



# **Sustainability Through Community: Social Capital in the Inner Urban Eco- community**

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## **Inner urban eco-community (IUE)**

- Located in CBD or inner suburbs
- Sustainability-oriented intentional community

## **Social capital**

- Contest concept
- Trust, cooperation, norms of reciprocity
- Public good

## *Chasing Ecopolis: Eco-incursions in Australian Cities*

Protagonists - Christie Walk (SA), Westwyck (VIC)



## Aim to explore:

- How social capital is enacted in these communities
- The multiple ways social capital impacts sustainability outcomes

## Data collection methods:

- Participant observation
- Semi-structured interviews



## Christie Walk (SA)



## Westwyck (VIC)



## Christie Walk (SA)

- CBD
  - 27 dwellings
  - 44 residents

### Common facilities:

- Communal gardens
- Community room
- Laundry / washing line
- Bike and tool shed

## Westwyck (VIC)

- Inner suburban
  - 12 dwellings
  - 24 residents

### Common facilities:

- Communal gardens
- BBQ area
- Washing line
- Bike shed
  
- **Stage 2**

## Christie Walk (SA)

### Eco features:

- Design
- Materials
- Harvest energy and water
- Solar hot water
- Produce gardens
- 11 car spaces

## Westwyck (VIC)

### Eco features:

- Design
- Materials
- Harvest energy and water
- Solar hot water
- Produce gardens
- Grey + black water

# Enacting Social Capital

Re-establishing a 'community of the past'



## Physical Setting:

### Intentional social contact design

*“Fostering community requires space for interaction. A hallway or car park are not spaces conducive to strong social connection...you’ll never really meet anyone.”*

(Participant)

**Pocket neighbourhoods** (Chapin 2011)

**‘Bump into’ effect**



## Social Mechanisms:

### Engaging place

- Impromptu gatherings
- Community events
- Shared meals
- Working bees



## Bonds forged through collective endeavour...

*“Christie Walk is different because intimacy is often derived from working together. Eco-developments sold as finished products cannot replicate the bonds forged through adversity and working together to overcome challenges. We moved in to a place with a culture and a heroic history, so there is a depth there.”*

(Participant).



# Impacting Sustainability

*Structures, systems, interactions, relationships*

## Site:

### Dwellings

- Compact, clustered
- Energy efficiency

### Energy generation

### Water collection

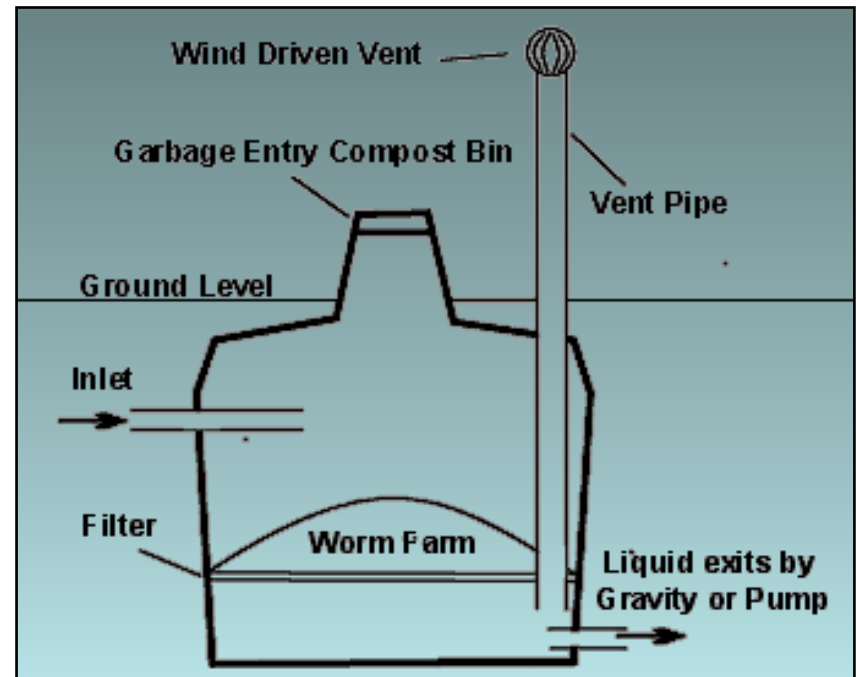
### Proximity

- Reduced reliance on cars



## Managed systems:

*“In total our community puts out at most 4 bins that go to landfill, it is often less than that. We have about 6 bins that go to recycling fortnightly. We also separately recycle batteries, bottles, egg cartons, polystyrene, clean plastic and metal lids. The average household puts out one rubbish bin and one recycling each.”* (Participant)



## Community interaction:

### Influence

- Informal consensus
- Follow the leader
- Agreements / controls

### Exchange

- Knowledge transfer / education

## Relationships:

### Sharing

- Informal
- Formal

*“The provision of shared facilities and equipment means that we can live quite comfortably in a smaller house...you actively get rid of stuff you don’t need”* (Participant)

### Support

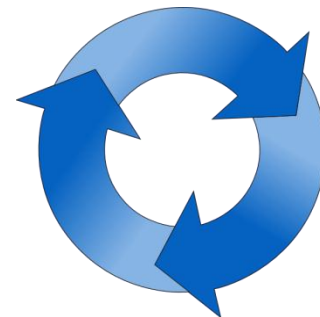
- Practical
- Social



## Meltzer (2005):

Physical & social structures provide platform for social interaction

- Interactions build relationships and commitment to place
- Engagement informs individual's interaction with his/her environment



## ➤ **Exploration of mechanisms only**

- How SC created & informs pro-environmental action

## ➤ **Comparison with ‘non-eco’ residential developments**

- Are they more sustainable?
- Warrants further research



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