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Community Cooperation and Social Solidarity

A Case Study of Community Initiated Strategic Planning

By Yoel (Joel) Siegel

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I want to express my many thanks to all of you who enabled me to start and finally complete this thesis.

To Mairead for not giving up on me and helping me to put the pieces of the puzzle together into a coherent picture

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To Judi and Nehama – the memories continue to inspire me

University of Sussex

Yoel (Joel) Siegel

Doctor of Philosophy

Community Cooperation and Social Solidarity

A Case Study of Community Initiated Strategic Planning

Summary

This research explored the process of creating a shared future and the evolution of cooperative collective endeavours in a regional rural community through a bottom-up planning process that involved professionals, public leadership and residents of a rural region in Israel. Using the MT rural region in Israel as a case study, the research was an interpretive exploration of how this community changed the way it collectively functions to achieve individual and shared aspirations. It examined how the community restructured its patterns of interaction, changing the social dynamics – which people interacted with each other, how they interacted with each other, and who felt committed to whom.

The motivation for this inquiry stemmed from my desire as a practitioner to better understand the processes by which communities learn to function cooperatively. What are the elements that contributed to enabling a community to create the conditions for collectively utilizing and sustaining common resources rather than dividing them up for private consumption and exploitative narrow interests? What type of cooperative mechanisms enabled people to accomplish together what they cannot accomplish alone?

**Specifically, there are three research questions: how the change process was initiated in MT, what was significant in the nature of participation in the planning process, and how the mechanisms for regional community cooperation evolved.**

It was a case study of the planning and development process that I facilitated in MT from 1994-1999 (prior to my intention to undertake research) and is based mainly upon recent interviews of the participants (in that process), their recollections, and retrospective interpretations of that experience.

The case has been explored from the theoretical perspective of viewing society in general, and community life in particular, as processes of constructing shared social realities that produce certain collective behaviours of cooperation or non-cooperation (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). This research was about understanding the process of making social rules that incorporate shared meanings and sanctions (Giddens, 1986) for undertaking joint endeavours (Ostrom, 1990, 1992, Wenger, 1998).

Specifically two primary insights have come out of this case analysis:

1. In the MT case there was a mutually reinforcing three-way interplay between the strengthening of commitments to mutual care on the regional level, the instrumental benefits from cooperative/joint endeavours, and the envisioning of a shared future.
2. The community development process was owned by the community (not by outside agencies) and they (the community members) set the rules for community involvement. They structured the social interactions which formed the basis for creating shared understandings as a collective to achieve their common future.

These insights shed light on how a community's structuring of its interactions and development interventions influenced its ability to act in a collectively optimal manner. By looking at the interrelation between trust as a function of social esteem (Honneth, 1995) and risk taking linked to instrumental benefits of cooperation (Lewis, 2002; Taylor, 1976; White, 2003) we can better understand what contributes to the way some communities continue to miss opportunities (Ostrom 1992), while others are able to promote their collective development and mutual wellbeing. By examining the process of designing (not only the design itself) community development programmes (Block, 2009) and by observing participation not as technique but as an inherent part of the way a community begins structuring its social interactions with their tacit (Polanyi, 1966) and explicit meanings, we can better understand the role of practitioners.

And finally, perhaps the elements of chance and opportunity that bring certain combinations of people together in a given time and space may need to be given more weight in what remains a very unpredictable non-linear field of professional practice.

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# **Chapter 1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Overview of the research**

This research explored the process of creating a shared future and the evolution of cooperative, collective endeavours in a regional rural community through a bottom-up planning process that involved professionals, public leadership and residents of a rural region in Israel. Using the MT rural region in Israel as a case study, the research examined how this community changed the way it collectively functions to achieve individual and shared aspirations. I looked at how the community restructured its patterns of interaction, changing the social dynamics – which people interacted with whom and their sense of belonging.

The motivation for this inquiry came from my desire as a practitioner to better understand the processes by which communities develop patterns or modes of collaborative/collective action that enabled them to successfully meet their needs and aspirations as they defined them. How did a community go about defining and then agreeing upon "the common good?" How did communities learn to work together in an optimal manner for their common good? What elements contributed to and enabled this process? How did cooperation become a dominant form of collective community action?

The case of the MT has been examined in the historical and contemporary context of rural life in Israel. It focused on the particulars of this specific case, but did so against the backdrop of changing realities of rural communities and rural local government in Israel. The region of MT, like other rural regions in Israel, is defined by its municipal boundaries and is composed of 32 small agricultural villages of 60 to 500 families – some designed as kibbutzes in which the members for the most part collectively own their residences and means of production, others as moshaves in which the family is the primary economic unit, and others as Arab villages based primarily upon extended family relations.

The issues raised in this inquiry had their roots in the basic questions regarding the nature of community and cooperative action. What happened in a community that

created the conditions for collectively utilizing and sustaining common resources rather than dividing them up for private consumption and exploitative narrow interests? How could mutual cooperation be fostered to accomplish together what people could not individually accomplish alone?

In the 1700's David Hume raised this issue eloquently in his parable of two peasants:

Your corn is ripe today; mine will be so tomorrow. 'tis profitable for us both, that I shou'd labour with you to-day, and that you shou'd aid me tomorrow. I have no kindness for you, and know you have as little for me. I will not, therefore, take any pains on your account; and should I labour with you upon my own account, in expectation of a return, I know I shou'd be disappointed, and that I shou'd in vain depend upon your gratitude. Here then I leave you to labour alone: You treat me in the same manner. The seasons change; and both of us lose our harvest for want of mutual confidence and security.  
*A Treatise of Human Nature, 1739*

This paradigm of two individuals becomes all the more complex when raised to the level of communities and modern cities where common endeavors require the cooperation of many different sets of individuals and groups with different and at times conflicting interests (Ostrom, 1990, 1992).

Many concepts and social theories have emerged around these issues from notions of social contract to the building of virtual communities on the internet. It is interesting to note that Putnam (1993) quotes Hume's passage in his book *Making Democracy Work* on social capital as does Rheingold (2002) a decade later in his book *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution* on technologies and social interaction. The issues of cooperation and the questions of mutual confidence and security remain in the forefront even today.

I began this research out of my personal and professional interest in seeing whether the strategic planning process which I facilitated in MT during the mid 1990's (prior to any plan to undertake research of this case) had left an impact upon the region or whether it had been a passing episode. I was curious about the extent and the way in which people involved in the process felt that changes had or had not taken place. Had the public planning process achieved its goals as set out by its initiators? What type of mechanisms for collective action had been set up? Were there lessons that I could learn for my ongoing professional practice that would be useful in helping communities function in a collectively optimal manner?

In order to go from the level of personal curiosity to that of researcher I had to expand and crystallize my conceptual frameworks. If I had remained within the concepts of traditional community development I would have probably gained some new understanding but only within classic community development thinking. By using theories that are more related to processes of collective learning (Wenger, 1998) and the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1967) I have gained a much broader and deeper understanding about how communities set their "rules" (Giddens, 1986; Ostrom, 1990, 1992) for their collective action and craft their institutions to manage their collective resources for mutual wellbeing.

My intention has been to offer insights about the processes of constructing shared realities that produce certain collective behaviours of cooperation which themselves are part of the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). This research is about understanding the processes of making social rules that incorporate shared meanings, sanctions (Giddens, 1986), and create mechanisms for undertaking joint endeavours.

**Specifically, the research questions are: how the change process was initiated in MT, what was significant in the nature of participation in the planning process, and how the mechanisms for regional community cooperation evolved.**

It is a case study of the planning and development process that I facilitated in MT from 1994-1999, based mainly upon recent interviews with the participants, their recollections and retrospective interpretations of that experience.

## **1.2 Dilemmas in community development and collective action**

Community development programmes have struggled over the years with the issues of community functioning and how people collectively succeed or fail to meet their needs and aspirations (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993; Putnam, 2003; Warren, 1965). In this research I have identified three primary approaches to community development which will be discussed in more detail in the literature review. In trying to understand the processes of change that took place in MT, I will be integrating concepts from

these and other theoretic perspectives that are not usually associated with community development analysis and practice.

The first types of community development programmes were designed with an instrumental, result-focused orientation. They had measurable objectives and were aimed at meeting specific needs in tangible ways. Programmes of this type have not for the most part been concerned with improving the way people and communities conduct themselves. They often involved such "mortar and bricks" (Gittell and Vidal, 1998 p.40) projects as the construction of roadways, health facilities, or other infrastructures. The change in a community's wellbeing was to be realised through upgrading its physical environment or service provision. Here the improvement of concrete instrumental services and facilities is the critical outcome. The tangible nature of these programmes is their relative advantage, but they do not usually address the issue of how communities enable themselves to act as a collective to develop and access such resources on their own.

The second types of programmes were designed with a more process, capacity-building orientation. By their nature they had less clearly tangible objectives. These programmes have been aimed at improving a community's ability to manage itself so that it can take responsibility for meeting its needs and reduce dependency on outside support. The underlying view is that the members of the community lack the awareness, skills, and leadership to function effectively as a unit. Most programmes of this type generally focus on improving the individual skills of the community development clients and they tend to have a training orientation. As Warren (1971) points out, some have more of social change orientation, but even those programmes with avowed goals of social change tend, in the final analysis, to work on individual abilities rather than on social systems change.

Even when empowerment is the explicit avowed goal it is often the outsiders who are supposed to empower the locals. Often community development programmes of this type emphasize the identification of critical needs through citizen participation which is intended to ensure that the true needs are identified (as opposed to those assessed by outside professionals or those skewed by the interests of funders) (Francis, 2001). However, this often does not relate to the dynamics that create or reinforce power

relations and control over resources that already exist within the community and between the community and the outside (Gittell and Vidal, 1998).

Despite the language of empowerment and capacity building, the need for tangible immediate results by funders, community participants, and the professionals themselves (Gittell and Vidal, 1998) rather than for abstract processes often lead more to quality of life improvements which are incremental and not designed for sustainability. Over the years, dependency may actually increase.

This is not to suggest that by virtue of their own agency alone people are to bring about change, but rather to explore how the structuring dynamics of social interaction in a community either constrain or harness the power inherent in people's individual and collective abilities (Block, 2009; Cleaver, 2001).

The third approach sees the existence of certain social characteristics of communities, especially mutual trust and social networks, as the key to their effective functioning. Much research and documentation has described communities that function “in a healthy manner” (Block, 2009, p. 5). Warren's notion of the good community (1970) exemplifies this approach. Likewise, there are a myriad of tools for assessing community functioning e.g. *Organizing for Social Change: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists*, (Bobo, Kendall, and Max, 1991); *Community Building: What Makes it Work* (Mattessich, Monsey, and Roy, 1997)

More recently the concept of social capital (Lin, 2001; Putnam, 1993) is being used to understand the interrelationships of certain social characteristics for understanding a community's instrumental functioning. Other recent programmes that give weight to goal achievement (as opposed to problems) and asset development have made some practical contributions in this direction (Kretzmann and Mcknight, 1993). They have introduced tools for mapping assets, which can provide critical information necessary for community development. However, there is still the issue of how communities learn to work together to access their resources as a collective.

In my experience as a practitioner there does seem to be a recognizable distinction between those communities with an orientation towards cooperation and mutual

wellbeing and those communities with an orientation towards competition and narrow self-interests. Although the three conceptual frameworks described above have offered significant insights, in my practice the basic question of what enables some communities to utilize their internal resources and external inputs in order to attain a quality of life as they define it, while others flounder in a sea of ever-growing needs in many ways still requires additional understandings.

This question is implicit in the community development concepts presented above. It underlies Hume's (1739) parable of the two peasants. Likewise it is a central issue in Hobbes' work. The approach explored here is in contrast to Hobbes (1651) solution of the "Leviathan" – the state as sovereign (necessary evil) which enforces (not fosters) cooperation through mandated power as necessary regulatory evil to overcome the inability of people to voluntarily subject their desire for individual wellbeing and give predominance to collective wellbeing necessary for survival.

Finally, the paradoxes of collective wellbeing versus self-interest, cooperation versus mistrust and exploitation, can also be seen in game theory's "prisoners' dilemma" (Hardin, 1993). In the metaphor of a prisoner's dilemma two bank robbers are caught and put in separate interrogation rooms and each told that if he admits his crime and betrays his partner while his partner denies the crime, then he will go free and his partner will go to prison for ten years. If his partner also admits to the crime and betrays him then they both will go to prison for five years. If they both remain silent they will each go to prison for one year. The decision is usually presented as a choice matrix such that presented here in figure 1 (Hardin, 1993; Williams, 1954).

<u>Individual</u>	<u>Collective</u>	
	Silent	Betray
Silent	1,1	10,0
Betray	0,10	5,5

**Fig. 1: Prisoner's dilemma choice matrix**

If each prisoner looks out for his own interest then the Betray, Betray scenario is the only rational individual choice. If prisoner one remains silent then he risks going to prison for ten years and if he knows his partner will remain silent then he should betray him in order to go free. Therefore the logical individual choice is betrayal which paradoxically leads to a less than optimal collective and individual outcome (both are imprisoned for five years each instead of one year each).

The work done by White (2003), who uses a game theory based conceptualization that is rooted in the logic of the prisoner's dilemma, is particularly helpful in this context for understanding the dynamics of community involvement. His work adds to the understanding of community functioning by looking at the structuring of the costs and benefits of community involvement not only at the level of individual benefit - in strictly utilitarian form - but also looking at the value placed upon civic responsibility, which he factors into the structure of costs and benefits. He adds an important dimension to rational choice theory for understanding collective action as a function of the structuring of payoffs that include social benefits in a broader sense.

However, rational choice and game theory analyses usually pay less attention to the social context.

Recall that our general objective is to show how economic and social institutions emerge from the interactive decisions of many individuals. To talk about his idea rigorously, we need a model of how individuals interact at the micro level. This is naturally provided by a *game*, which describes the strategies available to each player and the payoffs that result when they play their strategies (Peyton Young, 2001, p. 5).

The communal levels of trust, mutual care, and mutual dependence are considered to be outside of the game (and beyond a series of play of the same game) and are not generally given weight in the analysis. A rational choice analysis of community functioning is fundamentally based upon understanding how each individual maximized his or her benefits or getting more than the other whose wellbeing is not part of their motivation. As such, the question of **how** a community goes from missing opportunities (Ostrom, 1992) for development by acting on the basis of narrow self-interests to acting to become collectively and individually better off which underpins cooperation is not fully answered in rational choice theory.

These closely related conceptualizations intersect with the same issues in my practice. The underlying question is not what characterizes a community with effective collective action, but how the social characteristics and mechanisms necessary for effective collective action become the properties of a community (Block, 2009). It is about how communities learn to structure and organize in a different way. It is not so much an analysis of community power (which would involve issues of domination, conflicting interests, and others), but of how the community changes its ability to act optimally for mutual benefit. As Giddens (1986, p.257) summarizes "power is the ability to achieve outcomes". The concern here is with understanding the structuring processes that enable one community to leverage its power and transform its resources into collective growth and development, while other communities use power and access to resources with the outcome of increased polarization and depletion of its resources, as described in Ostrom's work (1990, 1992) on common-pool resource management and its dilemmas.

This has led me to focus on how communities change the structuring of their interactions enabling them to create cooperative types of social engagement mechanisms and set shared goals. My exploration was a less linear and more dynamic approach. It was less causal and predictive. It examined the coincidence of forces in time and space (Axelrod, 1984; Block, 2009) and will perhaps add to understanding the complexity of community life.

I have not asserted that communities have a singular structuring process that either promotes cooperation or promotes competition, but that we can identify different dynamics that contribute to the ability of communities to work effectively as a collective.

The case study explored the character of the community development programme in MT and how it converged with the functioning of this community in the specific context of this rural region in Israel. It examined how the goals of community wellbeing were defined; what strategies of collective action emerged; what types of benefits accrued to the community through cooperative action; and what changed in power and control mechanisms.

I have also tried to understand how agency is not only a process of individuals maneuvering within social structures but how people act as agents producing their social structures. I have explore how they are both the products and producers of community.

From a practitioner's point of view the concern here was understanding how to better encourage/help communities develop structuring processes that create the possibility for strategies of cooperation rather than narrow competition or free riding, which often results in mutual loss rather than mutual gain and community wellbeing (Ostrom, 1992).

### **1.3 A brief background on rural communities in Israel**

Israel was established in 1948. Although there had been a small continuous Jewish population over the centuries, as a modern state significant waves of Jewish immigration began at the beginning of the twentieth century. Similarly the Arab population which had been living in Israel for many centuries also experienced significant in-migration during the twentieth century.

The make-up of Israeli society is extremely heterogeneous culturally, religiously, and politically. Although MT includes both Arab and Jewish villages the forces of change that influenced the nature of collective action in the MT region were dominated by the changes in the Jewish rural communities, they were the primary focus of the examination. Cooperation between these two populations was afforded limited attention in the case study and was related mainly to changes in the education system.

What has uniquely characterized the Jewish villages is their organisation as collectives (kibbutzes and moshaves). Historically they were (and many still are) not only geographic communities, but formally structured as cooperative agricultural associations. They are both communities and organisations in which there is a complete overlap between being a member of the cooperative agricultural association and living in the village (Wiel, et al., 2001).

Until the 1990s each village functioned for the most part as an independent social, municipal, and economic unit. Local regional government had almost no role other than some very basic municipal services and regulatory functions. In recent years, local authorities (the regional councils), like MT, have become the primary governance institution in the rural regions of Israel. They now have a critical role in planning and infrastructure development upon which economic and housing growth depend (Wiel, et al., 2001).

#### **1.4 Public participation in planning and community development in Israel**

Israel is still a relatively young democracy with less than three generations of experience. The citizens of Israel, native-born and immigrants from around the world have great cultural diversity. With this diversity come fundamentally different notions of community in social, religious, geographic, and ethnic/national terms. Likewise democracy and civil society have not grown out of a tradition of consensus, but are evolving each day around practical issues.

Although processes of public participation in planning and community development are not new to Israel, the linkage between the two has not been a subject of systematic professional practice nor of academic inquiry.

For the first time, Israel's most recent national development plan for the year 2020 ("TAMA 35") legitimates the role of public involvement in statutory planning beyond that of only appeal procedures. Although the scope of obligatory, proactive, public participation is still minimalist and entails a policy statement (unpublished policy papers of TAMA 35, Ministry of Interior, 2001) rather than a statutory regulation, in practice some municipalities have undertaken planning processes with broad public participation including the active involvement of hundreds of people in any given community. Also, most Ministry of Interior planning tenders require public participation in the planning process.

In general, the field of community development in Israel parallels the first two types of programmes as described above (in section 1.2). The Ministry of Welfare is the primary agency which sponsors a variety of community work programmes. Many of these have an instrumental orientation and are aimed at improving specific conditions in a geographic area or the conditions of specific populations. Also in Israel, those programmes that are aimed at capacity-building focus primarily on the individual skills of community leaders or community groups. There are many voluntary associations, NGOs, mostly with service provision orientations. There are some with more change-oriented missions aimed at broader socio-economic policies, but they have had marginal impact (Siegel and Engel, 1999).

The issue of how to change the underlying dynamics of effective collective action in communities is now becoming the focus of professional community development practitioners. In 1999 the Israel Association of Community Centres (Engel, 1999) developed a hierarchy of levels of community work which placed programmes designed to address the overall dynamic of community functioning at the top of the pyramid. Conceptualizing and integrating this approach into community work in Israel is still in its early stages.

### **1.5 The concept of context**

The concept of context as developed by Giddens (1986) is particularly suited to the research undertaken here. It provides the lens through which we can focus our attention on those components of the social environment that were helpful in understanding the circumstances in which the MT case was conducted. As he states:

Context thus connects the most intimate and detailed components of interaction to much broader properties of the institutionalization of social life (Giddens, 1986, p. 71).

The institutionalization of social life in this sense refers to the structured elements of the social realities surrounding the specific events, or interactions that comprise the case under investigation. In this way context is both the process and its

outcome. Giddens goes on to state:

Social interaction refers to encounters in which individuals engage in situations of co-presence, and hence to social integration as a level of the building blocks whereby the institutions of social systems are articulated. Social relations are certainly involved in the structuring of interaction but are also the main 'building blocks' around which institutions are articulated in system integration. Interaction depends upon the positioning of individuals in the time-space contexts of activity. Social relations concern the positioning of individuals within a social space of symbolic categories and ties (Giddens, 1986, p.89).

The examination of context in this research thus focused upon the changing social reality of rural communities in Israel. Specifically, I explored the social position of these communities within Israeli society and the changing institutionalization of community life and governance mechanisms.

This view of context was very much in keeping with the interactional methodology of this research and specifically with Giddens' (1986) concept of structuralisation.

First, it enabled me to see common themes of changing social realities in rural Israel over the last half century and the interplay with the evolution of a changed and changing social reality in MT. Second, it set the more specific background for looking at changing patterns of collective action in MT in the context of changing control mechanisms over the allocative resources and authoritative resources (Giddens, 1986) that took place in rural Israel. That is the interplay between the changing nature of social integration in rural communities and the evolution of new governance structures at the regional level that related to systems' integration and institutionalisation necessary for structuring interactions beyond those of co-presence.

This transition is, to some extent, related not only to rural Israel but to any society going through change from a basically agrarian community to a modern capitalist community – a change in the balance between social integration (which generally has primacy in agrarian communities) (Giddens, 1986 ) and systems' integration.

## **1.6 Summary**

**In summary, the purpose of this research was not to add to the understanding of what characterizes communities that function effectively as collectives, but on how cooperation for mutual wellbeing, (that is, being able to maximize the use of their individual capacities and shared resources to promote collective and individual wellbeing), becomes a property of the structuring (Giddens, 1986) of a community's social interactions.**

**This research grappled with the question of what, in the way the community initiated a strategic planning process in the rural regional community of MT was designed and conducted, has enabled people to function more effectively as a collective. More specifically, I have articulated how the two primary insights emerged from this exploratory research:**

- 1. A community's ability to enjoy the potential payoffs/instrumental benefits from its cooperative endeavors is intertwined with its commitment to mutual caring and mutual respect unrelated to the functional contribution of its members**
- 2. The power for developing a community through participatory processes is significantly amplified when they are designed by the community itself to allow people to renegotiate their shared understandings of the community in which they live, to shape a shared future to which they can become committed, and to enable different elements of the community to take ownership of their future.**

## **Chapter 2. The Context - Rural Settlement Communities in Israel**

In this chapter I explored four primary aspects of the social context of the case under investigation:

1. The historical–ideological beliefs upon which the rural communities of Israel based themselves
2. Changes in the social and political status of rural communities in Israel during the last half century
3. The transition of collective agricultural settlements and the development of rural local government
4. The challenge of equity – balancing the different political interests as expressed in the tension between collective wellbeing in rural communities and narrower specific/local interests

### **2.1 Historical overview of rural villages in Israel**

This historical overview relates primarily to the changes that have taken place in the agricultural communities in Israel.

The character of rural (Jewish) communities in Israel is very much a function of the ideological goals of the different waves of immigration, and the national goal of creating a Jewish homeland. The early settlers of the second Aliyah (wave of immigration) of 1904 -1914 were committed to creating a new social national reality (Ravid, 1999). They formed the new collective rural communities that became the "kibbutz" and "moshav". In the kibbutzes all economic activity was initially collective, and in the moshaves the family was the basic economic unit.

The Jewish settlement in rural Israel has always had considerable significance far beyond its small numbers (initially 1,000 – 2,000 people) even before the creation of the State of Israel. The settlement communities were established according to the needs of the time, when they primarily served Israel's political and social goals as a new country.

The map of rural settlements in Israel, both Arab and Jewish, very much reflects the first decades of the State (1950s and 1960s). Until the 1980s, rural villages incorporated most aspects of economic, social, and civic/municipal life. (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997) This was based upon their agricultural roots which were linked to water and land rights.

Over the years, beginning during the British Mandate, groups of villages were constituted as a regional municipal council. Local rural government in Israel is essentially a federation of villages in close geographic proximity (usually between 10-30 villages with a population of 10-30,000 people). There are 54 such regional municipal councils in Israel with a total population of about 630,000.

These collective villages were initially very ideological in their orientation. They were almost always associated with political movements that shaped their social and economic orientation. The degree of collectivity, the relation to other Jewish and Arab communities, the degree of mutual support, and even the standard of living were set by the National Movements' institutions (Lapidot, Appelbaum, and Yehudaeh, 2006). Despite the radical reduction in the weight of ideology and the National Associations' influence, the map of regional rural local government to this day is still a reflection of this division that was based on ideological association. One regional municipal council can overlap geographically with another. The municipal status is often a function of the type of villages that compose its constituency –kibbutzes or moshaves. Some are mixed as is MT, though usually politically dominated by one type of village.

This geographic and social mosaic reflects the fundamentally social-political foundations of rural Israel and also sheds light on the complexity of service provision, especially in peripheral regions which can include a mixture of collective village types that cut across political, municipal, and functional connections (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997).

The kibbutzes, which in the case of MT are the dominant village type, have been undergoing a process of privatization from collective ownership of the means of production and housing to wage, labour, and private ownership. The moshaves

(family-based farming communities) have also been going through a radical change including a move from agriculture to small businesses (tourism-based and crafts) and wage labour. Both types of villages are expanding their demographic makeup and changing their social fabric by adding on new non-agricultural, quasi-suburban neighbourhoods (Wiel, et al., 2001).

Israel, as a country, has to a great extent functioned on the basis of the State being the primary end and its citizens a means for its survival. In this sense the Jewish people's survival has been the ultimate end and historically the underlying ethos of the country. This stands in sharp contrast to the current emerging view in which the collective is essentially seen as a means for individual wellbeing.

This change is even more pronounced in the kibbutzes. The satisfaction of individual needs was set by the ideology-based rules of the national settlement movements, with which each kibbutz was associated, rather than individual abilities. The survival of the collective (literally) was the goal. Individual fulfillment was measured by one's contribution to the collective.

Even with this change there still remains a tension between placing individual wellbeing at the ideological centre (with its exchange value orientation) versus seeing collective wellbeing as the overall goal (Ravid, 1999).

## **2.2 Changes in the social and political status of rural communities in Israel during the last half century**

There are a number of factors in Israeli society generally that have contributed to these changes in the rural communities:

1. The ideological transition from closed communities, based on the principles of collective communities and ideologies to a pluralistic society.
2. The transformation from a communal agrarian economy to a diverse market based economy.
3. The change in the communities' demographic make-up.

### 2.2.1 The ideological transition

In the late seventies the election of Menachem Begin from the revisionist right wing political party signaled a fundamental shift in Israel's social and economic ideology (and the end of labour party domination). This change had two major consequences for the rural communities. It changed their social status and their economic viability (Lapidot, Appelbaum, and Yehudaeh, 2006).

First, their social status as pioneers settling the frontier was reinterpreted to one of being exploitative landed gentry who sat on government land and enjoyed overt and inherent subsidies. This revision of the status of small rural communities impacted not only on those communities that had been settled pre-state by the ideological labour movement (whose background was primarily from pre-WWII Europe and Russia, considered by some as elite and by others as elitist) but also on those rural communities settled by Jewish refugees from Arab countries and post WWII Europe.

Second, the switch from a centralized socialist economy to a more competitive market economy meant that these communities – cooperative agricultural associations - had to survive not by virtue of meeting national development goals, but on the basis of their economic viability (Lapidot, Appelbaum, and Yehudaeh, 2006). (Similarly, this transformation affected not only the small rural communities, both Arab and Jewish, but also the development towns whose economic viability likewise had not initially been a consideration for their establishment.)

The national ideology became one of individual wellbeing rather than being mobilized for the collective wellbeing (Rosolio, 1999).

### 2.2.2 Changed economic base

Over a period of about a decade not only businesses, but also many collective communities and their national collective purchasing organizations, lost their economic viability. The decrease in agriculture's contribution to the economy and the pressure for commercialization has reduced the number of people employed in agriculture. Communities were forced into a transition to more diverse competitive economic enterprises and a need to find jobs often located outside of the rural villages (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997).

The processes of privatization of the communities and the push to more income-producing activities was accelerated by the financial crisis (related to investment practices and debt servicing) of the kibbutz movement in the 1980s, which left many kibbutzes and moshaves in deep debt. Many communities had liens on their pension funds, lands, and businesses. Over a 20 year period a national agreement was reached between the banks, the government, and the settlement movements. However, in effect it left each community to fend for itself economically and politically (Lapidot, Appelbaum, and Yehudaeh, 2006).

Israel and its rural villages are also very much under the influence of **globalization** and the growing social and economic gaps both within and between villages reflect this trend. The individual villages are ever more exposed to forces above and beyond national policies and, for that matter, beyond the borders of Israel. This exposure has multiple effects. It both affords new opportunities but also increases competition over access to resources. These socio-political and economic changes have greatly contributed to the weakening of the social fabric of these collective communities. In many cases it has led to reduced community services and undermined the values of mutual care (Lapidot, Appelbaum, and Yehudaeh, 2006).

### 2.2.3 Changes in the demographic make-up of the rural communities

In parallel with the economic changes, the founding generation has already retired having reached the age of 80 plus. The second generation (of continuity) in these communities (those born in the rural villages) often did not stay. Instead they often chose a more independent life in the city.

The collective economic structure of these villages was similar to a family business. The retiring founders expected to live off the returns of the family businesses – the collectively-owned enterprises (agricultural and other). Because of the shrinking population of young families capable of supporting the parent generation, the existence of the many communities was in danger at all levels (Wiel, et al., 2001).

In some communities economic hardships led to neglect of infrastructure and services. In particular, services for young children were reduced because of a lack of economic efficiency. This contributed to a self-reinforcing out-migration dynamic.

This situation was further aggravated by the legal and organizational policy upon which rural collective communities had been established. There was no mechanism for the absorption of new families other than those who intended to work in agriculture or those who were eligible for receiving land rights by virtue of being the generation of continuity - one child inheriting the land per family.

In the cities, however, there was a reverse phenomenon. Young families began a search for a quality of life that rural communities could offer, often purchasing community services, recreation activities and particularly educational services in rural villages. When possible people moved into rural communities renting homes in kibbutzes (where the population was shrinking) but maintained their jobs in the city.

In other situations this led to 'mixed marriages'. One spouse could be entitled to agricultural land rights by virtue of being the generation of continuity while the other spouse worked professionally outside of the community. In other cases people purchased land outright from aging families (that had no generation of continuity within the community) and joined the cooperative agricultural association.

In the nineties this process reached a critical point with the mass absorption of immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Israel. This influx of population greatly contributed to and fostered a decade of rapid growth economically and demographically throughout Israel. Rural areas, being a major source of land, became the target for development. At the same time the awareness of protecting green open space and insuring environmental sustainability gained increasing importance at the national planning level. National planning policy reflected this duality and thus limited the establishment of new communities, and gave priority to enlarging existing communities (TAMA 35, Ministry of Interior, 2001).

Many rural communities that had been faced with the problem of an aging population saw here an opportunity to grow and add new families to their villages. Although the number of immigrants actually absorbed into rural communities was extremely small, the development dynamic legitimized the incorporation into established rural communities of new non-agricultural neighbourhoods which were not based upon membership in the agricultural cooperative (Wiel, et al., 2001).

Being a resident and being a member of the cooperative were no longer a one-to-one relationship. The newcomers are not members in the cooperative agricultural association; rather their status is as residents whose land rights are rooted in a direct lease arrangement with the Israel Lands Authority. Their rights and obligations are not related to the cooperative agricultural association, but rather to their status as citizens of the community whose municipal and civic obligations/rights are rooted in local government, not in settlement movements. Similarly their economic wellbeing is related to the economics of their place of employment outside of the village to which they commute. These changes have been a major factor that contributed to the basic restructuring of these communities.

Especially in this context of local and global changes, the significance and the abilities of the villages to act effectively as a collective, on each community's own terms, is a primary factor in the ability of people to enjoy the goods and services essential for their welfare (Appelbaum, Lapidot, and Yehudaeh, 2006).

## **2.3 The transition of collective agricultural settlements and the development of rural local government**

### **2.3.1 The historic overlap between local municipal government and rural communal structures**

Rural municipal government in Israel is structured as a two-tier system (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997). The small villages, usually with a population of a few hundred families, are located within the statutory boundaries of a regional municipal council (which is a local authority) and subject to its authority. In parallel, each village has the status of local council with municipal statutory powers to impose taxes and

provide services. In parallel to this municipal structure each village has a cooperative agricultural association which is a voluntary organisation.

In most communities being a resident or citizen of a community and being a member in the collective association were contiguous. In fact the residents of the communities were usually referred to as members or comrades, not as residents or citizens. Their civic-municipal obligations and rights were structured into the cooperative agricultural associations in which membership dues also included municipal taxes, and the elected leadership or board of the cooperative agricultural association also served as the municipal community council. (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997)

In "community (village) councils" (paragraph 91 (a) of *Ministry Interior Charter for Regional Municipal Councils (updated)* (2006, p. 34), "Council members will be those who are simultaneously and according to its by-laws the (same) members of the board of directors of the cooperative agricultural association from the same settlement (community)". In other words, historically the village council members were selected by members of the cooperative agricultural association, and not by virtue of being residents in village. Yet, the civic rights of the population living within the boundaries of the regional municipal authority rested upon residency, not membership, in the cooperative associations.

Formally the regional municipal council is a federation of the local village municipal councils that send representatives from each village to the regional municipal council (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997). However, in practice the regional municipal council is de facto composed of representatives of the cooperative agricultural associations in their dual role as community (village) council members. The organisational municipal culture at the regional level as such has been more one of collective communities rather than local government. The residents of the regional municipal council do not vote for members of the regional council but rather choose a representative from each village to serve on the regional council.

This was very much the case in the MT regional council at the start of the strategic planning process.

Beginning in the late 1990s this started to change. Now regional municipal councils formally have primary statutory authority. The community councils still have the same authority as the regional council but only in those areas in which this latter does not intervene and on the condition that there is no discrepancy between the community council and the regional council (Ministry of Interior, The National Charter for Regional Municipal Councils, new version).

Until the 1990s (and still today) many regional councils do not interfere in the communities as long as they are functioning properly or unless the community voluntarily defers to the regional municipal council to provide certain services.

#### 2.3.2 The transition from community management to local (municipal) authorities

The statutory restructuring of local rural government in Israel over the last two decades has been quite significant. (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997) Of importance here are two main changes:

First, beginning in 1990 the system of electing mayors changed. Until that point in time the mayor was selected by the regional council that was composed of representatives from the different settlements (or villages) who sat on the council – one from each village. They elected a mayor from amongst themselves for a five-year term of office. Beginning in 1990 all the residents within the municipal boundaries of each regional council gained the right to elect and be elected through direct popular elections. It is important to emphasize that this change was not only a change in the democratic process, but reflected a more fundamental change in the recognition of people's civic rights based upon residency, as opposed to membership in the cooperative agricultural associations.

Second, the Ministry of Interior made a clearer distinction between the governance structures of the cooperative associations and the statutory structures of the community councils in each village. Their elections also became based upon residency rather than membership in the cooperative associations.

Furthermore the regional municipal council, which has primary statutory authority, can now delegate authority to the community local council. Previously its authority was residual. It filled in where the local community councils did not function. Now they have overall responsibility and authority for the citizens within their municipal boundaries. In practice most regional municipal councils automatically confer municipal authority en bloc to the communities. This is the case even in those communities where there has been a legal separation of the cooperative agricultural association from the community (municipal) council (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997).

Because of the primary legal status of the regional council, provision of specific services, the community council's budget, and taxation arrangements are approved by the regional council. Only starting at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has there even been a distinction between voluntary community services and legally mandated municipal services at the community level. Similarly almost all public institutions are now on land owned/leased by the regional municipal councils. This is a prerequisite for any national government support.

All these changes have led to a significant transformation in the role and mission of regional municipal councils.

### 2.3.3 The changing role of local rural government

Prior to this transition and until the late 1980s and early 1990s most kibbutzes and the more established moshaves provided their own services. These communities clustered together and established educational authorities that were recognized by the State as independent school systems. (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997)

In keeping with the ideological origins of these communities the old statutory regulations (until 1990) of the Charter for Regional Municipal Councils (paragraph 63) state:

The (regional) Council has the authority to improve and develop the region (meaning its municipal boundaries) economically, culturally, socially, and educationally for its residents or some group of residents, with the exception of education and culture which is

conditional upon the agreement of the community council of the settlement (village) or group of settlements to this action (p.25).

These villages used their income from the economic ventures of their cooperative agricultural association's agricultural branches, industrial enterprises, or tourist projects. In addition they enjoyed tax benefits and other direct budgetary support from the government or national cooperatives (e.g. the National Dairy Association, National Produce Marketing Board and others). Thus they did not, for example, use public welfare services, but had their own 'private' voluntary welfare services. Almost all community services were collectively owned and provided to all members of the village (association).

The political ideological change of the 1970s - the movement towards efficiency and privatization together with the demographic changes in the rural communities beginning in the late 1990s – that led to the changes in the municipal structure, brought this community based service system to an end.

Over the last 10-15 years regional municipal councils have been increasingly drawn into this gap and are now faced with the demand to provide services and initiate regional development. They have moved from the margins of rural Israel to the forefront both on the local regional level and on the national level. Regional municipal councils have become a major force in the area of land development including everything from infrastructure in new rural neighbourhoods to the management of joint regional industrial parks (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997).

The regional councils have become active players in areas that were formerly under either the individual villages' or the national government's exclusive control. The reality that the local villages were no longer self-enclosed, self-sustaining entities (socially and economically) has been a powerful dynamic in changing the mandate of regional municipal councils. They have taken on the role of providing public platforms – physical and organizational infrastructures – that afford the villages and their residents the foundations for meeting their specific needs and aspirations. This

has meant innovating new municipal functions capable of planning and managing collective regional resources.

Four examples will serve to illustrate the scope of this change (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997). They illustrate new areas of functional involvement of local rural government in Israel that have become accepted practice. Only 10-15 years ago these types of activities were considered outside the purview of local government and still today are not all usually undertaken by any one regional municipal council. As will be shown later MT is one of the only regional councils that have taken on all of these and other such expanded roles.

#### 2.3.4 The establishment of municipal industrial authorities

In keeping with the change from development based upon national goals to development based upon economic viability, fifteen regional municipal councils especially in peripheral areas have set up municipal industrial authorities (Ministry of Industry and Trade). These are subsidiary companies owned by the municipalities. The regional councils have leveraged the fact that large tracts of land suitable for industry are located within their municipal boundaries. They ensure the infrastructure of roads, water, sewage, and such needed by industrial plants. This is done either by lobbying for government development funds or through municipal betterment taxes. The intention has been to expand the economic base of the region to include non-agricultural economic enterprises. This has opened up new employment possibilities, generate secondary businesses, and brought in new land taxes.

Often these sites border on medium size towns. Under pressure for broadening the tax base of these neighbouring towns the Ministry of Interior has, at times, initiated the annexation of these lands with the intention of incorporating them into the neighbouring towns. To counter this threat the regional councils often entered into agreements with their neighbours and made these industrial authorities joint corporations that share the tax revenues. In this manner they maintain their land use control authority over large tracts of land and set the standards of upkeep. Ten to fifteen years ago local regional government did not even view economic development within the scope of its mandate neither did it have the professional nor statutory (by-laws) capacity to undertake such development projects.

### 2.3.5 The creation of regional employment centres (under the auspices of the regional councils)

Over the past decade, farmers in Israel have experienced far-reaching and profound change. Prices for their produce have dropped sharply as a result of competition from low wage countries in Eastern Europe and Northern Africa. National organisations and export cooperatives in Israel that used to support the farmers have become economically and functionally marginal.

For years employment in agriculture has continuously decreased (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997). In the 1990s less than half of the rural population's income came primarily from agriculture. (Ministry of Agriculture) This, combined with the change in the economic structure in Israel, as described previously, has forced the rural population to find new ways to make a living. The rising national unemployment rate and the distance of farm communities from urban job markets, has made this particularly hard. Thirteen regional councils also in the periphery have recently set up eight employment centres (unpublished report – "Maavarim" Programme – *Transitions*, JDC Israel, 2009).

These centres provide services on three levels.

- ◆ To individuals: job counseling and placement services
- ◆ To communities: strengthening social networks focused on employment and setting up community level forums to upgrade employment and reach the unemployed
- ◆ To regions: setting out employment policy regarding land use, marketing to businesses/employers of choice, promoting job-focused training programmes

Although the number of regional councils that established such centres over the last decade is limited, their significance lies in the expectation and legitimating of active involvement in this aspect of rural life. In the early 1990s, at the outset of a strategic planning process (one of the very first to undertake such a process), the mayor of the Upper Galilee Regional Council reminded the steering committee that its mandate

ended at the 'entrance gate' to the communities. Clearly employment services were beyond the scope of the council's functions.

#### 2.3.6 Operation of public schools

Over the past 20 years almost all schools have gone from being the responsibility of the villages to being the responsibility of the regional councils. To a great extent this is a function of economies of scale stemming from a change in demographics – fewer children in each community - and the need to be more economically efficient -reduce the ratio of teachers per pupil. It is also an outcome of the transition to municipal management. Previously the school facilities were privately owned by the cooperative associations on whose land they were built. Now the government requires that all public/community buildings that are constructed or expanded with government funds be owned by the municipalities (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997). In effect this has ended all direct national government funding of community institutions in the rural villages.

This change has meant the creation of education departments in the regional municipalities which in the past dealt only with the safety maintenance of a few educational facilities. Although it is important to add that the responsibility for education and teachers' salaries belongs to the national government, maintaining the high standards of education and high teacher-student ratio has meant that the regional authorities needed to significantly supplement the budgets of their schools. The regional councils also operate a variety of enrichment programmes that reflect the community values and elements of curricula that characterized the schools under village control. The responsibility however has shifted to the regional councils that now build, operate, staff, and maintain schools.

#### 2.3.7 Water purification plants

Around the world water purification is often within the purview of local government. Also in Israel the larger cities have been involved in sewage treatment. However, in the rural regions of Israel sewage was very much a village-level responsibility. The primary treatment was either septic tanks for individual households or sedimentation basins at the village level. Generally, the run-off was channeled into stream beds and the sludge was removed to dumping sites.

Two factors have been significant in the entry of regional councils to the water purification business. First is the change in environmental standards and regulations. Now approval of all new construction - homes, businesses, and public institutions - is conditional upon the sewage being channeled to a treatment facility approved by the environment authorities. Second is the need to recycle waste water, primarily for agriculture.

Particularly their need for water for irrigation and the availability of land for setting up sewage treatment plants has led the regional municipalities to enter into partnerships with cities. The contribution of the rural communities to the sewage is relatively minimal, but the purchase of treated water for farming (at various levels of purity) is a critical factor in the economies of the treatment process. Here again though limited in numbers, some regional councils have undergone a major change in their role in ensuring the infrastructure conditions necessary for the development and livelihood of their residents and communities.

These four examples illustrate how regional municipal councils have created new organisational platforms upon which individuals and communities can mobilise resources for their development and wellbeing. Similarly they have become the de facto managers of Israel's open space green areas.

The extent of their role is different from one regional municipal council to another depending upon the geographic proximity to metropolitan areas, the economic strength of the rural communities (within the municipal boundaries), and their ideological nature (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997).

This transition has led to two general types of regional municipal councils (Wiel et al., 2001). The first type works towards strengthening the villages as the primary social and economic unit. The regional council provides support services to the villages which grant services to their residents. In these regions there has been a process of establishing new **community** cooperative associations that include all the residents in the individual villages. It combines the community obligations of a voluntary

association with the powers, obligations and rights of the local village council (municipal). This enables maximizing services and taxes (membership dues and municipal taxes) on the local level. These new **community** cooperative associations work alongside the cooperative **agricultural** associations within a given community. In this case the regional municipal council continues to function largely as a federation of communities.

The second type is centralist and aims to transform the regional municipal council into a regional-city style municipality, where most of the functions and provision of municipal services are the responsibility of a central regional municipal authority directly to the residents of the region. According to this approach, the responsibility for the provision of services and for development is transferred from the local village level to the municipal regional level. The rural communities function more like low density dormitory neighbourhoods.

In both cases the local village council (to the extent that it is active) and the regional municipal council have been transformed from functioning on the basis of shared ownership and cooperative agricultural association membership to municipal governmental entities whose power is primarily statutory.

## **2.4 The issue of equity**

Amongst the many challenges facing local government in Israel over the last 20-30 years one overriding issue has had a major impact on the character and functioning of regional municipal councils in Israel. This is the issue of equity: how to balance the interests/needs of particular population groups or village communities and general wellbeing through equal receipt of services and access to resources.

Although, as explained above, the legal structure and recent rulings give primary authority to the regional municipal council, it is still composed of representatives (now chosen in municipal elections) from each individual village. Thus policies often favour local village interests over regional concerns. Decisions often reflect coalitions around specific interest groups: religious versus non-religious villages, primarily agricultural villages versus non-agricultural villages, large and economically strong village communities versus small or weak village communities.

This structure makes policy-setting regarding regional development, taxation, and service provision a highly complex process of political maneuvering (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997).

This growing diversity of the rural sector, that is reflected not only in the distinction between large and small communities and between communities with a strong economic base and those with a weak economic base, but also in the diverse economic and social character of the population, raises the question of equity in resource allocation and management by the regional councils among the different village communities.

In this context it is important to distinguish between two planes of equity (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997). National government is concerned with the gaps between the regional councils. The role of the regional councils is internally focused upon equality within the population and gaps between the different village communities under its authority.

Because the cooperative agricultural associations in the collective settlements, which are still the dominant majority in most regional councils, are subject to different legal authorities, the task of the regional municipal councils is particularly difficult. In the same village there are national laws governing cooperative associations that are based on membership with one set of regulatory and administrative mechanisms operating in parallel to municipal organizations reliant on residency within municipal boundaries with a different set of statutory regulations.

In this situation villages with strong cooperative associations can make decisions about the level of their local voluntary community services independent of the regional municipal council. They can, in effect, bypass the municipal structure altogether. Within the communities themselves members of the cooperative agricultural association can receive one level of community services, while the non-member residents receive a different level of strictly municipal services.

The regional council leadership must therefore maneuver amongst conflicting demands in such a way that will avoid policies objectionable to the stronger villages, but at the same time will not neglect weak villages and groups of residents.

Under these conditions the task facing regional municipal councils of ensuring equitable "life chances" (Giddens, 1886) becomes socially, economically, and politically very significant. The issue of control over non-material resources is as much at the centre of equity as the distribution of goods and services.

Because of the need to maintain this political balance within the regional council, where policy decisions are made, the principle of equity is a constant issue. The Hebrew expression for equity contains within it not only the notion of 'just' distribution, but also the notion of being fair. This places an emphasis upon the expectation that each party will receive not only the same portion (of resources), but a portion that meets that party's particular needs or matches its particular contribution. Thus built into the dynamic of ensuring equity is a high level of tension between fair distribution and fair burden (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997).

In the earlier days of the rural communities particularly in the kibbutzes this tension was resolved by the Marxian idiom of each according to his need and each according to his ability. With the breakdown of the ability of most rural communities to meet the needs of all their residents, the transition from pioneering values to market economy and municipal management of rural communities, there is a demand for more formal policies and procedures that ensure structured equity.

The way in which this takes place is through the control of two types of resources – allocative and authoritative (Giddens, 1986). The first refers to those resources related to the material environment, the means of material reproduction, and the artifacts produced. The second refers to the organization of temporal-spatial constitutions of interactions, the reproduction of the organizational relationship of people in mutual association, and organization of life chances. The coordination of any social system requires the combination of both types of resources.

This challenge of ensuring equity in the distribution and management of collective resources, allocative and authoritative (Giddens, 1986), can be seen on three levels:

1. The need to give legitimate recognition to the diversity of the different communities and even to the different populations within the communities.
2. The need to provide formal guarantees and continuity of resource allocation in a manner that fosters trust and the willingness to forgo immediate benefits for the achievement of long-term goals that reflect a fair distribution over time and space.
3. The need to crystallize shared goals and a vision of a collective future for the region as the basis for focusing efforts and resource allocation.

One of the ways regional councils have dealt with this challenge has been the undertaking of broad public planning processes that set forth a new collective vision based upon crystallizing shared goals on the regional level. This involves a change of identification with the region. It is no longer viewed only as a geographic commonality but one that involves collective functions, management of joint resources, and recognition of de facto interdependence of wellbeing among the village communities (and not only within the villages).

Public planning processes of this type have been carried out over the last decade and a half in about 15 regional councils and are usually referred to as "strategic planning processes" (Ministry of Interior). They include a variety of methodologies and range from short-term town meetings on the regional level, aimed at creating consensus around specific regional projects, to multi-year in-depth processes that involve changing the organizational structures of local government, promoting the creation of new regional community institutions, and initiating major infrastructure projects needed for development.

The common element here is the processes dialogue and public legitimising of the different voices within the region. It is frequently the first step in an effort to create a regional community.

A second way of dealing with the issue of equity has been the reorganising of service provision in rural areas. This has meant a redistribution of responsibility for ensuring that all residents of the area have access to, and receive, appropriate community and regional services. As explained above the two-tier system of government and the existent cooperative associations within the communities create a myriad of service providers with different economic resources and different levels of commitment to different groups of population.

Historically, the criteria of appropriate equitable level of services were set by the national settlement movements. In the kibbutzes (through the 1980s) this extended not only to community services, but to the regulation of personal commodities (ownership of TVs, cars, etc.). With the weakening of these national organisations each community's service level became a function of its economic strength or weakness.

With the statutory restructuring and transition from solely cooperative association management to primarily municipal or mixed management the need to set standards and reorganise the delivery of services fell upon the regional municipal council. All services that are municipal in nature – welfare, education, sanitation, infrastructure maintenance and others - are under the responsibility and authority of the municipal regional councils. Even those community services that are directly provided by the village communities themselves are, to some extent, regulated by the local regional municipality through land use zoning regulations, government subsidies, health and safety standards, and taxation policy (Wiel, et al, 2001).

The demand for accountability in the provision of services also comes from the residents, who now increasingly consider themselves as tax-paying residents, not only as members of cooperative associations. There has been a change in municipal taxation policy, which in the past was based upon per household rates (that were a function of the membership rates of the cooperative associations) and varied in each community. Now it is a fixed land tax rate based upon the number of square meters of housing per family. (Discounts for elderly, welfare recipients, etc. are set nationally by the Ministry of Interior.)

It is important to add that in many village communities there still are membership fees to, and revenues from, the agricultural cooperative associations above and beyond municipal taxes and services.

Furthermore, development projects – new neighbourhoods, industrial zones, commercial projects, tourist ventures and agricultural projects - are now all accompanied by development agreements or regulated by various betterment taxes that are the source of revenue for infrastructures (Ministry of Interior). All of these were unheard of ten to fifteen years previously. In this manner rural local government has become the arbitrator for ensuring that citizen's rights for equitable municipal services are respected.

A third way of dealing with equity has been the effort to balance statutory obligations and voluntary village community obligations in this new municipal structure. Prior to this transition rules and regulations were mainly implicit. The villages managed themselves and the regional council did not interfere. Upon occasion local regional government was the pipeline for funds from the national government to a given community. Deviation from this arrangement was localised to a specific situation and not a matter of policy.

The new more formal municipal regulations of recent years require clarification and shared interpretation for their implementation in a very complex municipal, communal, and economic constellation. Many regional councils have instituted mixed service packages that allow them to formalize the division of responsibility between the regional council and each village with their different frameworks for the provision of municipal and community services. Organising service provision in this manner clarifies and enables the provision of services tailored to the given social, economic, and organisational composition of each village community.

Other efforts include establishing systematic annual planning and management procedures between the senior regional council professionals and the leadership (public and professional) with each village community. This promotes mutual agreements regarding the sustainable development on the regional level in a manner that supports community development in a differential, fair manner.

Many regional municipalities have established professional support services to help village communities strengthen their internal social cohesion and maintain an ongoing dialogue with the different functional departments of the regional council.

And finally government transparency has become standard procedure in policy setting processes in regional municipal government.

The importance of political leadership in this period of transition is very significant. The mayors of regional municipal councils have the critical position of being able to voice a public commitment to equity, then translate that commitment into clear regulations and division of responsibilities that can be depended upon.

## **2.5 Summary**

The changes over the last 30 years in Israeli society in general, and more specifically in the rural communities, have been far-reaching. As presented above they have been on the socio-economic level, on the ideological-political level, and on the institutional-organisational level. These changes however were not always self-evident, but often tacit, even to those whose actions were catalysts for the change.

What is of particular interest here is understanding the interplay between the external forces of change that were affecting the context of the MT region and the internal forces for change that were both a reaction to, and contribution to, the change itself. The context in which the rural villages (kibbutzes and moshaves) of MT had been functioning has been and still is undergoing rapid change. It is the process not only of adaptation that is being examined, but also the processes of leveraging the externalities to generate internal changes, that have led to a more optimal way of functioning as a collective.

## **Chapter 3. The Literature Review**

**“It’s the cracks that let the light in” – Leonard Cohen**

This chapter is a review of some of the fundamental concepts of community development and cooperation. It is not an exhaustive analysis. My intention was first to highlight the primary conceptual themes that shape the design of community development work and second, to introduce into this arena concepts from related fields that can afford an additional perspective on community development processes.

In this discussion of the literature I began by reviewing the two classic approaches to community work – those that are process- and capacity-building oriented versus those that are instrumental-improvement oriented. I have then looked at concepts of cooperation that are based upon rational choice theory and further expanded this section to concepts that are related to the management of shared resources (common resource pool dilemmas) (Ostrom, 1990). Finally I have introduced a theorization of community development based upon concepts of community as a structuring of social interactions.

### **3.1 Community and capacity development versus functional improvements**

Improving community functioning has been the goal of many different community-oriented programmes worldwide. They involve government agencies, social service professionals, voluntary agencies, and others. In this part of the literature review I have focused on two of the central themes in the literature:

1. The instrumental improvement of community functioning through the provision of concrete services and goods
2. The process of capacity-building, especially the capacity for cooperation.

Part of the question raised in this research is the balance between these two approaches. What is the optimal mix of instrumentally-oriented programmes and process-oriented interventions?

For participatory approaches to be sustainable, people need to see the results, or at least see that results will be forthcoming, as these approaches require an investment of time and effort that could easily be directed elsewhere if no positive change emerges (Rowlands, 2003, p.15).

Most capacity-building programmes are focused on the process rather than on the material outcome. This is clearly reflected in the definition of community building by Mattessich and Monsey (2001, p. 8). “Community building initiatives, for the purpose of this work, are any identifiable set of activities pursued by a community in order to increase the social capacity of its members”. Community social capacity here refers to “a community’s ability to work together in concert... Communities with high social capacity can successfully identify problems and needs; achieve a workable consensus on goals and priorities; agree on how to pursue goals; and cooperate to achieve goals”. They go on to say that the outcome of a community building process is not the task and utilitarian goal accomplishment, but the “heightened sense of community – a strengthening of social and psychological ties to the place and other residents...”

In another relatively recent publication community building is described as

...a holistic approach that focuses its efforts on people. It is dedicated to the idea that residents must take control of their destiny and of their communities. Community building grows from a vision of how communities function normally, where community members create community institutions that help to achieve their aspirations as well as strengthen community fabric (Sanoff, 2000, p. 7).

We can see here a conceptualization that sees community functioning as an outcome of a community’s capacities which can be strengthened by community-building interventions. This is, to great extent, a linear causal model in which

- Community building interventions are the input
- Enhanced community capacities are the output
- Better instrumental community functioning is the outcome

Community-building processes, as noted above, focus on creating a strong sense of community: creating trust amongst community members, strengthening the connections between people, developing shared expectations, and setting mutual

goals. The inculcation of these elements into community life is considered to be the key to successfully fostering cooperation and community functioning.

In contrast the bricks and mortar approach of many Community Development Corporations (CDCs), which is focused often literally on the "concrete" improvements in a community, seldom address issues of community social and economic capacities (Gittell and Vidal, 1998). People may feel empowered by the functional improvement in local services or by infrastructure improvement even though there has been no social structural change. Such community development programmes are often considered successful both by the participants and by the sponsors. The improvement of specific instrumental services is the goal (usually aimed at the individual or some specific physical blight) not the issue of collective action by the community.

In a broader context is the issue of the lack of a relationship between instrumental and physical urban/regional development and capacity-building community development. "While there are positive cases of connection, for the most part regional leaders and community developers have been like ships passing in the night" (Pastor, Dreier, Grigsby III, and Lopez-Garza, 2000, p.7).

The issue of the balance between an instrumental problem-solving orientation (aimed at specific immediate functional needs) and a learning orientation (aimed at long-term capacity development) is also raised by Postma:

There is an unfortunate disjuncture between capacity building and what Edwards has referred to as institutional learning 'the process by which an organization identifies key lessons of experience and uses them to improve the quality of its work'. Capacity building may be so programmed towards the attainment of an improved future that it unwittingly forgets key past learnings (Postma, 2003, p.82).

This reinforces the need to balance process with outcome. As mentioned earlier a focus on specific goal attainment may divert energies from enabling a community to learn how to address the fundamental causes of its problems.

One of the most cogent, if not historically the first, analyses of the complexity of community development can be found in Warren's article "A Community Model" (1963). He begins his explanation by distinguishing between specific "community conditions which we interpret as 'problems'" and the underlying processes taking place within the community "as part and parcel of the system of community living which has developed in America". He goes on to state "One sees not only specific problems of one type or another, but also the general problem of inability of the community to organize its forces effectively to cope with specific problems". This connection between the functional level of "problems" and the community's capacity to organize itself is clearly a central issue for Warren.

Warren sees community development as the process for tackling this difficulty.

For one way of describing community development is by saying that it is a process of helping community people to analyze their problems, to exercise as large a measure of autonomy as possible and feasible, and to promote greater identification of the individual citizen and the individual organization with community as a whole. Through such a process, communities may be helped to confront their problems as effectively as possible (Warren, 1963, p.48).

There are three parameters to Warren's concept of community development

- The ability for problem analysis by the community
- Maximum autonomy (control over local resources, social and natural)
- Identification with the community (as a whole – not just narrow interests)

He does, however, qualify the ability of any specific community to overcome social ills that are a function of national or regional forces (Warren, 1963).

Warren discerns two paradigms for explaining social problems. Paradigm I models essentially view social problems as a result of individual deficiency whereas Paradigm II models view social problems as a result of dysfunctional social structure and the social consciousness both of community development professionals and

community members (Warren, 1971). In his article on the sociology of inner cities he states:

But the important – widely ignored – aspect of this situation is that advocacy planners, themselves, have technical competence only of the type which is applicable to operation with the prevalent institutionalized thought structure. They do not have an articulate technology and expertness regarding the alternative strategies designed to change the institutional structure on the basis of Paradigm II.... To the extent that resident groups have gained power in the program-planning process, they almost without exception have come up with substantially the same type of Paradigm I programs...(Warren, 1971, p.335).

Warren makes an important distinction between the structural deficiencies of community functioning (as a collective) and individual capacities (or lack of). He is clearly critical of avowed community-building programmes that in fact address only the issue of agency – individual capacities to negotiate within their existing social context/structure.

Similarly, Ryan points out that there may very well be a critical disparity between the programme goals and their models of intervention.

Many programmes with avowed structural change goals do not actually engage in community capacity building. The programme may be couched in the language of “human resource development,” but the target still remains the individuals in the community, training them, giving them skills, and improving services aimed at the individual. Such programmes lack the operational and conceptual tools suited to their ideology, which claims to focus on the community but in the last analysis usually adopts a strategy of “blaming the victim” (Ryan, 1971, p.4).

There are two central points here. First that capacity-building is fundamental to the process of community development. It is distinguishable from instrumental physical improvement of a community or its services, but cannot be divorced from them. Second, a community's capacity for cooperative collective action, and not just the improvement of individual functioning, is critical to the notion of community development as expressed in terms of cooperation to achieve goals and cooperative efforts. The capacity to cooperate is essential for meeting shared goals and ensuring collective wellbeing.

The key issue in these conceptualizations is how to create the conditions and capacities for the achievement of shared goals, managing resources, or meeting joint needs. All of these conceptualizations make a clear link between developing social capacities and the functional or instrumental operational aspects of community functioning. However, the relationship and causality are more assumed than explained.

Furthermore there often remains a problematic disparity between the systemic or structural goals of capacity-building programmes and the methodologies which as Ryan (1971) and Warren (1963, 1971) point out are generally focused upon individual skills enhancement or service delivery improvement.

### **3.2 The evolution of cooperation - individual rational choice**

As raised in the introduction to this thesis and as presented in the section above the issue of how to promote the capacity for collective cooperation in order to achieve collective wellbeing is a central issue in community development practice. In rational choice theory the causation of cooperation or non-cooperation is explicit. It is based upon the expectation that people behave in a rational manner aimed at optimizing their individual wellbeing. This is the prime determiner of cooperation or non-cooperation (Ariely, 2009).

Although the concepts of game theory generally isolate or discount other social factors and look at people's behaviour based solely upon self-interest/rational choice they do offer insights into the **structuring** and **understanding** of payoffs and can influence the level of cooperation or non-cooperation.

Despite the fact that this theoretical perspective, with its use of logical formulae may seem closer to mathematics and has been associated more with economics than with community development, as Ostrom (1990, 1992, 1994) has shown, they can afford a useful way for looking at social interactions and specifically for understanding cooperation.

The focus of rational choice is on the problem of how people meet both their individual and collective needs which may not coincide at any given moment. The central question is what should be the best option for optimizing payoffs individually and collectively in situations of conflicting interests? This is in essence the classic dilemma of collective action (Ostrom, 1990).

Rational choice and game theory conceptualizations address this issue from the perspective of individual self-interest. They concentrate on rational choice – choosing a strategy of action for optimal instrumental outcomes given certain payoff structures. Cooperation is understood by examining

1. How players develop strategies for optimal payoffs such as tit for tat (Axelrod, 1984)
2. How the payoff structure changes the choice of strategy of the individual players.

This approach is predicated upon the belief that maximizing instrumental utilitarian payoffs is the primary motivating factor of social behaviour, and the structure of the payoffs will determine peoples' most likely strategy of action.

### 3.2.1 Optimizing payoffs

In an illustration Hume (1739) provides an analogy referring to two peasants who choose to sit on their porch and watch their fields rot rather than cooperate because neither trusts that once having helped the other he will benefit from reciprocal behaviour. (His neighbour, having already received his help, no longer has any incentive to return the aid.) In this lies the paradox of collective irrational behaviour, cooperation being rejected and the choice of non-cooperation being preferred, which though individually rational in the final analysis is both individually and collectively detrimental, the functional outcome for both peasants being rotting corn fields.

Hardin raises the same issue in criticisms of Adam Smith's "invisible hand."

One may sense, however, that all too often we are less helped by the benevolent hand than we are injured by the malevolent back of that hand; that is, in seeking private interests, we fail to secure greater collective interests. The narrow rationality of self-interest that can benefit us all in market exchange can also prevent us from succeeding in collective endeavors (Hardin, 1993, p.6).

He goes on to present this dilemma in game theory terms (but adds the free rider problem to the payoff structure):

We have for the latent group, as with the prisoner's dilemma, a result that tells us that individual interests will preclude their achievement, because if the collective good is not provided, the individual member fails to receive a benefit that would have exceeded the individual's cost in helping purchase that good for the whole group (Hardin, 1993, p.25).

What makes sense for the collective may not make sense for the individual if the incentives for cooperation are less in value (their absolute amount or at a given moment) than the cost or risk inherent in the cooperative effort.

Frequently, community development practitioners implicitly approach the dilemma of collective action along the same lines of rational choice concepts. They work to make the folly of the paradox of the peasants' behaviour explicit, the assumption being that it is possible to promote community cooperation by explaining its benefits. The emphasis is placed upon teaching people individual skills (Warren, 1971). The goal is to educate the community members who apparently do not understand or do not have the necessary tools to successfully cooperate. However, frequently this educational process does not address the structure of the dilemma, its payoffs and its risks, nor does it deal with the underlying assumptions of rational choice.

Other solutions are based upon adding the shadow of the future to the outcome formula (Axelrod, 1984; Skryms, 2004). By adding the element of ongoing interaction between people in their social/community context, the payoff structure changes. It introduces the players' view not only to the past and but also to future benefits and costs. The anticipation of potential future mutual benefit can be an incentive to cooperate which outweighs short-term narrow self-interest. However, if the anticipation is one of risk that the other player will eventually exploit the first player, then we are back to the problem of mistrust and the paradox of collective action, in which acting solely on the basis of self-interest can lead to less than optimal outcomes both individually and collectively.

Only by changing the payoff structure to one where there is a confluence of individual and collective interests, where the payoff for cooperative behaviour for everyone and for each individual is greater than that of non-cooperation, should one expect there to be cooperation.

In his book *Stag Hunting and the Evolution of Social Structure*, Skyrms (2004) quotes Rousseau from *The First and Second Discourses* where he describes a rudimentary society in which men need to act in concert. "If a deer was to be taken, everyone saw that, in order to succeed, he must abide faithfully by his post: but if a hare happened to come within the reach of any one of them, it is not to be doubted that he pursued it without scruple". In the stag hunt game, rational players are pulled in one direction by considerations of mutual benefit (*the portion of meat for each hunter being greater than that of a rabbit*) and in the other by considerations of personal risk" (Skyrms, 2004, p.3). If I can trust that others will do their part – in Rousseau's words be "faithful" - then I, too, should adopt a strategy of cooperation (Lewis, 2002).

Although there is risk, I am better off cooperating rather than defecting as long as others cooperate. Skyrms stops short of the end of the passage which reads "and having seized his prey, cared very little, if by doing so he caused his companions to miss theirs" (Rousseau, in translation, 1973, p. 78). For Skyrms the issue appears to be only functional - how to reduce risk in light of potential payoffs. Caring for others is not part of the formula of motivation. Trust is related to recognizing that I and everyone else should do his part because it is in the best self-interest of each.

He goes on to introduce the concept of "basins of attraction" (Skyrms, 2004) for seeing how the combination of maximizing payoffs and avoiding risk-dominated strategies can lead to either optimal or sub-optimal collective behaviour.

When the game is repeated with pair wise random matching in a group of subjects, sometimes the group converges to all stag hunting and sometimes to all hare hunting, depending on the initial composition of the group. If the group starts in the basin of attraction of stag hunting, the group almost always converges to all stag hunters. If the initial composition of the group is in the basin of attraction of hare hunting, hare hunters take over (Skyrms, 2004, p.12).

The payoff structure of the deer hunt is functionally different from that of a prisoner's dilemma. In a prisoner's dilemma, as in Hume's story of the peasants, ostensibly one is individually better off by defecting – exploiting others when they cooperate. In the stag hunt it is the recognition that it is in my best interest to cooperate when others cooperate, and it is in their best interest to cooperate only if I cooperate. They have nothing to gain by defecting if I cooperate and similarly I have nothing to gain by defecting if they cooperate. The best option is always cooperating as long as others do so. Knowing this and knowing that the others know this, I can risk cooperating if the benefits of cooperation are worthwhile (Lewis, 2002).

The evolution of trust is thus predicated upon it serving my instrumental interests. It is the payoff structure, which determines either a cooperative or competitive interaction, encourages or discourages trust. Rational choice theory predicates the possibility of people trusting others upon the payoff structure from cooperative action. It is trust in the sense that people can be trusted to act rationally, that is to act in their best individual self-interest.

Looking at community development from this perspective suggests that it is not training programmes that will promote the capacity of a community to act cooperatively, but rather the way in which the benefits from cooperation are structured into collective endeavours. Explaining that it is in the individual and collective interests of the two peasants to cooperate will not change their behaviour. Only by restructuring community ventures such as deer hunts, instead of two farmers on their porches, can community development be fostered. Only if community endeavours are structured such that acting on the basis of individual self-interest also serves the collective interest will cooperation be possible.

According to rational choice theory fostering community development would mean optimal structuring of individual and mutual benefits from cooperation.

### 3.2.2. Social equilibrium and the evolution of cooperation – a game theory explanation

As I discussed in the section above, rational choice theory views the choice to cooperate as a decision based upon an assessment that the long term payoff for mutual cooperation is higher for everyone individually and collectively. That is, if all the other members of the community cooperate then it is also in each individual's interest to cooperate. The question that arises is, how can we manage sustained cooperation or enlist others to cooperate. How can the risk of defection or of free riding be reduced or eliminated?

There are two basic concepts of equilibrium (amongst the vast literature on the subject) that are particularly relevant to the conceptualization of cooperation based upon rational choice used here – Pareto optimality and Nash Equilibrium (Hardin, 1993; Ostrom, 1990; Taylor, 1976; White, 2003; Young, 1998).

A strategy of action is optimal or Pareto-efficient if no player can improve his welfare without reducing the welfare of the other player, or if there is no strategy of action whereby both players could simultaneously improve their situation (Ostrom, 1990, Taylor, 1976). This could be applied to community development as a way of looking at how people form optimal collective strategies of action for meeting their collective and individual needs/goals.

What is of concern here is how a community can go from collectively functioning in a non-Pareto-efficient manner to a different way of collectively functioning that would be optimal. A region with an education system of village level schools, which are too small to sustain specializations or have classes so small that teacher salaries are too low to attract qualified teachers, is functioning in a non-optimal manner. There could be a number of alternative, more optimal collective strategies, for better education. Closing some schools, sharing teaching resources, setting up a joint regional school system or just opening up registration areas and letting the best schools survive by attracting resources could afford some of the options.

It seems to me that the goal of achieving Pareto-efficient community functioning implicitly rests at the heart of most community development programmes. Fostering cooperation for maximizing mutual use of resources or for meeting individual and collective needs is the basis for a great many social intervention programmes. We could perhaps look at capacity building programmes as interventions aimed at helping a community overcome its lack of ability to adopt Pareto-efficient strategies.

In this type of conceptualization of collective action bringing about social change would mean bringing about a change in the equilibrium or stable patterns of play. In game terminology it means understanding how a non-optimal equilibrium becomes a disequilibrium that enables the evolution of a new equilibrium which is Pareto-efficient with better payoffs to all.

Understanding how different social equilibriums and in particular Nash Equilibriums are established could be useful in designing social change-oriented programmes. A Nash Equilibrium is a situation in which no player can improve his welfare by unilaterally changing his actions as long as the other player does not change theirs. Continuing the example from above, no individual village school can improve the education of its children unless the others also change their schools. Thus even though the situation is not optimal it is stable (White, 2003, Taylor, 1976).

Similarly it is worthwhile my driving on the right side of road as long as everybody else drives on the right side of the road (Lewis, 2002). Or, for that matter, it pays for me to drive on the left side of the road as long as everybody else drives on the left side of the road. The safety (which is the payoff) of each driver (player) depends upon his maintaining the same behaviour based upon the expectation that all of the other drivers will maintain theirs. Each driver stands to lose (crash) if one deviates from the strategy of action.

If, however, there is a potential gain by unilaterally deviating from the current strategy of action then the strategy of action is not a Nash Equilibrium. If I believe that everyone else will obey the traffic laws, then when a roadway gets clogged I can improve my situation by driving on the margins and get ahead of everyone else (assuming there is no external 'police' intervention). If I assume that other people will

deviate as I do then it is certainly in my interest to drive on the margins rather than letting others get ahead of me. Although driving on the margins is a Nash Equilibrium it is not Pareto-optimal. Collectively, the road is more clogged as drivers simultaneously move into the margins of the road.

We are back to the paradox that individual rational behaviour is collectively irrational. Rather than cooperating or developing strategies that promote better collective benefits, acting for individual self-interest based upon an assumption that everyone else will act in their own self-interest can lead to collective action that is not in anyone's **best** self-interest (Lewis, 2002).

In parallel, the perception that acting for collective wellbeing will best meet all the individuals' self-interests can lead to equally paradoxical situations. Hardin, in his book *Collective Action* (1993), makes this point using the famous passage from *Catch 22* where Yossarian explains to Major Major Major that although flying bombing missions over Italy (in World War II) serves the collective interest, flying bombing missions does not make sense for him. His bombs alone in themselves will have little effect upon the outcome of the war and his ultimate wellbeing, but flying bombing missions is inherently dangerous and thus not in his self-interest. It is not in any one pilot's **particular** self-interest to fly bombing missions (Hardin, 1982).

We have here a stable Nash Equilibrium which is not Pareto-optimal. Of course not having a war would be Pareto-optimal if both sides recognize the same paradox, but it would not be a Nash Equilibrium. Similarly this can help understand how communities come to act in ways that are individually rational but which do not optimally serve either their collective or individual interests.

By using these concepts to examine communities we can see how social contexts in which the structuring of payoffs from collective action is similar to those of a prisoner's dilemma contributes to non Pareto-optimal community behaviour which will be ongoing since this behaviour will also be a Nash Equilibrium. In a prisoner's dilemma situation the only individually rational choice is non-cooperation. It is the only Nash Equilibrium – no one can individually improve their situation as long as

everyone else continues to behave in a non-cooperative manner. And it is always non Pareto-optimal (Lewis, 2002; Taylor, 1976).

By comparison, under the same rational choice assumptions, if the payoffs of collective action in a community are structured like those of a stag hunt, whereby individual payoffs from cooperation are higher than the payoffs from non-cooperation, the possibility exists of cooperation becoming the dominant community strategy and sustainable since it is a Nash Equilibrium. No one stands to gain more individually from non-cooperative behaviour.

It is nonetheless possible that the non-cooperative strategy will still become dominant. If others act in a risk-limiting, self-interested way and choose not to act cooperatively then I too should forsake cooperative action. Although this is non Pareto-optimal, it can be stable since it too is a Nash Equilibrium. Despite the better payoff from cooperation, non-cooperation can become dominant if members of a community expect others not to cooperate for the collective wellbeing. Non-cooperation is a stable strategy of action because no one player can improve his payoff by unilaterally cooperating as long as the other players continue not to cooperate (Hardin, 1984; Lewis, 2002; Taylor, 1976).

Another factor which could affect the choice of strategy – cooperation or non-cooperation - is the differential ability of people to achieve a payoff. The stronger ones may individually achieve more alone than in collective action which leads to their defection leaving the weaker ones left alone to cooperate. If the collective payoff for the residual group remains low, then still others may defect. This could spiral out to total non-cooperation. However, if the individually weak are jointly more successful than any individual's actions, then the better payoffs from cooperation could lead to a re-recruitment of strong players (Peyton Young, 2004).

This analysis still leaves us with many questions as to how optimal collective community behaviour evolves. Why is non-cooperation, though not optimal, dominant in social situations when a prisoner's dilemma payoff structure is clearer (though it does not explain instances of cooperation). However, even when payoffs are structured like a deer hunt with optimal individual and collective payoffs from

cooperation, either of the strategies of action, cooperation or non-cooperation could become the dominant stable form of collective action.

In part the answer of rational choice theory may lie in Skrym's (2004) concept of basins of attraction, that is, people will seek out other people like themselves who see the mutual individual and collective benefits from cooperation. The evolution of cooperation here is simply a process through which potential cooperators identify each other and associate with one another (Axelrod, 1984). The agreed interpretation of each player's actions is a critical aspect of identifying potential partners for cooperation or avoiding falling prey to competitors. If they have shared understandings (both in terms of the ability to accurately communicate and in terms of shared expectations of each other's behaviour) then they can develop optimal strategies based upon the ability to predict the strategies of cooperative play in others.

### 3.2.3 Rational choice theory and participation

A particularly interesting application of rational choice and game theory concepts for understanding participation or cooperation in community programmes for collective wellbeing was made by White (2003). He uses game theory concepts to explain why, under certain circumstances, some people will contribute to or participate in cooperative actions despite the problem of free riders who take advantage of those who contribute. He shows that when participation/contribution in collective community endeavours is motivated at least in part by a sense of civic responsibility the benefits from participation outweigh the additional incremental costs incurred by free riders. Thus rational choice will lead people to participate; that is to say, a person will participate when the value-benefit placed by that individual on civic responsibility is greater than the cost of the free riders. A similar point is made by Taylor (1976) who speaks about *altruism* in games.

Furthermore, as more people participate in relation to the number of free riders the incremental costs of the free riders to the participants decline, which means that the minimal level of civic responsibility needed by the participants to balance free rider costs decreases, thus the level of participation again increases. This creates a positive dynamic of participation.

White's (2003) formulation is stated as follows: If Total (functional) Benefits (B) + the benefit attached by the individual to civic responsibility ( $\emptyset$ ) > Total Costs (C) then the person will participate. He develops this formula further as the basis for cost is explicated: Total cost (C) is a function of the unit cost of benefits (B) times the number of people who benefit (N) times the cost/benefit ratio (x).  $C = xNB$ . Individual costs are then a function of the total costs divided by the number of contributing – participating individuals (n)  $xNB/n$ . An individual will participate when  $B + \emptyset_i - xNB/2 > B$  (in a community of at least 2 people).

White's (2003) rational choice conceptualization, though still linear, adds elements of the social context into his game formula. He includes not only instrumental benefits but also social values in the payoff structure. He eliminates the sucker payoff by introducing a social payoff factor that is related to the social context in which the game is being played. The success of a cooperative action itself has the potential to reinforce socially as well as functionally. By including the social value of participation itself in the payoff structure the benefits of participation for civically committed cooperators outweigh the potential risks from non-cooperating/non-contributing free riders.

Using the same formulation it would also possible to promote participation by reducing the cost/benefit ratio (which reduces the per unit cost and the marginal cost per free rider). Thus the investment by paying participants has less risk in relation to benefits and the amount of civic commitment needed to balance non-cooperators also declines.

However, there is also a corollary – the relatively reduced cost of free riding may induce people to feel that their free riding does not greatly harm the collective effort, and therefore they themselves may become free riders. Thus the decreased amount of social value attached to civic participation needed to promote broad participation in collective action, could, at too low a level, lead to reduced participation (White, 2003). If the relative price of non-contribution, while still enjoying the benefits, is

very low, then it is easier to rationalize (that is overcome the social values in view of instrumental gains) becoming a 'free rider' (a non-cooperator).

As such this model does not seem to be a stable one. As White himself points out at some level the incremental contribution of the participant to the collective effort becomes marginal. Thus when this social value incentive for even civically committed players diminishes, they may defect and free ride. We are back to Catch 22. Players can increase their individual utility by free riding, that is, gaining the benefit from the collective action of the other players without paying the instrumental cost of participation. As the potential social benefit from participation decreases in relation to the instrumental costs, there is still the temptation not to cooperate; not doing one's own share has a net payoff greater than participation in the joint effort as long as others do their share.

The fundamental assumption in this context is that people will participate in a collective, cooperative action if the benefits from participation are greater than the costs. This is the rational course of action. However, as we can see in situations where the collective benefits are available to all, with no means of exclusion, rational individual choice would lead people not to participate in the costs, because one can still enjoy the collective benefits. Again, taking this rational individual behaviour to its logical conclusion leads to total non-participation, no functional cost, and no benefits from the cooperative endeavour.

Yet there are communities in which participation is the norm despite some free riding. It seems then that the balance against non-cooperation is not to be found only in the payoff structure of functional benefit but related also to social values (Axelrod, 1984; Taylor, 1976; White, 2003). Similarly, giving exact weighting in complex social situations would seem rather difficult. Nonetheless White's (2003) conceptualization, if used in a less mechanistic manner, provides an important link between instrumental benefits from cooperation and the social context in which collective endeavours take place.

### 3.2.4 Summary of rational choice theory and community development

The contribution of rational choice and game theory to understanding how cooperation can evolve in a community is composed of two parts. The first is how cooperative versus non-cooperative forms of behaviour are influenced by the payoff structures from these two alternative strategies of collective action within a community. The second is how either a Pareto-optimal strategy of cooperation or a non Pareto-optimal strategy of non-cooperation can become stable – a Nash Equilibrium strategy - even in communities whose payoff structures make cooperation the most beneficial strategy individually and collectively.

Though certainly an important contribution to understanding the importance of instrumental payoffs in fostering cooperation, I think as, Taylor (1976) and White (2003) make evident, that there may be other factors of significance in the social context of communities that influence cooperative versus non-cooperative collective action. In section 3.7 I will be looking specifically at how people's commitment to each other's wellbeing, that in many ways parallels White's (2003) conceptualization of the role of civic responsibility, influences collective behaviour.

### **3.3 Social capital – A conceptual linking between social capacities and functional wellbeing**

Closely related to the issues of cooperation and collective wellbeing, but more explicitly linked to community functioning and social context, is the concept of social capital. In his article "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America" Putnam (2004) defines social capital as:

By 'social capital' I mean features of social life – networks, norms, and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives (2004, p.1).

This conceptualization overlaps with that of capacity-building in the community development literature particularly the emphasis on social networks. The connection in his definition between social networks and co-operation is also a key to capacity-building in the community development literature. Elsewhere, not only does Putnam identify specific factors of community life that contribute to social capital but goes much further in explicitly linking the relationship between social capital and collective instrumental wellbeing:

. . . objective measures of effectiveness and subjective measures of citizen satisfaction concur in ranking some regional governments consistently more successful than others...By the 1980s, the North has also attained real advantages in physical and human capital, but those advantages are accentuated and in part explained by its longstanding edge in social capital (Putnam, 1993, p.182).

Putnam's description of how social capital works is particularly helpful in comparing it with rational choice models that give little weight to the social context in which self-interest decision-making and actions take place.

Most fundamental to the civic community is the social ability to collaborate for shared interests. Generalized reciprocity (not "I'll do this for you, because you are more powerful than I" nor even "I'll do this for you now, if you do that for me now," but "I'll do this for you now knowing that somewhere down the road you'll do something for me") generates high social capital and underpins collaboration (Putnam, 1993, pp. 182-3).

The fundamental conceptual issue that needs to be highlighted here is the underlying assumption that enables people to collaborate. Are they guided in their collective behaviour as in rational choice models by the expectation of an instrumental payback on their 'investment' or is there some other factor of significance?

Implicit in the use of the term social *capital* is the expectation of a return on investment which does seem to be very close to the underpinnings of rational choice payoff models. What distinguishes social capital concepts is the interrelationship of mutual trust (that underlies generalized reciprocity) and functional wellbeing (instrumental payoffs). Here the social element of trust fosters collaboration. It reduces the sense of risk of being taken advantage of, inherent in doing now for others while delaying potential returns to some point in the future. For Putnam, trust is the facilitator of collaboration. Trust comes from the social context that supports or limits the levels of collaboration.

Lin describes how social capital extends beyond the face-to-face association of primordial groups:

Third, in general, the utility of social capital (resources embedded in social ties) substantially exceeds that of personal or human capital. This calculation, in the face of the scarcity of valued resource, propels the extension of interactions beyond one's primordial group. Once such ties and exchanges are formed, certain collective rules follow. These rules, beyond interacting actors' original

intent and interests, constitute the basis for social structure formation (2001, p. 128).

Putnam places emphasis on civic associations as a primary factor in the development of social capital. In his article he brings evidence of the growing lack of community involvement concluding that 'we are less connected with each other.' He wants to identify the causes of this process with the inherent negative effect upon 'trust and civic engagement'.

He puts the blame upon TV as the culprit (comparing pre-TV generations with post-TV generations) because it decreases social engagement. It is interesting to note that this contrasts with Reinhart who sees the potential of technology for increasing social engagement. Reinhart analyses the use of cell phone technology as promoter of mobilizing social networks. Despite the differences between these two views on the role of technology, for both of them the process of social interaction is the issue – without it trust and other social collective capacities cannot evolve. Whether TV is the villain or possibly other forces, it is social isolation that is a critical barrier to collective functioning.

In this conceptualization the task facing community development is the creation of opportunities and frameworks for bringing people together, to overcome social isolation through mechanisms such as social networking that can strengthen trust.

Although social capital puts the emphasis on trust it seems to me that the concepts of reciprocity, when taken to their logical conclusion, are very close to those associated with the evolution of cooperation based on rational choice. In a social capital conceptualization people believe that through their social networks and associations, they will receive instrumental benefits (over time) from cooperation. This could be put in rational choice theory language as a Pareto-optimal, Nash equilibrium. The social context is important, but the explanation of motivation seems rooted in that of instrumental payoffs. In comparison White's (2003) analysis (above) sees civic responsibility as having social value in and of itself, not only as the producer of instrumental payoffs. It seems here that despite the centrality of trust it is instrumental trust which, though linked to the social context, is an outcome of instrumental

benefits. It seems very close to Skrym's basins of attraction where cooperators join with other cooperators through social networks for mutual benefits.

The connection between collective wellbeing and trusting others is evident in all these concepts, but the direction of causality seems more complex. The extent to which communal wellbeing (mutual benefits) itself is a causal factor, or at least a reinforcing factor, of social capital (especially trust) is less clear. Is the existence of generalized reciprocity an outgrowth of civic association or does civic association reflect community values of trust and mutual concern? We are still left with the question of how social capital evolves. Furthermore, why do some communities develop the capability for effective collective action (despite TV) while others are considerably less collectively capable?

### **3.4 Community participation as a fundamental element of community development**

Very much in keeping with the importance that Putnam and others place upon associations and opportunities for social interaction is the whole range of concepts and practices dealing with citizen participation. It is one of the central themes of the literature on community development and particularly of capacity-building. In the opening chapter of their book *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation* Hickey and Mohan (2004, p.3) state, "The notion and practice of participation in international development stands at an uneasy crossroads, reviled in academic and practitioner circles, yet as ubiquitous as ever in others".

The issue of participation goes to the heart of the practice of community development. For some it is part of an assessment and goal-setting process that is required by the sponsoring development institutions (Cook and Kothari, 2001). For others, such as Wenger, participation is the substance of community development: "Yet in our experience, learning is an integral part of our everyday lives. It is part of our participation in our communities and organizations." (1998, p. 8). For him participation refers to involvement in social enterprises through which we learn and create our communities.

### 3.4.1 The complexity of participation

Almost all of the literature related to community development sees participation as a critical force in improving community life even as an a priori good. Sanoff (2000, p.12) states that “participation is inherently good.” For others it is a tactic, which can be coercive or empowering. The danger of participation in development programmes and strategic planning lies in its being, a priori, a process of co-optation into the predetermined agenda of those in power or in control over the use of resources (Rowlands, 2003, p.14). The very promise of development assistance and the requirement of community involvement can lead those participating into the existing hierarchy, but not change their relatively powerless position (Cook and Kothari, 2001).

Furthermore, community development is often defined with little reference to the community’s internal disparities and conflicts or to its inherent strengths. The achievement of community consensus regarding aspirations and needs (which is frequently the avowed outcome of community participation and needs identification) may only be apparent. The underlying conflicts and differences of opinion may not be given sufficient voice (Francis, 2001).

Despite Sanoff’s (2000) view of participation as inherently good, we see here that this postulation is not universally shared. Whether it leads to capacity-building is very much dependant upon the way the communities structure participation. The questions of who participates, what motivates them, who sets the agenda, who makes the decisions, and how this influences the control over collective resources are critical issues in determining the capacity-building or debilitating impact of community involvement. Certainly participation of community members is a prerequisite for any community activity and clearly so for community building, but how it takes place, the mandate, the control over outcomes, and the context are critical factors that influence the impact of participation on the way communities act collectively.

### 3.4.2 The relation between community involvement in planning and capacity building

One of the growing domains of community involvement is the field of planning. Traditionally, almost any community development action begins with a community needs assessment in which community members often participate (Siegel and Engel,

1999). More recently the involvement of community members in urban or regional development programmes initiated by government and other development agencies is becoming standard practice in general specifically in Israel. There are a growing number of assessment and planning guides available and the link between the planning process and community development is being given considerable attention.

The complexity of participation requires identifying the assumptions inherent in community involvement. It includes understanding whose interests within and outside of the community are being served, who participates, what happens to the community input, how are conflicts within the community to be resolved, how are conflicts between professionals and the community to be resolved, what happens at the implementation stage, and finally who owns the process.

The meaning of community participation in planning is succinctly defined by Sanoff.

Thus participation [in planning] may be seen as direct public involvement in decision-making processes whereby people share in social decisions that determine the quality and direction of their lives...First from the social point of view, participation results in a greater meeting of social needs and increasingly effective utilization of resources at the disposal of a particular community (2000, p.13).

It is important to remember that community involvement in a planning process happens within a communal context and it raises a series of questions. What is the relationship between the rules of participation in the planning process and the rules of ongoing involvement in community life? Is the planning process a catalyst for change (and what type of change) or a reinforcement of existing interaction patterns? Who has the power to give legitimacy to the interpretations of events and the conclusions? Is the process of participation one of joint decision-making with a commitment of the participants to the outcome of negotiations? What mechanisms are there for monitoring implementation and what sanctions are there for non-compliance? Who has or takes ownership of the outcome?

Maury and Maury make an even more definitive case for the connection between community involvement in planning and its impact upon the social context in which it takes place:

...it is difficult to separate the link between funding and power. One radical but seriously proposed solution is to redirect the attention currently placed on funding towards organizational autonomy...The aim is to enable communities to use appropriate methods to self-assess their current situation, develop a vision for their desired future, develop a plan *for themselves* (and not reliant on an external agency) and move towards that vision.. In this scenario the power lies not in the funds but in the skills and self-knowledge that are developed *and remain* the community... (2003, p. 95, original italics).

For Maury and Maury community involvement in planning is an essential component of community development if and when it is done in a manner that connects a community with its potential power and enables people to work effectively as a collective towards their shared vision.

There is not only the political issue of creating legitimate opportunities for people to interact - that is institutionalizing the act of citizen participation. There is also the political issue of the type of institutionalization, i.e., how the act of participation is structured – who interacts with whom and how the resultant negotiated meanings are legitimized (or not).

Here it is important to recall Warren's (1971) Paradigm II processes of community development. He emphasizes the importance of addressing the structuring of communities' interaction processes. For him, like Putnam (1993, 2003) many years later, community development programmes need to focus on strengthening a community's social fabric. They both give primary importance to the social context and the structuring aspects of communities that affect the way they function.

### **3.5 Building community institutions as a structuring of interactions**

In her book, *Managing the Commons*, Ostrom (1990) addresses the problem of how communities manage their joint resources for optimal individual and collective wellbeing. From the perspective of institution-building she examines how they create the social mechanisms for managing common resources such that different individuals can maximize their own benefits but not deplete shared resources thus maintaining them for the benefit of all. This issue is at the very heart of a community's capacity to function cooperatively as a collective. How does a community pull in unison while meeting the needs of each individual? As Ostrom states:

The tragedy of the commons, the prisoner's dilemma, and the logic of collective action are closely related concepts in the models that have defined the accepted way of viewing many problems that individuals face when attempting to achieve collective benefits. At the heart of each of these models is the free rider problem... These models are thus extremely useful for explaining how perfectly rational individuals can produce, under some circumstances, outcomes that are not "rational" when viewed from the perspective of all those involved (1990, p.6).

This statement is almost identical to that of game theory, but Ostrom (1990) goes beyond this initial, utilitarian framing, and deals with the dilemma of collective action by linking the instrumental payoff structure with the social context in which the collective action takes place. As in social capital concepts, here too trust or distrust internally and externally is central, though, as will be shown, it is somewhat different.

Ostrom (1990) offers a succinct analysis of the two classic utilitarian strategies for dealing with the need for cooperative collective action in the face of irrational human exploitation. First is the external Leviathan (as developed by Hobbes for government or its proxy) that dictates the rules of use for public/common resources. This objective (rational) outside force is deemed necessary for economic efficiency and resource maintenance. The second is privatization in which ownership rights to the resources are distributed to the individuals. It is then in everyone's own interest to balance between immediate appropriation and sustaining their private resources over time. Ostrom (1990) analyzes the serious drawbacks of these prevalent strategies. She offers a third strategy of building local institutional arrangements tailored to the specific community as a social context and the specific material resource issue that has the potential for more equitable and efficient social management.

Similarly Rheingold in his book *Smart Mobs* (2002) on the relationship between technologies (mobile computing and cell phone technologies) and society examines many of the same issues inherent in collective action echoing Ostrom:

Identity, reputations, boundaries, inducements for commitment, and punishment for free riders seem to be common critical resources all groups need in order to keep their members cooperatively engaged. These are the social processes most likely to be affected by technology that enable people to monitor reputation, reward cooperation, and punish defection (Rheingold, 2002, p. 38).

Rheingold sees new technologies as providing some of the tools for more easily and inexpensively realizing strategies of cooperation based upon a self-governing process similar to Ostrom's (1990) third strategy of action, as opposed to privatization or government control.

Both analyses share the fundamental view that self-organizing for the rational use of common resources is neither to be taken for granted nor dismissed as unattainable. Rather it is the creation of social understandings and institutions that grow out of mutual experience and negotiated understandings that can enable a community to foster optimal collective action. They both place the focus on the structuring process of the social communal context (Ostrom, 1990; Rheingold, 2002).

Here, as in Warren's (1963) definition of community development referred to earlier, the issue of local/community autonomy or control over a community's destiny are central to the process of strengthening its capacity for collective cooperative action.

For Ostrom (1990) the interaction processes themselves are the object of change. There are two critical components to her conceptualization: a) The functional payoffs (as in rational choice conceptualizations); and b) The new social relations that grow out of community interactions, all change – are reproduced. Changes in the structuring of interactions affect and are affected by the new shared understanding / collective consciousness that evolves – community capacities are not taught, but are collectively and self-consciously restructured. The individual and collective rationales for cooperation are influenced both by the new functional payoffs (Axelrod, 1984) and by the shared understandings which shape, and are shaped by, the interactions.

She explores not only the operational and payoff levels of social interactions related to the management of collective resources but also how the rules of interaction are set.

1. Operational rules set the day to day decisions – who can appropriate collective resources (payoffs), in what way, how much, sanctions, monitoring and so on.
2. Collective-choice rules are the guidelines or manner in which policy is set.

These determine the operational rules.

3. Constitutional-choice rules set who and how the policy-making process can be changed (Ostrom, 1990).

Her contribution to understanding how cooperative behaviour evolves, beyond that of rational choice theory, is the way in which the social context is analysed. For Ostrom the rule-setting process is essentially the process for creating social institutions.

Institutions can be defined as the sets of working rules that are used to determine who is eligible to make decisions in some arena, what actions are allowed or constrained, what aggregation rules will be used, what procedures must be followed, what information must or must not be provided, and what payoffs will be assigned to individuals dependent on their actions (Ostrom, 1990, p. 51).

Different institutional constructs embody diverse possible interaction patterns or set varied rules of interaction. In each context – physical and social - these institutions lead to different types of operational solutions for meeting collective needs, for the development of different social relations and for different choices of actions by individuals and sets of actions by communities.

If we look at Giddens' (1986) conceptualization of rules then we can see how Ostrom's three layer process of setting the rules is fundamentally a structuring of social interactions with the potential for supporting or undermining a community's ability to collectively manage its common resources in an optimal manner. Rules, as defined by Giddens (1986), give meaning to and sanction social behaviour over time and space. Furthermore these patterns of interactions are not absolutes but rather are defined and redefined.

Giddens' (1986) conceptualization of rules not only reinforces that developed by Ostrom (1990), but more clearly explicates their role in giving meaning to social behaviour, their function of sanctioning behaviour, and their regulatory function in controlling the use/distribution of resources.

There is considerable similarity between Ostrom's three types of rules and Giddens' two types of resources: 1) Allocative resources which refer to the capabilities for command over objects, goods, or material phenomena are parallel to Ostrom's operational rules; 2) Authoritative resources which refer to the generation of control

over people and their actions overlap with Ostrom's collective and constitutional choice rules (Giddens, 1986; Ostrom, 1990).

The importance of the similarity between these two conceptualizations is the fundamental understanding of the structuring of social interactions, better expressed as the "structurational" (Giddens, 1986) nature of social institutions through which meaning is given to and produced through social behaviour. It also sets the basis for understanding the interrelationship between processes of signification or negotiated meanings (Wenger, 1998) and modes of collective action – cooperative and non-cooperative.

If we use this combination of Ostrom's and Giddens' conceptualizations, a community's institutions can be viewed as the social geometry of how people interact. It is a structuring process of who interacts with whom, the nature of the connection between the interacting parties, and the way in which negotiated meanings become fixed and enforced.

A community can thus be viewed as a grouping of people who have tacitly (Polanyi, 1966) structured their interactions in formal and informal institutions in order to meet their collective and individual needs and goals. In this sense community is a process of structuration, it is the duality of structure and agency (Giddens, 1986). It is tacit in Polanyi's sense of being a process of signification that goes beyond the immediate tangibility of an object's components. "...and may indeed be subliminal" (Polanyi, 1966, p. 31). This requires the ability to see the cohesiveness of an entity beyond its concrete parts and to recognize that this comprehensiveness has as much reality as an entity's more tangible elements.

Although changing the social context through community development processes can also be seen in some concepts of social capital, it is through a structurational conceptualization of community where rules, as the procedures for the enactment/reproduction of social practices (Giddens, 1986), can be explicitly linked with developing a community's capacity to cooperatively manage its resources (Ostrom, 1990).

Furthermore, by adding to Ostrom's and Giddens' concepts the view of society as a social construct in Berger and Luckmann's (1967) sense, together with the view of social meanings as an outgrowth of social interactions, as put forth by Mead (1934), social institutions can be viewed as the objectification of our shared meanings and the way we concomitantly structure our collective actions.

Wenger sees a reciprocal relation between people and things/objects whose dialectic interplay is the process by which we create social constructs. "Through the negotiation of meaning it is the interplay of participation and reification that makes people and things what they are" (Wenger, 1998, p. 70).

Cohen (1985), who defines community as a symbol shared by its members, although often with different interpretations, goes on to say:

In the face of this variability of meaning, the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through manipulation of its symbols. The reality and efficacy of the community's boundary – and, therefore, of the community itself – depends upon its symbolic construction and embellishment (Cohen, 1985, p. 15).

In a similar vein Giddens (1986) makes the distinction between practical consciousness which is fundamentally tacit (Polanyi, 1966) and discursive consciousness which is the ability of agents to overtly express what they know about the conditions of their action. By applying these concepts to community development practice, we can look at community building interventions as the explicit creation of sets of structured interactions with shared social meanings (or in Cohen's terms symbolic constructions) in order to provide for the members' individual and collective wellbeing in a total sense, not only in immediate instrumental terms.

Thus it relates not only to structures per se but to the interplay between the meanings of the interactions and the structured context which evolves. This is itself an interactive process in which the patterns of interaction are negotiated – given meaning and legitimized by proactive agents.

This notion of community does pose certain problems. In particular is the question of which sets of rules of interaction demarcate the community – all people who drive on the left side of road, all people who speak a certain language, all the fishermen in

specific village, all the members of a religious congregation, or all people of the same sex. The basis for defining the boundaries of a community and the distinction between different social groupings is not clear.

The contribution of this conceptualization of community is not, however, in its being a clear comprehensive definition. It is rather in its adding to the understanding of how structuring of interaction patterns among clusters of people with varying degrees of affinity and shared identities influence their ability to collectively define their common and individual needs and aspirations and sanction their different types of behaviour, as individuals and as a collective.

This helps us to understand how structuring processes wield control: who interacts with whom, towards what end and how people can access allocative and authoritative resources (Giddens, 1986). It suggests understanding community development by looking at how people view each other in their social context. It emphasizes the concept of community as the context and outcome of its constituent's interactions.

The basis for looking at community as a structuring of people's interactions rests upon seeing social structure in general as the organization of social constructs and specifically in looking at social institutions, both formal and informal, as the way that society organizes people's interactions. Here I refer to institutions not only as formal organizations, but also to social conventions – the accepted ways of doing things.

In order to better understand how particular institutional structuring takes place it is necessary to go one level deeper and explicate more fully the social construction basis of rules as used here. According to Mead (1934) we base our behaviour upon the way we believe others perceive us. How I act is based upon how I think others will act – react to way that I act. This is a process of adopting the role of the other, as developed in Mead's social psychology. It is what people come to expect and that informs the way they act – their perception of the way the world functions.

Peyton Young (2001) though coming from a rational choice perspective, makes a similar point. He looks at how the combinations of individual interactions evolve into predictable patterns, which in turn evolve into shared expectations – conventions.

...the general point is that the *stability of a convention depends on its welfare consequences of individuals*. Furthermore, the choice of convention does not occur at the individual level, but emerges as an unintended consequence of many individuals responding to their immediate environment. This example also illustrates that games are not always given a priori, as game theorists like to assume, rather the rules of the game themselves are social constructs (conventions) that are governed by evolutionary forces. To play games people must have common expectations about what the rules of the game are...(Young, 2001, pp. 71-2, original emphasis).

This view of social conventions as a social construct, a state of equilibrium among individuals interacting with shared expectations, adds an important vantage point for understanding the evolution and maintenance of collective action. Peyton Young (2001), very much in the tradition of rational choice, emphasizes the critical element of the need to know the rules of the game – shared meanings and expectations, but adds here the element of their non a priori nature.

It is this creation of shared expectations that enables the evolution of collective strategies. The context in which this adopting the role of other, developing a contingency strategy of action, takes place is the existing social constructs that a community has tacitly legitimized and institutionalized. It is the community's social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1967).

Halbwachs, in his work on collective memory, makes a point that is closely related to Berger and Luckmann's understanding of the social construct of reality and to people's need for coherence:

The individual calls recollections to mind by relying on the frameworks of social memory. In other words, the various groups that compose society are capable at every moment of reconstructing their past. But, as we have seen, they most frequently distort that past in the act of reconstructing it... But on the other hand, society can live only if there is sufficient unity of outlooks among the individuals and groups comprising it (Coser, 1992, p. 182).

The ability to depend upon consistency of shared meanings and expectations is fundamental to developing trust and stability, which, for better or worse, retards change. Knowing the rules is predicated upon there being rules which themselves are a social production.

Similarly Giddens makes clear the importance of the structuring qualities of rules for ensuring a sense of trust in our social world and our ability to make sense of it:

The structuring qualities of rules can be studied in respect, first of all the forming, sustaining, terminating and reforming of encounters. Although a dazzling variety of procedures and tactics are used by agents in the constitution and reconstitution of encounters, probably particularly significant are those involved in the sustaining of ontological security (Giddens, 1986, p.23).

By looking at social interactions in this manner we can see that understanding trust requires looking at the structuring of interactions not only as a process of mutual payoffs. The structuring of social interactions forms the context of social relations which are clearly predicated upon the ability of people to communicate and share their social experience, but, as Honneth points out, this also goes beyond the level of communication and cognition.

He looks at the importance of mutual commitment people have towards each other unrelated to their instrumental self-interests. It is viewing others not as objects for individual gain or even collective payoffs, but as subjects to be recognized in their own right. He explicitly states:

But this second form of freedom is to be understood, to put it positively, as a form of trust directly inward, which gives individuals basic confidence in both the articulation of their needs and the exercise of their abilities.....To this extent, the freedom associated with self-realization is dependent on prerequisites that human subjects do not have at their disposal, since they can only acquire this freedom with the help of their interaction partners. The three distinct patterns of recognition then represent intersubjective conditions that we must further presuppose, if we are to describe the general structures of a successful life (Honneth, 1995, p.174).

Trust is based upon the mutual recognition of people as subjects in their own right not only or primarily as a means for achieving instrumental ends - collective and/or individual. Although Honneth acknowledges that people do need each other, interaction partners to achieve self-realization, he emphasizes the intersubjective precondition of recognition for collective wellbeing.

In his analysis of Lucien Goldmann, Cohen (1994) articulates clearly this combination of instrumental and social elements that compose authentic community:

Common ends in a cooperatively organized society would, in contrast, unite form and content by uniting man's essential sociability with cooperative communal relations. Form and content would be common to the lives of all as part of apparently fully or almost fully, self-conscious trans-individual subject. This, then would be an "authentic" human community (Cohen, 1994, p. 254).

This is very different from utilitarian enlightened self-interest or Putnam's cogent conceptualization of generalized reciprocity, in which trust is based upon a belief in the reciprocity of exchange relations which, though going beyond any given transaction, are still based upon the expectation of instrumental returns.

The need for exploring this distinction is made in Lin's closing remarks in his book

***Social Capital:***

The relative frequency and intensity of instrumental and expressive interactions in a society, I believe, holds the key in determining the dynamics of stability and change. I postulate that the persistence of a given social structure depends on the relative amounts of expressive and instrumental interactions actually taking place among its members. The optimal points of such interaction both persistence and change should be focus of future theoretical and empirical explorations (Lin, 2001, p. 249).

It is not only the instrumental interactions, but the "optimal" combination with expressive interactions that needs to be explored.

The dilemma of collective action and the evolution of cooperation are as such multidimensional. Returning to Rousseau's deer hunters the issue facing society is both one of instrumental wellbeing and also an ethical problem, one of scruple. Is the payoff for participation/cooperation worth the individual's investment? Does his benefit match his cost and does his contribution to the collective cover his cost? Can he benefit without making a contribution? And if so why contribute? What risk does he take? Can he trust others not to desert their post? Does he view others and himself only on an instrumental plane or does he have a social or ethical commitment to them? Are others the means for his wellbeing or is he also committed to their wellbeing in their own right?

The implication for community development is the need to look at the development of trust, so critical for collective action, not only in the way interactions are structured on the instrumental level but also on the affective level. Exchange relations are primarily instrumental between objects whereas the affective levels are between subjects. This

leads to seeing community as the structuring of interactions between intersubjective agents who mutually recognize each other in Honneth's sense.

### **3.6 How communities learn**

From the literature above we can see that collective action involves developing shared meanings and structures - institutionalized ways of understanding the world in which we live and how to act as a community (Giddens, 1986; Mead, 1934; Ostrom, 1990). Almost echoing Giddens' need for ontological security Goldmann reiterates that it is the evolution of the collective consciousness of the community that enables it to act as a collective:

We may then conceive of social life as a totality of the processes through which groups of individuals try to achieve a satisfying and coherent equilibrium with their social and natural environment. The facts of consciousness constitute an essential and interdependent part of this effort (Goldmann, 1980, p.65).

Goldmann goes on to explain that collective learning is necessitated when existing meanings are no longer adequate to explain situations or to enable meeting new needs and interests. The need for change and the resultant need for community learning stems from an upset in the existing social reality. Expectations are no longer clear. Agreed meanings are called into question. Functional payoffs of a community's existing institutions are no longer adequate or no longer in equilibrium.

Goldmann gives a succinct three-part description of the need for social change:

- I. The fact that certain sectors of the external world do not lend themselves to integration into the structure being elaborated.
- II. The fact that certain structures of the external world are transformed in such a way although they may have been able to be integrated before this integration becomes increasingly difficult and finally impossible.
- III. The fact that individuals in the group, who are responsible for generating the processes of equilibrium, transform the surrounding social and physical environment, thereby creating situations that hinder the continuation the structuring processes generating them (Goldmann, 1980, p.61).

In this sense the need for community learning or change grows out of the process of people needing jointly to redefine the meanings and ways of interacting as a collective in order to understand and function in the world in which they live. The breakdown in the existing social constructs or rules by which collective and individual needs / aspirations / interests are met leads to the necessity to change them.

In his book *Communities of Practice* Wenger (1998) develops several concepts, which help to explain collective learning processes. Although he applies his concepts to organizational development, if used to examine community development processes, they can help understand not only the need for change but how community learning takes place - how communities learn to create the conditions that enable cooperative collective action or inhibit it.

He uses three fundamental concepts which I have put in a broader context:

- **Negotiated meaning** refers to the ongoing interactive process of give and take that enables us to interpret and act upon the world in which we live. This conceptualization is quite consistent with Mead's concepts of social interaction through which people create and take on shared social meanings, and with Giddens' notion of discursive consciousness.
- **Participation** refers to the membership in social communities and involvement in social enterprises. It is the process through which our experiences are shaped and through which we shape our communities. In this sense participation is not a technique for social planners to get citizen input, but rather the fundamental creation of community life.
- **Reification** refers to the process by which we project our meanings onto the world and perceive them as objects having a reality and existence of their own. In Marxian terms reification is part of the process of alienation of man from his species being. Marcuse (1964) gives a very elaborate explication of this process in his book *One Dimensional Man*. Wenger's use of the term here, however, does not refer to the process by which man himself becomes an object in society (a commodity – thus losing his human qualities) but to the notion of reification in the sense of institutionalization of human social constructions - conceptual

and organizational. Here there is much overlap with Berger and Luckmann's concepts of the social construct of reality and Ostrom's concepts of institution-building.

A breakdown in the integration and coherence of these three components can lead to participation which is filled with meaning but remains only an ephemeral episode. Likewise such a breakdown can lead to institutional inertia with social structures that are divorced from their purpose and meaning. Under these conditions we are faced with the problem of reification or alienation in the Marxian (Bottomore, 1964) sense.

Here is the connection to community development. The critical role of participation as a prerequisite for creating shared meaning becomes self-evident. Without community involvement in community development, without participation there is no opportunity for social interaction. Participation in community development is then not a question of professional ideology but rather the basis for collective learning and social production.

Similarly reification is the process of transforming participation into ongoing social understandings that are taken for granted as a priori agreements or conventions. This is a dialect not a fixed reality but perhaps close to Giddens' practical consciousness. Without this process of reification (as used by Wenger) the energy invested in creating shared understandings would dissipate and be lost to the participants as a collective. There would be no community learning but just a series of experiences and individual insights. The joint understandings would not become institutionalised and integrated into the community's collective action.

It is not only participation per se, but the structuring of the participatory process which is critical for developing shared meanings. Who interacts with whom, is both defined by a community's institutions and is an outcome of community development and community learning processes. The equality and/or inequality of participation have tacit (Polanyi, 1966) powerful learning messages that become agreed meanings. These meanings and lessons contribute greatly to our social identities, which in turn are part of the screen through which we interpret the meanings of our participation.

It is through one's social experiences that identity is developed (Mead, 1934). In this sense community learning is not necessarily positive. The development of shared meanings can be exclusive as well as inclusive. Stigmatising, which fits into Wenger's notion of reification, can be a destructive form of creating social identities that exclude, limit, and dehumanize. This type of community learning is no less possible than a more constructive one.

The issue is thus not only how communities learn but in fact what they learn, which perhaps raises the question of who takes responsibility (blame /credit) for the outcome.

Another point that develops from this analysis is the distinction between training individuals and community learning. Given the fact that many community development programmes place great emphasis on the training of individuals it is important to stress that the impact of community learning lies not in the imposed understandings of others onto the community or didactic skill-oriented instruction, but in the community's ability to learn from its collective experience – successes and failures. Furthermore, there is a built-in paradox to the notion of effective community development practice. Those very traits – strong social cohesion, high levels of institutionalisation, and community leadership - which make a community strong both on the instrumental level and on the capacity level are the very same traits that work to counter a change process which is the essence of community development programmes i.e. social change (Verba, 1961).

One way out of this paradox is to look more at the way communities learn and less at how practitioners try to teach them or change them. This is not to reject the learning from others outside of any given community, but, to again echo Wenger's insight, it is a negotiated meaning that grows out of participation. I would add that it is a continuously renegotiated meaning that is assimilated into, and reshapes, a community's collective consciousness that explicitly and tacitly molds its social institutions (Polanyi, 1958, 1966).

Furthermore not only are many social understandings tacit (Polanyi, 1966), but so are the mechanisms for renegotiating these understandings. As Ostrom (1990) points out

they determine who participates in this negotiating process, how they go about negotiating new shared meanings, and who controls the structuring of this interaction process. We can see how making these tacit structuring processes explicit and then restructuring them are essential processes of a community development programme as a collective learning process.

In the broadest sense a community can be viewed as a shared social construction of reality – its collective consciousness that gives specific interpretations to behaviour whose meanings may very well be different in different communal contexts, as well as different for different people - given their tacit social identity within their community.

Viewing community development as the process of making the tacit dimensions (Polanyi, 1966) explicit, negotiating new shared understandings, institutionalising (or reifying) them, and then collectively acting upon them affords a new and useful vantage point for understanding how communities learn to act effectively as a collective – that is the creation of a new social reality. This entails first making the tacit meanings of the current social reality explicit and assessing them as given expression in existing social institutions, values, and other aspects of community life. It involves people in a process of sharing their interpretations of their community and redefining how they envision themselves and their future. It is through such social interaction that people can share their interpretations and reinterpretations of their behaviours in the context of their community life. It forms the basis for new mutual expectations and understandings necessary for any change in the way a community structures itself and sets its rule for collective action.

It is quite important to point out again that this collective learning process is not only a cognitive one. Honneth's conceptualisation of the role of social esteem is quite relevant here in understanding the process of collective change that sees the importance of the instrumental and cognitive dimensions, but also adds the moral and affective dimension.

...subjects who, as a result of having their ego-claims disregarded, are incapable of simply going ahead with an action. In their emotional experiences, what one comes to realize about oneself is that one's own person is constitutively dependent on the recognition of others.

In the context of the emotional responses associated with shame, the experience of being disrespected can become the motivational impetus for a struggle for recognition...(but) only if the means of articulation of a social movement are available can the experience of disrespect become a source of motivation for acts of political resistance (Honneth, 1995, pp 138-9).

Honneth brings together here three elements that are important for understanding the initiation of change in community development programmes. First, he points out the debilitating impact of having one's ego-claims de-legitimated and the resultant inability to act on one's own behalf; second, is showing the potential impetus for change that stems from feelings of disrespect or denial of recognition; and third is understanding that a precondition for change is the ability to communicate the experience of disrespect and have it validated by others - going from a tacit unacknowledged feeling of denigration to an explicit articulation of delegitimising.

In this way Honneth links Mead's (1934) concept of symbolic interaction and the ability to articulate and negotiate (Wenger 1998) shared meanings, or a discursive consciousness (Giddens 1986) with the affective and moral components of social esteem. He presents here the underpinnings for change which challenge existing institutions (Ostrom 1990) and social constructions of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1967).

Social change can take place when someone or some groups go beyond the tacit assumption that the current social reality is the only possible social reality. This is complex because not everyone necessarily feels the need for change nor (even if they do feel a need for change) do they necessarily envision the same change. Thus the questions of who feels that things are not working and what is not working for whom are not trivial. Furthermore the type of change being sought can be on very different levels. Is it to be a better strategy of play within the existing rules of the game – the accepted social reality - or is it a call for an entirely new game - a more fundamental change in the way in which a community functions collectively?

### **3.7 Designing community development programmes as an opportunity to create new rules and foster a sense of belonging**

By using Giddens' (1986) concept of structuration along with Mead's (1934) concepts of symbolic interaction, community can be seen not as a structure per se but as a setting whose properties define the nature of social interactions out of which grow shared meanings and understandings, tacit and explicit. In this sense a community is not an entity. Rather it is a process. Community life is both a function of, and a contributor to, its social context.

For the most part community development programmes are oriented towards the future. However, an important additional perspective on how communities define themselves also relates to how they view their shared past. It is a key for understanding the way a community views itself in the present. Halbwachs points out

One cannot in fact think about the events of one's past without discoursing upon them. But to discourse upon something means to connect within a single system of ideas our opinions as well as those of our circle. It means to perceive in what happens to us a particular application of facts concerning which social thought reminds us at every moment of the meaning and impact these facts have for it (Coser, 1992, p.53).

Processes of remembering are directly linked to a community's social context - that is its shared understandings of itself in the present. The past is both a source for being able to interpret the present, but, as the recall of our past is through discourse in the present, which is interpretive, it is a construct also rooted in the present.

In his book *Community – the Structure of Belonging* Block (2009) talks about community development processes very much in line with these concepts. His term "transformation" of community is about engaging in a "new conversation," in which people create a new interpretation of their community.

Transformation can be thought of as fundamental shift in context, whether the shift is about my own life, my institution, or our community... Context clearly occurs as individual mindsets, but it also exists as a form of collective worldview... If transformation is linguistic, then community building requires that we engage in a new conversation, one that we have not had before, one that can create an experience of aliveness and belonging. It is the act of engaging citizens in a new conversation that allows us to act in concert with and actually creates the condition for a new context (Block, 2009, pp. 31-2).

In his conceptualization the design of community development programmes is very much related to discourse in the same vein as Halbwachs. It is one that includes processes of making the tacit structuring of interactions and shared meanings explicit. It focuses on enabling the creation of a new context. This means explicating the current forms of collective action in a community and creating opportunities for the community to structure new modes of social interaction and create new strategies to act in concert.

The task of facilitation here is to design a geometry of interactions that enables members of a community to share their insights by making explicit the different tacit rules as understood by Ostrom (1990) and Giddens (1986). This type of community development enables people to create a sense of belonging to each other, and to define their vision of a shared future of mutual wellbeing (Block, 2009; Honneth, 1995) and, in many respects, it is also a reconstruction of their shared past (Coser, 1992, p.53).

In order to promote this type of community development process, the design needs to address some basic questions:

1. How to promote a discourse that includes both vertical and horizontal processes of interaction which can enable the development of shared meanings across issues and across power relations?
2. How to legitimise the different voices and agendas within the community?
3. How to ensure transparent political process so that conflicts can be aired (Block, 2009)?

Block (2009) suggests conducting community development processes through the use of many small groups in a combination of large group sessions. This enables both the possibility to develop shared understandings, which can be legitimised through mutual recognition of joint concerns, and a sense of belonging that can be fostered in the intimacy of small groups (Block, 2009).

Block describes how this combination of small group and large processes creates the opportunity for the transformation of community life. His understanding brings together on the level of practice (as does Ostrom, 1990) many of the theoretical

insights that have been presented in this literature review. What for me is particularly important is his non-linear (though at times a bit prescriptive) way of describing the practice of community development. Looking at community development as creating possibilities introduces the element of chance and randomness that often characterises community development programmes in the field. In my experience, who in fact chooses to participate and what motivates them is as much coincidental as explicitly or even tacitly intended. In many ways this parallels Goldmann's (1980) concept of "possible consciousness" that grows out of and creates social interactions.

Similarly the implementation of the same community development methodology by one facilitator in one context leads to different dynamics and a different social reality than if conducted by a different facilitator or in a different social context.

Block's notion of "creating a context" for "acting in concert" or cooperation that opens up the "possibility" for optimal mutual wellbeing through processes of small group interaction together with large group interaction, captures the fluid nature and potential of community development practice designed in this manner. It also clearly recognizes the ownership of the community of such processes – something that stands in stark contrast to other community development approaches that are owned by outsiders who then have to develop techniques for community participation.

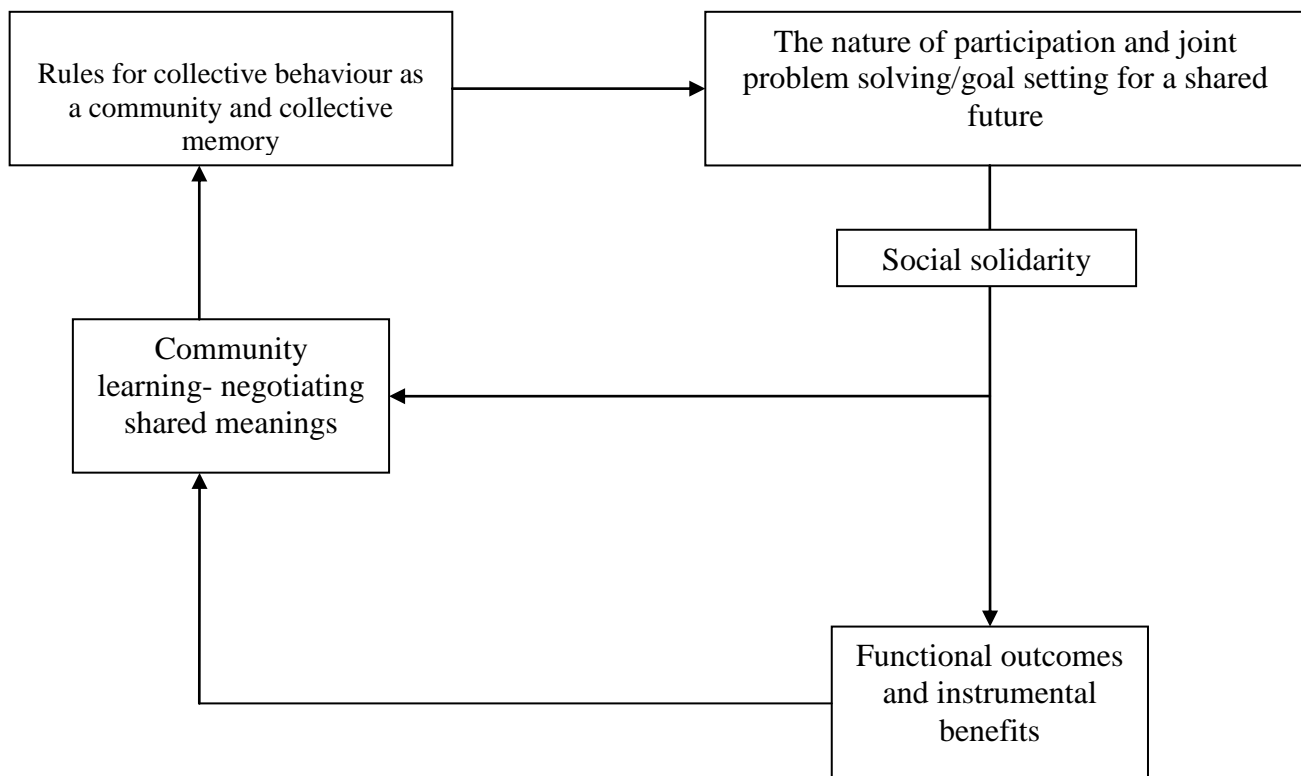
### **3.8 Summary of the literature review**

From the literature review four key themes may be observed that contribute to understanding how some communities create mechanisms for cooperative collective action and lead to optimal individual and collective wellbeing, enabling communities to overcome the paradox of Hume's two peasants' suboptimal (or non-Pareto) collective behaviour.

First is the importance of being able to develop shared meanings and mutual expectations – going from the tacit to the explicit – through a process of negotiating shared meanings (Wenger 1998). Second is the importance of a commitment to a shared future – one in which people recognise each other as worthy of respect in their own right, not only as an instrumental means but based upon social solidarity (Block, 2009; Honneth, 1995). Third is the way in which functional benefits are structured

into collective action – that is, the concrete payoffs or benefits that can accrue to people through their collective endeavours. And finally is the view of community as an interactive process whose rules give meaning and sanction different types of interaction between different groups of people within a social, geographic, and temporal context.

Based upon these four themes the purpose of the research can be stated as understanding how communities develop the ability to act collectively in order to achieve a shared future that promotes mutual wellbeing. Implicit in framing the research question in this manner is the focus upon the interplay of these processes and social properties which can be diagrammed in Fig. 2 as follows:



**Fig. 2: The flow of community development**

Community development can be seen here schematically as a combination of structural properties and processes that are in dialectic relationship. Rules influence the nature of participatory processes which similarly influence the form and qualitative nature of a community's social solidarity. The form and quality of social solidarity lead both to certain types of functional outcomes - the structuring of

instrumental benefits. This instrumental structuring in turn influences how a community negotiates its shared understandings and what the community learns with regard to its instrumental collective functioning and understandings of its shared social reality. These then loop back and influence the community's rules for collective behaviour. This process is ongoing and multi-dimensional in time and space.

## **Chapter 4. Methodology and Methods**

Society is more than an object of study external to the researcher. He (sic) himself belongs to it. The entire categorical structure of his consciousness and his emotions are social facts and responsible to the same scientific study. The subject, then, is part of the object studied. The object can be found within the subject's consciousness (Goldmann, 1980, p. 35).

The methodological framework of this research rests on the view that the objects of research are, as Goldmann suggests, socially defined. It is also a personal definition. Research is not divorced but rather emerges from the researcher's choice of social categories for analysis.

The conceptualisation of community development processes and the selection of which literature to review are both fundamentally linked to the relationship between the researcher and the object of study. The question of methodology in research cannot be divorced from the philosophical issues related to perceptions of the formation of social consciousness and knowledge.

My research examined the way a community learns to act collectively, a process which involves the formation of social consciousness. Thus there is an inherent linkage between the object of my research and methodology. They both are predicated upon a world view which sees reality as a social production (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). This is not to say that objects do not have an existence separate from society, but that the meaning and nature of such objects is defined through a human interactive process, a social dialectic (Giddens, 1986).

My definition of the object of research as an exploration of the functioning of a community and how a change in its consciousness took place reflects my choice of social categories for analysis. The intention is to better understand the ways in which a community structures its interactions result in new modes of collective action, how it learns to act collectively for optimal mutual wellbeing. This approach requires looking at community development from a theoretical framework that integrates the social construction of reality, the structuring of social interactions, and the element of agency within a specific social/historical context (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Giddens, 1986).

## **4.1 The methodological framework of the research**

### 4.1.1 The social construction of reality

The philosophical perspective adopted here is very much rooted in the view of reality as a social production. Berger and Luckmann (1967) point out: "It is from Marx that the sociology of knowledge derived its root proposition – that man's consciousness is determined by his social being" (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p. 5-6). This view of reality looks at the world and what we understand as inherently a function of the interaction between people, with each other, and the natural world in which we live. This view of reality does not have an existence divorced, separate, from society. It is a social reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1967).

This view stands in clear contrast to a strictly positivist view which focuses not on the production of a social reality, but on the human understanding of the laws of nature which have a being unrelated to humanity. As Giddens explicitly states: "The facticity of the social world is in certain basic respects a very different phenomenon from the 'givenness' of nature" (Giddens, 1986, p.172).

The underlying basis for this research is a view that the "facticity" of society grows out of the combinations of interactions between individuals and groups of individuals and between people and their surroundings, natural and human.

Berger and Luckmann give a very cogent expression to this view:

It is important to emphasize that the relationship between man (sic), the producer, and the social world, his product, is and remains a dialectical one. That is, man (not of course, in isolation but in his collectivities) and his social world interact with each other. The product acts back upon the producer. Externalization and objectification are moments in a continuing dialectical process. The third moment in the process, which is internalization (by which the objectified social world is retrojected into consciousness in the course of socialization by looking at how the world appears as an objectified reality)... Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product (1967, p.61).

The intention here is to make this view of reality as a social construct explicit. This view of society as an interactive process will set the basis for looking at the nature of community as a specific instance of this interactive process. The structuring of interactive processes will be examined as a critical factor that influences the ways communities learn and function as a collective in order to meet their individual and collective needs and aspirations.

#### 4.1.2 Social interaction – the intersubjective nature of society

In order to understand more clearly how a community learns to function optimally as a collective I will look at how the social construction of its shared reality takes place. This requires that I make explicit the theoretical basis for examining social learning by a community as the evolution of its collective consciousness through its praxis as a community – its collective action.

Marx viewed economic production as the fundamental human activity (*homo faber*) around which society is structured. I would like to propose using Marx's understanding of people's consciousness as a social production from the perspective of symbolic interaction by which we create social meanings. I agree with Honneth whose criticism of Marx includes a rejection of his limiting the fundamental human activity to labour. "It is impossible to conceptualize labour simply as a process of the objectification of essential inner energies; nor it plausible to conceive of labour, 'in and of itself,' as the complete realization of relationships of intersubjective recognition" (Honneth, 1995, p. 147). By combining a Marxist dialectic conceptualisation of society with a Mead-ian (George Herbert Mead) conceptualisation of human action, we gain significant insight into the way in which the structuring of social interactions affects our collective consciousness – our shared meanings of the world.

Luckmann and Berger made this connection some forty years ago:

The social character of man's self-production was formulated most sharply by Marx in his critique of Stirner, the German Ideology...Satre's own interest in the "mediations" between the macroscopic socio-historical processes and individual biology would be greatly served, once more, through a consideration of Meadian social psychology (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p.196 note 12).

They used George Herbert Mead's social psychology as a building block in their conceptualisation of the social construction of reality. They connected it with Marx's view of the world as fundamentally a human endeavor.

The reality of everyday life further presents itself to me as an intersubjective world, a world that I share with others. This intersubjectivity sharply differentiates everyday life from other realities of which I am conscious.... Indeed, I cannot exist in everyday life without continually interacting and communicating with others.....Common knowledge is the knowledge I share with others in the normal, self-evident routine of everyday life" (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p. 23).

It is the interactive process of man in the world or rather with the world that gives us our shared, "common," meanings.

This is not to say that human beings do not have a biological makeup, but the way we are as humans individually and collectively is not a predetermined absolute, but an evolution of our social interactions. Our human reality is our socially "negotiated" (borrowing Wenger's [1998] term) apprehension of the world around us.

Language has a primary role in this process. It is the means by which people are able to objectify themselves – that is make their subjectivity available to others. Language allows people to express their subjective experience through categories of meaning – *symbols* - that are understood by others.

If the individual can act in this way, and the attitude which he calls out in himself can become a stimulus to him for another act, we have meaningful conduct. Where the response of the other person is called out and becomes a stimulus to control his action, then he has the meaning of the other person's act in his own experience. That is the general mechanism of what we term "thought", for in order that thought may exist there must be symbols, vocal gestures generally which arouse in the individual himself the response which he is calling out in the other, and as such that from the point of view of that response he is able to direct his later conduct... a taking of the role of the other, a tendency to act as the other person acts (Mead, 1934, p. 73).

Language, as such, not only makes our subjectivity available to others, it also makes us socially available to ourselves. We can give social meaning to our being through this verbal interaction. We do this by looking at how others interpret our messages or actions. It is a reflexive process. I understand myself as others understand me.

Mead's (1934) concept of self is fundamentally a dialectic process in which individuals develop a sense of self through their interaction with others. This is a process of objectifying oneself, which is giving expression to one's inner self (subject) through the medium of agreed-upon symbols – words and actions that have mutually understood meanings. These meanings are adopted and internalised by individuals.

Goldmann (1980) makes a similar point through his concept of the *intrasubjective*, which also echoes Berger and Luckmann's *intersubjective*. Goldmann is speaking from a philosophical perspective, while Berger and Luckmann are speaking from a more sociological perspective. Nonetheless they both clearly share the understanding that it is the dialectic process of subjects interacting that construct a shared social reality, making the subjective objective, and taking on the social reality as having an objective reality that precedes (historically and socially) any specific individual or group. Thus our human reality is inter/intrasubjective.

In order to be able to lift the table together, we must be able to name it and set up a whole series of other things. It is, then, necessary that there be theory. Further, whatever will be said on the theoretical level must remain bound to behavior which takes for its object both the surrounding natural world and other human groups. In this domain the subject will be transindividual and all communication between John and me with respect to lifting the table remains communication within the subject, i.e., *intrasubjective* (Goldmann, 1980, p.97).

In order to act as a collective on any level (society in general or even a dyad), people must be able to act with and react to each other in a comprehensible manner. This means perceiving the meanings of another person's behaviour – actions or words. In the same way, a person must be able to comprehend his own behaviour as other people do, in order to project it in the manner which he desires and is comprehensible to others. In other words social interactions depend upon each individual's ability to take on the role of the other and view himself as they do. One responds to others' response to him; thus he shares in their response to himself.

According to Mead (1934) people learn to adopt the attitude of the other and to look at themselves through their eyes. He uses the term “me” as the objectification of self to oneself. It is the “I” (as subject) that perceives the “me” (as *social* object). Thus what is external becomes internalised as part of the individual. This means making the

objective subjective – adopting the agreed-upon social meanings – the symbols of the external social reality. It is what makes them human symbols. As such our perception of objective reality is a human reality that grows out of the interaction process through language and meaningful action.

Honneth (1995) has also developed a similar conceptualisation of social theory from the ethical and psychological perspective. He combines Hegelian dialectics (and concepts of recognition) with a Meadian social psychology. This is quite different from Marcuse (1941), who combined Marx and Freud.

Our empirically oriented investigation was able to show in detail what had already begun to merge in Mead's naturalistic transformation of Hegel's theory of recognition, namely, that the various patterns of recognition distinguished by Hegel could be conceptualized as the intersubjective conditions under which humans subjects reach various new ways of relating positively to themselves. The connection between the experience of recognition and one's relation-to-self stems from the intersubjective structure of personal identity. The only way in which individuals are constituted as person is by learning to refer to themselves, from the perspective of an approving or encouraging other, as beings with certain positive traits and abilities. The scope of such traits – and hence the extent of one's positive relation-to-oneself- increases with each new form of recognition that individuals are able to apply to themselves as subjects. In this way, the prospect of basic self-confidence is inherent in the experience of love; the prospect of self-respect, in the experience of legal recognition; and finally the prospect of self-esteem, in the experience of solidarity (Honneth, 1995, p.173).

Again, emphasised here is the intersubjective nature of social interactions. Honneth adds the levels of recognition in particular. Love, that leads to basic trust or self-confidence in oneself; legal status (from Hegel, but already implicit in Mead) that provides the basis for self-respect as a person with rights; and finally self-esteem for being a contributing member of society.

This last level of recognition is particularly important for understanding the tacit (Polanyi, 1966) messages of community life as they are manifested in the type and degree of social solidarity. Beyond the formalistic rights, which of course are not to be taken for granted, there remain the issues of social identity and one's sense of being that are critical for one's individual and collective self-esteem.

This point provides the underpinning for understanding the difference between (but interrelation of) community interactions based upon mutual recognition and social solidarity versus community interactions of an instrumental nature, and how they influence the types of cooperative collective action that can evolve in a community.

#### 4.1.3 Collective consciousness and social structure

Mead's concept of *mind* provides the connection between individual awareness and *social consciousness* linking individual insights to the process of evolving shared understandings or negotiated meanings (Wenger, 1998) that constitute community learning.

It is absurd to look at the mind simply from the standpoint of the individual human organism; for, although it has its focus there, it is essentially a social phenomenon; even its biological functions are primarily social. The subjective experience of the individual must be brought into relations with natural, socio-biological activities of the brain in order to render an acceptable account of mind possible at all; and this can be done only if the social nature of mind is recognized. ... We must regard mind, then, as arising and developing within the social process, within the empirical matrix of social interactions (Mead, 1934, p.133).

There is no divorce between the social context of our interactions and the development of our human consciousness. Our perceptions of the world at any moment are a function of the location, intensity, nature, and content of our social interactions. These common social meanings and perceptions, in turn, are the basis for our ability to act as individuals and interact as a collective.

Goldmann's conceptualisation makes a similar link between the interactive process and collective consciousness, not as a deterministic process, but one which develops in the different social contexts where social interactions take place. They both limit and expand our possible social consciousness. The structuring of reality is bound to praxis and praxis is bound to the structure of consciousness.

The structuring process results from the fact that individuals – and the social groups that they constitute (groups formed by individuals finding themselves related to one another and, in certain more or less important aspects, in similar situations) seek to give unitary and coherent responses to the aggregation of problems posed by their relation with the surrounding environment. Or to put it another way, they tend to by their action (praxis) to establish a balance between themselves and this environment.

The results of the thesis are:

- A. Every fact of consciousness is strictly bound in an immediate or relatively mediated way to praxis, just as all praxis is immediately or immediately or implicitly bound to a specific structure of consciousness" (Goldmann, 1980, p.56).

Our collective construction of reality and the meanings of behaviour as such are rooted in the context of the interaction between subjects.

The creation of social meaning is not only a process in which people internalise the given social construct of reality, but one in which people also collectively produce new social constructs. The social structures in which this process takes place greatly influence our social meanings and how we conceptualise reality. They are the social locations for our social interactions, but they in turn are structured and restructured by our social meanings which are not static. Our social construction of reality is negotiated or continually reinterpreted within the context of our existing social structures which themselves are reproduced.

This conceptualisation makes the Marxian relationship between social structure and collective consciousness almost self-evident, but it is Giddens (1986) who takes this understanding to the next level.

Giddens, who also adopts much of Mead's social psychology, deals with this same issue and develops the concept of "structuration." He makes a critical distinction between the dualism of structure and agency, seeing them not as two separate phenomena but rather as the duality of structure.

According to the notion of duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize. Structure is not 'external' to individuals: as memory traces, and as instantiated in social practices, it is in a certain sense more 'internal' than of with constraints but it is always both constraining and enabling. This of course does not prevent the structured properties of social systems from stretching away, in time and space, beyond the control of any individual actors (Giddens, 1986, p.25).

Our human/social meanings and recursive patterns of interaction become the institutions and structures of society. This internal nature of structure again echoes Mead's concept of self: "The self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience" (Mead, 1934, p.140).

Social structures channel social interaction and as such enable and delimit how and who interacts with whom. Social structures set the context for our interactions, but the possible social meanings that evolve out of these social interactions are not fixed outcomes. Incorporated into social structures are the rules, in Giddens' notion, for our social interactions, through which we create our social meanings. Thus the structural properties of society set the patterns of our interactions, leading to the development of our collective consciousness through which we reproduce our social reality.

Although social structures do appear as objectified social realities, they are a creation of our collective consciousness as much as its determiner. They form the contexts in which our social interactions take place and in which we develop our collective consciousness.

This is the theoretical foundation upon which I explored community functioning - as a *social system* – as an interplay of social structure and agency.

#### 4.1.4 The social construct of reality and research

The link between the view of society as a social construct and research methods is well expressed by Goldmann:

Having isolated the object of his research, the scholar finds himself with another important problem. In fact, social reality is far too rich and complex to be analyzed in its totality even in the framework of a validly isolated object. Furthermore no definitions of the object under study are ever valid in the absolute sense. One always begins with an approximation and, as research continues, one is obliged to modify it. As the structure under study is drawn with more detail, certain facts prove irrelevant while others, which at first seemed out of place, now fit (Goldmann, 1980, p.64).

Most significantly we can see the parallel between research, as an interactive process between the scholar and the object of research which is continually being reshaped, and the social construction of reality which is likewise a product and producer of our social interactions.

He furthermore provides here an understanding of the conceptual foundations of qualitative research in general and the case study method in specific. As Merriam explains:

Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. Qualitative research "implies a direct concern with experience as it is 'lived'..... It is assumed that meaning is embedded in people's experiences and that this meaning is mediated through the investigator's own perceptions (Merriam, 1998, p. 6).

Qualitative research is aimed at "understanding the meanings people have constructed". The objective of this research is precisely that. The intention was to understand the collective functioning of MT as a community by exploring the meanings which people have attached to their experiencing of a particular social situation or series of encounters. This process of interpretation took place on two levels. The participants in the community development process being researched (who were interviewed) expressed their interpretations of the events in answer to my questions, and I, as researcher, interpreted their meanings of their experience as a way of constructing a conceptual understanding of this social situation. Through the questions I also limited the scope to some extent. This conceptual constructing is itself an interpretation, whose theoretical framework is here being made explicit. As Goldmann (1980) points out, these constructions are only an approximation that is being modified through the interaction with the objects (who are also subjects) of the research.

We find in Merriam's (1998) description of interpretative case studies the second link between qualitative research and specifically case study methods with Goldmann's understanding of research as an interactive process of social construction.

... These descriptive data, however, are used to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering.... The level of abstraction and conceptualization in interpretive case

studies may range from suggesting relationships among variable to constructing theory (Merriam, 1998, p. 39).

The case study method enabled me, as the researcher, to use descriptive data to construct conceptual categories as the basis for theorising about a social phenomenon or its related social context.

Goldmann's graphic description "As the structure under study is drawn with more detail," articulates my experience as a researcher and the interactive process with the interviewees, the documents, and the literature. I, however, would use the metaphor of a puzzle that could be constructed to be different pictures depending upon which pieces are used and how they are put together. The researcher is an active agent in choosing the pieces, but so, too, are the participants in the research. They also choose and suggest pieces, some of which immediately seem to fit but then later have to be put aside, while other new ones fill in the blank spaces as the puzzle comes together. I will add, however, that even after the constructing is done, there remain some pieces still on the table that are not part of the picture, but nonetheless pieces, and that not all the spaces of the puzzle have been filled. Imagination remains a factor. (This is not to deny the need for internal validation.)

#### **4.2 The research questions**

This research examined the strategic planning process in the rural region of MT. It specifically focuses on the question of what in the design and interactions of this strategic planning process contributed to changes in the context of community (its shared meanings and structures) that have enabled people to function more cooperatively as a collective in order to optimise their mutual wellbeing (individually and jointly).

**The questions to be addressed are:**

- 1. How was the change process initiated?**
- 2. What of the experience of participation in the planning process was significant to those involved?**
- 3. How did mechanisms for regional community cooperation evolve?**

The questions are each addressed in chapters 6, 7, and 8.

The case of the planning process was not explored as a talking about or deciding what to do, but rather as an instance itself of a collective endeavour. The process of setting agreed goals as a basis for allocating public resources to achieve them was examined from the vantage point of itself being a collective action. The questions posed explored whether the strategic planning process afforded people an experience of effective collective action and whether it fostered those elements of trust, power, etc which enabled ongoing collective cooperative actions. So I looked both at the experience itself and at what happened following the planning process. I have sought linkages and breaks in continuity.

### **4.3 A retrospective case study method**

#### **4.3.1 The exploratory case study**

The purpose of the study was to understand a community development process and its outcomes in all its richness and complexity from different stakeholder perspectives. The hope was to develop insights into the way participants in the MT community development process experienced the change in the way their community functions and how they perceived that these changes came about.

This subject was studied in its real circumstances (Yin, 1994). The very nature of the inquiry required analysing a series of activities of a community in action in the context of a particular situation. Thus a case study research strategy was well suited for this exploration.

In general case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 1994, p. 1).

Yin (1994, p. 6) goes on to compare five different research strategies

Strategy	Form of research question	Requires control over events	Focuses on contemporary events
Experiment	How, why	Yes	Yes
Survey	Who, what, where, how much, how many	No	Yes
Archival analysis	Who, what, where, how much, how many	No	Yes/No
History	How, why	No	No
Case study	How, why	No	Yes

**Fig. 3: Comparison of five different research strategies**

The inquiry undertaken here is of **the how** and **why** type in a contemporary time frame with limited, if any, control over the events. Clearly it fits into the case study categories.

One of the critical aspects of this research was not relying solely on conceptual materials for identifying the parameters of a community's capacity for acting in an effective collective manner, but to cull these parameters in the research itself. This gave me the opportunity to more clearly conceptualise some of my tacit assumptions and intuitive practices that have developed from my 30 years of field experience in community development.

As stated, the objective of this research was to explore the processes through which optimal or suboptimal functioning of a community becomes dominant. It is about understanding the phenomenon of cooperation in the context of a specific rural area of Israel. Yin raises the issue of the relationship between context and phenomenon. Case studies can be used "especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1994, p.13). Not only was there a lack of clarity between the context of MT as a rural community and the phenomenon of cooperation, but it was the relationship between the two that was at the centre of this investigation.

The motivation for this research was to glean insights that could inform my practice as a community developer and hopefully that of other professionals. As Merriam points out, this is one of the main purposes of case study research:

A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcome, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice and future research (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

This study was very much about the social construct processes. Where the division between what changed, the outcomes and how it changed the processes is not clear-cut. The two were very much intertwined as is the production of society (Goldmann, 1980). First, the investigation of how cooperation becomes a convention for mutual wellbeing in a specific social context assumes that there is cooperation and this requires exploring its operational expression in institutional arrangements (Ostrom, 1990) or organisational mechanisms. Given, for example, the need for cooperative properties in the structuring of common-pool resource management for achieving optimal individual and collective wellbeing, the examination of cooperative mechanisms for collective action could be construed primarily as outcome-focused, but this would be misleading. The difficulty in distinguishing between looking at how cooperative properties became part of the social structure separately from looking at cooperation as an outcome was more complex than this dichotomy suggests (Giddens, 1986). This difficulty became clear in my initial attempts to define the focus of my research. I initially considered trying to identify two categories for investigation - questions focused on processes and indicators focused on outcome:

**Process focus – shared meanings that affect and are affected by the structuring of cooperation**

- **Why did people join or not**
- **What was the cost/benefit ratio**
- **What were the rules for engagement and who set them**
- **What were the power relations and changes**
- **What new social meanings developed**
- **What new norms evolved**

**Outcome indicators which also reproduce cooperative behaviour**

- **Level of community involvement**
- **Level of connectedness**
- **Access to information**

- **Ability to influence**
- **Access to resources**
- **Identification and commitment**
- **New communal mechanisms**

Each question or parameter could easily have been transferred from one category to the other. For example the level of connectedness was an outcome criterion, but how connectedness was achieved was a process issue. Similarly, what new norms evolved could be seen as an outcome criterion rather than a process question. Cooperation could have been looked at as a structural property of the community's social system that was "both medium and out come of the practices they recursively organize" (Giddens, 1986, p. 25).

What became clear to me as a researcher was the need to adopt a non-linear exploratory design characteristic of interpretative case studies (Merriam, 1998).

It was the very complexity of the subject under examination and the exploratory interpretative nature of this study that suggested designing the research as a case study.

Merriam categorises case studies as one or a combination of three general types. **A descriptive case study** is primarily a detailed account of a phenomenon that is more focused on establishing a database than theory building. **An evaluative case study** is primarily characterised by its judgmental function. It not only describes and explains. It assesses. This type of case is particularly appropriate for decisions about the success of programmes. **An interpretative case study** aims at explaining and conceptualising. It is used to analyse and understand a phenomenon that existing theories do not adequately explain (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). This last type of interpretative case study is the design of the research here. It was recognition, on my part, that community organisation conceptualisations and community participation conceptualisations were not adequate for understanding the complexity and dynamics of the MT case (other similar situations) for myself as a practitioner.

#### 4.3.2 The retrospective case study

The case study here was a two level interpretative process. I, as researcher, interpreted the interviewees' interpretation of their participation in the strategic planning process of MT, which involved asking the participants to recall past events. This was influenced by my construction of the interview questions which was a reflection of my explicit, but also my tacit, conceptualisations which acted as a pre-interpretation screen. As Hyman Gregory points out in her doctoral thesis research:

Given that investigative interviewers have usually been exposed to previous case information and may have mentally created a script of what occurred before conducting the interview, interviewer bias as a source of suggestive influence is of particular concern both during the interview and when recalling the interview at a later time (Hyman Gregory, 2009, p.14).

Similarly there was also a screening process of subjective filtering of the interviewees' recollections and the way in which they conceptualised what they remembered. Although this is frequently considered a limitation to the accuracy of memory, which can be "fragile"(Gallo and Roediger, 2002) and vary from one individual to another, it is not the exactness of what happened that is being examined in this case, but how the participants interpret what happened as a way of understanding how the past is now integrated into the community's current social reality and collective functioning. As Halbwachs describes in his work, society reconstructs the past to reflect the needs and beliefs of the present (Coser, 1992).

It is necessary to show besides, that the collective frameworks of memory are not constructed after the fact by the combination of individual recollections; nor are they empty forms where recollections coming from elsewhere would insert themselves. Collective frameworks are, to the contrary, precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord in each epoch with the predominant thoughts of the society (Coser, 1992, p. 40).

This perspective on how shared memory is a "construction" of the past is fundamental to undertaking a retrospective study of this type. Communities construct their pasts as a reflection of present interests and, as Giddens points out in the passage quoted above, the "Structure is not 'external' to individuals: as memory traces." Rather collective memory is in a dialectic relationship with a community's "collective frameworks".

The usefulness of this type of retrospective case study is well-described in the summary of the retrospective case study of *Private and public memories of Expo 67: a case study of recollections of Montreal's World's Fair, 40 years after the event* conducted by Anderson and Gosselin.

Concern about the *accuracy* of participants' memories was not a focus of the study. It is known that long-term memory is a contingent, evolving, and subjective account of thoughts, events and experiences that took place in the life of individuals. Moreover, it is well accepted that subsequent experiences and time may re-shape the way experiences are remembered and conceptualized in the life script (Bruner 1994; Freeman 1993; Neisser and Fivush 1994; Bielick and Karns 1998; Ellenbogen 2002). Hence, in this study, the qualitatively rich memories described by the participants were considered their 'current reality' (or 'subjective reality') of the recalled events from 1967 (2008, p.3).

Similarly in the MT case the interviewees' retrospective descriptions of their experiences and of their subjective, selective, recall were the very process of identifying those elements of the past which are still fresh (or easily accessed) and that can provide a richness of information. It is the subjective recall of their experiences that can bring out multiple interpretations of past events, which in turn are products of the community's current shared conceptualisation of itself and collective functioning.

Such process of the relationship between shared memory and changing shared reality can be seen in the conclusion of the study done on Northern Ireland's "Bloody Sunday".

The principal lesson that can be drawn from this analysis in terms of understanding other similar events is that although people materialize their memories of traumatic historical events in murals, monuments, and memory quilts, these sites of memory are themselves subject to change as people come to new understandings of their symbolic meaning and thus construct and reconstruct new identities and memories (Conway, 2003).

#### **4.4 The choice of MT**

As I stated earlier the choice of MT as the object of study was based primarily on my experience in that community as a practitioner. It had been a very rich and intense endeavor that extended over a period of years, one that has been formative of my ongoing work as a professional. In many ways it was a no choice decision, as Stake

describes: " ... sometimes selecting a case turns out to be a no choice at ... It happens when a teacher decides to study a student having difficulty, when we get curious about a particular agency, or when we take the responsibility of evaluating a program" (1995, p. 65).

In this sense the choice of MT was not initially based upon an explicit systematic set of criteria. However before actually beginning the data collection, this no choice decision was subjected to a review, the primary criterion being where could I best explore my research questions about how communities learn to function in a collectively cooperative manner that optimises their mutual well being. Best explore meant identifying a case that had a number of elements. 1) The case could afford a depth of data related to people's interpretation of their experiences through which I could learn about processes. 2) The issue of measuring success outcomes (the amount and effectiveness of cooperative endeavors could be relatively easily assessed), would not need to become the focus of the research. 3) The retrospective time frame of the analysis would enable an interpretation of a community development experience in the light of the way people linked it to the current type of collective functioning. This type of case could provide an opportunity to see how a community imparted meaning to its past experiences, and how reconstructing their experiences through recall (in Halbwachs' conceptualisation) could be used to understand those events from the perspective of their current social reality. This is closely related to the degree to which the interviewees attributed their current sense of mutual wellbeing as an outcome of the past events. It can offer much insight into the processes of creating shared meanings and the structuring of their collective behaviour. 4) The case would enable me both to have a depth of direct knowledge of the processes, but not be immediately involved. 5) There would be multiple sources of data. 6) Lastly, the research study would be minimally intrusive.

Although there are other communities where I have had similarly rich involvement in community development processes, they were less appropriate and none met these screening criteria to the same extent as MT. It is important to add that MT, as a case for research, meets the important criteria of exemplifying a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

It is one of a number of rural regions in Israel that, in recent years, have undertaken a strategic planning process with community involvement. The choice of MT as the case for analysis had particular value because it was a self-conscious effort at community development with a clear invitation to the public to participate and be partners in the process of change. This avowed open invitation was not unusual in today's context of community participation. It was however still somewhat unique in the Israeli context. Furthermore, although as in other rural regions the invitation for public participation in the strategic planning process formally came from the political leadership, the initiative in MT came from the community leadership.

This case also not only has the advantage of retrospective understanding, but a high degree of documentation (written and video).

There a cautionary note that Yin makes regarding some of the conditions that characterise this case.

Case studies have been done about decisions, about programmes, about the implementation process, and about organizational change... Beware of these types of topics – none is easily defined in terms of beginning or end points of the "case" (Yin, 1994, p. 22).

As will become evident from the remarks of the interviewees where the case of MT begins and ends has different demarcation for different people.

## **4.5 Collection and analysis of data - the audit trail**

### **4.5.1. An interactive process**

As a beginning researcher, designing the processes of data collection and interpretation was a daunting challenge. I particularly struggled with one of the issues related to case study research in general. The division between literature review, conceptualisation, data collection and data analysis in my experience did not reflect the exploration process. These stages were neither completely discrete in their time frames nor in my 'cognitive cooking' process. Merriam describes it well:

Rather the process is highly interactive. Your question takes you to some of the literature, which sends you back to looking anew at the phenomenon of interest. In trying to shape the problem, you go back again to the literature, and so on. In essence, you carry on a dialogue with previous studies and work in the area (1998, p. 50).

As a practitioner I have gathered data on MT for almost two decades. My work as a facilitator there demanded a processes of observation, interpretation, conceptualisation, and articulation – verbally and in practice. It often involved going to the literature for assistance in interpreting and conceptualising my work as a facilitator. The concepts from the field of community development and social capital were very self-consciously used by me in my work in MT as a facilitator. This was ostensibly unrelated to the current research exploration, but in reality it greatly influenced my theoretical framework and the initially tacit (Polanyi, 1966) categories of data collection and their interpretation.

The primary distinction between the process of facilitation and the process of research in MT, which influenced the research design, was the purpose. This is a study aimed at understanding what and how changes took place in the context and creation of a regional community in MT, and its properties of cooperative collective action. Because the intention here was to understand processes of community development that I have witnessed and in which I had participated, the choice of what is being observed, the categories in which the observations are placed, and their implicit meanings were constructed for this purpose. They were related but different from the conceptual tools of facilitation.

Yet, to a certain extent the differentiation between my role as researcher and that of practitioner is artificial:

The claim for objective distance from the objects of social research, which has long been critiqued by feminist researchers among others (see for example, Oakley, 1981) leads to skewed theory. In the close quarters demanded by most research interviews the aspiration to neutrality and objectivity seems even more implausible (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005, p. 47).

The design of this exploration and the process of data collection and analysis are the outcome of my research task. In order to understand the collective learning which took place during the strategic planning process of MT, and specifically in the structuring of social interactions of the participatory process, I needed to find a way to investigate the processes through which the private understandings and insights became public agreements both tacit and avowed, and the processes by which they became institutionalised forms of collective behaviour.

This meant that I needed to create a setting and dialogue through which the participants' and my tacit interpretations of the events could be articulated. It involved encouraging people to examine their different experiences of the strategic planning process from their current perspective. It required that I, too, examine my own recall of the events.

Framing the research task in this way defined the type of data to be gathered as people's interpretations of their experiences. The first step involved defining the questions to be explored, which would serve as the basis for the interview questions (to be discussed in the section on data to be collected 4.5.2 and 4.5.3) to help interviewees recall those experiences which were of interest to them and to me (as researcher). This was a two-step process. It initially grew out of the literature and my professional practice, and then was refined from the content of the first round of interviews, the review of documents, and a return to the literature. The next step was the explicit categorising of the data by looking at emerging themes from the interviews and then returning to the literature for better conceptualisation and further refinement. In parallel I recorded my own chronological subjective narration of the events as I recalled them. Finally was a process of my conceptualisation or 'answering' the research questions through the case presentation, which is the integration of the emergent themes, the supporting data – translated quotes and paraphrasing from the interviewees and the documents, and concepts from the literature.

#### 4.5.2. Choosing and defining what data would be collected

Deciding what data to collect was directly related to the interests of the researcher and the purpose of the research (Merriam, 1998). But as Yin points out, going from the how and why questions of a case study strategy are not sufficient to point you "to what you should study".

Only if you are forced to state some propositions will you move in the right direction. For instance, you might think that organizations collaborate because they derive mutual benefits. This proposition, in addition to reflecting an important theoretical issue (that other incentives for collaboration do not exist or are unimportant), also begins to tell you where to look for evidence (to define and ascertain the extent of specific benefits to each organization) (Yin, 1994, p.21).

Implicit in this process of deciding at what to look was the focus of the research and the crystallisation of the research questions. However, as has been discussed, the very nature of qualitative research often involves a focusing and a refocusing which, in this study, is certainly the case. Yin's point however is still quite relevant on two accounts.

First, without such propositions, an investigator might be tempted to collect "everything," which is impossible to do (Yin, 1994, p 22).

Second, even in an exploratory case, one needs to have a clear purpose and criteria as to why one type or piece of data is being collected rather than another.

**The purpose of the research as stated earlier was to understand how communities developed the ability to act collectively in an optimal manner in order to achieve a shared future that promotes mutual wellbeing.**

The next step was to more specifically define the unit of analysis which is the strategic planning process with community involvement in the MT region that I facilitated over a five-year period. Both the spatial and social boundaries are clear. They are set by the municipal borders and the participants in the planning process. The time boundaries, however, were less clear and were significant particularly for understanding the element of institutionalisation.

The data was collected from three sources. The primary source of data was the interviews with 12 people who had participated in the strategic process in MT. These interviews were specifically designed for the research undertaken and done voluntarily. The second source was my documentation when I worked in MT as a facilitator. These documents were not originally recorded with the intention of using them as data for research. The third source of data was the documentation carried out over the years by the MT strategic planner. These are public documents of the MT regional council that specifically document the strategic process beginning in 1992, and subsequent development and public planning processes that have taken place in MT over the years through the present.

Permission for using these documents and conducting interviews with people from MT for the purpose of conducting research by myself and using MT as a case study for my studies as D. Phil student at Sussex University was given both by Y, Mayor of MT, (who was also interviewed for this purpose) and by Ri who gave me access to the documents for this purpose.

#### 4.5.3. The interview process

For me using the process of interviewing was inherent in my choice of a case study as the research design.

The process however begins with a focus on specific substantive concerns (for example headteacher leadership, client relations of community nurses or privatization of prison services) that are articulated in the research questions. Through an iterative process that refers to theoretical, methodological and substantive position a research design is developed. From this position unstable as it may be, the interview, as part of the design, is structured with reference to the research questions (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005, p. 58).

In order to gather the data I needed to be more specific about what linkages and processes affecting cooperative collective behaviour I wanted to explore.

The questions in the interview guide (see appendix) were of four types:

- 1) The community members' (residents, community leaders, and professionals) recollection of how the changes came about
- 2) Their experiences of participation/involvement in the strategic process
- 3) Their sense of being connected / belonging to each other
- 4) Their perception of changes in the way the community functioned on an instrumental level.

Based upon these four focal points the interview questions were formulated.

The phrasing of the questions is then highly important, as is the degree to which the interviewee (and interviewer) may diverge from the original question structures and sequence. A more flexible schedule offers the possibility of extending and deepening engagement in the interview. Whether this is a strategy to obtain more authentic respondent accounts to be read off uncritically against pre-existing theory or whether it provides a space for a more negotiated exchange in which the researcher position is open to critique, constant attention and interpretation is required of the interviewer (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005 p. 59).

Implicit in the focus of the questions is that the interviewees' experience, their learning, and their view of the outcome would provide understandings and insights

about collective learning processes and the cooperative structuring of collective behaviour. There is an inherent danger that the interviewing process will essentially provide only data that relates to these categories and thus miss other important (and perhaps critical), information for understanding the context and phenomenon being studied.

As in the world's fair case study, I conducted the interviews in a similar semi-structured conversational manner that is described in the Montreal World's Fair research. "The interview questions followed the semi-structured interview protocol, and were conducted in a relaxed conversational manner and probed issues such as the spontaneous recall of Expo memories;"(Anderson and Gosselin, 2008). Rather than remaining closed, the categories of data to be gathered remained open and afforded the opportunity for exploring additional data that developed from the interview process itself.

In the process of preparing the interview guide it became clear that the nature of the data being gathered focused mainly on people's perceptions rather than being an attempt at discovering what 'really happened'. Thus the analysis of documents has been more as support and exploration of additional data categories rather than an attempt at verifying the evidence.

In order to understand the dynamics of the process in the MT case particular attention was given to including interviewees who had been involved in the early stages of the strategic process. I especially wanted to see if there had been change for them in their community and if they linked the change to the strategic planning process. In particular, I wanted to know what about that process had been significant for them. Twelve in-depth interviews were conducted.

Interviewing is also the best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few selected individuals (Merriam, 1998 p. 72).

#### 4.5.4 Recruitment of interviewees

The intention was to identify people who had different social roles in the region including professionals, community leaders, residents, and elected political leaders. All had been active in the strategic planning process and many still had an ongoing

role in the region or knowledge about the implementation of cooperative ventures/management frameworks on the regional level (schools, sewage, industrial development, etc.).

The interviewees were identified and asked to participate in three ways. The first was based upon my first-hand relationship as facilitator with potential interviewees from the period of the strategic planning process. The second method of identifying potential interviewees was asking Tm (as a community leader) and Ri as a professional to suggest people whose different perspectives reflected a range of experiences. Third was asking each of the other interviewees (during the course of the interview) if they had suggestions as to whom else to interview. Each of the interviewees was approached individually by myself and asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview about their experience in the strategic planning process as part of my research for academic studies. The request was for them to be willing to volunteer to be interviewed by myself at a time and location convenient for them.

The interviewees included:

**Y:** Mayor (male) and still in office

**Tm:** Resident, social director of her kibbutz as well as representative of her kibbutz on the regional (municipal) council; has since completed BA and become a professional facilitator (female)

**Et:** Young resident (female)

**Mok:** Resident, business manager of his kibbutz (male)

**Ri:** Participated as resident and later became the strategic planner of the regional council (male)

**Vrm:** Participated as a resident, became director of education in the regional council and was social director of his kibbutz at the time of the interview (male)

**L:** Professional staff member of the regional council (male)

**Zik:** Participated as a resident and later became the director of the economic development corporation of the regional council (male)

**Ar:** Religious leader (male)

**Tal:** Community worker in the regional council (female)

**Nat:** Head of the welfare services of the regional council (female)

**Mara:** Coordinator of training and in-service development of the Ministry of Interior in the region (female).

The interviewees included seven men and five women in ages ranging from their early 30s to mid 50s.

Because there are both similarities and differences among the interviewees and their experience of the strategic process, the focus of examination, '**what**,' was examined evolved as the interviews progressed as did the conceptualisation, of '**how**,' it was viewed. They, themselves, shifted and changed position as the interviews proceeded. Although this could be considered highly problematic, for me as a researcher it enabled new unexpected input from the interviewees.

For one interviewee the strategic process ended at the first public gathering. For others that was only the beginning of the process. For some interviewees the importance of the processes was being able to influence political change. For others it was linking-up other like-minded people and gaining legitimation for their views and values. Some saw it as the change in organisational functioning of the Regional Municipal Government and others as a change in community life.

#### 4.5.5 Recording the interviews

The twelve in depth face-to-face interviews were conducted by me personally. Although initially the intention was to electronically record the interviews this was almost immediately abandoned as it interfered with their conversational quality. In the course of the interviews extensive notes were taken in Hebrew with many phrases or specific wordings being written down verbatim in Hebrew (the language in which the interviews were conducted). Following each interview, notes regarding new questions and insights were written up by me in English. The interview record was then typed up by me and simultaneously translated into English. This was a combination of verbatim translated quotes, occasionally including key phrases as written by myself in the original Hebrew, as well as a process of paraphrasing. In many ways this was an implicit process of sifting and interpreting the interview records. In four instances follow-up interviews were conducted, two of which were lengthy face-to-face meetings and the other two were more limited telephone follow-ups.

The material from the interviews should be understood as a combination of direct translation of remarks as I wrote them during the interviews, capturing verbatim phases together with paraphrasing the interviewees' remarks. Direct, as close as possible to literal, translations of their remarks have been typed in **bold print**. My paraphrasing and some clarifications are in parenthesis.

The interviews took place in two rounds. The first group of interviews in May-June 2006 were semi-structured by design but were conducted in a rather open and exploratory manner. The second group in November 2007 was, by design, more open though still guided. The first set of interviews raised issues that did not fit into my initial conceptualisations of this research. This included a number of points, but three were particularly important: the personal sense of empowerment, the critical importance of being socially recognised or acknowledged, and the relation between instrumental benefits from cooperation and the commitment to mutual wellbeing. This led to a considerable period of reflection, and the need to reconsider my understandings of the case. In retrospect this was probably an important part of my transition from being a fairly self-aware practitioner to becoming primarily a researcher of this case.

(Although a period of many months between the two sets of interviews was part of the research design, this extended period was also due in part to personal life circumstances that required me to formally take an intermission from my studies for a full year).

#### 4.5.6 Document analysis

The process of gathering data and analysis in the MT case was not a neutral objective one. Part of the documentation of the case was my own working professional record of MT which is designated as "Siegel, working notes MT 1992-1998." These notes were not taken for the purpose of research, but were my recordings and working documents, some of which were formally submitted to the MT regional council (such as the proposed facilitation methodology for work in groups etc.). Others were notes

that I recorded for myself for assessing the process and considering alternative types of facilitation.

The second source of documents was made available to me by Ri, who is today the strategic planner of MT. He has compiled a set of documents that includes the records of many of the working groups of the strategic process, beginning in 1992 and also includes newer documents that have grown out of organisational development and other public planning processes in MT through to the present.

#### 4.5.7 Emerging themes and the creation of new categories (Merriam, 1998)

My initial conceptualisation processes upon which I designed the interviews was primarily based upon my understanding as a practitioner and strengthened by traditional community development literature. However as the interviews progressed it became increasingly clear that these conceptual constructs were not adequate to the task. They did not afford significantly new insights. The data collection process sent me back to the literature. I had to consider new additional conceptual frameworks. The initial theoretical conceptualisation process was revised in the light of the interviewing process.

I needed to develop new categories for understanding what people were saying to me. This particularly influenced the dialogue quality of interviews. Although the questions, which were semi-structured to begin with, remained fairly consistent, the line of follow-up to comments in the later interviews was influenced by both the previous interviews and the fresh concepts from the literature.

In this data collection process what I looked at and how I saw it became a spiral-like exploration process going between the interviews, conceptualisation, the literature, my current practice (in other settings), and back again to interviewing.

As described, the analysis of the interviews actually began as they were being conducted, but a more systematic categorising of the data began after their completion. The material from the interviews was organised by themes which emerged from reading and rereading the content of the interviews and my comments

('insight' notes) made following each interview. This was done by highlighting in colour themes that were repeated in the different interviews and particular points that were not compatible with my preliminary conceptualisations.

The review of the documents (both my working notes taken during the period 1992-1998, at which time I was the facilitator of the strategic process – see section 4.6 - and the documentation done and collected by the head of the Strategic Planning Unit setup in 1996/5), were initially used as secondary sources to expand upon themes that emerged from the interviews or to fill in gaps of information. These documents were also reread by me with the intention of identifying additional new themes and by marking sections for further analysis. These documents are in Hebrew and the quotations are my translations of the materials.

Out of this process of reviewing the interview records and documents 17 themes were identified. Many were on different conceptual planes and levels of abstraction, and they had different degrees of frequency among the interviewees, but their inclusion here in this rough form was important for understanding the process of re-conceptualisation that took place in the research.

- 1. Going from personal insight to public understandings**
- 2. There was a need for change**
- 3. Creating an opportunity for like-minded people to meet – the role of convener**
- 4. The importance of political leadership**
- 5. Empowerment**
- 6. Non-cooperators (and those that did not 'fit in') were pushed out**
- 7. The strategic process is not an event but an ongoing dynamic**
- 8. New types of interaction –structures/platforms**
- 9. Legitimisation**
- 10. Concrete results – functional (utilitarian) outcomes and process (ways of interacting) outcomes**
- 11. Cooperation that affords mutual benefits**

**12. The limited extent (percent of the population) of participation**

**13. Time leads to entrenchment**

**14. The role and type of public participation**

**15. The change in professional leadership**

**16. The role of the facilitator**

**17. Creating a common language – shared understandings**

The process of developing conceptual constructs for analysing the data required still another round of reviewing the literature, one that greatly enriched the insights gained from this study. The impetus for this in-depth return to the literature was a direct result of the recognition that the initial theoretical foundations of the research needed to be greatly augmented if the data analysis was to be fruitful. The 17 themes that had emerged raised new issues and questions.

Of particular importance was the addition to the theoretical repertoire of concepts used by Ostrom (1990) regarding common-pool resource management, the structuring of payoffs in rational choice theory (and its game theory foundations), Honneth's (1995) concepts of social solidarity, Giddens's (1986) concepts of structuration, and Block's (2009) insights regarding small group – large group dynamics.

#### 4.5.8 The conceptual constructs for analysing the case study data

The process of theorising in this research has required looking at the data from different conceptualisations of collective action and community development that have grown out of the ping-pong between the empirical and the theoretical fields (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005).

The 17 themes were the issues that were explored by me in the return to the literature. This expanded literature review led to the development of four conceptual constructs that I used for analysing the data, forming the lenses through which I examined the data of the MT case. Gaining understanding and considering the implications of these themes for practice employed the four conceptual constructs.

The four constructs are my integration and application of concepts from a different theoretical perspective. The initial 17 themes were not subsumed into the four constructs but remain identifiable in their own right throughout the case analysis. By virtue of being social constructs they were both the basis for categorising and interpreting the data and were themselves, in turn, modified, strengthened and more clearly interlinked through this theorising process. They are an articulation of my thinking that emerged from the interplay between the themes emanating from the interview process and the concepts upon which I drew from the literature.

- **Rule setting processes and social participation**

This conceptualisation enabled viewing community development as a process of negotiating meaning (Wenger, 1998). It involved making their tacit (Polanyi, 1966) shared meanings explicit and then renegotiating meaning in different functional and temporal contexts. This was a discursive (Giddens, 1986) process of constructing the social reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1967) of a community – its shared understandings of the world in which the members lived, what was important to them, and what they could expect from each other as a collective. It was a social interaction in which people shared their interpretations and reinterpretations of their behaviours in the context of their community life. It formed the basis for mutual expectations and understandings necessary for any collective action.

Not only were many social understandings tacit (Polanyi, 1966), but they were also the rules for renegotiating these understandings. They determined who participated in this negotiating process, how they went about negotiating new shared meanings, and who had the power to give legitimacy to the shared interpretations. They are both vertical and horizontal processes of an interaction which enabled the development of shared meanings and understandings across issues and across power relations. The rules for engagement delimited which people owned the rule setting process.

- **The structuring of payoffs**

This conceptualisation is related to the way the construction of instrumental benefits from collective action versus individual action influenced people's choice of behaviour. It dealt with the degree of people's functional interdependence and

sense of a shared future. Looking at community functioning from this perspective related to the paradox of common-pool resource management (Ostrom, 1990) and was directly related to the question of collective action that formed the research questions.

- **Social solidarity and mutual caring**

This involved processes of crystallising shared goals which reflected people's values and the evolution of commitments to individual and collective wellbeing. It is about the creation of new mediating mechanisms and greater social cohesion. It, too, involved people sharing their interpretations of their community and redefining how they envisioned themselves and their future together in small group and large group settings (Block, 2009). It related to the degree to which people felt connected to each other not only in exchange relations, but in relations of mutual esteem (Honneth, 1995).

- **The creation of mediating mechanisms for cooperative collective action**

The crafting of institutions relates to the way that social meanings were afforded form in organisational structures which embodied the rules of interaction that were themselves part of the process for developing shared meanings. They were, however, not only a medium of sharing meaning, but an instrumental mechanism for enabling joint endeavours. Looking at the structural properties of institutions was significant for understanding a community's ability to act collectively in an optimal manner (Ostrom, 1992).

## **4.6 What I looked at was what I came to understand - possibilities and problems**

### **4.6.1 Internal validity**

In many ways the questions regarding internal validity are related to the basic premises of qualitative research. What was examined in this qualitative research were "people's constructions of reality - how they understand the world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 203). If internal validity is about how congruent research findings are with reality then one set of constructions is used to understand another. The range for interpretations would seem to be enormous.

The theoretical framework of the social construction of reality in which this study was conducted quite specifically faces this issue. It is recognition that what I saw was a function of what I sought and at what I looked. **What** I selected to see as data delimited the possibilities of my understandings. Similarly my choice of conceptual frameworks determined **how I look** and subsequently how I understood what I saw. My social identity, preconceptions, personal views, and implicit research agenda all come into play. This position is expressed in almost the same words by Merriam who in part quotes Thornton:

"...our observations as researchers are framed in some way rather than others, which make perception itself theory-laden. Theory allows seeing what we would otherwise miss..." (Thornton, 1993, p. 68).... It ('the theoretical framework of the study') also determines what we do not see, do not ask, and do not attend to (Merriam, 1998, p. 48).

These problems are dealt with in two ways - conceptual and operational. On the conceptual level it was important to consider the validity of this method of research in relation to its goal which as Merriam states is not to "isolate the laws" of human behaviour, but to "describe the world as those in the world experience it" (1998, p. 205).

The issue of validity in my study is not related to my ability to describe the world; rather it is about how closely I could capture the way the people I studied experienced the world.

First this was done by triangulating the data from three sources (as described in section 4.5): interviews conducted for the purpose of this research, documents of the regional council and my professional working notes (from the period of the events that took place in the case study (which were not written for the intention of research), and my recall of observations from the time of the events (which I facilitated). My first inclination was to use these different sources to look for the accuracy and consistency of accounts. Almost immediately I realised that I should also be doing the opposite - that in fact it was peoples' perceptions, their construction of the world that I should be trying to understand.

The second way of increasing validity was been to make my position as a researcher (presented below in section 4.6.2) conceptually and socially explicit which I hopefully did, both to myself and to the readers of this research. Third was by creating an audit (section 4.5 above) trail (Merriam 1998, p.206) that described the research process in detail.

#### 4.6.2 My position as researcher

I want to begin this section by reiterating that I saw my role as a researcher-practitioner primarily as an interpreter, very much as Stake has described: "Research is not just the domain of scientists, it is the domain of craftspersons and artists as well, all who would study and interpret" (1995, p.97).

The very nature of my exploration here is rooted in my professional practice. Between the years 1994 and 1999 I worked as the facilitator of a bottom-up strategic planning process in the MT municipal regional council. Following a proposal and recruitment phase initiated by a community leader, I was hired by that council. Although my work was in part funded by the Israel Ministry of Interior Department of Training and Organisational Development, I was directly responsible to the regional municipality that convened a steering committee of professionals, elected representations, and community leaders. My responsibilities included:

- Facilitating a preliminary self-assessment process undertaken by a group of seven people who were community leaders and elected council members (this was done over a half year period of time during 1994)
- Facilitating a community-based strategic planning process aimed at setting forth the goals and policy for the development of the region, which involved over 300 participants in small and large group sessions (this was done over a year long period of time during 1995/4)
- Facilitating an organisational development process aimed at adapting the management practices and organisational structure of the regional council to strengthen its capacity to implement the strategic plan in cooperation with the village communities (this was done over a three-year period of time ending in 1999).

As mentioned earlier, my work in the regional council was undertaken prior to any plan or thoughts to use this case for research purposes. However, the impact of what I experienced in MT on my subsequent professional practice had a significant influence on my desire to more clearly conceptualise my insights and thus undertake this retrospective analysis from the perspective of a researcher.

I should add that my observations and new insights in my more recent practice experiences, as well as the literature, have influenced my understandings of the interviews and documents in this case study. They have become a filter for my memories of the case under investigation, and, most importantly, of the interpretations which are implicit in the categories of data collection and data analysis (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005).

There is an inherent danger of my justifying or idealising what took place in MT rather than bringing in a new perspective that can contribute to greater understanding. The possibility of this type of skewing is certainly present in the current study which, to use Stake's words, has become more "a labour of love" than anything else (1995, p. 46).

My personal identification and involvement with the people in this case is explicit both in my writing and in the information gathering. As I was beginning an interview with one of the professionals who participated in the planning process a secretary, upon learning of my meeting with the head of her department, **L**, came to me and said that I was 'responsible' for her working in the regional council which resulted from her involvement in the strategic planning process. Implicit in the interaction with some of the interviewees there was probably a tendency to avoid negative statements regarding the process in general and my role in particular. Nonetheless I think that for the most part, the interviewees' remarks are rooted in their own experience and even when referring to my role as facilitator they are informative rather than evaluative.

**Tm** – **There is here a body** (an organisational framework – the regional municipal council) **but we don't know how to define our needs. ..You (Yoel) sent us to learn - site visits** (in other municipalities and organisations). ....**We met** (people during the site visits) **in M, LG, E Y**, (names of regional councils) **and you invited the Mayor of the U G**. (names of other regional municipal councils)

**Tm's** statement manifests the role that I played as a consultant. It was first and foremost in exposing them to different perspectives on themselves as a community. In many ways this meant opening up the opportunities for them to meet people with alternative community realities.

This match-making involved gaining access to professional and financial resources. These were needed to undertake the strategic planning process.

**Ri - You** (during the final stages of work in MT) **told me to approach Joint Israel** (a major philanthropic organisation in Israel supporting community welfare projects and responsible for initiating Municipal Planning Units in Israel). **The mayor wanted me...they sent me to an assessment screening – the PI institute.**

(Ri was subsequently hired by the council with the support of Joint Israel – professionally and financially – to be the MT regional council strategic planner.)

The other major role that I played was to outline the professional methodology in both the planning phase and the organisational development phase in the overall process.

**Ri - There was a document that laid out the stages of work** (of the strategic planning process - methodology and type of facilitation by local staff and volunteers). **We** (the local facilitators) **acted in accordance.**

This is both the strength of my research and its potential weakness. Its strength stems from my intimate knowledge and direct involvement with the people and processes being investigated. The weakness comes from the problem of taking on a different role - that of researcher - which has required a different type of interpretative role from that of the intervening professional.

In part, the choice of MT over other possible cases relates to the time frame not only with regard to doing a retrospective interpretation, but also because over a decade separates my role as a practitioner from my role as researcher. This change in status is also legitimised by my being a 'student' which sets it apart from my task of understanding the strategic planning process as 'facilitator'.

I would however be remiss in not raising three important issues. First is the pervasiveness of social networks in Israel that generally make role distinctions difficult and certainly not absolute. Some of the interviewees involved in the

planning process are also professionals involved in local government and specifically in rural local government. We have crossed paths at conferences and workshops. Thus my role as researcher does overlap with my other role as practitioner. I think, however, rather than this detracting from my role as interpreter of phenomena and context, it has augmented it. My ability to glean additional information and enrich my understandings of cooperative collective behaviour in this case has been supplemented from occasionally hearing and seeing people from MT referring to their experience of the strategic planning process and other collective activities currently taking place in their community. Their comments are usually not specifically directed towards me, but rather part of their dialogue with other colleagues, at times in my presence. There have also been specific unexpected encounters that have afforded me significant insights, such as in a meeting of professionals and political leaders from regional municipal council where the Mayor of MT publicly recalled my role as facilitator and linked their current strategic process with the previous process 15 years previously. This incident exemplifies the ongoing professional relations in Israel that made separating my role as researcher from my role as practitioner almost impossible. It has the advantage of enriching information beyond the scope of the semi-structured interviews, but also points out the very personal perspective that I brought to this case study.

The second point which needs to be raised is related to the first, but of importance independently. Although it sequentially followed the data collection process, I have been involved as a practitioner in national projects that occasionally include MT. The issue is neither my relation to the MT community nor its perception of me as researcher and practitioner as discussed above, but to my own changing perspectives. My insights as practitioner cannot be divorced from my insights as researcher. I make this point specifically with regard to my 'roles' in MT, but the issue is more pervasive. The nature of my practice in community development in its many contexts influences the way I interpret the subject of my research. In many ways it was action research in reverse. I was not concerned (quite the opposite) that my research insights informed my practice (in other settings), but that my practice informed my research. This made my need to maintain the internal coherence of this study all the more important.

There was nonetheless a certain parallel between this second issue that I have called 'reverse action research' and the question of when to undertake the literature review in case studies. The debate is about the order and process of theorising. Should conceptual frameworks be synthesised from the literature and be used to help frame the concepts that inform the collection and analysis of the data upon which findings will be based, and then linked back to the concepts in the literature? Or should data be gathered first in order to form the basis for theorising and then bring in the theoretical frameworks from the literature (Merriam, 1998)? As a researcher my practice is part of my conceptualisation and in many ways a complementary process to the back and forth interaction between literature and data.

There is a third point, related to my position as researcher, and is inherent in this retrospective study. Frequently the limitations to research based upon people's recollections focus primarily upon the inaccuracy of memory. Recall is influenced by a variety of factors that affect the way people portray past events (Yuille and Tollestrup, 1992).

Though potentially a critical limitation in certain types of research, I do not think that this objection is the problematic issue of this retrospective analysis. It is not the accuracy of the recall of events explored that is at issue. On the contrary, it was the interviewees' interpretation of the events that served as the basis for understanding their community's functioning from the perspective of the present. As discussed in the chapter on methodology, the view of reality as a social construct fundamental to this thesis made use in specific of Halbwachs' (Coser, 1992) concept of memory not only as a process of retrieval, but as a process of construction. The influence of the current context of regional community on the interviewees' memory and their selective reinterpretation of the events was very much the object of the research, which was explicitly related to the social context of the interviewees' recollections.

However, what is problematic is that their memory was also influenced by the micro-context of the interview sessions. Their memory was stimulated and to a great extent directed by my interview questions (and reactions – verbally and body language). Thus the scope and quality of what they recalled was inherently influenced in the interview process by my suggesting the issues and types of experiences to be

remembered. In his work on collective memory Halbwachs points out how our memories are evoked.

It is also in society that they (people) recall, recognize, and localize their memories. If we enumerate the number of recollections during one day that we have evoked upon the occasion of our direct and indirect relations with other people, we will see that most frequently, we appeal to our memory only in order to answer questions which others have asked us, or that we suppose they could have asked us. We note more over that in order to answer them, we place ourselves in their perspective and we consider ourselves as being part of the same group or groups as they...Most of the time, when I remember, it is others who spur me on; their memory comes to aid of mine and mine relies on theirs (Coser, 1992, p.38).

Especially in the relatively conversational nature of the interviews in this research, the dynamic interaction between an interviewee and myself, in which each relied on the other to evoke their memories, greatly affected the data that evolved (and the data that did not). Furthermore, neither the content nor the extent of this limitation can be made very explicit.

Thus the problem issue in this retrospective study was not one of the interviewees accurately recalling events that took place over a decade earlier, but the tacit interpretive screening built into interviewing as a method for evoking memories as data. This point is germane to almost all interview situations, but all the more so here where these memories, already interpretive in nature, were the data to be analysed and interpreted by myself as researcher.

#### **4.8 Ethical considerations and issues**

There are several ethical issues that required consideration in undertaking case study research, particularly one that was of a highly interpretative nature and in a country where relationships frequently overlap, as is the situation in Israeli society.

Although there is little, if any, part of their remarks which is privileged private information or exposing, I explicitly asked the interviewees to indicate any information which they considered as private or about which they wanted to insure anonymity. Even though none of the interviewees indicated materials that for them were of a sensitive nature, I have chosen to scramble letters of their names. Similarly I refer to the case as MT rather than its actual name, and references, even in publically

available documents, have been disguised. As mentioned earlier, Israel is a very close-knit society and full anonymity in the field of community development is almost impossible. Thus I felt that this level of discretion, together with the reality that this thesis is not intended for wide circulation, affords an acceptable level of confidentiality.

Furthermore, permission for using materials was requested and given freely for this research in the context of my D. Phil studies, and the interviewees were asked to participate on a voluntary basis. Nonetheless, there is another important implicit ethical issue that should be emphasized here, which though related goes beyond the issue of confidentiality. This is the issue of trust between myself, as researcher, and the people being observed and recorded.

Ostensibly this was not a problem especially given the fact that the intended use of the research was neither evaluative, nor for the purposes of making policies which would affect the lives of those being researched. However, in light of the highly-networked nature of Israeli society, my researcher role here was not completely isolated from my other roles in Israel particularly as practitioner. As mentioned earlier, there have been occasional contacts with some interviewees as colleagues. What is at issue here was not the coincidence of contact outside of the research setting, but the way it could subtly influence both the research and the lives of those being researched. In the case of MT I think that this influence had two sides. On one side there was a self-reinforcing dynamic that insured that the trust placed in me by the people in MT would not be abused. I am not an anonymous researcher who can escape even unintended outcomes from a breach of trust or inappropriate exposure of people's statements. Thus there was a built-in awareness and even sanction that reinforced my responsibility as researcher. The other side of this dynamic was a potential biasing both by myself and by the interviewees to 'stay on good terms with each other' since we may have very well met again in different contexts. This remained problematic. Merriam suggests a way of mitigating (though not eliminating) this factor. It is one that I intuitively adopted at the time of the research and now am making explicit.

Often the researcher will be pressured to be more the evaluator, the scientist, or the therapist than he or she wants to be. Others will help negotiate the role. The role should be an ethical choice, an honest choice. It can help at the outset to show what kind of interpretations fit the talent and the role preferences of the

researcher, perhaps in previous work, by role playing or by just talking about it (Merriam, 1998, p. 103).

Honesty demands of me as researcher to share with the readers of this thesis that although the research is not action research, there was an interactive quality to the relationship between myself as researcher and the participants in MT being researched. It was in play both in and beyond the immediate research context. In many ways it is a relationship of mutual assistance and mutual dependence. We have helped and may very well continue to help each other better understand the way communities function and the way we act together. It is a relationship of trust that enabled understanding, but also tended to screen out discordant information and interpretations.

The principle of relativity is strong in qualitative case study. Each researcher contributes uniquely to the study of a case; each reader derives unique meaning. These and other differences are relative to the purposes of the study, the immediate situation of the case and the circumstances of the reader (Merriam, 1998, p. 103).

As pointed out by Merriam in the excerpt above the principle of relativity had considerable influence on how data was collected and understood. This was a very important consideration in this interpretative case study of MT. I have tried to make my position as a researcher and practitioner as explicit as possible and again pointed out the additional difficulty stemming from the hidden messages that interviewers convey to interviewees, thus eliciting the 'correct' response from them. On this point the issue that Halbwachs (Coser, 1992) raises regarding the process of how memories of past events are influenced by the cues from those with whom we interact was particularly significant given the retrospective nature of this research. In the appendix I have included the semi-structured schedule which, to some extent, made the memory-stimulating process of the interviews transparent. It does not, however, make the less explicit aspects of my cueing process completely accessible to the readers of this thesis.

There is an additional point of researcher influence that came to bear on this particular study. The decision to explore MT as a successful instance of community development did help a priori to reduce the evaluative nature of the exploration and also contributed to a relatively non-threatening in-depth understanding of MT. The

intention was not to avoid problems. Neither was it a basis for relaxing a demand for critical thinking. Rather, this research focused primarily on successes in order to learn from them. It reflects not only my personal optimistic nature, but is grounded in a professional conceptualization underlying the type of community development work which I have adopted and which influenced the choice of MT as the case study for research. It was a conscious choice not to focus on problems but rather to focus on assets (Kretzmann and Mcknight, 1993).

Therefore it is equally important to acknowledge the limitations of this orientation. I think that the optimistic and success-oriented tone of this research tinted the lenses of examination to a somewhat rose colour. Making this bias clear is therefore all the more significant here given my previous role as the community development facilitator and now in my current role as the researcher in which I am data collector (and filterer) and interpreter. Certainly much could probably have been learned from a more balanced account and perhaps the credibility would be strengthened.

I want to conclude this section on ethical consideration by reiterating that the insights that have evolved from this research are certainly not objective truths. They are my subjective interpretations of this case. A different researcher would very probably see different processes and come to different, though not necessarily contradictory, understandings.

## **Chapter 5. Background – The Case Context**

### **5. 1. Historical background**

This case is about how the MT (not the actual initials for the name of the region) rural region in Israel, composed of 32 separate small village-communities (kibbutzes, moshaves and Arab villages), undertook a community initiated assessment and planning process through which they consciously became a regional community with shared goals, common resources and structures for collectively managing itself. This initiative was referred to (by them) as the 'strategic process'. This section describes the context in which the strategic process took place and provides an overview of what it entailed.

Historically (as in most rural areas) each village-community has been a socially and economically self-contained entity. When the strategic process began in 1993 as in other rural regions (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997) each village-community was still running its own pre-school and public schools, taxed its residents, and provided most of its social-community services (sometimes in clusters of ideologically affiliated communities). Similarly the region, though only some 30 kilometers from the metropolitan area of Haifa (about 400,000 people in the city and surrounding suburbs), was not part of its social and economic catchment area. This functional and social separation is even more striking when taking into consideration the easy accessibility of the metropolitan area by public transportation and highways. Both the surrounding rural region and the surrounding urban centres were, for the most part, irrelevant to the lives of the people in these village-communities.

MT like other regional (municipal) councils in Israel had, until a change in the statutory regulations, been weak local authorities with minimal statutory authority (see chapter 2). They collected minimal taxes and provided minimal services (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997).

Beginning in the early 1980s all the village-communities of MT, like most of rural Israel, were exposed to a wide variety of social and economic factors that have led to a more individualistic lifestyle.

Due to the changes in Israel's economy (see chapter 2) in the course of the strategic process (as happened during this time frame in other rural areas in Israel), over half of the people started working outside of the villages and decreasing numbers were involved in agriculture. Mobility (primarily the affordability of cars, individually or collectively owned by the kibbutz) has greatly increased and working outside of the village-communities has become predominant. Social relations in general have gone beyond the fence of the villages. Collective non-ownership has become an historical phenomenon (Ravid, 1999).

The context in which the strategic process took place was especially interesting because two opposite dynamics were operative simultaneously. On the regional level, a community evolved in the region from a minimalist confederation of relatively autonomous agricultural village-communities into a regional communal entity with an integrative governance structure and organizational mechanisms for cooperative endeavors aimed at achieving collective wellbeing. At the same time on the local level the individual village-communities, particularly the kibbutzes, began (and continue today) a process of privatization - moving from collective management of almost all aspects of life to a much more individualized family production and consumption model of village life, a process that has been weakening their community structures. These two processes paralleled each other in time and space, one weakening community structures and the other strengthening them.

It is the depth and intensity of these two parallel processes that is quite unique to MT. What is outstanding in the case of MT (and unique to only a few other regional councils) was that the same people who comprised the regional municipal council (elected leaders from each village-community) were, on the one hand, leading a community development/governance process creating mechanisms for greater regional cooperative action, joint resource development and management, and on the other hand leading processes of greater self-reliance and individualism on the village level. This situation afforded an opportunity for understanding the social dynamics of community building in which people's individual value systems had different expressions in different contexts even within the same geographic region. The same

people were leading opposite processes of collective community action in their village context and in the regional context.

## **5. 2. An overview of the strategic planning process – a subjective chronology of events.**

This narrative is based upon my personal recollections and professional (unpublished) working notes from the MT case 1992-1998 (Siegel, Working Notes MT, 1992-8).

I want to again make explicit that during the period of 1992-1998 I was employed by the MT regional council as the facilitator of the strategic planning process.

Throughout that period I kept working notes, reviewed many documents and prepared documents of my own in my capacity as a field professional (not as a researcher).

Thus this presentation here of the overview is not based upon my observations of the case as a researcher but on a secondary interpretation of the events as I recall them and based upon a review of my notes and documents written at the time that I was facilitating the process.

### 5.2.1. The preprocess initiation

The story of change in MT began with **Tm**, a member of Kibbutz S who was elected to the position of Mazcir (social chairperson/manger). This election in and of itself was not anything out of the ordinary. **Tm** had been involved in various public activities in the kibbutz community and, although not particularly political in her orientation, this position suited her own aspirations to influence life in the kibbutz. Her being a woman was also not unusual. The position of 'Mazcir – kibbutz', which involved managing the social aspects and community services of the kibbutz, had been held by both men and women in the past.

What was significant was **Tm**'s insistence that she be the kibbutz representative on the regional council (the MT regional municipal council). For the most part this position had been held by the 'Meracez Meshek' (kibbutz business manager, which tended to be more male-dominated). This was true not only in kibbutz S but in almost every kibbutz in the area. The municipal council as such was almost totally male-dominated and budget-oriented. Her insistence was, however, not met with

opposition particularly since the position was not considered to be of much importance, but rather a formalistic administrative task.

It is also important to note that the incumbent mayor of the regional council was from the same kibbutz as **Tm**. They shared common friends and community issues within the kibbutz. They were, however, from different age groups (the mayor being older), which was often a factor in power relations that reflected seniority in the kibbutz.

Shortly after her election to the regional council, **Tm** initiated an assessment of the mission of the regional council. Getting approval for this evaluative undertaking was complex conceptually, socially, and politically. How this came about will be explored in depth in the case study analysis. The assessment action was approved by the MT regional council and a task force to undertake the assessment was appointed.

#### 5.2.2. The assessment task forces

A group of six people were chosen as the assessment task force. It was composed half of kibbutz members and half of moshav members (an Arab representative was not included at the time primarily for of a lack of consciousness). The woman who initiated the assessment, **Tm**, was chosen to chair the task force. Not all the members of the task force were council members. Some were community leaders but not on the council itself.

The group met a number of times per month over a period of half a year. They interviewed most of the senior staff of the municipality, other council members, other community leaders, and professionals and political leaders from other regional councils.

Much time and energy was invested in a two level ping-pong between the assessment task force and the community, listening to needs and aspiration, and between the task force and the regional council staff listening to their perception of their jobs and their relation to the village-communities. The task force visited other rural regions and interviewed people from the regional councils. The learning from other regions served to open up a new perspective on themselves and their region as a community – its collective functioning and governance structures.

My role as facilitator was to help them identify their questions, connect with other regional councils, and process their meetings. Beyond this basic professional function I continually encouraged them to make explicit their tacit assumptions about their community and its functioning and those of the people they interviewed. This enabled a self-conscious process of jointly interpreting and reinterpreting their situation. The task force translated their new insights into concrete recommendations in what later became referred to as the "R Document", which provides a concise description of their assessment process, their findings and their recommendations. It further included eight sweeping policy guidelines (translated below from the task force summary document):

1. *The regional council was to initiate proactive strategic planning and implementation programmes and not only react to external or local initiatives.*
2. *The regional council was to insure the provision of community services to all residents regardless of the village in which they lived and develop regional services when it afforded a relative advantage to separate services in each village.*
3. *The regional council was to insure the development and maintenance of regional infrastructures (roads, sewage, water, public institutions) that would create the conditions to enable the village to grow (adding new homes for the next generation and attracting new residents).*
4. *The regional council was to leverage local resources to mobilise governmental and philanthropic funds channeling them to meet regionally agreed upon goals.*
5. *The regional council was to reinforce initial efforts in the area of local economic development and actively create the conditions for economic development not only based on agriculture. This was to be done in cooperation with initiatives with the different villages and through public-private ventures.*
6. *The regional council was to take leadership and initiate joint programs with the villages to achieve regionally agreed upon goals. It was also to expand services and create a direct relationship with the residents in the area (not only work through the village structure as a unit).*
7. *The regional council was to develop and reinforce regional programmes to serve populations with special needs at the regional level while maintaining primary care within the villages.*
8. *The regional council was to reorganise and structure itself on the professional and public (the elected council) levels to improve its functioning in order to implement the policies outlined.*

(Source: Collected documents of the MT Strategic Planning Unit 1995 – 2010)

In keeping with their mandate the task force presented their findings and recommendations to a formal session of the regional council. The meeting took place at a sleepy 7 a.m. and as usual was chaired by the incumbent mayor. As in my first meeting with him he allotted **Tm**, spokeswoman for the task forces, 15 minutes to

present. I, as the outside consultant, was denied the right to speak as I was considered to be an observer at the council meeting which is open to the public. Before the council members could even react, discussion on the next agenda item began.

This dismissal of the task force's work led to a confrontation between the mayor and the council members who had volunteered more than half a year of their time. The mayor, who had been under pressure from a variety of personal and professional sources, used this confrontation to tender his resignation.

I am rather doubtful that the report and the ensuing confrontation were the determining factors in his decision, but they certainly were a catalyst. Given the sweeping nature of the recommendations, the specific cause of his resignation was unimportant. The significance stems from the coincidence of events. As will be presented in the case analysis the interviewees saw in the incumbent mayor's resignation the possibility of change that led to electing a new mayor.

The procedure for an interim mayor is selection for the remainder of the term by the full council (32 members). The candidate does not have to be a member of the council. Three candidates announced their intentions. The council passed a resolution requiring the candidates to meet with the task force, study its findings and recommendations and present its opinion back to a full session of the elected representative on the regional council.

The opinions ranged from objection to agreement to full endorsement. **Y**, who had fully endorsed the task force's recommendations, was selected. The assessment taskforce document became his platform for change.

Between his selection and his entry into office (a two-month period), he convened the task force a number of times and learned in depth both the instrumental and the participatory style of interaction that characterised it. In consultation with the task force members the new mayor's first act on the day of his selection by the council was to call for an open public meeting to air the assessment of the task force's recommendations. It was a call to understand and then either ratify or reject the new mission being set forth.

The final job of this task force was to present its recommendations to an open regional meeting. The meeting (known as the 'R Gathering' for its location at a kibbutz seminar centre outside of MT) was structured as a combination of small group workshop-type sessions and a formal decision-making open (to all participants in the R Gathering) session of the regional council.

My role at that time was to help structure the gathering and prepare the taskforce members to be both presenters and then facilitators of these small group sessions. Given their background the culture of town meeting dialogues in the village-communities this was not a difficult undertaking. The context was regional rather than local and certainly the scope was much broader, but the style was familiar to all the participants. The final session of the 'R Gathering' was an open meeting of the council. All present were allowed to speak, a radical departure from the former mayor's use of legal manipulation to prevent discussion.

The vote for ratification of the assessment task force document was taken by the elected council members, but done in public view. It was a decision not taken lightly and the task force's members and mayor were not at all sure that this radical transformation in the governance structure of the region would be endorsed. It meant changing the nature of the region, mandating the creation of new mechanisms for collective action, and changing the local authority's mission. It meant acting together to jointly manage and develop the area's resources, not just to divide up outside funds amongst the village-communities. The endorsement was unanimous and the recommendations became the 'R Document'.

### 5.2.3. Developing a new vision and a strategic plan for the region

Once the new direction was agreed upon there needed to be a much more operational translation of the principles and recommendations into a development plan that reflected the specific opportunities and needs on three levels: those of each village-community, those of the region as a whole, and the interrelation between the villages and the regional frameworks.

This next phase was quickly approved by the regional council. It was overseen and operationally monitored by a steering committee that included both community participants, elected members of the council and professional staff.

Over the course of a year this phase of the process included:

- Recruitment of participants
- Opening public meetings
- Small group policy task forces by subject
- Integration of policy recommendations
- Public hearings for review and feedback
- Formal adoption by the municipal council

The planning process was a combination of open regional discussions (with 200-400 participants) with a loose agenda and more structured small group policy task forces aimed at assessing the current situation, problem identification, resource identification, values clarification, goal setting, and policy for action guidelines in seven key areas of life:

1. Agriculture
2. Industry and tourism
3. Village growth and development
4. Education
5. Welfare and the elderly
6. Culture and recreation
7. Young adults (the next generation)

These policy task forces were staffed by department heads of the municipality and often co-led by volunteer facilitators from the village-communities. The other participants included community leaders and residents (some who were professionals in the different subject areas). As facilitator I did not participate in most task force sessions, but rather reviewed progress with the task force leaders, participating occasionally if specifically requested at a given session. At times these groups met in parallel simultaneous gatherings. At other times they met separately depending upon the nature of their policy area and the time schedules of the task force participants. The policy content of the different work groups was totally open.

Each task force set its own agenda. The interactive process of these sessions was a combination of unstructured discussions and formal planning tasks for assessing the current situation, problem identification, resource identification, values clarification, goal setting, and policy guidelines for action.

The small group task force recommendations were all ratified in two stages. First they were presented in large public sessions. There was a back and forth process over the course of three-four months with small groups meeting and then sharing their understandings in larger plenary sessions. This culminated in a public hearing in which each task force presented to an open regional meeting (with over 400 participants) and heard feedback in parallel small group sessions to enable a dialogue between the task forces and other community members at large, or from participants from other task force groups. This series of small group and regional meetings became known as the 'V Zion' meetings (the name of the village-community in which they were usually held).

As will be expanded upon in the case analysis this interlocking public renegotiation of understandings was a critical phase in going from private insights to publicly shared community meanings. It was the first formal act towards legitimising and institutionalising the new rules of the game on the regional level. Only then was each policy paper adopted by the steering committee which was responsible for integrating the policy papers into a relatively coherent (though not particularly linear) strategic plan.

Secondly, this overall strategic plan was ratified through the formal adoption by the regional council of the policy guidelines set forth by each task force that incorporated the feedback from the public hearings. In this way community input was given statutory standing. It reflected the formal commitment of the elected governing body – the MT Regional Council - to the new collective understandings. It was the formal legitimization procedure and it led the way for organisational changes to promote their implementation.

This planning process was a dramatic change in the way policy was developed. It was not a strategic plan prepared by professionals with community input, but a community building process in which people came together (the 'V Zion' meetings) to identify mutual concerns, set joint goals, and reach consensus about priorities and the use of resources.

This was the planning methodology of the strategic process agreed upon by the steering committee members with the mayor as the political authority. It was the basis of the invitation to the community to participate in the strategic process and was reiterated to each planning task force. In many ways the recruitment pre-targeted people who wanted to come together to cooperate on a regional level. (Collected Documents of the MT Strategic Planning Unit 1995 – 2010) This was an a priori expectation of the participants to create a tacit norm of cooperation amongst the participants.

The participants were recruited through flyers and local newsletters as well as through the formal organisational structures of the kibbutzes, moshaves, and the two Arab villages. This led to a very varied makeup of participants. Three population groups were underrepresented, primarily, the Arab population (no Arab women at all), young adults (18-28) and few women from the moshaves. The rest of the participants were a good cross-section of the population – men and women, residents, formal community leaders (elected in the kibbutzes, moshaves, and Arab villages), municipal staff, and elected regional council members.

For many this was their first encounter with each other certainly on a regional level. Moreover it was clearly the first time in which the public was given the mandate to develop policy guidelines for their community on a regional basis. Almost no such forums existed in the region other than the regional council itself, which previously had never engaged in such public encounters even in an advisory or feedback capacity.

It is however critical to point out that both the kibbutzes and the moshaves have had a culture and practice of town/village meetings in which the community sets its priorities and approves its plans of action. For many participants the practice of community dialogue was not a new experience. What changed for them were both the context in which this type of interaction took place and the people with whom they interacted.

The outcome of this year-long undertaking was a very thin 20-page strategic plan. It would hardly be an acceptable document in many professional planning circles. But what it lacked in pages and professional jargon it more than made up for by setting the policy mandate that reflected not only agreed goals but, equally important, it gave voice to the commitment to act in a concerted manner to achieve these goals. It legitimised a focused and restructured use of common natural and social resources.

This is particularly evident in the way each task force separately functioned and in the public review/feedback process prior to adoption of any recommendation. Each task force had to develop policy guidelines for action on the regional level primarily for the regional council, but frequently in interaction with the village-communities – e.g. changing a village level educational system to a regional one with shared physical facilities and teaching staff.

Although not explicitly stated, in retrospect there were three de facto criteria for adopting policy recommendations: they reflected public agreement, they were feasible (even if not immediately doable), and they were consistent with the new mission statement of the regional council as laid out in the 'R document'.

#### 5.2.4. Restructuring the regional council

Implementing these policy recommendations which formed the first strategic plan required not only a process of public participation and commitment, but also a restructuring and job redefinition of the professional level of the regional council. This organisational undertaking was monitored and directed by the mayor, the senior regional council staff, and the Ministry of Interior (organisational development dept.) staff over a two year time frame. It led to:

- ◆ Organisational adaptation and restructuring of the regional council
- ◆ Annual public review procedure of the plans, budgets and outcomes
- ◆ Ongoing public review of regional development programmes
- ◆ Developing new regional services (e.g. community centre, school system)
- ◆ An annual work plan procedure of the regional council with each community
- ◆ A series of training activities for professional staff, elected officials both of the regional council and the villages
- ◆ Crystallising the principals and procedures for initiating a multi-year statutory development plan for the region and its communities

In particular it is significant to note that the organisational structure that developed gave greater weight to the spirit of dialogue rather than to hierarchy. The functional departments were organised into related clusters rather than divisions. Education, welfare, and the community centre, for example, formed a cluster whose department heads met regularly to deal with cross-cutting issues. The cluster coordinator (one of the department heads) did not have authority over the others. Thus cooperation had to grow out of shared concerns and goals, not out of a bureaucratic power structure.

This is a rather unusual format for local government, but in this case one that grew out of, and reflected, the mandate of a regional community.

Of equal significance was the organisation of the regional council to be the direct provider of services and the leader of development initiatives. This required the transformation of departments from being primarily regulatory conduits of government funds and resources to the villages to being directly responsible for the

provision of functional services on the regional level. It included such things as the creation of direct welfare and counseling services to kibbutz members (who previously had a service of their own) and it meant establishing a regional sewage treatment plant to replace village level septic tanks and sedimentation pools. This was the radical organisational change both conceptually and operationally that gave expression to the recommendations of the 'R Document'.

#### 5.2.5 Strategic planning as an ongoing process

The issue of defining the borders of the case for examination was quite difficult in this research. First, the interviewees themselves did not make such clear distinctions; second, I, as a researcher, could possibly make such demarcations, but in doing so would lose some of the most critical insights; and finally the mayor himself consciously made continuity over time an explicit component of the Strategic Process.

At a gathering of regional (municipal) councils [11/2009], (which I attended unrelated to this research), the mayor, **Y**, spoke about the fourth strategic plan referring to the first one of 16 years previously, that had been facilitated by myself and initiated by **Tm** [the resident from kibbutz S] who was also attended this gathering. The significance of his reference to the past was in its explicit recognition of the intersection of social interactions and institutional structures. The current fourth strategic plan is an institutionalisation of the planning processes crystallized in the past, but its formation and content remain interactive in the present.

When I began the interview process I was struck by two immediate reactions. First was the freshness and sense of turning point to which almost all of the interviewees referred as being part of the strategic process, which (for me) had ended in 1998. The second was the different processes and events that people called the strategic process. The time frames that determine what is included in the strategic process varied considerably.

Everyone remembered the first meetings over a decade earlier – the 'R Gathering' and the 'V Zion' meetings, but the sense of being part of the strategic process was not an event that had ended. Rather it was something that continued today. There are many organisational and planning endeavors that have taken place over the years which the

interviewees consider to be part of the strategic process. For some it was the work of the initial assessment task force that developed the recommendations in the summer of 1994. For others it was the (current at the time of the interviews) ongoing community work of the regional staff together with the villages that are engaged in a process of privatisation and rapid demographic growth (attracting new residents from outside of the area into new neighbourhoods in many of the villages).

The events of 16 years earlier alone did not constitute the strategic process; rather they were a launching point for an ongoing way of regional collective action.

## **Chapter 6. How was the Change Process Initiated?**

### **6.1. The impetus for change**

As described in chapter 2 on context the forces for change in MT were similar to those affecting many other rural communities in Israel. Up until the 1980s the agricultural communities which composed regional councils had functioned as independent economic and social units with very limited interaction on the regional level. The change in Israel's political leadership beginning in the late 1970s and the move towards a more market-based economy exposed these cooperative village-communities to a combination of forces. They had to compete economically in their agricultural endeavors and in their manufacturing enterprises. At the same time, the government reduced its support of these villages, no longer viewing them as pioneering outposts whose mission was to settle the land. By the end of the 1980s, many individual cooperative farming communities were faced with a decreased economic base and it was increasingly difficult for each community to provide for its own wellbeing, employment and community services. The reality of rural Israel was greatly changed over the course of two decades. However, little had changed either in the village-community management organisation or in the regional governance mechanisms.

As I will present, the process of change grew out of a combination of factors. Many were related to the general organisational management problems and regional development issues facing most rural communities in Israel. Others were related to the particular dynamics of MT. I again refer to Goldmann's description of the need for social change very much in keeping with the situation of MT:

- I. The fact that certain sectors of the external world do not lend themselves to integration into the structure being elaborated.
- II. The fact that certain structures of the external world are transformed in such a way although they may have been able to be integrated before, this integration becomes increasingly difficult and finally impossible.
- III. The fact that individuals in the group, who are responsible for generating the processes of equilibrium, transform the surrounding social and physical environment, thereby creating situations that hinder the continuation of the structuring processes generating them (1980, p.61).

The external world for the residents and rural village-communities in MT had certainly changed, and the way the region was managing and governing it was no longer socially or economically sufficient. The existing structural integration was no longer viable. In the early 1990s the regional council, which was the only significant regional forum that included all the village-communities like other regional local authorities in Israel, did not function as a mechanism for joint endeavors. The gap between the needs and aspirations of people in the community and the possibility of achieving them was growing (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997).

After attending a number of regional council meetings **Tm**, as a newly elected representative of her kibbutz, felt that the regional council was not 'in sync' with the needs of the village-communities (the kibbutzes, moshaves and Arab villages) that it served. In her eyes the regional council was neither helping the individual village-communities develop nor actively enabling regional development. Something was not working. In her first meeting with me (as a potential consultant) (Siegel, Working Notes MT 1992-1998), she expressed a feeling of frustration that her participation on the regional council was as such of no consequence to the life in her kibbutz. For her, the need for change developed from a growing awareness that the individual communities could no longer meet their needs alone and out of a sense that the regional council had the potential to become a force for collective development endeavors and service provision.

This feeling led **Tm** to consult with the regional coordinator of the Organisational Development Department of the Ministry of Interior, E. (since deceased), who suggested to her that a preliminary proposal to undertake a municipal organisational development plan be prepared. Considering that the initiative did not come from the mayor, and in order to better understand the different courses of action, E. recommended that she inquire of a consultant who had experience with such development processes in regional municipal councils.

**Tm: We came to the mayor with a demand for change.** (This led to a decision to set up a task force/committee.) **The mayor referred us to the Ministry of Interior (Organisational Development Dept).** **We met you and another consultant** (as potential candidates to work with the MT regional council).

**Tm** had received the names of professionals recognised by the Ministry of Interior as appropriate candidates to do the consulting. The Ministry of Interior had sponsored a strategic planning process in a similar regional council a year earlier which involved broad public participation in the process and a strong formal mandate for action by the municipality, especially the mayor (unpublished working papers Upper Galilee Regional Council 1992).

**Tm** presented to the mayor a proposal to commission an organisational-regional assessment with an option to undertake a strategic planning process. Despite his having referred **Tm** to the Ministry of Interior, he dismissed the idea of strategic plans as being unnecessary and a waste of time and money. He cut **Tm** short, gave five minutes to present the proposal, and then pointed to the shelves saying that they were full of strategic plans and that he did not need any new ones. That ended the meeting as recalled by myself (Siegel, Working Notes MT 1992-1998).

**Tm** was mortified but not dissuaded as she recalled those events in the interview with her (16 years later).

**Tm: The mayor (former) ridiculed me – "the council does not deal with community." Residents are not the "interest" of the council. (There was) dissatisfaction among representatives... that the council was not functioning from different perspectives... I saw what was happening in other places compared to our council. It was not clear to where, but the current (then) situation could not continue. No one could do anything. What the mayor (former) did not want did not happen..... (The representatives of the "yeshuvim" (the villages) on the municipal council) recognised the dissatisfaction... We discovered that as representatives of our communities in the council, and as residents ourselves, that the municipal department heads did not know what the residents wanted.**

It was this awareness that neither the elected leadership nor the professionals were in touch with the needs of the people in the region, which became the catalyst for change. As **Tm** pointed out they felt not only powerless, but incompetent. This situation was both on a general level and around specific issues. As **Nat** says in her interview referring back to the situation at the onset of the change process:

**Nat: People were "fed up" with the (situation of) divisiveness (between different groups and between the kibbutz and moshav villages).**

As **Et** (a resident who was in her early 20s when the planning process began) complained:

**Et: There was nothing for young adults ... from the time that they are drafted into the army until they are released (demobilised).**

The accepted way of managing the region was no longer working. The regional council, which was the de facto body that included representatives from all the rural villages, continued to operate as it had for the past decades.

Giddens points out that one of the significant drivers of change is the sense that something in the current collective reality does not make sense. Something is not working or something is missing. If everything is okay and the world makes sense, then there is nothing to ask, no need to change, no need to learn, and no incentive to do things differently. As he states: "...Thus we do not ordinarily ask another person why he or she engages in an activity which is conventional for the group or culture of which that individual is a member." We only ask when there is a "lapse" or "fracture" of competence (1986, p.6).

Berger and Luckmann make the same point in almost the same words: "But even the unproblematic sector of everyday reality is so only until further notice, that is, until its continuity is interrupted by the appearance of a problem" (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p. 25).

**Tm** and the other interviewees understood that the regional municipality was badly in need of an entirely new definition of its mission. Although she had neither a mandate for action nor a basis for commissioning the work of an organisational consultant, she did not back off. In opposition to the mayor she passed a resolution in the regional council (the representatives of the kibbutzes, moshaves, and Arab villages) for conducting an 'assessment'. It was to be a self-assessment facilitated by a professional consultant. The council appointed an assessment taskforce to be staffed by a consultant and chaired by **Tm**. The task force was given a mandate to learn about the functioning of their regional council in depth and also learn about the functioning of other parallel regional councils. This would serve as the basis for their analysis. The consultant's task was to facilitate - ask questions and suggest where and with whom

they could find some answers, not provide the answers. The task force members could then evaluate the situation and decide whether a next step of organisational change or strategic planning was called for. This would have to be mandated in the future by the regional council (if at all) as it was beyond the scope of the initial terms of their brief.

To these cognitive understandings of the need for change, which were true of many other regional councils and rural communities, needs to be added a very specific factor in MT that of feeling insulted, being denigrated. In **Tm**'s comments quoted above she specifically mentioned being ridiculed by the mayor for her desire to initiate a change in the way the regional council was functioning.

**Nat** describes a similar experience of insult:

**Nat:** (I won't forget that I raised) **the need to work** (together as a municipal council) **on the security/defense problems** – (people were under) **great stress during the Grapes of Wrath** (military conflict with Lebanon during which the village-communities were shelled) **I was told** (by the previous mayor) **to just sit down and keep quiet... if I could not handle my fears "go get therapy"**.

This is particularly important for understanding the dimension of social recognition in the community development process and the dynamics of change that took place in MT.

In *The Struggle for Recognition* Honneth explains the significance of denigration as a force for social change as it becomes a shared interpretation of people's social condition.

Feelings of having been disrespected, on the other hand, form the core of moral experiences that are part of the structure of social interaction because human subjects encounter one another with expectations for recognition, expectations on which their psychological integrity turns. Feelings of having been unjustly treated can lead to collective actions to the extent to which they come to be experienced by an entire circle of subjects as typical for their social situation... In the first case, we are dealing with the analysis of competition for scarce goods, whereas in the second case, we are dealing with the analysis of a struggle over the intersubjective conditions for personal integrity (Honneth, 1995, p. 165).

In both cases it was the former mayor who insulted two people connected to the regional council. These insults were directly related to questions regarding the mission and functioning of the regional council as the organisational framework for collective regional endeavors. The insults struck the heart of the issue that became the public focus of change and eventually contributed to the resignation of the mayor.

From this perspective the impetus for strategic planning process in MT can be seen as a struggle for "recognition" in Honneth's terms. Tm's resistance to the (former) mayor's denigration led to the establishment of a task force whose very mandate was 'legitimising' a new interpretation of the region's collective way of functioning.

The act of appointing a task force to undertake an assessment was in itself public recognition that 'things were not working'. However, this act entailed a political struggle. The then incumbent mayor did not see any need for change and only acquiesced to the pressures of the kibbutz lobby in the regional council to appoint a committee. However, having been appointed by the regional council which even though at the time was only a minimalist forum for the villages to manage the region, it gave the task force public standing upon which it could address the existing regional reality.

The fracture in MT became even greater as people began to see what was happening in other regional councils. Other regional councils had already become proactive. They had begun to initiate programmes of development and services beyond those under the auspices of the village-communities. This was the beginning of calling into question the existing structuring processes of local government in MT. It was the first step in legitimating and publicly acknowledging the need for a different type of mechanism for collective regional action. In retrospect, this was the significance of creating the assessment task force.

The task force transformed the members' private individual insights that things were not working into an explicit shared statement of what was wrong and the substance of the needed change. They began the change by going from a tacit acceptance of the way things were to an explicit public statement of what they wanted things to be, as laid out in the document referred to as the 'from---to' principles or the 'R Document'.

They thus challenged the current social reality and offered an alternative. The power of articulating, going from tacit to explicit, provided the basis for challenging the tacit collective reality (Polanyi, 1966) of the way MT was functioning as a region.

The future of a community then becomes a choice between a retributive conversation (a problem to be solved) and a restorative conversation (a possibility to be lived into). Restoration is a possibility brought into being by choosing that kind of conversation (Block, 2009, p53).

The orientation of the assessment task force that evolved out of their investigation was not problem-solving but exploring a new possibility. Its mandate was to assess the situation as a basis for change; it was to learn and to question. In keeping with this principle my role as facilitator was not to be an expert giving advice, but to help the task force do a self-assessment. Facilitation meant helping frame the questions, creating a space for not knowing, and identifying resources for exploring possibilities.

Block goes on to point out the power of questions and how they open up possibilities:

The future is brought into the present when citizens engage each other through questions of possibility, commitment, dissent, and gifts. Questions open the door to the future and are more powerful than answers in that they demand engagement... Advice is replaced by curiosity (Block, 2009, p. 101).

**Tm** gives voice to this type of dynamic that characterised the assessment task force:

**Tm: The power** (of the initial task force) **came from its connecting up with a real need. We built the 'from ---- to' model** (that spelled out the new regional vision in the R Document).

This culminated in the mayor's resignation, an event that embodied not only a transfer of leadership, but a change from one set of rules for collective functioning to a new set. This event opened up the possibility for the insights of the assessment task force to move from the margins and to become the focus of a collective dialogue on a regional level.

## 6.2. From private insight to public mandate

One of the questions regarding how processes of change take place is related to how the insights or recognition of the need for change go from being private insights to becoming publicly acknowledged. To begin with, the question of who felt that something was not right was crucial. The issue was not simply whether things are working or not working but rather what is not working for whom? It can be a fundamental challenge to the political status quo, as was the case in MT, or a specific problem of a more limited scope.

The sense that something was amiss was not an absolute state of affairs or necessarily even a clearly defined problem or set of problems. It was a more complex situation that was related to shared understandings and interpretations of reality.

The sense that something was not working required public acknowledgement without which it would remain at the level of private opinion or insight. It was the transition from private interpretation and personal meaning to shared public interpretation of the situation that gave these new meanings their power.

A possibility, when declared publicly, heard and witnessed by others with whom we have a common interest, at a moment when something is at stake, is a critical element of communal transformation. This public conversation creates a larger relatedness and transcends a simply individual transformation. Conversations of possibility gone public are not all that restores, but without them personal and private conversations of possibility have no political currency and therefore no communal power (Block, 2009, p 53).

Initially **Tm's** sense that something was missing, was wrong in the way the regional council was functioning, was a private insight. It did not have the force of power to bring about change in the way the region functioned collectively. This required more than just articulation, which was the first critical act. But only after she attained the public–political mandate to establish the assessment task force could her private understandings become part of the public discourse. This enabled public understanding of the possibility for a different collective reality – a different collective mission.

Public recognition that something was missing, something was wrong challenged the existing social construction of the MT's collective reality. The incumbent mayor understood this and, even before listening to the specific recommendations of the task force, tendered his resignation. It was not per se the operational recommendations of the task force or its critical analysis of the regional council's functioning, but the more fundamental act of challenging the tacit shared interpretations (Polanyi, 1966) of the way the region had perceived itself and functioned as a collective that contributed to his decision (which was also a function of other factors). Here the relationship between the explication of the tacit level of social reality (Polanyi, 1966) and the distribution of power was very clear. The task force gave public voice to a new possible collective consciousness as used by Goldmann:

In the resulting relationship between the subject and environment, the subject (both on the individual and transindividual levels) never reacts univocally but project a relatively large gamut of possible responses. With this gamut different responses can be alternated at will (1980, p. 64).

If the task force had concluded its work with the mayor's resignation it may very well have been interpreted as a political coup and not have attained its goal of changing the region's collective social reality and instrumental functioning. The mayor's resignation became an important symbol of discontinuity, the discontinuity of political power and the opportunity for setting new rules for acting as a collective. It became a mandate for new interpretations that required involving the wider community as whole and not just elected representatives of the regional municipal council.

**Tm:** We decided that **if we are speaking in the name of the residents, then we need to convene them** (R Gathering) – **the question was would they come!!**

The power of the R Gathering was in its broad public acknowledgement of the need for establishing new interpretations of the social reality shared by the residents of the region. Honneth gives a clear conceptualisation of this process.

In this sense, the emergence of social movements hinges on the existence of a shared semantics that enables personal experiences of disappointment to be interpreted as something affecting not just the individual himself or herself but also a circle of many other subjects. As Mead saw, the need for such semantics

is met by the moral doctrines of ideas that are able normatively to enrich our notions of social community (1995, p. 164).

The explicit nature of change proposed was quite clear especially when looking at **Tm**'s remarks above together with the 'from---to' principles that were written by the assessment task force and adopted at the 'R Gathering'. The mission of the regional council as the framework for regional collective actions and the vision of the region were being collectively redefined:

- ***From** being a reactive organisation **to** becoming a pro- active force in the region*
- ***From** being a pipeline for government funds to the kibbutzes, moshaves, and Arab villages **to** fostering common resource development on a regional level*
- ***From** budgetary strategy of dividing up the pie to each separate settlement **to** one of prioritising, pooling, and leveraging funds for development as regional community*
- ***From** working behind closed doors **to** encouraging public dialogue*

(Translation from the 1994 B Document)

The structure of the statements was a clear indication of the way the task force saw the need for going from one collective reality to a different collective reality. Their new vision of themselves, though focused upon their municipal framework, in fact presented a different collective way of functioning as a region. It was a vision of action and resource development. It was a vision of sharing and leveraging resources not just dividing them up. And finally it was a vision of public dialogue. Because the members of the assessment task force had reached a level of acknowledged discursive consciousness as used by Giddens, they became a significant force for change.

Discursive consciousness: What actors are able to say or give verbal expression to, about social conditions, including especially the conditions of their own action; awareness which has a discursive form (Giddens, 1986, p. 374).

Had this remained a position paper produced by a small group and then been 'shelved' by the regional council, it would have reflected only the thinking of a marginal group. But it became the legitimate expression of the region as a whole having gained both statutory status, adoption by the regional council, and public legitimation by being ratified by representatives of all the villages in the 'R Gathering'.

### 6.3. From negotiating the system to having the power to change it

Understanding what contributed to the adoption of the assessment task force's understandings and recommendations was an important part of understanding the initiation of change in MT. It went beyond the stages of private insight becoming publicly acknowledged and legitimated. It related to having the power to actually initiate a change in the social context.

Giddens' conceptualisation of agency helps understand the dynamics of this case:

Agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place (which is why agency implies power)... Whatever happened would not have happened if that individual had not intervened... in which the reflexive monitoring which the individual maintains is fundamental to the control of the body... (1986, p. 9).

People in the community participated and remained engaged in MT because they felt able to influence policy decisions and eventually saw results - operational programmes and projects. They experienced their own capability.

**Mara: The meeting (R Gathering) provided an opportunity to influence things.** Residents spread out (in rural communities) **cannot influence things.** (In order to enable/effect change they have to influence from the bottom up..... ) **Resident involvement is not just a slogan it is the way things are actually done** (in MT today).

What is particularly important here is the linkage between people's power through a mechanism of participation – their ability to influence things, with the structuring of their interactions – "the meeting provided an opportunity". It is important to reemphasise that the interviewees did not see the strategic process as an event per se, e.g. the meeting (R Gathering), but as an on ongoing process of involvement "it is the way things are actually done." It was not the R Gathering alone in which people were able to influence their state of affairs, but through the way in which they structured their ongoing involvement. The community leaders (particularly the members of the assessment task force and new political leaders) owned the process of change. They set the rules of interaction – not outside government and not outside professionals.

As Giddens makes clear: The ability to influence does not reside in the individual's personal skills, but in the interaction between that person's skills and the structural qualities of the social context.

Analysing the structuration of social systems means studying the modes in which such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction... The constitution of agents and structure are not two independent sets of phenomena - a dualism but represents a duality (Giddens, 1986, p. 25).

What happened in MT was the experience of this duality which, over time, became an explicit sense of community power. The R Gathering can be viewed as empowered agents acting to change their collective state of being. (The interviews took place some 16 years after the event.) It is the interviewees' retrospective imparting of meaning to the past events in the light of the present concrete changes that has bound people's feelings of being powerful agents. As a community they have shared symbols of their capacity to influence and shape their shared reality.

**Tm's** words give clear expression:

**Tm: I learned that I have abilities... What is important to me I can accomplish. I wanted to leave my mark, do something significant as 'Mazcira' (then the newly elected secretary general of her kibbutz). I wanted to bring new values both internally and externally. Civil society has powers and they need to be directed. A vision is important – if you know where you want to go, you can.**

In her interview she also vividly recalls the sense or spirit of change:

**Tm: The council was transformed (into a body that) served the residents). The council has no reason to exist without the residents. (Now) the members of the kibbutz feel like 'owners'. As a resident I can go to the council and no longer feel dependent upon the 'yeshuv' (village) framework. I have begun to feel like a citizen of the country (with rights and obligations). (Service providers in the village could not get the information. If money/budget was requested they did not know if it was received or approved in the regional council. Kibbutz members have since learned that there were many things they could get.) The staff (Baale Tafkidim) in the villages gained access.**

Very evident from **Tm's** remarks was her feeling of power. Together with a small task force of six people she was able to transform their conceptualisation expressed in the R Document into a tangible reality. Her memory of the events reflects the sense of power to make things happen that changed her collective life and private life. (**Tm**

went back to complete an academic degree and subsequently opened a consulting business.)

As will be seen from the comments by the interviewees below, the sense of having power also changed in the eyes of the professional staff in the regional council and in the eyes of outside professionals who worked with the council.

What was particularly outstanding in the interviews with the professional staff was their linkage of their current ability to function as professionals to a process that began 16 years previously and one that for me (at least at the outset of this research) had ended 13 years earlier. The strategic planning process was not something that happened to them. It was theirs – they own it still today.

**Nat:** **The preparation** (of professional leadership - department heads and from the community as facilitators) **promoted dialogue. It enabled us to have influence** (over the process). **I could be a partner. I could influence the community leadership.**

**Tal:** **I** (as the community work professional) **entered** (joined) **the development planning staff** (headed by the regional municipal planner - town engineer) ... **a lever** (for promoting) **the social dynamics** (of development). **I gained access to a variety of other professional committees at a very high level – treatment-oriented services: psychology services, educational psych services, welfare, health, and the strategic planner** (of the regional council).

**Each time a new issue arose we worked at this level – for everyone it came out of the strategic process.**

**Ri:** **I remember the preparation exercise with SWOT** (training for the facilitators - professional staff and volunteers from the community) – **I had been in many training** (workshops), **but none in the area of visioning... it spoke to me.**

Most of the work of transforming public policy statements into operational programmes and services fell upon the professional staff of the regional council. Two aspects of their work there underwent a transformation: how they interacted and with whom the interaction changed.

First, they became important agents in initiating a new dialogue. Together with community leaders they took on the responsibility of being the co-facilitators of small group discussions in the various subject-oriented planning task forces. This meant going beyond their functional roles of service providers in specific areas (social services, engineering services, maintenance etc.) and becoming active participants in a much more exposed public regional dialogue.

Secondly it meant changing their way of working in their ongoing functional capacities. Their work became part of achieving a shared regional vision which they helped shape. They became linked to each other across professional lines (e.g. engineers with social workers) and committed to a shared future of their community. The professionals were both a force for change and its beneficiaries in gaining power and influence.

**Tal**, who was a community social worker in the kibbutz movement, spoke both for herself as a professional and how she saw the change for the residents in the region:

**Tal: The R Meeting was the beginning – it was empowering both for the service providers and for the service recipients... (we) go for it - it hasn't stopped.**

Her comment had two implications. First, she too linked the beginning of the change in power relations back to the R Gathering. Second, the process was empowering not only for community leaders such as **Tm**, but also for the professional level. Taking into consideration that this interview took place some 16 years after the event itself gave it importance for understanding it as symbolising a turning point in the region. The vision it embodied for the future is still strongly felt.

Certain events like the R Gathering come to be turning points, but it may very well be as much in retrospect as in the event itself. Their power comes from the interpretation of the event as much as the facts of the event.

**Mara**, who is on the staff of the regional Ministry of Interior, employed in service training and the organisational development centre (that serves MT) gave a professional outsider's perspective. (She was present at the R Gathering and has continuously worked with other regional councils in northern Israel.)

**Mara: It is hard to point out direct linkages (to the strategic planning process), but the meetings with public participation continued...(all the organisations, ministries, planners have to present before resident groups. They have input and say). Only afterwards does the council approve – (make decisions on programmes).**

Her comments were important again not for specifically referring to the R Gathering, but rather because she gave testimony of her view that the use of public forums continued to be an important mechanism for making ideas or plans explicit and

receiving a public mandate for action. This demanded making local government decisions based not only upon statutory authority and control, but decisions which had to be shared with the residents through various forums that enabled active input. The pattern of interaction – going to the public, gaining its support for action on the regional level - has become institutionalised. In this sense the R Gathering was not an isolated event, but rather the beginning.

This understanding of the (functional and social) value of public participation and inherent power-sharing was also very much a part of the professional-organisational ethos of the regional council. L, who headed the Sanitation Department, offered the rationale:

**L: There were not only sessions of the council members. There were meetings of the residents (that) connected them to what suited them: green, agriculture, suburbs..... (This interaction enabled) proper (systematic) decision-making ...being rural or urban... people had the opportunity to participate (in the decisions).**

His words "proper decision-making", give expression to the notion that this was the way it should be. Public participation in a municipal sanitation department's strategic decision-making certainly cannot be taken for granted as the norm. It was however precisely this view of reality and power sharing that has become the accepted convention in MT for over a decade.

#### **6.4. The role of political leadership**

The influence and role of political leadership in bringing about the change was a highly complex issue. An underlying question was whether the elected political leadership created the political culture or reflected the community's political context.

In this case it was quite clear that the newly elected mayor was not the initial catalyst for change. The impetus for change was related more to a feeling of dissatisfaction, which, when given voice by the assessment task force and mandated by the elected members of the regional council, led to the change in political leadership. As mentioned, the very acceptance by the elected representatives on the regional council of the assessment task force's preliminary document contributed to the former mayor's resignation.

What is equally clear, however, was the important role that political leadership played in leveraging the initial dissatisfaction and views articulated by the assessment task force into a new framework for cooperative collective action on the regional level.

**Nat – It was a big 'Mahapach' (turn around) - the entry of the new mayor.**

**Tm - The new mayor was smart and led the whole thing – a bulldozer.**

One of his (Y) first acts upon his selection by the full council as interim mayor (the previous mayor resigned mid-term) was to convene the R Gathering, which he did using the power of public office. The uniqueness of this act was not in the convening of a public meeting, which until the mid 1980s had been a fundamental part of community decision-making in the individual villages, but in doing so on the regional level. He changed the context not the specific practice. As Block points out:

Community occurs in part as a shift in context, the mental models we bring to our collective efforts. It is a new context that gives greater impact to the ways we work to make our communities better (2009, p. 29).

It was the changing of the context which has been the most significant role of the mayor's public leadership in initiating the creation of a regional community.

**Mara - Public participation** (at the regional level) **was very very new.** Y (the mayor) **brought this** (with him when he took office). **There was much more interest then than now.** (He in fact had no such experience in politics. He was a kibbutz member where community meetings of the kibbutz membership were the source of authority and power in the village).

**Despite the mayor's fears, he is very committed to resident involvement** – (now with the elections of 2005) **he does not even have competition.** (In the last two elections he did not have an opposing candidate – something that is not totally uncommon for incumbent mayors of regional councils.)

**Mok –** (The mayor undertook the) **strategic planning process** (to get a start) - **he learned from V, the mayor of G. region.** (He in fact brought his political colleague to council meetings to gain further support for this type of public management.)

These statements all gave recognition to the critical role that the mayor played by convening the R Gathering. With the support of the assessment task force, he initiated a dynamic of public dialogue on the regional level to which he was and is committed.

In the period between his selection (by the elected representative on the regional council to be interim mayor) and his entry into office Y joined the assessment task force and in consultation with them set forth his vision as mayor elect.

## ***Vision***

### *Putting the Western Galilee on the map*

- *To be a significant player on the national field*
- *To be a regional council with a high level of self-regard*
- *To be a point/place of attraction for tourists and holiday-makers*
- *To be a point/place of opportunity for local and international entrepreneurs*

### *Guidelines for strategic development*

1. *Protecting and nurturing natural resources and landscape*
2. *Strengthening the residents sense of belonging to the Western Galilee*
3. *Improving the quality of private and communal life*
4. *Creating a unique niche as a lever for developing the region*
5. *Insuring a balance between economic development and a communal quality of life*

### *The needed change*

**From** – *a regional council (the municipal organization) that provides service to a group (confederation) of agricultural villages*

**To** – *a regional council that focuses efforts leading processes of regional development and provides a variety of services to the residents.*

The vision statement as formulated by the mayor - 8/1994 (Translated by J.S.)

This type of thinking and acting - going from tacit acceptance to explicit change – first articulated by the assessment task force, became characteristic of the entire strategic planning process that was and still is being led by the regional council's mayor.

It is important to point out that the mayor's statement is a vision of the region not just of local government. The power of this vision statement was two-fold. First, it publicly expressed the need for making a change from the current tacit social reality to an explicitly new reality. Second, it was a statement of commitment being made by the person holding the publicly-elected position of mayor and thus carries with it the weight and status of the office. It had even more influence in that it came from the newly elected mayor, a political leader willing to risk being accountable to his community. The process of gaining a mandate for change from the broader public was his first act of office. His first formal decision as mayor of the regional council of was convening the R Gathering (Siegel, Working Notes MT 1992-1998).

The substance of his vision was a threefold combination of changes: 1) Viewing the role of local government not only as a service provider but as a force for mobilising resources to promote regional development; 2) Not only regulating and dispersing regional resources to each separate village-community but acting in concert towards collective regional development; and 3) Creating a sense of belonging and identity on a regional basis not only on the individual village level.

His vision is very much in keeping with Block's description of community transformation:

Community transformation calls for citizenship that shifts the context from a place of fear and fault, laws and oversight, corporation and "systems" and preoccupation with leadership to one of gifts, generosity, and abundance; social fabric and chosen accountability; and associational life and the engagement of citizens (2009, p. 73).

This was a critical point for understanding the change in power relations of the region. It reflected a change in the power relations between the political leadership, the professionals (in the regional council) and the residents. The then newly elected mayor saw himself as accountable to the broader public not only to the elected council representatives. Beyond being politically smart, it was recognition of the change in the power base. This was a particularly radical change given the fact that the mayor (at that point in time) was elected by the council not by the residents at large. (A few years later the law in Israel changed to direct popular elections.)

Understanding the importance of power sharing was not a historical carry-over from the kibbutz-dominated regional council of earlier years. It was very much an ongoing issue beyond the methodology of public forums for community input. It was part of the social-political consciousness of the region that was being incorporated into its governance structures. The (still) mayor of the regional council outlined his view of the importance of local village-community governance structures:

**Y. - I have proposed that there be local-village (municipal) councils in the kibbutzes** (separate from the cooperative structure of the kibbutz) – **I am looking for legal statutory grounding.** (These councils need to be strong so that people can have influence) – **I am not their kindergarten teacher. I also do not have control** (over the demographics and expansion that is taking place within each village-community).

He gave a pragmatic reason for his understanding of power sharing. It was a function of the limits of control and influence that the regional municipality had over village level demographic trends and development. It was not the regulatory control that is referred to here. (In fact the municipality has to approve all statutory plans for expansion and approving of building permits.) Rather it was his insight that control and power are not synonymous. He was not their kindergarten teacher. They were autonomous villages. Given the change in the social composition and economic base of the individual village-communities, he saw the need for a more formal governance structure at the village level that gave them the power to manage their affairs collectively beyond the older cooperative agricultural associations.

During the R Gathering the then newly-elected mayor put his reputation on the line by declaring that he would use his public position to ensure that agreements for the pooling of resources and the distribution of the additional leveraged resources would be honored (Siegel, Working Notes MT 1992-1998). This statement was not based solely upon statutory authority which could not legally dictate a policy of leveraging resources. It was made as a public commitment whose power and dependability would be judged based upon actual results.

This was a primary source of the mayor's power - the combination of personal skills with the structuring of collective interactions in which shared meanings are negotiated (such as the ongoing public forums in which development plans still today are discussed and ratified). In this sense power was invested in the community. The mayor had learned to use power not only in its controlling or constraining property, but also in its enabling property. "...power is the means of getting things done, very definitely enablement as well as constraint" (Giddens, 1986, p.175).

### 6.5. Summary - The power of people connecting in a new way

The notion of local government taking on the role of public convener was an explicit statement of the 'from --- to' document composed by the assessment task force.

- ***From working behind closed doors to encouraging public dialogue***

This role for a regional council was a radical change in the mode of municipal operation in Israel generally and certainly in rural local government as described earlier. Creating an opportunity for people from the different village-communities to meet - not only the formally elected members of each village on the regional council, but leaders at the community level - brought people together for a different type of interaction and created the opportunity for different connections amongst the participants, focusing on how to create a new vision for themselves collectively. As the mayor states:

**Y: The R Gathering brought the council members into the process. The V Zion meetings (work groups and plenary sessions) brought the general public into the process.**

Kibbutz members interacted with moshav members, Arab participants with Jewish participants, older with younger, men with women, and politicians with professionals.

The act of convening, bringing different people from the region together in a different context (geographically away from their day to day lives and meetings between people who would otherwise not interact with each other), in and of itself contributed to the atmosphere and dynamic of changing the existing collective reality of the region. The different voices of the community could be heard and given public recognition. The assessment task force itself was given a public platform upon which it could renegotiate the meanings of the community's collective reality of functioning and managing their resources.

This type of convening can be understood by looking at them as "gatherings" as used by Giddens:

Gatherings refer to assemblages of people comprising two or more persons in contexts or co-presence...Gatherings presume the mutual reflective monitoring of conduct in and through co-presence. The contextuality of gatherings is vital, in a very intimate and integral fashion, to such processes of monitoring. Context includes the physical environment, of interaction but is not something merely 'in

which' interaction occurs. Aspects of context, including the temporal order of gestures and talk, are routinely drawn upon by actors in constituting communication. The importance of this for the formulation of 'meaning' in gestures and in talk, as Garfinkel has done more than anyone else to elucidate, can scarcely be exaggerated (1986 p. 71).

In this sense the region changed as a collective by virtue of the way the regional council called people together first for the R Gathering, then for V Zion meeting, and today for the many other regional meetings. It has become part of the regional governance mission.

By this type of convening by the local government the lines of communication were changed from being a vertical process between governing and governed, to a horizontal dialogue within the community – residents, professionals, and elected leaders. This has been a proactive dialogue type of convening as **Mara** states:

**Mara: The regional council actively links the residents to each other.**

In many ways it was a process of cooperators mutually reinforcing other cooperators, i.e. cooperators joining together with other cooperators. Planning teams from the different rural communities came together to work and solve joint problems relating to social services, infrastructure and economics. Not only was cooperation easily identifiable as the more beneficial strategy of action, but people, who wanted to cooperate were also easy to identify.

Small groups of cooperators worked together. Here again Axelrod describes the dynamic:

The problem is that in a world of unconditional defection, a single individual who offers cooperation cannot prosper unless others are around him who will reciprocate. On the other hand cooperation can emerge from small clusters of discriminating individuals as long as these individuals have at least a small proportion of their interactions with each other. So there must be some clustering of individual who use strategies with two properties; the strategies will be the first to cooperate, and they will discriminate between those who respond to the cooperation and those who do not (1984, p.175).

This process of mutual reinforcement can also be understood using Skryms' (2004) concept of basins of attraction. The strategy of the initial task force was cooperation-oriented. They attracted other cooperators and established an increasingly cooperation-dominated basin of attraction. Skryms describes the dynamic in game theory terms. Stag hunters (cooperative hunting) associate only with other (dependable) stag hunters. Hare (individual hunting) hunters associate with each other and with stag hunters, but stag hunters will not join hare hunters (whose individual hunting has a lower payoff than cooperative hunting). This tips the balance in favour of payoffs to stag hunters.

Looking at the strategic planning process in this manner helped to understand a recurring theme in the interviews. People often said that although they may have learned something new, the importance of the strategic planning process was in bringing together people who shared the desire to work cooperatively.

**Nat:** (The strategic process) **put into words what was in my view** (thinking) ... **it created a dynamic of dialogue about the Moatza** (council) (referring here to the region not the organisation) **together...it did not change people ...it gave people the chance to express themselves**

The change process in many ways was primarily on the level of how the region functioned collectively and much less what people learned individually. It was very much a process of identifying and connecting to people who already shared a similar perspective or social reality (in this case the desire to cooperate) that had not previously attained collective legitimation.

By its very nature of being a planning process for the future of the region it brought together people from different communities and with different roles (elected officials, professionals, community leaders, residents from different backgrounds, men, women, and different age groups). It afforded an opportunity for people, already interested in a shared regional future, who otherwise would have no connections, to interact with each other.

**Tal: It exposed me to opportunities. It was a lever for meetings of residents and other (community) processes.**

**Tm: (referring to the outcome of the V Zion meetings) New pipelines were opened – the clogged ones were opened. There is a tremendous amount of strength in the region. A process like this creates links... (when I later led a women's forum I again discovered this). I made new connections.**

The invitation itself to participate in the strategic process was a call for regional cooperation. The convening role was important not only for the community members but also for the professional staff. It became part of the ongoing nature and way in which the regional council works and has structured itself organisationally.

**Ar: The strategic process gave me the platform to present my needs and my work.** (I had forums in which to present - the 'Eshkolot' – the interdepartmental management clusters of the regional council which are still the structure today). **The process (enabled) me to meet people and understand (their views).** (I came into contact both with individual residents and with representatives of the settlements.)

It was the creation of opportunities for people who would otherwise not interact to meet, that fostered the dynamics of people being able to bring together their individual resources to promote collective well being. They shared their particular concerns and common interests.

**Ri**, who initially participated as a community leader from his kibbutz (and later became a professional in the regional council), gives expression to this opportunity to connect to new people:

**Ri: I learned about the Upper Galilee strategic process** (in which Yoel Siegel was the consultant). **I had prior experience in organising community meetings. What was interesting, was people... overall I met new people.**

'Met new people' is not an outcome to be taken for granted. Putting people from different communities with different ethnic and ideological affiliations in the same room does not necessarily lead to new relationships and shared understandings. What became evident from the interviews was the evolution of a norm of dialogue that grew out of working in small mixed groups around a common concern.

**Tal: It gave legitimation ...the norm of working in staff groups** (professional and mixed professional-resident) **...I would be happier if it was even more.**

The type of convening that took place in MT can be further understood by using Wenger's term of "mutual engagement." For him communities are a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognisable as competence. He goes on to describe that

...mutual engagement involves not only our competence, but the competence of others. It draws upon what we do and what we know as well as our ability to connect meaningfully to what we don't do and what we don't know- that is to the contributions of others... it is more important to know how to give and receive help than to try to know everything yourself (Wenger, 1998, p. 76).

The purpose of convening the residents was not to explain to them what the initial assessment task force had decided was best for the community, but to engage them and mobilise their competences for mutual understanding and joint endeavors – making things happen. Here convening was structured as a process of collective interpretation making the tacit (Polanyi, 1966) explicit, reshaping it, and getting a public mandate for change.

This was an experience of empowered individual and collective learning.

## **Chapter 7. What About the Experience of Participation in the Planning Process was Significant to those Involved?**

In chapter 6 I looked at how the community development process was initiated and in particular at how, through the act of community convening, the initiators of change were able to move from personal insights to gaining explicit public acknowledgment and the mandate for change. In this chapter I examine the characteristics and nature of participation in the overall strategic planning process and how it contributed to the creation of a regional community capable of functioning effectively as a collective.

### **7.1. Community-led participation**

It is critical at the outset of this chapter to underscore the particular character of the convening and structuring of the participatory process that took place in MT. Unlike other planning processes where public input or consumer participation was integrated into a planning process or development process instigated and led by forces outside of the community (national government, international development agencies and others), (Cook, and Kothari, 2001), here the outside agencies and professionals were the ones who were invited to participate (Siegel, Working Notes MT 1992-1998).

A community leader, **Tm**, was the initiator. Though formally a political leader by virtue of her being on the regional council, she essentially acted in her capacity as a community leader (elected social manager) of her kibbutz. From the outset she understood that governance changes in the regional council were in essence a change in the way the region would act collectively, and therefore the community had to be actively engaged in this process of change.

Although professional services have been used to translate the community's goals into statutory plans and operational projects, the planning teams in different policy areas (as described in the section on the context) were locally led and community dominated (Siegel, Working Notes MT 1992-1998).

In this sense, the participatory process here was the opposite of being a technique for getting public input. Participation and community ownership were the foundations of the strategic planning process. It was the professionals who gave input to the community.

This was especially evident when looking at the way in which the public gatherings – the R Gathering (1994), the V Zion public strategic planning meetings (1995), and the statutory plan (1999) - were designed. Even when professionals were given more direct input (1999) it was under the auspices of a steering committee composed of active public leadership and municipal professional staff (Collected Documents of the MT Strategic Planning Unit 1995 – 2010).

These different public planning processes were all designed in a manner that included 1) Locally led small groups - planning and policy teams in different functional areas e.g. education, economics, agriculture, etc.; 2) Plenary sessions of all the participants in the small groups, plus open public meetings; and finally 3) Formal approval by the elected representatives on the regional municipal council, most of whom also participated in the small group teams. The role of outside professionals was as resource people (Siegel, Working Notes MT 1992-1998).

Thus the strategic process in MT was not designed as a planning process that used techniques of public participation. Rather, active engagement of the community was the underlying principle. The strategic planning process was inherently a community development process owned by community leaders and residents.

The interviewees presented conflicting views of who actually controlled the participation process. In **Zik's** view almost complete control was in the hands of the facilitator (myself).

**Zik: To the best of my memory you (Yoel) led the process. The others were (participating) partners.**

In contrast, **Tm** gave the most significant weight to the original assessment task force that initiated the process.

**Tm: The task force with the (backing) of the facilitator set the rules** (for the change process including public involvement) **not the regional council.**

The mayor (**Y**) decisively saw the ownership and control of the participatory process as belonging to the steering committee (which led the strategic planning process over a period of four years beginning immediately after the R Gathering).

**Y: The steering committee set the rules of the game.**

They all were accurate at different points in time and from different perspectives. The power lay not in the hands of one institution or group, but in the initiative itself. Once the task force began its work with formal recognition, and the R Gathering gave a public mandate to establish a steering committee to lead the next phase of the planning process, the locus of legitimation did not come from governmental authority, but from public support. This became a self-reinforcing dynamic during the entire strategic planning process. The role of facilitator was to help design the methodology of participation in keeping with the directions set by the community, not to control.

The importance of ownership and control over the rules of public participation is well stated by Wenger:

Because the negotiation of meaning is the convergence of participation and reification, controlling both participation and reification afford control over the kinds of meaning that can be created in a certain context and kinds of person that participants can become (1998 p. 93).

The ability of the initiators of change to influence the way their region functioned and to consider a different possible social reality was rooted in their having control over the participatory processes and not relinquishing them to outside experts or agencies. As will be seen below this control was used to foster participation in an inclusive manner.

## 7.2. Rule setting

**Ri: There is a rule that any subject that (significantly) affects the communities is presented to the public – information, involvement.**

Again, the adoption of participatory democracy for making decisions, already something built into the structure of these cooperative rural village-communities, was not striking, but its institution on a regional level in a manner that fostered the continuing negotiation of shared meanings was of considerable import.

Much of what transpired in MT can be viewed as an example of Ostrom's (1990) institutional approach to the dilemmas of common resource pool management. The case is particularly interesting in that it is a local community's self-organising process, in which it used its local governmental authority not as an external sanctioning force or regulating agency but as part of the community consensus-building and rule-creating process.

It was both a de facto and an avowed change in who was authorised to set the rules of interaction in the region as a collective. As such it was a change in the constitutional-choice rules as conceptualised by Ostrom (1990). Public affirmation through open dialogue, in which both the utilitarian and the interpretive aspects of new rules were negotiated, became the legitimised accepted process for rule-setting that affected collective action of a regional scope.

As described earlier **Tm**, as a community leader, and **Nat**, as a professional, spoke of their sense of empowerment by virtue of being able to have direct access to the rule-setting process. The implicit message of public engagement, in the setting of operational rules that governed the use of common/shared resources, was that the community had the power to create new mechanisms for using and leveraging its collective resources.

The residents of the region as a whole chose to change the structuring of their interactions from a situation where each individual community received its share of the common resources – regional council (municipal) budgets, government land, etc. regulated by the local authority - to one in which the communities pooled and leveraged their common resources into a mutually beneficial infrastructure and

services suited to their particular needs and aspirations (see chapter 8 for a description of the mechanisms/programmes).

The community, led by the regional council, recently (during 2010) underwent its fourth strategic planning process. The significance of this process was the continuity of the constitutional–choices rules (Ostrom, 1990) i.e., active public involvement in setting the operational rules. The operational rules entailed specific mechanisms and programmes that were formally changed and adapted to the changing realities of the rural community within the broader context of rural Israel.

In this sense the rules of participation in the strategic process could be seen as mechanisms of **control over their social and political resources** or in Giddens' (1986) term, **authoritative resources**. They had both a normative/sanctioning function and an interpretive function. The expectation and current convention is that public participation through regional gatherings and community-dominated taskforces give control to regional decision-making to a broad spectrum of community groups who can mobilise their collective and individual social resources.

The awareness and power of being able to collectively define what their community should be like has been critical. The functional goals themselves have been secondary. In fact, they have actually changed over time. (The fourth strategic plan of 2010 had different functional goals than those that were set forth in 1995.) (Collected Documents of the MT Strategic Planning Unit 1995 – 2010). But the process for setting goals through a process of collective reinterpretation and decision-making remained constant.

In many aspects we can understand the community building process and the evolution of regional cooperation that took place in MT by looking at it as the creation of collective rules as used by Giddens (1986, p.18) - the "constitution of *meaning*" and the "*sanctioning* of modes of social conduct".

In this sense community-building is being explored here as the process of setting the rules for interactions that included three dimensions:

- The process of negotiating shared meanings
- The attainment of social esteem and a sense of belonging
- The development of a commitment to shared goals and mutual caring

These were not separate discrete processes, but very intertwined, I have explored the dynamics of each one separately and then examined their integration using Giddens' concept of structuration.

### **7.3. Negotiating shared meanings**

The convening role of community and political leadership can be understood to be the creation of opportunities for negotiating new shared meanings and giving them clear expression. This was an important source of their power in MT. Giddens' conceptualisation is very useful here:

Much less familiar, but of essential importance to the engendering of power, is the storage of authoritative resources. Storage is a medium of 'binding' time-space involving the level of action, the knowledgeable management of a projected future, and recall of an elapsed past.... All depend for their retrieval upon the recall capacities of the human memory but also upon skills of interpretation that may be possessed by only a minority within any given population (1986, p. 261).

The leaders of the strategic process are those agents who crystallised the shared meanings that evolved in the different encounters and gatherings that they have structured, which go far beyond those of the strategic process. They are the ones who interpreted what happened in a shared language. They acted as collective memory repositories. It was done by public declaration (vision statements and other policy statements) and the approval or disapproval of programmes in public forums.

In discussing the forces that led to initiating the changes in MT I have used Giddens' concept of discursive consciousness, the ability to explicitly put into words and give public expression to private insights about the community's social behaviour. This was the interpretative dimension of the rule-setting process that took place in MT.

The formulation of shared meanings that took place in the small groups and the way in which different people experienced this process can be further understood through Mead's conceptualisation of meaning, which process he describes as "taking the attitudes of the other persons" (1934, p. 69).

If the individual can act in this way, and the attitude which he calls out in himself can become a stimulus to him for another act, we have meaningful conduct. Where the response of the other person is called out and becomes a stimulus to control his actions then he has the meaning of the other person's act in his own experience. That is the general mechanisms of what we term "thought," for in order that thought may exist there must be symbols, vocal gestures generally, which arouse in the individual himself the response which he is calling out in the other, and such that from the point of view of that response he is able to direct his later conduct (1934, p.73).

Mead goes to write:

For to repeat, objects are in a genuine sense constituted with the social process of experience, by the communication and mutual adjustment of behaviour among the individual organisms which are involved in that process and which carry it on (1934 p. 78).

For Mead "meaning" clearly grows out of social interaction. It is not a static external objective but something that involves mutual adjustment. Here is the basis not only for understanding the creation of meaning through interaction, but the structuring of interactions by the "individual organisms involved in that process and which carry it on".

There is also a great deal of overlap with Wenger's concept of negotiated meanings.

In this process, negotiating meaning entails both interpretation and action. In fact, this perspective does not imply a fundamental distinction between interpreting and action, doing and thinking or understanding and responding. All are part of the ongoing process of negotiating meaning. This process always generates new circumstance for further negotiation and further meanings. It constantly produces new relations with and in the world. The meaningfulness of our engagement in the world is not a state of affairs but a continual process of renewed negotiation (1998, p. 54).

He looked at the negotiation of meaning as a duality composed of participation and reification. "Through the negotiation of meaning, it is the interplay of participation and reification that makes people and things what they are" (Wenger, 1998, p. 70). There is a reciprocal relation between people and "things" in Mead's sense as quoted above. It is the dialectic interplay or reflexive processes by which we create social constructs.

In it was the interaction process in small groups where people could undertake the experience of taking the attitude of other people and could negotiate their shared meanings.

What became clear from the interviews was that people came to the process with skills, knowledge, values and world views. In the small groups they could negotiate shared meanings (understandings).

**Zik: More than anything else the (planning) process gave the opportunity to connect (with people from the region)... to know the people much better. We waste less energy on non-sense... more concrete (results). We understand each other without having to explain so much – we know what each other is thinking... (we are) of one mind.**

The discussions in the small groups were intimate enough for people "to know people much better" and understand one another. They were social spaces in which people could develop a common language and a short-hand - *We "waste less energy" on nonsense*. "Nonsense" in this case became quite literal. It was replaced with "sense and understanding".

The small groups were the forums in which people could bring their personal knowledge and make their individual insights public. It was a way for the community to create its shared knowledge. Each person could argue his case in a context of an intimate dialogue.

**Tal**: (The process) **enabled me to 'argue'** (make my case).

On this level the strategic planning process was an opportunity structured for forming shared interpretations of the world in which the participants lived.

**Nat: Ri** (the current director of the MPU) **was then a representative of his kibbutz steering committee. We spoke the same language. The steering committee** (that oversaw the strategic process after the R Gathering) **was very significant.**

The extent to which dialogue became a central part of the region's functioning can be seen in the mayor's unequivocal statement:

**Y: Dialogue with the people is the basics. I am at eight meetings with and in the communities every week including weekends: 30 communities every month!**

In part it was the public nature of the small group gatherings that focused the dialogue on shared issues, and in part it was the invitation itself to participate that enabled interested self-selected people to work together to create a shared future. To a great extent however I believe that it was the expectations of an open dialogue that grew out of the R Gathering which set the tone for the rest of the strategic process.

**Mara: The first meeting (R Gathering) left a very good feeling. People had the opportunity to express things.** (In public they could freely present opinions, raise issues, and express hesitations and reservations.)

The members of the assessment task force who initiated the R Gathering led discussions in parallel small groups. They themselves had gone through a process of negotiating new shared meanings as a small team. Over the course of many weeks they came to a common understanding that the existing rules of collective action were no longer suited to the changed realities of the region. They choose to replicate this way of interacting as the structure for the R Gathering.

The potential of small groups as a forum for negotiating new shared meanings is well expressed by Block.

The small group is the bridge between our own individual existence and the larger community. In the small group discussion we discover that our own concerns are more universal than we imagined. This discovery that we are not alone, that others can at least understand what is on our mind if not agree with us, is what creates the feeling of belonging. When this occurs in the same place and time in the presence of a larger community the collective possibility begins to take form and have legs.

The power of the small group cannot be overemphasized. Something almost mystical, certainly mysterious, occurs when citizens sit in a small group, for they often become more authentic and personal with each other there than in other settings (2009, p. 95).

The discussions in small groups often in parallel 'gatherings' (again using Giddens' term) provided a context in which the residents, professionals and political leaders could discuss and share their concerns, aspirations, and understandings of their collective situation in face-to-face encounters outside of their normal routines over a period of months. Through such intimate interactions they were able to compose their

thoughts and share their interpretations of their socially constructed reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1967).

This type of structuring enabled the participants to be actively engaged, to freely negotiate and renegotiate shared meanings in small groups. The fact that these small group meetings were led by local professionals and community leaders rather than by outside planning experts created an intimate safe atmosphere for dialogue and sharing views. It enabled the evolution of a common language, of shared understandings.

Setting forth the plan for the future of the regional community was not done by experts explaining to the community or getting community input. It was the different community groups and villages that were involved in a process of negotiating their shared future, what it would look like in their terms, what they expected from each other, and to what they were committed.

The power of this type of structuring into small groups and then larger gatherings is colourfully described by Gladwell (2002) in his book *The Tipping Point*. In the chapter on the "The Power of Context (part two)" he gives some examples of how social epidemics are composed of many small epidemics. He begins with the understanding that the capacity of people to have meaningful interactions is limited to a relatively small number of people. Beyond that they become overloaded. But it is not the recognition of the social influence of small group interaction (which has been explored over decades by social psychologists) that is revealing here. What is important here is his identifying the power of change that comes from many small groups that are in some way linked together, working on similar agendas in parallel.

In MT small groups often worked in parallel in different rooms in the same venue, but on various issues or tasks. Periodically they came together for joint reporting, feedback, and formal policy decisions/agreements (Siegel, Working Notes MT 1992-1998). This was the context for the interaction of knowledgeable agents to construct their social reality.

As Block points out this type of interaction combines the intimacy of small groups with the power of being part of something beyond the individual group meetings.

Small groups have the most leverage when they meet as part of a larger gathering. At these moments, citizens experience the intimacy of the small circle and are simultaneously aware that they are part of a larger whole that share their concern (2009, p 93).

Over the course of a year, the small group understandings and positions became part of the regional understandings and were integrated into the first strategic plan (1996).

The presentation, negotiation, and integration of the different teams' recommendations in large public sessions of all the teams and the public at large led not only to a comprehensive set of functional goals and guidelines for the region's development, but primarily to the ability to collectively shape a shared future for their community. They gained force and power by virtue of the consensus-building process out of which they grew. And finally they were ratified by the decisions of the regional council.

The impact of how the strategic planning process was structured can also be seen in Block's description of small groups working in co-presence.

We focus on the structure of how we gather and the context in which our gatherings take place. Collective change occurs when individuals and small diverse group engage one another in the presence of many others doing the same. It comes from the knowledge that what is occurring in one space is similarly happening in other spaces... (2009, p. 75).

This design of public participation in planning, which still is in operation today (Collected Documents of the MT Strategic Planning Unit 1995 – 2010), was, in effect, a continuation of the initial task force's way of functioning. It reflected their understanding of the need for combining in-depth work in a small intimate group over a period of months with broad public involvement (the R Gathering - the first large regional meeting) for changing the vision of the region as a collective and the way it was to govern itself.

It was not the community developer or the funding agency that empowered them; it was the participation in community-building that was empowering. Participation was a prerequisite. The rules or structuring of participation have tacitly expanded people's control over resources. This stemmed from their controlling the interactions in which their shared meanings were negotiated and legitimised.

#### **7.4. Social esteem and belonging**

One of the most critical issues facing MT, as with other rural regions, was the fragmentation between communities based upon the different settlement movement affiliation of each village and its differing socio-economic status. In their earlier history the settlement movements had tremendous ideological and practical influence over the way each village managed itself as a collective. This ranged from political party affiliation to the monetary value of labour assigned by the movement to kibbutz members' participation in the cooperative work force. Although this had already been weakened at the time of the strategic planning process, the influence of movement affiliations had been very significant frameworks in which social realities were negotiated by people living in the collective village-communities. As **Tm** expressed, this vertical association to the different ideological settlement movements ceased to be the anchor of collective understandings and, in MT, needed to be replaced with a common language on the horizontal regional level.

**Tm: There were three organisational and ideological frameworks in the region: Shomar Hatzir (politically left wing kibbutz movement) Tak"m (politically centralist kibbutz movement) and the moshaves (household based rural communities). Why should there be different kindergartens (in each type of community). Why should we be speaking a 'different language'?**

As described above the small group planning teams were composed of people with common areas of concern on the regional level (education, agriculture, etc.). However these groups were far from homogenous. They included the whole mix of the region: kibbutz members and moshav members with different ideological affiliations, Jewish residents and Arab residents, men and women, people from villages with different socio-economic standing, professionals and residents. Working together required mutual respect amongst the participants.

Again it is **Tm**'s words that gave expression to the type of interaction that took place in MT, one that is in stark contrast to the feeling of insult that she had suffered from the former mayor's behaviour towards her. **Tm** describes the work of the initial task force

**Tm: I had the Chutzpa (the nerve). The moshaves were willing to join in (in the task force). I originally came from a moshav. We met "moshavniks" (a person from a moshav), people from the Tak"m, and people from the Shomar Hatzir (ideological kibbutz settlement movements). G (from a moshav) said 'you (Tm) speak to us 'at eye level' (as equals) not from a position of superiority. We come from the same backgrounds.**

**Tm** had an identity that crossed group lines. She was the elected social manager of her kibbutz, but she had grown up on a moshav. She was able to bridge not only the identity and sometimes ideological differences amongst the members of the task force from different kibbutz movements but also to close the gap between them and moshav members who had often felt denigrated by the ideological domination of the kibbutz representatives on the regional council.

In looking back at the initiative for the strategic process the initial task force set the pattern of interaction predicated upon reciprocal esteem that became the model for participation in the various small group planning teams and committees which worked together over the months in the strategic process.

Honneth's conceptualisation of social solidarity describes the type of recognition and mutual caring that emerged from the strategic planning process in MT:

... the experience of being socially esteemed is accompanied by a felt confidence that one's achievement or abilities will be recognized as 'valuable' by other members of society... To the extent to which every member of a society is in a position to esteem himself or herself, one can speak of a state of societal solidarity.

In modern societies, therefore social relations of symmetrical esteem between individualized (and autonomous) subjects represent prerequisite for solidarity. In this sense, to esteem one another symmetrically means to view one another in light of values that allow the abilities and traits of the other to appear significant for shared praxis. Relationships of this sort can be said to be cases of 'solidarity', because they inspire not just passive tolerance but felt concern for what is individual and particular about the other person. For only to the degree to which I actively care about the development of the other's characteristics (which seem foreign to me) can our shared goals be realized (Honneth, 1995, p.129).

Here are two points upon which I will expand in exploring the dynamics of this case. First is the importance of recognising the other. The second point is the interplay between the setting of shared goals and the sense of mutual caring.

Honneth links the issue of social esteem and care with the ethical basis of recognition that goes beyond the normative values which communities assign to the behaviours of their constituent members. This issue, however, is beyond the scope of this research and I will only refer to it in general terms.

The interaction between the members of each planning team enabled them to clarify their guiding values in an intimate setting in several meetings (ten to fifteen depending upon the complexity of the subject area and the teams' composition).

The discussions in the assessment task force that took the form of a dialogue amongst equals became the model for the structuring of the interactions within the small group planning teams. This perhaps exemplifies what Block meant in his statement. "The conversation is not so much about the future for the community, but is the future itself" (Block, 2009, p. 102).

In these small groups neither the professional staff nor the politically elected representatives had a higher status than the residents. All members had equal say. As noted, these task forces were usually co-chaired by a resident and a professional from the regional council. Outside facilitators were resource people called in only as necessary by the group.

This paradoxically did not detract from the power of the formal decision-making body, the regional council as a statutory governance body. It loosened authoritative control but created more regional power. The mayor was particularly sensitive to this distinction.

**Y: The primary force is the council – it (regional development) is only possible by involving the communities.**

One of my most lasting impressions from the interview process was the consistency of this statement and action over a 16-year period. This is the same person who, as mayor elect, joined the assessment task force and now 16 years later restated his

commitment which is likewise backed up by his and the senior staff's annual meeting with the villages. This statement was not a revelation, but a simple expression of the way the region manages its development today.

It was an acknowledgement of the power of community participation – participation in which people could achieve social recognition through conversations amongst equals.

**Ri: Y positioned himself quickly – it took a few years to conciliate the moshaves... there is a new generation... there is no longer a sense of deprivation ... Y invested (heavily) to create a sense of equality.**

In many ways the assessment task force, which established the norm for the other different working groups in the strategic process, functioned very much as described by Block:

We have conversations where the focus is on the communal possibility and there is a shift in ownership of this place, even though others are in charge. We structure these conversations so that diversity of thinking and dissent are given space, commitments are made without barter, and gifts of each person and our community are acknowledged and valued (2009, p. 93).

This was the type of interaction which took place in the assessment task force. It later became the normative form of dialogue for the steering committee (which included members of the assessment task force, other elected councilors, and professional staff) that managed the strategic planning process following the R Gathering.

It is important to highlight two elements of this type of interaction. First is the "acknowledgement and value" bestowed upon the contribution of the group members. They are accorded social esteem. Second, and closely related, is the offering of contributions as gifts, not in anticipation of returns. This combination is the underpinning of social solidarity as used by Honneth. It exemplifies the experience of social esteem that is recognition of the other as a subject beyond the exchange/barter value of his or her contribution. As **Zik** stated, everyone contributes.

**Zik: (The process) strengthened my sense of belonging and our ability to speak. Every 'little one' contributes to the joint effort. There is no one 'genius'; everyone contributes.**

This fosters a very different kind of trusting relationship from that of economic exchange. It is important to note that words the "everyone contributes" were not so much an idealisation of the situation (certainly not everyone contributes), but an expression of the feeling of mutual giving and caring that permeated the different gatherings of the strategic planning process.

**Nat's words: The strategic process gave me the opportunity to express my ideas ... I was no longer alone.... a partner... a sense of belonging.**

These words were not only an expression of feeling, but a statement of being seen – being esteemed. She was not alone in her beliefs and aspirations. They were socially validated. In this sense she was 'recognised' as a social being. She was viewed "in light of values that allow the abilities and traits of the other to appear significant for shared praxis" (Honneth, 1995, p. 129). She could trust others to be responsive to, rather than denigrating of, her needs and aspirations.

What was central here was not the expectation of an immediate return from participation (which is important in its own right), but rather the social interaction through which people could affirm themselves and their integrity.

For many participants the strategic process was a reinforcement of who they were. They could now bring themselves to the regional level.

**Vrm:** (To begin with) **we had a shared world view** (being) **collective communities,** (Kibbutzes) **common life style.**

For **Et** it was a more functional connection:

**Et:** (I was concerned with the future of young people in the region.) **I met N,** (who became the deputy mayor). **N is a concerned personality and a personal example** (as a resident), **cares** (about) **residents, young adults, and has done** (things).

**Et** could search out and find someone who shared her concern and make things happen. This was a particularly important statement given the fact that in general **Et** felt like an outsider and unaccepted, as will be seen later from her other comments, but joining together with people sharing the same interest was an affirmative experience. Her comments here are closer to Putnam's (1993) concept of generalised

reciprocity than Honneth's (1995) concept of social solidarity, but the sense of being connected to her own possibilities is the main point.

**Et: The business women's forum opened up new doors.... You don't know exactly what will come of them** (the contacts). (Maybe I will need them in the future for myself or for those with whom I am in touch). **It's multilevel marketing.**

However, it is Block's conceptualisation that best summarises how mutual recognition fostered the development of a regional community in MT:

This is the value of a network or network of networks which is today's version of a social movement. All this needs to be followed up with the usual actions and problem solving, **but it is in those moments when citizen engage one another, in communion and witness of others that something collective shifts.** (My emphasis) (2009, p.75).

### **7.5. Shared goals and the commitment to mutual wellbeing – being better off**

In this section I will look at the process of developing shared goals and a commitment to mutual wellbeing. One of the most important insights of this research is the understanding of the critical intertwining of these two elements and the development of social trust. It is Honneth's insight that reaching common goals is predicated upon the commitment to mutual care. He specifically links the development of shared goals, inherent in the strategic planning process (Sanoff, 2000), with the recognitions of others as worthy of esteem. "For only to the degree to which I actively care about the development of the others' characteristics (which seem foreign to me) can our shared goals be realized" (Honneth, 1995, p. 129).

By definition the initiative to undertake a strategic planning process has built into it a process of setting goals. This was clearly the case in MT.

*The regional council was to leverage local resources to mobilise governmental and philanthropic funds channeling them to meet regionally agreed upon goals* (excerpt of the 'from --- to' R document).

The processes of reaching agreement on a shared future involved going beyond the specific needs and interests of individual village-communities or specific sectors like kibbutz type villages, or agricultural interests. It centered on the commitment for

mutual wellbeing. This is already clear in the R document:

The regional council was to ensure the provision of community services to **all residents regardless of the village in which they lived** and develop regional services when they afforded a relative advantage to separate services in each village. (Excerpt of the from – to R document, my emphasis).

In a different context this statement could be seen as a platitude of almost any local government agency in the world. But in MT it reflected the change from each village managing its own affairs, with no commitment to the wellbeing of other residents in the area, to one in which the region initiated a change in the way it managed its joint resources. MT was transformed into a regional community in which there was public commitment to the wellbeing of "all residents regardless of the village in which they lived".

As mentioned earlier, part of the work in small groups, including the sessions of the R Gathering, was the process of developing shared meanings. This specifically included understanding the significance of the principle of ensuring everyone's wellbeing. **Zik** speaks of the way that this statement was interpreted and translated into collective action. His comment has two parts:

**Zik:** (The region has gone through a change) **from each community alone to cooperation... it rains on us all.**

He expressed the realisation that people no longer are individually protected in their separate communities. "It rains on us all". The reality had changed and people recognised that they were in this rural region together. Concomitantly the way resources were allocated also changed.

**Zik continues:** **Pooling gives us all more** (instead of) **funds for** (village) **A and not for B. Kibbutz S** (the mayor's village) **gets like everyone** (else).

An important factor contributing to social solidarity has been the mayor's insistence on working towards agreed upon goals for collective wellbeing rather than dividing up the pie according to partisan interests. The head of the strategic planning unit made this quite clear:

**Ri: Z** (the former deputy mayor who left the MT Council) **symbolised the end of the old political culture** ("divided camp" politics between the moshaves and kibbutzes). **Y** (the mayor) **is very strict about the "rules." He demands "standards" ...not willing to get political benefits... no compromises. This is annoying... He does not capitulate... (and) he has gained people's trust.**

This feeling of working together as a group for common well being was also voiced by **Tm**.

**Tm:** (We learned to act as a group representing the residents (of the region) not as representatives of specific villages.) **There were no manipulators – rather a naïve group; that is the way the (previous) mayor looked at us.**

It is important to emphasise that the commitment to mutual wellbeing was not divorced from instrumental consideration of being better off, but that people shared a social commitment or, more accurately, a feeling of social solidarity that is best expressed in Honneth's (1995, p. 129) terms "not just passive tolerance but felt concern for what is individual and particular about the other person".

## **7.6. Summary**

Reaching agreement for collective wellbeing is a proactive process of negotiating shared meanings in a changing social, urban, economic, and political context. In MT it was the face-to-face intimacy of the small groups and the large public meetings that were the contextual organisation of the encounters of the strategic process. Here the discursive consciousness of negotiating shared goals and meanings interfaced with the daily concerns of those engaged in the strategic planning process. In these encounters talk was the process of interpretation and reinterpretation of meaning. The commitment to mutual concern was explicit both in the dialogue which was focused upon designing a shared future and in the development and management policies that were formally adopted (and then transformed into tangible joint endeavours at the regional level, as will be elaborated in the next chapter).

The initial vision statement and the subsequent updates were primarily expressions of shared values and understandings of people in MT as a region. These shared meanings came to define the boundaries of the community, not only the common instrumental services and infrastructures. As Cohen states "community depends upon its symbolic construction and embellishment".

“In the face of this variability of meaning, the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through manipulation of its symbols. The reality and efficacy of the community’s boundary – and, therefore, of the community itself – depends upon its symbolic construction and embellishment” (Cohen, 1985, p. 15).

Community here is the set of people who tacitly or overtly accepted the new rules of interaction and/or who were involved in the creation of new symbolic meanings that stemmed from their interactions.

These boundaries overlap with the physical, ideological, and functional demarcations of the regional municipality. The determining and delimiting factor was the shared discursive and practical consciousness as used by Giddens, and manifested in sets of rules of interaction whose meanings were negotiated in the specific social context of MT. They were produced and transformed on an ongoing basis.

This was a process of creating a regional community by reinterpreting and shaping their shared reality as a collective. It was and is an integral part of how they have structured their patterns of interaction as a collective and socially construct their reality.

As such, the strategic planning process in the case of MT can be seen as the creation of sets of opportunities for interactions that enabled the negotiation of shared social meanings, the building of relations of mutual recognition, and a commitment to a shared future.

What creates an alternative future is acting on the belief that context relatedness and language are the point and traditional problem solving needs to be subordinated and postponed until context, relatedness, and language have shifted. In this thinking, problem solving becomes a means and not an end in itself (Block, 2009, p. 80).

In the next chapter I will explore how this shaped the collective mechanisms for the members' individual and collective wellbeing socially and instrumentally.

## **Chapter 8. The Evolution of Cooperation at the Regional Level: The Interplay between Social Recognition and Utilitarian Payoffs**

The focus of this chapter is on understanding what contributed to transforming the strategy of cooperation into organisational mechanisms in MT. The question that I wish to explore here is what contributed to the creation of many mechanisms of cooperative endeavors on the regional level for optimising collective resources? What characterised the transition from avowed goals and policies to mechanisms of collective action with concrete outcomes?

Certainly the presentation of the case would not be complete if it stopped at the point of adopting the R Document and the subsequent policy papers that developed from the different subject-oriented policy (small group) taskforces, whose understanding was fundamental to this research. But of equal importance is to understand what enabled the creation of organisational mechanisms for collective action that implemented the policies aimed at regional cooperation. Without implementation the discursive dynamics of the strategic planning process would have become fleeting, and probably frustrating, moments of communication with no structural expression. "Work to build relationships, without any perceptible progress or visible signs of achievement for the community, tends to wear the residents down" (Mattessich and Monsey 1997, p. 34). In MT the issue of talk with no results was germane to a successful outcome.

**Mara: Until then (the R Gathering) there had been (some annual) meetings with the settlements – talk but no action no results.**

Until the R Gathering the strategy of 'dividing up the pie' between the different villages had been dominant in the region. The assessment task force recommendations made explicit that this type of collective action had become suboptimal both collectively and individually in the region. They also pointed out that the level of trust, amongst the different communities and between them and the regional council, was very low. This situation can be seen as one very much like the situation of Hume's peasants. The dilemma was not that one farming village community stood to gain or lose at the expense of the other, but that none wanted to

give up its share of the pie (regional resources and funds) for the collective advantage because they did not trust that their share would be returned, let alone improved. They did not want to be 'suckered'. So like the peasants, a risk-limiting strategy of self-reliance had been dominant.

In contrast to this regional situation at the outset of the strategic process, it is important to recall that historically the social values within the rural communities in Israel had been those of mutual care (Ravid, 1999). 'Arevut Hadadeet' (best translated as reciprocal security or mutual caring) was one of the founding principles of the kibbutz movement. It refers both to the mutual responsibility of each member of the kibbutz for the other members' wellbeing and the responsibility of one kibbutz to the other in the same ideological settlement movement. As **Vrm** stated: **To begin with we had a shared world view – collective communities**, (ensuring 'reciprocal security'). Trusting other rural village-communities had been very important in the settlement movements, but it was not regional. A kibbutz would not have seen a geographically neighbouring moshav as a partner (or vice versa). As **Tm** pointed out, they would have turned to their national settlement movement affiliations - **There were three organisational and ideological frameworks in the region...**(full quote above in chapter 7).

As described earlier (chapter 5 - the case context) the commitment to reciprocal security or mutual caring was becoming ever less socially and economically sustainable at the level of each individual village community. Likewise, the national settlement movements had lost both their ideological influence as well as their economic power. In looking at the policies that were adopted during the strategic process we can see that the social value of reciprocal security did not lose its importance, rather it became integrated into a regional community, as evident in the regional mechanisms for cooperation that have now become part of the ongoing operation of the MT regional council and the village-communities in the region.

In trying to understand how this came about I have chosen examples that are specifically related to the policies set forth in the strategic planning process, as they illustrate the continuity and transformation of policies and declarations into operational mechanisms. By looking at the structural properties of the new regional

mechanisms that evolved in MT it was possible to understand more clearly how cooperation evolved from the policy stage to the operational stage. I have examined both the congruency between these two phases and the nature of the cooperative mechanisms.

### **8.1. Redefining the mission of the regional council – from government to governance**

The need for a sweeping organisational development process of the regional council was implicit in the strategic process itself and had already been made explicit in paragraph 8 of the task force's original recommendations.

8. *The regional council was to reorganise and structure itself on the professional and public (the elected council) levels to improve its functioning in order to implement the policies outlined.*

The steering committee, headed by the mayor and including regional council professionals and village community leaders, who oversaw and led the process after the R Gathering, was very loyal to this mandate. The mayor was consistent and exacting in his leadership. He insisted upon the integration between the planning phase and the organisational development phase that, over time, began to overlap, each reinforcing the other. Structural-organisational change was not the end result of the strategic process but in itself a contributing factor to ongoing change. As Y stated in his interview:

**Y: It is time for a new strategic plan – we have undertaken the last plan (1995-2003). It has been brought to fruition (and the concomitant statutory plan is being implemented). We need to be thinking about the year 2015.**

Were it not for the process of public accounting (described below in this section), this statement by a mayor could be relegated to popular political declarations. In this case it is more like an admission of the need not to be satisfied with what has already been accomplished and an expectation to continue moving ahead.

Following the ratification of the strategic process policy papers in 1995 the regional council had to reorganise itself in a different manner in order to meet its new mission and implement the new policies. The change in the organisational structure was not to be just technical, but rather a reflection of the new evolving regional community.

Following his re-election in 2002 the mayor set forth his updated vision, which reflected the changed role that took place in the course of his first eight years in office.

*"The regional council will act as the leader in initiating the development of the village-communities and the region in order to create and sustain a rural community committed to the wellbeing of the residents, economic growth, open green spaces, and quality of life." Y (mayor)*

(Collected Documents of the MT Strategic Planning Unit 1995 – 2010)

The regional council became the regional governance body, not just the regulator and provider of minimal municipal services (sanitation, maintenance, etc.).

The change that took place required a very different pattern of work amongst the staff and between the staff and community, one that was more open and less hierarchically bureaucratic. The old hierarchical structure of municipal divisions was changed into horizontally organised clusters of functions with shared or overlapping areas of responsibility (Siegel, Working Notes MT 1992-1998). The management of these clusters was not one only of authority, but one of coordination and integration. As in the strategic process, dialogue became the basis for governance rather than vertical authority.

In keeping with the recommendations of the strategic process and the objectives for 1996, the organizational changes that took place focused upon crystallizing new patterns of work ... In particular the relationship between the clusters and the senior management team (of the regional council) (Report to the Mayor: Outcomes of 1996 and Objectives for 1997, in Siegel, Working Notes MT 1992-1998).

This type of organisation in a statutory government body, which has remained in place for over 15 years, is quite different from the normal bureaucratic hierarchy. It is closer to the concept of governing by network:

Government bureaucracies are ill equipped to solve complicated problems, however, because their narrow programs are constrained by laws, rules, and regulations designed to prevent favoritism and ensure everyone is treated alike... This approach empowers public innovators actively to bring disenfranchised citizens into the mainstream of American life through programs

and policies that encourage citizens to be self-governing rather than passive receivers of government assistance and helpless victims of external social forces. ...networks often move both horizontally and vertically. Not only do they engage service across sectors, but they also employ the concepts of devolution involve units of government and programs that are closest to the customer (Goldsmith and Eggers, 2004, p.37).

The organisational structuring of the MT regional council, that is dialogue and integration-oriented, has many similarities with the ideas of governance by network.

What is particularly interesting in this situation is seeing how the functioning of a regional municipal council became a key vehicle for collective action that is based more upon its role as convener than as controller.

Using her convening authority as a catalyst, an official can provide a venue for organizations and individuals with similar goals to meet, discover common ground, and perhaps find ways of dividing labor and sharing resources, making each more effective and efficient than before (Goldsmith and Eggers, 2004, p.62).

The regional council's service departments in MT took on convening functions and served as the organisational platforms for the functioning of the region as a collective. As stated in the strategic objectives for 2003-2008, "The preparation of intermediate and long range plans or projects of regional significance will include public participation along with the departments of the regional council" (Collected Documents of the MT Strategic Planning Unit 1995 – 2010).

This is a very different role for local government in Israel. Not only did the regional council go from being a very minimalist service provider to becoming the primary mechanism for development in the region, it took on the tasks of hosting, and staffing community-municipal action groups in a whole range of life activities: social/educational, infrastructure, demographic growth (including the changing nature of kibbutz communities), and regional economic growth (including the changing structure of employment) (Siegel, Working Notes MT 1992-1998).

To a great extent the organisational restructuring of the regional council mirrors the new interaction patterns that had evolved out of the planning discussions, and incorporated them into the local government framework. The change in the way the

various villages interacted with each other, the use and management of regional resources, and the identity of the region as a community, have been given expression in the organisational restructuring of the regional council. A new relationship between the regional council and the community was created. In essence, the geographic region defined by the municipal boundaries of the regional council, was transformed into a regional community that uses its governance structure as the primary platform for cooperative endeavors

Perhaps it is best summed up by L's comment:

**L: The processes were very helpful. The ISO certification** (which he considered also to be part of process of the regional council) **was not significant. The certification** (only) **reconfirmed the essence.**

He is referring here to the role of the regional council as the entity responsible for being the regional framework for cooperative endeavors and its commitment to quality of services to all residents.

An important element of this changed way of functioning has been not only in the organisational restructuring of local government, but in creating a mechanism for public accountability that exposes the organisation to public accounting of its programmes and their results.

The function of accountability in creating the conditions of trust needed for cooperation is an important component that needs to be included, especially since it was one of the four basic principles of change set forth in the 'from --- to' document adopted at the R Gathering:

- ***From*** *working behind closed doors* ***to*** *encouraging public dialogue*

Amongst the findings of the assessment task force is the statement "The council functions based upon the conception that it provides services to the villages not directly to the residents. There is no flow of information about needs from the residents through their representatives to the council, nor the opposite (accountability of the council to the residents)" (Assessment task force analysis in the 'from --- to' document).

The need for wider public accountability of the regional council to the residents did not remain only at the declarative level of the R Document. It was not only an avowed commitment, but one which has been institutionalised in three ways: through annual public reporting, the use of public hearings or committees around development programmes, and the active ongoing involvement of community members in updating regional development plans (Collected Documents of the MT Strategic Planning Unit 1995 – 2010).

The significance of public accountability in MT has been the requirement that the regional community defines, individually and collectively, to what it is committed. It has involved choosing in what to invest and what to forgo - prioritising resources allocation. This has generated four significant dynamics:

- a. Expectations have been translated into defined results
- b. Achievement of these results has been linked to the mobilisation and allocation of resources
- c. There has been shared responsibility for results; it is both vertical (regional council to constituent communities) and horizontal between the rural communities and the residents themselves
- d. Accountability has become systematic – in this case both professional accountability within the organisational structure of the regional council and public accountability to the communities and within the communities.

**Tal : He (the mayor) understood that he had to "build" and saw the political importance of mobilising (gaining the support) the moshaves... There was a clear commitment (to the policies developed by the joint professional-resident committees) ...He led ... there were not only papers – things happened after the talking. (There was) mandatory staff involvement... He (Y) was committed up and down (across the board).**

Tal's remarks gave voice to three elements – a results commitment, the need for public commitment to these results by all sectors of the community (moshaves not only kibbutzes), and the demand upon the professional to make things happen.

The significance of public accounting as a motivational force affecting the professional staff's performance is echoed in the words of the head of the water and sewage department:

**L: There is a (annual) meeting of the senior staff of the municipality with the senior leaders of each rural community. I personally do not like these public meetings, but I am much more conscious – service-oriented towards the residences (of the region). I am today more exposed to different people and the settlements have much greater interaction with the regional council. This is (also) due to the growth of the settlements (that require upgraded water and sewer systems).**

The professionals do not necessarily 'enjoy' the exposure of these interactive sessions, but it has become an institutionalised part of public participation in the functioning of the regional council. These comments, though coming from a regional council employee, may not necessarily be a reflection of the average citizen's opinion, but they do provide an important insight into the way the professional leadership have come to view their public role.

The role that political leadership played in demanding accountability was so taken for granted in many of the interviews that I almost neglected to include it as an explicit statement. The mayor was very exacting in his commitment to producing results:

**L: Y is willing to make public commitments – he is not afraid (to take risks).**

The function of the mayor's commitment to public accountability can be further understood by again recalling **Ri**'s remarks quoted earlier regarding his unwillingness to compromise on standards for political gain, nor his capitulation to political pressures.. Here it takes on the additional significance of being a commitment to maintaining professional standards in the use of public resources;

This contributed to the climate of assurance that public resources will be used for collective wellbeing. Certainly within the general context of local government this perspective was a significant factor in creating trust that the collective resources of the region were being directed towards public welfare and were not being abused by narrow political self interests.

What seemed particularly evident here, was the continuity between the type of interactions that took place in the small group taskforces and open public meetings of the policy-setting phase, and the type of governance structure that was institutionalised in the MT regional council as a governance body. There was a high degree of consistency in structural form and the patterns of interaction. We can perhaps see how the power of the experience of the planning events was incorporated

into an organisational structure which regenerates new experiences and possibilities for interaction. It is interesting to conjecture whether a different, more bureaucratic structuring, may have led to a dissipation of this energy.

## 8.2 The school system

One of the significant programmes that were implemented in MT was the transformation of the school system from individual village-based schools along ethnic and ideological divisions into a regional system. This was a direct reflection of the issues raised by the education policy team in the strategic process.

There needs to be greater investment in the schools in the Arab villages in order to ensure that the pupils will have more choices in the future... There is a conflict between the desire to maintain a connection to the individual village-communities and opening up the entire region as one educational area – consideration should be given to establishing specialization divisions/schools (Protocol Education Policy Taskforce 24/3/95 in Collected Documents of the MT Strategic Planning Unit 1995 – 2010).

Over the course of a few years this policy statement was turned into an operational reality. The school system became a regional cooperative endeavor with different village community level schools sharing resources and specialisation; pupils attended different schools on certain days depending upon their specialisation. **Vrm**, the former regional director of education and currently the social manager of one of the kibbutzes in the region, described how the school system operates. (The interview was held ten years after the policy was set out.)

**Vrm: Each school was able to maintain its independence. They did not have to give up their independence...everybody profited. This is especially true of the Arab villages. (Their schools and kindergartens were all upgraded.) This is one of the only places where Jewish and Arab pupils learn together... in the science specialisation track.**

(The pupils from all over the region go to the different schools depending not on where they live but on their specialisation. So once or twice a week) **children from the kibbutz go the Arab village for its specialisation and children from the Arab village go the kibbutz school for its specialisation.** (The regional municipality covers the added costs of busing the children according to their specialisations.)

Although an assessment of the academic achievements of the pupils is beyond the scope of this research, the change in the educational system is dramatic. As can be seen from **Vrm**'s comments, the pooling of educational resources on a regional level has enabled the creation of specialisation schools. Children now have the option to

study certain subjects in depth in a school that specialises in the subject. This option could only come about through a willingness to organise the region as a community with common educational goals.

It is important to understand, however, that cooperation at the regional level has not always been the optimal choice for the use of resources. The change in the educational system did not, for example, include kindergartens which have remained at the village community level. The proximity to home was important for this age group for accessibility to preschool education. The logistical distance obstacles of regional programmes would most likely have outweighed any possible upgrading of the services that might have accrued. In this instance individual village endeavors seem to have had better instrumental benefits than regional cooperation. The role of the regional council here was one of supporting village-based services, such as staff training and assistance in maintaining or upgrading facilities.

Because cooperation in this instance was very minimal the importance of mutual caring and the level of trust needed were also minimal. The level of mutual caring was limited to ensuring that everyone received his equal share of resources. The risks were not related to failed cooperation, but to possible failure of self-management of the kindergartens at the village level. The preschool education of the children in one village was not dependent upon the functioning of the preschool services in other villages. Social solidarity at the regional level had only a remedial or supplemental role, helping 'weaker' villages or specific population groups.

Setting up a regional system of specialised schools was quite different. As stated above (Protocol Education Policy Taskforce 24/3/95) there was a clear conflict between the desire to maintain control of schools at the community level while at the same time open up possibilities for better education for everyone. The organisational structure of the specialised schools in different village-communities allowed the communities to maintain a high degree of control over their schools but also required them to relinquish exclusive control over the schools.

There was now mutual dependence. There was a potential social and functional cost of introducing specialised schools that cut across ethnic and ideological boundaries. The level of education in one village was dependent upon the functioning of the schools in the other villages.

In this situation of pooled educational resources at the regional level, the level of trust needed went beyond that of everyone doing or getting their own share as in the situation of the kindergartens. The risk-taking involved in renouncing exclusive control over the village-community schools required both a commitment to mutual concern and an expectation of mutual benefits from cooperation.

The decision to undertake the cooperative educational venture had both elements. There was a commitment to quality education for the entire population – *to ensure that the pupils will have more choices in the future*. There were also mutual instrumental benefits. By using collective regional funds to cover the transportation costs neither the parents nor any individual village community has had to incur direct additional costs. Thus the financial costs of cooperation did not become the obstacle while the benefits accrued to the children, the schools, the individual village-communities, and the region.

Here there was the reverse paradox of the prisoner's dilemma. The decision to cooperate not based solely upon individual instrumental payoffs in fact resulted in optimal individual and collective instrumental payoffs.

This is not to say that every village community has excellent education nor is my intention to suggest that there are no educational disparities between different groups. Rather the intention here has been to identify how the commitment to serving all population groups, a commitment to **mutual caring**, was combined with **instrumental benefits**, specialised educational tracks, in the form of a regional school system which could only come about by a cooperative endeavor.

**8. 3. The regional water and sewage system** (upgraded from local septic tanks and sedimentation pools).

Very much paralleling the establishment of a regional education system was the establishment of a regional water and sewage system. It, too, grew out of a policy taskforce's recommendations of the strategic process.

Limited fresh water supplies led many farming communities to introduce technologies for recycling sewage and using the treated water for agriculture. However, the costs of treatment plants are extremely high and different village-communities have very different needs. Furthermore the amount of sewage needed to meet irrigation needs is often beyond that produced by rural village-communities. MT was amongst the first regional councils to initiate a regional sewage and irrigation plan that included the two neighbouring urban centres (Collected Documents of the MT Strategic Planning Unit 1995 – 2010).

The initiative to establish a regional body to manage the development of agriculture was explicitly stated in the recommendations of the agricultural policy taskforce. They included the establishment of a regional agricultural authority with four main areas of responsibility: land, water, research, and marketing (Protocol Agriculture policy taskforce 25-5-95, in Collected Documents of the MT Strategic Planning Unit 1995 – 2010). Water was considered one the critical elements for the survival of agriculture in the region.

Nonetheless, cooperation could not be taken for granted; each case had to show the relative advantage of cooperation. As **Zik** points out:

**Zik: The price per cube of water was reduced from 1.20 NIS to 0.70. (People) understand the added value of cooperation. But each time (a new cooperative program is undertaken) we need to go through the course (process) anew. But now I have 'receipts' (the proof of prior successful cooperation).**

(We are) **initiating, not passive** (on a regional level), **the previous mayor initiated the water treatment program. The strategic process strengthened** (the regional structure). **In '95 they** (each local community) **were unwilling give up direct control over using fresh water supplies** (for irrigation).

Here we can see how a history of cooperative endeavors with tangible results made it easier to take risks and relinquish control when it led to mutual gain. There was a good basis for reciprocal trust – getting back as much or more than you put in. The dynamics of cooperation here were very much in line with the concepts of a stag hunt (Lewis, 2002; Skyrms, 2004) situation of being mutually and individually better off through cooperation. The payoff structure of cooperation – reduced cost of water – changed the optimal individual village-community's choice of actions from individual communities competing for, or dividing up, scarce resources to actions that favoured a joint endeavor. The region stood to gain collectively and individually by pooling resources.

Enjoying the rewards of cooperation was, however, dependent upon each village community being able to trust that the others would do their part, not a free ride nor desert the joint endeavor in favor of less risky/more secure village level water and sewage systems even though they were less rewarding. As long as the regional council can show positive results from the pooling of resources e.g. lower cost of water, people could trust each other to continue to support cooperative efforts, because everyone understood that cooperation was in the best interest of all the residents in the region individually and collectively. The risk inherent in the joint venture could be offset by a reciprocal level of expected instrumental payoff. In a situation like this, as Axelrod (1984) points out, there is no need for friendship or any other sentiment. The decision to cooperate is rationally instrumental on a cost/benefit basis.

In 1997, in the brochure calling for participation in stage two of the strategic process – implementation - the issue of recycling water for agriculture is among the central topics (Collected Documents of the MT Strategic Planning Unit 1995 – 2010). In 2003, following his re-election, the mayor not only presented his vision (as described above) but also gave a public account of what had and what had not been achieved of the goals set forth in the strategic process. He specifically included the upgrading of central sewage systems in the village-communities. In setting goals for the future (2003 -2008) using recycled water for agricultural irrigation is again highlighted.

In MT, cooperative regional water and sewage management has become a successful strategy, increasing reciprocally reinforcing mutual benefits. The payoffs in infrastructure development, in improved regional services, and in the access to more resources in themselves are self evident. In addition a process of giving public accounting as shown above has been instituted on the political level and on the professional level. The mayor's demand for concrete results gave continuous voice to the commitment to outcome-oriented collective action and fostered the concomitant added value from the cooperative endeavors themselves. As **L** indicates:

**The power of this public commitment (is in its creation) of trust – He (the mayor) promised. He delivered! This gives me ambition.**

The benefits have since gone beyond the needs of agriculture and have laid down the infrastructure for development that meets the sanitation requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Israel.

**L: The upgraded sewer system shook-up the villages** (until this change each community had its own system of septic tanks and evaporation pools – some of which are still in use, but in general linked to a regional system): **The solution for sewage opened up new opportunities for development**

- **New neighbourhoods**
- **Bed and breakfast** (tourism)
- **Improved environment**

**The prerequisite conditions (for development) were created.**

The simplicity of **L**'s comments was a dramatic understatement. One of the most serious obstacles to development in other rural regions throughout Israel has been the lack of regional sewage treatment facilities (Appelbaum and Newman, 1997).

Many village-communities might very well be inclined to reduce risk-taking and settle for lower rewards e.g. higher water rates, rather than be dependent on others who have no concern for their wellbeing. It seems to me that this type of hesitation to enter into cooperative ventures has been overcome to a great extent in MT by the clear and explicit commitment to mutual caring. Though not a precondition for cooperation with a payoff structure in which individual and collective benefits coincide, this commitment to mutual caring has helped to reinforce and stabilise cooperation. It helped foster instrumentally optimal use of individual and collective

resources beyond those of the cost of water. As **L** stated, it laid down the infrastructure for new construction and demographic growth.

We can begin to understand how in MT the commitment to collective wellbeing and not only to individual wellbeing opened up the possibility for cooperation that required relinquishing the security of exclusive control over water and sewage by each village-community. Social solidarity allowed more risk-taking that opened up more development possibilities. These, in turn, generated additional collective and individual instrumental benefits.

#### **8. 4. Success and its limitations**

In my experience as a practitioner in the area of strategic planning and development, MT has been a leading model for other rural areas, frequently at the forefront of new projects and professional practices. In one of the quarterly conferences (4/2009) of the Settlement Division of the Ministry of Agriculture MT was the prime example of how to create the conditions for demographic growth using the examples of their experience in sewage treatment and water management in the physical domain, and in community integration and village level management in kibbutzes that have added new neighbourhoods in the social domain.

Recently (9/2010) following a steering committee meeting of the Community Employment Programme in MT (which is in its third year), its national director commented to me that MT knows the direction in which it wants to go and at the same time maintains a sense of openness and partnership that enables outside agencies to work with them (My D.Phil. journal notes).

These successes must however be qualified. Even though there has been much pooling and leveraging of joint resources, skepticism still remains and cooperation is not always agreed upon. **Zik** gives a good example of the problem.

**Zik: The renovation of the R H** (kibbutz tourist attraction undertaken by the) **Development Corporation** (brought into the region) **an additional 1,500,000 NIS (\$350,000) that enabled the council to promote additional projects.** (The cooperative undertakings) **have functional added value, and also positioned the region** (very well in relation to government programmes and private investments). (However) **not everyone understands, some don't see that they get their portion.**

There are instances in which individual interests outweigh regional cooperation. The villages are at times in competition with each other in trying to attract young families to settle in their communities. Stronger communities still have better capabilities to leverage funds from the regional council and government agencies than economically and less well-managed villages. Thus even in the face of very clear instrumental payoffs from cooperative ventures not everyone always agrees to cooperative efforts which could maximise the shared regional resources.

Similarly, not all the recommendations of all the policy teams have been implemented. Despite the work of a policy team specifically focused on young adults, services to this population other than employment remained minimal. Only in 2009, over a decade after the recommendations were made, was a centre for young adults initiated.

It is important also to note that the norm of cooperation was not only benevolent. The dynamic of identifying other cooperators was often self-selecting. Those who did not go along with the changes and move to regional cooperation were at best informed but by definition not invited.

**Nat: Those who were not ready to change (over a course of years) were dropped (pushed out) from the system.**

Those who felt that it was not the way to run a local government or felt that regional development could be better served through a less cumbersome public processes were, over time, excluded. Others who did not fit into the organisational changes were dismissed.

**L: Those who do not join the wagon (not part of the team) get sent home (fired). Standing still is regression. He fired those people who did not keep pace and people are angry with him for the manner he did this.**

**Et: The women's forum (run by the regional council community centre) is where I am involved... Today I am not connected to the regional council... No one recognises my potential – I do not have a degree even though I have taken many courses.**

In retrospect this process of exclusion was already a characteristic of the region, at least to some extent, even at the very outset of the case including the former mayor.

**Tm: He** (the former mayor felt that the) **task force had** (gained) **power and he could not connect to team** (identify with them and the process). **He did not see himself in the new situation. He resigned.**

## 8.5 Summary

We can see in the examples above that both instrumental benefits from cooperation and a commitment to mutual caring were part of the mechanism of collective action in MT. If these and other factors at play here could be given mathematical values then maybe it would be easy to predict and construct mechanisms for cooperation, but payoff structures from cooperative endeavors and social solidarity are more fluid. They are not absolutes with clear weightings. And the complexities of social interactions do not lend themselves to linear causality.

What can be seen here is how mechanisms of cooperation grew out of a particular combination of social solidarity that was strengthened in small group interactions in the context of larger gatherings, with the instrumental payoffs that accrued from pooling resources.

Giddens' concept of social integration is particularly helpful in understanding the complexity of how regional cooperative endeavors, that were a combination of mutual care and instrumental benefits, became the convention of collective action in MT on the regional level.

I have defined social integration as systemness in situations of co-presence... First, in order to grasp the connection of encounters with social production stretching away over time and space, we must emphasize how encounters are formed and reformed in the dur'ee of daily existence. Second, we should seek to identify the main mechanisms of the duality of structure whereby encounters are organized in and through the intersections of practical and discursive consciousness. This in turn has to be explicated in terms both of the control of the body and of the sustaining rules or conventions. Third, encounters are sustained above all through talk, through everyday conversations. In analyzing the communication of meaning in interaction via the use of interpretive schemes... Finally, the contextual organization of encounters must be examined, since the mobilization of time-space is the grounding of all the above elements  
(Giddens, 1986, p.72-3).

MT has fundamentally restructured its collective actions through the pooling of resources that led to being collectively better off rather than dividing up resources in a way that promoted competing to be individually better than (the others). This was not only an instrumental tactic, but a more fundamental aspect of social solidarity as conceptualised by Honneth (1995). What changed in MT was the context and who was included in the daily functioning of community life. The boundaries of community changed. They were no longer the geographic and ideological boundaries of the individual rural communities – kibbutz, moshav, or Arab village - but rather to the region as a whole. **Vrm**'s comments are quite descriptive:

**Vrm: We had to get out of an autistic mode of action and act together. If we do not cooperate it won't work. Without (an integrated effort) we will not exist. In a region like ours (periphery) competition (between schools and communities) will be a zero sum.**

Joint endeavors for collective wellbeing in MT embody both the element of exchange relations, in which decisions to participate are a function of expected returns from the investment in the cooperative venture, and the element of recognition of others as 'human' in which people are valued as subjects worthy of mutual caring and social esteem.

### **8.6 Instrumental payoffs and the structuring of cooperation**

At the R Gathering the assessment task force composed of representatives of the different sectors (economically-socially strong and weak kibbutzes as well as strong and weak moshaves) publicly exposed the suboptimal payoffs/benefits of their situation as a rural region. At that regional gathering they made explicit the instrumental price being paid by not acting cooperatively as a region to the other participants in the small group discussions. As explained above the interchange in the small groups enabled this insight to go from that of a handful of people to one which was shared and mutually interpreted.

The 'from --- to' document charged the regional council to become a proactive force responsible for leveraging local resources to attract new additional resources from government and private sources. This document explicitly states that the regional council should stop dividing up its resources and giving each local community its

individual share, and instead should use its collective resources to achieve common goals.

(The council should go) **From** a budgetary strategy of dividing up the pie to each separate settlement **to** one of prioritising, pooling, and leveraging funds for development as a regional community

This policy statement which, among others, was adopted unanimously at the R Gathering by the all the participants, articulates the ground rules for moving from the stage of assessment to the stage of joint community planning, and eventually to the stage of organisational adaptation. Both stages comprised the strategic process.

This can be linked to the instrumentally-oriented aspects of the process of identifying and structuring cooperative programmes between each of the village-communities with higher payoff rates than those based upon individual village action. It was not a rejection of individual community or individual action, but a collective decision to utilise shared resources for collective benefit in those instances where these resources could be leveraged.

This was not ideology (something that many regional leaders wanted to avoid, especially those who had suffered the 'cooperalysis' of their kibbutz – paralysis of action stemming from mechanistic coordination). This can be understood as a very functional assessment of the changing nature of regional development, the changed status of the rural settlement movement, and of the relative advantage of more effectively using collective resources.

In MT the risk in the first cooperative efforts was very low while the payoff was very high. The decision to pool the municipal development budget rather than divide it up amongst the rural communities was set as a five-year trial period to be judged by the degree to which it leveraged funds from the government for development projects, and the degree to which each community enjoyed the benefits over time. The amount that each community risked was very small and did not reduce its operational budgets. (It was a few thousand dollars per year per community usually used to improve agricultural access roads – projects which could be delayed with limited loss).

In effect a tit for tat strategy was initiated where the default of non-cooperation was always available. As Axelrod (1984, p. 174) points out the strategy of "generous tit for tat" is the most effective strategy. That is, I should cooperate if the other is cooperating, be the first to cooperate, and be forgiving if the other player defects. I should likewise be clear and also defect as a warning to try to return the other player to cooperation. This strategy is sustainable when there is the shadow of the future, i.e., the relationship between the players is ongoing. For Axelrod reciprocity over time is the key. Neither friendship nor social trust is a prerequisite.

The significance of functional mutual benefits from cooperation as an incentive for joint endeavors can be clearly seen in MT. Utilitarian payoffs for cooperation at the regional level were structured into the regional programmes as exemplified by the reduction in the cost of water for irrigation and in better educational services. Both were avowed objectives of leveraging resources (as expressed in the R Document and subsequent policy papers) and operational goals (as part of the regional council's project implementation) of the strategic planning process.

### **8.7 The role of mutual caring and the relation to instrument benefits**

The recognition of the situation in which each individual community meeting its own needs was no longer optimal and that regional cooperation was an alternative for promoting collective wellbeing was a radical change both in consciousness and in defining the boundaries of community. It involved a basic recognition that each person's wellbeing was dependent upon the actions of others beyond the boundaries of each village-community. This understanding was made explicit in the R Document:

The regional council was to insure the provision of community services to all residents regardless of the village in which they lived and develop regional services when it affords a relative advantage to separate services in each village.....

This is both a utilitarian statement "when it affords a relative advantage" and a values statement of mutual caring "to insure the provision of community services to all residents regardless of the village in which they live".

There is here an explicit formulation of expectations of mutual caring parallel to those of utilitarian benefit. The type of caring or trust voiced here is not only based on the

expectations that one will eventually receive an approximately equal return on one's investment, predicated upon socially or legally institutionalised instrumental exchange relations, but seems closer to the form of trust described by Honneth "directed inward which gives individuals basic confidence in both the articulation of their needs and the exercise of their abilities" (1995, p. 174).

The elements of social solidarity here seem to go beyond Rousseau's stag hunt in which the wellbeing of each individual hunter and the collective wellbeing of all the hunters are congruent as long as every hunter "remains at his post". By contrast in the case of MT, as exemplified by the policy to improve educational opportunities in the Arab villages, (section 8.2 in this chapter) social solidarity was not primarily related to trusting that others will "remain at their post" – contribute to the joint effort - because of the payoff. Rather, it was related to the expectation that people will collectively take care of each other beyond the utilitarian value of the other person's participation in the community.

The social esteem and mutual caring that characterised the dialogue amongst the participants is inherent in their crafting the R document which outlined the new utilitarian payoff structure. Had the participants limited their understanding of social solidarity to that of exchange relations (based upon reciprocity of investment and returns), and had they not achieved a level of mutual caring beyond that of instrumental returns, their ability to recommend the structuring of regional mechanisms for cooperation, that required taking risks inherent in relinquishing direct control over some of the resources of the individual villages, would have been much more limited and tenuous.

The development of social solidarity and recognition as used by Honneth means "to the extent to which every member of a society is in a position to esteem himself or herself, one can speak of societal solidarity" (Honneth, 1995, p. 129).

The 'from ---to' document opened up the possibility for a different type of dialogue which was close to Honneth's concept of recognition, to be addressed more in the next section.

The commitment to mutual caring, by reducing the risk of loss from exploitation which is inherent in pooling resources with others, entailed foregoing exclusive control and opened up the possibility of developing regional mechanisms for collectively leveraging common resources over time and space. Similarly, social esteem was both a prerequisite for, and an outcome of, undertaking regional programmes jointly by professionals and community participants. Each success from cooperation has created conditions for the next cooperative endeavor. This helps explain how the regional mechanisms for cooperation in MT have become an alternative to legal governmentally regulated standardised equal pie-division behaviours.

## **9. The Discussion**

### **9.1 Insights stemming from the research questions**

In this section of the thesis I have tried to articulate the primary insights that have emanated from this case study and literature review as they relate to the research questions. Finally, I wish to share my reflections on the research process and in particular on the interview process.

**As presented in the chapter on methodology the research questions addressed were:**

- 1. How was the change process initiated?**
- 2. What was significant in the nature of participation in the planning process?**
- 3. How did mechanisms for regional community cooperation evolve?**

**9.1.1. How was the change process initiated?** (from private insight to legitimised community learning)

The case of MT exemplified how going from individual insight to collective understanding was a critical first stage in initiating change in the way a community functions as a collective. The initial insight that something was wrong in MT was at first articulated only by one individual. It then became a self-conscious, explicit, self – evaluation process that involved a publicly mandated task force.

Particularly interesting here was seeing how the transition from private understanding to public understanding first involved an interpretive stage of developing joint meanings or shared language. Through the small group discussions the participants, as they stated in their interviews, articulated their insights, knowledge, and abilities in ways which allowed them to access each other's resources and then use them collectively.

As described earlier small group interactions were intimate enough to allow people to openly share their concerns and understandings with each other (Block, 2009). It is through such intimate social interactions, that people can share their interpretations and reinterpretations of their behaviours in the context of their community life that formed the basis for new mutual expectations and understandings necessary for any change in the way a community structures itself. Through such interactions, rules, (Giddens, 1986) with their normative and social meanings for collective action, were negotiated.

Though not usually associated with community development this type of interaction is well-explained by Mead. As quoted earlier in the section on methodology:

It is absurd to look at the mind simply from the standpoint of the individual human organism. ... We must regard mind, then, as arising and developing within the social process, within the empirical matrix of social interactions (1934 p.133).

In my practice as a community developer I often refer to this as the '**LSD**' stage. The community is in a state of changing consciousness that calls into question how they **L**ook at themselves, how they **S**ee the world around them, and the way they **D**o things together. This type of examination itself is in many ways a challenge to the accepted way things are.

Conceptualising community development as a collective learning process sheds light on the way that it opened up the possibility for creating new social realities.

Collective learning involves people in a process of sharing their interpretations of their community and redefining how they envision themselves and their future. This entailed first making the tacit meanings (Polanyi, 1966) of the current social reality explicit and assessing them as expressed in existing social institutions, values, and other aspects of community life. It furthermore involved making the tacit structuring of social interactions explicit and then restructuring them in a manner that better fit the community's vision of its shared future.

What also can be seen here is how transforming practical consciousness, which was functionally tacit, into discursive consciousness was necessary for dialogue (Giddens, 1986). It not only enabled a collective renegotiation of the many tacit elements

(Polanyi, 1966) of the existing socially constructed reality, also enabled a change in the mechanisms (for renegotiating these understandings) that determine who participates in negotiating the shared meanings of this reality and who controls the structuring of the interactive negotiating process (Wenger, 1998).

This is a political–governance change and required formal legitimation in order to succeed. In retrospect it was the controlling powers of the regional council of MT–the kibbutz caucus that legitimised **Tm**'s questioning of the then current way of collective functioning. In effect they sanctioned and explicitly supported her going to the full elected body of the regional council to get the mandate for the assessment task force.

What is important here is not the assumed understanding that change is a political process, but that existing political mechanisms can be used for legitimating a process of questioning the tacit assumptions and understandings upon which the very same political mechanisms rest. Such an explicating process can open up the possibility for mobilising broader public support for a change in the existing rule setting mechanisms.

The process of legitimating community transformation by political and community leaders is a fundamental part of both the learning and the development of effective collective action. They were instrumental in creating the conditions that allowed change to take place.

As Block points out: " ... leaders are held to three tasks to shift the context within which people gather, name the debate through powerful questions, and listen rather than advocate, defend, or provide answers (2009, p. 73)".

However, legitimation of the call for a change in the mission of the governing structure and a change in the nature of collective action, in the final analysis, was not based solely upon the existing power structure, but also on the assessment task force's composition that reflected all the stakeholders. To some extent the social and political cross-cutting composition of the assessment task force gave a priori legitimation to its findings beyond the specifics of the recommendations. The composition of the task force was critical both because it enabled the different voices of the community to be

heard, and also because it represented collective concerns and not sectarian interest groups.

The relationship between collective learning and collective action can be seen in the type of structuring of mediating mechanisms that developed from community learning. This combination lay at the very heart of initiating the processes of change. The interactive interpretive processes defined the types of mediating mechanisms that the community could develop which in turn set the rules for their interactions.

Understanding the structuring of the organisational mechanisms for collective action is the key issue here.

Analysing the structuration of social systems means studying the modes in which such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction... The constitution of agents and structure are not two independent sets of phenomena - a dualism - but represents a duality. According to the notion of duality of structure the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize... Structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling (Giddens, 1986, p. 25).

The learning process took place in the context of rules of engagement of 'knowledgeable' people within the community and in turn shaped the rules of interaction. These rules of interaction amongst the community members could enable or block collective learning and the capacity for effective collective action. In this case it was the coming together of **particular 'knowledgeable' actors** in the **specific structural context** of MT that contributed to the process of change.

#### 9.1.2. What was significant in the nature of participation in the planning process?

(Enabling participants to engage each other and find like-minded people)

The importance of convening people with similar world views and social agenda was clearly a critical aspect of the strategic process.

However, bringing people together in and of itself, though a prerequisite for effective social learning processes and collective action, was not enough to enable the interaction to become a learning process that led to effective collective action. There

seem to be two other critical components: first was the purpose of the gathering, and second were the rules of interaction for the gathering.

Inherent in the invitation to participate in the gathering of MT was the recognition that the fate and wellbeing of the residents of the region individually and collectively were linked to each other. In keeping with this, the purpose of bringing people together was to set forth a new joint direction for the regional and the rural settlements. The central issue (of the R Gathering) put forth initially was changing the mandate of local government to become a significant platform to jointly work for collective wellbeing in the region.

What can be recognised is how setting the agenda of the gathering in this way changed the social position of the regional council. Even before any avowed change took place it had already become the regional convener and had created the conditions for change. The participants were brought together to decide on their collective future. Although this did not guarantee the outcome of decisions, it certainly focused what was to be discussed and this tacitly excluded those who did not want to discuss the issue.

Furthermore, participation itself, even by those who did not favour change, in a gathering for this purpose convened at the invitation of the regional council had the potential for being a catalyst for change. The underlying expectation of the participants was to consider how best to work for collective wellbeing, how to be better off collectively, not better than one another.

As described earlier, many people in MT came to the strategic process with a readiness to cooperate for regional wellbeing and meet others who shared this belief which then became reinforced when positive outcomes could be seen. Also, interestingly, even when positive results could not be clearly or immediately demonstrated the people felt that the value of new connections and the sense of belonging compensated for the lack of specific functional outcomes. The feelings of belonging to the broader community seemed to have value which may have outweighed the costs of time and energy involved in organisation cooperative endeavours even if functional results were initially limited.

At least part of the answer to the question of how to promote cooperative endeavours lay in inviting people who already wanted to cooperate to a joint gathering for that purpose.

This does in parallel raise the issue of there being a corollary that perhaps promoting competition could best be accomplished by bringing together people who wanted to compete. Thus who participates and the outcome of participation were, to a great extent, a function of the agenda-setting process which is inherently a political governance issue.

As Henkel and Stirrat state:

In the language of discourse theory, participatory approaches 'afford' certain subject positions to the participants, and thus, to some extent, presuppose and shape 'participants' from the very beginning. But this is done in ways not always foreseen by exponents of participation. It is in this sense that we suggest that participation, counter-intuitive though it may seem, is a form of governance – in fact the ultimate modern form (Henkel and Stirrat, 2001, p. 179).

Clearly the structuring of participation was a form of governance. The issue was who sets the rules of participation and how is it structured.

In many aspects the case of MT related to the underlying issue of the structuring of the local governance mechanisms. What was rather unusual in this case was seeing who owned the convening process and who had the power to set the agendas. In MT the community was not only invited, but was also the host. The regional council took on the role of convener, but as a mechanism for what was essentially a community initiative.

Although consensus-building was a central methodology, there were many agendas and many voices. Those who became active participants had mechanisms to influence policy, promote specific issues, and create new opportunities for themselves and others. The power of the community planning process lay not only in the building of agreements or managing of conflicts, but in the mobilising of commitments to work for a multifaceted shared future authored by the community and its different groups. Block describes this process

Therefore, the challenge for community is not so much to have a vision of what it wants to become, or a plan, or specific timetables. The real challenge is to discover and create the means for engaging citizens that brings a new possibility into being. To state it more precisely, what gives power to communal possibility is the imagination and authorship of citizens led through a process of engagement. This is an organic and relational process. This is what creates a structure of belonging. This is more critical than the vision and the plan (2009, p.79).

The term "participation" as used by Henkel and Stirrat (2001), with the negative aspects of a priori shaping the community participants' positions, was thus perhaps a good basis for comparison with the type of engagement that took place in MT. It went far beyond a needs assessment in which the community gave input to a planning process owned and initiated by others – government, donors, or planning agencies. The rules of participation were set by a joint community – local government steering committee. Community engagement of this type involved giving up control by governmental authorities or planning agencies, but paradoxically increased power not in its dominating or constraining aspects but in its enabling accomplishing aspects (Giddens 1986).

The notion of "authentic citizenship" as used by Block conceptualises this process of power generation:

...authentic citizenship – which is to hold ourselves accountable for the well-being of the larger community and to choose to own and exercise power rather than defer or delegate it to others (2009, p. 55).

As Henkel and Stirrat (2001) point out the generally used terminology of resident or community participation may in fact be "disempowering". Perhaps the empowering processes of engagement would be a better articulation, one that would describe the process in MT as community authored planning and development processes. Community here would not refer just to the residents, but to all those involved in shaping, living and working with its boundaries as they define themselves. Plans were not presented by professional for community input, but were an articulation of a complex set of collective goals and policies to which the members of the community became committed. They set out the 'rules' (using Giddens' term) of engagement for creating mechanisms for collective action in order to achieve their shared future.

### 9.1.3. How did mechanisms for regional community cooperation evolve? (Giving gifts - going beyond instrumental 'payoffs')

In her book *Governing the Commons* Ostrom (1990) poses serious questions about the internal and external factors that influence a specific group's ability to extricate itself from common resource pool dilemmas. Beyond the utilitarian and instrumental factors which Ostrom herself identifies, it is perhaps Honneth's (1995) component of 'recognition' that distinguishes between those groups who have the capacity to extricate themselves from the dilemmas of common resource pool management and those who have not.

Most of the literature on rational choice theory explicitly excludes the affective and values dimensions of social context from the explanation of cooperation and sees it primarily in terms of the structuring of utilitarian payoffs. There are some important exceptions such as those of Taylor (1976) and White (2003). The way that joint endeavours were structured in MT can be understood in no small part by looking at the elements of social solidarity.

The concern not only for one's own self-interest, but also for the wellbeing of the other, appear to be an important factor for creating conditions that foster mechanisms for maximising joint resources. The temptation to free ride or take advantage of others for one's own self-interest, in a way that leads to suboptimal use of collective resources, can be balanced by the commitment to others' wellbeing. It is an opposite reading of Rousseau's stag hunt in which the stag escapes because each hunter is concerned only with his own wellbeing, "and having seized his prey (individually), cared very little, if by doing so he caused his companions to miss theirs" (Rousseau, 1973, p. 78).

Giving significant weight to the role of mutual caring to the structuration of cooperation does not in any way diminish the insights from understanding the importance of instrumental payoff structures necessary for cooperation, but adds another dimension. It does not take issue with the importance of instrumental benefits for promoting cooperation as the optimal rational strategy over time both collective and individually. It does, however, recognise that in MT going from hare hunting -

individual non-cooperation - to stag hunting - collective action - was not only a function of mutual cooperation having a higher payoff than non-cooperation, but also a function of the social context and specifically mutual caring.

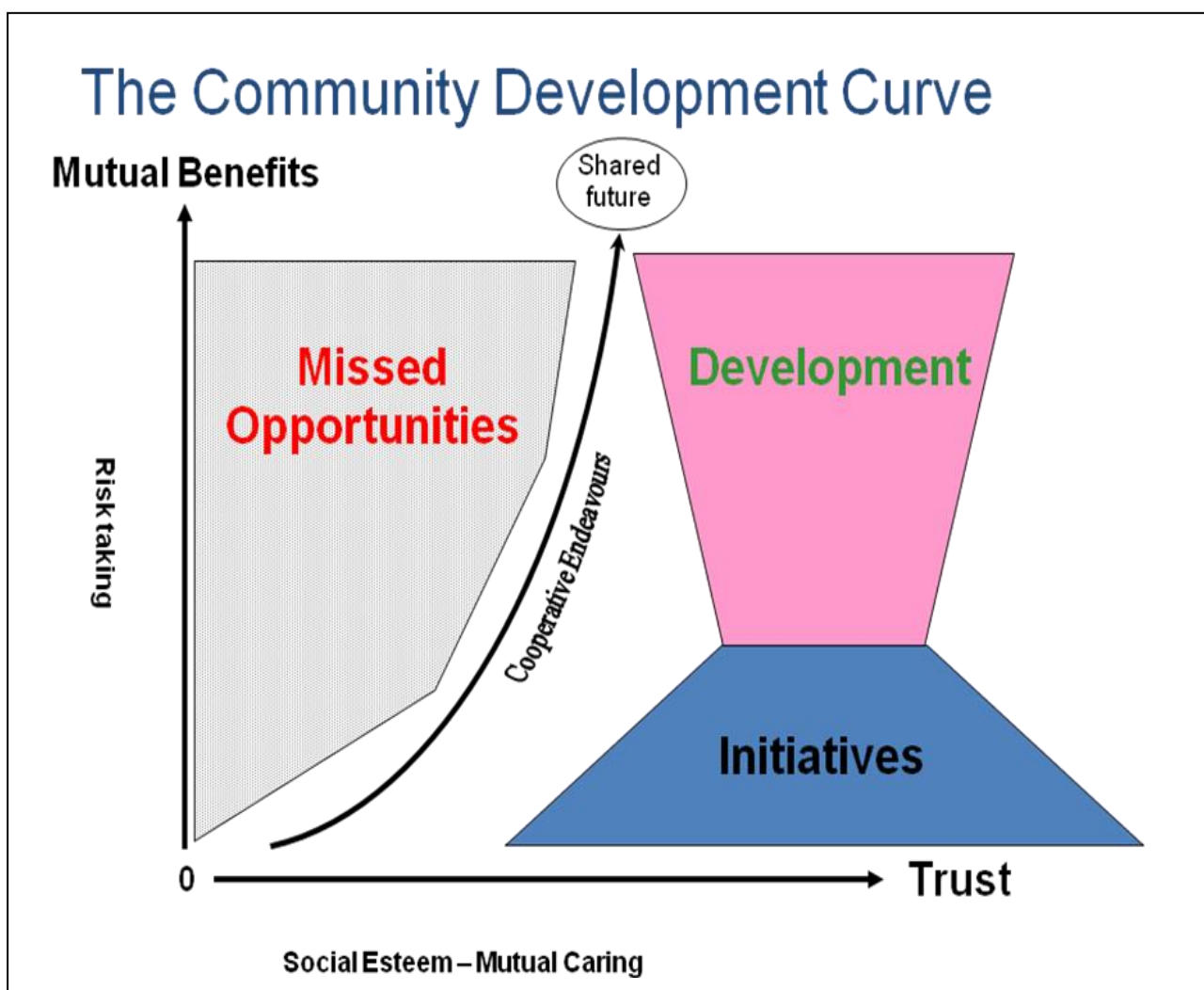
The issue of trust conceptualized by Putnam (1993) as "generalized reciprocity" - the belief that others will eventually do their part in cooperative efforts because over time it is mutually beneficial – has already made this linkage. What is being suggested here is that mutual caring that is based upon social esteem (Honneth, 1995) unrelated to expected returns, immediate or long range, played an important role in expanding the repertoire of possible cooperative actions, particularly those whose payoffs were structured like a prisoner's dilemma (acting on the basis of rational individual self-interest leads to diminished individual and collective benefits).

The public dimension of social esteem validated and reinforced the expectation of mutual caring and the belief that cooperators could be trusted to cooperate. Cooperation became in part an outgrowth of trust which reduced the risk of exploitation by others by the linking of cooperators committed to each other. This type of social context supported cooperative actions that have had better mutual payoffs from optimum use of shared resources that further promoted cooperation. It is a reverse of the prisoner's dilemma paradox. Here care for the other, unqualified by the expectation of instrumental benefit, paradoxically has had the potential to further individual instrumental self interests.

In the MT regional community with commitments to being 'collectively better off' as opposed to a social context in which people are focused upon being 'individually better than' (in competition with each other) there was a greater ability to exploit opportunities and utilise resources. Social solidarity seems to have balanced the risks involved in cooperation. In such communities the even "mortar and bricks strategies of community development" (Gittell and Vidal, 1998) may very well succeed. Communities committed to being 'better off' have the preconditions to structure mechanisms for utilising new resources; physical improvement or other anchors for development – roads, hospital, factory, etc.

The interrelation between **trust** as a function of social esteem (Honneth, 1995) and **risk taking** linked to instrumental benefits (Lewis, 2002; Taylor, 1976; White, 2003) can be presented as a graph of missed opportunities versus collective development. (see fig. 4) This combines Ostrom's analysis of "the price of missed opportunities" (Ostrom, 1992) with Honneth's (1995) concept of social solidarity.

In MT the combination of mutual caring with functional benefits enabled a dynamic of collective risk taking that was necessary to create mechanisms for optimally using the community's shared resources.



**Fig. 4: The community development curve**

The figure shows the mutually reinforcing relationship between the level of trust and instrumental benefits. When trust increases as a function of mutual caring even a limited degree of instrumental benefit is enough to initiate cooperative action and take

some risks. As mutual benefits increased only a minimal amount of mutual caring was needed to maintain cooperative ventures. However, the ability to secure instrumental benefits from new opportunities which involve risks (inherent in joint ventures) is dependent upon social esteem and mutual caring, which, when limited, leads to missed opportunities. As mutual caring and social esteem increased they could foster the initiating of cooperative ventures that lead to mutual benefits and support (projected 'payoff based') risk-taking needed for collective development. When instrumental benefits and trust combined they could contribute to achieve an optimal shared future. Reciprocally a commitment to a shared future has reinforced collective risk taking and mutual caring.

## **9.2 My critical reflections on the research**

As mentioned earlier, in order to draw out the interviewees and hear their experiences and interpretations of the strategic planning process, the interviews were conducted in a conversational manner. The intention was to glean from them understandings about how their community changed its way of functioning as a collective. The aim was not to produce historical documentation of the events, but to capture how people understood what had happened by recalling the past through the screen of the present collective reality (Coser, 1992) of the community in MT.

The research clearly afforded me new insights and enabled an exploration of the strategic planning process which has greatly enhanced my practice. The dynamic of interviewing then going to the literature, then writing, again going back to the interviews, returning still again to the literature and then back to writing was very enriching.

But despite my emersion in the case material, or maybe because of it, there is a weakness particularly in the data collection that could have been mitigated. This type of interviewing, though enabling me as researcher to focus on the insights which emerged in the interviews themselves, pre-screened the data for the subsequent analysis by virtue of my choosing what to record as relevant during the interviews. Although the interview notes are quite detailed, and include key verbatim phrases and words which were translated literally (and presented in the case study as direct

quotes), the choice of which words to record delimited the scope of issues and understandings that could have emerged from the analysis of the interviews.

In part the analysis was already tacitly taking place during the interview process. The identification of themes (and exclusion of others) was built into the written recording process of the interviews. Almost any structuring of interviews has the element of screening built in. However, in this case it was not a transparent process (available to others to assess), but rather inherent in the process of my data collection as a record written by myself.

As mentioned earlier the decision not to mechanically record the interviews was made in order to afford a less formal discourse atmosphere. The interviews took place in diverse settings at the choice of each interviewee – his/her (work) office, a coffee shop, or a public park. In looking back more critically at this process two possible steps could have contributed to assuring that the words and points expressed by the interviewees were more completely and accurately captured for analysis.

The first, which was given significant consideration, would have been to conduct a few group sessions with the interviewees and possibly other participants of the strategic planning process and share with them the insights that I had gained from the interviews. This was a very tempting course of action which I am sure would have further enriched the research here. However, there were two significant considerations which led me to dismiss this possibility. The first was the ethical issue of directly exposing the interviewees to each other's comments. Even given the generally positive nature of the interviews the possibility of such exposure had not been raised with the interviewees prior to being interviewed. Thus bringing them together as a group would have raised the issue of confidentiality and the need to renegotiate the basis on which the interviews had agreed to be interviewed and share their experiences with me on a one to one basis.

If I had made this option part of the initial research design and recruited the interviewees on this basis this first problem could have been overcome. An additional issue with this option is related to my role as researcher as opposed that of reflective practitioner. This research was conducted in the context of my studies as a D. Phil

candidate and not in my role as practitioner. Thus had I undertaken a joint learning session with the participants in which I was facilitating a session for the purpose of understanding the dynamics of the community and their experience, there would have been considerable confusion as to what exactly my role was and in what context and for whom the research was being conducted. Thus although I think that such a research process has considerable potential as a component for community development it belongs to my role, or that of other practitioners, and in this case such an action research was not appropriate and not part of my data collection contract with the interviewees.

A second option for enriching and ensuring accuracy of the data collection would have been to share with each of the interviewees individually the points that I had recorded and my understandings that came from the interview. This could have given them the opportunity to correct my recording and to add new information. In one instance I did conduct two follow-up interviews in order to clarify some points, and in others I conducted telephone follow-up. However, this was focused upon specific points rather than being a systematic process of checking my data collection.

Looking back now from the perspective of a more critical researcher this was a missed opportunity and could have been an important part of the interview method that not only would not have 'interfered' with the discursive quality of the interviews, but would have strengthened both the content of the data collected and would have expanded their interpretative and exploratory value.

### **9.3 Implications for my practice**

My work as practitioner has, for many years, been a combination of working as both a facilitator and as a consultant with expertise in certain functional areas such as local economic development and the social components of urban planning. Despite my long experience of leading groups and community processes this research has significantly changed the qualitative nature of my practice.

The insights I have gained took me beyond the boundaries of community work which had, to a great extent, formed the conceptual basis of my work as a practitioner. The research process afforded me an opportunity, as Schon (1983) suggests: to reflect upon my "knowing-in-practice" and question some of the basic assumptions of my practice. Even those aspects of my work which I had previously considered to be professionally skillful have been significantly revised. It was not so much a change in specific techniques or methods of practice, but in the way in which they are being applied.

I cannot generalise from this one case analysis and set forth policy guidelines for successful community development practice which in itself would be a contradiction to the insights gained, but I can point out how this research has influenced my practice in other settings.

During the last two years I have been involved in community development processes in urban and in rural contexts in Israel and in other countries. Previously I would have described these settings as developing nations or underprivileged regions. Now I find that even the use of this terminology reflects an a priori way of looking (down) at these communities. I have begun to talk not of capacity building, but of helping people harness their capacities in different contexts. I act less as a consultant and more frequently as a co-facilitator engaged in dialogues of mutual learning. Implicit in seeing the strengths of the people I work with is a message of competencies and assets rather than needs and weaknesses. It is goal- and results-oriented, not problem-focused.

I have learned to more effectively position myself as an inquirer with a particular perspective. My role is self-consciously more clearly one of setting in motion processes of making tacit understandings of how communities see themselves and act collectively explicit and accessible to the people themselves. A small rural island community in the Pacific Ocean can be seen, by outsiders and the community itself, as a poor undeveloped area of subsistence farming or a region of great potential based upon traditional organic farming. I have learned to plan with the communities how to use my presence as an outsider as an opportunity for them to convene people who otherwise would not come together.

What I have taken from this research is not a better technique of conducting group discussions (which vary greatly in keeping with local conventions) but rather a greater appreciation of people's thirst and capability to use gatherings of co-presence to create a commitment to a shared future. It is a recognition by the community itself (and each time anew for me) of the power of this process that enables them to develop new shared interpretations of their community's social reality. What has been especially enlightening is seeing how this interactive approach unfolds in such different contexts as cities in Africa and isolated villages in the Pacific Islands.

A critical factor which comes into play repeatedly in this type of work is that of ownership. This type of community development belongs to the community, not to an outside agency or funding body. Regarding this point I have been fortunate almost always to have been engaged by the communities themselves (as was the situation in the case study) who then seek funding for their community development program. Thus my first allegiance has been to each community rather than to the funding agencies. The locus of power in these situations has been, as it was in the case study, first and foremost in the hands of the community. For me as practitioner this greatly reduces and often completely eliminates a paternalistic dynamic. The responsibility for action a priori rests with the community (even though it is not a homogeneous entity). Almost inevitably across cultures and issues the sustainability of community development programs has been in a dialectic relationship with the 'ownership' of the community development initiative. When landing at small beach in a Pacific island the docking workers began to address me as "boss". My local colleagues corrected them saying that I was the "servant" inferring that they were the bosses not me.

Another critical issue that I have repeatedly seen is that without the establishment of implementing mechanisms or institutionalisation of new understandings the result of community development processes can lead as much, if not more, to frustration as to enlightenment.

Both in Africa and in the Pacific Islands this conceptual understanding which grew out of the research has led me to help communities structure into their development processes not only planning and understanding processes, but also the establishment

of organisational platforms for acting collectively in a socially and economically sustainable manner.

In one situation, when I simply asked a group of community leaders what the statutory regulations were for establishing a development authority in partnership with local government, I witnessed the ability of an 'undeveloped region' to mobilise organisational and management talents almost magically to set up a development corporation with considerable economic assets. Just considering the possibility was enough to mobilise people who had access to the critical information about their legal and institutional procedures for establishing a development authority. They were able to design a creative organisational framework, develop a business plan for sustainable project management, use legal council to structure the by-laws of the body leveraging national legislation, and present a work plan for implementation. This was accomplished in the period of a week by a local joint professional and community task force of 30 people.

In another instance the presentation of a case study (from a different country) at a local government workshop in the Pacific Islands, of how to use tax regulations to mobilise funds for local bottom-up development, led to an initiative to use their own tax regulations governing the extraction of natural resources by 'foreign entrepreneurs' to receive compensation that could be leveraged into community development initiatives. (Ironically these funds would most likely come from countries whose governments provide donor aid to this undeveloped region, but do not enforce tax regulations - which would generate significant income - incumbent upon companies of their national origin.)

I have seen how the creation and adaptation of institutions in different contexts transforms the excitement and energy of new understandings into operational programmes.

In a variety of contexts – training workshops, networking seminars, development projects – in a variety of locations such as Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Pacific Islands, I have been exposed to an overwhelming expression of a desire to link up with others who want to work together for a better future. Sharing this

commitment to human wellbeing, even across borders of conflict, has often created the conditions for people to take risks that enable their communities to leverage opportunities for development. People seek out other "cooperators" looking for partners to initiate collective action for a joint future, or as the Pacific islanders call people from their own communities – their "**one-talks**".

Lastly there is the element of chance that provides opportunities and unplanned meetings between people. It is perhaps a critical factor in the success or failure of community development programmes. Following a very successful beginning of a project, one of my colleagues from the Pacific noticed a rainbow. She immediately coined the phrase "**the rainbow factor**". So successful community development is not only a matter of skill it is also dependent upon the 'rainbow factor'!

## **Chapter 10. Contribution to Knowledge**

As stated in the introduction, much has already been written about what constitutes a well-functioning community. The definitions vary and in this thesis I have adopted the term 'optimal' functioning referring to the ability of a community to collectively use its resources in a sustainable manner for mutual wellbeing and overcome the paradox of situations like Hume's peasants. This conceptualisation of optimal community functioning is itself not new and serves mainly to help focus the issue addressed here.

What I hope has been accomplished in this work is a better understanding of **how** communities develop the capacity to act in a collectively optimal manner. In specific two primary insights evolved from this case analysis:

1. I have come to recognise the mutually reinforcing three-way interplay between commitments to mutual care, the payoff structure of benefits from cooperation, and the negotiation of shared meanings.
2. I have come to understand that the process of designing community participation is already itself a rule-setting process that structures the social interactions which are the basis for creating shared meanings and community life.

The first point evolved by integrating the concepts of social solidarity as developed by Honneth (1995) with concepts of rational choice theory. To a great extent this is an expansion of Ostrom's (1990) institutional approach and of other works that link aspects of social cohesion, such as a commitment to civic involvement, with instrumental payoffs from cooperation (White, 2003).

The element that has been added here is integrating these conceptualisations with the process of creating shared meanings that as Mead has presented as fundamental to all social interaction. This way of looking at collective action sheds light on the interactive processes and how rules of social behaviour are created.

Questions related to social solidarity, and how a commitment to mutual caring and social esteem can be fostered, have also been addressed in this thesis. In many aspects understanding the importance and fostering of trust, as examined in the theories of social capital, look at almost the same issue. In such theorisations social networks and associations play an important role. The potential 'capital' embedded in social relations is the focus. In this research I have tried to look at the issue of social solidarity and belonging from a different angle.

The change in the perspective offered here is grounding the understanding of strengthening social cohesion, as Honneth (1995) did, in Mead's (1934) theories of how shared social meanings are created. It is the interactive negotiation of shared meanings, again borrowing Wenger's (1998) term that creates the possibility for joint endeavours. This is in contrast, though not in contradiction, to focusing on accessing the embedded capital in social relations as done in theories of social capital.

It is the interactive processes of social relations as described here that link the first insight with the second, which deals with the design of community development programmes. The comprehension that small groups have the potential for creating a sense of belonging and mutual caring is not a new insight. Added here is its application to processes of community development as explained in very operative terms by Block (2009).

My contribution has been to shed light on how the structuring of participation in a community development programme was a powerful interactive process through which a community could define its collective future and then create the implementing mechanisms - institutionalise rules of collective behaviour – needed to achieve it.

This understanding can contribute to the way in which participatory processes are viewed. It reinforces the belief that participation is not a technique for involving the community. Rather it looks at 'community' as a process of participation. The design of interventions is a structuring of the way people interact collectively with its tacit and explicit messages. I have tried to share my recognition that the process of

designing community development interventions itself is a participatory process and part of the way a community acts collectively.

What still remains very unclear is the magic of what brings together some people, who are more inclined to cooperate with each other, while others continue to miss the opportunities of such a community. Thus the elements of chance and opportunity – 'the rainbow factor' - may very well need to be given more weight in what remains a very unpredictable non-linear field of professional endeavour.

The research opened with the paradox of Hume's peasants. I would like to conclude by presenting a corollary paradox very close to Taylor's (1976) notion of altruism and suggest that if the two peasants were committed to each other's wellbeing then the possibility for mutual instrumental benefit from cooperation (helping each other reap their harvest) would increase if their mutual caring for each other was detached from the expectation of instrumental benefits.

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## APPENDIX

### **Interview Schedule 13/8/2005**

#### **Significance of the strategic process**

- What does the strategic process bring to mind: thoughts, feelings, memories?
- What did you expect to happen? Upon what did you base your expectations?
- What happened during the process? Was there anything that especially sticks out in your mind?
- What led you / prevented you from participating?
- What part did you play? What led you into this role?
- Who led the strategic process and set the guidelines for public involvement?
- What were these guidelines and how do you know? Could you have influenced the way these rules were set? What happened to those who did not abide by them?

#### **Critical review**

- Was the strategic process productive? What happened in the community as a result of the process? How do you conclude this?
- Is this an effective way for people to express themselves and initiate action? Are there other more familiar ways/types of community involvement that you prefer? Would you participate in such an activity again?
- Is the way the community behaves today a part of the strategic vision? On what do you base your conclusion? Who else shares this conclusion?
- Who is responsible for the community's situation? Why/how do you come to this conclusion?
- What enables you or prevents you from being able to influence things? (Agency).
- Do you believe that the political leadership of the community is committed to the outcomes of the strategic process? How do you conclude this?
- In general do you feel that community leaders work for the common good of the community or more for specific interests? How do you conclude this?

#### **Learning: How do you draw your conclusions?**

- Do you feel comfortable in participating in such a public process? Was this type of process familiar to you?
- What did you come to understand through your participation in the process about yourself, about the community? (Your personal role, your professional role, and the importance of the community)
- In what way did it affect your involvement in the community? How did it affect other people? How do you conclude this?
- Did you meet new people or connect to people in a different way? In what way?
- Are there issues or programmes that you would like to influence in the community? Do you know what to do? How do you know or how can you find out?

- What types of opportunities are there for people to work together in the community? How do you know? Do you make use of them - why or why not? With whom did you work and on what?
- Were there other community events or experiences that influenced you? In what way?

**Summary remarks**

- What would you tell a person about your community?
- What would you do differently? Why?
- What did you learn from this experience?