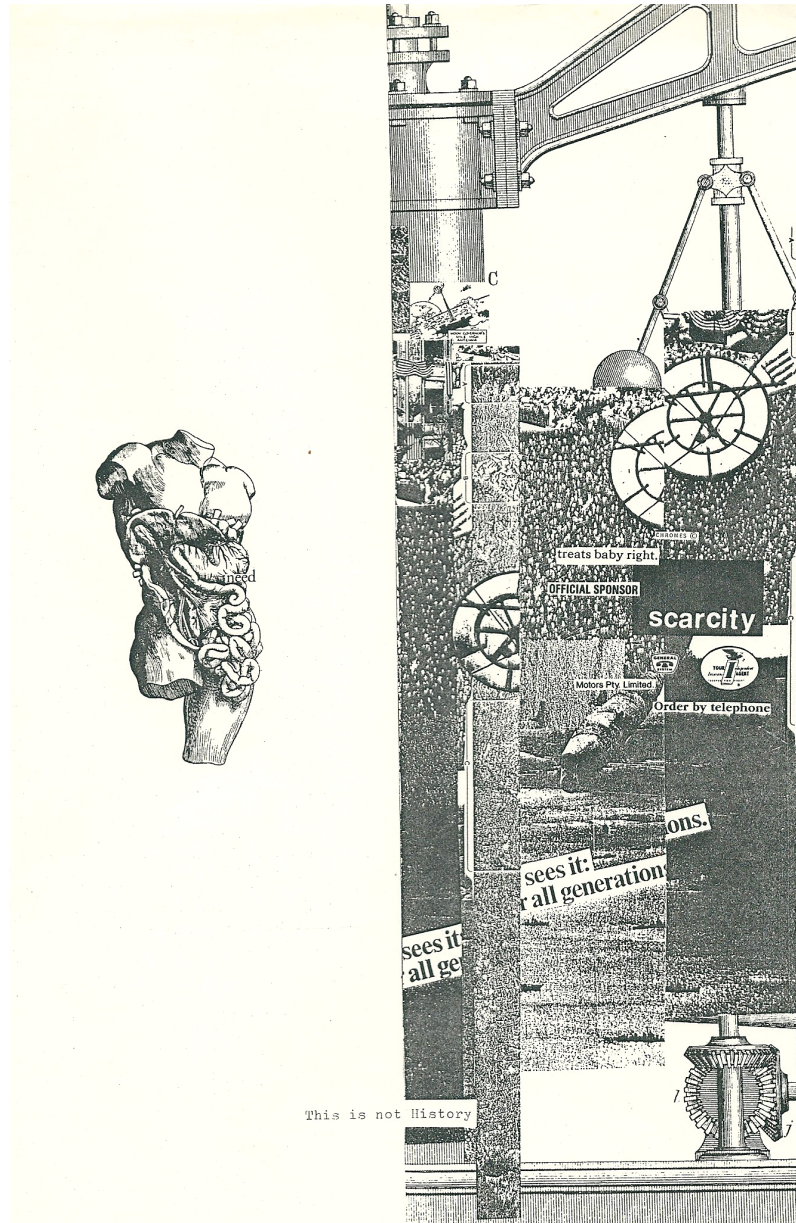


# Theorising Empowerment Practice from the Pacific and Indigenous Australia

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## **Theorising empowerment practice from the Pacific and Indigenous Australia.**

### **Introduction**

Here is a complex, if narrow, set of problematical facts to be interpreted or explained. The extent to which they are a significant set depends on the extent to which a logical explanation of them accounts also for other significant facts habitually occurring with them.

W.E.H. Stanner, "On the Interpretation of Cargo Cults", *Oceania*, Sept. 1958

#### *1. The Study*

This study examines empowerment as it is practiced by four different organisations. Taken together, these organisations span a period of 28 years, from 1982 to 2010, as well as locations, from the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Fiji, to Cape York, Australia. These organisations have been and are engaged in a diverse range of activity, including rural village development, conservation, democratisation and health promotion. In their present forms, two of the organisations are not-for-profit companies, one is a trust, and another is a university research institute.

The aim of this study is to provide Stanner's "logical explanation" of the practices of these organisations. That is, in looking at the practices of these organisations and the programs they operate, the study intends to work from practice to theory, and in doing so to re-evaluate and expand our theoretical reach for understanding empowerment and what is required to organise for this outcome. This process of theory formation provides the opportunity to compare and contrast the different contexts in which these organisations operate, seeking what is common and what is unique to the context, the organisations and their activities. Using this approach, the study aims to develop a common framework for understanding empowerment.

There is great diversity in the fields that address the concepts of empowerment and participation. Psychology, sociology, development studies, feminist studies, participatory research, organisation theory, social movement theory, business and education all make use of the terms to describe both a value orientation and a theoretical approach to developing individual and community interventions, and creating systemic change (Zimmerman 2000). This study will ultimately consider a range of authors from many of these fields, as it moves from first looking at practice to then examining the contribution of these authors to theory that describes the practices of the four organisations as they undertake their specific programs.

This study deliberately does not embed a definition of empowerment at the outset. The reason for this is to allow a space for clear and specific meanings of the term to emerge in the course of the examination of practice. This is necessary because the popular use of ‘empowerment’, and the associated language of dialogue and organisation, has become so extensive as to render the term practically meaningless (Cohen & Uphoff 1980; Rappaport 1995). In Australia, a 2007 review of community development interventions with a specific empowerment objective found that there is “a great deal of confusion and contention in the literature about the term community development and its constituent concepts of community, participation and empowerment”, and identified the need for “conceptual clarity about these terms and their interrelationship” (Campbell 2007:305). The present study hopes to contribute towards this greater conceptual clarity. To do so, this study is guided by four central questions:

- What are the linkages between an organisation’s practices, its operational philosophy and empowerment?
- How can these linkages be theorised synoptically?
- How do organisational strategies optimise empowerment?
- What organisational elements are necessary and sufficient to a successful empowerment program?

## *2. Methodology*

To approach these questions this thesis will use the diversity of the case studies presented to explore empowerment practice in a range of contexts. The material for preparing the organisational profiles that form the basis of the study come from the following sources:

- Statements of aims and objectives;
- Internal records of organisational plans and processes ;
- Internal records of retreats and self-assessment;
- Training guides and printed resources;
- Participant evaluation reports;
- Internal evaluation reports;
- Published evaluation reports;
- Published commentary;
- Media reports;

- Interviews<sup>1</sup>.

The author approaches the Pacific organisations from the point of view of someone who has, to varying degrees, been a participant in what is described. Having worked for the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) on North Malaita in the previous two years, for the 1986 evaluation of the SIDT, the author represented SIDT, and wrote the final report. The team for that evaluation included representatives from the Overseas Service Bureau (now Australian Volunteers International), the Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign (now incorporated in Oxfam), and SIDT. As well as ongoing informal contact with the Bismarck Ramu Group (BRG), the author was contracted by BRG as part of a three-member evaluation team in 2008, and by the Social Empowerment Education Program (SEEP) in 2009, again as part of a (different) three-member team. It is in the course of this work that the author has had open access to the personnel and records of these groups. The terms of reference for these evaluations asked the teams to analyse and also make judgements about the effectiveness and organisational capacity of these groups. These evaluations were thorough, and the team was given unlimited access to all employees, members and directors of these organisations. Evaluations included field work in each case. The teams drew extensively on interviews, workshops, field reports, organisational reports, audit and financial management records, and commentary from third parties in government and other agencies, local and international, in preparing these evaluation reports (Barcham 1987; Barcham 2008; Barcham 2009). These organisations stand out as exceptional for their innovative practice, persistence over time, and ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

In Australia, the author's professional roles have included three years, commencing in 2000, as town clerk for the remote Arnhem Land community of Bulman. This period coincided with the formation of the Nyirrangulung Mardrulk Ngadberre Regional Council, an initiative of the Jawoyn Association, Katherine. The author engaged in extensive talks with elders, government and existing council members and communities in securing agreement on the Regional Council Community Government Scheme (Commonwealth 2003), conducted a pre-electoral awareness campaign, and undertook discussions with each community to prepare the Council's regional development strategy (Barcham 2004). Later, from 2004 to 2006, the author worked as

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<sup>1</sup> Permission has been granted by these groups and/or persons to use this material under protocol 2011/117 approved by chair of ANU HREC #4, 26/5/2011. Any material relating to specific organisations has been provided to them for their comment and approval.

manager for a regional Indigenous employment scheme in Bega, Eden and Wallaga Lake in south-east New South Wales until its closure (as a result of policy changes by the Howard Government in 2006). In the course of this work in Australia, the author discovered no organisations that bore any resemblance to the Pacific models in their manner of applying principles of empowerment and participation. The apparent dearth of programs in Australia that demonstrated the principles of the Pacific organisations initially led the author to query the applicability of the practices employed by these organisations to Aboriginal Australia. However, this research question – asking if the practices of these Pacific organisations could be transferrable to Aboriginal Australia – was answered in the affirmative in finding the Family WellBeing program.

The Family WellBeing program is notable in the Australian context for being developed by Indigenous people, and also for its longevity, consistency of purpose and adaptability. The additional factor of organised delivery of the program coupled with local action, was provided by the James Cook University Empowerment Research Program (ERP), to be considered in Chapter 4. The ERP has been described as acting as a “default community development organisation” (McCalman 2011b: email response), and thus provided an Australian parallel with the Pacific experience. At this point in the research, the focus of the study shifted from how to apply the Pacific experience in Aboriginal Australia to looking at all four case-study organisations in their role as organisations that support empowerment in diverse situations. Separate research on the Family WellBeing program and James Cook University was conducted in the course of the present study.

### *2.1 Action and Reflection*

As the reflections of a practitioner seeking to understand how four organisations have acted to try to achieve personal, group and social change, this thesis draws on a long tradition that couples social action with conceptual reflection.

In the fourth century, Aristotle considered participation in his analysis of Greek city-states. While he found that political participation was not an absolute condition for human happiness and the good life, he did take the view that “self-sufficiency and action”, coupled with contemplation of the ethics of justice, defined the route to realisation of one’s full humanity (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, quoted in Mulgan 1990:201). An organisation based on justice should give the “virtuous man” a place in its governance, and he should “gladly and freely accept that as part of his social duties” (Mulgan 1990:211). Women, foreigners and slaves lacked full humanity precisely

because they were excluded from participation in political life.

Aristotle's *Ethics* establishes the fundamental relationship between reflection as theory formation about what is considered good and righteous, and the practice of right action by the virtuous citizen. Aristotle was ambivalent about the role of active political participation in making a good life. He believed that distributive justice implies that power is distributed on the basis of merit, but also implies the participation of equals. The outstandingly superior person can be accorded absolute rule, but there is also merit in government by a collective of virtuous citizens ruling as equals through political processes (Mulgan 1990:207). For Aristotle, both can be effective in achieving a society capable of delivering the perquisites of happiness and a good life.

Aristotelian praxis is defined in terms of actions that contribute to justice in the formation of the individual's "virtuous" character. The modern development of the understanding of praxis has taken a number of different paths. There is a discernible division between the "Northern Tradition" from the United States, primarily concerned with the design of collaborative research with the aim of system improvement, and the "Southern Tradition" of Latin America, which emphasises breaking down the structures and practices of colonisation and domination of knowledge production by elites, including local elites (Minkler & Wallerstein 2008:27).

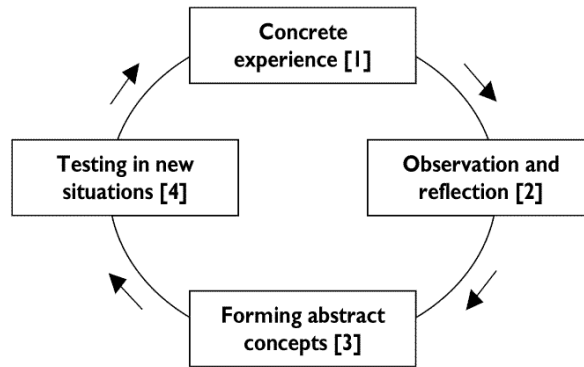
The Northern tradition is founded on the work of psychologist Kurt Lewin, begun in the late 1920s. Lewin's study of intended behaviour showed:

the significance of the person in the situation; one does not merely respond to stimuli but decides to do something about them and, in deciding, changes the situation for oneself (Lewin 1999).

Lewin coined the term "action research" to describe a methodology that incorporates the research subject in the act of researching with the intention of changing external circumstances for the benefit of the subject.

Educationalist David Kolb applied Lewin's work to develop an "experiential learning cycle" (Kolb & Fry 1975). Kolb's learning cycle consists of four elements: concrete experience, observation and reflection, the formation of abstract concepts, and testing in new situations (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb & Fry 1975)



As well as education, Kolb's interest lay in studying organisational behaviour in the field of corporate management and professional learning. In this context, theories about empowerment later became extremely popular. Widespread use of the term empowerment reflected the interest of North American corporations in "alternative forms of management that encourage commitment, risk-taking and innovation" in the face of foreign competition (Thomas & Veldhouse 1990:667).

Subsequent study in the field of action research in community psychology takes empowerment as the central "phenomena of interest". Empowerment is seen as a "multilevel construct applicable to citizens as well as to organisations" (Rappaport 1987:121). The concept suggests individual control over one's life, as well as participation in the life of the community through mediating organisations. Empowerment is regarded as a mechanism for mental health intervention that aims to "modify processes and mediating conditions that create risk" (Rappaport & Seidman 2000:2). Social conditions are regarded as risk factors for mental health, to be addressed through individual empowerment. Organisations can have a role in this by providing people with opportunities to gain control over social conditions. The essential elements of this "multilevel" empowerment are "participation, control, and critical awareness" (Zimmerman 2000:58). However, in terms of organisation, psychological research "to examine how empowered individuals work together to create competent communities" remains an unfinished project (Zimmerman 2000:56).

In the 1960s, the civil rights movement in the United States prompted a burgeoning of the study of organisation for social change (Davis et.al. 2005). However, study of the sources shows that this literature focused on organised action in specific political

contexts, rather than the process of learning and emancipation – “critical awareness” – in driving that organised action (Zald & McCarthy 1975; Piven & Cloward 1977; McAdam et.al. 2001; Davis et.al. 2005; Opp 2009). Organised action for social change is dealt with in the field of the North American practice of “organizing”, typified by the work of Saul Alinsky (Alinsky 1969). However, this takes the form of examining strategies and tactics for organisation, and whilst it dwells on an ideology of liberation, it too is not concerned with why particular strategies may be effective in an individual or psychological sense. So, in the Northern tradition, action research is isolated in the fields of psychology, health, business and education, and remains largely divorced from the study of political action for social change (Boyd & Angelique 2007). Zald, McAdam and Alinsky, as theorists and practitioners in the field of political action, have a rich contribution to make to understanding organisation in its political context. By bringing together this Northern tradition of political economy with action research and community development internationally, this study of four diverse organisations hopes to contribute towards understanding Zimmerman’s problem of how “empowered individuals” create “competent communities”.

The North American approach to the creative reconstruction of social arrangements through organisation was derived from the liberal sociology of Talcott Parsons<sup>2</sup> (Parsons 1956; Minkler & Wallerstein 2008). In Latin America, the Southern tradition held that Hegel and Marx reigned supreme. From this perspective, we see that Aristotle’s ambivalence about participation is resolved by giving our attention to the status of “women, foreigners and slaves”. When attention is brought to bear on those who are marginalised in society, attaining the truth about one’s full personhood requires independent self-consciousness, and from this Hegel reasoned that praxis must consist of political action to transform society (Hegel 1929:497).

The Southern tradition is closely identified with educator Paulo Freire (Freire 1996). Through the 1970s, in the North East of Brazil, Catholic and other organisations applied the methodology he developed, introducing the further Latin strand of liberation theology, following the Second Vatican Council which ended in 1965. Freire applied Hegelian praxis to the attainment of literacy by marginalised groups. In Freire’s analysis of dialogue, “*the word*” (italics in original), for it to be a true word,

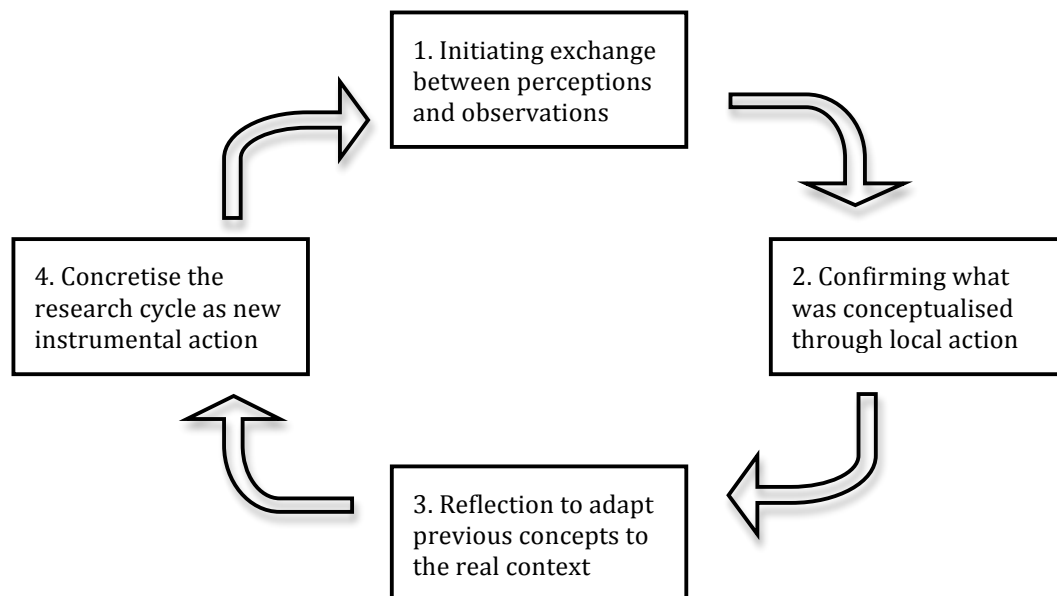
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<sup>2</sup> Parsons’s essay “Suggestions for a Sociological Approach to the Theory of Organisation” appeared in Volume 1 no. 1 of *Administrative Science Quarterly*, the journal of the Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University, in June, 1956.

must be at the same time a praxis.<sup>3</sup> Another influential Latin American was Colombian Orlando Fals Borda (Borda 1979). In his discussion of praxis and knowledge in Columbia, Borda also acknowledges his debt to Hegel, Marx and the Frankfurt School as makers of the philosophical foundation of “critical social science committed to action as a means of transforming the world”. Borda describes knowledge as the “dialectical unit” formed by theory and practice for the purpose of “action research” (Borda 1979:41). It is not entirely clear where Borda adopted the term action research, which he placed in inverted commas without reference. While he cites Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn 1970), it is tempting to see Lewin’s influence.<sup>4</sup>

The definitions of action research from North and South share a cyclic rhythm of action and reflection in reckoning with the challenge of epistemology. Knowledge production for social action is about perceiving reality with “the intention of both knowing and transforming it” (Borda 1979:39). Borda describes four “complementary and alternating steps” in the application of this method of knowledge production: initiating exchange; continuing with action at the local level; reflecting in order to modify practice; and concretising<sup>5</sup> the reflective research as innovative action (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. The dialectical method of action research, after Borda (1979:39)**



<sup>3</sup> To be discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup> Kuhn’s work also appears in the field of community psychology, to be discussed in Chapter 4. Obviously, Lewin’s contribution pre-dates this.

<sup>5</sup> Sartre describes concretising as “reification”, the process by which meanings are changed and new categories created. “Words are matter,” he writes, that “carry the projects of the Other into me and [...] carry my own projects into the Other” (Sartre 1983:98).

For Borda, the dialectical method appreciates “popular wisdom”, and implies the following imperatives:

1. Studying reciprocal relationships between common sense, science, communication and political action.
2. Examining the interpretation of reality from the point of view of the [Columbian] proletariat, according to “specific mediating categories”.
3. Studying how subject and object combine themselves in research practice, and recognising the political consequences of this combination (Borda 1979:43).

The first, a so-called “pedagogico-political field”, has a psychological element of “helping to change the class in itself into a class for itself”. The second imperative is necessary to “advance the struggle in which theory and practice coincide”. Finally, the Columbian experience confirmed the thesis that “the difference between subject and object can be reduced in the practice of research” by synthetic knowledge about “the idea of life” (Borda 1979:50).

Back in the North, experience in Latin America, Asia and Africa led to a major rethinking of development concepts in the early 1970s (Uphoff & Esman 1974). This stimulated research into the empowerment and participation of the world’s poorest and most marginalised populations. The US Congress, in its 1973 Foreign Assistance Act, made clear that “American development assistance is to be extended in ways that involve the intended beneficiaries in the planning and implementation of project efforts, as well as the gains from development” (Uphoff 1980:213). The capital investment and “trickle down” model of the 1960s was being replaced by one that emphasised the goal of “human progress” (Grant 1973). Throughout the 1970s the thinking of development specialists was dominated by this more people-centred focus, founded on a “basic-needs” approach (Grant 1973; Streeten 1981; Korten 1987). Participation was identified as an essential element of this strategy (Uphoff & Esman 1974; Cohen & Uphoff 1980; Burkey 1993).

In the field of development studies, ideas about what might constitute participation by the poorest evolved over time. Uphoff and Esman drew attention to local organisation as “a necessary if not sufficient condition for accelerated rural development” (Uphoff & Esman 1974:1). They pointed to village development committees in southern Africa, the *Sarvodaya* movement of Sri Lanka, cooperatives characterised by the

pooling of economic resources, and various interest associations as examples of local organisational efforts that demonstrated a participatory development paradigm (Roughan 1984:24; Vakil 1997:2060). In Africa, these types of organisations were seen as ways for the poor and marginalised to “achieve self-reliance and to explore and articulate their development priorities” (Nyoni 1987:51). The poor, as participating partners in their own development, required “organisational channels through which to make decisions, maintain communication, mobilise and manage resources, and resolve conflicts” (Uphoff 1988:53). In Europe, the concept of “self-reliance” became part of an analysis that linked poverty at the periphery to metropolitan wealth. This perspective was used to define self-reliance in terms of organisation which negated the political and economic structures of the centre (Galtung 1976). In Latin America, a similar analysis was known as “Dependency Theory” (Cueva 1976).

As praxis, these Northern and Latin American ideas, joined by the approach to ontology emerging from the participatory action research orientation of organisations in the Philippines and India (Rahman 1993), along with European and North American funds, led to a proliferation in Asia and the Pacific of non-government organisations formed with the objective of fostering collective empowerment (Howlett 1985; Roughan 1986; Uphoff 1988). These organisations emphasised that self-reliance has a communal focus (Roughan 1986). In this view, basic need has individual and communal characteristics, and so some of the basic needs of those who are marginalised cannot be met because social structures are configured by local elites and the metropolitan North (Galtung 1976a). Community characteristics like cohesiveness and strength of resolve “can only be assured if the community itself controls the basic needs of its life” (Roughan 1986:14), including control of local organisation. Self-reliant development became fused with political action and “liberation” in postcolonial contexts (Nyoni 1987; Craig et.al. 1990), coupled with interventions sharing the “widespread belief in the potential for building capacity at community level and generating change from below” (Craig et.al. 1990:286). Empowerment of individuals through organisation is necessary to the perspective that “sees poverty as the result of political processes and is therefore committed to enabling communities to enter those processes” (Vakil 1997:58).

Internationally, there are many non-government organisations engaged in community development that share an “emphasis on the values of democratic participation and the empowerment of the powerless” (Craig et.al. 1990:290). For practitioners of

community development based on collective empowerment of the most marginalised, participation through local organisation is equated with political empowerment of people. The geographic boundaries of “Northern” and “Southern” traditions, as described by Minkler (Minkler & Wallerstein 2008), break down when exposed to these international development scenarios. Nevertheless, as evidence of the extent to which all these streams have become braided together,<sup>6</sup> it is Minkler’s definition of participation, as it applies to research, that emerges from this short history of empowerment as the contemporary standard for empowering practice. She says community-based participatory research is an intervention that is:

about knowledge creation and the value of critical and emancipatory reason for understanding power dynamics, for recognising the interconnections between the personal and the social and between life worlds and system worlds, and for identifying the barriers to and facilitators of human actions that move toward the goal of social change [...] as we engage with community to promote more just societies (Minkler & Wallerstein 2008:40).

Minkler’s reference to “life worlds and system worlds” is drawn from the Frankfurt School referred to by Borda. She is referring to the critical sociology of Jurgen Habermas (Habermas 1974). Habermas observed that since the eighteenth century, the relation of theory to practice has grown to encompass more than a naturalistic observation of the human race. In his day, Aristotle observed that political institutions rely primarily on coercive authority rather than political participation for the moral education of citizens. The coercive role of the state is necessary because of the assumption that humans are not virtuous by nature. Instead of this, Habermas argues that:

theory now deals with the objective, overall complex of development of a human species which produces itself, which is as yet only destined to attain its essence: humanity (Habermas 1974:330).

For Habermas, following Hegel, central to theory that espouses the goal of full humanity is comprehension of relationships of power in human affairs. Rational praxis is construed as “liberation from an externally imposed compulsion” – in Aristotle’s case, the coercive power of the state. Habermas interprets theory which is guided by

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<sup>6</sup> This is a reference to development studies theorist Robert Chambers (Chambers 1992), quoted in Minkler (2008) as a discussion paper.

this interest in liberation as enlightenment, and this enlightenment is presupposed by the specific experience of “emancipation by means of critical insight into relationships of power” (Habermas 1974:330). As we see today, empowerment brings together community psychologists and community development practitioners from north and south in the Hegelian tradition, informed by diverse praxis, “stretched out along the vertical axis of world history”, while theory’s claim to provide “orientation in right action” remains constant (Habermas 1974:330). From a theoretical perspective, in this thesis, Habermas’s *Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas 1984, Habermas 1987) will emerge as a central to theorising empowerment.

In seeking to theorise empowerment from examination of the practices of the case-study organisations, the process for interpreting the case studies follows Borda’s dialectical method of action research. Step 3 of Borda’s method refers to “returning to reflect upon the experimental whole in order to detect more adequate ideas or shed more light on old concepts or theories so as to adapt them to the real context” (Borda 1979:39).<sup>7</sup> In the present study, the “experimental whole” refers to the practices of these organisations, and the client response to those practices. Here, “returning to reflect upon” this consists of comparison of the practices of these four organisations with the existing body of empowerment theory. The many reports and other documentary evidence of the practices of these organisations often provide good indications of the theoretical background being employed to direct practice. By examination of this writing, coupled with interpretation of the tools and methodologies used by the organisations in the programs they support, and interviews conducted with members of the organisations, the present study clarifies the theoretical underpinnings of each organisation. In the first half of the thesis (Chapters 1 – 4), each case study is reflected upon to draw out those aspects of empowering practice emphasised by the particular circumstances of the organisation. This is then compared with the relevant streams of theory.

Beginning this task has been greatly assisted by the work of Dr John Roughan. Roughan’s 1986 thesis *Village Organisation for Development* is a landmark in development practice in the Pacific. Roughan begins from an analysis of a person-centred approach to development as the basis for participatory workshops to create tools and narratives to support village organisational efforts in a rapidly changing environment. The methodology developed by Roughan and his collaborators became

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<sup>7</sup> In Kolb’s “experiential learning cycle”, step 3 corresponds to “forming abstract concepts” (Kolb 1975), see diagram p. 10.

the template for the work of the Solomon Islands Development Trust, much of which was subsequently adopted by the other Pacific organisations in the present study.

## *2.2 The Psychosocial Approach*

If action and reflection form the basis of the process for the present study, then empowerment as a “central theme” of a psychosocial approach is what defines its structure. In coming to terms with what constitutes the domain of psychosocial studies, the Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) for health of Meredith Minkler (Minkler & Wallerstein 2008) and Nina Wallerstein (Wallerstein & Duran 2006) again stands out as the exemplar. In addition to many of the sources cited above, their work is also informed by the feminist, post-structuralist and post-colonial praxis that has grown in the intervening 29 years since Borda published his studies in 1979 (Minkler & Wallerstein 2008:35). Minkler and Wallerstein have initiated and gathered together a folio of praxis employing action research<sup>8</sup> as a public health intervention for marginalised populations in the United States, including Indigenous Americans, Latinos and HIV sufferers (Minkler & Wallerstein 2008).<sup>9</sup>

In Community Based Participatory Research the purpose of studying processes of empowerment and participation is in part to seek evidence of “the added value of participation to the intervention and to the intervention’s [health] outcomes” (Wallerstein & Duran 2006:319). Like Zimmerman, another North American health professional, Wallerstein and Duran see the value of participation to outcomes as “direct and indirect and multilevel”, posing problems for evaluation. Outcomes can be affected by “material or program conditions [...] or psycho-social” resilience and protection. They suggest that this “critically important question” of outcomes may need theory to “adapt and expand to better uncover these differences” (Wallerstein & Duran 2006:319). This is a further area where this thesis seeks to make a contribution.

In the field of public health, the term “psychosocial” is allied with studying “social, physical and mental wellbeing” as a medical outcome (Marmot et.al. 1995:127). Perhaps the most well-known study in this area is the “Whitehall II” study, comparing sickness absences with public service ranking (North et.al. 1993). In this study of 10,314 British public servants, psychosocial parameters measured included, at work:

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<sup>8</sup> To avoid the use of acronyms such as CBPR, I will, where possible, use Lewin’s term “action research” to refer to this orientation of researchers to participation. Acronyms appear part of the tradition in this field: PAR, RRA, PRA, RAP...

<sup>9</sup> The full folio also contains praxis on sexual harassment of Khmer girls in California, transgender communities, Indigenous community leadership, Photovoice for participatory assessment, and organisation among hotel room cleaners in San Francisco and Las Vegas.

occupation strain, decision latitude, control, skills, pace, and support, assessed with a 67-item questionnaire; and outside work: social circumstances, personal difficulties, and emotional, practical and negative aspects of support assessed by 15 self-report questions by four nominated close friends or relatives of each subject. As well as known risk factors such as smoking and alcohol consumption, the study showed that psychosocial factors at work and outside work predicted rates of sickness absence (North et.al. 1993:362–363). Reported in the medical literature, it is evident from what was measured that the methodology of this study adopts a sociological approach to defining the parameters of “psychosocial”. These differences reflect a division between psychiatry, using a medical and biological model, and psychology, with its greater emphasis on behavioural and cognitive processes. With respect to what is “psycho-”, it is this latter usage that is employed in the present study. Of interest here is placing psychological characteristics such as motivation, emotion, perception, learning, judgement, reasoning, problem solving, symbolic abilities, self-awareness and reality testing (Newman & Newman 2006:7) in a single framework with social phenomena.

With respect to what is “-social”, the finding that psychological stress is both a cause and an effect of society’s inequality structures (North et.al. 1993; Elstad 1998; Lynch et.al. 2001) naturally draws attention to power, power relationships and empowerment as part of health outcomes. However, this apparently central theme has, in the health field, been overshadowed since the mid-1990s by discussions about “community capacity, community competence, community cohesiveness, and social capital” (Elstad 1998; Laverack & Wallerstein 2001:179). The emphasis on what is communal has created difficulties, particularly in the Australian Indigenous context. “Aboriginal community” or “communities” are terms often used as a convenient label for groups of co-located individuals, families and clans that are often highly heterogeneous (Scrimgeour 1997). Without organisation of some kind, even though defined collectively in the dominant social sense, the term “Aborigine” does not define a community; what happens when Aboriginal people organise does define a community of often (to the outsider) surprising spatial and social dimensions.<sup>10</sup> As a study about organisation, this thesis will define “community” as what takes place when a group of

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<sup>10</sup> The use of the term “organise” here refers to both formal and informal organisation that is goal directed. Organising a funeral or excursion is as much a goal-directed activity as organisation to operate a health service. Differences in kind aside, what is essential to note is *who* is becoming organised: on the one hand who has the time, energy and motivation, and on the other, who may or may not be legitimate representatives of “the community” for whom program activities are intended. Particular families, language groups or clans may represent only local elites.

heterogeneous individuals “collectively take action toward attaining shared and specific goals” (Laverack & Wallerstein 2001:180).

In the contemporary Australian context, the Cape York Substance Abuse Strategy, 2002, describes substance abuse as “a psycho-social contagious epidemic” (Pearson 2002). The strategy is quoted in the context of an evaluation report on the Family WellBeing program promoted by Apunipima Health Council and Cape York Partnerships (Tsey et.al. 2006). Here, “psycho-social” is used to describe how the social web is “infected” by “the behaviour of addicts” (Pearson 2002:21) and that this “explains the behaviour of family, friends, the community and the whole society” (Tsey et.al. 2006:17). Family WellBeing is an Australian Indigenous-developed empowerment program that has demonstrated effectiveness (Campbell 2007; Tsey et.al. 2009). The Family WellBeing training process is used as “a tool for engaging participants on a wide range of issues affecting their health and wellbeing” (Tsey et.al. 2006:8). Among a wide range of sources, the interdisciplinary team at James Cook University draw extensively on psychological approaches to empowerment (Rappaport 1995; Zimmerman 2000) as well as the action research of Minkler and Wallerstein.

In contemporary social science, what is “-social” is constituted by a spectrum of processes from interpersonal and family relationships, social roles, cultural myths, communication patterns, “community” support and ideology to patterns of economic distribution and selective discrimination or intolerance (Newman & Newman 2006). Bearing in mind that “the criterion for correction of thought is, of course, reality” (V.I. Lenin quoted in Borda 1979:41), taking the point of view of those who are marginalised, the present study assumes that the outcomes of these processes are known. With respect to economic status and discrimination, the low socio-economic status and disproportionate suffering of the world’s indigenous peoples is well documented (Carino 2009). It is not the province of this white Australian male to presume to probe, for the purposes of this study, an Indigenous appreciation of “interpersonal and family relationships, social roles, cultural myths”. By taking empowerment as its central theme, this study will challenge the categories used to consider these psychosocial factors, re-ascribing the categories of personal, social and cultural meanings through a universal approach to what constitutes the psychosocial foundation of our common humanity. In this way, the study hopes to clarify the meaning of “right action” in pursuing empowerment, participation and organisation as

interventions in a cross-cultural environment.<sup>11</sup>

As we have seen, the process of reflection, or theory formation, coupled with action, or practice, is critically concerned with personal, group and social dimensions in evolving a rational praxis of life. Because it simultaneously inhabits the dimensions of individual enlightenment and socially imposed conditions, the specific kind of emancipatory experience referred to by Habermas or Freire is necessarily one in which a participant deepens understanding of him- or herself both in terms of individual mind and psychology, as well as his or her role as an active, socialised member of a community. The content of the psychosocial approach is developed in the second half of the thesis (Chapters 5 - 8). There, each chapter uses the theoretical perspectives from the case studies to define the characteristics of these personal, group and social dimensions in turn. In the final chapter, these three aspects of a psychosocial view of empowerment are brought together into a single model.

### *3. The Context of Colonisation*

The Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and Cape York, Australia, present heterogeneous geographical, cultural, historical and social scenarios. One characteristic they share, however, is the experience of European colonisation. While conquest, empire-building and colonisation have long been a part of world history, the Western imperial project<sup>12</sup> is marked out by its global geographic scale and the extensive reordering of local economies to integrate them into the Western, capitalist mode of exchange (Magdoff 1978; Hayter & Watson 1985; Prasad 2003). Also, it is evident that Western imperialism has also subjugated peoples culturally and ideologically (Prasad 2003:5), in the Pacific and Australia most noticeably through the Christian church. Such is the depth of this penetration by Western institutions and political and economic structures that, for the Pacific nations in this study, formal sovereignty has had limited economic and political value in the postcolonial environment. Political instability and economic hardship characterise all these Pacific

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<sup>11</sup> "Cross-cultural" is another term under stress. Researcher and researched constitute a cultural boundary in action research. The usage in this instance comes from international development assistance.

<sup>12</sup> "Colonialism" refers to the physical occupation of territory, whereas "imperialism" may be exercised through control of major institutions. Thus, while the European imperial project involved extensive occupation, "neo-colonial" or "post-colonial" imperialism is characterised by the projection of economic power and the control of institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Hayter & Watson 1985). The "West" is used here to refer to both. In the Pacific context, this usage is admittedly becoming dated with the expanding influence of Asia, and the global nature of capital.

states.<sup>13</sup>

In the Australian context, Western penetration reaches its ultimate extent. The colonisers did not go home. Aileen Moreton-Robinson uses the verb *postcolonising* to “signify the active, the current and the continuing nature of the colonising relationship that positions [Indigenous people]<sup>14</sup> as belonging but not belonging” (Moreton-Robinson 2003:38), in a country where sovereignty remains in the hands of the colonising power (Brady 2007). Dispossession and the colonial rhetoric and policies of “smoothing the dying pillow of the full bloods, and breeding out the colour of the half-castes” (Cowlshaw 1999:87) places Indigenous Australians *in extremis*. In ruling the way Indigenous “subjectivities, identities and bodies are constituted”, the Australian nation state maintains Indigenous marginality, “homelessness” and “disruption, dislocation, and proximity to whiteness” (Moreton-Robinson 2003:37) in a way unlike that in the Pacific.

In Australia, it is evident that there is an urgent desire to foster the participation of Indigenous Australians in their self-development, as discussed by Noel Pearson, Warren Mundine (quoted in Maddison 2009) and Mick Dodson (Dodson 2006). In his paper delivered to the Native Title Conference 2007 in Cairns, Tom Calma spoke of the views of Aboriginal traditional owners about government policy for Indigenous economic development, including land, access to capital, and home ownership. He tells us that:

the majority of Indigenous people and traditional owners who responded to the survey last year support the position that sustainable economic development is essential for the well-being of Indigenous communities on Indigenous land. This is also the policy position of the Australian Government.

However, he goes on to say that even if there is broad agreement about a policy direction, implementation of policy is problematic. Calma says the problem is that “the process they have chosen to implement this does not provide for the active participation and engagement of Indigenous people” (Calma 2007).

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<sup>13</sup> Viz. the continuing presence of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, the wide extent of political corruption in Papua New Guinea, and the continuing military rule in Fiji.

<sup>14</sup> The original text refers to “us”. In assuming this term in parenthesis, not in the original text, the author notes Moreton Robinson’s comments on the diversity of Aboriginal Nations. As noted, the author believes she speaks for many, and so uses this broadest term to denote “us”. In the present study, the term “Aboriginal Australians” is used to refer to Australian Indigenous peoples.

Dillon and Westbury have argued that “government activity and authority” in remote Aboriginal communities requires a specific kind of implementation process that needs to be “focused ... on facilitation and enablement of Indigenous citizens and groups” (Dillon & Westbury 2007:213). The Australian Government’s Indigenous reform agenda *Closing the Gap* states that it is “underpinned by a new way of engaging with Indigenous Australians”, that recognises people’s capacity to participate in development and implementation of programs and policies, based on “listening”, “trust” and “dialogue” (FaHCSIA 2009). Achieving this new engagement in circumstances where there is a “perceived lack of strategy and innovation” across the Australian Public Service requires “strengthening the capacity of the public service” (FaHCSIA 2009; DPMC 2010). The reform agenda recognises that this engagement requires strengthening involvement by the corporate, NGO and philanthropic sectors (FaHCSIA 2009a). This study’s hope, ultimately, is to address itself to these audiences as they engage in action with Australian Indigenous peoples.

It is the persistence of the legal, economic and political regimes of the imperial project of the West that unites the heterogeneity of these Pacific states and Australia. Using Moreton-Robinson’s verb, for *postcolonised* people, the consequences of colonisation are:

configured within this postcolonising society through power relations that are premised on our dispossession and resisted through our ontological relationship to land (Moreton-Robinson 2003:37).

The author believes Moreton-Robinson speaks for many in the postcolonial world. Her statement seems as true in any of these Pacific “nations” as it is in Australia.<sup>15</sup>

To emphasise the commonalities of this shared structural imposition, the present study adopts language from development studies, referring to this relationship as having had the structure of a centre and a periphery (Galtung 1976).<sup>16</sup> However, in a contemporary sense, while the “periphery” still suggests marginalisation, in Australia the inequality of the power relationship is one “where one system is the encapsulating state and the other is a localised system of a minority group” (Morphy 2008:130). In this thesis, the image of an encapsulated minority will also be applied to islanders confronted with the

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<sup>15</sup> Bougainville’s secessionist movement is one example. The “nation” of the Solomon Islands is a fiction to the Kwaio of Malaita or Weather Coast people of Guadalcanal. As emerges in this study, land ownership and the “ontological relationship to land” is the number one issue identified by groups in Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

<sup>16</sup> This usage also overcomes the difficulties with “Europe” and “the West” referred to earlier.

“radical, indeed incommensurable, difference” (Moreton-Robinson 2003:30) between postcolonial system worlds of governance and local lifeworlds; and being a minority in a global political economy in which they cannot participate (Fukuyama 2008).<sup>17</sup> This study proposes that the expansionary nature of capital has closed the periphery, leaving islands of Indigenous survivors.

Dialogue, participation and empowerment are terms that have been used for decades to describe a set of techniques for coming to terms with the question of difference – difference of culture, of experience, of knowledge, of resources and of power. This study will examine specific practices, and, through a developing body of theory, interrogate this practice to reveal the values and philosophy that underpin organised action for empowerment and the implications of these for future practice. In doing so, it hopes to establish the necessary requirements for those who would choose to engage in dialogue to explore individual choices and develop participatory and empowering organisations capable of constructively sustaining Indigenous people’s potential and aspirations.

#### *4. Chapter Outline*

This study is divided into two major parts. Part 1 (Chapters 1–4) presents the four case-study organisations. Each of these chapters is in turn divided into two subsections. The first presents the data on each organisation, outlining their organisational practices and programs. The second employs this data to derive different theoretical aspects of empowerment, as each organisation shows a different emphasis in its approach.

Having tapped the case studies for their theoretical underpinnings, in Part 2 (Chapters 5–8), the conceptual insights thus gained are examined for their contribution to understanding personal (Chapter 5), community (Chapter 6) and social empowerment (Chapter 7). Finally, in Chapter 8, these three aspects of are brought together in a single framework, giving a synoptic view of organisation for empowerment. This framework shows the dynamic interrelation between persons, groups and their social effects in a three-dimensional model of empowerment called the field of community control. This provides a dynamic view of strengths-based change processes, indicators and outcomes.

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<sup>17</sup> Fukuyama’s “memo” refers to the Solomon Islands, and is applicable to Papua New Guinea. Note that at the time of writing, Fiji continues to be subject to significant sanctions and travel bans by other Commonwealth nations.



**Part 1**  
**The Case Studies**

## Chapter 1

### Solomon Islands Development Trust – A Foundation in Community Development

“The voyage of discovery rests not in seeking new lands, but in seeing with new eyes.”

Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*

#### 1.1 Part 1: Profile

##### 1.1.1 Introduction

In 2012 the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) celebrates 30 years of operation. SIDT began with the development of a national network of locally based teams delivering development education workshops directly in village communities. The rationale for this approach, and the structure of these workshops, grew out of doctoral research conducted by John Roughan. A Brooklyn NY boy and former Catholic priest, Roughan’s work began when he was given charge of the Rohinari Mission Station in the Are’Are (pron: aree-aree) district of South Malaita in 1960. As a missionary, school administrator and, later, kinsman through marriage, Roughan served the community “in the capacity of social scientist” from that time to the present (Roughan 1986:25).

Roughan’s involvement with the people of Are’Are continued through the 1970s when he was appointed Director of Catholic Schools and Catholic Relief Services for the archipelago. In 1974 he left the Solomons and entered the University of Hawaii to study the role of village organisation in development. For his doctoral thesis work on this subject, Roughan teamed up with his Are’Are kinsmen. Together, through daily contact, trust and commitment to each other, they set about the construction, planning, application and evaluation of a different kind of social intervention aimed at:

- understanding Are’Are history and its relationship to village development;
- strengthening local organisational efforts for village development;
- creating ways for villagers to assess their quality of life;
- planning ways to continue to support local organisational efforts through promoting participation in those efforts and the use of paraprofessionals in village development (Roughan 1986:3).

It was this final aim of the thesis that led ultimately to the creation of SIDT, an Indigenous non-government organisation. In 2009, Dr John Roughan was awarded the Solomon Islands Cross for his services to the nation.

### *1.1.2 Aims and Objectives*

Since its formation, SIDT has worked with villages across the provinces of the Solomon Islands to “promote community empowerment in areas of governance, education, health, environment, natural resource management, and disaster risk management”. SIDT’s vision emphasises strengthening the quality of village life in order to “address the social, environment and economic challenges facing the Solomon Islands” (FSPI 2009).

Roughan’s original fieldwork in South Malaita that became the methodology of the Solomon Islands Development Trust was conducted between June 1980 and April 1981. The Trust itself was formed in September 1982, following a workshop with representatives from several national organisations, namely the Solomon Islands Christian Association, Malaita Youth and Adult Training Centre, the National Provident Fund, the National Council of Women, the SI Development Bank and the SI Government. These trustees undertook to create a new development agency, and to build a mandate for an alternative vision of development. This alternative vision sought to challenge the dominant view in the Solomon Islands that development was:

- the product of an externally funded project;
- individualist rather than communal;
- limited to material production;
- male dominated (Barcham 1987:19).

The principles and practices of the organisation are laid out in the “Statement of Resolve” agreed to at the workshop.

The role of SIDT will include questioning the conventional development wisdom, raising the consciousness of both development donors and recipients concerning local development issues, and creating conditions where alternative development visions and actualities can take place. To raise these issues indicates how SIDT wishes to view its place in the Solomon Islands development scene. Thus, as a new development institution, SIDT intends to carve out an identity for itself which clearly distinguishes its role in development (Roughan 1982).

The Statement begins with a critique of the “project-as-development syndrome” – the notion that the project is the only, or at least the most important, path to development, and goes on to stress the need for linkage of projects to “village life systems”. These systems are the cyclic rhythms in village life that exert the strongest influence on the 85 per cent of Solomonese living in villages, and it is these, maintains the Statement, that should be the focus of attention when considering development proposals. SIDT will achieve this, continues the Statement, by focusing on the quality of village life (Roughan 1982).

The Statement takes the view that development is not an automatic consequence of any project, technology or technique, but that these should be seen as tools for greater understanding. Reflection, analysis and understanding require conscious human effort, and the Trust will make this type of adult education effort part of all activities. The program to be carried out by the Trust is a ‘whole package’ consisting of project activities linked to a focus on village quality of life and adult education. The Statement is decisive about working only with those groups and organisations that accept the whole package (Roughan 1982). The durability of the perspective adopted in the Statement is shown in an article written for the twentieth anniversary of the Trust, in which the core theme remains: “SIDT understands that the heart of the nation lies in village life” (Narasia 2002).

During the period 1984–2003 the activities of the Trust included rural water supply and sanitation, malaria and HIV prevention, addressing vitamin A deficiency, eco-forestry, butterfly ranching, coral reef conservation, small business development, and fruit fly eradication (Roughan 1997). Other SIDT projects included:

- the Coral Gardens Initiative;
- disaster preparedness;
- health, population and family planning through community theatre;
- the Ross Mining project – community representation and negotiation with the mining company;
- distance education;
- a Restorative Justice Program. (FSPI 2009)

SIDT’s focus on a national, extensive approach to outreach that delivered adult education, appropriate technologies, and questioned the dominant project-oriented thinking, was seen as an end in itself, a ‘national work’ (SIDT 1984). In the context of Solomon Islands non-government organisations, SIDT is characterised as an

“alternative voice organization that actively contests and questions government” (Rhodes 2007:14).

### *1.1.3 Strategies*

As the Statement of Resolve makes clear, SIDT was to be established as a development agency emphasising the linkage of the project to village life systems. Looking at the Statement, and the selection of the original board of trustees, it is apparent that from the outset SIDT had the intention of establishing itself as a national institution with its own specific program. The process for the establishment of SIDT drew together a board of trustees capable of giving the Trust legitimacy as a national institution.

The primary strategy of SIDT was to establish a national network of paraprofessionals able to provide the kind of adult education it envisaged. The focus on ongoing adult education was implemented through the use of “mobile teams” of trained villagers drawn from a range of communities, language groups and provinces.<sup>18</sup> Establishment of this village outreach program initially focused on the wide strategy of making contact with as many village communities as possible with the intention of building a critical mass of people who had experience of the SIDT approach.

Field implementation began in 1984 with a two-month residential training in the village of Harumou, Are’Are Lagoon, South Malaita. The beginning of a national field network was in place by 1985. From a staff of zero in 1982 to 104 by 1986, the field workers of SIDT consisted of 61 men and 43 women operating in teams of three to five, plus six head office staff in Honiara and eight overseas volunteers located in the provinces (Barcham 1987). By 1994, this field staff had grown to 270 Solomon “volunteers”, still working in teams of three to five, and still using the delivery mode of extended excursions and workshops (Chesher 1994).

With the aim of establishing a national network came the need for SIDT to have some permanent presence in each of the provinces of the widespread Solomons archipelago. The decision was made to set up bases in village communities rather than provincial centres, again emphasising SIDT’s focus on the village as the basis for development. Each base was known as a ‘People’s Centre’ in an effort to convey that the centre was not SIDT’s but existed, rather, as a community resource. Built by the local community, space in the Centre was rented by SIDT.

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<sup>18</sup> Known as Mobile Team Members, the paraprofessionals were generally referred to as “MTMs”.

People's Centres served as places for teams to meet for briefing and debriefing, to practise appropriate technologies<sup>19</sup>, undertake administrative tasks and to work with the overseas volunteers resident there as part of SIDT's presence. The provincial centres necessarily operated with a high degree of autonomy, as travel and communication around the archipelago was often slow, irregular and difficult. SIDT's strategy relied on providing adequate local supervision and logistical support to the teams, and a regular flow of information in both directions between head office in Honiara and the provincial team centres. The efficacy of SIDT's ability to penetrate directly to the village level with its wide network of teams was recognised after its major role in relief work following the disaster of Cyclone Namu in 1986 (Rhodes 2007:19).

SIDT invested early in educational media, including theatre and *Link* magazine. While the first group of overseas volunteers had been involved in the general establishment of the national network, the second group offered more specialised skills, and staff included both a graphic artist and a person with theatrical experience. The first *Link* magazine was available in June/July 1987.<sup>20</sup> Its function was twofold: first, to put SIDT on display, particularly in terms of its vision of development in Solomon Islands; and second, as a means to respond to criticism. This criticism most often took the form of claims that SIDT was anti-development. These claims were of two types: SIDT was anti-development because it did not fund projects; and that SIDT was anti-development because it opposed industrial-scale exploitation of natural resources.

This latter criticism is significant. SIDT's approach was not an open-ended invitation to village communities to set the agenda for SIDT as an organisation. SIDT's emphasis on village organisation as a development strategy led it to view certain kinds of development as contrary to this objective. SIDT takes this a step further by its active opposition to foreign interests involved in tuna fishing and tuna baitfish extraction, and industrial-scale logging of rainforest for export (Roughan 1997). This vein of environmentalism was another early feature of SIDT's approach. Its importance in the present study lies in the fact that only in relatively isolated cases did industrial-scale development arise as an issue for village communities. It was primarily a position that

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<sup>19</sup> Primarily simple ways to improve conditions using local materials – the “ventilated improved pit” toilet is one example.

<sup>20</sup> Some issues of *Link* were previously available on the World Wide Web. The server that retained these copies at <http://fspi.internetfiji.com/> at the time of writing is unavailable. SIDT also regularly published the Link Calendar, which included graphics and cartoons appropriate to the Trust's development message. An example from the 1988 calendar is appended (Appendix 1).

arose from SIDT's view of development. Where communities did raise the issue, SIDT actively sought to bring the views and experiences of that minority of communities into the national arena. Through its network, SIDT facilitated contact between communities that had experienced environmental degradation of their lands or seas, and those considering entering into supply contracts with foreign interests. This facilitation was part of SIDT's "on-going adult education".

#### *1.1.4 Tools and Methodologies*

To give meaning to a reflective and analytical approach to development, SIDT employed tools made for that purpose. These were called the Village Quality of Life Index and the Development Wheel, which were delivered as part of "village-level development workshops" (Barcham 1987). Contrary to the project-as-development view, SIDT saw that development needed to occur in a "self-reliant and technologically appropriate manner" that included women, and had the ultimate goal of a unified and self-reliant people (Roughan 1986:11).

The tools based on this particular view of development attempted to address the meeting of Solomon Islands village society with Western development at the level where it takes place: in the village. Villagers were encouraged to see development as involving all aspects of life, personal, social and material. This process was facilitated by encouraging villagers to publicly converse about the nature of development, and how they saw it affecting their lives in the village.

The Development Wheel (Appendix 2) was designed to provide a frame of reference for this discussion. A wheel figure is used to show that personal, material and social growth should come at the same time. The training notes accompanying the figure explain that

a standard development answer for Third World nations is that material growth must come before a nation (or a village, or a person) can have the other two. Our answer is that if all three do not grow well together, then there is not really any progress for the nation or the village or the person (Roughan 1984).

The Development Wheel picture aims to help people visualise the meaning of unbalanced development – that is, doing well in one area but not in another. It shows that both the person and the society are vital for growth. The spokes of the Wheel

would be scored from 1 – 10 on each parameter. A well-rounded wheel suggested growth in social and personal as well as material well-being.

The second workshop exercise invited villagers to examine the “quality of life” in their village using the Village Quality of Life Index (VQLI – Appendix 3). This exercise aimed to bring the focus of development efforts back to the village, raising awareness among village people that responsibility for their lives lay in their own hands, and that bettering village conditions depended far more on their own efforts than on what others could do for them.

An important part of the narrative of the Development Wheel and VQLI was that, having been created with Indigenous participation from Roughan’s collaborators, it struck a chord with older people who were strongly rooted in traditional culture. In spite of the tools’ foreign appearance, they served to re-establish traditional values and ways as a legitimate basis for future growth.

Two further tools were also employed. The first, the Social Cosmology Chart (Appendix 4), showed six dimensions of the social universe: social space, time, knowledge, relationships of persons to nature, relationships of persons to each other, and a spiritual dimension. For each dimension there were pictorial representations for ‘before Whiteman’ and ‘after Whiteman’. The tool aimed to extend debate about traditional versus contemporary values, making clear that there are two social systems operating in the village community which are distinctly different. The tool grew from information contained in the Development Course Notes used in SIDT training, which sought to clarify that development as modernisation implied a particular set of values, ideologies and “deep structures” (Roughan 1984), and could not simply be incorporated into village life without change to existing traditional values and social structures. The second, the Past/Now/Future exercise, was a visualisation exercise that followed on from the social cosmology discussion. In a quiet, contemplative environment, people were asked to reflect on the past and how their community had changed from then to the present. Next, people were asked to consider what the future might hold if the trends evident from that reflection continued. Together, these tools attempted to construct a narrative about change and control that was based on village people reflecting collectively on their own experience.

The paraprofessional mobile teams took this narrative to villages on extended field excursions. These excursions included three to four days staying in each community, conducting a series of workshops using the analytical tools to engage the village

community in discussion about development issues. The teams, where possible consisting of both men and women, undertook a regular two-week touring schedule, returning to their home community in the alternate two weeks. Communities self-selected to host a mobile team. Word of mouth provided the process for this self-selection. Usually, team members would be approached while on tour with requests for visits. The more the teams toured and had exposure, the more requests were generated. The teams would use local transport, often walking, and relied on the host community to provide board as part of the arrangements for a visit. Following a request, the teams would make an initial visit to the community to agree on a time for an extended visit, and to check what regular activities such as community days or church activities might assist or impede the conduct of the team's work while visiting. Having reached an agreement with the community about these arrangements, teams would undertake to return at a given time. Critical to the success of the teams was building initial trust and credibility. This was based on first asking community leaders when it would suit them to have a visit, as opposed to simply making a program based on efficient use of SIDT's time and resources, and secondly on returning reliably at the agreed time, and maintaining contact. This negotiated process of making contact with communities and the use of local resources marked out SIDT's approach as different to government or other non-government organisations in the eyes of villagers. SIDT teams came to them, in their community, at an agreed time convenient to them, and stayed for an extended period.

In the course of a village visit, the teams would conduct workshop sessions based on the tools, asking that the whole community – elders, leaders, women and youth – be present. Normally three workshop sessions were held, each extending for a half-day or evening. The workshops were combined with practical activities. These might consist of simply assisting the community with activities it had planned, such as building construction, fencing, gardening or community maintenance. Alternatively, these activities could encompass alternative technologies previously practised by the team members, including construction of pit toilets, drainage, rock pathways, kitchen improvements and cooking techniques (Barcham 1987). Later, other adult education materials addressing specific issues such as logging, nutrition and disaster awareness were incorporated. Thirty years on, much of the original SIDT methodology remains, with continued village outreach and the maintained use of analytical tools, now called “open learning tools”, including the Development Wheel, VQLI and the Past/Now/Future exercise (Roughan 2010).

### *1.1.5 External Relationships*

SIDT's original emphasis on water supply and sanitation technologies, such as pit toilets, drainage and paths, came as part of a package for joint implementation of the national Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) project by SIDT and the Solomon Islands government, funded by the Australian Development Assistance Bureau (AFFHC 1987). It is instructive to consider this in a little more detail.

While the Solomon Islands Rural Water Supply and Sanitation project had shown a reasonable track record on paper, with 78 per cent of the Solomon Islands population having an installed water supply system by 1986, installation of water systems was not a reliable indicator of acceptance or usage (AFFHC 1987). Frequent breakages, coupled with little or no maintenance, inappropriate siting and poor drainage, led to low utilisation and sometimes a degraded village environment, with consequent increased health risks. Analysis of the problem led those involved to suggest that the RWSS project suffered from a lack of community participation, and treated the villager as a passive recipient of development. A "community development" approach was needed to augment the government program. Evaluation documents from the time (McDonald et.al. 1986; AFFHC 1987) cite as the "benchmark definition" of community development a 1955 United Nations definition:

Community development is the process by which efforts of the public themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of a community and to integrate the community into the life of the nation and enable them to contribute fully to the nation's progress. This complex process is then made up of two essential elements: the participation of the people themselves and the provision of technical and other services in ways which encourage initiative, self-help and mutual aid and make these more effective. (UNESCO 1956)

Using this as their standard, project partners including the Australian Freedom From Hunger Campaign (now incorporated in Oxfam Australia), the Overseas Service Bureau (now known as Australian Volunteers International) and the Australian Development Assistance Bureau (now AusAID) identified SIDT as the vehicle for people's participation, and the Solomon Islands Government as the provider of technical services (McDonald et.al. 1986; AFFHC 1987).

In the extensive evaluation work that was carried out on the SIDT component of the project, it was found that things did not work out as imagined. One of the fundamental difficulties was the political nature of water supply. SIDT encouraged communities to express their views – views that were often critical of government and the delivery of the water supply program. “Talking about water supply” immediately raised questions not of pipes and taps, but of the actions and priorities of the government instrumentality meant to deliver them (Barcham 1987). SIDT, in responding to village priorities, found itself in conflict with the priorities of the project. SIDT’s idea of “community development” was not a process that paved the way for trouble-free entry of government technical teams, with willing villagers contributing labour and schooled in ongoing maintenance; community development was not just community participation and cooperation in planning and construction. It was a far more complex and political discussion.

While agencies such as the Solomon Islands Government and the Australian Freedom From Hunger Campaign tended to see SIDT failing to maintain focus on water supply (AFFHC 1987), others saw water supply as a backdrop to SIDT’s wider activities in village organisation (McDonald et.al. 1986; Barcham 1987). The experimental nature of the SIDT/RWSS project led to a lack of unambiguous direction as to just how the two aspects of community participation and government expertise were meant to come together. As a consequence, the project did not achieve its stated aims in relation to cooperation between SIDT and government and the meshing of the two programs as proposed by the UNESCO definition of community development. At the time, SIDT lacked the institutional development to respond well to this challenge. Its ability to exert influence on government and donor agendas was limited, and there was an initial acceptance of the need for a level of expediency, called by some “pragmatism”, in setting project goals (AFFHC 1987). In retrospect, the organisations involved in the RWSS project did not just have different development philosophies – modernisation on the one hand, self-reliance on the other – but these philosophies were incompatible.

The RWSS project emphasises one of the early difficulties for SIDT. Roughan and the SIDT Trustees had left the door open to link “the project” to village quality of life through adult education. All of the references to the work of SIDT by external agencies use project headings – “Coral Gardens”, “Bednet” or “Eco-forestry”, for example – to define the Trust’s activities. Few references appear to acknowledge the work of simply maintaining an adult-education network, or to community capacity

building through local organisation and problem solving, as ends in themselves. While commentary on the Trust's activities can use the language of community development, participation, empowerment or village focus, for donors, outcomes are couched in terms of specific goals. It is apparent that for donors it was the material and tangible aspects of development that were the reference point and the benchmark of success. At any one time, up to a dozen funding sources contributed to SIDT, each seeking to exercise its particular development agenda through an identified "project".

#### *1.1.6 Internal Relationships*

Roughan established the principles of recruitment for SIDT mobile team members when he made his initial selection of co-workers. Spending time in each of the villages that he hoped would participate in the development of an education program, Roughan looked for "persons with proven track records of trustworthiness and local leadership qualities" (Roughan 1986:86). Trust and credibility have already been mentioned as attributes necessary for the relationship between SIDT mobile team members and the village to be successful. The first team of co-workers employed in the process of Roughan's thesis work had been handpicked on this basis. Roughan's choice was based on a paraprofessional model of service delivery. Roughan recognised the limitations of a classroom-based formal education program for delivery of adult education that aimed to "activate villagers" (Roughan 1986). His intention was to develop a nucleus of trained village persons capable of continuing the program once his participation ended.

The paraprofessional model was a well-established methodology by 1980. Roughan draws on the work of the Centre for International Studies at Cornell University to describe the paraprofessional as "a person indigenous to the service area who has very limited technical or specialised training", able to be "an intermediary between local publics and a service industry, transmitting information in both directions and assisting local publics to claim and use resources which are available through the paraprofessional's efforts" (Esman et.al. 1980:8). Selection criteria for paraprofessionals emphasise personal qualities over technical skills. Literacy, for example, may be less regarded than honesty or leadership qualities. Care is also taken in selection to try and circumvent the dominance of particular factional interests (Roughan 1986:86). Later SIDT experience showed the benefit of teams working outside of their immediate home territories for this reason.

The first training of SIDT paraprofessionals began in July 1980. The training took place over eight weeks, with three days per week of formal attendance involving lectures, discussion and written work. The course developed by Roughan and his collaborators required 120 hours of formal participation, plus another 40 hours of informal discussion and review. In addition to working on the course notes developed by Roughan (Roughan 1984), the team spent substantial amounts of time on review, discussion and small-group practice in delivery of the development course material. Roughan and his co-workers took on the task of assimilating each other's knowledge, working together to develop the means of turning the resultant interpretation of development in the Are'Are context into a series of workshops and activities suitable for the village environment. This original group of 10 team members participated directly in the development of the tools and methodologies described above, refining their content and practising their delivery through the initial pilot workshops conducted in the trainees' home communities. It was an intense and creative period for all participants (Roughan 1986:91). Translation of this experience to a national program presented a major challenge. The development of the tools and techniques to be used had been a collaborative process between Roughan and the first team members, and Roughan had an established background in the Are'Are community himself. The opportunities for dialogue were extensive and well-established in this research group. However, having developed the material for use in village communities, and settled on the mobile team model of three- to four-day village visits, this group was confronted with the problem of how to extend their experience to others.

Roughan had been able to work directly with the communities and individuals involved in his initial selection of trainees; however, for the national program village communities alone selected the first crop of mobile team trainees. While communities had been asked to nominate men and women who were respected and of good character, inevitably this first national group of 60 people represented a mixed bag of talents and skills. Nominees entering the first national training were not subject to a rigorous selection process in the course of that training. There were no pass or fail standards. After training, team members tended to self-select, as those who had not grasped the SIDT approach opted out of the rigours of organising and maintaining a touring program.

The difficulty was that Roughan's earlier collaboration had essentially been a transformative experience unique to that group. While they had developed some useful tools, the tools themselves did not make a transformative experience, which appeared to require the interaction of people. The original group was acutely aware of the limited time that village communities could devote to the workshop sessions, and opted for a delivery model that would maximise public discussion, emphasising small-group discussion and general debate using the tools as a stimulus, rather than devoting precious time to lectures and information sharing (Roughan 1986:105). Although the first national training used the same basic material of the Development Course Notes, and extended over a similar period of time, new recruits tended to seize on the tools as the core of their delivery, placing little emphasis on the task of how to facilitate public discussion. The unintended consequence of this was that, in the Christian Solomon Islands, many of the new mobile team members saw themselves as disciples of the new development, the "SIDT way". It was their task, they believed, to proselytise across the archipelago, preaching the new good news.

Another challenge was presented by SIDT's acceptance that "the planning, implementing and writing-up of projects holds an honoured place in development strategy" (Roughan 1982). From 1984 to 1994, SIDT held "thousands of workshops attended by tens of thousands of villagers" (Chesher 1994). While an earlier "Forest Resource Inventory" project run by the SIDT Forest Protection Unit had accessed the widespread knowledge of the villagers, this had not contributed to any decline in industrial-scale logging, "despite this impressive exchange of information" (Chesher 1994). Of this, Richard Chesher, a consultant who conducted an evaluation of the Forest Protection Unit,<sup>21</sup> says SIDT "found that their awareness raising programmes have not made any changes in behaviour, therefore, they have decided to promote programmes that encourage change in behaviour instead" (Chesher 1994). What was required were more "action-oriented projects". This suggests continuing ambivalence about the role of the project in SIDT's work. One of the Unit's projects was a partnership between SIDT and Greenpeace called the "Solomon Islands Ecoforestry Programme". The program assisted community groups to begin small-scale ecoforestry projects. These projects were based on a portable sawmill and chainsaws producing certified hardwood for a niche New Zealand market in "ethical" tropical

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<sup>21</sup> While the FPU is employed in the present study in a critical light because of what followed, Chesher's evaluation appears on the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific website as part of a suite of "best practice" examples. SIDT is lauded for "awareness and vision; integrating stakeholders; training and educational initiatives".

timber. SIDT's task was to run village-based educational programs "to raise awareness and later on to train representatives from villages on how to practice eco-forestry" (Chesher 1994). Unsurprisingly, the project was fraught with problems of transportation and continuity of supply. However, in terms of its core business of village outreach, SIDT scored well on the process. There was a very high awareness of the organisation, and SIDT efficiently did its part in the project (Chesher 1994).

More recently, SIDT has said it "will return to its practical roots in 2010 to 2014 by focussing on building capacity Solomon Island villagers" (SIDT 2012). Kombuvatu, a Honiara estate housing residents from almost every Solomon Islands province, offers a good example of this. In recent years Kombuvatu residents went through a highly stressful period as a result of the estate being located immediately adjacent to the "Tiger Camp" of the Malaita Eagle Force, one of the groups responsible for militarised civil unrest in 2004. Jennifer Wate, currently Director of SIDT, organised a "Restorative Justice Training" session for the group. This group of Kombuvatu housewives thanked SIDT for the workshop, the first of its kind, one reporting that "the training was an eye opener for her and that she had come to realize that she hadn't learnt anything new but the course reinforced skills within herself and how she could apply them within her own community" (SIDT 2005). SIDT also responded to a burgeoning urban population through the Honiara Youth Theatre, performing street theatre on topics as diverse as youth mental health and urban sanitation (SIDT 2008). SIDT has also resumed the extensive use of participatory assessment tools and its focus on village organisation.

## 1.2 Part II: Analysis – Goals, Processes and Indicators of Development

### 1.2.1 Defining "Development"

The "Statement of Resolve" defines the overall approach of the Trust's work. First and foremost is the emphasis on the village as the unit of development, as opposed, say, to the cattle farm or the cocoa plantation being the main focus of development activities. Development is not just about more income. It includes the human cycles of growth and maturity, birth and death – the formative influences on personal and social change. It is the village, reflecting collectively on its situation, that becomes the vehicle for the definition of development. This reflection is facilitated by the use of analytical tools and discussion. The wide range of activities encompassed by SIDT can be understood against the background of its commitment to village self-reliance, appropriate

technology and adult education. From water supplies to social justice, the focus is on building local self-reliance through participation, and the strengthening of local organisational efforts and institutions. This is the “identity” that distinguishes the role of SIDT in the Solomon Islands.

The practices of SIDT can be summarised as follows:

- questioning the dominant development paradigm, and providing an “alternative voice”;
- involvement in a diverse range of projects related to “quality of life” and “self-reliance”;
- use of paraprofessionals conducting extended tours, staying in host communities and using local transport;
- importance of the personal values of paraprofessionals;
- use of locally developed tools to facilitate reflection, analysis and understanding about village development (Development Wheel, VQLI, Social Cosmology, Past/Now/Future);
- creating a national institution;
- opposition to industrial-scale development.

SIDT takes a holistic approach to the meaning of development. This orientation proposes a view in opposition to modernisation that legitimises traditional world views, construing “the project” as a type of development that is invasive, and modernisation as contributing to “an increase in village decay, growth of the generation gap between young and old and diminished quality of life” (Roughan 1982).

To change this process of modernisation requires a new consciousness on the part of both development donors and recipients. Human progress is not simply the result of contact with modernity – “beautiful houses do not make beautiful people” – but is an “internal function of persons and communities, helped or hindered by external things”. It follows that “external” intervention has “a catalytic role, never a dominating or directive one” (Roughan 1986:4). SIDT’s approach as an organisation defined its practices in terms of this catalytic intervention.

Roughan characterised development as “transformational”, in that it involved first a change in people’s thinking and attitudes towards the nature of the development process. For Roughan, this paradigm requires

a basic shift of the person-in-community and community-of-persons from being dominated, controlled and manipulated to becoming subjects, architects and moulders of their own future. Such an interior focus demands shifts in both the attitudes and the methods of persons working in transformational development (Roughan 1986:5).

The concept of transformational development is rooted in the development debate that occurred during the 1970s, referred to in the introduction (Uphoff 1980; Streeten 1981; Korten 1987). Particularly influential for SIDT was the work of Johan Galtung, who at that time was serving as Professor of Peace and Conflict Research at the University of Oslo. In 1978, on behalf of the United Nations University, Galtung initiated a project known as Goals, Processes and Indicators of Development (GPID), specifically to “contribute to new theories and practices of development” (Galtung 1976). The GPID project makes several assumptions about development in order to position the project relative to other fields of development research. First, development is defined as development of people. For Galtung, development

is not defined as the production of goods and services, nor as their distribution, nor as institution-building, nor as structural transformation, nor as ecological balance. All these may be necessary social conditions or means, but development as such is seen as human development, as development of people in society (Galtung 1976:1).

Secondly, the concentration on the person-in-society is seen as “the satisfaction and further development of basic human needs”. These basic needs “include material and non-material needs”, identified under the headings of “security, identity, welfare and freedom” (Galtung 1976b<sup>22</sup>).<sup>23</sup> A developed country is one “which guarantees an acceptable minimum of security, welfare, identity and freedom for everyone”, through a spatially and temporally specific combination of production, distribution, institutions, social structures and culture. Galtung sees this as a way to engage with a global world, where there are no “developed” countries as such – countries that may necessarily provide the template for the progress of underdeveloped countries.

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<sup>22</sup> As part of this project, Galtung served at a number of universities around the globe, including the University of Hawaii. Galtung’s residency at this university coincided with Roughan’s work on his doctoral dissertation. Unpublished material in the author’s collection is drawn from material collected by Roughan at that time.

<sup>23</sup> The definition of “basic human need” is further discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

By shifting the development debate from one focused on the imposition of a particular “template” to one focused on need, basic human need provided the theoretical framework for SIDT’s praxis of “questioning the conventional development wisdom”. Its focus on the “quality of life” emphasises both the material and non-material aspects of human development as a person-centred process.

Thirdly a fuller understanding of the relationship between the person-in-community and the community-of-persons rests on a construction of society based on two complementary views: society as actors, and society as structures. This approach underlies SIDT’s design of the tools used in village workshops, and defines the specific meaning of “self-reliance”.

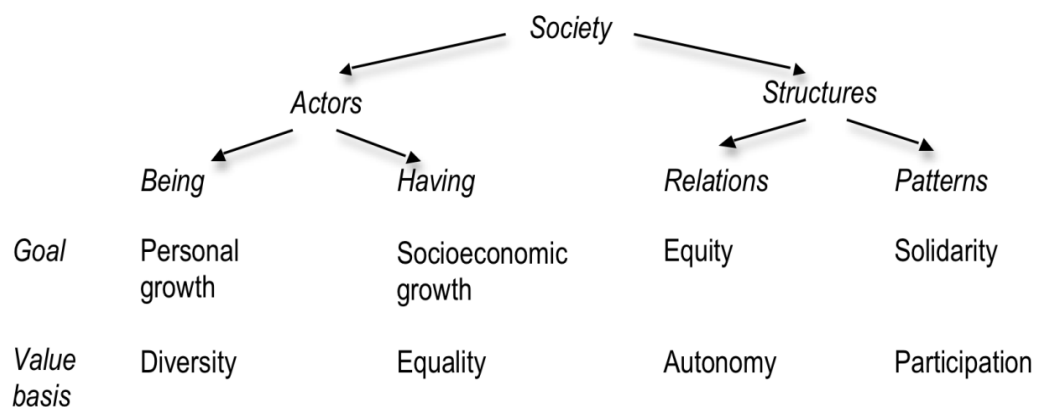
### 1.2.2 *Self-reliance*

Galtung positioned the Goals, Processes and Indicators of Development project as an opportunity to create a framework for considering potentially universally applicable development goals. His approach is unashamedly value-laden:

Human fulfilment, reduction of violence, abolition of misery, reduction of alienation and abolition of repression – such goals will not be questioned but will be assumed as the guiding lights of the exercise. The purpose of the project is simply to try to understand better the conditions under which all of these goals (not one, two or three of them) can be obtained ... (Galtung 1976:2).

SIDT’s Development Wheel exercise attempts to capture this multi-variant nature of human development. The Development Wheel is based on Galtung’s analysis of the universal goals of development, shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3. World Goals (after Galtung 1980)**



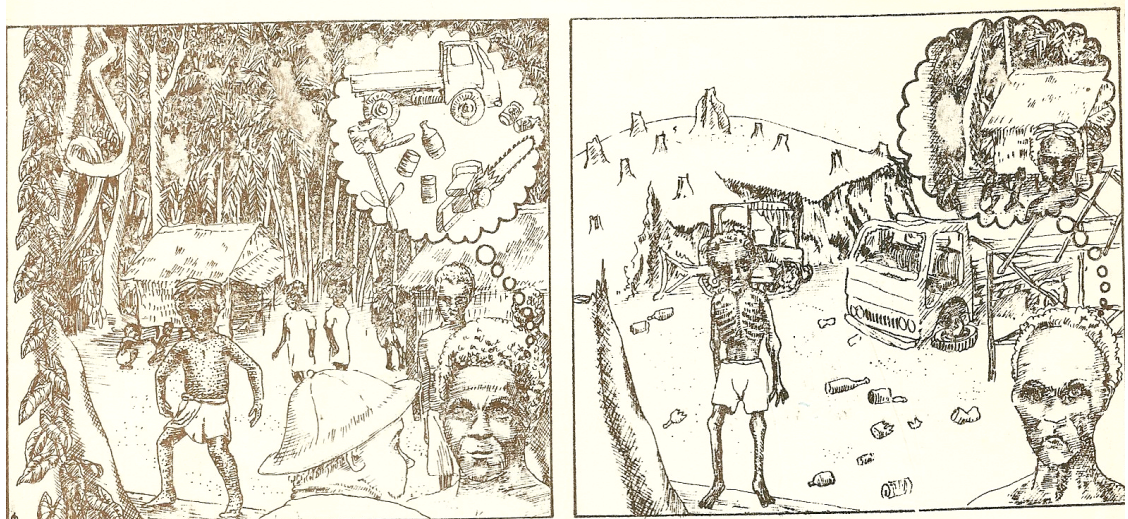
The “actor-oriented” and the “structure-oriented” perspectives on society are complementary. According to the action-oriented perspective, “societies are the sum total of the actors participating in them” (Galtung 1980:62). However, in freely pursuing their goals, actors will inevitably come into conflict. The structure-oriented perspective sees society in terms of the “structures of interaction between actors” (Galtung 1980:62) that regulate conflict and its resolution. The structure view reconstitutes the implicit autonomy of the actor view. Thus, while a free-market orientation can be meaningful from an actor perspective, in terms of the “being-power” of free will and autonomous choice and the “having-power” of possession of resources, it is blind to the “position-power” of structural relationships between actors (Galtung 1980:63). In international relations, the degree of autonomy of actors is regulated by the pattern that governs those relations, characterised by Galtung as having the structure of a centre and a periphery. Centre-periphery formation is a consequence of a Western orientation that sees the West as the centre of the world, possessing a universally valid value set that is not only its right, but its duty to distribute all over the world. Changing this structure from the periphery relies on establishing relations that are autonomous, contradicting the exploitation and penetration by the West. This can be achieved by building a pattern of participation, contradicting the fragmentation and marginalisation inherent in being peripheral. It is the struggle to create these contradictions that Galtung defines as “self-reliance” (Galtung 1980a). This necessary structural contradiction accounts for the practical incompatibility between modernisation and self-reliant definitions of development.

The Development Wheel incorporates Galtung’s three types of power (being, having, and position) into a single, holistic analytical tool, expressing these in terms of the interrelated perspectives of personal, material and social “wellbeing”. Galtung’s parameters of security, identity, equality, autonomy, solidarity, self-reliance and participation are all incorporated as spokes of the Wheel. Roughan and his Are’Are collaborators worked for two months to refine and define all of the 18 spokes of the Wheel. Roughan’s collaborators were particularly influential in defining the material aspects of wellbeing to include land ownership, land use, transport, shelter, nutrition, health, and so on (Roughan 1986:137). The figure also incorporates the two poles of the person-in-society and the society-of-persons into a singular circular representation.

The SIDT Development Course Notes incorporate another concept directly from Galtung’s work: that of “social cosmology” (Roughan 1984). Galtung uses this

concept to describe the effect of socialisation on needs-definition. His aim is to understand “Westernization”, a “social code” that shapes the world in its own direction, validating some approaches and rejecting others as incompatible. He sees this as necessary to make us aware of the “Western imprint” that tends to slant a general approach to basic human needs in specific directions that are compatible with the Western code. The “code” is expressed in terms of some overall assumptions about how the world in general, and human relations in particular, are organised, and how they evolve and are maintained over time. These assumptions fall into two groups: “social cosmology” and “social structure” (Galtung 1976a). It was the later mobile team members in North Malaita that created the pictorial representation of Galtung’s social cosmology, using it as a tool to demonstrate the penetration of Western social codes into traditional-life worlds, clarifying the way in which two potentially incompatible systems were present as influences in the life of the village community. The Past/Now/Future exercise draws attention to development as a process with consequences for all of village life, as opposed to being defined as something that happened *to* villages as a consequence of any particular project. This was captured graphically in SIDT’s flyer about the impact of industrial-scale logging shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. SIDT drew attention to the consequences of development for village life.**



On the other hand, the Village Quality of Life Index attempts to give this background in development theory practical significance for the village community. It focuses attention on “the ways and means to begin development action in one’s own village” (Roughan 1986:147). The Index assesses factors such as a clean, accessible water supply; dry, open village surroundings; adequate shelter, cooking facilities and

material goods; and village organisational efforts. It assumes that there is a close connection between these elements and overall quality of life. The items on the VQLI inventory were selected “though hours of discussion” (Roughan 1986:150), emerging from the life experiences of Roughan’s collaborators. The intention of the VQLI was to demonstrate that many development goals were within the power of the village community to achieve independently, establishing a practical basis for self-reliance, and also as a response to the often-asked question about “what a village should do to begin development” (Roughan 1986:147).

As well as supporting the overall approach to understanding village development, the concept of self-reliance contributed to the praxis of SIDT’s stand on industrial-scale development, and conservation of the environment as a development goal. Village communities in the Solomon Islands are heavily reliant on forest resources. Loya cane, sago palm leaf and timber for housing construction, various plants and insects, firewood, unpolluted water supplies, medicines and many other items are harvested directly from the forest environment. While self-reliance may not necessarily imply self-sufficiency, it is true that the ability to independently meet some basic needs serves the goal of autonomy. By removing these resources and contributing to increased erosion and stream-bank damage, industrial-scale logging undermines this goal. Equally, it contributes to imposition of a different economy, based on cash – cash needed to substitute for the lost resources, but rarely used in this way. Similarly, wholesale removal of small baitfish leads to declining stocks of larger fish important to the diet and trade capacity of coastal communities (Barcham 1987).

The purpose of the tools was to facilitate the kind of “conscious effort” and public discussion needed for “reflection, analysis and understanding” of development issues (Roughan 1982). SIDT’s catalytic intervention has the goal of generating participation in the village development process. Being aware that participation can mean anything from stoic attendance at meetings, to contributing project labour, to engaging in public debate, it is important to address the fundamental issue of the “what”, “who” and “how” of participation (Cohen & Uphoff 1980:214; Roughan 1986:19).

### *1.2.3 Participation as Dialogue*

To be seen to be real, participation must have an effect on the development process. That is, it is not just the contribution of labour to, for example, a government water supply project, but needs to be the result of people themselves identifying their needs

and the resources to address those needs, and agreeing on how to equitably distribute the results.

“Dialogue” defines the form of participation by village communities in the SIDT workshop (Roughan 1986:11). Dialogue is defined as an open communication process that is dialectical – that is, the process changes all participants. Freire states it thus:

Human existence cannot be silent nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world. To exist humanly is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection [...] Founding itself upon love, humility and faith in humanity, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of mutual trust (Freire 1996:69).

Participation as dialogue is a process that promotes change, leading to new balances between researcher and researched, rich and poor, and deeper insight into how underdevelopment and overdevelopment are linked together (Galtung 1976a:3). Dialogue explores at a “deeper level and with more symmetry” how “researcher and researched or citizen and decision makers/planners” look at goals, processes and indicators in development (Galtung 1978). Galtung identified the need to build into research methods the “conceptions people themselves have of their needs, of the goals of development, of processes leading to development, and how people know they are on the right track” (Galtung 1976:3). This research intervention requires the process of dialogue, and the creation of networks of individuals and groups able to contribute to their own understanding as well as the understanding of others.

For Roughan, dialogue is the means for the development facilitator to be “in the business of inventing ways for people to lift themselves from passivity into actively taking hold of their history and shaping it” (Roughan 1986:12). Further, development based on dialogue shifts from being a speculative and deductive exercise to one rooted in the experience of people. In this way, “the dialogical method protects the development facilitator from the temptation to dominate because no one party controls the agenda” (Roughan 1986:12).

If participation is not just about attending meetings, or contributing local resources to a project developed elsewhere, then participation necessarily relies on local organisational efforts to give it expression. This is because public discourse on the

issues affecting the community can only lead to action if organisation exists to bring decisions into practice. Studies from rural Asia (Uphoff & Esman 1974; Freidmann 1978), Latin America (Meehan 1978) and Africa (Ingle 1977) underlined the importance of people's organisational effort. Initiative is stimulated by the process of participation, and this needs to be harnessed in "disciplined problem solving institutions" (Owens & Shaw 1976:23) able to make linkages horizontally with similar organisations, and vertically between local organisations and structures at the centre of government. Participation through locally organised and controlled activity builds not only local cohesiveness and abilities to problem-solve, but also gives expression to local aspirations in the political sphere. This, says Roughan, is the beginning of development that has been achieved through the process of personal transformation.

It is the nature of dialogue that it is also a praxis. As Freire tells us, "word=work=praxis" (Freire 1996:67). The use of the paraprofessional strategy takes SIDT to the village community, making the statement that reaching out to the village person is SIDT's priority. Employing a negotiated process of village entry, using local transport, residing temporarily in the community and relying on local hospitality all reinforce the message that the paraprofessionals are people of the community, alert to local sensibilities and paying respect to local knowledge. In the context of this praxis, as well as methods, Galtung and Roughan draw attention to the importance of the "attitudes" of development agents.

#### *1.2.4 Attitudes*

For Galtung, the necessity of particular attitudes on the part of the development agent arises from the "psycho-political" nature of self-reliance (Galtung 1976a:208). Self-reliance begins with the concept of penetration of the periphery by the centre, called in Latin America "dependence" (UNEP/UNCTAD 1974:898). To contradict the normative influence of the centre requires self-confidence and self-respect, "a faith in own values and own culture and civilisation; the traditional one *and* the ability to create new culture", resistance to the formation of "tastes" that can only be satisfied with goods from the centre and "fearlessness as an attitude and practice of invulnerability" (Galtung 1976a:208). Roughan takes this further, emphasising the "interior focus" of development as the transformation of consciousness. For Roughan, this focus necessitates four attitudinal orientations:

- political participation that includes local organisational efforts that "concretise the concept of political participation";

- awareness that basic human needs, defined as “physical, psychological, spiritual and transcendent”, are met as both the product and the process of developing community cohesiveness and unity;
- comprehension that the structural view of society is necessary to understand the inequalities of wealth, justice and autonomy that occur within a system, and linked to this, awareness of dependency as a *structural* phenomenon;
- a positive attitude to women to negate the male-dominated structure of society (Roughan 1986:5–10).

Further, the praxis of dialogue required the paraprofessionals to practise what they preached. No paraprofessional could credibly discuss the VQLI if his or her own community was rundown and fractious. The actions of the paraprofessionals in practising “self-reliance”, “self-respect”, “participation” and “equity” within the team environment were critical in taking the Development Wheel from being a dead instrument to something village people could grasp and constructively employ.

#### *1.2.5 Challenges*

From the author’s experience, if a group scored low on material aspects of the Village Quality of Life Index – for instance by lacking tools or a medical box – an immediate expectation was created that SIDT would supply these as part of its development program. Countering these expectations was made difficult by SIDT’s ambivalence about the role of specific projects in its work. Many mobile team members continued to harbour and share the belief that SIDT’s role as a development institution must ultimately involve “cargo” of some description. One particularly torrid experience for the author involved a community that had, in its view, achieved high scores on every spoke of the Development Wheel. Having attained what they regarded as SIDT’s standard for village life, the community now expected that access to international aid dollars would follow. Rather than using the Wheel figure for its intended purpose of generating dialogue, the Mobile Team Members had instead conveyed the message that achieving the goal of development promoted by SIDT – a beautiful, clean, healthy village with a high quality of life that had been achieved by the community’s independent efforts – would trigger a flow of goods. It appeared that the question of what happens next, after the process of communicating with villagers about the deeper implication of development was begun, remained unresolved for the mobile team members, and for the organisation. “Awareness” had not changed the nature of the development process, and for many was seen as just the first step before latching onto

the real “meat and potatoes” of getting aid dollars to do a project. Chesher’s 1994 report suggests that even 10 years on from these events, uncertainty about SIDT’s processes still existed among SIDT staff. Adult education and “an impressive exchange of information” had not produced behavioural change. The response had not reconsidered SIDT’s training or delivery, but assumed that the hard currency of chainsaws and portable sawmills must be the solution.<sup>24</sup>

This suggests two major weaknesses in SIDT’s approach. First, the rudimentary training given to the later groups of paraprofessionals failed to adequately define dialogue in practice. So-called “preaching” the SIDT message was substituted for the much harder task of engaging the community in dialogue, using the tools as support for this process. Secondly, there was a lack of adequate screening of paraprofessionals for those attitudes considered so important for the agent of “transformational development” as envisaged by both Roughan and Galtung. SIDT sought to secure its mandate as a national organisation through the appointment of a board of trustees representing a range of existing national organisations. As well as the enormous administrative challenge of operating a national organisation with a large staff of paraprofessionals, this approach contradicted the praxis of dialogue. If the form of participation is dialogue, then the mandate of an organisation is necessarily based on a continuing participatory relationship between the community and the organisation, at least until such time as the community opts out of the relationship. By adopting what might be called a “scattergun” strategy that aimed to build a “critical mass” of aware communities, SIDT undermined its own approach. The evidence of SIDT’s participation in a wide range of information-based activities, from vitamin A deficiency to fruit fly eradication, suggests that the role of the paraprofessionals became restricted to the older definition of acting as an “intermediary between local publics and a service industry”, producing an “impressive exchange of information” but less in the way of actual behavioural change. Information exchange as the default role of the paraprofessionals did not live up to that envisaged for them as being agents of critical consciousness and social change.

### *1.3 Summary*

SIDT’s Statement of Resolve, like Galtung’s Goals, Processes and Indicators of Development project description, is a conceptually complex and ambitious statement

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<sup>24</sup> Returning to the Solomon Islands to celebrate 30 years of SIDT, the present study noted that SIDT has returned to its “practical roots by focussing on building capacity of Solomon Island villagers” (Anniversary Program, 2012).

of intent. Galtung and SIDT place the person-in-society and the society-of-persons as the dual foci of development efforts. Those efforts must involve the people in dialogue, “questioning the conventional development wisdom”, contributing to “new theories and practices of development” and creating “alternative development visions” (Galtung 1978; Roughan 1982).

As the title of this chapter suggests, this alternative vision provides a foundation for important themes that will be explored and developed further in the coming chapters. Employing the exemplar of SIDT’s praxis, four related theoretical perspectives emerge:

1. A person-centred “basic human need” analysis of development: this person-centred approach indicates that a psychosocial interpretation, involving both material and non-material aspects, is called for in understanding change and development.
2. Use of an actor-structure analysis to define the place of the person as a social actor interacting with disparate structures: seeing that Galtung’s conception of being/having/position power can be interpreted in terms of personal/material/social wellbeing indicates the possibility of a relationship between power, control and wellbeing.
3. Use of a centre-periphery analysis to define self-reliance: this perspective shows the significance of local organisational effort, and the ability to use local resources to problem-solve, in asserting meaningful control as a contradiction to the one-way street of modernisation.
4. Freirian dialogue as the process of participation: conscious effort, reflection and analysis is the style of intervention for the development agent. It indicates that development which seeks to address power disparities requires an intervention of a particular kind, likely to involve at least an entry process, group involvement and the use of collaboratively developed tools.

SIDT’s praxis provided a substantial foundation in community development for other organisations in the Pacific. Its overall consistency of approach and its longevity are impressive. How other organisations developed this practice, learning from the challenges faced by SIDT, is the subject of the next case study, the Bismarck Ramu Group.

## Chapter 2

### Bismarck Ramu Group – Independence Day

“Be the change you wish to see.”

Arun Gandhi, quoting his grandfather, the Mahatma, in “An Interview with Arun Gandhi”, B’Han, C. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*

#### 2.1 Part I: Profile

##### 2.1.1 Introduction

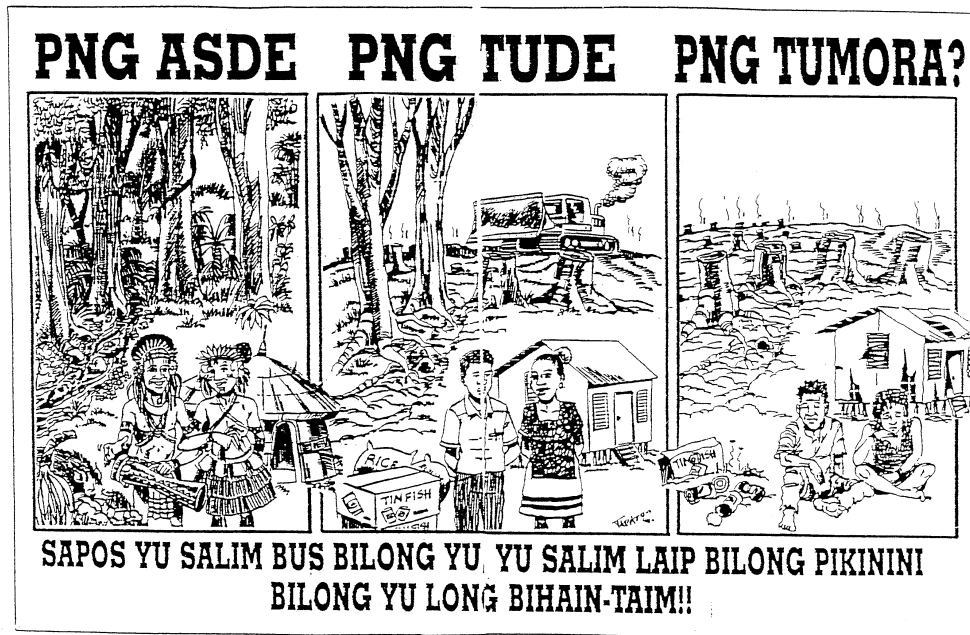
The Bismarck Ramu Group (BRG) was incorporated as a not-for-profit company under the Papua New Guinea Companies Act in 2000. While it has conducted activities in other parts of Papua New Guinea, and many of its activities have had national significance, its most notable work is focused primarily in Madang Province. The link between the BRG and the Solomon Islands Development Trust is found in the person of Barry Lalley, a Peace Corps volunteer with SIDT in Guadalcanal Province from 1985 to 1987. With a background as a political and community organizer<sup>25</sup> in the United States, Lalley injected his experience into his work with SIDT, and his later work in Papua New Guinea. The influence of his earlier SIDT work is evident in a number of graphics used by the Bismarck Ramu Group, including PNG Asde/PNG Tude/PNG Tumora (Figure 5), the Question Man (Appendix 5), which incorporates Galtung’s social cosmology and Ha-Ha, Richer (Appendix 6), an image that emerged from the SIDT training described below. For this reason, the story of BRG returns first to SIDT and the Solomon Islands.

During his time with SIDT, Lalley wrote, “SIDT’s belief in village men and women as a resource rather than a problem must be incorporated into the fabric of the organization itself.” Lalley saw the need for SIDT to model its objectives in everything it did. If participation by village people in their own development was the objective, then training and the organization of SIDT must be conducted on the same basis: “an organization which understands the importance of structures must create structures internally which strengthen what Mobile Team Members have learned” (Lalley 1987).

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<sup>25</sup> Reflecting its North American origin, this term will be spelt with a “z” when used to denote this specific set of practices, to be discussed below.

Figure 5. BRG's version of SIDT's Past/Now/Future exercise with a logging theme shows the continuity between the two organisations.



In an experiment aimed at achieving the kind of internal structures he envisaged, Lalley, along with Melissa Stratton, another Peace Corps volunteer, and the North Guadalcanal SIDT field officer Phillip Rongatha, designed and ran a training workshop for new SIDT mobile team members (MTM). Held at Dadave on Guadalcanal in 1987, the workshop sought to uncompromisingly value participation, and a Melanesian approach to knowledge production and organisation. For the Dadave workshop, the knowledge and experience of the participants would form the basis of the three-week residential workshop. For these trainees, the Melanesian practice of communication through “storying”,<sup>26</sup> or getting one’s point across through parable or allegory, “was exactly what we wanted from the trainees [...]. By talking about their lives, their villages, the changes and problems they experience, a process can begin whereby they start to take control of their lives” (Lalley 1987). The participants themselves generated the workshop content that was then the subject of discussion and analysis. Extensive use was made of role-plays, team- and trust-building exercises, and later, graphics to assist with the introduction of the tools. One participant proposed the following image: a ‘rich white person goes back to his country with stacks of money to live the good life, while the local landowner lives poorly having sold his land to the

<sup>26</sup> Solomon Islands Pijin.

white man' (Appendix 6).<sup>27</sup> Lalley stressed the potential for drama to make workshops 'fun, creative and enjoyable' as well as informative.

Like Roughan's approach to working with his original collaborators, at the Dadave workshop substantial time each day was spent on reviewing the previous day's discussion, after participants had had the opportunity for out-of-session reflection and discussion. All of this was before any mention of SIDT, use of the tools, and SIDT's program. The process of sharing and analysing personal experience became the mechanism for building group solidarity. Recognising that the MTMs were the essential ingredient to SIDT's success as a change agent, they needed "a training program that gives the MTMs the confidence and support they need to creatively deal with their rapidly changing world" (Lalley 1987).

Another important feature of the Dadave training was the rigour with which participants were assessed for acceptance as SIDT Mobile Team Members. The field officer and volunteers assessed each member on their understanding of the work, and those not meeting the grade were asked to retrain. All trainees had to complete the entire three-week course, including conducting nine practice village development workshops in the surrounding communities as part of a team. Of eight trainees, three successfully completed the full program. Two left early for family reasons, one completed five of the nine practice workshops and was permitted to gain more experience touring with a team before being reassessed, two did not satisfactorily complete the course and chose not to retrain, and one was asked to retrain, and toured as a trainee in the mean time.

The Dadave training serves as the introduction to the Bismarck Ramu Group. BRG represents the evolution of the SIDT approach as much as it was also a new beginning.

### *2.1.2 The Bismarck Ramu Integrated Conservation and Development Program*

The Bismarck Ramu Group began as a conservation project. In 1996 the Group was formed as part of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) funded Bismarck-Ramu Integrated Conservation and Development (ICAD) program. The Bismarck-Ramu ICAD was one of several experimental integrated conservation projects run as part of the Biodiversity and Conservation Resource Management Programme (BCRMP), jointly initiated by the Papua New Guinea office of UNDP and

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<sup>27</sup> The image at the appendix is from the BRG "Guide For CDT Members in the Bismarck-Ramu ICAD". Several of the images contained in this guide have their origin in SIDT (Don't Complain, Organize!; Ha, Ha, Richer; Social Cosmology; Asde/Tude/Tumora).

the PNG Department of Environment and Conservation. ICAD and the Biodiversity and Resource Management Programme have been the subject of extensive reporting and scholarly discussion (Grant 1996; Ellis 1997; McCallum & Sekhran 1997; Saulei & Ellis 1997; Ellis 1999; Filer 2000; Telesetsky 2000; van Helden 2001; Foale 2002; Filer 2005; Mowbray & Duguman 2009). This literature relates primarily to the implementation of tropical forest conservation policy in PNG. In terms of the development of BRG as an organisation with an effective methodology, two reports are of particular relevance, *Race for the Rainforest* (McCallum & Sekhran 1997) and *Race for the Rainforest II* (Ellis 1997). The first examines the Lak ICAD project in New Ireland, which was terminated in 1996 without the objective of a conservation area being achieved. The “Lessons from Lak” (McCallum & Sekhran 1997) informed the second project in the UNDP Bismarck-Ramu Area of Interest<sup>28</sup> in Madang Province, which is discussed in the second volume (Ellis 1997).

Analysis of the Lak experience led to conclusions remarkably similar to those proposed by Roughan 15 years earlier. The “Lessons from Lak” showed that for the ICAD process to be successful, “dependency attitudes need[ed] to be confronted and self help ones encouraged” (McCallum & Sekhran 1997:54). It was realised that the behaviour of field staff had a bearing on the ability of any development intervention to challenge community attitudes. Field staff had to “set an example” by relying on local resources and avoiding displays of wealth (e.g. project equipment and transport, consumption of imported food) that created expectations of a quick return for the community in exchange for cooperation. The use of material incentives to drive the ICAD process was shown to preclude the community’s search for its own development solutions. Like the SIDT/RWSS project, it was found that modernisation through importing technology, and self-help through creative problem-solving, were mutually exclusive processes. To achieve the aim of self-reliant communities, ICAD projects needed to provide “catalytic support” for development and had to “invest heavily in education to transform communities’ ideas about development” (McCallum & Sekhran 1997:56). The Lak ICAD showed that:

communities must come to reassess the meaning of development, the long-term consequences of their present land use actions, and the conservation value of their forests. They must rethink the process by which they seek development (McCallum & Sekhran 1997:60).

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<sup>28</sup> Area of Interest, or Aoi, is a UNDP label used to identify biodiversity “hot spots”.

The Bismarck-Ramu Group began to coalesce around the opportunity to implement this different approach to community engagement with conservation and development. The new Bismarck-Ramu ICAD would assess “social feasibility” based on “community motivation” using “Community Development Teams” with skills in “listening” and tools including “community mapping, timelines and conservation matrices” (Irwin 1997). John Chitoo, formerly a Forest Officer with the PNG National Forest Authority, and an observer of the Lak experience, was employed in January 1996 as area manager for the Bismarck-Ramu ICAD. He remains in 2012 as leader of the coordinating team for BRG. Lalley joined Chitoo on the Bismarck-Ramu ICAD project, leaving his position as Community Development Director for the North Simbu Rural Development Project, a model that had attracted the attention of the BCRMP team for its use of Participatory Rural Appraisal, community resource mapping and social analysis. Lalley’s journey had taken him back to the United States, and then subsequently to PNG through his involvement with the PNG Integral Human Development Trust, formed in 1990. One of the objectives of the Trust was the training of Melanesian Literacy Trainers on a voluntary paraprofessional model. PNG Trust worked with other indigenous NGOs in Melanesia, including the Solomon Islands Development Trust, the Vanuatu Komuniti Development Trust and the Literacy Association of Solomon Islands (PNG 2000).

Ultimately, the Bismarck-Ramu ICAD project “led to the creation of a new indigenous NGO known as the Bismarck Ramu Group” (Filer 2005:7), which is the next part of the story.

### *2.1.3 The Bismarck Ramu Group*

The PNG Biodiversity and Conservation Resource Management Programme (BCRMP) supported the Bismarck-Ramu Integrated Conservation and Development (ICAD) program with funding from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Global Environment Facility until 1999. At that time, UNDP chose to change strategy and direct funds from the Global Environment Facility through large international NGOs working in cooperation with local partners. While some commentators have suggested that BCRMP’s failure to secure a further round of funding was due to ICAD programs becoming unfashionable (Filer 2005), the fact that the UNDP Global Environment Facility continued to fund community-based conservation suggests that the problem may have lain with the BCRMP and the PNG Department of Environment and Conservation rather than with the principles of

community engagement. One of the last acts of the BCRMP was to initiate a process that led the Global Environment Facility to fund a community-based marine conservation project in Milne Bay province. A joint UNDP/Conservation International project, the Bismarck Ramu Group (BRG) had substantial involvement in the training of “Village Engagement Trainers” for that project from 2000. The Milne Bay marine conservation project, funded by UNDP, and run by Conservation International rather than the PNG Government, drew heavily on BRG’s expertise (Pontio 2005).

Whilst the ICAD component of the BCRMP had proposed to “develop innovative methodologies for conservation of biodiversity” (Ellis 1997:19), BRG was pressing the limits of the institutional boundaries of the ICAD program. From the BRG perspective, biodiversity conservation could not happen without local self-determination. This was not just a matter of principle; the Lak project showed that there were clear strategic and empirically demonstrated reasons why local motivation and conviction were essential to any successful intervention. In the words of the draft framework plan for the Bismarck-Ramu ICAD,<sup>29</sup> “if conservation and sustainable resource use truly doesn’t fit into the communities’ needs and beliefs then the ICAD project shouldn’t be there anyway” (Ellis 1997:21).

BRG refused to go into the Ramu Area of Interest talking about conservation. As Lalley notes, the *PNG Post-Courier* newspaper reported that 35 per cent of women die in childbirth in Ramu. “Are people thinking about conservation at this stage?” he asks (Lalley 1998). With the change to supporting conservation through large international NGOs, BRG and UNDP parted ways in 1999. In his short but useful history of BRG, Anderson describes what happened:

The split from the UNDP meant giving up large sums of money. The UNDP wanted the emerging BRG to work with a large international conservation group, The Nature Conservancy (TNC). However TNC maintained an approach focused on biological conservation, which was no longer acceptable to the community oriented BRG. John Chittoa says the UNDP tried to push the two groups together, and millions of Kina were on offer:

“But we decided not to take it and it was really kind of a unique thing, you know, no one really wants to disregard money from donors ... [but]

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<sup>29</sup> Ellis notes that this document, the Bismarck-Ramu Integrated Conservation and Development Framework Plan 1995–1999 was only ever circulated in draft form, and never published.

we did not agree with the project that was proposed ... we have different agendas.” (Anderson 2004)

The period of the UNDP-funded Bismarck-Ramu ICAD is referred to by BRG as the “colonial days” (BRG 2004). In 2000, BRG became an independent entity. Independence day was a major shift for BRG. The BCRMP required a focus on high-conservation-value, low-threat areas. After independence, BRG moved to areas under immediate threat of industrial-scale development. This was accompanied by putting BRG’s agenda more visibly in the media through joint letters and advertising. Conservation as a Western construct was replaced with the issue that had been there since the start of the ICAD: land. BRG’s banner, *Graun im Laip* (Land is Life), puts the Indigenous perspective front and centre. As Chitoo says, “people in Papua New Guinea are very much connected to their land – it’s their guarantee of survival” (Anderson 2004).

BRG’s insistence on defining and implementing its own agenda, and its daring ability to say “no”, attracted the sympathy and support of like-minded donor agencies, including the Netherlands-based Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation (ICCO), which was one of SIDT’s early funders, and the German Lutheran Bread for the World. BRG’s emphasis on trust and building relationships extends to its funders. ICCO and Bread for the World developed a trust relationship with BRG that continues to give the group the opportunity to follow its own path. Part of that trust is based on BRG’s commitment to personal trustworthiness and honesty. Financial accountability is of a high standard (both in the office and on patrol, women exclusively handle the money), and reporting and other funder-accountability requirements are highly satisfactory (Barcham 2008).

BRG began as a group of eight individuals, growing during the ICAD phase to five Community Development Teams supported by three clerical staff and a “church liaison officer” (Ellis 1997). In 2002, numbers grew to eight full-time staff and 16 part-time community organizers (external training and campaigning activities had been added to the community organizing). By 2008 there were between 30 and 35 members, with staff distributed between the Campaign Program, Training Program, Community Facilitation Program, the Information, Communication, Education Program, and administration and support staff. At the time of writing, in 2011 there were a total of 43 people involved with the group. Feeling that the group was becoming too large, 2012 has seen a reduction in numbers to 31.

#### 2.1.4 *Aims and Objectives*

BRG has stated its aims in slightly different ways at different times. In 2003, its approach is distilled as:

- Our Principles

People centred, working in partnership, accountable for quality results, dedicated to financial integrity, inspired and innovative.

- Our Values

Personal honesty, integrity, commitment; working together in teams – with openness and trust; empowering others and respecting differences; encouraging risk-taking and responsibility; enjoying our work and our families (Guman 2003).

In 2005, BRG's "vision" is stated thus:

BRG's purpose is to fight against the exploitation of people, land and resources in Papua New Guinea. We educate, inform and empower people so they can organise, make informed decisions, speak out freely and act to protect and keep control over their land, resources and livelihoods (BRG 2005).

Others have summed up BRG's early approach to community development in the ICAD project up as:

firstly, developing Indigenous partnerships with villager-landowners; secondly, assisting villager-landowners to develop self-reliant strategies based on customary land tenure; and, finally, assisting villager-landowners in community planning, including resource management and conservation options (Anderson 2004).

In a paper delivered by Conservation International to a 2005 conference on community engagement, BRG is described as a

local environment awareness organisation that works to assist communities on issues of land rights, literacy, conservation and culture [...] The experience from BRG and the Lak ICDP projects provided excellent guidance in devising a system that works with communities concerned about managing their natural resources, and has achieved exceptional on-ground support from communities. The BRG has been

highly successful in mobilizing communities at the grassroots level. Most importantly, their work has not only been effective, but also sustainable in the long term (Pontio 2005).

Unlike SIDT, BRG did not set out to create a new development institution. Even in the choice of name there is vagueness about what this “group” is all about. In the context of other PNG non-government organisations and the Lak experience, BRG sought to deliberately distinguish itself as *not* being a development organisation. An early BRG document titled “BRG Guidelines” sets the following parameters:

- BRG must remain small and focussed in its work of promoting self-reliance and working together. It does not seek to grow much beyond its present size. It seeks to minimize bureaucracy, channelling most of the funds and other resources it receives to the field operations rather than in administration;
- BRG does not seek to build an institution;
- BRG must remain focused on working with and assisting communities to organize themselves. BRG will restrict itself to working with communities in Madang Province;
- BRG must not overextend its work itself in its work. It must know its limits, be comfortable with them and say NO when it has to be said;
- BRG is not a training organization. While BRG members conduct training throughout PNG, they are done on an individual basis. Organizations, groups and individuals who are involved in working with communities are welcome to come and observe and learn how BRG operates;
- BRG will network with other people and organizations, however the networking must come about naturally; not just for the sake of networking nor dictated by donor agencies;
- BRG does not seek to promote itself via media stories, brochures, pamphlets etc. BRG seeks to continue its work in a low profile manner. Pamphlets will be created and given to donors;
- BRG will continue to invest much time and resources on personal and professional development of BRG personnel. BRG members are expected

to maintain a high standard of professional performance and personal behaviour.

Independence, flexibility and a low-key approach to supporting communities thus characterise BRG's mission. A list of "aims and objectives" contained in the guidelines bears comparison with the SIDT paraprofessional approach:

- Assist communities to organize themselves;
- Rid people of cargo thinking and assist them in being self-reliant;
- Strengthen culture;
- Help people recognize the strength and value of women;
- Share thoughts, discuss and assist people in their thinking about development and development issues;
- Help people recognize two systems that are in place (Western and traditional) and these systems are not often compatible [*sic*];
- Strengthen people's thinking about looking after their environment;
- Explain the negative impacts of large-scale development and tricks used by companies;
- Work closely with schools and churches to strengthen their thinking about looking after the environment;
- Establish a core group of community organisers. (BRG 2004)

It is notable that any reference to "the project" is absent from these statements. The SIDT view that projects do not of themselves make development has been taken to its logical conclusion by deliberately excluding project-related activities as in any way being part of the purpose of BRG. Instead, the focus is on the role of the paraprofessional and the quality of the relationship with communities. The other salient feature is that objectives are not static. BRG's aims are characterised by being means rather than ends, while providing detail about working principles.

### 2.1.5 *Strategies*

Looking over its aims, it could be said that BRG's overall intention is to develop strategies for whatever its objective happens to be at the time. In this way, failure is also a learning experience that provides the opportunity for further reflection and modification of its strategic approach. Reflecting on change in BRG, Chitoo says that

there were “some things that worked well while others that did not work out. There were lots of discussion[s] as to what were relevant and what weren’t” (Parsons et.al. 2005). The question, “What do we do now?” is a persistent driver of BRG’s strategic direction. The question is captured graphically in one of the images used in training (Figure 6). Caspar Poin, chairman of the BRG Board of Directors says:

I see there have been plenty of changes in BRG since we left UNDP in 1999. The first thing I want to say about all these changes is that all of them belong to everyone in the organisation. The changes, as with BRG’s development has been natural. They are organic changes. We haven’t tried to plan too far ahead in the future to identify challenges and plan some strategy of meeting them. We have waited for the challenges to meet us, and then we get together as a group and decided on how to respond (Anderson 2004).

That response has been based on three primary strategies. First are the paraprofessionals. Originally called “Community Development Teams”, the teams of paraprofessionals are now known as “Community Organizers” – yet another way in which BRG declares that it is not on a development mission. Teams of trained



**Figure 6. The question “Now - what do we do?” has been a persistent driver of BRG’s strategic direction.**

paraprofessionals, including both men and women, conduct extended tours known as “patrols”. “Patrol” is used by BRG to describe their strategy of extended field contact visits. Like SIDT, the implementation model consists of training paraprofessionals to work as mobile facilitators. The SIDT model of committed, low-key, Indigenous teams, paid a nominal stipend and using local transport and facilities, became the model for BRG.

The touring program was intensive rather than extensive, with regular visits to selected communities. BRG has given particular attention to the criteria it uses for selecting the communities with which it works. As post-colonial BRG shifted to focus on

communities where the threat to the local environment from industrial-scale development was high, they sought out communities that were motivated to collaborate in opposing invasion of landowner rights. Assisting a particular motivated community to get a result was given priority over trying to build critical mass through large numbers of contacts. Successful individual community change was the goal, and this success was itself used as the means to attract new communities and build momentum for wider change, via the successful community publicly promoting its activities.

Secondly, there is “organizing”. This approach is uniquely North American in its origins, and draws on a tradition of social intervention to support marginalised groups and minorities.<sup>30</sup> In Papua New Guinea, the best way to explain what this means is by example. In the following example it is interesting to make a comparison between SIDT’s “eco-forestry project” and BRG’s response to the same issue of industrial-scale logging.

During the period of the ICAD, BRG made contact with clans of the Wanang area. When a leader from that area, Filip Damen, declared his interest in stopping industrial-scale logging on his and adjacent clan lands, BRG spent two years supporting the group to resolve the internal barriers to the clans working together, and facilitating the process to define and codify the clans’ shared resource mapping knowledge. BRG always relied on the support of Wangan landowners to continue to negotiate and press in the absence of BRG team members, between visits. In accord with BRG policy, there were no material incentives, and no permanent presence was established in the area. Access to the area required transit through the lands of clans hostile to Filip and the 11 clans involved in trying to reach agreement. On its regular visits, BRG provided an interpretive bridge to the PNG legal system that allowed the clans to find a legal mechanism to control and conserve their land that would be binding on all parties, landowners and loggers alike. Ultimately, the 11 clans contracted to a deed that expressed their ownership and aspirations for land in a legally enforceable and innovative way. The BRG process assisted the clans to make aggressive use of good information and legal support to realise an internally negotiated settlement that ultimately conserved 18,000 hectares and defined land use in other areas of their joint estate.

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<sup>30</sup> This is discussed in more detail in the theoretical analysis of BRG.

The deeded conservation area now hosts a 700,000 kina project for the Centre for Tropical Forest Science, to conduct a baseline study using a series of small-scale “carbon monitoring stations” to “enable landscape and regional monitoring of forest carbon stocks” (Newstext 2008). More recently, Filip Damen flew to San Francisco to receive a US\$10,000 award for being an Indigenous islander with “exceptional achievement in preserving the environment and culture of any of the world’s 100,000 islands”. Mr Damen was awarded “for leading efforts by a group of 11 Wanang villages to sign a conservation deed” (Newstext 2009).

There is no mention of BRG in these media references. It is, however, interesting to note that Mr Damen, who has never been a member of BRG, is referred to as “a customary landowner and community organizer” (Newstext 2009). While the future is always uncertain, Mr Damen and the clans involved were able to express their opposition to logging as their will, without any promise other than their contribution to maintaining control of their customary land ownership and culture.

A third strategy is known as “Training”.<sup>31</sup> Workshops run by BRG staff have embraced community development, organizing, leadership, health and hygiene, gender, literacy, traditional medicine and conservation. Furthermore, appropriate technologies for diverse local audiences, including the police force, and international audiences seeking to understand the BRG methodology, have been utilised. The 2002 Evaluation (Eagles & Jones 2002) of BRG drew attention to the fact that demand for BRG’s services was outstripping the company’s capacity to deliver – a trend that has continued to drive BRG’s growth (Anderson 2004; Parsons et.al. 2005; Barcham 2008).

In addition to training, in later years BRG created a number of separate but integrated functional divisions (Appendix 7 – BRG Lines of Communication). In addition to the community facilitation and training functions, there is now also a “Campaigns” function, which raises issues in the press and the wider community, makes videos for release on Youtube, creates and accesses blogs, and through the Community Organizers supports landowners to mount legal challenges. The “Information, Communication and Education (ICE)” function produces pamphlets, posters and other material for public consumption (Bosco et.al. 2007). Campaign activity has included seeking to improve wages and conditions at the RDTuna packing plant in Madang,

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<sup>31</sup> In PNG Pijin, “training” embraces a wide range of educational activity. The English meaning of highly structured, vocational-type training is not intended.

supporting the Kananam community in their opposition to the social and environmental impacts of the RDTuna wharf adjacent to that community (Kananam 2003), opposition to clearing for oil palm plantations in the Upper Ramu Valley and on the coast south of Madang (Parsons et.al. 2005; Sindana & Paol 2010), and supporting landowners to oppose land registration, logging (in particular the activities of Malaysian-owned Rimbunan Hijau (Sindana 2007)), sea-bed mining proposals, and the massive Ramu Nickel and Cobalt project being undertaken by a consortium led by Chinese Metallurgical Group Corporation, and including Australian-owned Highlands Pacific Ltd (Evara 2010). Information activities have included raising concern about the introduction of hybrid rice (Sukot 2008), and informing and advising interested communities about carbon credit trading and the UN program to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. BRG was approached by Macquarie Group for advice on implementation of carbon trading (Barcham 2008), providing the highest quality information exchange for communities.

#### *2.1.6 Tools and Methodologies*

A guide to the original methodology was compiled by the first BRG teams (Lalley 2002). The guide sets down in detail the process of generating participation with the aim of building self-reliance and community control. It also sets down the rationale for the process used. From the outset, the aim was to model the desired outcome. “Participation” is defined in the guide as the community being in control of the process used to build self-reliance. The focus is on helping communities organize for self-reliance. The conservation methodology associated with the ICAD project using matrices is dealt with as a separate section in the guide.

The BRG process begins with community entry, in which teams look for motivation and conviction. These are evident when communities begin to organize, showing confidence, a willingness to cooperate together for a common aim, and commitment (Grant 1996; Lalley 2002:12). Because BRG takes an intensive approach to working with communities, teams assess what the community has done between visits. As well as making it clear that the community leaders can ask BRG to leave at any time if they are unhappy with anything the team is saying or doing – or “you don’t believe you can trust us” (Lalley 2002:6) – BRG also reserves the right to move on from communities that are only active when the teams are present. As was the case with the Wanang clans, the community must demonstrate its willingness to organize by working on its community program in BRG’s absence.

In the BRG guide, the process of participation begins with listening. Teams tell the community that they would like to hold a community meeting at a future agreed date. The team stays in the community for a few days to help prepare for that meeting by listening to people's concerns. This first-entry visit is to begin the process of building trust. Teams listen for "community themes" – "those things which people have the strongest feelings about" (BRG 2002:47). This is done because "emotion is linked to motivation. Only on issues which they feel strongly will people be prepared to act" (Lalley 2002:47, emphasis in original).

The focus is on community assessment rather than problem seeking, and on solutions rather than needs. Every effort is made to discourage the expectation that BRG's function will be to materially assist the community to meet its needs; the teams make it clear that they are there to assist the community to plan and organize, and that they "are *not* a bank, or a funding agency or a church or a business" (Lalley 2002). Offering no material incentive, BRG seeks an outcome driven by conviction rather than by the expectation of real or imagined external incentives, and with it, sustainable outcomes. The insistence that there are no material incentives associated with collaboration with BRG is based on the evidence that "handouts don't build motivation" (Ellis 1997:19). BRG's literature is firm on this point: "rid people of cargo thinking and assist them in being self-reliant" (BRG 2002). Coupled with a focus on listening and self-reliance is a clear strategic logic based on the Lak experience: the ICAD was not in a position to outbid logging companies for landowner's consent to conservation based on provision of goods or services.

The original group of Community Development Teams (CDTs) developed a "Seven Step Process" from community entry to mobilisation and follow-up (Appendix 8). However, it was found that telling people there were seven steps to go through tended to raise expectations that there would be "cargo" at the end of step seven. Like the community referred to in Chapter 1, communities focused on getting through the steps rather than working on developing critical thinking, thus defeating the whole purpose of the program. The 2005 Evaluation (Parsons et.al. 2005) drew attention to the potential to broaden the community process by inclusion of a further step after step four, which it called community "analysis". The report expressed concern that the only outcome for which BRG had a fully developed process including planning matrices was conservation, and that communities should be able to exercise other options based on their own analysis.

With respect to this, it is important to emphasise that the steps were intended only to serve as a guide for the CDTs. Over the years BRG discussions have proposed seven steps, four steps and two steps, and some have suggested just one. The use of a “step process” is a way to codify and structure reflection, not a recipe to be slavishly followed. Listening to each other and to communities is seen as the first and essential skill of community organizers. The guide for CDTs opens with the exhortation to “Listen. The more you talk, the less effective you are. Stop the preaching!!!” (Lalley 2002:1).

BRG’s patrol schedule includes up to a week of briefing prior to field visits, and a week of debriefing subsequent to field visits. Briefing/debriefing includes all staff. Practising presentations using role-play, reflecting collectively on the information gathered on previous visits, and brainstorming possible scenarios and solutions is an essential part of these sessions. The progress and nature of the process is always up for grabs, and this constant reflection and flexibility of approach is characteristic of BRG. Essential to BRG’s approach is the way the organisation itself constantly models and practises the processes it seeks to implement in communities. Promoting critical thinking based on mutual trust and credibility defines all of BRG’s interactions. In addition to team building and other techniques used during the process, the significance of the process is also marked out by the amount of time team members spend together in formal and informal discussion. The BRG compound at Jais Aben, formerly the Christenson Research Institute, provides a comfortable residential environment for the team members to meet and live together. Building internal relationships, strengthening trust and encouraging a unified, non-hierarchical team approach is a major purpose of the briefing/debriefing process. Anderson notes that “the result is a group which does not ignore goals, but stresses process; and a group which actively organises exhaustive opportunities for collective participation in group plans and evaluation” (Anderson 2004).

The tools used by BRG, including the community mapping process and graphics such as Question Man, Social Cosmology Chart, Ha-Ha Richer and others are intended *only* as tools. Unlike SIDT’s Development Wheel and VQLI, they are instruments to be used for clarification if needed, and are neither part of a predetermined process to be rolled out at the appropriate step, nor the focus of the community visit. That said, there is one tool, introduced at the second step of BRG’s process, that has stood the test of time: the PNG History Timeline.

A large painting in the BRG meeting house portrays an imaginary view of the Kuk agricultural site. The Kuk World Heritage archaeological site in the Western Highlands of PNG conserves the evidence of the world's first domestic agriculture (UNESCO 2009). Dating from 10,000 years BP, this site is a key marker on the 50,000 year Timeline used by BRG (Grant 1996). The purpose of the timeline is to root communities in their traditional beliefs and customs and to demonstrate that self-reliant development is not new, representing continuity with the past. The timeline shows the relatively short period since the “discovery” of PNG by the Spanish and Portuguese in the 1500s – the time when people adopted the sweet potato as the main staple, largely replacing the traditional taro – and the 1800s that brought Christianity and an end to cannibalism. The timeline also marks the (relatively recent) birth of Christ. In an evidence-based way, the Timeline seeks to build community self-confidence, equating self-reliance with a traditional development model.

### *2.1.7 Governance*

As noted above, the BRG has a non-hierarchical, or ‘flat’, organisational structure. This is achieved because BRG prioritises people over structures. The recruitment process emphasises looking for the kind of people who will fit into the “BRG family” (Parsons et.al. 2005). The incentives to participate are not primarily financial reward or prestige. Trustworthiness, honesty and sobriety are sought-after qualities for BRG, and the maintenance of these qualities is strictly enforced within the organisation. Lalley has used the work of Jim Collins of the Stanford University Graduate School of Business to describe BRG's recruitment policy. Collins studied the experience of 1,435 successful enterprises, and reported the following:

[We] expected to find that the first step [...] would be to set a new direction, a new vision and strategy for the company, and then to get people committed and aligned behind that new direction. We found something quite the opposite. Successful managers did not first figure out where to drive the bus and get people to take it there. No, they first got the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and then figured out where to drive it (Collins 2001).

Recruitment is based on the community organizers recommending “anyone just like themselves” (Lalley 2002:31). Subject to a rigorous selection process that aims to identify skills in leadership, problem solving and teamwork, the function that each

person then fulfils within the organisation becomes to a large degree a matter of negotiation between the organisation and the individual.

At an annual review meeting, members of the organisation are able to nominate their activities for the coming year. This process reflects two aspects of BRG's organisational structure. First, like the briefing/debriefing process, it provides time for people to reflect on what has gone well, and what could be done differently. Discussion is undertaken in an atmosphere of trust, not blame. As Lalley notes, BRG meeting processes are

strictly Melanesian; they talk things through ... ad nauseum ... because relationships matter, people matter ... and I think that part of the Melanesian character is not only carried out in the organisation but in the way they run things in the village (Anderson 2004).

Second, the annual meeting and review process, and the briefing/debriefing, works to minimise specialisation. This is brought about by extensive sharing of information from all participants in the organisation. Everyone who wants to can know what is happening in each aspect of the organisation's integrated program, and have the opportunity to work in different areas and acquire different skills and types of knowledge. This is part of BRG's commitment to continually building the skills and knowledge of its permanent staff and the paraprofessionals.

Weekly organisational meetings allocate and track completion of financial, administrative and other tasks in a relaxed but highly disciplined environment. There are established processes for annual performance reviews; likewise, the patrol debriefing process includes team members assessing each other's performance. An essential part of this disciplined environment is the BRG Board of Directors, appointed from within the organisation. The Board meets regularly and is able to draw on outside expertise to assist it with reflection and the resolution of issues that arise. Being of the organisation, the Board has a well-developed working knowledge of BRG, its strategies, methodologies and values. It deals effectively with discipline and maintenance of BRG's high performance standards (Parsons et.al. 2005; Barcham 2008).

There is a great deal more that could be said about the achievements of BRG. This brief profile captures just a small slice of its short history, large achievements and special organisational characteristics. At its annual review, all are reminded of the articles of the Papua New Guinea Constitution, which recognises customary land title.

Customary land owners, with the support of BRG, have successfully brought forward constitutional challenges to the terms of industrial-scale development, challenges that have had national and international effects (Callick 2010; Staff 2010; Callick 2010a).

## 2.2 Part II: Analysis – Modernity and Globalisation

### 2.2.1 *The Effect of Globalisation*

There are many obvious similarities between the BRG approach and that of SIDT. These include the use of mobile teams of paraprofessionals operating in a way that reflects local conditions; direct contact with village communities; extended stays in the community; the importance of the personal values and behaviour of paraprofessionals; the use of Indigenous-developed graphic tools; opposition to industrial-scale development; and the emphasis on self-reliance. BRG's reflective approach to organisational development also addresses the pitfalls encountered by SIDT. These include the decision not to build an institution; the mature relationships developed with donors; the cultivation of an organisational community, the "BRG family"; the significant amounts of time spent on continually enhancing the skills and knowledge base of paraprofessionals; and the modelling by the organisation of the outcomes it aims to achieve in communities.

While it can be argued that BRG is a simple evolution of the SIDT approach, having absorbed the "Lessons from Lak" and having developed an ability to reflect and adapt its approach, there are other indications that BRG is more than this. Four factors stand out as instrumental in this.

- the conscious development of a defined BRG community;
- the importance placed on continually building the skills and knowledge of the paraprofessionals;
- the ability to say no, and a willingness to take risks;
- the definition of the role of the paraprofessionals as community organizers.

In the absence of literature that identifies particular theoretical foundations for the methods employed by BRG, the search for a theoretical framework in which to interpret these innovations begins with looking for a comparable praxis. As the practice of "organizing" will take this search to the United States, it is interesting to start by comparing BRG's practice with the response of North American corporations to the challenge of globalisation. This response was first defined in 1992 by the

moniker “Workplace 2000”, a North American vision of the twenty-first century workplace (Boyett & Conn 1992). Workplace 2000 was a response to the shift of global capital to mass production in low-wage economies, and the growth of the service sector in the United States. This “new capitalism” was about “using new technologies to engage in flexible production of customised products and services dovetailed to specific consumer identities in a globalised economy” (Gee 2000:516). “New capitalism” included the popular corporate discipline of “total quality management” that demanded of employees “new concepts of work, quality, community, learning, and leadership” (Wiggenhorn 1990:71). Fundamental to this new workplace were empowered individual workers (Conger & Kanungo 1988; Thomas & Veldhouse 1990) able to “actively transform, improve and adapt their work practices to fast-paced changes in markets and technologies” (Gee 2000:518). This corporate “community of practice” has the following characteristics:

- Members bond through a common endeavour;
- The common endeavour is organised around the whole process, enabling integrated organisational functions;
- Members possess extensive organisational knowledge, able to carry out multiple and overlapping functions;
- Knowledge is first tacit, based on values, distributed across members and their tasks, and dispersed in networks of relationships: knowledge arises from group interactions;
- Leaders work to design the community of practice, helping members to turn their tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, realising that much knowledge remains tacit and embedded in social and cultural practices.

(after Gee 2000:519)<sup>32</sup>

As the workplace shifted to an orientation where “training becomes education” (Wiggenhorn 1990), Workplace 2000 carried over into North American approaches to classroom pedagogy. In this field, the language of corporate communities of practice was infused with Foucaultian discourse (Brown 1994; Gee 1998) to give theoretical support to this educational praxis.

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<sup>32</sup> Gee cites Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994, without including the page number or the title in the bibliography. The author assumes the reference is to “Reflexive Modernization”. However, the list appears to be Gee’s second order summation of the original work.

### 2.2.2 Foucault and the Social Discourse

The classroom pedagogy that developed in response to the demands of global corporatisation is reminiscent of Freire's criticism of the "banking" concept of education, where students are "receptacles to be filled" (Freire 1996:52). It incorporated cognitive psychology, recognising students as "active constructors rather than passive recipients of knowledge", possessed of "multiple intelligences" (Brown 1994:6).<sup>33</sup> The classroom was viewed as a "community of learning" with multiple methods of participation through art, theatre, technological skills, reading, writing, teaching and social facilitation. Essential to this pedagogy was recognition of learning as situated and contextual – that is, as a process that encourages newcomers to "adopt the discourse structure, goals, values and belief systems of the community". This kind of collaborative learning "promotes an atmosphere of joint responsibility, mutual respect and a sense of personal and group identity" (Brown 1994:10). In adopting the language of "discourse", the new classroom pedagogy invites reference to Foucault's concept of discourse, used to describe a domain rooted in "human practices, institutions and actions" (Loomba 1998:39). In Foucault's thinking, this domain governs reproduction of relations of power.

[T]here are manifold relations of power<sup>34</sup> which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse (Foucault 1986:229).

Foucault's concept of discourse represents a development of the Gramscian notion of ideological hegemony, which relies on both coercion and consent (Gramsci 1971:12). Freire conceptualised this consent as false consciousness, the "internalised consciousness of the oppressor" (Freire 1996:30) that, following Hegel, must be first undermined and then transformed into independent self-consciousness in order to facilitate continuing human growth. Roughan adopted this orientation in his theoretical development of SIDT's pedagogical approach, which aimed at "unmasking erroneous thought patterns" (Roughan 1986:4). Foucault takes this notion further, conceiving the

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<sup>33</sup> In 2011, this is common classroom practice, employing for example DeBono's "Six Hats" approach. Its persistence is shown by a November 2011 Google search for "learning styles", which gets as the top hit for images a site called "Voices of Leadership – Inspiring Leaders to Empower Others", which links to the IBM CEO study 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Relationships of power concern collective action, and are dealt with in the second part of the present study.

post-structuralist position that power does not emanate from a centralised or hierarchical structure, but “is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault 1990:93). However, while Foucault has been employed by feminist and colonial scholars in drawing attention to the way social reproduction resides in everyday life, he has also been criticised for leaving no space for dissent (Loomba 1998).

While it would appear true to say that dominant discursive practices make it difficult to think outside them, notions of “false” consciousness and the concept of power as totally insidious appear to be particularly disempowering perspectives. In seeking an autonomous social space to assert control, feminist scholars have argued that readings of culture can change when “the focus is extended to [...] the material world of the domestic” (Newton 1989:19), shifting focus from the construction of domination to specific environments and experiences. A dialectical relationship between the person and their lived discourse is proposed by feminist scholars, arguing that men and women are “makers as well as users of culture, subjected to the same ideological constraints, yet forcefully resisting those same constraints” (Walkowitz 1989:238). Post-colonial<sup>35</sup> scholars, many from Latin America, adopted a similar orientation, drawing on their experience of the power of local discourses to contest the dominant colonial discourse and its legacies (Alva 1995). In this post-colonial analysis history is not a single narrative. There are multiple discourses that “jostle up against each other, fight and conspire together, influence and change each other: they make us and we make them” (Gee 1994:4).

In this more contemporary analysis, Galtung’s “being power” now appears as a space to independently develop a learning community capable of conscious collaboration to evolve an autonomous discourse. In the United States, this process goes by the name of “organizing”.

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<sup>35</sup> The study of colonialism and its legacies is riddled with suffixes. Views about post-, de- and re-colonisation have their basis in differing perspectives on the project of modernity, yielding a range of post-modern, post-structural and finally neo-conservative counter-projects. Habermas (*Modernity versus Postmodernity*, *New German Critique*, No. 22, 1981) and Giddens (*Modernity and Post-modernism*, *New German Critique*, No. 22, 1981) consider the modern and post-modern projects in detail. This is a significant debate that will be considered later in the present study in relation to conceptualisations of power in the context of Habermas’s critique of Aristotelian praxis. For the present, the use of the term “post-colonial” is adopted from Jorge de Alva and signifies “not so much subjectivity after the colonial experience as a subjectivity of oppositionality to imperialising/colonising discourses and practices” (Alva 1995:245). This definition allows the inclusion of the range of post-colonial conflict from geographically displaced peoples such as African-Americans to anti-colonial resistance to imperial culture in both de-colonised and settler states in the Pacific and Australia.

### 2.2.3 Organizers

BRG's aim of establishing a "core group of community organizers" and its strategy of "training" reflects the North American tradition of "organizing". As far back as the ride of Paul Revere, North American culture supports independent citizen organisation, as noted by de Tocqueville (de Tocqueville 1945, first published 1835). In the context of the present study, the term is identified with "left-wing" organizing in the tradition of Mary Harris "Mother" Jones, who organized for the United Mine Workers Union and later co-founded the International Workers of the World. In the 1930s the organization of unemployed people gave rise to the Worker's Alliance of America, and the simultaneous movement of organized labour produced the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations. Post-war, the exemplars are the Civil Rights Movement that spawned a range of actions and organisations: the Freedom Rides, the Birmingham sit-ins, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, and Students for a Democratic Society, to name a few; and the movement of welfare recipients that led to the formation of the National Welfare Rights Organisation (Piven & Cloward 1977). Organizers strengthen, connect and mobilise grassroots groups to enhance their leadership, voice and power. Dave Beckwith from the Centre for Community Change defines organizing as:

the process of building power through involving a constituency in identifying problems they share and the solutions to those problems that they desire; identifying the people and structures that can make those solutions possible; enlisting those targets in the effort through negotiation and using confrontation and pressure when needed; and building an institution that is democratically controlled by that constituency that can develop the capacity to take on further problems and that embodies the will and the power of that constituency (Beckwith & Lopez 1997).

Today in the United States, community organizing is a well-established professional discipline. Prominent institutions include the National Organizers Alliance (founded in 1993 and based in Washington DC), publisher of *Ark*, a magazine for community organizers; the Centre for Community Change (founded in 1968, originally based in Chicago and now with offices in New York and Washington DC); and the Midwest Academy (founded in 1973 and based in Chicago), a training school for community

organizers. The Academy was founded by Heather Booth and her husband Paul Booth, a founder and former national secretary of Students for a Democratic Society and former president of Chicago's Citizen Action Program, formed in 1969 by trainees from Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation (Midwest Academy 2011).

Saul Alinsky is one of the doyens of organizing. His two small books, *Reveille for Radicals* (1969) and *Rules for Radicals* (1971) arranged and made more accessible his process for organizing empowering action. Alinsky's organizing experience began with his PhD work at the University of Chicago. In this context, during the 1930s he participated in the organization of a diverse coalition of groups from the "Back of the Yards", the industrial area adjacent to the Chicago stockyards. At the time, Alinsky saw that

community organizational enterprises have traditionally confined themselves to co-ordination of professional formal agencies which are, first, superimposed upon the community and, second, play a superficial role in the life of the community. It is a rare phenomenon today to discover a community organization in which the indigenous interest and action groups of the community not only participate but also play a fundamental role in that organization (Alinsky 1941:797).

Alinsky's focus on organizing "indigenous" organisations capable of mobilising a constituency in direct action later led to him forming the Industrial Areas Foundation to train community organizers. Under this model, the organizer has the catalytic function of facilitating and mediating between interest groups in a constituency with the aim of organizing for action. Heather Booth states this as the formula "OOO = Organizers Organize Organizations" (Beckwith & Lopez 1997).<sup>36</sup> Alinsky states that these organisations have two major functions: to "generate power" and develop a "people's program", which can then yield a "people's movement" (Alinsky 1969:54–55). In structuring training for organizers, Alinsky distilled the foundational language of "tactics" and "targets" which are "frozen". Alinsky's tactics are based on studying relationships of power. Tactics should evolve from a group's own thinking, be fun and a piece of political theatre. The target of those tactics should be a person or group that has authority vested in it by existing power relations. The target is isolated based on its

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<sup>36</sup> With respect to BRG, and the guideline to not build an institution, note that Beckwith is referring to "institution" building in the community, not the organisation that organises.

vulnerability and position in the decision-making process people are seeking to affect, and then “frozen”, or made the exclusive target of attack. As others come to the defence of the target, the campaign widens. This narrowing of tactics can make the protest appear overly dogmatic, but is necessary, Alinsky says, when “in a complex and urban society it becomes increasingly difficult to single out who is to blame for any particular evil” (Alinsky 1971:130). Freezing targets is a matter of personifying injustice in order to make protest actionable. Alinsky’s principles have been expanded upon over the years. In a more contemporary vein, Dave Beckwith from the Centre for Community Change<sup>37</sup> outlines four principles for community organizing that can be paralleled with BRG’s approach:

- People are motivated by their self-interest (BRG: start from where the people are at; what are *their* issues?);
- Community organizing is a dynamic process (BRG: maintain ongoing contact with the community through the process as it develops);
- Learn to deal with conflict and confrontation (BRG: promotion of self-reliance is inherently in conflict with industrial-scale development, requiring “a certain fearlessness” as a quality of Community Organisers);
- Take into account the fundamental definition of an issue, and mould group goals that are immediate, specific and realisable (BRG: work to create critical consciousness and use this to develop strategies and tactics for a specific set of circumstances) (after Beckwith & Lopez 1997).

The American emphasis on citizen organisations recalls Roughan’s approach to community development, much of which was based on the work of John Freidmann (Freidmann 1978). Freidmann stressed the necessity of building power through “linkage”. He in turn quotes Uphoff and Esman who accent linkage “horizontally [...] at the same level and especially vertically between local organisations and structures at the centre of government”. Emphasising “structures”, Uphoff and Esman point to the potential effectiveness of vertical integration of strategies to achieve change. This is a strategy that has been used by BRG. The client community is linked by the Community Organizers and BRG staff to, for example, legal resources to undertake court action challenging government decision-making. Through BRG and the PNG legal system, landowners are linked vertically to directly challenge corruption and

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<sup>37</sup> CCC helps “poor people develop their own strong organizations to improve their communities and change policies and institutions that affect their lives”. <http://www.communitychange.org/>

faulty decision-making at the highest level. In community organizing, the success of this linkage rests first on the mandate of the client community, established by the Community Organizers. In challenging structures of power through collective action, the active community is supported by BRG as part of the community's collective action.

This vertical integration shows how community organizers can play a bridging function, bringing communities into direct contact with the decision-making processes that affect them through the provision of skills and resources. For BRG it is about provision of means, not definition of ends. This is not to say that the community totally controls the agenda. As the description of BRG's practice shows, BRG is highly selective about the communities with which it works. Not only is local motivation essential, but there must also be a congruence of worldview, a meeting of minds between BRG's tacit and fluid vision of the future, its "telos", and the aspirations of the client community. This telos is, as Alinsky says, essentially about how the "Have-nots can take power away from the Haves" (Alinsky 1971:130). In this sense, organizing is about growing community as well as giving it expression in action. It is this intentional approach to community that links these three strains of praxis from North America: corporate training, classroom pedagogy, and contemporary community organizing. As the example of BRG also demonstrates, in organizing for empowerment, the intentional community of practice is an essential component.

#### *2.2.4 Modernity, Community and Dissent*

The creation of intentional communities has been theorised as a response to global modernity (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994). As the project of modernity reached global scale, the relationship between humanity and its environment fundamentally changed. The environment was no longer able to provide sufficient resilience to compensate for humanity's consumption and waste. Rather than the "end of history" (Fukuyama 1992), it is the death of nature that defines our age. Beck characterises this as the existence of global, uninsurable risk, entering the lexicon during the 1990s as the "risk society" (Beck 1992). The other prominent author on global risk, Anthony Giddens, states it thus: "henceforth and for the foreseeable future, with all its imponderables, we are dealing with a human rather than a natural order" (Giddens 1994:78). It follows that the evolution of social critique becomes much more than an academic exercise. Our own conscious efforts must take the place of the balancing forces of nature. What is significant here for the present study is that in the context of

global modernity, the process of evolving this critique is founded in how the modern intentional community defines itself.

The above material compared BRG with Northern practices aimed at transforming workplaces, classrooms, interest associations and finally society. In common is this defining characteristic of creating intentional communities. In Scott Lash's definition, these modern communities "consciously pose themselves the problem of their own creation and constant re-invention far more than traditional communities" (Lash 1994:161). Believing that the traditional community, be it workplace, classroom or neighbourhood, is a "receding social structure" (Lash 1994:111) eroded by the globalisation of modernity, Lash sees the need to conceptualise community anew. He locates his definition of the modern community in Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, "concrete ethical life" (Lash 1994:148), expressed in *Sitten*, accepted daily practices or habit. It can be seen that this nicely parallels SIDT's "philosophy", and BRG's search for "like minded people" to join the organisation. The creation of new practices that buttress this community is reflected in SIDT "carving out an identity", or BRG's emphasis on extended briefings and debriefings creating a setting deliberately contradicting the force of the clock and the deadline.

Jurgen Habermas, in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas 1984, Habermas 1987), argues that this process of communal self-definition is underwritten by that which is "explicitly aimed at critique of system order to win space for the lifeworld" (Lash 1994:140). In addition to Lash, other authors, including Minkler and Wallerstein employ this language of "lifeworld" and "system". Freire and the Latins also demonstrate a connection to this language through their Hegelian roots. In Habermas's view, the fundamental integrative tool that provides a legitimate sense of "we" is communication. This integrative function draws upon the "lifeworld", meaning the shared understandings, including values, which develop through face-to-face contact. This recalls the arguments used by feminist and post-colonial scholars to carve out a space for ordinary experience as a legitimate source of knowledge. According to Habermas, the legitimacy of the lifeworld is rendered ineffective, or "colonised", by system. This is the rationalised world of capital and power, constructing atomised individuals as part of the system – as worker or housewife, as a task rather than as flesh and blood. It is Habermas's view that since the legitimacy of values is born in lifeworld communication, the continuing colonisation of the lifeworld by system ultimately leads to a crisis of the values and common understandings that bind

societies. Since system also depends upon the lifeworld for its legitimacy – for example the belief that system operates in the best interests of all citizens – active restoration of group legitimacy, called “communicative action”, is inevitably a critique of system function.<sup>38</sup>

It is in this context that Lash develops his description of “reflexive community”. This community is not the same as an interest association, nor is it about shared characteristics, say, being “Melanesian”, or “rural villager”. It is about agreement on what Habermas would call “discursively redeemable validity claims”. These are the instruments of consensual power, what Lash calls “unthought categories” that are the “ontological foundations of practical consciousness” (Lash 1994:154). Note that this is not about questioning tradition in the sense of counter-factual subjectivism. Communally, there is no subject, there is only “we”. Participants are worlded together in what Lash terms “hermeneutic reflexivity” (Lash 1994:158). This praxis operates to turn tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge by generating cognitive psychological awareness, a mindful comprehension of the self, understood through these unrecognised instruments of habit, emotion and values as employed in the speech acts of the collective. As constituents of the lifeworld, these are the ingredients of evolving critical consciousness. This reflexive, intentional community is a more concrete form of Galtung’s and Freire’s conception of dialogue.

What follows is the creation of an alternative discourse. In the present study, this has its precursor in the definition of self-reliance, Galtung’s “contradicting the exploitation and penetration by the West” in centre-periphery relations. In terms of lifeworld and system, self-reliance can now be more specifically defined as the “withdrawal of obedience to institutions that have lost their legitimacy” based on “common conviction” (Habermas 1977:81). This is demonstrated in the way BRG’s “different agendas” allowed them to reject the UNDP offer. It is an agenda bolstered by consciousness that, says Chitoo, “it’s basically a common enemy that they’re up against – globalisation” (Tarczynski 2007).

So, it is evident that, as in a post-colonial analysis, this alternative discourse is evolved from the lifeworld. Habermas’s conceptualisation of lifeworld and system adds dimension to Galtung’s portrayal of human development as analysed in the Development Wheel. The basic dichotomy between actors and structures is retained in the lifeworlds and system of Habermas. More concretely than Galtung, for Habermas

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<sup>38</sup> Communicative action and its implications for empowerment is discussed further in Chapter 5.

the collective self is “worlded” in speech-acts – what Foucault calls the “gap between” where meaning is created. While Galtung and Roughton were acutely aware of not wishing to impose values, and are open about the value basis they take, in emphasising social spaces, Habermas provides a way to conceive of not the values themselves, but the way they are made overt in a community worlded in alternative discourse. That this outcome is one posed in contradiction to the colonisation of the lifeworld, and is a reclamation of social space, means that dissent is necessarily a characteristic of the modern reflexive community. In as much as they define themselves autonomously through the ingredients of the lifeworld, this type of dissent appears as a characteristic of both SIDT, “questioning the conventional development wisdom”, and BRG, “to fight against the exploitation of people, land and resources in Papua New Guinea”.

In its communal dissent, creation of an alternative discourse is an expression of power, the ability to say “no” to systematic colonisation by modernity. Quoting Thomas Jefferson, Habermas affirms the “emphatic concept of praxis” that “no one really possesses power; it springs up between men when they act together” (Habermas 1977:81).

### 2.2.5 *Informational Tools*

An interpretation of the informational tools used by BRG provides an opportunity to further build on the discussion of Habermas’s theory of communicative action. Achieving understanding in language requires a “rationally motivated agreement among participants that is measured against criticisable validity claims” (Habermas 1984:75). For Habermas, this “agreement” can be seen as four “analytically distinguishable concepts” of action.<sup>39</sup> Types of validity claims used in these forms of social action “characterise different categories of a knowledge embodied in symbolic expressions”: knowledge that is utilitarian, normative knowledge, and subjective knowledge (Habermas 1984:75). According to Habermas, actors draw on these three types of knowing, or “worlds”, in different ways when engaged in communication. These three types represent different uses of the ingredients of the intersubjectively shared lifeworld, which is found already interpreted, and forms the background for

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<sup>39</sup> To be discussed further in Chapter 6, briefly, Habermas’s four concepts of action are: 1. Aristotelian teleological action (decision making): actor attains end by choice of means. Collectively expands to strategic action. 2. Individual normatively regulated action: members of a social group who orient their action to common values, comply with norms, “expectation of behaviour”. 3. Group dramaturgical action: participants in interaction “constituting a public for one another”. Purposefully disclosing subjectivity. (Desires and feelings, romance). 4. Public communicative action: at least two subjects who “seek to reach an understanding about the action situation in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement”. Consensual intention.

communicative action when participants refer thematically to something in the world. Habermas sees that for the social scientist, the world problematises itself in the “objective contents of thought”, the objectivity of a “problematic, uncomprehended complex of meaning that can be opened up only through intellectual labour” (Popper quoted in Habermas 1984:76–78). This problematising becomes communicative action when claims to objective truth, interpersonal norms and subjective sincerity

are ascribed to the perspective of *the speakers and hearers themselves*. It is the actors themselves who seek consensus and measure it [...] against the “fit” or “misfit” between the speech-act, on the one hand, and the three worlds to which the actor takes up relations with [her] utterance (Habermas 1984:100 italics in original).

Chapter 1 considered critical consciousness in terms of dialogue. Here, the concept of dialogue, word and action, has now been further described in terms of communicative action that relates actors to the world through their own interaction. The independence of critical consciousness is achieved by subjects mediating content from objective (the totality of all entities about which true statements are possible), social (the totality of all legitimately regulated interpersonal relations) and subjective (the totality of the experiences of the speaker to which she has privileged access) types of social action to “mobilise the rationality potential” in communicative action (Habermas 1984:99). Communicative action requires “tools” that are validated by all three worlds. While Habermas uses the speech-act as the appeal to validity, it is important to note that the communicative model of action is not the same as communication. Lash’s use of *Zeuge*, “gear”, to expand the meaning of the speech act to include “language and informational tools” (Lash 1994:149) and their symbolic contents, is appropriate. The speech-act is any medium of communication whereby actors come to an understanding with one another.

In Habermas’s delicate dissection of types of action, and drawing on the applicable “thematic segment” of the lifeworld, the objectivity of communicative action creates the potential autonomy of the intentional collective. While Habermas assumes a phenomenological approach, this objectivity gives greater clarity about critical consciousness as being autonomous in its ontological status. Lash supports this view. For Lash, Habermas’s “communicative rationality” is a means “by which intersubjectivity can roll back the claims of the system, and expand the space of the life world” (Lash 1994:145). The cooperatively pursued goal of reaching

understanding produces these substantive goods of shared meanings, Lash's "tools and products" of reflexive communities. The cultural goods produced in the specialist field of BRG and the paraprofessionals as skilled organizers are "produced as much by the supporters as the players" (Lash 1994:161), that is, engagement with people of the likes of Filip Damen of the Wanang clans is a necessary part of the creation of shared meaning that drives the change process. The tools and skills of the paraprofessionals alone are not enough to produce change. There must also be communication that affirms shared beliefs about the world, such that the client group can identify with and build innovative action from the information and other resources BRG makes available. Together, through this communicative action, the paraprofessionals and their clients create a legitimate community.

In this way it can be seen that collaboratively developed informational tools such as the Timeline and Question Man embody communicative action. This is significant for two reasons. Firstly, the images propose an alternative to Freire and Foucault in declaring the capability of people themselves to innovate by deploying the material of their lifeworld as an act of negation to the world. There is no "false consciousness", nor is the dissemination of power ubiquitous. Secondly, they are images in which "cultural tradition is itself made thematic" (Habermas 1984:77), giving it and other categories of the lifeworld an objective existence, where formally they have been "unthought" (Lash) or "undiscovered" (Habermas).

#### *2.2.6 Risk and Tradition*

In respect of modernity and globalisation, reference has already been made to the status of risk. In his critique of Beck, Giddens makes a point which further contributes to Lash's characterisation of community in reflexive modernity with respect to the interpretation of BRG praxis. Giddens suggests that "risk and trust [...] need to be analysed together in conditions of late modernity". Modern, reflexive society is "not only a risk society" but also one in which trust has to be "energetically treated and sustained" (Giddens 1994:186) by the reflexive community.

Like Lash, Giddens questions "the old dichotomy between community and association" (Giddens 1994:186). He proposes that there now exist "new forms of social solidarity" maintained by "active trust" (Giddens 1994:186). While Giddens's vision is oriented to the West, a dispersed so-called "me generation", the evidence shows that BRG is conscious of this type of solidarity as part of its group dynamic. "Trust building" exercises are a regular part of its practice, and the relationship with

both client communities and donors is founded on trust that must be actively maintained. While Beck's view is that global society is defined negatively, by generating common risks, Giddens argues that the flip side of this is that risk collectively taken can build trust. In the case of BRG, this can be the first personal risk of allowing oneself to be vulnerable and authentic in establishing collective solidarity, or the collective risk of turning down the "millions of Kina that were on offer".

In this vein, Giddens proposes "two directly connected domains of transformation", the "extensional spread of modernity" on the one hand and the "processes of intentional change" (Giddens 1994:57) on the other. With respect to the former, as discussed above, saying "no" negates the global universalisation of modern institutions, Habermas's "system". With regard to intentional change, Giddens proposes that processes of intentional change require "the disinterring and problematising of tradition". The choice of language is perhaps unfortunate, and being cautious of the idea that tradition could somehow be a problem, Habermas's characterisation of reflexivity as making cultural tradition "thematic" is to be preferred.

What is important to note here is that as a domain of transformation, intentional change poses a risk to tradition, just as does modernity. In building collective solidarity, tradition is always at risk. It follows that maintaining discursively redeemable validity demands that the group have control of the content and process of change. Without control – or to use Habermas's language again, without the group defining itself autonomously through mediation of elements of the lifeworld – group solidarity cannot be maintained, because group validation will collapse. For each participant who has placed him- or herself at stake in a process of change, this is a personal risk. In this theoretical context, practising personal risk through trust-building and group practice exercises prepares the paraprofessionals for questioning long-held beliefs and practices among themselves and in the community.<sup>40</sup> It is in this transformative domain of risk and trust that the bonds are made between personal and collective power.

### *2.3 Summary*

The analysis of BRG began with four defining elements: a BRG community; empowering practitioners; the ability to say "no"; and paraprofessionals as community

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<sup>40</sup> The Timeline plays a central part of the work of the Social Empowerment Education Program in Fiji, and will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

organizers. Exploring comparable practice in corporations, classroom education and organizing in the United States, and investing this with a theoretical basis from contemporary social science, has led to an analysis based on globalisation and modernity.

This analysis has implications for defining community. In the present study, community has been defined as being realised in “communicative action”, in which actors collectively mediate objective, normative and subjective knowledge and make thematic the stock of cultural knowledge, the “lifeworld” that forms the background to these. Lash calls this “hermeneutic reflexivity”. Community is necessarily defined this way in response to the invasiveness of modernity. It is implicit in this definition that the formation of community is intentional – that is, it has a voluntary aspect – and that it is teleological, as shown in the first instance by its negation of modernity based on lifeworld praxis expressed in the practice of “organizing”. This is in sharp contrast to traditional definitions of community.

As well as contributing this definition of community, this analysis has led to understanding the four perspectives from the previous chapter<sup>41</sup> in terms of a single theoretical approach: communicative action. In terms of actors and structures, communicative action relates actors to each other through the analytically different worlds of objective, normative and subjective knowledge, each embedded in a lifeworld which is progressively colonised under the conditions of modernity. In terms of dialogue and a person-centred approach to development, it can now be said that when participants are worlded together in hermeneutic reflexivity, praxis operates to make overt what was formerly tacit knowledge – “unthought” categories. This process contributes to evolving critical consciousness by producing a mindful awareness of self as embedded in the lifeworld. This process can only be achieved in the context of a voluntary group or “community”, meaning at least two persons, and that this process also necessarily will involve system critique. This further suggests that empowerment must be a consequence of the communication that occurs when a group intentionally comes together for a purpose. In order to more closely examine the nature of this communication as a psychological phenomenon, the next chapter considers a more specific example of how the dimensions of the lifeworld can be made explicit by exploring the psychological force of narrative and its effect on civil society in Fiji.

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<sup>41</sup> Person-centred development; actor/structure; self-reliance and centre-periphery relations; dialogue.