

Dialogues for Sustainability: Indigenous Participation and Relational Power

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Abstract

Sustainability is built upon relationships as this is the only way to bring together government, market and community to create the innovative solutions required. Typically Indigenous people in Western Australia have not been included within relationship building. This is a result of a number of factors, most primarily the low representation and power of Indigenous people within mainstream participatory structures. Two case studies, *Dialogue with the City* and *Dialogue with the Pilbara: Newman Tomorrow*, which have attempted to include Indigenous people in participation are outlined and analysed. The concept of relational power provides the focus of analysis of the two case studies. Reflections upon Indigenous participation and relational power include issues relating to a process approach; representation; power, knowledge and control; and the need for more creative and culturally appropriate participatory tools and techniques. The paper concludes by emphasising the priority of relationship building to enable Indigenous participation, in addition to the imperative of Indigenous inclusion within participatory initiatives which highlight but do not necessarily resolve hidden tensions and power conflicts. Resolution of these tensions and conflicts remains within the political arena.

Keywords

Relational power, indigenous participation, deliberative democracy, sustainability

Introduction

The concept of sustainability has travelled and evolved through many international conventions and documents including the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, the publication of *Our Common Future* in 1987, the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in which participants compiled Agenda 21 and the 2002 World Summit in Johannesburg. One of the crucially important aspects of it is how people and relevant institutions connect and interact on the basis of their views and concerns about the use of resources available on the planet. Sustainability is about relationships and inter-relationships within and between the generations and the different actors in community, government and industry. This interaction within and between these sectors requires that a concerted focus be

given to the power differentials and the relationships between actors. Power is often assumed to reside in government and in big business. However neither of these alone can create long-term values and visions that are critical for sustainability. Power also is not in a fixed state; it is shaped by the action or non-action of stakeholder individuals, communities and organisations. Foucault argues that the reason for engaging in political struggles is to change power relationships (Rabinow 1984, p. 6). He uses the concept of relational power to show how communities need to be also included to provide a voice that is essential for long-term, effective and equitable decision-making.

Sustainability is built upon partnerships, as this is the way to bring together government, market and community to create the innovative solutions required to deal with the unprecedented environmental, social and economic challenges created by globalisation and the western style of development. This means that relationships within and between the sectors are crucial to finding sustainable solutions. Failed relationships will prevent sustainable solutions as the necessary values and visions cannot be generated without the critical involvement of key people. Indigenous people are generally the missing element in these relationships. Their involvement is necessary not just for the social justice of considering their needs but more particularly the important perspective that they can bring to the sustainability table. The idea of indigenous participation and relational power is thus the main concept behind this paper.

The paper will employ two case studies which have involved participatory techniques to capture the future visions within a sustainability framework. The analysis is particularly based upon the participation and relational power of the Indigenous community(ies) involved.

The paper will firstly provide a brief overview of the concept of sustainability and how this relates to knowledge and power. The emergence of participatory democracy in Western Australia is outlined and two case studies — *Dialogue with the City* and *Dialogue with the Pilbara: Newman Tomorrow* — are outlined. Reflections upon these case studies with particular regard to Indigenous participation are analysed and presented. The final section provides conclusions.

Sustainability

The concept of sustainability has been defined in a multitude of ways. Consequently this concept has been the centre of much academic, policy and community debate for a number of decades. There exists a significant body of literature which attempts to categorise sustainability. A significant contribution to this debate originates from the different interests and worldviews of the different actors within society, found within government, industry and community. For the purposes of this paper sustainability is defined as a framework of principles, a philosophy of

practice that engages multi-levels, places, cultures and actors in an integral approach towards better environmental and social health whilst simultaneously enabling the economic improvement that this may require (Government of Western Australia 2002).

Sustainability has only relatively recently appeared in academic thought and on the political agenda of the western world. However, according to Jull (2002, p. 18), sustainable development has been “a daily lived reality, an organic part of evolved and evolving indigenous economies, societies, cultures, and self-identifying political communities” and “integral to indigenous oral knowledge and sheer survival” (p. 18). The very essence of sustainability as it applies particularly to Australia requires this local wisdom to be made integral to any decision-making and future processes.

Local participation from all community groups is essential for the effective implementation of the sustainability concept and into the longer term. This is often based upon the view that local residents have a stronger understanding of local issues and also that those who will be affected by the consequences of decision-making should contribute to the process. Pretty supports this view stating that sustainability is time and place specific and therefore requires a participatory approach (Pretty 1995). Participation is often seen to enable the articulation of different perspectives in finding the innovation required for solving long-term sustainable solutions.

Sustainability, knowledge and power

The practical implementation of sustainability principles depends upon power relations. Each of the community, government and industry sector has power, based upon functions they best perform. The market provides goods and services but only in a short-term horizon, government provides regulations for common good outcomes and infrastructure, usually in a medium term horizon, and the community provides values and visions, ethical direction for society as a whole, especially for the long term. Through the interaction of these sectors power is ideally balanced and integrated solutions are provided. An overemphasis on any one sector prevents sustainable solutions from being found. Collaboration and partnership have become recognised as essential features within the search for sustainability. There has been recent recognition of the important role of a catalytic non-government sector and a decentralised economy. It is now believed that decision-making requires ‘jazz and synergy’ (WBCSD 1997) in flexible partnerships between these sectors and with civil society groups.

Typically most of the literature that deals with the relationship between power and sustainability has assumed that the state and industry hold power whilst the community sector requires empowerment to achieve a mythical state of being autonomous and self-sufficient. Autonomy is

not likely within the global economy and is undesirable in a sustainability framework. The most common imbalance comes from a weakened community sector. This can come from power relationships within the sector as well as between the sectors. Attention to the complexities of relational power that may exist between actors in the web within and between government, industry and community has received very little attention within the sustainability literature. This following section introduces these complexities.

The critique of orthodox planning, typical of the dominant modernist paradigm of the twentieth century, is particularly based upon its inherent tendency to control, model, predict and make certain, inhibit instead of promoting, weaken instead of supporting — the pluralistic, spontaneous, market-driven and entrepreneurial dynamics which actually shape cities (Hamdi and Goethert 1997). Rakodi (1993, p. 219) writes that this is because of “... its historical origins, its colonial history, its professional concerns with order and standards, its association with government and its domination by men” (in Hamdi and Goethert 1997). In regards to planning with Indigenous people in Australia, Crawford notes “Aboriginal Affairs in Australia has long been a field where experts have made policy decisions for Aboriginal Affairs. Australian history and current affairs abound with examples of such plans not working” (Crawford 1989, p. 2).

University of Sussex’s Robert Chambers (1993, p. 3) critiques a normal professionalism which “refers to the thinking, values, methods and behaviour dominant in a profession or discipline”. He argues that the core–periphery structure of knowledge and knowledge generation in normal professionalism encourages actors in universities, government and industry to move geographically to larger urban centers, to specialise rather than to diversify, and to move upwards through hierarchies of power and privilege whose apexes decide which and whose knowledge counts (Chambers 1993; Chambers 1997).

In academic circles the comparatively recent theoretical traditions of critical and interpretative social science which have been further developed by feminism and post-modernism have contributed to the ongoing development of this alternative body of literature within this paradigm. In a critique of the positivist Cartesian philosophy these traditions recognise that knowledge is a form of power that is socially constructed by changing social and historical processes, relations, perspectives and interpretations and instead emphasise the need for multiple discourses, collaborative and non-exploitative relations, the placement of the professional within the project and a praxis that is transformative and emancipative (Herron 1996; Schulz et al. 1998; Neuman 2000).

Misunderstandings about power are very common (Henkel and Stirrat 2002). Kaufman (1997) argues that the concept of power in developed societies has been determined by uneven relationships. He argues that the conception of power in developed societies has been created through human history in which a series of divisions have been the means of social organisation: control by a minority with economic resources, by men over women and by an ethnic and racial group over others. This has resulted in a hegemonic understanding in which power is perceived as an ability to control and dominate over other human beings or over nature. There are however alternative ways of experiencing power, to love, to fight oppression and for justice (Kaufman 1997).

An assumption is generally that power is held by institutions in the centre and the goal is to reverse this. Foucault states: "Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there... Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation" (Foucault 1979, p. 98). This requires a shift from the mentality that only the centre holds power. A focus upon the local and regional is also required. "Hegemonic or global forms of power rely in the first instance on those 'infinitesimal' practices, composed of their own particular techniques and tactics, which exist in those institutions on the fringes or at the micro-level of society" (Foucault 1979, p. 99).

Power is found everywhere and every person is a vehicle of power. "Power is thus found in the creation of norms and social and cultural practices at all levels" (Kothari 2002, p. 141). Knowledge is constructed within power relations that exist within these norms, social and cultural practices. Participatory approaches generally reveal material dichotomies but not necessarily the manner by which knowledge is produced through participation (Kothari 2002).

Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punishment* (1979) that the discipline of central institutions is an intensification of what occurs in everyday practice. Social control and the power relations embedded in society are internalized into the individual body, into their behaviour, actions and perceptions (Kothari 2002).

People are thus affected by the macro-structures of inequality such as gender, ethnicity and class but they are also affected by the invisible forms of power (Kothari 2002). These relational power structures are at the heart of the sustainability challenge.

Community consultation versus participatory democracy

To involve citizens in policy and planning has been an ideal since the Greeks' polis. Recent planning processes in all Western democracies have emphasised the need for local participation.

However, discourse with communities has often tended to be divisive rather than inclusive, rife with advocacy and 'grandstanding' rather than inquiry, comprehensive understanding or joint problem solving. Traditional community consultation has frequently led to unintended consequences of incensed lobby groups, with the general population leaving the arena to the more vocal and extreme, leading to increased civic disengagement, and a resultant decrease in social capital (Hartz-Karp 2004).

A key to this cycle of decreasing social capital is a better understanding of power relationships. While the focus of our democratic decision-making structures has been fair representation, there is now an increased emphasis on participation. This trend in the western world is becoming a nascent social movement of participatory or deliberative democracy (Bohman 1998; Smith and Wales 2000; Levine 2003). It has at its heart the need to make relational power into a more coherent and focussed set of processes.

Relational power through participation processes does not necessarily mean that an automatic shift in political power will result. If a process of participation can draw in voices and values of powerless people (such as Indigenous people) then it is an important step in extending their power base and bringing about change. However, is it more than likely going to create more conflict once the relational power is expressed? This then becomes an opportunity for the voices of Indigenous people to be considered more seriously as they become part of a broad community voice. This cannot avoid politics however (Owen 1994).

When the Western Australian Labor government came to office in 2001, they made a commitment to improve the involvement of citizens in governance. Minister MacTiernan, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, determined to put this commitment into action:

"In my view, we need to 'retool democracy' — to establish systems where we genuinely encourage community involvement in decision-making — where we present government not as the arbitrator of two or more opposing camps — each of whom are provided with incentives by the process in hardening their position — but as the facilitator of bringing divergent voices together to hammer out a way forward" (MacTiernan 2004).

It has been the task of one of the authors of this paper, Dr Janette Hartz-Karp, to find innovative ways to engage the community in joint decision-making with government, fostering participative or deliberative democracy:

"Deliberative democracy strengthens citizen voices in governance by including people of all races, classes, ages and geographies in deliberations that directly affect public decisions. As a result, citizens influence — and can see the result of their influence on — the policy

and resource decisions that impact their daily lives and their future” (Deliberative Democracy Consortium 2003).

Carson and Hartz-Karp (forthcoming) characterise deliberative democracy as a process that requires:

- influence: capacity to influence policy and decision making
- inclusion: representative of population, inclusive of diverse viewpoints and values, equal opportunity to participate
- deliberation: open dialogue, access to information, space to understand and reframe issues, respect, and movement toward consensus.

It is these elements — inclusion, deliberation and influence — that address the power relationships so critical to decision-making. How we make decisions becomes as important as what we decide if we are to achieve the backing of the people to implement them. Moreover, if we are to make decisions that represent all the people, then addressing the power differentials between groups becomes critical. This is particularly important when the voice of some groups in our society, such as Indigenous people, is unlikely to be carefully heard or heeded.

This paper examines two community engagement initiatives, *Dialogue with the City* and *Dialogue with the Pilbara: Newman Tomorrow*, to discern the extent to which the Indigenous people were included, had the opportunity to deliberate and to influence decision-making: that is, did the Dialogue process improve relational power for Indigenous people or not?

Over the past four and a half years in the Western Australian Planning and Infrastructure portfolio, there has been a focus on addressing problems or opportunities that have arisen by pioneering a variety of innovative deliberative democracy techniques. These have included citizens’ juries, deliberative surveys, consensus forums and 21st century town meetings. In each instance, the aim has been to improve the extent of inclusion, deliberation and influence. Of each of the techniques pioneered, it has been the 21st century town meeting,¹ which the portfolio calls Dialogue, that has offered the most promise in captivating the broad interest of the community by engaging very large numbers of people in small group, face-to-face deliberations with the assistance of high technology.

¹ AmericaSpeaks, a not for profit organisation in large-scale civic engagement designed this kind of new town meeting. Carolyn Lukensmeyer and her team from AmericaSpeaks provided invaluable assistance in pioneering this technique in Western Australia, especially Joe Goldman who came to Perth to assist with *Dialogue with the City*.

Dialogue with the City

When a large-scale opportunity arose — the development of a new metropolitan plan for Perth, the capital city of Western Australia — the community was involved through a 21st century town meeting. One thousand one hundred participants were engaged in the largest deliberative democracy initiative in the southern hemisphere — *Dialogue with the City*.

This Dialogue arose from both a problem and an opportunity. The city is experiencing some of the highest population and economic growth rates of any city in Australia. Concern has been expressed that the pattern of this growth, often called ‘urban sprawl’, is unsustainable. However, if it is to change, it will require the significant backing of the people of metropolitan Perth. The stated aim of Dialogue with the City was to plan to make Perth the world’s most liveable city by 2030.²

As a lead into the process the Western Australian Planning Commission released a variety of discussion papers which outlined trends and issues for consideration in a number of significant areas. These were summarised as an Issues Paper which was given to participants at the one-day forum in September 2003.

A large scale community survey was undertaken to, firstly, provide information to the participants at the one-day forum on the wider views of the community and secondly, to provide direct guidance to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. A website and online discussion group was established. The website allowed people to download articles and to also submit their views through discussion papers.

Youth input was encouraged through a school competition. Listening sessions were held with the youth, Indigenous people and people of non-English speaking background on the Thursday evening prior to the major one-day event on Saturday. These were held with the aim of providing a space to ensure that these groups were heard.

Considerable care was taken to ensure inclusive participation. One-third of participants responded to an invitation to a random sample of residents in the greater metropolitan area. One-third responded to advertisements, and one-third was invited stakeholders from the community, industry and government. When it became clear that some groups would be under-represented

² This is not an uninformed or misguided goal as Perth usually is represented in the top 20 in livable city surveys conducted globally.

(Indigenous, non-English speaking and young people), grassroots canvassing took place to ensure their participation.

The one-day forum on Saturday, 13 September 2003 attracted approximately 1100 Western Australians. Approximately two-thirds of the participants were citizens who had been either involved in the survey or had nominated to be involved by responding to advertising. The remaining stakeholders were from local government, environmental, industry and community groups. At the forum the tables were heterogeneous with the exception of the Indigenous and people from non-English speaking background tables.

The participatory segment of the day involved two main sessions, before and after lunch. The first session involved the group using networked computers to record discussion and issues. The records were sent to a theme team who collated and briefly analysed the data. The set of common themes that emerged was presented on large screens to participants.

The afternoon session involved a mapping game which enabled the groups to consider the challenges of planning and map what they would like Perth to look like in the long-term future. Four scenarios were given to the group to decide which one they would like the Government to consider within planning decisions. These included a connected network; multi-centred city; a compact city; and a dispersed city. The connected city received 35.4 per cent of support, followed by the multi-centred with 29.4 per cent, the compact with 22.4 per cent and the dispersed city with 12.8 per cent. The mapping exercise supported the findings listed in the previous paragraph.

Following the outcomes of the one-day major event and continuing the participation process, community workshops were held in both the north and south areas of the central Swan River. The aim of these workshops was to discuss the draft strategies which include the vision, values and objectives of the strategy in addition to the challenges which these face.

Dialogue with the Pilbara: Newman Tomorrow

Another opportunity for a Dialogue arose to address the issue of the long-term sustainability of Newman, a mining town in the Western Australia's far north. Rich in resources, Newman's mining economy is booming. Such growth offers both challenges and opportunities. By engaging the Newman community, it was hoped to develop a sustainability strategy 'owned' by the people of Newman, for the town's growth beyond the iron ore industry. The broad community, industry and all levels of government needed to be engaged. In Newman's case, it also needed to include the voice of the indigenous Martu who had lived in the area for 30,000 years and were likely to be there after mining. However, the history of Martu involvement in state government or local

government exercises has not been good. The Martu's history is strained by a history of slavery and violence in the area and by a present that is dominated by poverty and exclusion. The possibility of an effective Dialogue process that integrated Indigenous people into the event was quite low though the benefits in terms of policy outcomes were a real opportunity for the Indigenous people.

It was agreed that the outcomes of the Dialogue would become State Government priorities over the next two decades, and would be used to inform the Pilbara Sustainability Strategy, being conducted jointly by the State Government and Murdoch University.

A steering team (comprising local organisation representatives, branches of government, and industry within the Newman area) guided the process in partnership with the Department for Planning and Infrastructure. A number of methods were employed in which to advertise for the day: articles were placed in local newspapers; one thousand invitations were sent to a random sample of residents; participants were recruited in the local shopping centre; and invitations were sent to local organisations. Confirmed participants were sent case studies, fact sheets and a paper canvassing current issues confronting Newman.

Participation of the Martu people in the Western Desert region including the Newman community began in June–July 2004. The purpose of these meetings was twofold: firstly, to inform people about the upcoming one-day event; and secondly, to hold meetings in which to gather visions in the case that community people were unable to travel to town for the deliberative forum. Obligations to attend unexpected funerals, for example, are a sad reality in the desert.

The Dialogue was held on 30 September 2004 and was met with participation from approximately 150 members of Newman. This was by far the largest public meeting in the town's history. Dialogue participants were seated at 20 tables of approximately six to eight people with a scribe and a facilitator. There was considerable Martu participation, all from the Newman community. Three separate tables were assigned to the Martu, which was their stated preference. Computers at every table were networked, feeding the ideas of each group to a theme team who worked collaboratively to find the common threads emerging in the room. Facilitators were primarily local and regional government agencies and also from Murdoch University. Common themes were collated by the theme team and were projected on a large screen.

The tables were given a series of questions relating to the visioning of Newman's future, and the necessary implementation. The questions required participants to think in terms of sustainability

— long-term integration of economic, social and environmental elements. A series of four discussion sessions were held asking:

- What are your key hopes for the future of Newman and its surrounds?
- Remembering your key hopes for Newman, what do we need to keep? What changes do we need to make?
- You have been transported to 2020. Describe how you would like Newman to be socially, economically, and environmentally.
- You are now in charge of this town. Your job is to head Newman in the direction of the 2020 vision. What are you going to do socially, economically and environmentally to ensure Newman thrives?

The Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy at Murdoch University analysed the data and produced the final report.

Reflections from the case studies

Sustainability as a practical philosophy emphasises that we should think and plan for the future in an integral way that requires us to examine the process, who is being represented, the role of expert knowledge, the need for different tools to describe and understand reality, and for a new holistic management approach. Relevant questions include “who produces this knowledge, when and where; about and for whom is this knowledge; for what purpose is this knowledge created; how and in what form is it produced; and what are the effects of this knowledge” (Attwood 1992). The Latin origin of the word power relates to the ability and capacity to do things, and it is this constructive approach to power that the following sections explore by reflecting on the two case studies. In particular they reflect on the extent of the relational power which was made possible through the two events.

Process approach

Prior to the Dialogue with the City forum, metropolitan Indigenous groups were contacted with a to enrol in a special listening and learning session. The aim was to ensure that those who are often not listened to were heard, that they had the opportunity to learn more about the issues, and felt sufficiently comfortable to take part in the large Dialogue forum. Approximately forty Indigenous people attended this two-hour session. Each participant committed to attending the Dialogue with the City forum the following weekend.

To be deliberative, participants need to have opportunities to talk, listen to one another, access comprehensive information and seek common ground. At the listening sessions, Indigenous participants were seated in small, facilitated groups, with opportunities for interactive dialogue

and learning. To encourage familiarity and a sense of team, the table groupings were retained for the Dialogue forum. Although Indigenous people were represented, the process for Dialogue with the City did not significantly involve relationships being built and hence relational power was less possible through this process.

Learning from Dialogue with the City, it was decided to take more time and put greater resource into understanding the Indigenous viewpoint and creating more of a relational power opportunity in the Dialogue for the Pilbara. One of the authors of this paper, who had already established a relationship with the Martu, worked for over a month with the remote indigenous communities to discern their views leading up to the Dialogue event. This separate consultation process involved the Martu communities of Jigalong (the chairperson), Parngurr and Nullagine. Similar questions to those used for the Dialogue day were discussed with community leaders and at community meetings. However, its value remained uncertain until the Dialogue day as the process required this relationship to be extended into a more shared community relationship; otherwise the relational power could not be adequately expressed.

Representation

The 'other' of Indigenous people has been represented in a number of ways throughout colonial history. These representations have been supported by the power of the colonists and the other forms of knowledge they were simultaneously creating, including the mapping and naming of Australia and making the continent their own. Racial representations through legislation and census defined Indigenous people through the bureaucracies that controlled their lives through the late 19th century and into the 20th century (Attwood 1992).

Indigenous people in Australia continue to be spoken about in their absence. Mainstream government and industry structures require that non-Indigenous people speak for them. The minority status of Indigenous people in these structures means that an Indigenous voice is generally filtered through a non-Indigenous perspective. This was discussed in one of the community meetings in the Newman dialogue. Neither of the Dialogues had an Indigenous person in the theme team. This was a goal of the Newman Dialogue but did not eventuate. A possible reason may have been that the person who had agreed to the role may have felt intimidated by the circumstances.

There was not an Indigenous person involved in the design of either of the Dialogues. Additionally neither of the Dialogues had an Indigenous person involved in the analysis or writing of the report. The present convention of plan writing does not call for the identification and authorisation of authors. Instead the ideal authors are the voice of dispassionate text, which are unemotional

and untroubled (Eckstein 2003). Participation often results in the construction of texts which hold authority and data is interpreted by the person writing the text who in the case of the Dialogues did not have an Indigenous perspective (Mohan 2002).

Power, knowledge and control

The practice of participatory research for sustainability is based upon the foundational assumption that knowledge and power are intertwined (Mohan 2002). There has been however a tendency to overstate local knowledge and local self-determination and ignore the role of the expert in participation (Henkel and Stirrat 2002).

In recognition of the value that the 'expert' voice may add to participation both of the Dialogues included expert presentations. Experts also were available during the deliberation for participants to discuss specific issues with. In Newman the Martu table spoke at length with the BHP (the main mining industry company in the town) representatives about potential employment strategies.

The Dialogues relied upon individual and team ideas being submitted to a networked computer on each table. The ideas are then analysed by an independent theme team to form the common themes, which are projected back onto large screens within a very short time frame. As discussed there was no Indigenous member on the theme team. When the key themes were broadcast to the room, participants had the opportunity to verify them. In several instances, Indigenous participants felt the language used in the themes had changed their original meaning. It is the intent of 'theming' to capture the tone and content of the table submissions, however this is often difficult to achieve. Not having an Indigenous theme team member would have exacerbated this situation.

To enhance the influence of the Indigenous people, the key themes from the listening session were broadcast to the entire Dialogue with the City forum at the commencement of the deliberations. These themes were also included in the Preliminary Report given to all participants at the conclusion of the forum and were in the Final Dialogue Report, a more comprehensive analysis of the proceedings.

One of the Indigenous groups took part in the forum report back on the regional mapping game, where participants were asked to take the role of planners and determine where future growth would be placed on the map.

Finally, there was an Indigenous representative among nearly one hundred participants from the Dialogue with the City forum who formed the implementation working parties. These teams worked together over the following eight months to develop a plan for metropolitan Perth that was built on the outcomes of the Dialogue with the City forum.

These processes were a significant step forward in assisting the Indigenous voice to be taken seriously in the future planning for Perth. However, they were not enough. It is questionable whether the listening session at the Dialogue for the City was sufficient to develop and accurately reflect the Indigenous people's key issues. Within the large-scale 21st century town meeting methodology, it is only if the issues of the minority get taken up by enough of the majority that they become recorded themes and can be regarded as being integrated into the power expressed by the broader group in its final priorities and policy output. The computer software did not allow an analysis of the discussions on individual tables, so it was not known the extent to which the Indigenous themes on the day of the forum became the entire forum's themes. It could well have been that despite best efforts, the voice of the Indigenous participants had only been partly heard and partially heeded. It remains to be seen however what long-term benefits for Indigenous people flowed from their participation and profile in the Dialogue for the City.

Considerable efforts were made to ensure there would be adequate Martu participation at the Newman Dialogue forum though up until the day it was uncertain if any would attend. There were many discussions with the Martu communities, the provision of child care at the forum venue, picking up school children after school and bringing them to the venues after school care, and ensuring participants had transport to and from the forum if needed. The attendance of Martu was highly successful: of the eighteen tables of participants in the room, three were Martu. No other forum like this appears to have occurred in the history of the town and to many it was a challenging if not confronting experience.

Prior to the forum, participants were thoroughly briefed on the format and the process of a 21st century town meeting. It had been agreed that if any Martu people preferred to sit outside and deliberate in their own way, that this would be supported. However, none of them chose to do this. Thus relational power was given an opportunity to be advanced whereby a Martu voice could be heard as part of the broader community voice, perhaps for the first time.

The Dialogue forum facilitators at the Martu tables were knowledgeable and experienced in Martu culture. In order to ensure the Martu views would be heard, the views elicited by the separate consultation process were presented to the Dialogue forum prior to the commencement of deliberations. Given the number of Martu tables at the Dialogue, their issues were more often

reflected in the themes of the room. From the facilitator feedback, the Martu tables were pleased to see their views on the large screen.

In the final Preliminary Report which listed the priorities of the whole group the number one issue was improved relationships and opportunities for Indigenous people. This was historically quite significant.

In the Preliminary Report handed to all participants at the conclusion of the forum, the separate consultations conducted with the Martu were briefly reported. In the Final Report that was written following the forum, the full content of the separate Martu consultations was included in the body of the Dialogue findings.

In participation there is a question of who decides which knowledge is important (Kothari 2002). In the Newman Dialogue it became the role of people within Department for Planning and Infrastructure who were not involved with the process to rank the different priorities in one of the versions of the draft final report. The question of scale had been a matter of debate throughout the whole process. For the Martu consultations the regional scale is most appropriate. The Martu relate across the Western Desert as an interconnected whole yet differences exist between communities. This necessitates both a regional and local approach. The Martu had frequently requested a better local government representation and in particular, their own Shire. This has not historically and continues to not fit easily with the State or local government system.

The Final Report that was released resulted in considerable consternation from the local Shire. In the separate consultations, the Martu had prioritised the desire for a Martu Western Desert Shire and also improved communication between the East Pilbara Shire and the Martu. Although the latter issue had been raised at the forum as a theme, the former had not. After reading the Final Report, the East Pilbara Shire wrote to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure demanding that these elements be removed from the Report. The Shire claimed that these issues had not been prioritised at the Dialogue forum. Moreover, they stated the Report would re-invigorate dissention in the community since the issue of a separate Martu shire had already been dismissed.

This appears to represent an attempt by the local Shire to assert control over the Martu domain. Control is generally expressed by some actors and players being in a position to exercise influence on others or on circumstances affecting others. According to Bonell (1999), control comes down to one actor or group exercising power in order to limit the possibility of one or others acting otherwise.

The response from the Murdoch University authors of the Final Report highlighted that since the Martu were a significant percentage of the population, they needed to be heard and that it had been agreed that the Newman Dialogue process would include separate Martu community consultations. At those separate consultations, both issues had been prioritised by the Martu and hence needed to be included in the Final Report.

The issue is still unresolved but it highlights the importance of the relational power processes to demonstrate and focus the rest of the community upon underlying power tensions. This issue can now be pursued politically whereas before the Dialogue it had been never adequately expressed or dealt with. The reaction from the Shire was to try and assert their historical rights over the Indigenous people. Participation can resolve some issues but deeply political issues require a political solution and participation can expose these tensions. The same can be said for Indigenous employment which also has been a long-term issue in the Pilbara region (where Newman is located) but it took the Dialogue process to give it a particular focus for the Martu people. The mining company in Newman were exposed to serious questioning about why Martu people were not being employed by the mine. Indigenous governance and Indigenous employment were raised in their political profile due to the participation process.

Interestingly, in the Newman Dialogue Jigalong (a major Martu settlement) chose not to participate although the chairperson of Jigalong in Newman was interviewed as part of the process. This was enabled through the relational power with the chairperson's kin in Newman. Power is relational and Indigenous people can choose not to take part in government programs (Crawford 1989). The very act of inclusion in participation can be viewed as a form of control. Woods (1999) discusses 'adverse incorporation' in which the act of inclusion is not necessarily of benefit to the group who were previously excluded. Cohen (1985) supports this by stating that inclusionary control can often result in forms of control which reduce spaces of conflict and are thus more difficult to challenge. Exclusion can therefore be empowering and the means of challenging hierarchical structures (Cohen 1985; Wood 1999; Kothari 2002).

Established relationships are important in developing trust and rapport that is necessary for meaningful participation. However in both Dialogues it was only the Martu in Newman who had an established relationship with a person involved in the organisation. In the Western Desert community meetings there was not always enough time to hold many separate meetings required to capture difference. Power structures are easily reproduced within participation and including the local does not always result in a different understanding required for sustainability (Henkel & Stirrat 2002). This may have been the case in both Dialogues though the output suggests the

political results from the Pilbara were much more significant. Relational power for Indigenous people appears to have been more clearly tapped in the Pilbara though it is far from sufficient.

Need for culturally appropriate participatory tools and techniques for Indigenous people — drama, story, song

Participation can be perceived as a stage in which the techniques and tools are chosen by practitioners (Kothari 2002). In many instances participatory methods that are employed may not be suitable for some of the participants. This was the case to a varying extent in both of the Dialogues for the Indigenous participants involved.

In the Dialogue with the City the 21st century town meeting technique involves strict time scheduling, where small groups have between thirty and forty minutes to respond to a question and input their ideas to the table computer. Some of the Indigenous participants said this was not culturally appropriate. They were more used to deliberating until they felt the issue had been exhausted, rather than having artificial time frames. Although this was clearly a methodological downside, the Indigenous tables nonetheless did succeed in providing a wealth of information, and their participant feedback was positive.

In Newman this was also the case. Many of the techniques were inappropriate, particularly within short time frames. In some instances, particularly the ranking of priorities that had been themed from previous sessions, the Martu participants relied completely upon the facilitator's assistance. The data from these sessions is questionable.

There is a need for further experimentation in combining Indigenous facilitation techniques such as story telling, dance, music and song with Western techniques which are based upon literacy and numeracy skills.

Conclusion

The two case studies analysed provide insightful attempts to include the voice of Indigenous people when it comes to planning for the future. The deliberative participatory approach allows in principle for such representation but particular attention needs to be paid to making the process, the representation and the tools used appropriate for Indigenous communities.

The processes implemented to involve Indigenous people in the two Dialogues provide interesting insight into how efforts to enhance inclusiveness, deliberation and influence may still be insufficient to ensure the Indigenous voice is sufficiently powerful to be heard. *Dialogue with the Pilbara: Newman Tomorrow* made a concerted effort to learn from the experience of *Dialogue*

with the City, and had a more deliberative attempt to incorporate Indigenous people. This was enabled by the established relationship with the Martu in Newman which based upon long-term trust and rapport, necessarily for participation, particularly when crossing culture.

Indigenous issues in *Dialogue with the Pilbara: Newman Tomorrow* were more clearly identified and even provided a real challenge to entrenched elites. This is far from being resolved but it showed that the relational power of the Indigenous people had been asserted and heard.

The key findings from this analysis are:

- Indigenous involvement or representation in the design of the Dialogue process can assist in capturing the voice of these communities
- there is need for analysing theme issues at all levels of the discussion; finding communality of themes is often dominated by majority, rather than the importance and extent of the impact a specific issue can have on a particular community
- long-term commitment and relationship with Indigenous communities contributes to the building of trust and desire to communicate
- time constraints are perceived differently by Indigenous people and could impact on the final outcome
- there is need to use alternative culturally appropriate tools and techniques in the Dialogue, such as story telling, songs and drama.

The next steps in taking this further are part of the political process but the Newman Dialogue was able to insert Indigenous issues within the political arena sufficiently to enable the matters to be noticed and the inherent power conflicts to be exposed. Advances in the relational power processes such as the use of more creative techniques would probably work better at demonstrating these tensions.

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