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Remaking Civic Formation: towards a learning citizen?

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ABSTRACT This paper uses three examples of educational innovation emerging in the contemporary context of market-liberal reform as a focus for exploring the patterns and possibilities of civic formation. The first part of the paper contextualises contemporary civic formation within the long historic struggle between capitalism and democracy, highlighting the way citizen learning is being reconfigured as markets and state are mediated by community interests. The last section attempts to draw out the key features of this community-based citizen learning and its implications for citizen learning and action. This discussion provides a basis for clarifying the kind of civic and citizenship education that is needed to take community-based learning beyond localism towards formal civic engagement that can sustain and protect democracy. The idea of a *learning citizen* is suggested as a way of conceptualising and acknowledging the contradictions within this citizenship agenda that holds the imperatives of lifelong learning in tension with the imperatives of educating citizen.

Introduction

> Contemporary education policy in Australia privileges education markets and individual choice at the expense of public and democratic purposes for education. In our view, such a policy emphasis poses a significant threat to Australian democracy. (Reid & Thomson, 2003, p. xi)

As this quote suggests, the concern informing this special issue of *London Review of Education* is widely held. In Australia, as in England, there is disquiet because the emergent practices of education that endorse markets and audit appear to be undercutting the education of citizens who will protect democracy and the formation of civic society. The question for the special issue, and for Reid and Thomson, is how can education be remade to serve the purposes of a just and democratic society? How can education, in the context of a social order torn between neo-liberal free markets and neo-conservative family values and 'them'–'us' differentiations, develop an ethical citizenry and capable and creative contributors to the common good who will enable and protect civic society in a sustainable way?

In this paper I take up this question about contemporary education and how it can be made to better support democracy and a robust civic society. In order to address this question, I critique the way the debate about market-liberal education has been constructed in order to highlight the politics of state and market. Emphasising how interests mobilise through civil society highlights struggle and contradiction, re-reads

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education in the context of politics (not economics) and provides a way of seeing different kinds of citizen learning. This political analysis of contemporary education reform is illustrated in the second section, where I give some examples of educational work within contemporary education contexts drawn from a series of research projects conducted, since the mid–1990s. These projects have investigated the impact of market-liberal reform in established education and training contexts in Australia (e.g., in schools, Institutes of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and universities) and in 'new learning spaces' (Seddon *et al.*, 2003; Seddon & Billett, 2004) that are emerging through the formation of social partnerships beyond those familiar education institutions. Finally, I draw these threads together to highlight the contradictory character of contemporary education, the kinds of citizen learning that are and are not being supported and what this means for civic formation.

My main argument in this paper is that contemporary education policy, practice and politics has become primarily framed within a dominant economic discourse which marginalises and obscures the political purposes of education necessary to the formation and sustainability of a democratic citizenry. Yet it is not appropriate to concede that the economic purposes of education and training are more important and more worthy of social investment than the political purposes. Economics and politics are not locked in a zero-sum game but are both negotiated manifestations arising from the play of contested and contradictory social relations. The construction of market, state and civil society at any moment in history rests on the practical politics that forge historically-specific social settlements and it is these settlements that shape the social organisation of learning. Currently, the social relations of learning are tilted in favour of one-sided economic education imperatives. The challenge is to re-acknowledge the crucial contribution of political education outcomes in sustaining democracy and to work for a pattern of citizen learning that accommodates necessary learning for work and life-with-risk, and also learning for citizen action that can imagine the democratic ideal, support ethical judgement and protect democratic decision-making. I suggest that the idea of a *learning citizen* might be a focus for this kind of agenda because it acknowledges the different and contradictory imperatives associated on the one hand, with lifelong learning and, on the other hand, with education for citizenship. The idea of the learning citizen holds both economic and political purposes of education in play and, as a result, frames up a practical agenda for education politics and redesign centred on the process of forming ethical and active citizens with capabilities in capacity-building, community development, entrepreneurship and public activism.

Interpreting Civic Formation

Market Stories

There is widespread concern about contemporary education and its capacity to support civic formation. The key theme, illustrated by the introduction to this special issue and by the quote at the start of this paper, is that educational provision and practices are, today, shaped by a neo-liberal polity that drives privatisation and individual choice, creating a 'parentocracy' that is preoccupied with the competition for university entrance and jobs, and as a result gives priority to self-interested individual educational investments. As Reid and Thomson (2003, p. xii) suggest, this market-liberal framing of education has driven policies that have resulted in private schools gaining an increasing proportion of public funding. It has also encouraged a discursive framework for thinking about education that is couched in the binary language of public *versus* private, state *versus* market. Or, as Halpin *et al.* (2004) put it in this issue of the *London Review of Education:*

> The historical coalescing and intensifying specification of practice—strengthening consumer choice, contract law, audits of performance, corporate power and regulative accountability—are all designed to create the education service as a sphere of market exchange relationships, in which the actors are provided with an account of quantifiable performance that enables them to calculate their individual relative advantage.

This view of contemporary education expresses justified fears about civic society because the contemporary discursive construction of citizenship and political community defines the context and horizon of political activity in terms of the market.

This economistic framing is in tension with established views of civic society as a society in which the people are sovereign. The people, as citizens, are seen as moral and political actors capable of ethical judgement. Their views are valued on an equal basis and they have not only a right but a responsibility to act in ways which they believe will realise the common wealth of society and democratic decision-making. Because the people are citizens, they enact the state as a collective agency that can legitimately act on behalf of the people. The state exercises authority in society because state actions rest upon citizen action.

The way people are formed and act as citizens is critical in this view of civic society and has profound implications for the character of society. In being a citizen, people are challenged to confront questions critical to their lifeworld: who am I? What can I do? What may I hope for? In this respect, citizenship is based in social and political activity centred in interaction and coloured by the stories that we tell about ourselves and our political world—about who belongs to a particular body of citizens, who has the right to participate and what we can aspire to. Ultimately, what defines citizenship hinges on the way a community defines itself and what it thinks is 'good' (Davidson, 1997, p. 3).

The ascent of a market-liberal polity tells stories about the good society in terms of markets. These stories are authorised and legitimised because they are promoted and endorsed by the state, the collective agency of the democratic citizenry. These stories define the horizons of our aspirations in terms of consumer choice. They encourage the formation of citizens as market actors, characterised by possessive individualism and driven by self-interest and the pursuit of competitive advantage.

Yet, the discursive construction of political community at any moment in history builds upon the residues laid down in the past—persistent social institutions, social norms, and embodied cultures and traditions. The discursive politics that tell and retell stories of our past, present and future confront obdurate social structures and lived experience. And these stories are heard and negotiated relative to lived histories.

While anxiety at the prospect of a neo-liberal polity remaking civic society in the image of the market is justifiable, it is important not to over-extrapolate the discourse of the market and its singular logic, or to over-state the coherence of the polity in defining the world of experience. Other stories are possible and these offer different views of education in relation to civic formation.

Stories of Struggle

Reid and Thomson (2003) offer a different story about democracy and the purpose of education. They argue that education has been shaped by the ongoing struggle over democracy. The oldest and still most pervasive 'aggregative' model of democracy endorses thin notions of citizenship in which the aggregation of individual citizen votes is all that matters. This arrangement requires citizens to vote to elect public officials and policies but then to submit to their rule. It endorses hierarchy, elite agency and mass passivity, because

the people are not supported or encouraged to forge a public sphere within which dialogic resolution of issues and decision can occur. It endorses educational provision that is elite-friendly and differentiates the schooling of the elite and the schooling of the mass in terms of school structure, curriculum and assessment, and funding.

The counter-image is provided by a 'deliberative' model of democracy which assumes ethical and informed citizens who participate as equals in the public space (or *Agora*) in order to make decisions with the minimum of bureaucratic control. The democratic process is seen to be dialogical:

> A discussion of problems, conflicts and claims of need or interest where, through open and public dialogue, proposals and arguments are tested and challenged . . . decisions are made not by aggregating individual preferences but by a collective determination of what are considered to be the best reasons. (Reid & Thomson, 2003, p. xv)

The task for education is to form citizens who can be active within these dialogical processes because they are informed, have the capabilities to act in ways that can enhance the individual and society, and know that it is both lawful and appropriate to act in these ways because they are citizens.

The kinds of learning that are embraced within this model of citizen formation have been widely debated across a range of disciplines and in education (e.g., Ichilov, 1990; Gilbert, 1996). Mellor and Prior's (2004) synthesis embraces six dimensions:

- *Dimension 1*. Civic knowledge: understandings about political organizations, decision making processes, institutions, legal requirements.
- *Dimension 2*. A sense of personal identity: a feeling of self-worth, belonging efficacy, resilience.
- *Dimension 3*. A sense of community: locating oneself within a community(s), some perhaps imagined communities.
- *Dimension 4*. Adoption of a code of civil behaviours: civil and ethical behaviour, concern for the welfare of others.
- *Dimension 5*. An informed and empathetic response to social issues: environmental issues, social justice, equality and equity.
- *Dimension 6*. A skilled disposition to take social action: community service, active participation in community affairs.

This struggle over citizen learning and the practice of democracy is nested within a much larger and longer historic struggle between capitalism and democracy, between property-rights and people-rights, between consumer and citizen (Beilharz *et al.*, 1992).

These practical politics have played out in long waves of institution building and cultural formation that have consolidated historically-specific social settlements and configured social life into distinct domains of market, state and civil society. These domains acknowledge the persistence and legitimacy of social practices related to exchange, authorised collective citizen action, and civil action within non-government, non-business contexts. This last domain of civil society manifests as a particular set of interests and public voices. It is concerned with the way communities and citizens organise to advance their interests independently of government and how these activities and community organisations interface with government and business in particular periods of history.

Education sits across the domains of market, state and civil society. It is shaped within the politics that forges a specific social settlement but continues to be contested as its

institutional capacity to form the next generation is claimed and fought over by interests mobilised through market, state and civil society.

Contemporary Contradictions

Today, these long politics between capitalism and democracy are tilted in favour of global capital. The ascent of neo-liberal market organisation has undercut the longstanding commitment to state planning that came into ascendance in the late nineteenth century with the subordination of *laissez-faire* capitalism to the regulatory requirements of the liberal democratic state. In this nineteenth and twentieth century social settlement, governments ameliorated the effects of the market by regulating 'privately-oriented action' and exchange that harmed 'the integrity of individuals, of human groups and of their environment' (Yeatman, 1998a, p. 141). They also acted on behalf of the citizen-community, providing 'policies, procedures and institutions which enable those who belong to a political community to address their common needs, aspirations, goals and issues' (Yeatman, 1998a, p. 141).

The effect has been to erode the state's capacity to mediate relations between capitalism and citizens. 'Public interest' has been redefined, citizen demands rolled back, and public sector support for community interests curtailed by re-regulating public sector work and pressing the public sector towards private, market-based values rather than public values. The growing lack of fit between the contemporary transnational forms of capitalist organisation and the contemporary forms of national governance unleashed powerful social forces behind capitalist development that undercut the institutions, practices and funding of national governance. It restored a *laissez-faire* economic and political environment that privileges the market as if these developments were in the public interest.

The mismatch between nation-state jurisdictions and the global reach of contemporary capitalism has also compounded older patterns of cultural diversification that were gradually undercutting the basis of citizenship in national belonging. Established patterns of migration and trade are being diversified as globalism accentuates flows of commodities, finance, images, ideas and people. These developments shift our everyday lived horizons and bring us face-to-face with others, who are like us but different.

These effects of globalism undercut the sense of belonging and the myths about the nation, its origins and peoples, that were the anchor-point for citizen identification in modern nation-states (Davidson, 1997). These national myths which defined the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991) obscure the actual historical processes by which particular families or ethnic groups came to dominate others and consolidate their hegemony through nation-building processes which forged the institutions of state and civil society. The legitimacy of these myths rested upon the broad acceptance of a national narrative that ostensibly 'explained' national history and culture. Today, these accepted national narratives are challenged by the acknowledgment of cultural diversity and by sub-cultural narratives articulated by indigenous peoples and other minorities. This polyvocal storying of the nation weakens the sense of belonging, problematises our everyday horizons of understanding and action, and brings us face to face with cultural diversity in our everyday lives.

These large-scale politics of capitalism and democracy, nationalism and globalism, are like grating tectonic plates. Their shock waves shift the landscape of social life and destabilise what it means to live and be a citizen in contemporary society (MaRhea & Seddon, 2004):

Citizenship has become more inclusive as new social movements have contested patriarchal and patrimonial forms of domination (Yeatman, 2000). The old idea of the citizen as the sovereign individual of liberal theory has been countered by a notion of citizen as an

individual always in relationship with others—a 'social citizen' whose individuation is the outcome of social and cultural processes. Where the sovereign individual was understood to be an independent actor because dependence on others was not acknowledged, the social citizen is understood to be a relational individual who is capable of independent action precisely because of their relationships both with others and the natural environment. This changing conception of citizenship has informed a lively citizen politics, which has been taken up by public servants, particularly teachers, aiming to enable independence through social support that provides assistance 'when and how one requires it' (Yeatman, 1998a, p. 140).

Individuation has become more marked as consumer choice, markets and innovation have been affirmed. These trends have encouraged a sense of being individual, disconnected from older social ties and able to pursue one's own particular dreams and aspirations. They shift the locus of responsibility and risk away from the system and social level to individuals who are affirmed for their human capital, lifelong adaptability, personal agility, freedom to choose and consume, and flexibility as worker. As individuals are pressed to self-manage as responsible actors and risk-takers, they can become more reflexive, encouraging changing attitudes to authority and identity (Giddens, 1994). It can drive de-traditionalisation as individuals hold open the question of belonging and play with multiple identifications that sustain 'cosmopolitan vernaculars' (Bhabha, 2004). It can also encourage re-traditionalisation through disengagement and political quiessence fuelled by fear or uncertainty.

Structural and cultural change has accelerated as governments have responded to, and driven, diversity and choice through deregulatory and decentralising policies. Such policies undercut established patterns of collective agency and the delegation of politics to centralised agencies. The effect has been to diversify the places, and open up new spaces and flows, for social action (Castells, 1996). Instead of firm centres captured by confident concepts—nation, state, sovereign citizen, the school—experience seems decentred and ambiguous. The market with its diverse consumer pleasures and its unforgiving patterns of inclusion and exclusion is both an expression of and metaphor for this fragmentation.

Learning is fuelled in powerful ways, by market reform more than cultural change (Pusey, 2003). People everywhere are pressed to learn more and more—for work in a rapidly changing labour market, for being good parents or careful investors for their retirement, for making informed choices about schools, telephone and utility companies, shopping, lifestyle, health and well-being, even politicians. Market reform insists that we learn, all the time, about everything, exhaustively and exhaustingly all through our lives. But it also insists on learning that is utilitarian in character and oriented to enhance productivity, narrowly conceived. It is learning framed largely by the market rather than by citizenship and the priorities of citizen learning.

Contested Citizenship

The reconfiguration of government and public sector organisation that underpins and expresses citizenship coincides with the renewal of citizenship values and ideals based on the concept of a relational individual. It has split the defenders of public values over the appropriate form of citizenship and driven increasingly defensive responses as the rhetoric of markets and modernisation have become aligned.

Yet equally, people must deal with difference in the local places where they live their everyday lives, rubbing up against one another to find ways of coming to agreements as a basis for action. Politics come home to our everyday life contexts where it is possible to see the importance of recognition as well as redistribution, and their contribution to realising both individual and collective benefits. More and more, individuals are called upon to make

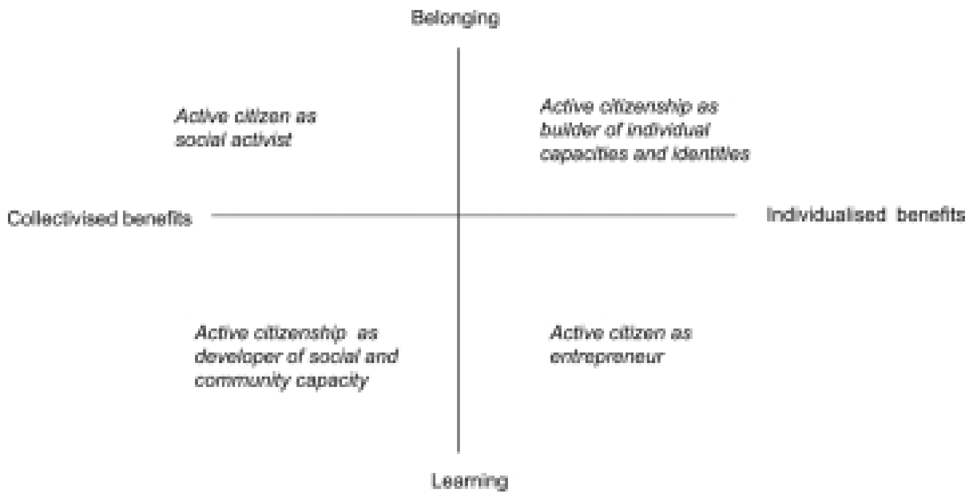

Figure 1. **Beyond activist and entrepreneur**

judgments which can inform political practices and ethical choices in localised contexts. And in these local places the effects are no longer impersonal or abstract. When decision-makers make their judgements they can see the effect on people they know.

Such paradoxical developments make active citizenship something that is done everyday in local places which are also spaces shaped by people mobility, global horizons, cultural difference and reflexive engagement. It is framed by everyday discourses and the assumptions about belonging and learning, individual and collective benefit, that they privilege. This immediacy means that an 'active citizen' is no longer some abstract ideal but a lived practice which we muddle through in highly contextualised ways (see Evans, 1995; Kenny, 2004).

As Figure 1 suggests, the active citizen of social democratic statism was imagined as the 'social activist', the *doer* of public good within collectivist decision-making processes that aimed at generating collective or universalistic benefits. Belonging to a collectivity and being socialised into the collectivity was privileged over learning. Learning was required but only enough to belong to and serve the collectivity through productive activities. The importance of critique increased as the idea of belonging weakened and as collectivity had to deal more and more with difference.

The active citizen of market liberalism has been constructed as the innovative entrepreneur and 'can-do' achiever who cuts through inertia to generate results and individual or particularistic benefits. This way of being a citizen is premised upon a weak sense of belonging, a disregard of tradition and a strong engagement in learning which allows ongoing refinement of ways of acting. It has been framed by the dominant market narrative and neo-conservative politics to affirm a particular, reductionist, conception of learning. This learning creates a narrow kind of citizenship that reflects a spurious belonging that doesn't question market liberalism and, more importantly, doesn't know how, or that citizens have the right, to challenge the dominant discourse.

Beyond these romantic images of the hero 'activist' or 'entrepreneur', there are more familiar everyday ways of being a citizen that build on learning *and* belonging. Such citizenship serves individualised interests by building individuals' identities and capacities for action and, through these processes of individual capacity-building, contributes to social and community development where practices are developed as shared property of the

collective—the group, occupation, nation, even humankind (Connell, 1995). School education has long been central to the formation of these kinds of active citizens—certainly more than the formation of citizen entrepreneurs and even than the formation of activist citizens whose independent stance and critical capacities tend to be contingent upon particular kinds of (classed and gendered) being in the world.

As belonging and centralised governance is weakened by changing times and as the limits of market liberalism are revealed in a selfish society, ways of being a citizen through capacity-building and community (capability)-development come into view more and more. These practices are not easily designated private or public, market or state. Rather, as the following examples show, these practices reveal ways of being a citizen and doing the public good that support particular communities in localised contexts.

Innovating Education

Victoria's TAFE institutes were decentralised through the 1990s, moved to a purchaser-provider model of training provision and subject to a falling price for training. This strategy reduced public funds available for the sector and meant that Institutes had to achieve a 1.5% 'productivity dividend' (i.e., provision of services for reduced cost) each year. In this context, the institutes diversified their funding base, while also responding to organisational demands—quality assurance, accountability processes and new patterns of management. While some teachers continued to commit themselves to traditional patterns of teacher professionalism, many others lived contradictions between economic imperatives and their own educational commitments in ways which supported new and innovative forms of educational practice (Seddon & Angus, 1999).

The reform agenda drove significant casualisation of the workforce (Malley *et al*., 1999). In one TAFE department the remaining three permanent staff worked with sessional teachers coming from industry to develop a cooperative approach to curriculum development, pedagogy and assessment. The effect of this development was to meet the institute's managerial and budgetary requirements and also extend educational opportunities for students and staff. Perhaps more significantly, the innovations served to realign the work of the departments so that its organisational axis shifted. The department became less significant as an organisational frame and staff emphasised their contribution to the occupational community they served. They recognised that they occupied a distinctive place in that occupational community, producing knowledge through dialogue between industry-based and permanent teachers, disseminating knowledge as they inducted students into the knowledge and ways of the occupation, and circulating knowledge and expertise through the occupation more generally (Seddon & Brown, 1997). One teacher observed that these changes had shifted the character of their work but it hadn't reduced their commitment to students and their learning. The department, he said,

> . . . *has* become a business. I mean, I think to survive you have to see yourself as a business that is providing education to the client who, from a policy point of view, is industry, but from the educator's point of view is the people that come in here on a daily basis. I think it's wrestling with that—trying to keep industry happy but making sure that we treat our customers not as customers or as clients, but . . . in a broad sort of educational perspective. I mean, we really do see them as people and, sure, we have to justify our existence under policy, but they are still people with problems, people with issues, and, from and educational perspective, that's just as important as meeting the demands of industry.

Despite economic reforms and increased accountability, the department supported learning in ways that built student's capacities for action. And through that work, the staff contributed to the development of their occupational community and also built up their own capacity for action that was collectively designed and collectively ratified. Such learning did not support the formation of activist citizens but it facilitated citizen learning by encouraging the view that individuals, even in workplaces, have the right to act and the responsibility to make decisions that shape the destiny of their group.

In a small private training provider, the managing director indicated that employers seek out her training provision because it makes a difference to their productivity and profitability. She is committed to an integrated educational approach to workplace learning which is rooted in the culture of the workplace and in the traditions of critical adult education which she and her colleagues developed as teachers in public education providers. She asserts that the success of these educational practices depends upon the professionalism of her teachers. She requires her teachers to develop their skills in crossing boundaries between educational and industrial contexts, so that they can deal with the contradictory discourses of public service education and capitalist profitability in industry, and learn to use forms of organisation and reporting which accommodate the culture of workplaces (Waterhouse & Sefton, 1997).

A teacher described the way she made a difference to the work and lives of the worker–learners that she taught.

> I pushed a group of people in the warehouse. I pushed them and pushed them about communication and—just the work in the class and we talked about being a proactive person and approaching people when you've got problems. And I pushed them and I pushed them and I pushed them really hard, knowing they could take this. I came in one day and they said, 'Oh, we need to have a meeting in class first'. I said, 'Why?' 'Well, we had a meeting at lunchtime and we'd like to talk to you about X'. Do you think I was blown away! Because they'd finally put into practice all this stuff we'd been talking about. How they can actually coordinate organised meetings. If they have a problem, how they can choose a leader. How they can approach a person, what communication strategies they would use. And they turned around and fed back to me everything we'd been talking about. And they thought I'd be really upset because I was going to say that, you know, we're all working hard and they wanted an extra break. But I just sat there with the biggest smile on my face and said 'Oh this is fantastic, oh this is great . . .' And they were just astounded because it was such a *buzz*!

Like educators in other more familiar learning spaces, this teacher supported the learners by developing their capacities for independent action and for working together to pursue a shared goal. The 'buzz' lay in their evident growth in citizen capacity.

This kind of learning was also evident in the operations of the training provider itself. The company was explicit about its long term commitment to training and emphasised the benefits of learning as a public good in all their work. The agenda was not to create independent, critical activist citizens who act for some kind of universalist public good but to build capacity for collective action in pursuit of shared goals at a local level. It was about building individual capacity in order to enable the development of communities—local groupings of like minded people who could act together to build a better world.

This ideal was shared amongst the staff in the training provider. It defined their collective identity and common culture, and provided a basis for establishing close and supportive collegial relationships. All the staff reinforced this message through everyday conversations,

regular staff development and a strong emphasis on day-to-day reflective practice. As one manager commented, the organisation created a private space within which the staff could reaffirm their shared values but also critically interrogate and renew them. This critical engagement was supported and enriched by admitting like-minded friends of the organisation (other trainers, adult educators, union officials, managers, bureaucrats and researchers) in to the private space. In this respect, the training provider served as a values repository not just for the staff but for affiliative networks that reached across the training industry and beyond. The training provider supported individual capacity building amongst employees in client companies and in their own company and wider networks. In this way they facilitated citizen learning by contributing to the development of localised communities and providing an organisational infrastructure for negotiating and enacting shared values and ideals.

This construction of an infrastructure for citizen learning and decision-making was particularly clear in a social partnership that supports, directs and administers an urban-based secondary school program for students from remote indigenous communities in South Australia. The program provided educational and residential services to students who were selected by their communities to come to the city for educational purposes. It also provided educational support for the communities by enabling collaborative attempts to build the communities' capacity for self-determination and sustainability.

The partnership developed because the communities on the 'lands' decided that as well as young people being culturally-literate in their own language and ways, it was important for them to be literate in the dominant Australian language and culture. The communities could have operated their own school system wholly on the 'lands' but opted to establish residential facilities and programs in a metropolitan school because it allowed their young people to become immersed within the dominant culture. It also provided different experiences to those of the 'lands' where unemployment was chronic and many young people had not seen indigenous community members working. There used to be work available for indigenous Australians on the 'lands' but in the times of their grandparents rather than their parents. Learning was seen to be important not because these young people would work in the cities but because they were more likely to live on the 'lands' and needed to consider what could be done at the local level to sustain, and be sustained by, the local communities.

Local governance has long been a feature of communities on the 'lands'. In 1987 the South Australian Government handed governance of educational provision over to the communities. At that time there were no models for this, so communities and their partners improvised as they enacted their new decision-making role. The education advisory committee, which was open to all community members, was established as a sub-committee of the land-holding body. Lawyers for the communities drew up an agreement about how the committee was to operate. It had elected positions and all community members could participate. Fifty to sixty members attended meetings. There were strong inter-relations between the education committee and the communities because of direct representation and the roles that community members played in the committee and in the wider work of the communities. There are also school councils in each community that determined local priorities, directed the school principals on the 'lands' and were themselves accountable to local governing councils. These councils were inclusive of all family groups.

The development of the partnership shows how the decision-making capacity of the education committee matured over time. The partnership consisted of the peak educational advisory committee on the 'lands', the schools on the 'lands', a section within the urban high school that facilitates students' learning in the high school environment, and the

residential facility near the high school that provides educational and community support, and hosted the partnership. The partnership was supported and sustained by the communities on the 'lands' and institutions—the Education Department and unions—based far from the 'lands'. The partnership was enacted under arrangements established by the South Australian government and was sustained by experience, reciprocity in relations and a shared history. Managing the balance between the needs of the different partners helped to develop the relationships. Over time the interactions resulted in the department developing practices that were inclusive of 'lands' communities. For example, community members were involved in school principal selection. The teachers' union also established more flexible processes, allowing community members to be appointed as education workers. These accommodations returned benefits that went beyond the immediate partnership.

Glimpsing the Future?

Community Politics and Networks

The grating tectonic plates of social change are reconfiguring the relationships between market, state and civil society but they do not reduce these domain's claims on education. Instead the demands are fuelled, the politics intensifies, stakes become higher. Old loyalties to particular patterns of public or private educational provision fall away as the pursuit of particular interests is legitimated.

The marketisation of education has created winners and losers but this is not a zero sum game between market and state. Contract has not replaced hierarchy. Rather, both hierarchy and contract are being mediated through community. The rhetoric may endorse individualised self-interest but, in practice, particular interests are realised through the pursuit of localised collective interests embodied by individuals-always-in-relationship and rooted in trust-based networks organised on a familial, geographic, faith or occupational basis. These communities are private collectives within civil society. They exist beyond the domain of government and business, and outside the frames of public collectivity (the state) and the centralised public agencies that have developed as extension of the state agency since the nineteenth century (e.g., unions, schools). There is an uneasy relationship between these decentralised private collectives within civil society and the centralised public collectivities orchestrated through the state. This unease drives the simple politics of public *versus* private but also frames up new politics rooted in the articulation of centralised and decentralised networks through partnerships (Seddon, 2003).

While these communities all have a reality in the here and now as distinct 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998), some are more grounded in a lived history. These are 'communities of destiny' (Teese, 1981), communities that operate through networks based in trust which successfully reproduce their culture across generations irrespective of the social settlement that is negotiated. Some sustain cultures that institutionalise disadvantage. Others are better resourced, and exercise superior influence. They support their own into lives of privilege and influence. Market reform doesn't reach far into this social organization of destiny or disrupt its operations. It certainly doesn't press these communities into a true contractualism which seriously individualises the parties to exchange (Yeatman, 1998b).

The mobilisation of these localised interests operating as private collectives through civil society is reconfiguring the social organization of learning. Public and private investments are shaping education and training in line with these different interests in order to realise particular values and achieve inter-generational learning and cultural reproduction through processes of development and processes of control. These interests are also reconfiguring the rules of learning that define who learns, how, what they learn and in what context. The

effect is to destabilise the old social relations of learning, the hierarchies that were sustained, and the public collectivities that supported them. The outcome is forms of tribalism, generally based more on bonding social capital, than on bridging or linking capital (Woolcock, 1998). Community networks mediate this kind of destabilisation. Their capacity to mobilise resources can soften the impact of change and its consequences, and re-collectivise risk in old ways through, for example, friendly societies and cooperatives that pre-figured the welfare state.

These trends in social life diversify the spaces for work, life and learning, offering individuals greater diversity and opportunities for tailoring their life choices to their own personal circumstances. Yet realising these opportunities depends upon the kinds of resources (financial, social and cultural) that people can mobilise (Watson *et al.*, 2003). Resource inequalities mean that there are inequalities in choices, in opportunities for exercising choice, and in security rooted in the collectivisation of risk. Persistent inequalities mean that there are persistent communities destined for social advantage and disadvantage. These communities of destiny interface with expanded market regulation that increase the spaces in which individuals are expected to mobilise their own resources in order to pursue the choices that they value. They also interface with labour market inequalities that are compounded by the systematic rolling back of public services that once mobilised individual's resources for collective projects serving all citizens (such as education, health, welfare). The result is an emerging landscape of unequal social protection, rooted increasingly in private civil agency and decentralised networks rather than in the state and its public agencies.

Supporting Citizen Learning

Social reconfiguration creates new learning spaces marked by different social relations of learning compared to the past, as was illustrated in the examples of education innovations emerging in the context of market-liberal reforms. In these new learning spaces there is undoubtedly pressure for teachers, and education and training providers, to work in ways that are more subject to market mechanisms and to the compliance regimes of government. Yet by and large these developments have been negotiated in ways that retain older commitments to supporting learners and their communities, to public service and to democratic principles. Innovations still focus on doing the public good and realising outcomes that are collectively defined and collectively ratified, albeit in localised small scale ways. This work is operationalised through an organisational structure that enables citizen learning and action largely in the form of capacity-building and community development but on a resource base derived more and more through private networks and market activity.

Very often the innovations that build capacity for this work develop in private spaces within public and private sector organisations—in departments, partnerships and networks where people know, and are motivated by, the learners they serve and by their commitment to build a better world. This local focus draws strength from familiarity and cultural affiliations while it addresses face-to-face cultural diversity and structural and symbolic inequalities. The contradictions create a powerful impetus to citizen learning and citizen action because shared understandings and agreements must be negotiated through difference before action is possible.

But a local focus can easily become parochial, with horizons that do not see connections between the hassles of localised day-to-day negotiations and dilemmas and larger social and political processes that shape patterns of behaviour and opportunity and enable government and governing in national and global contexts. Such citizen learning and action undoubtedly

generates goods for particular publics but it also drives inequalities because of its localism, its retreat from a universalistic approach, its opportunistic patterns of development and, therefore, its unsystematic impact. It develops civic capacity by increasing knowledge about local decision-making, affirming the rightness of participation, and encouraging a sense of empowerment and resilience linked to the capacity to act. Yet when tied to parochial horizons, such learning is likely to feed into localised social movement activism and can encourage citizen cynicism and disengagement from formal politics and the workings of government. It is a kind of citizen learning that is more likely to endorse aggregative than dialogical democracy and it does little to protect democracy as a social institution that enables government of the people by the people.

Remaking Education for Civic Formation

The reconfiguration of market, state and civil society in our contemporary period is opening up new spaces and opportunities for citizen learning, particularly by encouraging localised community networking and participation in processes that realise shared understandings and endorsed agreements in contexts marked by cultural difference. The effect is to form active citizens more as capacity-builders and community developers, than as entrepreneurs, and more as entrepreneurs than as public activists. These developments destabilise established understandings of the active citizen and open up many ways of seeing citizen action, as I suggested in Figure 1.

At one level, these developments are not problems in themselves. The social organisation of education and training has, historically, shifted so as to support capitalism as well as democracy. In this respect the emergent developments within contemporary education and training are little different to those of the past. Education and training continue to be contested domains of social practice, pulled in different directions to serve interests realised through market, state and civil society. What is problematic today is the retreat from serious engagement in the politics between capitalism and democracy and evident in the dominance of economic interests in shaping educational provision and the marginalisation of citizen education.

The recent priority in education and training has been the formation of lifelong learners understood in a largely economic way. Such lifelong learning prioritises learning for work and for a life that is fitted to the imperatives of a knowledge-based economy—a life that is lived flexibly, self-managed and subject to risk. It is a life oriented to learning: learning to do, learning what is instrumentally necessary, developing an informal knowledgeability appropriate for everyday practice, to meet the demands of a job or to be a member of a particular community. This notion of lifelong learning is tensioned between the demands of the market and the demands of civil society and community's rational responses to work intensification, the decentralisation of governance and the decollectivisation of risk. It encourages values of economic self-sufficiency, self-determination and voice and localised community security (Axford & Seddon, forthcoming).

Alongside this dominant discourse there has been a continued but increasingly muted commitment to the education of citizens. Traditionally such learning has been advanced through the organizations of civil society, through unions, political parties, voluntary associations and other community networks where adults could learn about citizen action. It was supplemented by school education that extended community-based civic learning through intentional and explicit teaching of civics and citizenship education. Such education inducted young people into civic knowledge and skills, and developed their capabilities in looking at the big picture not just local concerns, abstracting from particular contexts, and exercising reason in ethical judgement. These learnings provided a foundation for civic

action in contexts that reached beyond face-to-face interaction and addressed imagined communities rooted in regions or nations, in ethnic or faith communities, and in large-scale civil mobilisations. They supported, at least in part, the development of dispositions necessary to sustain active engagement, and a sense of the rightness and responsibility to participate as citizens in the polity. These civic and citizen learnings developed those capacities that not only sustain citizen action but also make it possible to imagine the universal as a goal and to see the state as a manifestation of the people's will and as something more than an aristocracy or a big corporation.

Even in its heyday, school-based civics and citizenship education only achieved partial success in these goals but it provided a foundation on which adult participation in civil society could build. In 1994 in Australia, the Civics Expert Group warned of the danger of 'civic deficit', noting that Australian democracy entailed only modest levels of active citizen engagement and the citizens had a poor knowledge of civics. The danger, they argued, is that in a context of increasing cultural diversity, 'civic deficit' can erode the democratic ideal and ultimately threaten democracy:

> When the lack of knowledge of how governmental institutions work and an uncertainty of what the civic ethos means is coupled with mistrust of politics, a danger arises. Our system of government relies for its efficacy and legitimacy on an informed citizenry; without active, knowledgeable citizens the forms of democratic representation remain empty; without vigilant, informed citizens there is no check on potential tyranny: '. . . our democratic values require that every citizen has equal opportunity to participate in the exercise of these rights and responsibilities. Without civic education that democratic ideal is not maintained' (CEG, 1994, pp.15–16).

Today, in Australia at least, the capacity to imagine universal public goods and the democratic ideal, and the necessity of ethical judgement (of truth rather than lies) is faltering. The threat of civic deficit has been realised through weasel-words and in small-minded government that has reasserted older notions of citizen belonging as a way of delineating 'them' from 'us'. The list of 'them' has grown the longer John Howard's Coalition government has been in office. 'Them' includes those who are different from John Howard's norm (indigenous Australians, 'welfare cheats', women with children that want to work and refugees) and the organizations of civil society that previously sustained adult citizen learning (e.g., via the unions, an independent press and media). Until recent times, many Australians appear to not have had the concepts or the language to decry these exclusionary policies.

The challenge is to acknowledge the erosion of civic learning through education and training. It is also to refuse the blinkering that has accompanied the ascent of an economic paradigm for understanding life, learning and citizenship and which has obscured the political purposes of education and training. Instead it is necessary to see how the social organisation of learning is located within, and can contribute to, the contemporary struggle between democracy and capitalism. It means recognising that the task of education and training is to create rich hybrids; *learning citizens* that are constituted at the contested interface between economic and political discourses and formed as active citizens—as capacity-builders, community developers, entrepreneurs and public activists—that can build the common wealth and engage in ethical judgement within democratic decision-making. And this means recognising but also supplementing everyday citizen learning through participation in diverse work-life-learning sites in order to consolidate a serious citizen ethic that can both enable and protect democratic citizenship in the face of an aggressive pursuit of profit by insurgent capitalism.

The problem, of course, is that currently governments drive lifelong learning for work and life-with-risk, without citizen learning for adults. And there is pressure to extend a similar mix into schools, particularly in schools that service communities of destiny without influence or the expectation of social leadership. Such arrangements benefit the advantaged but can be a kind of opiate for the disadvantaged. History shows that governments are generally not the agencies that do much about this kind of unequal empowerment. Rather, the impetus for change has mostly come from civil society, where local mobilisations look beyond localism, imagine a universal and build capacity by linking decentralised networks to the protected and better resourced networks of the state. Partnership supported by the state, not the narrow binary of public *versus* private, is the path to a stronger civic society.

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