

Creating 'sustainable' communities: New directions for community development within Australia's master planned communities

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Abstract

The word 'community' resonates throughout our lives. Community embraces a quality of life that seems universally valued. Whilst none of us seem to agree on its definition, we all have a sense of when it is absent or present. In recent decades there has been a growing sense that much of the development – emerging urban sprawl – on the fringes of Australian cities does not adequately support or encourage the development of community. This mounting concern for community, combined with the rise of sustainability – environmental, economic and social – as a core component in urban development, has led to the emergence of an increasing number of master planned communities that seek to offer new residents 'sustainable' communities, 'vibrant' communities, 'liveable' communities and so on. Whilst some of these offers are little more than enticing marketing campaigns, others are based on genuine attempts to encourage the growth and emergence of 'sustainable' communities. In their attempts to create 'sustainable' communities, developers have focused their attention on the way in which appropriate housing, public spaces and community facilities within the physical design can provide a basic platform that gives incoming residents the best opportunities to build community. They have also broadened their focus beyond the physical environment to the development of networks, relationships, capacities and possibilities for social interaction. Through an analysis of the development processes of three master planned communities in Sydney, Adelaide and Darwin this paper explores the way in which various initiatives ranging from participatory planning processes through to the establishment of partnerships with local community development organisations are being utilised by developers to create 'sustainable' communities.

Introduction

Community means different things to different people: some associate community with place, others with common interests or other attachments. Whilst none of us seem to agree on what it means, we all have a sense of when it is absent or present. There has been a growing sense that much of the development in recent decades – emerging urban sprawl – on the fringes of Australian cities does not adequately support or encourage the development of community, as one recent media article noted:

The parts of Sydney created by our forefathers ... were a string of jewel-like suburbs, wonderful, authentic communities ... The problem is that since the (second world) war, the model has changed (Susskind 1996)

This mounting concern for the loss of community, combined with the rise of sustainability – environmental, economic and social – as a core component in urban development, has led to the emergence of an increasing number of master planned communities that seek to offer new residents 'sustainable' communities, 'vibrant' communities, 'liveable' communities and so on. As Vedelago notes:

The TV ads paint these new suburbs as slices of idyllic living set amid lakes, parks, vineyards, golf courses, boardwalks and cafes; ... communities where neighbours become friends and friends become family. (2007, p. 4)

In the face of these moves by developers to offer potential new residents something beyond just a simple residential location, a broad range of research has begun to emerge which raises the question of whether or not it is possible to create communities through master planning processes. For example Gwyther (2005) has argued that developer-led master planning processes cannot produce a genuine ideal of community, whilst others such as Costley (2006) and Bajracharya et al. (2006) are optimistic that these developers have a potential to influence the creation of communities through a range of techniques such as community engagement, innovative place design, employment development and by promoting community involvement in decision making.

Whilst some of the offers of 'sustainable' communities, 'vibrant' communities, 'liveable' communities are little more than enticing marketing campaigns, others are based on genuine attempts to encourage

the growth and emergence of 'sustainable' communities. In their attempts to create 'sustainable' communities, these developers have focused their attention on the way in which appropriate housing, public spaces and community facilities within the physical design can provide a basic platform that gives incoming residents the best opportunities to build community. They have also broadened their focus beyond the physical environment to the development of communities through the development of networks, relationships, capacities and possibilities for social interaction. For example Stocklands, a private property development group, has recently implemented the *Stocklands Victoria Community Development Plan* (2006) to provide a community development framework – based on ten key elements which include health and wellbeing, community life, safety, art and culture, leisure and recreation, economic vitality, governance, information technology, learning, community access and support - that can be tailored to the needs of each of its master planning projects across Victoria. The plan identifies the development of community as a key component in the 'planning, design, marketing and sales' of its residential master planning projects. (Stocklands 2006, p. 2)

Through an analysis of the development processes of three master planned communities in Sydney, Adelaide and Darwin this paper explores the way in which various initiatives ranging from participatory planning processes through to the establishment of partnerships with local community development organisations are being utilised by developers to create 'sustainable' communities. I begin by offering some background to the emergence of master planned communities, and highlight the important role that community building and strengthening has assumed within their development. I then provide some methodological notes and present my case study.

Master planning *entire* communities

Master planned estates (MPE) are becoming increasingly important as a part of the urban residential fabric within Australian cities and as an increasingly popular means of residential provision (see Minnery & Bajracharya 1999, Bosman 2003). Defining MPEs is not as straightforward as it sounds. Indeed, researchers often begin with the assertion that there is no definitive definition (Minnery & Bajracharya 1999, Gwyther, 2005). However, most of the Australian research to date works within a broad definition that takes MPEs to be large-scale, integrated residential developments produced by private development entities that include the provision of physical and social infrastructure (Minnery & Bajracharya

1999, Bosman 2003, Gwyther 2005, Rosenblatt 2005, Gleeson 2006), predominantly located on 'greenfield'¹ sites on the outskirts of cities (Minnery & Bajracharya 1999, see also Gwyther 2005) and also more recently on 'brownfield'² sites. Within that broad definition, Australian MPE researchers work with the notion of a spectrum relating to the *intensity* of master planning (see for example Yigitcanlar et al. 2005). At one pole of the spectrum is the conventional planned estate where development complies with an overall vision of design and layout, often maintained through restrictive covenants on house and landscape design features. At the other pole is the master planned *community* (MPC), where the strategic intention and scope of master planning is intensified through place-making approaches aimed at managing social interaction and nurturing the practice of community as well as producing 'community' amongst residents. At this end of the spectrum, extensively planned integrated development is frequently complemented by programs of community development and various forms of 'community compact' (including behavioural as opposed to design covenants) used to mastermind social interaction and nurture community sentiment, binding residents and developers to the vision and localised practice of 'community'.

Over the past decade, MPCs have become a growing fixture within the Australian property market, as Randolph recently noted: 'In the past an area was released for sale, lots were subdivided and people would go in and build their homes ... Today there is a big tendency for developers to *masterplan entire communities*' (Maguire 2008, emphasis added). These MPCs range in scale from 50 – 100,000 lots/dwellings, with varying density, design and affordability. Newington in Sydney, for example, started life as an Olympic village, and while not quite the eco-suburb that Greenpeace imagined, incorporates environmental features. The Ponds, also in Sydney, has a progressive four year community development program which involves such initiatives as sustainability education for residents. Whilst the emergence of MPCs can be traced back at least to the garden suburb movement, their rapid growth over the last decade can be seen as a response to increasing concerns amongst the general population, policy makers, developers and educators for the way in which much development over the last few decades on the outer fringes of Australian cities, and cities elsewhere in the world does not adequately support or encourage the development of communities (Williams 2004, Prud'homme & Nicot 2004, Gwyther 2003, Harfield & Prior 2008).

In the last decade a broad range of large State Government corporatised residential property development vehicles, such as Landcom (New South

Wales) and the Land Management Corporation (LMC) (South Australia), and government authorities involved in development, such as the Defence Housing Authority in the Northern Territory, have begun to focus on the master planning of not just communities, but 'sustainable' communities³. Their commitment to the creation of 'sustainable' communities is expressed through the principles of 'triple bottom line' – economic, social and environmental sustainability. For example Landcom's website presents the following statement:

Landcom believes future generations should inherit communities that are safe and sustainable. This is why we are keen to demonstrate how quality urban development can at the one time, be innovative, environmentally sound, socially responsible and financially viable (Landcom 2008).

Similarly the website of the South Australian Land Management Corporation (LMC) declares: '[The LMCs] primary aim is to provide social, economic and environmental benefits to the people of South Australia by creating, facilitating and where appropriate, developing land based opportunities' (Land Management Corporation 2008). Their commitment to 'building communities' (Land Management Corporation 2008) and creating 'living communities' (Landcom 2008) through a triple bottom line approach to sustainability has resulted in the development of a broad range of environmental, economic and social initiatives within the MPCs that they develop. Initial sustainability initiatives that were undertaken in creating these MPCs were strongly driven by the desire to create better environmental outcomes – through the development and creation of environmental management systems, the development of energy smart housing design, urban design and communities through 'appropriate demand-side and supply side interventions', the use of water sensitive urban design amongst others (see for example O'Toole & Petersen 2006, p. 101-103). Without losing sight of other sustainability initiatives in the development of community, these corporations and authorities have recently turned their attention more strongly to social sustainability (see for example O'Toole & Petersen 2006, p. 103). This focus has led to the emergence of a broad range of initiatives including the provision of moderate income housing and housing for older people, the inclusion of existing community members and eventually new residents of the MPC in the design of the overall master plan and community facilities through ongoing consultation, the development of urban design that promotes a sense of place and opportunities for social interaction and safety, and community development programs (see for example O'Toole & Petersen 2006). The idea of community building and strengthening has gained an

important position in the attempts by these corporations and authorities to seek ways of creating and sustaining communities that are relevant to contemporary living. There is a recognition that notions of community from the past, even the relatively recent past, may not be appropriate for what we need for sustaining communities nowadays, and that opportunities for community development in master planned communities do not happen automatically, but need to be stimulated through institutional arrangements, partnerships and direct resourcing, to create structures and processes that forge connections between people and foster community life.

Community development's emerging role in creating *sustainable* master planned communities

This paper seeks to examine the nature of community development arrangements and processes that are currently being undertaken in the development of MPCs within the Australian context. To do this the case study investigates the similarities and differences in approach to community development within three MPCs located in different States and Territories around Australia – The Ponds in New South Wales by Landcom, Lyons in the Northern Territory by the Defence Housing Authority, and North Gate in South Australia by the Land Management Corporation⁴. Figure 1 provides some basic data on the land area, number of dwellings and projected population of each of these MPCs.

Project	Location	Principal developer	Land area (Ha)	No. dwellings	Projected population
The Ponds	Sydney, NSW	Landcom	320	3,200	10,000
North Gate	Adelaide, South Australia	Land management Corporation, South Australia	45	742	2,244
Lyons	Darwin, Northern Territory	Defence Housing Authority	77	702	2,075

Figure 1 - Basic data on the land area, number of dwellings and projected population of The Ponds, North Gate and Lyons.

Through analysis of these MPCs, the case study paper will assess the role of community development at various stages during the development of the master planned communities. In most cases, MPCs are a product of long-term, multi-phase development programs that combine a complementary mix of land uses (Schmitz & Bookout 1998). The developmental processes of master planned communities has been characterised for this paper as being comprised of three main stages:

1. *a visioning and planning stage*, which involves the initial conceptual development of the MPC,
2. *an implementation stage*, where the developer secures the necessary approvals and the MPC is built, marketed and undergoes initial occupation,
3. *a completion stage*, during which time the MPC is more fully occupied by residents and some form of handover of responsibility is effected between the MPC developers, the community and appropriate governmental institutions.

These objectives are achieved through the examination of a variety of documentary sources, and the use of personal interviews⁵ in order to further investigate the often complex and subtle nature of community development within MPCs. This information is then analysed with regard to any changes that could be observed over the duration of the development process, and with respect to the role played by the stakeholder. In order to do this, four groups of stakeholders were identified as being involved, or having the potential for involvement in the development of these communities. The first significant group of stakeholders is the developer, or developers of the MPC. Second are the various institutions, local, state, and federal governmental agencies related to the financing, planning and construction of the community, and the provision of physical and social infrastructure. Thirdly, are established community development organisations. Finally there is the local community made up of community groups and residents both in the MPC and surrounding areas.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the list of community development initiatives revealed during the research process, the stage of the master planning process at which they (first) occurred, whether or not they are present within each MPC project (✓ indicating yes, ✗ indicating no), and which initiatives have been completed or are yet to be completed (bl indicates those initiatives that have been commenced or completed). Greater details of each of these community development initiatives and each stage of the presence of community development within each stage

of the MPC development are discussed in the next three sections of the paper.

Stage	Community development initiative	The Ponds (Sydney NSW)	North Gate (Adelaide SA)	Lyons (Darwin NT)
Visioning and planning	Community partnership development	✓	✓	✓
	Community involvement in the development of the MPC vision	✓	✓	✓
	Physical planning that promotes community	✓	✓	✓
	Community (and social) planning	✓	✓	✓
	Community development strategy	✓	✓	✓
Implementation	Welcome program	✓	✓	✓
	Facilitation of community programs and activities	✓	✓	✓
	Communications - newsletter and community intranet	✓	✗(No intranet)	✗(No intranet)
	Sustainability education	✓	✓	✓
	Community initiatives fund	✓	✗	✗
	Community development committee	✓	✓	✓
Completion	Development of residents association or other formal community governance structures	✓	✓	✗

Figure 2 - Table showing key community development initiatives and their presence in the development process for each MPC.

Visioning and planning stage – Community planning

Community development and involvement in the visioning stage of master planned communities is by its very nature a somewhat problematic exercise. While it is possible to gain community input from surrounding

stakeholders and other interested parties, the eventual residents of the community are, of course, unable to have input as they are, at this stage of a master planned community's life, a purely hypothetical concept.

Community partnership development

During this early stage of the process, community development emerges out of the establishment of relationships between the developer and their consulting team of experts who engage with the community and key stakeholders in the development of a vision for the master plan. A key outcome of this engagement process within each MPC was the identification of community delivery partners with whom the developer and consultant team would work to create the 'sustainable community'. For example at North Gate a broad range of partnerships was developed with stakeholders including: the City of Port Adelaide Enfield in the detailed planning and implementation; the Heart Foundation in relation to Healthy by Design initiatives; and a range of non government organisations in the development and implementation of the suggested community development program (see below) amongst others.

Community Involvement in the development of the MPC vision

At this early stage of the development process, community development activities in all three MPCs involved some degree of developing a shared vision for the MPC in partnership/consultation with the community and stakeholders. Out of the three MPCs Lyons was characterised by the most comprehensive and diverse consultative processes around the master plan. Major steps included: initial stakeholder briefings with key community groups; community, business and government agency workshops; community open house meetings at which members of the community could discuss the proposed master plan with the project team and provide feedback; a local industry participation seminar; distribution of community newsletters and information bulletins; and a project web site. Whilst Lyons had the most comprehensive process, The Ponds had the earliest involvement of community within the master planning and visioning process through the formation of a community reference group. Of key importance to the effective involvement of the community and stakeholders in the master planning process is their access to resources. This was overcome in at least two of the projects through the provision of a broad range of assistance.

Physical planning process that promotes community

Given that many aspects of creating community are affected by urban design quality, in particular the quality of the public domain – safety and security, comfort and convenience and the nurturing of a sense of place – during the early stages of the master planning process consideration is given to the way in which urban design can contribute to the development of community. Whilst all of the MPC projects embraced efforts to create urban design that encouraged social interaction, there was a clear understanding that design alone was not capable of creating community. Likewise, Bajracharya et al. (2006) argues that only a strong *combination* of community engagement and innovative place design can contribute to the establishment of master planned communities which are liveable and vibrant with a strong sense of place (see also Talen 2002, McManus 1994).

Over time organisations such as Landcom have developed greater control over the built form of their MPC through the development of building and urban design guidelines that promote environmentally friendly development, through practices such as water sensitive urban design, housing design guidelines, community facility design (e.g. Landcom recently released guidelines for the development of community centres (Landcom 2008)). Other physical planning initiatives that were under taken in the MPCs were moderate income housing, lifetime housing and housing for the elderly.

Community (and social) plan

Community plans were developed as part of the community development process for each MPC. A community plan is one approach to assist with the integration of social and community issues into physical planning processes. A community plan supplements the more conventional physical planning studies by addressing the social dimensions of a proposed new community. In broad terms, the community plans developed for each MPC anticipate the likely needs of a future population for children's, education, health and other human services. The community plans also uses a consultative approach to identify key social issues that may affect the quality of life of future residents and impact on their capacity to support themselves and function effectively as a community. The growing importance that organisations such as Landcom, the principal developer of The Ponds, is placing on social and community planning as a driving force for the development of MPC was recently exemplified in the following comment:

[Landcom] is now in the process of developing a broad social sustainability policy to guide projects. Its experience has been - and this is probably an industry-wide issue - that very often social analysis does not occur until some time into the physical master planning process, which means that master plan briefs are not properly informed by social risks and opportunities. Landcom's policy and process guidelines will emphasise social analysis at the early stages of project definition so that clear objectives can be set and carried through to delivery (O'Toole & Petersen 2006, p. 107)

Community development strategies

As part of the community development process each MPC involved the development of a community development strategy. The most elaborate of these strategies was that proposed for The Ponds. The community development strategies provide a framework for community development processes and related activities. The community development strategies were prepared in consultation with community representatives and guided by community organisations with an interest in the area and the new and existing communities. The community development strategies were seen as important within each MPC to ensure that there was a framework, and that there was a commitment to resources that were needed to support community development activities as the new community evolved.

One key aspect of these strategies is the resourcing of a community development worker, also called a community facilitator. The purpose of such a position is to work with residents to implement the strategy. In addition, the community development plan's focus includes ensuring that all new residents are provided with information about available services, receive regular updates about local meetings, educational opportunities and events, and are invited to participate in planning local activities and events. Another key feature of the strategy is that they utilise local organisations, such as Connections Community Development as the key delivery partner. These key delivery partners are established non-government community organisation set up to deliver community development programs within the region in which the MPC exists.

Implementation Stage – Supporting community

The implementation stage is marked by the influx of the first residents into the MPC which are usually developed in stages. Community development and capacity building during this stage of the development within the

selected MPCs was supported through seven identified initiatives: a welcome program; development of community programs and activities as the residents move in; community newsletters and intranet to provide the residents with ongoing information about their new community and encourage participation; sustainability education to provide the residents with an understanding of how they can play a part in sustaining their new environment; a community initiatives fund to support community driven development initiatives; and ongoing community consultation. The aim of these initiatives is to provide opportunities for all age groups and sections of the population to become involved in the life of the community, to develop community networks and connections with other residents, and to create social capital and a sense of belonging. Associated with this is the need for residents to have opportunities to participate in the ongoing planning and development of the community and to develop stewardship over its resources. Within the implementation stage the community development activities are implemented by a community development worker, from a local community development organisation as discussed above.

Welcome program

A key element of the community development program within all the MPCs except Lyons, was a comprehensive welcome program designed specifically to enhance the initial experience of arrival in the MPC, address the information needs of new arrivals and assist them to settle into the community. A key component of the welcome program is a 'welcome kit' which contains a range of information to assist the incoming resident to understand and involve themselves in the local area. The process of distributing the welcome kits represents a key opportunity for community development facilitators to make initial one-on-one contacts with new residents in their homes. One of the MPC community delivery partners described the welcome program as follows:

We strive to reach each and every person who moves into our designated estate, both renters and owners ... Our specially designed kits include all types of important information for the local area, including fresh and recycled water usage, waste systems and regulations, bus services ..., a range of information for the local council, vouchers etc. Our aim is to build relationships with residents (Connections Community Development 2007).

At the time that this paper was being written Landcom had been running community welcome programs within its MPCs for over 10 years. O'Toole and Petersen describe the purpose of the program:

It was initiated to help overcome the isolation problems that sometimes arise for residents in newly developed areas. Landcom employs locally based 'welcome workers' as a point of contact for residents, to give them useful information about the local area and the services, facilities and programs available, and to organise functions and events where community members can meet each other and start to develop friendships and networks (O'Toole and Petersen 2006, p. 105).

Community programs and activities

During the implementation stage the community development worker will work with residents to establish their needs for local programs, activities, services and facilities, and will work with Council and service providers to address those needs. The development of ongoing programs rather than isolated events and activities is the primary focus. This might involve actions to set up regular programs such as playgroups or leisure learning classes (especially given the high proportion of parents unable to be home with young children), negotiation with service providers to provide sessional or outreach services in The Ponds and the surrounding neighbourhoods, and working with Council to ensure facilities are appropriate and well utilised.

Communication – Newsletters and intranet

To provide the community with regularly updated information on the progress of the community development process each MPC utilised forms of communication media including a quarterly community newsletter and in some cases the establishment of a community intranet (e.g. The Ponds). The 'suburban Gateway' community intranet project created by Landcom in collaboration with one of its community delivery partners – Connections Community Development – is designed to assist in the provision of information to residents and provide a vehicle for members of the community to develop networks around common interests and activities. The intranet is funded through partnership arrangements with local business and service providers and is managed by Connections Community Development.

Sustainability education

As part of the sustainability objectives of each MPC a community education program (CEP) will be rolled out during the implementation stage. The objective of the community education programs is to provide the community with a greater understanding of the environmental value of the site and the surrounding area, to enhance the local environment through increased community awareness of environmental issues, and to foster a sense of community and ownership of the site and area. As part of the welcome kit, residents are provided with a sustainability handbook which comprises a guide on how to make the best use out of the sustainability initiatives that have been undertaken as part of the MPC both within the public domain and in the home. Each CEP is developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders, for example The Ponds CEP was developed in partnership with Greening Australia, the Housing Industry Association, Blacktown City Council, schools, and TAFE.

Community initiatives fund

The idea of a community initiatives fund will play a major role in the community development approach in The Ponds. Its aim is to encourage and support community initiatives, programs and activities that will enhance the life of the community and quality of life of its residents. The initiatives resourced by the fund are also intended to promote community identity and civic pride, a sense of belonging, and social capital and social networks within the community. It is designed to ensure that all sections of the community have the opportunity to develop and participate in community activities according to their needs and interests. This understanding has its formal academic equivalent in the contemporary study of what is referred to as *social capital*, a concept most commonly associated with Robert Putnam (2000). Putnam uses the sorts of community organisations fostered by developers during the implementation phase of master planned community development as a form of barometer of community strength and interactions. As such the role played by developers in the fostering of these organisations is an important one. They are widely regarded as important aspects of the social capital of a place, and are an important component of an interactive community (Shapiro 2001, Sandefur 1998).

It is proposed that the community initiatives fund will provide small, one-off grants to residents groups and community organisations for the purposes of establishing projects and activities. The key community

delivery partner for The Ponds – Connections Community Development - describes the initiatives structure as follows:

A new initiative we are proposing is that a committee be set up consisting of representatives from the estate. This committee would facilitate a funding set up by Connections Community Development and sponsored by the developer. The aim of the fund would be to support and encourage programs, initiative and activities that will continue to enhance the life of the residents and the community (Connections Community Development 2007).

Community development committee

At the outset of the implementation stage and in the absence of residential community, each developer has agreed to establish a community development committee to facilitate management of community development and capacity building activities. It is proposed that these committees will be facilitated by the community facilitator and include representatives of the developer, local council, local community associations and key service agencies as required. The Community Committee will be auspiced by the key community development partner within a MPC. A key role of the committee within The Ponds is to review and approve applications for the community initiatives fund. The aim within each of the MPCs is for the committee to be replaced over time by one or more community associations as they develop.

Completion stage – Transition to community

The completion stage of a master planned community is characterised by the handover of responsibility and management from the developers to the relevant government authorities and community. It is a fundamental transition, and marks the return of the community to a more mainstream approach to governance. A key focus of this stage in the MPC is the development of capacity for residents to influence their environment and the sourcing of alternative funding to replace the cessation of funding from the developer. A major challenge at this stage of the MPC is encouraging diverse groups of residents to address this challenge through the strengthening of community groups that emerged during the implementation stage and the development of such community governance structures as community associations.

Community association(s)

The creation of community associations were recognised within each MPC, as being an important yardstick for a community's social capital, and providing great potential to effectively mobilise residents around particular issues. As The Ponds key community delivery partner asserted: 'Community associations are key components in community development. Our aim is to empower people to own and run their own community. Resident associations allow residents to have a voice in their community.' (Connections Community Development 2007). However, any power that they can exert via these associations is indirect in nature and outside of the formal processes of governance. This is, of course, not an issue unique to master planned communities. The lack of institutions to allow for direct resident input into community planning, management, and design is one that is common to most of the contemporary built environment. Master planned communities offer an opportunity to build these institutions. Governed as they frequently are by specialised local planning instruments, the potential exists to develop interfaces between existing governance structures and the associations and organisations that are being fostered as part of the community's development.

Concluding remarks

Over the last few decades there has been a surge of interest in 'community' within the development industry. This course towards community was firstly driven by a perception that much of the suburban development that emerged within the later decades of the 20th century within such cities as Sydney did not adequately support the formation of community – that fine web of incidents and conversations between individuals: the afternoon pick-up outside the school gate, Friday gathering at a mosque or the youth club. In response to these concerns and based on the belief that these webs that formed community were suspended from fixed points in the social landscape such as the gate to a school, the social club, the footpath, or a barbeque area, the development industry turned its attention to exploring ways in which the physical planning and the built environments could be created to provide opportunities to chat, meet up and pass the day together. In the last decade the course towards the development of community by the development industry has been intensified through the emergence of 'sustainability' and the 'corporate social responsibility' of the corporations and authorities who play a key role in the development industry. The collision of these two courses has resulted in a hybridised focus on creating 'sustainable communities'. The

vehicle for this has been the development of MPCs. The emergence of sustainability has shifted the focus of development industry corporations such as Landcom and the Land Management Corporation away from just physical planning initiatives to more holistic and complex community development processes (Bradshaw 2000) which use a variety of initiatives to develop community, such as partnerships with community development organisations to facilitate community activities, programs and work more closely with residents on the ground.

Through the analysis of MPC development processes within Sydney, Adelaide and Darwin, this paper has explored the ways in which various initiatives ranging from participatory planning processes through to establishment of partnerships with local community development organisations are being utilised by developers to create complex and collaborative frameworks for the development of 'sustainable' communities. At the visioning and planning stage, some of the community development tools used are the community plan and community consultations (such as community workshops in the case of The Ponds) to produce a long term vision for the area and involve the community in the development of the master plan. As Gleeson (2004) advocates there is a need for a participatory model of master planning instead of just 'master programming' in order to build active social networks, localised shared vision and place attachment. The key challenges at this stage are to develop a shared vision for the community (which at this stage only includes those people living in the vicinity of the proposed development and community organisations). At the implementation stage, the key community development initiatives are diverse. These range from a welcome program through to a community initiative fund, all of which are implemented on the ground by a local community development organisation engaged to work with new and existing residents to promote community. Finally, at the stage of completion, the focus is on transfer from private to community governance by the community and local councils, through the development of community governance bodies that can replace the developer. Figure 3 provides an overview of the initiatives that were apparent at the various stages of the MPC development processes.

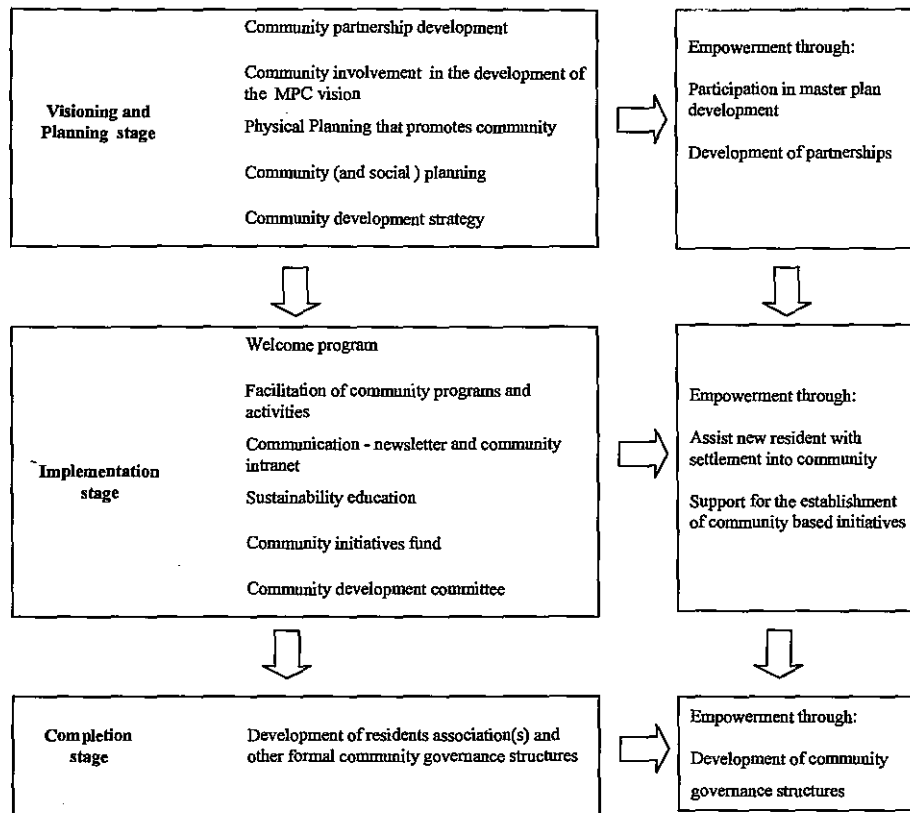


Figure 3 - Key community development activities identified during the various stages of the MPC development process (for more detailed accounts of each of these activities see the previous three sections of the paper).

In concluding it is worth highlighting that the focus within these MPC development processes is, as one development director noted 'not only to help facilitate the development of community but to empower community' (2: Developer)⁵. The community development initiatives aimed to empower the community by providing opportunities for involvement in the visioning and planning processes for the MPC, facilitating communication and interaction within the community, connecting new members of the community to resources and potentialities, and devolving decision making about community development to community groups and members wherever feasible. Empowered communities are those in which people are able to participate and be involved in decision making about their own future. An empowering process that was supported by a capacity building process, for example the devolution of decision making in certain circumstances such

as in the formation of community associations are accompanied by providing support for the development of necessary skills, knowledge support and infrastructure for members of the community, groups, and organisations so they are able to take on the role effectively. Community empowerment is a key building block in the development of 'sustainable communities (see Figure 3).

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Endnotes

1. A piece of usually semirural property that is undeveloped except for agricultural use, especially one considered as a site for expanding urban development.
2. A piece of industrial or commercial property that is abandoned or underused, especially one considered as a potential site for redevelopment.
3. Their commitment to the development of sustainable communities has been driven in part by the emergence of the notion of Corporate Social Responsibility (Cramer et al. 2004)
4. Each of these MPCs has a principal developer (in the case of The Pond it is Landcom, the NSW State owned development corporation) who owns the land associated with the MPC. Within each of the MPCs the principal developer who remains the central controlling entity during the development process, contracts separate companies to implement the building of separate sections or aspects of the community (e.g. stages of the residential developments at The Ponds are being developed through a joint venture arrangement with another developer – Australand, and Lyons and North Gate are being developed through a joint venture with the Canberra Investment Corporation).
5. Quotes from interviews are coded with the completed interview number and one of four generic descriptors – government, community member, developer and community development organisation. For privacy reasons no personal details have been provided. For example (Interview 2: community member) refers to interview number 2, where interview number two was conducted with a community member.

References

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