was not a place but a set of social ties and should not be confused with neighbourhood, although he considered that place of residence influenced the spatial distribution of social relationships and was, in effect, a physical anchor for social networks. At the same time, he considered that many forms of

community inevitably involved elements of both neighbourhood and network, giving acknowledgement to the spatial relevance of community and the importance of local communication. Flanagan (1993) is one of several writers (for example, Harasim 1994; Quarterman 1994) who recognised the increasing significance of networking through the use of computers and the internet. It is important, therefore, to look at how changes in technology and communication are impacting on the debate about the place-based nature of community.

2.4 Changes in methods of communication

As has been pointed out, Webber (1963) was not the first to recognise that changes in the way people communicate with each other have lasting ramifications for society. A quarter of a century earlier, Wirth (1938) anticipated a potential decline in the social significance of place-based communities resulting directly from advances in transport and communications development. He predicted urban lifestyles would develop among people 'wherever they may be, who have come under the spell of its institutions and personalities operating through the means of communication and transportation' (Wirth 1938: 48). In the early 1960s, Greer (1962) had similarly speculated that advances in transport and communications technology would affect the 'space time ratio' and increase the mobility of the individual and of ideas.

This section briefly outlines significant changes that have taken place in terms of advances in transportation and communications technology over the last four decades. It also discusses the various ways in which these changes are thought to have influenced the structure and functioning of not only community but also society in general, prophesised to some extent by Webber in 1963.

Webber, the futurist

Various academics (Hall 1997; Little 1999; Wellman 2000) have justifiably labelled as visionary Webber's recognition of the potential ramifications of advances in communications technology and the accompanying changes to societal structure. This was due to his perception of the different ways in which technological changes could impact on personal mobility. The 1960s were, in fact, a period of intense speculation over technological futures, with society seemingly at the cusp of a technology revolution. By

today's standards, of course, technology was relatively unsophisticated. Facsimile transmission was not regularly used as a communications medium until the late 1960s. It would be another two decades before it came into popular use throughout the world. Email facilities were beginning to be used to a limited extent by organisations with mainframe and mini-computers, primarily those with large geographically dispersed national or global networks, but it was not until the late 1970s and into the 1980s that email technology developed to comprehensively support interpersonal, social communication. The first microchip did not become commercially available until the early 1970s, heralding the subsequent phenomenal growth of personal computers.

Webber himself made no allusion to the changing transportation technology of the time, although his speculation with respect to increased mobility for specialised professionals could have been directed towards enhanced passenger services within the airline industry. This is, however, speculation, because the supersonic airline, Concord, was on the drawing boards but did not go into commercial service until 1976 and the wide-bodied twin jet aircraft, which preceded the Airbus of the late 1980s, had not commenced operations at the time of Webber's contribution. However, improvements in air travel were being widely canvassed by the early 1960s.

By contrast, it is apparent that Webber (1963) was definitely aware of advances being made in computer technology. He indicated an appreciation of the flexibility that 'new electronic data processing equipment' gave businesses for locational choice (Webber 1963: 44). He later identified improved communications, including 'real-time access to computerised databases' by the general public, as potentially critical developments (Webber 1968: 1098). Whether he was sufficiently visionary to have foreseen the internet as it operates today is a matter for conjecture. Arguably, it is the internet more than any other technological development which has dramatically transformed communications, facilitating what Harvey (2000) labelled 'time-space compression' and enabling communities without propinquity to flourish.

Towards the end of the 1960s, Webber argued that rapid and continuing technological developments, together with the decline (relative to income) in costs associated with long-distance interaction – both in transportation and telecommunication – produced more and more people willing and able to pay the cost of greater mobility. In addition, educational opportunities enabled the younger generation of professionals to enter into national and

international cultures. This expansion of knowledge was responsible for triggering 'a rapid explosion of life-space – both geographically and cognitively' (Webber 1968: 1099-1100).

These changes in society came about at a time when there was an expansion in service industries that demanded tertiary qualifications rather than unskilled labour. *The Economist* (in Webber 1968) recognised this changing emphasis as responsible for producing a gap between juxtaposed populations at widely different stages of development. It gave as an example the Watts riots in Los Angeles in the late 1960s, which were interpreted as resulting from social unrest related to the widening of the social distance and expanding differentials in opportunity for geographically identifiable communities that were relatively poor. Residents of such locations were missing out on benefits accruing elsewhere as a result of advances in technology.

The information poor

Whilst the so-called technological revolution has fundamentally altered dimensions of time and space, Webber (1968) recognised that not everyone would be equipped with the knowledge and mobility to participate on an equal footing. The Watts example is a case in point. Webber argued that the significance of the local community could become restricted to providing services for children and also for those adults who had not sought or were not able to participate in the new information age. How these services would be delivered and what they would be was not addressed, other than to suggest that there should be a concerted effort to assimilate all sectors of society into the changing urban environment, including those described as having impeded social mobility, or to use Webber's expression, 'the left-behind'.

Castells (1987) also warned that it should not be assumed the technological advances automatically meant individuals' activities and networks were freed from the spatial constraints of their neighbourhoods. The effect of technological efficiencies would vary, in his view, according to a range of factors associated with social, economic, cultural and political processes that shaped not only how the technology was used but also its general availability and level of accessibility.

More recent commentary on the impact of the enormous advances in transport and communications technology has highlighted this ability to bring additional liberation to

those already well educated and mobile but not necessarily to all sections of society (Droege 1995; Stilwell 1992; Tanner 1999). Although this technology has been widely proclaimed as a democratising medium, under present conditions, it appears the advantages often remain inaccessible to the unemployed and the unskilled as well as the financially and information poor. Stilwell (1992) noted that whilst Castells did not address social life and residential patterns, he did recognise that changes in information technology did not translate into greater freedom for all in the urban environment. Tanner (1999) similarly summarised technological impact by observing that, whilst it would be liberating for many, for others it accentuated problems of loneliness, alienation and loss of community.

The widening gap between the technological "haves" and "have-nots" has caused concern to some writers regarding the future direction of communities and society as a whole. Stilwell (1992) observed that, paradoxically, annihilation of space by information technology could promote unbalanced employment opportunities in the urban environment. This was because centre-periphery inequalities could be reinforced or further developed through the central business district remaining influential for the managerial elite, with mundane work relegated to outlying areas. In short, improved telecommunications and vastly increased information flows were serving to entrench some of the inequality in society.

Webber's view was that CWP would initially be a hallmark of the affluent middle class. Improvements in information technology might increase the probability of CWP being a characteristic of the haves and localism a feature in the lives of the have-nots. It is important therefore to consider the nature of new types of communities that are said to be emerging in cyberspace as a result of computer mediated communication (CMC), together with the perceived effects on urban society.

Virtual communities

Frederick (1994) was one of many scholars in the early 1990s to write about the emergence since the mid 1980s of a global society, with its members participating in many non-place communities equivalent to Webber's CWPs. He declared that, with the advent of personal computers, international publications, advanced telecommunications via facsimile and the internet, '... personal and professional communications can be maintained irrespective of time and place ...' (Frederick 1994: 284).

Associations that develop in cyberspace between people who use CMC for personal interaction happen in what has become known as "virtual communities", a term that Rheingold (1994) is accredited with popularising. He distinguished between human and virtual communities, where the former belonged "in real life" – that is, to the physical world of family, neighbourhood and a circle of acquaintances – whilst the latter existed at the intersection of humanity and cyberspace. Virtual communities were, according to Rheingold (1994: 284), '… cultural aggregations that emerged when enough people bump into each other often enough in cyberspace'. Such communities enabled instant access to a large number of people, facilitating establishment and sustenance of relationships under terms and conditions that gratified the individual. Rheingold (1994: 61) saw cyberspace users as '… deliberately experimenting with fracturing traditional notions of identity by living as multiple simultaneous personae in different virtual neighbourhoods'.

One of the distinguishing differences which Rheingold (1994) highlighted between the development of traditional and virtual communities was that, in the former, it was usual for people to meet first and then get to know each other; in the latter, a choice of whether or not to meet was made at a later stage after some knowledge of the person had been established. This was rather different from Webber's notion of CWP where members made initial contact face-to-face through affiliation with a professional, issue- or interest-based organisation, perhaps at a conference. Like-minded people, drawn together by a common interest, might subsequently be attracted to communicate with each other through CMC. The general intent behind continued contact would be the same as that afforded by membership within most organisations: individuals would benefit through thought stimulation, cross-pollination of ideas, information gain or for social gratification. However, by communicating within cyberspace, participation was not limited by spatial proximity or temporal factors. Initiating and continuing contact within virtual communities, however, might be prompted by quite different motivations to those already outlined.

In Rheingold's (1994) opinion, the existence of a group of people making common connection through CMC did not automatically mean a community had been established. This accorded with Harasim and Wells' (1994) view that community was more than a gathering of people to accomplish a task. However, Harasim and Walls (1994: 349) accepted that a community could emerge as a result of the accumulation of shared

experiences over the internet in the long-term. This could occur through what they labelled "solidarity", formed through the establishment of sentimental bonds or identification distinct from functional roles. In their discussion, Harasim and Wells (1994) reiterated earlier interpretations of community (for example, Krupat 1985; Stacey 1969) that identified other essential components, such as shared culture or codes that allowed members to understand each other, and a history that provided the group with an identity. Rheingold (1994) also recognised these factors as important ingredients for community and deemed a community *could* become established from within a computer-linked group as the result of the accumulation of a shared past in cyberspace. If a community *did* emerge as the result of these linkages, then, according to Rheingold, it would be associated with a definite sense of place in people's minds (albeit place in a non-material sense).

In spite of these claims, Jacobson (1994) stipulated that face-to-face gatherings (in conjunction with the longevity of a group's existence) *were* crucial to stabilising relationships into what could become a community. He contended that personal meetings in a geographic location must occur for the development of a sense of place. If such meetings did occur, then classification as a virtual community was no longer applicable. In accord with Jacobson's (1994) view, Calhoun (1998) suggested the label virtual community was an overstatement in many instances as many members of such networks, arguably the most active ones (such as Rheingold's own on-line community), lived within the same city. Calhoun (1998) argued that maintenance of face-to-face contact, strictly speaking, precluded categorisation as a virtual community.

In short, virtual communities were not an extension of what Webber envisaged as CWPs. Rather, they were something very different. It may be, then, that communication within virtual communities is not facilitating the emergence of CWP so much as fostering an alternative unforeseen by Webber. As has been demonstrated, there are polarised views on whether virtual contact alone comprises a community or whether such contact has to be amplified by personal face-to-face contact to justify the label community; in turn, this could nullify its classification as a virtual community.

In addition to concern about what constitutes a virtual community, there has also been considerable debate about whether such communities have altered the *ways* in which individuals interact, not only within them but also within place-based communities. Some writers in North America (for example, Etzioni 1996) have suggested that virtual

communities produce the same type of interaction as face-to-fact contact. Others, including Ife (1995) and Jones (1995a), have warned that virtual communities are capable of removing members' associations with a locality or neighbourhood and of stifling interpersonal interaction except through a computer. Ife (1995) saw removal of face-to-face personal relations from the concept of community as the ultimate in the depersonalisation of society. Jones (1995a) was of a similar opinion, warning that when community membership becomes simply a matter of subscribing or unsubscribing to a chat group or bulletin board, the nature of interaction differs: people could elect to participate or withdraw with little or no consequence. From a similar perspective, Truss (2003) lamented the advent of an emerging new language generated by CMC, an issue being pursued by some linguists (for example, Crystal 2001). Truss (2003) regretted replacement of face-to-face conversations by material (such as jokes, pictures, homilies and petitions) being forwarded indiscriminately to every name on an individual's email address book. Latham (1998) presented a different but complementary view on the manner in which virtual communities can reshape interpersonal relations. In recognition of the growing popularity and complexity of computer software games, he foresaw recreational pursuits as increasingly involving people competing against machines rather than interacting with each other.

Thus it can be seen that there has been significant discussion regarding the nature of virtual communities and how CMC has altered the ways in which people interact with each other. Questions remain about whether virtual communities are real, pseudo, or something entirely new in the realm of social contacts. That CMC has altered the ways in which people can communicate is clear. Whether it also encourages individuals to limit levels and types of involvement is also worthy of investigation.

Developing trends in technological advancement have been seen by some as reinforcing existing social tendency towards greater emphasis on individualism (Castells 1985b) – an extension of the *gesellschaft* influences originally suggested by Tonnies. Among other potential factors promoting this tendency are the increasing proportion of people living alone, the decreasing size of households, and the changing nature of the nuclear family. Castells (1985b) proposed that the increasing dominance of commercialism and individualism in urban societies attracted people to involvement in virtual communities. It has also been suggested that hunger for elements of *gemeinschaft* intimacy lost as a result of these tendencies were pull factors towards virtual communities (Rheingold 1994).

Interaction through CMC with others who would never meet face-to-face has been described as a display of pseudo-intimacy helping to reduce the hunger for more realistic relationships (Johnston 1992). Such trends must be of concern to those who regard face-to-face contact, communication and community as among fundamental human needs.

Others (for example, Ife 1995) have expressed concern that almost all relationships that people entered into within a virtual community were conditional rather than absolute. People not only chose which communities of interest to belong to but also were able to vary the level of their involvement, even to the extent of complete and immediate withdrawal. In other words, membership of virtual communities permits a desired level of anonymity to be achieved. It also allows individuals to construct their own identities or personae. People are therefore less constrained by usual social ties and obligations. Tanner (1999) maintained that diminishing responsibilities exemplified within virtual communities also extended into the neighbourhood. As a result, there was no longer the same sense of obligation to contribute to a community where benefits could accrue, not only in the form of what is sometimes called social capital but also through the provision of services and facilities resulting from voluntary participation.

An extension of this viewpoint was the proposition that, if acquaintances were minimal, people were less likely to be concerned about the welfare of neighbours or to be considerate towards their situation. If people were able to immediately withdraw into another social environment through CMC, then there was a strong possibility that there would be less concern for the consequences of actions within the local place environment. Tanner (1999: 47) called this trend the 'dogma of freedom' in that it promoted maximum individual freedom alongside minimal personal social involvement. Despite these criticisms of virtual communities enabled by CMC, there are many who support this form of interaction because of the perceived benefits it affords.

A number of notions have been presented about ways in which CMC can improve communities and people's lives. One simplified view (Wise 1997) was that many of the political, moral and social problems of post-modern society have developed through the inability of people to communicate adequately. Thus, from this perspective, improved communication methods will solve the problems. A much earlier viewpoint expressed by Licklider and Taylor (1968) about the potential of computers to be used as communication

devices was that they would be more effective and productive than other methods of communication and, therefore, more enjoyable.

The argument for the need for new communities has been advanced by those with the perception that community has disintegrated in traditional localities, such as urban neighbourhoods, with the result that people now yearn for and seek it in other places. Advocates of virtual communities, such as Mitchell (2000) and Rheingold (1994), have argued that CMC has the potential to not only promote new types and formations of community, but also to renew the sense of community and nurturing other types of communities. Calhoun (1998) mentioned a variety of ways that this could be achieved, such as allowing people to stay in touch between face-to-face meetings with family, friends or work colleagues and for arranging such meetings. In this respect, it could help to maintain face-to-face networks, supplementing activity rather than substituting, whether geographically dispersed or otherwise.

CMC has enabled telecommuting; for example, from a person's home to employer. In this context, it possibly has supplemented work that also goes on face-to-face. This form of spatial mobility has primarily been a requirement of professionals, businesses or organisations. However, although telecommuting has offered greater spatial flexibility and could operate independently from other forms of contact, it has to date been applicable to a comparatively small section of the workforce (Forster 1999). Whether or not greater home-based and home-area interaction, prompted by the flexibility of telecommuting, compensates for the loss of daily workplace interaction is a moot point.

From another viewpoint, Heffron (2000) highlighted benefits in the selectivity of association permitted within virtual communities, in that they supported the development of cultural and socio-spatial enclaves. In his view, affiliations through CMC could become a matter of individual choice, driven less by communal obligations and more by broader considerations associated with personal preferences, the push and pull of the market place, and perhaps notions of societal responsibilities. This selectivity could permit liberation of marginalised groups or those who were different from oppressive conformism (Tanner 1999). In other words, there is a body of thought which suggests that CMC can be liberating and therefore supportive of pluralism in society. According to this view, it is not socio-economic status which will predispose some people to CWP so much as personal

tastes and interests. In short, it is individual characteristics which are likely to foster interaction.

Others (Calhoun 1998) questioned whether CMC did, in fact, facilitate meetings between strangers. It is difficult to measure the extent to which cultural cross-over really does happen, given that people have long been able to choose lifestyle and location largely in terms of personal preferences and cultural similarities (or, in the case of the disadvantaged, have had location and lifestyle imposed on them). Allowing that CMC might assist in this type of networking does not mean it is a replacement for face-to-face meetings. For example, Flanagan (1993) noted that many people welcomed opportunities to travel to meetings of a social or business nature with others with similar tendencies, tastes or disadvantages. In this sense, perhaps CMC aids avoidance beyond preferred boundaries of comfort, contributing to more exaggerated levels of segregation within the urban environment.

CMC has been credited with facilitating interest group activities. In general terms, a community of interest is based on a single issue (sometimes broadly defined, as in the case of hobbies like bird watching), thus solely attracting people sharing that particular interest. However, it can be argued that such groupings should not be regarded as communities *per se*. It is also possible that CMC might encourage further stereotyping of interest groups. By attracting people with similarities of opinion, often on a single issue, participation might be limited. This could result in a society segmented by networks, with an extension of this being a society less tolerant of a variety of differing opinions.

In short, CMC by itself cannot be declared to facilitate interactions and dealings with the complete identity of individuals: nor does it provide a public realm in which members of different groupings can engage with each other across the boundaries of their differences. Evidence could not be found that showed CMC contributed towards bonding people in the types of dense networks traditionally associated with place communities. However, there seems to have been very limited empirical research on this topic.

This perhaps highlights one of the significant differences between virtual communities and locality-based communities. The dimensions of interaction via CMC, although operating independently of spatial or temporal proximity, are nevertheless no broader or narrower in scope, larger in number or smaller, than the desired level of involvement. This is because

members can control exposure levels prior to contact being made or received. Even relatively impersonal face-to-face relationships are with identifiable persons and have the potential for changing their character if parties expand the frame of their interaction. In contrast, CMC encourages proliferation of indirect relationships.

This essential difference between cyberspace and face-to-face relationships needs to be recognised. It is also important to recognise that virtual communities can deny individuals an attachment to place, or at least diminish that attachment. This is important because there is a school of thought which argues that such attachment is possibly an innate human need and certainly a significant contributor to human wellbeing. The emergence of virtual communities, or perhaps simply CWP, could also have adverse effects on human wellbeing by reducing social capital and mutual concerns.

2.5 Social capital

In the past decade, there has been substantial debate about social capital, despite the fact that, according to Winter (2000a: 5), 'there is limited understanding of the concept itself, its theoretical underpinnings, its empirical measurement and its application to public policy'. A popular conception has been that social capital is a 'resource of action', as promoted in the 1980s by both Bourdieu and Coleman (Hogan & Owen 2000: 75). Whilst Bourdieu was of the view that individuals could gain access to the social capital possessed by a group, Coleman asserted it could not be an attribute of individuals but was instead only produced by group associations or society as a whole (Hogan & Owen 2000).

Putnam (2000) has been accredited with popularising the term *social capital* in the 1990s. He described social capital with reference to 'connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them'. These features of social organisation facilitated coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Baum et al. (2000: 251) defined social capital as 'the building of healthy communities through collective, mutually beneficial interaction and accomplishments, particularly those demonstrated through social and civic participation'.

Interest in the concept of social capital has been particularly strong in the realm of politics. The OECD (2001) has recognised the increasing attention given in recent years to social capital by exploring the idea that social relationships, as well as the individual attributes

that comprise human capital, play a critical role in economic activity and human wellbeing. The OECD identified that, whilst governments and societies sought economic growth, they were also increasingly concerned about its impact on the natural and social environments. They were concerned about:

> ... the possibility of new forms of exclusion and poverty as the use of technology expands and, more generally, about the quality of life and health of children, the elderly and individuals and groups confronting economic and social disadvantage. Dealing with these concerns is made all the more complex by changing patterns of work, family life and community engagement. (OECD 2001: 9)

In the Australian context, Onyx and Bullen (1997) were among the first to attempt measurement of the emergent concept of social capital. They maintained that social capital could not be generated by individuals acting on their own; a network of voluntary and equal relationships presented preferred circumstances for its development (Onyx & Bullen 2000). These interlocking networks might be comprised of people in families, neighbourhoods, communities and other social arenas, and could be both formal and informal structures. Cox (1995) regarded individual as well as group structures as important and possibly synergetic in creating trust and mutuality.

In 2002, the ABS conducted its initial General Social Survey, addressing issues ranging across many aspects of life important to human wellbeing. Many of the questions related to forms of social capital (labelled social attachments in the survey) in recognition of the perception that:

> Relationships and networks are at the core of society and are essential to individual wellbeing. People are linked together with family and friends, and in wider communities characterised by shared interests, sympathies or living circumstances. Individuals may also form looser networks with people encountered through various activities and life situations. A person's networks may be concentrated in a local area, or more dispersed and sustained by travel and communications systems. There is a growing exploration of the ways in which social attachment may contribute to positive outcomes for individuals in areas such as health and employment, and for communities in broader opportunities for participation and in safer environments. (ABS 2003b: 1).

The overall position seems to be that there is the potential for social capital to be accumulated by individuals, groups, organisations and communities for the benefit of all. Because social capital results from historical accumulation acquired from circumstance, it cannot be relinquished or reinstated by decree. It is regarded as not being as volatile as other forms of capital, in that it builds up slowly and tends to be relatively stable, thus

enduring over long periods of time (Inkeles 2000). However, it is not, of course, inviolate and can be dissipated like any form of capital.

Different types of social capital are recognised, as are different ways in which it manifests itself within communities. This means that communities with similar overall levels of social capital can also have very different profiles of social capital elements, as shown in Onyx & Bullen's (2000) study. Putnam (2000) described two types of social capital. Bonding social capital – sometimes labelled "thick ties" – was formed by choice or necessity and was inward looking, tending to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups. The alternative type, bridging social capital – comprised of "thin ties" – was outward looking; it encompassed people across diverse social arenas. These latter networks were regarded as helpful for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion. By contrast, bonding social capital was better for reinforcing specific reciprocity and mobilising solidarity.

Globalisation has been suggested by politicians (Latham 1998) and academics (Stewart-Weeks 1998) as impacting in a negative sense upon resources of social capital by making it harder for people to sustain traditional connections and communities, in part due to the changing nature of markets. In addition, the growth of government and its role as a service provider has been linked to a decline in community volunteer work because individuals in the wider community feel less obliged to become engaged in voluntary activities of community and civic society. These functions have come to be seen largely as the responsibility of the public sector. These views have been countered by the argument that effective national and local leadership should play a role in the strengthening of both government and community, thereby enhancing social capital (Edgar 2001; Stewart-Weeks 2000).

One repercussion suggested by Mackay (1993) of recognised high levels of mobility in contemporary Australian society has been a tendency for some family members to lose touch with each other. Because of this and other factors suggested above, connections within and to local communities are sometimes broken, leading to feelings of isolation. Erosion of trust – sometimes referred to as the glue of social capital (Everingham 2001) – and a decrease in mutual responsibility and civic engagement by individuals are said to follow, also leading to reduced levels of social capital. Latham (1998) further speculated that the advent of television might present another reason for a decline in social capital.

This is on the premise that television contributed to people's perceptions of their environment, presenting perhaps unrealistic expectations of family life and community and the dangers and problems within their neighbourhood or areas of interaction.

Social capital is promoted as an important asset to be aspired to by individuals, community groups, workplaces or other organisations, whether local, national or global. A decline in its balance could have adverse effects on human wellbeing. Another factor that is regarded with more certainty as a significant contributor to individual human wellbeing is attachment to place which, in turn, produces a sense of belonging. The benefits of such sentiments in respect of geographically based communities have long been explored.

2.6   Place attachment and the importance of belonging

In the historically traditional community, a sense of belonging was understood to be associated with social relations that were established within a particular geographical area (Stacey 1969). Walmsley (1988) described a sense of belonging to a place as an affective bond that develops between people and locations over a period of time. Whilst humans can elect to substantially reduce their level of exposure to the environment in which they live by controlling the extent of their involvement, they cannot become physically separated from it. For this reason, any consideration of the effect that place has on people cannot be separated from the effect of people on place. As Walmsley contends, people-place interaction must therefore be studied in its totality.

Having a sense of belonging to a place was defined by Johnston, Gregory and Smith (1994) as encompassing the deep attachments developed in everyday life by individuals and communities to places through experiences, memory and intention. Place attachments have also been seen as providing anchors in life, thereby helping to orient individuals (Brown & Perkins 1992). These attachments can result in long-term bonds between people, their homes and communities – even a culture – and they focus on familiarity, stability and security. They can occur naturally in the context of daily experience, often without conscious intent. Altman and Low (1992) observed that the place attachment process might be more importantly developed as a result of social interactions than due to the location itself, suggesting it is more strongly influenced by people and culture than by physical characteristics. Nevertheless, the geographical environment is important. Brown and Perkins (1992) characterised place attachments as being usually associated with

positive feelings, with negative connections to place illustrative of failed attachments, sometimes experienced as alienation.

Thus having a sense of place produces a sense of belonging. This significance of place in day-to-day living and in the quality of urban life has long been explored by geographers and social scientists in addition to those already referenced, including Barker (1963), Feldman (1990), Ley (1983), McDermott (1975), Relph (1976), Suttles (1972) and Tuan (1980). The nexus between people and place has been variously seen as encompassing the bonding of people to places; the sense of self-definition that comes with attachment to place; the subjective perception of, and the feelings people have about, their environment; and a biological response to the surrounding physical environment (Altman & Low 1992; Bolton 1992; Brown and Perkins 1992; Hummon 1992). Walmsley and Lewis (1993) presented a synopsis of this field of study to the early 1990s in their broadly encompassing synthesis of geographical literature concerned with people, knowledge of their environment and subsequent spatial behaviour (that is, where people go and what they do).

A sense of attachment can therefore be considered multifaceted, involving behavioural expectations, sensitivities and emotions, and offering stability but also change through exposing individuals to an ongoing and evolving blend of people, processes, and places. Of particular interest is the view expounded by Maslow (1954) that the need for a sense of belonging is an innate need felt by all human beings. Moreover, according to this view, it is a relatively basic need which has to be fulfilled (after physiological and safety needs have been met) before higher order needs such as self-actualisation can be contemplated (Walmsley 1988).

Tuan (1980) argued that, by the 1980s, a strong longing for recapturing a sense of belonging to place had developed in North America. He identified technological progress and spatial mobility (two of Webber's catalysts for CWP) as well as the achievement of a national culture as factors largely responsible for changing perceptions of community and the demise of the importance of place in late-twentieth-century North America. According to Tuan, a backlash against these factors resulted in the widespread resurgence of conservative, traditional and nostalgic values that were, prior to this re-emergence, in the process of being challenged.

Around the same time, sense of place was a theme also pursued by Brower (1980: 192), who explained attachment to place by reference to '... the feelings of possessiveness that an occupant has towards a particular territory because of its association with self-image or social identity'. Brower uses the term "home range" to refer to the network of spaces that individuals regularly occupy. Moreover, he linked a strong identification to place with a tendency to personalise it, particularly at the micro-level of the dwelling. Brower's proposed four-part typology, based on occupancy of space comprised of personal, community, society and free occupancy space, has many similarities to Altman's (1975) earlier proposal for a three-part typology with classifications of primary, secondary and public territory. The micro-scale of rooms and dwellings is not of concern in this thesis. What is significant is the fact that both typologies recognised local territory as a major dimension of place attachment. According to Brower (1980) and as previously recognised by Warren (1963) and Wild (1985), strengthening of the non-place attachments could have the concomitant effect of weakening territorial connectivity. The corollary is that local place connectivity can become diluted to such an extent that it is comparatively irrelevant or unimportant to individuals. This can have detrimental effects on wellbeing because the rupturing of the people-place bond can upset senses of identity and belonging.

Pacione (1984) supported Brower's concept of home range, with the space within the home range which was most regularly used and inhabited labelled the "core area". This area covers what has often been described by the notion of neighbourhood. Interestingly, Pacione (1984: 381) could see 'no reason ... why individuals cannot be simultaneously members of a neighbourhood community as well as a more extensive community without propinquity'. He went on: 'while the majority of middle-class urbanites may have social networks which are not neighbourhood based ... for others including the elderly, children, lower class and housewives the neighbourhood is a significant territorial identity'. In other words, many writers have recognised the importance of place in human wellbeing. Even those who have accepted that certain groups (such as the middle class) might have non-place-based links recognise that some link to territory, particularly to neighbourhood, is invariably important.

Since the early 1990s, there appears to have been a resurgent interest in the virtues and instincts of place attachment and community. Stewart-Weeks (2000) has depicted this as a paradox of globalisation and attributed it in part to people's irresistible and resilient instinct for an identity and context that linked them to specific places and localities. In

part, the resurgent interest in place was also a response to people's removal and physical remoteness from arenas where the decision-making processes determining many aspects of their lives occurred.

In his consideration of feelings and perceptions about a place, Aitken (1990) declared that people were instilled with senses that were a reflection of not only past experiences but also of how they perceived the situation might be in the future. Anderson and Gale (1992: 2) reiterated this sentiment when they maintained that humans '... rely on visions and vocabularies to help us interpret our experiences, our relationship to others and the world at large, and social change'. They conceived place to be one of the interrelated geographical elements – the others were space, landscape, region, and environment – that formed the building blocks with which people constructed their understanding of the world. In this context, place is integral to a world view.

Bolton (1992) ascribed other values to place attachment, suggesting it was an important form of intangible capital that had positive externalities. He linked having a sense of place with a basic feeling of pleasure generated from social interactions happening in a particular setting (which he labelled a community). In a slightly different view, Hummon (1992) reverted to Tuan's (1980) expression of "rootedness" to describe the strong local sense of home experienced by individuals that facilitated development of an emotional attachment to their local area. Read (1996) expanded the interpretation of this metaphor when, with reference to the Australian context, he asserted:

> People are apt to sink their roots into, and form attachments to, any place they find themselves. Beyond the self-constructed units of the house, the house-garden, the house-garden-street, the house-garden-street-shops – all which have their own perceived unity – lie the neighbourhood, the territory, the suburb, the physical space and the social community. (Read 1996: 174)

This is an important point because it shows place operating at individual and communal levels and often related to home, neighbours, or residential settings, with boundaries not necessarily easily specified. Read (1996) also exposed the transience of the meaning of place to individuals, showing how this could fluctuate with, for example, changes in household composition or stages in the life cycle. He envisaged that a person's perceived neighbourhood area could extend or contract depending on levels and types of interaction. However, Read pointed out that because these changes often happened unconsciously, it could prove difficult to gauge the significance of a place to an individual. Often people

only become aware themselves of a depth of feeling when their place was threatened by some external force.

The issue of how people's sense of belonging to place can be studied is a critically important one encompassing not just standard positivistic social science techniques but also humanistic approaches which seek to place the researcher in the shoes of the subject in order to see the world through the subject's eyes, thereby focusing on the process of *verstehen* and empathy (Walmsley & Lewis 1993). It is, however, beyond the capacity of this review to explore the scope of this methodological issue.

Evaluating translations of place attachment within the contemporary urban environment, Mackay (1999) reviewed reasons for an apparent affection in Australian cities for *village* and interpreted it as a desire to live in more connected, interdependent communities. He cautioned that there needed to be realisation that the romantic ideals of village referenced a way of life and could not automatically be captured by the establishment of a village-style development in an urban location. In seeking village values, Mackay argued that people were hoping for closer connections with neighbours, the security of feeling safe, and ways to compensate for shrinking households. Attachment to place is central to these feelings, with the argument that wellbeing is advanced, wherever belonging is enhanced.

Speaking specifically of the Australian context, Edgar (2001) expressed concern that, in their search for Australia as a nation, political parties have forgotten the relevance of individuals' sense of identity and its close linkage to sense of place. He urged that this need for place attachment be recognised, nurtured and reinforced by governments and institutions. Edgar argued that individual identities become established and sustained at local and regional levels rather than the national one because Australians were generally embedded in culture at those levels. In support of this view, he cited the particular loyalties individuals directed towards the home, a local sporting side, the neighbourhood and its local issues. Edgar (2001: 82) argued for recognition of the importance of both place- and interest-based communities in individuals' lives, insisting: '[i]f our diverse interests are not adequately acknowledged, the fabric of this national patchwork can be very easily torn apart'.

In a different approach, Beggs, Hurlbert and Haines (1996) examined the concept of place attachment as it related to community attachment. This was prompted by Wilkinson's

(1986) argument that community development would not occur without community action. For this reason, it is important to attempt understanding of the mechanisms of community attachment, with the objective of identifying a process through which individual members of a community might help promote its development.

Beggs, Hurlbert and Haines (1996) identified and explored three dimensions of community attachment: those associated with interpersonal or local network connections, local participation, and sentiments. Their results showed that length of residence, social position and stage in the life cycle were the three key variables explaining the strength of community attachment. They also suggested that greater participation in community groups might contribute towards the development of community attachment. Beggs, Hurlbert and Haines recommended diversification of membership participation from narrow, single-interest groups to more community-focused groups, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas, believing that this might foster more egalitarian development at the expense of growth promoted by a local elite.

This is not, of course, the place to explore the nature and character of community development. The important point to make is that the intertwining of social relationships with spatial identity has attracted many researchers from several fields to study human attachment to place. Cox (1995), for example, suggested that a sense of place, developed through processes such as taking part in social and communal activities, was essential to the human condition. Over a number of decades, including more recently, many have written of its critical importance to people's wellbeing or, in some cases, to their discontent (Altman & Low 1992; Bolton 1992; Brower 1980; Brown & Perkins 1992; Edgar 2001; Hayden 1995; Hummon 1992; Mackay 1993; Tuan 1977, 1980; Walmsley 1988). It is important, therefore, to examine what is meant by wellbeing and how this might relate to notions of community.

2.7 Human wellbeing

It is generally recognised that a feeling of wellbeing is an important component of life. Elements of wellbeing can include material belongings, health, economic activity, safety, place in the community, emotional wellbeing and intimacy. National wellbeing is measured with reference to monetary transactions – growth in gross domestic product (GDP) or gross national product (GNP) (Hamilton 2003).

One of the first social scientists to try to define human wellbeing was Maslow (1954). He argued that all humans have a number of needs, such as the need to belong, to be loved, to have self-esteem, and to realise one's potential. Moreover, Maslow argued that some of these might be higher order needs which might not be of concern to the individual until more fundamental needs, generally recognised as essential human rights, have been met. In other words, Maslow set an important precedent in recognising that wellbeing was a multi-dimensional concept which encompassed a range of components of human existence. In some renderings of the term "wellbeing", these components are described as "fundamental social concerns".

The OECD first published its list of social concerns (as a result of consultation between member governments, including Australia) under eight headings for primary goal areas, divided into 24 areas of fundamental social concern (Table 2-4). Much of the subsequent literature has concentrated on wellbeing at an individual level although, in more recent times, ways of measuring social or collective wellbeing have also received attention (Black & Hughes 2001; Cox 1995, 1998; Mathers & Douglas 1998; OECD 2001). Generally speaking, the terms "wellbeing", "human wellbeing", and "social wellbeing" are used interchangeably. (Future references to "wellbeing" throughout this thesis imply "human wellbeing" unless otherwise stated.) For social researchers, these terms are also frequently synonymous with "quality of life".

In acknowledging the multi-faceted nature of wellbeing, Kline (1995) named a number of characteristics similar to Maslow's hierarchy as being significant. These include having a sense of belonging, a sense of place, a sense of self-worth, a sense of safety, and a sense of connection with nature, as well as the provision of goods and services which meet people's needs. The trouble with approaches such as those of Maslow and subsequent writers is that they are difficult to operationalise. Intuitively, for example, it seems entirely likely that a sense of belonging is important to individual assessments of wellbeing but it is difficult to decide how such belonging can be measured. In a sense, many experiential sensations can only be truly assessed through humanistic research and such research rarely provides quantitative measures of conditions.

Table 2-4: OECD list of fundamental social concerns – 1973
(Source: OECD 1976: 14-17)

Fundamental social concern

A *Health*

1. The probability of a healthy life through all stages of the life cycle.
2. The impact of health impairment in individuals.

B *Individual development through learning*

1. The acquisition by children of the basic knowledge, skills and values necessary for their individual development and their successful functioning as citizens in their society.
2. The availability of opportunities for continuing self-development and the propensity of individuals to use them.
3. The maintenance and development by individuals of the knowledge, skills and flexibility required to fulfil their economic potential and to enable them to integrate themselves in the economic process if they wish to do so.
4. The individual's satisfaction with the process of individual development through learning while he is in the process.
5. The maintenance and development of the cultural heritage relative to its positive contribution to the wellbeing of the members of various social groups.

C *Employment and the quality of working life*

1. The availability of gainful employment for those who desire it.
2. The quality of working life.
3. Individual satisfaction with the experience of working life.

D *Time and leisure*

1. The availability of effective choices for the use of time.

E *Command over goods and services*

1. The personal command over goods and services.
2. The number of individuals experiencing material deprivation.
3. The extent of equity in the distribution of command over goods and services.
4. The quality, range of choice and accessibility of private and public goods and services.
5. The protection of individuals and families against economic hazards.

F *Physical environment*

1. Housing conditions.
2. Population exposure to harmful and/or unpleasant pollutants.
3. The benefit derived by the population from the use and management of the environment.

G *Personal safety and the administration of justice*

1. Violence, victimisation and harassment suffered by individuals.
2. Fairness and humanity of the administration of justice.
3. The extent of confidence in the administration of justice.

H *Social opportunity and participation*

1. The degree of social inequality.
2. The extent of opportunity for participation in community life, institutions and decision-making.

An alternative approach to the measurement of wellbeing is to focus on available statistics. Smith (1977), for instance, in his analysis of social wellbeing in the USA, differentiated a number of dimensions of wellbeing (Table 2-5) and then sought to collect data that described how well (or badly) an area fared in terms of each dimension. The procedure allowed the statistical organisation of data to produce overall indices of wellbeing.

Table 2-5: General criteria for social wellbeing in the United States – 1973
(Source: Smith 1973: 70)

A. *Income, wealth and employment*
    1. Income and wealth
    2. Employment status
    3. Income supplements
 B. *The living environment*
    1. Housing
    2. The neighbourhood
    3. The physical environment
 C. *Health*
    1. Physical health
    2. Mental health
 D. *Education*
    1. Achievement
    2. Duration and quality
	E. *Social order*
	    1. Personal pathologies
	    2. Family breakdown
	    3. Crime and delinquency
	    4. Public order and safety
	 F. *Social belonging (alienation and participation)*
	    1. Democratic participation
	    2. Criminal justice
	    3. Segregation
	 G. *Recreation and leisure*
	    1. Recreation facilities
	    2. Culture and the arts
	    3. Leisure available

Walmsley (1980) has done this for Australia. In essence, this approach relied on the identification of social indicators to define "life chances" (Table 2-6). Ideally, these were statistics that measured fundamental components of human existence in such a way as to indicate whether levels of wellbeing were increasing or decreasing. The crime rate might be one such indicator in that an increase in crime rates could indicate a lowering of wellbeing (assuming that the increase has not come about simply because of changed policing or data recording procedures). Using a different approach, Baum et al. (1999) also used secondary data analysis to examine spatial variations in wellbeing in contemporary Australia (described as communities of opportunity and vulnerability), as did Vinson (1999, 2004) in his studies of the distribution of social disadvantage in Victoria and New South Wales.

Table 2-6: "Life chances" indicators for Australia – 1980
(Source: Walmsley 1980: 48)

Life chance		Indicator	Direction of influence on life chances*
A.	*Employment*	1. % population employed in workforce	+
		2. Male activity rate	+
		3. Female activity rate	+
		4. % population unemployed	–
		5. % population employers or self-employed	+
B.	*Education*	1. % population with no schooling	–
		2. % population with only primary education	–
		3. % population without professional and trade qualifications	–
C.	*Social stability*	1. Imbalance in sex ratio (male/female)	–
		2. % population permanently separated, divorced, widowed	–
D.	*Social belonging and participation*	1. % population overseas born and resident in Australia less than five years	–
		2. % population in same census division in 1966 and 1971	+
		3. % dwelling owner occupied	+
		4. Average rental of furnished house	–
E.	*Living conditions*	1. Crowding (bedrooms/people)	+
		2. % dwellings without gas and electricity	–
		3. % dwellings without motor vehicle	–
		4. % population under 5 years	–
		5. % population beyond retirement age	–
F.	*Family status*	1. % population living in single family households	+

*   A positive sign (+) means that an increase in the value of the indicator may be interpreted as increasing life chances and wellbeing. A negative sign (–) means the reverse.

Local indicators have a long history (see Walmsley 1980) and have been used to good effect in Australia to throw light on patterns of inequality (Walmsley & Weinand 1997). In practice, however, it is often difficult to collect social indicators for what are undeniably important components of wellbeing. Health, for example, is notoriously difficult to measure.

The difficulty of measuring wellbeing through the use of indicators was seen as a major factor in their declining popularity over the past two decades. However, social indicators are once again in vogue, with two trends in the contemporary world mainly accounting for this (OECD 2001): general unease about whether economic growth is adequate as the defining objective of public policy (the current catch-cry is for sustainable development); and growing concern about whether social programs are offering good value for money.

The demand for social indicators in response to these trends has been ascribed to governments needing tools to assess the cost-effectiveness of policies.

The OECD has, in recent years, developed an updated set of indicators for the measurement of social conditions and social policies. Table 2-7 lists these *new* indicators that, according to the OECD (2003b), will help satisfy demand for quantitative evidence on whether societies are becoming more or less equal, healthy, dependent and cohesive.

Social indicators can be used to assess whether and how the broad thrust of policy is addressing important social issues but they cannot indicate the reasons for outcomes. Because it is difficult to compile overall indices of wellbeing for areas or groups, researchers often resort to asking survey respondents to assess subjectively overall wellbeing in terms of a single scale.

Table 2-7: The new list of OECD social indicators – 2002
(Source: after OECD 2003b)

General context indicators (GE)			
GE1.	National income	GE4.	Fertility rates
GE2.	Age dependency ratio	GE5.	Divorce rates
GE3.	Foreign and foreign-born population	GE6.	Refugees and asylum-seekers
		GE7.	Lone parent families

Social status		*Social response*	
Self-sufficiency indicators (SS)			
SS1.	Employment	SS6.	Educational attainment
SS2.	Unemployment	SS7.	Student performances
SS3.	Jobless households	SS10.	Replacement rates
SS4.	Working mothers	SS13.	Activation policies
SS11.	Jobless youth	SS14.	Spending on education
SS12.	Retirement ages	SS15.	Early childhood education and care
		SS16.	Literacy
		SS17.	Tax wedge
		EQ3.	Public social expenditure
		EQ4.	Net social expenditure
Equity indicators (EQ)			
EQ1.	Old age income	EQ3.	Public social expenditure
EQ7.	Relative poverty	EQ4.	Net social expenditure
EQ8.	Income inequality	EQ5.	Benefit recipiency
EQ9.	Low paid employment	EQ11.	Minimum wages
EQ10.	Gender wage gap	EQ12.	Private social expenditure
SS3.	Jobless households	SS6.	Educational attainment
SS4.	Working mothers	SS10.	Replacement rates
SS11.	Jobless youth	SS13.	Activation policies
		SS14.	Spending on education
		SS15.	Early childhood education and care
		SS16.	Literacy
Health indicators (HE)			
HE1.	Potential years of life lost	HE4.	Health care expenditure
HE3.	Health adjusted life expectancy	HE5.	Responsibility for financing health care
HE6.	Life expectancy	HE10.	Older people in institutions
HE7.	Infant mortality	HE11.	Health infrastructure
HE8.	Disability-free life expectancy	SS6.	Educational attainment
HE9	Accidents	SS15.	Early childhood education and care
SS2.	Unemployment		
EQ7.	Relative poverty		
CO7.	Drug use and related deaths		
Social cohesion indicators (CO)			
CO1.	Strikes	CO6.	Prisoners
CO2.	Suicide	EQ3.	Public social expenditure
CO3.	Crime	SS6.	Educational attainment
CO7.	Drug use and related deaths	SS13.	Activation policies
CO8.	Group membership	SS15.	Early childhood education and care
CO9.	Voting	HE4.	Health care expenditure
EQ7.	Relative poverty		
SS2.	Unemployment		
SS11.	Jobless youth		

Conclusion

There are, inevitably, some sections of the literature on community that have not been directly considered within this chapter. Given the focus of this thesis on positivistic social science research, there has not been, for example, any in-depth exploration of the post-humanist literature, notably recent post-structuralist feminist critiques of the concept of community (for example, Liepens 2000; Fincher & Jacobs 1998). This is not to say that these writings are unimportant. Rather a thesis grounded on such critiques would be very different from the one undertaken. It has been sufficient in the present context to show familiarity with the main dimensions of humanistic geography.

From the epistemological approach taken here, it is clear that the concept of community is multi-faceted and complex, with two issues attracting particular attention and concern: the changing nature of community and the degree to which communities are place-related. Both these issues underpinned Webber's notion of CWP. This chapter has provided an interpretation of what Webber said, setting it in the context of the time of his writing and overall intellectual debate. It has also elaborated the concept with respect to contemporary Australian urban living.

One simple view is that Webber was a visionary who was ahead of his time. According to this view, CWPs will emerge sooner or later. A contrary view is that CWPs will, at best, be a phenomenon peculiar to certain affluent, educated and cyberspaced individuals. This difference of opinion might be merely an academic concern were it not for the fact that a sense of community or belonging is generally recognised as an important contributor to the wellbeing of most individuals and the fact that, in a practical sense, city dwellers have often relied on local area support and facilities.

Societal changes over the past four decades might have affected different aspects of urban community living in Australia by comparison with some other locations such as North America and the UK. However, in all countries alluded to in the literature, it seems that neighbourhood still has important meaning as a spatial term and as a unit of investigation. Whilst labels such as "community of care" and "community of commitment", even "community lost", have been variously promoted within the literature to describe place-based communities in the urban environment, throughout the thesis the term "the neighbourhood" is used to refer to people's "home patch" within suburban Sydney.

This review has assessed the extent to which the literature recognises that communities with which people identify extend beyond the neighbourhood. "Communities of limited liability", "liberated communities", "communities of convenience" and "homogenous communities" have been described in ways that identify them with the concept of "communities of interest" not limited by geography, a central component in Webber's notion of CWPs. Nevertheless, for any type of community to exist, it has been shown that key elements are expected to include a serse of identity and history, with common interests shared by its members.

Much of the discussion has centred on the issues of improved methods of communication and transportation made possible by advances in technology and identified by Webber as major determinants of any substantial growth in CWPs. With the advent of CMC, "virtual communities" have emerged, introducing what might well be an alternative form of community altogether, competing with other recognised types of CWPs. Whilst it is clear that virtual communities do not embrace members from all sections of society and accordingly do not offer additional freedom for all people in the urban environment, it is possibly characteristics of the individual rather than socio-economic status that are central to inducing involvement. In addition, the values, norms and moral codes traditionally associated with other forms of community apparently do not automatically apply within virtual communities, where different conventions for entering, participating, interacting, and exiting, even for language, exist. It is also possible that CMC impacts upon interaction levels and forms in neighbourhoods and other types of CWPs, either by influencing different patterns of behaviour or interpersonal associations, although empirical evidence has so far been elusive.

In summary, the literature provides no clear indication of the extent to which CWPs exist in virtual communities, in interest communities or elsewhere. Nor is there a clear indication of the impact of changing community identity on neighbourhood involvement and interactions, individuals' sense of belonging or wellbeing. It is these issues that are of central concern to this research.