

PART FOUR

Conclusion

CHAPTER 24

Learning to manage change in communities: A way forward

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This chapter synthesises the views in the previous chapters. It discusses what this synthesised view means for future policy and practice in regional development and community capacity building.

Introduction

The point of departure for this book is the urgent need to develop a way forward for rural Australia. Many communities are demoralised, their backbone of volunteers worn out. However, the political message is that these same communities are ready and willing to engage in a rural renaissance. Despite this willingness, clarity on what should be done and how to do it is often lacking. There is even a view that rural adjustment has inevitable outcomes in terms of the demise of rural Australia as we know it, and that there is nothing that can or should be done about it. Guidance is required on both conceptual approaches and practical action which communities can take.

Significantly, the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Dr Kemp, stated the following in a media release (2000):

This is a time when smaller communities are looking to their future and how to prosper in a highly competitive environment. They are also keen to keep their home-grown talent which is vital to preserving and building the social fabric of rural and regional communities in the 21st century (p. 1).

These words add to the (now) many government portfolios proclaiming the worth of communities and their wellbeing in rural and regional areas, and words such as these indicate a willingness to put some of the rhetoric into practice. The caution is to establish whether these words represent an old policy wrapped in new rhetoric, or whether they in fact represent a shift to a more inclusive and integrated way of approaching rural issues.

It is clear businesses and communities must have the capacity and confidence to master change and for this, economic resilience, empowerment and a learning environment are important. Socioeconomic wellbeing in communities is also dependent on development of regional infrastructure—education, training, transport, energy, public amenities, communications, health—all areas now requiring combined public and private partnerships for investment. While in many cases this may be necessary in economic terms, in others a greater mobilisation of the community and activities which allow communities to help themselves provide alternative approaches.

There is a need to shift from the old rhetoric of decline and limited opportunities in rural communities to strategies for creating communities which can determine their own destinies and grow. A number of communities have already taken this path and much can be learned from their success. This is essentially the purpose of this book—to present a ‘different’ analysis of the rural scene and practical models and initiatives adopted by some successful communities. Vital lessons can be drawn from such a task. The aim here is to share the

views of experts and practitioners on both conceptual and practical approaches to community development. This chapter provides a synthesis of these views.

The need for new approaches

One thing is quite clear, namely that ‘old policy’ wrapped in new rhetoric is no answer to the problems facing rural and regional Australia in the 21st century.

Most rural communities lack the social, civic and economic capacity to manage the massive change driven by a range of factors most of which are, but need not necessarily be, outside the control of rural people. Falk (Chapter 1) has provided an analysis of these factors. Technological change and expansion of knowledge tend to work in favour of scale and overcoming of the tyranny of distance. The result is globalisation of our economies, information systems, financial institutions, and business and leisure activities. This trend is reinforced by other factors such as, economic rationalism, metro-centrism and the urban drift, trends in schooling, revision of the nation’s literacy and numeracy requirements, the policy environment of the three tiers of government, the nature of work in the regions, unemployment, an ageing population and shifting meanings of key concepts. While bringing many benefits, at the local level, the resulting economic and social structures from these changes often act to disempower or marginalise communities.

Several authors such as Courvisanos (Chapter 2), Bawden (Chapter 3) and Bradbery et al. (Chapter 12), point out that in these circumstances, inequality often grows and the environment within which people live and work alienates them and debases those values necessary for a sustainable and balanced society. The statistics presented by Falk (Chapter 1) and Courvisanos (Chapter 2) tell the story—escalation of crime, suicide and social dislocation. Bawden (Chapter 3), through use of systems analysis, describes the devastating downward spiral that results from such imbalance. As argued by Bawden (Chapter 3), Geno (Chapter 4) and Perkins (Chapter 5), democracy cannot thrive under these circumstances.

Unfortunately, rhetoric and policy tend to support the forces at play. Simplistic appeal to markets as the mechanism for generating socially optimal outcomes for society is inadequate. Blind faith in competition policy and microeconomic reform as the way forward will work to reinforce imbalance. Clearly, there is a case for review—but realistic review which, while acknowledging the realities of our global economy, starts from values and principles of dynamic communities and then works towards inclusive, community solutions. This is the argument in the chapters by Bawden (Chapter 3), Geno (Chapter 4), Perkins (Chapter 5) and Bradbery et al. (Chapter 12). But this is different from the usual rational economics solution where the policy *means* is the market and the *ends* are the market outcomes.

The market allegedly expresses peoples’ preferences, hence outcomes from this process are allegedly what people want. These authors analyse the flaws in this argument—not only the inevitable imperfect operation of many markets, but also the inability to establish markets for some activities and the problems of aggregating market outcomes to socially optimal outcomes for society. These authors also point to the inherent biases which creep into market economies where those with power and property rights can reinforce inequities and disenfranchisement of those without property rights, and where alienating technologies and institutions invoked by market solutions become ever more domineering and exclusive.

Courvisanos (Chapter 2) in economics and Bawden (Chapter 3) in systems theory, both in path breaking work, have addressed some of these issues based on evolutionary, innovation

systems. Their approach involves re-conceptualising our economic system as a dynamic, organic structure where processes of innovation, learning, institution building and diffusion of technologies and knowledge, act to create regenerative societies. Such societies can reverse the inevitable outflow of economic and social infrastructure that follows change within our current economic systems. They work to build social capital.

Within such revised conceptualisations of our socioeconomic system, a ‘different’ policy framework emerges. Here, we first want to know the *ends* or outcomes we want and only then should we turn attention to the *means* or best ways to achieve these ends. There are major new policy issues here. The preferred means may ultimately still be the market but under this new approach, new institutional settings could well generate totally different (market) outcomes.

Bawden (Chapter 3) argues the challenge to convention reflects two fundamental tenets: (a) that the essential activity of being human is not the setting and seeking of goals of resource allocation, but the establishment and maintenance of relationships; and (b) that learning about our world involves experience, spiritual insights, values, emotion and disposition, as well as ‘pure’ reason. Relationship building, it is argued, is the essence of social capital, while learning is its currency. Evidence is provided in support of the contention that we are moving ‘beyond economics’ as an expression of total human endeavour, and this is related to the notions of a risk society and what is referred to as reflexive modernity. The challenges of the globalisation of risk and thus the risks of globalisation are explored from a perspective of ‘appreciative systems’, and this notion is itself investigated through the perspective of learning systems.

By addressing *values first*, authors such as Geno (Chapter 4), Perkins (Chapter 5) and Bradbery et al. (Chapter 12) are able to articulate what is required in rural areas and, indeed, in Australia generally. They argue for re-establishment of a sustainable community in which people are empowered and participate, in which there is vision, learning, broadly based (but not necessarily business) leadership and where there is congruence between market outcomes and what people want. Solutions lie in bringing about a framework in which creativity and learning can be expressed. This in turn, relies on the rebuilding of trust, inclusiveness and reciprocal, purposeful collective action through internal and external networks. All of these are central features of social capital and learning communities, and all are necessary for effective market transactions and successful community based ventures. Such a transformation relies upon changing the institutions within which people live and work. Change institutions and you change behaviour and hence market solutions.

These points are argued strongly by authors such as Falk (Chapter 1), Bawden (Chapter 3), Perkins (Chapter 5) and Bradbery et al. (Chapter 12) who conclude that successful communities in this context are those which learn and in the process create the social capital necessary to underpin a learning society. Many chapters such as Falk (Chapter 1), Courvisanos (Chapter 2) and Moore et al. (Chapter 13) provide a persuasive case for learning communities and the presence of social capital as a necessary condition for the operation of a market-based economy. Such communities can build on experience, adapt to massive change and capture opportunities for growth. This is an upward spiral, still involving the market mechanism and outward looking policies, but within a wider, holistic social and institutional setting.

While numerous articles and papers elsewhere have addressed the three primary aspects of sustainability, less attention has gone to how to integrate these three aspects in furthering

sustainable regional development. Geno (Chapter 4) reviews efforts which have been made to develop regional level environmental management schemes which seek social, environmental and economic sustainability. In these schemes, the components of sustainability are largely viewed in a hierarchical manner and the aspects of environmental sustainability and economic viability tend to take on a greater level of importance. The issues of social sustainability are often left to be operationalised at the national level. However, Geno (Chapter 4) shows the concepts of human ecology may be applied to the challenge of integrating the social and economic aspects of sustainability at the regional level and developing associated policy measures. Social impact analysis offers a technique to operationalise social sustainability at the community, or regional level. These social approaches to sustainability serve to provide mechanisms for truly integrating the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainability.

An ecological framework for sustainable community psychology, planning, learning, development and social capital for economically sustainable development is presented by Perkins (Chapter 5). Two examples of sustainable development in the USA are briefly discussed, both involving concepts of community planning: co-housing and the ‘new urbanism’. A participatory action research process and ‘service-learning’ are discussed as a means to generate collaborative ‘learning communities’. It is concluded that sustainability should be defined not only in economic and traditional ecological terms, but also in terms of a social ecology that includes the development of community psychological ties (sense of community, communitarianism, place attachment, pride in one’s home and community, community confidence and satisfaction), as well as neighbouring, citizen participation, and organisational efficacy.

Regional development has, in the past, paid little attention to the spiritual or social context, or indeed the human interconnectedness of the region. Bradbery et al. (Chapter 12) move beyond (rational) economics and ecological impact statements to the concepts and practices of civil society or social capital. Some attention is beginning to be given to these concepts in areas such as the arts (see Chapter 15 by Kingma) and in the development of regional agreements for Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander sites (ALGA 1999; ATSIC 2001). In Bradbery et al’s paper, the importance of including such additional dimensions in planning and implementing development is identified. It is argued that sustainable development of a region of necessity includes consideration of the natural, human and spiritual resources of the region. The paper provides some techniques and processes which can be useful in the discernment of the spiritual resources of the region.

Key themes for change

The theme of this book is that of learning. An ethos of active and self-directed learning is the only way in which individuals and society can manage change in an inclusive and equitable fashion. Learning needs to permeate all aspects of lives if the response to change is to be a positive influence on the wider community—that is learning needs to be actively encouraged on the part of individuals, groups, organisations and communities.

The kind of learning being discussed in the preceding chapters varies. There is no one ‘right’ kind of learning—in fact only the integration of formal, non-formal and informal kinds of learning will achieve the kinds of outcomes muted in these pages, namely a stronger, responsive and proactive regional socioeconomy for Australia. The additional benefit of the physical infrastructure afforded by formal and non-formal institutions and organisations, especially educational and training ones (schools, TAFE institutes, and Community Education providers) is highly important for regional socioeconomic viability.

With conceptual challenges facing rural Australia identified, several authors then explore a number of themes, which will be central to a new approach to developing community strength. Key themes identified in the chapters of this book are the different approaches to learning, education and training, pathways for community education and learning, creating learning organisations at the local level, empowering of small business, women and new roles for youth in creating social capital, and the theme of building of learning teams and groups. Issues such as the role of leadership and volunteerism are discussed as well as integrative planning processes which include spiritual impact statements as a neglected dimension of a holistic society. Such spiritual impact statements as discussed by Bradbery et al. (Chapter 12) must be part of a holistic approach to developing community strength, along with economic, environmental and social considerations.

In regions and countries experiencing economic problems, the use of education and schools to enhance economic development often leads to narrow forms of vocational education and training. Grubb (Chapter 6) argues this tactic is usually counter-productive, and services neither employers nor youth well. He outlines a broader and more integrated approach to occupational preparation, linking youth to both school and future employment. The importance of concepts such as these, and the above themes, is supported by the recent Rural Industries Working Group (Commonwealth of Australia 2001) on learning needs for rural Australia.

Williamson and Marsh (Chapter 7) discuss pathways for education and training. One of the unfortunate aspects of the labour market at present is the high level of youth unemployment. Policies and strategies to counteract this have had a major effect on the development of young people and their transition to adulthood. The implications from these strategies are discussed for young people in regional Tasmania reaching school age (completion of Grade 10).

The potential of new communication and information technologies in the revitalisation of regional communities is discussed by Grace (Chapter 8) in relation to empowering women. Much remains to be understood about the factors which contribute to the success of innovative technology applications in these communities and ways in which such success might be measured. Research conducted by the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) indicates gender significantly affects not only access and use of communication and information technologies, but also rural community development. By focusing on rural women's perspectives on communication issues, this research has revealed a need for the development of 'soft' technologies to ensure that both social and economic development occurs in an integrated way in regional, rural and remote communities.

Disability-based organisations, in general, have traditionally provided care, support, work, and occupations for people with disabilities in a system supported by subsidies from government and charity from the community. Griggs (Chapter 9) outlines an innovative model developed for regional disability-based organisations. Managers and boards of management of many of these organisations have decided that the way to manage the change is to be more responsible for their own destiny and to base their operations on commercially viable businesses. The management base for this new paradigm needs to be strengthened, as evidenced by a recent profile of northern and central Victorian non-government disability sector managers. Griggs's paper examines these issues. It concludes that organisations which are either unable or unwilling to make the necessary adjustments in their management

education and training philosophies and practices, may find that this will lead to the erosion of efficiency and effectiveness in the community.

Small business barely has a voice in rural Australia, especially in connection with its particular needs for learning and training. Kilpatrick and Bell (Chapter 10) summarise a number of studies which have focused on the needs for distinctive training and learning responses for rural small business. They set out the crucial requirements of that sector, and suggest some solutions to the challenges of learning and contributing, in a two-way fashion, to the community. The importance of social capital in achieving the required outcomes is highlighted.

Kasl's (Chapter 11) work on understanding small teams and their capacities to learn is key to understanding organisational capacity for creative engagement in the community and in business. The critical role of the team in creating learning organisations is equally useful in understanding how small groups can be the building blocks in community and regional learning and development, as well as in transformative change. Kasl describes strategies for small-group learning and offers a vision for how community learning practitioners might support small group learning.

Communities and social capital

Social capital has been identified in this book as the networks, norms, trust, and bonding, bridging and linking ties involved in working together. Its hallmarks are inclusiveness, cooperation and sharing. It is the glue of relationships and facilitates economic and social activity. The capacity to learn, and motivate and activate knowledge is dependent upon the stock of positive social capital.

Growth of social capital is dependent upon institutional and policy settings. It is institutional settings within which markets work, which give expression to economic and social behaviour and within which communities attempt to maintain social structures. Where authority, institutions and power, whether associated with government or (large scale) business, are remote and determined outside communities, there is a potential to contradict important social, cultural and spiritual values and undermine social capital and the ability of communities to 'learn'.

Communities which have been able to retain some power over institutions and the power base, have a good chance of being successful in reversing the community's fortunes. However, even where circumstances are favourable, a catalyst is often required to make the necessary changes. A growing number of practitioners and professional people have made it their business to ensure such catalytic support is available and to assist communities to develop new approaches to empowerment. These community developers come from fields as diverse as economics, social work, environmental studies, social ecology, social capital, rural sociology, health, local government, town planning, engineering and architecture, representing a truly cross-sectoral profession. In this book a number of success stories are reviewed to illustrate the potential of these new approaches and to support the above themes of the book.

Moore et al. (Chapter 13) provide insight into some international models of success in regional development while Muktasam and Chamala (Chapter 14) discuss a group action learning model for sustainable rural communities using the Indonesian Rural Community Development Program. These authors illustrate how action learning takes place within groups and how the participatory action research methodology stimulates the action learning

process. Group approaches for rural community development include many types and numbers of groups yielding rich lessons for community development.

Wyn and Stokes (Chapter 16) build upon the work of Williamson and Marsh (Chapter 7) by addressing the barriers to wellbeing and participation, which face young people in rural Australia, and the responses by rural communities to these issues. Mulraney and Turner (Chapter 17) discuss the role of young people in renewing regional communities. For example, the NAREET (Northern Adelaide Regional Education Employment and Training) Network has put structures in place that have encouraged educators and trainers at all levels to work collaboratively with community and industry stakeholders on the issue of full youth employment. The learning community partnership approach is evolving into a very successful model. Structural reform of the labour market, combined with the rapid change in information technology and communication systems, has led many young people to be very uncertain about what the future holds for them.

Education in the 1990s is about supporting young people to shape a future for themselves next century and learning how to be in control of their own future (Commonwealth of Australia 2001). As we shift out of the passive, benefit-orientated welfare system towards a regional skill and wealth building approach to economic and employment development (Commonwealth of Australia 2000), it becomes increasingly obvious that more active, locally sensitive measures are needed. Regional approaches are developing that are giving more coherence and effectiveness to public sector programmes (particularly in education and training) and moving towards measures promoting entrepreneurship, job creation and innovation (Mulraney and Turner, Chapter 17). This is leading to more active promotion and development of the local labour market, and efforts to make explicit the skills required, as well as pathways to acquire these skills.

Bowles (Chapter 18) builds on the work of Kilpatrick and Bell (Chapter 10) by discussing the positive outcomes which can result when the business sector invests in the community. He shows how business and community partnerships have pay-offs for all the partners. In this case, a major school in regional Australia has worked closely with local businesses, the education and training authorities and the wider community, to achieve a sustainable model of a learning community with rewards for all.

Arnott and Benson (Chapter 19) explore the learning processes of pastoralist stakeholders in a case study of education and learning in the tropical savannas. In this case, difficulties in communication between landholders, government departments and other research centres led to research on experiential and informal learning, formal training, and use of information technologies. Results have been useful to all stakeholders.

Balatti (Chapter 20) explains how a learning community in a remote mine site was established to develop literacy and other communication skills of employees. Collaboration between the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE and mine management produced a peer-tutoring model that was successfully implemented in a work site that had thwarted all previous attempts in meeting those same communication training needs. This learning partnership proved to be a catalyst for learning experiences and partnerships extending well beyond what had been envisaged.

Bruce (Chapter 21) describes the building of social capital and community-learning networks in community Internet access centres in Canada. Development of a highly Internet- and computer-literate community was a catalyst in capturing emerging employment and

social opportunities. Community access centres in all rural communities and small towns lead to the emergence of new networks among individuals and organisations at all levels, through which new social capital and skills can be introduced. Issues of use of voluntary labour and involvement of government are raised as important issues.

MacManamey, Falk, Bruce and others (Chapter 22) use stories from newspapers and health centres to promote community projects. For example, in one campaign the media raised the self-concept or identity and the level of economic activity of the northern region of Tasmania. A Centre located at the University linked with the newspaper staff to fund a project to help develop the ‘Believe It!’ campaign. This unusual partnership is already making a significant impact on a region through drawing on a ‘social capital’ evaluation model based on knowledge and common resources and identity-building resources in the communities that make up the region. In another campaign, lessons learned on business planning to establish four neighbourhood Community Health Centres in Canada, were publicised with resulting benefits in the wider community.

New concepts of ‘situated leadership’ are discussed by Falk and Mulford (Chapter 23). They argue that traditional practices and ideas of leadership must quickly give way to radical, new models of leadership.

Kingma (Chapter 15) illustrates how the principles of community cultural development (CCD) can be fostered and applied through catalytic government programs for the arts. Case studies from the CCD Fund of the Australia Council for the Arts are drawn upon to paint a rich set of guidelines for community empowerment. The creative arts can help accelerate change because they foster those community social, cultural and business processes, relationships and concepts of work required to achieve a shift to sustainability.

A way forward

This book has provided a much needed insight into ways in which communities can rise above the disenfranchisement that results from exposure to extreme change and current economic and social policies and institutions. The focus of the book has been on success stories but within an innovative conceptual framework of systems theory and the principles and concepts emerging from the research on learning communities and social capital.

The chapters by Courvisanos, Bawden, Geno, Kilpatrick and Bell, and Mulford and Falk carry the implication that, to be effective (and as a precondition for the success of economic policies), regional businesses and communities must become ‘learning businesses and communities’ based on knowledge intensive firms operating through continuous improvement and regeneration of organisational structures and networks. These businesses and communities must have strong linkages to the wider economy. Commercial activity must be supported by networked, informed and skilled local communities. There must be enabling leadership within the community upon which to structure partnerships, resolve conflict through dialogue and build cooperation.

In regional economies, establishment of an institutional environment conducive to innovative business and social investment is probably the most important factor influencing growth. Apart from structural adjustment, areas of relevance are new forms of competitiveness, regional leadership and management of processes for change, and generation of civic or social capital required for successful business and social activity.

An important argument in favour of an increased role for governments in supporting industry development in regions is identified in the chapter by Courvisanos, which builds upon the ‘Porter philosophy’ in which four sets of variables are seen to act to create an environment conducive to creation of competitive advantage. These four variables are:

- the relative endowment of the region with respect to other regions;
- the size and quality of the home market;
- the connections within the region with complementary and supporting industries which are already competitive including skills of suppliers, consumer demand, formal and informal networks and the structured support of public bodies, and
- the organisational structure of firms which influences their capacity to change.

Porter (1990) argued that successful industries have strong linkages, for example, to buyers, suppliers, customers, technology and networks, and that these linkages work best where industries are geographically concentrated or clustered. These firms and industries are best able to achieve external economies through participation and partnership at all levels.

The (trade-based Porter) model may not work as effectively in Australian conditions where local market size is small compared with large markets such as in the USA. The degree to which business enterprises can become embedded within regions is related to the scale of enterprise and size of firms—large firms and institutions tend to be more detached from the regional community, that is, ‘in’ the locality not ‘of’ the locality. The dilemma is that as firms capture economies and become larger, they also become less effective in helping to build social cohesion and unity, so necessary to sustainability. In these circumstances smaller and less economically powerful regions tend to become disempowered, passive and simply nodes in a wider network of power relationships, a point made strongly by Falk in the first chapter of this book.

The institutional settings within which firms operate are, therefore, highly significant and should be a focus for regional policy. In addition, there is a strong argument for government involvement in partnership with industry, to ensure sustainable community development.

The Porter approach, if it is to work, must be accompanied by institutional arrangements which lead to different more socially aware businesses and networks, and by strong local stakeholder processes, partnerships and leadership. Again, governments have an important role to ensure an environment within which these activities can develop.

Regions need to attract skilled workers and high technology firms and have the mechanisms in place to retain them and encourage learning in the local economy. In turn, regional communities must be able to provide the environment not only to attract knowledge but also to retain and embed this into local economies. Communities become more than connective physical infrastructure, rather, the places that provide competencies and connections. This social or collaborative infrastructure is essential to improving the knowledge base and cohesiveness of local economies.

The sense of ‘place’ implied in the above, is the complex of intangible characteristics of a community that make it attractive to actual and potential residents, and determine the degree to which participants can grasp opportunities and create wealth. This concept extends to firms and industries connected through ‘virtual place’. Economic and social prosperity is easier to achieve where communities embody a substantial stock of this social capital.

Values, aspiration and inspiration are strongly linked to the structures, mechanisms, accountability arrangements and political and institutional settings. All these factors contribute to more effective and efficient business structures, and private sector investment and risk sharing. Ways to influence these factors at the community level will have a high commercial and social payoff, meaning that higher, more socially optimal levels of business investment, are possible with some supporting input and involvement of governments.

Empowered, learning organisations and communities, which build on their social capital, will be highly effective in:

- achieving successful change;
- generating the climate of participation necessary for the government's welfare reforms to succeed;
- lowering transactions costs associated with economic and social activity;
- attracting new investment and creating partnerships with the private sector;
- developing inclusive stakeholder processes at all levels which work to minimise conflict and gain community agreement, and
- building local capacity for innovation and sustainability.

Presence of a good stock of social capital in the community is central to achieving growth. Social capital is not only an important means for bringing about required change but it is also the product of such change. Presence of a good stock of social capital in communities will generate an upward spiral of positive change, which integrates economic, environmental and social issues and has the characteristics of cooperation, tolerance, equity and community. The fact that a strong community precedes and is the precondition for strong and sustainable economic growth, is pointed out in several chapters, including that of Geno, and Bradbery et al.

Where strong communities in regions are not evolving then, if perceived to be important in terms of efficient economic allocation of resources or in terms of achieving social goals associated with the vision and values discussed in Bradbery, Fletcher and Molloy's chapter, there is a case for government and community involvement for local empowerment. Such enabling (social) support could be directed towards:

- fostering community capacity building and learning;
- encouraging enabling and participative leadership;
- facilitating the growth of learning organisations, communities and, more recently, regional centres and cities;
- generating effective relationships, networks and multi-stakeholder processes;
- generating (two-way) information and knowledge flows for business, community and government decision making;
- empowering women and minority groups as key drivers of the inclusive values noted above and their commitment to integrated, holistic processes of growth, and
- supporting the creative arts as a basis for bridging the gap between narrow, profit-based activity and broader socially useful activities.

Enabling support for communities will, of itself, create the environment for revival of local institutions and organisational structures. Where feasible, additional ways, which will help in the redesign of public policy to achieve this, are:

- re-examination of governance at all levels;
- assessment of the costs of access and connectivity to resources and management structures (including IT) in local communities;
- devolution of power and responsibility to regional communities, and
- analysis of processes, accountability arrangements, regulations and administrative machinery which tend towards uniformity and control at levels beyond 'locality'.

The reports in this book show that the trust and social cohesion aspects of social capital are *requirements* for people to become participants in all manner of economic and social activities. The skills associated with human capital are not sufficient for achieving outcomes by themselves. In the case of learning, education and training, when human capital (behaviour of individuals) and social capital (behaviour of collectives that facilitate action) are combined, outcomes are perceived as more effective. By bringing human and social capital together, the capacity of people to learn and respond to change is increased. Moreover, learning is initiated by self-confidence and self-esteem, characteristics that are embedded in the learning process and are the prime enablers of participation in learning and essential ingredients for positively managing the forces of change.

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The theme of *Learning to manage change: Developing regional communities for a local–global millennium* is that Australia should become a learning society in order to build capacity and manage regional change for social and economic benefit for all. Learning is viewed as the integration of formal, non-formal and informal education and training. Dynamic and purposeful learning produces social capital, and social capital produces economic as well as social and personal benefits. Learning is a process of adapting to change while retaining the power to sort and sift the available information so as to meaningfully control our lives in the learning communities in which we live. Learning communities—groups of people who work in dynamic partnership to decide on and manage their futures—are those that will survive as vibrant and productive leaders.

The contributing authors share the roles of providing leading-edge information, analysis of issues and hundreds of best practice examples of building strong communities through active and critical learning.

Six of the contributors are experts from the USA and Canada: Professor Richard Bawden (formerly Australia, now USA), Professor Rusty Brooks (USA), Mr David Bruce (Canada), Professor Norton Grubb (USA), Professor Bernie Moore (USA), Professor Douglas Perkins (USA). The remaining contributors are from all parts of Australia. The contributions expose and explore some of the significant issues and practical solutions for developing complex communities under contemporary forces for change. There are particular and significant implications for an integrated approach to education and training at the regional level.

‘The chapters provide a rich and provocative blend of information, practical wisdom and issues-based discussions that reflect the variation and complexity of managing change in rural communities of the new millennium.’ Professor John Allen, Center for Rural Community Revitalization and Development, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE USA.

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