

# **PARTICIPATORY DESIGN FOR DEMOCRACY AND WELLBEING: NARROWING THE GAP BETWEEN SERVICE OUTCOMES AND PERCEIVED NEEDS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper *explains* how narratives told by Aboriginal service users and Aboriginal service providers form the basis for redesigning the approach to complex interrelated problems associated with unemployment, alcohol, domestic violence and homelessness. On the basis of the case study it develops an argument for how *it is possible* to mainstream the matching of services to meet perceived needs. It makes the case that a) it is possible for democracy to be re-worked in such a way that a) *collective needs* (and steering for the *common good*) can be married to b) decentralized policy making (and steering from below). Sustainable participatory policy based on user perceptions of what works why and how could be the basis for enabling people to set aside narrow difference and to consider different ways to govern democratically. We conclude that bureaucratic and compartmentalized responses are inadequate to address complex multifaceted problems and that the process of engagement is in itself important for democracy and wellbeing. A dedicated website describes the work of the ARC team <http://www.socsci.flinders.edu.au/av/pathways/binder.php>

Key words: perceived needs, participatory design, performance outcomes

## **1. INTRODUCTION: USER CENTRIC DESIGN FOR WELLBEING**

This research develops and tests out a means to undertake health impact assessment in a systemic manner<sup>2</sup> with local Aboriginal participants who are to be affected by the consequences of decisions. The SA Aboriginal community initiated the research and are the co-owners of the research process and its outcomes. The multidisciplinary team addresses social inclusion issues by designing (see Banathy 1996, 2000, 2003) developing and testing a dynamic management tool together with Neporendi Forum Inc, Aboriginal researchers and the South Australian Department of Human Services. The challenge is to address co-morbidities and a number of issues<sup>3</sup> through creating meaningful theory that is tested out by those who experience the areas of concern and who will be affected by the decisions taken. Neporendi is representative of the issues faced by Indigenous communities in other areas of Australia, such as: high levels of health-related issues, unemployment, homelessness, family violence and reduced education opportunities. The effects of family violence are wide-ranging, for instance: the criminalization of the offenders has financial, physical and psychological consequences for the women, children and men involved. It also has intergenerational consequences. Social inclusion, homelessness, unemployment, gambling, family violence and drug misuse are facets of a complex, interrelated problem that requires a coordinated governance response across departments in the public, private and non-government sectors. However, current

compartmentalized thinking in respect of some aspects of human services has led to disciplinary specializations. Service providers need to develop the capacity to work across disciplines and to understand better the nature of “joined up” social problems as they relate to social wellbeing and governance (Fougere, 2007). This is not merely a change to policy and practice, but a move away from the perception and definition of issues in separate compartments<sup>4</sup>.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The wellbeing project is funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage Project with the South Australian Department of Health, Flinders University, University of South Australia and Neporendi Forum Inc, an Aboriginal NGO<sup>5</sup>. The co-researchers (comprising academics across a range of disciplines, service users and providers) address wellbeing in terms of their lived experiences of what works, why and how. The outcome is the development of prototype software that is co-owned and designed by the partners. We chose one of the most difficult problems in Australian context, namely social exclusion, unemployment, health, housing and addictions (gambling, alcohol and other drugs) with the hope that if we could create an interactive policy tool for a ‘complex wicked problem’ with many interrelated variables and with a strong value base (see Rittel et al 1973), we would be able to adapt the model to other less complex problems to inform policy on the basis of evidence of what works, why and how and on the basis of ‘if then’ scenarios to address the common good. At a presentation of this research at the ‘Social Innovation Conference’ in Adelaide I stressed that what is needed is *mainstreaming* the policy matching processes and enabling people to *think through policy options based on scenarios* for the their *own* and *collective wellbeing*. Solidarity can be achieved through realizing that a) it is in our best interests and b) that through inspiring and mobilizing an understanding that we stand and fall by our thinking and our practice. Our futures are recursively linked. The symbol of the boomerang is a symbol of recursiveness. Our own wellbeing is connected with the wellbeing of the environment and the wellbeing of others. Only by considering the systemic feedback loop or ‘boomerang affect’ (Beck 1992,1998) can we take into account the notion that poverty and pollution are the problems of other nation states, they are our own problems and they pose risks for our wellbeing. The research project detailed in this paper a) explores the extent to which participation as *a means and an end* enhances the capability of people to make rational choices for themselves and others and b) assesses the extent to which network governance can be used to enable centralised steering and control from above and decentralised steering and design from below<sup>6</sup>. The premise on which this research is based is that bureaucracy<sup>7</sup> is in need of an overhaul, because it is not sufficiently responsive to social and environmental needs<sup>8</sup>.

## 3. AIMS, RATIONALE AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The research aims to design and test out a process that could achieve a better match<sup>9</sup> between service outcomes and perceived needs, based on the expertise of the service users. Our approach using policy networks ensures that the voices of people in local, un-networked spaces are heard by (Freire1982) working with those who have lived experience (Polanyi 1962). The rationale for the research is twofold:

- Firstly, complex problems need to be addressed by means of responsive and participatory policy processes that are implemented by interagency responses.
- Secondly, interagency responses are difficult to manage effectively and need to be accountable to the principals they serve and to the other agents with whom they collaborate.

Keel (2004) stresses that the violence affecting Aboriginal Australians needs to be understood as part of the vicious cycle of marginalization.<sup>10</sup> Six in every 10 Indigenous Australians rely on welfare payments and 64% of Indigenous people receive incomes below 299 dollars per week in comparison with 44.6% of non Indigenous Australians, according to the 2001 ABS. With the exception of 6 participants in this study the participants drew the social wage or were on CDEP or seeking work at the time of the research.<sup>11</sup>

Integrated approaches, based on working across organizations to support wellbeing are described by New Zealand Public Health as “an idea whose time has come” in opposition to efficiency approaches that have ‘undermined social capital’ (Fougere 2007:1-2). This has implications for inter and intra governmental government and the move away from compartmentalised thinking and practice. Better, integrated governance requires overcoming ‘mind traps’ (1968, Vickers, 1983) and compartmentalised approaches to both thinking and practice. It is possible to do things differently and that we can make a difference to democracy and governance by enhancing the ability of people to engage actively in shaping sustainable policy, provided they are encouraged to think critically and systemically about the future<sup>12</sup>.

Decisions draw the line and make cuts (Churchman 1982). They exclude some interests and not others. By engaging in dialogue and steering from below and above we have the best chance of making ethical, sustainable decisions, because the testing is done – not just by the so-called powerful experts, but by people with lived experiences who can and should give their inputs<sup>13</sup>. Of course some participants in democratic dialogue could think that social justice and the environment are unimportant:

“Up with the death penalty or at the very least ‘rack em stack em and pack em into jail’<sup>14</sup> or “the planet is finished, the party is nearly over, you may as well enjoy what is left, because China and India will do more polluting that you or I”.

These comments, heard recently in South Australia are presented with irony, only so that I can use them as a departure point for making a strong case in support of solidarity. Three policy documents underpin this research and my paper. The first is the report by the Public Health Advisory Committee, New Zealand (2007) which stresses that wellbeing “*is an idea whose time has come*”. Integrated approaches, based on working across organizations to support wellbeing are described by New Zealand Public Health as “an idea whose time has come” in opposition to efficiency approaches that have ‘undermined social capital’ (Fougere 2007:1-2). This has implications for inter and intra governmental government and the move away from compartmentalised thinking and practice. Better, integrated governance requires overcoming ‘mind traps’ (1968, Vickers, 1983) and compartmentalised approaches to both thinking and practice. It is possible to do things differently. We can make a difference to democracy and governance by enhancing the ability of people to engage actively in shaping sustainable policy, provided they are encouraged to think critically and systemically about the future. The second is the Brundtland report “*Our Common Future*” (1987:20) which highlights the need to work across boundaries:

“Until recently the planet was a large world in which human activities and their effects were neatly compartmentalised within nations, within sectors (energy, agriculture, and trade) and within broad areas of concern (environment, economics, social). These compartments have begun to dissolve. This applies in particular to the various global ‘crises’ that have seized public concern, particularly over the last decade. These are not separate crises: an environmental crisis, a development crisis, an energy crisis. They are all one. The planet is passing through a period of dramatic growth and fundamental change. Our human world of 5 billion must make room in a finite environment for another human world. The population could stabilize at between 8 and 14 billion sometime next century, according to UN projections. More than 90 percent of the increase will occur in the poorest countries, and 90 per cent of that growth is already bursting cities”<sup>15</sup>

The third are two policies applied within the EU, namely the Aarhus convention and Local Agenda 21 which provide space for local people to shape and hold the market and the state accountable at the local level where they live (Florini, 2003, McIntyre-Mills 2006).

#### 4. RESEARCH APPROACH

PAR is a useful process to enable people to a) make the connections across their own lives and the lived context b) to work with boundaries of sectors and knowledge areas to bring about changes for social and environmental justice. The issue of representation addresses the issue of researcher and researched, an area of concern for Bourdieu, but it also raises questions about who will draw the map?<sup>16</sup> In this research no ‘master narrative dominates’ (Hampden Turner 1981) instead all the constructions are shared and communicated, because

assumptions, beliefs and values play a key role as filters and these need to be understood by service users and providers, in order to enable a better match of services to perceived needs<sup>17</sup>. According to Lorenzi-Cioldi and Clemence (in Brewer and Hewstone 2004: 315):

“Researchers are beginning to pay more and more attention to the content of knowledge- specifically to knowledge in particular settings, and to the ways in which knowledge is shaped during its transmission”.

Solutions to address the effects and symptoms of the problems avoids the causes which need to be addressed to break the interlinked cycles at the level of governance.

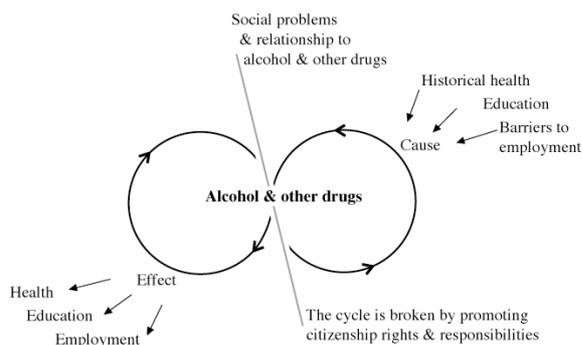


Figure 1: Breaking the cycle through participatory governance and developing citizenship rights and responsibilities (McIntyre 2003 14)<sup>18</sup>.

Systemic Governance praxis assisted by means of the praxis of interactive design is conceptualized in terms of the principle of subsidiarity, meaning that those who are at the receiving end of the decision should be party to the decision making process<sup>19</sup>. This was tested out in the research to find out if the approach to participatory governance leads to better service delivery based on options, rather than a ‘one size fits all’ approach (see Chambers 1997: 189). All cultures and individuals have the capacity to think in terms of categories and in terms of webs, this is the balance that we need to seek in order to solve the problems of every day life that are created by imbalanced thinking. Participatory Action Research (PAR) can assist in addressing the challenge to think systemically and reductively (in other words, to expose the meanings and systemic structures) so as to address the coils of the destructive system that encompasses human constructs and actions in a ‘recursive cycle’, to use Giddens’ (1991) concept. The process of change involves making policy suggestions rooted in praxis and participatory civil governance. Two conceptual tools are used in this research, namely: reductive logic<sup>20</sup> and recursiveness (adapted from Giddens 1991) to address the vital ingredient of citizens being able to make a difference by virtue of the way they construct and reconstruct their thinking in response to their lived experiences. These two tools are important for building local governance capacity. Building networks of trust is indeed a worthwhile goal for enhancing civil governance, but it is by no means unproblematic from the point of view of the participants with unequal power (See McIntyre Mills, 2003c).<sup>21</sup> Some participants jockey for power at the expense of others and every network suffers from those who are welcomed and those who are not. The challenge is to help people establish links with people with whom they can identify. Age, gender and level of education lead to differing perceptions and an awareness of perceptions is a central aspect of the project. Definitions of social capital mentioned by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) do not include space to be different or for spiritual wellbeing that respects the interconnectedness of self-other and environment. Social capital has a materialist base even if it was originally defined as “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1995:67).<sup>22</sup> This research strives to establish effective ways to build the capacity of the service providers and to enhance wellbeing by achieving a better match across perceived needs and service options. Our hope is that the interactive prototype model created for the ARC research described in this paper see also McIntyre-Mills et al 2006,2008, McIntyre-Mills 2007, 2008 forthcoming) could be extended to enable trans national policy dialogue. Whilst bureaucracy has a vital role in ensuring that democratic states can operate to support freedoms (to the extent that they do not undermine the freedoms of others) it is also undeniable that democracies are built on participation. Research shows increasingly that marginalized people are excluded from active roles in shaping policy, for a range of reasons including lack of skills, connections and confidence.

'Wellbeing' is defined as living life in a balanced, harmonious manner, living the life of a caretaker and considering people and the environment. Housing strategies (Runcie and Bailie 2002), for example to address ways to enhance the functioning of housing<sup>23</sup> within communities and their environment need to be open to the ideas of those who have experience. The concept of 'Quality of life' draws on Nussbaum (1995: 83):

"Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length, not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.... Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life. This includes ...employment outside the home and to participate in political life...being able to show concern for other human beings...being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature...Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities...." (Nussbaum 1995: 83-85).

Awareness within context and responsive appraisal of many dimensions means that connections and interactions could be the basis for human wellbeing. This research draws on the literature on social capital ranging from Putnam's (1995) bonds across like minded people, bridges (between different groups) and links (across hierarchies to bring about change). The approach addressed the notion of dominant cultural capital as belonging to those who are powerful (as per Bourdieu 1986, 1972) and to demonstrate how capacity building 'from below' can be effectively undertaken by enabling a process of drawing on the cultural capital of those who have experienced hardships and social exclusion.<sup>24</sup>

We tested the following hypothesis: The greater the usage of knowledge management systems to address complex problems (such as homelessness, family violence, drug misuse use, unemployment and social inclusion issues), the better the problem solving outcomes for human service users and providers. We explored the following research question: To what extent can the self-learning knowledge base a) assist in tacit and professional knowledge management based on comparing maps of service providers and users?; b) result in improved decisions that enhance quality care/services for clients?

Fifty self selected service *users* who are associated with Neporendi contributed to the research and invited me to undertake the project with them as a result of previous research and volunteering. After an ethics process involving formal and informal evaluation by the participants I collected the data with guidance from respected women and men within the community<sup>25</sup> on:

- What Wellbeing means personally.
- What works and what doesn't work in service delivery.
- Participants were invited to draw conceptual diagrams. Personal stories of what works, why and how reveal patterns. Patterns provide a starting point for each service user to explore healing pathways by building on other people's experiences. Each of the 50 *participant service users* have contributed to the design of the knowledge base through their initial research conversations and the use of organic analogies (see McIntyre-Mills 2007). The analogy of healing through weaving together strands of experience is central and powerfully resonant to the Narranjiri women, as are the analogies of pathways in the landscape of life and branches in the tree of life. The next steps were to discuss the mapping with the co-designers and to test out the ideas in a pilot study with the service providers to ascertain if the system enabled better outcomes to be achieved as far as the users are concerned.

Knowledge management in this research is not merely about collecting, organizing and accessing information through computing systems.<sup>26</sup> Stories were shared by co-researchers, including the elders who stressed that weaving together strands of experience and making meaning, provided the basis for healing. The metaphor for healing included organic analogies and these were central to the design of the software. We modelled a series of overlapping spirals spanning holistic, integrated service delivery to fragmented and compartmentalised delivery of services as options with many variants in between (See Downes 2006: 36). Those who are most in need require the most integrated services and the most participation in decision making. Those who are least in need require the least integrated services and are able to draw together services for themselves and act as facilitators for others, volunteers in service delivery or act as service providers for others. The challenge is to map the turning points for the a) better or b) worse that lead to changes in life and to c) identify the barriers from the point of view of both service providers and users. Mapping is something that people use when explaining the connections across a number of variables. Some of the questions in the research conversations built on the research experience that the team brought from other projects. In addition to narration the use of picturing and conversation makes a difference to understanding. The use

of picturing enabled not merely ownership of ideas, but enabled complex variables and relationships to be mapped out. A group of woman elders met to discuss the initial prompts that were included in the research conversation. They stressed that they wished to enable policy makers and practitioners to understand that wellbeing could only be addressed by means of a systemic approach. Democracy is based on feedback and learning from diverse stakeholders. The concept, 'In basket', enables realizing that change occurs when individuals take control of their lives and this can require moving away from abusive people and places. The concept 'Out basket' is based on ridding oneself of limitations in life. The concept 'barriers' refers to difficulties faced by participants and they can be internal or external, structural barriers. The key turning point is the realization that rights and responsibility go hand in hand and that self determination comes with a sense of self worth and recognizing that "shame" is a learned reaction to abuse and social exclusion. Building relationships is crucial for healing. Those who leave family and place to escape violence build new community networks over time. But when these relationships fail (as evidenced in many conversations and stories) it became clear that the sense of identity fragmentation and loss is heightened. Being aware of being an outsider and not being a local meant that some informants stressed that they needed to be "careful about what they said" and avoid "putting themselves forward". For example, an elder who had a reputation for having arguments and stressing cultural differences and political viewpoints (that were generally considered unviable) was silenced through being voted out of organizational roles<sup>27</sup>. This led to her leaving the community for a second time. Previously she had left after a relationship breakdown. Other women had also stressed that they had left the Adelaide community for a while after a relationship breakdown or a disagreement in a community organisation. Moving away becomes a way of coping and dealing with shame or depression associated with loss. The research was undertaken at a time when a) the shortage in public housing and its impact on Aboriginal South Australians b) a national focus on violence in Aboriginal society was stressed in the media. The first phase of the conversations revealed the following themes as factors to be considered in an integrated approach to complex problems:

"escaping violence or bad situation, finding safe housing, mental health, social inclusion, education, employment, poverty, depression, gambling, alcohol and other drugs, violence, racism, diabetes, renal dialysis, death, mourning and sorry business, moving around and travel associated with visiting or leaving a bad situation, sense of connection and belonging. Dropping the ball or being unable to cope is the result when too many issues need to be juggled"

On a continuum where 1 = life in balance and 5/6 = life in chaos, those closer to 1 are more inclined to use *more* generic services whilst those closer to 5 are more inclined to use *more* Aboriginal services. The issue is matching needs and services and finding the right combination. These patterns are drawn from analysing the stories of women and men. Based on an analysis of the data, wellbeing for service users can be understood as a state that can be interpreted in many ways, it has many domains. For some it is:

1. 'Being employed' and 'able to help others', because their 'life is in balance'.
2. 'Rebuilding'
3. 'Making a transition' by using a combination of services
4. 'Keeping it together' after leaving a violent situation and trying to control drug and alcohol misuse – use cigarettes extensively
5. 'Making the break' from an unsatisfactory way of life
6. 'Not coping' and unable to leave or repeatedly returning to a violent situation.

This platform detailed above can be adapted to include the perceived ideas of people at the local level who can build in the content so that it reflects their concerns and so that representation is contingent and open (see Rorty 1989 and Gould, 2007). The pathways are created through respectful communication, comprising listening actively and in a friendly manner and responding appropriately in a way that demonstrates that the listener has engaged with the story teller<sup>28</sup>.

The survivors against the odds stressed that a host of factors *together* made it possible for them to achieve transformation in their lives. Success stories have the potential to lead to simplifications or become nothing more than motivational story telling unless other stories span a range of life chances. A pathway<sup>29</sup> to recovery is weaving together the strands of experience to ensure that the individual experiencing the personal trouble understands that it is part of a public issue on domestic violence, poverty and addiction including the misuse of alcohol and other drugs<sup>30</sup>. Combinations of 5 axial factors were perceived important<sup>31</sup>: Home safety (and being free of violence),

Health (physical and mental health) , Purpose (Formal Employment or preparation for employment /profession employment/CDEP / training /education), Connection/belonging (people and place), volunteering, community leadership and cultural spirituality, Self respect and confidence, feeling good about oneself which is linked with being able to access services, work, study, maintain a stable home for children.

The next step was to develop a proforma for the design of a knowledge base, based on the emergent themes to address solutions. We tested the design by De Vries (2006) by using a walk through based on questions and ticking off factors from a map created by all the participants. Participants were asked to self select factors from the NVivo “factor map” of core building blocks will help to identify which archetype they are closest to. Personalising the factor map by adding factors by placing the new factor as close as possible to existing factors and describing the new factor. It is anticipated that when the process is tested the service users will give their perceptions of what works why and how and then the interactive process will enable better matches, thus enhancing “cognitive capability , namely perceiving, imagining and thinking (Nussbaum 1995 : 77). Service users were encouraged to:

- identify with a) typical stories by comparing their own lives with the typical stories, by selecting the factors that characterize the story and identifying the factors that make their own story unique. These new factors are added to the map.
- Explore the scenario of ‘what if I were to make one small change in my life? What would the implications be for my life?’
- Identify the turning points and the barriers and discuss how the patterns in their own lives are similar or different.
- Consider the impact that taking a step in a different direction will have on their lives.

## 5. DIMENSIONS OF WELLBEING

The stories told by the women and men can be grouped overlapping domains rather than as a linear continuum. Stories from co-researchers (both service users and providers) reveal dimensions of wellbeing.

**Table 1: Dimensions and Indicators of Wellbeing**

Dimensions of wellbeing	Indicators
Physical health	Safe housing (free of violence) in a safe community, regular meals, household goods to support wellbeing (stove, fridge and washing machine, furniture), clothing, dental health, healthy body free of diabetes.
Mental health	Good interpersonal skills, a sense of respect and belonging , trust in a network of people
Socio –cultural	Routine roles to maintain a household and connections with a community Access services such as health and education
Political	Engaged in decision making outside the private sphere, Sense of rights and responsibilities
Economic	Access to employment Learning entrepreneurial skills Learning literacy, numeracy and computer skills.
Environmental and spiritual	Connections with ‘country’

The words of the informants were used to summarise each theme. Typologies represent typical (but **not fixed archetypical**) approaches. These typologies are seen as overlapping **domains** that change over time as the lives of the men and women change. Changes from one domain to another are summarised as dimensions (including in baskets, out baskets, barriers, turning points and services that worked for them).

**Table 2: Coping strategies of women and men. A comparison of female and male typologies is based on an analysis of the narratives.**

Female	Male
Use a wider range of services regularly which enables them to maintain their level of wellbeing even if they do not manage to rebuild and undertake major transitions in their lives.	Men used a narrower range of services and tended to focus on housing, social wage and finding a job.
Emphasis on physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing	Men tended to wait until they could no longer function before seeking assistance from physical or mental health services. A gap exists between those in control and those out of control, because of an inability to establish relationships and trust which impacts on their minimal use of services to address addiction, unless they are forced to do so as a result of a court order.
Leaving abusive relationships is a first step towards healing	Loss of partners was a trigger for grief, self harm and risk taking
Woman hit rock bottom as a result of using alcohol and drugs as a way of life and to deal with grief and loss.	Men hit rock bottom because they use alcohol as a way of life and when they cannot control people and events in their lives.

Wellbeing is a perception of quality of life that spans a number of interrelated factors, but is underpinned by meeting their basic needs<sup>32</sup> for safety, food, housing, education, training, being able to obtain a job and earn a living, which in combination contributes to a feeling of self worth and self actualization. Being involved in one's community and being listened to are important for feelings of self worth and this sense of social inclusion can recursively impact on coping skills which then leads to a decrease in the use of alcohol and other drugs. The challenge is to have a sense of place, a sense of security at home and in the community. This can be summed up as a sense of social inclusion. This enables young people to study at school and it helps adults maintain a study and work routine. Educational achievements and maintaining a working life are difficult to achieve when home environments are unstable because of physical, emotional or sexual abuse<sup>33</sup>.

## 5.1 Social connections that create hope and negative social interactions that lead to detachment and loss of hope

“What works is making this place a safe haven, a good place for people to come to.... They are invited to come here and to be volunteers. They do not realize it, but I am building their self esteem. It is important for people not to feel that they are being “treated for a problem”. The arts and crafts are a way to break the ice....Yarning makes the difference”.

This is a reference to taking time to make sense of one's experiences and to share the experiences with others. This is a crucial ‘circuit breakers’ for those who are close to breaking point as a result of complex interrelated problems: at the very least friendliness and respectful listening, ‘giving people time’ and then ensuring that their needs are addressed through following through their case work and enabling them to fill out forms and to work out what part of the problem to work on first. This can be addressed by supportive listening, addressing isolation and building social networks beyond the existing networks of family, because these can be part of the problem, providing safe accommodation, training and occupation and paid employment for those who are not primary carers of dependent children, elderly or disabled. The co-created software is not intended to replace building rapport and relationships. It is a means to support better matches of responses to perceived need. This research resonates with that of Bowlby and Ainsworth (1991, 1992) who emphasized the importance of positive relationships for developing attachments. Without positive relationships participants stressed that they became angry and lost hope. This affected their ability to engage with others and it has relevance for wellbeing (according to this research and that of Atkinson, 2002). Being ‘shamed’<sup>34</sup> by service providers was discussed as being one of the greatest barriers (on this see Atkinson,2002) to healing as it creates a sense of victim hood and leads to mistrust. The legacy of racism, loss of land and generations of social exclusion provide the lens through which the service users view their life chances and evaluate the services. Poverty and a lack of resources, combined with a lack of self respect associated with violence, abuse and alcohol misuse are part of the systemically linked web of problems.

This is why a sociocybernetics approach is needed to explore the complex, recursive interrelationships so that a web of interventions can be provided. The emotions felt by those who are turned away from service providers who do not understand their needs was expressed graphically in the picture below as an unfriendly interaction with a service provider, depicted as tall, intimidating and unsmiling, next to a picture of what works, namely a circle of women talking as equals. This requires building rapport through “two-way communication”. Gore (2007) argues that one way communication raises many problems for democracy. Importantly Gore writes about the way in which two way communication is vital for building relationships and creating attachments between people at the individual level and also at the societal level<sup>35</sup>.

The data *from service users* has produced very specific recommendations about a) meeting safety concerns that go beyond just physical housing and b) the importance of social networks to support those who have complex needs. c) Throughout the very detailed stories, supported by pictures and vignettes, the informants have stressed the value of respectful interactions from service providers.

## 5. POLICY INFORMED BY PARTICIPATORY DESIGN AND MATCHING SERVICES TO NEED

“There has never been a serious attempt to focus on the institutional interface between Indigenous people and governments in Australia. To construct an interface that creates greater parity and mutual accountability (and true shared responsibility) would require governments to agree to limitations on their existing powers and prerogatives and to make accountability a two –way street rather than the existing one-way street. ... (Pearson, 2007).<sup>36</sup>

The prototype for participatory design supports the idea that meanings and values need to be placed centre stage when addressing complex needs<sup>37</sup>. We argue that the process of engaging stakeholders is all important to addressing wellbeing which is a complex, interrelated concept based on perceptions and values along with the meeting of core basic needs; it requires respect and a sense of being connected with the community in which one lives. ‘Control of destiny’ through being able to shape one’s life has been highlighted in this research and supports the findings of Tsey et al (2003:36) who argue that wellbeing can be enhanced through empowerment. Service users whose lives are in balance are able to use generic services, but those whose lives are overwhelmed rely on specific services. A strong case can be made for the need to maintain specific services to ensure that service providers can triage the service users into holistic case management and holistic services if they face multiple life challenges. The main point of our research was to enable an exploration across cultural explanations of what works why and how and to find areas of overlap and difference. The findings to date : a) *demonstrate* the importance of matching perceived needs to service outcomes and the role that ongoing communication can play in shaping policy. Being involved in dialogue on policy matters and applying the dialectical process in one’s community is one of the ways to ensure a fulfilling life (which he called eudaimonia, on this see Irwin (1985, Elias and Lichterman 2003). b) *support* the idea that wellbeing is what is valued and necessarily includes emotions and basic needs. Empowering Indigenous organizations to achieve wellbeing for Indigenous people is a step in this direction (Rowse 2003)<sup>38</sup>. To support the common good we need mobilisation of people to support ideas and this requires active engagement, so that people can learn from one another and test out their ideas by considering ‘if then’ scenarios. The approach to social inclusion from below is based on: a) Encouraging an understanding of ‘if then’ scenarios to enhance an understanding of the consequences of different choices for individuals and groups. b) Enabling a process of ‘critical heuristics’ (Ulrich 1983) guided by informatics software (De Vries, 2008 forthcoming) Bourdieu (1972) in the Outline of a Theory of Practice stresses the importance of understanding the worldview of participants. He talks about the landscape of ideas and concepts which people inhabit as habitus. Critical heuristics can help to assess the extent to which a problem has been appreciated systemically. c) Matching perceived needs to services wherever possible (McIntyre-Mills, 2007). The idea that people are ignorant and ill informed is made by Caplan (2007), others such as Surowieki (2007). Caplan develops a neo conservative argument based on the idea that democracy and science function effectively because of open systems and therefore the market should be allowed to act as an open system<sup>39</sup>. It is a construct, like democracy and it should be an open system. But the argument fails, because the market is not an open system, it has favoured the powerful who have controlled it to

serve the interests of the powerful. The critique, however by social democrats who believe that it is possible to reconstruct the market to act as a more open system is that it has potential to be used to serve social and environmental concerns. Stern (2007) and Held (2004) have argued that global markets could be guided by transnational laws and a global covenant (that underpins laws) so that a sustainable future is based on triple bottom line accounting and accountability (Elkington 1997).

“...reducing the risks of climate change requires collective action. It requires co-operation between countries, through international networks that support the achievement of shared goals. It requires a partnership between the public and private sector, working with civil society and with individuals. It is still possible to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, through strong collective action starting from now” (Stern, 2007: 644).

Power is vested in positional authority associated with hierarchy, but also vested in relational power and the power imbedded in discourses. In large nation states diverse interest groups are not necessarily able to voice their ideas effectively through aggregated majority votes or to shape agendas. They can feel alienated and detached (Gore 2007, Habermas, Derrida and Borradori, 2003). Centralised steering through government based on aggregated majority votes can be effectively supplemented by integrative dialogue based on participatory design and discursive discussion on what people perceived to be right and their rationale for making these judgements. By using votes not only for elections but to give opinions on issues, decentralised steering can supplement centralised steering from above and it can enable greater democracy and governance. As Fishkin and Laslett stressed (2003) it is vital to ensure accountability and control (see also Fishkin 2000) and this is possible through new forms of network governance that can enable:

- Design from below through enabling people to provide design inputs and to ensure that the agenda is not controlled by others.
- Deliberate by considering ‘if then’ scenarios and the impact of their choices on their own lives and the lives of others so as to consider both individual and collective needs.
- Make choices on options and indicate their choices so that they are weighted.
- Mapping pathways of choices to inform policy makers of people’s ideas.
- Updating the pathways as people register their choices.

Discursive or deliberative democracy (see Dryzek 1990,2000) and other forms of direct local participation or voting on issues need to be considered as completing aggregative democracy which remains ‘the best worst choice option’ (to use Churchill’s phrase)<sup>40</sup> and to find ways to enable it to become more accountable to those who are excluded from the protection of citizenship rights.<sup>41</sup> Rights, not customer satisfaction, are the predetermination of social justice. Nussbaum<sup>42</sup> argues for supporting reason and rationality via building capabilities, if we are to sustain the ‘quality of life’ that is extended beyond the social contract (based on the Rawlsian, 1999 ‘veil of ignorance’ test to include those who are unprotected as citizens and are consequently voiceless and powerless<sup>43</sup>, unless human rights are extended to non citizens). Unfortunately as Gore (2007) has stressed in ‘*Assault on Reason*’, the engagement in democracy has eroded in USA due to one- way communication and powerful control of the media and the strong influence of corporate money politics. The large diverse nation state needs to be represented and held accountable so that elections are not dominated by elites who need to be held to account through a range of opportunities in a general election are essential for establishing human rights. This also enables working across nation states and so we move beyond citizenship to consider human rights and the sustainability of the planet for this generation and the next. This requires new forms of accountability and governance which enables checking on decisions and holding our representatives accountable in between elections<sup>44</sup>.

Does the Aarhus convention provide a way forward as Florini (2003) suggests that could enhance wellbeing and accountability by enabling citizens to express their concerns at the local level? Could it help to address some of the UN Millennium Goals by holding the market to account through greater transparency and participation<sup>45</sup>? According to Florini (2003:190):

“it allows individuals and NGOs to seek redress in court when governments or corporations fail to meet these obligations to provide information. And the transparency requirements do not discriminate on the basis of citizenship or geography. An NGO or individual in one country can demand information from a government or corporation in another”<sup>46</sup>

On its own it is unlikely to make a great deal of impact on enhancing the ability of people to engage actively in shaping policy, unless it is supported by opportunities to engage in e-democracy and e-governance. Linear thinking is systematic and supports only those ideas that can be accommodated in terms of the tests made by experts. Power is vested in recognised expertise and political association with experts. Rosenberg (2002) argues that linear logic undermines reason and argues for the need to develop more critical and analytical ability<sup>47</sup>.

The ability to think about our thinking and to be philosophical can be cultivated in dialogue with others. But equally the potential exists to polarise and to be oppositional, unless the dialectical reasoning process is cultivated through if then thinking based on ‘critical heuristic’s and unless the dialogue is open to ensure that the complexity of the decision is matched by the complexity of the decision maker<sup>48</sup>. Our research makes the case that active participation is *not only* essential to match policy to perceived needs, but in order to build a sense of engagement. We need to be able to address the unexpected, accept the value of irony and deconstruction from diverse viewpoints, in order to test out our ideas in dialogue that enables rapport to be built through creating shared metaphors that enable both our common good and collective interests to be upheld whilst enabling decentralized steering from below to enable testing out of ideas based on empirical evidence of what works, why and how. Thus the paper begins where Rorty (1989) ends in ‘Contingency, *irony and solidarity*. A greater striving to understand ethics and human meanings and values is essential<sup>49</sup>.

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- <sup>2</sup> User-centric design is based on telling narratives and exploring perceived meanings. The next step is to analyze the discourses for patterns (Christakis and Bausch 2006 and Van Gigch 1991, 2003 on meta modelling). Making sense of perceptions is through identification of patterns and making meaning/sense of the patterns based on weighting the choices. The number of times particular themes were raised or particular service choices made equals a weighting. The approach demonstrates the ability of people to design the content of the software and thus to engage in participatory design, e-governance and e-democracy which could be used to extend democracy to the marginalized and socially excluded. In the Australian context these include Aboriginal Australians, refugees and young people without the vote who will have to live with the decisions in the future. The current research is only with Aboriginal stakeholders aged 18 and above and it needs to be extended in the next phase to include younger Australians.
- <sup>3</sup> Co morbidity: the coexistence of substance use and mental health problems (PARC Co morbidity Project <http://www.parc.net.au/comorbidmain.htm> accessed 13/09/2005. Culture, Spirit and Wellbeing: looking at the big picture Spirituality and Health Conference 2005, Adelaide.
- <sup>4</sup> The project has ended and despite many changes in the organization of Neporendi, such as the departure of key board members and staff, the research agenda continues. Some of the original community participants remain, others have moved to non government and government organizations and they continue to 'talk up' the project which has expanded the breadth of our connections. All the co-researchers remain committed to extending the project to other contexts in Australia and to that end we are having conversations or presenting papers locally, nationally and internationally. For example a presentation has been made at the Social Inclusion Board in Canberra at the invitation of the director of policy in the Chief Minister's Department in Canberra. A paper entitled "New directions for social wellbeing through extending deliberative democracy to enhance representation", was delivered at the *Social Innovation conference* in Adelaide and papers have been presented at international conferences on various stages of this project.
- <sup>5</sup> This South Australian based research explores the extent to which it is possible to enable the principles of subsidiarity to be operationalised in such a way that people who are to be affected by decisions are able to have a say in setting local agendas in terms of social, economic and environmental considerations that are vital for wellbeing.
- <sup>6</sup> Kjaer (2004: 49-58) explores the question to what extent networks are a problem for democracy. She argues: "The basic assumption underlying the parliamentary governance chain is one of representative democracy. The people are sovereign and enjoy the basic political and civil freedoms. The people ultimately hold political authorities (parliament and government) to account. They are able to do this as long as political authorities are responsible for policy decisions and implementation. If the political authorities no longer have full control over policy, in other words if the basic organizing principle is no longer a hierarchy, then the representatives of the people cannot be sure that their decisions are effectuated. Yet one of the characteristics of networks is that power is more diffuse and lies in relations among actors. Hence, responsibility for a particular policy or policy outcome may be difficult to place, and accountability difficult to ensure."
- <sup>7</sup> The ideal type of bureaucracy advocated as the 'best worst option' to support democracy has become a core project for many leading social scientists (see du Gay, 2005), but Savage (in du Gay 2005: 331) argues there is need for caution: "The evidence ... indicates that the alignment of bureaucracy with the institutional habitus of the professional and managerial middle class closes down one historical avenue for the advancement of more popular concerns."
- <sup>8</sup> I am not suggesting networks replace bureaucracies, but that networks can be used as a means (amongst others) to make human service organizations more responsive so that they can match responses to perceived needs and narrow the accountability gap between agents and principles. The cynicism about network governance is evident in the following quotation: "Another alternative to the market model, as well as the traditional models of bureaucracy, is the 'dialectical' or participatory organization. ... This change in management is at once a manipulative mechanism for increasing efficiency and a genuine moral commitment to participation ... Whether the participation is authentic or not, it is difficult for an organization to deny involvement and access to its employees and even to its clients... The spread of network conceptualizations in the social sciences has been paralleled by a proliferation of network practices in governance ... No longer can governments impose their wills through legal instruments and, if necessary, coercion; they must now work to achieve something approaching consensus among a large group of self interested parties who have some influence over the policy... (Peters 2001: 8).
- <sup>9</sup> The aim is to identify the gaps in service delivery pertaining to social inclusion and complex problems by providing a dialectical (Lind and Lind 2005) means of managing complex knowledge through supporting networking by means of a computer system (Castells, 1996) that is empowering rather than disempowering to the workforce and the most marginalized Australians. Usually capacity building is top down. In this research it is bottom up with the service users providing a better understanding of different constructs and perceptions. This is our starting point for so-called 'knowledge management' using scenarios, based on possible options to be able to encompass complex social, cultural, political, economic and environmental dimensions (Kahane 1992:3). We worked across a number of domains, in order to address the area of concern.
- <sup>10</sup> The report entitled "*Family violence and sexual assault in Indigenous communities: Walking the talk*" stresses that circuit breakers include healing men, women and children (Keel 2004: 19) through working across departments and at all levels of the community. Involvement in decision making and "walking the talk" are part of the solution and part of the process of empowerment.

- <sup>11</sup> According to ABS statistics the Southern Region has lower levels of family violence than the northern region, partly because of the Onkaparinga Collaborative Approach set up by a network of government, non government and community participants in 2005.
- <sup>12</sup> We hoped that if it were possible to create a means by which we could combine both decentralized decision making and steering from below and centralized steering from above based on the common good, prompted by 'if then' scenarios that are future oriented and wellbeing oriented, then we would be able to build a system that could be used for spatial and conceptual transboundary decision making.
- <sup>13</sup> Burma and Zimbabwe are two recent cases where peaceful force should have provided the conditions for dialogue to occur. How do we inspire enough solidarity to care for others? How do we inspire quick, careful intervention before too much more suffering occurs? These are the concerns raised by Rorty (1989) in "Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity". Evidence of primary and secondary research on what works, why and how suggests that it is the process of dialogue and raising awareness locally, regionally and internationally creates solidarity or bonds of mutual understanding, connection or attachment to policies, because people have helped to design them. But we cannot have dialogue with those who do not wish to talk (Rorty 1989: 63 and when people feel they have something to gain and are prepared to 'unfold values' and to 'sweep in' (West Churchman, 1971, 1983) social, cultural, political, economic and environmental conditions. We need to strive to create the conditions for dialogue and the challenge is to ensure that we support freedom to the extent that it does not undermine the freedom of others. When that line is crossed decisions need to include the common good and not those factors that undermine it. But who decides on the nature of power and what the common good entails? We need to be guided by the axioms that we can all share, namely that what matters is freedom from suffering. This is what Rorty (1989) stressed in his argument for expanding the boundaries of solidarity, but he did not draw the boundaries of solidarity sufficiently widely. Expanded pragmatists consider the implications of policy and governance decisions for this generation of life and the next.
- <sup>14</sup> This phrase was cited by Sarre (2008) in characterizing the policy approach to crime in Australia and many government's internationally. They have a punishment, rather than a prevention approach which sits uncomfortably with the rhetoric that they wish to achieve social inclusion for those suffering from drug and alcohol-related crimes. Although property related crimes in Australia have decreased, according to him other crimes have not been positively affected by incarceration. Sarre, R 2008. Social Innovation, Law and Justice. *Social Innovation Conference*. Adelaide 19-21 June 2008, Hawke Building.
- <sup>15</sup> <http://www.worldinbalance.net/agreements/1987-brundtland.html>
- <sup>16</sup> The notion of rights and responsibilities can only be carefully considered when one is mindful of the past: colonization, dispossession, oppression through loss of land and the low points (such as Nuclear testing at Maralinga and mandatory sentencing). Being given citizenship in 1962 without the power to make decisions in parliament has done little to address the learned hopelessness and helplessness born of experience. Nevertheless this is balanced by survival, and gritty determination. Out of the chaos of dispossession comes creativity and renewal. The extent to which a sense of agency is affected by participating in designing and constructing an alternative form of decision making tool is one of the reasons for undertaking this research. Learned hopelessness, helplessness, blame is acknowledged but the next step is to add things to one's life by taking responsibility and applying a sense of rights to agency and remove the barriers that one is able to remove through individual and community action. This project takes critique one step further and makes an attempt to find a way to enhance service delivery through enabling the service users to design, model and test out the value of subsidiarity and a means to join up the governance decisions through a dialectical computer design, created by and for the users. The design is based on their hopes, fears and passions, in other words their experiences as Aboriginal Australians who have experienced marginalization and dispossession.
- In this research, the area of concern and approach was identified and designed with Aboriginal co-researchers and ensures that the users became part of a *community of inquiry and practice* together with service providers. It is a praxis approach to research called 'expanded pragmatism' (McIntyre-Mills et al 2006a, c). Pragmatism (unlike idealism) is an approach to philosophy of science and ethics that stresses the consequences of actions. Narrow forms of pragmatism (such as utilitarianism), considered the consequences for some stakeholders, not all stakeholders. In this sense the research draws on Peirce, Dewey and Addams (see Shields, 2003, Hildebrand 2005) and then C. West Churchman's Design of Inquiry approach (1979, see McIntyre-Mills (2000, 2003 a, b, c, 2004, 2006a, b, c).
- <sup>17</sup> Mapping and modeling systems have been the preserve of linear or positivist thinkers who divide 'self' and 'other', 'subjective' and 'objective'. New science makes it possible to argue that the testing process needs to be done as an iterative, intersubjective process that involves all those who are to be affected by the decisions. This improves both science and democracy and it can help to improve communication and political negotiation (Schoeny and Warfield 2000). Because the starting point for the design is on the consequences of thought and action for service users, the approach is dialectical and responsive, to the 'wisdom of the people' (Christakis and Brahm, 2003, Christakis 2004 and McIntyre-Mills 2006 on expanded pragmatism). Social cognition is about how individuals and groups perceive the world 'out there'. The issue of representation is central.
- <sup>18</sup> The argument made in *Critical Systemic Praxis* (meaning thinking and practice see McIntyre-Mills, 2003 Diagram 1.5, page 14 called: 'Breaking the cycle through participatory governance and developing citizenship rights and responsibilities') is supported through the work of Atkinson (2002) and in the narratives shared by survivors of poverty, violence and social exclusion and confirmed by those women and men who are still trapped in the negative vicious cycle of poverty and addictive behaviour which can be seen as both causes and effects (Stafford Beer, 1974). An economy that supports the class/culture system is "written"/expressed in the socio-demographic patterns (educational outcomes, unemployment and incarceration), morbidity and mortality and life chances in the Northern Territory where the research that provides a background to this study was based. Similar trends apply elsewhere in the world where marginalized populations are often those with the lowest health outcomes.
- <sup>19</sup> Critical Systemic thinking and practice can usefully be applied to governance. In this approach there is a place for those with professional expertise and for those who know how it feels to walk in a particular pair of shoes or to go barefoot. It also ensures that the testing of the hypothesis is done by those who will live with the decisions. It embodies participatory democracy (McIntyre-Mills 2003 and helps to 'rescue the enlightenment from itself' (McIntyre-Mills et al 2006 a). Critical Systemic Praxis is based on a belief in the potential of

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- human beings to construct and reconstruct their futures. This process is about 'unfolding' and 'sweeping in' (Singer and Churchman 1979, 1981 and Ulrich 2001) the issues that can be explained retroductively as historical, economic, intergenerational violence associated with marginalisation, alcohol and poverty. The history of Aboriginal Australians spans dispossession, survival and citizenship, the struggle for rights, responsibilities, agency to overcome learned helplessness and hopelessness, creativity and a 'can do' attitude.
- <sup>20</sup> It is adapted from a range of sources and informed by Aboriginal co-researchers and participants and in this project it has enabled the participants of this project to identify the patterns that undermine their life chances and it has enabled Aboriginal citizens to design better matches between their needs and the responses they receive from service providers. It is based on: i) The critical work of the Frankfurt School and drawn from a critical reading of Marx, ii) C.Wright Mills (1975) for history and biography and iii) C.West Churchman (1979) for religion, aesthetics, politics and ethics and iv) Habermas (1984) and Foucault (1980) for an understanding and exploring communication, power and knowledge and knowledge domains, v) Ulrich (1983,2001) and vi) Flood and Romm (1996) for critical questioning and triple loop learning and vii) Zimmerman (1994) for sweeping in the environmental issues.
- <sup>21</sup> Social capital', according to White (2002: 268) is a concept that needs to be considered critically. Conceptually it can mean different things to different interest groups. Thus merely studying social networks as if they were objective indicators of something uniform and meaningful for all the participants is mistaken from this critical and systemic point of view.
- <sup>22</sup> The ABS paper (2002: 3-5) also cites similar definitions by Cox, Baum and Winter who apply the concept to Australian society White (2002) citing Bourdieu's (1986) construct of social capital included an analysis of power and stressed, that it could be in the interests of some rather than others, particularly if it is constructed in a way that is meaningful only to participants who are politically powerful.
- <sup>23</sup> Access to water, sanitation, refuse removal, electricity and secure living spaces (ability to lock doors and windows).
- <sup>24</sup> The idea is to enable them to educate the powerful and not the other way around. Networks can lead to empowerment or disempowerment (Elias and Lichterman 2003) and in this research the partnership design ensures that the service users are able to use their maps of the world, their experiences and strategies to inform the service providers, rather than the other way around. Social learning is through contextual understanding and it becomes part of what Bourdieu calls "habitus" (see Bourdieu 1972: 87). By thinking about these taken for granted ideas and imagining options we can begin the process of reframing our thinking. This is discussed by Deleuze and Guattari in their work on identity that explores being and becoming (see Bogue, 1989). "A number of things happened in the sharing of life experiences and narratives. As each person listened in dadirri to the stories of others in the group, they became able to listen more deeply to themselves. They found the same courage in themselves that they had observed and named in others. As participants explored their own stories they began to change they found words to describe feelings and experiences they had never previously given voice to and had never told another person. Shared feelings expanded understanding and deepened relationships." (Atkinson 2002: 254).
- <sup>25</sup> Self selected service users who are associated with Neporendi. Data collection by Janet with assistance of Kim O'Donnell, Daphne Rickett and Tracey Turnbull; Doug Morgan and Bevin Wilson.
- <sup>26</sup> Peter Reason (1988, 2001) argued that knowledge needs to be co-constructed and the viewpoints of multiple interest groups taken into consideration. When undertaking research the expert becomes the facilitator of co-researchers and so the power dynamics are quite different from those in traditional research. Increasingly it is realized that communication is important for management, leadership, problem solving or governance in a range of public, private and voluntary sector organizations. It becomes even more important when working across organizational, geographical (national and international) and cultural barriers. Out of these key narratives and with the inspiration and integrative approaches of Banathy (2000), Capra (1996) and Bausch (2001) I weave the following praxis guidelines/principles to addressing governance in context. Knowledge according to Habermas (1984) can be conceptualized as three domains. These are the objective, the subjective and the intersubjective and now the systemic domain – the most open and the most complete domain as it is not merely humanistic, but eco-humanistic, I situate myself in the ecosystemic domain.
- <sup>27</sup> Many of the arguments she raised were profoundly relevant to promoting a sustainable environment, but they had an exclusive cultural dimension that the broader membership wished to avoid, in order to encourage diverse Aboriginal service users and partnerships with the wider Australian community.
- <sup>28</sup> The interactive modeling process could support matching services to need as long as it is seen as an aid to decision making and an aid to e-governance- not as a means to predict and control. It could also be used to enable accountability by making the pathways of choices transparent to users and providers. The narratives and pictures (both abstract and concrete representations) were used to develop metaphors of weaving together strands of experience into baskets that could be used to :
- Tell their unique personal history shaped by a range of social, economic and environmental circumstances.
  - Explore how it has been shaped by their experiences, for example of violence at home, homelessness, or unsafe neighborhoods and limited networks.
  - Identify with a story that others have told and explain how it is different and similar
  - Assess positive life lessons and identify assets that they have and need for their in baskets
  - Discard the problem areas from their lives by taking personal responsibility and
  - Seek assistance to address identified needs that have been prioritized through considering their specific circumstances.
- <sup>29</sup> Poverty, addiction and marginalization can be addressed through creating bonds of support within the community, bridges between the Aboriginal and non Aboriginal community which requires overcoming discrimination and racism through reconciliation and friendship and links with those who can help to bring about change and empower those who are in need 'to translate private troubles into public issues' (to use C.Wright Mills 1975, phrase). Weaving strands of experience is the metaphor on which the healing pathways design was based (McIntyre-Mills 2008, forthcoming). Our research makes a strong case for better linkages and pathways to support a section of the service users and thus to triage the users (as per David Calvert 2005. Pathways converge on the importance of a) active participation in the process of healing and b), building strong networks and c) respectful and friendly communication as a means and an end for

wellbeing. Participants agree that achieving safety (physical wellbeing) is dependent on having self esteem and confidence based on knowledge of one's rights and responsibilities. Social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual wellbeing rests on access to alternatives which participants learn about through role models, mentors and service providers who can work closely with service users to ensure holistic and specialised care can be provided. The mainstream delivery of services is appropriate for some, but not all service users. Those with the least confidence and the most limited social support networks need to be given additional assistance to negotiate and combine services and social, cultural, political, economic and environmental resources to support wellbeing. The issue is ability of service users to access services, the ability of service providers to match and combine services effectively and contextually on the basis of need. In this research, using PAR the service users designed pathways based on their perceptions and experiences. These findings were compared with the findings from the perceptions of the service providers. The bridge between the two data sets is provided by the service users who have survived negative life chances and have become service providers. Some of the Aboriginal informants who were **service users** became **service providers** during the course of the study and some of the **service providers became service users** for a while, whilst overcoming challenges such as grief over the loss of a partner or illnesses. Participatory action research is used to set up the collaborative framework and to build existing relationships. The dynamic process of service delivery and referral was modeled by means of the system and confidentiality of service users has been preserved. Neporendi along with organisations with which it is closely linked have tested a paper-based version of the design and the testing and refinement process continued during 2007 and 2008 and culminated in workshops in February and May to test the interactive software. A 'Pathways to wellbeing workshop' was held at Flinders University, 12 February, 2008. An evaluation of software designed in partnership with an Aboriginal NGO and the South Australian Department of Health and the Australian Research Council was held on the 12 February, 2008 at Flinders University entitled "User-centric Design: Pathways to Wellbeing". This was a timely date, just prior to the apology made by Prime Minister Rudd for the past injustices to Aboriginal people. The workshop was attended by Aboriginal and non Aboriginal health service providers and academics. The most positive aspects were considered to be its potential for creativity, innovation and social inclusion. The next step is to find a way to find finding to develop the generic prototype and to find ways to generalise the software to other areas such as service delivery to local government or matching the needs of diverse interests within regional areas. This would involve working within and across both conceptual and spatial (including organisational) boundaries. This is a big step and needs the support of interested groups to assist us with the process of approaching both public and selected private sector funders (see McIntyre-Mills 2008 forthcoming).

<sup>30</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001, *Census of Population and Housing*. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005 *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Report* 4704.0. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2006, *Alcohol and Other Drugs Treatment Services in South Australia 2004-2005: findings from the National Minimum Data Set (NMDS)*. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2006, *Australia's Health*, ISSN 1032

<sup>31</sup> The inference from the analysis of the data is that by providing a combination of factors (safe housing, meeting basic physical needs then accessing education and employment) wellbeing becomes possible. The first Nvivo maps were developed iteratively for discussion with the male and female service users and Aboriginal service providers who formed part of the reference group and later with a wider group of non Aboriginal commentators at a workshop hosted by McIntyre and Morgan with co-researchers and corrections were made. The aim was to find the shortest pathway approach to achieving wellbeing outcomes. But the pathways are based on the perceived lived experiences of the service users as to what constitutes successful, integrated outcomes.

<sup>32</sup> See Maslow, A.H. 1970 *Motivation and Personality*. New York. Harper and Row

<sup>33</sup> Poverty leads to anxiety and anger and the use of alcohol and other drugs helps to make the situation bearable for a short while, until the reality of unpaid bills and hungry children has to be faced again. Escaping poverty becomes even more difficult if one has to acquire skills without having the self esteem and confidence to attend school or training. A sense of hopelessness and helplessness can be addressed through structural intervention to prevent social exclusion. Practical immediate interventions such as public health and dentistry and by building community organizations where people are made to feel welcome and important to others can be helpful. Pathways to recovery can be making sense of experiences to ensure that the individual experiencing the personal trouble understands that it is part of a public issue of racism, social exclusion, poverty, addiction including the misuse of alcohol and other drugs and violence associated with anger, grief and the use of alcohol and other drugs to blot out pain or to conform. These are vicious problems in that they are a) both causes and effects of problems (on this see Stafford Beer, 1974) and they have b) a value component, many variables and many relationships (see Rittel and Webber 1984) on complex, wicked problems). The way to address problems by abused women is to leave households or communities. This can bring a solution for them, but it is not a sustainable approach. Households and communities need to be supported through developing strong networks. Participants talked of Hackam as 'the Bronx' and a place where it was difficult to bring up families safely. Safety was stressed and the value of women leaving a violent home and sometimes a community as a first step towards achieving wellbeing. This is paradoxical, because to achieve wellbeing she will need to establish a sense of community as a priority, once she feels safe.

<sup>34</sup> Women and men need to find ways to survive abuse within their personal lives and when they seek assistance. A sense of self esteem and hope for the future can provide a sense of agency, but when people are at their most vulnerable supportive mentors, case workers or role models can make a positive or negative the difference, in the words of Constance:

"Be able to keep your cool when you line up and wait and when people are rude to you, be able to keep records of who spoke to and make sure you do not make a mistake, literacy and numeracy matter, need to be able to understand the form and be able to have enough social skills to speak with the officers. [Need] money to pay for gap, be registered, have a Medicare card and be registered at Centrelink "

<sup>35</sup> "As Miller and Ferroggiaro (1996) have pointed out 'respect and self respect are central components of an enlarged concept of citizenship...Respect affects how we are treated, what help from others is likely, what economic arrangements others are willing to engage in ..., when reciprocity is to be expected'. Respect acts as a resource for individuals, and should be considered a component of the

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norms of reciprocity, trust, and social obligation that are essential for minimising the risks of poor physical, psychological, or social health (Aday 1994). Indeed, mutual respect and the avoidance of inflicting humiliation on people is the central concept of Margalit's 'decent society' (Margalit 1996). ...honour and shame are so crucial to human relations and may often become issues of life and death has long been recognised...." (Wilkinson et al 1998: 594). This is also supported by the work of Ainsworth and Bowlby (1991), Brewer and Hewstone (2004), Atkinson (2002) as well as Greenfield (2000) all of whom stress the importance of engagement that builds linkages across diverse groups, based on trust. Unfortunately negative racist, sexist communications have an opposite affect which is why supportive networks are vital for wellbeing. The data from two men's focus groups and from two combined focus groups with men and women service users stress the importance of not only respectful communication and interactions, but warmth and friendliness. Borradori, Habermas and Derrida (2003) take up this issue and stress the implications of the quality of communication for democracy. Respect is not enough, warmth and the quality of the engagement matters. Democracy is currently increasingly criticized for not representing the interests of diverse citizens and for not taking into account the social justice and environmental concerns that span national boundaries (Beer 1974, 1994), Habermas, Derrida, and Borradori, 2003, Pape 2005, Devji 2005, Singer 2002 and McIntyre-Mills 2003, 2006a,b,c). As Savage (2005: 330) argues, there are many kinds of bureaucracy and current democratic forms are in need of an overhaul. Revitalizing democracy (Putnam 1995) and democratic institutions by finding new ways to engage the marginalized is the challenge (highlighted by Savage 2005) to which this research is addressed. Florini (2003: 83) sums up the challenge as follows: "...when decision making reaches the rarefied level of intergovernmental organizations or even informal multilateral rule making, the threads of democratic accountability can be stretched very thin. It is often hard to see such decision making systems as a means by which the people of the world, through the instrument of their freely chosen governments, resolve their common problems. ... Accountability to the general public is at best indirect, and often, for all intents and purposes, it does not exist at all ...[The] mechanisms we have put in place to deal with large scale collective action problems seem so thoroughly inadequate when matched up against the scale of the problems..."

<sup>36</sup> Pearson, N. 2007. A structure for empowerment. *The Weekend Australian. Inquirer*. June 16-17.

<sup>37</sup> McLuhan and Powers (1989) argue that "the medium is the message". They argued that digital technology would change the world. Clearly digital technology can be used for emotive one-way communication that discourages critical thinking (see Muhlberger 2006) or it can support discursive dialogue and two-way communication. The latter is needed to enable analysis and greater awareness of the different ways in which issues can be constructed (Rosenberg 2002, Gore, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Rowse, T. 2003 "Tim Rowse reflects on three conferences about Indigenous rights and the campaign for a treaty. Australian Policy online [www.apo.org.au](http://www.apo.org.au)

<sup>39</sup> The work of Caplan and Surowiecki supports the open market and does not make an argument for controlling the market to support social and environmental justice. Where their work (and that of neo conservatives) fails is that they do not recognise that the economy does not factor in the externalities of poverty and pollution (see Beck 1992). Open testing out of ideas is important for science and democracy and it is essential for avoiding 'polarisation of ideas' and 'group think' in small groups (Tyson, 1989), but the market needs to be held to account to ensure the common good by factoring in the so-called externalities of pollution and poverty.

<sup>40</sup> Florini (2003) emphasized the importance of combining both centralized steering from above (in the interests of the global commons) and steering from below in the interests of holding the elites in business and the state to account and in the interests of mobilizing an interest and concern about public issues. She does not favour leaving democracy in the hands of 'philosopher kings', she believes in democracy as the best worst option and cites Winston Churchill (2003: 209). Participation beyond voting in elections is supported in her vision. She cites the Aarhus convention and regional federalism as the way forward. She believes that networks that are more transparent and accountable will be part of our digital future. But she is concerned about bridging the digital divide. That is the challenge to ensure that we do not have the digital haves living in domed, safe environments whilst the rest face the worst that environmental degradation has to offer.

<sup>41</sup> Age, gender, ability, income, species membership or some other constructed category pertaining to position on the continuum of life are and have been used to exclude human and sentient beings from a right to quality of life (see Nussbaum, 2006, Singer, 2002, Sharpe, 2005). The dangers of top down decisions made on the basis of liberal democracies that are out of touch in between elections and not necessarily sufficiently responsive when elected need to be weighed against the dangers of networks that can be captured by powerful interest groups that can exclude some interest groups that do not take into account the common good. Centralised steering from above and decentralised steering from below can be achieved based on new forms of participation. The project set out to assess the extent to which it is possible to improve democratic accountability and the ability of governments to address complex needs.

<sup>42</sup> Nussbaum (2007) does not discuss the environmental challenge in '*Frontiers of Justice*', for this Held adds detail on social democracy and Singer (2002) on ethical implications for public policy. This goes beyond mere capacity building as suggested by Fukuyama (2004) who argues that the ability to think critically and analytically is important and for this reason that government organizations and non government organizations need to develop human capacity. As Sen (2000) argued in 'Development as Freedom', we need to be able to think critically and rationally to participate and develop society (see Sen and Nussbaum in Crocker, 1995).

<sup>43</sup> The capabilities test for quality of life is also extended to non human species in her argument and in so doing she extends Singer's (2002) notion of a life free of pain for sentient beings. Sharpe (2005) acknowledges attachments based on communication (verbal and non verbal) and relationships that responds to an acknowledgement that consciousness is a continuum (Greenfield 2000, Bausch, 2001). This is relevant for considering the rights of those who are not able to enter into contractual arrangements and thus would provide protection to human and non human beings who are unable to speak for themselves. It thus provides protection for the young, the disabled and for other species. Consciousness of varying complexity spans all life (Boulding, 1956, 1968, Bausch, 2001). Science, democracy and governance is enhanced when connections across self, other and the environment are appreciated, based on non-linear, systemic logic.

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- <sup>44</sup> These links have been exposed in the forthcoming election and the prospects for the Democrats seem promising, despite the bitterness of the competition between the candidates. Energy futures are however controlled by the “big end of town” and it remains to be seen how far the current democrats candidates will move to embrace the message put forward by Gore (2007).
- <sup>45</sup> Participation enhances the capability of people to engage in the consideration of options and the implications of the different options for their lives. Could it enable large diverse nation states to enable better participation and thus address some of the concerns raised by Gore (2007) in ‘Assault on Reason’ and Derrida and Habermas in conversation with Borradori in “*Philosophy in a Time of Terror*”? People are not sufficiently engaged in the polity when they rely only upon voting. Liberal democracy could be effectively extended through participatory processes that enable people to give their points of view and thus design ‘from below’, but also to consider the implications of their ideas before making a choice. Then the choices can be mapped and used as a basis for informing policy making as well as informing those who are the designers. Thus it could help to develop what Banathy(2000) calls ‘evolutionary consciousness’ that could enable us to hold in mind more than one big idea at a time and to consider the implications for ourselves, the next generation, thus ensuring that the global commons are addressed locally by people when they make policy and governance decisions. It is possible to do things differently! Big ideas and big policy to address overarching policy directions of climate change and wellbeing require integrated approaches, such as the 2020 Summit in Australia. We do not need to avoid thinking in terms of either or approaches. We need to consider both ‘social inclusion and sustainability’ and find ways to work with the market to achieve sustainable futures’ (Rudd 20 April 2008). We need both centralised controls and decentralised involvement. Participation can marry the two together allowing for social inclusion, ‘creativity’ and ‘open government’ that is responsive to ideas.
- <sup>46</sup> Florini cites Petkova, E. and Veit, P. 2000 Environmental Accountability beyond the Nation State. The implications of the Aarhus convention. Environmental governance note. Washington DC: World Resources Institute, April. The paper sums up the potential and pitfalls such as the access to information- needs to be less vague about the extent of access and access to technical information – copyright issues and patents Public participation by individuals and NGOs needs to be supported by protocols and they raise questions about how enforceable the notion of access to justice is in practice.
- <sup>47</sup> “Tolerance is understood and valued in quite different terms when reconstructed within a systematic (sic read systemic) frame of reference. It is meaningful in terms of its positions relative to other values (e.g. freedom, equality, etc) and this as an element of an ideology or in terms of its function in the larger social system. Alternatively it may be understood in terms of some higher order principle (e.g., one of cooperation oriented to maintaining the systemic integrity of the actors involved. In either case, the meaning of tolerance is defined without reference to specific behaviours or particular individuals or groups. Rather it is defined in more general and abstract terms” (Rosenberg, 2002: 389). Despite Rosenberg’s missing the philosophical point about the difference between systemic and systematic thinking he is correct in arguing that linear logic and an inability to think about values undermines democracy. His argument fails in so far as he argues that *systematic* linear thinking is open. If he had argued for *systemic, non linear* thinking that is informed by an awareness of socio-cybernetics (which goes beyond cause and effect to include feedback and feed forward) then he would understand that representation and the notion of representation should be the basis for all education, because it is the basis for science and democracy.
- <sup>48</sup> This is supported by Ashby’s Rule of Requisite Variety and also by the work of Surowieki (2004) in ‘*The Wisdom of Crowds*’, which shows that if crowds of diverse and independent people are asked to give responses, the large, diverse groups are more likely to be correct more frequently than a narrow group of experts. This populist work is widely known. It is cited by Caplan (2007) who argues that collective wishes or aggregated wishes enable democracy to function, because the diverse random and open processes generate sound results. But this is where the similarity with the research of McIntyre et al (2006) and Christakis and Bausch (2006) differs. We argue for the value of discursive democracy, not only do the participation of diverse people at the macro level augment this aggregative potential, it can also be carried out at the micro level and combined with discursive dialogue on complex needs; it can enable people to vote more responsibly and based on more informed ideas. It can mobilise support for the global commons. It thus augments the aggregative potential of liberal democracy based on open voting systems and it finds the most frequent patterns across variables, informing the policy makers of the people’s choices. See McIntyre-Mills et al 2006 for a discussion on this point.
- <sup>49</sup> This is why Churchman (1982) argued that we need the techniques of “unfolding” and “sweeping in” multiple variables. These he argued are dialectical tools that hone in on contextual variables and issues and draw in a range of considerations. The challenge is to work with diversity and to make sense across different constructions of meaning. In Britain the Blair government has suggested that joined-up-governance is a way to deal with the socialist versus capitalist divide between two systems by developing a Third Way (Giddens, 1998) that enables people to be involved in all levels of the decision-making and governance, but it has been interpreted in a somewhat neo-conservative manner in recent years in Australia (McDonald and Marston, 2003). Behrendt (2005) discusses the implications for democracy of the abolition of ATSIC, the peak representative body of Aboriginal Australians by the Howard government. The need to develop the capacity of public sector organizations to meet service needs and to enhance outcomes is stressed in this paper in a bid to balance the scales towards the public good.