The challenge for those of us working in rural Australia in the early years of the twenty-first century is to accept difference, understand resistances, celebrate our historical antecedents [without excluding those that “do fit”] and maintain a high level of reflexivity [difficult to undertake, but important to attempt].

(Stehlik 2001 p. 40)
8.0 Introduction

The quotation by Stehlik (2001) which opens this chapter cites concepts that are suggestive of Foucault’s writings: first, the reinterpretation of power as an interplay of acquiescence and resistance, having both positive and negative aspects; and second, the emphasis on the importance of history, especially for understanding discourses and what is accepted as knowledge and truth. The term *reflexivity* refers to the idea that knowledge is “socially constructed, rather than existing as an objective external truth” (Johnson 1995 p. 228). These conceptualisations have been used (with others) in the results chapters of this thesis to explore the range of power relations in rangeland communities.

This chapter summarises the results of this thesis, briefly answering each of the research questions. The next, and final, chapter of this thesis will restate the last research question. The model developed in this thesis illustrates the dimensions of participation (Figure 2.2) and indicates that power is not the only influence on participation. However, power emerged from the literature and from the results as a fundamentally important dimension of participation. What is lacking is praxis — the application of theories of power to the practice of participation. An in-depth understanding of the theories of power is also needed to better grasp the concepts embedded in the typologies of participation, and in the participation literature generally.

This research was designed to examine community participation in south-west Queensland. Because the whole philosophy underpinning participation is to evoke the views of local communities, it was considered important to examine participation from the perspective of the community participants themselves, rather than from the more traditional perspective of the implementers only. It was therefore decided to conduct the research in a way that would allow the important issues to emerge.

As power was the key issue to become apparent, hypotheses about power relationships had not been framed before field work began. A theoretical framework based on principles from the two main traditions of power was used to examine this grounded data. Several of these principles were evident in south-west Queensland. Examples include elements of Habermas’s discourse ethics (Habermas 1990) and a belief in the value of consensus, and Foucault’s “structure of actions” (Foucault 1980) and acknowledgement of the role of resistance.

In the results chapters, both of these views about power were used, and it was concluded that a style of analysis that integrated both was useful. Each view embodies a set of values and assumptions about power. As such, these views highlight different relationships between government people and community members, and different relationships between groups and
between individuals. Each tradition has weaknesses and strengths. Consequently, the results chapters firstly use a Habermasian and then a Foucauldian approach before a new understanding of how power relationships operate within community participation is formulated.

8.1 Overview of questions addressed

The key research focus for this thesis was to explore the question: *How do power relationships influence community participation in rangeland management programs?* The approach has been to answer a series of secondary research questions initially proposed in Chapter 1:

1. *What participatory processes are currently used by government in rangelands programs?* Chapter 5

2. *How is power expressed by participants within participatory processes?* Chapter 6

3. *How does power relate to other dimensions of community participation?* Chapter 7

4. *What are the implications of power relationships for participation?* Chapter 9

**Question 1: What participatory processes are currently used by government in rangelands programs?**

Participatory approaches and processes used by government officers in Australian rangeland management programs extended from those that merely provided information for communities, to those that employed highly participative approaches where local people shared in the decision-making power. Usually, landholders had power to influence the content, and sometimes to influence the processes, used in the projects. Many of the same processes were used in different projects; for example, brochures, media releases, field days, workshops and discussion groups were commonly employed. However, it is clear that these labels, which focus on methods, were ineffective in describing the details of how these processes were used, and the degree of power sharing.

This research highlighted the principle that it is *the way the processes are implemented* that is fundamentally important, and this largely depends on the attitudes and intent of the practitioner. The methodology, principles and values used to guide the participatory design, which underpin the methods used, are paramount in understanding power relationships. The same methods may be used by different practitioners in ways that change the degree of power sharing. For example, a workshop may be a series of lectures imparting information — the entire process planned and run by a government officer; or the workshop may be highly participative, with interactive exercises allowing members to influence the topics to be covered and the way in which the learning is to occur. Meeting procedures commonly used in south-west Queensland follow the format of speakers for and against a motion — this tends to polarise divergent opinions and
maintains the status quo in power relations. Approaches which question people’s values and encourage reflexivity are preferable. The following definitions encapsulate some of the ideas of practitioners, by dividing participatory processes into three broad groups: traditional extension methods, highly participative processes and representative processes (see Table 8.1 for detailed definitions).

Table 8.1 Participatory processes currently used in Australian rangelands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Traditional extension</th>
<th>Representative</th>
<th>Highly participative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>Usually one-way flows of information from government to landholder, and sometimes from landholder to government when the government wants comment on proposed policy or project.</td>
<td>Community representatives are elected or chosen and only these individuals participate. Sometimes representatives do have considerable power to influence government; at other times they are merely token representatives.</td>
<td>Two-way flows of information between groups. Usually the decision-making power is shared between the various community stakeholders, and between government and community. The level of power sharing is sometimes negotiated, sometimes stipulated by government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power sharing</td>
<td>Low level of power sharing.</td>
<td>Variable, but tends to be low levels of power sharing.</td>
<td>High level of power sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of processes</td>
<td>Media releases, Newspaper articles, Newsletters, Brochure/Flyers, Radio/Television, Surveys (mail/telephone), Field days, Workshop, meetings, Discussion days, One-on-one interaction</td>
<td>Boards and representative committees, Citizen’s juries, Community profiles, Rapid rural appraisal, Future search conferences</td>
<td>Participatory Action learning, Local Best Practice, Soft systems methodology, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Participatory action research, Participatory monitoring and evaluation, Workshops, meetings, Discussion days, Future search conferences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participatory processes will fit into one of these groups, although some are generic, and will fit into several of these groupings depending on the way the methods are used. The examples indicated in Table 8.1 are from the literature, as well as from observations made in the rangelands during the course of this research. In the period during which data were being collected, traditional extension processes aiming to enhance landholder learning were extensively used in the rangelands. Sometimes these were employed on their own and sometimes in combination with representative or with highly participative processes. Both government staff and landholders noted the trend towards highly participative processes, particularly at the local level. Programs such as Landcare and Bestprac espoused highly interactive processes that shared some of the decision-making power between governments and landholders. Representative processes dominated at the regional scale, probably for purely pragmatic reasons as the effects of distance in rangeland areas make it more difficult to involve large numbers of people for long periods.
Overall, landholders liked the trend of increased opportunities for local community involvement and greater decision-making power in government rangeland management programs. Most government staff agreed, but some thought there was too much emphasis on community perspectives at the expense of scientific expertise. While landholders and agency staff were largely supportive of the general underlying aim of participation — to improve rangeland management — all agreed that participatory approaches needed improvement.

Local landholders in this study revealed that poor participation can be worse than none at all: sometimes it is better not to involve the community, rather than to do it badly. Agencies initiating participation need to recognise that participation is not always appropriate. When participation is tokenistic, it can exacerbate cynicism about government, shatter trust between government staff and local communities, promote conflict between stakeholders and encourage apathy towards all government programs. An understanding of the key issues and the existing context is essential if participatory approaches are to be improved.

Government practitioners and landholders described participatory processes in different ways. Practitioners usually discussed participatory processes in terms of the methods (as discussed above) or the goals they were trying to achieve; for example, a workshop can aim to improve landholder knowledge, change community attitudes, enhance landholders’ skills, create awareness or change land management practices. However, it is notable that neither the purpose nor the method’s label clearly described the process from the landholders’ perspective.

Landholders tended to emphasise the credibility, including communication style and sincerity, of the government practitioners involved with them, as well as the degree of power landholders had in the project (i.e. their ability to influence decisions). A key issue for most rangeland landholders was that they wanted to be able to “have a say” in both the process and content. Clearly, if the participatory process provides the opportunity for landholders to influence decisions, they are likely to be positive; but landholders feel they are wasting their time and are critical if they believe they are not listened to and have no power to influence government.

However, “having more power” in Habermasian terms, is not always required. Depending on the context, landholders were supportive of activities which had a “low level” of power sharing, saying that they did not always want to be involved in decision-making. For various reasons, including that they did not have the time or resources, or thought that is was the government’s role, sometimes landholders said that no participation was appropriate for a situation. For example, a brochure, website or telephone information service that informed landholders of
simple technological information — such as new types of chemical for combating the pest, buffalo fly — was considered desirable.

To landholders, of most importance was the “structure of actions” (in Foucault’s terminology) of the participatory activities. The issues mentioned by landholders were the honesty and integrity of the government individuals, sufficient time to establish relationships between people, trust, good social capital in terms of communication and facilitation skills of the government staff, transparency of the process and being explicit about the degree of power sharing that was integral to that project. Institutional arrangements were also seen as enhancing or hindering participation. For example, institutional arrangements which are flexible and responsive to community needs are enhancing; but a lack of resources or a lack of trained staff can lead to poor processes, which will hinder participation. Nevertheless, relationships between individuals, between community members, and between government and community were paramount.

Landholders also said that the government agencies’ emphasis on methods was incorrect. For a variety of reasons, government agencies do tend to promote recipes to guide their participatory activities. It is quicker and easier for practitioners to use someone else’s methodology than to adapt or invent their own, and recipes attempt to ensure some consistency across all regions. This research concludes that having the right formulae for all groups, the correct discourse ethics (Habermas 1990) and a set communication strategy to alleviate the negative effects of power and domination within groups was not always appropriate.

It seems obvious that different participatory processes are needed for different situations. Many existing approaches are designed with a specific situation in mind: media campaigns are used to raise awareness; experiential learning is used in workshops to improve people’s skills, such as in computing or pregnancy testing of cattle; participatory action learning is used with groups in Bestprac to improve productivity.

This research highlighted the need for more attention to be given to the complexities of the situation when choosing and implementing participatory processes. Participatory approaches need to be adapted to fit, or be designed especially for, the given situation. This research showed that participation is complex, with a myriad of dimensions. Consequently, designers of activities need to be cognisant of the appropriate scale, degree of power sharing, relevant stakeholders, skills of individual facilitators, resources available, regional constraints and so on.
Participation needs to be contextual, not only for different situations or projects, but also within projects. Processes may need to be adapted during implementation because circumstances can alter during the life of the project. Processes should be flexible and responsive while remaining consistent with the overall principles that influenced the design. Landholders applauded those projects which attempted to incorporate flexibility and adaptation; examples in south-west Queensland included Bestprac and the Feral Goat Management project.

**Question 2: How is power expressed by participants within participatory activities?**

In general, landholders and government staff tended to have different perspectives about where the power lay in community participation. The following analogy, where the government staff are likened to sheep being nudged by community members, probably sums up many landholders’ ideas about participating in official government activities. As one landholder said:

> We were like a sheep dog trial, we just nudged here and nudged there, a little bit at a time, week after week, a little nudge here, a little nudge there ... it took a very long time, very long winded. (LG 3)

While this was not meant as a reflection on individual government officers, the government as a collective was seen as a mob of sheep, and regarded as not very bright; they tended to run as a mob and follow the leader; if you got one going in the right direction the others might follow. Some landholders hated them, others liked them, but most people just got frustrated while trying to manage them. In terms of power relations, this landholder saw the government staff as a collective, and the landholder had some control over the situation.

In a similar manner, many government staff probably also saw the landholders as a collective, a mob of sheep. Many commented on the difficulties in achieving changes to land management practices, complaining that even when landholders smiled and agreed with proposals, nothing happened. They were also frustrated with the process of participation, but tended to see themselves as having the power to control the situation.

The paradox highlighted here is that individuals from both “sides” tend to blame the collective “other”; that is, landholders blame “the government”, and government staff blame “the landholders”. Individuals on one “side” attempt to assert power over individuals on the “other side” by grouping them as a collective with collective faults. This blaming of “the other” was most evident when individuals felt that the other side had more power than they did (see Box 6.4 and 6.5).
These distinct perspectives about power relationships also indicate a lack of understanding about each other stemming from differences in the cultures of the two groups. One of the clearest examples was with the SWS meetings — government documents and agency staff promoted the SWS group as an exemplary case of community participation with genuine partnership and grass-roots control. Observations of the meetings would support this view. In contrast, the landholders involved said that meetings were a pretence; they were happy to “play the game” while there was something in it for them, but the power was really in the hands of government staff who controlled the funds.

All of the people interviewed in south-west Queensland tended to have an understanding of power that fitted within the dominant tradition — expressions were often about the quantity of power people “held”, who had power over or power to influence others. Some expressions did fit within the alternative tradition, as epitomised by Foucault. While it is too simplistic to suggest that the government officers are all Habermasian thinkers, and the landholders are more likely to adopt a Foucauldian understanding of power, there is a tendency for each group to adhere to the principles and ideas espoused by these traditions.

The government staff, without knowing the theory and philosophical basis, were inclined to follow the Habermasian idea of discourse ethics (Habermas 1990). The government officers in south-west Queensland do realise that actors have divergent interests and conflicting goals. Rational discussions based on scientific knowledge were seen as a way of reaching decisions by consensus about rangeland management issues. However, observations of SWS meetings indicated that the processes used were not promoting equality between the various groups in the region; town businesspeople and Aboriginal groups were not represented in most discussions. The principles of generality, autonomy, role taking, power neutrality and transparency did little to alleviate existing power disparities. Forums that are more open, where people are encouraged to be reflective and consider the broader context, are needed to ensure that marginalised groups have the opportunity to be included. This would begin to improve generality and inclusivity, and to close the gap between the rhetoric and the reality of participation.

The concept of empowerment for rural communities was discussed and alluded to by both landholders and government officers. Some government staff discussed principles of self-reliance and the need for communities to take responsibility for land sustainability problems. However, some landholders voiced resentment about the term empowerment, as it implied that they currently did not have enough power. In many situations they did not feel disempowered (such as SWS Board example above) — they simply had a different perspective on their situation; they had a reality different from that of some of the government practitioners.
Some of the landholders in south-west Queensland expressed power relationships differently from how government staff expressed them. They were not particularly respectful of administrative power (as in Habermas’s definition) — there was a fair amount of “government bashing” at the beginning of each interview as people expressed their feelings, before being able to provide information about their power relationships and community participation. They tended not to respect people just because of their position in the administrative institutions, whereas government bureaucrats tended to accept this kind of power. Rather, landholders were interested in the characteristics and skills of the individual; that is, expert power, referent power and information power (French and Raven 1959) tended to be more accepted. As with Australian rural culture generally, people seemed to focus more on power relations between individuals, rather than within the collective.

Some of the expressions of power were more aligned to Foucault. The emphasis on the structure of individual relationships, the importance of how community participation is facilitated (rather than the methods used), the acceptance of conflict as part of the normal process of change, the importance of the local, of context and the dynamics of power relationships all indicate similarities with Foucauldian thinking.

People’s expressions sometimes alluded to the permeating influence of economic rationalism on government policy. Such comments are understood in light of Foucault’s discussion of discourses as obscure power relations which condition the way people think. The knowledge that is “heard” and used in NRM is constrained by the various dominant discourses of our society today, including economic rationalism and the scientific discourse.

The importance of context and the dynamic nature of power are not accounted for in the commonly used ladder-like typologies of participation (Figure 8.1: left diagram). The ladder model seems to assume an understanding of power in the dominant tradition. It implies that entire projects fit within one or other of the levels of power-sharing. It also implies that one level of power is universally appropriate for all stages of that project, at least as a goal for which practitioners should aim.

The ladder model implies that it is better for the community to have a higher degree of power in decision-making, and that lower levels are not desirable. This is not the case when we look at projects on the ground in south-west Queensland: projects are not that simple. Both landholders and government staff stated that the “lower” levels were appropriate at certain times, and for
some projects. Landholders suggested that some activities were the domain of government, and that government had a responsibility to make some decisions and undertake some activities.

However, landholder interviews in particular, highlighted that power tends to fluctuate during the life of any project (as described in Chapter 6). Government practitioners agreed that power levels are not static over time; power fluctuates, as is illustrated in the flexible and changing “wobbly wheel” model (on the right of Figure 8.1). Experience with communication and an understanding of the various contexts specific to the project help facilitators decide what type of participation is appropriate for a particular phase.

While Pretty’s typology of power does not provide a complete picture of power relations, some universal guidelines are needed in government to ensure some degree of consistency across the state. Groups should not be advantaged or disadvantaged because of the lack of government rules. The ladder model is very useful for indicating to practitioners and landholders that different levels of power sharing do exist.

![Figure 8.1 Changing interpretations of power](image)

This research has revealed that power sharing is not to be conceptualised as a ladder, as it fluctuates over time and between levels during projects. The diagram on the right represents fluctuating power, and illustrates the complexity of power relationships. At different stages of management in any project, different levels of power relations will operate, and thus different types of participatory methods may be appropriate. The same participatory design with the same
methods, the same topic and the same facilitator will have different forms of communication between individuals, different power relations and different outcomes. Focusing on universal approaches for participation misconstrues the complexity of power relations.

The fluctuating nature of power proposed in this thesis (see Figure 8.1) better represents power in the sense of Foucault’s “governmentality”\(^{39}\), the intimate level of power relations. It incorporates the “microphysics of power”, where techniques of power are understood through the behaviour of individuals (Foucault 1979). The web-in-a-wheel model builds on Foucault’s ideas about power as omnipresent, ultradynamic, fluid, and possibly productive and positive (Flyvbjerg 2001). This way of conceptualising power is almost impossible to understand from the ladder model.

Power relations are influenced by what could be called micro-forces and macro-forces, and both of these change over time and differ according to the context. The levels of power in the ladder model seem to relate more to macro-force elements — the structures and policies of government, or what Foucault (2003c) calls the technologies of government. The dynamic nature of power is easier to comprehend in the web model — both the more intimate form of “governmentality”, with its fluid interactions between individuals, friends and groups, and the macro-forces of government. Ross et al. (2001) also found the ladder-like typologies lacking when they suggested laying down the ladder to make it horizontal. However, a richer model is needed, and this is now proposed in the web model.

These research results demonstrate that community participation should not be employed merely to pursue some ideal about high levels of involvement; rather, it should be employed at whatever levels are appropriate to the specific context and local conditions.

The concepts of stable and unstable power positions are more important than “higher” or “lower” levels of power sharing. To achieve long-term changes and sustainable land management, stable forms of power may be more effective. Table 8.2 shows linkages between types of participation (after Pretty 1995b) and their possible power base (after French and Raven 1959), and lists possible consequences for each type of participation.

The comparisons in Table 8.2 indicate that participatory activities that employ different bases of power may be more likely to produce more lasting influence than others, by achieving stable or enduring change. The literature suggested that “weak” participation (e.g. Jiggins 1993) is not

\(^{39}\)One of the three meanings of governmentality is the mentality of those governed and those doing the governing (Foucault 1991b).
useful because decision-making power is not shared with local people (e.g. Pretty’s 1995b levels 2 and 3). However, with this weaker level of power sharing, people may change their land management practices if information is provided by someone whom they trust and respect (i.e. someone with an expert or informational power base); in this case, enduring or stable change may be produced. Likewise, when information is collected from local people (e.g. Pretty’s 1995b level 3), there may or may not be stable change.

### Table 8.2 Linking types of participation and power bases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of participation (after Pretty 1995b)</th>
<th>Power base (French and Raven 1959)</th>
<th>Type of influence likely on local people (as highlighted in this thesis)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Manipulative participation</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
<td>Unstable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Passive participation (information giving)</td>
<td>Expert Informational Referent</td>
<td>Stable or unstable - may or may not be effective for long-term change in land management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Participation by consultation (collecting information)</td>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Stable or unstable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Participation for material goals</td>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>Unstable in land management because funding incentives are short term or intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Functional participation and 6. Interactive participation and 7. Self-mobilisation</td>
<td>Expert Informational Referent Legitimate</td>
<td>Stable or unstable - may or may not be effective for long-term change in land management. An example of referent power is a government or local person who becomes a charismatic leader; the group is likely to fail when the leader leaves.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Simply looking at the level of power sharing as indicated by the various typologies is insufficient; simply looking at French and Raven’s power bases is insufficient. The importance of the individual is suggested by French and Raven’s (1959) different bases, and in this research the landholders also emphasised the importance of the individual, including his or her personality, skills and abilities. Most frameworks provide facilitators of participatory land management with glimpses of what power relations means for participation. Each framework has its strengths and weaknesses, but none capture the complexity of power relations in practice. Using a variety of frameworks can help to provide a richer picture, and assist practitioners to understand what is happening in their own particular context.

The various expressions of power by landholders and government staff, and how these relate to the conceptualisations of power from the major Western traditions, indicate that power is contested, complex and often hidden. As Foucault stated, the exposé of power relations within the specific context is needed to ensure equality and freedom from the dominating influences of power. No matter what theories or ideas practitioners may use to aid their understanding, exposing power relations requires an understanding of reflexivity. People will have different and sometimes conflicting perceptions of the power dynamics that influence participatory land
management programs. An in-depth appreciation of the particular context, the people and their culture is essential if the intricacies of power relations are to be understood. In practice, an understanding of power parallels an understanding of people and communication, being able to ask reflective and insightful questions, being able to listen and to “see” the assumptions underpinning the words that people speak.

**Question 3: How do power relations influence participation?**

The previous chapter established that power relationships are pivotal to all of the six dimensions of participation, and that power may be seen as the driving factor, placed in the middle of each “wheel” of participation. Because human beings are capable of both producing and reproducing their social world (the mutual dependence of structure and agency), power relationships both determine and are determined by the various dimensions of participation (see Figure 8.2 below).

In the Foucauldian tradition, these relationships may be positive or negative, and may even have elements of both. For example, everyone in a local rural community may wish to be involved in an activity to decide about water resources for the town supply, as well as for irrigation. However, the limited capacity of the government may reduce participative opportunities — a negative influence in the eyes of the community. Yet, from the government’s perspective, a genuine discussion with a small number of representative people may be more desirable than a large crowd of people whose community power games may have obliterated the voices of the marginalised — a positive outcome.

![Figure 8.2 Relationship between power and participation](image)

This indicates that power relates to, and is influenced by, the goals of participation; power relates to and is influenced by scale and so on; power relates to and is influenced by each of the other dimensions of participation: Stage, Who, Capacity and Design. Power relations can be seen to drive participatory processes, and participatory processes drive power relations; when and how these occur are influenced by the context. Habermasian thinking suggests that the structure of participatory activity is very important and that discourse ethics could be used to alleviate the negative effects of power. The alternative paradigm suggests that power is everywhere. Thus, I suggest that overall, the context is more important for understanding power.
relations. In practice, the people in the field — those who live and work in the rangelands — are the ones who are more likely to be able to understand the context, and thus understand the power relations of their own communities.

The key point is that power relations influence participation. Power influences the choice of participatory processes; but more importantly, at the level of individuals and groups, power is inherent in all relationships. Thus, the perceptions of individuals about the participation, and the outcomes of participatory activities, are largely determined by the actions of the people involved, rather than by the methods or processes used. Power relations have a huge effect on participation; perhaps, overall, participation has a lesser effect on power relations.

As well as each dimension of participation relating to power, the dimensions relate to each other; for example, goals can influence scale, and vice versa. The proximity of the dimensions to each other in the diagram has no significance; any dimension can relate to any other regardless of its position in the participation diagram (Figure 8.3).

Figure 8.3 Relationships between the dimensions

If we were to combine Figures 8.2 and 8.3, the intricate web of arrows would indicate some of the complexities and confusion about power relationships within any one context. This analysis (or reframing) of power relationships aims to illustrate that power issues are complex and that we must never assume that we understand them fully. We can, however, approach an understanding of power relations, provided that we reflect on them critically. To strive for freedom and equality is an on-going task of exposing the “games of strategy” (Foucault 2003c p. 40). Even then, the situation is likely to change. In practice, people need to realise that equality and freedom in power relations are conditions for which we eternally strive; because the context of our lives and of rangeland management are constantly changing. We cannot determine a level of power which is equitable, or processes which will attain and maintain that level of power. Equitable power relations are not a point which we can reach, but rather principles by which we may practice participatory processes. This is in line with Cox’s (2001) ideas about a “more civil society” mentioned in Chapter 3.
In rangeland management projects, the environment changes dramatically over time, and so do the land management concerns. People’s knowledge and understanding of the issues, people’s attitudes and the discourses of society, all change, as Foucault (1991a) highlighted. The various social, economic and environmental contexts are also dynamic. All of these co-evolve with power relations.

While the context is fluid, the theory of community participation — for example the nature of genuine participation, the extent to which decision-making power should be shared, the criteria for selecting participants — is less fluid. It is true that our attitudes and ideas about community participation have changed, as indicated in Chapter 2, but the concepts of equity and social inclusiveness have existed in the theory for some time. In practice, even these principles have waxed and waned over the years, with the focus constantly changing.

In addition, the power relationships change over time (and differ according to the context), as do the dimensions of participation — and the way in which all of these aspects change depends on dynamic contextual factors. The way in which each dimension relates to the others depends on the specific context; the relationships are not the same in each participatory activity, as illustrated below (Figure 8.4).

Power is represented in this diagram as the “web”, the inner figure, while participation is represented as the outer figure. Power relations have various levels shown in the web (as illustrated previously in Figures 6.1 and 8.1), and participation has various dimensions (as illustrated previously in Figures 2.2 and 7.1). At any particular time, one dimension of participation may seem most important (as illustrated by the highlighted triangle in Figure 8.4). For example, the scale may be determined by the capacity of government and the context, which in turn influences how many people can be involved in the implementation stage. What happens during the implementation stage is likely to influence the following stages, such as evaluation.

As well as one dimension of participation being critical at a particular time, so one level of power may seem to dominate; but these two elements spin independently, representing ultradynamic fluctuations where there is no universal link between any level of power and any dimension of participation.
The aim of participatory activities is to keep some level of balance between all of these fluid elements, particularly when the third key element, context, is considered. Each of these elements — power, participation and context — has its own dimensions and fluctuations. At different times and in different places, these wheels can re-form, re-shape and interlock at different places: an ultradynamic system in which all of the component parts can influence each other. These relationships may be unimaginable until they evolve. Managing power relations in participatory processes can be likened to trying to balance these two interlinked, spinning wheels as they roll along a very bumpy road of multiple and variable contexts.

Perhaps what is most important is managing the transitions between the major changes (Dick 1991); for example, between representative processes with a low level of power sharing to highly participative processes with a high level of power sharing. It seems that change is what people have most difficulty coping with, so that these are the times when conflict is most likely
to erupt. As power relations are perhaps the strongest driver, it is changes in power relations that need to be managed most carefully. At present, we tend to ignore not only the changes, but the power relations themselves. It is for these reasons that this thesis has provided frameworks to help understand power relations, at least in terms of raising our awareness about power so that we can be more mindful in practice.

8.2 Conclusion

Participatory approaches that integrate knowledge and experience from different perspectives are essential to achieving sustainable rangelands. The rhetoric and policy of rangeland management, and rural land management in Australia generally, certainly follow international trends of sharing power with local communities. Many of the stories about power relations told in this thesis are likely to be relevant in other regions, not just in south-west Queensland or the rangelands of Australia. Discussions with colleagues suggest that the same kinds of power relations occur in coastal regions in Australia also. Therefore, some of these findings are relevant in the wider context, as is outlined in the next chapter.

To improve participatory activities, we need to recognise two facts: firstly, it is impossible to understand all of the power relationships; secondly, the way to manage the effects of domination is to be flexible and responsive to an ever-changing situation. Clearly, the traditional formulaic approach to designing participatory processes is inappropriate. It is far more valid to have a systems approach that is cognisant of the context, and a defined set of principles about communication. The next chapter proposes some principles to assist in understanding power relations in participatory resource management. While this thesis has highlighted the importance of power relations in the rangelands, it is also important to consider the implications throughout Australia, and internationally.
We must rediscover the silent murmuring, the inexhaustible speech that animates from within the voice that one hears, re-establish the tiny, invisible text that runs between and sometimes collides with them.

(Foucault 1972 p. 9)
9.0 Introduction

Power relations are sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, and sometimes even more subtle than this: often, they remain obscured in the shadows of our thinking, hidden in our unconscious. Foucault understood this, and one of the tasks he set himself was to critique power in such a manner that “violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them [institutions] will be unmasked” (Chomsky and Foucault 1974 p. 171). This thesis has pursued this idea, and attempted to expose the some of the manifestations of power and understand how power relations influence participatory resource management.

A better understanding of the power influences at work in communication between landholders and government officers is needed to improve participatory approaches in rangeland management. Are landholders not heard because rural communities have less voting power, and thus within government institutions? or are rural people silenced because of other, more subtle and obscure power relations? The “invisible text” of discourses can mask power relations, and determine whose voices are heard and not heard — what is sayable and not sayable and it is these discourses to which Foucault (1972) refers, and which hide power relations from us.

This thesis found that the power of discourses to influence participatory resource management are not clearly understood in south-west Queensland. The results presented in Chapter 6 suggested that landholders occasionally complained about the dominance of the economic discourse, but how this largely “invisible text” influenced power relations was not clear to most actors in participatory processes. Likewise, power relations themselves were not clearly understood, and were certainly not explicitly discussed.

This chapter concludes the thesis by answering the final research question: What are the implications of power relationships for participation? The question is answered by developing some principles. These principles explain power relationships within participatory rangeland management, and the broader implications of the changing relationships between people and institutions of the state.

While the primary focus of this research was to complete a doctoral thesis, a secondary aim was to provide some guidance for governments and communities attempting to introduce power-sharing arrangements. To use Rose’s (1996a) terminology, (see Chapter 1) the “territory of government” is being re-configured. This process of change is confusing and frustrating for those who need to manage their land and conserve our environment while new arrangements are being fostered between communities and new strategies of governance are being formulated.
The chapter concludes by highlighting some still-unanswered questions, and suggests directions for future research.

9.1 Implications

In this thesis, it has been argued that power relationships are inherent in all human interactions. Consequently, understanding the range and impact of power relationships is fundamental to understanding human relationships, the essence of community participation. As Foucault says:

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 2003c p. 27)

The results chapters have indicated a range of power relationships in land management programs — amongst landholders, between individuals within groups, and between landholders and government staff. This dynamic and fluid network influences and is influenced by the various dimensions of participation (as discussed in Chapter 7 and Figure 8.2). To answer this question about how an understanding of power relationships can improve participation, I return to each of participation’s various dimensions.

In the following sections, I propose conclusions, or principles, for each dimension to guide practitioners and to improve participatory practices. These principles are really propositions which need further research to ensure their relevance to situations outside the case study environment examined in this thesis.

9.1.1 Context, and discourses

Context is perhaps the most fundamental element to consider in participation; it certainly underpins much of Foucault’s writing (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 99–100). Context is multi-dimensional and multi-layered. It occurs in the environmental, economic and social dimensions; but within each of these, there are layers and levels. To complicate matters, the various contexts are dynamic and ever-changing in terms of place and over time. We could say that to cope with this situation, government departments and agencies may need to have different participatory processes for different situations and communities.

However, as Foucault said:

Something more is involved, however, than the simple observation that their content varies with time and circumstances: It means that one must investigate the conditions that enable people, according to the rules of true and false statements. (Florence 2003 p. 3)
The essence of this principle is that simply saying that different participatory processes are needed for different contexts is insufficient; we need to investigate the conditions that determine which topics and processes are “right” or “wrong” in different contexts.

Contexts, especially the contexts of power relations, communication and participation, are formulated within a particular episteme and within certain discourses. The power of discourses on people’s behaviour and thinking is immense. Discourses determine what is seen as true or false at any given time in history (Florence 2003 p. 2), and thus determine community norms and rules of communication.

Even though context is vitally important, this research highlighted the fact that many participants in land management programs did not understand even the specific economic, environmental, social or cultural contexts, let alone the broader context of the prevailing discourses. Landholders complained that government staff did not understand them; but nor did landholders always understand government officers, or other landholders, or even themselves; so it is no surprise that regional issues sometimes proved difficult for them. Of course, our understanding of ourselves is clouded with power relations, and exploring the history of our own thinking would help us to better understand power relations within participation.

Multiple discourses and multiple communities
Not only do land managers need to incorporate knowledge from a variety of different disciplines, all of which have their own language and underlying assumptions, but as individuals they are part of numerous communities and discourses that influence their thinking and actions. Many dichotomies exist in the SWS region: rural versus urban, rich versus poor, old versus young, formal university education versus localised knowledge and practical skills. This research pointed out that government staff tend to be university educated and indoctrinated in the scientific disciplines; landholders are often trained on the land. Another differentiating characteristic is that government staff are often young, while the average age of farmers in the rangelands is over 55. Their different backgrounds and experiences mean that they have different perceptions and understandings about power relationships, about participation and about land management.

With the changing role of communities in systems of governance in the twenty-first century, participatory processes need to take account of the ideas in the communities to which people belong. Each individual will belong to many communities, each with its own language and ideas. We should not assume that every landholder belongs to the same communities, understands issues in the same way or ascribes to the same discourses. We should not assume
that people understand the world in the same way that we do — or that we understand each other’s discourses.

This idea is similar to Foucault’s “ethic of discomfort”, an ethic that can be seen to be based on the philosophical task bequeathed to us by Maurice Merleau-Ponty who said:

Never be content to being completely comfortable with one’s own presuppositions. Never let them fall asleep … be very mindful that everything one perceives is evident only against a familiar and little known horizon, that every certainty is sure only through the support of a ground that is always unexplored. (Rabinow and Rose 2003 p. xxvi)

There is great diversity of individuals and groups in land management programs, and all need to be mindful when making assumptions about others, for this diversity can lead to misunderstandings.

This discussion leads to two principles aimed at guiding practitioners when they are developing participatory activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle 1</th>
<th>Principle 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never make assumptions about the power relations, ideas and behaviour of others, based on one’s own discipline and discourse.</td>
<td>Participatory activities may need techniques to explore discourses, their embedded language, values, attitudes and perceptions, and the implications these have had for existing land management practices, before addressing possible changes.</td>
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Changing nature of issues and communities

Being a rural person no longer means that one is based in an agricultural business, even though many graziers and farmers still define themselves in this way. Bed-and-breakfast farm stays and other tourist enterprises are an important economic component of rangeland areas. Off-farm employment is a reality for many “farmers”, niche and “boutique” industries now exist and large enterprises with greater vertical and horizontal integration are increasingly being promoted. The changing nature of what it means to be “rural” was discussed in Chapter 5.

Within the “advanced liberal” (Rose 1999a) approach to government, marginalised sectors of society (such as the rural and regional communities) are increasingly left to their own devices. Marginalised groups suffer from increasingly punitive measures and need para-government agencies to provide services (Rose 1999a p. 88). One could view the invention of new regional arrangements under NAP and NHT2 as part of the technologies of “government at a distance” (Rose 1999b). Unfortunately, even though government at a distance is supposed to mean increased devolution of power to regional bodies, it does not seem to be accompanied by increasing flexibility of arrangements and processes.
This discussion leads to another (third) principle, which can be added to the two stated above.

**Principle 3.** Avoid universal solutions, and explore the potential for:

(a) multiple strategies with contextual strategies and situational ethics; and
(b) flexible and changing strategies, responsive to changing knowledge and conditions.

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**Rangeland management conflicts**

As this thesis has highlighted, land management is a political issue involving asymmetrical relations of power and is subject to contestation. Foucault revealed that “power is not evil, but games of strategy” (Foucault 2003c p. 40) and where there is power, there is resistance (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 121). Building on Foucault’s ideas and from my own experience, it is clear that conflicts are inevitable in land management, and can produce positive as well as negative outcomes. However, this research suggests that participatory processes, as presently applied, often aim at consensus, and so tend to avoid the conflict which, properly handled, might have been beneficial (Brown, Ingle-Smith, Wiseman and Handmer 1995; Mansbridge 2003).

This study has highlighted that there is no simple, definable boundary line that can be drawn between those “on the side of power” and those “on the side of resistance” (Rabinow and Rose 2003 p. ix); rather, it has emphasised that power fluctuates between individuals. With the ultradynamic and fluid nature of power, individuals, landholder groups and government institutions can all operate in a range of positions of power, even within the same project.

Rangeland management conflicts can stem from different understandings, values and perceptions, as in the conflicts in south-west Queensland where cotton irrigators, sheep and cattle graziers and conservationists all want water for their own purposes. This epitomises the classic land management conflict between stakeholders from different industries and interests. People can be “trapped” in their own point of view, their own discourse, and are unable to “see” and understanding the perspectives of others. Not only can discourses be seen as “surface projections of power” (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 123), but discourses produce power.

Making visible the differences in meaning originating from different discourses with their “games of truth” may help resolve deep seated conflicts. This research has emphasised that current institutional structures, based on the discourse of economic rationalism, work against community desires of ethical behaviour, a “fair go”, trust and reciprocity. However, understanding may not necessarily bring consensus, as people are not always prepared to give

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40 Games of truth are the rules that influence the discourses of a certain domain at a certain time (Florence 2003 p. 2).
up dearly held values; however, multiple, compatible solutions may be possible. Hopefully, ethical solutions for land management based on transparent values will be accepted, even if they are not the preferred solutions for all stakeholders.

From this, we can formulate a fourth principle.

**Principle 4.** Conflict should be embraced. We need very skilled facilitators who use participatory processes to allow conflict to surface, and to use the energy and positive aspects of resistance.

### 9.1.2 Goals

The goals for community participation are closely linked with the roles people play when they are involved in government programs. This research found that participation goals are often poorly understood and are rarely explicit. The lack of specified goals in projects and programs could allow for flexibility as people assume roles; it also contributes to misunderstandings, and people feeling that the government does not listen to them. At a broader level, the changing roles of “experts” are also poorly understood. Government staff and landholders alike expressed frustration at the increasing demands of financial and organisational accountability, which corresponds with a decrease in the value of the opinion of scientific “experts”. These changing roles and unclear goals at the project level, and the broader level, result in a burgeoning lack of trust.

Lack of trust is increasing because of the practices of individual actors within participatory activities, as well as the overall nature of government. Building trust was quoted by many landholder and government participants as a key goal which needed to precede other goals in projects. Without trust, other goals could rarely be achieved. As the territory of government is re-configured with the structures of “new public management”, mistrust is inevitable (Rose 1996a p. 351). Audits and contracts encourage mistrust and contests between community groups, rather than supporting reciprocity and enhancing social capital (Rose 1999a p. 165).

One of the revelations in this thesis is that goals fluctuate during the life of any project, in much the same way as power is dynamic and fluid. This oscillation is poorly understood by participants, particularly by facilitators and government officers who are often constrained in their thinking by the existing ladder-like models.

The various groups involved in rangeland management programs tend to have different goals, and some of these are incompatible — for example the desire of landholders to “teach”
government officers, while within the same activity, government agencies are trying to “teach” landholders about some aspect of land management.

This discussion on goals leads to a fifth principle.

**Principle 5.** Goals for community engagement need to be explicit and transparent, yet flexible — allowing for multiple yet compatible goals as well as changing goals.

**9.1.3 Scale**

Participatory processes and power relations are different at the local and regional scales. For example at the regional scale, landholders feel powerless as they do not believe that they have power to control land management at this scale; only small numbers of people tend to be involved in representative models of participation, so others sense that they are excluded. At the local scale, landholders have more opportunities to be involved in participatory activities, which are usually more inclusive, and landholders feel that they have power over land management practices on their own properties.

Power differences are influenced, in part, by the participatory practices that are employed. In many cases, it is probably impractical and too costly to change the focus on representative participation models at the regional level. Many programs, departments and disciplines have weak links and poor communication between them (see Figure 2.3; Section 7.6 Capacity, particularly Box 7.8). The previous organisation of regional groups included few formal arrangements or structures to facilitate integration. Also, it is difficult to see if the current regional arrangements will succeed in forging better links with existing local groups, despite their best intentions. However, the fact that the same people seem to turn up at all the meetings, and that strong informal networks exist within rural communities, means that some integration does occur.

The belief that people have the power to change land management practices only on their own land is true to a large extent. However, if these localised practices could be informed by a broad understanding of regional issues and the implications of actions across the region, perhaps actions which benefit the region would result. To achieve this scenario, much more feedback needs to be provided from regional groups to the broader community.

Stronger links between local and regional processes are needed. Formalising an arrangement whereby local groups are nested within a regional structure could be of assistance. In this instance, using Habermasian universal structures or constitution would probably help overcome
the problem of poor communication between scales. A universal structure for all regions might comprise, for example, a meeting or forum that local groups could attend. Alternatively, a written policy statement (or constitution) could be drafted, which would specify that local groups were to be given some sort of forum. In this case, people would have a formal opportunity to present their ideas and receive feedback. At times, the SWS group took this approach, inviting local groups and individuals to present their ideas and providing a forum for discussion between government agencies at local, regional, state and sometimes federal scales.

If government agencies introduced such a universal mechanism or principle, the feelings of powerlessness in local groups should be alleviated to some extent. Such a formal arrangement is needed, because simply using meeting procedures that incorporate principles of free speech from discourse ethics (Habermas 1984) is insufficient to overcome people’s feelings of powerlessness. All participants are under the influence of discourses that are biased towards the dominant party, and sometimes the feeling of unease that people feel is not clearly recognised. Then people blame “the government” for the economic rationalist approach or “bloody competition policy” (LG 9). Really, they are frustrated by a discourse that is much broader than that of the current government. Apart from suggesting critical debate about the history of our ideas, there is no simple to way to highlight the problems of discourses on participatory land management.

Forging links between scales about data sets and practical land management topics is difficult, as people usually understand only the scale that is relevant to them. Recognising differences between scales, and encouraging people who work at different scales to discuss their needs for information, both formally and informally, would help bridge this gap. Communities of place tend to operate within one scale, and catchment-wide bus trips in south-west Queensland were a very successful way of helping people to understand regional scale, as well as their usual property scale. Communities of interest are more likely to span scales, and these need to be encouraged to discuss scale dilemmas.

This may be summarised as Principle 6.

**Principle 6.** Instigate formal mechanisms to support integration between scales. By providing spaces and forums, more inter-scale communication can be encouraged within current informal networks.

**9.1.4 Stage**

As with all other dimensions, the type of participation and level of power sharing within each stage are fluid — the stage of participation is linked to context and other dimensions of participation (see Figure 8.2 and 8.3 above). What happens at one stage can often influence power relations in future stages.
Community participation is often limited to certain stages of the project, and these stages are chosen at the discretion of the government institution, rather than the community. Several projects in this rangeland case study supported landholder direction of the content; however, the government usually controlled the process, both the type of participatory process and the stage at which people could participate. Sometimes control was exerted through funding timetables or other audit requirements designated by government departments. More formal participatory processes tend to have set stages at which community members can participate, while more informal processes tended to be more flexible.

Much that is written on participation suggests that community involvement at all stages of projects is desirable; however, to encourage participation at all stages of every project would further exacerbate the problem of over-consultation in small rural communities. Herein lies the paradox of more and less participation being needed at the same time, and no one yet understands when more or less is appropriate.

In situations where high levels of trust are found, local communities tend to demand less participation, probably because they trust the government to do the right thing. As with goals, more flexibility is likely in situations with high levels of trust. However, keeping local communities out of the planning stages is likely to increase suspicion and mistrust. Interviewees, particularly government officers, suggested that building relationships was needed before the first stage of any project. Building strong relationships between government departments and communities would mean that everyone would have a greater understanding of how, when, where and which stages would benefit from local involvement.

This idea is encapsulated in Principle 7.

**Principle 7.** If high levels of power sharing participation are desired, community involvement at an early stage of projects is required.

### 9.1.5 Who

Hierarchies and power plays occur within government groups, within rural community groups, between individuals, and between government staff and landholders. The power of the dominant discourses and the technologies of government and communities influence the types of people who are selected, and those who select themselves to participate.
The number and types of people involved are influenced by power relationships, as mentioned previously. Marginalised groups such as Aboriginals, youth and women are poorly represented, and even townspeople and urban industries tend to be poorly represented in land management groups. Hopefully, the new NAP and NHT2 regional bodies will encourage a broader representation from rural communities. The numbers of people involved tend to be linked to considerations of scale and the capacities of individuals.

The individuals who are involved affect power relations, particularly in terms of which versions of truth and which discourses are heard. As landholders are involved in rangeland management programs more than other rural people, it is their discourse that dominates. Conservation views are not always discussed, or discussed in a constructive manner. A diversity of voices in conversations may actually assist in managing the negative effects of domination.

This can be stated as the eighth principle.

**Principle 8.** Widening the diversity of participants with different backgrounds and characteristics is important in terms of different voices being heard, but is insufficient to achieve sustainable land management.

### 9.1.6 Capacity

The skills that individuals — both government staff and community members — need to participate in projects is often overlooked. Communication skills, the ability to listen to others and the confidence to voice a different point of view do not necessarily come naturally, but can be learnt and developed with experience.

The current technologies of government — their structures, policies and discourses — tend to limit rather than facilitate participatory processes, despite the rhetoric. The intent for community engagement may be voiced, but the current institutional frameworks make it difficult to implement genuine power sharing in decision-making.

The implications of power in the creation of knowledge and truth are often not realised — one of the contributions from the Foucauldian way of thinking. All of us are understandably indoctrinated and constrained, to a greater or lesser extent, by our backgrounds and the discourses of our communities. The individuals and groups whose knowledge is valued, and how it is incorporated, are obviously moulded by these types of power relations. Knowledge is viewed differently from the perspectives of landholders and government staff, even though these categorisations imply a homogeneity which only partially exists.
From this can be derived Principles 9 and 10.

**Principle 9.** Skills in managing power relations are essential for participation facilitators.

**Principle 10.** The capacity of government departments to better coordinate their consultation and participatory activities is essential, to minimise overlapping consultation and the same questions being asked time and time again.

### 9.2 Dynamic power in participation

The conclusions reached in this chapter — encapsulated in Principles 1 to 10 — suggest that instead of relying solely on the theories of the dominant tradition, new approaches for participatory activities can be developed, which are informed by both a Foucauldian and a Habermasian perspective of power. This is in accordance with the literature that expounds on the shifting of power relations in advanced liberal democratic government (Foucault 1991b; Miller and Rose 1990; Rose 1993, 1999a, 1999b).

In a society with advanced liberal government, some of the themes that have been the foundation for the discussion on power in the dominant tradition are no longer relevant. Rose presents this as a set of ideas:

- the idea of simple hierarchy of domination and sub-ordination;
- the idea of a place of truth beyond power to which criticism aspires;
- the idea of power as totalized in a sovereign state which can be accorded responsibility for, and benefit from, its working;
- the personalization of that idea in the image of the professional as “servant of power”. (Rose 1999a p. x)

Therefore, the role of government officers and the role of the community are being re-defined. No longer are government professional staff simply “servants of power” as Rose (1999a) suggests, doing the bidding of a Minister of the government; but neither are government staff, or public servants (as they were once called) simply servants of the public or community. Gone is this dichotomy about where the allegiance of the public servants should lie. Life for government officers is now far more complex.

So what are government staff in this liberal democratic style of government to do in participatory land management? Government staff simultaneously have more freedom and more responsibility, as do communities. What I propose for participatory activities is in line with the philosophies of the new liberalisation of government: greater freedom of choice in conjunction with greater responsibility for ethical behaviour.
Involving the community in partnerships is not always the best approach. With a greater understanding of the different types of participation and fluctuating power relations, government staff are released from always having to use a highly participative approach. A high level of power sharing may not always be appropriate or required. They have greater freedom to choose whether or not to use participatory methods at all; and then to choose the level of power sharing that may be appropriate for the context. Sometimes, the community shares the responsibility for making decisions about the type of participatory processes to use, and government and community are genuinely involved in a collaborative management approach.

Rose (1999b p. 166) points to shifts in power relations in today’s “advanced forms of government” which “rest on the activation of the powers of the citizen”. Within government NRM and agriculture programs there is an increasing recognition that regional solutions are needed and that different ways of operating will be required in the various regions. Regional arrangements do have some flexibility in terms of process as well as context. Where extension services still exist, different participatory and learning approaches are recognised as necessary for different contexts; yet the corollary to this community responsibility is perhaps not yet explicit in terms of government practice.

In addition to community responsibility, I suggest that government staff, as individual members of today’s society, also need to assume greater responsibility. If we ascribe to the view that the practices of government can influence the nature of government, then what its staff do, or practice, is fundamentally important. It is these practices that form the nature of government rather than simply the reverse. Consequently, both government staff and landholders must shoulder more responsibility for the implementation of participatory processes.

With this increase in freedom of choice comes greater freedom to choose the type of participation, a greater responsibility for active thinking about which approach is best, and more responsibility for ethical behaviour within participatory activities. This is precisely what many of the landholders in this case study were calling for: more ethical behaviour in the individual staff involved in particular projects. As Foucault said, “ethics ... allow the games of power to be played with the minimum of domination” (1988 p. 18). Ethics should be context dependent; that is, we should be cognisant of other people’s values and take account of cultural variations. Collaboratively determining ethics may be appropriate, but not always practical, so people need to take personal responsibility for acting ethically in each particular situation. Universal ethics are probably possible, but may be so broad as to be useless for guiding an individual’s words and actions at the local scale.
Michel Foucault’s analysis of power provides a means of developing a more adequate and contemporary conception of wisdom (or phronesis). Practical experience as well as wisdom is needed, and individuals need to take responsibility for this to ensure freedom is maximised. Foucault’s approach was for individuals to act at the local level, for people can make a positive impact at the local scale (Clare O’Farrell, personal communication, 13 March 2003). Freedom comes from the Socratic injunction of taking care of yourself or, in Foucault’s words, "Make freedom your foundation, through the mastery of yourself" (Foucault 2003c p. 42). Individual reflection and awareness of self are essential in the mastery of oneself. An understanding of others is also fundamental, as is an understanding of reflexivity, because the way in which others view the world is socially constructed from different experiences and cultural norms. Freedom itself is a socially constructed notion.

### 9.3 Concluding comments

Power differentials in developing countries are perhaps more obvious than those in Australia, where we tend to assume that we all share the same culture in a relatively classless society. As power relations and cultural differences become better recognised in developing countries, they are more likely to be considered when participatory land management programs are being planned and implemented. Another difference between Australia and other countries seems to be that over-consultation is more of a problem in Australia. Over-consultation here is due in part to the vast distances and small rural populations. We also have high expectations of what we expect our rural landholders to understand and incorporate into their management, particularly in the myriad forms of legislation (Fitzhardinge 1994).

This thesis has demonstrated that more participatory approaches and a greater devolution of power are not necessarily desirable. This is true throughout rural Australia. Sometimes the government may need to take the lead and alone make decisions about land management. Sometimes the community expects this of government. For example, with an outbreak of a pest species, participatory approaches take too long; decisions and actions are needed quickly. The expectations of government about what can and should be done by small rural communities are often unrealistic — over-consultation and burn-out are real problems. Devolving too much responsibility to local people is not only unrealistic, but irresponsible in terms of sustainable land management.

Whether or not participatory approaches are appropriate is not always clear. What is clear, however, is that when participatory approaches are chosen by government or by communities, considerable time, financial resources and skills must be allocated — usually far more than people imagine. Excellent communication skills, genuine ability to listen, flexible government
policy and adaptive management principles are all required for participatory land management to be effective. Capacity is needed both within government agencies and within participating local communities. As this thesis has stated, poor participation can be worse than none at all for the people involved, as well as for the environment. It can exacerbate existing problems such as distrust; it can polarise viewpoints and reinforce the status quo.

The people and groups who may gain from participatory activities, and those who may lose, are not always considered. As others before me have pointed out (see Chapter 2), “representative” processes are not always representative, and “inclusive” processes are often not inclusive — achieving either of these is difficult. The current institutional structures of government agencies and existing power relations can reinforce the status quo, rather than rebalance asymmetrical power dynamics. Government systems actually work against genuinely participatory processes for reasons outlined — such as economic discourses that erode social trust, and accountability requirements that impose the burden of evaluations, which are often irrelevant to achieving sustainable land management.

Agency staff in state government land management agencies from south-west Queensland have embraced community participation, and some projects are considered excellent by landholders — but not all. The perceptions of landholders and government officers about participation reveal a lack of understanding about power relations, and the role these play in participation. As Australia has become more urbanised, there has been a growing lack of understanding among new generations of government officers and agencies about rural communities, their culture and needs. Where distrust and lack of understanding occurs, communication becomes less transparent, and power games seem to become more subtle and subversive.

Power relations affect participatory land management activities at the micro-level (between individuals), as well as at the macro-level (within the hierarchies of organisations and between the organisations). This is true in south-west Queensland and elsewhere in the world. At times, the macro-level factors do seem to exert the most influence. In many natural resource management programs, such as vegetation management, one of the key influences on participatory processes has been politically expedient decisions made by governments. Yet, as this research has emphasised, the individuals within the system, and how they operate, also exert influence over the lives of those involved in participatory land management. To achieve sustainable futures, we need to manage the power relations at all levels: within the political sphere, within institutional structures at the policy level, and between individuals.
Power operates at many levels, and in many ways. It is complex and not always visible. Indeed, those who try to understand power relations are themselves influenced by the dominant discourses of their communities, and their own world view. Habermas’s emphasis on discourse (with discourse ethics and communicative rationality) does help people to understand the views of others, and can bring resolution and consensus in some situations. However, when the power games become more devious and hidden from view, when everyone starts trying to maximise their gains in whatever way is possible, and trust between groups and between individuals breaks down, then the worst effects of power manifest themselves. Accordingly, sustainable land management suffers.

9.4 The future

This research has raised as many questions as it has answered. The world is continually evolving, and one issue for the future in the south-west Queensland rangelands is likely to be the Queensland government’s review of leasehold land. As with any rangelands issue, critical questions will include: Who has the power to make decisions? Who can participate in discussions? How can local people be involved in actions to achieve a particular goal? How these are resolved will determine the extent of conflict during the process, and the eventual outcomes.

One possible future is that some land may be decommissioned from agricultural production. Multifunctional properties with coexisting conservation, tourism and indigenous uses may develop. Some of the current graziers could be retained to manage the land, including the control of pest plants and animals. For many years, landholders in Europe have been paid to maintain cultural landscapes, and this may eventually occur in Australia. I believe that the problem with such a future is not that landholders do not want it, but rather that there would be a power issue of how such a relationship would be organised — who would the land managers work for, how would management plans be developed, who would have the power to influence what constitutes good land management, how would reporting and accountability procedures be instituted?

Many landholders would not want to be employed by the government. Many are critical of the government’s record of managing national parks in Queensland. Also, cynicism with and distrust of government is rife. In my view this will be a far greater obstacle to a radical change in intent and practices of rangeland management. I believe that if landholders can stay on the land they know and love, and be paid a wage to use their skills and knowledge, many would seriously consider accepting this change. The two critical issues to be resolved if such changes are to be initiated are (a) the power structures within the institutional systems and the
relationships between the individuals, and (b) who is to be involved and what their roles are. Also, could the new regional arrangements play a role in managing these leasehold lands, or are other forms of community collectives required? Yet again, understanding the power relations will be a vitally important facet of the future of the rangelands.

To be able to achieve new forms of governance for futures such as these, further research is needed. As was mentioned earlier, we currently use participatory approaches alongside representative systems of government. Switching between these two approaches is often the trigger for conflict in land management, and we need to explore how to manage the transitions between representative democracy and participative democracy.

Conflict is inevitable in land management, whether here in Australia or elsewhere around the world. How we manage conflict, how we allow it to emerge and not be pushed away, how we use the energy created by conflict to find innovative and different solutions to land management are the topics of another research project. “The possibility of permanence of conflict, inequality, difference, non-reciprocity and dominance” (Hillier 2002 p. 14) is referred to as agonism. This idea of agonistic democracy, from Chantal Mouffe, may be a starting point for learning how we can better integrate conflict and resistance into democracy.

Other topics are already the subject of research: exploring how different institutional frameworks can assist in promoting principles of contextuality, adaptability and flexibility; and also integrating scientific data, values and aspirations from the various actors across different scales. These are all vitally important.

Lastly, we must not forget Foucault’s writings, which provoke us to ask different kinds of questions, to critique the very questions we ask, and to remember the importance of context. This is a task for all of us as reflective practitioners, whenever we observe, whenever we act, to whatever communities we belong.
Appendices
Appendix — Questioning schedule

The questioning schedule used for the semi-structured interviews was modified as different issues and possible themes emerged. The key change was the introduction of Pretty’s typology at the end of this schedule.

In line with semi-structured interviewing, these questions were used as a guide, or as prompts, rather than being used exactly. These interviews are different from structured interviews because they allow much more flexibility, and sound more like a normal conversation. The sequence of questions was not set and I allowed the conversations to go with what people wanted to discuss. This has some implications for data analysis, because some groups would not mention a particular issue at all. However, this does not mean that this was necessarily unimportant to them. In fact, because I know some of the people, I knew that these issues were important; it was simply that the conversation that day, with that group of people, took a different direction. My interviews often had limited time, usually about 1 hour.

Interruptions to the sequence were common. I sometimes “broke the rules of structured interviewing” to challenge people’s ideas. This is a risky manoeuvre, but one which was culturally acceptable in the west where making fun of people is the norm. However, I was careful to pick the group and the timing; I would do it only if it “felt” right and I really wanted to check out what people meant. For example, in one meeting where a group of respected leaders in the rural community became particularly negative about government, seemingly one comment led to another in a somewhat flippant manner. I challenged them by asking if (using their words) the government could do nothing correctly, and if the logical conclusion was for the government office in Charleville to be closed! In the context of this interview it worked – one fellow smiled, but they gave my question more careful thought, and then discussed some of things the government had achieved.
QUESTIONNING SCHEDULE: PROMPT SHEET

INTRODUCTION
Thank you very much for taking the time to come this [afternoon]
Our discussion today will take about 1 hour.
We are here to talk about how local landholders and the many levels of government relate to each other & work together.
With respect to property and land management related programs
(issues such as Wik and Native Title are outside the scope of this study, even though they are important)

Today's discussion will give you the opportunity to say what you think, about the good & bad aspects about how government interacts with you and others in south-west Queensland.
We all know the issues facing rural areas in the west, declining terms of trade, commodity prices, and often the weather.
Close working relationships between graziers and the many levels of government are now considered essential by many to overcome these issues.

Government uses the words partnerships, consultation and participation frequently; but people are complaining about many problems.

The aim of this project is to look things issues about these relationships, including
- describe how landholders currently work with government
- what are the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches
- are different types of participation appropriate at different situations, at different scales.

The project is funded by RIRDC
& I wish to use some of the information for my study at the Rural Extension Centre at Gatton and at ANU.

The work in being undertaken in the South West Strategy region of Queensland.
What we hope to achieve during these discussions is
- capture local experiences
- provide an opportunity for people to hear & learn from others
- describe current participation in SWQ
- record and document local opinions
- provide information which will be used to influence Govt policy makers
- assist new government officers to the SWQ area, by providing guidelines

Does anyone have any questions?

To make the most out of our time together, I’d like to propose a few ground rules to guide our discussion
R – respect each others opinions, don’t criticise others personally
O – speak one at a time
P – be precise & to the point, we have a tight timetable
E – encourage others ideas
S – share the time with everyone.

We have lots to discuss, if discussion starts to drift, I’ll have to interrupt, or ask permission to extend the meeting.
Pause and check for comments & questions

If it is OK with you all, I would like to tape record our discussion. This is just to make sure I don’t miss anything, and help me interpret what you say accurately.
- Is that OK?

I wish to assure you that everything you say is confidential, your names will not be associated with what you say. I will refer to the groups by a code, so that comments cannot be traced back to your particular groups. However, I would like to use some direct quotes from what you say
- if that is OK?

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• So that we are speaking the same language, I’d like to ask what words you use to describe the interaction between landholders and government; the involvement of local people with government regarding land management issues.
  - what does participation mean to you

IF THE GROUP HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN MANY PROJECTS
• What government projects have you been involved in
[ possible prompt:
I’m interested in looking at services in the bush; what projects and programs have been active in your area during the past 2-3 years, they may have just finished, but have been active recently; the aim of the projects is about managing your properties in some way]
  – why did you get involved in this project?
  – how did you hear about it?
  – did you have any concerns/hesitations?
  – what did you expect to get out of being involved?

• Let’s select one of these projects to discuss, so we can get into some depth
  (try and focus the discussion, but this sometimes failed, as people wanted to talk about their pet likes & dislikes, regardless of the project)

• I’d like to understand what aspects of participation are good and what are bad

What specific occasions were you were involved in,
  – that were good …why
  – that were not good …why
  – where you learnt something
  – any particular instances that had the greatest impact on your attitudes
  – any particular instances that had the greatest impact what you do on the property … how & why

[ADAPT IF THE GROUP HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN ONE PARTICULAR PROJECT]

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To summarise the characteristics of effective participation.

Can you think about all of the projects you have been involved in, related to NRM and agriculture,

• Can you describe some examples where the government has interacted well with landholders
• OR can you describe what you would expect a good participation approach to look like
• Repeat for negative examples (if necessary)

Can you take a few minutes to jot some ideas down individually, then we can share with the group
[5 mins max on their own]

Now let's share some of those ideas [brainstorm & write up on a whiteboard]

prompts – these changed and were added as interviews progressed, but some examples are

number of people
type of activity
who involved: whole management unit/who control decisions
meet local needs …what are these needs
government listen & act on landholder comments
use local knowledge
hidden agendas
attitudes of govt officers
why did you get involved with these government projects (introduced when the questions about the beginning of the project were dropped)

[ much of this section was dropped as interviews progressed, as people had so much to say related to the previous questions]

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PRESENT PRETTY’S TYPOLOGY

This sheet that I just handed out to you, can we just have a quick look at that, I’ll read it out and please ask questions; we can discuss it as we go.

The first one is where you’ve got people sitting on boards but they don’t have any real power so that’s the manipulative participation, this has come from the literature these categories, then there’s passive where you just receive information so you may be sent brochures or you go to a lecture something along those lines. No real opportunity to ask questions. Then there is providing information where you provide information to the Government, but you have no real guarantee that they may ever use it, whether that’s for some planning process or whatever they’re doing. Material incentives is where something, such as money, machinery, labour is given to local people to encourage their participation. Functional participation is where the Government is setting the goals for a particular program and you are invited to participate, but you only have limited opportunities to change the direction of the project. Interactive participation is where it sort of Government and land holders on equal footing and you’ve both had some contribution to make and self reliant participation is where the landholders have the control and the Government is providing services.

• So, can you think of projects or activities you have been involved in that fit into these different levels?
• Which level do you think is the most appropriate, what’s the best?

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CONCLUDING COMMENTS

How did you find this discussion – was it useful to you?
From my point of view, what came out of this discussion was …..

WHAT NOW?

I will write up information, do some preliminary analysis
Would you like me to send you a copy … of the interview transcript or of the summary sheet  
(everyone asked for the summary sheet)
If it is OK with you, I would like to send a summary report will be sent to SWS, DPI, DNR, EPA  
(everyone wanted this to happen)
Eventually these summaries will be part of a broader report for RIRDC and government policy makers

Thank you very much
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