Local Sustainability and Community:
Issues of Social Capital, Governance, and Capacity.

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
Masters of Environmental Management

March 2003

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Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or graduate diploma in any University or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

Christian Martin
March 2003
Abstract

This research was based on the notion that initiatives involving communities at the local level are essential to advancing the sustainability agenda. Three communities of the Community Precinct Program, a community representation framework implemented and maintained by the Glenorchy City Council (GCC), provided case studies by which to explore how the sustainability agenda may be locally operationalised. The development and implementation of a local State of the Environment Report (SoER) process was used as a strategy by which to examine the uptake of sustainability principles by members of the community. Inhibitors and facilitators to the adoption of sustainability emerging in the state and civil spheres during the SoER process were examined by using a combination of questionnaires, participant observations, and interviews with community members and GCC representatives. Issues of social capital, governance and capacity emerged as central. Specifically, the relationships among social capital, community capacity, and sense of community emerged as significant in the ability of precinct committees to initiate projects enhancing sustainability. Findings also indicated that while the Precinct Program does enhance participation in decision-making processes, thanks largely to the efforts of community leaders and the improved link between the community and Council, tensions among Council representatives, and the Program’s lack of focus undermine its substantial benefits. Increasing the understanding of sustainability issues within the community and Council is also a challenge, with the sustainability rhetoric evident in Council documents rarely being implemented in practice.
Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my thanks to my supervisor, Dr Elaine Stratford, for feedback and encouragement throughout the year, and for perhaps placing a little too much confidence in me.

Thanks also goes to Carol, Denbeigh, Kerryn, my parents, and various others around uni for commenting on various draft chapters and providing helpful advice; to Anja and Cindy at the GCC for providing otherwise unobtainable insights and assistance; to all community members and Council representatives who were in any way involved in the project; and to Chris, Matt M., Matt J., Sacha, and Alice for kitchen table inspirations.
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