Chapter 1
Power – the forgotten dimension

The fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics.

(Bertrand Russell, cited in Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 88)

1.0 Introduction

Power affects us all. It is part of our daily existence no matter who we are, where we live, or what we do. We suffer it, create it, enforce it, love it and hate it. It is at work in all our relationships, and has many manifestations — yet for all these, we sometimes fail to notice it; often, we barely understand it.

Power relationships within contemporary Western societies are changing profoundly. Economic rationalism, the market and globalisation now influence policy formation and the ways in which our land is managed. At the same time, forums, both international and Australian, commit us to principles of equity and natural justice; approaches that encompass community engagement are in the ascendancy. The pursuit of sustainability in rural communities is now a key platform for governments around the world. Yet, frustration and cynicism with governments are rife. Young (2000 p. 4) points to the paradox of everyone favouring democracy, yet "apparently few believe that democratic governance can *do* anything".

These changing power relations influence the way communities are involved in land management programs. Governments around the world are devolving power to local communities, and this thesis questions how power relations influence community participation as related to rangeland management. Several authors have highlighted changes in power relationships, including Lockie:

> Power is not viewed in poststructuralist sociology as a one-way, hierarchal concept, but as one which is continually challenged and negotiated. (Lockie 2001 p. 27)

On-going negotiations and debates about the roles and responsibilities of groups and individuals for sustainable land management are becoming commonplace in contemporary society. Even so, the social dimension is still recognised as the weakest "pillar" of sustainable development (Lehtonen 2004). Fung and Wright (2003a, 2003b) suggest that the way forward is through participatory collaboration, which values participation and empowerment. However, most research into participatory collaboration has focused on institutional analysis, "rather than upon the political and social conditions that are necessary for these institutions to operate fairly and effectively" (Fung and Wright 2003a p. 282). In Australia, little research has been undertaken into participatory land management, particularly in the rangelands, and it is here that this research focuses.

Making changes to power relationships is one of the implications of participatory approaches. Nikolas Rose (1996a) suggests that profound change is occurring in our way of thinking and acting. Governments appear to be retreating, and devolving power to local communities. On the

other hand, at the heart of this new political discourse are strategies with implications for the government of self with new relations of mutual obligation. Within this era, people are not only expected to act differently, they do in fact act differently. As Rose explains:

> The *subjects* of government, the human beings who are to be governed … are now conceived as individuals who are to be *active* in their own government. Their responsibility was no longer to be understood as a relation of obligation between citizen and society … rather it was to be a relation of allegiance and responsibility … Each subject is now located in a variety of heterogeneous and overlapping networks of personal concern and investment — for oneself, one's family, one's neighbourhood, one's community, one's workplace. (Rose 1996a p. 330–331)

Communities are taking on new roles and forms. Some are becoming more like networks, sometimes existing only in cyberspace, with geographical boundaries becoming less relevant. Groups of like-minded people with similar interests are emerging as prominent communities. It is in communities that micro-moral relations are forming, and different kinds of arrangements and alignments are influencing people's actions.

Alliances, even "unholy" alliances, between previous antagonists are forming to overcome problems. In the Australian land-use management arena, the first well known alliance was created in the 1980s when the Australian Conservation Foundation and the National Farmers Federation initiated the Landcare movement (Campbell and Siepen 1994; Toyne and Farley 1989). In 2000, water and salinity problems were the catalyst for an "unholy quartet" of conservationists, farmers, Aborigines and the social services sector (*Weekend Australian* 5–6 Feb. 2000, p. 10). These groups came together for the first time to recommend that all Australians pay a salinity levy to spread the burden beyond rangeland and other rural people in whose land the problems were manifest. Clearly, new alliances require negotiations about power, if the partners are to work together for mutual satisfaction.

1.1 The problem – unmasking power relationships

Within land-management agencies and rural communities in Australia, and elsewhere in the world, people are struggling to understand these new alliances and their associated power relationships. The new arrangements for funding under the National Action Plan for Salinity (NAP) and the National Heritage Trust, Stage 2 (NHT2)— where financial resources are distributed by regional community bodies made up of diverse stakeholders instead of by the state government — are indicative of the power being conferred onto these new alliances. Yet on the ground, communities and government agencies debate how to implement these new arrangements, and to ensure equity rather than dominance. The philosophical basis for, and practical implications of, such fundamentally different relationships between governments and

communities are not well understood. New frameworks and supportive processes are needed, and a critical analysis of emerging power relationships is needed.

Communities now are involved far more with contemporary government than in previous centuries, and in different ways. In community participation, power issues are pervasive, yet not always obvious. Expressions of power and tools to influence decision-makers vary considerably — from environmental activists chaining themselves to trees as a demonstration of people power, to less-visible, but still powerful tactics of developers funding political parties to ensure the election of those sympathetic to their interests. Whatever the context, power relationships in natural resource management (NRM) are often contentious and fraught with emotion. The danger then is that power issues may not be discussed openly. For government agencies and other agencies encouraging community participation, making power relationships more transparent is likely to improve participatory activities. While the participatory literature discusses power relations, there is scant recognition of the extensive literature about power *theory*.

Power struggles within community participation groups tend to be overlooked, even though power is considered a major issue in the participation literature (Chambers 1999; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Guijt and Kaul Shar 1998; Higgins and Lockie 2001; Pretty 1999). A theoretical understanding of power is lacking, both in the literature on participation and in the practice of community participation in land management in Australia. Definitions of power are often implicit rather than explicit in the literature about participation; yet we need to better understand the definitions of power, and to negotiate these meanings with participants, if communities are to be effectively involved in land management.

1.1.1 The role of community in rural Australia

The importance of community participation in governance has long been recognised. Aristotle gave priority to public deliberation over science (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 127). For the past two decades, participation by local communities has been promoted by many as essential for improving land management world-wide (Chambers 1999; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Cornwall 1995, 1998; Jiggins and Röling 1994; Leeuwins and Pyburn 2002; Pretty 1995a, 2002a; Pretty and Uphoff 2002; Scoones and Thompson 1994) and in many policy documents (UNDP 1998; WECD 1987; World Bank 1996; 2003). In Australia, various policy documents and writers promote participation to provide more informed analysis of community values and needs (Aitken 2001; Aslin and Brown 2002; Buchy, Ross and Proctor 2000; Commonwealth of Australia 1999; Lockie and Bourke 2001; MDBC 2002).

To solve problems in complex circumstances where uncertainty and instability are common, multiple perspectives need to be taken into account (Schön 1983). In land management, scientists, policy makers, conservationists, landholders and other members of rural communities need to utilise each other's expertise and knowledge to develop integrated solutions. Many environmental problems, including weeds and pollution, do not respect property or disciplinary boundaries and need integrated catchment or regional solutions. Landholders need to work with their neighbours, as well as with scientists and others, to develop answers.

Science and technology are often considered the pre-eminent knowledge source for land management decisions, yet environmental and agricultural problems still hinder sustainability in rural and regional Australia. Much of the current scientific understanding is simply not employed. The traditional models of technical rationality based on single disciplines or sectoral "fixes" are not always appropriate. The answers lie partly in making better use of existing knowledge and capacity, not simply inventing new technology. Also, holistic approaches that incorporate multiple perspectives are frequently needed (Fisher and Hovermann 1988; Leeuwins and Pyburn 2002; Reid 1995; Schön 1983; Tighe and Taplin 1990).

The principle of inclusiveness is seen as desirable. The full range of stakeholders needs to be involved in policy formulation and in management to attend to the demands for participation (Dovers 2001 p. 13). Integrating local farmer knowledge and scientific knowledge are increasingly seen as necessary to solve complex land management problems (Abbot and Guijt 1998; Chambers, Pacey and Thrupp 1989; Gabriel 1991; Pretty 1997, 2002a; Russel and Ison 1993). Participatory agricultural extension models incorporating learning are increasingly being promoted to replace more traditional transfer-of-technology models (Chamala, Coutts and Pearson 1999; Jiggins 1993; Macadam 1997; Röling 1995). These emphasise the view that end users and government policy makers can learn from each other.

Identifying those who need to be involved in making decisions about land management is often difficult. The literature rarely discusses "who" should participate (Guijt 1998 p. 10). Many people have a stake in how Australia's land is treated: the people who depend on rural land for their livelihoods, people who live in rural and regional areas, people who visit the country for holidays, people who have spiritual links to country, and people who care about the native wildlife. Most of Australia's land is rural; yet, Australia is one of the most highly urbanised societies in the world (Garnett and Lewis 1999). These urban people have the political power through sheer numbers to significantly influence the way rural land is managed.

12

The real challenge then is in managing people — developing participatory processes to integrate multiple perspectives and develop solutions. Ineffective communication and inappropriate participatory activities can exacerbate problems rather than develop solutions. Rapid changes in power relationships can cause tensions; for example, the Queensland government deciding to enact Vegetation Management legislation at the same time as community groups were discussing vegetation guidelines.

While community participation may not be the panacea for all rural problems, if participatory approaches are to be used, improvement is needed. Jiggins (1995 p. 140) suggested that the current focus on participation may falter if the quality of methodologies is not questioned. This comment is particularly relevant to Australia, where the character of current participatory processes is not well understood in the management of agricultural land and natural resources. Few studies provide a rigorous analysis of participatory methodologies. Clearly, there is a need to examine how Australian participative approaches may be improved and a key component of this is a better understanding of power relations affecting sustainable land management.

1.1.2 The importance of power

A better understanding of power relations is needed if we are to achieve change through community participation. Power issues are often overlooked within agricultural extension and rural development in Australia. Government officers often say that they want to listen to landholders, but whether that government official, or the Minister, or someone else actually has the power to make the decision is rarely made clear. Landholders, government institutions and other agencies rarely use the word *power* explicitly. Language often masks the importance of power, but the concepts relating to it often underpin how participatory programs operate.

Power relationships are inherent in the social context within which participation occurs. Power also operates in the relationship between the initiator and beneficiaries of the participatory process as described in the typologies. Lozare (1994) stated that communicators need to be more effective in understanding power relationships, and in managing these in ways that contribute positively to the development process.

1.1.3 Silent power

In my experience as an extension officer working in NRM in Australia, power is rarely discussed, particularly in comparison to other aspects of participatory processes. Fear about losing power as the facilitator — for example by doing oneself out of a job because the community has assumed the power to manage NRM themselves — probably contributes to this relative silence. Fear of the community not being effective in achieving sustainable outcomes

for agriculture and NRM also contributes to the fear of discussing power too explicitly. Power relationships are very personal, and many people are uncomfortable discussing their individual relationships with other people. At an organisational level, power is not widely discussed as it draws us into the critical consideration of roles and responsibilities, and ultimately resources. People and organisations "in control" often do not wish to change the status quo.

The government or agency staff may lose the power to control every aspect of the project, but community ownership and success are likely to be much greater. Long-term sustainability is the ultimate goal of many projects, and community ownership and sustainable management of the environment are valued outcomes. To gain the desired outcomes there needs to be an open discussion of power relations and associated resources, rights and responsibilities of the various people involved.

1.2 This research

This research will explore the theory and concepts of power relationships from the literature on philosophy, government and sociology, with the aim of exploring some of the complexities and confusion about power. Understanding the processes of power dynamics is grounded in the context of land management in the Australian rangelands.

Because power interactions are so linked to the context, an understanding of the rangelands was important for this research. To be able to expose the intricacies of power plays, one needed to gain the trust of the people in the community, so that they would be open about what was really happening. A long-term perspective was possible because this doctoral research was undertaken part-time over 8 years, while complementary research was done concurrently.

1.2.1 A rangeland case study

Rangelands are recognised as the arid and semi-arid regions of the world. The term *rangelands* is internationally used: the first Society of Range Management was formed in the United States of America in 1948 and the Australian Rangelands society began in 1975 (Society of Range Management 2004). World-wide, rangelands tend to be characterised by low populations because of the harsh environmental conditions. In Australia, the rangelands are sparsely populated, with only 2.3 million people living in 75% of the country (NLWRA 2002). In contrast to overseas, over 60% of the Australian landmass is privately managed; in the eastern rangelands, the proportion is closer to 90% (NLWRA 2002). It is therefore imperative that the people who control the land are involved in decision-making. In the vast and remote rangelands, regulations simply cannot be enforced, so participatory resource management is essential.

The Australian rangelands are important for several reasons, and thus worthy of research. From a conservation perspective, Australia's rangelands are significant as they are relatively intact ecologically, compared to other countries. Yet much of the area is used for pastoralism, or extensive grazing, which includes cattle and sheep. Again, the involvement of graziers and pastoralists is vital to overcome the degradation problems. Economically, the rangelands are important, as much of Australia's mineral wealth is derived from this area. While agricultural production is not as great as it once was, it does still influence Australia's balance of trade. Tourism also generates significant income (NLWRA 2002).

The stockman and the rangelands environment epitomise the traditional identity of Australians. While few people actually live in the bush in the 21st century, it comprises an integral part of our mythology and culture. This culture, from both our rangeland stockmen and indigenous people, plays a part in attracting tourists. Many concerns have been expressed about the future of the rangelands, and some suggest that the current form of agriculture in the Australian rangelands is unsustainable (Abel and Ryan 1996; Auty 1994; Blesing, Andrew, Foran, Abel and Bourne 1996; Eldridge and Freudenberger 1999; Fargher Howard, Burnside and Andrew 2003). A different future for the rangelands would affect many communities who live, work and travel in this part of Australia. Participatory resource management needs to engage with a very wide range of stakeholders.

To ensure that the rangelands have a sustainable future, innovative strategies need to be developed. Such strategies would benefit from a wide range of knowledge and experience, and so need to incorporate the views of the many stakeholders. These include those with direct experience gained from living in these arid and semi-arid lands, as well as those with policy expertise. Participatory approaches needed in the rangelands could well be different from those required in other areas in Australia, because of the sparse population and large distances.

The geographical context for this research is a region of Australia's rangelands in south-west Queensland, chosen partly because it has had a long history of community involvement in government land management programs. Power relations are complex because of the various roles and knowledge bases that people have in land management. This thesis will explore power relations between the various stakeholders involved in rangeland management.

1.2.2 Research questions

In pursuing a better understanding of power relationships within community participation, this study will explore the perspectives of various groups involved in land management in the

Australian rangelands. Particular attention will be given to land managers, rural communities and government, as the reconfiguration of power relations is changing dramatically between these groups in rural Australia.

The following research questions have been formulated. The key research question is:

> *How do power relationships influence community participation in rural land management?*

Secondary research questions are:

1. *What participatory processes are currently used by government in rangelands programs?*
2. *How is power expressed by participants within participatory processes?*
3. *How does power relate to other dimensions of community participation?*
4. *What are the implications of power relationships for participation?*

A number of terms are critical in these questions. Although the research is about power relations in community participation related to rangeland management in Australia, the key terms used — *power, community and participation* — have diverse meanings. To avoid confusion, only general definitions are provided here, as a prelude to the more detailed discussion in later chapters.

1.2.3 Meaning of power

My view of power initially came from that of the dominant tradition in Western thinking, that power is the capacity of someone or something to influence others — the power to "make a difference" (Hindess 1996; Dryberg 1997). During the journey of undertaking the field work and analysing the data, many anomalies in my understanding of power became evident, and alternative theories were needed to help me understand power relations.

Understanding the meaning of power and its implications for participation in the rangelands is the essence of this thesis. Consequently, a whole chapter is devoted to discussing the history of the traditions of thinking about power, and a case study that further reveals my understanding of power relations. To help the reader, I shall simply explain power (for now) with Giddens' definition.

> Power is "the capacity of an actor to intervene in a series of events so as to alter their course". (Giddens 1976 p. 111)

The overall outcome of power relationships is confusing, and while people may have intentions for their actions at a local level, the broader implications may not be evident:

> People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what
> they don't know is what what they do does. (Foucault 1982b p. 187)

The outcomes of power relations often do not become clear until the action is begun, and people do not realise that such outcomes have occurred unless power relations are discussed more openly This research is important because it aims to focus attention on power relations, and encourage discussion about the power implications of participatory natural resource management activities. The implications of power relationships are as complex and diverse as the communities in which they exist.

1.2.4 Meaning of community

The word *community* is used in everyday language, but its meaning can be elusive. Sociologists in particular have used it in numerous ways; in the mid-1950s, Hillery (1955) discovered 94 different definitions. The notion of community is fundamental to sociologists and its meaning has been debated by several seminal scholars including Durkheim, Weber, Tonnies and Simmel (Cohen 1993).

While social scientists struggle with the concept of community, people who live in communities can have a clearer understanding of "community spirit". Sometimes, formal membership is not important. People can be bound together in joint, even aggressive, activity toward a common goal, such as is found in the groups — described by Heskin (1991) — who fought against being displaced from their homes. Other groups are bound by common ties of kinship, friendship, rivalry, familiarity and jealousy, which guide the social interactions of their lives (Cohen 1993). Not all these ties are positive; it is a myth that communities are homogenous. Cohen says:

> This consciousness of community is, then, encapsulated in perception of its boundaries,
> boundaries which are themselves largely constituted by people in interaction. (Cohen
> 1993 p. 13)

Boundaries of community are usually based on people or places. Willmott (1989) distinguishes between *interest* communities (people-centred) and *territorial* communities (place-centred). Place-centred communities are those whose people live in one locality. This is the sense used in the Rangeland Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia 1999 p. 34). Here, the boundaries are based on a geographical location, such as south-west Queensland or the Cunnamulla town community. People-centred communities are those in which people have a common cause, common interests or common ideas. Two examples of people sharing common interests about rangelands are the local Landcare community, and an international community of scientists interested in desertification.

During the 20th century, new communities developed and assumed greater importance for governance. Rose (1996a) explains that these can be "virtual" communities associated with neither "real" space nor "real" time — including internet communities who share a common interest, moral communities (e.g. feminist groups), lifestyle communities (e.g. sea-change or downsizing groups) and communities of commitment (e.g. disability, local activism groups). Such communities play an important role as networks of allegiance with which people identify strongly. Communities can engender a moral code of individual responsibility as well as collective responsibility or community obligation. This moral code means that communities can be "not simply the territory of government, but a means of government" (Rose 1996a p. 325). In this sense communities are a new form of governance.

The boundaries of communities may be unclear, and choice of boundary usually depends on the individual defining the community as it is culturally and socially determined. According to Wilkinson (1989) this blurring does not matter if one is searching for the core characteristics of the community. The core characteristics will be dynamic and time-dependent, particularly if they are described by the members of the community. Aspects of social interaction and psychological identification will assist in describing particular communities. Social interaction occurs between members of people-centred and place-centred communities, as does psychological identification. People, place, social interaction and psychological identification are the four components suggested by Hillery (1955) for defining community. The size of a community certainly affects the degree of social interaction that people have; local-scale communities have stronger links with each other.

In this enquiry I take the view that *community* is defined by its members. Clearly, people-centred and place-centred communities can overlap. Christenson and Robinson's definition suits this view, where:

> Community is defined as "people that live in a geographically bounded area who are involved in social interaction and have one or more psychological ties with each other and with the place in which they live." (Christenson and Robinson 1989 p. 9)

The way in which communities participate in land management programs has also changed, as is described in the following section.

1.2.5 Meaning and purpose of participation

The term *participation* is ambiguous, meaning vastly different things to different people. In common parlance it simply means "being present"; for example when people participate in or attend meetings. Many practitioners involved in community development, regional development and sustainable development have a more specific definition: for them the only "genuine"

participation occurs when decision-making power is shared with local people (Chambers 1999; Cornwall 1998; Guijt 1998; Kothari 2001). In the 21st century, there is an increasing role for communities in governance. Governments and land management agencies continue to use a plethora of terms including partnerships and engagement.

Different interpretations of, and strategies for, participation are important in different situations. Meanings depend on who defines participation, and why it is undertaken. The intent of the initiators — that is, their goals for choosing a participative approach — largely determines the meaning and methods. In Australian rural land management, local community participation is often initiated by government agencies, so the meaning is largely defined by those agencies. Many programs are still top-down, aimed *at* people or run *for* people, even though some are developed *with* people. Participation may be intentionally or unintentionally subsumed by the initiating agencies.

Participation is often romanticised as a cure-all so that anything participatory is assumed to be "good" and "empowering" (Guijt 1998b; Rogers 1992). The most effective participation is seen to be that which involves the whole community, but this is clearly unrealistic. Rogers (1992 p. 227) acknowledged that participation is difficult to achieve, rarely works completely and can fail spectacularly. As Slocum and others have argued: "past experience suggests that participation can bring about both positive and negative change" (Slocum, Wichhart, Rocheleau and Thomas-Slayter 1995 p. 17). Whether the impact of the change is positive or negative depends partly on the goals, partly on the types of methods used and partly on the way participation is implemented. Unfortunately, many government employees who facilitate participatory activities often have little or no understanding of the theory or history of participation; they may be well-intentioned, but naive. This thesis will demonstrate why devolving too much responsibility to local communities may be unrealistic, and even irresponsible if we aim to achieve sustainable land management.

Clearly, there is an enormous range of views that operators hold about participation and its implementation. Not surprisingly, this has led to complexity in the literature, and has allowed the term *participation* to develop a plethora of confused meanings.

1.2.6. Definition of participation for this thesis

This enquiry uses *participation* as an overarching term to encompass the broad spectrum of meanings: sometimes a means to an end, sometimes an end in itself. This broad definition of participation is consistent with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2 2004). For the purposes of this thesis, participation is defined as follows:

> Participation is a range of processes through which local communities are involved and play a role in issues which affect them. The extent to which power is shared in decision-making varies according to the type of participation.

Clearly, types of participation differ; this thesis uses the terms *consultation* and *collaboration* (or *partnership*) to describe opposite ends of a spectrum of approaches, as indicated below.

Participation

Consult, inform   **Collaborate, partnership**

Consultation employs a one-way flow of information between an agency and the community; e.g. providing information to the public, collecting information and undertaking a needs analysis. Local people have no, or limited, influence over agency decisions.

Collaboration is defined as an on-going interaction where power is shared between the agency and the community. Power can be shared in various ways, including collective decision-making and collective management of projects. It involves negotiation and a two-way flow of information.

Figure 1.1 Definitions of terms

This enquiry examines the differences in approaches to participation in Australian rangeland management.

1.3 Structure of thesis

This enquiry begins by describing community participatory practices, particularly those used in agriculture and land management. The analytical framework is based on theories and concepts about power, and these are described next.

The ways in which power is described by those participating in land management programs in south-west Queensland varies between community and government staff. These voices of power are described in relation to the key theories about power. The implications of power relationships on the various dimensions of community participation are then explored before the conclusion, which highlights the contributions to theory and practice from this research. The structure of this thesis is guided by questions and answers that link each chapter, as indicated in Figure 1.2.

Chapter 1 **Power – the forgotten dimension**	Q: What is the problem to be investigated in this thesis? A: Power is often forgotten and needs to be made explicit to improve participatory activities.
Chapter 2 **Participation – rhetoric or reality?**	Q: What is the meaning and history of participation? A: Participation is now part of the rhetoric, but there is still room for improvement of practice, in particular the recognition of the importance of power.
Chapter 3 **Exploring the traditions of power**	Q: What are the existing theories and concepts about power? A: Two main traditions exist, each with a different meaning of power. Used together, these traditions bring a richness of understanding about power relations.
Chapter 4 **Designing the research**	Q: What research design is appropriate to explore different perspectives about power in participation? A: The methodology allows the research to be responsive to the participants, and to changing contexts.
Chapter 5 **Focusing on south-west Queensland**	Q: What is the background to the case study region? A: Considerable community participation has occurred in south-west Queensland, and participatory activities and possibly power relationships have been influenced by the contexts of the region.
Chapter 6 **Voices of power**	Q: How is power expressed by participants? A: Most people's expressions of power fit within the dominant understanding of power; i.e. power as a tool. However, some see power as a structure, and the personalities of the individuals exercising power are fundamentally important: such descriptions come mainly from the landholders. Government staff tend to focus on methods and processes to overcome power disparities. A deeper understanding of power relations is gained if several frameworks are used.
Chapter 7 **Linking power and participation**	Q: How does power relate to the other dimensions of participation? A: Power relationships impact on all dimensions of participation, thus making this an important aspect of participation that cannot be ignored if participatory processes are to be improved.
Chapter 8 **Web of power: a summary**	Q: What has emerged from this research about power relations in participatory NRM in south-west Queensland? A: Power is a complex web, dynamic and fluctuating at both macro- and micro-scales. Power sharing levels change during NRM projects; at the same time, power forms the structure for relations between individuals. Not only does power change, but the various dimensions of participation also change, as does the context within which power and participation operate.
Chapter 9 **Implications of power**	Q: What are the implications of power relationships for improving participation? A: Incorporating Foucault's critical style of analysis with Habermasian theories of power deepens our understanding of power relations in participatory rangeland management.

Figure 1.2 Core questions and summary answers for chapters of thesis

This first chapter has demonstrated that power issues are often neglected in community participation, and that to improve participatory activities these need to be better understood and made explicit. This thesis will investigate how power relationships influence community participation activities in the Australian rangelands.

The key terms *power*, *community* and *participation* have been defined and the research questions formulated. The next chapter is the first of two chapters to set the context and framework for the research, by outlining the history of community participation in sustainable development world-wide, and specifically in agriculture and NRM in Australia.

Chapter 2
Participation – rhetoric or reality?

Local agricultural knowledge is considerable, but still often overlooked by policy makers.

(Palmer 2004)

2.0 Introduction

The history of participation in development and land management provides a context for exploring power issues in community participation in the Australian rangelands. The historical literature on participation is primarily based on work conducted in developing countries and the northern hemisphere, but many of the principles and techniques for participation are applicable in Australia. Some adaptations are needed for the Australian situation and culture; for example agriculture here is market driven and capital intensive by comparison to many other countries. As Syme (1991) suggested, the overseas literature needs interpreting as Australians emphasise individual freedom, and have preferred methods of decision making. Over the past decade, much useful material has been written on involving local people in the Australian context over the past decade, including works by Buchy (2001), Buchy, Ross and Proctor (2000), Chamala, Coutts and Pearson (1999), Curtis and Lockwood (2000), Dale and Bellamy (1998), Lockie and Bourke (2001), Lockie and Vanclay (1997), and Vanclay and Lawrence (1995).

This chapter also outlines some of the typologies of participation, to highlight different forms of participation and their implications. It then defines what participation means for this thesis. It also formulates a model indicating the key dimensions of participation that need to be considered if participation is to be improved; that is, to provide outcomes of greater environmental, economic and social sustainability in rural and regional Australia.

2.1 Trends in participation worldwide and in Australia

There is a growing, worldwide recognition of the value of participation and the integration of different perspectives. In the 21st century, multi-role collaborations are more widely acknowledged as a way to draw insights and experience from a variety of groups of people so that learning is both multi-institutional and cross-disciplinary (Pretty and Uphoff 2002 p. 244). This section traces the growing recognition of participation through international documents, and in Australia, by examining government and funding agency statements. The original aims of participation, and current criticisms, are better understood by reviewing the historical trends in participation.

Participation that involves a variety of groups is seen as a way to facilitate interdisciplinary approaches. The general trend towards interdisciplinary approaches began as a reaction to the failure of specialised scientific disciplines and economic growth to solve social and environmental problems. Social and political insights were seen as a necessary adjunct to the conventional disciplines (Tighe and Taplin 1990). The development of participation reflects broader trends in thinking in scientific disciplines. Despite this recognition, incorporating the

perspectives of different disciplines has not always been easy. This difficulty stimulated the emergence of transdisciplinary approaches in the late 1980s and 1990s (Fisher and Hovermann 1988; Tighe and Taplin 1990).

The emphasis has changed from single disciplines to multi-disciplinary[1], interdisciplinary[2] and now transdisciplinary[3] approaches as the general scientific community has recognised the need for integrated, holistic and systemic methods. The development of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary thinking ran parallel with criticism of top-down approaches in development and land management, and with the emergence of participation. Some of the best-known critics of participation include Robert Chambers (1999), David Korten (1980) and Norman Uphoff (1992). All these authors argued that alternative people-centred approaches that are context-specific are needed if programs are to be successful. The implication here is that the balance of power needs to shift from being government or agency driven, to being driven by local people. Slocum explained that central to these alternative approaches:

is the belief that people [local people] are capable of critical reflection and analysis and that their knowledge is relevant, necessary and valuable. (Slocum et al. 1995 p. 11)

The understanding that the perspectives and knowledge of local people was valuable meant that institutions could learn from the community, and new approaches could be used in the search for a sustainable future. This local knowledge is sometimes called traditional knowledge, but as Pretty (2002a) points out, *traditional* can imply "backward", yet traditional knowledge does undergo continuous adjustment, being shaped by new knowledge and changing circumstances. Pretty quotes from the Four Directions Council of Canada:

What is traditional about traditional knowledge is not its antiquity, but the way it is acquired and used. In other words, the social process of learning and sharing knowledge ... Much of this knowledge is quite new, but it has a social meaning and legal character, entirely unlike other knowledge. (Pretty 2002a p. 146)

Power relationships within communities and within society have devalued local knowledge, while many of the critics of this view have idealised "local" as better than any other form of knowledge, and local control of land management programs as essential.

---

[1] Multi-disciplinary approaches use several disciplines to solve different components of a problem, on which researchers work in parallel (Rosenfield 1992).
[2] Interdisciplinary approaches involve researchers working jointly, but still from disciplinary bases to address a common problem (Rosenfield 1992).
[3] Transdisciplinary approaches attempt to develop new perspectives using principles from a variety of disciplines, requiring the breaking of barriers erected by the disciplines (Rapport 1996) and a shared conceptual framework (Rosenfield 1992) that necessitates questioning the values and assumptions underpinning each discipline.

However, Kaufmann (1968) and Uphoff (1991) talk about the paradox of participation, where "top-down" efforts are required to promote "bottom-up" participation. What is needed is: a state that rests on the strong support of an inclusive democracy, in which the powers to manage problems that are best handled locally have been devolved to local units of governance and to the people themselves. (Freidman 1992 p. 35)

One knowledge should not be valued over the other; neither scientific nor local knowledge are more valuable than the other. Both are needed, or rather, various perspectives from the "top" and the "bottom" are needed. The key question is more about how knowledge is shared, as it is recognised that knowledge from scientists, policy makers, and different groups within the community are all needed to solve complex natural resource management and rural community development problems. The ways in which knowledge is shared are influenced by power relations.

Knowledge and power sharing are made more complex by the heterogeneity of communities. Communities are not homogeneous, or indeed harmonious. The discourses within development and NRM literature may suggest that communities have common interests and needs. Guijt and Kaul Shar (1998) dispute this; they suggest that the notion of a homogeneous community hides the power relations within it. Initiatives that threaten established privileged positions are often greeted with antagonism and even violence (Uphoff, Esman and Krishna 1998 p. 181). While these international examples focus on discrimination due to gender, class, age and ethnicity, factors such as wealth, longevity and reputation bestow prestige and power on Australian communities (Gray and Phillips 2001 p. 55; Lockie 1997; Race and Buchy 1999).

Since the 1970s in particular, there have been significant changes in attitudes to participation. Participation in NRM has continued to increase in prominence since the 1970s and much has been written (Campbell and Siepen 1994; Chamala and Mortiss 1990; Chambers 1999; Coutts 1997; Dore and Woodhill 1999; Lockie and Bourke 2001; Ross and Brown 1994; Vanclay and Lawrence 1995a). The general scientific community (especially agriculture) and the rural development community all support the increasing use of participatory approaches (such as Chambers 1999; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Cornwall 1998; Nas and Silva 1999; Pretty 2002a).

The focus of Australian agriculture has changed from production to productivity, to long-term sustainability, and then to regional development and community development. These key phrases, especially in the development of structured participatory approaches and the related trends in agriculture and rural development in Australia, are summarised below (Table 2.1). The broad trends in rural Australia are the same as those in the rangelands.

Table 2.1 Parallel development of participatory processes and Australian agriculture

Era	Trends in participatory processes	Australian rural trends
1950s and 1960s	Rapid industrialisation, growing influence of technological expertise, supremacy of scientific knowledge. This era characterised by diffusion model of adoption in agriculture (Chambers 1992). Extension agents involved primarily in teaching farmers and in transfer of technology.	Post-war settlement schemes. Drive for increased production; agricultural optimism.
1970s Need for alternatives	Concern expressed about "giving a voice to the voiceless" specifically the poor in developing countries (Freire 1972). Increasing focus on learning, adult learning principles and group extension. Early experimentation of participatory approaches in the development field. Frustration over ineffectiveness of externally imposed and "expert" orientated forms (Chambers 1992). Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) grew out of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA).	Increase awareness in environmental issues. Drive for efficiency in agriculture. Recognition of interdisciplinary approaches.
1980s The participation boom	Change from top-down development to bottom-up, with an acknowledgement of value of local knowledge. Flourishing of participatory approaches and methodologies, including participatory action research and tools such as rich pictures and Venn diagrams, particularly amongst non-government organisations (NGOs).	Concerns about sustainability. Development of Landcare, central concept participation.
1990s The participatory imperative	Fervour about participation continued in the early 1990s. Participation became synonymous with "good" or "sustainable" (Guijt and Kaul Shar 1998 p. 4). Green (1988 p. 71) stressed that popularisation of participation was dangerous (problems often glossed over). Funding bodies began demanding community participation as a condition for funding. Push for participation stimulated proliferation of guidebooks and courses on "how to".	Rural and regional development focus. Building social capital.4 Emergence of transdisciplinary approaches.

(after Guijt and Kaul Shar 1998)

Those looking for alternatives in the 1970s were inspired by Paulo Freire's works (1996, 1st published 1970) from the education field. His process of *conscientization* is about learning — learning that raises people's awareness of their own ability to make a difference and which encourages action based on the individual's own knowledge. The sense of participation in this literature is that of changing power relations, with local people instilled with the belief that they do have power to influence their situation. In Australia, Landcare provides a good example of local people being empowered, as their knowledge is recognised as being valuable; those who have traditionally been responsible for decision-making have begin to accept that landholders have a voice.

In agricultural extension, there has been a shift away from the traditional linear model of diffusion originally proposed by Rogers (1962, 1983) and Rogers and Shoemaker (1971). This

---

[4] Social capital is defined as "the features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (Putnam 1993 p. 1967).

shift, which has been towards greater community governance (often referred to as "genuine" participation within the community development arena) with more flexible learning approaches, has been promoted by many (Chambers et al. 1989; Jiggins 1993; Korten 1980; Leeuwins and Pyburn 2002; Pretty 1999, 2002a; White et al. 1994). This literature highlights learning as an integral component of "genuine" participation, whether it is learning for conscientization, institutions learning from local people, or people learning from each other.

Participation in Australian natural resource management and agriculture has followed these trends, perhaps due largely to the realisation that previous approaches have failed (Buchy, Ross and Proctor 2000). Other reasons for the growth of community participation, and particularly regional level involvement in Australian land management have been suggested:

- increased access to information, more intrusive media, alienation from traditional structures and new sophistication within lobby groups (Davis 1996 p. 2),
- greater demands by citizens in the implementation of the regulations because of increasing government protection and enormous growth of social regulation (Mulligan 1990 p. 20),
- alienation of citizens from decision making by technical complexity, increasing people's desire for involvement (Mulligan 1990 p. 20),
- inability of current institutional arrangements to achieve sustainability (Dovers 1999; Dore and Woodhill 1999).

These reasons suggest that citizens are demanding greater decision-making power, more participatory democracy rather then representative democracy and that local communities have an increasing desire to be involved in and influence government decision-making processes.

2.1.1 Policy documents and other statements

The trends in participation can be traced through policy documents and statements by agencies, both international and Australian. The Australian approach to participation is historically based on the northern hemisphere literature (Syme 1991) so a brief review of international milestones is relevant to outline the history of participation and the shifting balance of power.

Participation originated in the field of community development (Warburton 1998) but has been endorsed by international organisations. The milestones below (Table 2.2) indicate that the United Nations and the World Bank are leading proponents of participation. The first major international document to promote "genuine" participation in sustainable development was the World Conservation Strategy, which strongly supported the participation of local people, emphasising the importance of local action.

Table 2.2 Some international milestones for participation

1953	Major institutional support for genuine participation began. The United Nations began using community development to describe self-help activities to tackle poverty/social inequity (Warburton 1998 p.18).
1973	World Bank landmark address brought credibility to "people's participation" (White et al. 1994 p.21).
1980	World Conservation Strategy: Living Resources Conservation for Sustainable Development popularised participation and community action: "individuals and community groups [want] to participate in decisions which affect their locality has been a notable movement of the past decade… enthusiasm for local action which offers great scope for building a resource saving society" (IUCN 1980 p. 70).
1987	Participation linked to sustainable development — sustainable development requires "a political system That secures effective citizen participation in decision-making" (WECD 1987 p. 65). Our Common Future: Brundtland report by the World Commission on Environment and Development stimulated discussion about "putting people first" and the search for "self-reliance" (Elkins 1986).: "the law alone cannot enforce common interest. It principally needs community knowledge and support, which entails greater public participation in the decisions which affect the environment….decentralising the management of resources upon which local communities depend, and giving these communities an effective say over the use of the resources. It will also require promoting citizens' initiatives, empowering people's organisations, and strengthening local democracy" (WECD 1987 p.63).
1992	Earth Summit conference Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil, formally established new forms of participation, central to decision-making. Principle 10 declares that environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. Agenda 21 statements also reflect this: • "the broadest possible participation … should be encouraged" (Agenda 21: 1.3) • integration to be promoted at every level, especially community and local scale (Agenda 21: 3.5) • government, NGOs should support a community driven approach to sustainability (Agenda 21: 3.7 Robinson 1992).
2002	World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg reinforced the need for constructive inclusive partnerships, dialogue and capacity-building; reaffirmed the role of indigenous people and the empowerment of women. It stated that sustainable development requires "broad-based participation in policy formation, decision-making and implementation at all levels" (Resolution 1, Annex 26: United Nations 2002 p. 4).

By the early 1990s, two important trends emerged – firstly to reject traditional top-down perspectives in favour of bottom-up people-centred development and secondly to emphasise education of all levels of society (Younis 1997 p. 300). Agenda 21, which was formulated at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, highlighted that:

> it is particularly important to focus on capacity building at the local level in order to support a community-driven approach to sustainability. (Agenda 21, 3.12: Robinson 1992)

Community-driven approaches were melded with top-down or state interventions to achieve the effective partnerships, as both are recognised as being needed, both internationally and in Australia. After the Brundtland Report, the Australian Commonwealth Government encouraged each Australian state to develop its own sustainability statements (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Some milestones and key policy documents related to Australian rangelands

1984	National Conservation Strategy for Australia established the grounds for public participation in both government and private sector decision-making (Carr 1993).
1987	Landcare endorsed by the Australian Conservation Foundation and the National Farmers' Federation (Toyne and Farley 1989).
1989	Prime Minister Bob Hawke's statement Our Country Our Future committed a financial contribution to cooperative action between community and government for environmental action (Carr 1993).
1991	A nationwide consultation program was undertaken as an important part of developing the Ecological Sustainable Development Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia 1992a).
1994	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission prepared a guide Community Based Planning: Principle and Practices, which suggests specific processes to empower communities and highlights some issues in developing community plans.
1994	Queensland Department of Primary Industries policy stated "client consultation should be considered during planning and implementation stages of all major projects that impact clients" (QDPI 1994 p. 2). Effective consultation in this document meant that clients should have a genuine opportunity to influence decisions.
1995	A new approach to rural development was promoted through the Rural Partnership Program with principles such as community involvement, equity and cultural diversity (DPIE 1995 pp. 4-5). Community ownership, self-reliance of rural communities, integration of programs and sustainable management of natural resources were encouraged as the basis for best practice (DPIE 1995a pp. 14-15).
1997	Indigenous participation was promoted in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rural Industry Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia 1997). Objectives include community decision-making, short- and long-term empowerment by providing a degree of self-sufficiency.
1997	Landcare and Integrated Catchment Management in Queensland were linked, aiming "to provide community leadership in partnership with government to achieve priority natural resource management, bio-diversity and sustainable production outcomes in Queensland" (Department of Natural Resources 1997 p. 1).
1998	Reducing the barriers to women's participation in government, industry and communities was one of the key principles stated in A Vision for change: National plan for women in agriculture and resource management (Commonwealth of Australia 1998). It emphasised increasing skills and building confidence as keys to empowering women.
1999	Managing Australia's Rangelands: National principles and guidelines for Rangeland Management focused on an "integrated, coordinated and participative planning processes, with a regional focus and local ownership, including all local and regional stakeholders" (Commonwealth of Australia 1999 p.7). It emphasised consultation, collaboration and partnerships with regional stakeholders, flexible and responsive planning for the purposes of capacity building, continuous learning and skill improvement.
2000	The National Action Plan is a joint commitment from Commonwealth, state and territory governments of $1.4 billion over 7 years, for regional solutions to salinity and water quality problems. All levels of government, community groups, individual and land managers and local businesses will work together. Intergovernmental agreements highlight the needs for capacity building, the development of integrated catchment/region plans by communities within a government framework (COAG 2000).

Many of these statements address participation in an ad hoc way (see Syme 1991). The vague mandate for participation in Australia has allowed agencies to interpret the need for participation, and the meaning and extent of participation, on a case-by-case basis. In any one state, land management agencies ascribe different meanings to the word *participation*. Many terms are used, often interchangeably, including *community engagement, community constituency, collaboration, client liaison, consultation* and *partnerships*; more recently, the term *community governance* has emerged. This suggests that conceptual clarity is lacking, and that there is little guidance for initiators of participation. Murthy (1998 p. 210) supported this

view by saying that in Australia, the purpose and characteristics of participation are rarely differentiated or clarified. This has undoubtedly contributed to lack of public credibility in participatory processes (Curtis and Lockwood 2000; Dovers 2000; Syme 1991).

Nonetheless, the style of guidelines for participation has changed since the 1990s. Early guidelines were often prescriptive, stipulating protocols, and based on the assumption that "one size fits all" (e.g. Commonwealth of Australia 1994; Queensland Department of Primary Industries 1994). Such blueprint approaches are gradually being replaced by more flexible guidelines, adapted for specific contexts (Aslin and Brown 2002; NSW Government 2004; Queensland Government 2003; Warringah Council 2004).

Many of the policy documents cited above (Table 2.2 and 2.3) promote true participation or community governance where the decision-making power is shared; however a gap exists between this rhetoric and the reality. Participation is often romanticised as a cure-all so that anything "participatory" is assumed to be "good" (Guijt and Kaul Shar 1998; Rogers 1992). Both in Australia and internationally, agencies claim to be using participatory approaches. However, the effectiveness of participation has been questioned (Dale and Bellamy 1998; Diesendorf and Hamilton 1997) and often, little progress has been made in translating ambitious plans into action (Korten 1980).

Sometimes, community participation is inappropriate, and poorly implemented participation can be worse than none at all. The result has been to maintain the status quo, even to strengthen the position of the traditional elite and disadvantage the poor, and heighten alienation of outcomes (Korten 1980; Pretty and Uphoff 2002 p. 156). From the perspective of environmental advocates, collaborative approaches are not always useful (Dukes and Firehock 2001).

Government authorities tend to both fear and need community participation. Approaches which genuinely foster empowerment are feared by many in power, including governments, because this may unsettle the status quo (Dale and Bellamy 1998 p. 34; Dovers 2001; World Bank 1998). However, governments need public support and adoption of new land management practices, yet open-ended involvement is less controllable (Pretty 2002a p. 156). Friedman (1992) highlighted the idea that local empowerment needed a strong state with a flexible and responsive bureaucracy. Success factors in managing change in regional and rural Australian communities now include the importance of partnerships involving individuals, families, community groups, government and even Commonwealth ministers (Commonwealth of Australia 2003; Regional Summit 2000). This trend recognises the need for an integration of bottom-up and top-down approaches.

Some policy documents and statements (Table 2.3), as well as the literature about participation, imply that traditional approaches such as transfer of technology are no longer useful, or used. However, this is not necessarily the case. While much of the literature, has idealised the benefits of participation, Tighe and Taplin (1990) point out that one must not assume that traditional approaches have been rejected. Different approaches are complementary (Figure 2.1).
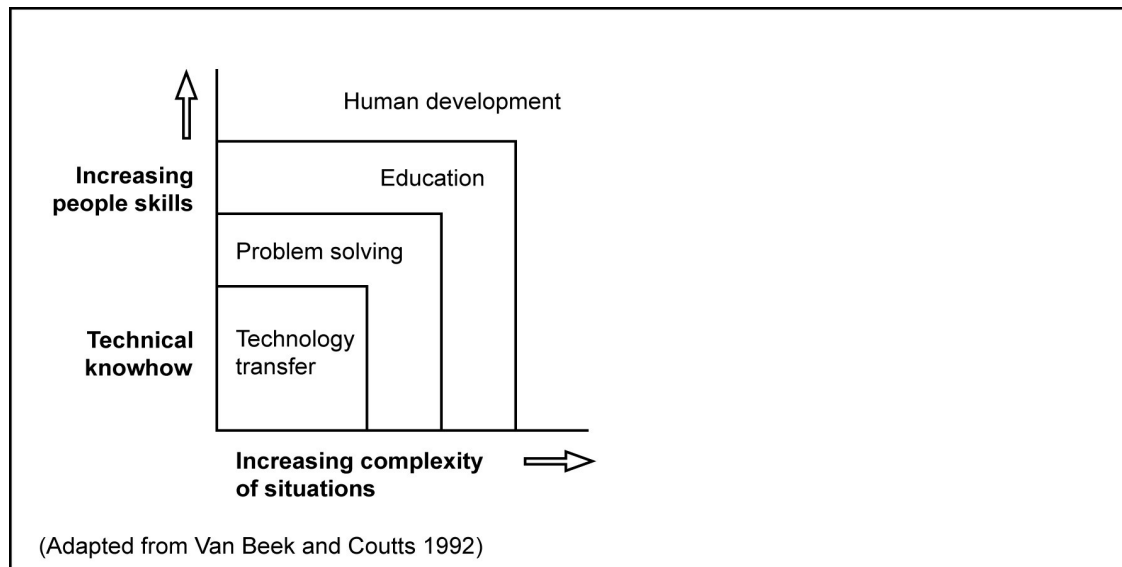

Figure 2.1 Complementarity of differing extension approaches

Different extension approaches are appropriate in different contexts, and require different types of learning — for example, creating awareness and information provision are appropriate for simple technology transfer, while experiential learning and action learning have been proposed for problem solving and human development (Blacket 1996; Clark 1996). Learning is integral to community participation, particularly the building of social capital and community governance. *What* people learn about is affected by power, as the choice of topics on offer is governed by the dominant discourses of the day. In agriculture in the 1990s, property management planning was "in vogue" and seen as a valuable tool for improving productivity. Also, *who* people learn from is affected by power relationships, for example landholders tend to learn more from their neighbours because of the credibility of the information. It is these power relationships, which underlie all learning and participation, with which this thesis is concerned.

Few guidelines exist to guide the choice between different approaches. Dukes and Firehock (2001) pose questions and a list of cautions, about when collaborative approaches are appropriate, fair and effective — these were intended to assist environmental organisations in America decide on whether or not they should be involved in collaborative decision-making about environmental issues. Even rarer are discussions that assess the implications of different approaches in terms of power relations and the creation and sharing of knowledge. The

following sections explain different types of participation and how power is related, as this understanding is needed to improve participatory approaches.

2.2 Different types of participation

The previous discussion on meaning and trends in participation indicates that participation comes in different forms. Several models have been developed, each proposing a spectrum of participatory approaches, and these will now be discussed. The different types of participation are differentiated according to a variety of criteria, often including power.

For many observers, participation is ultimately about power relations. Power is the most common criterion used to identify different types of participation (Slocum et al. 1995). In this sense, power is manifest in a variety of levels of control between researchers or institutions and local people. In simple typologies, levels of power sharing are expressed merely as a dichotomy; in complex typologies, however, many levels of power sharing are described. The terminology differs between typologies.

The World Bank (1996 p. 3) has named the more traditional approach the "external expert stance" as opposed to a "participatory stance" where decision-making power is shared with local people. These polarised positions of power sharing are also referred to as "top-down" and "bottom-up". Participation is described also in terms of dichotomies such as shallow versus deep or weak versus strong. These terms are value-laden and imply that participation that does not share power in decision-making is "wrong" and the only "true" participation occurs where local people have a say. Carr (1994) argues that approaches that integrate both ends of this spectrum are needs to achieve sustainable land management. Others (Greene-Roesel and Hinton 1998) suggest that various levels may exist simultaneously. Some typologies incorporate a wide spectrum of participatory approaches (Table 2.4).

Arnstein (1969) is perhaps the most well known. She employed a model that differentiates eight rungs on a ladder of citizen participation. According to Arnstein, only three levels are "true" participation, but other levels often masquerade as attempts at it. Pretty (1995a, 1995b, 1999) proposed two versions of his typology, both very similar to Arnstein's. Jiggins' version (1993) is different in that it links agricultural extension models and techniques to the roles of people involved. As she explained, models are representations of reality, but can also be used as analytic tools or as guides for action by determining "fitness for function" (Jiggins 1993 p. 615). Cornwall (1995) suggested a continuum with six positions. This enquiry explores whether participation typologies can be used to assist in determining which level of control is appropriate in a particular context.

34

Table 2.4 Types of participation

Arnstein's model	Jiggins' model	Pretty's model	Cornwall's model
Manipulation Therapy		Manipulative participation	Co-option
Informing	Transfer of technology (ToT) includes Training and Visit.		Co-operation
Consulting (e.g. attitude survey)	Farming systems research and extension (farmers not involved in diagnosis)	Passive participation Participation by consultation	Consultation
Placating (representative on a board or committee)		Participation for material goals	
	5-element model (decisions made collaboratively)		
	Chain-linked (decisions made interactively)	Functional participation (to achieve the goals of an external agency)	Collaboration
	Participatory Technology Development (PTD), includes RRA.		
Partnership	Natural Resource Management (NRM)	Interactive participation	Co-learning
Delegated power			
Citizen control		Self-mobilisation	Collective action

(Adapted from Arnstein 1969; Cornwall 1995; Jiggins 1993; Pretty 1995b, 1999)

One of the problems is that these typologies imply that there is an ideal level of power sharing. As Warburton (1998) has pointed out, the literature suggests that more is better, but this is questionable. Several problems have been identified with participation typologies:

1. Devolving power may not be desirable. Murthy (1998) stated that it is assumed that a greater level of participation leads to greater empowerment and more effective projects; however, few studies have examined the impact of participation.

2. Devolving power may not be feasible. Local people do not always wish to be involved. As Guijt and Kaul Shah (1998) pointed out, 100% participation is a myth.

3. Participation does not occur in a static situation. Participation levels change during the life cycle of any project; often, high levels of participation by local people occur in early stages (Guijt and Kaul Shah 1998 p. 10).

4. "Insider" and "outsider" perspectives are simplified; for example not all government staff are regarded as outsiders (Guijt and Kaul Shah 1998 p. 10).

5. Diversity is ignored. Initiators may tend to use typologies in a prescriptive manner that can stifle creativity. As Guijt and Kaul Shah (1998) pointed out, the purpose of participation changes even between research and action-orientated contexts.

6. The differences in perceptions between actors are neglected; particularly about what degree of participation is appropriate (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995).

7. The importance of scale is ignored. The choice of spatial and organisational scales depends on the goal; for example changes in land management practice usually need to occur at the

local scale; while policy change may be needed at the state or national scale. Horizontal and vertical links between community and organisational units are often missing (but are needed) as many land management issues encompass multiple scales and multiple interests.

This discussion indicates that various dimensions of participation are critically important: (a) social context, such as attitudes and perceptions, will influence the type of participation that is appropriate or possible, and (b) different participatory approaches may be appropriate in different stages of the same project. Participation needs to be flexible, sensitive to the complexity of community relationships and designed for the specific context. The various key concepts of participation are presented in the model below.

2.3 Dimensions of participation — a model

The above discussion highlighted that participation, in its many forms, is embraced widely in natural resource management and agriculture, yet problems still exist. Many aspects of participation are important when participatory activities are being designed and planned. The dimensions which were mentioned include the context, the purpose of participation, the scale at which the participatory activities take place, who and how many people are involved, the stage of the project at which community participation occurs, the capacity of the participants — both the government staff and the community members — and the design and methods employed to undertake the participatory activity. All of these dimensions are permeated by power, as is described below.

Power is seen as a key element of participation. The typologies indicate that the degree to which power is shared between actors is commonly used to differentiate between types of participation. Power is at the centre of the following model (Figure 2.2) because it is the focus of this thesis, and because it influences all of the various dimensions of participation. Power is represented as an irregular "circle" or "wobbly wheel", to indicate that it has indeterminate boundaries, and is constantly changing and moving.

Context is also seen as pervasive, and is the background dimension which also influences the whole of the participatory activity. As the context changes, so the nature of the participation may need to change. All of the other dimensions need to be considered when planning and designing participatory activities. The importance of each may be different according to the specific context. As a result, the same participatory process, run by the same facilitator in different regions, is highly likely to have different outcomes.
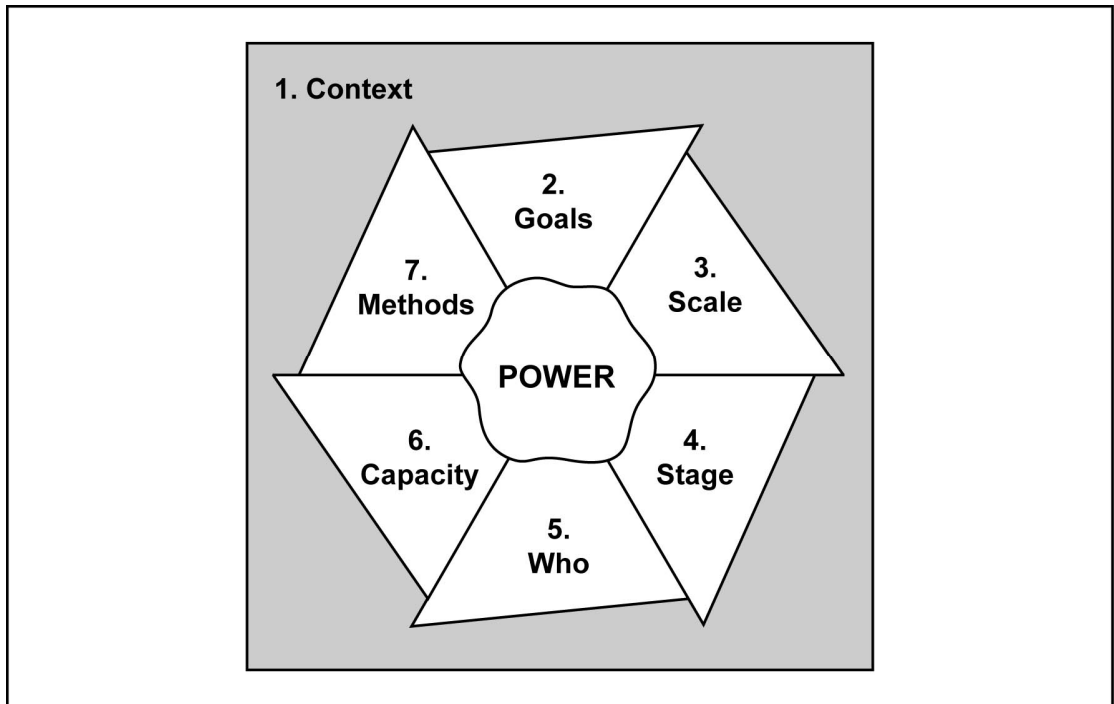
Figure 2.2 Model for power in participation

Each of these dimensions is discussed below. Power, because of its importance, is the topic of the next chapter, Chapter 3, so is mentioned only in passing in this section (2.3.1).

2.3.1 Context

Many authors emphasise the importance of context in participation (Dovers 2001; Gabriel 1991; Heeks 1999; Ison 1993). Human behaviour is determined by the context (Ison 1993). Behaviour influences, and is influenced by, power relations. The context of power is the relationships among the systems, groups and individuals involved in the participatory activity. This in turn includes the environmental, geographical, economic, social and cultural contexts within which the participation occurs — the existing social networks, the existing rural culture, and the existing systems of governance within that particular community. All of these contexts are obviously interrelated.

Jiggins (1993) and Waters-Bayer Haile and Alebikiya (1999) stress that the context is more important in arid areas, as extensive grazing systems are different from those found in more-arable farming areas. Arid areas are in a constant state of flux, subject to environmental and climatic extremes, and changeable market conditions (Jiggins 1993). The arid environment of the Australian rangelands usually has lower agricultural productivity per hectare, and small scattered populations in comparison to the coastal regions. Because of the vast distances between people, time and money are important limitations to their attending activities.

Thus, participatory approaches, and models for innovation to encourage land use changes, need to be different in the rangelands compared to other contexts. Some processes, or the timing and the way the process is used, are more suitable for the rangelands, and thus preferred by the rural people living there. Extension officers need to be cognisant of the specific rural context in which they are working — or at least be prepared to ask the community what is appropriate. Rural people often want a say in the format of participation, not just the content. For example, meetings will be better attended if organised outside shearing and mustering seasons. The environmental, socio-economic and cultural contexts for this research are detailed in Chapter 5.

Whatever the context, it is dynamic over space and time. Highly variable climatic, volatile international markets and deteriorating social conditions establish the societal context within which participation and power relationships operate. Rural people are stressed by many aspects of their changing context. Coping with risk, changing legislation and policy frameworks, the number of new groups they are expected to attend, adapting to community and individual aspirations and even past experiences of participation influence people's desire and ability to participate. As the context changes, so the type of participation and the power relationships may need to change. Ideally, processes and government departments are flexible enough to incorporate changes as these occur. Context impacts on many aspects of participation, including how motivated people are to participate in government projects, and community needs, aspirations and goals. Context influences each of the dimensions of participation (as listed in the model Figure 2.2), and the purpose or goals of participation is discussed next.

2.3.2 Goal

The goal or purpose of participation refers to (a) the reasons that the initiating agency has for involving local people in land management programs, and (b) the reasons for the local people wanting to participate. For facilitators and practitioners who are responsible for participative programs, the range of intentions is wide: some are ideological and some are simply pragmatic.

Learning and empowerment are commonly promoted in land management and agriculture world-wide (e.g. Chambers 1999; Dovers 2000; Korten 1980; Pretty 1999). However, the meaning of "learning" and the philosophy behind the various forms of learning and teaching varies. Learning approaches are desirable as they (a) have the potential to be flexible enough to embrace error (Korten 1980), (b) can be adaptive, to allow for ever-changing environmental circumstances (Lee 1993; Walters and Holling 1990) and (c) do not presume to fully understand the means or the ends in advance (Bawden 1995). Learning approaches usually have an emancipatory or empowerment intention, which is frequently stated as the goal of participation

(Syme 1994). However, "genuine empowerment can never be conferred from outside ... community organizations are the place where people learn the praxis of real democracy" (Friedman 1992 p. 77, 78). Real democracy in Friedman's (1992) language is an inclusive democracy where local people are empowered — a civil society which infers rights and obligations. Power in this sense develops through building relationships, and develops when community participation is fostered. The end goal in terms of NRM programs or sustainable communities is not pre-determined.

Participation can be the purpose of the activity and an *end in itself*, but participation can also be the *means to a particular outcome*. Several authors have suggested that participation needs to be an end in itself as well as a means to an end to have long-term benefits where different approaches are synthesised (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Guijt 1998; Pretty 1999; Warburton 1998). Within resource management, participation is often a means to an end — to produce positive outcomes for resource management. Yet the benefits of improved decision-making, better facilitation of action, and more-effective programs (Diesendorf and Hamilton 1997; Dovers 2000; Keen and Stocklmayer 1998; Lawrence, Vanclay and Furze, 1992; Ross and Brown 1994) do not always eventuate. Community participation is plagued with failures.

Some goals can illicit positive responses from participants, while others contribute to feelings of distrust and even anger between communities and government agencies (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5 Goals from a government perspective

Goals with likely negative responses	Goals with likely positive responses
Education or "cure citizens, thus altering public opinion (Arnstein 1969)	Improve effectiveness and efficiency of NRM programs (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Dovers 2000) by tapping local knowledge
Assess public opinion to diffuse opposition, and neutralise difficult people; co-optation in Burke's classic analysis (Burke 1968)	Encourage learning about land management and adoption of sustainable practices (Curtis and Lockwood 2000; Korten 1980; Pretty 1999)
Follow agency recommendations for public involvement (Landre and Knuth 1993)	Build public support for implementation and action (Diesendorf and Hamilton 1997)
Improve public image (Landre and Knuth 1993)	Ensure transparency, accountability (Dovers 2000)
Delaying tactic; smokescreen for government inaction (Dovers 2000)	Increase capacity of community or citizen competency (Curtis and Lockwood 2000)
Free labour or other assistance from outside government (Dovers 2000; Landre and Knuth 1993)	Assess public views to improve decision-making (Ross and Brown 1994) and improve service delivery Landre and Knuth 1993).
Defend government decisions about land management (Syme 1994)	Resolving community conflict (Ross and Brown 1994)
Enhance staff careers (Heeks 1999)	Allow debate about social values (Dovers 2000)

Frustration is generated when participation purports to "listen to the people" and "incorporate their concerns", but merely follows the agency mandate. In contrast, positive responses usually occur when power relationships are transparent, or some form of power sharing occurs.

Many of the goals of participation can be related to the various typologies of participation and the degree of power sharing implied (see Section 2.2.1). For example, public education, public contribution and public consultation (three uses of participation suggested by Ross and Brown 1994) imply one-way communication and limited power sharing, while public partnerships imply two-way communication and a "higher" level of power sharing.

The motivation and goals of local Australian communities are not commonly reported. Andrew, Breckwoldt, Crombie, Aslin, Kelly and Holmes (2003) and Kilpatrick, Johns, Murray-Prior and Hart (1999) are some of the few who examine goals of local people (see Table 2.6).

Table 2.6 Goals for learning from community perspective

Improved efficiency	Improved farm business viability
Acquisition of marketing information and skills	Compliance with legal requirements
Better manage risk	Increased environmental awareness
Personal development	Development of new relationships/friends

(Andrew et al. 2004; Kilpatrick et al. 1999)

Learning of some sort is probably one of the key goals for participation that is common to both landholders and government agencies. Often, the reasons for local people wishing to participate differ from the goals of the agency (Chamala 1990; Chamala, Coutts and Pearson 1999), and this is supported by a comparison of Table 2.5 and Table 2.6. To complicate the issue, many programs have multiple goals (Bellamy, McDonald, Syme and Butterworth 1999).

Conflict and frustration can arise because of incompatibility between goals. As highlighted above, a community can have goals different from those of government. Within land management activities, conflict is inevitable as there are increasing and often opposing demands for finite resources such as water and land. A mismatch of goals at different scales — such as local aspirations and national goals — often causes conflict (Christenson and Robinson 1989). One way to avoid some of the negative outcomes of participation is to ensure that the goals of participation are clearly stated and, where appropriate, negotiated.

The call for institutions to strive for greater clarity in participatory approaches is not new. Both goals and roles of participants need to be clarified (Guijt 1998; Landre and Knuth 1993). In Australia, Kirkpatrick and Fulton (2003) call for greater clarity of purpose for sustainable agriculture, while Dovers (2000), and Davidson and Stratford (2000) call for clarity of roles and responsibilities in Australian NRM and ESD. Negotiating goals with participants can alleviate confusions and negativity, as negotiation indicates a willingness to share power.

However, defined goals and roles are not without some limitations. Highly regimented roles may prevent creativity and innovation. The rigidity of government administration is one of the problems of contemporary democratic institutions (Dovers 2000; Fung and Wright 2003b; Hirst 1994). Chamala, Coutts and Pearson (1999) suggest that goals should not change rapidly, otherwise continuity and stability of groups is threatened. Still, goals and roles do need to be fluid and changed over time, rather than being absolute. Re-negotiation of goals and roles may be needed when dealing with complex systems that change over time.

Goals also relate to other dimensions of participation. *Inter alia*, goals are interdependent with the scale of the project, as is described in the following section.

2.3.3 Scale

Most land management and environmental issues are part of a complex web of relationships that encompass more than one scale. For example, free-roaming feral animals can cross property boundaries; and weeds can spread down river catchments, thereby crossing state boundaries. The term *scale* in this thesis refers to the spatial size or spread of the natural resource management issues or the focus of participatory activities. Thus, scale can be national, state, regional, catchment or local. The phrase *local scale* refers to a paddock, a property or a group of adjoining properties in a district. Participation across different scales is vertical participation, as opposed to horizontal participation that occurs between agencies, business and government organizations (Figure 2.3).
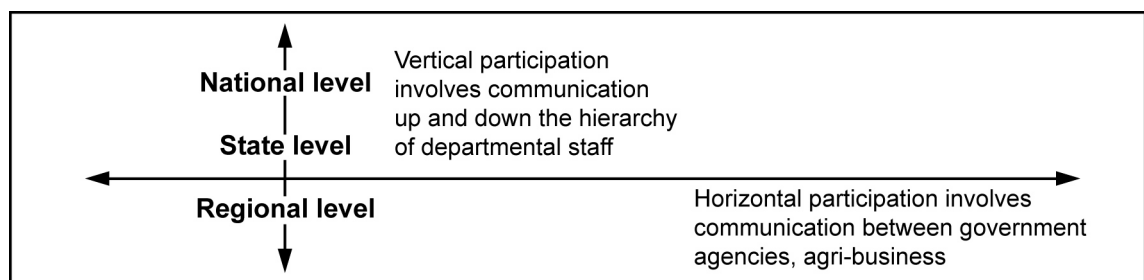

National level Vertical participation involves communication up and down the hierarchy
State level of departmental staff
Regional level Horizontal participation involves communication between government agencies, agri-business

Figure 2.3 Vertical and horizontal communication

Other types of scale are important in participation and for power relationships. Differences in time, where impacts may take a long time to appear, can also be a challenge in land management (Dore and Woodhill 1999 p. 203). This is referred to as *timeframe*.

Organisational scale, or the size and number of relevant administrative units, is often complex. In some regions such as the Murray-Darling Basin catchment, several states and many local

government shires are involved. Decisions made at one scale can impact on practices at another scale; for example decisions about Landcare funding are made at the state and national scale, and impact on land management at the local scale; but local people have little contact across scales. One example where local people were successful in influencing the decisions made at the state scale, was the community action to stop irrigation licenses being issued on the Cooper River. Yet the power to influence decisions across scales can be illusive.

Scale is related to various other dimensions of participation, as well as power. The best scale for environmental issues can vary, and multiple scales with multiple purposes are common. Bryden (1994) calls for decisions to be taken at the "lowest possible scale" — the subsidiarity principle. At this scale it is practical to involve a larger number of people. Face-to-face contact is vital to overcome suspicion on both sides, to build trust and to establish some sense of equity within relationships. The power of individuals to influence decisions seems reduced at the larger scales, so much so that Curtis and Lockwood (2000) suggest that the smaller number of people representing the community at the regional level threatens the legitimacy of regional groups, and as such participation seems merely tokenistic. Representative participation methods, rather than inclusive methods, are more prevalent at larger scales.

Yet making decisions at the local scale, even if participation is optimal, may not be sufficient for the local community to feel empowered. Disempowerment can occur if citizens do not understand how to act in ways that change the root causes of environmental problems. In Australia, ICM volunteers who attend regional meetings and participate in collaborative decision-making, often feel disempowered, believing that they are unable to implement sound management practices on the ground (Bellamy et al. 2002). It seems that people have difficulty understanding how to change issues that take place at, or are connected to, scales that are different from those to which they are accustomed.

One of the reasons is that there are poor links across scales. For example, community Landcare people tend not to go to national and state Landcare conferences, and government officers who have the power to make decisions about funding rarely get to the field days and local meetings of the 3000 or more Landcare groups in Australia (Brown 1996 p. 20). In NSW, the regionally based Catchment Management Committees (CMCs) have a direct role in decision-making for funding for Landcare groups, but until 1995, few CMCs had a complete and up-to-date list of all the Landcare groups in their catchment (Bailey 1997 p. 134). The breakdown in communication noted in Landcare by Brown and Bailey is a consequence of scale.

The new National Action Plan regional arrangements (COAG 2000; Queensland Government 2002) seem to be shifting the balance of power to the local communities and encouraging greater co-ordination. This may overcome some of these problems of scale, but they may not. The danger is that the mechanisms for scaling-up and scaling-down are not well established. Local communities often seem to have little power to influence larger scales, as few mechanisms for communication across scales exist.

2.3.4 Stage

The term *stage* refers to the time during a project at which stakeholders become involved. Local community participation may occur at various stages of any project. Power relations often influence who get involved, and when. The number and type of stages within a project vary according to the type of project, but some examples are:

Preparation, scene setting	Problem identification
Goal and agenda setting	Research project development
Situation analysis	Seeking financial support
Solution generation	Conducting the research project
Action planning	Producer demonstration/trial site
Action and evaluation	Extension/dissemination of results
	Commercialising research results
(Dick 1991 p. 189)	(Chamala, Coutts and Pearson 1999 p. 15)

One way to understand the relationship between power and stage is to look at the stages of group formation, such as Tuckman's (1965) classic description with four stages: *Form, Storm, Norm, Perform*. In group formation, every stage has different power relationships; some stages such as Storm are characterised by conflict with the working out of power relationships between individuals. Norm and Perform are characterised by more stable relationships where the dynamics of power between individuals has been established.

Different views exist about when people need to be involved. Lee (1993) suggests that adaptive management[5] processes need centralised planning and decentralised implementation, which could be interpreted to mean that community participation should occur only at the implementation stage. An alternative view is that stakeholders need to be involved in the early planning stages (Dovers 2001 p. 13; Mitchell 1989) and problems-identification stage of

---

[5] Adaptive management is a system of management where scientific experimentation and resource management progress collaboratively; initially developed by Holling (1978, 1995), and Walters and Holling (1990).

projects (Pretty and Uphoff 2002 p. 246). Mitchell (1989) believes that if public involvement begins at the normative (where decisions are made about what ought to be done) and the strategic level (where decisions are about what can be done) rather than at the operational level (where decisions focus on what will be done), some of the protracted debates can be avoided. This thinking is in line with many environmental activists, action learning specialists and community development practitioners who tend to promote local involvement in all stages of the process: planning, reflection, action and evaluation (e.g. Chamala 1990; Dick 1998; Jennings 2003; King 2000).

Looking back at Tuckman's stages, we can see that decisions made early in the process with a non-established group are likely to involve conflict. However, this conflict may be more about power plays between individuals than about the land management issue per se. However, if government officers always go to established groups, the scope of views represented in decision-making is limited; and leaving community involvement to a later stage in the project is not appropriate, as suggested by Burke (1968) and others above.

Various two-dimensional matrix tables have been developed. Priscoli and Homenuck (1986) relate stages in the project (issue identification, evaluation, decision-making) to public participation objectives; in another matrix the stages are related to publics (those who are reached, those who are involved), and constraints (time, cost and special circumstances). Chamala, Coutts and Pearson (1999) note that the type of participation and the degree of power sharing depend on the stage of the project; they also use a matrix to work out the level of interest and the impact different stakeholder groups may have in particular projects. The influence of stakeholders on the project hints at the importance of power relationships — some stakeholder groups may have considerable power to influence outcomes.

While these may be useful tools when participatory activities are being planned, such two-dimensional matrices do not present a holistic picture. Participation is multi-dimensional (see Figure 2.2). Other links occur. The stage of the project is related to all of the other dimensions of participation, including power; yet in the literature, links between all of these dimensions are rarely discussed.

The stage when people are involved is important, because ownership and commitment are more likely to occur if people share power for defining the problem, then for planning and developing the project. Flexibility is obviously required in the process, in the facilitation skills to handle contentious situations, and in allowing appropriate time to work through debates and conflict as these arise. In some contexts, the various stages may require different people to be involved.

2.3.5 Who is involved?

The dimension of "who should be involved" has two aspects: (a) the specific *individuals* and groups who should be involved and (b) the *number of people* who need to be involved. There is a growing diversity of stakeholder groups with an interest in how the Australian rangelands are managed , thus making it more difficult to choose who, and how many people, should be involved in participatory activities.

The recognition of the importance of "who is involved" is growing. Questions such as "Who is included in participatory activities? How representative are they? Who is excluded? Who benefits and who bears the costs?" have assumed some importance in the literature (Chambers 1999; Chambers et al. 1998; Freidmann 1992; Guijt 1998; Hirst 1994; Ife 1995; Pretty 1995a; Slocum et al. 1995). The role of women in agriculture and other gender issues are addressed in the literature, even though most still complain about discriminatory practices (Buchy 2001; Guijt and Kaul Shar 1998). In Australia, calls for inclusiveness in participation are now found in policy documents as well as in academic articles (Alston 1995; Carson 2000; Dovers 2001; Ife 1995; MDBC 2002; NSW Government 2004; Queensland Government 2003).

Diversity of opinion in NRM and ESD is important. As Pretty (2002a) says, it does matter who tells the stories, because the land contains many meanings and different constructions for people. Development practitioners often speak of communities as if they are an undifferentiated whole (Slocum et al. 1995); and same criticism applies to NRM and agricultural officers in the Australian context. Rural communities in Australia are diverse, as is noted by Morrisey (1999) and Vanclay and Lawrence (1995) in their descriptions of different rural community types.

Some viewpoints are not heard because of power dynamics. The dominance of certain discourses can prevent some voices from being heard. Alternative and marginalised discourses are usually dismissed because they are seen as radical or irrelevant. The idea of a practitioners' discourse about "rural communities" denies the existence of the many "rurals" — the variety of communities with their individual meanings.

Also, some people or groups of people do not have the opportunity to be heard because of discrimination. In third world countries, people are disadvantaged in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, age, physical and mental disabilities (King 2000; Vaughan and Hogg 2002). In my experience, age, place of birth, job position and language also play a part in ascribing powerful positions in rural Australia. Facilitators from government and other institutions do influence the meetings because of their position, and yet few of them realise the impact of their position.

Indeed, people's positions in the group do influence power relationships and the information that others are willing to share (Scoones and Thompson 1994). Fisher (2003), Guijt and Kaul Shar (1998) and Murthy (1998) all note the contradictions in relation to the role of "expert" or "government official", and the impossibility of these people acting in bi-partisan ways. Also, government staff are cast in the potentially conflicting roles of being an agent of change as well as being an agent of control (Fisher 2003). This may occur within their individual role; for example if one person is the facilitator of a Landcare group and also sits on the Regional Assessment Panels for deciding on Landcare funding. Even if their role is not internally in conflict as in this example, there are always conflicts within the institutions, with sections pitted against each other. Facilitators, government staff and scientists all need to be aware of how power dynamics can influence their relationships with the community, and the interactions within the communities.

Inclusiveness may be a desirable principle, but it is difficult to achieve. Carson (2000) suggests that while inclusiveness and representativeness are general principles for effective participation, there are times when representativeness is not necessary. For her, the purpose of participation and the role of those involved are important in achieving effective consultation and participation. The capacity of institutions, and the financial resources available often determine how many are involved. Who is to be involved and who should be involved are "interrelated" to the purpose, scale and stage, but the other dimensions are sometimes interrelated as well.

Those who are involved may also need to change over time and space, depending on the changing context, and the changing needs and goals of individual participants. If we agree with the principles of adaptive management, then participatory approaches need to be flexible to account for changing circumstances, and new knowledge developing over time. Thus, the stage at which local people may need or wish to be involved may change over time. Policy implementation and project actions can have unintended consequences (Bryden 1994 p. 221). It is desirable to have a feedback mechanism that involves the locals in assessing the outcomes, so that policy makers can understand the impacts of any decisions made or actions taken.

Another dimension of participation is the capacity of people, for stakeholders often participate according to their abilities, or perceptions of their abilities. This is discussed in the next section.

2.3.6 Capacity

Rural communities and government agencies need to be involved in participatory land management. This section discusses the capacity of government individuals and institutions, as well as the capacity of local individuals and rural community groups for participation.

The capacity of the participants includes the ability and skills of the people involved to be able to communicate to each other effectively, as well as the resources such as time and financial capacity. To develop partnerships, certain skills are needed, so that people feel confident to be part of the process. In this sense, capacity relates to power. The individual's power in any relationship is associated, at least partly, with their communication abilities. Guijt (1998) suggested that in participation, communication skills need to be seen as "essential complementary skills, rather than as optional social skills". Her work was carried out in Australian forestry but the same applies to the rangelands. However, skills and training in communication are often overlooked, particularly by government agencies.

Institutional government capacity

A lack of communication skills and abilities of government staff can exacerbate power inequities. Government institutions and staff are gatekeepers of information, and if their written and verbal communication skills are poor, local people's ability to access information is hindered. Locals may attend meetings, but as Keen and Stocklmayer (1999) found, participation does not mean that people receive the information they require. So, intentionally or unintentionally, government staff can contribute to local people feeling powerless.

The changing face of participation has left some government staff ill-equipped. Most have a background of technological and scientific training. Skills in facilitation and encouraging social learning are often limited (King 2000). Some staff are concerned that the role of facilitator devalues their expertise (Cavaye 1999); yet research has found that the more involved agency staff were with local community, the more value local people placed on the technical expertise of government officers (Cavaye 1999). Institutions need structures and system skills to enable both vertical and horizontal participation (see Figure 2.3).

Horizontal participation is perhaps not as well recognised as being a problem. In Queensland, there are separate bodies concerned with vegetation management, water allocation and catchment management (Bellamy et al. 2002). Alexander (1995 p. 76) states that to seriously address sustainability, a very wide administrative support system involving a wide range of government departments is required; that is, excellent horizontal participation. Cooperation between government agencies is still one of the major barriers to effective participation.

The problems that government bureaucracies have with participatory processes are well documented, both internationally (e.g. Friedman 1992; Guijt and Kaul Shar 1998; Hirst 1994; Korten 1980) and in Australia (Brunkhorst, Röling and Coop 1999; Burke 1998; Dore and Woodhill 1999; Dovers 1995, 2001; Edwards 2002; McDonald 1991). Existing democratic institutions with representative government structures have several limitations when attempting to undertake community participation (Hirst 1994 p. 13). This is highlighted in Table 2.7 below.

Table 2.7 Institutional limitations and solutions for participation

Limitations of government institutions	Possible solutions
Centralised institutions have an ability to respond to diverse community needs (Korten 1980 p. 484)	Flexible, responsive approaches (Lee 1993; Pretty 1999)
The rigidity of institutions means that only single-loop learning is possible in this context (Lee 1993); with no questioning of underlying values	Double and triple loop learning (King 2000)6
Short-term funding arrangements for NRM projects and human resources limit security (Dovers 2001). In my experience, three-year contracts for staff are common-place in NRM and agricultural agencies in Queensland. Local groups spend too much time looking for funding, rather than on-ground works	Long-term funding, with a commitment from government to ensure certainty (Dovers 2000; 2001)
Participation needs time, as the process of social change is slow. Follow-up activities may be required in addition to initial plans (Guijt and Kaul Shar 1998)	Organisational commitment must span years, not months (Guijt and Kaul Shar 1998 p. 18)
Loss of capacity for innovation through conformity with bureaucratic norms (Freidman 1992 p. 141), and the same rules for everyone regardless of the context	Smaller projects which are tailor-made and autonomous (Friedman 1992 p. 141)
Easy to lose impetus because bureaucracies are rigid, with many rules and regulations (Hirst 1994)	Encourage involvement of local people (e.g. Pretty 2002a)

The solutions often seem simplistic, yet are difficult to implement because government departments have poor horizontal communication, and the complex problems are entrenched within the structures and systems of the government and bureaucracies themselves. Some successes have been achieved in Australia. One of the greatest achievements of Landcare is seen as getting the Federal Departments related to conservation and agriculture working together more closely (Alexander 1995). Still, excellent participation within and between institutions is not sufficient to achieve sustainable land management.

Rural community capacity

Local people also need skills to be able to participate effectively. The need for high-level communication skills for local communities has been in Queensland's rural communities in Queensland (Cavaye 2004; Claydon et al. 1999; Comber and Pullar 1995). A poor

---

6 Single loop learning is correcting errors by changing behaviour; double loop learning questions the underlying assumptions behind routine behaviour; triple loop learning goes further by examining the underlying assumptions of values, and learning about single and double loop learning (Bawden and Packham 1993; King 2000).

understanding of government language, bureaucratise and scientific jargon is one issue influencing the capacity of local communities to interact with government. As noted by Fisher (2003) and Steel (2003), the language of economics dominates almost every sphere of decision-making. Landholders need to learn "government speak" (or the language of government), as well as the way governments do business, to be effective in the institutional arena. Alternatively, a common language needs to be found.

Landholders often seem to lack confidence in their own knowledge. Carr notes that "farmers still believe that their kind of knowledge does not count as much as scientific wizardry" (1993 p. 247). Ironically, there is increasing recognition about the value of local knowledge, but many landholders still believe that scientific knowledge is superior to their experiential knowledge. Many professional organisations reinforce this notion, by expecting landholders to receive rather than acquire knowledge (Pretty and Uphoff 2002 p. 245); they are certainly not expected to create knowledge. Thus landholders, as well as scientists and government officials, are trapped in the dominant discourse that assumes that science and technology will provide all of the solutions needed for sustainable land management. This can mean that landholders do not see themselves as able to equally share the power to make decisions with scientists, at least not for land outside their own property.

Rural groups sometimes struggle with the skills needed for participation. Increasingly, ability in project management and finance are required, as government funding bodies have strict rules about accountability. Rural people also need to be able to manage group interactions and networking effectively, especially when representatives are required to collect information and then feed back the outcomes of meetings to their constituents and communities. In summary, government institutions need to encourage local communities to become skilled in participation, for without these abilities, equitable partnerships will be impossible. Likewise, government facilitators need to have the appropriate skills, and the institutions and bureaucratic systems need to be flexible and responsive enough to undertake genuine participation, for bad participation may have worse outcomes than no participation at all.

2.3.7 Design and methods

A lack of methodological clarity has been reported in developing countries by Guijt (1998) and Guijt and Kaul Shah (1998). They suggest that far too much focus is placed on the design, methods and techniques employed, while other dimensions of participation are not given sufficient attention. The same is true in Australia: extension officers at the 2003 Australasian-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) conference suggested that extension methods cannot be

used as standard "recipes"; rather, flexibility and responsiveness are required to build relationships crucial to effective participation (for example Boyd 2003).

Designing participatory activities involves several components, including choosing the principles that guide the process, and selecting the various methods, techniques and tools that are to be used. The following box (Box 2.1) indicates the meaning of the terms, methods, techniques and tools. The range of participatory designs, methods, techniques and tools from which government facilitators can choose is enormous.

Several levels of detail within the components of design need to be considered. Similar to the hierarchy of mission, goals and objectives, design has several levels, namely framework, methods and techniques, and tools. A series of methods and techniques are usually linked together to form the design of participatory activities. In this thesis, the framework of methodology is overarching, often with just a few key principles which can be adapted to fit the situation; methods are then chosen to fit this framework; and tools and techniques are chosen from a huge array of possibilities, again to fit within the two levels above. This hierarchical arrangement is highlighted in the figure below.
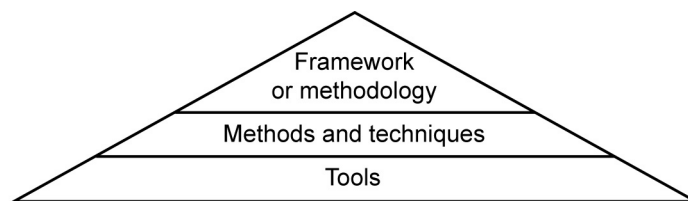
Framework or methodology: This is the over-arching approach with principles or laws to guide the choice and implementation of methods, techniques and tools used within participatory activities. Framework is the term used in soft systems (Checkland 1985b); while generally in the social sciences, the loosely corresponding term is "methodology". Some examples include grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1995), action learning (Dick 1996), soft systems methodology (Checkland 1981), or critical systems thinking (Flood and Jackson 1991). While I adhere to a fairly pragmatic approach for extension practitioners, where one can use whatever tools are appropriate to the task, the pure approach is to have a rationale which consciously uses methods and tools within support the chosen methodology, which has a theoretical link back to a specific paradigm (Jackson 1997).

Methods and techniques: These are the procedures used to gather and analyse information in research (Blaikie 1995 p. 7) or in participation; the way in which activities are undertaken e.g. focus groups (Krueger, 1988), mail surveys (Dillman 1978), FIDO model (Dick 1991) or Rapid Rural Appraisal (Pretty 1999). Techniques are often used to achieve specific outcomes within the broader method; e.g. funnelling, which is a questioning strategy used in interviews (Minchiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander 1990) or mindmaps (Buzan and Buzan 1995).

Tools: These are specific ways of undertaking broader methods or techniques. Tools can be devices to extend the usefulness of methods or techniques such as audio-visual aids or computer programs, or the seating arrangement of the room to facilitate equal discussion (Clark 1996). Tools tend to be used to assist in the implementation of individual segments of the design.

Box 4.1 Components of design for the process of participation

The design of participatory activities has changed in line with the history of participation, as the principles underpinning participation have changed (as outlined in Section 2.1 *Trends in participation)*. During the 1990s, the scope of participatory approaches widened as the traditional extension approaches evolved. Different designs reflect (a) the need to change the balance of power relationships, (b) the benefit of integrating multiple perspectives, (c) the value

of using local knowledge, and (d) the need to develop solutions for complex land management problems. In the Australian rangelands, participatory action learning programs were developed, including Bestprac in the wool industry by the WoolMark Company; similar programs in the cattle industry were promoted by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA).

Changing the design to include more participatory and bottom-up approaches has meant adding or changing some methods, techniques and tools so as to facilitate power sharing. This is not to say that traditional approaches are now obsolete. Simple transfer of technology is needed; for example, the "technology development" model successfully improved mango supply chains in Queensland (Kernot, Ledger, Campbell and Holmes 2003). Other methods and techniques, such as quantitative surveys, are not participatory, but can be very useful when used in conjunction with participatory methods. However, the methods employed can hinder or enhance outcomes. As Patton (2002 pp. 42–3) points out, strategic planning can hinder innovation, because very structured linear processes tend to limit creative or lateral thinking.

To assist power sharing, many traditional methods, techniques and tools (see Box 4.1) can be used in a different manner to ensure they are more inclusive. The same process can be transformed when used with a different intent and principles. As Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) argue, it is not the methods used which define participatory approaches, but rather the attitudes of the researchers. New methods to emerge include Citizens Juries and consensus workshops (see Coastal CRC 2003, *Citizens Science Toolbox* for an explanation). The intent and attitudes of the individuals involved in participation are critical factors in determining whether or not participation is about sharing power with the participants.

Because of contextual issues, it is difficult to specify the methods that should be used. Various authors have attempted to provide guidance. Woods, Moll, Coutts, Clark and Irvin (1993 p. 15) present a matrix of methods for information delivery according to different stages of the problem identification cycle, but qualify this depending on the intended output and relevance for the particular community or industry. The Warringah Council in NSW (*n.d.*) recommends determining the level of impact on the community, and provides matrices which relate the level of impact to the level of participation required, and then to the type of methods that are useful. This suggests that they are concerned about the influence or power that a particular segment of the community will exert on the Council. Such a politically motivated way of designing participation may not be appropriate if learning is the key purpose of involving the community.

Other principles are important in determining how participatory methods are used. The literature on land management models emphasises the importance of flexibility and adaptation (Lee 1993;

Walters and Holling 1990). The same principles apply to participation (Abbot and Guijt 1998; Pretty 1999). Guijt and Kaul Shah (1998 p. 15) also highlight the need to choose effective sequences of methods, and principles such as flexibility. Some dimensions of participation will be more important in certain contexts, and at different times during any project. Each situation needs to be assessed and the relationships of all dimensions to the design of participation considered. Flexibility and a readiness to adapt to unforeseen circumstances are essential principles in designing and implementing participatory approaches.

One way of supporting flexibility is to use an iterative design. Planning, implementation and understanding may progress in stages; each stage develops deeper understanding, leading to further implementation, and so on. An iterative process allows evaluation to be formative; that is, incorporating the results of evaluation to improve the project as it progresses. Changes in one dimension, such as context or who is involved, may necessitate a change in the design and methods used. Using the principles from and/or a framework of adaptive management or action research can assist in encouraging flexibility and adaptability. Overall, participation is complex, with many interacting dimensions which can make implementation difficult, even with the noblest of intentions on the part of all concerned.

2.4 Conclusion

Community participation is recognised as vital in land management, both in agriculture and NRM. Participation is seen in many ways, and is used for various reasons. The intent may not always be aligned to the original reasons for espousing the involvement of the community — reasons of empowerment, conscientization and building trust. The move towards regional arrangements where funding is directed to regional communities by the Australian federal government can be seen as an attempt to build sustainable, healthy communities, as well as improving the sustainability of the environment.

The literature indicates that participation is now part of the rhetoric in Australian policy documents. Nevertheless, the failures of current participation are numerous (see Table 2.5) including lack of understanding of the importance of context (Jiggins 1993; Waters-Bayer et al. 1999); distrust of government (Carson 2000; Cox 1995; Dovers 2000); lack of social capital (Putnam 1993); dominance of economic rationalism (Edwards 2002); incompatibility of goals (Christenson and Robinson 1989; Priscoli 1997); discrimination (Gray and Phillips 2001; Race and Buchy 1999); rigidity of bureaucracies (Dovers 2000; Fung and Wright 2003b); and lack of training for government staff (Guijt 1996; King 2000).

These highlight the need for improvement; more can be done to improve participatory praxis — by linking a better understanding of theory with enhanced practice. This is particularly so in our understanding of power relations between governments and local communities. As Cooke and Kothari (2001 p. 14) suggest, the proponents of participatory approaches have generally been naïve about the complexities of power and power relations. I believe that this misunderstanding underpins many of the problems in participatory discourse and practice. The next chapter looks at existing theories of power as a start to understanding how power relationships influence the many dimensions of community participation.

Chapter 3
Exploring the traditions of power

To understand power, therefore, it is necessary to analyse it in its most diverse and specific manifestations rather than focusing on its most central forms such as its concentration in the hands of a coercive elite or a ruling class.

This focus on the underside of everyday aspects of power relations Foucault calls a *microphysics* rather than a *macrophysics* of power.

(McNay 1994 p. 3)

3.0 Introduction

Power is multi-faceted: there are many different perspectives on, and definitions of, power — as there are many different perspectives about participation. The perspectives on power depend on the context, and the debate is underpinned by assumptions that reflect the philosophies of the people involved. Power, as Gallie says, is "essentially contested" (Gallie 1955–56 as cited in Lukes 1994).[7] Clearly, we need to understand power and its relationship with participation. Using ideas from different perspectives provides us with a richer understanding of how power is expressed, who is wielding it and why, and how it is exercised. This chapter aims to clarify the theories and concepts of power as it relates to participative processes in the rangelands.

One important distinction is revealed in the chapter's opening quote. If we are to understand relationships among individuals and organisations in participation and community engagement, we need to explore both the *microphysics* and the *macrophysics* of power. The term *microphysics* refers to relations between individuals and the personal context of those individuals. They are, as McNay (1994 p. 3) says, "the underside of everyday aspects of power relations … with their diverse but specific manifestations". The term *macrophysics* deals with the relationships between groups. When government agencies are planning and implementing participatory projects, they tend — if power is considered at all — to focus on the macrophysics of power.

The philosophical thinking about power has tended to focus on two main traditions, founded on the work of Habermas and Foucault (Dryberg 1997; Flyvbjerg 2001; Hoy 1981). In this thesis, I shall adopt the division of the traditions as epitomised by the works of Habermas and Foucault (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 88). To me, these two authors ascribe fundamentally different meanings to power and emphasise different aspects of power. Flyvbjerg (2001 p. 103) appears to align these two traditions with the macrophysics and microphysics of power, when he states: "Habermas emphasises procedural macropolitics, Foucault stresses substantive micropolitics". However, the differentiation between the two schools of thought is not as simple as macropolitics versus micropolitics.

Although Habermas and Foucault focus on different aspects of power, its macro and micro aspects are discussed in both traditions. Foucault discusses macro aspects of power when he deliberates on biopower (Gordon 1991; Rabinow 2003) and resistance (Foucault 1982a; Hillier

---

[7] The words "essentially contested" were commonly used by Lukes and have even been attributed to him by Hindess (1996). However, Lukes (1994 p. 4) acknowledges borrowing the phrase from W.B. Gallie "Essentially contested concepts": Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 56 (1955–56), p. 169.

2002). Foucault defines power in terms of microphysics, as the "structure of actions" between individuals (e.g. Foucault 1980; 1981). Habermas (1990) also reflects on relations between individuals in his discourse on ethics, in which he advocates ways of alleviating the corrupting effects of power relations between individuals. However, it is still true to emphasise that the meaning of power is conceptualised in very different ways in these two major traditions.

The differences in thinking between these traditions and their implications for understanding power relations in the context of participation is outlined in this chapter. This chapter also provides the theoretical framework for the thesis — how power relations have an impact on community participatory processes. In Section 3.1, I examine in more detail these divisions in Western thinking about power. The next two sections review, respectively, the dominant (Habermasian) and the alternative (Foucauldian) concepts of power. Section 3.4 looks at how these traditions can be linked, and Section 3.5 relates these ideas about power to the participation literature.

3.1 Divisions in Western thinking

Theoretical debates about power have raged since the time of Aristotle and Plato, and it is from their ideas that the two basic conceptions of power have emerged (Flyvbjerg 2001). The dominant tradition has developed from Plato, through Hobbes, Dahl and others to Habermas, while the alternative tradition has developed from Aristotle through Machiavelli and Nietzsche to Foucault (Flyvbjerg 2001; Foucault 1972; Machiavelli 1984; Nietzsche 1968). Each tradition is defined by the way power is conceptualised: the dominant tradition sees power as a tool or instrument; thus power is the capacity to act or influence others. Within the Foucauldian tradition, power exists only when exercised in relationships; power is described as the structure for relationships: "it is *the way* in which some act on others" (Foucault 2003e p. 137). Some selected concepts and a few of the many writers whose work fits into these two traditions are listed in Table 3.1.

Concepts about power are often represented as dichotomies — the collective versus the particular; the state versus the individual — as highlighted by Flyvbjerg (Table 3.1: shaded Row 2). However, dichotomies can hide the complexity of power and belie the possibility of linking the traditions to gain a richer understanding about power relations. Not all of the ideas about power in the dominant tradition have a corollary in the alternative tradition; many Foucauldian ideas were simply not conceived of in the traditional conceptions about power.

Aristotle's idea was that these dichotomies represent two sides of society, (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 59), which suggests that both sets of concepts are important to a true understanding of power

relations. Before exploring the possibility of linking these two traditions (in Section 3.4) I shall outline some of the concepts relevant to each of these traditions. The following section first outlines some of the concepts within the dominant tradition and indicates how these may be relevant to community participation. It then addresses some of the key ideas from Foucault and their links to participation. These concepts are used in later chapters to explore community participation.

Table 3.1 Concepts of power from the two traditions

Dominant tradition	Alternative tradition
Power is defined as a tool or instrument, the capacity to do something, or to exert power over someone or something	Power is defined as a structure
	Power is "games of strategy"
	Power is everywhere
Embodies ideas of cumulative power, quantitative power, collective power	Power can be creative and positive
	Truth is created
Sovereignty: rights and consent	Knowledge, truth and discourses are related
Rationality	Multiple rationalities
Legitimate and illegitimate power	Governmentality
Discourse ethics	Government at a distance
Communicative action	
The collective	The particular
The state	The individual
Control	Circumstance
Directives	Deliberation
Sovereign power	Individual power
Consensus (Flyvbjerg 2001)	Conflict (Flyvbjerg 2001)
The ideas of Weber, Hobbes, Dahl, Parsons, Arendt, Lukes, Habermas fit into this tradition.	This tradition encompasses the work of Foucault, Nietzsche, Rose, Miller, Lacan, Mouffe and Rabinow.

3.2 Concepts from the dominant tradition

The dominant tradition comprises several concepts. In this section, the concepts that will be examined in detail are *power as capacity*, *sovereignty*, *rationality* and *discourse ethics*. The section will then close with a discussion of some of the criticisms of this dominant (Habermasian) approach.

3.2.1 Power as capacity

Power is commonly seen as a simple quantitative capacity. Individuals can possess a certain amount of power, sometimes more and sometimes less. Power gives one the capacity to act, or to influence something, as illustrated in the following definitions, each of which emphasise slightly different aspects of power (Table 3.2).

The concepts here are all based on the premise that power is a capacity or tool that can be wielded by an individual to change outcomes; it is an ability to exercise control or influence over others, and is associated with action. All these theories share a concern with "power as

entity" (Flyvbjerg, 2001 p. 116). This entity is "something" one can *possess* or *have*. Lukes (1986, 1991, 1994) argued that all these theories could be reduced to the one underlying concept of power as *capacity*. This capacity can be expressed through control, dependence and inequality.

Table 3.2 Definitions of power

Authors and key concepts	Descriptions of power	Examples related to NRM
Weber (a) power is associated with *action*, as well as about influencing others (b) power is rarely absolute	(a) "The chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action" (Weber 1978 p. 926). (b) While A may exert power on B, B may not always capitulate (Weber 1947).	Extension officers act by providing information to landholders; by their actions, they have the power to influence others, even if indirectly. Participants may, or may not, respond to information provided.
Hobbes Power to achieve outcomes	The power of a man is his present means to obtain some future apparent good" (Hobbes 1968 p. 150).	Extension officers act to obtain better land management.
Dahl Power over others	"A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (Dahl 1957 p. 80).	Landholder A would not muster feral goats unless their neighbour B told them to do so.
Lukes Introduced notions of control, dependency and inequality	"It is commonly assumed that power must involve the use of *threat or deprivation*"; but it can occur though incentives (Lukes 1991 p. 87-88). *Dependence* occurs when power is exerted indirectly through a relationship between A and B. Differential capacity means *inequality*: "power as inequality is measured by determining who gains and who loses — that is, A's ability to gain at B's expense" (Lukes 1991 p. 87–89).	If a farmer does not do something, such as spraying weeds, their neighbours will refuse to help fight fires (i.e. deprivation) or the Council will spray the weeds and send them an account, forcing them to pay (i.e. retribution).
Giddens (a) Power is associated with *action*; as such, power is a condition of *human agency*. (b) Power has a capacity for *transformation,* rather than being a resource *per se*.	(a) "The capability of the individual to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events" (Giddens 1984 p. 14). (b) "Power itself is not a resource. Resources are media through which power is exercised" (Giddens 1984 p. 16).	A farmer with more money has the power to purchase more cattle; an extension officer can exercise power through scientific knowledge.

Giddens (Table 3.2) adds to the ideas of power as a capacity associated with action. He is more specific, suggesting that power is not a resource, such as money, for people to use. Rather, it is an ability — more like a skill or tool — which allows them to be effective in exercising influence over others or to achieve some form of change.

In participatory development, Taylor (2001) suggests that for subordinate groups more attention needs to be directed to increasing both the "power to" and the "power over". In Australia, current conflicts include those about the power to harvest water from rivers for irrigation or stock water. Ife (1995) suggests that people need to have power in various domains: power over institutions, over resources, over economic activity. One of the most common cries in community participation in rural Australia is the desire for the power to influence government.

If power is a capacity, the capacity develops from a particular base. One of the classic works on power is that of French and Raven (1959), who outlined different types of power bases (Table 3.4). These describe different ways in which people have power *over* others or have the power *to influence* others.

Table 3.3 Different power bases in the dominant tradition

Power base (French and Raven 1959)	Explanation	Examples (This thesis)
Coercive power	Where negative consequences can be handed out or consequences removed	If landholders do not participate in one event, the government will ignore them in future, and they will have limited opportunities to participate.
Reward power	Where positive consequences can be delivered or negative consequence removed	Landcare sometimes offers rewards through incentives; if people undertake high priority activities, they get funding.
Expert power	Where someone is seen as having special knowledge or skills and as being trustworthy	Scientists are often seen as having specialist knowledge in a particular field, such as veterinary skills or plant identification expertise.
Informational power	Where people believe that someone has information that will be useful to them in accomplishing their goals	Government staff may have knowledge about grant schemes that will provide useful funds to assist landholders achieve their goal of fencing a sensitive conservation area.
Referent power	Where people respond to someone because they identify with, respect, or want to be liked by this person	A rural leader may be well respected in a region, with a public image and charisma, and thus others go to him/her for advice.
Legitimate power	Where people ought to have influence because of their positions or special role; e.g. policeman	The Chair of the Catchment Committee or the government Minister has power because the position or role he or she holds, often temporarily.

All of these bases are evident in NRM and community participation, as is indicated by the examples in the right-hand column. In my experience, rural communities place greater value on referent power than on legitimate power; the positions that people hold are rarely seen as being particularly important. Often, people remain in positions for a few years and then move on, someone else taking their turn. By accepting a position, people are sometimes seen as "doing their bit" for their community, and it is expected that everyone in the community will do the same, albeit in different ways, over time. Sometimes more than one base of power may be operating simultaneously. For example, landholders often go to meetings because of the status

of the speaker rather than the content of the talk. The speaker may be liked because of his or her charisma (referent power), or expert knowledge (expert power).

Lukes highlighted different aspects about power (see Lukes 1974, 1986, 1994). He categorises the various debates about power by using three concepts — *who* held power, *private versus public* power, and *hidden versus visible* power (Table 3.4). All belong to Flyvbjerg's dominant tradition of power.

Table 3.4 Lukes' views of power

Lukes' categories (1974, 1986, 1994)		Description
Pluralist group	One-dimensional view	Distribution of power is *unequal*, but not concentrated in the hands of a few. Power can be identified only if there is overt conflict (Hindess 1996; Lukes 1974) — exemplified by Dahl (Dahl 1961; Lukes 1974)
Elite or Reformist group	Two-dimensional view	Includes both *public power and private* power, which is covert; controls the agenda and prevents some groups being heard, (Lukes 1974, 1986). — exemplified by Mills, Hunter (Lukes 1974), Bachrach and Bartz (1969).
Radical group	Three-dimensional view	Based on *coercion*, an insidious power occurs when individuals or groups, who are excluded from political debate, do not even recognise that their interests are at risk (Lukes 1974; Hindess 1996). Gramsci's view is that the consent of the popular classes to bourgeois rule is possible only because they are unaware and do not understand the implications of capitalist domination (Hindess 1996 p. 6, p. 18) — includes Marxists; exemplified by Habermas and Gramsci (Hindess 1996)

Luke's concepts are important in participatory resource management; the unequal nature of power relations can influence the outcome. Also, the difference between private and public accounts of power relations is a cause for concern (Cooke and Kothari 2001). Participation is supposed to assist in ensuring that everyone in the community has the opportunity to be heard, but this does not always occur. Power relations can ensure that some views remain hidden; then, participation simply maintains the status quo. Not only are some views kept hidden, but the power relationships themselves can be hidden; for example people may not be informed about health dangers of the chemicals they are producing. When the influence of power is not obvious, and is hidden from those who are subject to its impact, then it is seen as being coercive, insidious and inappropriate. Consent is not given freely, but unknowingly.

Still, the concept of consent remains inherent in this form of power. According to this understanding, power is seen as a capacity that depends on the consent of those over whom it is exercised; power is legitimised by its subjects (Hindess 1996 p. 10–11). The concepts of capacity and consent are both inherent in the idea of sovereign power, which is fundamental to the dominant tradition of Western thinking.

3.2.2 Sovereignty

The idea of sovereignty is prevalent in the development of modern political thought since Hobbes (1968; 1st published 1651) and Locke (1988; 1st published 1689) and, more recently, Giddens (1984, 1994). *Sovereignty* is the view that political power should be located in the state to protect civil society, as advocated by the "New Left" (Latham 2001). In the dominant tradition, sovereignty is seen as the most important power in a society (Hindess 1996 p. 15). Sovereign power is more than simple capacity, as it focuses on the role of the collective as opposed to the individual (Hobbes 1968; Giddens 1984), as well as the legitimacy of power and consent.

In modern Western society, sovereign power no longer relates to a monarch, but is exercised through democratic processes. Democracy is linked to government institutions, which prescribe rules for the regulation of society by writing constitutions and laws that are enforced through the judiciary. For Habermas, sovereign power sanctions the law, and so sovereignty is a prerequisite for the regulation of power by law (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 92). The idea of sovereign power is evident in today's Australian judicial system; our constitution and laws are based on a belief in sovereign power. As the Chief Justice of Australia said in 1992: "sovereign power resides in the people" (Finn 1993).

Some authors (such as Habermas 1996) make a distinction between political power and administrative power as two aspects of sovereignty. Political power is exercised where public opinion generates influence that is transformed through political elections; Habermas (1996) refers to this as "communicative power". Such political or communicative power is then transformed into "administrative power" through legislation; so political power gives legitimacy to administrative power. Likewise, the medium of law gives legitimacy to the political order. This circular effect between political power and administrative power underpins modern democracy.

Within NRM and agriculture, both the political and administrative arenas have resolved that community participation is desirable (see Section 2.1.1 *Policy documents and other statements*); but the level of power sharing varies between programs. Community participation is often seen as merely encouraging a better understanding of laws, policy and regulations. People complain that many government regulations are not rational and are not designed to serve a diverse community; however, this is counter to the intent of the Habermasian philosophy, which is underpinned by a particular belief of rationality. This idea is pursued in the following section.

3.2.3 Rationality and truth

In the dominant tradition, the idea of rationality relies on a basis of a universal truth. An understanding of truth develops when people, who are "autonomous individuals", communicate and reason with each other; then the "force of argument" draws people to a consensus in thinking. Rationality in the Habermasian sense is based on positivistic scientific thinking, as promoted in the Age of Enlightenment[8] (Hindess 1996); there is one truth in a world governed by natural laws, and science is a key way of providing objective answers.

Habermas wanted to reconstruct the path to political emancipation and democracy (Habermas 1983; Cavalier and Ess 2001). To enable democratic debate and collective deliberation, public spaces need to be created where citizens can understand various perspectives and make responsible judgements (Hillier 2002 p. 27). Habermas's theories about social interaction build on the ideas about the universal right of human participation previously developed by Arendt (Hillier 2002).

Habermas (1984; 1987b) distinguishes between *communicative* rationality and *instrumental* rationality — both ways of reaching the one universal truth. Habermas (1984) sees his theory of communicative action as (a) developing a concept of rationality which is not subjectivist and (b) integrating people's *lifeworlds*[9] and systems paradigm. Communicative rationality develops through communication, and is "a consequence of the social conditions in which the rationalization has taken place" (Hindess 1996 p. 91). Instrumental or strategic rationality is for Habermas (1972, 1984) somewhat inadequate — this conception of reason is based on the positivistic understanding of the world and includes economic rationalism. Habermas's (1984) focus on communication and *intersubjectivity*[10] differentiates his ideas from those of the earlier Enlightenment theorists.

However, the effects of rational thinking can cause problems for society. Far from the Habermasian belief (1990) that people's ability to reason and think rationally will lead to a utopian democratic society, the reverse may occur. Weber thought that social life in modern capitalist societies would become organised around impersonal principles of rational calculation and technical efficiency, and spiritual and moral values would become less important — leading to negative consequences such as the breakdown of communities (Weber 1947, 1986). Indeed,

---

[8] The era known as the Age of Enlightenment began to be influential by the early 19th century (McHoul and Grace 1998 p. 32); but was reactivated by Habermas and others in post-WW2 Germany.

[9] The term "lifeworld" arose from systems thinking. Habermas (1987a p.137) describes a "lifeworld" as comprising structural components of culture, society and personality. Habermas (1987a) acknowledges that people have different views of the world, and that these views are influenced by their "lifeworlds".

[10] Intersubjectivity allows people to communicate successfully and share, with others, their understanding of the world.

the breakdown of rural communities in Australia is sometimes blamed on economic rationalism, which is a form of instrumental rationality. Also, the reduction of a range of government services and even the change from one-on-one extension to group-based approaches in participation can be seen to be the result of economic rationalisation.

Edwards (2002) echoes Weber's concerns about rationalism having negative consequences for communities. She believes that economic rationalists are blind to relationships between people, and that strong communities, characterised by positive personal relationships, are created by developing our sense of belonging, identity and self-worth (Edwards 2002 p. 80). For Edwards, economic rationalism is eroding one of the great assets of Australian culture, social trust:

> The foundations of social trust lie in our relationships to government and to each other.
> Our trust in government reflects our belief in our ability to pull together as a community
> and collectively manage ourselves as a nation that historically prided itself on anti-
> authoritarian larrikinism, Australians have demonstrated a remarkable faith in their
> institutions. (Edwards 2002 p. 88)

Edwards (2002 p. 85) goes so far as to claim that the current focus on economic rationalism is causing greater distrust in Australian government institutions. This in turn results in serious problems for community participation — people distrust any activity associated with government. Rational discussions are difficult when people do not trust each other, as well as having different views of the world. Both Hillier (2002) and Flyvbjerg (2001) point out that Habermas seems unable to understand the implications of multiple lifeworlds (society, culture and personality) on people's ability to rationally discuss issues.

Autonomous individuals and consensus

Habermas recognises the plurality of people's lifeworlds, influenced by their social conditions. Nonetheless, this view is tempered by the philosophy of intersubjectivity (Hindess 1996 p. 90), where individuals can communicate successfully and share their understanding of the world with others. Habermas believes that people are "autonomous individuals". Such autonomous individuals are free to make decisions if the interfering effects of power can be controlled. However, only in an ideal lifeworld can we find autonomous, free-thinking, rational individuals uncorrupted by power (Hindess 1996).

Habermas focuses on how people could achieve *consensual outcomes*, based on his belief in ideals and universals. In ideal speech forums, particular interests would be stripped away by on-going discussion between people with different lifeworlds until they arrived at the bed-rock of common interest. (This is different from Foucault who focuses on conflictual public space). The Ecological Sustainable Development working groups (Robinson 1992) are examples where on-going discussions did reach consensus. However, there is incongruity between Habermas's

ideals and reality, between his intentions and implementation, which can be seen as based on his "insufficient understanding of power" (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 92–93).

In participatory approaches there is a concern about the focus on consensus building:

> At public and collective events, PRAs [Participatory rural appraisals: one form of participatory activity] tend to emphasize the general over the particular (individual, event, situation, etc.), tend towards the normative (what "ought to be" rather "what is"), and towards a unitary view of interest which underplays difference. In other words, it is the community's "official view" of itself which is projected. (Mosse 1994 p. 510)

Participation encourages expressions of consensus by the nature of group communication and the development of group norms. Paradoxically, this hides the very power structures that citizen participation and communication, in Habermas's approach, are meant to curb. For Habermas, simply providing public space is insufficient; people need processes to govern their communications. These processes are universal and apply to all human beings, and allow people to argue rationally.

Force of argument

Habermas (1990) believes that people must communicate and engage in argumentative speech to reach a rationally motivated agreement, because:

> Argumentation insures that all concerned in principle take part, freely and equally, in a cooperative search for truth, where nothing coerces anyone except the force of better argument. (Habermas 1990 pp.120–1)

Argumentation is based on a belief in communicative rationality, where people will always search for the one "truth" thus striving for a consensus. Communicative rationality requires ideal role taking and power neutrality (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 91). For Habermas, communicative rationality:

> brings along with it connotations of a noncoercively unifying, consensus-building force of a discourse in which the participants overcome their at first subjectively biased views in favor of a rationally motivated agreement. (Habermas 1987b p. 315)

Habermas determined that a specific style of communication, discourse ethics, would achieve consensus through the force of argument. This is discussed next. Discourse ethics relates to various dimensions of participation — *Goals* (Dimension 2: Figure 2.2), and *Who* (Dimension 5: Figure 2.2),

3.2.4 Discourse ethics

Habermas devised an idealised set of principles which he called *discourse ethics*, which aimed at providing impartiality and rationality (Table 3.5). The principles are based on generality, autonomy, ideal role taking, power neutrality, and transparency. For Habermas, these principles

of communication are the effective way of promoting equality and alleviating power disparities. He says:

> Such a discourse is a gathering of people with the intention of reaching rationally motivated consensus on moral norms that will be universally valid. In the process, agents learn from each other to see what their common interests are, while all interests are judged impartially; only those norms can claim validity that are able to meet the agreement of all concerned. (Habermas 1983 p. 103, in van Es 1998 p. 2)

Community participation which allows all points of view to be "judged impartially" (Habermas 1990 p. 122) fits with the scientific paradigm, which stresses objectivity. The scientific paradigm dominates discussions in NRM and agriculture, because science has made important contributions in this field, for example with the development of new technologies including machinery and plant varieties. Discourse ethics applies principles to human discussion which are similar to those applied to scientific experiments; consequently, scientists feel comfortable with this form of argument.

Table 3.5 Five key requirements of discourse ethics

1 Generality	No party who is affected by what is being discussed should be excluded from the discourse.
2 Autonomy	All participants should have equal possibility to present and criticise validity claims in the process of discourse.
3 Ideal role taking	Participants must be willing and able to empathise with each other's validity claims.
4 Power neutrality	Existing power differences between participants must be neutralised such that these differences have no effect on the creation of consensus.
5 Transparency	Participants must openly explain their goals and intentions and in this connection desist from strategic action.

(Habermas 1990 p. 65–66)

Habermas believes that the extent to which discourse ethics occur in practice, depends on the effects of power which distort communication within the rational lifeworld. In later years, he acknowledges that his approach is idealistic (Habermas 1994), but is still one to which people should aspire. For government institutions, a set of rules stipulating correct processes for engaging with the community is useful, as it allows some consistency of approach from all staff.

Discourse ethics can be applied at both macro and micro levels of government. When answering criticisms that the sphere of his work was unclear and that he overlooked microphysics, Habermas replied that "macrosociological power relations are mirrored in the microphysics of power, which is built into the structures of distorted communication" (1991 p. 247). Thus, the process to overcome this distorted communication can be applied at the macro and micro levels. Rules and regulations aim to treat all citizens across the state or nation equally, and these principle are useful in deciding how institutions should operate when policy is being written. These rules apply equally as well at the micro level, such as when a meeting is being facilitated.

The principles of discourse ethics are admirable, and such participation is often promoted as being good practice by government extension officers involved with communities. The attractiveness of this schema is that it provides governments with ethical guidelines for participation. While few practitioners have heard of Habermas, many of these principles are now internalised into participatory policy and practice (Queensland Government 2002[11]; COAG 2000; New South Wales 2004; IAP2 2004). One example I have observed within government is the trend towards appointing "content-free" managers; that is, managers with no expertise in the specific discipline, but having good management skills. The participatory processes set down in policy or designed by government staff are often not debated with the communities; in true Habermasian style the rules for correct process are universally applicable. Strictly controlling the process is an attempt to moderate the negative influences of power. Therefore, in a Habermasian style activity, the process is not debated with the community; it is the content that is deliberated. In a Foucauldian style both the process and the content are open for debate with the community.

Process or content

The procedures of community participation are often "detached" (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 91), because the community is not involved in determining the process. The government facilitators or government staff — the "experts" — determine the procedural rationality. Conversely, when it comes to substantive rationality, Habermas (1984) argues that the participants in the situation to be in control of the communication agenda — "detached" participation. Foucault is different in that he favours bottom-up approaches to both process and content (Foucault 1991c; Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 103). Therefore, in participatory processes designed within a Habermasian approach, the community would be involved only in discussions about an NRM or land management topic, whereas in a Foucauldian approach, the community would be able to influence the *way* the discussions were undertaken, as well as the topic itself. The various ladder typologies of participation do not specifically highlight when the community has the power to influence the content, or when it has the power to influence the process; but clearly, the "highest" level of community participation would involve the community having power to influence both content and process.

This is not to claim that all departmental officials fail to understand or debate the involvement of communities in the design of the process. There are those who argue that there is no true

---

[11] One example of transparency is that the key principles for implementation of NAP and NHT2 and regional NRM planning state: "The NRM planning process should be a 'no surprises' process i.e. there needs to be early and iterative discussion and transparent negotiation between regional Bodies and Government stakeholders" (Queensland Government 2002 p. 1).

participation unless the community is involved in all aspects, both content and process (Foucault 1991c; Flyvbjerg 2001). They also see that government officials cannot, by themselves, understand the best ways to involve some sectors of the community, such as different cultural groups or minorities. The opposing arguments include the observation that some communities are ignorant about the types of participatory processes that exist, or the appropriateness of particular processes for particular situations. In spite of this, for many government staff, public participation is used as a guise for manipulating public acceptance for projects; it is therefore not surprising that many of those managing the process wish to maintain control. As Beder (1999) highlights, process consultants often wish to divide the various "publics" (see *Who is involved*, Dimension 5: Figure 2.2) so they can selectively involve people likely to be persuaded to support their project, while denying people who are potential opposition, any opportunities to participate.

The dominant tradition, based on Habermasian concepts, is often criticised for its moralistic top-down approach to community engagement. The assumptions on which the principles of communication are based are also seen as questionable, idealistic and unachievable. However, their very existence means that this approach is attractive, and many practitioners aspire to achieve such ideals. While striving to improve participatory practices is admirable, it may raise unrealistic expectations, and Foucault points to the dangers of such idealism.

3.2.5 Criticisms of the Habermasian approach

Many criticisms of Habermas revolve around his idealism, insensitivity to context, naiveté and moralism (Flyvbjerg 2001; Hindess 1996; Rorty 1989). The attainability of rational communication and discourse ethics is based on some unrealistic assumptions. Firstly, to achieve Habermas's process one would need unlimited time (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 91) and thus unlimited resources for community participation. Because time is restricted and resources are scarce within institutions and government agencies, the discourse ethics approach is unlikely to be possible in reality. The term *resources*, as used here, relates to an institution's *capacity* to undertake participation (Dimension 6: Figure 2.2).

Secondly, discourse ethics and communicative rationality assume a willingness and ability of individuals to participate and follow the principles. As van Es (1998) points out, discourse ethics demand that individuals, and their cultures in general, be willing to adopt a universal moral viewpoint. This viewpoint is based on typically Western assumptions about moral preferences where "reasonableness and equality of individuals are postulated as self-evident highest Good" (van Es 1998 p. 3). Not all cultures share this assumption. In Australian land management debates, participatory processes need to take account of the cultural assumptions

we impose on indigenous Australians — in their society not all individuals are considered equal in public debate, as strict cultural rules govern the way in which, and those to whom, individuals are allowed to speak. Yet participatory processes often try to facilitate equal opportunities for everyone to speak in public, even when these are culturally inappropriate.

Discourse ethics assumes that individuals can communicate competently and have the *capacity* (Dimension 6: Figure 2.2) of critical reflection, even if they come from different lifeworlds. The language used in land management discussions is often that of government bureaucracies and scientists, and not all community people are comfortable or familiar with this. Not only do we need different types of participatory processes, but we need to recognise that within any process, not everyone is able to communicate equally.

As Flyvbjerg (2001) points out, in reality, communication is usually associated with rhetoric and people trying to maintain their different interests; and "success in rhetoric is associated precisely with distortion" (2001 p. 94). Discourse ethics allows people to listen to each other's rhetoric, but the underlying values and beliefs are not necessarily exposed. When positions become entrenched and conflict arises in community participatory activities, a common response is to provide more information — in Habermasian terms, rational thinking in based on an understanding of the "truth". More information from those "in power" serves only to further inflame the situation as it ignores people's feelings, attitudes and values. It denies the existence of any opinion that is not perceived as fitting with the "correct" scientific solution. The status quo is often maintained, which is contrary to the ideal of "free" communication expounded by Habermas's ideal communication (in particular refer to *Discourse ethics*, requirement 4 above).

Habermas's idealism is linked to his insensitivity to context. He assumes that the procedures of discourse ethics are appropriate for all contexts and all peoples. In Australian rural communities, people may be able to communicate competently if the participatory processes are designed specifically to accommodate their preferred modes of communication. For example, participation guidelines for Aboriginal people constantly stress the need to have culturally appropriate methods (Young, Davies and Baker 2001; Dale 1992; Young and Ross 1992). The *methods* and techniques (Dimension 7: Figure 2.2) promoted by PRA — such as daily schedules, historical transect, livelihood analysis (e.g. IDS 1996; IIED 1994) — suggest sitting outside and drawing pictures in the dirt rather than using a hall or "classroom" environment. While Habermas acknowledges that people have different life experiences, the implications of this for communication and community debate are not dealt with adequately by his models. Foucault focuses more on *contextuality* (Dimension 1: Figure 2.2) than does Habermas.

Foucault himself (2003c) voices criticism of Habermas's idealism, and in doing so suggests that his way of viewing power relations may offer some solutions to these problems. Foucault states that he agrees with some of Habermas's ideas, but not all, writing:

> I have always had a problem insofar as he gives communication relations this place which is so important and, above all, a function that I would call "utopian". The idea that there could exist a state of communication that would allow games of truth to circulate freely, without any constraints or coercive effects, seems utopian to me. This is precisely a failure to see that power relations are not something that is bad itself, that we have to break free of ... The problem is not to try to dissolve them [power relations] in the utopia of completely transparent communication but to acquire the rules of law, the management techniques, and also the morality, the ethos, the practice of self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible. (Foucault 2003c pp. 39–40)

Foucault suggests that ethics in communication is important, but not ethics that focus on achieving an ideal, for this is unrealistic. Here Foucault points out that power is not necessarily bad, but is not always transparent; for example, the outcomes of communication are often biased towards the interests of the dominant discourse, and the power of discourses is not always obvious. However, power cannot be dissolved through transparent communication; it will still exist.

Freedom from power cannot be assured by institutional systems or constitutional writings such as laws and policies, even if they are established for the purpose of maintaining principles of democracy and equality; nor can freedom be assured by imposing moralistic theories which attempt to guide people's actions (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 101 and p. 127). The problems with constitutional writing are echoed by Putnam (1993) who warns that the "designers of new institutions are often writing on water". Institutional reforms often do not alter behaviour, certainly not in the way expected. Frequent reforms within institutions, as occur within state and Commonwealth government departments, can result in loss of productivity in the short term, and can create an environment of fear. Achieving natural resource management outcomes in such an environment can be difficult, as trust is further eroded.

Dangers of idealism
Pursuing unattainable ideals can be seen as causing problems for society. For Foucault, "ideal" solutions were not simply pointless; they were dangerous; consequently, he was reluctant to provide directives, because ideals can block the view of reality (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 103; Miller 2000 p. 235). He sees the ideal as one of domination's most fundamental effects (Hindess 1996 p. 149). The ideal is based on the notion of rationality, which can be divorced from power in modern democratic institutions, as explained above.

Ideals in themselves are not the problem; it is expecting to reach the ideal society that is unrealistic. As Cox (2001) suggests, there is no "truly civil society" but only a "more civil

society". Building on this idea, striving for *better* practices is appropriate, but insisting that there is a *best practice* is wrong. Striving for ideals in communication, as proposed by Habermas, can improve current practice, as there is always room for improvement. However, this needs to be tempered by the realisation that the "ideal" needs to be flexible and may not be the same "ideal" in every situation. Ideals may also change over time, as the circumstances, and our understanding, change. I suggest that aiming for the "one and only" ideal can lead to outcomes that were never intended, and that one of these unanticipated consequences may be the loss of personal freedom. Clearly, overcommitment to an ideal for extension processes, such as group discussions rather than individual property visits, can limit learning opportunities.

Both Habermas and Foucault were concerned about freedom for individuals in democratic societies (e.g. Foucault 1991b; Habermas 1994); both saw communication and public deliberation as vital, so both would probably agree that community participation is needed. What is different is their understanding of how to ensure democracy and freedom, so perhaps Foucault's view is the more realistic. In the Habermasian tradition, community debate according to the principles of discourse ethics is integral to the idealised model of society — the way to "free" the world of power. In the alternative tradition, Foucault gives priority to discourses and public deliberation as a way of producing the truth rather than finding it (for further discussions on Foucault's view of truth see Section 3.3.3). Foucault believes that one can never "escape" from power, as one set of powers is simply substituted by another (Foucault 2003c; Hindess 1996 p. 152). To seize the "centers of power" might simply reproduce old patterns of domination instead of changing them (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 122).

Habermas's moralistic stance attempts to suppress conflict; yet in reality, societies and governments that deny conflict are oppressive. Instead of constitutional thinking — with laws and procedures to control negative effects of power — a strategic view of power is needed (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 108). Instead of trying to contain power relations, community participation needs to occur in "wider and wilder territory" (Ryan 1992 p. 286), where conflict is inevitable. As Flyvbjerg explains:

> In strong democracies, distrust and criticism of authoritative action are omnipresent …
> Democracy guarantees only the existence of a public, not public consensus. A strong
> democracy guarantees the existence of conflict. A strong understanding of democracy
> must therefore be based on thought that places conflict and power at its center, as
> Foucault does and Habermas does not. (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 109)

This is not to say that Habermas's work is not valuable; his approach does serve a purpose for government institutions in terms of aiming for some consistency of guidelines across the nation. However, the dominant approach is insufficient if we are to understand power relations. Some aspects of power relations need to be viewed in other ways, as, for example, in the alternative

tradition epitomised by Foucault's works, for Foucault does provide answers to many of the criticisms of Habermas. It is to Foucault that I now turn, to explore alternative ways of viewing power and help understand more successful approaches to implementing community participation.

3.3 An alternative way of thinking

Foucault conceptualises power in a way that is fundamentally different from that of many others. This is a strength, as it provides new insights; it is also an impediment, however, as it makes him difficult to understand. As Rabinow and Rose (2003 p. vii) point out, he set out to "open up possibilities of thought" by giving words a new sense of meaning. By using words from common parlance, but with new meanings, he helps us to view the world in a different way, and to see inequities, strategies of control and disempowerment that we had previously missed.

Most people think of domination when they use the word *power* (Foucault 2003c p. 40), but domination is just a negative influence of power. One of the problems with the dominant tradition's emphasis on sovereignty, the state, and the related juridical power is that it views power in simplistic, negative terms:

> a historical problem arises, namely that of discovering why the West has insisted for so long on seeing the power it exercises as juridical and negative rather than as technical and positive. (Foucault 2003f p. 308)

While this interpretation suggests that power is a positive enabling force, Foucault came to understand that power could have both positive and negative effects (Hillier 2002; Hindess 1996; Rose 1999b). His early works— for example *Discipline and Punish* (1979) — is based on a more Marxist account of repressive power. As he began to study the question of government, he recognised that "power is not evil. Power is games of strategy" (1988 p. 40). By "games of strategy" he means one individual trying to influence another, while the other is resisting the influence, or is himself or herself trying to influence a third person. The issue for Foucault is not about avoiding power, because we cannot, but about managing relationships so as to prevent domination.

Foucault starts from two premises. Firstly, power and knowledge are inextricably linked, like two sides of the same coin. Secondly, all power comes from below because it relies on the compliance of those being ruled; no matter how unequal the power, people still have choices, even limited ones. From this he constructs a model in which society is a dynamic network of ever-changing force relations, between dominant and subordinate people, with associated discourses that justify and reinforce these relations. Foucault clearly separates his

conceptualisation of power from the norm (as exemplified in the writings of Habermas and others). His thinking about *meaning* of power is explored next.

3.3.1 A new meaning of power

Foucault conceptualises power in a new and perceptive way. He specifically says that "power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away" (Foucault 1981, p. 94); also, "power is not a matter of consent" (Foucault 2003e p. 137). Foucault states that he rarely uses the word "power"; when he does, what he means is the "relations of power" (2003c p. 34). The exercise of power is not simply "a relationship between partners; it is *the* way in which some act on others" (Foucault 2003e p. 137). He describes this as the "structure of actions" (Foucault 1980 p. 220). Foucault insists that power is manifest in the structures (techniques and procedures) of actions brought to bear on individuals.

Power is not something that exists outside the relations between people, for "power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action" (Foucault 2003e p. 137). Relationships can exist at different levels, and power can be individual or collective:

> Power relationships are extremely widespread in human relationships. Now, this means not that political power is everywhere, but that there is in human relationships a whole range of power relations that come into play among individuals, within families, in pedagogical relationships, political life and so on. (Foucault 1988 p. 27)

For Foucault, power is inherent in all communication. Power is "always present" (Foucault 1988 pp. 11, 18, 34), and communication is at all times penetrated by power (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 93). It is not a capacity that is possessed in certain quantities by people.

Foucault also argues that power cannot exist unless people are free (Foucault 2003c; Hindess 1996 pp. 98–101); freedom in this understanding is not freedom from domination, as in Habermasian thinking. For example, indigenous people in Australia have a history of vilification and oppression. They are not free from domination, yet they are free to express some resistance.

> Resistance, struggle and conflict, in contrast to consensus, are for Foucault the most solid bases for the practice of freedom. (Flyvbjerg 2001 p.102)

People need to be free to express resistance to power when its effects are negative. Freedom in this sense is a freedom that comes from within. Freedom does not come from espousing universal theories about communication, where the ideal is the utopian absence of power, as Habermas suggests. As Foucault explained: "if there were no possibility of resistance … there would be no relations of power" (Foucault 1988 p. 12). The concept of resistance is fundamental to Foucault's understanding of power, for resistance is an indicator of power at

work. In NRM, we need to be cognisant that different forms of resistance exist. Australian country people are usually very polite, and may show outward signs of compliance; but as experienced extension officers know, they often smile, and then do exactly as they wish, seemingly oblivious to the information presented to them. Conflict does not necessarily characterise resistance.

Forms of resistance are multiple and contextual. The interaction between resistance and power can produce changes in power, and resulting changes in resistance (Hindess 1996 p. 101). As power is inherent in all forms of social interaction, so too, resistance exists everywhere. Power relations between individuals are inherently unstable, reversible and ambiguous (Hindess 1996 p. 101). Consequently, resistance has many centres, and there is a "multiplicity of resistances", each of which needs to be analysed as a special case (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 122). One example would be a government officer talking with a grazier: at times the government officer could exercise more power because of expert knowledge; at times the grazier could assume a dominant role because of local knowledge; at times the government officer may exercise power by enforcing legislation, but the grazier may resist by using a friendship with the Minister to obtain an exemption without the government officer being informed.

This illustrates that power relationships may not be obvious, that resistances may be subtle and even devious, and that these fluctuate according to individuals and situations. To understand power relations in this research, and in participation generally, at least two aspects of communication are important: people need to have (a) an in-depth understanding on the context of the participation, including the culture and communication styles of the people involved, and (b) an ability to engender trust, develop spaces where people feel comfortable enough to open up and explain the undercurrents and power dynamics to the observer. Both of these relate to the *capacity* of individuals to communicate (see Dimension 6: Figure 2.2).

Foucault proposes that power is best understood in terms of micro-politics, where networks of power exist at every point in society (Hillier 2002 p. 54). Foucault's discussion of power — as the "structure of actions" with dynamic, unstable power relations between individuals — is significant in community participation because this style of conceptualisation encourages us to explore the micropolitics of power. In comparison, Habermas's emphasis on procedural macropolitics (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 103) could either miss the influences of the micropolitics, or view such behaviours as anomalies in the ideal system. To overcome this weakness in my analysis, therefore, I shall use ideas from both Habermas and Foucault.

Foucault's perspectives add significantly to our understanding of power. In particular his conceptualisation of sovereignty and "governmentality" (Foucault 1991b) is relevant to my exploration of community participation in rangeland management.

3.3.2 Governmentality

While Foucault does not deny the existence of political power based on the idea of sovereignty — the focus of the dominant tradition — he is frustrated by the focus on the state. "The state is … a mythicized abstraction, whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think" (Foucault 1991b p.103). He wants to free power from what he sees as an obsession with sovereignty, as epitomised in his famous statement:

> we need to cut off the King's head: in political theory that has still to be done (Foucault 1981, p. 89)

For Foucault, sovereignty is but one of the three forms of power that he distinguishes: sovereignty, discipline and government.

> We need to see things not in terms of the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of a disciplinary society by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty, discipline and government. (Foucault 1991b p.102)

Foucault discusses sovereignty as the form of power which developed in the sixteenth century when the "love of God" was no longer the only way of securing the obedience of men (Foucault 1991b p. 87; originally 1978). Discipline developed next, and is linked to the development of administrative systems, which managed people as a population — as a collective mass with aggregate effects: "schools, manufactories, armies" (Foucault 1991b p. 102). Trends, statistics and the homogenisation of individuals characterise this form. Government, in Foucault's eyes, is linked to political economy and bureaucracy. Foucault describes the development of each of these forms of power —sovereignty, then discipline, then government — but he stresses that they exist today as a triangle; one has not superseded the others.

Foucault conceptualised the emergence of the "art of government" (1991b p. 101). The art of government means that governments have different rationalities, hence the name *governmentalities*. Governmentality has a broader meaning than government, for these rationalities are "systems of thinking about the nature of the practice of government (who can govern; what governing is; what or who is governed)" (Gordon 1991 p. 3).

Foucault gave three meanings to the term *governmentality*:
a particular historical event, formed by "institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections" (Foucault 1991b p. 102)

a general transition of governance with a "series of specific governmental apparatuses" and ways of knowing or "whole complex of savoirs" (Foucault 1991b p.103)

a mentality of those governed and those doing the governing (Foucault 1991b).

In this thesis I focus on the third definition, as used by most theorists. Governmentality is usually seen as a particular kind of discourse that is specific to the state. Foucault sees it as the "regulation of conduct" with the state as only part of government (Foucault 1991b). He argues that the principles of political action and the government of the state or institutions are related to those of personal conduct and the way we govern ourselves (Hindess 1996 p. 105), and that both of these aspects of power constitute governmentality.

Power is seen as a network of relationships, evident in all spheres of society. Rose elaborates by explaining that individuals now have a responsibility to be involved in governing themselves, rather than power being exercised from outside:

> … the subjects of government, the human beings who are to be governed … are now conceived as individuals who are to be active in their own government … it was to be a relation of allegiance and responsibility … Each subject is now located in a variety of heterogeneous and overlapping networks of personal concern and investment — for oneself, one's family, one's neighborhood, one's community, one's workplace. (Rose 1996a p. 330–331)

In natural resource and land management, this idea of the management of self fits well with current processes of government: self-reliance was emphasised in some government agricultural programs such as FutureProfit (Stewart and Armstrong 1998). In the new regional arrangements (COAG 2000), regional community groups are responsible for allocating funding for natural resource management projects, even to the extent that governments submit bids for funds to these regional groups. Another way of controlling people's behaviour is through the "norms" and expectations of society. The growth of awareness in conservation issues over the past ten years can be seen as occurring because of various communities of influence, which include the media, and discussions within families, neighbourhoods, Landcare groups and workplaces such as cattle sales. No *one* state or law is responsible for "governing" people in this broader sense of government.

This form of power revolves around not only the management of self, but the management of others. Gordon (1991) explains governmentality as the "conduct of conducts", which refers to the exercise or conduct of power with the intent of influencing the conduct or behaviour of others. In explaining the conduct of conducts Foucault states:

> When one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others, when one characterizes these actions as the government of men by other men — in the broadest sense of the term — one includes an important element: freedom. (Foucault 2003e p.138)

The exercise of power requires freedom on the part of the individuals involved, as discussed previously. Therefore the existence of power does not imply the removal of freedom (Hindess 1996 p. 101). As Foucault explains:

> relations of power are not something bad in themselves, from which one must free one's self … the problem is not trying to dissolve them in the utopia of perfectly transparent communication, but to give one's self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the ethos, the practice of self which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination. (Foucault 1988 p. 18)

Ethics, which limit power games of domination, are founded in the context. Foucault proposed a situational ethics (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 99) grounded in the social and historic context, to provide the best basis for action. The importance of the context follows from the belief that human action cannot be reduced to predefined elements and rules (Flyvbjerg 2001). Because ethics and ethical behaviour are grounded in the social context, they become important in the management of others.

Many government NRM programs are about the management of others. These programs usually aim to influence the attitudes of landholders, or influence the land management practices of graziers and farmers. Foucault's reconceptualisation of power as governmentality emphasises the need for ethics. Thus, the government staff, scientists and facilitators involved in programs that aim to influence others should be mindful of their own behaviour and ensure that it is ethical according to all involved. By this means, power relations and relationships between individuals should be conducted with the "minimum of domination" (Foucault 1988 p. 18) with respect and equality in communication. Power relations and relationships between people and governments are changing in today's society, and Foucault's style of critique is used by authors such as Rose (1996a; 1996b; 1999a; 1999b) to analyse these changes.

Changing role of government

I shall use two of Rose's ideas when looking at community participation: *government at a distance* and *the changing role of the expert*. Both of these concepts derive from Rose's view of society and government. In this postmodern era, Rose (1993; 1996a) sees the territory of government as being refigured. Here "the subjects of government, the human beings who are to be governed … are now conceived as individuals who are to be active in their own government" (Rose 1996a p. 330–331). The notion of community has assumed a new importance; it is no longer simply the "territory of government, but the means of government" (Rose 1996a p. 325). In such a community, individuals are "active agents" who are free to shape their own lives. Individuals are influenced, and their behaviour modified, more by their communities than by government.

The ideal view of the social state has given way to the "enabling state". In this new, more-complex style of government, "new lines of power" have opened up (Rose 1999a p. 142; 1999b). Rose (1993; 1999a) defines this as "advanced liberal government" where citizens are transformed into consumers. Consumers are free to choose what they want, whereas citizens were controlled by the laws of government in the style of Habermasian sovereign power. This concept carries with it the idea of "new lines of power" in which citizens are redefined as consumers by having greater freedom of choice.

As the state enables consumers to take more control, the idea of government-at-a-distance has grown. This concept was adapted by Miller and Rose (1990) from Bruno Latour's notion of "action at a distance" (Latour 1987, cited in Miller and Rose 1990; Rose 1999b). The capacities of citizens have become key resources for government. The trend toward greater community participation, such as the NAP regional community arrangements, are evidence of this new style of government in Australia.

Within this new state, the "experts" have also been transformed, as bureaucrats and government agents no longer have the same influence (Rose 1999a). Rose (1999a p. 154) views experts as espousing norms, or universals, which once allowed them to retain an unwarranted trust and independence as professionals. In today's government, new norms of accountability have developed; these norms include transparency, observability and standardisation (Rose 1999a pp 153–155). Trust has been eroded, as:

> audits have come to replace the trust that social government invested in professional wisdom, and the decisions and actions of specialists … audit is the technology of mistrust, designing in the hope of restoring trust … [yet, they] amplify the points at which doubt and suspicion can be generated. (Rose 1999a pp. 154–155)

Such an assessment certainly fits with the current view of governments in the field of NRM and agriculture. Rural people's mistrust of government seems to be increasing; in community participation, people are suspicious that their information will have little or no effect on policy makers. These new lines of power are perhaps little understood by, and are often obscure to, those *who* are involved in community participation (see Dimension 5: Figure 2.2).

For Foucault, the task was to *unmask the obscure exercise of power*, and particularly to criticise the workings of so-called "independent and neutral" institutions, because the unmasking allows people to fight against them (Chomsky and Foucault 1974 p. 171; Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 102). This premise is true in community participation, for "invisible" power is exercised through discourses that influence the creation of truth and knowledge. In this research, therefore, I

examine the drivers and assumptions underpinning the use of knowledge in NRM and agricultural programs.

3.3.3 Creation of truth and knowledge through discourses

Truth and knowledge are central concepts in the everyday affairs of human beings. Yet their natures remain problematical, and philosophers have produced many theories about both. It can be argued, for example, that there is no one truth, that each society has its own regime of truth, that truth can mean different things at different stages of history. In this section, we examine some of the concepts of truth and knowledge as they relate to power, including the purposefully provocative idea that rather than being revealed, truth and knowledge can also be created by power relations.

Creation of truth

Power can be obscure or hidden from view, and Foucault sets out to "render visible" these aspects of our experience (Klee's term cited in Rabinow and Rose 2003 p. viii), by providing profoundly different insights. Foucault identifies how power effects can distort the truth (Rabinow and Rose 2003); he enables us to see different kinds of relations between truth and power, in which power is a matter of the production of truth, and truth itself is a thing of a particular world, intrinsically bound to it for its production and circulation (Rabinow and Rose 2003). Foucault proposes that truth "is linked in a circular relationship with systems of power, which produce and sustain it" (Foucault 1984 p. 74). Foucault envisages an interaction between truth and power, which was largely unnoticed previously.

What the dominant tradition of power ignores is that power relations influence the "truth". Rose (1999a) builds on the thinking of Foucault, and questions the social and political role of scientific knowledge. He rejects the view that knowledge can be seen as a resource used in the service of power "driven and shaped by political and professional interests" (Rose 1999a p. xiii). Instead, Rose looks at the formation of knowledge and the conditions under which truths, facts and explanations come to be formulated and accepted. In land management, the "truth" is usually "constructed" in a science paradigm, and this "truth" is then used to make "objective" decisions. Within this framework, information that has come from local people — as promoted by Chambers and others (previous chapter) — is very difficult to accept as valid. The tension between knowledge generated by science and experiential local knowledge is the basis of much conflict in community participation in this research. Consequently, in this research I explore the forms of knowledge that are accepted and used in NRM and agricultural programs.

Foucault talks about power as the "strategic games between liberties" (Foucault 2003c p. 40). These games are not to discover "true things" (Florence 2003 p. 2[12]) but are "a set of rules by which the truth is produced" (Foucault 2003c p. 38). There is no *one* truth, waiting to be discovered by whatever means. Truth is determined by the rules of each particular society, and those rules and the discourses of that society "regulate the norms of truth" (Rabinow and Rose 2003 p. xii).

Each society has its own regime of truth, which includes types of discourses that it accepts and makes function as true. Discourses thus enable the society's members to distinguish true and false statements, to employ techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth, and to ascribe the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault 1984 p. 73). Dryzek (1997, 2000) adds that discourses construct, or at least recognise, entities, and "truth" is linked to a particular society, discipline or time.

Thus, Foucault believes in different kinds of rationalities, rather than the universal rationality of the Habermasian school of thought. To understand what Foucault means by rationality and truth, we need to understand what he means by discourse. To him, discourses have their own rationalities, which determine what is seen as true or false at any given time. Foucault talks about discourses as "games of truth", which are:

> not the discovery of true things, but the rules according to which what a subject can say about certain things depends on the questions of true or false ... The critical history of thought is neither a history of acquisitions nor a history of concealments of truth: it is the history of "veridictions" understood as the forms according to which discourses capable of being declared true or false are articulated concerning a domain of things. (Florence 2003 p. 2)

Discourse in this thesis is influenced by Foucault's perspective, where discourse is a cage that governs the way people think, but this is very different from Habermas's definition:

> To one school of thought, followers of Michel Foucault, a discourse is like a prison, it conditions the way people think. To another school of thought, influenced by Jürgen Habermas, discourse means precisely the opposite: it is pure freedom in the ability to raise and challenge arguments. (Dryzek 2000 p. vi)

This means that discourses determine what will be seen as true or false at any given time in history, and for different groups of people. Thus, the "games of truth" are not about finding what is true or false; games of truth are the rules that influence the discourses concerning a certain domain at a certain time. Games of truth do not arise "in abstract space of thought" (Rabinow and Rose 2003 p. xxi) as perhaps in science, but relate to specific practices, places and times; thus truth varies with the context and the discourse to which it relates.

---

[12] Florence is a pseudonym which Foucault used in this paper.

Foucault explains discourses by turning to different disciplines of medicine, mathematics, economics and psychiatry. These are recognisable, but enigmatic as we have difficulty defining their limits:

> what individualized a discourse such as political economy is not the unity of its object, not its formal structure … It is rather the existence of a set of rules of formation for *all* its objects … *all* its operations … *all* its concepts … *all* its theoretical options … Discourse is not the system of its language. (Foucault 1991a pp. 54, 59)

Discourse does not mean discussion or words, but the set of rules that define what is "truth" relevant to a particular discipline or body of thinking. Discourses may span time, and do not necessarily disappear when an alternative discourse is formulated. Discourses define what is sayable, what is remembered, which "utterances are put into circulation … what is valid, or debatable or definitively invalid" (Foucault 1991a pp. 59–60).

Discourses can transfer and produce power, and they can reinforce power; thus, discourses can be a way of ensuring freedom (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 103–127). Conversely, discourses can weaken the grip of power, for "secrecy and silence can mask power" (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 124). Discourses can mask power completely or subvert it to the extent that obscure areas of power can exist without public knowledge (Flyvbjerg 2001p. 124). When discourses reinforce each other, then power is enhanced and an institution may be formed or grow; when discourses clash, power and institutions are limited. For Foucault, the task was to unmask these obscure areas. To help unmask such discourses in this research, people's perceptions about knowledge, and what knowledge is accepted, will be analysed.

Foucault gave priority to discourses and public deliberation as a way of producing the truth (Florence 2003). Thus, community discussion can be a way of producing truth. Again, government staff and scientists are *not* likely to feel comfortable with this thinking, and too often, community participative processes are tightly controlled. A current example would be the Regional Forest Agreement where the process was closely dictated by government, even though the professed principle was to allow different stakeholder perspectives to be aired. Only limited information was released, and debate was curtailed, so allowing the debate to be co-opted by the development discourse (Hillier 2002).

Creation of knowledge
According to the above ways of thinking, just as discourses produce truth, they also produce knowledge, and knowledge from the most powerful discourses is what is heard. As Flyvbjerg (2001) points out, this alternative conceptualisation turns Francis Bacon's dictum "knowledge is power" on its head. Knowledge can "provide" people with the power "to do" or "to influence";

but in addition, power defines what gets to count as knowledge. Therefore, "power is knowledge" is more accurate for Foucauldian thinkers. In NRM, salinity is an example of what counts as knowledge: 20 years ago a few scientists were aware of looming salinity problems in Australia, yet their ideas were not part of the accepted discourse of the day and salinity was not a major sustainability issue. In the 2000s there is a significant injection of resources from the Commonwealth government for a National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality (COAG 2000), and salinity and water management are now seen as key issues in the sustainability discourse.

From this viewpoint, scientific discourses can be seen as objects of political practice (Foucault 1991a p. 69). Scientific information promoted to communities during participatory activities can thus be "political" in the sense that it belongs to a particular discourse. Ecological principles from a conservation discourse may conflict with land management principles espoused by an agricultural production discourse. In my experience, landholders are often presented with conflicting information and asked to integrate both into their practices. They are probably far more familiar with the problem of different rationalities than are most scientists. Further, some scientists overlook the implicit power of their scientific discourse.

Foucault acknowledges the difficulty for many people in his provocative approach to discourse, yet it is his intention to make previous discourses seem "problematic, difficult and dangerous" (Foucault 1991c p. 84), so as to encourage people to look at situations a different ways. People have difficulty recognising that:

> Their history, their social practices, the language they speak … even the fables told them in childhood, obey rules which are given to their consciousness: they hardly wish to be dispossessed … what they say … matters little. (Foucault 1991a p. 71)

Individuals are influenced by the discourses and rules that govern their existence, even if they are unaware of them. Many scientists would feel uncomfortable with this viewpoint about the way knowledge is formed, but as Foucault (Rabinow and Rose 2003 p. xxvi) believes, this "ethic of discomfort" is the philosophical task bequeathed to our society. Perhaps landholders and scientists need to feel uncomfortable with the propositions placed before them, for it is only through this feeling that the power effects of discourses become evident.

3.3.4 Criticisms of Foucault

Foucault has often been criticised for focusing on discourses and for lacking norms; that is, he provides critique but no overall praxis. A frequent criticism levelled at Foucault is his reluctance to provide normative theories, methodological frameworks or guidelines for what should be done. He is bound to the Nietzschean idea of unmasking truth and power, where truth is

"imposed by a regime of power" (Hillier 2002 p. 51). Hillier also suggests that Foucault provides a tool-kit for local resistance, perhaps manifest in demands for increased local participation in government decision-making processes. Flyvbjerg (2001) and Miller (2000) also argue that he is not without norms. His norms are expressed in a desire to challenge "every abuse of power, whoever the author, whoever the victims" (Miller 2000 p. 316). Foucault, like Habermas, is a political thinker. The difference is that Foucault (1991c) thinks it improper to pose norms (for further discussion see Chapter 7 *Introduction*).

Many of the criticisms of Foucault revolve around the interpretation of his work as postmodernist or poststructuralist (Hindess 1996 p. 90; McHoul and Grace 1998; Gergen and Gergen 2003); for example Habermas's main complaint is with Foucault's relativism (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 99; Habermas 1987 pp. 276–294). Two of the key tenets of postmodernism are discourse analysis and relativism. Postmodernism is relativistic in that reality is regarded as being viewed differently by people in different contexts, and each view is just as valid as any other. Postmodernism argues that truth and morality do not have an existence beyond our discourses — that is, how we talk, write and think about issues. Foucault's views can be seen to have some postmodern characteristics, in that he argues against universal ideals, but he does not otherwise ascribe to the postmodern perspective. The Foucault style of critique is "not a rationalist style, but neither is it irrational" (Hillier 2002 p. 58).

In emphasising contextual aspects, Foucault may seem to be espousing poststructuralist ideas, yet when asked if truth is a construction, he answers:

> That depends. There are games of truth in which truth is a construction and others in which it is not. One can have a game of truth that consists of describing things in such and such a way ... which itself has a certain number of historically changing rules ... this does not mean that everything is a figment of the imagination … I have been seen as saying that madness does not exist, whereas the problem is absolutely the converse. (Foucault 2003c p. 39)

Foucault is certainly not a poststructuralist, as he is searching for reality. He wants to discover how things such as madness are constituted, and what "kind of rationality" people use to define them (Foucault 1981 p. 95).

Rejecting the postmodern idea of relativism, Foucault favours contextualism. Flyvbjerg (2001 p. 100) suggests that it is a mistake to confuse the "anything goes" of relativism with contextualism because in contextualism "the present effectively limits possible preferences: humans cannot think or do just anything at any time". The traditional dichotomy is between foundationalism and relativism, where foundationalism means that truth can be grounded in normative foundations. However, Foucault rejects both relativism and foundationalism. For

Foucault, contextualism is an effective defence against the relativism and nihilism of which he was accused (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 101).

In community participation, context is fundamentally important, and the implications of a multitude of contexts are factors in community participation that are often neglected. The importance of *context* is emphasised in my model (see Dimension 1: Figure 2.2), which portrays context as an all-encompassing background, influencing all dimensions of participation. An understanding of the context of my research area was developed over many years of working in the rangelands, and through written documents and critical observation.

3.4 Linking the two traditions

These two ways of thinking about power, which have developed in philosophy and social and political sciences, are usually seen as diametrically opposed. Habermas and Foucault themselves would be unlikely to agree to any idea of complementarity between their ideas, as they often engaged in vigorous criticisms of each other's work (Flyvbjerg 2001; Hillier 2002 pp. 57–62). However, Hillier (2002 p. 62–64) questions whether they read much of each other's work before Foucault's death, and points out many positive assessments of each other's ideas. The ontological differences between Habermas and Foucault concern their treatments of the processes of rationalisation and the development of truth: Habermas and his followers believe in universals and ideals, while Foucault believed in multiple rationalities, and truths produced by power.

Instead of judging these as simply opposing conceptions, however, some believe that the two traditions of thought can complement each other (Dryberg 1997; Flyvbjerg 2001; Hillier 2002). Flyvbjerg (2001) notes that many of the weaknesses of Habermas and Lukes are actually the strengths of Foucault, and vice versa. Habermas is criticised for his idealism, but he is strong in universals and generalisations. Foucault is criticised for his avoidance of advocating moral solutions, but Foucault emphasises the particular and contextualism (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 108). Also, Habermas has well developed macro-political ideals, but he is weak in his understanding of political processes; Foucault is weak in generalised ideals (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 98) but strong in micro-politics.

Flyvbjerg (2001 p. 88) further suggests that the best of both traditions can be integrated to produce a new common framework for analysing power. He proposes that a new conception of power can be developed which links the best of the ideas from the Nietzschean–Foucauldian interpretation of power with the Weberian–Habermasian approach to power. This proposal acknowledges that (a) power can be both positive and negative and (b) power relations need to

be examined at the institutional and governmental level (Habermas's focus) in addition to the local context (Foucault's focus). However, Flyvbjerg (2001) defines power as dynamic and fluid, exercised rather than possessed — the same as Foucault (1979). While his proposal builds on the work of both Habermas and Foucault, to say that it adopts the best of both traditions masks the preference for Foucault's interpretation of power.

Flyvbjerg's new conception of power, combining some of the ideas of the different perspectives, allows discourse ethics to be seen as a way to manage power, rather than a way to get rid of power (Flyvbjerg 2001). This incorporates Foucault's idea of power as a regulating mechanism within communication. Such an approach builds on Habermas's ideas, but does not subscribe to the idea of universals, applicable to every situation.

These ideas have clear implications for how power may be viewed, and used, in the participation literature. It is to these implications that we shall now turn.

3.5 Different conceptions of power within the participation literature

The literature on participation is generally based on the dominant conception of power as a quantitative capacity. Power is generally assumed to rest with the central elite, or government officers, while the community is seen to be in need of empowerment. Landholders I spoke with disliked the term *empowerment* because of the implication that the powerful will help them, the powerless. Thus, even the supposedly supportive word *empowerment* perpetuates the language of the existing structures and tends to reinforce the status quo.

Even though power relations and empowerment issues are frequently discussed, theoretical debate about power and associated discourse is uncommon in government circles; philosophers such as Habermas and Foucault are rarely mentioned. The meaning of power is often not explicit in the participation literature, but the meanings can be deduced from the way in which the word *power* is incorporated. As Vanclay and Lawrence (1995) point out, sociology played only a small part in Australian — or, in fact, world-wide — agricultural research until the mid-1990s (Vanclay and Lawrence 1995 p. 168). This may be one of the reasons for much of the participation literature emphasising traditional concepts of power.

An analysis of Pretty's writings (1995b, 1999) clarifies his interpretation of power within participative projects. In his typology of power, Pretty (1995b Table 1 p. 1252) says that some people "have no power", which indicates an assumption that power can be possessed. In the

same typology he mentions "distributions of wealth and power". This implies that power is a quantitative capacity that can be divided between different individuals or groups. Both of these statements are evidence that Pretty's understanding of power is as a quantitative capacity that can be acquired, seized or shared, rather than exercised, as Foucault would say. This view is more like the understanding of power held by Habermas, but contrary to the ideas of Foucault. In this research, I sought to understand the participants' perspectives about power, and the extent to which their understanding of power was similar to that expressed in Pretty's typology. Additionally, I sought to understand whether the participants' views fitted more with a Habermasian, or a Foucauldian style of thinking.

The writings of many others in the development and participation fields support the traditional conception of power as capacity. For example, White et al. (1994 p. 22) writes about the "power elite" which suggests an understanding of power similar to Lukes' elite category, part of the dominant tradition of power. Lozare in the same book (1994 p. 231) gives a detailed analysis of power by discussing individual and collective power. He quotes Weber, Burns and Dahl, and others who all hold similar conceptions of power. In Australia, Vanclay and Lawrence (1995) discuss Habermas, Giddens and Bourdieu, but not Foucault. Their language — "different actors *have* different levels of power" (1995 p. 132) — reinforces their belief in power as capacity. Kothari (2001 p. 141) agrees with my assessment that within much of participatory discourse "people's knowledge or local knowledge is seen as a fixed commodity that people intrinsically have and own".

However, some confusion exists about how the conception of power links with other espoused philosophies. Pretty's (1995b, 1999) analysis of power seems inconsistent with his discussions about paradigms. He advocates the need for adopting paradigms other than positivism because of the need to move away from solely scientific or technological solutions. He acknowledges the importance of context-specific research and incorporating multiple perspectives, which are principles incorporated in Foucault's conception of power. Pretty also suggests changing the focus from questions of "What?" to "How?". Such thinking seems akin to a Foucauldian approach (Flyvbjerg 2001). However, Pretty seems to support the traditional view of power by the language he uses and his belief in science and technology as providing a rational basis for decision making.

Chamber's interpretation of power also seems confused at times. On one hand, Chambers (1999) emphasises the contextual, dynamic and reversible nature of interpersonal power relations. Here, he quotes Cocks:

> Individual persons can occupy different positions along different axes of power at one and the same time. People are complicated enough, alas, to enjoy the various pleasures of domination while simultaneously suffering all the insults and injuries that sub-ordination brings in its wake. (Cocks 1989 p. 6)

This understanding fits with Foucault's conception of power. On the other hand, Chambers argues that power is part of the problem, especially in hindering people's learning, saying "*all* power deceives, and exceptional power deceives exceptionally" (1999 p. 76). Habermas tended to see power as a problem, but Chamber's view seems different in that he does not appear to suggest that power needs to be removed completely, but rather that it needs to be managed differently. However, Chambers focuses on the need for empowerment of the "lowers" (the poor, the weak, women, minorities and the vulnerable in society). This implies that power needs to be a shifted from the strong to the weak groups. In this respect, Chambers (1999) has adopted a structuralist view of power by setting up dichotomies of "uppers" and "lowers", the powerful and the powerless. Thus, Chambers appears to want to include some of Foucault's ideas about the fluidity of power, yet he maintains a fairly traditional and structuralist discourse about power.

The value of adopting a Foucauldian view of power is promoted by several authors, including some feminists (Hailey, 2001; Kothari, 2001; Taylor, 2001), and some research in rural Australia using a Foucauldian approach includes the work of Lennie (1996, 1999), Gibson-Graham (1995) and Jennings (2003). Lennie examines participation and empowerment of women in Australian rural communities using feminist poststructuralism, and is thus based on a Foucauldian model of power. Other feminists (Gibson-Graham 1995) undertook a comparative analysis of power relations in rural Australia using structural Marxist theory, poststructuralist theory and Foucault. Gibson-Graham argues that different conceptions enable different strategic interventions and visions of social change. A poststructuralist approach has benefits in understanding power as fluid, and therefore liberates women by offering them a multitude of different roles and a variety of possible interventions (Gibson-Graham, 1995 pp. 181–183). Taylor (2001) and Hailey (2001) both use a Foucauldian approach to understanding power in participation, and argue against the formulaic approach to participation.

As Lee (1992) and Kothari (2001) explain, a Foucauldian analysis disrupts the commonly discussed dichotomies, such as macro/micro or powerful/powerless, because it sees all individuals as vehicles of power. A Foucauldian style of analysis of power allows us to:

> shift our concentration from the center and national institutions such as the state, not because this enables the powerless to speak and be heard, but because those macro-spheres of authority are not necessarily the only focal conductors of power" and in this conception "knowledge is culturally, socially and politically produced and is continuously reformulated as a powerful normative construct. (Kothari 2001 p. 141)

Such an approach has benefits by emphasising the dynamic and contextual nature of power. As Foucault (1988) himself pointed out, and others (Gibson-Graham 1995; Hailey 2001; Taylor 2001) have illustrated, the formulation of universals can actually reinforce domination and limit the opportunities for solutions. However, the dominant approach, as highlighted through the works of Lukes and Habermas, offers many insights about power as indicated by some of the key authors and practitioners in the development field.

These two approaches can provide alternative yet complementary means for analysing power relations within community–government interactions undertaken in the south-west Queensland rangelands. As Nietzsche (1969 p. 119; 1968 p. 287) suggests, more eyes and different eyes used to observe the same thing can give a more complete perspective. Foucault's principle process question "How?" adds another dimension of understanding to the questions of "Who?", "What?" and "Where?" asked by Lukes, Habermas and other critical theorists (Flyvbjerg 2001 pp. 118–119; Foucault 1982a). Because of the impossibility of merging the two traditions completely, power will be analysed from both perspectives.

This thesis will develop relevant questions for "How-Who-What-Where", will analyse power, and will examine how to improve community participation processes used by government agencies. Thus it will explore how useful it is to treat the conceptions of power from the perspective of the dominant tradition, as promoted by Lukes and Habermas, as well the alternative conceptions based on Foucault.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter set out to clarify the theories and concepts of power as it relates to community participation. Power is a contested concept: there are many different perspectives on, and definitions of, power, and there are many different perspectives about participation. These perspectives depend on the context, and to whom one is speaking. The traditions about power are underpinned by assumptions that reflect the philosophies of the people involved. Using ideas from different perspectives gives us a deeper understanding of power relationships. In any participatory activity, it is important to examine *how* power is expressed, not just by whom; the *level* of power that is being examined; and *where* the power is being exercised.

The literature highlights how power is multi-faceted, so the scope of further research needs to allow the various aspects of power to emerge. People's perspectives of participation obviously vary according to the power relationships and the positions that individuals hold within the participatory activity. The two traditions or ways of thinking about power are, to many, fundamentally different. I agree with Flyvbjerg that some melding of the two traditions is

possible, as each portrays a different perspective about power; each is valuable and will provide a rich understanding of power relations.

Because of the multitude of perspectives about power, it is difficult to link each of these with the specific dimensions of participation (Figure 2.2). Rather, this research will first analyse the data from a Habermasian perspective, and then a Foucauldian perspective. The research needs to be designed to evoke the perspectives of different people and the nuances about power and participation. How this is done is outlined in the next chapter.