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# **Diverse Economies in Place**

A study of economic subjects and practices in the  
Wingecarribee Shire of New South Wales

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Source: Author

The intersection of the social and the economic

## **Statement of Originality**

Except where otherwise stated, this thesis is my own work

March 2003

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to Ruby  
who will always have a special place in my heart

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## Abstract

This geographical investigation is situated within ‘the cultural turn’ from which the dominance of both political economy and capitalism is being challenged. It contributes to a growing movement of post-capitalist thought and demonstrates that undoing capitalist assumptions and rethinking the economic-social divisions created by these assumptions, shifts the power base from the global capitalist realm, to a more inclusive and economically diverse array of local spaces. The Wingecarribee Shire is one such local space. This study of the geography of the diverse economy of the Wingecarribee Shire of NSW, empirically tests the validity of the Gibson-Graham Diverse Economy Framework. It examines ways in which residents are inhabiting and maintaining a diverse economy and the implications of their situation in a diverse economy for local and regional planning and development.

The study involved participant observation over a 12 month period within the community economies of the Wingecarribee Shire. Several in-depth interviews with shire residents were also conducted.

The Wingecarribee study reveals a dynamic diverse economy that is as asserted by Gibson-Graham a complex matrix of different kinds of transactions, different forms of labour and different modes of economic organization. It also suggests that there is a strong relationship between the geography of a place and the nature of the diverse economy that exists there. Few geographers have to date examined spatial differences in the diverse economy. This study provides a springboard for further examination in this regard.

Two key lessons for local and regional economic development and planning seem to emerge from this research. By promoting the diverse economy framework and incorporating it into policies planners and developers can:

- 1) Formally recognise the significance and value of non-capitalist economic initiatives and their role in building and maintaining cohesive social spaces, and
- 2) Formally recognise the interdependence of the capitalist and community economies and the embeddedness of both in place-specific cultural and social practices.

## Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACRDC	Australian Capital Region Development Council
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
BGBAA	Boer Goat Breeders Association of Australia
EASI	Electronic Accounting Systems Integration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMR	Greater Metropolitan Region
IPB	Illoura Park Boers
LETS	Local Employment Trading System
RAR	Rural Australians for Refugees
RAS	Royal Agricultural Society
SH	Southern Highlands
SHN	Southern Highlands News
STHBEC	Southern Tablelands and Highlands Business Enterprise Centre
TCF	Triple Care Farm
WSC	Wingecarribee Shire Council

# Chapter 1:

## Introduction

It is not true that we must continually crank up the economic machine, starve the poor and work ourselves to death. Believe me about this: I was trained as an economist! The challenge is to set the imagination and creativity loose, to think outside the box, to see the opportunities, which lie beyond the problems. We can only resolve today's questions by opening up new approaches and seeing new connections (Robert Theobald 1997: 16).

## Background

As subjects in the global market economy, humans are increasingly pressured to accumulate wealth and to adopt a greedy and insular approach to resource consumption. Consumerism can engulf and trap us. There-in lies the potential to become slaves to an ideology and fooled by an illusion which cannot sustain our global planet, environmentally, socially or politically. Perhaps for this reason local participants in the global capitalist marketplace are becoming increasingly disillusioned and disenfranchised (Theobald 1997). There is a growing movement of post-capitalist thought that has many facets (Waring 1988, Ironmonger 1996, Gibson-Graham 1996, 2002a, 2002b, Theobald 1997, Hui 2002). This groundswell questions the very terminology that has shaped understandings of globalisation.

Theobald (1997:18) notes the misuse of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a measure of the 'success' of national economies, arguing it was never designed to be such, but rather a measure of the production of goods. The measure is inadequate in many regards. Not only does it not account sufficiently for services at a global scale, it excludes a whole range of local transactions in the household and community arena. Waring (1988) notes that many of these activities and transactions are ones that women are primarily involved in. By way of further example, consider the language used to describe the state of nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 'underdeveloped', 'developing' and 'developed'. Many have begun to contest this representation of a single continuum of growth and wealth along which national economies are measured by the capitalist's yardstick. In 'Contesting Development' Kindon (1999: 192), writing from an 'anti-development' stance, describes development as "a linear and universalistic blueprint" defined by

powerful ‘western’ nations. In a similar vein, Gibson-Graham describe development as the:

historical experience of capitalist industrialisation in a few regions that has become a description of a universal trajectory and a prescription for economic and social intervention, in all of the world’s nations (Gibson-Graham 2001: 5).

Gibson-Graham emphasises that capitalist market practices as emerged from the western economic tradition, have set the global regulatory agenda since the late 1980’s, and in doing so have to some extent, destroyed and devalued community based economic initiatives in ‘non-western’ and ‘less developed’ localities. I would like to examine along with Waring and Theobald, the way this ‘devaluing’ of community economic activities has also happened within capitalist economies, particularly in view of the fact that mainstream economic activity (wage/salary earnings), is the dominant measure of identity and of both financial and social power.

In providing a context for this study, it is important to recognize that we are not only participants in the global market place, but also local citizens inhabiting “social space in which people live, work and socialise” (Meegan 1995: 55). Richard Meegan adds that the interaction over time of these activities gives places their distinctiveness. Local citizens have, in essence, the desire for connection with local places and people and because of this, the potential for community building and cohesiveness (Cox 1995). The social realm comes into play here more visibly through home, neighbourhood and community group participation.

Our ‘personal’ and localised geographies are, however, globally connected on a daily basis in the simplest decisions about what to eat, wear and watch on television. For such decisions may place us at the end of a line of transactions that stretch from Asia to the USA (Murphy and Le Heron 1999: 2). According to Allen and Massey (1995: 1) we live out “local versions of the world” and therefore it is essential we locate ourselves in a global context. This presents a great many tensions. ‘Our world’ today is intoxicated with what Cox (1995: 4) describes as “macho, competition-driven progress” as embodied in capitalist markets. Cox argues that in this representation of the global world, the ‘social’ “has been relegated to such a low priority that it’s almost completely off the agenda”. In mainstream economic thinking, there is a marked divide between the economic and non-economic or social activity. Activities in the realm of household

production and the gift economy, amongst others, are done for oneself or for others without monetized payment and thus described as non-economic activities (Dodds 1997:99).

## An emerging body of post-capitalist thought

This thesis adopts the view that essentially the economy,

is characterised by individuals and groups specialising in the production of certain goods and services and exchanging these for other goods and services which they may consume or use as inputs to further production (Dodds 1997: 99).

Along with Gibson-Graham (2002b), I have also included ‘one-way flows’ of produced goods and services such as ‘gift giving’ in the economy. This definition of a ‘more-than-capitalist’ economy leaves the door open for unpaid and alternative paid transactions in the household and community arena, to be included. Ironmonger (1996) and Williams (2002), amongst others, seek to quantify the significance of unpaid work in capitalist economies. Williams observes that in both the UK and the USA more than half of the total working time is spent engaged in unpaid work, and that over the past 40 years “advanced” economies have experienced “a shift in working time towards the unpaid sphere” (2002: 8).

Cameron and Gibson-Graham (2003: 15) attempt to conceptualise the totality of diverse economic relations (the diverse economy) “in terms of the coexistence of different kinds of transactions...different ways of performing and remunerating labour” and “different modes of economic organisation or enterprise”. The diverse economy encompasses both activities usually associated with capitalist enterprises as well as those that exist outside the capitalist sphere in places such as households, neighbourhoods, small businesses. The term ‘community economy’ as developed by Gibson-Graham, is adopted in this thesis to refer to that portion of the diverse economy that constitutes non-capitalist economic relations (Gibson 2002a). Gibson (2002a: 76) emphasises that in a community economy, transactions “are inflected with ethical principles” such that both “the material well-being of people and the sustainability of the community are priority objectives”. Included in the community economy are alternative market (e.g. barter) and

non-market transactions (e.g. gifts); alternative paid labour (e.g. self-employed) and unpaid labour (e.g. volunteer) and alternative capitalist organisations of surplus distribution (e.g. state enterprise) and non-capitalist organisations (e.g. cooperatives). Chapter Two provides a more detailed explanation of the diverse economy and the community economy.

Significantly, it is not these ideas of community economies themselves that are new, but rather the framing that is different. Community economies have existed for a long time in many cultures, but because they are often hidden from the capitalist eye, they have not been valued in the global economic realm. Now with increasing recognition and vigorous debate, new models of community economy, income generation and sustainable living are emerging from the ‘grass roots’ of the local. In embracing a new sense of economy, one might argue that the economic-social divide is narrowing because there is not as clear a distinction between what is work/not work, economic/not economic, as there once used to be. To visualise a diverse economy, as I hope to do in this thesis is to remove the notion that capitalism ‘is’ and instead to recognise it as a dominant discourse and as such a construct (Gibson-Graham 1996). Put simply, humans have created capitalist ideals, therefore we possess the capacity to re-create and re-think them. In a diverse economy, capitalist and non-capitalist transactions are equally valued. In this sense we as economic actors have the capacity to see ourselves as ‘multiple economic subjects’ (Gibson 2002b); that is, actors who inhabit both local community and the wider economic spaces, and both the capitalist and the ‘other’ simultaneously. This project utilises Gibson-Graham’s current ‘framing’ of the diverse economy to map the multiple economic identities of individuals (economic actors). To my knowledge a mapping of this kind has not been done before.

## Research Focus

At a theoretical level, this thesis explores the delicate balance between our global and local citizenship, and the ways in which this dichotomy intercepts that of the economic and social divide. Through the review of current literature, I want to demonstrate that by undoing capitalist assumptions and rethinking the economic-social divisions these assumptions have created, we can shift the power base from the global capitalist realm

to a more inclusive and economically diverse array of social spaces. The Wingecarribee Shire of NSW provides a tangible context in which to explore the consequences of this shift in economic thinking, and enables the proposition of new pathways for regional economic development. In practical terms, this thesis examines the potential of people and place (in the Wingecarribee Shire), to inhabit and maintain a diverse economy.

This particular case study locality was selected for specific reasons. First, the nature of the research topic favoured an inside out perspective. As a resident of the Wingecarribee Shire I have been able to join community groups and be amongst the people. This has enhanced my ability to access services and contacts and to really understand the issues surrounding my research topic. Second, the region was selected because it is of great geographic interest both economically and socially. In many ways it is very distinct. Described by Williams (personal communication, 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> July 2002) as the last green corridor out of Sydney, it maintains British heritage through its social fabric and the physical and economic landscape. To date the council has managed to minimise development, but this is becoming increasingly difficult. Like other regions on the fringe of a city (e.g. Blue Mountains, Central Coast) the Wingecarribee Shire is home to many commuters who work in Sydney and/or Canberra. Households and business entities alike are pressing for development approvals, and the region as a whole faces big choices about its economic future.

This study focuses on the stories of individuals and my observations of community economic activity within the Wingecarribee Shire. Whilst similarities to other regions may be suggested, this research is not about making generalisations. Rather it is intended that this close up encounter will raise possibilities about the ways in which people inhabit a 'place-specific' diverse economy and explore the implications this may have for local and regional economic development and planning.

The research questions are:

- 1) **In what ways are people inhabiting and maintaining a diverse economy in the Wingecarribee Shire of NSW?**
- 2) **What implications does their situation in a diverse economy have for local and regional economic development and planning?**

In answering these questions the following outcomes were sought:

- To gain a better understanding of the relationship between the geography of a place and the nature of the diverse economy that exists there
- To identify themes in relation to how localised diverse economies can be built and maintained
- To propose ‘lessons’ for economic development and planning based on the recognition of the diverse economy in place of a capitalist one

The study involved a participatory research process over a 12 month period, within the community economies of the study locality. Several semi-structured open-ended interviews with residents were also conducted.

## Thesis Structure

The following outline provides an understanding of how the separate components of this research fit together coherently in thesis form. Chapter 2 provides a literature review of economic geographical trends in the past decade. Out of this analysis flows the emerging body of ‘post-capitalist’ thought already mentioned, which calls for a re-thinking of what constitutes ‘the’ economy and a questioning of the division between the economic and social spheres. Research methodology is the focus of Chapter 3. It outlines the research justification and context, and details the research design and my role as researcher. In Chapter 4 a profile of the place and people of the Wingecarribee study locality is provided. Particular emphasis has been placed on the factors that could be seen as helping or hindering the growth of a diverse economy in the region. Chapter 5 encompasses the analysis and discussion of research findings. It re-maps the economic identities of certain Wingecarribee Shire residents and in doing so exposes themes in relation to how a diverse economy might be built and maintained. The last chapter proposes new pathways for local and regional economic development and examines future directions for research and community action. Five vignettes are presented between chapters to give examples of how Wingecarribee residents inhabit and maintain a diverse economy.

## Exhibit A: Geraldine's Story

Geraldine<sup>1</sup> and her partner Stewart have lived in Bowral for 18 years. Their home was built in the late 1890's in what was then the working class part of the town, now referred to now as 'old Bowral'. As we walk around the garden, Geraldine tells me (paraphrasing) 'the neighbours have given up complaining!' She is referring to the piles of half composted garden waste, the collections of second hand materials awaiting use in various projects, and the rubbish which they have long since been meaning to remove. Over one fence, live a couple who have bought and renovated their purchase in the last year and are now selling it with a great return in mind. Geraldine talks about how her street is representative of many in Bowral that used to be quite working class and are now inhabited by wealthy Sydney commuters and the likes. She speaks of the snobbish uppity attitudes, which she says are now so dominant in the town, with somewhat humorous remarks as opposed to resentment. I find myself wondering how much these differing class attitudes have really affected her.

Since 1988 Geraldine and Stewart have been managing the Bowral Food Co-operative. As noted in the general research observations section of Chapter 4, they operate the co-op from their home and travel to Sydney bi-monthly to buy produce. It is worth noting that despite her enthusiasm and commitment to it, the food cooperative is not identified as the main activity that occupies Geraldine's time and energy, nor is it able to provide an income for her.

Gardening, pottery and some of the time she spends with her elderly mother are identified as 'work'. Geraldine does admit that she finds it hard to distinguish between work and leisure in her lifestyle. Her work schedule appears very flexible and changes from week to week. Work in the garden for example is subject to seasonal variation and her energy levels. Similarly the advanced ceramics course she is undertaking at Moss Vale TAFE has a flexible schedule and attendance is 1 day weekly or fortnightly. This course allows Geraldine access to common facilities (kiln etc.) and opportunities to interact with other potters. She also has a pottery shed at home and works half days there, again depending on her energy levels.

At present minimal earnings are attached to the economic roles Geraldine has. She runs a stall at a local market once a month selling her pottery. However, changes in consumer demand over the last 20 years and an increase in the availability of cheaper alternative crockery have meant that it is difficult to earn an adequate income from pottery. Similarly when Geraldine buys food for the co-operative, the small sum she pays herself for this service, is usually just enough to cover travel costs to and from city suppliers. Stewart's income as a librarian sustains them financially. When his income is insufficient Geraldine receives a disability pension.

Geraldine had Polio when she was 5 years old. It reduced her mobility in the right arm permanently and has affected the muscles generally in the right side. As she gets older (now early 50's) her energy levels are diminishing and she gets tired more easily, more

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms have been given to the Wingecarribee Shire residents whose stories appear between chapters.

than the average person that is, due to the polio. She questions aloud that perhaps in her 20's and 30's she ought not to have done some of the very physical jobs she had such as fruit picking and horse management. Despite these comments, Geraldine describes herself as having an 'invisible disability'. 'Unless people know me well or are observing carefully, they wouldn't really know I have a disability' (paraphrasing). She tells me her parents never 'indulged' her disability and implies that this motivated her. 'My disability hasn't stopped me from travelling and doing many different jobs. I've organised my life in such a way, streamlined everything so as to manage with the reduced mobility' (paraphrasing). We move on to talk about issues surrounding living with disabilities more generally. Geraldine perceives that disabled people don't fit into the capitalist system making money because they are in the way of profit making and the notion of maximum productivity for minimum accommodation of human labour. We question the extent to which society does really accommodate people's disabilities. In this context, Geraldine mentions the computer course she undertook in 2002. She was informed towards the end of the course, that there was a typing component in the exam and went to see the teacher to express her concern about doing this in the allocated time. The teacher replied along the lines of 'Why are you doing a computer course if you can't type?'

Disability aside, Geraldine also believes she doesn't fit into mainstream society and economy, because she is not comfortable with the capitalist ethos. She describes herself as 'not tuned into capitalism' and 'not tuned into money' (paraphrasing). Geraldine expresses a dislike of the ways in which people are measured by what they do, and what they have achieved in life, and that their 'success' is measured in big things such as that which grabs media attention. When people ask: 'What do you do?' they imply: 'What paid work role do you have'? In this exchange there is a desire to impress each other. Geraldine laughs slightly when she tells me she replies: 'I am re-skilling'. I observe a tension between not wanting to conform to capitalist market expectations but perhaps at the same time feeling inadequate about not having 'succeeded' in amassing wealth or a career. She feels that she has always had small ambitions and hasn't made enough of the opportunities she has had. Geraldine says because of her choices, she doesn't have many assets to retire on. She recognises too that she would like money for 'little luxuries' and that 'we all like to have some luxuries' (paraphrasing).

*Comment:*

*According to the mainstream and capitalist view of the economy, Geraldine has no economic input or significance and yet, her story reveals many ways in which she works and participates in the production and exchange of goods and services. Individuals like Geraldine, who experience marginalisation would benefit from a more inclusive representation of the economy than that of capitalism.*

# Chapter 2:

## Representations of the economy

### Introduction

This chapter focuses primarily on developments within Anglo-American Economic Geography in the past decade. Geographers are seeking frameworks that better expose the complex web of economic and social factors in places and spaces. As a result the dominance of the political economic approach to analysis in this discipline is being questioned. This chapter places current debates into the theoretical context out of which they were born. It also contextualises this research project as situated within ‘the cultural turn’ from which the dominance of both political economy and capitalism within geography is being challenged. With this end in mind, I have sought to be both retrospective and visionary in analysis, and broad ranging in my approach evaluating the work of sociologists and geographers alike.

### Research in Economic Geography

#### **Why study Economic Geography?**

Economic Geography, put simply, is concerned with “people’s struggle to make a living” (Johnston et al 1986:117). Traditionally, this entailed the analysis of production in global regions and assisted colonial powers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to make strategic decisions about investment, commerce, trade, settlement and the use of resources. Once it was recognised as a formal sub-discipline within Anglo-American universities (in the early 1900’s), economic geography became increasingly influenced by neo-classical economic thought (Barnes and Sheppard 2000:2). This introduced capitalism and associated ideas such as individualism and the free market, into geography. In this process economic determinism replaced environmental determinism<sup>2</sup>. Similarly the

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<sup>2</sup> The view that the environment controls the course of human action (Lewthwaite 1966) as cited by (Johnston et al. 1986: 131). Economic determinism for the purpose of this distinction is where the economy controls the course of human action.

colonial descriptive studies were gradually replaced by the more analytical approaches that are adopted today (Johnston et al 1986:119).

Despite neo-classical influence, economic geographers are distinct from economists in placing emphasis on the spatial dimensions of economic systems. They seek to describe and explain the distinct economics of different places and understand the ways in which these economies are connected (Barnes and Sheppard 2000:3). Since the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there has been a strong interest in this connectedness of economies at the global scale, as embodied in the analysis of globalisation and development.

Characteristically,

globalisation is an economic geographical phenomenon, and traditional economic geographical ideas around spaces of flows, and places of control and production, are central to its understanding (Barnes and Sheppard 2000:3).

With a growing interest in globalisation worldwide, other disciplines are increasingly borrowing ideas from economic geography (Barnes and Sheppard 2000:3). Thus, the study of this sub-discipline is both relevant and critical in understanding global issues, particularly so in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in view of the fact that societies and economies at large have undergone enormous changes over the last 30 years. De-industrialisation, industrial restructuring, the rise of information technology, computerization, the feminisation of the labour market and globalisation have all contributed significantly to reshaping geographies of economies. With this in mind, I want to turn the attention from ‘why’ to ‘how’ by examining the framework that has been adopted for economic geographical investigation, namely the political economy approach.

### **The Political Economy Approach**

Since the late 1970’s the ‘political economy approach’ has dominated economic geography and this is still today the key framework within which various theories and approaches are explored (Barnes and Sheppard 2000:5). The political economy approach seeks to explain the relationship between the social, cultural and ideological worlds as they interact with and are shaped by the underlying economic basis of society. According to this framework, the circulation of capital is organised as an inter-woven network of production, exchange and consumption. ‘Concrete’ geographies are produced in and across space as predicated by the ‘successful’ circulation of capital

(Swyngedouw 2000:47). Within this framework geographers are able to identify and analyse that which is visible, dominant and measurable. Richard Walker for example begins writing on 'The Geography of Production' in the following way. The "heart of every economy is industrial production, and the heart of economic geography lies in the spatial patterns and physical landscapes industry creates" (Walker 2000: 113). Similarly Jamie Peck explores the way in which the political economy approach has created a dynamic 'labour geography' (2000:133-147), and Doreen Massey (1997) looks at the spatial division of labour in research and development workplaces.

### **The Cultural Turn**

Despite the dominance of political economy, this tradition is now on the defensive (Crang 1997:3). Increasingly, economic geographers are questioning the usefulness of the political economy framework. Instead they are developing and adopting alternative approaches, out of a desire to better explain and understand the economic-social connection.

Content is being rethought in terms of what social and spatial proportions of life count as economic, what portions (if any) are therefore non-economic, and how these dedicated spheres of economic and non-economic interrelate (Crang 1997:3).

The 'cultural turn' is the umbrella term that has come to represent this intellectual shift within the discipline. It brings together a number of different perspectives namely post-marxism, institutionalism, economic sociology and feminist theory (Barnes and Sheppard 2000:5). In this sense, the precise forms of the cultural turn have been multiple and contested (Crang 1997:3). This thesis adopts Crang's use of the term 'cultural' to refer to the meaningful mapping of the world and our position within it. The cultural turn is a process by which questions of identity, value, meaning and signification are explored, and one that has the potential to incorporate a moral-ethical attribution of signification (Crang 1997:5). Doreen Massey argues that incorporating cultural thinking into economic geography empowers the view that the economy and the geography of the economy are fully culturally constructed. "What we think of as 'the economic' is itself expressive of other aspects of our culture/society" (Massey 1997:35).

As noted earlier, the research of the Wingecarribee Shire in NSW as presented within this thesis, is situated within the cultural turn. In order to give a tangible sense of

political economy and the changes brought about by the cultural turn, I would like to present the reader with the following two representations of the Wingecarribee economy.

### **The political economic representation of the Wingecarribee Shire**

In this first representation we are looking for what is visible and measurable in terms of production, employment, turnover and so forth<sup>3</sup>. Precisely what are the concrete economic geographies that comprise this region?

**Table 1: Employment by Industry Sector (%) Wingecarribee and the Greater Metropolitan Region (GMR – Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle), 1996.**

Industry Sector Summary	W'carribee %	GMR
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	5.5	0.8
Communications	1.3	2.3
Community Services	9.7	16.2
Construction	7.6	6.5
Electricity, Gas, Water	0.8	0.8
Finance, Property and Business Services	9.7	17.8
Manufacturing	12.8	13.4
Mining	1.2	0.6
Public Administration and Defence	11.6	4.1
Recreation and Personal Services	12.8	10.9
Transport and Storage	4.2	5.1
Wholesale and Retail Trade	19.3	20.2
Undefined/ Not Stated	3.3	1.3
TOTAL %	100	100
TOTAL No. Persons in 000's	14 764	----

Source: Wingecarribee Shire Council 2000 with additions, based on ABS 1996 census data.

According to the executive officer of the Southern Tablelands and Highlands Business Enterprise Centre (STHBEC), the dairying/ beef cattle industry is the largest employer and generator of income in the shire<sup>4</sup> (Williams pers. com.). This is supported in part by Table 1, which indicates a significantly higher percentage of employment in agriculture and related industries in the Wingecarribee as compared to the greater metropolitan

<sup>3</sup> Where available I have used recently released 2001 census data, however some figures are quoted from the Wingecarribee Social Plan written in 1999-2000 as based on the 1996 census. The updated social plan was not completed prior to my thesis submission date.

<sup>4</sup> No figures were available to support this claim.

region (GMR). Of total businesses in the shire, 22% operate in this sector (Wingecarribee Shire Council WSC 2000). It is worth noting that although the de-regulation of the dairy industry during the late 1980's–90's induced a dramatic decline in dairying, Williams believes many dairies switched to beef cattle.

As indicated in Table 1, the manufacturing sector employs a similar % of total workforce to GMR. In the Wingecarribee shire this 12.8 % only amounts to 1900 people. Key manufacturing operations in the region include the Berrima Works of Blue Circle Southern Cement Ltd., Boral Country – Concrete and Quarries in Moss Vale and Mittagong Timber and Trading Ltd. The sector on last record had a turnover of \$267.2 million (1996-97 figures as published by WSC 2000). Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures indicate that in real dollar terms, there has been a downturn in manufacturing since the 1987-88. Williams estimates manufacturing turnover in 2001-02 to be a lot higher and questions the ABS calculation process. Also worth noting is the fact that, despite the downturn, since the early 1990's there has been an increase in the number of manufacturing operations. According to Williams this is due to the increase in the number of small businesses in this sector. In 1997 there were 126 manufacturing operations in the shire compared with 74 in 1990-91 (WSC 2000).

The tourism industry in the Wingecarribee recorded an \$86 million turnover in 2001-02 (Williams pers. com.). Tourism gross domestic product (GDP) in Australia for the period 2000-01 was valued at \$31.8 billion and this amount accounted for 4.7% of GDP (ABS 2002a). Table 1 classifies the majority of the workforce in this sector under recreational and personal services, retail trade and communications and to a lesser extent agriculture and related industries. In this sense this sector employs a significant proportion of the working population. Wholesale and retail trade alone accounts for 19.3% of employment in the shire.

Table 1 indicates that Wingecarribee employment in Public Administration and Defence is almost three times that of GMR. The Wingecarribee Shire Council (WSC) is responsible for the provision of fresh water and sewerage services to towns and most villages in the region. Councils do not perform this function in the GMR. WSC also operates the Moss Vale Saleyard and Stock Pound and a large Resource Recovery Centre. Berrima and Robertson gaols, The Department of Land and Water offices in

Moss Vale, the Morton National Park and several state forests also contribute to public administration employment.

These findings present one picture of what dominates the Wingecarribee economic landscape. When compared to Australia wide statistics one might argue that the region is not significant in economic terms. But that aside, this representation presents a very limited picture. The framework applied has restricted analysis to turnover in dollar terms, measured labour force contribution and GDP. Let us look now at another way of seeing this economic space.

### **A more diverse representation of the Wingecarribee economy**

This second representation as inspired by the cultural turn readily includes social and cultural components of the economy. In this representation I have returned to the Dodds definition of the economic sphere. Utilising Dodds' definition we are observing all individuals and groups specialising in the production of specific goods and services regardless of scale, turnover and dollar profitability (1997: 99).

There is a diverse and prominent array of volunteer organizations in the Wingecarribee shire. Subjects in this study alone identified involvement in Southern Highlands Permaculture, LETS<sup>5</sup>, the Wingello and Penrose Rural Fire Service, the Wingello Mechanics Institute Hall Trust, the Bowral Food Co-operative, the Boer Goat Breeders Association of Australia, Rural Australians for Refugees, Human Life International, Southern Highlands Reconciliation and the Shire's theatrical group. Volunteer involvement was also identified through subjects undertaking regular gaol visits and assistance with re-settlement into community upon release, writing for the Southern Highland Way newsletter and one of the local papers, the Southern Highland News, editing the State Polocrosse Magazine for 10 years and being state secretary of the Australian Polocrosse association for 15 years.

In neighbourhoods and households economic activities observed include home schooling, barter and half cash/ half payment in kind arrangements, lending and sharing

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<sup>5</sup> In the Wingecarribee Shire LETS refers to the Local Employment Trading System. Elsewhere in the world the abbreviations can refer to Local Employment/Exchange/Energy Trading System/Scheme.

of tools/machines such as mowers and computers, vegetable/ orchard and pottery production and exchange, and gift giving.

There are many sole trader and 2 partner business entities operating in the region. Some are 'second jobs', cash-in-hand and informally organised and thus unlikely to be represented in ABS statistics. Examples noted in this study are tree felling, a handy man business, firewood cutting and delivery, a roadside orchard stall, back yard herb production for a naturopath, household help and fencing.

There are visible signs of small scale agriculture production in the region not only dairy/beef cattle, but alpaca farming, goat breeding, horse studs, orchards, vineyards and market gardens to name a few. While some are commercial and would be represented in the ABS statistics, many are hobby farms<sup>6</sup> occupied part time.

The tourism industry provides a basis for other 'industries' to exist in both the townships and the villages. Tourist brochures and websites promote the many markets selling crafts/food etc. in various locations. The desire to promote the British heritage of the region is reflected in the preservation of historical buildings, and in the emphasis that is placed on community events such as the Exeter Fair and Brigadoon<sup>7</sup>. 'Bundy goes Briga-boom' reads a local paper headline hailing the 2002 event, the biggest yet with an attendance of more than 18 000 people (The Southern Highlands News, 8/4/2002).

While some of the employment and productivity in this second representation is included in the ABS calculations a large proportion is not. In many cases labour is unpaid, alternatively remunerated or cash-in-hand and business activities difficult to quantify in dollar terms.

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<sup>6</sup> A hobby farm is a farm that is not considered to be the main source of income for the owners.

<sup>7</sup> Brigadoon is the mythical village in the Scottish Highlands in which the people awake every hundred years to resume their lives for 24 hours. Bundanoon hosts a re-enactment of Brigadoon as an annual event.

## Embracing economic diversity: towards post-capitalism?

Outlined previously are two very different economic representations of the same geographical space. The political economy approach focuses upon production, turnover and employment in key industries and as such presents a predominantly capitalist view of the economy. Embracing a diverse economy opens the door to thinking beyond capitalism. This thesis is part of a current intellectual shift within the cultural turn whereby geographers are retranslating their thinking about economy and about capitalism in particular. The second part of this chapter explores this particular retranslation process in more detail.

### **Political Economy and Capitalism**

Early thinking about political economy was strongly associated with the writings of Karl Marx on capitalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although classical Marxist economists were concerned with the instability and limitations of capitalism as they saw it, capitalism “proved remarkably robust as a socio-economic and a cultural system in the face of the alleged inevitability of crises” (Swyngedouw 2000:49). Marxist social scientists in the 1960’s-70’s sought to understand this dominance of capitalism and why it seemed to be reproducing across the globe. Despite intentions to oppose ‘it’, I believe their analysis reinforced rather than challenged the supremacy of capitalism, and at the very least tolerated its pervasive presence. It has only been in the last decade or so that some geographers have worked to undo the notion that capitalism ‘is’, and recognise it instead as a discourse, one representation of the economy, and as such a construct and a human creation. The possibilities that are emerging from this are empowering, particularly in light of the inability of capitalism to sustain our global community, as noted in the thesis introduction.

### **Interpreting Capitalism**

Capitalism as an economic discourse emphasises the circulation of money, commodities and labour. The system is seen to be motivated by the commonly accepted goal of surplus accumulation (profit making) and for this reason, it must always be growth orientated. Zero or negative growth threatens the economic social order on which the

system rests. Further-more, capitalism in its true sense is characterised by a fundamental social division between the owners of the means of production (capitalists) and those who own their labour, which they sell to secure their survival (Swyngedouw 2000:44-47).

What has transpired in the last century has been the translation and interpretation of dominant capitalist ideals across different social and cultural spaces locked in time. Thus capitalism is a construct that has been translated and retranslated over time. If we are to lobby against it we need to be clear what we are arguing for and against. We must not make capitalism the enemy nor completely reject it in practice without first asking, is this system fundamentally flawed or have we simply misinterpreted it? If an anti-capitalist and anti-economic stance for that matter,

has resulted in a complete rejection of all capitalist aspects (including material gains) that may be indispensable even in alternative ways of life, then it could backfire and project a negative image, not only to the parties involved but also to the entire field of alternative practice – the image of an unrealisable utopia (Hui 2002:3).

With this in mind I would like to turn attention to some of the representations of capitalist economy we see today.

Many activists and scholars argue that as a way of life and a road map for globalisation, capitalism is inherently exploitative and exclusive. Economic geographer Eric Swyngedouw (2000:48) identifies the instability of capitalist socio-spatial dynamics describing the capitalist geography as a “restless landscape”. Antagonistic social relations are inevitable under capitalism he argues, because necessary expansion and surplus accumulation is the result of unpaid labour. That is, the production process involving living labour has to produce more value than that portion which is paid to workers for their effort (wages/salaries). In this sense the relationship between workers and capitalists is necessarily **exploitative**.

Similarly geographer Andrew Sayer argues that cultural resources have been “instrumentalised” or manipulated for economic gain (1997: 20). ‘Norms’ regarding gender roles “have long been manipulated for economic purposes” and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century “social reformers encouraged church attendance for economic reasons”. Sayer argues that this manipulation of cultural (and I would add social) values is on the

increase. He writes about the “Japanisation” and value driven push of capitalist enterprises investing in the well-being of workers through teaching communication skills simply for economic gain. Theobald (1997) also contributes to this discussion arguing that household and community production (unemployed, volunteerism, work in prisons etc) is not valued economically and yet social services often depend on the ‘goodwill’ of workers to operate with viability.

Not only does Swyngedouw (2000) identify interclass struggle (between workers and ‘capitalists’) but also intra-class struggle because capitalists are competing with each other for the control over spaces of production and the flow of labour resources. Someone (or many) have to ‘lose’ or ‘miss out’. In this sense capitalist economies are **exclusive**. Gibson-Graham provide an example of the effect of this excluding, describing the powerlessness and marginalisation felt within the community in the face of economic restructuring in the Latrobe Valley, Victoria (2001: 15-16).

Po-keung Hui is critical of the depiction of capitalism as ‘homogenously materialistic’. He says it is not homogenous or merely economic but rather “filled with diverse socio-cultural practices” (2002:3). Durable personal relationships, animal rituals, superstition and emotion are significant in the capitalist worlds (Hui 2002: 3). In this second representation of capitalism, it is not the system itself that is flawed, but rather **the poverty of the economic language** that has come to dominate capitalism, that is being criticised (Hui 2002). Hui argues that potentially useful economic terms such as free trade, private property rights, profit and management have been further translated into concepts of exclusion, privilege, control and a linear logic of maximising material gains, and that what is needed is an **alternative translation process**.

Gibson-Graham travel a different path but appear to arrive at the same conclusion as Hui. Gibson-Graham start out identifying capitalism as “the economy of sameness” and argue that non-capitalist economic activity, if seen to exist at all, is perceived as subordinate to and contained by capitalism (2001:6, 1996). Drawing on writings from feminist economic theory, economic anthropology and theories and chronicles of the informal economy they seek to undermine the ‘capitalocentric imagery’. In its place they find the “**rich narrative of a highly differentiated economy**” as illustrated in Table 2 (2001:6).

If we are merely angered by the mastery of capitalist representations such as those presented above by Swyngedouw, Sayer and Theobald, we run the risk of remaining a powerless minority voice (Hui 2002). For in doing so we are still allowing it to have dominant place. Similarly if we suggest ‘alternatives’ that are not feasible and expect economic subjects to choose capitalism or the ‘other’ we are in danger of advocating the ‘unrealisable utopia’ I described earlier. One of the empowering possibilities that emerges from this realisation is to find a new way forward where-by the capitalist and non-capitalist worlds are intertwined. This is why the work of Gibson-Graham who advocate an alternative language of economy in which “capitalism is not the master signifier” (2001: 8) and Hui’s attempts to retranslate mainstream economic language (2002: 1) are invaluable.

### **The Diverse Economy Framework**

Table 2 is Gibson-Graham’s current representation of the diverse economy. Gibson notes the difficulty of representing this complex matrix in a static tabulated form, and emphasises that the framework implies no pre-given assumptions of determination (2002a: 76).

In this diverse economy framework what is often seen as the economy, that is capitalist markets, wage labour and capitalist enterprises, are “merely one set of cells in a vast and complex matrix of diverse economic relations” (Gibson 2002a: 76). The shaded area in the table represents the ‘community economy’ in which economic activities are motivated by ethics and principles other than ‘pure’ competition, individualism and private gain.

Economic activity in the Wingecarribee Shire well illustrates the diverse economy categories in Table 2, and provides a tangible understanding of the community economy. A few examples have been selected from the diverse economy representation provided earlier in this chapter. The permaculture exchange network and LETS are examples of alternative markets and the home schooling observed in Wingello and Penrose is an example of ‘non-market household flows’. The Bowral Food Cooperative is a communal enterprise that operates with ‘alternative paid’ and unpaid labour and the ‘handyman business’, being self-employed, can be described as alternative paid and an

independent enterprise. People participating in the Wingecarribee community economy invest heavily in household flows, volunteer work and family care, whilst in many cases also participating in the capitalist component of the diverse economy.

**Table 2: A Diverse Economy**

Transactions	Labour	Organisational form
MARKET	WAGE	CAPITALIST
ALTERNATIVE MARKET  Local trading systems Alternative currencies Underground market* Co-op exchange Barter	ALTERNATIVE PAID  Cooperative Self-employed Indentured* In kind	ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST  Environmental ethic Social ethic State enterprise Non-profits
NON-MARKET  Household flows Gifts Indigenous exchange Theft*	UNPAID  Volunteer Housework Family care	NON-CAPITALIST  Communal Independent Feudal/ Peasant* Slave*

Notes to accompany table:

Activities marked \* are ones that we might not want to foster as part of the 'community economy'.

The table is designed to be read as columns rather than rows- non-capitalist enterprises participate in markets, for example, and volunteers may work in the capitalist sector.

Source: Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2003 p. 15.

Economic subjects undertaking multiple economic activities shift across the framework according to which part of their economic identity is being examined. Julie, whose story appears in Exhibit B, is one example of this. She works for an independent insurance loss assessor in Bowral 4 days a week thus participating as a wage labourer in a capitalist enterprise that sells services in the formal market. She has a primary producer licence and is self-employed in a small independent business breeding Boer and Anglo-Nubian goats. Julie also participates in non-market household flows by raising chickens for meat/eggs for example, and does family care visiting her elderly mother. As noted in the thesis introduction, this research adopts the term 'multiple economic subjectivity' as

developed by Gibson-Graham, (Gibson 2002b), to describe this phenomena, that is that subjects like Julie inhabit more than one economic space.

## Conclusion

The public domain has been flooded in recent years with economic representations. We increasingly hear talk of the social economy, community economy, green economy and the sustainable economy (Gibson-Graham 2002a:8). This multiplicity of economic representations is challenging capitalist dominance and opening the door to a whole new way of thinking about what constitutes economic and non-economic space. Furthermore, as this chapter has demonstrated, undoing capitalist assumptions and rethinking the economic-social divisions these assumptions have created, shifts the power base from the global capitalist realm, to a more inclusive and economically diverse array of local spaces. The Wingecarribee Shire is one such local space. In this chapter I have provided a preliminary glance at the diverse economy in this region. Further on in the thesis I provide an in depth analysis of the potential of the Wingecarribee community economy, by examining the multiple economic identities of five Wingecarribee residents.

It seems fitting to end this chapter with the words of Gibson-Graham who articulate so succinctly the ideas I have presented in both chapters one and two of this thesis.

All these innovations (*representations*) are attempts to expand the boundaries of economy to include what has been prohibited – the household, voluntary and community sectors, non-capitalist enterprises, and ethical judgements related to the future, the environment and social justice. All are attempts to wrest economy back from the reductionism of the market and perhaps assert that the economy is, after all, what we make it (Gibson-Graham 2002a: 8).

Chapter Three outlines the methodological approach employed to conduct the study of the diverse economy in the Wingecarribee Shire.

## Exhibit B: Julie's Story

Julie has lived on her 50 acre property on the outskirts of Berrima for 30 years and for the last 12 of those years she has been a single parent. Julie's farm, which has previously housed cattle, pigs and sheep, is now primarily focused on goat breeding. In 1999, after 6 months of research into the industry (visiting studs and seeking advice from experienced breeders etc.), Julie started breeding Anglo-Nubian goats, and in 2000, she added Boer goats to her herd. At the time of interview (August 2002), Julie had "approximately 90 head all up", does, bucks and kids combined. (Figure 5 shows Julie interacting with some of her goat herd on her farm in Berrima.)

Julie works physically hard and long hours in order to manage the farm on her own. She explains, "My older son (26 years) still lives at home until such time as they finish painting the house he has recently bought in Tallong...his first house purchase and the younger (24 years) is building a home further down Medway Road with his girlfriend. I have always managed to do things and generally cope for myself. The boys do help at times, but basically if something needs to be done I have to figure it out for myself. They both have their own lives to lead, and if I want to stay on my farm, I have to be able to (*manage by*) myself". Her hard work on the farm involves daily early morning and evening chores. Julie also stays up through the night when the goats are sick or kidding so that she can help if complications arise. "Having spent money on an embryo program and waited and looked after animals and waited for 5 months, there's not much point not being here at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour to save any problem". Julie also manages to run a household and do all her own property maintenance such as fence repairs. Aside of the goats, she has two alpacas that 'guard' the goats and their young kids (as shown in Figure 6), horses, chickens and several domestic pets!

As a primary producer, Julie is able to recoup Goods and Services Tax spent on genuine farm expenses to plough back into farm. "You can recover some of the taxes paid. I am particular that I only claim back what are genuine expenses for the farm. The ATO (*Australian Taxation Office*) have tightened up considerably on primary producers and there is not the of the system there was years ago. Small farms like mine are expected to show an intention of making a profit - some time down the track...we hope not too long a track!" Julie's comments identify that whilst the primary producer license and the goat breeding bring in some money, her business is not yet profitable.

To supplement her earnings Julie works 4 days a week for an independent insurance loss assessor in Bowral. She is the only employee and as such 'the assistant'. After 5 years in this position, Julie feels that she knows the business well. She is used to dealing with insurance companies, even the 'difficult' ones, and has a lot of responsibility because of this.

As part of her on-going commitment to goat breeding Julie performs a voluntary secretarial role within the Sydney Royal Agricultural Society sub-committee of the Boer Goat Breeders Association of Australia Ltd. Volunteer work has been a significant part of Julie's identity for many years. In 2001 she retired from two prominent positions in the polo crosse association of NSW. Julie was the association's secretary for 15 years

and editor of state's polo crosse magazine for 10 years. Julie gave up the "enormous work load" of her polo crosse involvement in order to focus more of her energy on the goat breeding business.

Julie is ambitious and wants to make a valuable contribution to the goat industry. Around the time of our interview, she had been complemented on the quality of her breeding stock and told me that had meant a great deal coming from an expert in the industry. Julie is looking for niche market opportunities such as local goat meat and cheese production and at how her production might cater to religious festival demands for goat meat. While Julie says she is aware of her limitations as a single person in her 50's, I can't see her retiring in a hurry! She presents as an energetic, self-motivated and skilled primary producer who loves working with animals and is attached to the farm she has lived on for 30 years.

*Comment:*

*Julie is a self-motivated and entrepreneurial businesswoman whose passion and determination is inspirational. Her story illustrates both the challenges and the possibilities that emerge when one chooses to negotiate multiple economic identities.*

# Chapter 3:

## Methodology

### Research justification and context

#### **Shaping new economic ground**

This thesis forms part of a growing trend in human geography to adopt qualitative methodologies that explore the feelings, understandings and knowledges of participants (Dwyer and Limb 2001:1). This trend is significant, given that it is only through the cultural turn, that disciplines such as economic geography have openly embraced qualitative methodologies of any kind (2001: 5).

The stories of local people and places encountered in this study provide deep insights into the processes shaping our socio-economic existence. This statement is justified on the basis that there is “no real world that exists independently of the relationship between researchers and their subjects” (Dwyer and Limb 2001: 7). In this context, questions of the representativeness of a small-scale study such as this one are somewhat irrelevant as this thesis is not about making generalisations. Rather, as noted in the introduction, it is intended to raise possibilities and allow me to hypothesise about the scope of multiple economic subjectivities in a diverse economy.

#### **Ethical considerations**

I readily concede that as a researcher I have strategically sought to enter the life-world of others. Along with Smith (1988:22) I would argue that, however laudable the aim, such research begins with “deliberate and calculated decisions to participate in someone else’s daily round”. The important ethical considerations this raises have been addressed in this project. Research has been conducted in accordance with the Australian National University’s policies on ethics in research and the particular ethics protocol approved for this project. Project information sheets were issued to interviewees about two weeks before their interview and consent forms were signed prior to the commencement of each interview. A copy of these is contained in Appendix 1. Although all participants

consented to identification in the thesis, I decided to use pseudonyms for the five subjects who participated in the multiple economic identity study because of the nature of the information given.

## Research design

### **Participant Observation**

“The participant observer gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organisation he studies” (Eyles 1988: 8). I chose this strategy in the belief that such a ‘grassroots’ approach would maximise my understanding of community economies in operation and of the potential of the region to sustain a diverse economy. As a participant observer over a 12 month period, I visited local markets, networked with community members at neighbourhood gatherings, attended permaculture field days, LETS trading days and various community meetings. Detailed notes were taken during and after key events. As noted below, participant observation provided initial contact points and allowed me to establish rapport with potential interviewees.

### **Snowball sampling**

Interviewees were selected through the process of snowball sampling. The use of this technique is particularly valid in community research projects of this nature (Saha 2002). It provides a middle ground between random and over-engineered selection. The technique requires the researcher to pick several different points to establish initial contact (Saha 2002). The ‘points’ in this study were an Australian Capital Region Development Council (ACRDC) meeting, a Permaculture/ LETS trade day, a food cooperative packing session, the local newspaper and a community newsletter. I consciously chose avenues deemed part of the community economy and those that I felt best represented a cross-section of the community in terms of age and socio-economic mix. I avoided starting with ‘gate keepers’ such as the local councillors.

## Interviews

I conducted 8 interviews of 3 to 4 hours duration. The time period included informal chatting and in most cases a tour of the interviewee's property. The five subjects whose stories are exhibited between chapters were all interviewed at their homes. One of these subjects was interviewed twice. The other two interviews with Gilli Williams were conducted in a Bowral coffee shop. Upon request, notes for review were sent to interviewees via email or hand delivery and they were invited to make corrections or additions.

I chose to conduct interviews of a semi-structured and open-ended nature. The particular technique I employed is referred to as the 'focused' interview (Judd et al. 1991: 261). This enabled me to approach each interview with a framework of topics I wished to cover but the manner in which questions were asked and the timing was left largely to my discretion. Appendix 1 shows the framework of topics for the two interviews with Gilli Williams<sup>8</sup>. The framework of topics for the other interviews was as follows:

- The main activities that occupy an average day and week in your normal routine
- The activities identified above that you would classify as work and secondly which you would classify as having economic/ financial gain for you
- The role(s) that best describe how your time is occupied e.g. teacher, parent and volunteer fire fighter. How you manage having different roles (if applicable)
- The community economic activities you are and/or would like to become involved in (if applicable)
- The dominant economic and/or community issues in the shire
- Factors that may hinder economic and/or community development

The focused interview style was chosen because it allowed respondents more freedom to express their own line of thought and I, as the researcher, the "freedom to explore reasons and motives and to probe further in directions that were unanticipated" (Judd et al. 1991: 261). Although the above descriptors suggest that the focused interview is semi-structured, Judd, Smith and Kidder categorise it loosely under the term 'unstructured', because the majority of the questions are not predetermined and very

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<sup>8</sup> Gilli Williams was interviewed for the purpose of profile building and information on the economic representation of the region. For this reason she was asked different questions as noted in Appendix 1.

few are closed-ended (1991: 260). My findings certainly validate their claims about unstructured interviews.

The flexibility of the unstructured interview, if properly used, helps us to bring out the affective and value laden aspects of respondents' responses to determine the personal significance of their attitudes... This type of interview achieves its purpose to the extent that the subject's responses are spontaneous rather than forced, are highly specific and concrete rather than diffuse and general, and are self revealing and personal rather than superficial (Judd et al. 1991: 261).

### **Small sample size**

To conduct an in-depth analysis of my subject's responses proved a mammoth task. Typically transcription requires six or seven hours for each hour of interview time and longer if the researcher, as in my case, is not an experienced transcriber (Jackson 2001: 201). I spent about 3 days transcribing each of the 8 interviews I conducted. In addition to this, the depth of my inquiry meant that for each interview I spent a further 3 days minimum (re) reading and (re) listening to tapes as new ideas and themes emerged. My decisions about workload were based on a desire to balance sound analysis with the time and word constraints of an honours thesis.

## **The role of the researcher**

The analyst must reflect on those elements of the social world that shape the self responsible for research. For the analyst's self is not a static assemblage of personality traits that is able to observe without absorbing. Instead it is continuously redefined in interaction with others to become a special mirroring and incorporation of the social processes in which it is embedded (Smith 1988:27).

For the reasons outlined by Smith above, it was important for me as a researcher to monitor my 'self' in relation to themes and ideas that emerged during the course of my project. I was mindful of the fact that who I am and what I value inevitably affected my analysis of findings. I am also a part of the local space I researched. It would be naïve to think I could be wholly objective. I chose instead to recognise that I, and those I researched, were equally part of the process of constructing local knowledge (Smith 1988).

### **Positioning oneself**

Engaging with subjects in a discussion about controversial topics such as gender roles or religion required conscious processing and sometimes distancing on my part. I worked hard both mentally and emotionally on what Smith refers to as ‘face work’, that is to purposefully establish a healthy reputation (1988: 24). I did this in order to avoid the unanticipated and unconscious manipulation of power in situations where I as the researcher felt threatened. Smith (1988: 24) implies that when power struggles arise the researcher may resort to intimidation, ingratiation and self-promotion thus building a negative reputation and compromising research outcomes.

Positioning myself also involved building a genuine relationship with each participant. I did this by opening up common ground and tapping into shared experiences. I found the insights of Deirdre McKay helpful in this regard. Her research leads her to the observation that the ‘successful’ interview works “as an exchange of autobiographies”. She found that participants were most reflective and critical of their story when she as the researcher contributed relevant aspects of her own. The level of comfort they found in her company determined how much she learnt about them (2002: 188-189).

### **A resident researcher**

To be a part of the people and place I investigated was a great asset. I could openly discuss community concerns and issues with a genuine voice. I could also share my own experiences of living in Wingello, a predominantly working class and unpretentious honest-days-work type of place. I did sense that subjects were more willing to be open and honest about sensitive and personal information because I was ‘one of them’. I could introduce myself primarily as a resident and thus to some degree avoid the stigma attached to being an external university-trained researcher. On a more practical note, my residency heightened access to council records, the library’s local history resources and initial contact points.

Interviews, participant observation and my experiences as a resident, enabled me to build the profile of the Wingecarribee Shire contained in the next chapter.

## Exhibit C: Laura's Story

Laura and her partner David have lived in the Wingecarribee Shire for almost 20 years. They moved to their current address in Penrose, in January 2002. Laura describes herself as a community activist and full time home manager with a range of work roles. The main activity that occupies Laura's time is childcare. Laura and David have four boys aged 14 years, 11 years, 4 years and 1 year. During the day Laura looks after the 2 younger kids. She and David share the travel and parental support related to Nicholas' schooling in Wollongong. This involves getting up at 5:30 a.m. and ensuring Nicholas gets his bus, dropping him at the bus stop in Bundanoon at 6:30 a.m. and picking him up from Albion Park in afternoons, which is a 2 to 3 hour round trip!

Laura is actively involved in all her sons' development. Christopher was being home schooled until recently. He started at the local primary school (Penrose) a few days prior to our meeting. Nicholas was also home schooled prior to start of high school in 2001. Laura home schooled the boys "for the primary aim of getting them or giving them the opportunity to getting into a selective school". Laura tells me that Nicholas "absolutely loves" the selective school he attends. She doesn't think he would have survived in a mainstream school because he was extremely early in his development and identified as a gifted and talented child. Although she no longer home schools the boys, Laura still prioritises involvement in their development and education. She says, "I encourage the kids to pursue their interests". Laura has always insisted they do some form of music lessons and other extra curricula activities. Chris has joined the local fire brigade and done training with them. Nicholas has been working since he was 7 years in commercials and drama/ music performance. He has an agent and secures a reasonable amount of work. He recently did the American Standard Accent course and Laura took him to Sydney for a couple of weeks to do script work. "I saw he had a gift and tried to encourage him. I want to provide all our kids with the opportunity to utilize all their talents".

As owner builders, Laura and David are presently making several house building/ extension decisions. They are keen to adopt sustainable living practices with regards to heating, water consumption and so forth and sourcing recycled building materials. Laura has also been spending time observing the seasons and bio-diversity in their new place at Penrose.

Laura writes for The Southern Highlands News (local newspaper) fortnightly. Since moving to Penrose, she has started writing about the Southern villages of Wingello and Penrose. Laura has realised that even though she lived in Robertson for 18 years, she didn't know a great deal about this area. "There's too many secrets here that have to be exposed I think...really there's some very interesting people here and the area is a little bit untouched". Laura believes the Wingello and Penrose district is undiscovered in part because of the different physical geography (to rest of highlands) and the perception that there is no reason to come here. She perceives that a big advantage of living in these areas is that there is a large cross section of people. We mutually observe that social inequalities appear more exposed here than in some of the other Wingecarribee

localities. In this context Laura recounts the following exchange. She had sighted a dead wombat on the road and when she stopped, had found a baby wombat in the bush. She took it to the general store where she and the owner phoned the local 'wombat carer'. She recalls, "This guy came into the shop with the blue singlet on and shorts and a very hairy neck. *She laughs*. That's how I remember him. He said 'Oh bloody things you should have run over it'. Here I am with this political ethic and environmental ethic and doing the right thing and you've got someone who's lived in Tallong and his opinion is put concrete in all their holes and run them all over because they're vermin. That's a real difference of perspective, an interesting perspective. To him I could have been this woman who was just trying to be politically correct, but I found myself thinking that man was ignorant".

*Comment:*

*I find myself wondering to what extent these 'differences in perspective' impact on community cohesion and thus also on the ability of communities (particularly small ones) to build and maintain local economies?*

As well as writing for the newspaper, Laura writes for the Southern Highland Way (Penrose, Wingello and Tallong) newsletter; is a part of the permaculture and LETS network and is the publicity officer for the Penrose Rural Fire Service.

Laura's community involvement appears to be a two way process. She explains: "Joining the fire brigade was something that we did straight away. If we're relying on them to help us out, we have to give them something" ...that part of community is really important to me". Laura is actively and voluntarily involved in various community economies, and at the same time conscious of the benefits this involvement has for her own economic livelihood.

# Chapter 4:

## The Wingecarribee Profile

### Introduction

The interaction of people living, working and socialising, that is the ‘embedddness’ of economic and social factors, gives places their distinctiveness (Richard Meegan 1995). This chapter well illustrates Meegan’s observation. A concise profile of the Wingecarribee locality is given in this chapter. It focuses on factors that could be seen as helping or hindering the ability of economic subjects residing in this region, to maintain a diverse economy.

### The Place

#### **Location**

Wingecarribee local government area covers 2700 square kilometres. This is an area bigger than metropolitan Sydney (WSC 1999a). Located roughly 110 kilometres south west of Sydney, the shire is characterised by its high altitude (hence the name ‘Southern Highlands’) and associated colder temperatures. Most areas are 640m or above in elevation. The Illawarra Escarpment and the Morton National Park shape the shire’s eastern boundary. The northern, western and southern boundaries are areas of rugged bushland. Figure 1 locates the region in NSW and Figure 2 shows the towns (Bowral, Moss Vale and Mittagong) and villages that comprise the region.

#### **Rapid development**

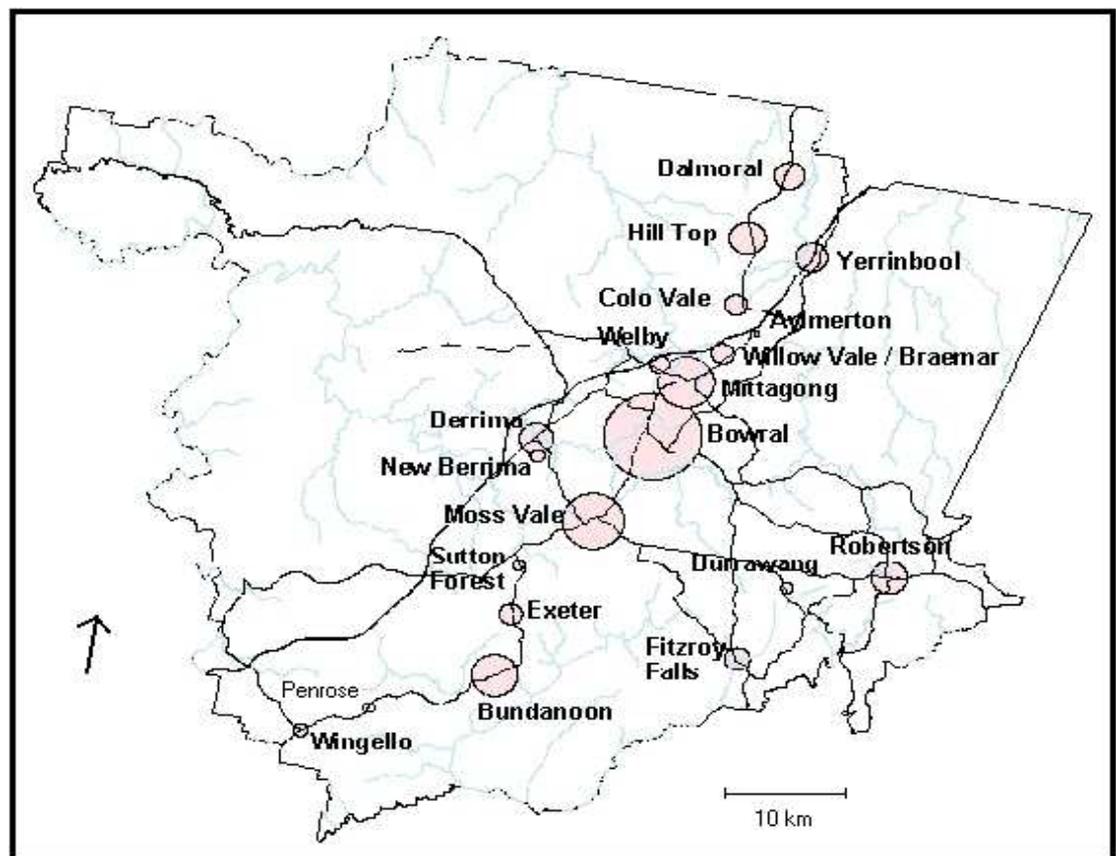
The Sydney to Canberra corridor is the last ‘green belt’ for economic development around Sydney. Given its proximity to these two major urban centres and the attractiveness of the landscape it comes as no surprise that the Southern Highlands is believed to be one of the fastest growing inland regions in Australia (Williams, pers.com.). The population, now about 41 000, increased by 23% between 1991 and 2001. Over the same period Australia’s total population increased by 13% (ABS 2002b).

**Figure 1: The location of the Wingecarribee Shire**



Source: Australian National Resources Atlas 2001

**Figure 2: Towns and Villages in the Wingecarribee Shire**



Source: Wingecarribee Shire Council 2002 and ABS 2001 census data

### **Economic potential**

In his study of Bowral (that he gave the pseudonym Bradstow) in the 1970's, Wild observed that tourism and country residences had been an important aspect of economic life in the region since the late 1800's when many country houses were built by wealthy graziers and Sydney businessmen (1974: 13, 19). Despite the continuation of absentee land ownership, the old money families dating back to the late 1800's are injecting fewer resources into the region (Williams pers.com.). Today, in many cases 'new money' is replacing the 'old'. In making this comment Williams is referring to the wineries, restaurants and dairies being established by new investors. Williams also notes the benefit of the entry of 'middle income earners' into the area over the past decade. "The truth is, the fellow at Willow Vale and Mittagong are probably putting more money into the community than the fellow that lives in Burradoo<sup>9</sup> and has his business in Sydney". The "fellow at Willow Vale" refers to the self-employed small business owners such as tradespersons.

## **The People**

### **Class consciousness**

The late 1800's settlement by the gentry "established the district as prestigious" (Wild 1974:19). They built in Burradoo, the ultimate address. So much so that in the 1970's, almost a hundred years on, a person still received the best attention at exclusive city stores if this address appeared on their credit card (1974: 31). Late 1800's Bowral and Moss Vale townfolk, largely ex-convicts and emancipists, viewed the Burradoo set as snobby and detached from everyday affairs (1974: 19). Both Wild and Williams note that the progressive arrival of the middle stratum has to some extent been a leveller (Wild 1974:9 and Williams pers.com.). Other long-term residents interviewed echo this.

### **Absentee land ownership**

Today, as in the 1890's, the residences and farms of 'city people' are mainly used during holiday periods, at weekends or for retirement. Williams voices concerns about

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<sup>9</sup> Burradoo is known traditionally as the prestigious and wealthy residential location on the outskirts of Bowral in which city investors traditionally chose to purchase and build mansions.

poor land management due to lack of land education. In a similar vein, Julie, an interview subject talks about the “Noah’s Ark syndrome” on many hobby farms. Williams also believes that the shire is missing good intellect and community interest because “they want to come down and relax and unwind, they don’t want to become part of the community” (pers.com.). On the other hand, Julie recognises that city hobby farmers “are inevitably more open-minded, they’re more open to trying a new way of doing something, (*they have*) money and they’re prepared to put money into whatever they want to do”.

### **Income**

The Wingecarribee Shire’s median weekly income is the same as the national average of \$300-399 (ABS 2002b). The average income however, places the shire at \$275 as opposed to NSW \$397 per week, based on 1996 census figures (WSC 1999a). There are a higher proportion of lower income earners and a lower proportion of higher income earners in the region compared to state averages. The wealthy city part-time residents and investors create a false sense of affluence across the board. Their absentee land ownership is “a problem in as much as it lowers the average income of the area. It’s a very affluent area with a very low income for that reason, (*that is*) that the income isn’t here” (Williams, pers.com.).

### **Ancestral origins**

In the 2001 census the three most common ancestries identified within the region were Australian 43%, English 42% and Irish 13% as compared to national figures of 36%, 34% and 10% respectively. The number of people of indigenous origin in the Wingecarribee Shire is 497, 1.2% compared to Australia’s total of 2.2% (ABS 2002b; 2002c).

## My perspective as a resident

When I was in year 12 at high school in metropolitan Sydney (1987), I spent a week studying the highlands for my Geography fieldwork. I remember thinking these were ‘real country towns’ with a high proportion of elderly people whom I shyly attempted to interview. The independently owned clothing shops and the like also stood out in my mind. It seemed such a long way from Sydney, another world. Both my perspective and the general perceptions of the highlands have changed a great deal in the past 16 years.

### **Diminished sense of distance**

The most notable change is that the sense of distance has diminished. Commuting to Sydney and Canberra from the Southern Highlands is quite acceptable for workers and particularly appealing to public servants and business people who travel regularly between the two cities. The WSC notes that possibly as many as 30% of people who travel to places of work, travel beyond the shire boundaries (mainly to areas of Sydney), and 67% of workers use their car to get there (1999b: 2)<sup>10</sup>. Residents will speak of ‘going into town’ interchangeably to refer to Bowral or Moss Vale and Sydney city. I myself travel to Sydney city and/or Canberra every week by car and my spouse works in Canberra 4 days and Sydney 1 day a week. Similarly, interviewees in this research travel 3 to 4 hour round car trips more than once a week for various lifestyle reasons and consider this travel as a ‘normal’ part of their routine. It’s a distinctive type of travel too; little traffic, mostly freeway driving and a lot of kilometres.

### **Workplace changes**

Close to 10% (approximately 1500) of employed persons in the Wingecarribee Shire work from home (WSC 1999b: 2). Technological changes have meant that increasingly people are able to operate businesses electronically and communicate with clients and colleagues via modem networks from their home, thus making their proximity to work places less relevant. In turn this has led to greater flexibility in work hours and routine.

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<sup>10</sup> These figures are likely to be higher now. The WSC report referred to is based on the 1996 census. 2001 census data is not yet available.

### **Semi rural character**

Despite development pressure and the encroaching city sprawl, the region has maintained its distinct semi-rural character. People appear to adopt a relaxed, slower pace of life. Networks, community groups and the general connections of people knowing each other seem to me stronger and more numerous than in Sydney where I lived for 30 years. This in itself appears to attract newcomers like me wishing to escape the city pace.

### **Alternative Lifestyle**

Increasingly the region is characterised by sustainable small-scale agricultural systems such as permaculture, and residents who have an interest in sustainable energy usage in house and garden design, self-sufficiency, and so forth. As part of my research, I participated in permaculture field days, observing 30 to 40 enthusiasts in attendance. I gather 150 people are on the group's mailing list.

## **Community Economies**

Chapter Two provided a list of community economy initiatives observed in the region. Below is a brief outline of two of those initiatives in operation. The information was gathered in the course of this project.

### **The Bowral Food Co-operative**

Geraldine and her husband Stewart started the Bowral Food Co-operative in 1988. Their vision was to create an opportunity for people to purchase quality whole foods (e.g. grains, nuts, legumes) for a cheaper price in return for some input into packing and purchasing. The consumer co-op operates on a trust basis. Members (10-15 in total) order bi-monthly and are required to drop off their money and packaging. Geraldine and Stewart go to wholesale stores in Sydney where they buy bulk items. Extra supplies are stored in the part of their house that has been converted into the co-op stores and packing area. Members of the co-op take turns to pack up orders. There is no formal

roster so labour is performed on a trust basis. Members also pick up their orders from the co-op themselves.

### **Permaculture Southern Highlands and LETS**

Permaculture Southern Highlands is a group of individuals who are actively involved in home-based food production, surplus exchange and barter in the region. Field days are held every month and attract strong interest as noted previously. The group produces *The Permacultivator* newsletter to communicate events and provide motivation and ideas, and they are also in the process of establishing a Local Employment Trading System (LETS). Organisers are promoting the benefits of LETS as local community network/ relationship building, distribution of surplus produce, local employment, wealth for those on low income and a sharing of resources. The LETS scheme operates through a central register that keeps track of ‘gibs’ (name for the chosen unit of value). Members can buy and sell goods and services for gibs and/or half cash half gibs as agreed between buyer and seller. Sometimes the permaculture field day is combined with a LETS trading session in which traders can sell and purchase a range of items. At trade days I observed surplus fruit and vegetables, seedlings, eggs, honey, jams and native plants for sale. *The Permacultivator* is also an avenue through which people trade, not only goods, but also services such as school tutoring, music lessons, cleaning, house painting, accounting advice and child minding.

## **The role of the council**

Residents interviewed perceive that the Wingecarribee Shire Council is in crisis mode due to rapid growth and the associated strain on resources and infrastructure. The council has sought to slow development, adopting a ‘minimum development and no innovation’ policy. Several interviewees described new business initiatives that had not been approved. Gilli Williams is experienced in dealing with the council. She advocates in situations where single persons or entities may have less power than she does in dealing with the council. Williams (pers.com.) recalls her recent disappointment when a boutique cheese maker business was not approved. The entrepreneur went on to successfully establish in the Hunter Valley. Similarly, Julie talked about a viticulturist

she knew who had been denied local approval and then gone on to run successful vineyards in Young. Williams and Julie both recount the council's rejection of several applications in relation to farm-stay and farm caretaker arrangements on commercial and hobby farms.

Wild implies that the minimum development policy is not a new phenomenon.

“Bradstow has rarely attempted to attract industries and in fact has on a number of occasions rejected them. One of the main reasons has been the influence of the wealthy people who want to ensure the place remains a pleasant rural village” (1974: 26).

Mowbray argues this point more generally, noting that local government “is an institution through which status, power and wealth are acquired and maintained, particularly through its role in controlling land use and property development” (2000: 216).

In this chapter I have described the factors that make the Wingecarribee Shire a distinct geographical space and one in which the social and economic realms are intertwined. In the next chapter we enter the day-to-day life of Wingecarribee residents and examine the ways in which they are negotiating multiple economic identities and maintaining a diverse economy. These processes are understood in the context of the local spaces this chapter has described.

## Exhibit D: Terry's story

"I just feel I haven't been that helpful economically".

*Comment:*

*At the end of our conversation Terry expressed this concern to me. I on the other hand was grateful for his insights and sharing. To me, Terry's ethos and principles suggested a very non-conformist, radical and passionate determination to balance social and economic concerns in both his own lifestyle and his projected worldview.*

Terry has been involved in social activism in the Southern Highlands for almost 20 years. He has often been a minority voice. He explains "I was involved in the peace movement way back when we first came to the Southern Highlands and we (*Terry and his wife*) were part of the Hiroshima march through the streets of Bowral which was unheard of...completely unheard of that anyone would protest in Bowral".

For the past 13 years Terry has worked at Triple Care Farm in Robertson. The farm is part of Mission Australia's (an arm of Sydney City Mission) care support and training network, offering assistance to homeless and troubled youth. At the farm 'students' are given training in a diverse range of outdoor hands-on activities and in life management skills such as self-maintenance and budgeting. Terry is involved in all aspects of their training.

On a 'typical' day Terry gets up at 5:45 a.m. feeds his animals and prepares for 'work'. He has to be at the farm at 7:30 a.m. in order to wake up 6 students that are in residence there and help them get ready for the day (chores, self maintenance such as showering etc. and having breakfast). By 8:45 a.m. Terry and the students are down at the farm area, where the day's work is allocated. Farming activities during the day vary immensely. At the time of our interview Terry was teaching tractor driving and maintenance, and directing students in the laying of a concrete slab for a chemical/flammable materials shed. Terry aims to be home by 4:30 to 5 p.m. however; sometimes on his way home he goes to shower an elderly person or to pick up his daughters from after school activities (e.g. drama, part-time job).

The evenings and weekends in Terry's routine are heavily occupied with volunteer work. One of the prominent volunteer roles Terry has is promoting Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR) in the Southern Highlands. For 2 hours each Saturday morning, Terry sits at a table in Bowral's main street "inviting people to write words of welcome and hope to people in the (*detention*) centres, Villawood in particular" because of its relative proximity to the highlands. This has been happening for almost a year. The welcome book idea "started here in the highlands and has now spread to...(*at*) the last count I think was something like 43 other country towns have started that up as a result of what we started in Bowral". As part of his commitment to RAR, Terry writes letters to the government and other RAR centres, and provides short-term accommodation for refugees. He tells me that he recently had a Kurdish man staying the weekend who was seeking work in the district. RAR was arranging employment for him at a local bakery. Terry has a number of other volunteer roles. These include campaigning for Southern Highlands Reconciliation, involvement in gaol resettlement programs attached to Berrima and Robertson Gaols, participation in the local theatrical group and youth

association (with his two teenage daughters) and parental input into the two schools his daughters attend.

“We’re very social justice and human rights orientated, our family”. Terry seems proud and pleased that his daughters are promoting issues of social justice amongst their peers. For example, they have done public speaking and written plays on topics of social concern at school.

Sometimes on Sundays, Terry goes to St. Vincent’s aboriginal centre in Redfern. He lived in Redfern for 9 years and prior to that spent 6 months living with Aboriginal people in Wilcannia in his own words “to enable (*him*) to get insights into their situation”. Terry’s says his experiences in Redfern and Wilcannia have helped him through the years to empathise and connect with people who are potentially marginalised. He explains, “I’ve been in no man’s land as far as not being accepted in cultural situations. (*In Wilcannia*) I was white to the black people and I was black to the white people”.

Although social activism is still a minority voice in the region, Terry says the “council is becoming more aware of multiculturalism in the highlands now. Once the highlands was middle class, upper middle class, very conservative, introverted, anti any change”. Terry acknowledges the influx of different restaurants over the past 18 years as an example of some level of openness now. He also notes that there are “quite a few radical authors in the highlands” and is encouraged by the open mindedness of people he meets “when on the table”.

## Exhibit E: Derek’s story

Derek is a self-employed accountant and business advisor. He operates his business called Electronic Accounting Systems Integration (EASI) from his home in Wingello. EASI helps businesses work more efficiently and “grow and develop themselves by harnessing their accounting records and information”. By way of example, Derek talks about improvements in the stock control and invoicing procedures of a business he has been advising for 9 years. This company is now 3 times the size it was 5 years ago.

At present, Derek has 20 clients and the majority of these are small to medium sized companies with 10 – 20 employees. Most clients are located in and around Sydney, with the remaining few in rural NSW and Victoria. They are usually seen on site, which means Derek travels to Sydney and beyond 4 to 5 days a week. On a typical day he leaves home between 6:30 and 7 a.m. and is home again between 7 and 8 p.m. Sometimes additional work is done in the evenings via modem and electronically (from his home office). At the time of our interview, Derek was working 70 hours a week assisting a client in Chatswood, Sydney, 2.5 to 3 hours drive from Wingello. He stayed in Sydney some nights to save on travel time. When possible, Derek aims to work from

home on Fridays and to see his local clients on this day. He is seeking to build up the number of local clients he has. Derek aims to do this by providing friendly service and sound advice. He also offers discounted rates for local clients. "I charge them 100 dollars an hour here, the shop (*Wingello General Store*) even less... mainly because of what they can afford and cause it's a small business and because I don't have to travel so far. For Sydney (*clients*) I charge between 150 and 220 dollars an hour".

Considering all the travel Derek does I wonder if it is worth it? Living in Wingello that is. He responds: "Oh yeah living here is fantastic. It's like coming on holidays every night... the fresh air, fresh water, kids can run around... it's quiet. The city has got a different vibe. There's a lot more anger and everything else. Here you can just be quiet, you can just do your own thing. You don't have to rush here and there". Derek and his family moved to Wingello in 2000. His comments reflect his appreciation of the change from city life.

In addition to the long hours of paid work, Derek commits about 5 hours each week to volunteer work. He states plainly "I want to give at least 10% in time and money and so that's about what I do". Derek volunteers his accounting and business advisory skills to a number of non-profit organisations. These include a catholic bookshop, a pro-life organisation, a monastery, the local fire brigade and community hall and a local network of home schooling families. In the case of Human Life International, Derek explains how he "helped them design a data base to track all the donations they receive". In terms of the Cardinal Newman catholic bookshop he started by helping them with their tax and has gone on to provide business and marketing advice. Below Derek recounts how he first got involved at the local monastery at Penrose. "Oh I went there. I said I'm an accountant. I said, what are you guys doing?" *At the time there was someone already doing the books but they weren't sure what to do with GST changes etc.* "I stepped in and said 'I'll help you' and so I set the system up... and they can now see now how much they've actually earned over the last 2-3 years. They've got a lot of records there now... and they sell... little candles after mass. You can light a candle and pay 50 cents each or whatever it is and they never knew, they always thought oh no making money on candles they're hopeless things. The last so many years they've got thousands of dollars from candles that people have put money into... from donations".

Derek inhabits a diverse range of economic spaces both locally (Southern Highlands) and further a field. Like Julie he shifts across the terrain of community and capitalist economy. While he is a self-employed person and part of the community economy, he engages with capitalist enterprises in the form of his EASI clients on a daily basis. In addition to this, through the provision of accounting and business advice to non-profit organisations such as those noted previously, Derek is validating and attributing significance to economic activity taking place in the social realm.

*Comment:*

*His story enables us to imagine the possibilities for socio-economic cohesiveness that emerge when capitalist and non-capitalist economies, and the local and wider economic spaces are integrated.*

## Chapter 5:

# A re-mapping of local economies: analysis of the Wingecarribee findings

### Introduction

This chapter provides a tangible and localised representation of the diverse economy of the Wingecarribee Shire. The theoretical concepts presented in Chapter Two are here grounded in the lives of real people inhabiting local economic and social spaces. This discussion outlines the possibilities that emerge when capitalocentric imagery is replaced with the “rich narrative of a highly differentiated economy” (Gibson-Graham 2001:6).

**Table 3: A profile of the Wingecarribee residents in this study<sup>11</sup>**

	Laura	Derek	Gilli*	Geraldine	Julie	Terry
Age group	40-49	40-49	50-59	50-59	50-59	60+
Residential locality	Village*	Village	Town	Town	Rural property	Village
No. Years residence in W.S.	20	3	20+	18	30+	18
Main Income	NIL	Self employed: Accountant/ business advisor	Executive Officer of STHBEC	Disability pension	Administrative assistant for Insurance Loss Assessor	Youth/ Community worker at Triple Care Farm
Family	Spouse, 4 children; 4 -14 years	Spouse, 5 children; 2- 11 years	No info provided	Spouse, Children not mentioned	Single, 2 adult children	Spouse, 2 children 16 and 12 years

Note:

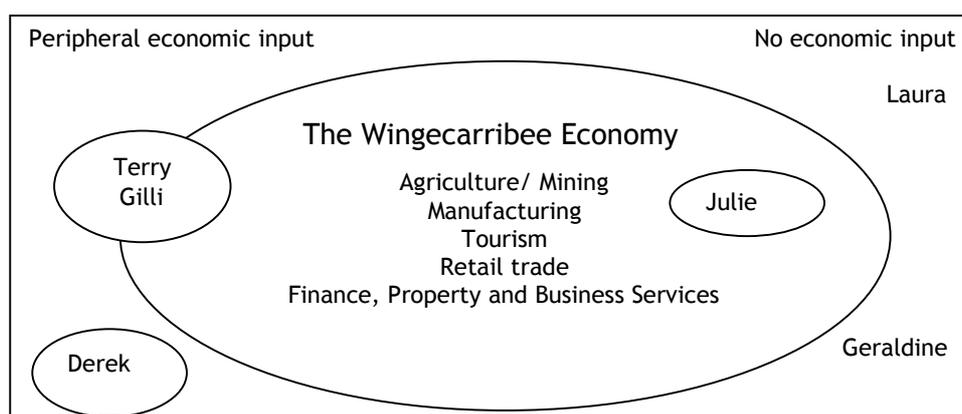
\* Village classification - where a locality has a population of 500 people or less.

<sup>11</sup> The interviewees in this study are an ‘atypical’ sample because as described in Chapter 3, they were selected through snowball sampling.

## Political economy mapping

There are numerous ways of representing subjects of the diverse economy. The exhibits inserted between chapters are narratives based on the interviews I conducted. Table 3 presents the interviewees in terms of basic demographic statistics. Figure 3 situates the subjects of this study on a simplified political economy ‘map’ based on the main income data contained in Table 3.

**Figure 3: A political economists’ classification of economic subjects in this study**

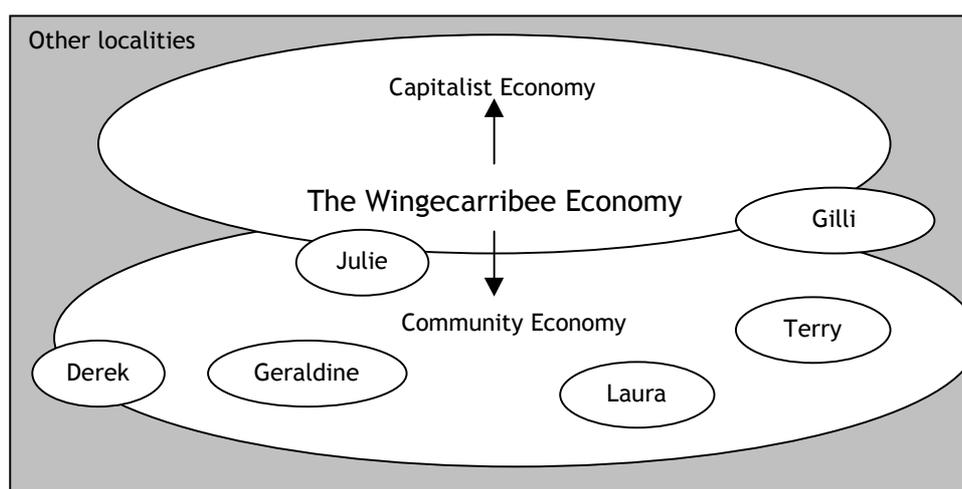


In Figure 3 ‘the’ economy, is comprised of the major dollar earning industries as identified in the political economic capitalist representation of the region (Chapter Two). The figure illustrates that Julie is the only subject that is employed in the Wingecarribee capitalist economy. Although Derek, Terry and Gilli also earn a taxable income, their contribution to the economy is classified as peripheral. In Derek’s case this is because he is self- employed and does most of his paid work outside the Wingecarribee Shire. Terry and Gilli work in non-profit, non-capitalist organisations dependent on government funding and donations. However, their employment is localised. For this reason I have situated them on the edge of the economy to account for possible linkages between their organisations and the key industries e.g. finance,

business services and retail. Laura and Geraldine are not employed so they are classified as having no economic input at all.

Although Figure 3 is over simplified and diagrammatic it serves the purpose of highlighting the exclusive nature of an economic representation based on the capitalist norm. Such a representation excludes the complex matrix of economic transactions, which we have come to refer to as the diverse economy. Figure 4 is an attempt to position the same economic subjects in the diverse economy.

**Figure 4: Subjects situated in the diverse economy of the Wingecarribee Shire**



In this chapter I re-map the economic subjectivity of five Wingecarribee residents by positioning them in Gibson-Graham's Diverse Economy Framework outlined in Chapter Two (Gibson 2002a, Cameron et. al. 2003). In the process of this re-mapping, I draw out some of the themes that emerge in relation to how a diverse economy might be inhabited and maintained in a local community.

## Validating non-capitalist economic identities: Geraldine's story

Geraldine perceives that disabled people don't fit into the capitalist system of making money because they are in the way of profit making and the notion of maximum productivity for minimum accommodation of human labour (Exhibit A).

Geraldine is representative of many in our society who are seen to have no economic input because they are not engaged in formalized paid work. She has lived with what she terms an 'invisible disability' since the age of 5 so this sense of 'not fitting' into the economy and the labels that carries, have in one way or another been with her for almost fifty years. The following excerpt from Geraldine's story illustrates the personal cost of having been de-valued economically.

When people ask, 'What do you do?' they imply, 'What paid work role do you have'? In this exchange there is a desire to impress each other. Geraldine laughs slightly when she tells me she replies: 'I am re-skilling'. I observe a tension between not wanting to conform to capitalist market expectations but perhaps at the same time feeling inadequate about not having 'succeeded' in amassing wealth or a career (Exhibit A).

Geraldine is also representative of a growing number of economic subjects who are disillusioned with the capitalist ethos. She readily admits being 'not tuned into capitalism' and 'not tuned into money' (paraphrasing) and has actively sought an alternative lifestyle. She established the Bowral Food Co-operative in the late 1980's for example, as a means of purchasing healthy whole foods without all the add on costs of the capitalist market. This co-op is still running successfully today as described in Chapter Four.

The 15 co-op members actively involved in this alternative market are benefiting from the vision of community economy that Geraldine had 15 years ago. As shown in Table 4, her role in the co-op is but one of a number of ways in which Geraldine contributes to the community economy. For example, her pottery skills and interest in organic gardening enable her to participate in the gift economy and barter networks. On a few occasions I gratefully received gifts from her garden. Although the Political Economy map positions her as having no economic input, in reality Geraldine is involved in many transactions of goods and services and actively building local economies.

**Table 4: A map of Geraldine's multiple economic identities**

Transactions	Labour	Organisational form
MARKET	WAGE	CAPITALIST
<p>ALTERNATIVE MARKET</p> <p><i>Co-op exchange:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sells whole foods to Bowral Food Co-op members</li> </ul> <p><i>Underground market:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cash in hand sale of pottery at markets</li> </ul> <p><i>Barter:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garden produce and pottery exchanged for other goods and services of equal value</li> </ul>	<p>ALTERNATIVE PAID</p> <p><i>Cooperative:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Token payment by Bowral Food Co-op</li> </ul>	ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST
<p>NON-MARKET</p> <p><i>Gifts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home grown produce and pottery</li> <li>• Disability pension</li> </ul>	<p>UNPAID</p> <p><i>Volunteer:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bowral Food Co-op</li> </ul> <p><i>Family care:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part-time care of mother-in-law</li> </ul> <p><i>Housework:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gardening</li> <li>• Household maintenance</li> </ul>	<p>NON-CAPITALIST</p> <p><i>Communal enterprise:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Channels surplus to Bowral Food Co-op</li> </ul>

Adopting the Diverse Economy Framework is the means by which we can validate and promote the economic contribution of Geraldine and the many others like her, who for one reason or another don't 'fit' into the capitalist system.

## Integrating capitalist and community economies: Julie's story

As shown in Table 5, Julie works as an administrative assistant to an insurance loss assessor in Bowral. Outside of these 'normal work' hours she owns and runs single-handed a goat breeding business called Illoura Park Boers. On a day-to-day basis she negotiates these two identities and in the process shifts across the terrain of capitalist and community economy. Julie describes her routine; "it's a bit like a treadmill that you don't get off". She gets up at about 6:30 a.m. and spends an hour and a half working at home. Tasks include checking animals, freeing those that are caught, filling hay racks and checking that the water troughs are full. Then it's "off to work around 9 a.m.". She works at the office 4 days a week. At one stage she elected to work 3 days a week because of home business demands, but that didn't continue for long as there was too much to be done. She tries to leave at 5p.m. Then she spends at least 1.5 to 2 hours working at home each night, feeding the goats and doing various jobs related to their upkeep. When the goats are kidding Julie works longer hours into the night. She tries to take her holidays to coincide with busy times e.g. kidding, agricultural shows, arrival of new breeding stock. Her weekends are often consumed with the business also. She mentions a recent trip to Queensland Friday to Sunday there and back to buy new stock.

Julie integrates the capitalist and community economy roles outlined previously because they are both important in her life. The goat breeding business is important because it satisfies Julie's desire to be entrepreneurial and it gives her the sense that she is making a valuable contribution in some way. Julie has worked with animals for over 20 years and had primary producer status for that same length of time. In this way the business is an important part of her identity. In our conversations she refers to her goats as "the family", as shown in Figure 5.

When she started her Boer goat breeding in 2000 Julie was thinking she would be able to give up her insurance work. She recalls:

I guess I was fired up and thinking oh goodie I'm going to breed Boer goats and I'll earn some money out of this and I'll replace an income and whatever. *Alan (her mentor) cautioned Julie that she wouldn't be able to compete with the 'big guns' and should look instead for a niche. Julie says that kind of washed over me I didn't take too much notice of that. Away I went gung ho.*

**Figure 5: Julie and ‘the family’**



Source: Author

**Figure 6: The alpacas that guard Julie’s herd against fox and dog attacks**



Source: Author

**Table 5: A map of Julie’s multiple economic identities**

Transactions	Labour	Organisational form
<b>MARKET</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sells goats to domestic market</li> </ul>	<b>WAGE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistant to an insurance loss assessor</li> </ul>	<b>CAPITALIST</b>
<b>ALTERNATIVE MARKET</b> <p><i>Barter:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goods and services incl. information exchanged with other farms</li> </ul>	<b>ALTERNATIVE PAID</b> <p><i>Self employed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary producer – Goat breeding business called Iloura Park Boers (IPB)</li> <li>Primary producer licence allows her to recoup farm expenses</li> </ul>	<b>ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST</b>
<b>NON-MARKET</b> <p><i>Household flows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chickens – provide eggs and meat for own consumption</li> </ul>	<b>UNPAID</b> <p><i>Volunteer:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative role - for Boer Goat Breeders Association of Australia Ltd (BGBAA)</li> <li>Secretary for an RAS sub committee related to BGBAA</li> </ul> <p><i>Housework:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household and outdoor home maintenance - e.g. several farm pets</li> </ul> <p><i>Family care:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mother in retirement home</li> <li>2 adult children</li> </ul>	<b>NON-CAPITALIST</b> <p><i>Independent enterprise:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IPB a goat breeding business that rarely generates surplus</li> </ul>

Julie now says, “there’s no way in the world I’ll be able to give up (*paid*) work, short of winning the lottery”. This is not to say that her business is struggling. On the contrary it is developing well and she is building a good reputation in the region. The business expenses, however, are substantial. Julie spent \$ 13 000 on frozen embryos and \$4000 for her first embryo program in 2001. On top of this she has had to buy extra feed because of the drought. This amounts to about \$ 2000 a month. In essence the insurance work is the means by which Julie can keep the goat business operating. She is quite definite about continuing with the business even if it never becomes her primary earner.

This is because the non-financial rewards far out way the costs of running it. As long as this is the case, Julie will continue to integrate these two equally important economic identities and in doing so move across a diverse economic landscape.

Julie's story inspires the possibility that subjects can be personally enriched and rewarded in non-financial ways through the process of inhabiting multiple economic identities. Furthermore her dual economic citizenship enables us to imagine the possibilities for an integrated diverse economy. Julie's recent decision to explore the possibility of making and supplying goat cheese and goat meat to local restaurants is a way her community economy venture has positive flow on effects for growing local capitalist industries. At the same time, the willingness of Julie's Bowral employer to support her in negotiating work hours and holidays to fit in with running her business, is a way in which engagement with a capitalist enterprise enables Julie to inhabit the community economy.

## Community economy input for capitalist gain: Laura's story

According to the political economists' perspective Laura has no economic input. However we can see in Table 6 that this is not the reality. Like Geraldine, she has a number of community economy roles. What Table 6 does not show is that Laura's economic input in many cases feeds directly or indirectly into the capitalist economy. I want to focus on two examples, the first being her writing for the Southern Highlands News (SHN) newspaper. Below we are talking about her involvement in permaculture and I ask,

A: Are there other activities that you are involved in, in the community that you would classify in a similar sort of vein ...involving economic activity as a replacement or addition to mainstream economy?

L: I'd say the permaculture group's the only one (continued after Table 6)

**Table 6: A map of Laura's multiple economic identities**

Transactions	Labour	Organisational form
MARKET	WAGE	CAPITALIST
ALTERNATIVE MARKET <i>Barter:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permaculture network and neighbourhood surplus distribution</li> <li>• LETS network</li> </ul>	ALTERNATIVE PAID	ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST
NON-MARKET <i>Household flows:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared child-minding and transportation of children to school etc. with spouse</li> </ul>	UNPAID <i>Volunteer:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writes for the Southern Highlands News</li> <li>• Writes for the Southern Highland Way</li> <li>• Publicity officer for Penrose Rural Fire Service</li> </ul> <i>Housework:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owner builder house alterations</li> </ul> <i>Family care:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 children at home</li> </ul>	NON-CAPITALIST

A: So the involvement in newspaper and so on...you can't see how those things have any...they don't have any economic value attached to them?

L: Well I mean I suppose from exposure...unfortunately the paper don't see that I'm trying to get free advertising for people or get something for me...I feel if we build this area up and expose it, it will be of value for everyone in the community...I am actually getting an advantage by doing what I'm doing for the paper 'cause I meet people and also I get to know what's available maybe for my children, and Jack being in real estate...I mean I'm married to Jack and that is an advantage too, I can't deny that, that it is an advantage to get known in a community and to get some sort of social standing. You have to get known in real estate...Long term wise I'm getting experience in the media too.

In this excerpt Laura mentions that she gets free advertising for people. About the time we met she had just written a piece about a local guest house/ golf course and was saying how important it was for these local businesses to be 'exposed'. Secondly through her writing for the paper Laura is getting some sort of social standing as she puts it and this an advantage for her husband in terms of real estate sales. Thirdly in

writing for the paper she is gaining media experience, which may well lead to other work in the future. In these three ways we can see the potential for this community economy involvement to advance capitalist enterprises. It is also worth noting that the SHN is itself a capitalist firm employing a number of volunteers like Laura to promote it.

Much of Laura's community economy input revolves around family care. In this role as with the newspaper writing we can see benefits for the capitalist economy. Laura is heavily involved in the education and development of her four children. She home-schooled (community economy) the two eldest children in order to maximise their chances of getting into a selective high school and/or private school. In this way she is supporting the more elite and costly educational institutions. As part of her family care role she has also been supporting her eldest son's acting and musical career for the past 7 years. She often takes him to Sydney for script work, courses and so forth. Laura's involvement and support has enabled her son to earn a considerable income in the capitalist realm.

Laura's story encourages

the recognition that capitalist economic relations can be seen to rest upon, or be supported by a sea of non-capitalist economic relations – an inversion of the old base superstructure that situated capitalist production at the basis of all that constituted society at large (Gibson 2002: 76).

## Building communities of difference: Terry's story

Terry also contributes to the community economy of the Wingecarribee Shire in many different ways. He has worked in a paid capacity at Mission Australia's<sup>12</sup> Triple Care Farm (TCF) for 13 years. TCF is located at Robertson (see Figure 2). Terry explains: "The Farm is for young people...with behavioural problems, abuse issues, homelessness, drug and alcohol issues or criminal offences". TCF aims to support 'students' in the areas of vocational training and personal development/ welfare simultaneously. Terry teaches farming and landscaping as well as life management skills such as self- maintenance and budgeting. Aside of this full time job, he

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<sup>12</sup> Mission Australia is a non- denominational Christian service organisation.

**Table 7: Terry's role in building communities of difference**

Transactions	Labour	Organisational form
<p>MARKET</p>	<p>WAGE</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><i>Youth from TCF gaining jobs as a result of Terry's training e.g. in agribusiness</i></p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><i>Terry's support enabled a Kurdish refugee to find employment at a local bakery</i></p> </div>	<p>CAPITALIST</p>
<p>ALTERNATIVE MARKET</p>	<p>ALTERNATIVE PAID</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><i>Terry's resettlement assistance may help persons released from gaol to re-enter workforce as self employed</i></p> </div>	<p>ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST</p> <p><i>Social Ethic:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid work at Triple Care Farm (TCF)</li> </ul>
<p>NON-MARKET</p> <p><i>Household flows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shares with spouse support of daughters' activities e.g. transportation to school, sport, p/t job</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><i>Integration of refugee families into the local community</i></p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><i>Re-integration of persons out of gaol into their own family unit.</i></p> </div>	<p>UNPAID</p> <p><i>Volunteer:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural Australians for Refugees activist</li> <li>• SH reconciliation campaigner</li> <li>• Gaol visiting and resettlement assistance – Robertson and Berrima gaols</li> <li>• Care of elderly in community</li> </ul> <p><i>Family care:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wife and two teenaged daughters</li> <li>• SH youth association</li> <li>• SH theatrical group</li> </ul>	<p>NON-CAPITALIST</p>

Note: Arrows and boxed text indicate potential flow on effects of Terry's economic roles

undertakes a number of local volunteer roles as mapped in Table 7. Here I am only going to refer to Terry's role in Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR) and post gaol resettlement programs attached to Berrima and Robertson gaols.

In these two volunteer roles and at TCF, Terry works with individuals who are marginalised and seeks to help them re-integrate into both the economy and society. The following RAR related dialogue between Terry and myself illustrates this:

T: We've just had a Kurd stay with us for the weekend who is seeking work in this district and it looks like he'll get it too as a baker, and when he gets that, another person is going to put him up and we'll get him a bicycle and he can peddle down to...cause it's early hours in the morning, he can peddle down to this baker shop and that Kurdish refugee then will have a start. He's on a temporary visa now. If he can establish himself and prove that he is established then he can get permanent residency.

A: Are there a fair number of refugees in the Southern Highlands?

T: No

A: So is part of the program to promote...

T: Yeah part of our program is to promote that.

A: ...promote rural Australia becoming much more aware and accepting of refugees in the local community? Or something like that?

T: That's right and then integrating them into the community, which takes a group of us to have various functions. Like if we had a family somebody would take the kids to school and introduce them to the headmaster, some would take the fellow to employment, some would show him where the local chemist is...you know all this type of thing, get them some bedding, get them accommodation you know, help them establish themselves and form relationships with these people.

Terry is playing a significant role in building a community of difference in a predominantly Anglo- European and traditionally class-consciousness landscape. The fact that he is a minority voice in the highlands does not deter him. He is motivated by a desire to address social inequalities and positions himself in the 'social justice work' domain. Terry does not appear to be motivated by his own financial gain. He tells me quite openly that his TCF salary of \$39 000 is not enough for his family to live off. Having established that Terry operates from a 'social world' perspective, I want to emphasise that it is this very perspective that is enabling others to become economic actors. In both the following excerpt and Table 7 can see ways in which Terry's perspective enables potentially marginalised economic actors to inhabit the diverse economy.

T: I've always been a person for ideas and extension so that people can better themselves. So although I haven't always been directly in an economic...in a personal economic situation I've tried to enable others (speaks with emphasis) to be in an economic situation.

A: It's really about skilling people to be able to survive...financially...that's why it's interesting to think the ways in which people can manage to live a relatively healthy, balanced life without necessarily having to earn lots of money.

T: Yeah. Yeah even psychologically too in that, you know this fellow coming out of goal and other people I've had. You know to enable them to participate in a more positive on-going, self-reliant situation which we're doing you know with kids out there at the farm where they have budgeting and all this kind of thing to enable them to survive in our culture and be contributors within that.

This excerpt also highlights that Terry is enabling potentially marginalised people to become economic actors, because he recognises the embeddedness of the economic, in the cultural and social realms. In the previous excerpt he made a connection between helping people access an economic livelihood and integrating them into a community. Here he adds that this process is also about helping people become contributors to our society and culture.

Terry is creating local spaces of economic, cultural and social diversity. His story allows us to imagine communities in which all these factors are interconnected and equally valuable in creating the identity of the individuals that inhabit them.

## Building community economies: Derek's story

Derek moved from the city in search of 'the country life'. That is how he came to be living in Wingello 3 years ago. This village (also my home) has a population of about 400<sup>13</sup>. In residential terms it is developing fairly rapidly but these residents still rely heavily on Bundanoon, Moss Vale and the other towns for goods and services. The railway linking Sydney and Canberra and the roads to the freeway and nearest towns intersect at the centre of the village. Also at this central point are a general store/post office ( as featured in Figure 8), the Wingello Rural Fire Service and the Mechanics Institute Hall (a community hall) which is shown in Figure 7. In one sense the significance of this place is marked more by where else you can get to from that point than it is by what is actually there. But thanks to community economy minded people like Derek that is changing.

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<sup>13</sup> According to the Wingecarribee Shire Council (2002) Wingello has a population of 295 people. It is unclear as to whether this figure is based on 1996 or 2001 census data. The estimate in the text is based on local knowledge and my observation of recent population growth in the town.

Since his arrival Derek he made a conscious decision to involve himself in the Wingello community. He has done this by offering accounting and business advice, applying the principles behind his own accounting business (EASI) to local business and volunteer organisations alike (see Table 8 for a mapping of these roles). The general store has welcomed Derek's assistance. The proprietor can now do the Business Activity Statements and keep track of expenses using a computer system Derek installed for little cost. The fire brigade has also needed help in understanding accounting changes brought about by the GST. Derek has voluntarily provided that expertise.

**Table 8: A map of Derek's multiple economic identities**

Transactions	Labour	Organisational form
<b>MARKET</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sells accounting systems</li> </ul>	<b>WAGE</b>	<b>CAPITALIST</b>
<b>ALTERNATIVE MARKET</b> <p><i>Barter:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neighbourhood surplus distribution</li> <li>Exchange with other home schooling families</li> </ul>	<b>ALTERNATIVE PAID</b> <p><i>Self employed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Runs own business - Electronic Accounting Systems Integration (EASI)</li> </ul>	<b>ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST</b>
<b>NON-MARKET</b> <p><i>Household flows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Home schooling</li> </ul> <p><i>Gifts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wingello General Store</li> </ul>	<b>UNPAID</b> <p><i>Volunteer:</i></p> <p>Offers accounting and business advice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cardinal Newman Bookshop</li> <li>Human Life International</li> <li>Monastery at Penrose</li> <li>Wingello Rural Fire Service</li> <li>The Wingello Mechanics Institute Hall Association Incorporated</li> <li>Home schooling families</li> </ul> <p><i>Family Care:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wife and 5 children</li> </ul>	<b>NON-CAPITALIST</b> <p><i>Independent enterprise:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Runs own business - EASI</li> </ul>

In terms of the hall Derek has instigated a complete turn around in the way the community perceives this facility. He explains “the community owns the hall so ...it’s owned by everybody and therefore nobody”. In order to provide a tangible sense of ownership and a better framework for use Derek established a management committee. As well as this, there are now trustees who represent the community. The committee has introduced an optional yearly membership of \$20 and set very low rates for member usage. Derek tells me “The figures of the last 12 months, up to June showed that we had more income that year than the previous 2 to 3 years put together”.

Derek is playing an active role in building a new kind of localised economy. In his words he has helped entities “develop themselves by harnessing their accounting records and information”. In doing this Derek has elevated the economic identity of these entities. In addition to this he has recognised, like Terry, the connectedness of economic and social transactions at the local scale. It is this recognition that has enabled a new sense of a community economy to emerge in Wingello as indicated in this excerpt.

If the hall’s not there, there’s nowhere to have all the things we’ve been having... birthday parties, bush dances, the art show for school and trivia nights for the cricket club. The Professionals Real Estate holds antique auctions in the hall there and this brings in a lot of money for the fire brigade, and the shop. The shop stays open because everyone comes in to buy icecreams ...and the fire brigade caters with a sausage sizzle and drinks... they’re making \$500 or so from the auction every 6 to 8 weeks that they wouldn’t otherwise have.

In summary Derek’s vision for the Wingello community economy is clearly articulated below:

The key...I’ve always said is those three things, the hall, the shop and the fire brigade should be one. It’s not as in one organization but they should have the common things (events) all together and the locals should support those. Because unlike the school, which gets it’s government money and can be there regardless, these three things can all die. The shop can die and it’ll never come back again. The hall can die and it’ll never come back again. The fire brigade can die and it’s unlikely to come back again and people should support it.

The various themes that have emerged in this chapter in relation to how a diverse economy might be inhabited and maintained in local communities have significant implications for economic development and planning. These are explored in the next and concluding chapter of this thesis.

**Figure 7: The Wingello Mechanics Institute Hall**



Source: Author

**Figure 8: The Wingello General Store**



Source: Author

# Chapter 6:

## Conclusion

“Our interest is in fostering an economy in which the interdependence of all who produce, appropriate, distribute and consume in society is acknowledged and built upon” (Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2003: 16-17).

### Research contribution and future directions

This examination of the geography of a localised economy has revealed a dynamic, vibrant, and place-specific diverse economy in a locality that is barely, if at all, on the political economic map. Revealing such an economy undermines the authority of capitalism, and exposes the inability of capitalist representations of economic sameness to capture reality, which is after all, surely what we as geographers are seeking.

This research contributes to the growing body of post-capitalist thought in two significant ways. First, it empirically demonstrates the validity of Gibson-Graham’s diverse economy framework. Engagement with real people in their every day life has revealed stories of multiple economic subjectivity that are all different. There is, as asserted by Gibson-Graham, no one relationship between the capitalist economy and the community economy. Rather, the all-inclusive diverse economy has been shown to be a complex matrix of different kinds of transactions, different forms of labour and different modes of economic organisation.

Second, this study suggests that there is a strong relationship between the geography of a place and the nature of the diverse economy that exists there, in other words that diverse economies are place-specific. Economic geographer Colin Williams draws attention to the fact that few geographers to date have explored spatial differences in the diverse economy or in his own words “economic plurality” (2002:3). My research provides a springboard for further investigation in this regard.

This project contributes to on-going research and development in relation to the formation of post-capitalist thought. Flowing on from this, there are several avenues for

future research both in Australia and abroad. This study was limited in sample size and it would be interesting to raise the possibility with the Southern Tablelands and Highlands Business Enterprise Centre (STHBEC) and regional councils, of conducting a larger scale study of diverse economic activity across the 6 shires in the tablelands and highlands region. Some of these shires are also part of the Australian Capital Region Development Council (ACRDC). I attended an ACRDC workshop in 2002 and saw first hand the potential for research in this region.

When I commenced this project I wanted to investigate cross-cultural variations in the community economy. Time constraints and the word limitations of an honours thesis prevented this. It would be interesting to determine how significant issues of 'place' really are by comparing and contrasting community economies in urban and rural localities in Asia and Australia.

If we could identify factors most likely to result in the development of diverse economies in different localities, we could in theory understand the 'pre-conditions' for the long-term survival and 'effectiveness' of community economy initiatives. This in turn, would enable planners and developers to allocate resources effectively, and communities the opportunity to build and maintain economic significance and social identity and cohesiveness, simultaneously.

## Lessons for economic development and planning

Various themes emerged in the previous chapter as to how a diverse economy might be built and maintained in and around local communities. Two key lessons seem to flow from my research.

By promoting the diverse economy framework and incorporating it into policies planners and developers can:

**1) Formally recognise the significance and value of non-capitalist economic initiatives and their role in building and maintaining cohesive social spaces**

This has the potential to counteract the marginalisation experienced by economic subjects like Geraldine, who are excluded and de-valued by capitalist representations of the economy. Furthermore, as Terry's story highlights, validating the economic contribution of potentially marginalised people is a means through which cohesive social spaces can be built and maintained. Formally recognising the significance and value of non-capitalist economic initiatives also has the potential to raise the economic profile of small places such as Wingello, and small scale initiatives such as the Wingello Mechanics Institute Hall Trust and the Bowral Food Co-operative, and in so doing, build identity, meaning and connectedness in the local spaces people inhabit.

**2) Formally recognise the interdependence of the capitalist and community economies and the embeddedness of both in place-specific cultural and social practices**

This is the means by which the interdependencies of multiple economic subjectivities can be promoted as economic subjects are recognized as inhabiting both wider and local economic spaces, and the capitalist and other economic spheres simultaneously. Derek and Julie's stories demonstrate the ways in which engagement with capitalist enterprises (in their case accounting and insurance firms across NSW and Victoria), financially supports their positive involvement in local community economies in the Wingecarribee Shire. Laura's story is an example of the ways in which capitalist economic relations rest upon and are supported by non-capitalist economic relations in the household (parental support of her son's acting career in Sydney) and community arena (volunteer writing for the SHN newspaper).

I would like to examine the implications of these lessons for local (Wingecarribee Shire) and regional (plus Southern Tablelands shires) planning and development.

### **In the context of the local scale**

The Wingecarribee Shire Council actively discourages large-scale industrial development in the belief that this will threaten and depreciate the region's semi-rural character and image. This anti-capitalist stance shows a reluctance of local government planners to embrace mainstream economic thought. The WSC also, however, actively discourages 'alternative' development and new innovation such as boutique cheese making, instead consciously promoting the highlands as a 'centre of excellence in embroidery' and a place to relax and retire.

It would seem that the WSC is not interested in developing the region economically. Residents have described it as in crisis mode in terms of its response to land management issues such as farm sub-divisions and serrated tussock, and development pressures associated with the rapid population growth. The diverse economy framework provides an alternative pathway for economic development that is sympathetic to the council's concerns, while at the same time able to address these pressing issues in the locality. The implications of a change of mindset on the part of the WSC might be significant.

First, by formally recognising the extent and value of non-capitalist economic initiatives, population growth could be seen as an asset rather than a development liability. The Wingecarribee Shire's population growth is due to the progressive arrival of middle-income earners who in many cases already inhabit diverse economic identities, as self-employed or 'alternative' capitalist workers. This middle stratum appears to be community minded and actively interested in promoting social and cultural diversity in the region. Grass-roots initiatives, such as those implemented by Derek in Wingello are low cost to the council and thus unlikely to put a strain on already limited resources. The community benefits and flow on effects of the shire's population growth may well outweigh the costs in terms of infrastructure and so forth. The Diverse Economy framework offers a way of valuing this as an economic contribution.

Second, the formal recognition of the interdependence of the capitalist and community economies has positive implications for the management of absentee landowner properties and the issues related to the shire's transient population. If the WSC were

more willing to approve live-in caretaker arrangements on hobby farms for example, land management problems experienced by part-time farm managers could be attended to on a daily basis by locally employed farm workers with a good understanding of the management issues.

The formal recognition of the interdependence of the capitalist and community economy also allows us to see how the injection of earnings from capitalist activities outside of the region can build up the resources in the Wingecarribee Shire for local fire brigades, land and animal care groups and other important community economies. For example, a Sydney hospital surgeon and part-time resident, donates funds to the Wingello fire brigade and hall trust. In a similar vein, Derek's accounting expertise attained through engagement with capitalist enterprises in Sydney is passed on to Wingello community economies.

#### **At the regional level**

The Southern Tablelands and Highlands Business Enterprise Centre fosters and encourages economic development in 6 shires of NSW, namely Crookwell, Boorowa, Goulburn City, Gunning, Mulwarree and Wingecarribee. These shires all face their own set of place-specific economic development challenges. Goulburn City for example, has welcomed much of the industry that the Wingecarribee Shire has rejected, but at the same time suffered the consequences of plant closures and industry downsizing.

By adopting the diverse economy framework, flexible and place-specific pathways for economic development can be implemented. Gilli Williams, as the executive officer of the STHBEC, recognises her role in growing and promoting diverse economies. The STHBEC supports economic activity in both the community and the capitalist economy. Their involvement ranges from input into the development of a new cheese factory outside Moss Vale and the creation of a cafe and restaurant 'eat street' in Mittagong and a 'main street makeover' in Boorowa, right through to the support of an independent catering enterprise operating from home in Crookwell. The WSC does not support the STHBEC financially and is often resistant and even antagonistic at times, in response to STHBEC initiatives. Whilst other councils are more supportive of STHBEC initiatives than the WSC, incorporating the diverse economy framework into economic policies

may be a means by which relationships between the STHBEC and shire councils within the region are strengthened and funding for community economic ventures is increased.

### **In terms of community action**

As part of my on-going commitment to the growth of local community economies in the Wingecarribee shire, I am preparing a report on the research findings contained in this thesis. It will be distributed to those that participated in this study and other interested parties, in the belief that grass roots maintenance of community economies may also grow and foster their validity in policy and practice.

### **Wider Implications**

I am hesitant to assert how 'typical' an example of a semi-rural diverse economy in Australia, the Wingecarribee Shire might be. No doubt there are some similarities between the nature of development taking place in the Wingecarribee Shire and that taking place in other semi-rural regions on the fringe of cities, both in Australia and abroad. The increase in commuting and home office activities in relation to formal employment is one example. Similarities do not however, necessarily pre-empt a growth in the community economy. Telecommuting and home office work for example, may well be taking place in relation to capitalist firms. Interestingly, households in rural localities in the UK "have both more commodified and more monetised work practices than their urban counterparts" (Williams 2002: 13) and this runs contrary to common assumption of "lagged adaptation" and greater reciprocity and self-reliance in rural areas (2002: 13). A similar pattern emerges when UK households in affluent areas are compared with those in rural deprived neighbourhoods (Williams 2002:15). These findings contrast what we might 'expect' to find in Australia based on the Wingecarribee study, highlighting the need for further research.

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