Chapter 6
Regional Delivery of Natural Resource Management in Australia: Is it Democratic and Does it Matter?

Susan A. Moore

Introduction

Australia’s agricultural and pastoral lands face widespread degradation and declining productivity (Wentworth Group 2002). In response, the Australian Government has committed billions of dollars to the regional delivery of natural resource management, where regional groups plan and administer programs to achieve on-ground improvements in land and water management (CoA 2004a), predominantly on private lands. On the basis of these plans, some landholders will be publicly funded and others will miss out.

Given this decision making spends public funds and has equity implications, it is timely to ask ‘are these processes democratic and does it matter?’ To address this question, this chapter begins by overviewing natural resource management in Australia. Specific attention is given to the two most recent programs, the Natural Heritage Trust Extension (NHT Extension) and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) (CoA 2004a). This discussion is set in the context of worldwide trends in regionalism and regionalisation, and placed within the political context of Australia as a third way democracy (Reddel 2004, Giddens 2000). The idea of the ‘demos’ is then introduced, as conceptualised by Dahl (1989) in his work on procedural democracy (Guttmann and Thompson 1995). Using the demos as an analytical lens helps move us beyond the current plethora of work and rhetoric around representation and participation.

The subsequent critique addresses the second part of the question first – does it matter if regional natural resource management processes are democratic? The answer is that it does, given democracy’s place in the Australian psyche and culture, and its centrality in third way politics. Regarding whether these processes are, in fact, democratic, it is clear that the regional groups do not fully represent their demos. As such, they are not democratic. The chapter concludes with comments on how the demos could be better represented. Also included are thoughts on regional delivery of natural resource management as a model for
pluralistic participation in regional development governance, a central theme of this book.

**Regional Natural Resource Management**

Natural resource management (NRM) in Australia has tended to focus on the sustainable management of the land, water and biota of agricultural and pastoral areas, although the definition of natural resources is usually much broader, encompassing marine and other interests. From the mid 1980s, sustainable management of agricultural and pastoral areas received significant levels of funding from the Australian Government, but it wasn’t until the late 1990s that a regional focus became apparent. Over the whole period there has been an ongoing emphasis on involving landholders and government agencies in collective decision making. Most recently, partnerships between governments and communities have dominated regional NRM (see Head, this volume).

*Managing in the 20th Century – Landcare*

Regional delivery of NRM in Australia has its origins in the Landcare activities of the 1980s and 1990s, integrated catchment management (ICM), and the first iteration of the Commonwealth Government’s Natural Heritage Trust in the late 1990s. Landcare began in the Australian state of Victoria in 1986. Two years later the Commonwealth Government committed $360 million to the Decade of Landcare. This program aimed to engage a large portion of the rural population, to produce more informed, skilled and adaptive land managers possessing a stewardship ethic, and facilitate the adoption of sustainable resource management practices (Curtis *et al.* 2002). It initially involved limited funding for education and demonstration activities, rather than large scale, on-ground works. In 1996 both major political parties committed to increased funding for Landcare, including on-ground work on private lands where there were identifiable conservation benefits (Curtis 2003).

Landcare groups formed to access funding and undertake works. Most groups have a membership of 20–30 people (Curtis *et al.* 2002). Membership has been voluntary and the groups are not formally linked to government. Members usually determine group structures, processes and priorities. Although the focus has been activities on lands owned or leased by group members, there has also been work on road sides and other local reserves.

Landcare is regarded as an Australian success story, primarily because of its activation of voluntary, community groups. Although the rhetoric of Landcare has been one of grass roots development, government support has been essential for its successes (Curtis 2003). Commentators (e.g. Curtis 2003, Eckersley 2003) have suggested Landcare was an example of the Commonwealth pushing environmental management onto local communities and private landholders while downsizing
extension support provided by State governments, for agriculture in particular. Concerns have also surfaced regarding the effectiveness of Landcare, in particular that critical habitat continued to be lost. Biodiversity remained a low priority for landholders, with the necessary regional/landscape-level approaches generally not achieved by work at the property level.

The Commonwealth Government Natural Heritage Trust Program (NHT, or simply the Trust), initiated in 1997 and concluded in 2001, addressed this critique in part by allocating significant amounts of money for on-ground works on private lands. Over the four-year program, community-based groups received $1.25 billion to undertake on-ground conservation works. The Trust focused on water, coasts and marine environments, biodiversity and sustainable agriculture. Concern continued to be expressed about the piecemeal nature of the projects, since biodiversity conservation and salinity management require actions across landscapes (CIE and CSIRO 1999). The multiple-small-projects approach of the NHT program resulted in high administrative costs with little funding left for on-ground works (Working with People 2004, Curtis 2003).


In 1999, the Commonwealth Government first proposed delivery of NRM through regional groups (NNRMTF 1999). A regional approach would enable larger-scale projects to be implemented, addressing concerns about the piecemeal approach produced by numerous small projects. The regionally-based National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality Program (NAP) was announced in 2000, involving a package of $1.4 billion from the Commonwealth, States and Territory governments over a period of seven years (CoA 2004b). This program focuses on ameliorating dryland salinity and improving water quality for humans and the environment. These goals are to be achieved by regional communities, in 21 designated priority catchments across Australia (CoA 2004a).

In 2001 an NHT Extension was also announced, to run for five more years (CoA 2004c), with funding of $1.5 billion from the Commonwealth. Its emphases are also regional, with the bulk of funding available to community members being through regional plans. Specifically, the NHT Extension funds (1) regions, based on regional plans, with the States matching the Commonwealth’s investment; (2) projects of national, multi-state or broadscale nature (i.e. funding outside the regional plans); and (3) small, local projects, solely through the Commonwealth Envirofund (CoA 2004a). Biodiversity conservation remains a central focus. In May 2004 the Commonwealth announced the allocation of a further $300 million to this program.

1 In this Australian context, 'State' is used to refer to both State and Territory Governments (Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory).
Both programs are now being implemented in the 56 regions covering Australia. In several States the boundaries of these regions derive in large part from pre-existing regions like catchment management authorities and boards. In other States, boundaries may be based on pre-existing administrative boundaries or developed solely to deliver these programs. Each region is expected to develop a plan which considers all the environmental, social and economic impacts of NRM at a regional level. Responsibility for the development of these plans rests with ‘an organised regional body’ representing the local community, supported by the government, and accountable for expenditure of public monies (CoA 2004a). Funding of regional plans is dependent on their accreditation by the Commonwealth and respective State Ministers. Investment funds can only be released to a region once an investment strategy, based on the regional plan, has been completed (CoA 2004a).

Membership of regional bodies is usually a mix of community and agency representatives (Curtis and Lockwood 2000). Their composition varies from State to State (Ewing 2003) and even within States. In Victoria they have at least one representative of the State government. The remaining members are appointed by the State Minister for Environment and Conservation, based on their skills. At least half of the members must have primary production as their principal occupation (Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 [Victoria]). In Queensland, membership is not prescribed, although it is subject to approval by the relevant Minister.

In Western Australia the selection of members varies between regional groups, and has no legislative basis. The Avon Catchment Council relies on nominations of potential representatives from its three sub-regions and then election by local government and their land management committees. These members represent a geographic area rather than specific interests. The Swan Catchment Council in Western Australia also seeks nominations from sub-regions, plus it has members representing special interests, such as biodiversity and indigenous concerns. Both these regional groups have significant representation by State government (Rockloff 2004).

Local government is increasingly being identified as an important player in the regional delivery of NRM (Anon. 2004). Reasons include local government’s roles as public land managers and controllers of land development, their responsibilities for maintaining the quality of life for their ratepayers, and the opportunities they have to attract funding. Most relevantly, Local government is democratically elected with delegated powers and functions. Local government is accountable both to the people they represent and the legislative requirements of government (Anon. 2004, Dovers 2003), although voter turnout in Australian local government elections is often low.

*Regionalism and Regionalisation*

As in Australia, regional delivery of environmental and broader sustainability programs has also become popular in the European Union and United Kingdom
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(Chatterton 2002, Gibbs 1998). In the United States, ecosystem-based management, centred on large areas of national forest, has been embraced as a way of obtaining environmental outcomes and reducing conflict (Stankey 2003). In Australia, regional delivery can help governments out of a twofold bind. There are now enormous national and international pressures to embrace sustainability. Regionalising, with its promises of self-determination, helps address sustainability demands, as it involves local decision making and local bodies taking responsibility for both economic development and NRM (Haslam McKenzie 2002). At the same time, regionalising provides a framework for progressing the government’s self-help approach to rural sustainability (Gray and Lawrence 2001).

Regional activities may be a product of either regionalism or regionalisation, usually the latter, although sustainability advocates prefer the former. Regionalisation is usually guided by government or industry, with administrative regions formed to improve management efficiency and delivery. Power may be devolved to regional managers. Regionalism, on the other hand, is initiated and developed by community members. It is often multiparty and includes government, communities and industry (Dore et al. 2003, Dore and Woodhill 1999). Both regionalisation and regionalism are seen in Australia (Jennings and Moore 2000), although Australian regions have often been identified and developed for regionalisation purposes (Dale and Bellamy 1998), driven by a regional development agenda. A regionalising approach is clearly not new to the Australian political landscape (Dore et al. 2003, Brown this volume).

Democracy, The Third Way and the Demos

Democracy is a very old word with complex meanings (Williams 1976). The intention here is to describe democracy as realised within the Australian ‘third way’ political landscape and then provide sufficient explanation of the ‘demos’ so that it is possible to analyse whether regional natural resource management is democratic, and what this entails.

Third Way Democracy in Australia

Third way democracy has been enthusiastically and uncritically adopted by the two major political parties in Australia and has fundamentally influenced Commonwealth Government policies since the mid-1990s (Reddel 2004). The third way was first described in 1996 by the American Democrats as a new progressivism (Giddens 2000); it included fiscal discipline, investment in education and training, welfare-to-work schemes and urban renewal schemes. Another central element is an emphasis on effort and responsibility, and less emphasis on rights. The metaphor refers to a third way between old-style social democracy, with its excessive faith in the state, and neo-liberalism with its misplaced trust in the unregulated market (Callinicos 2001).
The argument goes that the third way was needed because the advent of new global markets and the knowledge economy have affected the capacity of national governments to manage economic life and provide an ever-expanding range of social benefits. A new framework was suggested, one that avoids both the bureaucratic, top-down government favored by the old left and the neo-liberal aspirations of the right to dismantle government altogether (Giddens 2000). Welch (2002) also suggests that in the face of globalisation, national governments have retained an active role in the re-scaling of functions, hence the recent interest in regionalisation.

For the 1980s and much of the early part of the 1990s, Australia was gripped by a neo-liberalist mantra, with the associated focus on deregulating markets and reducing the role, size and status of governments (Hood 1995, Mascarenhas 1993, Considine 1988). Through embracing the third way, Australia has moved some way to countering this focus by seeking to address the social problems created by deregulation. This redress is being promulgated through a self-help agenda where individuals must make an effort and take responsibility rather than governments providing welfare support (Gray and Lawrence 2001). This self-help agenda is very apparent in the regional delivery of NRM, especially with regard to community capacity building (CoA 2004b, Reddel 2004).

Under a third way approach, local and regional government are advocated as being able to meet peoples’ needs more effectively than the larger state or national government bureaucracies. Supporters also see an increased role for non-profit voluntary agencies in the delivery of public services (Giddens 2000), including NRM (see Head, this volume). ‘Joined up’ provision of services has become a catch cry of third way advocates, with governments partnering with industry and community groups to provide community services.

Regional delivery of NRM is clearly a third way ‘child’ in a number of ways. It is an effort to govern via formal partnerships between the Commonwealth and State governments and regional groups. The Commonwealth Government has retained a strong directive role in these partnerships, especially through its dominance of accreditation processes and decisions regarding the availability and extent of funding. A reliance on volunteerism is also strongly evident in the regional delivery of NRM. Landholders, although receiving some remuneration for providing public services such as biodiversity conservation and water management activities on their own lands, are also expected to contribute their own resources.

A core goal of the third way is addressing social exclusion (Callinicos 2001), often via emphasizing personal responsibility and providing training and education. Yet addressing social exclusion is one area where the third way has not translated into regional NRM practice. While regional planning identifies the need to include key stakeholders (CoA 2004a), no explicit attention is given to confronting and resolving exclusion from plan preparation and from the benefits flowing from the targeted investments. Although Envirofund offers opportunities for funding for those who miss out in the regional plans, the scale of funding varies
by orders of magnitude. The Envirofund has up to $30,000 available per project (C0A 2004a) compared with millions of dollars for the regional plans.

Defining the Demos

The root meaning of democracy is 'rule by the people'. Central to this ideal are other considerations, such as who rules – who are the people (Dahl 1989) – by what procedures, over what matters, within what limits and with what degree of deliberation. Of particular relevance to the regional delivery of NRM is, Who are the people making the decisions and to whom do these decisions apply? As Dahl (1989: 120) elucidates, 'the demos should include all adults subject to the binding collective decisions of the association'. He also notes that any adult groups not included in the demos will be 'lethally weakened' in defending their own interests (Dahl 1989: 129). Thus, for regional NRM, the membership of the regional groups must reflect the demos for the groups to be regarded as democratic.

Any of those who have the potential to be harmed by a proposal should also be part of the demos. As diverse a representation as possible should be sought (Eckersley 2000). The worth of representation can then be judged by the way in which representatives are selected, who has been elected, and how well they represent the broader interests of society (Williams 1976).

The Australian Regional Forest Agreement process has been criticised, largely because a lack of attention to the demos resulted in the devolution of decision making by the state to civic actors that was 'highly selective and capricious, rather than broad-based and procedurally mandated' (Lane 2003: 291). This process privileged green and timber industry concerns but not others, such as recreationists and indigenous interests. In contrast, the Herbert River Catchment process in northern Queensland has been reported as demonstrating legitimacy 'by the diversity in the representation of catchment interests' (Bellamy and Johnson 2000: 273). Attention to the demos in natural resource management decision making is critical.

Dahl’s (1989) comments on how to identify a proper democratic unit help to refine our understanding and identification of the demos. Criteria for determining its scope and domain include:

1) persons who comprise the democratic unit can be clearly bounded;
2) people in the domain strongly desire political autonomy;
3) people in the domain want to use democratic processes to govern themselves;
4) it does not violate fundamental rights and values;
5) the interests of those in the unit are significantly affected by decisions;
6) consensus will be higher if this unit of delineation is chosen; and
7) gains will outweigh the costs.

Dahl noted that if its scope and domain are not justifiable then it can not be made right simply by democratic procedures.
Criteria (1), (4), and (5) are used below to analyse how well the regional NRM groups represent their demos. Criteria (2) and (3) were not used because they rely on personal reflections. Criterion (7) was omitted because it is impossible to tell yet whether the gains of regional NRM will outweigh the costs. Criterion (6) was omitted because of the controversy surrounding whether consensus is ideal (see Chowcat 2000, Young 1997).

Regional Natural Resource Management and the Demos – An Analysis

Regional NRM and Democracy – Does it Matter?

Does it matter if regional delivery is democratic? Yes it does, for several reasons. First and foremost, it is important because Australia has a democratic system of governance. Australian governments also remain firmly committed to the third way with its emphasis on civic society and making democracy more democratic (Giddens 2000). The question then becomes ‘should regional delivery of NRM be regarded as a governance issue?’ The Commonwealth Government is clearly concerned about governance, for example stating that regional bodies must represent and be accountable to the local community (CoA 2004a). The required breadth of this representation is less clear, however, with the bilateral agreements specifying consultation with key, rather than all, stakeholders.

Second, the investments being made in the regional plans derive from revenue raised by the Commonwealth and State governments. As such, the demos from whom these monies have been obtained might reasonably expect to have some say in how it is spent. At other scales, such as State government, this is achieved by voters voting in and out elected representatives and in so doing influencing the types of policies implemented. It is also possible to lobby local members of parliament or portfolio ministers and influence the activities of public sector portfolios.

Third, these regional plans have equity consequences for the associated regional communities. Some groups and individuals will receive funding while others will not (CoA 2004c). For these investment decisions to be accepted, the process itself must be regarded as fair (Smith and McDonough 2001). A key to this is properly recognising and involving the demos. The last and closely related reason is that regional delivery of NRM involves predominantly privately owned lands. Where private groups and individuals stand to benefit (or not gain) from public funding, the associated decisions must be perceived as fair.

Regional NRM – Is it Democratic?

For regional NRM, the demos is all those affected or likely to be affected by regional NRM decision making and subsequently by implementation of the
regional plans. Do the regional groups currently represent their demos? Dahl’s (1989) criteria can be used to help answer this question. Using Criterion 1, Persons who comprise the unit can be clearly bounded, we see that members of each regional group are drawn predominantly from their region, except government agency representatives and those members representing broader interests, such as biodiversity. As such, the existing membership suggests that a clearly bounded unit, based on the region as a geographic entity, exists. Such a conclusion is misleading, however, as those comprising the unit cannot be clearly bounded as they exist beyond the geographic and temporal boundaries of the region, across society and into the future, and well beyond the current membership of the regional groups.

For many regional groups, interests outside the region are not included, for example those with concerns regarding how public funds are being used, those involved in cross-boundary issues, or with biodiversity and indigenous interests. Also un-represented are future generations and non-human objects (Dobson 1996), with the latter also being unacknowledged by Dahl (1989) in his consideration of the demos. As such, although the existing, regionally derived membership of these groups has a clear boundary (the requirement for Criterion 1), such representation is flawed because the demos for regional groups extends well beyond the region, in both space and time.

The regional groups do not violate fundamental rights and values, thereby satisfying Dahl’s (1989) Criterion 4. As an expression of ‘third way’ regional governance, the regional groups provide a good example of how civil society may be enhanced through regional devolution of decision making. In terms of the representation of interests (Criterion 5: Interests of those in the unit are significantly affected by decisions), the analysis becomes more complex and interesting. The regional groups are currently dominated by landholders, with the residents of rural towns, those with marine interests, indigenous people, women, and conservation groups, all under-represented (Bates 2003, Curtis et al. 2002). Landholders are key members of these groups as they will be responsible for implementing the NRM work. While the regional groups must include representatives of landholders, both those likely and unlikely to receive funding, they must also include and represent the other elements of the demos.

One way of representing broader societal interests and those unable to represent themselves is to rely on public servants. Environmental groups have also been suggested as representatives for the latter group (Dobson 1996). State actors can also contribute as arbitrators or mediators if there are disputes between multiple parties (Lane 2003, Agrawal 2000). Ongoing government involvement in environmental decision making has been identified in a number of studies (e.g. Bingham 1986) as the most important contributor to successful outcomes.

The Commonwealth, State and Local governments have various powers and authority that they bring to new regional NRM delivery processes. They have the ability to potentially affect as well as be affected by the decisions of the regional groups. Dahl’s (1989) fifth criterion can usefully be expanded to ask ‘who has the
power or authority to make, manage, and enforce decisions (Agrawal 2000)? and then ensure that this expanded demos is represented in the regional groups. The Commonwealth Government has been instrumental in initiating and progressing regional delivery of NRM in Australia. They are a key partner, through accreditation of regional plans, being a signatory to bilateral agreements with regional bodies, and releasing investment funds to regions, plus providing ongoing advice and input to regional planning and NRM.

The State governments are expected to work with regional groups to prepare the regional plans, and are part of the Commonwealth accreditation process and subsequent bilateral agreements with the regional bodies. Most regional NRM groups include State government representatives. Most of the technical information and the decision making systems are held by State government departments. And a large part of the success of Landcare has been attributed to State government involvement (Curtis et al. 2002). Local government is also regarded as a critical stakeholder in regional NRM (Anon. 2004). Their role is still evolving. Dovers (2003) commented that those crafting the governance arrangements for regional NRM would do better to look towards the democratic basis of local government rather than favouring boards where members are selected by a Minister.

Caution must, however, also accompany involvement by state actors. Members of the Commonwealth and State governments have access to power and resources outside regions that may not be accessible to community members. Catchment management authorities (the precursors to regional-NRM groups in some Australian States) had less access to resources, knowledge and influence than state agencies, officials or university researchers (Eckersley 2003). Asymmetrical power relationships generally exist between governments and communities (Agrawal 2000). Such imbalances may result in state actors pushing their own agendas rather than working collaboratively to realise community aspirations. Imbalances may also be used to block or impede community planning efforts. Or, they may lead to state responsibilities becoming privatised (Ewing 2003), as has been the case with the Victorian catchment management authorities becoming responsible for waterway and floodplain management. Communities may become agents of the government (Everingham 2001).

An important question for the demos, beyond the criteria provided by Dahl (1989), is whether members should solely represent interests (as per Criterion 5) or whether membership should also take into account skills and competencies (Stock and Moore 1999). Using a representative-democracy-based argument, individuals must be representatives of other individuals and/or groups. If, however, deliberation is to be part of the democratic process, then these individuals must be competent as well, so they can deliberate on behalf of, as well as being accountable to, their constituency (Gutmann 1993). Regional groups currently use a mixture of approaches, although appointed members are often there for their skills and competencies more than as a representative of a particular constituency. Ideally, individuals will be both representative and competent in key areas.
Conclusion – Constructing the Future

Defining and Representing the Regional Natural Resource Management Demos

The regional NRM groups do not satisfy Dahl's (1989) criteria in terms of the demos being clearly bounded and defined and including all those whose interests are significantly affected. If having the demos properly identified and represented is critical for democracy (Eckersley 2000, Guttmann 1993, Dahl 1989, Williams 1976), then the regional NRM groups are not democratic. Broadening representation will result in a greater diversity of interests, which is potentially beneficial (Agrawal 2000, Young 1997). Such differences can provide a resource for reasoned decision making (Young 1997). Only by paying attention to differences, and how they affect resource management outcomes, local politics and interactions within communities, will local decision making for sustainable NRM be possible (Agrawal 2000).

Government agencies are critical members of the demos, particularly State government: 'The whole process will sink or swim, dependent on agency support' (Working With People 2004: 20). State government agencies are not only members of most regional groups, they have provided most of the data and technical expertise needed to prepare the regional plans. For a number of groups, they have also facilitated meetings and helped design and conduct the public consultation required as part of finalising the plans. Everingham (2001) argues that an active state, even where there are community-centred governance arrangements, has an ongoing obligation to work with community groups to help manage externalities such as globalisation. The state can also help groups consider the common good beyond their more immediate regional concerns (Redcl 2004).

Crucial roles for government members include arbitrating where there are disagreements between members or within communities, and representing, by proxy, those outside the region or unable to speak on their own behalf (Dobson 1996). Local government has a special role – not only do they already have democratic processes in place at the regional level, they also represent various constituencies that can in turn be represented on the regional groups. The central place of local government in environmental management is increasingly being acknowledged and accepted (Binning et al. 1999). The typically low turnout at local government elections may, however, mitigate the degree of legitimacy afforded them as a representative institution.

Who else should the demos include? Residents of rural towns, those with marine interests, indigenous people, women, and environmental groups (Bates 2003, Curtis et al. 2002) may all be part of the regional NRM demos. Dobson (1996) identified benefits from including environmental groups because they could act as proxies for future generations and non-human species. They can also provide national through to international perspectives on regional NRM activities.
Regional Natural Resource Management as a Model for Pluralistic Participation in Regional Development Governance

Regional delivery of NRM in Australia is a nationwide effort to move towards more sustainable land and water management practices. It parallels regional efforts elsewhere to progress sustainable development (Chatterton 2002, Gibbs 1998) and provides a working model of how sustainable development may be pursued through a predominantly regional focus. It can also contribute to broader regional development outcomes, with commentators increasingly recognising sustainability as being central to regional development (ISRD 2004).

The efforts to establish participatory processes for regional NRM also provide a potential model for engaging a plurality of interests in decision making. If the concerns raised in this chapter about the demos can be addressed, then regional delivery of NRM could provide a model for other sectors to emulate in their work in decentralised and community settings. In Australia, having such models is critical, given this country’s enthusiasm for third way democracy, with its focus on regional governance and social inclusion (Reddel 2004).

To achieve recognition of the demos and of its importance in decision making, requires knowledge of governance and the associated principles of democracy. Currently, the capacity-building efforts of the Australian Government are focused elsewhere. Where governance is mentioned as part of the regional delivery of NRM, the discussion is restricted to water rights, land clearing and market-based instruments (CoA 2004b). A recent study of community group engagement in NRM (Anon. 2004), identified two governance elements as critical to the success of regional NRM – decision-making processes and partnerships. Associated issues included community groups feeling alienated from the current approach to NRM, lacking interest in regional planning, and not being sure who should be engaged and for what purposes. As such, capacity building provided by the Commonwealth Government for regional groups (and associated State agencies) could usefully be directed towards governance training and the development of mechanisms, approaches and styles that make democratic practice possible.

Regional groups are only one element of the complex multi-level governance associated with NRM in Australia. This complexity is not unique to NRM, but rather characterises many policy domains today. Third way advocates clearly identify this multi-level approach and recognise regional initiatives as one of a number of layers of governance delivered by both the public and private sectors (Callinicos 2001, Giddens 2000). As such, regional delivery, although important, is not the only point of entry and influence. The judgment that it is the only point for community engagement has contributed to the unrealistic expectations placed upon it (Rockloff 2004). In reality, there are a number of demos coalescing around different points of entry to NRM decision making. To ensure that the abilities and resources of those who engage in NRM activities are not wasted (Warren 1996), care should be given to locate and engage the most appropriate demos for the issue at hand.
References


