

Participatory Development for Regional Sustainability in Western Australia: An Enabling State?

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Abstract

Sustainability requires integration of social, economic and ecological spheres and equitable participation in decision making. Regionally specific sustainability processes that account for diverse environments and populations, including indigenous are required. An international participatory paradigm provides a broad philosophy and includes an array of concepts and methods for local and regional communities in partnership with government to facilitate regional processes. To achieve this, a coordinated commitment to an enabling government structure, sustainability principles and in particular a participatory philosophy, by the State and local governments is necessary. This will require a transformation of the public service from a director of passive programs and laws to a facilitator of community projects and outcomes, towards an enabling state. Participatory methodologies have been utilised successfully around the globe to create an institutional framework that facilitates a process of dialogue, partnership, networking, learning and managing change. This paper examines the potential contribution of a participatory approach as the means to improve the participatory capacity of regional communities and both local and State Government towards the facilitation of regional sustainability processes.

Keywords: enabling government, facilitation, participatory methods

Introduction

Around the globe, a crisis of legitimacy exists between bureaucratic government structures and their citizenry. There is a growing consensus regarding the need for both an active and engaged civil society and an accountable and responsive state to resolve this crisis (Commonwealth Foundation 1999). However, the normal bureaucratic tendency is to standardize, centralize and impose top-down targets and thus impede or prevent the open-endedness, flexibility, creativity and diversity of civil society and for the growth of participatory development (Chambers 1994). In Australia there is a need to transform the public service from a director of passive programs and laws to a facilitator of community projects and outcomes, towards an enabling state (Botsman & Latham 2001).

A paradigm of participatory development has been observed within international development theory and practice since the 1980s. This is changing the lens of development from modernization through infrastructure to people, participation and empowerment (Chambers 1997; Hamdi & Goethert 1997; Shephard 1998). Participatory Learning and Action are a family of methodologies within this paradigm that facilitate processes of inclusive and participatory democracy within civil society and encourage the necessary and complementary institutional change (Cornwell & Geventa 2001).

Sustainability can only be understood as time and place specific and this requires a participatory approach (Pretty 1995). It also requires recognition of ecological, social and economic spheres as integrated and interdependent. A sub national regional scale for implementing sustainable change that is proactive and reflexive in its approach is necessary (Gray & Lawrence 2001; Government of Western Australia 2002; Jenkins et al. 2003). The idea of regional sustainability acknowledges that local issues and local participation are fundamental to sustainability. It is also recognised that regional Western Australia, when defined as the area outside of Perth, has diverse sustainability issues that are often different to those experienced in an urban context. In recent years the idea of regional sustainability has been included within the State Sustainability Strategy as an important component of Western Australian sustainability (Government of Western Australia 2002).

This paper examines the potential contribution of a participatory approach to improve the participatory capacity of local communities and both State and local governments towards regional sustainability. It firstly outlines the context and rationale for regional sustainability in Western Australia. The next section provides an overview of an international participatory paradigm, conceptual framework and participatory methods. The last section of the paper analyses the applicability of this paradigm and associated concepts and methods for regional sustainability in Western Australia. In accordance with international experience, the focus of this last section is on the change required within government structures and its institutional philosophy.

A Context for Regional Sustainability in Western Australia

In Western Australia, only 28% of the population lives outside of Perth, yet the vast majority of the State's land is rural and remote from townships (Patterson Market Research 1999). Regional (i.e. non-capital city) Australia in general suffers disproportionately from ecological problems such as salinity, social problems such as youth suicide and population decline, and economic problems such as lack of employment, service withdrawal and declining terms of trade (Lawrence et al. 1993; Jones & Tonts 1995; Gray & Lawrence 2001; National Heritage Trust 2002). Additionally, Davis (2001) cites evidence for an overall trend of decline in trust in government and participation in civic life.

The Western Australian Draft State Sustainability Strategy (Government of Western Australia 2002) proposes Regional Sustainability Strategies as a mechanism to enable regional sustainability and address economic, ecological, social and political issues. It is suggested that Regional Sustainability Strategies enable processes of change with the integration of economic, social and ecological factors at the regional level through community participation.

The overall objective of regional sustainability strategies in the Draft State Sustainability Strategy are:

- Applying the principles of sustainability as articulated in Draft State Sustainability Strategy at a regional level,
- Enabling Western Australian regions to develop more sustainability; and
- Facilitating processes that may enhance regional sense of place over the long and short term (Government of Western Australia 2002:60).

In Western Australia, a complex melange of national and global trends blend with local histories and social, ecological and economic issues to create regionally specific sustainability issues. These are discussed in Armstrong (forthcoming). Non-metropolitan regions are experiencing the influences of global change differently. Diverse regional and local circumstances, such as local

and regional industries, levels of economic diversity, environmental degradation issues, socio-cultural or demographic composition of the regional population and the history of the region, all affect the influences of global and national factors.

In the context of globalisation there is a re-emergence of sub national regions as important drivers of change (McGee et al. 2001). As national market intervention is scaled down regions are competing in both national and international contexts (McKinsey & Co 1994:19). In Australia, the forces of economic globalisation and federal government led market liberalisation policies have intensified the experience of spatial inequalities in wealth (Stilwell 2000).

Ecologically, it is the regional level where society–environment interactions occur that facilitate or obstruct sustainability. There is a growing awareness that regional strategies for natural resource management are most effective (Dore & Woodhill 1999). As the long-term sustainability of a region depends on its ability to support itself, and make best use of its natural and human resources, an empowered community with a strong regional identity, or ‘sense of place’ has been suggested as a necessity for regional sustainability (German Ministry for Education and Research 2000).

It is this spatial variation in social, ecological and economic issues that makes a regional approach to sustainability important (McManus & Pritchard 2001). This is particularly the case in Western Australia where size and population dispersal mean that neither local nor state governments can respond adequately to regional sustainability challenges. However a definition of regions for the purpose of regional sustainability is yet to emerge, as is the clear articulation of a process through which regional sustainability strategies may be developed.

Defining Regions

Complexity and ambiguity are inherent in the idea of a region, which is essentially a social construction of space. It may be a space for economic, social or ecological relationships, for government administration, or a political entity, or “constructed from the confluence of (these) differing concepts of space” (Keating 2003:256). While the term regional in Australia is frequently used to describe the area outside of capital cities, it is also used to describe a potential geographical space, including for the purpose of regional sustainability strategy development in Western Australia.

Some definitions of regions as particular scales of interaction include:

- An area “that is meaningful to all the likely stakeholders and one that is practical for management purposes... (that) reflect(s) the environment and natural resource management issues of concern to stakeholders in the region” (National Heritage Trust 1998:4);
- The bioregion, “a geographic space that contains one whole or several nested ecosystems, characterised by its landforms, vegetative cover, human culture and history as is identified by local communities, government agencies and scientists”.(Miller 1996:11);
- The ecoregion, “a relatively large unit of land or water containing a characteristic set of natural communities that share a large majority of their species, dynamics, and environmental conditions (Olsen & Dinerstein 1998:3);
- Agglomerations of local government units;
- Administrative or electoral, statistical divisions;

- Areas with economic or industrial linkages, social or cultural linkages (Dore & Woodhill 1999).

Gray and Lawrence (2001:2) conceptualise regions as “that part of Australia and its population which has a distinctive relationship, sometimes incompletely described as dependency, with metropolitan Australia”. Here it is inferred that centralised decision making by state and federal government at least partially determines the socio-economic climate in regional Australia. It is this type of relationship between centralised government structures and the diverse areas that they serve that may potentially be addressed through the development of regional sustainability strategies.

In Western Australia there is currently no clear governance structure for regional development. Nine Regional Development Commissions have a statutory function to coordinate and facilitate regional economic development in nine administrative regions (Western Australian Regional Development Council 2001), yet have been criticised for having arbitrary boundaries, and being unable to attract grass roots support or enable broad participation (Beer & Maude 1996). Additionally, regional organisations of local councils have been created for a variety of purposes (Western Australian Local Government Association 2003). Particular Regional Development Commissions, including the Peel Development Council and Regional Associations of Local Government such as the North East Wheatbelt Regional Organisation of Councils have begun regional sustainability processes (Local Government Focus 2002; Peel Development Commission 2002). However, there is no Western Australia-wide framework through which regional sustainability may be implemented.

Governments have typically created regions to enable decentralisation of their functions. Regionalisation of government agencies however is not undertaken with a standard approach so that regional boundaries differ from department to department and are not necessarily compatible with regional sustainability. Regionalism, has been defined as “regional communities having greater influence over and participating more directly in the decision making that impacts their regions and their futures; the phenomena of increased attention to the regional scale and consequent regional initiatives, and the general trend towards greater stakeholder participation, often resulting in partnerships between the community, industry and governments” (Dore & Woodhill 1999:vi).

International Participatory Development

A participatory approach has the potential to improve the participatory capacity of all stakeholders.

A Participatory Paradigm

A paradigm of participatory development has been well documented within international development theory and practice since the 1980s. A development paradigm is defined by Chambers (1997) as a coherent and mutually supporting pattern of concepts, values, methods and behaviour amenable to wide application. This development paradigm is detailed by Shephard (1998) as a movement away from industrial technology to organic/holistic, profit to sustainable improvement, technocratic/exclusive to participatory/inclusive process, resource control large institutions to locally managed common property.

This participatory paradigm evolved from the theoretical traditions of critical and interpretative social science and has been further developed by feminism and post-modernism. In a critique of

the positivist Cartesian philosophy these traditions recognize that knowledge is a form of power that is socially constructed by changing social and historical processes, relations, perspectives and interpretations and instead emphasize the need for multiple discourses, collaborative and non-exploitative relations, the placement of the researcher within the study and a praxis that is transformative and emancipative (Herron 1996; Schulz et al. 1998; Neuman 2000).

This participatory paradigm is perceived as a “learning process (that) is essentially undetermined and open-ended, ie., there is no advance blueprint” (Bergesen & Lunde 1999). Chambers (1997:197) comments that the participatory “evolving paradigm is more like a living thing which grows, changing form to fit its changing environment, flexible, able to yield and able to expand”.

A Conceptual Framework

Within the participatory development paradigm a number of inter-related concepts have gained prominence in practice and publication. A conceptual framework is outlined below with the purpose of framing the discussion in the following section of the paper regarding participatory development in Western Australia. This framework has been discussed previously in Mc Grath (2001)

- ***Participation***

Participation within development consolidates the foundations for long-term sustainable and stable development and democracy. Sustainability can only be achieved by people themselves, representation and involvement in decision making, action and outcomes are regarded as essential (Slim 1995). Four factors that signify participation in development include (Gow & Vansant 1983):

- People organise best around problems that they consider to be important;
- Local people make rational economic decisions in the context of their own environment and circumstances;
- Voluntary local commitment of labour, time, material and money to a project;
- Local control over the amount, quality and especially the distribution of benefits becoming self-sustaining.

Participation is a highly contested term with multiple interpretations that range from manipulative participation, consultative participation, interactive participation to self-mobilisation which involves empowerment (Pretty 1995; Sarkissian et al. 1997). As a method of change, participation is a means to develop the voice and organisational capacities of those who have been previously excluded. The methodology exists as an exploratory and experimental prefiguration of a future society which will be based upon new and perhaps unconceived principles of social, economic and political organisation (Kaufman 1997). Rahman warns of attempts to place participatory theory, and in this case policy, too much ahead of practice. Instead society should evolve into a participatory framework via a *dialogical method of inquiry* between ways of knowing, being and doing. This in itself is associated with solutions to dilemmas and obstacles to participation specifically, and more generally to the concepts of democracy and sustainable development (Rahman 1993).

- **Facilitation**

The role of the 'facilitator' is an essential element of participatory development. Facilitative skills include patience, listening, flexibility, networking and a self-awareness (Sirolli 1995; Connell 1997). The phasing out of the facilitator is the ultimate goal. A successful facilitator is the one who is able to encourage independence and self-reliance. This should take place progressively in which the facilitative focus begins to include wider areas where communities are linked in a process of building broader structures and coordinating mechanisms (Rahman 1993).

A facilitative approach is required within a process of participatory development that includes self-mobilised participation, community controlled capacity building, empowerment, networking and conflict resolution (Welbourne 1993; Shephard 1998).

- **Capacity building**

Capacity can be described as the 'ways and means needed to do what has to be done' (Wood et al. 2002). Capacity building includes training and other methodologies of social, political and economic empowerment through which to help people develop the confidence and skills necessary for them to achieve organisational capacity (Warburton 1998) and thus partner government in a system of mutual accountability.

In this regard capacity building should ideally focus upon:

1. Decentralisation of the management of resources upon which communities depend and the development of the means in which communities may participate and influence the decision making over the use of these resources;
2. The promotion of citizen initiatives;
3. The empowerment of peoples' organisations;
4. The strengthening of local democracy and thus participation;
5. Creation of employment and economic opportunities;
6. Achieving social, economic, cultural and environmental goals (Warburton 1998; Frank & Smith 1999)

- **Empowerment**

Empowerment is a process that ultimately cannot be imposed by outsiders although external support and facilitation may encourage and potentially speed up the process (Rowlands 1995). An empowerment approach followed by communities themselves and facilitated by government and non-government agencies is a powerful force that has the potential to insert these communities into a participatory development process as agents of transformative change, rather than as beneficiaries of it (Connell 1997).

Marsden and Oakley (1990) comment upon the quantitative elements that an empowerment methodology of assistance encourages, such as possession and control over economic and social resources, and the qualitative elements, such as organisation, social awareness and self-reliance. These factors contribute respectively to quantitative development, economic productivity and growth, in addition to qualitative development, social and political infrastructure (Marsden & Oakley 1990).

- **Networking**

Networks are found within civil society (Shephard 1998) and between civil society, industry and government. The network society has resulted in a fundamental change in the way that power is conceived and understood, such that it is no longer only found in command and hierarchy but is also generated in the practice of horizontal cooperation within networks (Marschall 1999).

Collaboration and co-ordination are essential features within a participatory development process. A network approach to organisational and institutional structures better enables these features to grow from the community level up (Latham 2001). Organisational principles in this regard as detailed by Lipnack and Stamps (1994) include a unifying purpose, independent members, voluntary links, multiple leaders and integrated levels.

The Network society has emerged in an environment of information and technology communication (ITC) networks. As these networks have expanded, they have challenged traditional hierarchical models to respond by flattening into diffused, horizontal structures of decision-making in which traditional hub models are evolving into interconnected webs of collaboration (Marschall 1999). Ensuring equitable access to ITC networks is problematic, particularly in the remote setting.

- **Conflict Resolution**

Vested interests are often threatened by an empowerment approach and this can create conflict. A participatory approach also tends to challenge the myth of the homogenous 'community' with conflicts of interest being more clearly identified. However, whilst participatory approaches reveal conflicts they are also a potential mechanism for resolving them. Welbourne (1993) believes that a participatory approach holds great potential for conflict resolution because of the emphasis on communication. Mukherjee (1996) argues that the building of better relationships enables the clarification of misconceptions which are often the source of the conflict (Welbourne 1993; Mukherjee 1996; Holland & Blackburn 1998).

Participatory Methods

Participatory Learning and Action are a family of methodologies within the participatory paradigm that facilitate processes of inclusive and participatory democracy within civil society and encourage the necessary and complementary institutional change (Cornwell & Geventa 2001). The principles in common include:

- A systematic learning process;
- Multiple perspectives; group learning process;
- Context specific;
- Facilitating experts and stakeholders; and
- Leading to sustained action (Pretty 1995).

Participatory Action Research or Action Planning is a particularly useful approach that includes both action and the participation of disenfranchised groups, analyses power differentials and investigates the need for structural change (Hamdi & Goethert 1997; Schulz et al. 1998).

These methods thus provide the practical means in which to achieve the general philosophy and conceptual framework of participatory development at both a community and also institutional level.

International lessons for Western Australia: An Enabling State?

Participatory development has been the focus of international development for many decades and the lessons from this experience are useful for the further development of participation in Western Australia, with particularly reference in this paper to regional sustainability. International experience demonstrates that a participatory and facilitative approach and associated methodologies at the community level have the potential to strengthen community participation and empowerment, local capacity in accordance with local requirements, resolve conflict and encourage the growth of civil and industry networks to build coalitions and partner government.

Western Australian Regional Participatory Development

There currently exists a strong foundation of policy, industry and community support for participatory initiatives within Western Australia to further develop participatory development for regional sustainability. This requires further development; particularly towards a facilitative model. An analysis of these is provided in the following discussion.

- ***Participation***

It is well recognised within Western Australian and Commonwealth governments that regional development strategies will require a participatory focus (Department of Commerce and Trade 1999). Engaging regional communities in decisions that affect them is essential (Stone & Hughes 2001). The idea of participation is supported at the State level by the work of the Western Australian Citizens and Civic Unit at the Department of Premier and Cabinet which is exploring the ideals of active citizenship and community participation in decision making and aims to promote:

- Active citizenship;
- Community-government dialogue;
- A participatory and partnership approach to government; and
- To value diversity in citizenship (Government of Western Australia 2003).

However, how these ideas are to be enacted, ideally facilitated at the local or regional level is not clear within this documentation. In addition careful attention needs to be assigned to the form of participation that is facilitated by this approach. In this regard a distinction can be made between participation that maintains the dominant hierarchy of power and thus the current distribution of control over economic and political resources and participation that transforms it (Shephard 1998).

Goodall and Lucas (1997) assert that actions towards sustainability will be based upon the different beliefs or worldviews of diverse regional communities. The attitudes that people hold towards diverse factors like landscapes, lifestyle, social networks and individual identity inform their conception of sustainability. Sustainability will thus emerge out of place. Encouraging sustainability planning to emerge out of place, and the ideals and visions of regional communities in a manner that enables participation will require transformation of the state government (Barns 1997) A truly participative approach requires government structures and ethos that enable community participation that is self-mobilised and sustained, rather than impede it, which is typically the case (Latham 2001).

- ***Facilitation***

International experience observes a shortage of trained personal, social mobilisers or community organisers to facilitate a participatory approach at the community or regional level (Thompson 1998). These facilitators are an essential element to a participatory development process. Government field staffs tend to be poorly paid and trained and face a top-heavy bureaucracy (Shephard 1998). Non-government social entrepreneurs tend to bypass government in Australia because of its inflexible structures (Latham 2001). Such issues are documented in the Peel region of Western Australia (Lucks & Durak 2001; Peel Development Commission 2002). Given the geographical context and the structures of government in Western Australia it would be reasonable to assume that these constraints exist across government. An increase in the number of trained facilitators either within government or non-government agencies is required for participatory development generally.

- ***Capacity building and Empowerment***

The Framework for Cooperation on Regional Development was developed in 2000 between State, Federal and Local governments. This outlines a commitment from all spheres of government to regional development that promotes ecological, social, cultural and economic wellbeing, through cooperation between spheres of government, and with regions. Developing capacity to adjust to change, to develop and retain business and enhance economic diversity and to provide essential infrastructure and investment for development are key areas of cooperation (Department of Transport and Regional Services 2002). Specific responsibilities are set for Federal and State governments in regional development with the primary responsibility being allocated to State governments. Minimising overlap between government programs and encouraging co-ordination, empowerment of regional communities through capacity building and leadership development, cooperation between government and private sectors, building on existing programs for government service delivery, increasing competitive and comparative advantage in regional areas and consultation between spheres of government on decisions and to share best practice are principles for cooperation in regional development (Department of Transport and Regional Services 2002).

Regional capacity building, a key feature of the above Framework, is best defined as the ability of a regional community, which includes industry, to pursue its own development through strategies which empower, motivate and enable regional communities and the provision of skills, resources, networks and information. The role of government in capacity building is to provide opportunities and encourage participation (Department of Commerce and Trade 1999).

As for participation, a process of capacity building needs to focus upon whose capacity is being built, for whom and who controls the process (Warburton 1998). Local organisations would ideally manage resources according to their own rules (Gaventa 1998). Shephard (1998) believes that a facilitative approach to the development of organisations is required. This facilitative approach is most certainly the case within Western Australia in order to ensure the success of community controlled capacity building.

- ***Networking and Conflict Resolution***

A network approach will require a consolidated focus upon increasing the organisational capacity of civil society, industry and government to participate and develop partnerships and coalitions. This will require conflict resolution to enhance cooperation and collaboration. Networks that enhance the relationships between inter and intra regional spatial differentiations

are a critical factor for participatory development and sustainability (Arndt et al. 2000). A diversity of networks currently exists in regional Western Australia (Department of Commerce and Trade 1999) at both the community, industry and government levels. The further development of these networks is a key strategy within the Western Australian Community Leadership Plan (Department of Local Government and Regional Development 2003). A partnership approach between community, industry and government is a key feature of the Draft Regional Policy Statement (Department of Local Government and Regional Development 2002). The success of a networking and partnership approach will require a change in the broader structures and ethos of Government in which change and flexibility is encouraged (Gaventa 1998) and coordination is the result.

Local governments are identified as key players in the regional sustainability process in the Western Australian Draft State Sustainability Strategy in which a partnership approach is envisaged between State and local government, civil society and industry to implement sustainability (Government of Western Australia 2002). A model of polycentric government has been proposed within the international domain in which local government is one actor in a network of actors of equal status, sharing governance with community bodies and with decentralised arms of central government (Shephard 1998). Currently in Australia the distribution of power between state and local governments is such that local government is constrained. This is supported by (Beer 2000) who states that “Regionalism in Australia has suffered from the strength of state governments on the one hand and the weakness of local government on the other” (Beer 2000 cites Mal Logan 1978:23). The model of polycentric government may be of some benefit in the Western Australian context.

International Participatory Development Lessons: An Enabling State

It has become increasingly documented within international development practice that the hierarchical and top-heavy nature of bureaucratic institutions such as government, combined within the bureaucratic tendency to standardize, centralize and impose top-down targets impedes or prevents the open-endedness, flexibility, creativity and diversity of civil society and the growth of participatory development (Chambers 1994). The project or programme approach typical of bureaucracies exacerbates these tendencies (Leurs 1998).

It is an inherent danger within a participatory approach that the concepts within the participatory paradigm are easily co-opted to serve the powerful and vested interests, which may include a well-intentioned public service. The power differentials between communities at whatever scale and their bureaucratic governments and between structures of government itself are a major impediment to participatory development. The key elements to power in this regard are influence, authority and decision-making and access, control and ownership over funding and knowledge (Leurs 1998). This is supported by the Australian experience (Latham 2001)

Institutional change within government has therefore become a focus of participatory efforts within the international development domain to complement the previous focus upon community-based approaches and to negate the potential for co-option. This has been previously outlined by McGrath (2001). Thus it is now recognised that a participatory approach requires a complementary focus upon government and civil society (Cornwell & Geventa 2001) and in regards to sustainability will also require strategies to partner industry. A focus upon institutional transformation in government as a process rather than an outcome is required in Western Australia to enable a facilitative approach by government and non-government agencies towards community and industry participation.

Thompson (1998) argues that it is possible to alter the operational procedures and institutional cultures of centralized, bureaucratic institutions but this is not easy nor is it quickly achieved. Some of the key elements required for government to become a strategic, enabling institution are:

1. a policy framework supportive of a clear role for local communities;
2. strong leadership committed to developing learning-organisational systems, capacities and working rules;
3. long-term financial commitments and flexible funding arrangements;
4. better systems of monitoring and evaluating performance, and new mechanisms for ensuring accountability, both to policy and to communities;
5. attention and patience in working out the details of systems and procedures, with lessons learnt from pilot projects, and the negotiation and accommodation of different interests and perceptions;
6. creative management, so that improved policies, procedures and field practices, once developed, can be scaled-up and implemented effectively;
7. and open, supportive yet challenging organisational climate in which it is safe to experiment and fail;
8. small, interdisciplinary teams or working groups of innovative and committed agency professionals working in collaboration with external resource persons capable of acting as catalysts for change (unbundling hierarchy);
9. regular documentation and analysis of lessons for improving practice and building and institutional memory;
10. a flexible, integrated, phased training programme over a sustained period of time, involving key actors at different levels (Shephard 1998; Thompson 1998).

In a critique of the Australian context, Latham (2001:248) describes the enabling state as “a facilitator of community projects and social outcomes... a funder and enabler of public services, with the management and control of these projects devolved to the institutions of civil society... a process, as a way of encouraging communities of interest and mutual forms of political action”. The guiding principles of an enabling state include:

1. Look to community-led solutions: to devolve power to communities and build social capital and capacity;
2. Learn from social practitioners who create networks of practical innovation and apply the skills of social work and entrepreneurialism to disadvantaged communities;
3. Enable the poor to do more towards self-help, creativity and achievement;
4. Flatten hierarchies and liberate people such that public governance is transformed to become a network of semi-autonomous service providers, linked to the regulatory and funding functions of government such that new connections between citizens and communities are enabled;
5. Keep on boundary crossing through collaborative partnerships that effectively integrate the traditional silos of government, focus on locations and broaden the circle of collaboration;
6. Demand responsibility all round
7. Practice a new politics of trust in which the state identifies skills and devolves power to communities of interest (Latham 2001).

Participatory methodologies are now being employed successfully around the globe to enable an institutional framework that facilitates a process of dialogue, partnership, networking, learning and managing change including the effects of globalisation (Chambers 1994; Blackburn

& Holland 1998). The employment of these methodologies for training is an integral component within the process of organisational learning. Training in this regard includes the creation of interactive learning environments and continuous learning, preparing staff to use innovative field methods and improve communication, analytical and facilitation skills. However, it is also necessary to change the institutions rules-in-use, financial-management practices, reporting systems and supervisory methods if the institution is to be changed from an implementer dictating the terms of development, to an enabler supporting local peoples' research or development (Thompson 1998). All this requires a broader participatory approach.

Korten (1988) identifies five inter-related stages for institutionalising a participatory process. The first phase involves identifying changes required within existing training procedures. During the second phase after the participatory approach has been adequately conceptualised, senior staffs are exposed to the new approach, generally through facilitation of external agencies. In the third phase the participatory approach is tested under diverse field conditions in which the methodology's strengths and weaknesses are assessed. Lessons are also learnt in regards to training working teams. The fourth stage involves enacting the methodology at a broad scale where trained facilitators usually from a third sector, train large numbers of agency staff. The training of a team of in-house facilitators occurs in the fifth phase (Korten 1988).

Conclusion

A political commitment to a participatory approach that includes capacity building, empowerment, partnerships and networking within Western Australia has been demonstrated in a number of initiatives including the State Sustainability Strategy and the work of the Citizens and Civics Unit. This is supported at the regional level by the Inter-governmental Framework for Cooperation and Regional Development and the Western Australian Draft Statement on Regional Policy.

International experience demonstrates that a facilitative approach to community participation, capacity building and networking is now required to better enable community ownership and control and thus sustainability. This approach requires further development in the Western Australian context. A facilitative approach will require the support of an enabling government. Participation is a set of principles more than an ideology and an ethic rather than a model (Blackburn 1998). This understanding of participation and ultimately regional sustainability will require an open-ended and learning approach by bureaucratic institutions. The political commitment in Western Australia for sustainable and participatory regional development will need to be matched by a transformation within the structures and philosophy of government. Towards achieving regional sustainability, the aim of this institutional change should be enhanced interactions in partnership with civil society and industry within facilitative participatory process/es.

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