Democratic Governance for Sustainable Regional Development

Theorising Regional Development Governance Processes for Achieving Ecologically Sustainable Development Objectives in the Hunter Region of New South Wales

by

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June 2007
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Preface

When my husband, Greg Heys, died in June 2007 he was moving towards completion of his PhD thesis. Three years had passed when I asked a group of his professional colleagues and friends what they thought could happen with the work he had done. They felt that the work was of value, both for original and insightful contributions which Greg was making towards the understanding of regional development governance processes and for his documentation of a unique set of interviews which he conducted with Hunter people. Further, although his draft manuscript required editing, that once edited it should be made accessible.

The way ahead became clear when Len Regan, a member of the group, offered to do the editing. He inspired others of us to take up the editing work as well, and I thank Len Regan, Dr. Moira Gordon AM and Professor Brian English for committing their time, skill and dedication to the editing task. Dr. Bernard Curran I thank for his reflections on Greg’s work as indicated in his introduction to Greg’s research document, and for his liaison with Gionni di Gravio, the archivist at the University of Newcastle, leading to the placement of the document in the Cultural Collections of the Auchmuty Library of the University. My thanks to my friend Jude Conway who took on the task of proofreader and to Len Regan who committed to the additional task of formatting the document. As a result of our joint efforts Greg’s research document is now placed in the public domain.

Greg’s first supervisor for his PhD was Professor Phil O’Neill, followed by Dr. Lesley Instone. I thank them for their work with Greg.

In preparing the document for publication, minor editorial changes have been made to correct typographical errors, punctuation and grammatical mistakes, and to improve readability. Interviewees’ statements have been edited to remove those sounds, words, phrases and word sequences which occur in natural speech as people prepare their ideas for verbal expression, but which impede the flow of those ideas in written form. These expressions were meticulously recorded by Greg in transcribing the interview tapes. Their omission is indicated by “…” in the document presented.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to “Greg’s thesis team”. Each member of the team had a far deeper appreciation than I of the work involved when we embarked on this project. Their support and commitment has been unwavering and has enabled us to achieve what we set out to do.

Wendy Heys
Coordinating Editor
June 2014
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 1</th>
<th>Introduction to a Particular Region and Time, to an Activist, and to a Rationale for a Line of Inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Observer Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Taking the Case Study Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Early Environmental Planning in the Hunter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>The Hunter Resources Boom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>New Managerialism in Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.1</td>
<td>Coming to Grips with New Legislation and New Managerialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.2</td>
<td>Learning to Plan Strategically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Pathways to Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>Revitalizing the CBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8.1</td>
<td>CBD Redevelopment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8.2</td>
<td>The Council as Urban Designer and Consent Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8.2.1</td>
<td>Redeveloping Honeysuckle: Council, Community and the State-run Development Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8.3</td>
<td>Council as Property Owner and Developer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8.4</td>
<td>Council as Entrepreneur: Marketing, Promoting, Refurbishing and Activating the CBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Post Steelmaking Newcastle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>Understanding a Region’s History</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 2</th>
<th>A Brief History of Regional Development Institutions and Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outline dated 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May 2004</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline dated 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; June 2004</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 3</th>
<th>Tracing Evolving Modes of Governance in a Changing Region – Shifting Bedrock</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Using Grounded Theory within the Case Study Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Setting up the Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Revealing History, Justifying Strategies and Institutional Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1</td>
<td>The Open Codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2</td>
<td>Histories, Understandings and Practices in the Hunter Region:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.1</td>
<td>What the Open Codes Say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.1</td>
<td>Industrial Life and Regional Development in the South Maitland Coalfields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.1.1</td>
<td>Emergence of the Idea of ‘Region’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.2</td>
<td>Regional Economic Development – Post Keynesian Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.3</td>
<td>Regional Strategic Planning and Development – Nascent Regionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.4</td>
<td>From Conservationists to Urban and Environmental Activists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.4.1</td>
<td>Insisting on the ‘Rule of Law’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.4.2</td>
<td>Persuasive Means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.4.3</td>
<td>Tactical Manoeuvres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.5</td>
<td>Cultural/Social Equity Tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.5.1</td>
<td>Developing the Region through (Re)empowering its people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.5.2</td>
<td>Responding to Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.5.3</td>
<td>Creative Organisation Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.5.4</td>
<td>Recruiting (Local) Economic Development Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3</td>
<td>Others ‘Loners, Lurkers and Strong Men (and Women)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>A Region’s Journey towards an Understanding and Practice of Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1</td>
<td>Axial Codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2</td>
<td>Building on Motivation to Develop Beliefs and Practices of Sustainability in the Hunter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2.1</td>
<td>Describing Regional Motivation and its Dynamic Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2.2</td>
<td>Regional Beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2.3</td>
<td>Significant Event(s) and Alliances and Resistances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2.4</td>
<td>The Process of Making Sense for Regional Reflexive Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2.5</td>
<td>Regional Reflexive Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.3</td>
<td>Evolution of Sustainability in the Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.4</td>
<td>Diffusion of Regional Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Rallying Demand for Regional Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.1</td>
<td>Selective Coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.2</td>
<td>Elements for Building a Model Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.3</td>
<td>Organising Principles and Processes for Regional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER 4**

4.1 Shorter Draft  Constructing Participative Governance Sustainability in a Changing Region  137
Ingredients for the Development of Sustainability  138

4.2 Longer Draft Constructing Participative Governance for Ecologically Sustainable Development in a Changing Region - Creating Understanding and Practices  139
List of Tables

Table 3.1 Sampling Matrix for Interviews 36
Table 3.2 Open Codes, their Properties and Dimensions 38
Table 3.3 Axial Codes and Categories Derived from the Data 79
Table 3.4 Selective Codes and Categories Derived from the Data 122

List of Figures

Figure 3.1 Regional Historical Framework for the Study 35
Figure 3.2 Shaping Sustainability: Relationships between Codes 81
Figure 4.1 Shaping Sustainability: Relationships between Codes 137
Figure 4.2 Relationships within and between Codes 138
Figure 4.3 Shaping Sustainability: Relationships between Codes 139

Appendices

References 143
Personal Communications 144
Acronyms 145
List of Informants Interviewed 147
Introduction

"I was a sporadic student who played a lot of sport, prayed seriously and read a lot. In my junior years at high school I read the usual boys' heroism adventures stuff, but later was greatly influenced by one of the set texts, 'David Copperfield', which led me to a rash of other Dickens' books and the conscious beginnings of my sense of moral justice."


The choice by Greg Heys for his Ph.D. study: 'Democratic Governance for Sustainable Regional Development' was not only the result of a special interest developed in earlier studies, it was in fact also the end result of a personal commitment to the ideals of equity, community and social justice. This commitment could have led him to a life as a missionary priest in the Pacific but fortunately a change of mind did not lead to a change of heart. From the time he left University in 1972 until 2000, the year of his Ph.D. enrolment, this personal commitment led him from being a novice social planner to an academic position at the University of Newcastle and then to the office of Lord Mayor of Newcastle from 1995 to 1999. What we have in this present study is the result of 30 years of personal commitment and practical experience as a social worker, a researcher and a political leader.

Sadly the work is unfinished. However, for those interested in the past, present and future of Newcastle and the Hunter region this thesis is relevant for work that still needs to done. Local councils are still struggling to meet ever-increasing demands with ever decreasing resources. At times they combine, at other times they compete and conflict. The ever-constant cycles of Labour and Coalition governments, state and federal, militate against consistency in policy and planning. The industries, the engines of the Hunter - mining, wine, equine, agriculture and manufacturing - struggle with and against one another on an uneven playing field. Citizens continue to be frustrated by issues like employment, education, pollution and confusion over climate change. They are overwhelmed by an increasing sense of helplessness in the face of the powerful companies that call the shots, and sadly, they mourn the loss of those values that underpin community life - trust, integrity and loyalty. To make matters worse, the ideal and idea of the 'common good' lies buried beneath a pile of political promises and statements of 'Corporate Social Responsibility'.

To appreciate how Greg's life and work informs this study we need only to look at his approach to his role with Orange City Council as Community Development Officer, and subsequently with the Bathurst-Orange Development Corporation. As his friend and colleague, Len Regan, recalls: "Greg was the Social Planner when the Bathurst-Orange Development Corporation was established in 1975 to build a new city of 250,000 people and greatly expand the existing cities of Bathurst and Orange. The residents of the region were justified in feeling threatened by this bureaucratic invasion of architects, surveyors and economists who had no social or community perspective on the project. Greg established and diligently managed a Consultative Committee drawn from well-respected community members. Greg facilitated the social impact studies that the Committee generated and he ensured that the Committee's view on all aspects of the Growth Centre development were on the agenda for every Corporation Board meeting. Greg was patient but persistent in ensuring that the social dimensions of the Growth Centre were inculcated into every aspect of its planning and development. These were admirable qualities that Greg retained and nurtured right throughout his academic, professional and political careers."

In 1982 Greg and his wife Wendy moved to Newcastle where Greg took up the role of Project Manager for the Hunter Social Development Programme (NSW Department Of Youth and Community Services) followed by Regional Coordinator for the Home and Community Care Programme (NSW Department of Family and Community Services). In 1988 he was appointed as Lecturer in the Department of Social Work at the University of Newcastle. By 1990, Greg was developing and teaching courses on the social and equity dimensions in urban and regional development policy and practice, and convening the organising committee of a three-day conference on Social Justice which focussed on the themes of equity, environment and education. In 1991 he was elected to Newcastle City Council. In 1995 he was elected as Lord Mayor, a position he held till 1999, the year before he enrolled for his Ph.D.

As Lord Mayor, Greg came face to face with three major issues which are reflected in his choice of research topic: the closure of BHP and its effect on the local economy, the global drive for sustainability, and the rise of regionalism.
Moira Gordon, another friend, tells a story that provides a good insight into Greg's *modus operandi*. In 1997 Moira attended a Regional Science Association conference in Wellington, NZ. She was surprised to see Greg there and delighted to find the Lord Mayor listening to leading researchers reporting on their studies of regional issues: "However that was typical of Greg Heys' approach. His was a very collaborative style - collaborative rather than confrontational. The aim was to tap into the collective wisdom to arrive at consensus decision-making."

With the impending closure of BHP, in 1996 Greg established within Newcastle City Council a *Taskforce on Steelmaking in Newcastle*, to examine the social and economic effects on the region. This Taskforce brought together representatives from all affected quarters - trade union, business, politicians and community. The magnitude and impact of the impending closure was immense and is similar to what might happen to Newcastle and the Hunter when coal mining ceases.

This leads inevitably to the question of sustainability and, of course, to the word of our time, 'resilience'. Moira Gordon reminds us that there was at the time “emerging interest in social planning, environmental consciousness, regional awareness and opportunities to promote regional planning initiatives.” To this end Greg played a key role in 1997 in securing Newcastle as a venue for an internationally recognised conference. This was a lead-up conference to a United Nations General Assembly Special Session entitled 'Pathways to Sustainability: Local Initiatives for Cities and Towns'. This enabled Council and the Newcastle community to re-image itself, and for Greg to claim that his leadership as Lord Mayor saw Newcastle become a truly active Australian city in pursuing ecologically sustainable development policies and practices in the late 1990s.

How do you develop a regional consciousness or a sense of regional community or even a region united in common purpose? The Hunter Valley Research Foundation had led the way back in 1955. Thereafter subsequent local, state and federal initiatives followed, each trying to project the voice of the region. Greg saw and realized the value of this groundwork. Moira Gordon commented: "There was much goodwill evident in the approaches taken in the late 90s. There was a focus on the big picture and an acceptance that wisdom is unlikely to be the prerogative of just one person or group; that much can be gained by listening to the perspective that others can bring; and that by drawing on the wisdom of many groups a better outcome could be achieved. The focus was on the good of the whole region, not in parroting a mantra that promoted one's own sectional gain."

Greg's professional, political and academic experience, combined with his personal qualities, his ideals and his values provided an excellent foundation on which to build his thesis. The core strength of this work lies in the fact that by the time Greg came to the thesis he had met, and won the trust of, a number of 'Champions for the Hunter' who provided him with a broad and deep range of personal experiences of, and professional insights into, the Hunter region. It is one of the great disappointments of this unfinished work that Greg was not able to bring the full force of his analysis of their insights into the study. But for those interested in following in his footsteps he shows the way.

And he also showed the way in his life and work. It was all about social justice and community values. Even while researching and writing he worked as Project Manager with the Hunter Community Renewal Scheme on a strategy to improve the quality of life in Windale, a housing estate. He also found time to be the chairperson of the local Community Forum, convenor of Friends of the Regal Cinema and a member of Rotary.

Those of us who have had the privilege of working together on editing Greg's work have done so not only because of our regard and admiration for Greg but also out of our respect and affection for his wife, Wendy. We dedicate this work of ours to the love, loyalty and tenacity of this truly dedicated woman. Another great friend, Jude Conway, sums up what we all feel: "I knew that I would learn valuable insights while going through Greg Heys' thesis and what has stayed with me is his valuing of development based on 'the quadruple bottom line' - environmental, social, economic and governance; and in his exploration of the stumbling blocks."

Bernie Curran  
on behalf of Wendy Heys, Jude Conway, Brian English, Moira Gordon and Len Regan
Chapter 1

Introduction to a Particular Region and Time, to an Activist, and to a Rationale for a Line of Inquiry

“The City’s community, church, union and business leaders were expectantly collected in the dark wood panelled boardroom of BHP’s original headquarters building. We had just moved into the room from the company’s cafeteria where we had been waiting for an hour beyond our scheduled meeting time, talking amongst ourselves and cursorily absorbing the large graphic display of the company’s history, industrial processes and samples of its products. During our wait the external relations manager reported the progress of the great man’s changing impressions during his meetings with committees set up to manage the transition and his inspections around the plant. That morning he had arrived in Newcastle for the first time expecting to be ambushed by the media. His premonition was based on a letter, sent to him a week before his visit from one of the city’s leaders asking if he was still committed to the company’s undertaking to develop the Steel River project and to redevelop its steel plant site once steelmaking ceased. The Newcastle community was concerned with the newly appointed American Managing Director’s reported comments at a Melbourne Business Summit that a company had to be committed to ‘shareholder value’. He was reported to be pleasantly surprised that he wasn’t ambushed by the media, that the workers of the plant had increased productivity during the last years of its operation and that a pathways programme designed to ease workers into alternative jobs, careers and lifestyle changes was being taken up so positively ... Finally he was ushered into the boardroom. While tea and scones were served Paul Anderson and his wife were introduced to us. In his speech to the gathering of leaders Paul Anderson said that a company, if it was to survive had to be concerned about three things – it had to be responsible to its workers, it had to be responsible to the community in which it was located and it had to be responsible to its shareholders.

The reality in a few years afterwards saw Anderson’s three-pronged assurance swing solidly around to shareholder value.” (Heys 2000, 23)

1.1. Introduction

This thesis is impelled by the regional development history of a particular region and the practice of the writer as a participant observer and an activist who has been living and working over a period of 35 years in regional New South Wales (NSW) as a planner, a state public servant, an academic and a local government politician. This work is motivated by a desire to examine and understand a particular regional development experience in order to develop better regional development practice. Determining a desired direction in which cities and regions should be heading is a further motivation for this work. What is the desired direction, who has the right to determine it and who in the end determines it are questions that are argued over throughout the development of plans and strategies and the implementation or the lack of implementation of their subsequent programmes. Seeking to understand these questions and how the answers are reflected in policies and practices of regional development agents and communities is a further strong motivation for this work.

The participant observer and activist position has both the advantages of being in a close position of participation, observation (of self and others) and the disadvantages of being so close that valid analysis and self-reflection on one’s actions and those of other players is layered by context and subjectivity. The 25-year observation period in this era of the region’s 200-year European history has been sufficient to discern and assess various regional objectives and strategies, to have watched different theories and

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1 Editors’ note: Broken Hill Propriety Company Limited Newcastle steelworks.
2 Editors’ note: The period of 35 years is from 1972 to 2007.
3 Editors’ note: The period of 25 years is from 1982 to 2007.
practices of regional development being deployed, to have studied the support and resistance to them, and finally, to have appraised their material effects. What follows from this realisation, more importantly, is the further realisation that regional activists with longer histories of involvement are likely to have developed theories and practices based on longer-term experience.

The disadvantage of this participant observer and activist position raises the questions of what is the most appropriate methodology for this thesis and which methods redress the disadvantages and amplify the strengths of this research position.

This chapter outlines and argues apposite methodological considerations. It establishes the justification of the project’s validity by tracing change and resistance to change in the Hunter region of NSW, Australia, through the story of a series of regional, local and organisational strategies over a 25-year period.

1.2. Observer Context

Over 17 years of this period I played an evolving regional development practitioner role beginning as a manager of a regional community development programme, then as a researcher and academic, a councillor on Newcastle City Council in the early 1990s and as lord mayor of Newcastle in the late 1990s. My term of office was highlighted by the United Nations sponsored *Pathways to Sustainability Conference: Local Initiatives for Cities and Towns* in 1997, and the closure of the BHP’s 84-year-old steelmaking plant in 1999.

*Greg Heys’ note – Insert paragraph on reflexivity here.*

These stories of regional development practice outline agency goals, strategies and customs, the countervailing tactics of stakeholder organisations and groups and communities, and the role of the state. I will start with the early period of regional planning and the Hunter Development Board. Then I will describe and assess the organisational and urban changes faced by Newcastle City Council and the strategies that flowed from the *Pathways to Sustainability* conference held in 1997. Finally I will analyse how the region’s organisations, institutions, groups and communities responded to the closure of the BHP steelmaking plant in 1999.

1.3. Taking the Case Study Method

The case study relies on “observation and verbal types of analysis” as opposed to “survey techniques and quantitative analysis” (Mitchell 1983, 187). Mitchell characterises a case study as “a detailed examination of an event (or series of events) which the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some identified general theoretical principle” (op. cit. 192). Its principle benefit is that it “preserve(s) the *unitary character of the social object being studied*” (op. cit. 191) as opposed to studying specific traits. This is the most appropriate research model for this thesis and this chapter, which seeks to understand the dynamic relationships within the overall system of individual, institutional and regional histories, practices and institutional networks. Mitchell refers to Eckstein’s classification of case studies of which his *Heuristic case study* category is most appropriate for this work. This category is “used to stimulate the imagination towards discerning important general problems and possible theoretical solutions…” (op. cit. 196).

The urge to analyse regional development practice history arises for a number of reasons. A beginning point in the Hunter region at least, is that regional development plans, campaigns and strategies only have limited success in achieving their objectives. While enthusiastically supported during the creation phase, once launched the strategies quickly lose strength of coherence and the support of the necessary agencies for them to act as regional development guider. While a long time period is devoted to constructing regional plans, strategies etc, when they are finished, they are quickly overtaken by new

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4 Editors’ note: The period of 17 years is from 1982 to 1999.
information, new threats and opportunities, new development theories and changing organisational alliances. Furthermore in recent years, resources and structures to implement them are either inadequate or short lived. Regional plans are generally controversial; different regional communities and organisations disagree with their objectives, their consequences or their processes. Beyond the agency responsible for their construction, there is little commitment to a regional strategy from the institutions and organisations that are identified as responsible for their implementation. A study of regional development agencies and their strategies in the Hunter region during the period 1978 to 1988 demonstrated their failure to achieve their stated objectives of broadening the economic base of the region (Heys 1990). Why prepare these strategies? What purpose does this cooperative searching activity during their construction phase serve? These questions need to be answered for it would seem that once the construction is completed there is either no structure to implement the plans or one that is inadequate to the task. The first part of this story deals with the evidence from this period and recounts the aspirations of the region’s early regional planning and development practitioners.

1.4. Early Environmental Planning in the Hunter

Self-conscious “scientific” regional planning in the Hunter Valley of NSW has strong roots in the devastating floods of 1955. The Hunter Valley Research Foundation was set up to research the mechanisms leading to flooding in the valley and to recommend ways of preventing similar disasters in the future. The Foundation was successful in developing flood mitigation and soil conservation programmes. From its success the awareness grew among regional leaders that setting up a regional organisation to research a regional problem, works.

The Discussion Paper for the first Regional Plan was produced by a coalition of regional interests under the auspices of the regionally based state-sponsored planning agency. This Discussion Paper called for: 1) the establishment of the Hunter Development Board (HDB) to advise the Minister for Industrial Development and Decentralisation on regional development and to implement strategies for broadening the economic base of the region, and 2) a taskforce that would be a “multi-disciplinary professional task force, to undertake comprehensive investigations and to make specific recommendations to government about the future economic and social development of the Hunter Region” (Hunter Regional Planning Committee 1978, No 3, 1.11). The recommended composition of this taskforce is illuminating. It was to consist of people seconded from government departments and would be supervised by a Steering Committee drawn from the Hunter Planning Committee, Hunter Development Board, Regional Advisory Council and government departments. “Here was a mechanism that would coordinate the activities and resources of the state and federal public sector to parallel the HDB’s coordination of the private sector” (Heys 1990, 40). The proposed taskforce’s composition is informative on three counts: firstly it demonstrates an effort to create a body that represented what the authors saw as the relevant government agencies for regional development so that through their coordination, the state government cooperation could be assured; secondly, that a united front had a high probability of ensuring support for regional initiatives; and, thirdly, the absence of whole sectors of the regional community, namely civil society and labour. Clearly, from the multi-disciplinary taskforce’s steering committee’s point of view regional development is a matter for the professional bureaucracy, government and business. The Hunter Development Board had similar design principles and assumptions about success in the composition of its Board - business, government departments, local government and, interestingly, the union movement. Its composition recognised that regional development players came from a broader range of interests than those accepted for the proposed “multi-disciplinary professional taskforce”. The strategy behind the structure of these organisations was that by reflecting relevant stakeholder groups on their governing boards a coordinated and therefore united persuasive voice to funnel regional views to government would be produced.

Fervent aspirations and regionally favoured solutions for the balanced development of the region are apparent in the enthusiasm and commitment that went into the first Hunter Regional Environmental Plan. Commitment to the development of the region can be quickly established by noting that 21 technical working papers and three discussion papers were prepared and a lot of consultation time went into the production of the initial phase of the Regional Plan. The next stage in developing the Plan was to agree on descriptions for economic, environmental and social goals and objectives. This planning exercise is
notable for its comprehensive and thorough description of the goals and objectives which give the impression that getting the wording right is an important part of setting up the Plan for success. Note the wording of the economic objectives.

“...the provision of a greater diversity of industrial and commercial development to broaden the Region’s economic base and increase the range and quality of job opportunities, while reducing the Region’s sensitivity to fluctuations in the external market” (Regional Environmental Plan No.1, 1982, 112).

The Plan was impressive because of the scope. Its goals encompassed social, regional economy, land use settlement and transport, natural resources and environmental issues and problems. The issues for the region were identified by dint of much research and consultation. The challenges were defined comprehensively. What was the solution? Coordination. Coordination of both the government and private sectors through the “multi-disciplinary professional taskforce and the Hunter Development Board”. Coordination, the idea of one representative body speaking for the region is a theme that continues to run through regional strategising. In the 1970s, coordination was to be achieved through a multi-representational organisation given a charter by government.

The state government established the Hunter Development Board but ignored the recommendations for the multi-disciplinary taskforce. The regional hopes for a comprehensive environmental plan were dealt with even more harshly. The foreword to the Hunter Regional Environmental Plan No. 1 (1982) sums up the government’s attitude.

“The Plan, which is limited in scope to environmental planning issues and current knowledge available on these, establishes a broad settlement pattern for the Region, based on anticipated population growth; a general policy framework to guide future public and private development over the next 20 years...

It does not address all problems confronting the Region, as many of these are outside its scope...

The way in which the government will continue to address these problems and issues is through the adoption of complementary public authority plans and ongoing programs” (op. cit. iii).

Thus the new Department of Environment and Planning decided to stay within its charter and not address the region’s broader definition of environmental concerns. The Plan then stepped outside its charter and assured its audience that the government would address the issues beyond the scope of the Department through “complementary public authority plans and ongoing programs”. In later years the Department updated its Regional Plan on three occasions, staying within the confines of population growth, infrastructure requirements, land capability and land use.

The Hunter Development Board continued to be a successful coordination vehicle for regional development, spearheading many campaigns, delegations and submissions, and managing some labour market programmes. It was so successful that its sponsoring government department wrote an evaluation of it that led to its demise in 1988 at the hands of the new Greiner-led Coalition state government (Heys 1990, 102-108). It was replaced by the Hunter Economic Development Council (HEDC), which saw itself in a similar role to the HDB, “the government’s adviser on the Hunter” (op. cit. 118). It also followed the practice of previous regional development strategies, with the production of a comprehensive, widely consulted Hunter Economic Development Strategy (Hunter Economic Development Council 1992). The composition of its board departed from the representational design principle of the HDB, electing to only constitute itself of people with business and industry experience. However the strictness of this approach has been moderated in the appointments of its last two boards that have been set up by a Labor government. Meanwhile, the HDB did not go away. While only a shadow of its former strength it continued to run labour market programmes and to make significant contributions to regional development strategy building.

In the mid 1970s regional actors thought that through research, consultation and the establishment of bodies composed of relevant agencies, successful regional development could be achieved. In this way a common position about the region’s challenges and solutions would be agreed and a united and therefore strong view expressed to government and business. Although success was limited, elements of this approach are evident in the practice of their descendants today.
1.5. The Hunter Resources Boom

With the approval of large open cut coalmines, the construction of aluminium smelters and coal-fired power stations in the late 1970s, the new premier of NSW, Neville Wran declared that the Hunter Valley would become the Ruhr Valley of NSW. The region had been planning since the mid 1970s to develop its economy to produce more jobs whilst protecting its environment. The coal and power development strategy was Mr. Wran’s response and the government was keen to offset the undesirable impacts of population change brought about by this development. Rural towns with long established social and economic patterns would change significantly. Their populations were predicted to grow at a faster rate and the newcomers would be highly paid and skilled. Two illustrations of these changes were: prices in the supermarkets went up, and long-term residents were disappointed that they or their children could not compete for the high skilled jobs. The Hunter Social Development Programme (HSDP) was a government response to these kinds of changes.

The HSDP’s design was a change from the current programme planning and practice. Since the mid 70s state government departments had provided funds to community groups to provide community services on the basis of what was known as the ‘submission model’ where a case for funds was made by a local group and the decision makers decided the merit of the competing submissions. Quite often the public servants decided to spread the inadequate budget across most of the submissions leaving none of them adequately funded. The criticism of the ‘submission model’ was that well-connected, well-resourced communities were more likely to win the funds.

The HSDP, administered by the Department of Youth and Community Services, was the first state government programme to attempt a ‘needs based’ approach where initial research and consultation were undertaken across the Hunter Valley to identify the high priority negative impacts of change and agree on facilities and services to address them. The contest over the merits of the ‘submission’ and ‘needs based’ models was part of the reason for the conflict surrounding this change to programme planning and practice. There was conflict from the beginning and conflict developed at all levels of the programme. The two departmental officers and their supporters, who designed and reviewed the HSDP recommended different design features which became the rallying points around which community members, organisations, local government and departmental officials formed. The two different design features were: whether to set up a regional funds allocation committee (representative of regional stakeholders to achieve a greater degree of local control over funds allocation) or not; and the ‘submission’ versus the ‘needs based’ model of funds allocation.

The Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme (WSAAS) managed by the Department of Environment and Planning used the ‘submission’ model. Its first triennial evaluation report criticised the performance of the HSDP, which was based on ‘needs analysis’, when it was only two months into its implementation.

Conflict developed at other levels of the programme. Firstly, there was ongoing competition between the government departments managing the HSDP and WSAAS for control of the HSDP. Secondly, some local municipal authorities disagreed with the HSDP manager over the type and design of projects identified and the level of funds allocated to them. There were value disparities behind some of these differences. Two examples illustrate the nature of conflict at this level. One council planner thought that two women’s refuges could be funded for the price proposed for one. He thought that using volunteers and having no night shift workers was acceptable and would reduce costs. An advisory committee providing advice to the state minister on relevant standards for women’s refuges disagreed with the local council planner. Another council did not want a women’s refuge established in what was regarded as a prestigious area of its community. Thirdly, there was regular conflict both within management committees of the projects, and between committees and their workers. Much of this conflict was around management committees’ roles and the split of responsibility between management committee members and workers. Committee members who were imbued with volunteer ethos expected the same commitment (foregoing statutory pay increases and conditions), from their generally younger and tertiary educated workers.
The HSDP was one small regional development programme introduced as a government response to its strongly contested ‘resource boom’ strategy of regional development. Union and community participation in regional development has always been a strong feature in the Hunter’s history as illustrated by Metcalfe (1988). During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the union movement, environmental groups and local resident action groups formed coalitions to influence the shape of industry and government development strategies. The HSDP was representative of regional development practice in the Hunter in the 1970s and early 1980s. Governments, organisations, communities, groups and individuals involved themselves according to their perceptions of their interest, and positioned themselves according to their definitions of what they saw as key issues. With issues such as regional allocation committees, needs and project identification, and funds allocation, stakeholders outside the formal process argued their ‘democratic right’ to be involved and those stakeholders within the formal process argued for greater democratic involvement. It was assumed that government could successfully support communities with a small amount of programme funding to overcome the negative impacts of socio-economic changes that arrived with the resources boom.

1.6. New Managerialism in Local Government

1.6.1. Coming to Grips with New Legislation and New Managerialism

One of the features of regional development practice in the Hunter region in the 1980s and 1990s was the application of ‘new managerialism’ principles to the reshaping of organisations. A range of such practices were either adopted voluntarily by organisations or imposed on them by government legislation or changing economic circumstances. This section describes how the Hunter’s traditions influenced a changing structure and practice in Newcastle City Council (NCC), one of the many agencies playing a regional development role, as the ‘new managerialist’ rubric was forced on it by new legislation and the threatening economic outlook for the region.

The designer of the NSW Local Government Act (1993) described local government authorities as “competing towers of professional fiefdoms” (Mant 1994, personal communication). Local government commenced about 150 years ago in Australia with clerks and civil engineers and grew by identifying further civil, public health, planning, social and cultural needs and funding programmes to meet those needs. This evolution meant the development of new categories of professionals to deliver the new service or manage the facility. These professions developed their credentialising associations and self-preservation practices. Unacceptable consequences of this tradition can be illustrated by a prevalent attitude towards health inspectors, referred to as ‘little dictators’ who looked after their friends and used the complexity of the local government ordinance to frustrate ‘difficult’ food retail outlets. The organisation [Newcastle City Council] had protected itself with a Byzantine paper trail, married women had to resign their positions when they become pregnant and staff were discouraged from talking to the elected aldermen.

Of the many actions the new Local Government Act (1993) required of councils, the one which stands out for this history of NCC dealing with change, was the necessity to review the structure of the organisation and to place senior staff on performance contracts. The Act expected councillors to take this opportunity to redesign the organisation so that it would be more effective and efficient. In response Newcastle Council has undergone three restructures since 1994. The first general manager to be appointed under a performance contract relied on the principles of Best Practice to bring about organisational change. Training and facilitation were the key change tactics. Results were monitored by a large representative committee of workers, management and unions called the T.E.A.M. (Together, Employees And Management). The tools of this approach were: self-directed work teams which met to continually refine their work practices; flattening the management hierarchy (positions of deputy directors were abolished); and setting up workplace agreements, which provided bonuses when productivity targets were achieved. The strengths of this restructure were: workers and managers planning and implementing more efficient changes to their traditional work practices; an enterprise agreement with rates of pay greater than the industry standard; a growing sense of team morale between workers, union and management. These benefits were reflected in significant productivity improvements, although there was a dispute about the size of the gains and who made the decisions.
about spending the productivity gains. Sometimes the gains were spent before the council could deliberate their allocation in the annual budget. Some staff also criticised what they saw as the totalitarian application of the organisational change objectives and methods and the power seeking positioning of some of their colleagues.

These changes unravelled somewhat due to a change of council in 1995, the departure of the general manager and the arrival of a new one with a different management style.

A competitive market for senior officers is one of the consequences of the performance contract requirement of the new Local Government Act that was designed to prevent the traditional incumbent ‘having a job for life’ and to encourage new leadership with energy and fresh ideas. The new council elected in 1995, wanting to be sure that it had the best general manager for what it saw as a very high salary, decided in June 1996 to ‘test the market’ by openly advertising the general manager position when the general manager contract was due for renewal. Some members of the new council also mistrusted the current occupant because he was seen as being too close to the previous lord mayor. While the recruitment of the general manager is an intriguing case study in the translation of corporate boardroom myth to local government political reality (one councillor was formally advised by council to withdraw from the recruitment process due to a non-pecuniary interest arising from his frequent expression of annoyance with and non-support for the general manager for not giving his son a job in the council) the result was that council appointed a new general manager. This caused great consternation in the organisation and the business community as well as in some state government circles. One government official described the non-reappointed general manager as the best in NSW. (There may have been some self-interest in this assessment as the official was the mayor of a Sydney municipality when the outgoing general manager was the Town Clerk for the same council). One of the tasks of the outgoing general manager had been to recommend a restructure of the organisation to the new council. He had been reluctant to do this until the future of his own contract was clear. This task was now left to the new general manager. It was clear very soon after he took up his appointment that his leadership and management style was challenging and contrasted strongly with the collaborative style of the previous occupant.

In 1994 when the state Department of Local Government carried out its regular audit of council’s performance, it concluded that while the council was performing well generally, its elapsed time in approving development applications could be significantly improved by integrating the parts of the three different divisions of the organisation’s structure that handled them. This traditional divisional structure illustrates Mant’s fiefdom towers analogy well. The divisions were based on the professions of engineering, health and building, and town planning. Development control needed the knowledge and skill of all three, but rather than integrate the necessary knowledge and skill in one structural division, the workflow was segmented. Some thought having three sets of files and management for one development application resulted in inefficiencies. This recommendation from the Department of Local Government audit was one of the ‘new managerialist’ solutions.

A second design principle for the restructure was the new managerialist rubric of the funder/provider split – never have the same division of an organisation funding and providing a service or facility. Budgets and audit trails would be more transparent and competition more fierce if one division specified and funded what another division or separate organisation provided.

Another initiative of the new Local Government Act was the requirement for councils to prepare strategic plans. Each division [in NCC] had its own strategic planning resources, to varying degrees. The Planning Division had the most strategic focus. Other divisions had no strategic planning focus. The organisation’s corporate planning was separate from the divisions’ strategic planning activities. The restructure provided the opportunity to centralise the strategic planning function in one division, which would also design specifications for work and services for other divisions or outside organisations to implement.

Another opportunity of the restructure was to examine the efficiency of workflows and their divisional responsibility. For example there were inefficiencies between two divisions over the maintenance of open space, parks and physical assets like public buildings. The Engineering Services Division was
responsible for mowing the grass on roads verges while the Community Services Division mowed the grass in public parks, which were often adjacent to the road verges. Quite often, they didn’t mow the same areas at the same time. To the ratepayer this practice seemed inefficient.

There was more angst in the administration and the council over the implementation of this restructure because the implementation was drawn out and the minor amendments seemed more to do with patronage and self-interest than efficiency. This restructure had two problematic aspects, matrix management and an unbalanced organisational structure. There were fears that the strategic planning function would become an isolated tower of excellence, creating plans and writing contracts, which the rest of the organisation would have to implement. Matrix management or having two supervisors in different divisions was seen as the answer. Only some staff would be located in the strategic planning division, while other staff from different divisions would be given a strategic planning task when the task called for their particular expertise. The danger of this approach was the potential for conflict between an individual staff member’s responsibility to their Divisional Director for completing on time their operational tasks and their responsibility to the Director of Strategic Planning for completion of their strategic planning tasks. The success of matrix management relies on the senior management team being collaborative. The team needs to be able to stay focused on the goals of the whole organisation and not split into the needs, priorities and interests of separate divisions. This tension is most likely to build during difficult budget discussions when apportioning the burden of either a no-growth or a cut-back strategy is being debated. In this situation the other difficult aspect of the redesigned organisation becomes relevant. There was a vast difference in the number of staff in each division. The City Services Division contained 63% of staff establishment while another division had 4%. This disparity in divisional size brought into play the hierarchal traditions of local government with different size salary packages and four levels of hierarchy in the senior management producing a fragmenting tension in the Senior Management Team that flowed into the rest of the organisation.

A number of insights can be drawn from this organisational history. Firstly, strategies of organisational change are subverted by their contradicting management practices and dominant traditions, resulting in a new practice that reflects neither the ideal of the change initiators or the complete return to traditional practice. In council’s recent history, the change strategy of educating the organisation towards Best Practice was subverted by the ‘market place’ informed fashion of competitively seeking the best general manager, the outcome of which derailed the change strategy. Secondly, the derailment of the first change strategy provided a space for a different restructure strategy that was driven by strong advice from the Department of Local Government, clouded by a divisive leadership style that resulted in the traditional, self-interest practices re-emerging in the Senior Management Team. This new change was halted by the council’s dismissal of the general manager opening the way for a different change strategy that combined elements of the previous two.

1.6.2. Learning to Plan Strategically

While the Local Government Act (1993) required councils to prepare and exhibit a management plan and budget, ‘new managerialism’ was forcing strategic planning onto them anyway. There were other forces pushing councils to change their traditional practices as well: budgets were experiencing declines in real value; assets were wearing out or becoming irrelevant; governments were passing legislation which required councils to run their accounts like private corporations and account for the depreciation and maintenance of their assets; and there were growing community demands for new services, facilities and statutory responsibilities without the financial resources to pay for them. Habitually councils framed a budget based on the advice of their professional fiefdoms (engineers, planners, community workers, librarians, accountants) refereed by the Town Clerk. Typically the budget was based on the previous year with an increase to allow for the annual cost of living increases. Any spare money was spent on programmes and projects that were promised during election campaigns. This approach had become unsustainable. The annual operating costs were becoming greater than the total annual revenue, the reserves were too small to maintain a large ageing asset portfolio and councils were not providing adequate maintenance budgets for new assets that arose from their election promises. On the revenue raising side of the budget, councils experienced tightening of their income. The state government had
instituted ‘rate capping’ which only allowed councils to increase their rates by the cost of living index. Grants from either the state government or the federal government were also decreasing in real value.

Against this evolving cultural and organisational background Newcastle City Council undertook its first strategic planning workshop held over a weekend in 1993. The major political issue about the exercise was the expense incurred in going to a hotel in a resort area outside the Newcastle local government area. The task was writing vision, values, and mission statements, defining goals and devising a broad divisional structure for the organisation. The theory behind writing vision and mission statements is quite straightforward; the reality in council’s case was very different. The vision statement was agreed on at the end of a frustrating session - when a late arrival, quickly informed about what he had missed, declared “Newcastle – so good the world would be happy here”. Everyone quickly agreed to it with relief. The vision thereafter was subjected to disparagement and after a few years, at a specially convened strategic session, it was changed to “Great Place, Great Lifestyle”. Eighteen months later when the subsequent general manager was interviewed for her position, she added “Great Future” to round off the statement. The addition was endorsed by the organisation.

The atmosphere of the workshop was almost like that of a sensitivity training group session. Techniques like active imagination, imagining and writing up future scenarios, ‘going on helicopter rides’ to get the big picture were used to develop the written results and to build agreement. The product of the 1993 weekend workshop was the City Enhancement Plan (CEP) that supposedly defined the directions of the organisation, and relabelled the organisational divisions. However it had minimal impact on the relationships between levels of staff, between divisions and between the council and the administration.

The Best Practice training strategy, referred to above, was far more instrumental in diluting the strong hierarchy of relationships. The strategic planning workshop did not change the tradition of designing the budget based on the favourite programmes of the ‘powerful’ in the organisation. This behaviour is illustrated by the habit of the ALP [Australian Labor Party] caucus secretary who, in moving adoption of the annual budget in the council meeting, added his favourite of $1million worth of additional road works.

The City Enhancement Plan was not followed up with a process to test the feasibility of its strategies or even a set of action plans. The next budget after the Plan’s adoption did not specifically reflect its strategies except in an accidental, haphazard way in so far as it could be argued that some current programmes, structures and practices supported it.

The next attempt at strategic planning, in 1996, used a formulaic method called Business Thinking Systems, which employed a more comprehensive technique for identifying threats and pressures and their effect on council’s programmes and services using a backcasting technique to identify strategies and measure outcomes. The councillors and senior staff participating in this series of workshops identified strategies for dealing with the ‘pressures’ on local government. These strategies were then voted on to identify the high priority issues. Only a few of these issues received a majority of votes while most of them only received one vote of support. These issues were not deleted from the list of strategies. They created difficulties in subsequent resource allocation debates as their supporters argued they were just as worthy as the strategies that received majority support. Finally, there was no feasibility testing of the strategies or development of action plans.

The following attempt at strategic planning was rather different. By this point the council had collected over 100 strategic and policy documents. The Strategic Planning Division submitted a draft paper to council that culled, rationalised and streamlined these documents so that after a series of discussions at council’s Strategic Issues Committee, the document was refined into Newcastle Strategic Directions (Newcastle City Council 1998a), which outlined council’s vision and values, for itself as an organisation and for its community. This document has been used to guide the development of the Newcastle Urban Strategy, a major policy guide for land use planning and development in the city, and its assets management plan and two of council’s subsequent budgets.

To contrast the vain hope of developing strategic plans that could drive concrete programmes and budgets, it is useful to describe the realities facing the council and councillors as they saw them, the
actual budget making process, and to recount some of the decisions that are made on ‘budget night’. Before new managerialism took effect, typically a draft budget would be designed on the basis of an increase on last year’s budget programmes of three to ten percent. New programmes and services would be resisted because they would take resources away from traditional services and programmes and habitual work practices. As the cost cutting actions (rate capping, reduction in government grants), demands for cost effectiveness (quality assurance, Best Practice benchmarking), legislation for financial transparency (public exhibition of management plans and draft budgets, public reporting on key result areas) and the raising of ethical and probity standards (guidelines for ethical behaviour from the Independent Commission Against Corruption, corporate law upgrades) by state and federal governments had their effect on local government, the organisation had to find ways of responding. The response was to replace people with information technology, rearrange workers into teams that designed their own flexible and multi-functional workflows, and change their work practices. The indicator that this change process had finally been accepted was when the engineers found a more flexible and responsive way to repair roads so that the inadequate budget could be spread further. Up until 1998 engineers had run the argument for roads on how much more money they needed to repair them or the whole network would continue to deteriorate from good to fair to poor to bad; and they had developed a computer model to demonstrate this. On ‘budget night’ their strategy had been to argue for more money rather than develop smarter ways to spend it. When the Services Division finally came up with four different ways of repairing roads (patching, rebuilding sections, sealing from water penetration and rehabilitation) rather than the one expensive way, a significant change was reached.

Workers were also part of the pressure to maintain traditional patterns of expenditure. They harkened back to the days when they had big road building equipment and a major road building programme. The needs of the city had moved on. There was no need to continue to build new major roads as the city had reached its spatial limits and its arterial network had spare capacity. The emphasis was now on repairing worn out infrastructure and big machines and programmes were no longer required. The city now needed many small programmes for road, footpaths, drainage, safety fencing, cliff and sea wall stabilisation. This example illustrates the change dynamics faced by the professional fiefdoms. We now turn to the councillors and their spending habits.

Councillors typically saw council budgets as the way to have their various and collectively disjointed election spending promises implemented - a reasonable expectation in a democracy. When they were elected to council they began to appreciate the challenge of fulfilling their promises as they assessed the habits of the professional fiefdoms and the legacy of the previous council’s programmes. Nevertheless councillors still wanted to make decisions about their ‘spending money’ no matter how small the amount was. This was the discretionary amount - the amount left after the operational costs, statutory obligations and agreed major capital works programme had been decided. If the majority of councillors were not happy with the amount left for their ‘projects’, the foundations of the budget would then be revisited. Some of the foundation principles were: balanced, deficit or surplus budgets; retiring debt; building reserves; reducing the number of staff; increasing revenue; and selling assets.

Council’s changing practice for setting budgets is illustrated by tracing its change in attitude to selling assets. Council has sold off assets over a long period of time. As the funds from these assets sales were used to cover the operating costs of the organisation, the value of these assets was lost to the organisation after only one year. Once the items on the asset sales list became politically difficult and once council had to provide a reserve fund for the depreciation of assets, strategic thinking about assets - which ones to keep, which ones to sell and which ones to fix up in a way that provided for the real cost of continuing preservation, became important. The criteria for making a coherent set of decisions for about $1.2 billion worth of assets could only be achieved by developing an overall strategy.

This section has illustrated the many traditional habits, expectations and vicissitudes lying in wait to trip up the organisational reformer, whether it is central government or an energetic general manager out to develop an impressive CV. The analytical question arises whether organisational reformers can realistically expect any other outcome or whether there is a more successful approach.
1.7. Pathways to Sustainability

European occupation of the Hunter Valley was founded on exploiting the resources and dispossessing the indigenous peoples of the region - cutting down cedar and ash trees, burning shellfish middens to produce limestone, farming and eroding the rich alluvial river flats. Mining and exporting coal became the major nineteenth century industry, which in turn led to the twentieth century steelmaking, heavy manufacturing, and power generation industries. Awareness of the ill health consequences of air pollution grew during this period and while there was an acceptance of the inevitability of poor air quality there has been a strong push to improve the environment in Newcastle since the 1950s when council established a committee of business, university and environmental protection agencies to monitor the quality of environmental factors, make recommendations to improve them, and followed through with various strategies to achieve a change. The region’s communities have an ambivalent attitude towards exploiting its resources. Using resources means jobs for future generations; however establishing industries, opening new mines or building a denser urban fabric is seen as detrimentally exploiting the environment and diminishing the regional community’s quality of life.

When the Local Government Act of 1993 required councils to prepare State of the Environment reports and prepare Environmental Management Plans, Newcastle was well prepared and motivated to make the most of this opportunity. The council had just appointed a young and enthusiastic Environmental Division director and there was an active group of environmental officers in the organisation. This group suggested that the format for the Newcastle Environmental Management Plan (NEMP) follow the principles of Agenda 21\(^5\) which are more extensive than a strictly environmentalist frame for structuring such a report. The council was then asked to sponsor a lead-up conference to a United Nations General Assembly Special Session to be held on June 23-27, 1997. The conference *Pathways to Sustainability: Local Initiatives for Cities and Towns*, held on June 1-5, 1997 enabled the council and the Newcastle community to re-image itself. In the month beforehand, BHP, the owner of the 82-year-old steelmaking plant in Newcastle announced the closure of this plant. The timing of the conference was exquisite for its purpose of identifying a new economic and job-generating direction for the Hunter region.

The *Pathways* conference provided local communities from around the world with the opportunity to review their progress and further develop skills in implementing local sustainability and to contribute directly to the achievement of global sustainability.

“*Pathways to Sustainability* aimed to:

- be a working conference where the world’s best examples of Local Agenda 21 (LA21) responses were showcased and reviewed;
- present the opportunity to report and apply the outcomes from Habitat II by confirming commitments and establishing actions;
- allow for local governments, business and community leaders and professional practitioners from Australia and throughout the world to learn together the skills and processes needed to improve the social and physical environment of their cities and towns” (Newcastle City Council 1997, 2).

A major product of the conference, the Newcastle Declaration, was presented to the Special General Assembly of the United Nations held in June 1997. The Newcastle Declaration gives a sense of the UN strategy under Local Agenda 21 and recommends specific regional application. For example the Declaration acknowledges:

- “That based on growing population trends, there is an urgent need for the developed world to drastically reduce our per capita impacts in the short term if we are to achieve global sustainability in the long term.”

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\(^5\) Later to become Local Agenda 21, a specific outcome from the Rio Earth Summit for Local Authorities. This was further endorsed as a mechanism to implement the habitat agenda at the local level by the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlement (Habitat II) in Istanbul, June 1996.
• That actions need to be taken to mitigate the adverse effects on local communities of continued trends toward economic globalisation and free trade” (Woods, Brugman et al. 1997).

and declares a commitment to:

• “Assisting our own and other communities to progress toward local sustainability by sharing and learning from each other.
• Ensuring that all sectors, groups and citizens in our local communities, including adults, youth and children are given equal opportunity for active participation and partnership in the process of developing Local Agenda 21 action plans” (ibid.).

This extract illustrates the strategic language and style of a longer document which has five clauses and twenty sub-clauses.

The Pathways conference concluded with an outcomes session where delegates heard that some of the key challenges for the future include:

• “Finding ways to help empower local government to accelerate the action on local sustainability
• The need to improve training and skill building in community participation for all levels of government
• The need for greater dissemination of models, tools and approaches to Local Agenda 21 processes
• The need to establish better and stronger links between the developed and developing world
• The need to cultivate a stronger notion of civil society in ways that help to recognise and celebrate the richness and strength of cultural diversity and the contribution this can make to local and therefore global sustainability
• The need for more strong and inspiring messages about positive action to help inspire others on their pathway to sustainability
• The need for new partnerships between the public and private sector on projects and programmes for sustainability
• The need for zero emission to be the goal of industry, recognising the need to modify production processes through systematic rethinking of product and service design and delivery
• The need for local communities to facilitate a culture of innovation and entrepreneurialism and look inwards for local economic development opportunities rather than concentrating on seeking investment from afar” (Newcastle City Council 1997, 10).

Recommended future actions flowed from the conference and its feedback process. A prime one was that Newcastle and the region becomes a centre of excellence in sustainable development. The recommendations include:

• Newcastle City Council adopt Local Agenda 21 and the Newcastle Declaration as a guiding framework and in so doing enlarge on the vision of the City as a model sustainable city of the 21st century
• Establish a Pathways Trust that would provide long term leadership from all sections and guide a range of implemented actions. The Trust would act as a permanent secretariat.
• Green industry cluster development
• Establish the Hunter sustainable energy programme
• Set up a local enterprise facilitation programme
• Establish an international training centre in local sustainability and environment (op. cit. 16-22).

The Pathways conference gave the council greater energy, focus and a deeper commitment to address a wider scope of issues and strategies under the Ecologically Sustainable Development [ESD] banner. As the conference was an important event in the history of the Hunter’s regional development practice, its impact on practice should be assessed. Since the most strategic intent of the conference was to “allow for local governments, business and community leaders and professional practitioners from Australia and throughout the world to learn together the skills and processes needed to improve the social and physical
environment of their cities and towns” (op. cit. 2), attempting to assess the depth and diffusion of learning and action through the local community and the nation is the most appropriate evaluative question. Such an assessment should go beyond a simple score card: the quality of the change and the adaptability of the learning is also necessary.

The UK literature’s assessment of local government taking up sustainability initiatives is dismissive. Pell (1996) finds that very few local authorities have managed to shift from a ‘dry green’ to what he sees as the necessary ‘shallow green’ paradigm that sees the “management and regulation of humanity in relation to the rest of Nature” (Pell 1996, 139-140). Patton and Worthington found “relative lack of progress made in some local authorities towards the establishment of a structure which is designed to coordinate the authority’s response to LA21” (Patton and Worthington 1996, 37). Surveying the Australian experience, Whittaker, in assessing surveys of Australian local government’s response to LA21, found that councils tackled the easier policies first and less frequently tackled “structural, systematic and the ‘big’ global issues” (Whittaker 1997, 321). Albrecht (1998, personal communication) argues that by creating LA21, the UN has cleverly taken the responsibility for implementing sustainability from global forums, transnational corporations and national governments and given it to the one area where nothing much can happen, local government.

By the year 2000 a number of the recommended outcomes have been implemented by Newcastle Council as well as a number of other instrumentalities. Before describing these in detail, a summary list is:

- Australian Municipal Energy Improvement Facility – energy efficiency and greenhouse gas reduction
- The Pathways to a Sustainable Hunter, to promote ESD regionally
- Newcastle Urban Strategy – a planning policy to guide the sustainable reshaping of the city
- Steel River Eco-industrial Park, a multi-agency concept that is being built by an infrastructure developer
- Enterprise Facilitation - small business management coaching
- Sustainable Industries Cluster supported by 80 member companies
- Centre for Sustainable Technology, University of Newcastle
- Chair of Environmental Science, University of Newcastle
- Clean Hunter Centre - secondary market development for waste
- Commitment by Newcastle City Council to the Young People of the City
- Commitment by Newcastle City Council to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of the City of Newcastle – action plan to redress impacts of occupation
- McDonald’s/Newcastle City Council Memorandum of Understanding to develop sustainable products, facilities and services
- Commitment to Ecologically Sustainable Development Principles in Newcastle City Council’s procurement processes to improve council’s ESD results
- Newcastle Eco-village – an ecologically designed and managed urban residential development for an intentional community.

The Australian Municipal Energy Improvement Facility (AMEIF) started with a ‘dry green’ idea of saving money, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating new jobs by implementing energy cost efficiencies and reinvesting the savings into further energy efficient technologies and practices. In its first year of operation AMEIF trained and started up 6.5% of local authorities around Australia in this simple strategy and is contracted to deliver its programme to 28% of councils by the year 2004. Having improved Newcastle Council’s energy efficiency practices, AMEIF is now broadening the message to

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6 Editors’ note: AMEIF has undergone name changes since 2000. It was renamed the City Energy and Resource Management and later called the Environment and Climate Change Services Unit (ECCS) of Newcastle City Council.
the local building industry and residential sector. AMEIF has been able to make rapid progress partly because of the availability of federal funds allocated for programmes that reduce greenhouse gases. Its style is typified by energy, arresting communication tactics and creating connections to emerging sustainable technology industries, relevant communities and organisations with global creditability like the Rocky Mountains Institute. Its work and message have rapidly spread through environmental, community, government and local business networks.

Newcastle has been successful in establishing the Pathways Trust through the Hunter Region Organisation of Councils sponsoring the Pathways to a Sustainable Hunter Forum. While the Forum has developed and published a set of regional sustainability indicators and showcased businesses with sustainability practices, it has not created an enthusiastic awareness of sustainability practice and possibilities throughout the region, a major purpose for its creation.

One of Newcastle’s most ambitious projects arising from the Pathways conference is its land use plan for the city. Called the Newcastle Urban Strategy and Local Environment Plan, it uses new urbanism design principles to “provide greater choices to the community, in terms of access to housing, employment, transport, and social and cultural services, while offering reduced travel demand, improved air quality and greater identity for Newcastle, its city centre, and its district and neighbourhood centres” (Newcastle City Council 1998b, 5). By designing an ‘urban core’ zone of mixed higher density residential combined with commercial and home based employment around the 13 villages that now comprise the City of Newcastle, it is anticipated that private vehicle trips will be greatly reduced and walking and community interaction promoted. While the Plan’s development has been a three-year long, consultation-intensive project largely confined to the professional and commercial elites and the local resident groups, it does not seem to have ignited general community support.

The Steel River Eco-industrial Park project brings the insights of the Pathways conference to the BHP/state government promise “to create 2000 new jobs by the year 2000” through an eco-industrial park built on a disused emplacement site for steelmaking waste. Various business, government, environment and community stakeholder interests collaborated to design a set of environmental standards and a Local Environmental Plan that included definitions and standards for an eco-industrial park for the site. The Park’s plan grants an approval within 28 days for a development that fits the standards of the ‘environmental envelope’ defined in the Strategic Impact Assessment Study (APT Peddle Thorp 1997). The range of stakeholders worked together creatively and enthusiastically during the eighteen months design phase to bring the Plan to its approval stage. During this stage the comment was often made that the ‘twenty-eight day’ approval facility and a Manufacturing-in-Bond incentive would give the Park a “great competitive advantage”. Since approval, the progress of the Park’s creation and marketing has been the developer’s responsibility. This period has been marked by delay, missed opportunities and less involvement of the wide range of stakeholders from the initial design stage. The developer has been left to develop the site and not been able to sell parcels of land except to two tenants who committed themselves during the design phase. The difference between the energetic commitment of many stakeholders in the design phase of the Park and the slow, low-energy fumbling of the implementation phase is a question full of potential for this inquiry into regional development practice.

In the initial two years of its development the Enterprise Facilitation project (EF) was distinguished by zeal and support. The proposal was to set up ten local projects managed by local people with the range of relevant experience to provide small business management coaching to people who want to start up or expand their own business. The consultant hired to investigate its feasibility consulted with government, community and business leaders throughout the region. The target was to create four hundred new businesses over two years. The programme was to be seventy-five percent funded by regional fund-raising and sponsorship with the balance provided by the local community hosting each particular project. Community and business leaders responded enthusiastically to the concept and significant amounts of cash and in-kind support were committed in the initial stage by businesses and local government. The response of staff from the principal state government managed economic development agency, the Hunter Economic Development Corporation (HEDC), and the economic development officers of the local councils were either mistrustful or passionately opposed to the project. The mistrust arose out an assertion that the project’s consultant was not consulting enough with the council officers.
The economic development agency saw the project as duplicating the existing Business Enterprise Centres (BECs) that it funded. The senior staff of the HEDC argued that the BECs were doing the same work in the same way that the proposed EF projects would do, that the funds were being wasted and duplication encouraged. The EF consultant maintained that his methodology was significantly different and that his consultation was developing wider community support and commitment for the projects whereas the BECs were regarded as ‘government’ projects that the wider business community had no commitment to or involvement with. The EF consultant was dismissed in some quarters as a ‘very good salesman’. The arguments against supporting the pilot period and evaluation of EF disguised issues of who should be controlling the project. The University of Newcastle Research Associates’ subsidiary, Hunter@Work, was set up to receive the funds on a tax deductible basis, to distribute them to eligible projects and oversight the evaluation of the programme. One of its members decided, without consultation with the stakeholder groups, that the federal government should be lobbied to contribute to the project before the local fund raising committee became active. Delay, confusion and mistrust ensued leading to the shelving of the project. Like the Steel River project, high levels of creativity, commitment, energy and results were generated in the design phase of the EF project. This energy dissipation indicates an area of fruitful reflection for regional development practice.

Some of the *Pathways to Sustainability* conference strategies have been taken up by industry and specific purpose agencies. The Sustainable Industries Cluster consists of companies that “offer goods, services or practices that significantly contribute to sustainability.” The cluster “seeks to identify, develop and promote environmentally responsible and sustainable industry products, services and practices” (Hunter Regional Development Organisation 1999, 85). Its existence is due to the emerging market for sustainable technologies and practices, and contributes to the *Pathways* conference vision that Newcastle establishes an International Training Centre in Local Sustainability and Environment Management. The University of Newcastle has also recently established a Centre for Sustainable Technology and is seeking to appoint a foundation Chair of Environmental Science.

The Clean Hunter Centre is a technical, marketing and financial advisory service for the secondary market development of new products from waste. The idea of the Centre came from initial work by Newcastle City Council arising out of its Environmental Management Plan and promoted during the *Pathways* conference. While there is energy and commitment amongst the stakeholders in these initiatives, an awareness of their existence and potential has not diffused through the general community.

Further council initiatives not specifically recommended by the *Pathways* conference that reflect its spirit are the “ Commitment by Newcastle City Council to the Young People of the City” (Newcastle City Council 1996), and “Commitment by Newcastle City Council to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of the City of Newcastle” (Newcastle City Council 1998c). Both these documents, which arose out of long consultation with the relevant communities and seek to redress disadvantage perpetrated by the dominant development model, are being implemented with the relevant stakeholder groups’ active involvement.

Some additional strategies have been identified and implemented. The McDonald’s Memorandum of Understanding arose from a Development Application to extend a McDonald’s restaurant in Mayfield, a Newcastle suburb. In its approval the Newcastle City Council included a requirement that the restaurant provide eating utensils that could be recycled. McDonald’s objected to this and threatened to appeal to the Land and Environment Court to have the condition overturned. When approval was sought for building the next McDonald’s restaurant in Newcastle, at Broadmeadow, the council negotiated the incorporation of a range of ESD programmes (energy efficient building design and appliances, water conservation, waste management, improved litter control and management, and the redesign of its supply chain to include ESD products).

The “Commitment to Ecologically Sustainable Development Principles in Newcastle City Council’s Procurement Processes” was introduced to refine project design, tender specification, evaluation, and project management so that council could encourage an improvement in the ESD results of its suppliers.

These sustainability initiatives are characterised by energy, commitment, opportunism and rapid diffusion of learning into the community mainly in the design stage of the project. Two notable
exceptions where these qualities have carried on into the implementation stage are the Clean Hunter Centre\textsuperscript{7} and the AMEIF projects. The Newcastle Urban Strategy has been translated into a Local Environmental Plan, which does not deliver enough design detail to realise the Strategy on the ground. Otherwise the majority of the projects either have not reached their implementation phase or have lost direction and energy. An inquiry into this aspect of regional development practice is important as many projects founder at this point of their history.

Nevertheless the Ecologically Sustainable Development project of the council and the region is marked by its receptivity. It is a set of programmes and initiatives that organisations in the Hunter were prepared to take up and for the while they filled a policy vacuum ignored by central government and business. This is an example of a positive opportunity for regional development and job creation.

1.8. Revitalising the CBD\textsuperscript{8}

1.8.1. CBD Redevelopment

There has been growing concern about the dying Central Business District (CBD) of Newcastle for the past 25 years\textsuperscript{9}. Long-time Novocastrians speak fondly of the thronging Hunter Street of the 50s when everyone came to ‘town’ to shop, walk the main street, meet and talk. People used to wander from the Co-operative Store in the west end along the three miles to the top of town. The footpaths were thick with people and it took ‘an age’ to get to the other end. Today this scene is fondly remembered and people ask why “those days can’t happen again”?

Today, in 2000, particularly since the earthquake in 1989, the main street is fairly quiet. A lot of small shops are vacant and major institutions and employers have left. The energy utility moved its administration and depot out to Wallsend, 15 kilometres away. The Royal Newcastle Hospital is no longer the major hospital since the John Hunter Hospital, 10 kilometres away, began operating in 1990. Major retailers and hotels were destroyed in the earthquake. People have been moving their residential quarters from the inner city to the sprawling suburbs where modern shopping centres with lots of ‘free car parking’ have been built. In the last four years (1996-2000) this flight from the CBD has reversed and is being redeveloped by local private capital, some national capital and the state government. This redevelopment is producing a CBD that will be very different from the mythical one of the 1950s. The redevelopment is being driven by an inner urban lifestyle choice, leisure retailing, tourism and the conference industry which is consciously exploiting the maritime and urban heritage located beside a river frontage which is the entrance to the world’s largest bulk export harbour.

The CBD is the site for conflicting strategies fuelled by the fears, conceptions and interests of the contending sectors about and towards each other. Competing groups view the development and use of the CBD both negatively and positively at the same time. Its urban heritage, cultural activities and lifestyle opportunities make it an attractive place for people to experience directly or vicariously. There is even conflict within groups who share this perception. Generally older inner city residents regard younger people who enjoy the entertainment venues as abusing both themselves and private property. Resident Action Groups formed by inner city residents resist owners of entertainment venues and licensed premises extending their hours of operation or developing a more intense use of these premises. Redevelopment proposals of inner city sites are scrutinised for the way in which they will block views, reduce privacy, and encourage activities that reduce property values or create a nuisance, whereas proponents for the developments regard their size and/or proposed activity as necessary for economic viability. The broader community and the union movement generally regard the development as necessary for job creation. With the private development of public space, such as the redevelopment of a maritime wharf, the situation essentially comes down to a contest between developers wanting a prime

\textsuperscript{7} Editors’ note: Clean Hunter Centre Limited went into voluntary liquidation in 2002.

\textsuperscript{8} Editors’ note: This section describes events in Newcastle over the period 1990 – 2000.

\textsuperscript{9} Editors’ note: This period of 25 years is from 1975 to 2000.
site to ‘secure a return for their investment’ and the activist groups objecting to the ‘privatised’ alienation of public space. The state government argues that private investment will be the only way that these redundant waterfront sites will be redeveloped and promises that all interests will be addressed through a proper planning process which usually ends in compromise and design solutions that satisfice rather than satisfy.

The various Newcastle Councils over the period of twenty years have been caught in the cross fire of this debate. The debate has been a major shaper of election policies of the various teams who have run for office. Three strategies, with variations, have been attempted: the council as planner and consent authority, the council as property owner and developer, and the council as entrepreneur. This section deals with each of these in some detail.

1.8.2. The Council as Urban Designer and Consent Authority

After five or six years of debate the council endorsed the Newcastle Central Area Strategy (Newcastle City Council 1992). Its main innovation was to change the traditional conception of the main street, Hunter Street. This was typified in popular folklore by Mark Twain’s alleged observation in 1895 that Newcastle is “unique, ... in having one long main street – some two miles long, I’m told, which I suspect may be some sort of Antipodean record – with a hospital at one end and a cemetery at the other” (Scanlon 1997, 106). It was further alleged that, after being refused entry to the exclusive Newcastle Club, he changed his initial observation to “Newcastle is one long street with a graveyard at one end with no bodies in it and a Gentlemen’s Club at the other with no gentlemen in it” (op. cit. 116). The changed thinking of the Central Area Strategy was to conceptualise the main street as five distinct precincts. This freed up the council and the community to think about developing the Central Business District in distinctly different ways: the most controversial aspect of the plan was how to physically connect the old waterfront and railway workshop and marshalling yards redevelopment of Honeysuckle with Hunter Street across a heavy rail corridor. The issue became the basis for a community campaign to save the rail and the heavy trains. The state government with the support of the local council came out against the community campaign. The rail line stayed when the opposition became the new state government. The debate about access across the rail corridor still erupts from time to time.

The next major document was Newcastle Urban Design Guidelines: DCP 30 (Newcastle City Council 1993), which tried to keep new development within the scale of the existing built environment in order to preserve the heritage values of the CBD, particularly the historic East End. It was an ambitious effort, which mainly relied on floor space ratios, height of buildings and the parapet height at the street edge and preserving vistas and view corridors to and from significant buildings to achieve its objective. The height of buildings became the usual contested issue between council, developers and community. Developers claimed that they needed greater than the approved height and required bulkier buildings in order to achieve viable economies of scale. The contentious element of DCP 30 was that council had discretion to “apply the Guidelines in a flexible manner” which depends “upon the proponent demonstrating that urban design and economic development advantages to the CBD will result...” (Newcastle City Council 1993, 1). A further policy, the Shop Top Housing Policy was brought into play by developers to gain additional height as it provided bonus floor space ratio if inner city housing units were built on the top of commercial development. The fear of those who want to restore the vibrant CBD of the 1950s is that too many of such new buildings would eventually destroy the finely articulated texture of the existing built environment, especially in the East End of the CBD.

Large redevelopment sites had become available because of the 1989 earthquake (Grace Bros site, the Civic site, George Hotel), the flight of institutional and utility uses (Department of Main Roads, Shortland Electricity, Royal Newcastle Hospital) from the centre of Newcastle, and the state government wanting to get a financial return on redundant space (railway workshops, educational facilities and maritime waterfront). The experience is replete with many cases of major redevelopments.

1.8.2.1. Redeveloping Honeysuckle: Council, Community and the State-run Development Corporation

The Honeysuckle site provides the most richly textured controversies over design and development
approvals. The relationship between community and the NSW state government-run Honeysuckle Development Corporation is necessary background for understanding the urban design issues and the conflict over development of sites within the Honeysuckle area.

When the state government decided to redevelop the redundant railway marshalling yards and maritime space in the early 1990s, it commenced by establishing a consultative committee to consult with the community in the development of the master plan. The master planning exercise created the expectation in the minds of active community groups that development would be built according to the plan, that certain heritage buildings would be used according to agreements made in the master plan stage and that there would be ongoing involvement of the community in the implementation of the plan. Early in the history of the Corporation, which was established subsequent to the consultative committee, the federal government contributed funds for innovative urban redevelopment. The Corporation held a community design competition for a housing estate to be built on some reclaimed land adjacent to an old inner city, low-income suburb. To meet the requirements of the federal government Building Better Cities Programme, the development had to have innovation in its design. The most obvious aspect was energy efficiency in the housing design. When the site was eventually sold to a developer the community felt that its six-month contribution was ignored for the off-the-shelf designs and estate layout of the developer. The project was modified when the federal minister concerned intervened with the lord mayor on the night that council considered the development approval and convinced him to incorporate some of the innovation requirements of his (the federal minister’s) funding programme. The ‘off-the-shelf’ design was modified because of this ministerial intervention. This fragile relationship between council, Corporation, developer and community continues with every planning scheme and major development on the Honeysuckle site. The waterfront hotel development application of 1997 highlighted this mistrust and contest between the parties.

The Development Corporation had accepted a tender for the development of a hotel on a disused wharf. When the local press published an ‘artist’s impression’ of the development at the point when it was being submitted to council for approval, the coalition of interests against it was able to galvanise popular opinion around several aspects: the ‘long, high, blank wall-like appearance’ of the proposed development adjacent to the waterfront meant that ‘the public’ would not have access to the waterfront; that ground level views from the road behind the development would be lost – this would be ‘foreign to Newcastle’; property owners, especially those behind the development, would lose their views of the Harbour and their sites would not be able to be developed to their potential or would have to be built higher to access water views.

The opposition wanted either a continuation of the Harbour Foreshore Park further west along the waterfront or low scale development. The Corporation wanted a major people attractor for the site. The union movement and people living in suburbia wanted the development to go ahead for its job creation potential. The council was finely balanced against approval and the decision was adjourned to mediate alternative designs amongst the affected parties.

During the mediation sessions one of the property owners kept referring to the ‘Newcastle way of resolving the problem’, of master-planning the whole area so that the road was next to the waterfront and the proposed hotel was located alongside his development site and not in front of it. This suggestion seemed like a delaying ploy cast in the guise of collaboration as the Honeysuckle chairman asserted that his staff had tried to negotiate such a joint planning venture and it had been resisted by the developer. The Corporation’s attitude towards this property owner was that he had made his wealth by firmly looking after his own interests and that’s what he was doing now. The recommendation for approval was defeated because one of the councillors misunderstood which aspect of the decision was before council. Three levels of planning decision were being put before council that night: the Development Control Plan to allow a hotel to be built on the site, the land rezoning and, the actual Development Approval. Those opposed to the development were able to make the most of this confusion. The longer-term consequence of the debacle was the state Minister for Planning removing planning authority for the whole of the Honeysuckle site from council. The developer tried to extract more concessions from the Corporation who in response severed its contract with the developer. It took another five years before another developer achieved an approval for a different design on that site. This history of planning and
development decision making, pressurised by many contending interests, highlights the inability of the
process to negotiate with all interests so that optimum results occur, or the inability of regional
development practitioners to identify and use a process that is suitable for the resolution of these
complex redevelopment decisions.

1.8.3. Council as Property Owner and Developer

The council, although it has been divesting itself of significant property holdings over the past ten years,
still owns significant property in the CBD. Twenty years ago council commenced property acquisition in
the Civic Precinct with the idea of redeveloping it for new commercial activity. This strategy is now
well underway. Half the precinct is redeveloped as office and hotel accommodation with the balance
developed as civic space (Wheeler Place). It has redeveloped its Civic buildings and found multi-
purposes (conference venues) and more intensive uses for them.

A sale of one of the sites in the Civic area highlights the difficulties the council has in being a developer,
a landowner and a development consent authority. One of the developers who was competing for a
tender to build an office block for a national corporation approached council to purchase one of its
development sites in the Civic Precinct. When the developer’s competitors heard of the possible sale
they raised probity issues and claimed that they would have been interested in buying the site if they had
known that it was for sale. The competing developers appealed to the anti-corruption commission and
the ombudsman who scrutinised the process and gave it their approval. A similar tactic was used when
the council did not approve the change of use of an existing restaurant and function centre located in a
waterfront heritage building, to a more intensive use as a hotel and gambling venue. The disgruntled
owners of the heritage restaurant then lodged a complaint of a conflict of interest to the state ombudsman
office against the council. They claimed that the council had a conflict of interest because it leased one of
its waterfront buildings to a company who operated a boutique brewery.

Another major council asset is the Hunter Street road reservation especially where it was turned into a
mall in 1976. These four city blocks have been the centre of hot debate for 10 years with the rest of
commercial Hunter Street becoming a greater part of the debate in recent years. The issues: Will a
refurbished Hunter Street Mall attract shoppers back into the CBD against the competition of the
suburban shopping centres? Does free parking provide an essential competitive advantage? Should the
CBD be marketed? What is the new retail and commercial position of the CBD now that convenience
shopping is located in the suburbs and the CBD finds itself on the periphery of the sprawling city? These
questions raise the legitimacy of the council either taking on an entrepreneurial role itself or raising
revenue for others to carry out this role in the redevelopment of the CBD.

1.8.4. Council as Entrepreneur: Marketing, Promoting, Refurbishing and Activating the
CBD

The final strategy council used to revitalise the CBD was to use its revenue raising capability to fund a
number of programmes that would bring it ‘back to life’. Eight years ago, the council established a
series of mainstreet committees who were representatives of business from the various precincts of the
CBD. Their programmes were funded from levies raised from their properties in addition to their normal
rate. Council would also contribute other funds and work ranging from regular maintenance to a
refurbishment programme of municipal infrastructure. The strategies for promoting the CBD went
through four phases, which different stakeholders supported or criticised. The first approach was to
market the CBD as though it was a large suburban shopping centre. This was criticised by commercial
leaseholders as not assisting them. The marketing person left and was replaced by a manager who
focused on brightening up the CBD with banners, giant Christmas trees, clean streets and street trees as
well as some remnants of the marketing programme. At the end of this phase the Mall mainstreet
committee began a campaign to rehabilitate the Mall. This strategy could be described as the serious
infrastructure upgrading strategy. A lot of committee time and consultation was committed to
developing a design brief, lobbying council to commit the necessary funds and selecting a designer.
While this design was being worked out painfully over a period of years (the funding was always
chancy) the City Centre Committee successfully prevailed on the council to trial free parking in the
CBD. They argued that suburban shopping centres had free car parking so for the CBD to be
competitive, it needed to provide the same. Some of the workers and the owners of businesses then occupied the most convenient parking to their places of work. Moral persuasion was tried on these recalcitrants and the response was variable. After a few years of studies and debate, a parking strategy was adopted that used the pricing mechanism to distribute the most attractive parking for the short-term shoppers and the parking stations for all day parking. Undertaking a merchandising strategy for the CBD is the latest approach (CMS Group, Knight Frank, 2000). This entails understanding designing a ‘shopping experience’ and an urban experience that will attract people to come into town for that unique experience. The right mix of retail outlets would then be organised over time and the relevant attributes of the CBD enhanced and promoted. These strategies were identified and developed in a atmosphere of critical and sometimes trenchant appraisal: absent landlords did not spend money on their buildings while the leaseholders had to pay the additional levy; marketing programmes that were acceptable to retailers were a waste of money to commercial businesses; the restaurants in one street were at odds with the non-restaurant businesses over a beautification scheme; and the residential ratepayers thought too much money was spent on the CBD. There was always pressure to abandon the levy or not to increase it, yet everyone agreed the CBD was dying and wanted it resuscitated.

In the last fifteen years council has taken on the role of property developer and urban animateur to develop an income stream from its assets sufficient to maintain them and to revitalise the CBD generally. In a policy environment of neoliberalism and ‘new managerialism’, council has been forced to do this in the face of shrinking rate revenues and central government grants. This role has been undertaken in a climate of community opposition to the ‘privatisation of public space’, the commercialisation of services, and increasing surveillance of council’s probity responsibilities as a consent authority. This mix of pressures results in council grinding to a slower pace of decision making, opening itself for private sector pressure to reduce its democratic essence – ‘call in the technocratic administrator’. Whether all this matters for the shape and style of a region’s development is a critical question to be examined in this thesis.

1.9. Post Steelmaking Newcastle

Finally to return to the more dramatic story outlined at the beginning of this chapter of USA global management style, head office decisions distanced from what has become one of many local plants, and regional aspirations.

Before BHP announced the closure of its steelmaking plant in May 1997, the city had been active in developing strategies for retaining the plant or creating substitute jobs. Unemployment in the Hunter region has been approximately 4% above the national average since the early 1990s. According to the Hunter Economic Development Corporation’s discussion paper (Hunter Economic Development Corporation, No. 34, 1997), unemployment in the Hunter arises from a number of factors: changes to the region’s economic base; downsizing associated with technological change; competition from low cost imports; a mismatch of skills with emerging employment opportunities; and the cumulative impact of deflationary fiscal and monetary policy. The net additional employment in the region is accounted for almost entirely by the expansion of part-time jobs.

When BHP announced its shutdown there was an enraged, vigorous response from all sections of the community. The protest of “How could you do this to the community of your birthplace, to the workers who have toiled so diligently in such dangerous conditions to make you the great company you are today?” was the strongest one. There were other, dissenting, voices: “This will be the best thing for Newcastle, it can shed its dirty industrial image” came largely from the commercial sector; and “BHP, you are making a big mistake, you have got it wrong” was voiced by a prominent local politician. BHP responded to the ‘loyalty demand’ and joined in with community, union, church, government, business and education leaders to soften the blow of their decision. The campaign strategy then moved into a solution negotiation phase marked by public meetings, workshops, delegations; visits by the Prime Minister, the Premier and government ministers; submissions; and round table discussions. In this phase there was the opportunity to choose a direction that fitted the region’s resources to the best strategy for thriving in ‘today’s global environment’. Ideas such as assisting sustainable industries to establish, building sustainability infrastructure like bikeways or repairing the environment were suggested (Heyes
How the strategies have worked out three years after the announcement of the plant’s closure, after a range of remedial initiatives have been decided, and what other strategies have become apparent – these are more central to the purposes here.

The agreed range of initiatives were: an eco-industrial park to replace the lost steelworker jobs; the construction of a large-scale container terminal where the blast furnaces once belched fire and smoke; recycling the heritage buildings; a ‘pathways’ programme to support the workers into new jobs and alternatives; and three ‘Hunter Advantage’ funds – state government, federal government and BHP. Either a single agency – the NSW state Premier’s Department, or a committee – the Prime Minister’s Hunter Taskforce, or BHP and developers, manages these initiatives. The Beyond 2000 Committee, the fulcrum for the early strategy development work, now provided a watching brief and received reports from the groups responsible for the implementation of the initiatives. One of these, the Premier’s Department, administers the state’s Hunter Advantage Fund which provides money to a company if, in the Department’s assessment, the proposal is likely to produce ‘real jobs’. A number of the supported proposals have not gone ahead after the funded feasibility stage, some have failed and some would have gone ahead without the funding support anyway. The effect of giving implementation responsibility to individual stakeholders is that their detailed progress is removed from public scrutiny along with the active involvement of the whole range of stakeholders. Meantime BHP has moved on to other strategies. The container terminal is becoming less of a reality. BHP has sold its former steel plant site to the state government with an agreement to clear the structures but not to decontaminate the ground. BHP has ‘spun off’ its fourteen other companies in Newcastle into a new company called One Steel. The American managing director moved on five years later unable to demonstrate that he had a personal sense of loyalty to the place where his company’s steelmaking started. His constituency is much wider than the local one, his remit was to restructure the company back into profitability and he did this by joining up with another global miner.

With a wide range of stakeholder involvement and energetic campaigning, the region was successful in extracting major recognition and assistance out of the BHP closure. While there were hopes that the region could have leveraged the closure into more varied and sustainable regional development strategies and practice, as the implementation phase of plant closure eventuated, the rescue programme fragmented and the region’s energy ‘moved on’. Nevertheless the hope remains that lessons and skills left in the minds and heart of the region’s residents by BHP’s investment still remain to be harnessed in future ventures. This is another line of investigation for this thesis.

1.10. Understanding a Region’s History

This chapter highlighted moments of change in the Hunter’s recent history of regional development practice. The traditional core development agencies have relied on well researched and consulted documents combined with representative committees to develop a persuasive voice and privileged position. Labour, environmental and broader community-based interest groups have reacted to or supported regional proposals with energetic pressure campaigns. The state’s involvement ranged from support to more directive control. This recent phase of the Hunter’s story shows that regional development practice evolves through building strategies around narratives motivated by perceived crises and by diffusing the learning from these strategies. The history of current practices shows that the traditional coordinated approach has been set aside for a more dynamic, project-specific approach. Understanding these processes according to relevant theory is the next stage of this project.


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Editors’ note: The Newcastle Beyond 2000 Committee was initiated by the Hon. J. Richard Face, MP (Minister assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) in response to the BHP announcement of closure of basic steelmaking in Newcastle.
Chapter 2

A Brief History of Regional Development Institutions and Practices

Chapter 2 is referred to in the text but no draft of this chapter has been located.

The following outline notes have been located, dated 18th May 2004 and 3rd June 2004.

Dated 18th May 2004

A brief history of federal and NSW government regional development policy and how the Hunter Region evolved. (A take on the history of the role of the State using a diorama technique in places)

- Including aspects of the theoretical argument (different aspects of theoretical observations) including:
  - Theories of the State
    - Regulation theory (instance Paul Kelly. Cf “Journeys”)
    - Post Fordism
    - Neoliberalism
    - Post Structuralism
    - The Third Way (Giddens and structuration)
    - Ecologically Sustainable Development
    - Local Agenda 21
    - New Regionalism
    - The Learning Region
    - Theories of Regional Development
    - Competitive Advantage and Cluster Theory

Dated 3rd June 2004

A brief history of federal and NSW governments’ regional development policy and the socio-economic western evolution of the Hunter Region including aspects of the theoretical argument:

- Regulation theory (instance Paul Kelly. cf “Journeys”), Post Fordism, Neoliberalism, Post Structuralism
- The Third Way (Giddens and structuration)
- Ecologically Sustainable Development, Local Agenda 21
- New regionalism, the learning region
- Theories of Regional Development, Competitive Advantage and Cluster Theory
Chapter 3
Tracing Evolving Modes of Governance in a Changing Region – Shifting Bedrock

3.1. Introduction

LAB 1 11 I don’t know if you’ve heard of the day that Menzies came here to talk them back to work in 1940 ... (No, I said). Menzies announced that he was coming to Kurri to make a national broadcast in the biggest theatre in the town and he would ensure that the Kurri miners carried out their patriotic duty by going back to work, for the war had just started. Christ, you could cut the outrage with a knife; tell the Kurri miners they could break with the union. Everywhere you went; men, women, “Fancy someone like that telling you what to do.”

So McBlane, O’Toole and the lodge officers interviewed Menzies before his meeting at the Prince Theatre. Before the meeting was to begin, and the national broadcast was made, [they asked] would any other point of view but his be permitted to go over the national broadcast? No. Would questions be permitted? No. Are you the only speaker? Yes. A huge meeting had been called in front of Kurri Theatre. You couldn’t drop a cigarette paper on the ground, the crowd was so thick. An outraged crowd to begin with. McBlane was having a go quietly. McBlane addressed them on behalf of the lodge officers, that because the conditions that they sought hadn’t been agreed by Mr Menzies, that this meeting be declared ‘black’ and we hold our own meeting down at the rugby league ground. A tall thin fellow with the rag of a shirt quite promptly shouted out, “We came to hear Mr Menzies.” And I shouted out, “What lodge do you belong to?” He was a clacker!

GH He was a what?

LAB 1 A clacker, brought there for that purpose. There were sixty of them standing at the side of the road, at least sixty.

There were six people at Menzies’ meeting, and he had to announce over the radio that the national broadcast had to be abandoned and that he would seek some other way of addressing the miners.

So our meeting was going on, being addressed by Bondy Hoare. You had to hear Bondy Hoare to hear a real public speaker; he could speak for hours and hold an audience. I was just outside the league ground and I heard it going on. Here’s Menzies walking into the league ground and Melbourne will tell you how brave he was, with these walleyed communist-dominated miners. And he was there because he thought they weren’t communist dominated (laughs). How brave he was. If he had one bodyguard, he had sixty and they were showing their revolvers and most of the people there had been at Rothbury. You could imagine the reaction to that. He walked down to the platform, and Alex Gibbon told me this later on - Alex Gibbon was the Scots chairman of Pelaw Main Miners’ Lodge; he was chairing the meeting. He said to Alex Gibbon, “Mr Chairman, may I be permitted to address your meeting?” And I said, “Aye”. He said, “We believe in free speech here” (laughs). And I said, “You ken, but we also believe in seniority and you can speak in your turn.”

He [Menzies] got up on the platform and he wasn’t a bit popular. When his turn came, and like him or loath him, he was a terrific speaker. He got on about the war, the war, the war, and he was beginning to have an influence on them. He turned round and with all the scorn that Menzies could get into his voice,

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11 Editors’ note: Informants are identified by an alphanumeric code as in LAB 1. For a listing of informant codes and their sectoral base see List of Informants Interviewed.
cutting with ice, he pointed at little Billy Orr who is not much bigger than me and said, “This communist, why are you influenced by this communist? Why don’t you take notice of what I’m putting in the interest of Australia? Why don’t you reject this communist?” And the crowd erupted because there was affection for Billy Orr who proved himself by the gains he made. And Billy Orr was just sitting there. And when Menzies had finished, Alex Gibbon said through the loud speaker, “Well, I’m sure Billy Orr is entitled to a reply to the Prime Minister.” Billy was as sick as he could be, you could see it. He just walked to the microphone. “No Mr. Chairman, I’ll let Mr Menzies’ record speak for itself. I’ll let my record speak for itself. If Mr Menzies would like to swap notes with me about his war record against mine” (laughs). Menzies just lost it, he just lost the crowd. It was all over. A huge crowd covered the streets. The commonwealth car was just edging through the crowd and I got a glimpse of him, sitting in the back. He was as white as a sheet; he was as white as a sheet. He’d made a fool of himself, and that’s one of the legends of coalfields’ history - how the miners tamed Bob Menzies. The Herald ran a big two page article about it. (Interview #1)

I didn’t know the story, or some of the argot, but it was a great one about well-oiled organisational power; about the teller’s principles of democracy, fairness and cohesiveness; about earning the trust of the community through your track record; and victory over the powerful outsider who doesn’t have a ‘local’ track record to engender trust and support. This local power was pitted against a most powerful outsider, Robert Menzies the Prime Minister of Australia, who in refusing fair and reasonable rules of engagement felt the full brunt of organised union and community cohesiveness. He was recognised as a worthy opponent, a great orator, but he was mortified because he didn’t know the locals and their track record of service to the union and community. This is a well rehearsed story to bolster understanding, identity, worthiness and effectiveness of the local institutions of the South Maitland coalfields at the height of their influence, told, in a time when that era has reached its zenith, by one of its leading practitioners.

This chapter is about developing an understanding of how a region builds itself and its prosperity. It is an empirical chapter reporting on research to develop theory on how regional development governance processes for achieving ecologically sustainable development objectives in the Hunter Region of NSW are created, deployed and reconfigured. This work thereby assesses the capacity for regional people and their institutions to shape their futures, their communities and the institutions in which they work to achieve their aspirations. The chapter begins by positing the suitability of the case study model and grounded theory research method for this task. The results of this study are then described and analysed. Starting with informants’ histories, roles, motivations and strategies (open codes), the analysis develops codes of meaning and relationship (axial codes), and moves on to codes of aspiration and their necessary action (selective codes). This process reveals practices and dynamics for creating meaning, developing analytical tools to inform future action. These reflections and beliefs underpin ideas as to how the region’s institutions, interests and communities should organise themselves and act to achieve an idealised future. This descriptive work positions the project for the next chapter where a theory of a regional development governance model for achieving ecologically sustainable development in the Hunter Region of NSW is proposed.

The structure of this chapter is to describe and justify the suitability of the grounded theory approach within the case study model as the basic grid onto which the contour lines of personal and institutional histories and regional construction practices are laid. They provide a platform to theorise about memories, emotions and events, the way communities and associations conduct themselves and the construction of regional institutions’ features and their practices. Out of these regional hallmarks, aspirations for the future evolve and structures and processes for achieving them develop.

12 Editors’ note: The South Maitland (Cessnock) coalfields extended from Greta and Heddon Greta in the north, through Kurri Kurri and Cessnock to the small villages of Paxton, Millfield and Ellalong in the south.
13 Editors’ note - the author wrote only brief notes for the next chapter, Chapter 4.
14 By ‘regional development governance’ I mean institutional organising principles.
3.2. Using Grounded Theory within the Case Study Model

The grounded theory approach has been used within the case study model of research to analyse the research material collected that represents the local history of regional development practice in the Hunter Region. An explanation and justification for the case study method is presented in Chapter 1. Here, the application of a grounded theory approach is argued.

The grounded theory research method is used here to generate theory about how regional organisations, communities and individuals organise themselves to achieve their objectives for their region. Grounded theory was developed by Strauss and Glaser in the 1960s and “is a flexible and creative research method that guides the researcher through the building rather than the testing of theories” (Bailey, White and Pain 1999, 173). Simply expressed, grounded theory is “theory drawn or teased out of the data gathered” (Minichiello et al. 1995, 75). Grounded theory is based in the tradition of symbolic interactionism and “demands critical thinking: it starts from the premise that the world is in a constant state of flux, and that individuals are not all equally placed; it seeks not only to uncover conditions that are relevant to the research question but also to build in process and change by exploring how individuals respond to changing conditions and to the consequences of their actions.” (Bailey, White and Pain 1999, 173)

This is an ideal method for a project based on the assumption that people, communities and institutions are self-reflective and seek to continually keep on with their objectives in a changing context. In this method, the researcher is also considered to be a reflexive being. “Researchers come to the study with their own ideology, and as such will harbour their own interpretations of others’ construction of reality” (op. cit. 173). As outlined in Chapter 1, this researcher meets this circumstance due to his public service career, and civic and academic roles in the Hunter. Grounded theory sets itself the difficult task of representing reality in its complexity in order to produce a more valid abstract theory (op. cit. 174) and this is the nature of this research task.

At the heart of grounded theory methodology is a spiral - of formulating propositions, interviewing, data recording, data analysis, proposition adjustments, selecting further interviews to test new propositions and so on, until there is data saturation and/or proposition verification (Minichiello et al. 1995, 250). A detailed and explicit coding of texts by labelling recurrent words, phrases, ideas or themes generates progress around the spiral. Code making is grounded theory’s way of organising the data in a way that initially reveals themes that are both strong and divergent. Once these surface themes are apparent, further derived themes describing meanings, motivations, feelings and relationships between categories, emerge. Finally normative themes ranging from expressions of aspiration or regret, through to fear and loathing, emerge.

In this study rather than use Minichiello’s (1995, 248-251) approach to grounded theory methodology of sequential interviewing, data transcribing and analysis and proposition adjustment, I largely recorded interviews, minimally analysed them and fed insights derived from previous interviews into subsequent interviews. In this way I responded to Minichiello’s advice to “have an eye for detecting the conceptual issues while the data are collected … without analysis occurring in the field, data has no direction” (op. cit. 248). In my approach, the transcribing, detailed analysis and coding lagged behind the actual interviews. I adopted this approach because in my initial proposition formulation phase I decided on using a matrix to select informants to represent regional institutions and sectors that I describe in greater detail in the sampling section below. In the adopted approach I coded and recoded the data more intensively using Markku Lonkila’s (1995, 42-44) open, axial and selective coding categories to interrogate the data, which he takes from Strauss and Corbin’s schema (1990). Lonkila’s approach closely parallels the structure of the research project and its constituent interviews, hence its suitability. While Lonkila’s structure is described in detail at the head of each section of the data analysis (Sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6), it is helpful to define his categories and describe their relationships to each other before outlining the interview sampling method.

Lonkila describes a three stage coding system:

1. **Open coding** identifies concepts by their properties and examines their nature, relationship and
dimensions.

2. **Axial coding** works intensively with one category by “put[ting] those data back together in new ways by making connections between a category and its subcategories”. (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 97)

3. **Selective coding** - the most important category (a ‘core category’) is selected and the study is oriented around it “by specifying and validating the relationships between it and the other categories”. (Lonkila 1995, 44)

This coding framework follows the dynamic of the interviews. The open codes reflect the informants’ histories, their attitudes, beliefs and practices within their institutions, located in their understanding of where their region is situated, what they saw as the forces changing their region and the strategies they deployed, the alliances they developed and the forces they resisted. These histories and practices prompted reflections leading to deeper meanings and motivations outlined in the axial codes. The selective codes portray informants’ aspirations for their region and postulate structures and processes that will enable regional players to mediate, decide on and implement decisions that achieve their aspirations for the region’s future.

I portray an archaeology of informants’ relational position in terms of their sectoral base and more significantly, the dispersal and influence of their ideas and practices on other informants over the study’s time period against a backdrop of major internal and external events and ideological movements. This historical setting and veins of influence are set out in Figure 3.1. It shows the flow of concepts, expressed as perspectives that are taken up and modified in different periods and sometimes different sectors in the histories and practices of the interviewees. As well, informants bring different concepts that do not seem to have antecedent origins within the region’s history. To illustrate this, a former politician from The Greens party talks about the learning concept that I label ‘Local activism as learning for regionalism’. These perspectives are described more fully at the beginning of Section 3.4.2 where they are used as the organising frame for the **open code** data. Not all the informants fit into this organising frame, and some sit outside the perspectives framework. In those cases the informant or the data has been labelled ‘lurker’.

Finally the sampling matrix was developed from the schema depicted in Figure 3.1 and the detail of the dispersal of informants across the matrix is laid out in Table 3.1 accompanied by a more detailed explanation of its development throughout the interview period.
**Figure 3.1 Regional Historical Framework for the Study**

1990s Globalization
- Rio Conference
- BHP closure

1980s Neoliberalism
- Tripartitism
- The ‘Accord’
- Industry Restructuring
- ‘Ruhr Valley’

Post World War II to 1976
- Submarine contract
- Mt Thorley open cut starts
- ‘Regionalism’ concept
- Maitland floods
- New State movement

Between World Wars I and II
- Rothbury lock-out
- Great Depression
- Hunter land settlement

International Regional Events / Movements and Sectors
National Civil Society
Business/Industry Unions Politicians Public Servants Professions Experts

(Note: This Figure is to be read from the bottom up to the top in order to reflect history as foundational for more recent events, players and coding.)

**Legend**

- Industrial economy perspective:
- Regional economic development perspective:
- Regional strategic planning and development perspective:
- Conservation/environmental perspective:
- Cultural/social equity perspective:
- *Lurker*: sits outside the perspective framework

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Editors’ note - this figure was a work in progress by the author.
3.3. Setting up the Study

Having described grounded theory methods within the case study model, then argued their merits for the purposes of this research project, and outlined the coding method and its categories, I turn to the methodologies, sampling and data processing techniques of the study.

A semi-structured interview methodology was chosen to allow the informants to expand on the topics and diverge from them, as well as allowing the researcher to probe, disrupt and pose hypotheses during the interview. Due to the researcher’s participation in the region’s history, he was well known to all of the informants. The central principle behind the sampling matrix was to capture the sustainability arenas, the geographical scope, the capitalist sectoral range, a fifty-year historical time span, and emerging leadership properties of institutional practice in the region within a realistic sample of twenty-five interviews. As the interviews progressed a snowballing technique was used to cover gaps in the matrix. This approach was designed to overcome the limitations of previous studies of regional development institutions and practices outlined in Chapter 2.16 This sampling matrix is set out in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1 Sampling Matrix for Interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Era</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td></td>
<td>RUR 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>All those below</td>
<td>All those below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalism</td>
<td>Business/ Industry</td>
<td>BUS 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BUS 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BUS 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td></td>
<td>LAB 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/ Bureaucracy</td>
<td>POL 1</td>
<td>BUR 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BUR 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BUR 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td></td>
<td>COM 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>COM 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>LAB 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BUS 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BUS 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BUS 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>COM 5</td>
<td>ENV 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ENV 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>POL 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>COM 2</td>
<td>COM 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>COM 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews explored the themes of:
- Histories: individual, organisational and regional
- Events of regional significance
- Driving narratives
- Associations and networks
- Challenges/conflicts/collaborations, and
- Multiple logics.

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16 Editors’ note – the author wrote only brief notes for Chapter 2.
The interviews, averaging one and a half hours duration, were audio recorded over a period of four months. A field diary was kept during the interviewing stage and further notes and tentative codes were developed during the transcription phase. They were then transcribed and recorded in a four hundred and four page transcript file, which was then manually coded. The codes were revised and used to construct nineteen transcript sub-files that are outlined in Tables 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4.

3.4. Revealing History, Justifying Strategies and Institutional Practices

3.4.1. The Open Codes

This section sets out the broad contextual data of the project using the first of Lonkila’s (1995, 42) coding categories, **open coding**, which identifies concepts by their properties and examines their nature, relationships and dimensions. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) quoted in Minichiello et al. (1995, 259) suggest a number that I intend to use as open coding elements. My development of open coding categories is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Coding Elements</th>
<th>Open Coding Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting/Content codes</td>
<td>Histories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identity/Image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of the situation codes</td>
<td>Histories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives held by subjects</td>
<td>Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process codes</td>
<td>Alliances and Resistances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event codes</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy codes</td>
<td>Regional Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship and social structure</td>
<td>Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>codes</td>
<td>Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional Practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BUR 2’s history shows how personal, professional, organisational and community histories interweave.

**BUR 2** I came up to Newcastle in 1957, at the beginning of 1957. I am a graduate of Sydney University with a major in Economics and when I came up here I commenced working with Cyril Renwick who had just formed the Hunter Valley Research Foundation. In fact, Allan Pattison and myself and one other chap were the first three employees of the Hunter Valley Research Foundation.

It was an interesting situation. Technically I was employed by what was then the Newcastle College of the New South Wales University of Technology, as the funding for my position was directed through that institution, because the Hunter Valley Research Foundation was still in the process of being established. So I suppose at that point my interest in regional economics became established. I worked with the Hunter Valley Research Foundation as an economist for four years. In fact I did the very first ‘This is Newcastle’ statistical supplement which came out with ‘Symphony on a City’ (I think that was the publication and there was a little statistical insert that went in the back of it), and that was the very first one of a series which has continued in the Research Foundation’s ‘Hunter Region at a Glance’. That would have been in 1959 ...

The **open codes** are set out in Table 3.2. They are further elaborated into properties (which describe attributes of a category) and dimensions, which describe their qualities.

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17 Editors’ note - this table was a work in progress by the author.
Table 3.2 Open Codes, their Properties and Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Histories (H)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Regional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Professional/Personal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Organisational/Community</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Movement Politics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Campaigns</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 a) Alliances/Opponents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b) Level of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 a) Tactics to shift responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity/Identity/Region (I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Personal</td>
<td>1,4 a) Sense of place ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Organisational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Regional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Feeling ‘bullish’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Neither State Capital nor Rural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Having Strengths and Assets</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 a) Deserving assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b) Industrial image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c) Unequal, lacking, victim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>d) ‘Old’/’New’ Hunter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>e) Feeling ‘bullish’ or demoralised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change (C)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Regional Change</td>
<td>4 a) Disillusionment with government/business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Organisational Change</td>
<td>b) Innovative response to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Industrial Change</td>
<td>c) Fear of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Responses to Change</td>
<td>d) Adapting to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>e) Need for realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>f) Seeking justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Resource Availability</td>
<td>6 a) Change for change’s sake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Nature of Change</td>
<td>b) Amazing change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Social Change</td>
<td>c) Systemic change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Cultural Change</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Government Revision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Practices (IP)</td>
<td>1. Organisational Control (getting the numbers)</td>
<td>1 a) Reputation assassination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Networking</td>
<td>b) Earning your stripes/trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Responsive Innovation</td>
<td>c) Minority issues/NIMBY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Union Practice</td>
<td>d) Internal dissention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>e) Competition/Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>f) Learning for leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>g) Turf competition/Isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Regional Agency Board Cross-membership</td>
<td>2 a) Teamwork/Patronage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Managing Adverse Development Impacts</td>
<td>b) Spatial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Labour Market Liberalisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Legalistic Policy Frame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Structure of Land Tenure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Training Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. ‘Badging’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Agency Service Planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Ordering/Continuity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Bureaucracy Insensitive to Outsiders</td>
<td>4 a) Structure and practice in a coalmining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. Professional Responsibility</td>
<td>community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Organisational Restructuring</td>
<td>b) Universal role and network of unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. Deploying Technical Expertise</td>
<td>c) Length of ambit claims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. Response to Lack of Regional Investment</td>
<td>d) Coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>e) Personal contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>f) Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 a) Decision making process – open /closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15 a) Working together across disciplines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Practices (RP)</td>
<td>1. Participation/Consultation</td>
<td>2 a) Working together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Striving for Unity</td>
<td>b) Regional voice/Cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c) Branch office mentality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>d) Local government individualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>e) Personal qualities of managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>f) Politically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Leadership</td>
<td>5 a) Site agreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>5. Union Involvement in Regional Taskforces with Business</td>
<td>7 a) ‘Next big thing’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Comparing Hunter with Other Regions</td>
<td>8 a) Sequential development</td>
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<td>7. Cargo Cult Mentality</td>
<td>b) Controlled from Sydney</td>
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<td>8. Regional Strategic Planning</td>
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<td>9. Systems View</td>
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<td>10. Responsibility/Avoidance</td>
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<td>11. Action/Strategic Avoidance</td>
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<td>12. Regional Role</td>
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<td>Power (P)</td>
<td>1. Positional</td>
<td>4 a) Leadership</td>
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<td>2. Resistance</td>
<td>5 a) Reputation assassination</td>
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<td>3. Associational</td>
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<td>4. Personal Authority</td>
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<td>5. Self-Aggrandisement</td>
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<td>6. Manipulation</td>
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<td>7. Seduction</td>
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<td>8. Empowerment</td>
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<td>9. Centre/Periphery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significant Events (SE)</td>
<td>1. History of Coal Industry</td>
<td>1 a) Japanese investment</td>
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<td>2. Technology</td>
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<td>3. World War 1</td>
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<td>5. Great Depression</td>
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<td>6. New State Movement</td>
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<td>7. 1955 Maitland Floods</td>
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<td>8. Regional Development Awareness</td>
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<td>9. Hunter Development Board Defunded</td>
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<td>10. Industrial ‘Shake-out’</td>
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<td>11. Neoliberalism/Globalisation</td>
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<td>12. Losing the Frigate Contract</td>
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<td>13. BHP Closure</td>
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<td>14. Socioeconomic Change</td>
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<td>15. Pathways to Sustainability Conference</td>
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<td>17. Australian Masters’ Games</td>
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<td>18. CSIRO Moving to Newcastle</td>
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<td>19. Honeysuckle Development</td>
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<td>20. Drought, Loss of Water</td>
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<td>21. Opportunism</td>
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<td>22. Total Catchment Management Model</td>
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<td>23. Job Network Model of Job Creation</td>
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### Category | Property | Dimension
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**Alliances/Resistances (A/R)** | 1. Disillusionment with Government/Business | 1 a) Trust
2. Supportive Institutions | 2 a) Competent support
3. Hostile Institutions | b) Committed to collaboration
 | 3 a) Scale of organisation
 | b) ‘Red tape’
 | c) Lack of leadership
d) Practice of small grants giving
e) Demarked ‘silos’
f) Stonewalling/Distrust
g) Inertia and avoidance
b) Little support
i) Structural permeability
j) Interpersonal clashes
k) Takeovers
l) ‘Politics’
m) Bridging gaps
n) ‘Over-regulation’
4. Partnerships
5. Scale of Organisation
6. Opposing Internal Objectives
7. ‘Politics’
8. Afraid to Make Decisions
9. Contingent Support/Hostility

**Strategies (S)** | 1. Standing Up for Ourselves | 6 a) Changing the mix
2. Measuring Inequality/Unfairness | b) Seed funding
3. Communication | 16 a) Conservation movement
4. The Three ‘Cs’ (Communication, Cooperation, Coordination) | b) As a response to crisis
7. Implementing New Opportunities and Practices
8. Plan Succession Strategies
9. Pursue Cluster Development
10. Develop Technologies
11. Institute Dynamic Strategy Process
12. Regional Science Analysis
13. Look for ‘Drivers’
14. ‘Managing’ the Region
15. ‘Marketing’ the Region
16. Opportunistic Approach
17. Contesting Knowledge
18. Defending the Region
19. Creating ‘Seat at Big Table’
20. Training/Education for Change

**Economy (E)** | 1. Regional Economy | 1 a) Restructuring
2. National Economy | b) Diversifying
c) Job seeking
d) Innovative
e) Level of capital investment
f) Overheated land market
3. Community
4. Export Performance
5. Cluster Development
6. Alternative Economy

### 3.4.2. Histories, Understandings and Practices in the Hunter Region: What the Open Codes Say

I have laid out the purpose of this study, its method and methodologies, sampling rationale and the coding framework developed from the data. I am now ready to display the data according to the coding frame. I begin with the open codes and in this section use the device of clustering the data around five
major perspectives that show up strongly throughout the study period.\textsuperscript{18} I use this approach to manage a large amount of data that establishes a backdrop of history and practice, etc. This in turn gives a context to the sections that rely on axial and selective codes.

The first and primary perspective at the beginning of the study period is \textit{industrial economy};
- second is \textit{regional economic development} perspective
- third is \textit{regional strategic planning and development} perspective
- fourth is \textit{conservation/environmental} perspective
- finally, \textit{the cultural/social equity} perspective.

The perspectives run through the data. They change and develop over time and across sectors. For instance the Hunter Development Board’s participants are strongly focussed on the \textit{regional economic development} perspective but they also develop ideas and practices in the \textit{regional strategic planning and development} and \textit{cultural/social equity} perspective. I will draw on the materials from interviewees who largely represent these perspectives, however it should be noted that most of the interviewees couldn’t be neatly allocated to a particular perspective as most of them reveal more than one perspective. A few interviewees do not fit any of these perspectives in their outlook or method of operation. This seemingly inconvenient misfit of data is a rich area of investigation to see if idiosyncratic behaviours influence future regional practices.

3.4.2.1. Industrial Life and Regional Development in the South Maitland Coalfields

The history, understandings and practices from the South Maitland coalfields are justifiably regarded as part of the bedrock of the Hunter’s \textit{industrial economy} perspective. The data reveal how this history and associated practices have massively shaped the stories and practices of other perspectives and places in subsequent time periods. From all the rich, well developed material in my interview with a resident of those coalfields, who went to work in the Richmond Main mine a few years before the Great Depression, who was active in all the relevant local institutions and was a consummate practitioner and communicator of local practices, I want to focus on those aspects that reveal union history, meaning and motivation, the development of institutional practices, conceptions of their [the miners] place in the region, strategies to promote or resist change, to build alliances and overcome blockages. I then want to trace the further development of these meanings and practices in interviews with two businessmen, a politician and a union official whose prime leadership time in the region took place in the 1970s through to the 1990s.

According to our underground coalminer informant (LAB 1) the colliery owners shut the gates to their workers in 1929 demanding that they abolish their seniority practice, dismantle their cavil system\textsuperscript{19} and reduce their wages. The cavil and seniority system was in place to protect individual miners, especially ones regarded as militant, from discrimination by management.

\textbf{LAB 1} If the owners at the end of the lockout and the government had insisted on the abolition of seniority, the lockout would have still been going on to this day ... the pits would have been shut down for ever. (Interview #1)

The miners had a highly structured understanding of the lockout, and their response to it. They were well rehearsed in their understanding of the structure and control of the colliery companies and their relationships with conservative governments, the courts and the newspapers.

\textsuperscript{18} I’ve chosen the term ‘perspective’ to indicate a set of institutional attitudes, practices and cultures that are preferred to other possible sets. These sets are described, justified and deployed throughout each informant’s interview.

\textsuperscript{19} The cavil system allocated miners to various jobs in the mine and was run by the miners themselves. “You picked your own mates to go on the coal. You got onto the coal in your turn by seniority.”
LAB 1 John Brown is a big coal capitalist and in 1929 was a hangover from the early industrial revolution of the individual capitalist. Behind Cessnock collieries [was] the biggest [shipping and coal handling] company in the game - Howard Smith; the shipping interests behind Hebburn was Huddart Parker; behind Abermain seam is Adelaide Steam[ship Company], behind Bellbird was ... These huge shipping combines tied up the big coal companies as their subsidiaries. John Brown was on his own; he had his own ships, his own railway, his own port at Hexham and he undone the colliery proprietors in Melbourne because he shipped coal to Melbourne in his own ships at cheaper prices than the big shipping companies. ... (Interview #1)

The workers structured response was founded on local organisation: the union, the miners’ lodges, the cooperative store and the ‘store divvy’, food relief, the sick fund, the funeral fund, the Militant Minority Movement20, WEA [Workers’ Educational Association] and the Labor Daily21 newspaper. These performed an essential set of industrial advocacy practices, social safety network and broader advocacy functions and they were linked to other similar local networks.

LAB 1 When these towns were the dormitories for the miners, concentrated on the mines around here, you joined the miners union, joined the miners’ lodge, joined the friendly society and joined the cooperative. The first thing I did, the first pay I drew when I got back after four years on the dole, was to put two bob in the co-op. With two bob they gave me credit through 1938 and 1940. That was strong conviction, plus enjoyment of the benefits the cooperative gave. When the miners’ lodges were destroyed with the destruction of the field, you destroyed the membership of the co-op and the friendly societies. (Interview #1)

The ultimate recourse was to rely for support on the Australian Labor Party, ideally when it was in government. Often that reliance proved to be illusory and led to cynicism about what should have been a powerful institution on their side.

LAB 1 The mass of the miners looked to Labor governments being elected and a Labor government was elected in October 1929. Theodore22 came to our Central Council, promised that within fourteen days of being elected the mines would be compulsorily reopened on pre-lockout conditions. He asked for financial support to get Labor elected. So they gave him a thousand pound of our very strained funds.

Labor swept to office. I’m not exaggerating, people were dancing in the street, and it was all over bar the shouting. The lodge meetings were places of merriment. “We are back at work.”

GH What? The government didn’t deliver?

LAB 1 They ditched us. They said they didn’t have the constitutional power to do what they said they promised to do. They should have thought that out before. If they didn’t have the constitutional power, why did Latham23 prosecute John Brown?24 And why did they criticise the government or join the prosecution against John Brown? The truth was, they were too bloody weak ... too weak. (Interview #1)

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20 Editors’ note: In 1929 the Communist Party of Australia established the Militant Minority Movement (MM). Its aim was to organise the union movement's growing disillusionment with the Labor Party into a cohesive force, pushing a policy of militant class struggle. The disillusionment was caused by the Labor Party's response to the employers' offensive in 1929 and its attacks on workers' living standards during the Depression. The miners experienced a devastating defeat on the northern coalfields in which one striker was shot dead by police. The Scullin federal Labor government refused to intervene to assist the miners, despite having promised to do so during the election campaign. This provoked widespread revulsion, opening the space for the Communists to win a larger audience.

21 Editors’ note: The Labor Daily was a Sydney-based journal/newspaper of the early to mid-20th century. An organ of the Australian Labor Party, it was published with the strong support of the Miners’ Federation.

22 Editors’ note: Edward Granville “Ted” Theodore was federal Treasurer from 1929 to 1930 in the Scullin Labor government.

23 Editors’ note: John Latham from 1925 to 1929 served as the Commonwealth Attorney-General in the Nationalist government under Stanley Bruce and Earle Page.

24 Editors’ note: The coal proprietor, John Brown, locked out the miners on the northern New South Wales coalfields. Attorney-General Latham recommended he be prosecuted, but Stanley Bruce, the Prime Minister, in an effort to bring the parties together to settle the dispute, stopped the prosecution.
In looking for a source of the miners’ meaning and motivation, there was a strong sense of betrayed trust in the coalfields as a consequence of the World War I experience, which was an eye-opener for our young informant.

LAB 1  So when I started work as a 14 year old at Richmond Main I was conceited enough to regard myself as a socialist. I got the patriotism kicked out of me because at that mine there were twelve hundred and fifty men …, both men and boys, but at a guess at least thirty percent of them were veterans of the First World War – Brits, Australians, New Zealanders, a couple of Canadians and so on, and in the main they were the most bitter, disillusioned people you could come across.

Listening to the men in the company train, crib time and the union meetings and so on, it dawned on me that these people were not what I thought they were. They felt betrayed; the thing had left a mark on them that they would never get rid of. What I said about the Depression haunting you, I think the war haunted them too, and very few of them joined the RSL. The RSL branch at Kurri was always small. … At least sixty percent of the members of the Communist Party were war veterans. (Interview #1)

On top of the bitter English and Scottish miners’ experience, this sense of betrayal was a strong driver for union and community collective action. This highly developed structure required a set of committee and mass-meeting management skills and procedural practices around elections, meeting management, decision making and minute keeping.

LAB 1  Richmond Main had a reputation of producing outstanding chairmen. Crook, who I’ve got no time for, if he wasn’t the best chairman in the world, he was one of the best and you could model yourself on him in that regard. I got shifted into that category of being an outstanding chairman.

McBlane - he was outstanding. Now his conviction was, once the union established policy and the policy was endorsed by the ‘rank and file’, no matter who it pleased or offended, you adhered to the policy once it was established. In effect, while I never hear him say it, in effect the theme was, loyalty to the union providing the ‘rank and file’ have the final say – all Central Council minutes, all Board of Management minutes have to go to every lodge to be endorsed, for or against each commitment – [you] didn’t deal with them all because a lot of them were administrative – but on policy, you did vote. (Interview #1)

The facility with which miners and their communities used their power, based on organisation and industrial strength, is threaded throughout this opening story.

In these excerpts from Interview #1, I have pointed to three highly developed sets of practices woven through this interview: the job protection strategy of seniority, the all embracing union and community support system emanating from union practice, and a highly developed set of decision making and leadership practices. Underpinning these practices is a worldview of a structured set of relationships covering capital, the state, labour and community. Together they give the unions a sense of purpose, an analytical framework for making sense of their world and to guide their decision making, and finally enabling them to develop a set of organisational practices and institutions for achieving their goals.

I now examine the interviews of two business men, a retired federal politician and a union official who worked in the region from after the Second World War through to the nineties to see how the concept of seniority was mediated by events and ideologies of their times. These players’ narratives also reveal the new concept of ‘region’ and its generative practices. The union movement continues to play a major part in these regional practices during the period of their pivotal engagement in the region.

3.4.2.1.1. Emergence of the Idea of ‘Region’

A significant business informant became involved in regional development during the 1950s through to the late 1980s. He had established his leadership base as chairman of the Newcastle Chamber of Commerce. His theoretical tools came from his enrolling in the newly established University of Newcastle studying geography, regional economics and philosophy where he was influenced by the first director of the Hunter Valley Research Foundation, a regional economist, Prof. Cyril Renwick. He [the informant] set up the Hunter Development Board (HDB) in 1972 and became involved in the Department of Planning’s Hunter Planning Committee. He set about developing a regionalist set of meanings and
practices which included the union constituency and addressed the region’s needs for jobs as a major driver for regional development. (Interview #3)

BUS 1 ... and we were just treated as the ‘pack horse boys’ up here and we just got the scraps. That’s something that’s never left me.

I realise that there’s got to be a capital city. The domination of Sydney reminds me very much of the rich growing rich and the poor growing poor ... So I went into, from the University here because of Cyril Renwick, I became very much involved with the Hunter Valley Research Foundation ... Cyril Renwick did a lot for Newcastle. He was the one who created in me the regional attitude. I was flying my own aircraft at that stage, and I used to fly over the region. I began to realise just how it was about time that we didn’t talk about Newcastle and we talked about the whole of the Hunter Region. So everything I’ve been involved in has taken place from there. (Interview #3)

While reflecting the habitual distrust for the non-local, he differentiated between Labor politicians and state public servants and built a direct relationship with the NSW state premier of the time, Neville Wran, and the Secretary of his [Premier’s] Department as his preferred avenue for influencing the NSW state government.

BUS 1 I spent hours in the Hunter Valley talking to councils about what we might do. To cut a long story short, when we set the Hunter Development Board up, we set it up comprising the unions and local government. We had some non-voting representatives from government; I think we had three government officers from the Hunter. We had ordinary commercial people and we had general members of the public. So we spread it and we set out telling people this is what we wanted to do, we wanted representation from the whole region, and that went like a rocket for a while, it went exceptionally well. (Interview #3)

The structure of the HDB reflected structural representation practices of the coalfields, reinforcing a constituency representation generally. With the idea of the Hunter Valley being a region he then spent a lot of time travelling and “talking unity and showing that we wanted things done and the state government at the time did a few things that indicated that it was right on side.” (Interview #3)

BUS 1 What we did was create a communication; we used to talk about the three Cs, Communication, Cooperation and Coordination, and what we were trying to achieve, and did I think do so, was a balance. We wanted the Hunter to go forward in a balanced state as to the social, economic and ecological aspects of the development of it. We didn’t want just to be, we didn’t want it to be just turned into ... we’d seen enough of BHP and we didn’t want that over again. (Interview #3)

So the chairman of the HDB identified the concept of ‘the region’ differentiating itself as a place distinct from Sydney. He reflected a constituency on the Board that represented the region’s community as he saw it and he developed some principles for collective regional action. This is the first time that ‘balanced development’ is talked about and it is reflected in the region’s first Hunter Regional Environmental Plan published in 1978. The regional economic development perspective that will be outlined further on framed the Plan. The concept and practice of ‘balanced development’, along with those of the conservation movement from the 1950s, Newcastle Trades Hall Council, and the movement against air pollution, support the construction of the conservation/environmentalism perspective and prepare the region to embrace the concept of Ecologically Sustainable Development which wasn’t to appear until the 1990s.

Another businessman informant, active over the same period as the chairman of the HDB, worked in the coal industry and was still a member of the HDB at the time of interview. His story provides rich insights into the coal industry’s structures and regional practices since the 1970s. The oil crisis of late 1970s was a seismic event for the Hunter Valley because it prompted the entry of Japanese investment and stimulated the construction of large open cut mines in the Upper Hunter. This in turn put pressure on the coal chain to improve its throughput, and on towns to provide more community infrastructure to accommodate the newly arrived skilled workers in the region. BUS 4 tells of industry’s role in funding a local government’s shortfall in developing additional residential subdivisions, the structuring and financing of a port coal-handling subsidiary, pressuring government and assisting with financing for
deepening the port of Newcastle, and supporting the introduction of a national competition policy and using it to force down the coal freight rate.

A significant ideological movement that began in the mid to late 1980s was the rolling out of the neoliberalist agenda which was mediated initially by policies under the Income and Prices Accord after which came more significant policies such as the National Competition Policy. These changes can be highlighted by looking at the different perspectives of a federal Labor politician, a union official and a member of the coalmining management club who were all involved in resolving the challenges of workplace change for themselves and their constituencies.

Former federal politician and Newcastle City alderman (Interview #13) has a story about his community’s history when he was a teenager that powerfully formed his motivation for his career.

POL 1 And then when I joined the Australian Labor Party in November 1956 there was this meeting, my second or third meeting, the President of the branch was a man in his seventies, a man called Jim Babbage and there was some discussion at the end of the meeting, people just talking together, and something they had been talking about. I just didn’t know anybody at all and felt quite strange. They were talking something about the Depression. Actually this comment stood me in good stead right through my life, right through my ministerial and parliamentary life and in understanding demarcation issues, understanding industrial issues, union problems. What he said to the other fellow he was talking to was, “We’ll never let the bastards do that to us again.” And what he was referring to was people being turfed out of their homes, people being turfed out of their jobs. What he was showing was the pain and agony that came from the suffering during the Depression. (Interview #13)

He then expanded on his understanding of the unionist strategy behind the practice of job demarcation.

POL 1 ... so coming out of the Depression what they did, and I always thought of [this] when I was doing industrial relations in transport, was that they sought then to create job security. This is post World War II, and my observation was [that] the means of creating job security was to demarc or to proscribe the boundaries and the tasks of each employee. Nobody could steal anybody else’s job. So they thought they were protecting their jobs by defining their jobs; that way everybody would know their job precisely, what it was, and no one could be crossing over taking somebody else’s work and putting people out of work. And I saw that as very much a result of the Depression ...

There is another saying that I picked up along the track and it probably describes it well, appropriate today. When we look back and say what were those arrangements and why were they there and I’ve explained the thing and you say, “Well they are no good today, they are an obstacle to improved efficiency today,” and so they became. Technology changed and everything else changed but the comment was, “Well they were appropriate to the circumstances of the time”. They may not be appropriate to today’s circumstances but they were appropriate to the circumstances of the time. (Interview #13)

Here we can see the legacy handed down by the union movement, enunciated so passionately by LAB 1. Now in the 1980s this former federal politician had to reconcile his government undermining the traditional survival strategy of a significant part of his constituency, the practices of the cavil and ‘seniority’ as being “appropriate to the circumstances of the time”.

POL 1 We as a region had to adapt. We had globalisation in terms of what was happening in the coal industry and that was constant pressure, and we had globalisation already in place in respect of the steel industry and shipbuilding and we’ve already been through that, we’d lost that one. The effect of globalisation ... it was internationally driven. (Interview #13)

A former trade union official LAB 2 who held the most senior union position in the region over the period had to reconcile changing union practices by claiming that this was the only way to preserve jobs. The first “shake out” in BHP back in the early 1980s was the catalyst for assessing the effectiveness of traditional regional industrial practices from a union viewpoint.

LAB 2 So from the meetings the consensus was we had to look at the economic base of the region, we really had to start thinking about diversifying the base. I think that proved to be correct because in later years, it didn’t happen immediately of course, manufacturing industry came into serious threat. I mean either a
threat from new technologies which were inevitably going to replace labour or simply globalisation was going to impact on a lot of manufacturing industries. They were going to disappear; disappear off the face of the earth or disappear to another country.

... I believe that a lot of change in attitudes in the region was the due to shake out in the BHP. I mean it was like the earthquake; it had that sort of impact. If the starting point is jobs and you look at what you can do to alleviate the destruction of jobs and move towards creating new jobs, then you have a pretty firm base by which you can work with other organisations within the region. You can put aside some of the ideology, and the fundamentals are pretty well the same for everyone and you can start to look at that as the primary issue. (Interview #5)

The former federal politician, who over his career held federal ministries in Transport and Industrial Relations, had his way of accommodating the contradictions of the industrial relations restructuring of his time, with those of the region’s traditions.

POL 1 So with that whole transition of change we come back to where we started with the Accord. The Accord was the right process at the time. It actually was the work of the Accord and the settling down of the workforce and the resolution of a lot of the unfairness at that time from the Fraser government that actually has enabled the creation of the platform for the nation to go ahead in terms of quite substantial increases in productivity, quite substantial increases in competitiveness. (Interview #13)

By this time the union movement had worked with government, business and the community on a number of regional development boards and for a number of regional economic initiatives, for example the frigate contract. The first steps of what later became known as ‘site agreements’ is described by the coal industry manager BUS 4 as being facilitated by John Varnum, a former secretary of the Transport Workers Union, who was then in the position of the Deputy President of the NSW Arbitration Court, as he deals with sorting out the rates of pay between eight unions.

BUS 4 He set to work because he was very familiar with all those problems. So he gets to work and his mode was simple. He’d call in the unions to see him who would be involved in the site. My personal experience of this was at Mt Thorley, so we told him that we were going to build this thing. So he called all the unions in. He’d been through all the awards and he found that, for instance, that if there were front-end loaders like excavators and things that were going to be used on the site, under the various awards there would be five different rates of pay that would be necessary, and if you want to cause a dispute you get blokes working together on different rates of pay for the same job. What he did, he had all these awards together and he found that, for instance, that if there were front-end loaders like excavators and things that were going to be used on the site, under the various awards there would be five different rates of pay that would be necessary, and if you want to cause a dispute you get blokes working together on different rates of pay for the same job. What he did, he had all these awards together and he’d sort them all out, then call in the unions in and say “Well we’ve got to make a common agreement.” And then he’d bring out a new set of rates for the job, which were marginally above, there was a margin on them so they were attractive to everybody. They were a margin of ten percent more than under the highest award, so he’d make that into a site agreement and then set that up. And then a lot of demarcation would go and there would be no automatic right to strike and all that kind of thing, and he had a full operating agreement with all these rates. And then he’d call all the unions in, perhaps about fourteen unions, get them all to sign it.

Then when we issued contracts to build it, we’d issued that agreement, it became part of the terms of contract for the builders. So all the employment conditions for the people were in the one agreement. So there wasn’t any one union that had control of it and those ventures were dispute free. Varnum had a lot of authority. Now he didn’t do that as judge, he did that when he moved down from the bench and sat down with them. So it was something they really signed between themselves, he just persuaded them and supervised them; he did that, he stepped off the bench to do it, it wasn’t a decision of his court. It worked like a charm and there were a lot of projects in the Hunter Valley moved better because of that. (Interview #18)

Ten or so years later this successfully established regional practice was made more powerful when the Kelty plan to amalgamate unions became a reality. This is how our coal industry manager saw it.

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25 Editors’ note: Bill Kelty was secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions from 1983 to 2000.
Camberwell started; fortunately it started off at the right time. It was the first mine that was able to make an agreement with the union to be a single union mine. Prior to that you had a mess, about seven unions that were always brawling with each other. Well Camberwell started up in 1990 just at the time when Bill Kelty was looking to amalgamate unions. He wanted one mining union and there was intense competition then to see who it would be. And what was the Miners’ Federation, now the CFMEU [Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union], gave the opportunity to do a deal with Camberwell that they’d be the single union at Camberwell, and that allowed them to actually grab the lot (laughs). That closed the FEDFA [Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen’s Association] down, the AWU [Australian Workers’ Union] and all those people. Anyway we were faced with the position at Camberwell: would we go the ordinary route or would we grab this opportunity, so we grabbed it. And because we grabbed it, the CFMEU didn’t know much about open cut mines because the only members they had in the open cut mines were the drillers and shooters, the people who drill and put the explosives in, and the bathroom attendant, they were the only people they had at an open cut mine. So they weren’t the FEDFA and the AWU who were much bigger at open cut mines; and they didn’t know too much about it. But they knew about undergrounds.

Anyway they weren’t saddled with a whole other baggage that the other unions were saddled with because that got to become custom and practice and things you fought for and you’d only lose over your dead body. Typical was the number of men you had to drive a shovel. The FEDFA did that, and you have to have two men on a shovel no matter how big it was or how small it was, and there were some of them that would fit in this room and you still had to have two men on them. A very little back hoe and it still had to have two men on it because it was classified as a shovel. But the Miners Federation didn’t have any of those hang-ups. So we were able to negotiate much better conditions with the union, and of course there was only one union so nobody was thinking of demarcation. (Interview #18)

In telling this story our coal industry manager ridicules the unions’ rationality concerning hard fought-for practices and the culture that underlay them, but from his position of observing the inefficiencies arising from demarcation disputes he had a valid argument.

The Trades Hall secretary describes this same change, with more caution, from a regional perspective as well as an industry one.

The Kelty plan with the Accord with the Labor Party and the move to the amalgamations of unions, I think quite frankly in my own opinion, they were a disaster. Through the amalgamation process I believe that a lot of unions, which might have been small unions that had a sort of niche market in the industrial scene, had better contact and provided better service to the memberships than bigger larger unions which to some degree lost contact with their membership.

One of the problems is that the regions themselves usually divide and conquer themselves. But yeah, I think it’s been the most important thing, we go back to the period when not confronted with this issue of unemployment - when power stations were built at a rate of knots, coalmines were opening up. The approach then was to modernise industrial agreements on the site so that you had them in place before the project started. (Interview #5)

This union official, reflecting from a regional awareness and demonstrating one of the benefits of the region’s constituency representation practice, saw the need for the union movement to assist in building a positive image of the region.

Get an agreement in place beforehand, and they worked. I think that’s why the region got a reputation for good industrial relations as distinct from the South Coast who were still practicing old methodologies. And you would know … that [at the] Hunter Economic Development Corporation marketing became a primary objective to convince the outside world. You would go to another region and they’d say, “Oh, that dirty dusty strike-ridden place up there.” A lot of money was spent on that campaign trying to change that image …” (Interview #5)

Pushing for the region’s industrial interests against the union strategy of protecting jobs, both the union official and the coal manager were members of various regional development bodies, principally the Hunter Development Board. At this time of the industry shake out in the 1980s the Board continued to foster the concept of the ‘region’, set up projects like Hunter Group Training to compensate for major industries closing down their training divisions and promote the growth of emerging industries like the
wine and blood horse industries.

The former federal politician supported these initiatives and was instrumental in establishing a federal government sponsored regional development organisation. He had developed his awareness of the region from his local government experience during the 1950s.

POL 1 So you had this ‘everything is connected to everything else’. So if you’re talking about a road, it’s probably about a road from here to Tamworth, but you’re just looking at the section within Newcastle boundaries. So if you look first at a part of the service, it was just one component of a larger system of infrastructure you had to have. Then second to that, but linked, you had the realisation that the way to get the solution is you need to have the other councils, the other people, the other committees that are also involved with that service to also join with us, and that way we had a stronger voice. (Interview #13)

This section has outlined the development, the dissemination and modification over time of industrial and regional development practices in the South Maitland coalfields. They have been the bedrock upon which the economic and ideological changes of the post World War II period have been played out. These traditional meanings and practices have been radically modified and new concepts and practices have developed to protect and develop the region. The traditional notion of seniority has been attacked and largely abandoned over the study period. New practices have been developed by players like the coal manager, union official and the federal politician by modifying traditional practices while taking account of the consequences of regionally significant events and movements of their times, in this case neoliberalism and globalisation. The union movement has been represented on the regional economic and development bodies that were set up to deal with regional economic change. This has seen the union movement take a leading role in modifying these practices at the regional level.

We now move on to show how players in these regional bodies built on and used the evolving concept of the Hunter Region and its perceived competitive advantages in a new way, foisted on it by neoliberalism and globalisation.

3.4.2.2. Regional Economic Development – Post Keynesian Phase

When the Greiner-led Coalition state government sacked the Hunter Development Board in 1987 and set up the Hunter Economic Development Council there was a shift from a ‘Keynesian style’ policy of state development to the beginning of a free market approach. The shift was from expectations of the state government funding recommended projects to a role of identifying opportunities for economic development and encouraging the implementation of projects by the private sector. A new generation of regional development organisations built onto the concept of the Hunter Region and used the attributes developed by their predecessors for its new approach, mainly to ‘market’ the region. They also took the notion of a regional economy, described by the earlier Hunter Valley Research Foundation, and elaborated many new market segments. Finally in this regional economic development perspective we will see how these ideas were focussed into communication and perception strategies targeted both internally and externally to take advantage of the region’s close location to the largest consumer market in Australia.

To describe how this perspective modified traditional institutions and practices we will turn to material from interviews with an academic, an industrialist who was the chairman of a state government sponsored regional development corporation, a member of the Hunter Development Board and four public servants.

The Hunter Valley Research Foundation by this stage in the region’s history has become a pioneering organisation in the region. Its structure and work set up a major part of the regional economic development descriptive framework and it was used as a template for more recent regional development strategies and it provided a starting point in the careers of a number of regional activists. This quote from a retired academic and bureaucrat (Interview #10) underlines the significance of the Foundation.

BUR 2 It gave enormous strength. This is probably digressing considerably from what you want to look at, but in 1959 or 1958, we at the Research Foundation, and I specifically, had been very heavily involved in the first attempt to get regional income estimates for this area. At that stage there were no state income
estimates, only national income estimates, yet the Foundation started working on generating a regional estimate and that work continued after I left. People like Joan Murray, and later on, Robin Mcdonald, continued doing that. The fact of us doing this helped put pressure on people at the ABS [Australian Bureau of Statistics] to produce regional statistics. The official statisticians could see that, at least, someone was interested and someone’s using such measures. That was quite unusual at the time. Western Australia, in fifty-nine, had state income estimates because Alex Kerr, who was one of the founding professors of the Regional Science Association, had an interest in producing these, but none of the other states had anything like it. That strength, of a good database coming through, gave strength to a sense of regional identity and it also provided some strong basis for decision making. I think the continuity of the Hunter Valley Research Foundation has been a quiet but very powerful influence in that and continues to be. (Interview #10)

An industry general manager (Interview #17) arrived in the region in the early eighties to manage the controversial Tomago aluminium smelter. He felt that he had to prove that his company was going to be responsible environmentally. He also joined the Newcastle Chamber of Commerce to work for more efficient exporting through Newcastle Port, as efficient port infrastructure, practices and costs were a significant interest to his export-oriented company. However, it is in his role as the chairman of the Hunter Economic Development Council where he best reveals his understanding of the Hunter as having special economic strengths derived from its resources, its institutions, its image, its strategies etc.

He accepted the characteristics of the region identified by earlier regional leaders and used them to build a competitive advantage profile for the region. He spells out the necessary regional response to the ‘free market’ approach in the following story of defeat out of which a ‘valuable lesson emerged’.

BUS 3 Again I’m looking at the Hunter from a helicopter. I’m looking at it over time. One of the most significant things ever to happen was for Newcastle to lose the frigates. There was a major political campaign to get the frigate contract for Newcastle and the essence of that campaign was “We deserve it.” It wasn’t based on “We’re the most competitive.” It wasn’t based on “We’re the most able to do it”, but “We deserve it”, and it was a political campaign. It didn’t succeed and that forced the Hunter to stop and think. Too much local industry lived off the supply department of BHP and they weren’t in a situation where the market required them to be all that competitive. When the minesweepers came along and ADI [Australian Defence Industries] came to the Hunter there was just beginning to be a change in outlook amongst the major medium-level companies in the Hunter. They were starting to realise that the Defence Department was serious about its quality assurance requirements – of being able to comply with its specifications …

Now that meant that a lot of companies who wanted to be suppliers had to learn new tricks. They had to learn to market, they had to learn how to price, they had to learn how to install quality assurance systems so they could provide the required level of assurance that the Defence Department wanted, and you had the advent of the development of HunterNet26. (Interview #17)

This sums up the essence of the neoliberalist strategy and the change challenge facing the Hunter. He also saw the opportunity that the region had to exploit consumer markets in Sydney 160 kilometres to the south, and that the freeway linking them should be upgraded to improve access.

BUS 3 Until the development of the expressway, road transport to and from Sydney was quite tortuous and at times you’re looking at four hours to go from one place to the other. So I think it’s only in the last decade that a lot of people are moving freely in and out of the Hunter. It had tended to be, until then, a closed community, and again if you don’t see what it’s like outside, your imagination is not expanded. Against that background major change can be very threatening or feel threatening …

I think the development of the expressway which puts the Hunter on the doorstep of the biggest consumer market in Australia is very, very significant. (Interview #17)

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26 Editors’ note: Incorporated in 1992, HunterNet is a network of small and medium-sized manufacturing, engineering and consulting companies located in the Hunter Region of NSW.
The experience of exporting to external markets is nothing new to the Hunter, however the range of product is now different, so is the transport mode - road, instead of rail and sea. Tourism is now seen as a key export product from the region.

BUS 3 Again during those early years with the Chamber, I started to formulate in my own mind core principles about how the Hunter could develop. One, it was already a major engine of the NSW and Australian economy. It was good at heavy manufacturing so it seemed to me, point one, was to continue what we were good at. Two, there was a developing, but in the eighties it was still just emerging, tourist industry for the region. I’m thinking of Newcastle itself, for the region, Port Stephens, the vineyards and so on. Now we were on the doorstep of Sydney and with the development of the expressway we were within an hour and a half of most parts of Sydney so we could attract the overseas tourist but more importantly we could develop the repeat business out of the biggest consumer market in Australia which is the Sydney basin. (Interview #17)

The former member of the Hunter Development Board described how his agency realised the export potential of long standing regional products that did not have much export exposure before.

BUS 4 We then set off to develop things. I remember two good things that came out of it. One was the wine, which is an enormous export success now, but in 1980 they didn’t export any wine. So we had some consultants look over the valley and look at all the different possible industries, those existing and those which offered a good opportunity, and they actually came up with horse racing or stud horses and vineyards, two of the industries that had opportunity for growth. So we worked pretty hard on the vineyards and we actually got them talking to each other, which was the first requisite. We got to the point where we shipped the Marching Koalas over to Japan to march through the street and lots of people went over there. So we got the wine industry to contribute to a fund and make a big international presentation of wine and got them all working together. The Board hasn’t had any involvement with the wine industry for a long time, because after we got them working together it took off, it’s done very well. Then we took up the stud horses business and that took off pretty well too. So we went on and promoted a lot of stuff and looked for those kinds of opportunities. (Interview #18)

Finally another significant growth industry was to augment Sydney’s sea transport infrastructure as the capital became more and more congested with residential and lifestyle development.

BUS 3 It seemed to me that Sydney has all sorts of growth problems; it is geographically a basin, its infrastructure is crowded, moving containers around Sydney is a nightmare. I think it was a major mistake for Sydney ever to allow trucks into Botany, it was never the intention. Governments of the day weren’t prepared to stand up to the Transport Workers’ Union over the issue and have rail access only in and out of Port Botany. But on top of that you had the residential development of the inner city parts of Sydney Harbour and increasingly that development meant that port activity was going to be squeezed out. I mean there is virtually none of it left at Balmain, for example, or at Woolloomooloo.

Here at Newcastle you had one of the great underdeveloped deep-water ports in Australia. It was in terms of NSW interests a very scarce resource. There are limits on how far you can develop Port Kembla because it is not safe in all weathers. There is a limit on what you can do in Botany because of the proximity to the airport and a number of other things. Sydney was declining as a commercial port and becoming more and more a recreational port and here only an hour and a half away is an undeveloped deep-water port. (Interview #17)

To underscore the logic of this development strategy, the industry manager summarises the list of neoliberalist achievements.

BUS 3 I think something else that probably infected the culture of the region and I’m talking about industrially. You’ve got a number of things: you’ve got globalisation that can’t be stopped; you can’t turn off the internet, worldwide communication; you can’t stop the money markets working twenty four hours a day seven days a week the way they are. I mean it’s just so easy to move money around the world. Governments in Australia saw that and reached an agreement about competitive policy, there’s a Commonwealth/State agreement about competition policy and that’s what’s leading to the corporatisation of things like the railways, the power stations, the ports, all of these things. BHP used to operate like the MSB [Maritime Services Board], it was almost like a government department, the way it was structured, the way it worked bureaucratically and so on. Industry has to be competitive to survive, there are no guarantees. (Interview #17)
Another important strategy in regional development practice that has become dominant over the past 15 years \(^{27}\) is the emphasis on regional perception and communication, internally and externally. An executive officer for a development corporation with a journalism and marketing background argues the case for this practice.

BUR 4  Yes it’s all related. The feeling was that people outside the region get messages via the media but they also get messages via business and we’ve got five hundred and seventy thousand potential ambassadors here in the region. If we communicate with the general community about the region’s benefits and capability, then within their ambit of influence, whether they are local or outside, the message spreads. So that’s the word of mouth thing, so that’s why we wanted to build local confidence. And of course ... confidence, particularly economic, confidence, is a self fulfilling prophecy. So if people are feeling bullish, then they will take bullish behaviour when it comes to employing people etcetera. In fact we are just about to start a television campaign locally about the capability of the region, so that’s been an ongoing programme. (Interview #19)

The regional marketing strategy has a number of purposes and rationales according to the executive officer.

BUR 4  I should say that the perception thing is only one part of the marketing. The marketing programme has three planks: one is build local confidence and we monitor that; second is to improve the image and raise the profile of the region; and third is to target industry sectors in which the Hunter has competitive advantage. Now we mainly put our resources outside the region because that’s where the incremental investment comes from. (Interview #19)

Networking and building cooperative relationships between managers is still an important role for CEOs [Chief Executive Officer] in this era. However the basis for relationships between them hinges less and less on the Newcastle Boys High School shared history. Relationships and networks are now less predictable, more complex and have to be consciously worked on, as demonstrated by this discussion with a general manager of a local government authority who is a woman and a newcomer to Newcastle.

BUR 3  … and I have good relationship with the CEO of Honeysuckle. I haven’t mentioned Honeysuckle really. We specifically meet every couple of months for lunch so we have quite a good relationship.

GH  Now he’s a bloke. That’s interesting.

BUR 3  He’s a bit of a civilised bloke I think. You know he is not a Novocastrian in the traditional sense. No, he is very open, and again I get on with him. I suppose it does boil down to that. So I think there is still a bit of ‘blokieness’ there that probably is an inhibitor in some ways, although on the other hand they find they can’t ignore us (laughs) when we are in these positions. I am a bit concerned that as a result people go to the lord mayor on issues. That’s fine if they are strategic issues and advocacy, then of course the lord mayor’s office is the place to go. I have to muscle my way in some times.

GH  Yes, D. E. is the other example.

BUR 3  Yes, he’s incredibly important with the government. I think that’s shown with this Land Management Corporation being set up as a subsidiary. I’ve had occasional discussions with him. He’s quite receptive. He’s never initiated one. He is the kind of person that says, “Oh I don’t go to rent-a-crowd functions.” And good on him, and there’s a fair bit of that around the place. He keeps his own counsel but he’s obviously got enormous influence in Macquarie Street. He’s well respected, and I do not know who he is mates with, but I think he tends to run his own race … What the Port Corporation says is taken seriously, but the position at council is, yes the general manager is head of the organisation, the lord mayor is really the front person and all the rest of it. But in spite of those dual things, dual positions, the general manager’s position is seen as potentially influential and I think you’ve got to be very humble about that. I mean there are some people who take a very arrogant view of that and I think it gets people offside. G.O. was one of those, so brusque, so focused in what he was doing. But he did do a lot while he was here, no doubt about it, and he took no prisoners. That was his style and sometimes that works against effective

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\(^{27}\) Editors’ note: That is since about 1990.
working relationships. You’ve just got to try and weave your way through that. There’s always a personal challenge, interpersonal challenge I think. (Interview #11)

The ‘post Keynesian’ style of regional economic development is also about coping with change and creating new economic sectors and products. While some of the newer state managers looked out for gender and class diversity in industry managers, older regional activists were more cautious about the benefits of change. Before illustrating the debate on the new economy, this excerpt from a council general manager describes how she sees the new economy delivering benefits in her area of influence.

BUR 3 Yes, it came from an idea of Roland Peelman of the Song Company, and Hunter Orchestra. He was very keen and he talked to Phillip Hughes, and Peter Evans is involved, and Anthony Jeffrey and it came through there. I mean I just love the name, Loud Mouth, is so great. It’s got enormous potential, I think, to really grow, because it’s not elite. You can have a little Chamber Orchestra function up at Belltrees in Scone if you want, and you can have a rock band and funky comedy for the other audience. It’s something for everybody. I really have a strong belief that that’s going to be a real stand for us in the future; I hope so anyway. We’re going to wind up today, actually this afternoon; we are going to review it all and see what we can learn. I don’t think we’d had enough time this year to give it the publicity and to market it well enough. We were on the back foot and it really didn’t do it for us, but I’m glad it went ahead.

GH So within those limits it was a success?

BUR 3 Yes, the comedy was a huge success. That was probably the most popular event and that appealed to a number of age groups. It activated Wheeler Place for us and the huge containers gave us a sense of enclosure out there. If there’s a bit of extra marketing and exposure I think it will get more people at the Civic [Theatre] and the Conservatorium. There was the Australian Chamber Orchestra at City Hall and that was sold out. So the potential is definitely there. We need to build each year slowly, not try and go with a big bang next year, but really try to build on it. We’ve got an audience database and we can utilise more of that. So I think that’s exciting. I’m pleased about that. (Interview #11)

These conflicting views on the benefits of new economic activities and their change consequences are reflected in the following passages, the first from a state manager with a marketing background.

BUR 4 Let me tell you this story. The head of one of the big industrials who was coming into the region, and he will remain nameless but he was a very urbane global person of the world, worked all over the world in different roles and is still proposing to put a development in the Hunter. He did the rounds of all the groups and the meetings, all the influences, went to the Chamber etcetera, etcetera and because he and I had worked so closely together on his project, we were friends and we could talk off the record. He said to me, “I walk into those meetings and I look around the room and it’s all white Anglo-Saxon males over fifty-five. There’s not even any Greeks and Italians there.” He said, “Where are all your minorities, where are your Asians, where are your women, where are your younger guys?” He said, “It’s like stepping back into the fifties for me.” Now this person said that to me probably two years ago now, and I said, “It’s come a long way, baby” (laughs). I guess that because I’ve worked in some of those overseas countries and in Sydney, and increasingly the world is becoming global, I don’t think we as a region will be taken seriously in the more service-oriented economy unless we do demonstrate that diversity. (Interview #19)

On the other hand the consequences of change can have significant costs and dubious gains according to one long-term regional activist.

BUR 2 One cost is the effect on people. There is also a very strong cultural change, which means there are other things going on at the same time. One is the culture of change, change for change’s sake. It is expected that you will rotate your jobs and rotate your executives. Whatever happened to corporate history? And of course this will bite, as it has on occasions very severely, in case of a breakdown. There has been the case of ‘no one knows how the power plant was installed because we got rid of all the engineers that did it’ type of thing … But the other thing I think one has to face, is that there’s an element of truth in one of the criticisms of this area that you get from the high flyers, “Oh, too comfortable.” People retire back into Newcastle; there can be a sense of come and settle back into Newcastle. So there’s probably also a lack of people who are still ‘being driven’ in Newcastle – people settle back and it’s comfortable. Yet it’s often those people who are being driven who will be drivers in community life. We are too comfortable here; we are a bit laid back. (Interview #10)
However another regional development organisation manager felt that better measuring techniques would largely resolve the danger of becoming unbalanced in the region’s deployment of industrial development strategies. Referring to the damage created by industry’s disinvestment in industry-based training, the impact of which is now apparent twenty years later, he noted:

**BUR 5** What was missing though, to underpin the voices of the more perceptive leaders within the community, was the hard-nosed analysis of that skill system. How does it work, what happens if you pull out inputs in year one, what’s happened by year ten? We don’t have those accounting mechanisms. We have very good financial accounting tools, we’ve been developing them for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. But when you look at the ability to analyse and model and create the alternative to the financial accounting systems in other areas, whose flows are less tangible and more difficult to measure, we don’t have the tools.

**GH** I mean people were making statements but they were in unmeasured terms, or not as definitive as the accountant who said, “This means you can save a hundred thousand dollars off your bottom line if you close this unit or whatever.”

**BUR 5** Exactly. As I indicated, we don’t have the tools to actually mould the system and to measure it. Organisations don’t report on those things, so it’s not being brought to the attention of the key decision makers. One of the things that we could have been doing along those lines is introduce a system of measures that look at things much more broadly that just the revenue. So here are some graphs that do track the financials and here we are looking at the actual numbers of people. How many host organisations have we got that are looking after five or more of our apprentices, or ten or more? That’s important because usually those organisations do have better training cultures and they are supportive of young people in complementing our day-to-day management systems. What’s the mix of our trades, where are they going, what are our safety activities, and where are the things that we should be doing to look after the well-being of our people? Why aren’t people completing, have we got discipline issues …? (Interview #22)

Informants also referred to the perverse effects of neoliberalism signalling further change. The first set of concerns is a general warning from a former chairman of an economic development organisation.

**BUS 3** I think we have a huge problem with the way the economy is structured. I’m not talking of the Australian economy. Superannuation payments have become a large part of the investment community; they put a huge pressure on Boards for short-term results. I don’t know how we get out of this. I worry about it. But there is so much pressure on Boards today, not just in Australia but in the United States, England and Europe, for short-term results because that’s how superannuation funds provide income returns for their members. It’s very hard for companies to take a longer-term view about developments. I was lucky I worked in an industry which is not really short-term, you make investment decisions based on an outlook of five or more years. So I was able to approach things on a basis that I had three [years] left at Tomago and I had a three year horizon for the sorts of things I wanted to do. I had the opportunity to try and do them gradually, because again you are dealing with people, you’re changing the way they live in terms of what they are spending their time doing and how they think at work. You can’t do that overnight and you can’t explain it to people and ask them to agree with you. (Interview #17)

The second inherent destabilising force identified is fragmentation that comes from competition and performance management, as illustrated by an economic development coordinator.

**GH** Can I ask you a bit more about soft and hard infrastructure and what happened in the past where there was competition between the players within the region that then maybe undermined the most efficient use of hard infrastructure?

**BUR 1** I think it has been done poorly in the past because the drivers in relation to that hard infrastructure, and we’re talking about land, have not been well understood. The drivers have been the wrong drivers and a good example, and probably the best example that I could give, is the management of the land on Kooragang Island. It’s largely been managed up till now by Public Works and Services, but with a clear mandate that was given to them by Treasury. It’s one of those single focus agendas which is about maximising your returns on that land, and they didn’t take into account the strategic importance of those parcels of land in terms of driving the future of this region for the next thirty years. Now we find ourselves in a position where some of that land is poorly utilised by operations that really could be located in many other areas. Not good decisions taken in those days. So what do we end up doing? You...
end up being forced into a position whereby you need more incorporated industrial land and that’s going
to have an impact on the environment, and you’ve forced yourself into that position in some respects.
(Interview #6)

Following on from the dominant industrial development perspective on the Hunter’s history pre- and
post- World War II, in this section, describing the regional economic development perspective, I have
shown how more current leaders built on the work of earlier regional pioneer leaders and, taking account
of the strictures of neoliberalism, applied those traditions to a new set of industry and commercial
sectors. The informants show a use of neoliberlist thinking and practice that is shaped by the Hunter’s
traditions, including an ambivalence towards this recently arrived ideology.

In the next section another long-term perspective with a rich, controversial and complex history is
described. This perspective is again partly at odds with a neoliberalist worldview in some respects while
supporting it in other respects.

3.4.2.3. Regional Strategic Planning and Development – Nascent Regionalism

Many informants refer to another bedrock event of the Hunter, that of the 1955 Maitland floods and the
consequent setting up of the Hunter Valley Research Foundation. The Foundation was created to study
how the consequences for the region of a crisis like flooding could be prevented. It set up hydrology and
regional economic programmes which developed into flood mitigation and soil conservation programmes
and regional economic modelling and reporting. This response to a natural disaster was the catalyst to
develop conceptual frameworks for a number of regional development strategies: natural resources
conservation and the Hunter Catchment Management Trust; economic strategic planning; and regional
strategic planning. In this perspective on regional development we notice scientific foundations and the
practice of professional disciplines as the basis for regional understanding and practice. The
contributions of several respondents will be used to reflect on this perspective of regional strategic
planning and development. Three of them have an academic background, three a strong involvement in
government-sponsored regional development organisations, and two of them a history in political parties
and community organisation. We begin by highlighting the seminal location of the 1955 Maitland floods
through the view of one of the academics.

BUR 2 Undoubtedly the fifty-five floods were still influencing thinking and decision making at a physical level,
influencing what people were doing to river banks, the way they were siting development, the way they
were handling development applications. People were using flood plain maps. So probably as a catalytic
event the 1955 flood was one of the things that really shaped a sense of regional identity, and also shaped
the way people acted and worked. (Interview #10)

BUR 2, a retired academic in the regional science discipline, initially worked for the HVRF (Hunter
Valley Research Foundation) and since then served on a number of regional development organisations
including both the Hunter Development Board and its Greiner Coalition state government replacement,
the Hunter Economic Development Corporation. She brought her regional economist’s perspective from
the HVRF, and noted the strength of the HDB as being based on the region’s tradition of constituency
representation and connection to the state government.

BUR 2 I think that, to be quite frank, the bureaucracy learnt its lesson after setting up the Hunter Development
Board that was very strongly locally based. In fact there was no real role pressure being exerted from
Sydney. I’m not even sure that in the original constitution the Minister had to approve the appointment of
members to the Board. What was specified was that there would be industry, union, business, and local
government representatives on the Board, and that was clearly specified. Now that meant that you had a
very independent local Board and I think that the bureaucracy realised that that was dangerous for them.
So when they established first, the Hunter Economic Development Council and then the Hunter
Economic Development Corporation there was a different model. There actually had been an interim
agency before the HEDC [Hunter Economic Development Corporation] known as HEIDS [Hunter
Employment and Industry Development Scheme]. I don’t know if you remember that. But it only lasted
a few years, it was an absolute disaster. All they did was spend money on offices, office furnishings and
cars for themselves. It was a total disaster. When the Hunter Economic Development Council was
established the control of appointments was held by the Minister and that has remained the case.
(Interview #10)
BUR 2 points to the constituency representation tradition in the structure of the HDB and notes the break in that tradition with the composition and the ministerial appointment method of the Hunter Economic Development Corporation.

It is necessary to go back a step to describe regionalism as a subject of scientific analysis. While the definition of region is central for all the perspectives, the debate over definitions and their implications for strategy occur mostly within this perspective of regional strategic planning and development. Respondents address this issue in a number of ways. In this perspective a number of ‘scientific’ definitions of what constitutes the Hunter Region were offered. Firstly, an historical approach based on European settlement is given.

GH Tell me then about … one of your driving themes, the river, the idea of the river being the source of civilisation or that great civilisations have grown up around ‘the river’. But if I can take that a little further, another dominant idea in your thinking is how this region has a tendency to disconnect the mouth from the source of the Hunter, or even the mid-reaches of the river. Do you know why that is, or was it always the case, or does it ebb and flow?

RUR 1 I think your thesis is based on a social basis, and you probably get three distinct types of people. You get the rural people in the Upper Hunter involved with the horse industry, the diary industry and pastoralism. Then you have a very strong winery and vineyards industry and, of course, your coalmining industry which is a huge issue, and I’ll get back to that later. You get different types of people, different types of thinking. You get, unfortunately, people coming up and working in the mid-Hunter but spending their money and living in Newcastle. This is a thorn in the side of the people living in the Middle and Upper Hunter. (Interview #14)

Another way of defining the region is the community identity approach, sometimes described as a ‘community of interest’. Here it is further emphasised by contrasting its ‘community’ character as clearer and more connected than the ‘communities’ of a metropolis like Sydney.

POL 1 Regions have strengths; the strengths that they have are identity, a sense of belonging, there’s a regional spirit and they can work as a team. They are strengths that big cities can never have. The big capital cities are disparate. They are split up and broken. There are no collective voices that speak for Sydney. You might get the Lord Mayor of Sydney or the Lord Mayor of Parramatta. That doesn’t carry the same weight as you’d be in a region. So in a region you look to identify your strengths and then to capitalise on those strengths and take them forward ...

There’s cross membership here. Again that is strength of the region. It’s that sense of belonging. So there is identification of the area as a region. So it’s almost like a mini-state or a mini-nation; there is a sense of belonging … (Interview #13)

A further and more recent definitional approach is an ecological systems basis for deciding on administrative boundaries.

POL 2 The whole idea of total catchment management as a regional approach is to integrate. It’s not necessarily a regional approach, but it’s an integrated catchment approach to doing things ...

What’s the detail of how you set up the regional structures; I mean what is a region, what does a region look like when you draw lines on a map? In the Hunter we have probably the best, one of the strongest, sense of identity of a region, with very clear defined catchments. Even then, Lake Macquarie is regarded as not part of the Hunter Catchment but everyone regards it as part of the Hunter region … But there are lots of other areas in Australia that aren’t easy to draw those kind of lines on a map. If you start to talk about regional governance you do have to start drawing lines on a map at some point. What does that means in terms of equity? (Interview #15)

Following the ‘community identity’ way of thinking about the Hunter, the regional practice in this perspective is to establish committees (taskforces, councils, corporations, foundations and institutes can be substituted) with memberships either representative of multi-agencies and multi-levels or constitutive of selected expertise. The data is replete with histories and practices of these committees, of reflections on their usefulness, their ideal membership and relationships with others. They seek to have an impact
on the Hunter’s development through producing plans and reports, making recommendations and submissions, and taking delegations to governments, and administering various funding programmes. The following excerpts are an insight into the informal workings of these committees, the benefit accruing to their agencies and their implicit region building.

BUR 2  So for example there was a very strong barrier between the Hunter Development Board and the HEDC. The Hunter Development Board has never wanted to maintain, or claims that it never wanted to maintain, this barrier very strongly. HEDC has certainly had, I think, at least departmental advice that they should have nothing to do with Hunter Development Board. Where that barrier actually broke down and I went onto the HEDC was after A. Y. was no longer chair of the Hunter Development Board and A. P. became chairman of the HEDC. A. P. and I worked with the Hunter Valley Research Foundation in the nineteen fifties. Forty years later that earlier association became an important factor in breaking that organisational barrier because we had worked with each other and knew that we could work with each other. So these things, I think, are very important and this is a very important part of the social capital for community, for good or for evil. You know the influence of the old Boys High network in Newcastle, all pervasive. All right, it didn’t always act for good but it sure is a powerful network. It gave cohesion. I think that’s one of the important things. It’s not just the funding, not just who’s scratching whose back, but it’s also the long-term social capital that’s in place. (Interview #10)

The value of familiarity and trust is compounded by experience and contacts, as indicated by these reflections on the value of introducing Newcastle people onto an Upper Hunter committee designed to address jobs losses in the area.

GH  So could you tell me a little bit more about how that worked? He brought people together, but was there more that had to be done for them to start working together and sharing resources?

RUR 1  Well the big thing also that he did do was he put on the Board, by invitation, a lot of high flyers from Newcastle, and we would have the meeting up here in the Upper Hunter and half of them had never been past Raymond Terrace, past Branxton. He brought Gaye Hart, she has been up here because of the TAFE college at Scone; Bernard Curran from the University of Newcastle, Moira Gordon for the IDC [Industry Development Centre], it was very good. Unless they came up and had a look at things they don’t understand it. It again helped with the overall picture …

GH  Tell me about people that come up from the Lower Hunter. How do they help?

RUR 1  Well, awareness really. I think smaller industries were started up in Aberdeen and things like that. And also getting back to the old thing of government funding, making the councils aware that they could get government funding of which we never knew … and there is funding available. I think the big thing is if there are people who are knowledgeable at sniffing it out … And I think that’s what we’ve got to try, because other districts do. It’s very important. (Interview #14)

The major formal output activity of these committees and taskforces in this perspective is the production of plans, strategies and reports. A former strategic planner with the State Planning Authority, and now a transport planning consultant, describes his role in the production of the region’s first strategic land use plan, the Hunter Region Plan of 1978.

BUS 5  Some of the planners from Sydney arranged for me to be moved away from the statutory planning work into their regional planning and be their person in the Hunter and that would have been in ‘71 or so. The main person involved there was Ian Sim. I don’t know where he is now but he had a very big influence on my thinking. He seemed to be a ‘black sheep’ among the planners which were predominantly the statutory type planner, the formal process planning, whereas he was looking at issues and understanding. He got to the stage, even in Sydney, he had an office out in a back room, and he was a bit of a hermit in that way. I mean that’s how it seemed to me at the time. But he came up and he was the one who drove the process of the first Hunter Regional Plan and I was with him on that team. So there were particular things that I was responsible for which I worked on, and one was coal deposits in the Hunter Region and where they were and what the implications were - the transport systems associated with moving that coal. At that stage in 1970, I think we were still exporting only about six million tonnes of coal through Newcastle Port and they only just changed from bringing it in by steam engines in wooden wagons. That change was completed in 1972. (Interview #21)
Just as the Mt. Thorley open cut mine was a significant event for the coal industry executive so it was a defining moment in realising the value of regional strategic planning for the young regional planner.

BUS 5 We were involved in the issue around the Mt. Thorley area to the south of Singleton where Singleton Council had approved a five-acre rural residential subdivision. When we did the work on the Hunter Regional Plan we found that the big coal deposits were sitting just under the surface. They were so close to the surface you couldn’t get them out by underground mining. So it distracted us a bit from the regional planning process and we had to actually go through a process of revoking those planning consents and saying, “No, this land can’t be carved up for five-acre rural farms. It’s got to be available for open cut mining.” I suppose it embedded in me the value of regional planning because this was a very practical example of why it needed to be done. (Interview #21)

The Hunter Regional Plan (1978) was a high point in the practice of this regional strategic planning and development perspective both in its rigour and comprehensiveness. While many documents and strategies for developing the region have been produced, it was what their producers were setting out to achieve, and what changes were necessary for their plans and strategies to succeed, that were significant for predicting the long term viability of this perspective. Within this perspective, a former politician, a former executive officer of a regional development organisation, and a regional academic were clear in their articulation of these issues.

The former federal politician saw himself as having the benefit of a local government view, then developing a regional view, and finally, from his position as a minister in the federal government, evolving a comparative regional consciousness from his working relationships with regions across Australia.

POL 1 You could see more how the regions went, how the other regions fitted into the national scene; that made it clear in my mind that our future lay in having a voice as a region.

So if I go back to when I left the council and I went into government as a new backbencher in the Whitlam government. As a local member I saw the opportunity to lift us up. Very much in my mind [was] that we had to be a single voice. Then I tried to develop with local federal members the idea that we had more of a regional voice. So the local federal members had some discussions among ourselves and tried to get a common vision rather than an electorate by electorate vision, as happens in the capital cities.

So then we went into opposition and I became a shadow minister. Transport is a key regional priority, and as Shadow Minister for Transport, heaven knows how many regions in Australia I’ve been to and discussed those issues at regional levels. Whether it’s the Steel Triangle in South Australia, which is an area that suffered somewhat similar to here in the past; whether it’s here; whether it’s Wollongong or Port Kembla; whether it’s Geelong; whether it’s Gippsland. You can go region after region. Again that’s why I had that national view. I had a local view, a regional view and I see across the region and I see across the nation. We are just one of many regions. I see us not being parochial, but my observation is that of all the regions, this is probably the leading region. We are much more sophisticated than we realise we are; we are much better at promoting regional interests and operating with a regional profile, than we realise we are. (Interview #13)

Quoting from a recent regional economic strategy, the former federal politician, who chaired the committee that instigated it, nominated the following regional characteristics and capacities as the base for a successful strategy.

POL 1 *Reads and comments on his introduction from Hunter Advantage Strategy.* “The strengths of a region are the people, skills, qualities, commitment and the region’s resources.” So when you go to globalisation and you take the resources we’ve got, what do we have to compete with? You take people and the new way of doing it: that’s where the Accord came in, that’s where the ACTU [Australian Council of Trade Unions] came in, that’s where unions came in, and here you’ve had really national leadership for many years with Peter Barrack and the original site agreements. Yet we’ve been portrayed as having an indifferent industrial performance level altogether. Here, where I’ve said in Hunter Advantage: “Where we need to have a timetable, effective leadership in business” we haven’t got that. “A readiness to embrace change and a determination to succeed.” Hunter Advantage is the product of many different people of differing strengths and weaknesses and differing ideas, but the critical thing for the region is that catalytic role of pulling people together and going in the same direction. (Interview #13)
He nominates “people, skills, qualities, commitment and the region’s resources,” and adds that “pulling people together and going in the same direction” as “critical”. He then asserts that the region is failing to prosper because of a traditional practice of looking for “a wish list, a cargo cult approach, looking for magic puddings, some big new projects” (Interview #13). He also nominates the retreat to capital cities of business leadership for the decline in the quality in regional leadership, which is an essential facet for the region’s success.

POL 1 What’s happened is that the branch office mentality applies very strongly. In the case of these large organisations, the largest traders and the mines, the Port Waratah Coal Services, the steel companies, if they were the head offices they’d be totally different. They would be carrying leadership and giving leadership and looking to attract other business here and building around themselves. But they are mute, generally they are mute, or if anything they’re critical over pinpricking. (Interview #13)

Other informants support this concern and call for the cultivation of regional leadership. An executive officer who led the Hunter Regional Development Organisation (HURDO) endorses this call.

BUR 5 There is, I think, a perception that there is good collaborative leadership in the region based around the situation where there is a major event. Everyone does temporarily drop boundaries and gets together, discusses the issue, agrees on what needs to be done. Off the top of my head, my perception is that there is an expectation of others having to be the ‘doers’, usually in providing money to fix the problem. So the Statement of Common Purpose document is then signed, and fairly rapidly that collaboration dissipates and people go back to their silos or their towers and life goes on, whilst attempting to hold to account the others that they identified as needing to fix the problem. (Interview #22)

The retired regional academic sees this change in the nature of regional leadership as a resource that is necessary for developing regional strategies.

BUR 2 The region also misses out by not being a state capital. So there’s a level, in all sorts of hierarchies, which is missing here.

GH The top decision making level?

BUR 2 The top decision making level, but also the one below it. So you can get to certain junior levels here, but if people want to go the rest of the way up the hierarchy they have got to go through the ranks in Sydney (or Melbourne, if it’s BHP), before they can rise to the top jobs. Now it often happens that at the stage where people are ‘going through the ranks’, some will settle down at an intermediate level while in Sydney (or Melbourne) and be content to stay in that particular intermediate rank’s level. There they become the skilled administrator with a bit of spare energy and time who can branch out and do things in community organisations. I think it’s at that level of skilled second-tier management that we are missing out on resources. (Interview #10)

This section has described the regional strategic planning and development perspective as a distinct tradition from the previously outlined regional economic development perspective and yet both share a common ancestry in the Hunter Valley Research Foundation. Both have been driven by state and federal government agencies through different policy eras. The different emphasis between them, as discerned in the informant interviews, is that the regional economic development perspective is more focused on economic development within the region whereas the regional strategic planning and development perspective is more broadly concerned about the development of the region physically. This distinction was clearer during the mid-term of the study period. Towards the latter part of the study period the distinction has become quite blurred. This aspect will be elaborated further in Section 3.5 where our regional activists examine their meaning of ‘region’ and its characteristics.

This chapter’s analysis now moves to two other perspectives that have a strong local tradition. Although not as central to government or business agencies that practice regional development, they are

28 Editors’ note: A Statement of Common Purpose document was signed by several parties involved in a project as an agreement to guide their participation in the project.
nevertheless ever-present through their activism and resistance to economic and physical land-use change.

3.4.2.4. From Conservationists to Urban and Environmental Activists

Interwoven throughout the dominant regional development perspectives, described above, are a number of alternative ones that continually seek to resist or influence these. The sample represented in the data are institutions and organisations who push to conserve part of the region’s natural or industrial heritage (Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement29), seek to lift the standard of health in the face of polluting industry (NO-LEAD group30), promote ecologically sustainable development practices, and improve the amenity of their suburbs (Mayfield Residents Group, Tighes Hill Residents Group). Based on the lessons of these case histories, these organisations form region wide advocacy networks to mount pressure on the dominant institutions and to develop more participative governance systems in the region. Their objectives and practices are still seen today in some of the earlier community organisation practices and objectives. A long-standing conservationist, an anti-pollution campaigner, an urban activist, a retired research chemical engineer and a Greens party member represent the conservation/environmentalism perspective amongst the study’s informants.

This perspective is largely unreported on in regional development literature and yet it is always in the background, and often in the foreground, of regional development issues under current contention. The agencies, individuals and institutions representing the dominant perspectives seek to ignore the organisations, groups and institutions represented in this perspective. If they can’t ignore them they are mostly in conflict with them; occasionally they cooperate with them. The relationship between the dominant perspectives and the agencies and individuals of this perspective is contextual according to the positions of antagonists in a particular issue.

A significant characteristic of the conservation/environmentalism perspective is the commitment of its leaders, usually determined by a motivation formed by personal or professional histories. All of those interviewed have histories and motivations that drive their actions and fuel the energies they devote to their campaigns. They need to have commitment and energy because a lot of their work is done on a voluntary basis and with very small financial and material resources behind them. The participants here have to rely on the ‘good’, persuading governments or organisations with significant resources to do things that they are reluctant to do. Their agenda items are couched in positive benefits or negative consequences for the targets of their campaigns. This is briefly illustrated by referring to two very different activists, the anti-pollution activist and the retired chemical engineer.

The anti-pollution activist remembers her childhood experiences as the stimulus for her activism.

ENV 1 As a child I used to think to myself that something is very wrong, when the air you’re breathing makes you cough and splutter. I wished somebody would do something about it. I remember that we had a high school assignment once about pollution in the area and nobody even mentioned Pasminco.31 I thought, well I’m not going to say anything, and see if the obvious comes up, and nobody said anything. The class spoke about litter and that sort of stuff. While there’s this dirty big industry spewing pollution all over

29 Editors’ note: The Parks and Playgrounds Movement is a community organisation established in the early 1930s. Its secretary was C. E. W. Bean, the historian, lawyer and journalist. It was brought to Newcastle in 1952 by R.E. (Tom) Farrell, and continues the work to safeguard our natural and cultural heritage. The Movement’s early work included the protection of the open space provisions of the 1952 Northumberland County District Town and Country Planning Scheme.

30 Editors’ note: The community action group NO-LEAD was formed in Boolaroo in 1991 when a public health pilot study revealed a significant lead contamination in the area. In Boolaroo, a small working class suburb on the northern tip of Lake Macquarie, lead contamination has been caused by Pasminco Metals Sulphide’s lead-zinc smelter. NO-LEAD stands for North Lakes Environmental Action Defence group

31 Editors’ note: Pasminco operated a lead smelter on a site between residential development at Boolaroo and Argenton, suburbs of Lake Macquarie.
everyone, everyday, and that never came up in the entire week’s conversation in the class. It’s like everybody really believed that it wasn’t doing anything wrong or harming us.

GH That somehow it was OK.

ENV 1 As a young child it was always in the back of my mind. I felt very hostile towards it really because it did interfere with my well-being. So when I saw the information in the paper that NO-LEAD had organised a public meeting I knew I should become involved. I made my father come too. (Interview #4)

The retired chemical engineer’s lifelong involvement in industrial processes maintained his commitment to use his knowledge to continue to pursue environmental research, remediation and education.

COM 2 I spent some thirty years or so working with BHP as a research chemical engineer. I worked for six or seven years with Courtaulds up at Tomago. I was a trainee there before actually graduating and spent some time in Sydney and then went off on a fellowship to Canada. I spent a couple of years in Canada doing research work before I came back to join BHP in their research department at Shortland. I worked in that area for some thirty years. But then about four years ago I took early retirement and continued on with some consulting work in a range of areas. I suppose as part of the work with BHP I was involved primarily in research and development linking with a fair range of the company’s applications. Whilst we talk about a research division, a lot of the work I covered there was in development aspects and trying to assess the role that new technologies might play in the various company activities, primarily in the coalfields with energy related areas. Because BHP was looking at a range of developments and possibilities for business opportunities, it brought us in contact with a whole range of new technologies and a range of people around the world who were developing new technologies. I had the opportunity, for example, of becoming involved in some new gas separation system which we ultimately applied to the company’s applications, but also in the preservation of fruit which is something you wouldn’t imagine BHP doing. But because we had the technology that we developed in separating gases, we were able to create a system which was applied to refrigerated shipping containers with certain control of the gases so that we can preserve the fruit over a period of time. So I mention that because it gives a range of our activities. In more recent years, because of my interests in environmental areas, I’ve been doing quite a lot of work in association with the Australian government and BHP Transport looking at some of the problems associated with transferring toxic marine organisms around the world in the ballast water in ships ...

Just recently I’ve joined a group within the Anglican Diocese in Newcastle with Bishop Graeme Rutherford who is down at the Central Coast and is Assistant Bishop to Bishop Roger Herft who’s up here. At the last Diocesan Synod they decided to do something about the environmental issues that are of interest to the Diocese. We have now set up the Diocesan Environmental Council which has just developed some environmental guidelines. Basically it is aimed at saying that we accept that as Christians we do have a responsibility for our environment and for the long term sustainability of the earth we live on, and so we are looking for ways in which we might be able to create an awareness of the environmental issues throughout the Diocese but also take some actions on things we might be able to encourage, for example people who attend church to become involved in Landcare, or to learn more about greenhouse gas emissions, or to set up some community composting facilities. (Interview #7)

The agendas around which the informants represented in the conservation/environmentalism perspective organise themselves range widely according to topic, area of geographic application and on a reactive/proactive scale. The scope of the areas of regional development concern is:

- seeking to protect or improve the amenity of an urban environment (reducing the over-concentration of boarding houses in a suburb, lobbying to remove heavy trucks off inadequate inner city roads);
- negotiating a Strategic Impact Assessment Study and Development Control Plan for a new industrial estate adjacent to an established residential suburb;
- fighting government departments, industry and sections of a community to reduce the airborne levels of emissions from a lead and zinc smelter located beside a community;
- lobbying government to set up legislation and administrative procedures for preserving land considered to be of high conservation value;
- requesting programmes to restore man-made artefacts and urban landmarks and landscapes thought to be of high heritage value; and
- instituting ecologically sustainable development education and regional participative programmes.

Some of the detail of this agenda range will be indicated when describing the strategies and tactics of the campaigns that the informants in conservation/environmentalism perspective have used to pursue their goals.

The discussions of the strategic and tactical considerations of the conservation/environmentalism perspective participants reveal the insights they derived from the success or failure in achieving their objectives. More importantly they speculate on ideal rules and resources that could achieve, in their view, more successful regional development.

Meanwhile to understand the experiential basis for their learning and reflection it is necessary to outline the span of the strategic and tactical options used in their various campaigns. A preliminary list derived from the data is:
- cooperating under the rule of law and its associated institutions;
- persuasive means: the power of science; politics and community sensitivities;
- the persuasion of precedent; impressing with effective numbers and power blocs;
- significant events.

Underlying these strategic considerations are stories of tactics, mainly of the divide and conquer, networking and persuasion variety. These will also be referred to.

### 3.4.2.4.1. Insisting on the 'Rule of Law'

The strategic practice of a long-standing conservation activist in the region is a powerful example of a strategy based on cooperating under the rule of law and its associated institutions. His chronicle is replete with instances of campaigns to set up conservation legislation and instrumentalities, efforts to have planning documents honoured in practice by government agencies, and warnings of environmental and social chaos if the scientific, legal and participatory elements of the legal framework are diminished for the sake of economic expediency.

ENV 2 There’s one thing the Northumberland County Council tried to do. It was trying to get an understanding of what was happening with the mining land titles and the sterilisation of land for mining. Nowadays they call it the sterilisation of land for conservation, interesting! Anyway the old Northumberland County Council had a report done on unused colliery lands. I’d like to be able to get a copy. Most of their records were taken to the dump. Isn’t that dreadful? Their minutes are all there in the State Archives, but not the actual documents that flow from those minutes, even enquiries and things like that. There may be evidence of them somewhere other than in newspapers, and newspapers are notorious in that they don’t keep detail. It’s a tragedy! I just can’t remember the name of the director that took over from Eric Wilmot. People like Eric kept these absolutely beautiful records and they did such wonderful maps, it’s unbelievable, Northumberland County Council maps.

Northumberland County Council took on planning but there wasn’t enough flexibility ... They always claimed that they had their plan finished. They planned for the region from 1948 to 1952. In 1952 they exhibited their plan and then it just was in limbo until 1960. So for those eight years, well actually say ten years, no one had any control of the plan, so it lost all its meaning. It should have been revamped; you can’t leave a plan like that just wandering around. And then Lake Macquarie Council took over planning down there and they are the ones who did a lot of damage to the region, because they allowed so

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32 Editors’ note: Northumberland County was one of the original nineteen counties in New South Wales. It included the area to the north of Broken Bay, including Lake Macquarie and Newcastle. The County had a local government, the Northumberland County Council, between 1948 and 1963. In 1963 the State Planning Authority took over the Northumberland County Council’s role.
much development all over the place and a lot of it was colliery land. For instance, one particular estate agent in Newcastle was able to get hold of all that land that you now call Bel Air, and up around Charlestown. That destroyed the inner Newcastle green belt because the Northumberland County Council was working on the basis of Newcastle having the population that the whole County’s got now. The County Council had the old idea of the garden city concept which Canberra also used. Lake Macquarie Council had no idea of the garden city concept. The County Council thought that by putting a ring of green belt it would hold and force redevelopment in inner Newcastle. (Interview #16)

As so many of these conservation/environmentalism perspective battles were over land ownership or what the land could or should be used for, the focus of activists’ tactics relied on land ownership traditions, legislation pertaining to land, and institutions and practices that dealt with land. The following excerpt instances a number of ways in which organisations responsible for land, managed it in ways that were advantageous to them, while being an obstacle to the objectives of activists operating within this perspective. The activists responded by pushing for “transparency”, by insisting on the requirements of various mechanisms in legislations being implemented and using the relevant role and capabilities of other government agencies (for example expert reports, Commissions of Inquiry) to bring about the desirable change.

ENV 2 You’ve got to have checks and balance in any system. I think that probably from our point of view, transparency must be always the thing, it’s the only sort of way to check things, and if there’s no transparency you can’t check anything. I’m just in the process of doing an Ombudsman’s complaint about Newcastle Council in 1994. In 1994 after the Local Government Act was changed, all the lands that were committed or that council held in a public trust for parkland were supposed to go into Community Land, and they didn’t. Council never looked at the savings provisions of the Act. The state government wrote the Act the way they did even though it was a Liberal government (laughs). The thing is you have the savings provisions so that you don’t have to re-fight. For instance Blackbutt was never dedicated public land. Billy Burges always held it as fee simple, so that he could do anything he liked with it. That was the basis. And so we had this fight to get all these lands dedicated and to get Blackbutt Reserve dedicated was something. Even after all these years and all these fights, it is not dedicated.

This is why I criticise the Belmont matter. We’ve got the state government ready to take over the land and we’ve still got nothing dedicated down there, and that means that there’s nothing under management from the Parks and Wildlife Service or council. You need the technical people. Unless you’ve got the technical people advising you it just becomes a political exercise of “Oh well, we’ll keep those people out of the road,” or something like that. I’m trying to get the council to take up the issue of sand extraction at Belmont, but the miners were instructed to leave it just like that by the BHP, no restoration (laughs). So the BHP has this overriding thing. This is where you need central government; you need strong government to come in. But this also raises one of the big issues in our region - mining. This has been a coalmining province since day one. Coal is such an important part of our society providing energy. Whether it can be done more efficiently, that’s where we hope to get the benefit from the CSIRO [Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation] at Steel River.

When, in about 1992, the sandminers transferred to Port Stephens, what I found was that they were operating without consent, and of course the council lost the consent documents and they had to ask Boral for copies and the person who was involved just resigned. So it was a long fight to try and actually prove that they were operating without consent actually. And it required a bit of work from the Ombudsman but we forced the council into the situation where they had to have an inquiry. We had the inquiry up there at Port Stephens and they had to go through the process of getting consent, and therefore Boral had to do an EIS [Environmental Impact Statement]. As part of the evidence we wanted to take the inquiry from Port Stephens down to Belmont to show them how land was not restored and what it looked like after these people had finished and they said, “We only did that because the BHP actually wanted us to leave it like that” (laughs).

So these people are thinking: well we’ve ruined the land and therefore we’ll be able to develop it (laughs). That’s what they have been doing ever since. (Interview #16)

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33 Editors’ note: Mr W. (Bill) Burges was Newcastle Town Clerk 1950 – 1977.
3.4.2.4.2. Persuasive Means

This includes precedent, scientific argument, highlighting community sensitivities, exploiting significant events, getting the numbers and playing politics.

The persuasion through precedent strategy that activists use in their campaigns begins with the description of a past ideal state. They identify the current conditions and situations that have brought about an unsatisfactory divergence from that state. They then argue that the former state or an approximation towards it should be restored. The stages of persuading a group of the rightness of their action are well illustrated by the long-standing leader of a resident action group.

COM 4 ... we enjoy living in Mayfield but the face of Mayfield has been changing. The people who had been happy were no longer happy because of the lack of ‘discrimination’ in the distribution of the people from juvenile courts, Juvenile Justice, the gaol release programme: people who were unfortunately in a situation where they had to have public housing. There were a lot of boarding houses for mentally and physically handicapped [people] and aged people. None of them seemed to have adequate conditions, nor did they have case managers. I couldn’t believe that a government could leave a mental health department in such a state that they couldn’t provide case managers to look after these people. People were being lost in the system, so when their relatives finally went to try and find them they were probably fifty miles away but no one had a record of it. It was a disgusting state of affairs. (Interview #9)

The conservation activist points to the English origins of reserves and how this precedent was the basis for eventually setting up State Recreation Areas and a system of National Parks.

ENV 2 Timber-getters were anxious to push a road to Barrington Tops, not that there is a lot of timber at the Tops. It’s mostly snow gum and open country. But on the way up to the Tops there’s some rather interesting rainforest areas where there are lots of rainforest timbers, and they did take a lot as they moved that road up to the Tops. But there was a flora reserve up there in the forestry area and people had been fighting using the legal machinery that was available. In those days you had reserves, crown reserves and with the advent of forests you had forest reserves. Forestry was able to set aside parts of their forests for flora reserves, but there was other legislation which came through the Chief Secretary’s Department. You had legislation, which comes down from England really, that gave you opportunity to protect individual species. It really came from the days of the lord of the manor stopping poaching (laughs). So we had the Chief Guardian of Fauna, a fellow named Allan Strom. He was a great bloke and there was a Wildlife Protection Unit within the Chief Secretary’s Department. (Interview #16)

In contrast to the persuasion through precedent strategy is the scientifically based, professional discipline approach to change. The description of a major construction project by the retired research engineer exemplifies deference to the eminence of scientific method to solve complex problems. He cautions the necessity for the subservience of individual agendas to its logic.

COM 2 These are typically very large projects. There’s a lot of planning goes into these things and now much of that is computerised. So to pick one example, the offshore oil-rigs that were built in Newcastle some years ago, some of the basic sections were built here and then they were floated down to Port Kembla where they added some extra components onto the living quarters, and the whole thing was towed from there. If you look at a project like that it involves not only the basic design and the systems but there’s a combination of safety issues which are controlled by a series of regulations that deal with the environmental side of things. How do you cope with the bits that are going into the water because they can have an effect not only on the corrosion of the pipes but also on the local marine environment? And then there’s the whole process of how you procure the equipment, so there’s a massive series of scheduling operations that have to take place. That’s all computer controlled now, but it’s a very detailed thing. Often it brings together a whole range of different people, so you might have electrical, engineering, mechanical, civil, biological, biochemical people. It is a very detailed process which is often updated almost every day to make sure that everything’s going to happen. Consequently I suppose engineers do have that systems approach to make sure that everything happens in the right time and the right order to avoid hiccups because to multi-million dollar projects delays can be a critical thing. But I think one of the things I’ve learned over the years is that in order to solve a problem, whether it’s at a community level or at a detail design level, this whole multidisciplinary approach is crucial. I certainly came across areas where people tended to do their own thing and consequently that’s not a good way of getting an overall job done. I think this question of working together across disciplines is the right way
and that’s where perhaps engineers or people with experience can work very much closer with a whole range of people to try and make some things happen. (Interview #7)

Appealing to ‘the rule of law’, the reasonableness of precedent and the truth of the scientific approach is buttressed by a set of political-oriented strategies. These include understanding community sensitivities, exploiting significant events and getting the numbers. An understanding of communities and organisations is an important skill in designing possible campaigns illustrated in these two excerpts from local activists. The first shows the difficulty of generating a united community campaign when there is a psychological weakness for the opposition to exploit, and the second, an attitude of self-defeat.

ENV 1  It really is ‘shoot the messenger’ at times. A town like Boolaroo makes it hard to face the facts. In Boolaroo it is not uncommon to find three generations of the one family living within a few streets of one another. So that makes it pretty hard for those three generations to be confronted with the possibility that their health and even their IQ may be affected. So what would you rather - admit that possibility or deny the issue? “I’ve lived here all my life and there’s nothing up with me” is the catch cry that we usually heard from those residents, because stating otherwise was not an easy reality to face. If the issue was about black spots on your washing, I think you would have found a very united community, but because it meant something so personal it was just too hard. Compounding that difficult thought was the fact that to admit that there was a problem of contamination in Boolaroo would also threaten the value of your most solid asset, the family home. It’s a big thing for a working class family to watch their home being devalued. It wasn’t a pleasant pill to take so I can certainly understand them grabbing for the option of denial. Not everybody had an affected child, but everybody had an affected home and that was the difference and that’s what was able to split the community.34 (Interview #4)

POL 2  Every organisation is different, but in a generic sense we were just a bunch from another campaign. We were spawned really by the Tighes Hill Residents Group that had taken on a traffic management campaign very successfully. Part of coming to Tighes Hill in the early eighties is an experience of coming to a community. I hadn’t lived in that kind of community before. It’s a very close knit community in a way but a community that in a sense was kind of downtrodden. That sounds precious to say in the Australian context but they were people who had become almost acculturated to putting up with pollution, putting up with incursions into the way they lived their lives that they shouldn’t have to put up with. There had already been a residents’ group and I got involved in it very slowly over a couple of years. Then the council was sacked in the eighties and this residents’ group, not with my involvement at that stage, had gone through a process of trying to get the trucks out of Elizabeth Street, and they were pretty much on the verge of beating them when the council was sacked and the whole thing fell through.

I had a bit of a campaign background and I looked at it and I thought this is just too bad to see all this campaign energy which almost reached its culmination get dissipated. So I just got involved on that basis with a few other people who had newly moved into the area who didn’t have that feeling of, “We’ve lost again.” And that was very much the prevailing mood around the place, “Oh well, you know if it would have been better, it would have succeeded.” We thought, “This can succeed.” There was no doubt that as a campaign it was quite winnable, and so we took it on. After a while we’d achieved more than we actually set out to achieve. We ended up getting a whole local traffic management scheme, when all we were aiming for was to get the trucks out of Elizabeth Street. ... (Interview #15)

This excerpt from the anti-lead smelter activist illustrates the tactical interplay between groups of people to exclude and/or include each other from significant advisory structures and how those excluded respond.

ENV 1  When the North Lake Macquarie Remediation Committee was formed as a statutory body charged with spending the six million dollars on decontamination and remediation of the area, NO-LEAD was not given a seat. This was because the panel to choose representatives on this committee was made up of Pasminco, the [Health] Department and the council. We’d had no friends in the council or Pasminco and the Health Department was weak and weary. I believe that the situation even embarrassed the state government and it got to the point where the state government had to say, “Put them on the committee, for heaven’s sake.” I’m sure there’s no documentation on that but it was pretty close to what happened.

34 Editors’ note: Pasminco purchased properties in the most severely contaminated residential areas of Boolaroo to create a buffer zone between the smelter and the community.
So we did get onto the committee, but soon found ourselves blocked out of all sub-committees. They had decided that only ‘real community’ could be on the sub-committees. Real community members were those that still lived in the community. By then a lot of NO-LEAD had moved out of the area, either because of their knowledge of the contamination issue or because they had lived in the buffer zone. Residents of the buffer zone were arguably the most affected residents, and they felt they still had every right to contribute. Yet we were all kept out of every sub-committee and again we had no constructive avenue for contribution. We ended up just leaving the committee, and throwing ‘media rocks’ at them from the outside. Lobbying a good ‘media rock’ caused damage to their statements of ‘all being well’. They were cleaning up contamination before they were turning off the Pasminco tap. So they were wasting the six million dollars of remediation money given by the state. They didn’t want us reminding people that the homes were just getting recontaminated. Everybody knew that was going to happen but the clean up was seeming to appease everybody at the time. We were the ones who were going to spoil the farce. (Interview #4)

Significant events are scanned for their consequences for campaigns or their potential as a lever on other events and campaigns. The significance of events can become apparent over a short time period, like an unanticipated result for a meeting, or over a much longer period. This is illustrated in three passages from different interviews.

POL 2 And then you had a government, I must say I didn’t really have a lot of respect for it in any other way, but the Greiner government to its credit, did continue with the TCM [Total Catchment Management] policy that Labor had introduced, and it remained committed to that. I remember going down to a crucial meeting with Greiner. McNaughton was there, Keegan, who was the local member then, was there. To see a fusion of the different political forces in the city so committed to doing something must have been powerful, and they said, “Look, we are prepared to use Throsby Creek as a flagship for TCM; we are looking for an opportunity to do this”. And so he said, “We’re prepared to put in the money, but you guys have got to make it work too otherwise it’s going to be a bummer.” And so he put, I think, a million into the pot basically and that’s what made it happen as well. (Interview #15)

ENV 1 We had a funny stroke of luck that helped change things to go our way. I won’t mention names but I will just say ‘a LMCC [Lake Macquarie City Council] general manager’ was affected by the smelter while renting a house close to Munibung Hill. He had a barbecue that had to be abandoned because of a sulphur dioxide dump on the suburb. All of a sudden his guests start coughing and spluttering and their eyes burning. For a while after that he was on our side. We had been sidelined for some time, but LMCC started listening. We really had some wins for a while. The general manager pushed it as far as he was game but eventually he pulled back. I also think that the local Labor Party let him know that he had pushed it too far. Outside of those rare serendipitous occasions you only get help from people who aren’t ambitious within council. Anyone with any ambition doesn’t help at all. Another hindrance was that councillors at the time were too influenced by their mayor and the Labor Party. We had a few different mayors over the years. When a mayor acted concerned people would listen, but when the mayor just continually says there was nothing, people used that to do nothing. The Lake Macquarie mayor J. K. would say: “My wife grew up here and there’s nothing up with her”. This, despite me continually reminding him that the smelter wasn’t smelting lead35 when his wife was there. … Other mayors at least listened, but not him, not at all. (Interview #4)

COM 2 I’ve certainly seen in my career within BHP, and you see it now in so many corporations and organisations, the emphasis is now on shareholder wealth at the expense of community relationship and I guess loyalty within a company. So no longer do you see the sorts of things that we might have seen ten or twenty years ago when we had a strong community relation within an organisation. People got on with each other very well; there was a sense of loyalty and understanding between an employer and an employee. It seems to me in many cases now a lot of that has gone at the expense of the profitability of an organisation. That is much more the criteria; so consequently you see people working on contracts and all sorts of things rather than being part of a whole community. I think we’ve lost that thing too and that’s all to do with wealth. One has to then think about what is the relationship between wealth, personal wealth and sustainability. (Interview #7)

35 Editors’ note: The lead smelter at Boolaroo was in operation from 1897 to 1922. In 1922 the smelting section of the plant closed down due to low metal prices. In 1961 a new zinc-lead smelter was commissioned and was in operation until 2003. Source http://niha.org.au/article.php/2010112010295938
3.4.2.4.3. Tactical Manoeuvres

This includes networking and lobbying, and divide and rule through denigration.

The experience and skill, not to mention the persistence and courage, of community activists is often assumed to be of little consequence in understanding the drivers for regional development practice and potential. The respondents in this study frequently demonstrated the elemental importance of grounding in tactical manoeuvres to affect the strategies described above. Networking and lobbying are pivotal tactics to influence significant decision makers and to build credibility.

ENV 1 Networks are vital to a community group, networks are everything. I must admit that’s one of my fortes and I believe that helped NO-LEAD’s success. We networked internationally and kept up with the latest information relating to the issue. We knew who to call and knew when we needed help.

I’ll tell you an amazing example of networking. We found out that Pasminco handpicked some community members to represent the ‘community’ perspective in America somewhere, I can’t remember where. We found out, last minute, like within a day or two of them leaving and we were horrified. Funded by Pasminco and presenting Pasminco’s perspective in the guise of representing the community. So we put out a call internationally and found a grassroots group that was going to attend that same conference. We got the other side of the story over to that conference within two days of finding out. Pasminco and their handpicked residents were furious because the people we found took hard copy printouts of a few hard truths about Boolaroo.

Networking can have amazing results like that and you also get the most up to date information. When you are up against an industry like Pasminco it’s vitally important to know what you are talking about and networking helps keep abreast of the issues. It also spreads the load when you’re not being paid.

GH Yes so you were networking internationally. You were also networking nationally with other cases around the country.

ENV 1 Absolutely.

GH And with other bodies like the EDO [Environmental Defender’s Office] and the Wilderness Society, - not the Wilderness Society, Greenpeace was it?

ENV 1 Greenpeace at the time were the only organisation with a toxics campaigner. Other groups now have them, but back then there was only Greenpeace. Greenpeace helped us network with groups having similar issues and also gave us the latest information. We networked with the dross smelter group in Kurri Kurri, Helen Hamilton from Port Kembla, and some wineries in the Hunter Valley. We all faced development application issues. We got together to try to expose the uselessness of consent conditions from the NSW state Commission of Inquiry. We had all been through the process of a Commission of Inquiry resulting in good consent conditions of approval for the various developments. The trouble is that nobody takes any notice of consent conditions from Commissions of Inquiry. It’s all a farce. So we were going to get together with a campaign on that dilemma but it got undermined. We thought that individually we had failed but together we might be able to make an impact for the state. We tried to get media saying, “Look everybody, this is just a big waste of state money and a waste of everyone’s time if things are ignored. It’s a farce.” Networks are vital. (Interview #4)

Frequently used counter tactics are to stigmatise the opposition.

ENV 1 It was an ever-fluctuating thing with the council. We had more luck with them with decreasing the sulphur dioxide than tackling the lead. It was an interesting development when the council started knocking back approval of major subdivisions because of the sulphur dioxide. It was not something we lobbied on, but was supporting our issues. It came from left field and it was quite exciting. Suddenly you’ve got industry against industry and that’s a different game.

It was up in Macquarie Hills, also in Warners Bay and at the end of Fairfax Road. There were two big subdivisions wanted by developers but the air quality wasn’t good enough. Even the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning was panicking, developers took the council to court. Council was quite confident in its position and so they let that go ahead and it made Pasminco look pretty bad for a while. So we had nothing to do with that but it was still helpful.
It’s kind of like a divide and rule and conquer tactic, but it just happened serendipitously.

But again it was the revenge of the then LMCC general manager. (Interview #4)

Or set up divide and rule dynamics within a community instanced with this passage.

Pasminco bought in other groups; they actually helped form and then, they supported them. Pasminco propped up a previously lifeless Chamber of Commerce into a bigger more vibrant enterprise. Other groups formed, SOS, Save Our School and BIG, Boolaroo Improvement Group, and all were pretty much primed by Pasminco. Pasminco then made it very clear to the government bodies that, “Look NO-LEAD aren’t representing the real community. This is the real community.”

A very old, tried and true tactic and it was used in Boolaroo.

Opportunity arose when … [a representative] from the Australian Conservation Foundation and a doctor from the AMA [Australian Medical Association] asked if I would show them the Boolaroo issue as part of their national environmental health tour. [I thought] it would be a big media event and I needed to maximise any local advantage. As they were there with a national agenda, I gave them issues that related to the national interest. I focused in on a few winnable points of national or state significance. I pointed out how the issue could benefit from community right-to-know legislation, and public participation in licensing of hazardous industry. Big picture stuff that would help us enormously. These national identities could push the issues that in turn could bring about a positive local effect.

How wrong I was! Unfortunately … the doctor stated that the people of Boolaroo lived in “third world conditions”. They never looked at the information I gave them, or thought about the local effect of what they were saying. They came in and … [got] the sensation they wanted and left us with the mess and no friends.

A local politician rang me and called me every name that related to irresponsibility and lies. I knew that politically he wasn’t on our side, but he had previously respected me for what NO-LEAD had achieved and how we had achieved it, but all that went down the drain thanks to the … show. Off they went leaving me with the disaster. Everyone got on the talk-back radio outraged that NO-LEAD would “bring these people into the town and feed them lies, ruining the local reputation”. It was a huge blow to our cause. After years spent building up credibility, it was shattered in one day and never really recovered. Pasminco had never inflicted as much damage as ACF [Australian Conservation Foundation] and the AMA. (Interview #4)

Apart from communities being divided by determined opponents, inadvertently or otherwise, as illustrated in the previous passages, communities and networks can undermine themselves because of histories of unresolved conflict or for political and personal motives. Such circumstances are illustrated in the following statements from a political activist and a trade union official.

I think that a lot of the fact that the idea I put forward got rejected come down to the politics of the moment, where Lake Macquarie was pissed off with Newcastle because of the recycling stuff that was happening. Well, you’ve got to get past the petty politics of it all in many ways and move on, and I guess regions in that sense are their own worst enemies. Those petty internecine regional wars are going to be the problem. (Interview #15)

The biggest problem is politics and that huge divide just doesn’t seem to be able to break down. So there are a lot of small groups all paddling around, all trying to do their best, but it’s the same as the expression like ‘the power of a pack of dogs’ which is greater than the individual power of the dogs within that pack. If you could start to get the region to work together then we would have a much better force out there and a greater ability to be able to get some positive results occurring within the Hunter Region. (Interview #5)

This section has introduced the essential outsiders in the regional development process – outsiders in that they are not the dominant players with government remits and the resources of economic production behind them; but nevertheless essential promoters and resisters in the democratic process with an indirect power base located in the electoral constituency of parliamentary democracy. The process used in promoting their agendas is based on persuasion, using strategies that rely on agreed understandings such as the ‘truth of science’, the ‘rule of law’ and the ‘logic of politics’. In order to deploy these
understandings these activists need to build credibility and influence through farming knowledge and cultivating networks as well as having the ability to sustain their organisational capacity against tactics designed to demoralise and destabilise them.

In the next section we turn to another set of minor players whose zest for organisational capacity building and capable adaptation to hostile ideological policy paradigms is matched by their commitment to redressing social inequality.

3.4.2.5. Cultural/Social Equity Tradition

The regional developers operating within the cultural/social equity perspective also make a claim to building the Hunter Region. They pursue this goal by supporting and empowering marginalised people, and by developing and maintaining what they see as the best organisations and programmes within the region. Their strategies for achieving results ranged from changing the behaviours and priorities of the organisations which either hosted their programmes or provided resources to them, resisting and adapting to changes forced on them, building their networks of influence and persuasion, through to interpreting their programmes as delivering the same objectives as the dominant economic development perspective.

This section is based on the interviews of a number of leaders from not-for-profit organisations and human services government departments whose realm of activity ranges over the whole welfare and community development sector in the Hunter Region, such as Hunter Council of Social Service (HC OSS), others advocating for marginalised minority groups in the region (peoples from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background and those from a non-English speaking background), as well as an advocate for the cultural creativity of young people and a local government officer who coordinates her council’s youth programme.

The relevant findings are set out by:

- firstly, outlining how these interviewees see themselves contributing to the development of the Hunter Region;

- secondly, describing the way they seek to promote their clients’ and organisations’ chances by either resisting change, adapting to it, or seeking to reshape bureaucracies and networks they look to for resources (usually funds);

- thirdly, describing their work of building their organisations and networks that reflects the practice of other regional institutions; and

- finally, describing the way in which economic development strategy that is adapted and recruited in the interests of their clients reveals a strategic determination that reflects dominant ideology and responds to elements that are favourable to their clients.

3.4.2.5.1. Developing the Region Through (Re)empowering its People

The following excerpts begin with illustrating the primary focus that these interviewees and their agencies have, to encourage their clients to develop the personal and material resources to overcome their disadvantages. Here a CEO of an Aboriginal cooperative that delivers a range of services, talks about the commitment and motivation of one of his workers and, through inference, himself.

COM 5 The way that I see M. operating is that she talks about our people. Those are the people that she has a cause and effect on, in terms of the children, in terms of parents seeking childcare. She comes from a really strong family; her mum obviously is a major mover in our organisation, so there is this natural flow-on effect. But it’s also interesting to listen to her; don’t just go and talk to her, listen to her talk about what she says. And there is a similar journey: we’re roughly around the same age; with those things that we saw that were very important to us back then in terms of change, rape of children that are adults now and so on. What’s really interesting to hear her talk about is to try to lay tracks for children....(Interview #20)

He goes on to describe the basic and significant personal deficit that the clients of this agency struggle under.
COM 5  You disempower people, and I believe that is something that Aboriginal Australia is only just now starting to emerge from. We’ve been doing it for quite a while in terms of our sophistication and the articulation by our academics over the last ten years. We’ve been really starting to emerge and produce stuff; Marcia Langton and so on. But the practical-ness of that comes from people who I believe are working in prime roles, working in counselling, working in cultural development, working with kids in schools, those people are the ones who are championing the cause today. The mum and dad who will go and watch their sons or their daughters play sport; take an active role, that’s leadership. (Interview #20)

While the starting point is the delivery of personal support services, interviewees and their agencies don’t see their roles stopping at that point. Rather, their part in advocating on behalf of their clients and critiquing proposed government changes is a role they cling to in the face of the penalty of funding cuts and the threat of breaching contractual arrangements. This is shown in an interview with a coordinator of an agency delivering services to migrant communities and refugees.

COM 7  In recent times the MRC [Migrant Resource Centre] as a government funded agency has been told to pull our horns in a bit. So our main purpose in life that we report on, and I hope we pursue and I hope we have always done, has been service delivery. Now there has been a kind of moratorium on some of the more high profile activities, because I go back to that original thing we were talking about, about where government [is] wanting to jump on peaks [peak bodies] if you like, particularly where they don’t necessarily sing their song. So I’m very conscious that the funding body has a certain view, and we pursue their agenda which also happens to be a perfectly valid agenda of service delivery to people; but that’s not to say that you can’t always get somebody else to do your barking for you, and you need to be smart about that. (Interview #24)

To have a job is seen as a crucial resource for achieving self-sufficiency and autonomy. Therefore building the depth of the Hunter job market by building up local autonomous organisations with their back office services and suppliers located in the region, in the face of funder policies driven by cost efficiencies, is an issue.

COM 6  ... major struggle not being in a capital city, but more and more things gets transferred to capital cities. Just look at welfare: these new agencies come to town, Skillshare is a typical example, they come to town at (say) Muswellbrook and the first thing they do is to stop buying anything in Muswellbrook because it all comes from Sydney. So they actually create unemployment; it was one of the first, not deliberately. It’s a great pressure; we are all under pressure financially, even DOCS [Department of Community Services], even Department of Housing. So what’s happening is that these large corporations spreading across the state ... are sucking jobs out of the regions because all the infrastructure jobs are starting to go. Like Samaritans, we have to employ accountants. We’ve got a twenty million budget, we have to employ a couple of marketing people because we have to raise money for all these people coming in for emergency relief, and we’ve got four hundred staff so we’ve got a HR [Human Resources] department, that creates jobs. So if we get better-educated people, people in government say we need a government department located out here. We’d do far better if local government bought all their stuff locally from local suppliers. I mean I used to be able to buy motor cars cheaper in Melbourne than I could in Newcastle as part of some national deal. I’ve got a fleet of ninety cars. I buy them all here because we managed to find a way with the locals into this franchised system where we buy them locally. We never tell government; we want all our stuff delivered by local agencies. That way we are helping local business and local welfare agencies. I mean if we got taken over by a Sydney organisation, we would lose twenty-five jobs in the Hunter because they would all be gone and they don’t know that, business don’t know, they don’t know the difference. (Interview #23)

A strong emotional attachment to the region is therefore a given for building it up in the face of a powerful dynamic, weakening its capacity to provide support for marginalised people in the region. This sentiment is articulated strongly by the youth culture activist.

COM 3  It’s not where I’m from and it wouldn’t work in the west of Sydney anyway. They have this idea that one size fits all. That is outrageous. It’s just so outrageous it just makes me spit with fury because I just can’t believe it. I believe that it happens to a certain extent. I accept that if I was on the other side of the fence, I’d play that game myself. But I cannot believe that it happens to the extent that it does and with the degree of blatant-ness that it happens. People will blatantly say that to you. It’s extraordinary really. (Interview #8)
3.4.2.5.2. Responding to Change

Having set the raison d’être for this set of regional activists we now turn to their modus operandi in the face of current political expediency and policy change. Here in the words of the Board member of the Area Health Service we have a sense of how the former high regard for the achievement of multicultural policy and practice in Australia and in NSW is now more tempered.

COM 7 I’m currently also on the Hunter Area Health Board which is an appointment for a four-year term. The role there still wears a multicultural interest hat although interestingly enough it’s a state body. There have been some erosion around ethnic affairs policies in the state sector; there’s no doubt about it. In state agencies we’ve got a state government that doesn’t really hold the ethnic component all that seriously, or as seriously as it did, and as a result all those policies that should be driving towards some affirmative action are not there. But you get these mixed messages; the level of the machinery of the state doesn’t appear to value or to have a place for the ethnic minority. On the other hand, at levels like this regional body there is still a lot of good will towards that ethnic minority sector, towards that group as consumers of health services, as contributors to the health service. (Interview #24)

This political expedient approach to policy and media management is then contrasted with an ‘age of enlightenment’ view of the previous foundation for policy.

COM 7 At the end of it, that’s the only way it will really work properly when all those minority issues are just absorbed as part of a really good management template for agencies, where they see their customers in all their various diverse ways, from all sorts of different cultural perspectives. Gay, gender, race, all those things, they are simply attributes. The ideal model is to simply see a party come through your door and first and foremost, I suppose this sounds idealistic, see the person and then note that they have blue eyes, black hair, or they speak with an accent. They are things that may have some impact on what’s going on with them, their lives, what they are wanting to do, what they are being stopped from doing. But essentially that’s how you’d like Centrelink to act, how you’d like the police to act; simply to recognise that they are dealing with a very diverse kind of humanity and all those things need somehow to be taken into account. They may not have a particular impact on the way people are dealt with. But to deny people their difference and paint them all in some sort of homogenous bag, is denying them, I think, natural justice. (Interview #24)

The agencies’ critical response to government implementation of new managerialism practices was the driver for developing new strategies and structures as shown in the following descriptions of the evolution of the Hunter Council of Social Service by two of the principal movers. It is seen as a way of maintaining the ‘regional voice’ for the cultural/social equity perspective.

COM 6 It was really a response to competition policy. The job network would come in and everyone wasn’t allowed to talk to each other because that was collusion. So it was in response to all that. The sort of groups that joined was Centacare, Mission Australia, Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul and the Smith Family. It was a very informal group, but that’s the way we started. It grew from there and we started to talk about maybe we should do things together, collaboratively, whether we should become a regional network that focused on social justice issues because no one else seemed to be doing it at the time. Samaritans were always prepared to have a say about things, but most agencies, we found over the decade, were retreating from that sort of exposure because it made you vulnerable to your funding. (Interview #23)

Creating a number of vehicles for ‘having a freer voice’ in the face of government sensitivity to criticism of its policies is seen as important.

COM 6 If you say the ‘wrong thing’, they say, “We don’t fund you to criticise us”. For the Samaritans it was strength for us because we’ve got a lot of volunteers and we do things for nothing (laughter) and they always want us to stay. We are the reserve for Centrelink really, particularly with our emergency welfare work. Most of our referrals come from Centrelink social workers: people coming in, in crisis. They don’t know what to do with them so they send them down to Samaritans. They very much want us, which gives us a certain strength. We’re multi-service, so apart from our worry about our workers, if the government knocks off one of our branches, we don’t care basically. And the Board knows that. The Board says it’s our policy that we will not back down because of threats of losing money. So it wasn’t out of need really, because for ourselves, we’ve always had the freedom to speak on behalf of the
Another motivation for the formation of the Hunter Council of Social Service is to have a body of sufficient gravitas, able to communicate with other regional bodies in the region.

COM 7 I’m also involved in HCOSS, the new body which is now actually making a bit of a mark after a long time. It has had a real re-energising through some of the people on it and it is very much in keeping with some of what you’re saying; that we’re trying to establish some sort of voice which does represent that social and cultural capital and does try to include it in any dialogue that’s had between the region and those other brokers and other larger bodies which may have some impact on the regional development. We want to get what I still call ‘our seat at the big table’. Now I think something like HCOSS has real potential to do it, particularly if the level of leadership that’s there remains. It’s a pity sometimes these things do depend on the personalities. But that was its purpose and my interest in being involved in it was very much about that because I felt that there were opportunities being missed. There was also a sense of regional pride in having a Council of that sort which could be very representative of our local scene: the urban, rural and regional interface; the particular circumstances under which our organisations, our agencies, need to work; the kinds of difficulties that happen in areas with a big geographic footprint and limited resources and how you cover it all; and the lack of an umbrella body anyway. (Interview #24)

On the other hand new managerialist policy changes have provided this sector with the latitude to question their own practice of using negative indicators of client populations to make claims for funding, as shown by this comment from the coordinator of an ethnic communities service agency.

COM 7 Turn it around and get away from the deficit model which I think we’ve probably concentrated on for almost too long. I think the nature of our client base is such that we can’t keep hanging onto the deficit all the time and pleading disadvantage. We can’t, even when we know that there are people with those continuing legacies of difficulty either arising from their migration or simply because they’re the people they are and their life circumstance. (Interview #24)

As well as government policy changing, so do the circumstances of clients. This requires a new approach on the part of agencies.

COM 7 We no longer can talk about the major post-arrival process that happens because people are expected to slip in quite easily and take up the threads. Now in practice that doesn’t happen, but we also have to relate our activity to the policy of the day, which I don’t have great problem with, because we can always find windows of opportunity through other programmes that we run, particularly through the state, the DOCS programmes, they are all about welfare. So we can slot people into programmes where I don’t necessarily have to be absolutely accountable to the kind of Commonwealth policy that funds us. It’s a juggling game and you have to look at the realities and try to accommodate yourself, and somehow work within the parameter of the system to be able to support those who do have deficits, but also to work with and in a way of that productive diversity model, where you are saying, “We’re got terrific people here; look at them, look at them go up in lights”. While at the same time we can still work with Families First with really disadvantaged families, with welfare crisis, domestic violence, all those things that are part and parcel. (Interview #24)

Government support for youth policy programmes has arisen out of higher unemployment rates of the 1980s and ’90s and the human rights movement. The establishment of a youth cultural project took advantage of the existence of these government policies and practices as well as the new media arts and information technology, and was used innovatively by the young people concerned.

COM 3 It is loosely defined as an arts media youth culture organisation and through that I’ve also been involved in a range of projects such as the various festivals that make up ‘This Is Not Art’ and things like that.

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36 Editors’ note: This Is Not Art festival is an annual 5 day festival of independent, emerging and experimental arts and media.
We actually started Octapod\textsuperscript{37} a few years ago. A group of us got together and started it out of what we felt was a perceived gap. Basically it was started out of unemployed boredom to be perfectly honest, because we were all unemployed at the time and felt that we had little prospect of getting real jobs. We were all a bit overqualified, we had studied or had the experience in student things or editing Uni papers or various other things, and wanted to set up an organisation that would facilitate a range of different projects. There were about eight of us that were working at that time, and we wanted to set up an organisation that would facilitate this wide range of projects. So that’s how I got involved. We jumped in over our heads when we were not really sure what we were doing, and started it. (Interview #8)

This more enlightened social equity approach was contested by a traditional inequity practice. This following excerpt while describing practice from another region has resonance in Newcastle and activists had to be alert to its consequences to successfully mount their innovative programmes.

COM 1 They saw youth development as giving the kids something to do so that they wouldn’t be bored, and mainly trying to find jobs to keep them in town, and stopping the kids from taking drugs. They didn’t see any role for arts and culture. They were definitely talking about Aboriginal kids or non-English speaking background kids. Hervey Bay’s got an interesting population. It’s similar to some places in the Hunter where there’s quite a large population of middle-aged men and older middle-aged men who have younger Filipino wives and young Asian wives. So town actually is quite multicultural, and yet the councillors really saw my role working with the white kids and not with the other kids. I didn’t really pick this up for a little while because to get the funding they had ticked all the boxes and the boxes said work with a diverse range of young people. I started doing programmes that involved more Aboriginal young people working with the white population. In Hervey Bay they were geographically separated; the Aboriginal population lived in different suburbs in clusters and in outposts towns and the white population lived in the centre of town and along the foreshore. So when a project that involved after school activities that provided transport for the Aboriginal kids to be able to participate, they turned around and said, “Well no, you can’t transport them because this is an illegitimate expense”. But what they really were saying was, “Well no, we don’t want activities for Aboriginal young people.” … There were quite a few times when I had to go before council and they would say, “Aboriginal kids get all this extra money and privileges and our kids are some of the poorest in the country and yet you’re wasting our money on giving these kids, with all these extra things, more things”. (Interview #2)

In the previous sections the cultural/social equity perspective’s purpose of defending the interests of marginalised groups, its modus operandi and the impact on it of changing government/funder policy has been sketched. In the final two sections we describe how the representatives of this perspective go about building their organisations to deliver programmes despite these constraints.

3.4.2.5.3. Creative Organisation Building

The cultural/social equity perspective sees itself as not having the same clout and resources of the other perspectives. However it does have the resources of moral persuasion, a support base of marginalised groups that constitute a significant minority of the total population and a reserve army of volunteer labour. These resources are deployed in creative ways that allow organisations to grow without the levels of funding and resources that are usually expected. This is illustrated in the following two excerpts with the first one seeking to make equity claims for this perspective that should be commensurate with other more entrenched programmes.

COM 1 Although I will always go to every council meeting and say, “We don’t have enough money, we need more, we need more”, I will also always recognise that we can work miracles with nothing. We have done that in the ‘Palais’\textsuperscript{38}. When I started there was just me, and then we got one and a half staff, then we got two, now we’ve got two full time plus five hours of casuals, and now we are about to get two more full time, and so we will have a full complement. But what that team has been able to achieve with nothing has been amazing - just with the resources of kids bringing themselves and what they can get

\textsuperscript{37} Editors’ note: Octapod is a resource base for creative projects in the Hunter Region. It aims to provide the Hunter Region with a variety of resources to enable a participatory, innovative and sustainable artistic culture.

\textsuperscript{38} Editors’ note: The Palais was a former dance hall where a youth cultural facility was established.
from their communities or the businesses that will support them. This community is a very wealthy community in comparison with some of the ones I’ve seen and we do have resources. So I’m not saying that council can get away with only funding youth services to a token level in comparison with other services, but what I am saying is, I think that it builds the resilience of young people and their own self-reliance. Then they have to think about the consequences of using their resources in this particular way. (Interview #2)

The difficulties of innovation are demonstrated in the following excerpt as the youth development worker struggles against administrative boundaries set up to ensure transparency in the use of funding derived from local government ratepayers.

COM 1 Newcastle City Council doesn’t see itself as having that role. Every time we are on a regional forum or some kind of regional activity, it’s always, “What does Newcastle get out of it?” And it’s always, “We’re putting up this money. You guys need to contribute as much and if you don’t, we’re taking our ball and going home.” And I think that is a structural barrier, and I think that something needs to be done with senior management and the councillors, but also at the grassroots level through council staff. We are not just members of the Newcastle community, we are members of mainly the Lower Hunter communities for a start, and we are members of a broader region, and it’s not just tokenistic so that we get more grant funding and more money. (Interview #2)

However this extract from the interview with the youth cultural activist highlights, in this case, the successful creative use of scarce funding and the consolidation of programmes over time, based on successful deployment of their assets of constituent support, innovation and volunteer labour.

COM 3 A lot of that is done at a project level, some of that’s done at the Octapod level; it does vary from project to project. Octapod has auspicing fees which it gets from the projects that come through, which is generally enough to keep it ticking over. In the case of This Is Not Art, where the budget has actually grown quite substantially over the years, those auspicing fees are a very big chunk of what it costs to keep Octapod going. The subsidies from the City Council in terms of rental on the space has gradually crept up over the years. It was heavily subsidised to start with and it [the rent] is creeping up to the point where we are almost at what they perceive to be the market rate for the building. But over the years, that capacity to pay that, has gone up as well; that’s not a major consideration. It tends to be that Octapod funds itself now through projects that happen through it. It relies on volunteer staff that does things like act as treasurer, keep the accounts and those sorts of things, which are always excruciatingly difficult to keep because that’s always very hard. It’s interesting for us because we’ve got to a point where we’ve got quite a profile. People assume that we are well resourced and they are surprised that there is no one around to return a phone call for three days or that we can’t necessarily get the documents that someone is seeking clarification on, because we don’t have anyone whose job it is to do that stuff. So that creates growing pains. They are a big issue as those sorts of things have come on board. (Interview #8)

Meanwhile out of the spotlight of negative publicity, organisations that deliver the cultural/social equity perspective are developing and growing.

COM 8 Unless people think it’s going to affect them directly, through loss or gain or whatever, the consciousness or the awareness isn’t raised. But I think it’s been more about a steady, steady growth. And yet it’s funny, you are a community within a community, and the indigenous community within Newcastle is probably one of the better ones from around the state, even national, to be just working away and growing and achieving, achieving and achieving. (Interview #25)

Those interviewees working on the development of the regional representative body [HCOSS] for the cultural/social equity perspective plan to deepen their advocacy for their constituent groups by seeking to be more in touch with them and to strengthen their credibility with government agencies and other powerful agencies in the Region. This is spelt out in the following passage from the CEO of a major welfare agency in the Region.

COM 6 I think we’ve come through that. We’ve been a bit of them and us; I think when we were fully funded by governments we used to think of business as arms of the capitalist system. In some ways the change has brought us all together. Just in our membership we’ve got women’s refuges, family support, community based stuff, youth organisations, a migrant resource centre, and Cessnock Council. One of our aims is to work for [Aboriginal] reconciliation, and we want to develop plans for that. Having spoken to a couple of
Indigenous groups, they want to be with us, they don’t want to be separate; in this we are open to all ideas. We’ve got a member in each of the regions, Upper Hunter, Lake Macquarie. On the executive committee we’ve got a member from every part of the Hunter; and that’s why we want to respect that, and when we go there we have open meetings. We have our agenda, and if anyone wants to come in they can tell us what’s going on locally. It’s not, ‘you can set up a committee and you never hear anything more’. We just want to be open and inclusive, even if it’s a bit chaotic at times, and for people to see that there’s a group that will represents their interests in this region and will do whatever it needs to be done. I’ve got an open door to the Regional Director of DOCS - she’s happy to meet me whenever and hear what the sector has to say. I think it’s got a fair bit of potential; we are just parochial and stubborn but we’ve still got a long way to go. (Interview #23)

3.4.2.5.4. Recruiting (Local) Economic Development Strategy

A coda to the cultural/social equity perspective’s attempt to carve out a place in the regional development policy agenda is the development of their case against the traditional focus on importing large scale economic generators in favour of recognising the economic capital inherent in the cultural and heritage assets that the region has already developed. This approach is spelt out in the following passage from the interview with the youth cultural activist.

COM 3 I’ve always had a very strong view about what is appropriate development for Newcastle and what I’m trying to do. What we’ve tried to do is to some extent lead by example with that. There is a phenomenon that I’ve written about at various points in time and tried to get published and never had much luck. The phenomenon is that we need a new big factory. There is this kind of assumption that we lose a steelworks - we need another new steelworks, we need some big mega project from out of town that is going to cost a billion dollars and provide two thousand jobs. There’s this great history that the Newcastle Herald has of announcing a thousand jobs on the front page of the paper every three weeks. It’s just extraordinary. For example, I’m amazed that they don’t market things like Newcastle’s architecture, because every time I bring someone to Newcastle they marvel at the architecture. I never see it emphasised. I’ve never seen it in a tourist brochure. Newcastle has this fantastic streetscape, not just a historical streetscape but also the varying eras that are represented here that have all since been obliterated from every city in Australia. (Interview #8)

In this section the device of describing five regional development perspectives has been used to analyse the tangled skein of threads that make up the history of the region’s development of the past seventy years. While the device has been successful in accommodating most of the threads, there are stories of development in the region that it doesn’t cater for completely. It is important to pay attention to these stories that don’t fit neatly into the classificatory device, as they are also part of the history of development in the region. They could prefigure an emerging strategy or they don’t fit any scheme. So I’m referring to these inconvenient but important regional actors as ‘loners, lurkers and strong men’ and we now turn to a description of them.

3.4.3. Others - ‘Loners, Lurkers and Strong Men (and Women)’

This section reports on a small group of interviews that do not easily fit into the system of classification of regional perspectives used here and yet they have an impact on the development of the region. While I’ve represented this category with just two interviewees, there were elements of other interviews that would also qualify for inclusion in this section. For example, the youth development public servant qualifies as she consciously struggles with her organisation to establish a foothold within it to deliver on the needs of her constituents, while on the other hand she used her bureaucratic position and the resources that attend it in the interests of her constituents as she saw them. (Interview #2)

A representative in this category is the owner of a local land development company who inherited the business from his father. From its local base the company has expanded its development activities across a range of commercial sectors and along the east coast of Australia. His situation illustrates some of the issues impacting on this group.

BUS 2 We’ve got a Barramundi Farm in Far North Queensland. We’ve got a resort property in Far North Queensland, a shopping centre in Far North Queensland, we still own (indistinct), the Telstra Building in
Newcastle, the Herald Building in town, in terms of the commercial balance to the things we do, plus our residential subdivisions. (Interview #12)

Over the past twenty years he has been notorious for seizing unconventional avenues for development opportunities that have seen him enter into protracted public battles with community groups and government agencies. To prevail in these situations he has relied on outspoken criticism of groups and government agencies, the Land and Environment Court and strong due diligence research. His struggle with agencies and his frustration with them are illustrated in the case of the Northlakes subdivision development described below.

BUS 2 I think a classic example is our purchase of Northlakes. We purchased Northlakes in 1998. Northlakes land had undergone studies by council and the previous owners for ten years previous to 1996. In 1996 Northlakes was rezoned for the urban development of the city, for the northwest sector. In that rezoning process Northlakes is owned by two different owners, ourselves which own the area around Cocked Hat Creek, and the Rouche family which owns the area known as Pambulon. So we would have thought it a fairly straightforward process because it was rezoned in 1996 after ten years of studies. We bought it in 1998. We immediately put a DA [Development Application] in, or it took in fact twelve months to put a DA in, because, as part of the DCP [Development Control Plan], council insisted that a species impact statement goes with the development. Now that’s a very costly and time consuming exercise to do, but nonetheless we did the species impact statement. Normally species impact statements aren’t required unless an eight-part test is failed by one endangered species. That wasn’t the case in the previous studies and in fact they took a long time to do the actual shape of Northlakes in the three different zonings. They did that with full knowledge of the endangered species that were on the site at the time and we consequently purchased the land. Now we have been five years and at least a million and a half, maybe close to two million, dollars in studies and we’ve only got approval for the first precinct, Precinct One, four hundred lots out of the sixteen hundred lots that we thought we purchased – five years! Study after study has been done. We have been humbugged by National Parks, we’ve been humbugged by the DLAWC [Department of Land and Water Conservation] and we have been humbugged and it’s all been orchestrated in fact in my view by council. So every conceivable delay, including the recent fires, the bushfires, again caused us to change our plans. So from DLAWC and … from National Parks and endangered species, council and just the general humbug, we’ve been five years on what should have been at very simple straightforward DA, which is only kerb and gutter and storm water and roads. There is no difference today quite frankly, in a subdivision other than technical changes to the treatment of water than what it was building a subdivision fifty years ago. It’s simply roads, kerb and gutters, power and water. (Interview #12)

He then argues that the amount of land that is under development along the east coast of Australia is insignificant and the number of studies and amount of expense required to bring it to market can’t be justified.

BUS 2 The process though, three years ago you needed an engineer and a surveyor. Today we need upwards of fifty consultants to do the same subdivision, so progress. The outcome is still a subdivision which is roads but the process to get the outcome is enormously convoluted, had been made difficult by the interpretation of the officers of the Endangered Species Legislation and the different interpretation now being followed by the other government department, DLAWC. The outcome as I said is exactly the same, it’s a bloody subdivision! When you look at the bigger picture we have twenty million people in three million square miles. If you fly from the tip of Cape York to Tasmania along our coastline, looking laterally at the bigger picture you’d say, “What development?” You get a blip at Brisbane and you get a blob at Sydney. So in our thousands of miles of coastline with our twenty million people, thinking laterally, comparing it with the rest of the world and understanding the rest of the world, one would say, “What development?” Any proponents suggesting over-development of our country are just talking utter rubbish. (Interview #12)

This managing director pursues his business objectives and relies on his own significant personal resources of persuasion and position as well as those of his company to achieve them. We will return to his motivation for his persistence in the face of strong opposition shortly. His approach is contrasted with that of the youth cultural activist and his friends.

As described in COM 3’s interview, quoted in Section 3.4.2.5.2, the youth activist gradually reveals how and why his new organisation came about, constructing reasons, method, structure and constituency as
his story progresses.

His group saw the need for a media-based resource centre “where you could go and learn about the internet or video production or any of those media related skills” (Interview #8) that would support young people in producing multi-media work relevant to their circumstances. From this starting point, they were faced with overcoming the difficulties of establishing what was seen as an esoteric facility in a regional city where the dominant wish list ran to establishing large manufacturing companies and heavy infrastructure.

COM 3 I can’t really explain it. You had a bunch of people who did, between them, have very good skills - no resources, no money but due to the fact that … all my life I’ve never really been able to get a job in Newcastle and [with] everybody else that’s involved in Octapod sort of being in a similar boat, so we’ve had a lot of time and a lot of skills and therefore the question is: we are the sort of people that choose to apply them to something rather than just kind of … There’s the other really practical thing too. A lot of the friends that were peers around at that time [had] got heroin problems and didn’t do anything and it was purely just staying off boredom and trying to stay engaged - the social isolation that just comes from being unemployed or having to move away. We didn’t want to have to move away. (Interview #8)

Nevertheless he and his friends are onto a sufficiently powerful idea for the organisation, its programmes, and support for it to grow over a period of ten years with very scarce financial resources.

The managing director of the local land development company argues his case from a social equity position saying that an overly cautious approach to land release and sub-divisional approval was socially unjust for his end consumers, young families.

BUS 2 It’s ridiculous. They either plan to have more people and to house and accommodate and create the lifestyle that goes with it or they don’t. The situation in Lake Macquarie is they have undersupplied the available land. There is plenty of land that could be used for housing. It has tightened off the supply, and prices of land have tripled in the last four years in many areas. When we were first selling Green Point, we were selling Green Point eight hundred metre square blocks for seventy thousand a lot. We’re now selling four hundred and fifty square metre lots with mines footing for one hundred and eighty thousand dollars. Supply and demand. Now Northlakes - we started selling two years ago at sixty five thousand dollars. A block was sold last week at one hundred and sixty two thousand dollars. (Interview #12)

He fulminates against conservationists not having a realistic position on the challenge of funding environmental remediation.

BUS 2 Look at that; here’s another example, the politics. There’s Nine Mile Beach, completely denuded by the sand mines. No endangered species in sight but the political persuasion said “Don’t build any housing; don’t do any development on Nine Mile Beach”. Now we had a deal almost done with BHP to buy Nine Mile Beach. We had long lengthy discussions with the Water Board; instead of pumping all that sewage out to sea and wasting it, to put the sewage through a tertiary treatment plant, run the pipes along Nine Mile Beach and turn it into an oasis, an oasis within two years. What’s the economic driver of that? Housing. What’s the other economic driver of that? Build a hotel and a golf course so that the land can be intelligently rehabilitated and used. What’s happening to it now? Nothing! (Interview #12)

He attacks the inability of government agencies to resolve NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) resistance to higher density development in existing urban areas that would supply housing that meets government policy of restricting urban sprawl.

BUS 2 So who gets squeezed? You can’t develop the suburbs because of the bush land and now you can’t put decent high-rise where it’s sadly needed in order to drive this little shopping centre, which is going but performing terribly badly. What decent restaurants and coffee shops are there in Belmont? There’s none. What is needed to drive the viability for the restaurant? Population! Why isn’t there high-rise around that lake which would be built and grown to stop the urban sprawl? So people are caught again by the lack of wisdom and the politics. No, don’t have any high-rise because we don’t want it in Lake Macquarie; don’t have any urban sprawl because of the endangered species. (Interview #12)

The land development company CEO argues that government is negligent in not having proactive land supply planning in place and laments the discriminatory treatment he receives from council.
BUS 2 The wider thinking in these things should be done by governments in terms of the planning process in the first place. But they certainly need a lot of thought because they are not looking at affordability, they are not lateral, they narrow their focus down on the one individual block, they don’t look regionally in my opinion. So for their jobs that they’ve got to do … the council officers - they interpret the legislation as a ‘no-go’ because for one reason or another, if you’ve picked up, the message gets through either via councillors or political persuasion or the officers themselves: yes, we want that to happen; no, we don’t want that to happen, and miraculously that’s what follows. And for our developments we have to fight like hell. For example, up here at Fencott Drive, a site we bought from BHP. It was subject to three council reports paid for by council. All of those three reports … recommended partial development of that site. We had to run two Land and Environment Court cases in which the environmental arguments they threw up at us in the courts were an absolutely nonsense, but you can make an argument on endangered species to stop almost anything when there’s a desire. (Interview #12)

Finally, he is both “consumed” by the workload of running his business and he does not see any effective allies that will assist him in changing government inaction or the discrimination against him, thus confirming his position as a ‘loner’ relying on his own resources to pursue his company’s interests.

GH And so, so apart from people like UDIA [Urban Development Institute of Australia] and Australian Business Limited and the Chamber are there other networks or alliances …

BUS 2 No.

GH ... that you could be developing that could help you with this problem?

BUS 2 No except maybe send a cheque to the Labor Party.

GH (laughs) Things like the HEDC, the Hunter Economic Development Corporation, or the federal thing; they don’t even come onto your radar screen by the sound of things?

BUS 2 Yeah.

GH It’s an interesting comment on them. That’s what I’m getting at.

BUS 2 I’ve never thought. You’re just so consumed with your own business, like many businesses, consumed with survival these days of just simply handling the massive amount of paperwork that comes across and the compliance checks. One would like the luxury … some organisations, huge organisations, may have those, the Lend Leases etcetera may have those - the time or the people.

GH Well I think that’s a valid point and a valid constraint. You just can’t organise because you just don’t get a return from it, and given the fact that you’ve got compliance and penalties if you don’t address this other stuff, the paper work stuff.

BUS 2 The Hunter Economic Development [Corporation], what can they do for me? I say “Look, there’s a block of land; I thought I had sixteen hundred [lots], but I’ve got less than a thousand”. They say, “Oh well, we’ve done it for (what they say are) valid environmental reasons”. So it’s up to the courts, the courts will determine it. Of course, for environmental reasons, it’s very easy to fabricate anything and have an argument. One of the points of law that they used on Fencott, is there were endangered species within five kilometres of the site. Now if you used that on everyone in Lake Macquarie, there would be nothing ever built because there are endangered species within five kilometres of every block within Lake Macquarie. But it still doesn’t stop them using it in the courts as a valid ecological argument to stop development if they so choose. It’s very easy to run the case on the precautionary principle of not doing rather than doing. Doers in this world have an uphill battle to actually get something done. (Interview #12)

This section has extensively displayed the properties and qualities of five regional development perspectives. The first three, of industrial economy, regional economic development and regional strategic planning and development, share close commonalities in institutional and regional practices, alliances/ resistances and strategies for change. On the other hand, the conservation/environmental perspective and the cultural/social equity perspective, while also sharing some of these common understandings of the region as the three perspectives listed above in adopting similar institutional
practices, also emphasise contrary regional objectives and maintain separate regional institutions and practices. The perspective classificatory system is incomplete and the ‘loner, lurker, strong man’ category compensates for this. However all the perspectives have changed their strategic focus and operational tactics over time in response to significant events and ideological change.

The dynamics behind these changes are reported in the next section through a focus on changing understandings of the Sustainability code where it is mediated by other codes such as Regional Beliefs, and Regional Motivation and process codes such as Regional Learning, Making Sense and Regional Reflexive Practice through which notions of Sustainability are assembled and transported throughout the region.

3.5. A Region’s Journey Towards an Understanding and Practice of Sustainability

The previous section set out the Hunter’s history of regional development perspectives and practice. In this section we will examine how concepts and practices evolve within the context of open codes mediated by axial codes to produce new understandings, agendas and practices of sustainability.

3.5.1. Axial Codes

Lonkila (1995, 43) defines the second of his three coding stages as axial coding. Axial coding works intensively with one category and makes connections between categories. This is a useful theory-building tool because it puts the “data back together in new ways by making connections between a category and its subcategories” (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 97 in Lonkila 1995, 43). Axial codes do not follow on from open codes in a linear order. “They are rather two ‘modes’ of coding between which the researcher is continually switching” (Lonkila 1995, 43). This is done within the framework of a ‘coding paradigm’ made up of the following elements with my salient data codes (indicated in bold) and is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Axial Coding Elements</th>
<th>Axial Coding Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The phenomenon under study</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its causal conditions</td>
<td>Significant Events (open code)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its context</td>
<td>Regional Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervening conditions</td>
<td>Regional Beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The action and interaction strategies of the actors involved</td>
<td>Regional Reflexive Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The consequences of the actors’ actions</td>
<td>Alliances and Resistances (open code)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making Sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following is an example of how this coding paradigm can be applied by identifying the elements and the salient data codes. Here is an account of how one informant developed his awareness of the region and his personal energy for being involved in regional development.

POL 1 Primarily, as I recall, it was about the realisation that it was pretty pointless me talking about a water supply for the Hunter if you’re only talking about the Newcastle section. The Newcastle section was usually where the sewer pipes came out. I remember one of the puns was about anybody from Merewether was called sewer rats, that was back in school days, because that’s where the sewer outlets were and it wasn’t all the sewerage from the people from Merewether, it was right across the region.

So you had this everything is connected to everything else … So it wasn’t just a matter of crying out we want more money, because my basic approach is, what are we doing with what we’ve got. In almost every case with infrastructure particularly, even now … this is one of the pathetic cries that comes from the city of Newcastle. It’s always putting the hand up for more money for infrastructure and they’re making quite poor and inefficient use of the existing infrastructure.
So you looked first at what you’ve got, how can you make it better, how we can fit it together, so that it was pointless us having one view about the size of the pipe if the view of where a drain was going to go was not clear. Another issue around at that time was Newcastle Airport, having an airport to service Newcastle and all the debates and locations were well away from where it finally finished. Where we eventually have expanded the civil airport for the Hunter region is where it should always have to be because the airport was always there, but the thinking wasn’t there, that realisation that we are part of the whole. (Interview #13)

This former federal politician developed his concept of region by starting with an awareness of the labelling of his neighbourhood being derived from the noisome end point of vital infrastructure connecting his suburb to many others. He came to understand the connectedness of communities throughout the region being linked by important infrastructure networks (sewers, roads, airports) and that the development of a concept of region was important to create the best design and programme for appropriate infrastructure delivery.

This process of realisation is a metaphor for designing the relationship between codes that construct the understanding of **Sustainability**, the ‘core’ phenomenon under study in this section. To be able to realise the usefulness of the theory-building tool because it puts the “data back together in new ways by making connections between a category and its subcategories” (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 97 in Lonkila 1995, 43), the data ‘shows’ these properties and processes. Axial codes do not follow on from open codes in a linear order. “They are rather two ‘modes’ of coding between which the researcher is continually switching.” (Lonkila 1995, 43). The **axial codes** are set out in Table 3.3.

Figure 3.2 describes the nature of the relationship between the ‘core code’ **Sustainability** and the other axial codes, which show the antecedents of its properties and dimensions in the Hunter Region. The open codes provide the background for the analysis at this level and some of them, **Significant Events** and **Alliances/Resistances**, for instance have a more determining effect on the nature of **Sustainability** and so they have been brought into service again in this section.

**Table 3.3 Axial Codes and Categories Derived from the Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional Motivation (RMB)</strong></td>
<td>1. Job Protection/Job Creation</td>
<td>7 a) Social activism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Regional Independence</td>
<td>b) Community &amp; government together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Moral Duty</td>
<td>c) Great place to live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Preserve a Civil Society</td>
<td>d) Strengthen links</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. ‘Getting the balance right’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Regionalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Regional Aspirations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Creating Caring Bureaucracy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional Beliefs (RB)</strong></td>
<td>1. Children should not have to move away</td>
<td>2 a) Collaboration/Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Habitus)</td>
<td>2. Of Regional, Federal, State, Business, NGO, Individual</td>
<td>b) ‘Regional’/Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Representation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. ‘Too greedy’, Resentment, Mistrust, Conspiracy</td>
<td>5 a) Downtrodden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Sense of Community</td>
<td>b) Strong and clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Distrust</td>
<td>c) Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Can Win</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Engaging Regional Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39 Editors’ note - this table was a work in progress by the author.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Events</th>
<th>See Table 3.2 Open Codes for detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alliances and Resistances</td>
<td>See Table 3.2 Open Codes for detail</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional Learning (RL)</td>
<td>1. Personal 2. Institutional 3. Regional 4. Community</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4 Positive/Negative dimensions 3 a) Response to losing frigate contract</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | | |
3.5.2.  Building on Motivation to Develop Beliefs and Practices of Sustainability in the Hunter

The approach taken here is to firstly describe the properties of the codes in parts (1), (2), and (3) of Figure 3.2. I refer to these codes as relational codes to indicate that while they are not determining the nature of sustainability they describe dynamics and processes that shape a particular set of properties and dimensions labelled as Sustainability. These sets of codes influence each other and, in turn, shape the various properties and dimensions of Sustainability. While I will demonstrate the relational nature of these codes in Chapter 4, the task here is to describe the properties and dimensions of these codes.

Figure 3.2 Shaping Sustainability: Relationships between Codes

The significance of these relationships between codes, shown in Figure 3.2, is based on Lonkila’s advice about the role of coding in grounded theory. It is important in grounded theory to not only analyse the properties and dimensions of Sustainability by “isolating and naming the categories, ‘but also how to dimensionalize them and discover their conditions, consequences, and associated interactions and strategies’” (Strauss 1987, 154 in Lonkila 1995, 47). This is how “the distinctive feature of coding in grounded theory as striving towards theory development” (op. cit. 47) is realised. What these codes describe is crucial to the particular understanding of a region, its institutional arrangements and regional development practices. The codes describe the sources of personal and institutional energy derived from regional motivation, the individual/institutional/regional rationale for particular practices, the reflection on campaigns experienced and working relationships tested producing changed aspirations, beliefs and strategies for achieving them.

While I have used descriptive labels generated from the transcripts, they are aligned to epistemological and ontological concepts developed by postmodernist writers such as Bourdieu, Foucault and Bakhtin. First I will describe the categories, properties and dimensions before showing their developmental relationship to Sustainability and Governance in the next chapter. The order in which I have chosen to

Editors’ note: For the remainder of Section 3.5, the sub-section numbers have been assigned by the editors. In addition, the sub-section headings of ‘Regional Beliefs’ and ‘Significant Events and Alliances and Resistances’ have been inserted.
describe the codes is based on an arbitrary beginning point of a spiral relationship between codes for which there is no logical starting point. This process is like diving into a river ultimately flowing to the sea but that flow is moderated by the tides and eddies created by large influences like the moon and smaller forces such as rocks and silt deposits.

3.5.2.1. Describing Regional Motivation and its Dynamic Forces

Beginning with the Regional Motivation code, we find that job protection, job creation, and reducing unemployment are the long-standing major motivators for regional practitioners becoming active in the region. Other properties of Regional Motivation are serving one’s moral duty, creating a civil society, getting the balance right in a region, and achieving regionalism. The job-centred motivation is foremost in the life of the longest-living union activist in the region and it is evident in regionally established programmes and all strategic documents. This motivation is well illustrated by a former Trades Hall secretary.

LAB 2 If the starting point is jobs and you look at what you can do to alleviate the destruction of jobs and move towards creating new jobs, then you have a pretty firm base by which you can work with other organisations within the region. (Interview #5)

To generate jobs is such a powerful motivation that “You can put aside some of the ideology and the fundamentals are pretty well the same for everyone and you can start to look at that as the primary issue” (Interview #5). While such a statement might be expected of a former unionist, a former research engineer had a similarly strong commitment to job creation.

COM 2 It’s a real dichotomy isn’t it? Because you see Greg Norman spending hundreds of millions of dollars building this new place up in the vineyards and people paying … four hundred thousand dollars for a new house, a weekender in many cases, and yet in Windale [a public housing suburb] you’ve got these people who may never have a job … so how does one equate those social issues in helping people to make decisions to achieve long term sustainability? (Interview #7)

To highlight the wide-spread support for job creation across the region in the early 1980s when large employers were closing down their apprenticeship training facilities, a director of the Hunter Development Board reported that both local authorities and public companies put money into establishing and running an apprenticeship and traineeship training company (Interview #18). Strong collaborative effort and regional institutional resources are devoted to job generation and training. A strong Regional Beliefs statement concerning job creation is that the children of the region should not have to leave the region to find work and that every effort would be made to encourage them to work, as illustrated in this statement by the executive officer of a major welfare agency.

COM 6 I personally wouldn’t allow unemployment to go for more than six months from what I’ve seen and I’d bring back whatever the Labor Party had, the Working Nation. I’d guarantee I wouldn’t let any kid leave school and do nothing you know, because I’ve seen what it does to them. (Interview #23)

Some regional practitioners located their Regional Motivation as a moral duty and put it into practice in a number of ways. One prominent environmentalist pointed to the inability of industry and organisations to have a capacity for caring generally, in contrast to individuals. In the following passage this activist argues how he is not constrained by an ‘uncaring’ organisation but rather he is free and motivated “to carry the society through” and advocate for “the wilderness thing” by challenging organisations.

ENV 2 It’s difficult because every organisation, like the BHP in the case of Steel River, is running their own operation. An actual organisation does not necessarily care about anything. There are individual people in the organisation that service the organisation, who care; whether they get their salary or not. None of them have their cares about the same things. But the thing is unless you’ve got an issue, like in the wilderness thing, to carry the society through and see that organisations do change, it doesn’t happen. (Interview #16)

Another environmentalist got involved because of her initial awareness as a small child of industrial contamination in her locality, and nobody in authority referred to it. In her adulthood when locals started
to agitate against this toxic waste, she became involved “just to be faithful to my own conscience, I suppose, over the years”. (Interview #4)

The ex-mining executive links his moral duty to his conception of being a gardener as the proper attitude of caring for the environment and exercising “a much wider responsibility” beyond “personal ownership in terms of sovereign ownership”.

BUS 4 A lot of that is properly directed to conserving and to being the gardener, and it leaves humankind in the position that it ought to be, because of its own nature, in charge of this whole process, but it gives human kind a stewardship which says, “You’ve got that, now look after it.” And it’s not for strictly personal ownership in terms of sovereign ownership, you have a much wider responsibility; as a person or any kind of legal person you have a much wider responsibility than just caring for the thing, than just for your own absolute benefit, because you are part of a society, you know. And being part of a successful society means that everybody participates in it and makes a contribution to it. Now you can do that by way of tax or producing goods; I mean somebody who produces sheep should strive to produce good quality sheep so people can eat good quality mutton … it’s a duty to be good at what you do. So this is the stewardship model that I follow. Now a lot of the law that arises from that, like the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, mining legislation about rehabilitation of the land and restoring the land to a condition that’s at least as good as it was before you got it – that’s all in the last thirty years, that’s progressed enormously. People like coalminers used to walk away from places and leave some old messes behind them, which are now heritage sites of course. (Interview #18)

Extending from the Regional Motivation property of moral duty is the more specialised one of preserving a civil society. In the following passage the ex-mining executive and regional development board member develops a complex position of taking a stand on how he sees Australia contributing to the rest of world’s prosperity by exporting its mineral resources while at the same time sustaining its environment as a good gardener would, which in turn contributes, more fundamentally, to preserving a “civil society”.

BUS 4 Well there are some key decisions to be made. There are some key decisions that are not science. There’s a question of what you want our society to be like; do you want to be materially right? We can conserve a lot more; so we can switch over to sustainable … renewable energy source[s] like wind and sunlight. It would multiply the cost of our electricity many times if you convert to all that. You’d pay; say you’d shut down all the aluminium refineries, shut down a lot of industry; you’d make us all live a lot more simply; you’d cut out a lot of motor cars, so go back a century or so in material terms, right? Do we want to do that? So we have got to make a decision about somewhere where you are going to sit in a material world. You’ve got to decide what kind of contribution you are going to make to the rest of the world; how much are you going to help other people or how much are you going to dominate them. Are you going to be another military force like Hitler was or do you want to conquer the world like Stalin wanted to and nearly got there? So you’ve got some aspirations like that. I think we are more fortunate than those because I don’t think we want to do any of those things particularly; we don’t want to be the richest in the world, though we want to be pretty comfortable, which we are; we don’t want to grab the rest of the world but we do have a penchant for helping other people. We do want to treat our land like a garden and not just mine it and leave waste behind us; we don’t want to do any of those things but at the root of all that and more fundamentally to those objectives we’ve also got to preserve a civil society. (Interview #18)

This conceptual progression is further developed by other regional activists who have a Regional Motivation to get a balance between job creation and protection, creating material wealth and ‘looking after the garden’, and this challenge is referred to by a number of interviewees as ‘getting the balance’. A senior state public servant discusses the difficulty of implementing such balance between disparate areas of policy and regulation in developing the region.

BUR 1 So you’ve got to have a strong economic base if, in fact, you are going to be conscious of the environment because that costs money. We really need to have a mentality where you are not only preserving the environment but you’re also driving jobs growth, economic growth within the area and also having a third mentality of really looking after the people who do need support from the community … Now if we can get that balance right then we really have a strong region and that is what regional growth is all about. (Interview #6)

Finally regional practitioners are also motivated by the imperative to capture more resources and
autonomy for the region in order to carry out their work on the region’s behalf. This motivation presupposes a concept of a geographical entity, called the Hunter Region, for which resources are garnered. These practitioners supported competition policy, introduced by the federal government in the 1990s, to achieve this purpose. This regionalism property is well illustrated by the ex-mining executive and regional development board member.

BUS 4 One of the things that motivated us in the Hunter Development Board in the early days was that we were working hard and producing goods and all the benefits were going somewhere else and that meant that in here we were producing coal and paying high freight and it was all maintaining the urban rail system in Sydney. The numbers were pretty obvious so we wanted to be more independent, make our own way, be our own competitive industry and work and compete on an equal footing and keep the benefits. The driver has been the competition policy, so that what you pay for services is related to their cost and they are not just simply a taxation mode. So that’s a big driver. (Interview #18)

Capturing more of the region’s resources for the region is a facet of the regionalism property of Regional Motivation. This is a central motivation that will be further explored in Section 3.6 of this chapter on governance and regional model building. The property of regionalism focused on here is that of creating connections between organisations in the region to advocate for greater self-determination and more involvement in the decision making about the region. A manager of a large welfare agency reports this as a significant motivation for creating a regional welfare advocacy network.

COM 6 For something like the Job Summit, even in [Professor] Bill Mitchell’s CofFEE⁴¹, government is the employer of last resort. Well that’s fine. It’s not going to happen in the next five years, that’s for sure and what do we do in the mill, Bill? These people are getting older. So we want to strengthen the links between various sectors of the Hunter. At the end of the day our aim is that the disadvantaged are not left out … (tape interrupted) we don’t normally address this [disadvantage] and HCOSS does. (Interview #23)

He goes on to argue the economic advantage, to business and workers, of organisations supporting each other in the region and how centralisation forces work against regionalism.

COM 6 We don’t want to take over from the agencies because our aim is to strengthen the capacity of agencies to do their work better and part of our role, too, will be to try to organise that the small groups have got the resources they need, the management committees to get the resourcing they need because people feel quite vulnerable now; they need services. I just think it’s better for the community to have more control over where everything’s going. Even the media - we have fewer media than we used to … Since Prime went, NBN news is not a half hour, it’s only seven minutes and there are fewer radio stations. I mean everything is geared to this sort of big company take over isn’t it? The Workers Club gets taken over by a city club. I don’t know whether we are going to win in the area but we’ve got to have a try. And they’ve got such big purchasing [power], the big corporations have got such strength in how they spend their money. How does a local group compete with that? We worry about the economy too; we worry about getting government supplies from local dealers because that keeps them in business. But it’s something we are going to have to work at; it’s not just going to happen and we hope that local businesses will work at supporting local welfare agencies. (Interview #23)

Some activists argue that regionalism is necessary to produce a more sustainable world and according to a Greens party activist the region is strongly placed to achieve regionalism.

POL 2 The driver? The driver I guess is just a general social-change activist background and I guess part of that has come from my own perspective. If we are going to develop a sustainable world, regions and regionalism have a key part to play, a much more key part than is presently reflected in the way we do things at the moment and so I wanted to push, I guess, that kind of approach in the Hunter where I think we are reasonably, I wouldn’t say uniquely placed, but strongly placed, to explore those kinds of things. (Interview #15)

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⁴¹ Editors’ note: The Centre of Full Employment and Equity (known as CoFEE) is an official research centre at the University of Newcastle and seeks to promote research aimed at restoring full employment and achieving an economy that delivers equitable outcomes for all.
This section has laid out the individual motivations for doing regional development work in the Hunter Region and which are encapsulated in the Regional Motivation properties of job creation and protection, moral duty, building a civil society, caring for the region and pushing for more regional autonomy (labelled as ‘regionalism’), seen as essential for achieving the kind of region that practitioners desire. These motivations are justified and support a set of Regional Beliefs properties that are now described and discussed.

3.5.2.2. Regional Beliefs

Taken as the starting point for considering Regional Beliefs is Pierre Bourdieu’s working definition of Habitus, “embodied feelings and thoughts connected to commonsense understandings of the world and arising from particular social positions, including those of class, gender, nationality, and ethnicity” (Reed-Danahay 2005, 2). The unconscious operating beliefs about self, community, place and ‘what is right’, are scattered throughout the interviews either as justifying facts, statement of rights etcetera, or as assumptions to be challenged. Respondents either use them as solid beliefs or see them as impediments to action and seek to shake their stability. Firstly I will illustrate Regional Beliefs statements at work as firm foundations, and then I will discuss them as targets for change.

The coordinator of the Aboriginal non-government organisation uses a Regional Beliefs statement when he says, “We need to emerge out of the notion of welfare dependency” (Interview #20). “Welfare dependency”, a long-standing regional belief, is currently applied and debated amongst Indigenous communities and government agencies in Australia as a situation that is holding back Aboriginal peoples from achieving autonomy, self-determination and health and well-being. He goes on to state that “the only way you can do that is to take responsibility for the problem and it’s not that difficult to bring change. But people say it’s lack of education; I think that’s the case too; but I also believe that it is to do with [the] whole of lifestyle” (Interview #20), thus highlighting the all-encompassing nature of Regional Beliefs. The statement also takes as a starting point the downtrodden dimension in the community property of Regional Beliefs.

The youth culture activist described himself as having “grown up in a house that was affected by long term unemployment and that was my reality when I tried to look into the workforce, you know” (Interview #8). This was a dominant Regional Beliefs theme that many interviewees either mentioned directly as their motivation for being involved in regional development or they implied the debilitating effects of unemployment. When this attitude is combined with the “not wanting to move away thing” (Interview #8), a debilitating, or challenging, combination of beliefs becomes apparent. The motivation for regional involvement located in ‘job creation, job protection’ is so ingrained in the individual and community’s psyche that when it is described as the “not wanting to move away thing” the Regional Beliefs that people from the region should not have to move away is assumed as a given.

However our youth culture activist also uses Regional Beliefs statements positively when he asserts, “The other thing is that Newcastle, on the up side, has this incredible … environment in which to do that sort of project. It is cheaper than most other cities in Australia, both the costs of living and the cost of your overheads” (Interview #8).

The owner of the property development company states his belief “that’s almost begrudgingly that as a corporate citizen in this town there’s got to be something wrong with us … We must have stolen something from someone or robbed someone or done something wrong to be (laughs) successful” (Interview #12). This sentiment which is an obverse Regional Beliefs attitude of mine workers towards mine owners that permeated the interview with the ex-mining union official (Interview #1). The ex-local government politician and local resident activist perceived the operating Regional Beliefs of his local community saying, “It’s a very close knit community in a way but a community that in a sense was kind of downtrodden … but they were people who had become almost acculturated to putting up with pollution, putting up with incursions into the way they lived their lives, that they shouldn’t have to put up with” (Interview #15). Another environmental campaigner reflected this “downtrodden” Regional Belief with a perverse twist by reporting the opposition to her group’s campaign to get a polluting industry to clean up its discharge of toxic waste to the environment. She said, “We were told that sulphur was good for you and everyone believed it” (Interview #2). Such Regional Beliefs enabled
industry to keep on polluting and governments to deny their adverse effects.

Another long-term resident activist, mirroring the Regional Beliefs of mine workers towards business owners, reports not trusting government agencies and indicates a general adherence to this belief amongst her colleagues. She argues:

COM 4 Now those of us who have our own groups and active groups don’t trust the Community Forums [which were set up by the local council authority] (laughs) because it is too governed by council officers and I don’t think that should occur really because a lot of the features are dealing with council matters and either need council support or we need to say something to council about what’s happening. And I think they [the Forums] are closed after a certain time because the officers have to be paid. … I’m basing this on what I hear. (Interview #9)

There is a rich set of Regional Beliefs about other larger, more dominant places and institutions, like coalmining or land development companies, that are used to explain defeat, misunderstanding and difference. In explaining why a particular company retrenched its local plant’s environmental liaison officer, who had developed a good working relationship with the community, a seasoned urban activist expostulated on the incompetence of Melbourne management.

COM 4 How could a firm be so stupid, apart from anything else! Admittedly a lot of other people got sacked the same day because they’d bought another company and had to reduce their costs.

GH So you really think that opportunity, of them buying another company and reducing their costs to cope with the expense of the other company, that opportunity was used to get rid of somebody who had not only done a lot of good for relationships between the community and that company but possibly had done too much good, been too accommodating to the community’s needs?

COM 4 Well I think that was management’s view - Melbourne management. The management here would have been involved in any decisions. They may have also sacked him … which is always a possibility. But yes, it should have been publicised … it was shocking. (Interview #9)

Such Regional Beliefs pertain both within the region and between regional institutions. An instance of this is the description as “a lot of kind of aggro” in a local government general manager’s attitude towards an informant who is an executive officer of a state government regional development agency. She also believed that there were similar attitudes towards her agency, because of its Newcastle-based location and the way it operated, from the Upper Hunter communities and agencies. She goes on to explain how she will overcome that hostility based on Regional Beliefs.

BUR 4 There was a lot of kind of aggro there because I went, “Whoa, where is this coming from?” But you get the same thing in the Upper Hunter although not as much. But I think part of that will be fixed with K.B. from Muswellbrook, and I would intend working closely with her because she will be kind of a springboard for the Upper Hunter, which will be good; so you’ve got to use the resources that are there and make your alliances where you can maybe do something. I guess it’s that for the HEDC. The way we’re structured is very specific projects with very specific [funding], you know with twelve months of funding or two years of funding, and these are the outcomes we are going to have and this is our partner in funding. So there’s that project stuff, but there is this expectation that we will, you know we are the (indistinct) for everything because we are affiliated with state government. (Interview #19)

The longer excerpt below is a current day version of the long standing Regional Beliefs of distrust between big business and the community that, in this case, is assumed to also be located in locally based government agencies and even some professions working for them. The businessman believes that it is resentment about his success that motivates inconsistent treatment of his development proposals. He contrasts this vindictive approach on the part of his detractors with the professionalism of his firm and he avows respect for those who act likewise.

BUS 2 That’s almost begrudgingly that as a corporate citizen in this town there’s got to be something wrong with us. When I went to school my father wasn’t long out of bankruptcy and this business has grown from nothing to a massive organisation. Now in some circles in this town that’s a crime. We must have stolen something from someone or robbed someone or done something wrong to be (laughs) successful.

86
GH Yes. I don’t know, maybe it’s a cultural thing and it’s worthwhile thinking about it and exploring even further in the sort of work that I’m doing because I’m very interested in how there must have been that underlying attitude there that people are resentful of success or that there’s something ‘you’re out of the normal’, ‘there’s something wrong with you’, if you are successful, if you’ve ‘had a go’. And then the fact that you stand up for yourself only compounds that.

BUS 2 Um.

GH So what is it about the council officers then? Do you think...

BUS 2 Zealots.

GH … they’re reading the attitude that [your business is] ‘on the nose’ and therefore we can get away with this?

BUS 2 Yeah, yeah, no question.

GH Yes.

BUS 2 In talking to journalists over the years whenever my name comes up (laughs) I walk in and say, “such and such,” and they say, “Oh you’re the famous Mr. M,” and I say, “Oh I’m not that famous.” But (laughs) it’s the whole culture out there. I think there’s a very healthy respect for our professionalism from the good officers. There’s a very healthy respect for what we do. We run the Jewellstown Tavern, the shopping centre. We had that leased out for many years and took it back over about four years ago, [when it] was doing twenty thousand dollars turnover a week. Today the same business is turning over a hundred and thirty thousand dollars per week. It’s an enormous success. Why? Because of the culture that we’ve put into the place. We’ve taken the ramshackle Mattara Hotel; we paid four million dollars for it. I’m going to spend five million dollars on renovating that hotel. It will be an enormous success because we’ll make it a success. It took me eight months to get the DA out of stinking frigging council to renovate an existing pub, eight months. I’m going to put a tower above it for residential accommodation. I’m going to put [in] that DA in the next two months and I’m going to send it to the Land and Environment Court. They approved ten stories on the corner; they approved ten stories over the road. We were talking to them at twelve stories; some internal planner came along … and said, “No, we’ll stop it at six.” (Interview #12)

Regional development activists sometimes choose to challenge Regional Beliefs attitudes as being unproductive and do so to move the objectives of regional institutions forward and begin to reshape particular Regional Beliefs into more productive ones for meeting the challenges facing them at that time. Just as the manager of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agency argued for moving beyond Regional Beliefs that lead to the practice of welfare dependency, the manager of a large welfare agency describes the benefit of acting in spite of such beliefs.

COM 6 I think that encouraged people, because when we started people were saying, “Waste of time. You can’t do anything.” You know, total disillusionment, nothing will work. Here we were six months later and we got it. So I think the people were really encouraged by that. (Interview #23)

3.5.2.3. Significant Event(s) and Alliances and Resistances

So Regional Beliefs are not immutable. While they are elemental for regional understanding, aspirations and practice, they can be called into question and changed. We conclude this section by looking at how Significant Event(s) and Alliances and Resistance practices play a part in changing Regional Beliefs. The closure of an 84-year-old integrated steelmaking plant was such a Significant Event that palpitated the centre of the Regional Motivation of job creation, particularly manufacturing jobs. The dominant Regional Belief concerning jobs and job creation was opened up by this event, with a majority of people thinking it was catastrophic for the kind of work that had become ‘natural’ to the region’s population. On the other hand, the closure was seen by others as an opportunity to advance a tertiary economy. These shifts in Regional Beliefs are reflected in the following quotes from two public servants.

BUR 3 The closure of BHP is the defining moment, I suppose, which some people say is the best thing that’s ever happened. I think it’s a bit crude to say that. It provided an opportunity for the region to think
through more carefully how its diversified economy could be developed and look to the opportunities; the business, convention and conference market became one of those avenues that people saw. Well, if we’ve got a bit more clean air now and we’re less dominated by a singular corporation … then that’s what we have to do; we have to build new areas. (Interview #11)

And from BUR 4:

GH I’m just wondering … if BHP was one of those kinds of events?

BUR 4 Oh yes, it’s a watershed; it was a watershed; it was a symbolic watershed because I mean our perception research showed that that’s all people saw when they thought of Newcastle - smog and BHP - and I think that was for even people who lived in the region.

GH That was an external perception that some people didn’t want to let go because it was jobs.

BUR 4 Oh yeah and you couldn’t. I mean, I remember I had people saying at the time, “Oh it’ll be the best thing that ever happened” and other people saying ...

GH Like the union movement saying, “The sky’s falling in.”

BUR 4 That’s right, exactly and it was probably somewhere in between, some people are probably still suffering; I think you can’t let go of that either. But at the same time I think that it’s generally been very positive, you know. (Interview #19)

I have just sketched the properties of Regional Motivations and Regional Beliefs and how they can be modified by Significant Events and Alliances and Resistance practices. Now I describe a further set of variables that determine regional understanding and practices under the headings Making Sense and Regional Reflexive Practice.

3.5.2.4. The Process of Making Sense for Regional Reflexive Practice

Informants have come to make sense of what constitutes the ‘Hunter Region’, their own regional activism and their motivation for action through a range of influences including personal experiences, self and formal education, professional training, institutional practices, historical and ideological events. This range will be sketched under the code’s properties of: personal meaning and motivation, spatial relationships, acquiring knowledge, understanding the ‘region’ especially the regional economy and the regional environment. We begin with personal meaning and motivation.

The personal meaning and motivation property of the Making Sense code reflects on informants’ insights derived through changes in personal circumstances, professional education or learning from events in their work and institutional positions. We start with a younger person who has been employed in a newly created position, to facilitate the cultural development needs of young people, in an established local government organisation that is going through significant change in the 1990s. The worker, with the support of her supervisor, has the organisational space within a two-page role statement, to work out what her job really entails. Given her personal experience and beliefs she sees herself as “more accountable to the young people” than to the council as her employer, clashing with the established notion of command/ control organisation. Particular instances of applying this policy have brought her into conflict with her employer and she has had to modify the practice implications of her beliefs without compromising them.

COM 1 So there is a youth development position in Newcastle that focuses on welfare and the social justice for youth in relation to housing and legal issues and welfare issues, and then council decided to employ a youth development officer to focus on the cultural development of young people and on their participation in civic processes. But when I started there was a role statement that was two pages long and my immediate supervisor had come from the library sector. He had a passion for libraries and he was

42 Editors’ note – there were no examples of Alliances and Resistances at this point in the draft.
a wonderful mentor … but he had never worked in cultural development or youth development and he had no knowledge of the youth sector. So both of us had an interesting journey in learning about who the players were in Newcastle and how we needed to do things and how to go about doing things. One of the things - I think that I always felt that I’m more accountable to the young people of Newcastle than to Newcastle City Council as my employer and this has created a lot of personal conflict for me over the years. Because, there have been times when what is best for the organisation hasn’t necessary been best for young people. And so I’ve had to try and find a way to bring those two different issues together and to make sure it didn’t cause too much personal compromise for me. (Interview #2)

Nevertheless her practice, as revealed in the way she has worked with young people forced her employer to change its policies and practices by accommodating the way in which she works with her client group. The imperatives for changed practices is shown in the following excerpt from a youth cultural activist who represents the type of young people and issues that the youth development officer has had to address.

GH Why was it important that you addressed those arts and cultural areas that you perceived as not being addressed?

COM 3 I guess one of the funny things; I don’t think we thought it was important. It’s kind of funny in hindsight. If you took it away it would become very important. But … at the time I don’t think we thought it was important so much as worth trying. I can’t really explain it. You had a bunch of people who did, between them, have very good skills - no resources, no money but due to the fact that … all my life I’ve never really been able to get a job in Newcastle and [with] everybody else that’s involved in Octapod sort of being in a similar boat, so we’ve had a lot of time and a lot of skills and therefore the question is: we are the sort of people that choose to apply them to something. … There’s the other really practical thing too. A lot of the friends that were peers around at that time [had] got heroin problems and didn’t do anything and it was purely just staving off boredom and trying to stay engaged - the social isolation that just comes from being unemployed or having to move away. We didn’t want to have to move away. It’s funny that we are talking on the phone because I’m away but we didn’t want to have to move away. (Interview #8)

The youth cultural activist has described a Making Sense process that led him, along with his colleagues, to creating a set of cultural development organisations and programmes across Australia that arises out of the Regional Motivation of ‘not leaving the area to get a job’ and then thinking through and experimenting with alternatives to avoid the avenues of boredom and drug use, taken by a lot of his friends. An older method was for individuals to leave their area to gain experience elsewhere in order to achieve recognition locally. Here is the situation of a woman born in Newcastle and now working back in the region as an executive officer for a regional organisation. She describes how she made sense of the position facing women in the 50s and 60s. Through her experience in other places she developed an assessment of the potential of her birthplace and where it needed to grow. She then took the necessary steps to work her way around this disadvantage for women.

BUR 4 Yes, I guess that my attitude to that and this is I, personally, not so much the organisation’s, but I lived for five years in the States and I lived in Honolulu for three of those years. With Qantas, in that marketing role I travelled around the world and I saw a lot of regions and then I spent ten years in Sydney. I was raised here; I left here because I saw it as a blokes’ town. I was a woman with a bit of ambition and I felt a little bit alienated, I guess as a woman with ambition – that’s not what women did here. But then I worked in a place like the States where women are in a lot of management positions and then in Sydney I rose through the ranks with Qantas but, as I said, I had sussed the place and as I sort of went through all that I realised the potential of the place and how beautiful it was, and the industrial potential etcetera and so I made a conscious decision to come back. The closest I could get first of all was the Central Coast and then I was actually made an offer to do the marketing role here. So I came with some pretty clear ideas that the region needed to change, that it could retain that manufacturing base but it needed to be transformed manufacturing. Obviously the internet was starting to kick in during that time and because I was raised here I knew that the region, while it exports a lot of coal and a lot of steel, it could tend to be quite insular. That was a negative and a positive but in my mind it couldn’t remain insular because if it didn’t decide its own destiny and get out looking, then others would come in from outside and decide the destiny for us. (Interview #19)

A personal example of Making Sense, of a different quality, is that of the migrant who settles in a new area. In the following excerpt, the manager of a migrant welfare agency describes her experience of
coming to terms, over a long period of time, with the dislocation from her original place contrasted with settlement in a new one. It is significant to note that the experience motivated the drive to engage in formal study to confirm her experience.

COM 7 Well, I suppose it hasn’t changed from my initial interest and it’s very much as these things are based on personal experience; perhaps a sense of trying to change the world a little bit better for migrants who are, and as one myself, refugees. I well remember in fact the hard ride, some of the kinds of fragments and negatives that people experienced which I see, probably not then but I see now, as pretty much part and parcel of others trying to come into that world, or that centre stage; it’s a rite of passage which happens to anybody trying to move from one environment into another. What happens to people can be a legacy for all their lives and their sense of exclusion, of never belonging and taking that to the grave is really heartbreaking to see; and I guess it came from a family experience and in a way when the opportunity arose to perhaps look at some of the theory behind it, how it all happened and why and just trying to get a context about it. In short doing a proper course of study kind of gave me a good grounding in understanding what was going on. (Interview #24)

The above excerpts are examples of Making Sense of one’s personal position. More significant for our understanding is how regional activists make sense of events or the position in which they find themselves acting in their organisation. In this first example a retired federal government politician and minister of the crown sums up in an unusually clear aphorism the sense he makes of traditional unionist work practices that seem to be counterproductive in the current neoliberal policy frameworks and practices where union power is not so effective. Those practices, he says “were appropriate to the circumstances of the time” for protecting jobs.

POL 1 There is another saying that I picked up along the track and it probably describes it well, appropriate today. When we look back and say what were those arrangements and why were they there and I’ve learned the thing and you say, “Well they are no good today, they are an obstacle to improved efficiency today,” and so they became. Technology changed and everything else changed but the comment was, “Well they were appropriate to the circumstances of the time”. They may not be appropriate to today’s circumstances but they were appropriate to the circumstances of the time. (Interview #13)

Regional development activists crucially have to make sense of their place and its potential for being ‘acted on’. How does the idea of a ‘Hunter Region’ come into being, how is it grasped, and how is it formed so that it can be acted on and act upon others? Here I describe regional activists making sense of their spatial relationships with a physical place. Making Sense of the Hunter Region as a ‘region’ didn’t appear in the discussion with activists until the late 1960s to early 1970s. In the interview with the coalminer who began work in the 1920s there was no idea of the Hunter Region as his physical place in which he carried out his activism. His place was ‘the coalfields’ (Interview #1). Forty years later this is how the founding chairman of the Hunter Development Board describes the Hunter Region and how he thought he would motivate leaders in the region to accept ‘new’ ideas and practices by firstly achieving “some things” and by avoiding being seen as taking over the role of established institutions such as local government.

GH How do you encourage, spur on the community to want to be recognised as a region and to work as a region?

BUS 1 The only way that I think that can be done...

GH This was the sort of thing you achieved back in the 60s and the 70s.

BUS 1 Yes, but I knew that I couldn’t go any further unless some things happened. The things I wanted to see happen, was that the regional body, at the time when we were at the top of the tree before the Greiner episode ...

But what we really needed that time was the love and affection, was the public love and affection, the government take some tangible form. I didn’t want to see set up a fourth tier of government. We’d have got the local government blokes offside then and I didn’t believe that was right. Local government is a very necessary part of a municipality and public administration so we didn’t want to go down that road. I
purposely didn’t want to go down that road because I thought it was inefficient, we wouldn’t achieve, it would flop but, secondly, I just believe it’s unfair to the blokes that have worked in local government. (Interview #3)

One of those “local government blokes” who could have gotten “offside” describes the alliances formed in council debates that led him to make sense of issues when he and his colleagues were struggling to find a more useful way to think about the connection of their place to other places. They started with the observation that “roads or rail or ports” were connected to other places, “they embraced the whole region”. In using the idea of region they had to confront the Regional Belief that they were being “disloyal to Newcastle Council”.

POL 1 I first began to use the words regional, that the Hunter was a region, probably about nineteen sixty nine, nineteen seventy when I was on Newcastle Council. That’s when I first saw that we needed to actually try to have a common view because so many things that were involved here in the region, whether they were roads or rail or ports or industries, actually they weren’t just confined to the boundaries of Newcastle City Council, they embraced the whole of the region. The ‘region’ at that time was almost a dirty word. It meant that you were being disloyal to Newcastle Council. It took quite some years and the late Vic Bell … and Joy Cummings. Joy Cummings and I entered council at the same time, and we often worked closely together. We sat next to each other on council and we worked closely together on projects, particularly on environment matters and that was my first taste of, my first awareness of it wasn’t just what ward I was in, it wasn’t just Newcastle City Council. Some of the infrastructure and services that needed to be approached from a regional, across all the councils, view and I’ve always spoken in that direction since. (Interview #13)

The strategy our retired politician used to avoid the accusation of disloyalty was to use the axiom “everything is connected to everything else” thus emphasising the quality of region that warranted its use and to develop institutions built on this concept.

POL 1 So you had this ‘everything is connected to everything else’. So if you’re talking about a road, it’s probably about a road from here to Tamworth, but you’re just looking at the section within Newcastle boundaries. So if you look first at a part of the service, it was just one component of a larger system of infrastructure you had to have. Then second to that, but linked, you had the realisation that the way to get the solution is you need to have the other councils, the other people, the other committees that are also involved with that service, to also join with us, and that way we had a stronger voice. (Interview #13)

From this struggle to describe ways of thinking that enable the most effective way of organising the delivery of services, now in his retirement, the former federal government minister maintains that regions will be the basis for the most effective governance structure in the future despite the inordinate amount of time it is taking to achieve this reorganisation.

POL 1 Because I see the region as an entity. I see it as free-standing … One day in the future when we progress and local government is upgraded and the state government is downgraded and we share across the nation those matters and responsibilities that need to be nationally uniform like health and education, eventually [it] will come. But it’s a long, long time. It hasn’t in my fifty years; it hasn’t got nearly as fast as I thought it would. But eventually it will get there … Then you’ll see a region being identified more or less like other nations identify counties and things of that nature. The political entity becomes larger because it’s the right thing to do. (Interview #13)

The retired politician came to his realisation about the benefits of a regional reorganisation for government administration. Another regional activist, who is based in the agricultural sector and is married into early squatter ancestry, has arrived at a regional view via other routes. Her sense making is based on the physical transportation of Upper Hunter soil into the mouth of the Hunter River combined with a regional economy view derived from her training, and support for the work of a regional agency that championed region-based economic analysis, soil conservation and hydrology management practices. From this process of Making Sense she draws the regional connection, describing it as “they are linked”.

RUR 1 Not only did it [Upper Hunter soil] end up there but it silted the whole harbour … I was sitting with Professor Cyril Renwick who actually had been one of my lecturers when I did Economics at University
of Sydney. We were sitting at Scratchleys and a huge big tanker came alongside of us and I turned to him and I said, “It is thanks to you that these great big coal loaders can now safely come through into the middle of Newcastle Harbour.” And that was the very beginning and people don’t realise that … There is this great necessity to understand the Upper Hunter, the Mid Hunter and Newcastle because they are linked. (Interview #14)

This spatial relationship property of Making Sense of the region has further evolved to now include an analysis of intra-national and extra-national economic and logistical relationships. This excerpt is from the interview with a professional regional planner and transport consultant who has institutional experience. He comments on the Regional Beliefs that inhibit institution-based policy makers in contrast to his own unfettered view. He grants the executive officer of a regional business chamber the same perceptiveness.

BUS 5 What we were saying is that you’ve got a place that happens to be in Newcastle but it is the driver of the regional economy, you know the steelworks that is going to disappear. What we’ve got to do is to replace that with something that takes advantage of that site which strengthens the economic basis of the whole Hunter Region and that is the freight terminal because you’ve got the deep water wharfage, close to the ocean, you got miles of advantages over any other coastal freight terminal in Australia on the east coast and you can only get that advantage if you can get the infrastructure through the region and enable the produce of this region to come down to the port, but also tap into the adjoining regions which are the Central West and the North West; and bring that produce through this region to the port rather than those having to cope with it at the moment. Basically what is happening at the moment and what’s happening then since ’98, ’99 sort of thing, the inland areas are very good in producing agricultural produce but they can’t get it out of Australia, they have to compete with the export markets. They are having to road it to either Melbourne or Brisbane; if they rail it to Sydney it’s a tortuous process because the rail has to go in through Sydney and there is all sorts of time constraints and they miss the boat and that sort of thing, but the cost to it brings the price of the produce above what they would expect on overseas markets. Whereas we could see that if you get that produce down to Newcastle by rail and out, you avoided all of these costs; the freight costs would be twenty five percent less than what they are currently bearing, but not only that because you could get out so much more cheaply and compete on overseas markets, you could produce a lot more. So your unit costs would go down even further. Now I was able to see that. I suppose I’ve got the ability to understand a lot of interrelated issues whereas most people either seem to not have that ability or are working within an organisation that only lets them look at one aspect of it, whereas I was in a position where I could try and look at all of it and could bring it all together. I think David Simmons appreciated that and could understand that; a lot of other people didn’t. Another difficulty I think with regional governance is that very few people could understand the complexity and interrelationship of all the issues that have to be addressed. (Interview #21)

The retired federal government minister appreciates the spatial relationship property differently, perhaps in a more defensive way. Instead of embracing these changing relationships, he sees the region being infiltrated more from major state capitals. The region is not as isolated as it was in the past, now it’s losing its capacity, autonomy and power, because industries are managed more and more from state capital centres.

POL 1 The same with Newcastle. Newcastle is too close. We’ve always been too far, but too close. Now we look like getting much too close and if ever there was a time when it’s more important that we think regionally it is now because of the regional economy. They gave the regions some services but not really the power. Now you see it at BHP. BHP was driven from here but where were headquarters? Melbourne. Melbourne. So the thinking was always [that] they were driven from down there. This was only ever a branch office even though the boardroom was here and the origin was here and their money was generated from here in all those formative years, even through to World War II. (Interview #13)

On the other hand the youth culture activist sees the region becoming a periodic congregation point for a national movement. His product is cultural, its process virtual, rather than agricultural or industrial goods and services, and so he describes a quality in his understanding of spatial relationships that has far more fluidity, in spite of his dependence on the major capital centres to support him in his work.

GH Yes, I think relationships outside Newcastle are important too. Particularly if they reinforce internal relationships. I’m just wondering if that might have happened.
Well, the biggest issue for us is overwhelmingly the majority of our funding, audience and support comes from outside Newcastle and those relationships have largely been formed because we have, I mean from the very beginning what we were doing was picked up by a national audience but also because we were working. One of the things that was actually very beneficial, which I kind of found odd, was when I moved away. I moved away right after that first Fringe Festival and got a job in Sydney but I didn’t stop doing, keeping my involvement with what was happening in Newcastle. Suddenly my job put me personally into a national context of all these things that were going on out of which, I then kind of subsequently invested back into Newcastle in terms of transforming from the Fringe Festival which was a local festival to This Is Not Art which ultimately became a large national festival. So there was that level of contacts and support and benefit. I had been exposed to them because of what I’d done in Newcastle, gone away, got them, got those contacts and support and brought them back with me. There were lots of example of that, I think, in terms of projects which we have done where all the members who have been involved in Octapod have worked in that way to some extent. Also one of the things, because we were on the internet from the beginning too and so we were plugged into groups of people doing similar things all around the world, even if we couldn’t find a group of people locally that were doing what we were doing or were particularly interested in what we were doing. (Interview #8)

Nevertheless physical place, defined differently by different cultures, is significant as well to individuals and communities. For Indigenous cultures perception of country is a powerful example of this, evidenced here by an executive officer of an Indigenous training organisation.

That is probably difficult for the young ones who are coming through now; you know, because they might be born here but they know their mum and dad aren’t Awabakal and they don’t get the opportunity to go back to their country, to their mum and dad’s country or whatever; they just have to try and fit in somewhere, try and find wherever they fit in, and I think there are big challenges for the youth, their identity. I know with my own kids we take them back home as much as we possibly can and make it up a bit. My husband’s Novocastrian, he visits his country; he’s not Aboriginal but this is where his life is, so they at least have that. But if both parents aren’t from here … (Interview #25)

The property of acquiring knowledge, of Making Sense of the region, reveals moments of shifting awareness in regional activists’ accounts of their stories. In the one below the chairman of the Hunter Development Board, after paying acknowledgement to another regional leader, voices his insight born out of practice of the need for an “implementation chapter” explaining how to carry out the results of research.

I can only speak well of the Hunter Valley Research Foundation. I think the Hunter Valley owes Cyril [Renwick] a debt. He made a lot of us think about a lot of things we wouldn’t have otherwise thought about and that should not be forgotten … I began to realise that one of the things the Hunter Valley Research Foundation hadn’t done was implement things. It had done a lot of good groundwork, talking about the region and so forth but it really hadn’t got involved in doing anything other than research work, right. And that to me was somewhat barren; every good research book should have an implementation chapter at the end and not many do have that. (Interview #3)

The following exchange between the interviewer and the pastoralist represents a moment of acquiring knowledge concerning “local” and “scientific” knowledge and the way in which they are used. Here, in the latter section of this excerpt, a moment of ‘knowledge creation’ relevant to the research process occurs, as well as the interviewee reflecting on the discussion by saying, “It’s a good point to throw in”.

Do you think that their work will impinge on the work that the Hunter Valley Research Foundation has done in its early years because that, as you say, is why it was established - to preserve, I suppose, the waterways?

What do you mean? The work that Macquarie University is doing?43

43 Editors’ note: Macquarie University and the Catchment Management Authority undertook a joint project, the Upper Hunter River Rehabilitation Initiative on a 10 km reach of the Hunter River south of Muswellbrook, designed to trial and research various methods of river rehabilitation in the Hunter.
GH  Has the Macquarie Uni work acknowledged or built on the work that was done … in the Hunter Valley Research Foundation?

RUR 1  No, I don’t think they would have any idea. I think the whole thing is pie in the sky.

GH  That’s an interesting comment.

RUR 1  That’s four and a half million dollars, and on the supposition that you’ve got to get back to nature, and it’s not nature at all. The whole flow is run by government decision. It’s nothing to do with nature.

GH  That’s what I find fascinating - that there’s a policy that you, the people who have worked this land are not able to bring your experience to, how you might use a particular piece of land that has this seasonal effect of water rising and falling. There is a different set of knowledge, so called scientific knowledge versus local knowledge.

RUR 1  It’s a good point to throw in. Sometimes you don’t have to go into it, you just throw in a question like that and it makes the examiner sit up. And you can end it with a question mark. Who is making these decisions? The landowners or the university students or the policy maker. Question mark, end of thing, and the examiner thinks - that’s an interesting one. That’s another thesis. You want to do that?

GH  Because it’s another factor in the way our institutions work. Here you’ve got scientific knowledge and things called universities, which have got the scientific approach. Then there’s another set of knowledge that has grown up with the locals...

RUR 1  Um practical.

GH  How to manage that land, and it seems like the two can’t come together whereas they should. One should inform the other. (Interview #14)

The ‘understanding the region’ property of Making Sense especially the regional economy and the regional environment, is used by regional activists to claim a special knowledge about regions and the way they work in contrast to state capital cities. This special understanding about regions is then used to explain how non-regional policy makers are unable to make decisions for regions that are congruent with their ‘true’ nature. Regional activists emphasise this positional difference in understanding as a way of explaining inappropriate policy decisions regarding regions. In the quote below the former federal government minister contrasts how practices of non-local firms and those with their “roots” in the region are deployed, to demonstrate this difference of special understanding of regions.

POL 1  The other extremely important factor to be taken into account for regions is that, whether it’s the private sector, whether it’s public companies, whether it’s private companies, whether it’s the defence forces, but particularly governments (state level and national level), industry associations - almost none of them comprehend the thinking and priorities of regions. That’s a very deliberate and considered decision over my long experience. They have difficulty comprehending how they think, how they function, how they prioritise. In almost all cases they say, if something bobs up in the Hunter, “Oh yes, we’ve got that same problem out in Miranda in Sydney, yes, well, we’ll apply a metropolitan solution.” Now the same thing applies whether it’s Melbourne or Sydney, particularly Melbourne and Sydney, to an extent Adelaide but more Melbourne and Sydney. It’s the capital city orientation that applies similarly in the corporate sector. What this region has suffered from is the branch office mentality of so many of the industry managers here. They see the Hunter as simply a place to be for a while, a transitory posting and then move on. And that’s quite distinct from the companies that are born here. The companies that have their roots here have a commitment here. So the old Howard Smiths, and the Gominans, in the early years the Brambles and the Chadwicks, the Morison and the Bearbys and you [can] go through a whole raft of family companies, the Rundles, the Taylors and others because of the textile industry. Their roots were here, they were born here and they had a commitment to the region. (Interview #13)

The former federal government minister then displays a facet of his regional economy property of Making Sense by elaborating the comparative advantage of the region with its lower cost of, and specialisation of, labour. He emphasises the inability of non-local business to appreciate this advantage and so they follow the capital cities’ solution of reducing labour force size.
Newcastle is a bit like Liverpool was in the United Kingdom in the 1990s. There’s a close similarity in terms of the militant background of the community. They were port cities, general port cities, mixed, [Newcastle was] more bulky goods than in Liverpool. These cities change; surplus port areas come up, skills are bypassed. They’ve got a narrower skill base but [also] a narrow industry base which makes it hard for them to diversify. When I was looking at comparisons between Liverpool, and Newcastle and the Hunter, back in 1990 [I found] that you could buy a commerce graduate or whatever graduate in whatever skill you wanted in tertiary education in Liverpool, considerably cheaper than you could buy that person in London or in southern England. It certainly applied here; you could get [a graduate] with a higher level of qualifications, certainly with a higher level of dedication, certainly a higher level of productivity of output than you get in any of the capital cities. But business is not thinking that way. Business is looking simply at how they compare costs … It’s like the octopus, you keep chopping off the tentacles rather than saying “Is the head in the right place?” It’s that kind of mindset that operates very much against regions. Now you find, for instance, in some of the federal departments, that they would have been far better off being out of Canberra, but the mindset was, everything functioned from Canberra, and if you had an efficiency improvement or just usually a cost cutting then you cut off the outlying bits, which inevitably are the regions. (Interview #13)

A former trade union official displays a different understanding of how state government decision makers regard the region in that they fail to appreciate the region’s capacity for solving the problems associated with rapid population expansion in state capital cities. The interview moves on from this point to explore the constraining role that private sector funding of infrastructure plays in determining these decisions about population location.

And I mean really the state government is compounding its problems. While ever they just continue to service, I mean they are behind the game and they are trying to catch up and they won’t catch up. The cost of transport infrastructure in Sydney is unbelievable. They can’t get ahead of the game, they’re trying to catch up and they’re compounding the problem. Instead of looking at the regions, for the purpose of moving people out of Sydney, decentralising the people, there’s going to be continuous demand that they can’t meet in trying to meet the transport infrastructure to stop Sydney from choking up. Their contribution to decentralisation is minimalist, it’s tokenism.

Can I also float this idea: with Federal Government privatising major infrastructure, like the airports, there’s a similar problem that’s taking up the available private capital or the attention of the major players?

The transport infrastructure is being privately constructed.

Like the national rail.

Tollways and that.

The airport’s the latest thing.

Absolutely, that’s where the market is.

So is government not being strategic? They’re solving a catch-up problem wherever it is. Whether it’s a political problem, (just because there’s an ideology that says that governments shouldn’t own national rail) or a catch-up problems like Sydney’s transport problem.

Obviously public transport or transport of any sort is a costly exercise and you need a critical mass of people to make it work. And so, I suppose to invest in Sydney is the place because that’s where the government’s throwing money and that’s where the big dollars for the private construction companies are going … Next thing they will sell the bridge (laughs). (Interview #5)

Another way of Making Sense of the region’s default position of being ‘held back’ is through the argument that the state bureaucracy is successfully exercising its statutory and state resources power to limit the growth in the power of the region. This is the way that the former chairman of an earlier and reasonably autonomous regional development organisation understands the major relationship shaping the region’s chances for achieving autonomy and for realising its potential. The response then required from the region is less “fragmentation” and more unified leadership.
GH … the Department of Planning being inactive since …

BUS 1 But you see that’s part of the bureaucracy’s programme. The bureaucracy doesn’t want a unified region because, if you get a unified region, what the bureaucrats are frightened of is that they get too many questions levelled at them that they can’t answer and that they don’t want to answer. Questions about development and so on and so forth. They’re that flat out looking after themselves in the metropolitan area that they don’t want to be worried about the rest of the country. The rest of the country is only there to service the metropolitan area, that’s all that it’s there for. In my view there is no state policy and this is why I’ve started asking local parliamentarians questions about “What’s your programme?” Because unless you can get the local parliamentarians … prepared to stand up to Carr\(^44\) and Egan\(^45\) with a policy and start waving and start saying, “This is what we want” and then stick together. But you see the problem is they’re not a team. The problem is, that when you say that Newcastle comes together for things like the submarine and so forth, even though they come together, they come together as a mob of yahoos rather than an organised strike force and you need an organised strike force.

GH It seems like we’re good at crying poor and saying that “We was robbed”.

BUS 1 Oh yeah; we can make ourselves heard … (Interview #3)

Early in the interview a more passionate, detailed comment had been made.

BUS 1 The great problems were from the Hunter. There was still a great deal of fragmentation, no matter what P.M. or anybody else says to me. I know that, underneath, fragmentation still exists. If anybody can talk about one Hunter whilst all the local government bodies …They’re not led by somebody who can bring them together. I believe the municipalities should stay but I think the Hunter Regional Council [HROC] has got to be stronger and there’s got to be a strong leader to create the unified approach. I’m to the stage now of saying that is doesn’t matter what you do, so far as regulations or statutes or anything else of concern, you’ll not create a region unless the people want there to be a region. The people of the Hunter have got to want it. If they want it, it will go like a beauty, and it should. (Interview #3)

This strident and clear understanding is backed up by a current regional public servant who sees Sydney as myopic and unappreciative of the region’s potential and therefore locals have to work harder to have their position understood. She also explains state government reluctance to be more generous and competitive with other states on behalf of the region by assuming that when the state government gives something to one region, the other regions will demand similar treatment.

BUR 4 I think there is a bit of Sydney-centricity …, whether it’s myopia or something about the potential of this area, because a lot of it [investment] has gone to those other places, where the state government is paying to get it into their state capital and that’s our competition.

GH It’s really tough competition.

BUR 4 It is, it is.

GH It really makes us lift our game, I guess, when you’re up against that kind of competition.

BUR 4 It does.

GH We’re sort of punching, what is it? Punching …

BUR 4 Above our weight.

GH Above our weight.

BUR 4 But I guess there’s only …


\(^{45}\) Editors’ note: Michael Rueben Egan served as Treasurer of New South Wales between 1995 and 2005.
GH  So much we can do.
BUR 4  Yeah and then if you’re in the ring with Mohammed Ali …
GH  Yes.
BUR 4  Brisbane and the Gold Coast aren’t dissimilar to here in demographic make-up; a lot of similarities in regions but [not] dollars, even for the really respectable, reliable companies; Qantas went to Brisbane and we fought hard to get them here, but I mean they didn’t even stay in Sydney and there were incentives. So the stakes are high, there is a lot of brinkmanship in those games; sometime you don’t know if you’re dealing with really reputable boards.
GH  And anyway there must be a point where it is irresponsible, where it’s fair enough to play the game but where the stakes get too high, as I said, it becomes unsustainable.
BUR 4  You’ve got to walk away from the table. You know the NSW government, to give them their due, when it comes to those sorts of negotiations that are between the government and the company, if the government wants to walk away from the table then ultimately you know they’ve made the call. I just wonder whether they think about it maybe in the terms I’ve described, if they think of Newcastle as that satellite hub and therefore, because they don’t have to pay to get anything into Sydney, it just comes to Sydney.
GH  But there’s other costs associated with Sydney, land prices and the movement costs.
BUR 4  Exactly, but then the other problem that the NSW Government has is the Hunter is just one region in NSW and when we got a Hunter Advantage Fund, Illawarra wanted an Illawarra Advantage Fund so they’ve also got an equity issue as well.
GH  And then of course the rest of NSW - it’s interesting how it’s divided up. The rest of NSW says that NSW means ‘Newcastle Sydney Wollongong’ and they see themselves as the third tier, most of the regions in NSW.
BUR 4  It’s tough, it’s tough for us, and it must be. I mean if you look at how the boards are funded, our board, if I want to do any project or the marketing, or the Advantage Strategy I need to go out and get a partner, a funding partner externally and then I go to government and they match. Well I find that hard, but here we’ve got the Port Corporation giving us this much, the Newcastle Airport and the councils give us this much and you are in a big economy. Some of those tiny towns, how they ever get the dollars to do anything when they probably need more than anybody, those little regions. So I guess that’s a lot of the complexities that the State Government has to grapple with. (Interview #19)

This interaction between interviewer and interviewee is an instance of Making Sense emerging, with each of us reinforcing current understandings of state and national context in which regional policy and practice understandings are created. The passage leads us to the next section in which properties and their instances of creating meaning are described in greater detail. This code is called Regional Reflexive Practices.

3.5.2.5. Regional Reflexive Practices

In the Regional Reflexive Practices code we take the category of Making Sense a step further by examining those sections of the interviews that show the machinery of regional activists creating understandings out of their experience. A clash of beliefs, ideas, practices, or policy assumptions activates this machinery and we can watch the cogs moving to produce new, clearer and more determined meanings. This machinery can be seen operating at many levels, at a range of different places in organisations and institutions within and outside the region. A first property of this code is the more general ‘process of constructing meaning’, followed by the more focused property of ‘constructing the region’ and concluding with properties that are reflections on the process itself, that I have labelled ‘changing mindsets’ and ‘learning from change’.

In the first example the youth services coordinator proposes the newly enlisted force of the ‘Nanas of Newcastle’ to support her different way of working with young people. She identifies what she has to accomplish and the risks she faces to move beyond the model of providing a service to young people
through a youth-centred place to a model of involving them in developing pathways for their future and seeking to involve their ‘Nanas’ who are seen as powerful allies for such a model, a contrarian way of seeing people who are typically thought of as kindly, elderly, but essentially politically naïve women in the culture of the region. The ‘Nanas of Newcastle’ are described as equal stakeholders in the youth project and this construction is central to the way the officer works.

The same youth worker is also confronted by the current day protocols of risk management imposed by insurers and accepted by her organisation as reasonable. She sees such practices as undermining her essential purpose of giving young people the opportunity to develop their own enterprises, so she is resigned to working harder to deal with this limiting imposition.

GH  So is this a comment about the mandatory, the clash between a regulatory approach ensuring the people act ethically or with probity, versus people’s innate or people’s ability to perceive what’s the right thing to do and do it anyway?

BUR 1 I think the balance is out of kilter. I think the balance is being driven by corporate insurance industry. It’s the whole industry, in that on the one hand they have been getting us to sign these disclaimers, but whenever we do anything involving another organisation we have to get their certificate of currency to ten million dollars made in Newcastle City Council’s interest and noting that Newcastle City Council insurers are not responsible for public liability for that activity. Now really, council insurers should be responsible for public liability insurance for that activity and it’s quite onerous to ask someone who maybe just started out doing their own little home business, small business, cultural activity and when you are talking about youth arts, you are talking about emerging arts professionals. They don’t have that ability to be able to pay for those kinds of things. They don’t have the track record that they can say to an insurance company, “I’ve got a demonstrated ability to manage risk”, but they have to pay. It means that as a council officer I’ve always got to think, other sections don’t even bother thinking about this. I have to think, OK it’s going to cost me half a week to get the paperwork up to spec for this young person working in a small business, working at the youth venue. Alternatively I can use this big contractor from Sydney who is one of council’s preferred suppliers and, not employing any young people, hopefully will deliver the planned outcomes but not from a community development point of view with the young person having some work with council. He’s the only one who’s really missing out there; other young people are still getting the same service. (Interview #2)

In the next two excerpts an anti-pollution campaigner seeks to understand why decision makers won’t act on what she sees as a reasonable result. In the first passage she sees that the state government is reluctant to require a lead smelter to clean up its pollution because it would be economically disastrous and so she believes that there is a powerful framework already set in place that her group of supporters has to contend with.

ENV 1 Like you’ve brought up earlier with other issues, I think in these issues the scene is set somewhere in state government and I believe the scene that was set for Boolaroo is that: OK there’s a smelter in the town that economically this state can’t do without. It brings in so many millions of dollars worth of exports every year, creates employment. The area cannot do without it. (BHP is going to fold soon blah, blah, blah.) It has got unacceptable levels of toxicity, we can never get rid of them all but what we’ll do is help the community live with the situation. So if we teach them what they called ‘behavioural guidelines’ and we slowly, within economical reasonable terms for Pasminco, get them [Pasminco] to start decreasing emissions - then that’s all right. So that’s what I think. The scene was set before we started and then we had to sort of push and shove in between … (Interview #4)

In the following instance of the process of constructing meaning the activist is puzzled to understand why a planner is holding out against the advice of a local government environmental advisory council on what development to allow on a piece of land that is located in an environmentally sensitive area. She postulates an unseen external influence that has such power to overwhelm the support by the council for an innovative environmental approach to be taken.

ENV 1 But why is that hard? I couldn’t understand why that was hard. In my frustration with the whole thing I went back and thought about the position of this planner. Like he obviously had pressures from outside but why didn’t he feel supported from within the council? He’s just a little player in the whole thing. Obviously he must have been frustrated to be yelling at us like that in the meetings, and feeling obliged to stick up for the developer. Why did he not feel supported in the council? Like I said, it shouldn’t go
ahead at all, but if it was going to go ahead at least say, “Let’s make this something for the council to showcase”, because I believed that could have been the future for Newcastle - to make itself a green example. It’s already got a bit of a green name. We could really start pushing that further, just like that BHP land. What was it called now?

GH Steel River Eco Industrial Park.

ENV 1 It was never going to work. It was so slow on the uptake and if one thing came out of the Pathways to Sustainability conference, everyone that had any knowledge about anything said, “These eco industrial parks don’t work. That’s not the way to go.” But the way we could have gone, I believe, is pushing forward our sustainable development. Not in a lower key sort of way but in a big way because nobody else seems to be doing that. Newcastle could have been the pioneer. We could have put a development out there as an example to all and made it work, because it can work. I don’t see why it can’t. It’s just this mindset within a council where nobody’s really comfortable enough to support it fully. I don’t think there are any grounds for their fears. Back to the example of the Tank Paddock\(^\text{46}\), for instance, putting aside that it really shouldn’t be developed at all, but it could have been a prestige area, something that people would have fought to get into. It wouldn’t have been a hard thing to sell. I’m sure you would have found that, and then that would have grown, and it could have really been the beginning of something good. (Interview #4)

The conservation activist sees the redevelopment of an old industrial site as an opportunity for restoring environmental values as part of the redevelopment plan, while the industrialist see it as an opportunity to realise some economic return on land that is no longer of any use to them. Hence there is a struggle over standards of clean up, and use of the site is partly determined by the level of contamination that can be tolerated by a particular use.

GH The history of this place shows that in those groups like the resident action groups, there will be a broad coalition that will come together and will start raising questions.

ENV 2 Oh they will ultimately. When you consider the Tomago sand mining site, it’s wrong in principle. We should be drawing a line and saying, “Look, we are not going to be destroying any further ecology - let’s deal with what we’ve already destroyed”, and restore the area and make benefits out of it. We just can’t leave it as a running sore. That’s what’s happening even in Steel River. One of the problems there was the groundwater carrying pollutants running continually into the river. BHP has been able to show that there are small amounts of materials and so on. But what we were able to show was they didn’t drill enough bores to actually test to understand exactly where the hot spots were. Now there were a couple of hot spots which should have been completely cleaned up. But without going into that, the general problem is groundwater. This is an old estuary, you’ve got a major south arm and part of that south arm used to come through Steel River and go down through the BHP.

GH The BHP site.

ENV 2 This was first brought to us in an international sense with a place called Love Canal in America where they had a housing development and people became so terribly sick.

GH Someone once suggested to me that what we ought to be doing with the BHP site is mine it because there’s all this stuff to be recovered from all that fill.

ENV 2 But that is right. They remined the slag. Well that is what happened with the Steel River site and why we have the little park at Mayfield West called Stevenson Park. One of the conditions of remining was that BHP provides Stevenson Park. Will it end up like Love Canal? (Interview #16)

His principle of “not destroying any further ecology – let’s deal with what we’ve already destroyed” contrasts sharply with the attitude towards land with environmental values as a reason for “frustrating

\(^{46}\) Editors’ note: The 147 hectare parcel of land known as the Tank Paddock is located near the township of Minmi. The Green Corridor Coalition was campaigning for a continuous stretch of native vegetation between Stockton Bight and the Watagan Ranges. Residential development was sought for the Tank Paddock which sat at the narrowest point of this green corridor.
and holding up the development” espoused by the director of a land development company in the next excerpt. Rather he argues that he is providing an overriding social good through the provision of land for housing. In this passage I agree with his conclusion that sterilising “two hundred and sixteen of our lots on residential land” does have adverse “social implications”.

BUS 2 Oh they don’t ever see in their position of frustrating and holding up the development because of a clump of *Tetratheca*47, that then has a ripple effect eventually down to these sorts of social issues. In this report written by the council, by this planner, which effectively sterilises two hundred of our lots at Northlakes when we got to ‘The Policy Implications’ she says, “Social implications; there will be no adverse social implications resulting from the amendments of the DCP.”

GH Right.

BUS 2 That report sterilises two hundred and sixteen of our lots on residential land.

The heat and professional familiarity in the transcript of this exchange shows different constructions of meaning at work. I have spontaneously agreed that the decision to protect a threatened plant species does have a social consequence of reducing the estate’s housing yield. The planner should have argued that the social cost was balanced by the environmental benefit of preserving a threatened plant species. The land developer and I have different beginning points for the same construction. While I see the need to provide housing, he uses the same priority to support developing a residential subdivision on land with a high environmental value.

In the next interview fragment an executive officer of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander welfare agency justifies changing a historical service of providing transport to medical services for its clients against strong opposition. He has constructed the meaning, behind the policy that he has now changed, as addressing isolation by bringing people together through organising their transport.

GH What was behind your thinking when you said that? With the medical services patients wanting to be picked up or taken home, and you said, “Look we just can’t do that any more.” What was the thinking behind those who did that, who went and picked people up? And what’s behind your thinking in saying “No” to that practice?

COM 5 I’ve got no real doubt that back then there was a real lack of opportunity. People were very much in isolation in this town. I’ve got no doubt that the earlier people in this organisation had done that to bring people together. It was a way of harnessing the energy of people and there are some real tough situations in communities. We still do provide a clear service too and there will be transport issues. But I identify that one of the major problems for this organisation is the notion of transport - and we can’t afford it. You know I’ve been criticised and I’ve been knocked around a bit over it, but I can deal with that because I think it’s important that what we try and do is, we try and channel that money into providing programs. I’ve had people ring and abuse me for not taking them to places and I can live with that because at the end of the day they’ll manage to get there another way. For a lot of people the argument is – “Well you know, you’ve got black money there, it’s not your money, it’s black money.” And I say, “Yeah, OK, I’ve got a job to do and my job is to make sure that I do the very best thing I can with the money.” So we decided to move away from that. …

If we find that the situations warrant that extra care we will do that and we will provide the transport. We had a gentleman who came from the country and needed to get to Gosford, he had suffered a stroke but he was getting over it. So we transported the gentleman to Gosford and we just see that as something that needs to get done; [if] I felt that he was just trying to take us for a ride I would have said, “Get on the train.” (Interview #20)

While the previous passage focused on a policy that is internal to the organisation, the next passage concerns the contest over the construction of meaning between Indigenous workers located in government agencies that the welfare agency relates to in obtaining services for its clients. The clash of

47 Editors’ note: This refers to *Tetratheca juncea*, commonly known as Black-eyed Susan. It is listed as a rare and threatened Australian plant. It is a low-growing undershrub which is difficult to find when not in flower.
meaning revolves around which set of workers “represent the community” - workers in government agencies or the workers in the non-government organisation. Who therefore can legitimately speak for the Indigenous community? This is an important contest whose result gives to or takes from the agency’s legitimacy and relevance. In constructing the meaning of working for “the Department” as opposed to working in “the community” the executive officer rehearses the government workers’ argument of championing “cultural learning” within their agency and that therefore constitutes community representation – a position he rejects saying that such workers should be primarily providing a service. Such a construction sets up implications for the way in which both sets of workers, government-agency based and not-for-profit-agency based are able to work with each other.

GH Well I think a lot of people are freaked out by that too; I’m aware of that in what I’m doing. What about the official organisations like Health, and DOCS, and Police, and Housing who have Aboriginal Liaison Officers? What’s the relationship between your workers and those people? Because I often wonder about the role of those people in those government organisations.

COM 5 My argument is this and I don’t care who listens to it – “[If] you work for the Department, you work for the Department.” Don’t you go walking around saying, “I represent the community.” My attitude is that’s not the place to do that. Yes, you can provide direct connections, you can help, but it’s a career; you chose to work in there for a career.

GH It also strikes me that they are removed from community because there is just one person.

COM 5 But it works to their benefit you see. What they can do is they can perpetrate this notion of wanting to champion the thing for cultural learning and all that sort of stuff; and so what they are not doing is they are not working along the Departmental lines. They are actually somewhere in between. I don’t believe that that’s their role. I believe that their role is to be...

GH Whatever the Department...

COM 5 Whatever the Department decides for them and they provide direct service. They can provide links and they can provide all that sort of stuff. Now we’ve got a fairly healthy relationship with the Area Health Service Team except for a couple of people involved. And as far as I’m concerned that’s not your role, your role isn’t to be the ears for the community. Your role is to provide a direct link service into the Department. If you can do that then it makes the job easier. People walk around and say they don’t understand you, they don’t understand Aboriginal people. It’s not their role to understand Aboriginal people, it’s their role to provide a service and what we’ve got to do is to find a way to help them understand what excellence is; excellence isn’t that they don’t understand Aboriginal people; excellence is that they do understand their target group.

GH Is part of their role to interpret to the rest of their workers, their co-workers...

COM 5 Oh yes.

GH … like I’m thinking of the Aboriginal Liaison Officer in the police service and he is just one person for the whole of Lake Macquarie. He’s got a hell of a workload.

COM 5 Yeah, and he does a good job.

GH But it seems to me that his role is to work with or sensitisate the rest of the police force or liaise.

COM 5 Creates bridges.

GH Creating bridges yeah.

COM 5 And he does that very well. But he will tell you, “I work for the Police Department.” Whereas other people will say, “I work for … but I’m the cultural educator.” You can’t be that in my opinion, you can’t be that - you work for the Department.

GH But it seems very hard, it runs across the model you were talking about with M. P. where she’s got, I think of it as a ‘wholistic role’...
COM 5 Yes.

GH The way you describe it - that’s the word I would use. When you come to workers who work say in the Area Health Service or Community Health and they are Aboriginal nurses there must [be] an issue there because they haven’t got the flexibility that say M. has, it would seem to me. I don’t know.

COM 5 No, I don’t for any one minute remove myself from the fact that they have a very distinct job to do and they can do it very effectively. Now look, any number of people have fallen by the wayside in departments and have got issues about not being able. My point though is this; let’s say they work as a liaison officer for DOCS at Charlestown or DOCS here and their role is specifically that, but if people are trying to refashion their way of life, refashion their job say into being a cultural educator then you need to leave that job and go and get yourself a job in cultural education. Because we need somebody in that specific job because we are dealing with kids everyday in the same situation, same problem and so on and so on and yes I understand all that; people say, “I get burnt out in the Department,” but you don’t get burnt out in the Department cause you’re bloody black; you get burnt out in the Department because there is all this crap going on in community, you know. So to me the thing isn’t about being in competition; it’s about being connected and finding ways to talk and communicate because I think that for, in some ways lack of sophistication, you’re seen as somebody not understanding but it isn’t, it is just a different way of interpreting words and so on. Now I would imagine that given the opportunity, M. G. would be very active depending on what he sees as his role as. For a lot of Land Council people they see themselves as working in Land Council; they don’t see themselves as community development people. (Interview #20)

On the other hand an executive officer of another community welfare agency that assists migrants to settle in a new land comments on how she has constructed the meaning and therefore the practice she will apply in the face of wider scaled, ideologically inspired reconstruction of meaning of the term “multiculturalism”, the implications of which are central to her practice. She’d had doubts, with what she thought of as a pejorative usage of the term and welcomed the positive practice she could invest in its substitute phrase.

COM 7 There is another project that I’m particularly happy with and it’s funded by the state and it’s called ‘Productive Diversity in the Workplace’. Now I reckon, in one way or another, productive diversity might supersede multiculturalism as ‘the term’, the ‘catch-all’, because multiculturalism, apart from being long, has also tended to be bowdlerised a bit. I mean you get silly things like, “Oh, are the multiculturals here?” That sort of thing. So I think it’s no longer fashionable and has a pejorative meaning as they all do. Remember ‘ethnic’, ‘efnic’, ‘reffos’, all of that. I wouldn’t mind betting that ‘productive diversity’ has such a positive zing to it, a lot of people will say, “What does that mean?” In a way it probably expresses the underlying principle of the multicultural umbrella, because it is about using that diversity to benefit [in an] economic, cultural and social sense the rest of the world, certainly Australia. (Interview #24)

In the following fragment from the interview with a state government regional coordinator construction of meaning can be seen operating in two ways. Firstly, there is the assembly of a negative image of the traditional practice for operatives to stay within their mandated administrative responsibilities as confining themselves in their “silos”. Secondly, they are encouraged to see the resources they managed as opportunities for delivering other objectives, normally outside their charter, for government - in this case the use of National Parks for the creation of employment opportunities.

BUR 1 I think that there’s a growing, albeit very slowly, a growing understanding within some members of the community … that we’ve got to think more laterally than we have in the past. I think, through the processes of the Regional Coordination Management Group, there is the ability to be able to share ideas and that often drags people out of the silo they’re employed in to the point of understanding some of the other issues that are out there in the community and the importance of being conscious of those exercises as well. A good example of that is the Cessnock Community Renewal Strategy. In the past those types of place management approaches have been very much focused on one agenda and that’s the human service side of the equation. I think in this region we tried from day one to bring in some of the economic sort of issues and get employment back up onto the agenda because they provide one of the long-term opportunities to get people to break out of [social disadvantage]. Where we are now starting to go in Cessnock is to another level of thinking, which is about getting all of the natural resource agencies to recognise that they have a role to play in terms of social disadvantage within that community, and soon!
And therefore they need to contribute in terms of what can be done in those communities. Yes, you’ve got a massive area called ‘National Park’ out there. How can that be turned to a greater advantage for the community to provide an income stream, jobs, whatever the case may be?

We’ve also seen a situation where the EPA [Environmental Protection Authority] is becoming involved in some of the human services issues in Booragul, to say, “OK, if we drive a process within the community in terms of minimising the amount of waste of water, electricity and so on, that contributes to the spending power of the household and therefore that can add some certain advantages in terms of the household.” … So then there’s starting to be a greater thought process going in from government agencies, from communities and so on about the importance of driving these issues, but it’s a slow process. We’ve been working in silos, we’ve been thinking in silos and most messages that come across the television and media and so on are very focused on … (tape ends). It really is difficult I think for people to be able to broaden their thinking patterns to say, “Yes, there’s ten percent good in that and twenty percent good in that, yeah let’s [do it].” (Interview #6)

Moving from the property of the process of constructing meaning within one’s experience of organisations and institutions to that of constructing the region, in the next excerpts regional development activists reflect a range of approaches from using physical characteristics and creating new understandings from change, to resisting externally imposed meanings. In the first excerpt, constructing the region through identifying its economic assets is brought into play. It then follows that it is necessary to identify and nurture the mechanisms, i.e. “links”, “sister city relationship”, that make the most of those assets. This construction concludes by listing some of the perceived relationships difficulties experienced in marshaling these mechanisms.

BUR 3 I’d never actually thought of it in political terms either but, of course obviously it is. I just thought of it as a rural/urban thing and fairly natural. Now that you mention politics, of course the conservative rural influence. But they do feel neglected for whatever reason but its base is the coalmines further up the valley, tourism, wineries. Well there’s no problem getting people to the wineries and getting people to develop that. I think there’s enormous potential. Again, if you show the links between the airport and the Upper Hunter (in terms of bloodstock or other imports(exports, whether that’s people or product) and the port, we have the opportunity to really make those changes. The port is trying hard to diversify. We don’t have live sheep exports at the moment, which I was asked this week by one of the visitors. But presumably there’s potential for those links to be more directly generated in the future, not necessarily for live sheep but with the agriculture industry as a whole. The current council is very interested in re-forging or reinforcing the links with Dubbo as a kind of sister city relationship. For that very reason you tap into the hinterland and all that’s there, especially in relation to the port. I guess that’s the opportunity we’ve got although the port’s an autonomous entity running as a commercial business and it tends to say to council, when council says: “How can we help forge better links with Dubbo and help you capitalise on export opportunities?” “Oh we’re right; we can do our own thing.” So I think they tend to still see council as perhaps unnecessary to their operations. And yet it’s in our interests, if we are to think about sustainability, to help the port develop alternative exports to coal, the biggest unsustainable industry you come across. (Interview #11)

The former chair of a regional development organisation illustrates a narrative style popular with interviewees which prompted an exchange of cases and the ‘appeal to authority’ approach of highlighting the comparative economic advantage of the regions. This is shown in the following two excerpts.

BUS 3 Now a little test of that came: my boss wanted a new car for his daughter and he got a few quotes in Sydney and I said you had better get a quote or two up here and he found that it was almost fifteen hundred dollars cheaper for a car worth twenty thousand and he said, “Why is that?” And I said, “Because land values here are so much less, the overheads of the car dealer are so much less and therefore he is so much more competitive compared to anyone.” I mean you look at the value of a block of land on Parramatta Road. I mean it just tells the story; it’s a microcosm of a general principle.

GH Yeah and that competitive advantage then flowed into the conference market that I’m familiar with too, because that’s how Newcastle badged itself … I mean there were structural issues of not having the concentrated number of rooms, hotel, motel rooms for conferences but I know that after a period of time (and now it’s been rectified, you know) that problem has been sorted out, but nevertheless conferences could be mounted for about half the cost in Newcastle as down there.

BUS 3 And there’s a convenience factor too, Greg. For most conferences you need a programme for partners.
Now if you want to take people somewhere on a bus out of Sydney you’ve got an hour and a half to get to the fringes of Sydney before you move onto somewhere. In the Hunter, and you’re out somewhere in the vineyards or Port Stephens or whatever.

But look I was going to make a suggestion; there were two people it’s important that you talk with … The reason for talking to these two is that one … as head of the Department [of Regional Development] had his eye on the different regions of NSW and he used to often tell me how different it was for him to come to the Hunter and feel the optimism and feel the way organisations were working together to move the region forward. So maybe it’s a perspective. Getting the Hunter into this perspective, that would be helpful and … [the other person] of course, came to the Hunter from other regions. He came to the Hunter as general manager of HEDC and the local manager of the Department of State Development. Now he came as a professional in that role having spent time in other regions including Wagga I think. So again he will be able to put the Hunter and its characteristics in its broader perspective. (Interview #17)

A major way of constructing the region consists in critiquing external decision makers’ plans for it and defending against those decision makers’ responding attacks on the region’s leadership.

POL 1 But again you’re looking at a Sydney problem pushing out rather than saying, “Well if you want to create a society or a community in this region, what are the components? What is the best way of doing it and what should the mix be?” It hasn’t happened that way. They are trying to do something at planning but they’ve still got the problem with services and you’re seeing it reflected here in the demand for public transport where they are saying that five percent of people use the public transport. So I see at the moment the ludicrous discussion about the public transport service in Newcastle. At one stage someone will say, “Why are we debating so much here and giving attention to something that ninety-five percent of the people don’t use?” As if it was the ninety-five percent because obviously the priorities are different. It’s not about public transport, it’s about land development that the real issue is about. The debate is really about land development, not the provision of a service that ninety-five percent of people don’t use. In my mind as president of the Maritime Centre, that is going to be very much dependent on efficient available public transport and the very service that will bring people right to our door from the largest market in the country, they’re wanting to close down.

Change in boardroom thinking, and that is really where it really has to happen, it has to happen in boardrooms, because they make the commercial decisions, the investors decisions. So in doing that now there’s a much, I think, better awareness amongst younger business people of today in our region that the community here, the joint communities, have a lot to offer in term of skills and competitiveness and the factors that you are looking at in business … One of the catch cries used against the region, one of the practices used politically against the region but also by companies for decades, has been: “You have three big people in Newcastle and five views,” and they use ‘Newcastle’ in a loose fashion. They are really talking about the Hunter but Newcastle is used as a tag. So it’s nice to be careful about that. A lot of the time they are not talking about Newcastle, they are talking Newcastle and the surrounding areas that they are interested in, involved in. Now if you’re looking at that as our old “There’s too many organisations in the Hunter”, that’s another one of the old slogans. Actually the multiplicity of organisations in my mind, in my political observation, is actually a very healthy sign, it’s sign of more than the local progress association that are interested in where we are going, what we are doing, what the opportunities are. So the more the organisations are in, so far as I’m concerned, the merrier. It doesn’t worry me in the least. It’s evidence of the more people in this region who want to have a say, and they’re got particular interest about an issue, than most other areas. That’s a good sign; it’s not a bad sign. But it’s been used for decades against the region to say, “Well they can’t agree on anything.” (Interview #13)

Another major way of constructing the region is in terms of its administrative boundaries based on, but not consistent with, its geographical system. These next three passages are from the interview with a member of several regional organisations, who has an economic and historical background and yet is firmly located in the squatter ancestry of the Upper Hunter. They show her working with administrative boundaries, geographic features and settlement patterns to suggest how the region might be constructed. At the same time she couches her understanding according to the purposes of the interview and in support of her motivation of advocating on behalf of her part of it, despite the travel difficulties.

RUR 1 There’s awareness. All I was doing basically was trying to make them sit up and take notice that there was an Upper Hunter and with so many it was just threshing around in the dark. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, you know. They didn’t think it was a major part of the equation and it is. … I don’t
know where you stipulate what is the Hunter? … You have got to establish in your beginning, are you looking at the Hunter in a geological framework totally? And then there’s the flow into the Hunter. Are you taking it on political councils or are you doing it on a shire? Because every boundary is different. Do you incorporate Port Stephens? It is not the Hunter. It is the Hunter if you are looking at it in administrative terms. You’ve got to clearly define the area … you are dealing with because there could be one, the prodigal son, that destroys your argument.

GH Well I think the basis that I take is the geological system but then I think we have these human made systems that sit on top of that and they, as you say, clash with it or sometimes they work with it or sometimes they work against it and it’s the way people interpret and stick within their administrative boundaries rather than think of their geological connections outside of the administrative boundaries, I think, is a challenge for regional development.

RUR 1 You had better state that because you have got a real problem. You’ve got a problem with Port Stephens and Lake Macquarie immediately. Gloucester, Dungog, outside, you know? The dairy industry like that, the timber industry like that, does that encroach on what you’re doing? You’ve got to be very succinct in the area and the time factor and everything else.

... and I go down to all these meetings very early in the morning. I have to leave and be at the early meetings and I do it for one reason and that is to make people conscious of the Upper Hunter and I think to make the Upper Hunter part of the whole spectrum. I think that going back to all the great civilisations of the world, they have all evolved around a main river. You’ve got the Seine in France with Paris, you’ve got the Thames in England with London and you have got the Tigris and the Euphrates in India and Iraq and here we’ve got the Hunter and I think the beginning of the Hunter Valley Research Foundation was started in 1955 with the huge flood and the realisation that all the top soil from around here, from around our area ended up silting Newcastle Harbour.

[As] you know, government policy and land tax, all those things, totally and utterly govern things. I did my first work on opening up the Ninety Mile Desert in South Australia where a government gave an incentive. If you take up this land, and invest in it and you develop it, in an area that was virtually useless, and it had become a dying place (not because it lacked water, it lacked trace elements) and AMP [The Australian Mutual Provident Society] was behind that scheme. They took a million acres and it was developed. But, we are getting away from it. The other thing is going back to demography. You had in the old days, because mobility was so limited, the horse was the only means of transport. You lived in pockets. You didn’t move around as much as you do with the motorcar now. You had definite settlements which were ardently Catholic, places were ardently Protestant etcetera. Like Maitland and they, after the Irish famine, the relations there were able to bring people out from Ireland, and Maitland became a very predominantly Catholic settlement. So religion came into it. Definite government policy came into your patterns of settlement. And as you know, compositions on boards nowadays reflect very much what things get done and don’t get done. (Interview #14)

The issue of power in these constructions of the region is generally implied rather than explicit. However in the next excerpt, rare for its explicitness, the power dimension is raised as the reason that a state government minister resisted the region’s councils developing a forum to have input into the development of the region. Foundational to this construction of the region is that the state administrations are artefacts of British colonialism and that smaller geographical areas with geographic and community of interest logics are inherently more enduring.

POL 2 I mean one of the strong feelings I got from that experience of mine in the proposal for a Regional Assembly was the quite strong resistance of R. F. for example. I remember him saying this would just be another talkfest etcetera and all that kind of thing and I picked up a really strong impression there was that notion, “We’ve got to be careful about this kind of thing because it’s a threat to us,” that territorialism of state government afraid for probably quite legitimate reasons because our states don’t make a lot of sense on any logical basis. They’re just the hangovers of the colonial administration system and I think that no one ever … necessarily articulated it in a very specific way in their own heads even, and I don’t think R. F.’s … analysis has gone like this, but I think what you’re seeing there is that sign of, “Oh better be careful, there’s some threats to power here.” And I guess to some extent he is right; that was part of my motivation. (Interview #15)

The region has been constructed and reconstructed over time. Predominant constructions change from era to era. In the next passage the executive officer outlines her campaign to develop a construction of
the region based on the transportation network and hierarchy for goods and services along the east coast of Australia. This radical new construction has been generated in the conceptual space and the underutilised infrastructure space created by the closure of integrated steelmaking in the region. The selling of this construction requires the development of a communication strategy which rehearses the assets of the region in a way that supports the notion of a “satellite hub”, constructs its competing regions as having deficits, and seeks explanations for the inertia of Sydney-based decision makers.

BUR 4 Yes, exactly, and the Central Coast and probably the Illawarra. I guess what I was saying is … you can have the one hub with all the spokes going out. And the Illawarra I think is already committed to just being a spoke, although it’s somewhat of a hub because it has a port and industry as well. But they’ve been coming up for the last four years saying, “What are you doing, how are you doing it?” So they’re obviously feeling that things are happening here and I mean when you think back - I remember going to a conference in WA, I was delivering a paper and it would have been about 1998 after the announcement of [the closure] of BHP, and I remember this other guy was delivering a paper that said, “We Don’t Want to be Another Newcastle”. I mean I found it offensive to start with but just the fact that one, the perception was out there, and two, he thought that that perception was so widely held that...

GH Everyone would know what it meant when he said it.

BUR 4 that’s right, that was part of the communication currency. So I guess what I’m saying is that if you have a niche and if there’s really some thought put in along the NSW coast about the port (but obviously it’s not just about the port), it’s how you track product through to both places. It’s what sort of industry is here … Trying to get industry to relocate is really tough and our biggest challenge. When we are up against competition it’s out of Brisbane or it’s out of Adelaide or it’s Melbourne, because those states are giving a lot of money and the state government’s attitude is a bit like well: Sydney is booming so NSW is booming. And I find that a bit myopic. I mean without biting the hand that feeds me and being too critical. … I thought it would just make sense, as they’ve done in other countries, that you started to work out: how can this ‘niche in’? … You’ve got your university, you’ve got a vision and you’ve got the university with its research that is ‘niching’ into the industry that you are attracting in here, and that’s all related to the port and the resources that you’ve got and you can then start. But I think you almost need to start at that vision point of, “You need to realise that this is a satellite hub.” Because it is unique. The Hunter is unique. Like I said the place that’s going to overtake us in population in 2005 is the Gold Coast, but the Gold Coast doesn’t have the infrastructure apart from a few fun parks and a lot of tourism. It’s part of that conurbation that is Brisbane that runs down [the coast] now. Whereas we’re [earlier on in the process] so that we’ve got more opportunity to drive this if we do drive it. And that’s just my opinion. Other people might say, “No, just let market forces dictate,” I mean I don’t know. (Interview #19)

The interview then takes on the feeling of a visioning session essential to corporate strategic plans, reinforcing this construction of the region at least for the moment and underlining the ephemeral nature of this enterprise.

GH But I mean, what’s also enhancing this is its hinterland, as you say, the resources of its hinterland and it’s not just the wine and the coal...

BUR 4 Exactly.

GH Obviously you can’t overlook the coal...

BUR 4 That’s what those guys don’t have.

GH Yeah but now it’s the horse industry and the tourism industry; so there are other things as well as the coal.

BUR 4 That’s right, and the airport.

GH The airport’s part of the transport infrastructure like the port and you’ve obviously got the road/rail system. Obviously the place is very well set up...

BUR 4 It is.
GH for dispersing goods and services but it’s also generating [products], and that’s been the history because of its coal and steel, it’s generating its own or it’s originating its own product …

BUR 4 Exactly.

GH and diversifying that.

BUR 4 But I guess that for instance Newcastle Airport [is] a prime example. Newcastle Airport, I’ve worked with them and we’ve done some research on moving air cargo out of Sydney up to here and we had all the national air freight operators and they said, “Fabulous idea, Sydney Airport is a nightmare, curfews. We would love to have that done.” But that is going to take will from state and federal government as well as the operators.

GH I suppose you’re going to have Macquarie Bank resisting it now because that would be a revenue stream for them I assume, as the owner of Mascot.

BUR 4 Yeah, yeah there’d be all sorts of things come into play but then if you had Howard or Carr put their imprimatur to it and sometimes that’s just … Again it’s perceptions, it’s just a line in the media that can, you know, that can effect financial markets, affect perceptions and then suddenly … I mean are they afraid that everybody will stampede out of Sydney and come up here? I guess I’m going a bit down that path there, that’s my vision. (Interview #19)

Not only does the mainstream economic development strategy of the region seek to reconstruct the region to fit changed economic circumstances, minor sectors such as cultural development reconstruct the region to best position their development strategy. I’ll finish this section with a long and impassioned excerpt from a youth cultural development activist who begins by caricaturising the local media’s industrial construction of the region and then continues with the ‘perception is reality’ line of argument having economic consequences based on Newcastle’s cultural assets.

COM 3 “New Steelworks Promises Three Thousand …” and nothing ever happens, you know. But in the meantime in the background there’s a group of people like us plodding away trying to actually create things … that do contribute economic growth. The festivals and projects that we do really do create economic growth; I think more importantly, well equally importantly, they contribute in terms of changing the perception of Newcastle. The perception that I believe that we have created: Newcastle is a dynamic, vibrant and beautiful place that several thousand people get every year (and most of them are journalists, you know, or are actively engaged in the media so they go away and talk about it and write about it and I think it really helps), this idea that Newcastle should promote the assets that it’s got rather than wish it was somewhere else. I always get infuriated. I think there is a real failure to appreciate the benefits of what’s there and sell them properly. And I think that’s something we have always tried to do by example with what we’ve done. … I’m not sure at what level you’re asking us to have engaged in that. As well as an organisation that’s prepared to or perhaps as a groups of individuals who have strong views …

GH It’s OK, I mean whether it’s people as individuals or whether there was corporate – I shouldn’t say corporate, collective manifestations of ESD practice, because I think the understanding then evolves either if there are just a few individuals, the ones who, as you say, had an environmental background and therefore you consciously brought that into the way you worked, and then I guess it became, as you were just illustrating an issue, as ESD - as an alternative model … to the mainstream or the traditional economic activity …

COM 3 A very strong thing that has driven me personally, and I think in the wider sense – so many of the parts of being involved in the project that are from Newcastle - is this sense of trying to demonstrate another way, and that is such a major factor. Not to stand around and whinge about it and to complain about it. I’m not the type. I don’t have the energy to waste to complain how everybody else is doing it. But, trying to go: “Look, don’t tell us that the only way you can be economically effective is to work in this particular way, is to bulldoze everything for the rampant development community.” My argument is that actually, not to mention environmentally … economically destructive because it destroys the asset that Newcastle’s got.

48 Editors’ note: John Howard was Prime Minister of Australia from 1996 to 2007.
The idea of turning it into a Gold Coast monoculture, which I see being driven in various different directions at times, or to take it back to the worst parts of its industrial heritage! I think that I’ve tried to make this point again and again. There are unique assets that Newcastle has that can be harnessed, if we are clever about harnessing rather than trying to get rid of them, to make Newcastle’s assets similar to everyone else assets.

GH Yes.

COM 3 And I think those factors that I was talking about before that actually inspired us; cost of living, artists in Sydney can’t get studios. There is nowhere for an artist to get a studio or if you are a young person and you want to, you are interested in establishing art galleries or working spaces or those sorts of projects. Newcastle is a godsend. (Interview #8)

In this section we have described the codes of Regional Motivation, Regional Beliefs, Significant Events, Alliances and Resistances, Making Sense and Regional Reflexive Practices that are constitutive of the code Sustainability. I haven’t at this point attempted to demonstrate their constitutive character. That is the task for the next chapter. However before turning to describing the diffusion mechanism of this regional experience and practice I will describe the properties of Sustainability found in the region.

3.5.3. Evolution of Sustainability in the Region

The properties and dimensions of the Sustainability code set out in Table 3.3 are extensive and rich in their application. Providing a description of their scope, their lineage and miscellany, as I do now, sets a comprehensive context for the discussion of the relationships between them that is taken up in Chapter 4.

Earlier ideas and practices that constituted the starting point of the current understandings and practices of Sustainability come from the idea of ‘conservation’, embedded in English tradition. “You had legislation, which comes down from England really, that gave you opportunity to protect individual species you know. It really came from the days of the lord of the manor stopping poaching (laughter).” (Interview #16). In the 1930s the environment movement began in New South Wales with the idea of preserving natural areas. An interviewee, who began coalmining in the 1920s, recounting how he and his colleagues fought to ‘win’ all the high-grade coal from a mine, illustrates a more particular form of conservation.

LAB 1 John Brown had ninety percent extraction at Richmond Main and Pelaw Main. Richmond Main was supposed to be a world record. The mine was so well laid out and the seam there wasn’t subject to spontaneous combustion. In the Cessnock area they worked the top seam, the Greta main seam, the main top seam. It runs up to nearly forty feet thick, not everywhere but it runs up to that. At the top, what they call ‘the tops’, the top sections, there’s pyrites and when they draw coal, when they draw pillars the roof falls in and the tops are left behind and set up internal combustion. And they seal off millions of tons at a time. Baddeley went overseas and if Baddeley had stayed in as Deputy … If the Lang Government hadn’t been defeated, Baddeley would have made sure that there was stowage. First of all it was hydraulic stowage – you pour sand into the old workings. That was changed later to pneumatic stowage – crushed stone. Joe Arthur when he was minister, instead of the Coal Board being allowed to carry on its function to make (indistinct) he set up a non-statutory [body] which the coal owners sabotaged. At Abermain, where I was on the Coal Conservation Committee, with the partial stowage (indistinct) we

49 Editors’ note: John Baddeley was Secretary for Mines in the first (June 1925 to October 1927) and second Lang governments (November 1930 to May 1932). He was Deputy Premier and Secretary for Mines in the McKell and McGirr governments from May 1941 to September 1947.

50 Editors’ note: ‘Stowage’ refers to filling mine cavities with materials such as crushed rock or sand.

51 Editors’ note: Joshua Arthur was Secretary for Mines from June 1950 to February 1953 under Premiers McGirr and Joseph Cahill.

52 Editors’ note: In May 1951 a report to the NSW state government was made by the Joint Coal Board on the increasing incidence of spontaneous combustion and the associated problems of fires and the sealing off of huge areas of productive coal seams. In 1952 a government body, the Coal Conservation Committee was appointed to
increased the extraction from thirty percent to seventy percent at two shillings a ton. The coal owners declared a veto over the coal conservatory, dictated that that had to be taken out of the annual report.

GH Oh really.

LAB 1 They sabotaged the whole thing. (Interview #1)

Moving to the early 1970s we find the Hunter Development Board advocating a “balance” between economic development, social development and environmental protection. This idea sets up a framework for the future variations, modifications and additions to the concept of Sustainability.

BUS 1 What we were trying to achieve and did, I think, do so was a balance. Balanced. We wanted the Hunter to go forward in a balanced state as to the social, economic, ecological aspects of the development of it. We didn’t want it to be just turned into - we’d seen enough of BHP and we didn’t want that over again ...

GH No, no there was a (indistinct) that balance between commerce or economic development and environmental and social welfare.

BUS 1 The big thing in our mind was balanced development. You asked me what you want to put up on the board as a sign? It would be balanced development. (Interview #3)

The important notion of “balanced development”, introduced at this time, is still a key objective today. While it is difficult to see how “balanced development” is applied, the exchange set out below reinforces the major role played by the Hunter Development Board and indicates the English roots of this planning project.

GH People were being appointed not because they represented any sectors ... but because they were seen to have some expertise ... That’s significant.

BUR 2 Significant change there and, I think, that the other thing possibly has happened is, there has been a drawing back to a focus on development that’s predominantly economic development. Whereas the HDB maintained its focus on social and environmental development as well.

GH Because that was an interesting thing in the first Hunter Regional Environmental Plan - that balance ...

BUR 2 Yes.

GH ... between environment and social and economic but, I mean, with it coming under the umbrella of a Planning Authority it very much became land use.

BUR 2 It gets pulled back to being land use.

GH Yes because the environmental stuff is then seen as a role for the EPA.

BUR 2 That’s right.

GH Which was established a little bit after that and so you had that split or fragmentation of, I think, what was a very good planning concept, that kind of balance. And I know that people probably said, “What was the Hunter Planning Authority doing talking about education, or social welfare or public transport or things like that?” But that was all part of the social dimension.

BUR 2 Colin Lee was the planner who was there. Colin was very well trained, he was well qualified, he’d studied, and he’d come from experience in England. He was well aware of the wholistic approach that was being taken to planning in England at that time. I think a lot of that impetus came from, or certainly was sustained by, his consciousness of a necessity for planning to be much more than land use planning.

(Interview #10)

formulate plans and methods to combat spontaneous combustion. The Committee proposed that stowage be carried out such that areas were airtight thus allowing the removal of pillar coal within a two year period.
A further significant property of **Sustainability** is environmental protection, brought about through long experience and campaigns to eliminate pollution as opposed to attempts to plan an ideal state of affairs for communities and a region. This way of defining **Sustainability** as the absence of negative harmful effects is well demonstrated in this extract from the interview with a resident action group member.

GH   What do you see if there was to be not a Steel River but an ESD, the region or Newcastle, develop in an ecologically sustainable way? What would that mean on the ground? How would one see that, how would one know that in your view?

COM 4 It’s something that’s hard to achieve but it’s something we should be trying to achieve and, I think, it brings its own values and its own tourist values to the community once it’s done properly. There is no need these days to have polluting industries near the community. The community won’t put up with it anymore. The community is better educated. The community realises if they have something like this, it’s going to affect their lifestyle and their life perhaps and you also have the person who needs the employment. But a lot of the pollution that we’ve had in the past could have been prevented had they bought the right equipment, the right housing for it. This is what we watch all the time. (Interview #9)

A continuum of positions and practices has sprung from this property of environmental protection. They range from industrialists taking it for granted that nothing but protecting the environment is acceptable in development nowadays, to others ascribing an unrealistic preservationist position to “radical greenies” and both sides of the debate insisting that the remediation of damaged sites is proper practice. Three extracts showing these variations follow, beginning with a general manager insisting that we are all environmentalists now and ending with a mining executive asserting best practice remediation credentials on behalf of his industry.

BUS 3 I’ve participated in many, many discussions with them about the controls for Tomago and I had a problem, I must say, with the subject of your study because it seemed to me that the title of it implied that it might be possible to have non-environmentally sustainable development. I just can’t see that being permitted. Protection of the environment is so much a part of our thinking these days. (Interview #17)

ENV 2 I don’t think the radical greenies who just want to preserve everything and decrease the population of Australia and so forth - they’re always going to be around, most likely will always be around - but they’re not the winners. (Interview #16)

BUS 4 There’s been proper development of practice and law in the last thirty years about how to restore mines, in particular open cut mines. Obviously they’re the biggest job to restore, but that science and practice has grown enormously, and industry has joined in and pretty well kept ahead of the science. If you want to know about the science of rehabilitating land don’t go to the government. Go to the industry because industry knows more about it, because it’s had to do it. And there isn’t any argument about that. There is argument about the detail but there isn’t argument about the principle and some of the systems by which they did that, in terms of regulation and development of plans and so forth, [which] have got very sophisticated. So there are a lot of good things happening there and Australia, fortunately, now has recognised what it has done to river flows and the salination problem, which is probably the biggest problem. The biggest environmental problem we have in Australia is land salinity. (Interview #18)

However the conspicuous and wide ranging debate over the definitions and ideal practices of **Sustainability** is the most striking property. The mining executive sets up a Judeo-Christian concept of “stewardship” contrasting it with one of an unrealistic separation of humankind from his/her dependency on nature to explain his understanding.

BUS 4 Well, obviously all resources have to be managed and I like to think of the earth and the part we live in as a garden. Now there’s two basic approaches. You can take the radical green approach that’s all well documented and you can reject the place of humankind as something unique. That is to say people and the human race are just part of the ecology and so they have to have a position in the ecology that balanced with all the others and there is nothing particularly unique about humankind. It’s just another kind of animal of which there are many. And that’s the radical green point of view, and that leads to ideas of zero population growth and lower energy usage, [total] and per capita and all those kinds of things. It also leads to, at the other end, to the preservation of large areas of wilderness, so that you leave it to nature and mankind doesn’t interfere with it. A tree and a man have equal rights. Now that’s professed; there is plenty of that that’s professed.
On the other hand, you can have that God created the world and put man in the position where he’s got a stewardship over all creation and should look after it and so it’s more of a garden. That’s the view I like to adopt. Now you can be a bad gardener and just dig holes in it to grab what you need for the immediate cause and leave a trail of destruction behind you; well, that’s not proper stewardship. So you’ve got a duty and obligation, a moral duty to garden well and part of that’s making it sustainable and leaving some of it for future generations, so you’ve got generational equity. And you’ve got to produce and make it stable and not have the ecology or environment deteriorate into desert. There are deserts that are due to the destruction of forests and the like around; the cedars of Lebanon and the forests of northern Africa. There are plenty of places to think about. … There’s eroded land in Australia where it’s been over-grazed or over-cropped or deforested or whatever. So we’ve got bits of destruction everywhere. We have to bring in proper laws and agreements in the community so that we control that and [so] that it’s just not open slather for everybody. (Interview #18)

Other interviewees rehearsed definitions and reflected on the factors that determine one approach over another. In the next passage, a former chemical engineer urges discussion about the many definitions and implications for acting on them.

GH How do you operationalise the concept of sustainability? Because as I said we have talked about it in a number of different ways. There are people who’ve got an understanding of sustainability that means no development and other people who have got an [understanding] of sustainability that means that you do the best you can to minimise the adverse environmental or social impact of this development. I’m wondering if that’s your definition of sustainability because, I mean, some people would say that a definition of ESD is that you do this whole claw back thing and lock things up and preserve nature’s systems whether it’s sea, or forests or rivers or whatever. But, then there are people who say,”Look you still need to develop stuff, we still need an economy, we still need jobs.” … That’s social responsibility, which is part of ESD.

COM 2 Yes, yes I think it is. I think there are so many definitions of sustainability. That’s why I think it’s important for these things to be discussed, people become more and more aware of. I guess on one hand you could say, we should stop mining a lot of the coal in the Hunter Valley because that is environmentally sustainable. It’s a way of reducing the effects of greenhouse gases. But then one has to say, “OK, what are the effects of this and how do we go about assessing the social impacts and, I guess, the other impacts there?” (Interview #7)

The mining executive, while recognising the legitimacy of some definitions of sustainability, nevertheless argues the crucial requirement to release carbon into the atmosphere as the necessary mechanism to ensure ongoing life on earth.

BUS 4 There is a wide range of opinion about whether you should employ the ‘precautionary principle’… It’s a great tool because you’ve only got to use your imagination to apply it. So there is an enormous debate. Now it’s not much of a debate because now it’s about greenhouse gases. They want to decarbonise the atmosphere and I’ve got a simple argument against that because if you decarbonise the atmosphere everyone will be dead because the only source of material to build plant life is carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. Plant life can’t get, physiologically or biologically, can’t get carbon to build its own self except from carbon dioxide in the air, so if you decarbonise the atmosphere, plants don’t grow. If plants can’t grow nothing else does (laughter) anything that moves anyhow. So you need carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. But there’s still this great greenhouse debate going on, whether we should limit it, and whether we should cost ourselves the earth to do that. (Interview #18)

An environmental activist realised the essential power relations inherent in what practical decisions are made for the sustainable development of a particular piece of land when a council planning officer insisted on the preparation of development guidelines for an environmentally sensitive site.

ENV 1 I think your question on people’s understanding about ecologically sustainable development is interesting. It has always been a place where different groups have completely different definitions to work from. A good example was when I was on the Newcastle Council Environment Committee for a while. We were bogged down with the Tank Paddock issue which was at the time a greenfield housing development site. It was early in the planning stages. The Tank Paddock issue has got a life on its own in another aspect now. The council was wanting it to go forward as an ecologically sustainable development. One person on this environmental consultative committee reviewing it as a development said, “To start with it doesn’t meet the first criteria for sustainability because the first criterion is: are there other places where you can
develop that are not greenfield sites?” And the answer is: “Yes.” So why do we need to go any further? Clearly most of us agreed; it should stop being considered right there. However because the council had a much narrower view of sustainability, we were forced to go forward with the concept whether we liked it or not. The council planning officer’s concept of being more sustainable was to have larger blocks so that people would keep more trees and also to have different gutters. They’re called swale gutters or something like that. I said, “What’s to stop people covering their bigger block with cement, putting in two big sheds?” Just because you give them a bigger block doesn’t mean that they are going to keep the trees on the block. We just continued to waste time talking because we came to the table with such different perspectives of sustainable. It was so frustrating and I ended up pulling out, it was just going nowhere. It really was going nowhere. What’s the point in arguing details like that, when it was the whole thing that shouldn’t be going ahead?

GH So do you think that some planners have that same mentality of trying to make it happen and just take the line of least resistance?

ENV 1 I really felt sorry ... What he kept saying to us was, “The poor developer, this is just costing him.” Anyway we managed to find out that behind the developer was Rio Tinto. Ultimately the company who was looking after the person was ultimately owned by Rio Tinto. I said to him, “I don’t think they’re going broke tomorrow. I think that we can do this. We believe that it shouldn’t be developed at all, but if it is going to be developed let’s make it a shining example to all councils.” And he was just so irritated. For the first time ever in a meeting I lost my temper with him and I said, (because he blew up somebody else, which I just wasn’t prepared to cop) and I said, “Listen you, we have had enough of this. We’re here putting in all these hours and all you do is talk about the developer.” (Interview #4)

In so far as a working definition went, activists from across the range of regional development perspectives agreed that a “wholistic system”, which is “evolving”, is a crucial property of Sustainability. A number of quotes provide a sense of the richness and complexity of these essential elements of this definition. First we begin with a standard definition repeated by the research engineer, followed by essentially the same definition presented in a more reflective and explanatory manner.

COM 2 One of the things I did before I came, I just copied down … the definition for sustainability which the Institute [of Engineers] publishes as its role. The definition is, “The ability to maintain a high quality of life for all people both now and in the future while ensuring maintenance of the ecological processes on which life depends and the continued availability of the natural resources needed.” So, in a sense, they have tried to develop some sort of a definition if you like, and along with that then there is a series of guidelines, policies, I guess, which engineers are … advised to take into account when doing new developments. (Interview #7)

BUR 2 Well I suppose it’s essentially a concept of … I think the words say it all. Ecologically - which to me means a wholistic system, a whole lot of different systems working in an interlocking way, but more or less working in some sort of harmony and balance. So it’s involving all the systems. Sustainable - which means that they can continue over a long period of time which, of course, is what worries me about the economic rationalism approach and the downsizing mentality and all that sort of thing because that will make a profit only over a very short time and over a long time horizon there needs to be something else. And development - in a sense that, I suppose in some loose sense, people think and say ‘things are better today than they were yesterday’. I hesitate over the term ‘development’, as over ‘progress’, because many times we are simply shifting our problems. But ‘development’ in the sense that you find that you are ending up with more at the end of the day than you would otherwise have had. An evolving concept there. I think that, probably, the evolution has occurred in those three areas at quite different disparate rates. Development, such as we were talking about, was first of all seen as economic development. But even then, within organisations like the Hunter Economic Development Corporation and with organisations like the IDC whose primary brief is strictly economic development, there has been an awareness that development has to be a much wider concept than that. Certainly the Hunter Development Board always had this very strong concept that it had to be the entire package, all of the things that go to say, “This is a good region to live in.” So it was the social, it was the physical environment; the social environment as well as the economic environment and the jobs environment. Sustainability - I think this is something where, again, there’s been some relearning. (Interview #10)

The regional planning professional provides a regional context for this property by positing zero sum game principles and applying the wholistic evolving system to the overseas consequences of exporting of coal from the region.
And it had a definition of sustainability in it which I have used as my basis ever since. It’s a very simple one, it’s just three dot points and it says that “any resources that are used should be replaced or they shouldn’t be used at a greater rate than they can be replaced or if you can’t replace them you’re got to replace them with an alternative”. So that’s really what’s driving me, the Whitelegg definition of sustainability. So that when we are looking at the region, we are saying, we should first of all be saying how many people can this region support in that context, in other words if we have five hundred thousand people here what resources are they going to use up and can the region replace them either in themselves or in an equivalent way. Now no one is doing that. In particular in this region we have this horrible issue of the coal. We are digging the coal out of the ground, bringing it back up again and sending the coal out. That is in a sense removing it, it’s just transferring a sustainable problem from here to another region in the world and should we be saying, we are aiding and abetting sustainability problems in other parts of the world by making it easy for them and cheap for them to burn coal or should we be saying, is that what coal was for - to cause such massive pollution in the environment or was there some other reason why coal is there? I’m not sure but I’m not quite sure that I’m terribly comfortable with the fact that we just dig it out of the ground and give it to someone pretty cheaply and after that it causes massive environmental problems. So we as a region should be asking that question. (Interview #21)

The manager of a migrant support service broadly accepts this property of Sustainability and defends the part of the system that she has a working relationship with, migration growth. In so doing she hints at the attacks on her clients as the marshalling of power by others who use sustainability criteria for their own purposes. In other words definitions of sustainability contain aspects added in through self-interest.

Because it’s something that affects everybody; it affects everybody. So it can’t, we can’t, be impervious to it; we can’t operate apart from an ecologically sustainable context. I think [to do] that is going to be foolhardy. We represent the consumers, the users, and the spoilers, as much as anybody else. I think it’s always interesting … to think of some of the arguments about what’s brought Australia to the low point that some of our ecology has got to at this stage. There has been a very facile attempt from time to time to blame it on greater population growth particularly with migration; and the counter view which I’m happier with, is probably the rather imperfect farming practices and the like right from the very early stage of development. (Interview #24)

The general manager of a local council develops the case further by suggesting that creating a growing demand for sustainable goods and services can create a new, sustainability-based economy.

You’ve got to have a strong economic base if, in fact, you are going to be conscious of the environment because that costs money. So we really need to have a mentality where you are not only preserving the environment but you’re also driving jobs growth, economic growth within the area and also having a third mentality of really looking after the people who do need support from the community. The triple bottom line unfortunately doesn’t rank highly enough in the mindsets of the majority of people. You’re either green or you’re red and [either way] don’t seem to be able to breach the broad sort of issues within a regional context and say we’ve not only got to have a good clean environment but we’ve also got to have jobs, we’ve also got to look after and protect our fellow citizens that don’t have the ability to be able to look after themselves. Now if we can get that balance right then we really have a strong region and that is what regional growth is all about. (Interview #6)

The regional planner on the other hand, sees that building a sustainable region or “regional ecology” is unachievable under the current culture and practices of property ownership rights. He argues that these
rights have to be withdrawn so as to allow the inherent environmental values of land to be the primary criteria for development.

BUS 5 Now I don’t know the answer to this one but I do think it’s crucial to this whole process that there has to be a change in what the expectation that people can do with their land and it has to be, the over riding concern must be sustainable regional ecology if I can use that term. That comes first. There will be a transition period where people will get their fingers burnt because they have had a different view on it and the government will have to manage that within the short term, but overall we should be saying this is what we want for the region and we are backing the Plan First\(^\text{53}\) process, really that is what should be happening there, take away all land ownership maps and things, don’t worry about who owns the land and just say what should we be doing in this region; when you’ve worked that out, then come back into the land ownership and say, “Well OK there will be disadvantage apply in this case and we’re going to process it so that it can be handled in the short term.”

GH Almost do a ‘Design with Nature’ thing, Ian McHarg approach ...

BUS 5 Yes.

GH where you look at all the environmental values and overlay them and then say, “OK which pieces of land have the least impact on the land with environmental values that you value highly” and then you say, “OK how does that then line up with all your man-made systems?”

BUS 5 That’s right. (Interview #21)

The anti-pollution activist and her group believes that if development decisions were determined by their health-enhancing effects on humans and communities, then sustainability would be achieved as well, using the anthropocentric lens for the contrarian purpose of protecting the environment.

ENV 1 NO-LEAD clearly articulated a vision for the aims of the group. Namely, to see healthy children playing and swimming in a healthy environment. This was anthropocentric but we believe that when humans are able to thrive in an environment, then generally the flora and fauna in that environment are healthy also. To threaten part of that environment threatens all. For Pasminco to be putting in 2.2 tonnes of lead, 2.2 tonnes of zinc, cadmium, arsenic into a non-tidal lake annually was really not sustainable and it’s just not acceptable to the health of all life connected to that environment.

GH Human-centric. Anthropocentric

ENV 1 Yeah anthropocentric of course. We believe you can’t be healthy if your environment isn’t healthy as well. (Interview #4)

Apart from the economic and environmental aspects of Sustainability, the recently emerged social aspect features implicitly and explicitly in a variety of expositions. It is the third leg in the triple bottom line which is advocated by a government employed regional coordinator who sees that the region has as yet been unable to implement this Sustainability property. See quote from BUR 1 on previous page.

From her experience in a poor region of a developing country, the youth coordinator describes her determination to implement the triple bottom line and how specialists further up the funding line of command challenged her “everything’s connected” view.

COM 1 What I learnt from him was a really integrated grassroots approach that everything’s connected or interconnected. You don’t just have a youth venue that sits in isolation. The youth venue has to have a benefit for the rest of the community. It can’t just be - and its quite interesting when I write that into documents and things – before it gets up to go into a grant application for something. That side of it generally gets edited out. They generally say they just want to see the objective as it relates to council’s policy on youth and they don’t want the other social indicators or the other information. (Interview #2)

\(^{53}\) Editors’ note: ‘Plan First’ was a planning system review process conducted by the NSW government in 2001.
She illustrates the social benefits of using the triple bottom line approach for a group of marginalised Aboriginal young people and describes how the relationship she develops with people and agencies outside her organisation is an enactment of this approach.

COM 1 There’s a really good team that does a lot of stormwater management. … And they actually do a whole lot of environmental education programmes and they are really innovative projects and I work with them to try and integrate public art into that. I’m working with the Bathers Way at the moment … In all the documents, the ones that were here before I came and the ones that have come after, there has been a consistent identified need for culturally appropriate activities for Aboriginal young people. That’s every time. Like, if you do a needs analysis that’s objective, that’s what comes up every single time. Come up with this public art project (which I’m not really calling a public art project because it has to go through this really formal process which it probably won’t get through), to have an artist-in-residence based at the Youth Venue and the Art Gallery. The artist-in-residence will be Aboriginal, will come from a high profile Aboriginal arts organisation, funded by the Australia Council, Ministry for the Arts and the Foundation for Young Australians, and I work with young people from the Aboriginal students from Francis Greenway High at Beresfield, Newcastle High and Waratah Technology High …

And we also know that when we talk to these kids, they say, “We don’t go to the beach because when we go to the beach, people really hassle us and think that we are trying to steal their stuff, that we trying to take their towels and we don’t have board shorts and they look at us funny when we go down there in our footy shorts.” So the beaches aren’t really public spaces for Aboriginal kids’ use. So this project is to get this Aboriginal artist to work with those schools over probably a whole school term. They’ll have an excursion along the Bathers Way with Aboriginal elders telling them stories about how it was when they were growing up, about dreamtime stories, about hunting and gathering different foodstuffs along that Way. With the landscape architect they’ll choose a site. They’ll develop an art work for that site and then there’ll be two dances developed, one a girls’ dance and one a boys’ dance that are site specific. Then they’ll come back and install the art and have a big launch celebration day. The idea is that these young Aboriginal people are giving a beautiful gift of art to the city …

GH So is that example the working out of your understanding of ESD?

COM 1 I think so, like to me it’s social justice, but [it’s] one thing I really learnt from the Earth Summit. (Interview #2)

Meanwhile the general manager of the same local government organisation advocates the addition of “governance” to the triple bottom line as she seeks to change the organisation’s silo culture, which throws up the very barriers that entangle the youth coordinator.

BUR 3 I think the council is still pushing the sustainability issues quite strongly and what we are trying to do as an organisation is to have a framework which is a sustainability framework so that we get some sort of logic into where everything fits in the frame. We are trying to deal with this complexity. I call it the quadruple bottom line framework because the fourth line is governance. To me, I think especially with all the corporate collapses, it’s really important to have that ethical line. It’s the way we do things, that we don’t have lots of secret meetings. [But still] I get criticised for lack of transparency and probity. So with that environmental, social, economic, governance, we classify our documents, all our documents, into those four areas. Now there is overlap and it’s only a tool, but it’s a tool I think that if we start to present our management plan, and this will happen next year rather than this year, and we see all our strategic documents in that context as we work down to the implementation level, then staff in the organisation will know that sustainability is something that we are all involved in. (Interview #11)

The state government regional coordinator sums up the Sustainability property of triple bottom line well by pointing out the “opportunistic” character of ecologically sustainable development that emphasised the economic and environmental compromise but neglected the social aspect of a sufficient definition. He argues because of this unbalanced use of the term ESD, it is unsatisfactory as a working definition.

GH I’d like to take this opportunity then to ask about your objectives or how you understand ecologically sustainable development, but I’m wondering [if] you might see that as different from the triple bottom line, I’m just wondering if you could comment on that? Is there any difference between ESD or Ecologically Sustainable Development and the triple bottom line?

BUR 1 I think there’s a huge difference. To my understanding, Ecological Sustainable Development is about a
very environmental push.

GH Right

BUR 1 In other words we will not take jobs that really do have any sort of impact on the environment. That’s it.

GH So it kind of means that the environment, it’s maintaining a pristine standard of the environment if you like, it’s a bit like ...

BUR 1 I think it’s been an opportunistic sort of phrase that has been grabbed by the conservation community as their catch cry. And I don’t think it was ever intended that way. What I think was the original intention of the terminology was more aligned to two of the three bottom lines. That is, economic growth but making sure that it is not doing irreparable damage to the environment and that’s the way it was originally intended.

GH So you are saying that it’s missing out on the social?

BUR 1 No. I think it’s even gone further than that and it’s now the catch cry and being driven by one section of the community. It is not in any way sympathetic towards the economic drivers and it’s not in any way, couldn’t give a damn about, the social side of the equation either and I think that’s a mistake.

GH So your working definition then would be the triple bottom line and you said that you haven’t seen any fair dinkum example of it but from what you’ve said so far it’s a balance between the three dimensions.

BUR 1 Yeah, that’s the way we need to, as leaders within the regions, to be thinking all the time. What effect is this going to have on the economy, what effect is it going to have on the environment, what effect is it going to have on the community in terms of being a social driver or being socially conscious? (Interview #6)

The very consideration of implementing Sustainability raised questions about the process and consequences of implementation/non-implementation. The research engineer posed the terms of this conundrum when he debated with himself the consequences of installing sustainable energy technologies, against those of the current power generation technologies of coal-fired power stations.

COM 2 I suppose just to take up on another point, I feel very strongly about the strong link between what we might see, say an engineering feasibility or technology linking with social change. I feel that … politicians don’t … put very much emphasis on many of the social issues. For example, if you look at the area of environmental responsibility, in our areas we have a lot of issues that do cause us some environmental problems, and I think in many cases there are solutions, engineering or technical solutions to those problems. But when you actually start to look at the cost of doing some of those things … renewable energy is a good example; we’ve got the wind generator over on Kooragang Island for example. A lot of people see that as a solution to the whole energy problem, but in actual fact when you look at that situation the cost of generating power from wind generators is significantly more than it is, say, through the coal-fired power stations and so, even if you look at some of the newer technologies like solar systems using photovoltaics and other sort of alternatives to generate power that way, it may reduce the environmental concern about greenhouse gases. But it may cost say three or four times or even five times the cost of generating power from coal-fired power stations. But, at the same time, we have a social issue in Newcastle in that Newcastle is the largest exporter, the world’s largest exporter of coal for example, and so a lot of our jobs and our infrastructure here in the Hunter Valley hinges very much on the export of coal. So, if all of a sudden we say “Look we are going to be environmentally responsible, we are going to start to reduce the amount of coal we sell because we know that it produces greenhouse gases which will ultimately form long term effects.” (Interview #7)

On the other hand, a government regional development agency resolved the dilemma of implementing Sustainability by leaving decisions about environmental impacts to their colleague agencies that have the expertise and responsibility to consider environmental impacts.

BUR 4 Our job is to promote our market and sell the region and to service any interest that comes. We, I guess, have full confidence in the process, the regulatory process, at a local government and a state government level that those companies have to go through because NSW has some of the most stringent laws in Australia. Nor will we advocate for a company, lobby for a company, on the grounds of whether it is or it
isn’t clean, because that’s not within our capability to determine. That’s up to the experts; it’s a minefield and it’s complicated. We’ve come under fire for putting in the previous Hunter Advantage Strategy, under job generation, to work on the approvals for Tomalpin\textsuperscript{54} which we put in as an action. The community, the green lobby in Tomalpin really, challenged us on that publicly and came in here and spoke to us, and that was something we kind of had to go back to: Who are we? What’s our role? What do we do? Should that have been in there or shouldn’t it? Are we serving the whole community? And we decided that OK, our thing was economic development and we don’t shy from that, without fear or favour, but we are not going to lobby for something like Hunter Economic Zone. We will facilitate its development wherever we can. (Interview #19)

The commitment to implementation or otherwise aside, if activists decide to work for \textit{Sustainability,} the problem of how to do so generated a scattered array of possibilities as shown in Table 3.3. The ‘multi-disciplinary approach’ parallels the ‘wholistic evolving system’ character of the definition. One interviewee argued, “If you’ve got people of different disciplines coming together at least you’ve got information” (Interview #7), while another argues for fluidity between and within organisations as being best able to throw up new solutions.

POL 2 You know when you create something that’s so all-encompassing you can’t talk about it, you end up … in a way the framework undermines your ability to analyse and negotiate it and play it out.

GH Yes.

POL 2 Because people have to deal with things, with bits, you know, bits are part of the way that we deal with [things] and so I’m not advocating some kind of an anarchic system that you do away with bureaucracies that are categorised. But I guess I am advocating systems of organisations that are fluid, more fluid and flexible but that provide a way of empowering individuals and communities more than what our present systems do. I guess I’m really much more a radical reformist than a revolutionary actually. I don’t know that what I’m saying is particularly revolutionary actually. I think that lots of things that we do now that I would want to continue doing, that I think are quite reasonable things that we do. I think there are also some pretty fundamental systemic changes that we need to go through to simply rectify the things that we … (Interview #15)

A manager of an Indigenous organisation called for greater recognition of Aboriginal traditional practices as a source of more effective models for implementing \textit{Sustainability.}

COM 8 I suppose, when we talk about sustainable development of the region and Hunter, I think as we were talking earlier, I think there’s got to be greater recognition of Indigenous peoples in the Hunter. That from business, community, government sector, the need to really push and celebrate rather than waiting for something that hits the fan and then they have to deal with issues. So taking that on board, so that as a community, to celebrate the Aboriginal community within it. I think people who then get to know Indigenous people can see the richness they can offer. So that sounds like a real big motherhood type statement but I guess it’s a start. It’s a start where we need to get the people in the business area acknowledging not just up in the Upper Hunter, where they’ve got big reasons to acknowledge that for mining and stuff like that, the Wonaruah group. So it’s a little bit less down here in Newcastle in the business areas down here. (Interview #25)

She illustrates the possible contributions that Indigenous traditions could make by referring to the detrimental effects of current work practices on family life and indicates how the Indigenous community had been pushing for these considerations “for years”.

COM 8 That’s right. I think it’s quite funny and ironic that you talk about large businesses are trying to change their employee relationships and the culture within their businesses that recognise the role of parents to enable them to be good parents and give them time off and that sort of stuff…

GH Parent friendly workplace practices?

\textsuperscript{54} Editors’ note: The Tomalpin woodlands near Kurri Kurri are the largest intact bushland remaining on the Hunter Valley floor. The Hunter Economic Zone was planned for 900 hectares of this site.
Whereas Indigenous culture has been saying that for years that we need to recognise the value of our family relationships within business. There is that sort of shift and change. … It was, if you had to go away for a family death, or whatever like that, the non-Indigenous people would say, “No you can’t go.” Now they are actually saying it adds value to creating a healthy employment environment for their employees. (Interview #25)

The general manager of a local government authority articulates the challenges of the common response to how Sustainability is to be implemented. Not only has everyone in the organisation to play a part but the thinking and doing parts of the organisation need to be well connected.

I think that’s where council is very good because it’s a doing organisation by and large and nevertheless it’s trying to think strategically about its doing.

And that’s the link. It’s really difficult, I think, to get the blokes out on the road knowing why they don’t let the concrete and grit and sand wash down the drains, that they need to think about where all that’s going, get traps in and take proper precautions and that’s got to be translated from a very high level of strategic policy development which is the airy-fairy people with the pointy hats. And to be able to bring that together by getting our managers collaborating is one of the things I had a lot of struggle [with] but I think it’s developing quite nicely now through joint accountabilities of those managers. And the strategic area and the regulatory area in particular now are communicating at a better level than three or four years ago. It’s taken all that time to get them to do it. You see I think we do have to keep demonstrating by example and provided the community elects a council that would see the importance of continuing those initiatives we are on a really good track to keep that momentum going. That’s the challenge. (Interview #11)

This section has described the various properties and dimensions of Sustainability, tracing its regional precursors, the range of definitions, the sets of interests emphasising different aspects according to their position, and finally the challenges in its implementation. This description leaves us at the point where the question then arises – what regional structures are to be put in place in order to successfully develop a region according to Sustainability principles? The following excerpt poses an answer to this question from a position from within an organisation.

I think the council is still pushing the sustainability issues quite strongly and what we are trying to do as an organisation is to have a framework which is a sustainability framework so that we get some sort of logic into where everything fits in the frame. We are trying to deal with this complexity. I call it the quadruple bottom line framework because the fourth line is governance. To me I think especially with all the corporate collapses it’s really important to have that ethical line. It’s the way we do things, that we don’t have lots of secret meetings. [But still] I get criticised for lack of transparency and probity. So with that environmental, social, economic, governance, we classify our documents, all our documents into those four areas. (Interview #11)

The next passage takes the answer to the question further by suggesting a need for greater personal power and for suitable governance structures.

Really what we want and the environment is a very key part of this but only a part of it, I think what we need is integrated ways of looking at human and natural communities and I think we need models of governance that reflect that integrated way of looking at it. And so I guess I do see ESD not just about the reasonably challenging set of things in itself but about looking at the way we use resources and making sure that we leave enough resources for future generations to be certain that they’re going to be able to survive on this planet as well - those reasonably well established core parts of ESD: the precautionary principle, biodiversity, all those things which are still quite challenging within the public policy frameworks though nonetheless to me just seem like they’ve got so much logic that they will take hold. I think we need to be moving beyond that kind of model and building the notion that you don’t have sustainable frameworks until people have power over their own lives and until you’ve got systems of governance that can provide that for example. That’s where I’m a strong advocate for regional governance, the forms of governance that build on perhaps local government more than the existing kind of frameworks that we have. (Interview #15)

Governance and regional model building are the subject of Section 3.6 of this chapter. Meanwhile regional activists and institutions learn about practices and history through networks connecting local,
time specific, individual and organisational experience to regional and institutional tradition and practice. Some elements of these networks will be now illustrated through the code Regional Learning.

3.5.4. Diffusion of Regional Learning

Regional Learning code is represented as the milieu in Table 3.3 that enables concepts, beliefs and practices about the development of the region to propagate across time, institutions and space. Properties of this code, discerned from the interviews, are: personal, institutional, regional and community and they have positive or negative dimensions that become apparent in specific contexts. These are now briefly described. The first three instances are personal realisations brought about by direct involvement in local campaigns, a business operation and a regional development organisation, where the participants either applied, or extracted, an analytical concept or a principle of practice from their experience. In the first extract, a former local politician realised the applicability, for him, of the activist aphorism, “Think globally, act locally”.

POL 2  I mean it really was that time when that great cliché of “Think globally, act locally,” was one of the sayings of the time and that really gave it material form for me plus the traffic management activity and I thought, “Wow it really happens.” The other things I was involved in were much more kind of larger scale or diffuse kind of things were, you know, the contribution that you and even the little group that you’re involved in towards it, was kind of very difficult to measure anything, whereas in these cases you know well if I hadn’t done that, you hadn’t done this, if that person hadn’t done that, it probably wouldn’t have happened. It’s a very clear kind of set of things that you can contribute to. (Interview #15)

The newly appointed manager of an aluminium smelter was determined to change his organisation’s culture that had led to an extended strike before he took up the position. He subsequently joined the local chamber of commerce and later accepted places on regional development bodies. His way of working on these bodies was shaped by the success of his initial challenge.

BUS 3   After the big strike I set about trying to start the process of developing teamwork. I was convinced that people have to have a stake in what they were doing, not just a stake in having a job but also a stake in what they were spending their time at work doing. A feeling that they had ownership of the results of their efforts. So I was concerned to start the process, which takes two or three years to really start to get going, of restructuring the organisation so that it worked on a teamwork basis. Because the old days of command and control are obsolete; they don’t work. (Interview #17)

The former mine manager and commissioner for Australian Railways, and now mining consultant, was determined to avoid the fatal design element that he observed in organisations he sought to resuscitate in the past, when he was helping to draft the structure for the new regional organisation in which he was now involved.

BUS 4  Anyhow I remember arguing that the worst thing we could do is set up something that ‘couldn’t fail’ because everything I knew of that ‘couldn’t fail’ was grossly inefficient and a lot of the instrumentalities were like that especially the trading ones like the railways. (Interview #18)

Regional Learning relevant to regional development also occurs at the institutional level. In the first of the next three excerpts a senior level public servant remarks that the various strategic planning documents, feasibility studies and evaluation assessments he has read have not been able to provide a treatment that addresses all elements of what he expressed as the “triple bottom line”.

BUR 1   But the other weakness is, and I alluded to it before, is that I have not seen any document at any time that effectively looks at the triple bottom line. It is either a pro-development agenda and they do as much as they need to, to address the environmental and, to a lesser extent, social issues, or else it’s an environmental document that has a token amount of economic and social stuff in it. And we keep on claiming that we’re doing justice to all those three agendas and I say we haven’t got it right yet. (Interview #6)

The planning and development institutions have learnt to write policy documents and environmental impact statements to meet the bias of their audience, depending on whether they have an environmental, an economic or a social expertise or agenda. This senior manager, sitting in a regional coordination role
with exposure to all arenas, is able to note this bias. But I see in his statement the learning of a practice that does not meet statutory planning requirements for considerations of sustainability.

Another salient illustration of institutional learning is the local chapter of the Institute of Engineers becoming proficient in building design that takes account of earthquakes. This particular lesson came as a result of the Newcastle earthquake which occurred in December 1989 and resulted in the loss of 13 lives and extensive damage to buildings and infrastructure.

COM 2 One example is the Newcastle earthquake for example and I think you find that people like I. P. and a whole group with expertise in that area very quickly became involved both at the social and the engineering detail level, so they could go in and look, in a very short period of time, at a whole new set of regulations or guidelines that were developed to ensure that future buildings didn’t have the same limitations as some of the earlier ones. And I’m sure that’s the same in the environmental area. I think it’s another part of a process which engineers would normally go through, in terms of an alternative, albeit some of these things are forced on them anyway. (Interview #7)

Experiences concerning the longevity of regional bodies, in the face of change in governments of different political persuasions, led a seasoned regional practitioner to evolve a set of survival practices that extended the life of a recently established regional body beyond the life of the particular government in which he was involved.

POL 1 Our role has been to be the unifying influence. That’s why I’m proud that there is a level of cohesion and cooperation that you see now even in the Hunter Area Consultative Committee that wasn’t [in earlier bodies]. They [earlier bodies] were set up as an organisation with clear political brands on them so that when the Greiner Government came in, the Hunter Development Board, that was doing a good job, had to be killed because it was a Labor Government [creation]. You understand that? Similarly when the Howard government came in HURDO had husbanded its money carefully. We were parsimonious and no one ever got paid on the organisation. All of its board were volunteers and they didn’t claim any expenses. We were parsimonious to the extreme and that’s how it should be. (Interview #13)

Regional Learning spreads out beyond institutions and across the region. In this next example a regional organisation was established as soon as possible after the announcement of available funding. Such alacrity was based on the lesson of a similar organisation 30 years earlier losing its funding because the region’s communities couldn’t make a decision about its structure.

POL 1 The Australian Assistance Plan, I learnt some lessons out of that as a new member and we spent so long here locally talking about who would be members and who wouldn’t be members and all this sort of stuff that by the time we finally got around to making a decision ...

GH Yes that’s right and you had to hand your money back and that’s the lesson you learned for HURDO.

POL 1 not to get caught up in that and that’s why I was determined on this, that we were one of the first cabs off the rank with HURDO. HURDO was announced today and we were in there tonight and saying “Well, OK, this is what we want to do” and we moved very quickly. There was no way that I was going to let us miss out again. And we had the needs here and we have the quality. (Interview #13)

Regional Learning includes a stage of awareness of regional development process. This is illustrated in the next quote where a currently active regional development practitioner consciously describes the idea and process of regional lessons that need to be learnt, the preconditions for their generation and the structures for their deployment and utilisation.

BUR 5 I think there are certainly some lessons to be learnt there. I think the wine industry is another good one. I think there are a number of very interesting sectors that could be worked on. The manufacturing sector has some good leaders within it. They were very conscious of their need to reinvent their industry. In industry discussion with them they clearly identified that they want a regionally focused industry development strategy for them. They want to know how to get manufacturing back up as a global player in this region and secondly, obviously as a component of, but with sufficient concern over it as to pull it out as the second issue, are skills. They know that they’ve got to address training within their constituency; they’ve got to get the small to medium players, particularly, and the big end of town although they’re fairly limited in number now, with a much higher commitment to training. And some of
the leading medium-sized enterprises that are in that sector now set specific targets just as we’re doing here, for the number of people in their organisation in training, the number of apprentices, the number of people doing this type of training. So those are, I think, there are some really good vehicles through which some of these new concepts could be formulated and tested and then hopefully the lessons from those rolled out onto a broader scale. (Interview #22)

In this part of the chapter the selected axial codes, set out in Figure 3.2, have been described in a way that prepares for their relationship to each other, in a context or milieu of Regional Learning, and particularly their support for regional understanding for Sustainability to be developed. The properties described in the code Regional Motivation, reinforced by Significant Events builds a range of Regional Beliefs that are acted on or against through a series of Alliances and Resistances. The experiences described in this set of codes engender Making Sense meanings about the region and motivate further Regional Reflexive Practice. The range of properties and dimension described under the code of Sustainability arise from these nested beliefs, motivations and practices. Their connections will be traced in greater detail in Chapter 4. Now it is necessary to complete the description of the codes by turning to the selective codes of Ingredients for Building a Region and Regional Organising Processes.

3.6. Rallying Demand for Regional Participation

3.6.1. Selective Coding

Lonkila defines the third of his three coding stages as selective coding. Selective coding (Ingredients for Building a Region, Regional Organising Processes) takes place later on in the research process where the researcher decides on a ‘core category’, then specifies and justifies relationships between it and other categories by orienting them around it (Lonkila 1995, 44). Table 3.4 sets out this final stage of coding.

Through their experience informants have developed elements for an ideal way of making and implementing sustainable regional development in the Hunter, (as illustrated here by a member of The Greens party) that raises ways of building a regional decision making mechanism and negotiating how the relations between its institutions should operate.

POL 2 The Labor Party, and it’s interesting that they haven’t followed this one through, but I remember that they had a policy, (it was maybe in the election before the last), of offering some formal recognition to the Regional Organisation of Councils so instead of just being these voluntary comings together of local government in regions, they would get some legislative recognition in the Local Government Act, and the Labor Government had committed itself to devolving some responsibilities onto those ROCs [Regional Organisation of Councils], for example, sport and recreation stuff is one that they mentioned. Now I don’t know, I haven’t had a look at the government policies or Labor Party in that regard in this recent election but they didn’t deliver them. I mean one of the strong feelings I got from that experience of mine in the proposal for a Regional Assembly was the quite strong resistance of R. F. for example. I remember him saying this would just be another talkfest etcetera and all that kind of thing and I picked up a really strong impression there was that notion, “We’ve got to be careful about this kind of thing because it’s a threat to us,” that territorialism of state government afraid for probably quite legitimate reasons because our states don’t make a lot of sense on any logical basis. They’re just the hangovers of the colonial administration system and I think that no one ever … necessarily articulated it in a very specific way in their own heads even, and I don’t think R. F.’s … analysis has gone like this, but I think what you’re seeing there is that sign of, “Oh better be careful, there’s some threats to power here.” And I guess to some extent he is right; that was part of my motivation. (Interview #15)

Therefore in this final part of the chapter regional activists outline the arguments, hopes and aspirations for the sufficient properties for a set of regional institutions and the processes and dynamic forces necessary to operationalise them. They are described through the codes of Ingredients for Building a Region and Regional Organising Processes whose properties and dimensions are set out in Table 3.4 below.
Table 3.4 Selective Codes and Categories Derived from the Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingredients for Building a Region</td>
<td>1. Leadership</td>
<td>1 a) Strong</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Communities taking Responsibility</td>
<td>b) Intellectual</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Relevant Infrastructure</td>
<td>2 a) Regional advocacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Economic Networks</td>
<td>b) Strategic impetus</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Ethical Line</td>
<td>3 a) Resource construction and utilisation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. ‘Big Picture’ Logic</td>
<td>4 a) Cluster model</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Constructing the Region</td>
<td>7 a) Evolving model</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. ‘The Answers’ from Conflicting Needs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. A Systems Approach</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. Strong Intellectual Base</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11. Scale Relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. Strategic Framework and Vision</td>
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<td>13. Values Definition Process</td>
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<td>14. Exercise Foresight</td>
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<td>15. Strengthen Capacity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16. Identify Assets as well as Deficits</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17. Corporate Investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional Organising Principles and Processes</td>
<td>1. Representing Regional Constituencies</td>
<td>2 a) Hierarchy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Models of Governance</td>
<td>b) Informal channels</td>
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<td>c) Networked</td>
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<td>d) Proportional representation</td>
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<td>e) ‘A talk body’</td>
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<td>f) Performance standards</td>
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<td>g) Whole of government</td>
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<td></td>
<td>h) Responsibility</td>
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<td>i) Integrating including community</td>
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<td>j) Grassroots democracy</td>
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<td>k) Business-like</td>
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<td>l) Facilitate passion</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>m) Degrees of collaboration</td>
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<td>n) Regional Assembly</td>
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<td>o) Tripartitism</td>
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<td>3. Process of …</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Rule of Law</td>
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<td>5. Rights/Responsibilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Leadership Quality and Direction</td>
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<td>7. Leadership Renewal</td>
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<td>8. Leadership for Sustainable Results</td>
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<td>9. Regionalism</td>
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<td>10. Funding Models</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11. Strategic Role</td>
<td>11 a) Community bank</td>
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<td>12. Operational Role</td>
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<td>13. Moral Support</td>
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<td>14. Membership Motivation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15. Levels of Decision Making</td>
<td>15 a) Sydney-centric</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16. Democracy Element</td>
<td>b) Subsidiarity</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16 a) Consensus decisions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b) Participatory MFP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17. Ministerial Appointment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18. Quadruple Bottom Line</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19. Accountability</td>
<td>19 a) Community’s ‘right to know’</td>
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3.6.2. Elements for Building a Model Region

Calling for the kind of leadership that champions the interests of the region and its communities is a prime property for building a model set of institutions that will successfully develop it. Such leadership

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55 Editors’ note – this table was a work in progress by the author.
will eventuate with the growth of four dimensions outlined by the former federal minister in the following passage.

POL 1  So if we had more national offices here - I mean I would love to see a drive from the local business community to have more firms relocate their head offices or their administrative opportunities into this region. That makes sense; we offer good wages, good staff, good skills, good transport connections, but I don’t see any of that. So that’s the kind of thing that can be done. Not in markets in promotion of the region, [but] in business working together particularly in the tourism industry. Part of the problem with the tourism industry from a regional viewpoint is they haven’t matured where they look at cross marketing and working together. You still have local government areas competing with local government areas as destinations, which is just absolutely ludicrous. So there’s that growth in improvement in regional thinking to come but there’s leadership areas where business has to give that leadership. Politicians can’t give it, governments can’t give it, public servants can’t give it; it has to come from commerce and trade itself. For all those reasons I think there’s a great opportunity in the region, but if we just continue to work and think together as a region (remembering we’ll always have differences and different priorities) new ideas will be born, old ideas will pass on, circumstances will change, markets will change; not to be fazed by it, not to be afraid, but rather look at how we can link arms and take ourselves forward down that same direction. As long as we are doing that we are going to continue to be the leading region of Australia. That’s almost like a policy speech. Wasn’t intended to be. (Interview #13)

Here he calls for a campaign to encourage the head offices of businesses to relocate to the region so that the talent pool for regional leadership is increased. Then he points out that leadership from the business community is the best source of regional leadership talent, not political or public service sources, because once business leaders mature “at cross marketing and working together” to advance their business they will transfer that learning to the development of the region and will “look at how we can link arms and take ourselves forward down that same direction”. (Interview #13)

The former CEO of a development organisation identifies the “freer” position of non-government regional institutions to develop the regional leadership required. In this excerpt he notes that regional leadership is on the wane in the beginning of the 21st century but that it was strong in the 1970s and played a role in developing the region – and its ability to work on the region’s needs may be necessary again.

BUR 5  One of the reasons that a couple of the directors particularly have hung on in the face of a number of challenges to sort of say, “Look we’ve had our day, we don’t [have] a reasonable role in the region any more,” was because of that particular fact - that there isn’t in existence really an effective organisation at the moment that is not tied to in some way into government. The hope was that at some point in time this issue of regional leadership was revisited and dialogue progressed, that at least that structure may be of some interest to the community if it decided to restructure, reinvent, renew regional leadership and it needed it, at least a vehicle through which that might happen, because it is freer, it can even, [though] the funds are very limited, it can do what it likes with them and it can throw a challenge out to organisations in the region as it’s done through the University through the current chairman, to say “Hey, come up with some good ideas. We’ve got a little bit of money here; it might help to do some good.” Again that harks back to the Hunter Regional Development Organisation. It needed to report to government for some initial seed funding but its directors were not appointed by the government, they were local identities; again probably too politically based in its membership here which, I think, was a problem but still it was free in ways to pursue its own thoughts, ideas and priorities. (Interview #22)

A former Greens local government councillor disagrees that business is the sole source of this kind of leadership needed for the region. He sees that leadership can come from local government and in the following passage he describes the need for the region’s institutions to bring together the economic, social, environmental and infrastructure elements in a wholistic and integrated manner. He adds that structures of regional organisation should be discussed to achieve this integration.

POL 2  I think that it’s in that direction. I do see local government as a key player, an absolutely key player, and I think that until local government can take that kind of leadership role, local government is so much a victim not just of its own internecine stuff but also it falls for the propaganda too much. I mean it … sees, like state and federal government does, it sees regionalism and regional development as an economic concept. I mean everything that’s been tried is really about economic stuff and I just think we’ve got to
move away from that, I mean the economic part of it is a key part of it, I don’t disagree with that, but it is that integrated notion that you need. You need to bring together the social, the environmental, and I guess the infrastructure. I think the proposal I put forward and I must admit it’s a long time since I’ve gone back and read my own proposal, but I seem to remember it consisted of economic, social, environmental, and infrastructure. The notion that infrastructure planning whilst it was related to those things was enough of a thing in itself, because local government is already coming together to do a lot of infrastructure sharing and things like that so just the notion of infrastructure provision itself kind of almost demands a separate thing. And then regional organisation, how you did organise as a region, how you discussed that and set up those structures. I think those were the things that I suggested should be brought together in a regional plan and that was really just a set of ideas. I was quite happy for the regional assembly or some other process to be established that could nut that sort of stuff out. I was just offering because people won’t accept just a process or structure without some kind of notion of where it might lead, I find it horrible but nonetheless ... You pick something and then they shoot that down. I don’t really mind if they shoot it down as long as you do this bit. Those are the kinds of things that need to be brought together in whatever eventual shape … I don’t care, if those are the categories, as long as the things are wholistic and integrated - and I think we would have been so much more in front if we had [done that]. (Interview #15)

In this endorsement of local government’s current role and potential for generating the leadership necessary for building the region, the chairman of the first regional development organisation in the region supports the former Greens councillor positioning local government in this way. He wanted to support local government to achieve its purpose that he “saw as the guts of society” as he described it. He was also at pains not to usurp government’s role but to be a conduit of advice to it.

BUS 1 What the region really needed at that time was for the government to give almost a de facto recognition to the Hunter Region, and this needs a lot more thought ... What we needed was for the love and affection of government in some form that gave us not official status within the system, but it indicated to everybody that we spoke, that we were not an official department from the government, we had no power at all. I didn’t want any power, but [that] government would listen when we spoke, and we needed enough money from government to be able to do that, not stupidly, but to be able if we saw something that was necessary within the region. Local government wasn’t getting anywhere with it and local government needed some help and I wanted to work through local government and the unions and anybody. I wanted to work through the bodies that I saw as the guts of society. (Interview #3)

We shall return to the perceptions of power usurpation later in this section when we describe the fate of tentative attempts at regional advice generation by local government. Staying with the discussion of leadership, the state government regional coordinator also agrees that “leadership within the community” is a “vital” property for Building a Region. However he argues that other properties are also necessary, notably that “people … take responsibility at whatever level in either driving their own lives, other people’s lives or a whole community forward”. In order to bring this movement about he nominates “soft infrastructure” as a major requirement and in the following passage he illustrates how education and attitude change comprise an important part of “soft infrastructure” for addressing the position facing one community.

BUR 1 I’ve been in this sort of regional development, economic development field for a lot of years. I’ve certainly seen a lot of mistakes but I don’t think there is one ingredient that is critical in terms of driving it. I mean to say they talk about leadership within the community and I would agree. Absolutely vital. That you can give people or bring them to a point where they can take responsibility at whatever level, in either driving their own lives, other people’s lives or a whole community forward. But it’s not the be all and end all. When some of the reports came out and said that’s a most important criteria, I did never agree with that. It’s a balance between some of that soft infrastructure that we’ve talked about, you know. Another good example is Cessnock where there is wonderful growth occurring within the community and we’ve got a massive level of unemployment within the community. Almost to say there’s brick wall between the town of Cessnock, the villages around Cessnock and the growth that’s occurring at Pokolbin and will occur at HEZ [Hunter Economic Zone] at Kurri. Now how … you break down that wall is a

Editors’ note: The Hunter Economic Zone at Kurri Kurri was approved by the NSW state government in 2002. It was meant to be the state’s biggest employment development. The companies that owned the site were placed in liquidation in February 2012.
slow hard process but we’re starting to learn that the educational area is a major deficiency within that community and the attitudes are a major problem, because it was a coalmining community; for the last three, four, five generations these families have been coalminers. The major employment for people who live in Cessnock is coalmining. [Now] there’s one coalmine there. Now something’s wrong, we haven’t got the balance right. We’ve got to get that soft infrastructure right. We’ve got to work on the attitudes, we’ve got to work on the educational standards, we’ve got to work on the transport issues to get people to jobs and so on to bridge that gap and we’ve got to have the employers who are similarly prepared to break down some of those issues as well. Same exercise, without hard land, without the hard infrastructure, then you’re not going to get growth and development into that particular community. So it’s got to go hand in glove with soft and hard infrastructure, really has got to be addressed within regional communities to make sure that where they believe they’ve got a competitive advantage they have, and they’ve got to address the weaknesses and build up on those weaknesses as well to cover off on them. (Interview #6)

The region needs to be able to advocate for itself, asserts the general manager of a local government authority, reflecting the opinion of the regional development board chairman cited earlier.

BUR 3 And Hunter Councils57 [HROC] … over the last eighteen months has stated that it wants to be the voice of the Hunter and you know the councils in the region feel that they are in touch with the community and therefore need to take more of an advocacy position. That’s the first time that I’ve seen HROC really think about what it wants to achieve but I think it will find it difficult to get other parties into that loop and be a legitimate voice of the region. So there is an advocacy committee now and I think they operate on an executive type or sub-committee basis and GMAC [General Managers’ Advisory Committee] can refer issues to it. It’s meant to be there so it can respond quickly to issues that are running instead of waiting for a board meeting. But I am struggling to think of issues that they have been running with or have any particular success with. It’s early days. (Interview #11)

So while a number of respondents agree that making representations to government on behalf of the region is an important property of Building a Region, the general manager is not able to nominate issues that the regional body representing the local government authorities in the region has advocated on its behalf. The general manager also indicates that another government appointed regional economic development board doesn’t show a “strategic impetus” which raises a further vaguely defined dimension of the Building a Region code. “Strategic impetus” means the ability “to gather around it and gather in people who are already running things that they can already add value to” (Interview #11). It is a significant dimension because it attempts to describe the nature of regional structures’ day-to-day work. A further property indicating the character of what regional activists ought to be doing, according to the state government coordinator is trying “to drive on that triple bottom line and get that balance”.

The following passage is an insight into the thinking behind the decisions and advice that this public servant makes on a daily basis.

BUR 1 As a regional coordinator for Premier’s Department if I am just a ‘jobs’ advocate and that’s all I drive then I’m not the right person for the job. I feel very comfortable with some people believing that I’m a red-neck, other people believing I’m green, other people will believe that I’m pink, because that tells me that maybe I’ve got the balance right.

GH Between all the extremes.

BUR 1 That’s right. I don’t know whether I’ve got it right or not, it’s for other people to judge in those terms, but you really need to stay focused on that triple bottom line as being the most important driver especially in a growth area like the Hunter Region because if we get it wrong, we are certainly going to hurt the region from either a social, an environmental or an economic perspective. So we’ve really got to drive on that triple bottom line and get that balance.

GH Would you say that this is the most crucial aspect of regional or economic development, what we’ve just been talking about, getting that balance right and finding methodologies to do that?

57 Editors’ note: Hunter Councils – also referred to as Hunter Regional Organisation of Councils (HROC).
Within the organisation the general manager creates a regional model for achieving sustainability by creating a sustainability framework, which classifies everything the council does according to the four areas of “environmental, social, economic, governance”. [See quotations from BUR 3 in Section 3.5.3]

A further set of properties defining a suitable regional model for achieving sustainability is to do with the nature of the model itself. Here respondents identified essential characteristics similar to those of a systems approach with feedback loops, having a scaled relationship to other government systems and in its time dimension being evolutionary rather than linear. Excerpts from various interviewees are now set out below. Firstly an environmental activist uses McHarg’s “Design with Nature” (1969) principles illuminated by Monty Python.

And before that it used to [be] all the people going into the BHP and so on; they all went through all these little streets of Tighes Hill and Mayfield. So you’ve got different residential people too; it’s changed. The whole thing is a dynamic system and you can’t sort of say, “Oh we’ll just make a pronouncement.” It doesn’t work like that. Something will come up here, you’ve got to have a system that’s, say, flexible - that’s able to pick up on things. I don’t necessarily mean flexible in facilitation; that’s where we’ve always pushed for flexibility and I think that’s not a good thing because you’ve really got to tighten up some of the things like, we really should have a tight rein on the North Channel that’s still in its natural state and say, “Well listen you’re not going to do anything there that’s going to interfere with that.”

The former Greens councillor also supports a systems design for a regional model when he was cited earlier saying “Those are the kinds of things that need to be brought together in whatever eventual shape … I don’t care, if those are the categories, as long as the things are wholistic and integrated - and I think we would have been so much more in front if we had [done that]” (Interview #16). Criticising the restricted vision of the current model he predicts the ownership by the regional communities of a whole system-embracing model that also empowers regions.

I mean they are very restricted in their vision I think, they kind of fit into a Labor way of doing things that evolves from that economic point of view and they are primarily about economic things. I mean they are also about stimulating employment and social outcomes as well, but they’re still very disintegrated, they are not a vision for a new way of doing things. They are a vision for delivering a bit of some cycleways or that kind of thing and providing some jobs. It’s that old kind of framework. It’s not, “Look, here’s an exciting new way of doing things.” That in its own right would be empowering for regions etcetera and would really establish something that might be a bit dynamic as an ongoing thing because once you set that kind of structure up it’s a bit like setting up Landcare. Governments would never get rid of Landcare. They can’t because it’s too owned. Now if government stimulated something like that and used local government (and it could happen federally,) I mean the problem with the federal thing is of course it doesn’t have the legal power over local government, but it certainly has the dollars and it has shown before that it can resource things … in that sense it can happen federally. But at the moment the trends are all away from that. (Interview #15)

The former Greens councillor then describes the time dimension of this model as evolutionary.

We do have this very strong de facto way of doing things regionally and because I guess I see this one in slightly evolutionary terms. This one is not cyclical. I think there is a growing sense that it’s a better way of doing things, very incremental, it’ll grow, there will be cycles within the growth you know, it is an evolutionary one. Eventually people will start asking those fundamental questions, “This is the way we are doing things and this is a better way of doing it, why are we still doing it this way? Why have we got this structure there in Macquarie Street? Wouldn’t it be better to have something that does things in the Hunter in terms of governance? Why isn’t this mob who are doing all this regional stuff accountable to people who we elect directly?” At a certain point those questions will get asked in a way that will have

Editors’ note: Landcare is a partnership between the community, government and business to carry out environmental protection in Australia. It consists of numerous Landcare and Coastcare volunteer groups.
more resonance than I did when I put up the Hunter Regional Assembly type of idea. That moment will come in that evolutionary sense; I guess I’ve come back to an evolutionary model. (Interview #15)

This is supported by a former executive officer of a federal government constituted regional development organisation, who describes the time dimension of the current unsatisfactory model as non-linear. He goes on to describe the properties of the necessary model for Building a Region on a Sustainability agenda as requiring constant dialogue with feedback loops.

BUR 5 I think one of the key things … is to keep the dialogues active. It’s got to sustain the interactions amongst the local leaders and try to tie together some broader elements of the system across your economic and social and environmental spheres and try and draw them in together into some in-depth more meaningful dialogues. That’s when you’ll start to get some things happening so what you end up doing is then having a regional strategy that is just really a very broad set of statements; this is where we want to go, the kinds of things we’re going to be doing; and then on a day-to-day basis the doing is evolving constantly. The dialogues are there, the connections are there, the resources are being brought in, the capital markets are hooked in, it’s just a different way of conceiving the notion of a strategy. (Interview #22)

Having outlined the most noticeable properties and dimensions of the Building a Region code, we now turn our attention to how the respondents anticipate the conduct of relationships between and within individuals, groups, communities and institutions if the desirable features of this regional model are to be realised.

3.6.3. Organising Principles and Processes for Regional Development

In the Regional Organising Principles and Processes code, our regional development activists reiterate the principles that have informed the structure and practices of the region’s institutions in the past. While they harken back and emphasise some of these traditional properties, particularly regional leadership, the interviewees realise that guiding behaviours have to be modified and even new ones introduced in order to achieve sustainable regional development. Firstly the long-standing properties of Regional Organising Principles and Processes will be reviewed. This will be followed by some of the soul searching and even angst that interviewees expressed as they struggled to adjust these properties so that they would address the perceived shortcomings of current regional models to respond to the sustainability and regional development challenges of today. Finally new properties with a focus on diversity in policy response and consensus decision making at the lowest levels are described for they are seen as constituting a push for greater participation in decision making about the region that will lead to its sustainable development.

I begin by describing a traditional property of regional governance and the contrary recent practice that is seen as undermining regional autonomy. At the start of the study period, boards of regional organisations were either self appointed or ministerially appointed to reflect the constituency of the region. Political weighting was a feature of ministerial appointments which was seen to have the disadvantages of discontinuity and disenfranchisement of some sections of the community. In one interview, it was put to the respondent (and their agreement was indicated).

GH [This] raises some interesting questions because that’s always one of the issues about how boards are appointed and there’s been a number of ways in the history of the region of how boards or committees have been appointed. And whether they represent certain constituencies, and more latterly since the Greiner years there’s been a philosophy that says, “No you don’t represent constituencies, you represent yourself because you have just got expertise in this area and that’s why we want you on this board.”

BUR 5 Yeah.

GH Or this idea of self appointment versus ministerial appointment; and because this problem of recognising continuity has come up in the case of the HEDC that was set up by Greiner, there was a concern that the membership might change too radically with a change from a Liberal government back to a Labor state government, so you know it’s a very [real issue], thinking about structures and who’s on those structures, there’s lots of history there to think about. (Interview #22)
A member of the Hunter Development Board endorses this method of appointment, as confirmed in the following excerpt.

GH And I think there’s a difference too in that the way, not only just the Minister’s appointment but the categories of appointees, like you were saying the HDB had business, councils, bureaucracy, unions. I think with the HEDC … people were being appointed not because they represented any sectors …

BUR 2 That’s right.

GH but because they were seen to have some expertise.

BUR 2 Expertise or leadership. (Interview #10)

Here is another member of the same regional development organisation describing how its membership was self-appointed.

BUS 4 So they set up the Hunter Development Board and various people were asked to join it. It was set up with a number of invitees of which I was one, John Varnum was another one. I think it was Varnum who first rang me up to know if I would do it. All the government planning agencies had a member sitting on the Board; the Premier’s Department was there and the State Planning, the EPA, various agencies, the main groups that ran infrastructure like the Electricity Commission, so you had a Board made up of a number of these people. (Interview #18)

This arrangement produced a small number of regional leaders sitting on a range of committees creating what one of these members describes as “intersection” rather than “overlap”. Committee intersection has benefits that outweigh the time senior managers were tied up in meetings, as she describes.

BUR 2 I think it’s actually a most effective thing. I know there’ve been criticisms – “There are too many bodies in the Hunter. The same people keep turning up on committees.” Not quite true because what you’re getting is not overlaps - you’re not just getting the same people attending etcetera but you’re getting intersection. A third of the people at this meeting you will have seen at the last meeting you were at, which, in a sense, means that the information flow between bodies is balanced. What is coming into this committee is not just one representative from another body saying: “This is what we’re doing”; but three or four people bringing their different perspectives on what the first body is doing, into the second. So I think it’s effective; it’s expensive on executives’ time because if this is going to work it’s got to be working at a fairly high level - you can’t have the junior manager there because they don’t know enough of the whole picture. So it’s expensive of executives’ time but I think in the long run it’s an extremely efficient way of getting some cohesion, of getting people understanding what is going on in the region, who is doing what, where, and also of establishing the networks of contacts. (Interview #10)

BUR 2 had earlier described how being a member of a pivotal regional organisation like the Hunter Development Board creates other board appointments and entry into new organisations even when the original body has scaled down its functions. There is a limited pool of leadership talent and it gets recycled because of its valued knowledge and address book.

BUR 2 I think there’s probably still a small area where it’s being effective. I’m no longer Chair of the Hunter Development Board but I’m still Hunter Development Board’s representative on various bodies. … I’m on the Steering Committee for the Hunter Strategy and I’ve also remained on the Hunter Beyond 2000 and the Upper Hunter Beyond 2000 Committees. Now particularly with something like the Upper Hunter Beyond 2000 Committee, I think that has been extraordinarily effective and the prime effect has come from the fact that Newcastle people have been prepared to go to Upper Hunter towns for their meetings. So it’s no longer, “You come down and see us”. And people, in going up to those meetings, have actually formed networks and links. For example, there is the time that something comes up and people are talking about a problem and somebody from down in Newcastle says, “Oh, you should talk to so and so”. It opens the door; or it can open up a whole window of opportunity. So, even if people from Newcastle were actually not doing anything apart from going to meetings and being there, there can be a very significant input into the Upper Hunter. And, of course, there was more input than that. I think that’s been very, very effective. (Interview #10)
The Newcastle Chamber of Commerce, now the Hunter Business Chamber, was one of the original and prime sources of leadership talent. Members of the Chamber serve on various project committees and were recruited to other government regional organisations. In this description by one of its members we see the regional reach that the Chamber has despite its increased focus on services to its members.

BUS 4  The Hunter Business Chamber and it’s affiliated with, it’s part of, the Australian Business Chamber, so it provides a lot of employer services like industrial services and the like. If you ring up and quote your member number you can get all the help in the world about industrial awards. It’s quite a big thing and it also works in the apprenticeship region and it works in the advocacy area for development in the Valley, employment and the like, so it’s self funded and independent and it can operate quite independently and it’s got a lot of pretty smart people working on it. (Interview #18)

The Regional Organising Principles and Processes code’s properties of representing regional constituencies with its dimensions of networked, informal channels, developed over the past two decades, are now being questioned in a number of ways. I now highlight the expression of these concerns for they presage more recent properties and dimensions that our respondents believe can deliver the principles and processes required to meet the challenges now facing the region.

This reflexive mode begins with praise from a beneficiary of the traditional practice of constituting boards. Here a former executive officer of a regional development organisation set up in the early 1990s is ascribing the desirable dimension of apolitical leadership arising from locals being able to choose their representatives.

BUS 5  [The federal minister] was really looking at the creation of an apolitical leadership group within the region; so it wasn’t appointed by government; the leadership or the board of that particular organisation and its counterparts in other regions was left to local leaders to determine what that process might be and I think that was a very good decision. (Interview #22)

In recent decades this traditional practice has fallen into disuse by government, creating adverse consequences of agencies and boards having been appointed by state ministers. This passage highlights the tension and mistrust between local government and state government agencies.

BUS 4  I had just about an argument with K. H. yesterday where ... he said, “Why would we ever take the HEDC seriously when Lake Macquarie’s the biggest population?” You’ve probably heard the arguments too.

GH  Yes, it doesn’t surprise me.

BUS 4  “And we don’t have anybody on the HEDC board; why would we take you seriously?” I said, “Well, the board’s appointed by state cabinet, talk to state cabinet.” There is this feeling from Lake Macquarie and also from the Upper Hunter that they are left out. We try with the resources that we have to make them feel included, to be equitable when we pass around leads; to be inclusive. I guess I sort of feel, … and I know Ben must get this too, that they think the government has got all the money and the power and they think that because we’re associated with the state government that we must have this power and that either we should be showering gifts upon them and we’re ignoring them, or we have far more resources than we do. I’ve got one, two, three full time people and a couple of consultants and that really does not a power base make, and really we’re there to do projects. (Interview #19)

The property of being able to choose leaders, and thereby ensure that they act in the interests of the region, is contrasted with a description of planning authorities failing to insist on major developments rectifying the full impacts of their proposals, thus leading to unbalanced regional development. In this passage a regional planner insists that providing measures to meet the impacts would get “some genuine regional decision making on planning and consistency going”.

BUS 5  Normally in a decision making role associated with the sort of matters that councils deal with, you would have an executive level of decision making and you would have a board level of decision making, and the board would make the policies and the executive and management would implement them. To me a development application is an executive decision within a set of policies; a development application to me should never go to council. The thing that should go to council, for example, would be: What is Newcastle’s role in the region in the implementation of a sustainable transport system? That’s just my
example, but it applies to other developments. The council makes a policy and it says, “You will not approve any major industrial area unless you have done a full study on how people are going to get to and from work. How many of them? What modes will they use? What’s the impact of that on our roads system? What’s the impact on congestion? What are the alternatives? What have you got to ask the developer for? So you go to Austeel and you say, “If you want to put a steelworks in there with five thousand workers, you’ve got to put a transport system in that gets those people from where they are likely to live to your place and back again without adversely effecting the environment of the region.” So the executive officer would go and beaver away and say, “Well the only way we can do this is to put such and such a system in.” If we could get that sort of a decision making process, then I think we would have a chance of getting some genuine regional decision making on planning and consistency going. But the calibre of the council officers would have to be greatly different. (Interview #21)

Following the same argument, the regional planner sees that the Business Chamber is “not strong” in standing up for the region. Here region is synonymous with the Business Chamber and similar regional bodies. So in strong leadership we have another dimension of Regional Organising Principles and Processes identified.

POL 2 It was probably ground breaking in that sense, I mean it was probably for the first time that you saw built into the kind of legislative and structural government an approach that said, “We must do this together.” The whole core of this is actually about integrating the processes, the natural processes obviously, because it’s about managing a catchment at a physical practical level, but then once you understand even at a very simplistic level what that means there are agencies and I think it was identified that there were - I can’t remember whether it was eleven or thirteen, but somewhere within that kind of ball park - of agencies with pretty key direct responsibilities for managing parts of the catchment, those agencies were acting basically on their own and yet in a disintegrated way and TCM was pretty much about bringing those all together and so in that sense it was quite a ground breaking approach to public policy; and I mean I don’t take any responsibility for that, that was formed way before I got involved in any of those kinds of things, it was there. I guess what we just did was we added the community into that equation and that became a key player. It was people like Ian Furner who realised, who saw and thought - that is a key part of this. We had real resistance to it. I mean there was real resistance from the McNaughton council for example early. This is before I was a councillor because they formed the Throsby Creek Environmental Taskforce. It was formed and it was highly resistant to resident groups having any official [role], they were on that Taskforce but they weren’t allowed onto any of the working groups and it was very clear that the attitude was, “You don’t have any expertise (laughs). These are experts coming in here, this is an engineer and this is a ...” (Interview #15)

He then goes on to identify that a key person with a “vision” for the “total catchment management” philosophy and in the right organisational position was critical to the project’s success. This is a particular dimension, doing things in an integrated way, of the property leadership.

POL 2 I mean that’s the thing. It’s easy, when you just discuss what we did in isolation, to think that was the reason that it happened but in fact I really wonder if it would have ever happened if two other things hadn’t occurred at the same time. One was that we had a really strong innovative person who emerged
within the agencies, the Hunter Catchment Management Trust, in Ian Furner who at that time really had a
vision for how it could be, … he was driven by that notion that you could do things in an integrated way,
very imbued with the whole ‘total catchment management’ philosophy etcetera. … (Interview #15)

Leadership, or the lack of it, its desirable dimensions, and how it can be generated in the region, is a
dominant focus for finding answers to the perceived malaise of regional organisations and the
directionless region. The next series of passages contain a detailed analysis of a particular lack, namely
of cross-organisation leadership and the kinds of tasks that need to be accomplished if the region is to
prosper. This is provided by a regional planning facilitator.

BUR 5 So I’ve followed the development of it through with the consultant that was engaged through the
Taskforce but also then came back to work with them to actually run the industry workshops; and looking
at some of the difficulties that arose towards the end of that process about the differing views on the
structure of how it was handled, which were not brought forward till very late in the process, just indicate
how poorly connected the leadership organisations are; and again I think despite the best efforts of the
HEDC in this case (and I’ve been previously critical of them for their lack of outgoing participation and
engagement), but in this case it’s hard to say that because they did invite pretty much all of the major
players to sit around the table and they either chose not to or they sat there and didn’t really engage. So I
think there is some, there is a lot of, work to be done looking at the mix of formal and informal leadership
structures to improve our capability in that planning and project development area. If we come back to
your earlier discussion on major projects and capital, how are we going to do that if we don’t have a more
effective leadership structure in place to bring forward potential projects, to evaluate them and to put a
stamp on those that are deemed through all sensible due diligence that we are capable of doing? [This is
where we] have got to go if we’re going to create new capabilities in the region. (Interview #22)

The facilitator then discusses the potential for the kind of leadership he has identified to emerge from
local government and illustrates how leadership of the kind of quality he has in mind would cooperate
across organisations.

BUR 5 So yes if we talk about local government I do believe they will need to really take a much stronger role. I
think some of the more honest GMs [General Managers] will acknowledge that they don’t engage to any
great extent with the broader regional issues and that there could be much more done; and I guess having
facilitated a couple of workshops with Hunter Councils I’m somewhat frustrated that some of the
answers, seem really you know clear, and yet they haven’t been facilitated effectively. You know just the
notion of saying, “Yes you all have, you’re duty bound, to create your own management plans.” Surely
the next step (and they have discussed it), is to look at the overlap between plans with neighbouring
councils and then where is the broader coalescence of is sues and, instead of having some arbitrary sort of
system of trying to fund a regional body, that you fund those areas as projects and that each LGA [Local
Government Area] would put funds in for that particular issue, put some of those funds in for the regional
attack on that particular issue which may in fact be far more effective than each of them doing it
individually. I guess there are some efforts to do that stuff but not with the sort of enthusiasm and
effectiveness that could be applied there. (Interview #22)

He then raises the region’s inability to “use the political system” to get additional resources effectively.

BUR 5 One of the things that came out of the industry workshops, Greg, was the fact that we do use the political
system very poorly. So we need to learn to use the system and if we need to advocate for more taxpayer
funding to come back here, well let’s do it. Let’s not just mouth off. Let us actually do it intelligently
and effectively and work the system to get the outcome and understand it’s probably going to take some
time. And then the other thing that came out was this real call for a coordinated regional leadership that is
about the local community and at the same time a voice into the political system that is much more
effective (Interview #22)

The regional facilitator and former executive officer of a regional development organisation emphasises
his conclusion that the region needs leadership of a dimension “with a real vision and passion and ability
to speak effectively across all political persuasions”. He goes on to urge that people in the region have to
become active about generating these leadership qualities.

BUR 5 I identified a real sense of frustration re-emerging in that there is so much more that could be done by this
community if it had the quality of leadership that it needs; leadership with a real vision and passion and
ability to speak effectively across all political persuasions and more importantly a capacity to build dialogues and partnerships, not to alienate and offend and to burn bridges and to be just seen as petty bullies. You know and you see that coming out from sections of the regional leadership at times. I believe that we’ve got a lot to learn about: one, what we are capable of doing; and then the things that are needed to actually take us there. When you study other regions that are genuinely global players - with the quality of their lifestyle, with their people enjoying the robustness of their economy and the capacity of relatively small communities to sell to the world and to train peoples that they’ve got the highest level of skill in certain areas. That just doesn’t happen here. That’s why I’m frustrated about here. We’re a region that’s just sitting back and thinking well somehow it’s just going to happen. That’s my overriding sense, that we are very laid back about this sort of stuff, that it’ll just take care of itself and I don’t mean … in saying that to demean the really committed work of the many individuals and in theory some of the organisations; but I think from the organisational perspective, they really do lack the quality of leadership that’s required to take this place somewhere. (Interview #22)

The former Greens councillor recalls the change in concentration in The Greens party support in the state capital of Sydney and the strength of support in regional areas of NSW. He then argues that the reversal of that situation has led to a focus of resources on Sydney concerns and of Sydney driven policy development.

POL 2 I can remember in the early nineties a group of us sitting around in the NSW Greens State Delegates’ Council meeting worrying about the fact that Sydney was weak within the Greens. We really were concerned about how weak the Greens were in Sydney because all the energy was in places like Newcastle and Byron and the South Coast etcetera. The energy in Sydney was very low, but just through natural processes [it changed]. I mean you get parliamentarians elected and they have their offices in Sydney. Macquarie Street is where their offices are. The media they access is in Sydney because they are Legislative Council people and that’s across the whole state. The most efficient way for them to capture media is, of course, in Sydney and that’s where the votes are in the sense that the Legislative Council is a single electorate so the votes are concentrated in Sydney and so there’s a kind of natural dynamic. And then of course the state office, we’ve got a state office now, and it quite logically is in Sydney but much of those things started to happen with our next parliamentarian Lee Rhiannon, [who came] after Ian Cohen. Ian Cohen was regionally based and so to a certain extent that maintained the strong regional element. But Lee Rhiannon is a Sydney based person and so [are] the structures of support etcetera that developed around her. And then local government, whilst we tended to be strong outside of Sydney in local government in the early to mid nineties, the Sydney thing started to surge. Now I don’t have the number but I think the number of Sydney councillors now outnumbers the non-Sydney councillors and so there’s been a real shift in the power. It’s interesting that Cessnock Kurri Greens just recently tabled a proposal to the State Delegates Council that they appoint a regional development officer, an organisational development officer. Not regional development in the sense that you’re looking at, but somebody whose job it is to make sure that there’s adequate liaison. … It came out of the experience of one person in the Cessnock Kurri Greens who was part of the State Election Campaign Committee and part of a few things that were happening in Sydney, [who] realised that unless you’re in Sydney you’re out of the loop, you know, (laughs) and so this person’s job will be essentially to be in Sydney but ironically … it’s a regional job, … their job is to liaise and communicate with people who just simply can’t make it down to Sydney all the time. And that was given surprising sympathy, I must admit I had expected a bit more opposition … within The Greens one of the dynamics is of a Sydney, non-Sydney thing. (Interview #15)

The former Greens councillor then suggests that current forms of electing parliamentarians to government works against regional interests. He suggests that the German system would give a regional voice stronger consideration.

POL 2 I actually quite like, I must say that [while] I’m not totally on top of it myself, but I quite like the look of the German system. I mean the German system has a proportionally represented lower house or the parliament which is elected you know essentially a bit like the Legislative Council in NSW is, of a kind of list so you get different groups represented in the House of Governance which is one of the problems that I see with a House of Reps model because it’s basically a tied-up, very locked up two-party system because it has single member seats. You have to have, in order to win single member seats concentrated support in particular areas. I mean that’s the way the National Party now gets fewer votes than The Greens, for example, and yet the National Party gets seats in the House of Reps and the Greens don’t. And then it has an upper house which instead of being based on states, is based on provinces there and the people who sit in those upper houses are actually provincial parliamentarians. Provinces is probably a
better name for regional states but you then have a pretty direct link between your provincial regional governance and the federal parliamentary system. I rather like that and I actually think there should be links in the same way between local government and provincial governments eventually. (Interview #15)

This leads him to state quite categorically that because of the structure of state government, the bureaucracy has a Sydney-centric dimension in the way that it works. He feels that “strong regional forms of governance” will emerge eventually.

POL 2  Something emerges within them that’s kind of regional in its nature and so what you have is some fairly regionalised administration or bureaucracy that is not accountable to an elected regional form of government, it’s accountable to a Sydney-centric government and I think that eventually the pressures within that system will build. I mean I’m talking about fifty years. I’m talking about really long term horizons here, fifty or a hundred years but I’d be really surprised if we look back in two hundred years for example, I’d be really surprised if we don’t have strong regional forms of governance, and I mean elected governance that reflects the kind of administrative governance that we do have. (Interview #15)

This is difficult scenario to envisage, given the strength of Sydney, however the former Greens councillor then raises the dimensions of “grassroots democracy” and “consensus decision making” as indicators of a change towards effective Regional Organising Principles and Processes.

POL 2  “Look this is not a Greens way,” you need to sit back and think about this and restructure your own way of doing it, and so there is a learning process there for quite a number of new members. I know that I’m involved, for example, nationally at the moment in what’s called the ‘Consensus and Grassroots Democracy Working Group’ which is examining ways right around Australia where The Greens are committed, to the extent to which we are committed to consensus decision making processes and how we do build in grassroots democracy into organisational structures and processes and it’s very different in every state. But one of the patterns that’s emerging is exactly the sort of notion that as new members are coming in, some of them don’t know about this kind of stuff, it’s new to them, some of them, probably most of them, once they do become familiar with it, they generally are transformed by it themselves. It’s usually, “Oh right, this is a better way”. (Interview #15)

He then rehearses the efficiency versus effectiveness argument and the benefits of keeping these two different outcomes in tension.

POL 2  I think that there are some disadvantages to consensus. One of them is the pure efficiency. The argument that always emerges in The Greens about consensus, is the efficiency versus grassroots democracy argument; that is essentially what it is about. Most of the people eventually must engage in an argument. What comes out is very clearly is, “All right, this is all very well, it sounds very good to do this kind of stuff but it’s not workable because of the size, because of the time etcetera, the mere efficiency arguments.” You’ve got to give efficiency obviously at one end of the spectrum. You could spend forever making a decision about anything and you have to balance that with the grassroots democracy and efficiency issues and so the negotiation is about achieving those kinds of things. But there are people who I think are not, and maybe will never become, convinced that the efficiency or that the grassroots democracy gain is equivalent to the efficiency loss (laughs) that you’re going to lose, there are people who just think it is just not workable from where I stand. They see that they are part of organisations who have made decisions very efficiently and I guess they may have been part of the elite that may have ended up making those decisions; they would have never felt the kind of sense of marginalisation that adversarialism can bring, maybe that’s part of it, and so they are very entrenched and emotionally involved, really “We’ve got to make decisions, we’ve got limited time and we’ve got to get it done,” you know. I can see that point of view. (Interview #15)

For a different way of seeing, an alternative view is to push for a universal decision on a policy issue or a development decision. The totalising manner in which current dominant governance tradition treats Indigenous matters is raised by an executive officer of an Indigenous organisation. In her view the diversity of views and solutions is skated over or avoided. Yet Regional Organising Principles and Processes sensitive to Indigenous diversity could yield significant benefits.

COM 8  I was going to say where the environmentalists might use Indigenous issues; again developers who think … because there’s the possibility of an Indigenous thing there, blow it all out of proportion and everything is gone. [It] stops them without thinking there might be a way we can work with Indigenous
people … to solve this issue; for maybe both parties getting a good outcome out of it; rather than just trying to put a blanket over it and saying, “Keep it quiet.” Or up front saying, “This is a big hit issue or problem and I don’t want to have anything to do with it,” when they haven’t really asked the Indigenous people what it really is their concerns might be; they’ve just assumed either way that there was going to be an issue … And I think … there are always different points of view within any community whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous. I mean at times this push to get consensus of Indigenous people’s views in one group … doesn’t recognise that Indigenous peoples are just as diverse in their own culture [as] non-Indigenous people. And governments are at fault too because they … lump Indigenous people all under this one banner, for the benefit of Indigenous people … you would do this and you have to push down that track, and if you get one or two that object or whatever it sort of holds it up. When really I mean everybody should have the opportunity to object. (Interview #25)

Rehearsing these dialogues on the shortcomings and possibilities of Regional Organising Principles and Processes properties and dimensions leads to assertions of aspiration and illustrations glimpsing a sustainable way of working in the region. We now turn to these statements of aspiration and stories of hope.

As an Indigenous organisation’s executive officer asserts for plans to work they need to be developed with the community thus underlining the grassroots democracy dimension of the Regional Organising Principles and Processes code.

COM 5 But if that’s not specific to that community then there is a great chance that it won’t work. The principles are all the same; work with the people, listen to the people, build the plan. (Interview #20)

New organisational structures are being developed to meet the current requirements. In this quote from the youth cultural activist we see a structure that engages the participants’ “passions” for their work and which is therefore resource thin at the top and thick at the operation level.

COM 3 Octapod is a structure designed to set up many projects. Within that nowadays This Is Not Art is a structure that supports eight separate festivals, which in turn each support several different programmes of events. So you actually have these structures. The way in which it works is: for the individual who is working on a project… working on something that is very specialist and very directly related to what they’re interested in doing, for them… they [are] not trying to get engaged with the big large thing, they get engaged with small accessible practical, ‘right near them’ things.

We’re a very peculiar structure. One of the reasons … is that we have never, what six, seven years that Octapod’s been going, we have never had a paid member of staff, there has never been a paid staff member. So it has to rely on a structure that allows people – you can’t pay people to do things when they are boring or they get difficult or whatever else – we have always had to rely on a structure that is designed as much as possible to facilitate people’s passions. …

And if people’s passions aren’t there, that’s where the structure falls over very quickly. I mean that’s a big flaw in it. It just doesn’t really work all that well in terms of some of the more boring organisational side of things. It works very well in terms of harnessing people’s energy towards outcomes. (Interview #8)

The state government appointed regional coordinator sees his role as bridging the usually unbridgeable sectors of social, economic and environmental considerations.

BUR 1 My current role is as regional coordinator with Premier’s Department and the focus of that is to try and coordinate government activity within the regions towards issues that are broader than the individual department so to try and get a whole of government approach in relation to major issues. Now the major issues can be either economic development, in terms of major projects, [or] environmental management on things like the remediation of Lake Macquarie or it can be social development like projects like Windale and Booragul/Bolton Point and now Cessnock and so on. (Interview #6)

And we are reminded by the general manager’s determination to restructure the council’s reporting protocol to align itself with the sustainability framework and at the same time add a dimension that reflects the properties and dimensions of the Regional Organising Principles and Processes code.
BUR 3  [What] we are trying to do as an organisation is to have a framework which is a sustainability framework so that we get some sort of logic into where everything fits in the frame. We are trying to deal with this complexity. I call it the quadruple bottom line framework because the fourth line is governance. To me I think especially with all the corporate collapses it’s really important to have that ethical line. It’s the way we do things, that we don’t have lots of secret meetings. [But still] I get criticised for lack of transparency and probity. (Interview #11)

The former Greens councillor is confident that an appropriate regional structure will emerge eventually that will enable delivery of integrated consideration of all aspects of the region in a more democratically participative manner.

POL 2  Yes I think in the future we are going to need these forms of governance. A regional assembly is a way of establishing some kind of structure, some kind of process for the foundation of what could become something in a long, long time and I was thinking even about a decade or so, a long time. It also has the advantage of being able to, I think when regions get together, a bit like the Throsby example you know, when you get together and you offer something new in terms of political punch, that in itself has its own ripples and so if you get in a region like the Hunter, local government, as a leader, saying, “Hello, we’re going to bring this community together - all the elected representatives, all the spheres, local, state, federal and we’re going to offer an opportunity to come together and we’re going to get the community together in a structure that provides input and a say in how these things happen and we’re going to get an integrated regional plan that’s going to deal with pretty much everything we want this region to look at. [That is] in terms of the role of governance and then we’re going to use that for our blueprint for the future of this region ...our own internal approaches of local government to government, what we ask state government to do etcetera.” That’s got to have power. The first region that does that, I’ve lost contact since I’ve been out of local government but I understand there have been some moves in that direction in some areas, the first region that really gets that together in an ongoing way that’s going to be a powerful thing. (Interview #15)

The regional planning facilitator sees that training for the leadership dimensions that can work effectively across networks, involve communities down through their structures and work with leaders across all sectors of the region, is necessary for a sustainable future for the region. Finally what’s needed in leadership is the ability to allow people and communities to do what they are passionate about.

BUR 5  Yes it is and I also think a significant factor is the very low priority that we give, as evidenced in any initiatives of any structured form at all, to the development, the fostering, the encouraging, the recognition, the rewarding of good leadership; and there are other regions in this, certainly even in this state as well as this country and certainly in other countries that set it as an extremely high priority and they have leadership institutes within the community and they actively encourage, identify, support, develop in very structured and creative and effective ways, leadership within the community. (Interview #22)

The multidirectional quality of the necessary leadership focus is illustrated in this exchange between the regional strategy facilitator and the interviewer who is seeking to clarify the interviewee’s expression and to extend the implications of what he is advocating.

GH  The leadership is down the organisation; we talked about it before how you had the problem issue with boards but you had the middle-level people prepared to do something and right down with the grassroots workers where everyone has sorted out a common view; but then it’s working across those organisations too.

BUR 5  Exactly.

GH  Because that’s what we are into isn’t it? Intractable problems or issues that at a regional level require multi stakeholders.

BUR 5  Absolutely.

GH  The easy stuff we are doing; we’re coming to the complex.

BUR 5  And that’s not something our culture tends to do particularly well, hence the talkfests sort of thing; you
can’t possibly deal with a complex problem in fifteen minutes and yet there is this expectation, this perception of leadership of ‘getting the job done’ and being exactly that; “What’s the problem? OK, give me a couple of options, right let’s do number one; off you go, get out of here and get on with it,” you know.

GH Some of the structures that we use to convey information i.e. the classic conference; we have a plenary session where we have the guru flown in and gives the latest idea to this silent audience with ten minutes at the end for two or three questions. It’s the empty vessel, fill it up; you know the five hundred people in the auditorium and expecting those five hundred people to support it all.

BUR 5 Yeah.

GH I mean that’s an assumption that doesn’t hold any more. I mean to say that the way that these conferences, these talkfests are structured, we have to think about.

BUR 5 There has to be, yes.

GH There has to be collaborative learning and everyone agrees because people more and more are acting as individuals, they don’t buy the command/control line anymore as you said earlier on.

BUR 5 Absolutely not.

GH This place works because people have got a passion about something that they see for the future.

BUR 5 Yeah. The worst thing that I can do is to get in their way. If I try to take their jobs over or tell them how to do their jobs that would be the worst thing in the world and that is that what they had before me.

(Interview #22)

In the end the former Greens councillor recognised the enormity of the change that regional communities and state government have to face if Regional Organising Principles and Processes necessary for achieving sustainable regional development are to emerge.

POL 2 You need some kind of demand from the community and an assertion that we want this to happen; you need people within the existing bureaucracy that have some kind of commitment to a different vision, to a different way of doing it; you need the political vision, view, the will to do it and really that’s a tough one in this case because essentially it requires the state governments to say, “Yes we will set up something which will in the long term be a major threat to us.” I mean I don’t have a problem with that in particular. If that’s what’s better for our communities that’s what state government should do and if state governments in the long term can’t weather the storm of the kind of debate and power that eventuates then obviously you know, I’ll take a bit of a Darwinian attitude to it really, it’s the survival of the fittest really you know, in that case they probably need to go (laughs). It’s like they’ve got to buttress their kind of artificial existence by resisting this much more organic natural form of governance that could emerge.

(Interview #15)

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter has collated what twenty-five regional development leaders have said is necessary for their region to develop in a sustainable way. Their histories, motivations, practices, reflections and passions have been arranged, according to grounded theory, in order to reveal understandings of regional development practice as it has occurred over a fifty-year period in the Hunter Region of NSW. The purpose of using grounded theory is to discover a consistent theory of regional development practice, arising from this data. To do this it is necessary to explore the relationships between codes and assess their influence on each set of code categories.

This is the task of the next chapter.
Chapter 4

4.1. Shorter Draft

Constructing Participative Governance for Sustainability in a Changing Region

Figure 4.1 [Figure 3.2 revised] Shaping Sustainability: Relationships between Codes

The significance of these relationships between codes shown in Figure 4.1 is based on Lonkila’s advice about the role of coding in grounded theory. It is important in grounded theory to not only analyse the properties and dimensions of Sustainability by “isolating and naming the categories, ‘but also how to dimensionalize them and discover their conditions, consequences, and associated interactions and strategies’” (Strauss 1987,154 in Lonkila (1995, 47). This is how “the distinctive feature of coding in grounded theory as striving towards theory development” (op. cit. 47) is realised. The task in what follows then is to describe the ‘conditions, consequences and associated interactions and strategies’ of the codes shown in Figure 4.1 and show their influence on shaping the properties and dimensions of the Sustainability code.
an amalgam of externally imposed yet constantly mediating structures and practices being resisted or promoted by indigenous regional movements which are informed and inspired by the experience of regional institutions, communities and individuals.

**Ingredients for the Development of Sustainability**

The important task for this section is to highlight the influences of codes on each other and particularly their influence on the formation of **Sustainability**. This approach shows how local understandings of **Sustainability** have their origins in regional histories, **Making Sense** ascribed to regional events and practices. I have selected two significant regional themes, ‘job creation’ and ‘the idea of region’ to influence the selection of the codes’ properties and dimensions and data to show development of a Hunter Region concept of **Sustainability**.

[Draft ends at this point.]
4.2. Longer Draft

Constructing Participative Governance for Ecologically Sustainable Development in a Changing Region – Creating Understanding and Practices

Figure 4.3 [Figure 3.2 revised] Shaping Sustainability: Relationships between Codes

The significance of these relationships between codes shown in Figure 4.3 is based on Lonkila’s advice about the role of coding in grounded theory. It is important in grounded theory to not only analyse the properties and dimensions of Sustainability by “isolating and naming the categories, ‘but also how to dimensionalize them and discover their conditions, consequences, and associated interactions and strategies’” (Strauss 1987,154 in Lonkila 1995, 47). This is how “the distinctive feature of coding in grounded theory as striving towards theory development” (op. cit. 47) is realised. The task in what follows then is to describe the ‘conditions, consequences and associated interactions and strategies’ of the codes shown in Figure 4.3 and show their influence on shaping the properties and dimensions of the Sustainability code.

Returning to Figure 4.2, [see Shorter Draft] Significant Events reinforce Regional Motivation and Regional Beliefs, which in turn determine which dimensions and properties of Alliances and Resistances are engaged. These Significant Events, Regional Beliefs, Regional Motivation, and Alliances and Resistances in turn shape the properties and dimensions of Sustainability. Firstly I will show how Significant Events influence Regional Beliefs and Regional Motivation through the themes of ‘job creation’ and the ‘idea of the Hunter Region’.

an amalgam of externally imposed yet constantly mediating structures and practices being resisted or promoted by indigenous regional movements which are informed and inspired by the experience of regional institutions, communities and individuals.
Taking the starting point of **Regional Beliefs**, with a working definition from Pierre Bourdieu as “embodied feelings and thoughts connected to commonsense understandings of the world and arising from particular social positions, including those of class, gender, nationality, and ethnicity” (Reed-Danahay 2005, 2) the unconscious operating beliefs about self, community, place and ‘what is right’, such statements are scattered throughout the interviews either as justifying facts, statement of rights etc. or as assumptions to be challenged. Respondents either use them as solid beliefs or see them as impediments to action and seek to shake their stability. Firstly I will illustrate **Regional Beliefs** statements at work and then focus on how they, along with the other pertinent codes, shape the properties and dimensions of the **Sustainability** code.

The coordinator of the Aboriginal non-government organisation uses a **Regional Beliefs** statement when he says, “We need to emerge out of the notion of welfare dependency” (Interview #20). “Welfare dependency”, a long-standing regional belief, is currently applied and debated amongst Indigenous communities and government agencies in Australia as a situation that is holding back Aboriginal peoples from achieving autonomy, self-determination and health and well-being. He goes on to state that “The only way you can do that is to take responsibility for the problem and it’s not that difficult to bring change. But people say it’s lack of education; I think that’s the case too; but I also believe that it is to do with [the] whole of lifestyle” (Interview #20), thus highlighting the all-encompassing nature of **Regional Beliefs**.

The youth culture activist described himself as having “grown up in a house that was affected by long term unemployment and that was my reality when I tried to look into the workforce, you know” (Interview #8). This was a dominant **Regional Beliefs** theme that many interviewees either mentioned directly as their motivation for being involved in regional development or they implied the debilitating effects of unemployment. Because of their significance I will return to employment/unemployment shortly. However our youth culture activist also uses **Regional Beliefs** statements positively when he asserts, “The other thing is that Newcastle, on the up side, has this incredible … environment in which to do that sort of project. It is cheaper than most other cities in Australia, both the costs of living and the cost of your overheads.” (Interview #8)

The owner of the property development company states the belief “that’s almost begrudgingly, that as a corporate citizen in this town, there’s got to be something wrong with us … We must have stolen something from someone or robbed someone or done something wrong to be (laughs) successful” (Interview #12). This sentiment is an obverse **Regional Beliefs** attitude of mine workers towards mine owners that permeated the interview with the ex-mining union official. (Interview #1)

The ex-local government politician and local resident activist perceived the operating **Regional Beliefs** of his local community saying, “It’s a very close knit community in a way but that in a sense was kind of downtrodden … but they were people who to me had become almost acculturated to putting up with pollution, putting up with incursions into the way they lived their lives, that they shouldn’t have to put up with.” (Interview #15)

Another long-term resident activist, mirroring the **Regional Beliefs** of mine workers towards business owners by not trusting government agencies, indicates a general adherence to this belief amongst her colleagues, when she argues:

**COM 4** Now those of us who have our own groups and active groups don’t trust the Community Forums [which were set up by the local council authority] (laughs) because it is too governed by council officers and I don’t think that should occur really because a lot of the features are dealing with council matters and either need council support or we need to say something to council about what’s happening. And I think they [the Forums] are closed after a certain time because the officers have to be paid. … I’m basing this on what I hear. (Interview #9)

Regional development activists sometimes chose to challenge **Regional Beliefs** attitudes as being unproductive and in doing so move the objectives of regional institutions forward and begin to reshape a particular **Regional Belief** into a more productive one. A manager of a substantial welfare agency illustrates this.
COM 6  I think that encouraged people because when we started people were saying, “Waste of time. You can’t do anything.” You know, total disillusionment, nothing will work. Here we were six months later and we got it. So I think the people were really encouraged by that. (Interview #23)

BUS 3  Again I’m looking at the Hunter from a helicopter. I’m looking at it over time. One of the most significant things ever to happen was for Newcastle to lose the frigates. There was a major political campaign to get the frigate contract for Newcastle and the essence of that campaign was “We deserve it.” It wasn’t based on “We’re the most competitive.” It wasn’t based on “We’re the most able to do it”, but “We deserve it”, and it was a political campaign. It didn’t succeed and that forced the Hunter to stop and think. Too much local industry lived off the supply department of BHP and they weren’t in a situation where the market required them to be all that competitive. When the minesweepers came along and ADI came to the Hunter there was just beginning to be a change in outlook amongst the major medium-level companies in the Hunter. They were starting to realise that the Defence Department was serious about its quality assurance requirements – of being able to comply with its specifications. (Interview #17)

In the passage above an erstwhile chairperson of the Hunter Economic Development Council captures a regional learning moment where the traditional Regional Belief “we deserve it”, has been used to enact the Regional Motivation of creating jobs for ‘our children’. This is challenged by the failure to win a defence contract. Faced with this failure, businesses and regional economic development organisations are forced to create a different strategy from their practiced political campaign approach. Subsequently:

BUS 3  HunterNet was formed to encourage this development [quality assurance capacity] amongst Hunter companies. It was led by a few who acted as mentors and encouraged the others and I think the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The minesweeper Hunter project [a large defence tender that followed five years later] went ahead exceptionally well. (Interview #17)

This time the successful strategy creates a new Regional Beliefs and Regional Motivation determining the best way to win large contracts and reinforcing another Alliances and Resistance practice of collaborating networks of firms that collectively capture the capacities necessary to compete in this changed arena when tendering for large defence contracts.

The closure of an 84-year-old integrated steelmaking plant was another Significant Event that reached to the centre of the Regional Motivation of job creation, particularly manufacturing jobs. The dominant Regional Beliefs concerning jobs and job creation was opened up by this event with a majority of people thinking it was catastrophic for the kind of work that had become ‘natural’ to the region’s population. On the other hand the closure was seen by others as an opportunity to promote a tertiary economy. These shifts in Regional Beliefs are reflected in the following quotes from two public servants.

BUR 3  The closure of BHP is the defining moment, I suppose, which some people say is the best thing that’s ever happened. I think it’s a bit crude to say that. It provided an opportunity for the region to think through more carefully how its diversified economy could be developed and look to the opportunities; the business, convention and conference market became one of those avenues that people saw. Well, if we’ve got a bit more clean air now and we’re less dominated by a singular corporation … then that’s what we have to do; we have to build new areas. (Interview #11)

And from BUR 4:

GH  I’m just wondering … if BHP was one of those kinds of events?

BUR 4  Oh yes, it’s a watershed; it was a watershed; it was a symbolic watershed because I mean our perception research showed that that’s all people saw when they thought of Newcastle - smog and BHP - and I think that was for even people who lived in the region.

GH  That was an external perception that some people didn’t want to let go because it was jobs.

BUR 4  Oh yeah and you couldn’t. I mean, I remember I had people saying at the time, “Oh it’ll be the best thing that ever happened” and other people saying…
Like the union movement saying, “The sky’s falling in.”

That’s right, exactly and it was probably somewhere in between, some people are probably still suffering; I think you can’t let go of that either. But at the same time I think that it’s generally been very positive, you know. (Interview #19)

Turning to the theme of ‘the idea of region’ and the role of Significant Events in developing this idea, we see in the following excerpt from a regional practitioner three different types of events, a natural event, the influence of an ideological movement and a specific conference on Sustainability identified as influences on regional understanding and practice.

Significant events obviously I’ve spoken about the fifty-five flood. I think that the mid-seventies was significant again because this is where I saw the start of commonwealth interest in regional matters. Now I would say the next most significant thing was the Sustainability conference and I would categorise that, you know, among the really significant events. It raised the profile. It moved towards an integrated approach to a lot of things in thinking that had not been there before. I think that that’s had, the fact that such a great conference could be put on, it was so visible, it had a big impact certainly in the city and I think also in the valley as a whole. I think that that was very, very significant. (Interview #10)

In the next two excerpts from a local authority general manager the Pathways to Sustainability conference is also acknowledged as a Significant Event forming a new Regional Belief. Furthermore the role and nature of the Alliances and Resistance code is identified

It started as far as I can see, it started that Pathways to Sustainability platform for leadership. It seems to be taken up both in the region and continued by council itself but the ability to influence things of major importance seems to be limited to political lobbying as far as I can see. Take Austeel, the proposal for a major new steel operation here in Newcastle; the decisions are being made in Sydney. The lord mayor is taking an advocacy position to try to get, I suppose, an outcome that will live with the environmental interests. (Interview #11)

I think the other catalytic thing is the development of CSIRO Energy Division but it’s symbolic in the way the building looks and it’s very obviously sustainable energy because it’s really visible and I think the momentum will build further. (Interview #11)

Another example showing the role of the Alliances and Resistances code in shaping a regional concept and practice was when a local resident activist, academic and later Greens party local politician formed an alliance with unlikely partners, a Coalition state government, to implement the organisational principle of Total Catchment Management to focus the roles and resources of government agencies, local government and community groups to rehabilitate a polluted waterway. This positive experience informed the activist some years later when he proposed an annual regional agenda setting, comprehensively representative, regional assembly to Hunter Regional Organisation of Councils

And then you had a government, I must say I didn’t really have a lot of respect for it in any other way, but the Greiner government to its credit, did continue with the TCM policy that Labor had introduced, and it remained committed to that. I remember going down to a crucial meeting with Greiner McNaughton was there, Keegan, who was the local member then, was there. To see a fusion of the different political forces in the city so committed to doing something must have been powerful, and they said: “Look, we are prepared to use Throsby Creek as a flagship for TCM; we are looking for an opportunity to do this”. And so he said we’re prepared to put in the money, but you guys have got to make it work too otherwise it’s going to be a bummer. And so he put, I think, a million into the pot basically and that’s what made it happen as well. (Interview #15)
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**Personal communications**

Albrecht, G. (1998). Glenn Albrecht was in 1998 a Senior Lecturer in the School of Environmental and Life Sciences at the University of Newcastle, NSW, where he was the head of the Ecosystem Health Research Group.

Mant, J. (1994). John Mant is an urban planning consultant who has worked in the field of local government and planning for many years. He was responsible for rewriting the NSW Local Government Act (1993).
## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACF</td>
<td>Australian Conservation Foundation</td>
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<td>ACTU</td>
<td>Australian Council of Trade Unions</td>
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<td>ADI</td>
<td>Australian Defence Industries</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<td>AMA</td>
<td>Australian Medical Association</td>
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<td>AMEIF</td>
<td>Australian Municipal Energy Improvement Facility</td>
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<td>AMP</td>
<td>The Australian Mutual Provident Society</td>
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<td>AWU</td>
<td>Australian Workers’ Union</td>
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<td>BEC</td>
<td>Business Enterprise Centre</td>
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<td>BHP</td>
<td>Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>Central Business District</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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<td>CEP</td>
<td>City Enhancement Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFMEU</td>
<td>Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>CoFEE</td>
<td>Centre of Full Employment and Equity</td>
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<td>CSIRO</td>
<td>Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>Development Application</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCP</td>
<td>Development Control Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOCS</td>
<td>Department of Community Services (NSW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DLAWC</td>
<td>Department of Land and Water Conversation (NSW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDO</td>
<td>Environmental Defender’s Office</td>
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<td>EF</td>
<td>Enterprise Facilitation</td>
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<td>EPA</td>
<td>Environmental Protection Authority</td>
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<td>ESD</td>
<td>Ecologically Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>EIS</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEDFA</td>
<td>Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen’s Association</td>
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<td>GM</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
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<td>GMAC</td>
<td>General Managers’ Advisory Committee</td>
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<td>HCOSS</td>
<td>Hunter Council of Social Service</td>
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<td>HDB</td>
<td>Hunter Development Board</td>
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<td>HEIDS</td>
<td>Hunter Employment and Industry Development Scheme</td>
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<td>HEZ</td>
<td>Hunter Economic Zone</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
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<td>HROC</td>
<td>Hunter Regional Organisation of Councils</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>HSDP</td>
<td>Hunter Social Development Programme</td>
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<td>HVRF</td>
<td>Hunter Valley Research Foundation</td>
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<td>HURDO</td>
<td>Hunter Regional Development Organisation</td>
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<td>IDC</td>
<td>Industry Development Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>LA21</td>
<td>Local Agenda 21</td>
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<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Area</td>
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<td>LMCC</td>
<td>Lake Macquarie City Council</td>
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<td>MFP</td>
<td>The meaning of this acronym is not given in the text. It usually means Multi-Functional Polis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MRC</td>
<td>Migrant Resource Centre</td>
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<td>MSB</td>
<td>Maritime Services Board</td>
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<td>NCC</td>
<td>Newcastle City Council</td>
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<td>NEMP</td>
<td>Newcastle Environmental Management Plan</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Government Organisation</td>
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<td>NIMBY</td>
<td>Not In My Backyard</td>
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<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<td>ROC</td>
<td>Regional Organisation of Councils</td>
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<td>TCM</td>
<td>Total Catchment Management</td>
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<td>T.E.A.M</td>
<td>Together, Employees And Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDIA</td>
<td>Urban Development Institute of Australia</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>WEA</td>
<td>Workers’ Educational Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSAAS</td>
<td>Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Informants Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview number</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
<th>Informant’s sectoral base</th>
<th>Informant identifier</th>
<th>Relevant information about informant as at date of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>February, 2003</td>
<td>Union Movement</td>
<td>LAB</td>
<td>A retired mine worker and union official who is still at 90 years of age an active commentator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>February, 2003</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>COM</td>
<td>A local council’s youth services coordinator who has implemented council’s youth policy including the very successful Palais youth cultural facility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>March, 2003</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>ENV</td>
<td>A campaigner against the effect of high levels of lead emissions on a Lake Macquarie suburb coming from an adjacent smelter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>March, 2003</td>
<td>Union Movement</td>
<td>LAB</td>
<td>A retired secretary of a peak local trade union council who was involved in many regional initiatives, and is active on the Honeysuckle Development Corporation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>March, 2003</td>
<td>Bureaucracy/Public Service</td>
<td>BUR</td>
<td>A regional coordinator for a Department of NSW Government in the Hunter Region who in this capacity coordinates the Regional Coordination Management Group and facilitates a range of development projects and initiatives in the region on behalf of the Department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>March, 2003</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>COM</td>
<td>A member of the Institute of Engineers, a former manager of BHP Research Laboratories at Shortland in the Hunter Valley of NSW and a current member of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle’s Environmental Issues committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>March, 2003</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>COM</td>
<td>A founding member of Octapod, a Newcastle originated arts/media youth culture development organisation that has sponsored an ongoing range of youth cultural festivals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>March, 2003</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>COM</td>
<td>President of a residents’ group, an incorporated association that is concerned about the quality of life in Mayfield. As a representative of this group has been involved in many local campaigns and consultations on major development projects and advisory bodies.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>#10</td>
<td>March, 2003</td>
<td>Bureaucracy/Public Service</td>
<td>BUR</td>
<td>A retired academic, a former chair of the Hunter Development Board and is or has been a member of a range of Hunter regional development organisations and advisory bodies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#11</td>
<td>April, 2003</td>
<td>Bureaucracy/Public Service</td>
<td>BUR</td>
<td>The general manager of a local government council and a member of the Hunter Events Corporation, the Newcastle Airport Board and NIB [a Health Insurance Fund].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#12</td>
<td>April, 2003</td>
<td>Business/Industry</td>
<td>BUS</td>
<td>The managing director of a major residential development and construction company that has built projects locally as well as up and down the east coast of Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#13</td>
<td>April, 2003</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>POL</td>
<td>A former member of the House of Representatives, a former federal Minister for Transport and still active in local community activities and regional development specialising in transport policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#14</td>
<td>April, 2003</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>RUR</td>
<td>A local historian and researcher, director and board member of many regional and sub-regional bodies and a member of a significant pioneering family in the Hunter region of NSW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#15</td>
<td>April, 2003</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>POL</td>
<td>A prominent member of the Newcastle Greens, an academic teaching media studies at the University of Newcastle and was a local government councillor from 1991 to 1999.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#16</td>
<td>April, 2003</td>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>ENV</td>
<td>The long-standing president of the Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement and in this role has been involved in many campaigns to save, conserve or promote areas of natural and cultural significance in the Hunter region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#17</td>
<td>April, 2003</td>
<td>Business/Industry</td>
<td>BUS</td>
<td>A former chair of the Hunter Economic Development Corporation, a former manager of Tomago Aluminium, a director of the Hunter Ports Authority, a director of the Honeysuckle Development Corporation and a councillor on the board of the Hunter Institute of Technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#18</td>
<td>May, 2003</td>
<td>Business/Industry</td>
<td>BUS</td>
<td>A longstanding consultant to the coal industry, a former mine manager and a long-time member of the Hunter Development Board and Hunter Group Training.</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>#19</td>
<td>May, 2003</td>
<td>Bureaucracy/Public Service</td>
<td>BUR</td>
<td>The CEO of the local Economic Development Corporation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#20</td>
<td>May, 2003</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>COM</td>
<td>The CEO of an Aboriginal cooperative. (The sound quality of the tape was affected by work related noises and conversations in the background taking place from time to time).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#21</td>
<td>May, 2003</td>
<td>Business/Industry</td>
<td>BUS</td>
<td>A principal of a transport consulting company who has advised government agencies and private companies on transport and planning issues in other locations in NSW but mainly in the Hunter region over a long period of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#22</td>
<td>May, 2003</td>
<td>Bureaucracy/Public Service</td>
<td>BUR</td>
<td>The CEO of a group apprenticeship and training company established by the Hunter Development Board in the 1980s. Also the former executive officer of the Hunter Regional Development Organisation established in the mid-90s under the sponsorship of the Keating federal government and responsible for the development of ‘Hunter Advantage’, the most recent and significant regional economic strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#23</td>
<td>May, 2003</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>COM</td>
<td>The CEO of a major church’s welfare agency in the Hunter Region and Chair of the Hunter Council of Social Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#24</td>
<td>May, 2003</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>COM</td>
<td>The director of a migrant resource centre which represents the interests of ethnic minorities in the Hunter Region and champions the ideals of a multicultural society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#25</td>
<td>June, 2003</td>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>COM</td>
<td>The general manager of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cooperative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>