

# Small Island Governance and Global-Local Change in King Island, Tasmania

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# Abstract

It is claimed that small islands fall prey to powerful forces that transform place and life, creating major political, economic, social and environmental challenges simultaneously global and local in their reach and impact.

This research examines whether, how and to what extent modes of governing fail or succeed to support such challenges of change. A qualitative work positioned between island studies and cultural geography, it fuses notions of island, place and governance in a case study that examines how members of a small island population dealt with global-local change. The setting was King Island, remote dependant of Australian island state Tasmania. Three methods were used: community observation by the researcher, analysis of primary and secondary documentary evidence, and the interpretation of three rounds of interviews conducted with King Islanders over six months. Data were first categorised, described and analysed in terms of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats or challenges that islanders perceived in relation to quality of life. Second, four challenges of chief significance to participants were examined in depth: governance, population, land use and tenure, and climate.

Hermeneutic analysis of these four cases points to both failures and successes to manage global-local change in the short term, which participants explained in terms of particular mindsets in King Island contoured by local (island) place, and tensions over relational place with two powerful sovereign governments. Examples of the potential of governance—dealt with in depth in the final

discussion—suggest that both failures and successes of various kinds and intensities are possible in small island systems. Such insights stand as conclusive and object lessons in two ways. First, what appears to be governing failure can lead to change and opportunity for growth in governing capacity and outcomes for the common good. Second, occupants of small islands can indeed find ways to manage their global-local challenges.

# Declaration

## Statement of originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgment is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

## Statement of authority of access

This thesis may be made available for loan and limited copying and communication in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

## Statement of ethical conduct

The research associated with this thesis abides by all guidelines in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

Elizabeth Jones

15 October 2013



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# List of acronyms

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| ABS      | Australian Bureau of Statistics                                |
| CCA      | Cradle Coast Authority   |
| CCNRMCMC | Cradle Coast Natural Resource Management Committee             |
| CSIRO    | Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation   |
| DEEWR    | Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations     |
| DCITA    | Department of Communications Information Technology & the Arts |
| DPAC     | Department of Premier and Cabinet                              |
| DPIPWE   | Department of Primary Industries Parks Water and Environment   |
| DPIW     | Department of Primary Industries and Water                     |
| DPIWE    | Department of Primary Industries Water and Environment         |
| EDO      | Environmental Defenders Office                                 |
| IPCC     | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change                      |
| KINRMG   | King Island Natural Resource Management Group                  |
| KIPS     | King Island Planning Scheme                                    |
| LGAT     | Local Government Association of Tasmania                       |
| LUPAA    | Land Use Planning and Approvals Act                            |
| MIS      | managed investment scheme                                      |

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| PAL    | Protection of Agricultural Land Policy                   |
| RMPAT  | Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal         |
| RMPS   | Resource Management and Planning System                  |
| TPC    | Tasmanian Planning Commission                            |
| UNCED  | United Nations Conference on Environment and Development |
| UNDP   | United Nations Development Program                       |
| UNFAO  | United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation        |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change    |





# 1 Origins

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*Sea Elephant River winter ebb tide, King Island 2007*

*Island images waterborne in silence to the Strait:  
humans' fire-charred earth ellipses,  
and nature's winter sunset chroma.*

## Unfolding

Change happens—it is the stuff of life and manifests at a variety of scales.

This scalar nature of change interests geographers. Arguably, even the most global manifestations of change find expression at the local level and, examined at that scale, will produce case evidence generalisable outwards to larger scales. Thus, in pondering the geographies of change, place matters in absolute, relative and relational terms.

Islands are absolute and relative spaces. In spatial terms their physical boundaries are etched by water, their sizes are smaller than continents, and they are sometimes deemed relatively more isolated and/or remote (from some putative centre) than other regions. Islands are also relational places typified by interactions, interconnections and linkages—both internal and external—that reference (but are *not* determined by) such spatial features. Australia is an island continent subject to significant change—political, economic, social, environmental—across all scales from the international arena to smallest of locales.

In a federalist system whose seat is the national capital of Canberra, Tasmania is the island continent's island state. It comprises no less than 334 islands, islets and rocky outcrops that are administered by 29 local governments (which are creatures of the states), three regional associations of those local governments (which are voluntary alliances), and the Tasmanian and Australian Governments (both of which operate in a bicameral parliamentary system). Two of Tasmania's islands, King and Flinders—each a single local

government jurisdiction—are located in Bass Strait. King Island is the subject of this thesis (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1 King Island and its Tasmanian and Australian mainlands  
Source: Google Earth 2012

I selected King Island for two main reasons. One was the lifelong appeal islands have held for me, a fifth generation resident of the Tasmanian archipelago. I have set foot on a number of the smaller members of the collection. They embody values beyond compare: a sense of world-apart; abundant impressive natural values; and, in some, arresting remnants of a bygone British imperial presence.

The second reason for my choice nests in my early research of the development of nineteenth century Tasmanian government. Over time I broadened my perspectives to explore how Tasmanian people interacted with place, and how

the connection was revealed in their modes of governing. I studied a far northwestern Tasmanian community, geographically isolated from the state seat of power. I analysed how distant state politicians, bureaucrats and local representatives interacted with that remote place, and how they met certain of its needs that they themselves had determined. I decided that in subsequent research I would ask *residents* what their community's most pressing governance needs were, and track their responses to how such needs were met.

Simultaneously, island studies were becoming a productive field of enquiry. Whereas researchers had once considered political activity in remote islands unimportant (Anckar 2002), now scholars such as Baldacchino and Bartmann saw much promise in island sites and encouraged study of their policy foci and governance. The potential of islands as sites of governance studies captured my interest. I sought possible research sites among populated offshore islands in the Tasmanian archipelago. In a process of elimination I discounted offshore islands whose governance was already being researched by scholars, for example Bruny Island; islands that lacked sufficient numbers of resident participants such as Hunter Island in Bass Strait; and islands designated as tourist destinations administered by the Tasmanian Government, such as Maria Island. Also eliminated were islands that were members of island clusters, such as Three Hummock Island in the Hunter Group or Flinders Island in the Furneaux Group. I found that King Island had sufficient residents, its own local government, stood alone geographically, and no-one was currently researching its governance. Like many fellow Tasmanians I knew little about this remote place, apart from the presence of a large mine there and the island's

notoriety as a shipwreck coast. I was also among the apparent majority of Tasmanians who had never visited the island or knew anyone there.

King Island lies 40 degrees south of the equator, is some 1,098 square kilometres (424 square miles) in area, and supports approximately one and a half thousand people (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012). Axiomatically, both the place and the people are subject to change, responsive to it and capable of driving it—again at various scales from the local to the global. That said, four specific expressions of change are the focus of this present work; these are what I will term *four change cases* of real significance to the Islanders and to the Island.<sup>1</sup> A matter of concern in and of itself, *governing* is the first of these change cases and it folds through the other three, namely *population, land use and tenure, and climate*.

Governance is understood here in the terms set out by Malpas and Wickham (1997, 93; emphasis added):

those ‘macro-projects’ undertaken by organisations (governments) established for the purpose of regulating the lives of whole communities or nations ... [and] ‘micro-projects’ such as are involved, for instance, in the running of one’s daily work schedule or in managing a household budget [or choosing to participate in local island affairs] ... [governance] covers, in fact, *the entire field of social action*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I use the capitalised forms ‘Island’ and ‘Islanders’ to refer to King Island and its people; references to ‘island’ and ‘islanders’ denote instances not of King Island.

<sup>2</sup> The focus here is primarily upon macro-projects.

Malpas and Wickham argue that governance aims for complete control of its practices but is limited by its failure to achieve such mastery. Failure is a structural feature which ‘marks the limits of governing practice’ (1997, 93). Those limits are first, that governance is a *partial, incomplete activity*, never in control of its practices or operations because much in social life lies outside its established, regulated framework. Such incompleteness leads to failure. A second limit to governance is that it is a *contested activity*, located at the intersection of other, differing government practices used by multi-tiered, interdependent systems that overlap, compete, interfere with and restrict other governance practices. Thus governance will fail because it never has complete control of its own projects. According to Malpas and Wickham, it may *appear* that governance successes are as common as failures, but this misinterpretation occurs because, ‘in trying to succeed, we obscure the other conditions [limits] that are also operating and that may actually hinder success’ (1997, 91). In Malpas and Wickham’s view, then, governance is always accompanied by failure.

In certain contrast to Malpas and Wickham, Villamil (1977) considers governance from the perspectives of size and survival of small island systems. One important claim is that small island systems are both closed and open. First, as *closed* systems, their governance is limited in certain respects—land resources such as land are finite; capacity to absorb further inputs is restricted; and any additional input will be a substitute for something already present in the island. These conditions require a government of a closed system to carefully regulate what is introduced into it and in what way—unregulated

introductions might see significant structural changes or even demise of the island system. Second, Villamil examines small islands as *open* systems, in the sense that they allow entry of powerful influences from elsewhere—for example, population flows, new technologies, or a development pattern out of harmony with island society, physical character, and/or culture. In contrast to Malpas and Wickham (1977), Villamil implies that governing *might* fail, for the aforementioned external influences lie beyond local government control and might create serious difficulties for small islands; indeed, the smaller the island, the worse the problem of control.

Neither of these scholarly understandings of governance is devoid of some hope. Malpas and Wickham allow that the failure of a particular practice ‘itself gives rise to new governing activities ... Governance thus sets the stage for its own failure, just as failure sets the stage for governance’ (1997, 96–97). In turn, Villamil concludes that, while many of the external influences that penetrate islands cannot be completely halted, the task of small island governments is clear: how to govern so that change does not disrupt island society.

In tune with Malpas and Wickham, throughout the thesis I opt to use the terms governing, modes of governing and governing practices to refer to the field of social action under study. In my analysis, this choice becomes important in order to distinguish between modes of governing through *government* (by elected representatives and bureaucrats by means of legislation, regulation, the judiciary and the public service) and modes of governing through *governance*

(decision-making involving partnerships among public, private and civil sectors).<sup>3</sup>

Malpas and Wickham's work is important here because governing is a key means by which to address complex change such as characterises the four cases analysed in this work.

Several questions arise: what limitations of governance hold in relation to the four change cases that presently challenge life on King Island, and what may be learned by them? How do people conduct themselves on King Island in relation to governing, population decline, land use and tenure, and climate change, to what effect now and in relation to perceptions of life on the Island in the future? On this understanding, how have King Islanders dealt with these four change cases and how do the object lessons that may be drawn from their experiences ramify for others elsewhere?

These four cases and allied research questions are important in crafting an original study positioned between island studies and cultural geography, and in this sense the research is significant because through it are applied insights from these allied fields of scholarship in a rich case study. In what follows, I seek to generate novel insights that will inform both conceptual and empirical understandings of island, place and King Island as a specific place experiencing many changes.

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<sup>3</sup> Swyngedouw (2005, 1992) describes this as the administrative transition in Western governments from 'hierarchical and bureaucratic state forms [of governing to] institutional ensembles of governance based on horizontally networked tripartite composition'. By government I mean the system of representative democratic rule 'from above' where all responsibility, decision-making and accountability rest with elected representatives supported by a bureaucracy.



The focus on King Island adds another element of originality to the work insofar as it is the first such study in and of this place. The research has weight, too, because it explores the utility of a particular method of approach to undertaking research among King Islanders, one that took the form of extended and repeated/augmented interviews with key informants.

I seek to bring together particular findings about the shifting nature of life in one island and more general insights about modes of governing *in place*. The aim is to find whether, how and to what extent modes of governing fail or succeed to support the management of change. Failure in governing need not be seen negatively; rather, by understanding change, it becomes possible to ‘hear’ better Islanders’ concerns. In turn, that opens up the capacity to appreciate Islanders’ perspectives, reflect, and seek other and optimal ways to manage for both uncertainty in the face of change and alternative futures that manage it.

## Outline of chapters

Chapter two describes the ways and means chosen to achieve the study’s purpose mentioned above in regard to the change cases posed. First offered are theoretical frames—key scholarship findings discovered within the literatures of place, island and governing. Next mentioned are means of data generation, a single case study of four components. Reference is made to the case study design; an extensive desk-top review of primary and secondary sources including scholarly and policy texts and ephemera; matters of ethics and investigative rigour, choice of multiple fieldwork approaches, conduct of

individual participant semi-structured interviews and, within this present chapter one, data collection limitations, all with the intention of establishing credibility and confidence in study conclusions. To address such questions the research deployed a six-month ethnographic study *in situ* that featured participation in life in King Island, repeat interviews with participants experiencing Island life, and thematic analysis of conduct around the four change cases.

Living in the Island and my appreciation of Mason's (2005) insights on qualitative research inspired me to weigh the value of varied voices and imaginative and creative forms of expression such as poetry. Pink (2007) expands these possibilities by suggesting that visual images of all kinds inspire conversations. I consider verse a form of inner conversation, and found that certain photographic and other images of King Island or King Islanders led me to reflect upon and crystallise certain study significances. Often such understandings remain hidden and amorphous until image and personal reflection intersect. Thus I coalesced data threads and images of Island place or practices at the gateway of each chapter.

The remainder of chapter two details the conduct of three rounds of interviews over six months and the means used to make sense of material from each interview round. The accuracy of meanings so derived was crucial—the meanings provided themes of global-local change for chapters four to seven, change cases intended to address the research objective and proposition. Indebted to Mason (2005) for her insistence that theory and approach be deliberate and palpable throughout a work, matters of methodology overflow

into chapter three, where I describe and analyse how participants saw the research setting; into chapters four to seven where I detail analysis and synthesis of thematic data; and into chapter eight where I interpret the study's meaning.

Chapter three has several functions. The first is to introduce the broad geographical context of the case study—King Island, its people and its government. It is in amongst these entities that the practices of governing are played out, and responsiveness of local people to governing processes examined. Two vantage points contribute surveys of the Island context: first a dispassionate overview of physical, socio-economic and political settings; second, hitherto unknown feelings, values, beliefs and thoughts of King Island participants in regard to their Island—the sum of people's everyday experience of Island existence and the big issues involved in their survival there. Topics appear—isolation, remoteness and resourcefulness in innovation, notions held by some Islanders (though by no means all), and which have been unsettled in chapter two. The remainder of chapter three demonstrates the presence of global-local change in King Island—key to my research proposition and objective. Participant sketches introduce the four change cases that drive the research and form the substance of the next four chapters.

Chapters four to seven are the dissertation's analytical hub. They explain how and with what effect King Islanders dealt with their big issues of governing—global-local political, economic, social and climatic change. These four chapters share internal consistency. Each provides topic background. Each describes several critical contexts such as political, economic, social or

environmental discourses and motivations that arise from elsewhere or from past times to shape what emerges within the particular change case. Each considers how the change case is a governing concern, and analyses how participants understand the effectiveness of governing practices for that case.

The first part of chapter four contextualises governing in political, social and geographical terms by reference to participatory democracy and relational place. An analysis follows of participant views of King Islanders' responses to global-local transformation in governing. The chapter draws forth influences upon King Island, and refers to more distant places. This work adds weight of evidence to the idea that, as Malpas and Wickham (1997) assert, the system of governance fails to manage change for reasons that include characteristics of partial and contested governance in island and other relational places.

Chapter five concerns change in population, with particular reference to a steady decline in absolute numbers that clouds present and future existence in King Island. I reflect upon how people interact with islands and change, especially given population decline in King Island, and do so by means of an historical overview of King Island settlement, its cyclical character, participant views of current population status, and four critical contexts of King Island's population decline—migration, ageing, rurality and remoteness. The chapter explores how emigration is a governing concern and how local government and citizens have dealt with the issue. Responses are shown to be shaped by people's ways of being in local (island) place and by seemingly omnipotent forces transmitted across relational place; they demonstrate that governing practices have been unable to halt or slow numerical decline; and they point to

the conclusion that uncertainty is the inevitable and unsettling short-term outcome.

Chapter six addresses change in land use and its tenure. I first reflect upon associations of person to place and the specific character and development of that association in King Island. Then follows an overview of four contexts essential to understanding change in Island land matters: planners' imprint; the conservation versus development discourse; and two land use policies—state-directed economic growth, and neoliberalism. The remainder of the chapter provides description and analysis of King Islanders' attempts to grapple with social and economic issues associated with multi-national investment projects and substantial outsider purchase of King Island land. Critical reflections on local governing practices to manage change in land use and tenure permit me to suggest that incomplete, contested governance (Malpas & Wickham 1997) again arises because of specific aspects of islandness and more general elements of relational place.

The subject of chapter seven, the final change case, is climate change. First, I provide background—definitions of atmosphere, climate and weather, and on what binds people and Earth's atmosphere. An overview follows of contemporary climate change, its implications for the planet's places and islands, and people's diverse reactions to it. The chapter turns to three crucial considerations for decision-makers: uncertainty that surrounds aspects of climate science and clouds its practicality for local government planning; the tendency to privilege the scientific perspective of climate change and how this bias stifles use of socio-cultural perspectives that might clarify the complex

phenomenon for the general population; and certain deficits in governing practices that are found at all scales. The final part of the chapter contains conclusions about King Islanders' efforts to manage climate change, using as criteria good governance principles of responsiveness, inclusiveness and effectiveness.

Finally, in chapter eight I recapitulate my investigative process. Then I discuss whether and how the case permits certain conclusions about modes of governing, change and uncertainty. From the change cases I draw case conclusions and consider if and how they might be applicable to other of the world's islands and places not islands. Finally I point to research directions prompted by the study.

## Study limitations

All research has limitations, including this study. I refer to such limitations here, at the doorway to the dissertation, to best position the reader to gauge the overall effect of the work.

My focus here is the study's data generation phase. As Van Maanen (1988) observes, there are limits to what a field-worker can learn in a given place. During collection of field data I met with unanticipated difficulties in two areas. The first concerned provision of participant anonymity, preferable in some case study research (Yin 2003) and a rigid requirement of the research ethics applied to the conduct of this study. Once in the field it quickly became clear that it was not possible to guarantee participants total anonymity in a small bounded setting of less than two thousand persons. Despite Mason's

(2005) exhortation to give careful thought to problems of providing anonymity, some obstacles could not be planned for—the researcher has to be in the field to encounter them. For example, I did not fully appreciate certain small-place realities; it was idealistic to expect that I could shield from common knowledge whom I was interviewing. Islanders were intimately connected with everything that occurred in their place, a connection that crossed over into my own vocabulary—in my field journal there was a subtle shift from the phrase ‘on the Island’ to ‘in the Island’. Possibly it marked my increasing immersion in King Islanders’ life matters and echoed the view that expressions using ‘in’ highlight belonging and collective identity (Ronström 2011).

Problems with interview venues aggravated concerns about participant anonymity. Neutral, out-of-sight venues were few and far between. Most often I found myself in public buildings or various workplaces, sometimes without quiet private interview spaces or optimum tape recording conditions so that throaty lawn-mowers, screeching babies and eerily keening winter winds enlivened my interview tapes. Sometimes there was an open-door or even no-door office policy, constant noisy human traffic stream, and sometimes no alternative but to reveal to reception staff the identity of the person I wished to meet. Use of snowball recruiting had a similar outcome: in asking a participant if there was someone else in the community I should speak to, the named person was occasionally identified as an active participant, even if I had not followed the recommendation.

Despite such problems, participants continued to place trust in me and to share their feelings, values, beliefs and thoughts on a variety of often controversial

matters. I balanced my concern with the unexpected anonymity issues by keeping in mind the epistemological limitations of interviewing—in particular, that people might not reveal matters as they actually perceive them (Eyles & Smith 1988); that there is always more than one way of stating what it is we hold to be true (Malpas 1999); and that successful outcomes ultimately depend on participants' goodwill (Jacobs 1999). Ultimately I was able to preserve participant anonymity, previously referred to as a requirement of the research ethics applied to the conduct of this study. When writing this dissertation I strictly avoided identifiers—participant gender (including personal pronouns), photographic images (apart from one community photograph in which I obscured facial identification), age (never 'young', 'older', or specific age), length of time on Island (never Island-born, long-time resident, contract manager) or community role.

Such efforts to preserve participant anonymity came at a certain cost to the research. Overall, I agree with Yin (2003) that, in a study of this kind, concealment of 'who said what' most likely serves to eliminate important context. Participant insights might have gained added weight and credibility if seen as perspectives of, for example, an elected representative, key professional council officer, retailer, ex-Councillor, Island-born resident, man or woman, and so on. But previous field experience taught me that such identification could be counter-productive when researching in a small community where people generally strive to live harmoniously, and do not necessarily place trust in a researcher without firmly promised anonymity and confidentiality such as is required under the National Statement on Ethical



Conduct in Human Research (Australian Government 2007a). In the few cases where I have cited comments that Island citizens placed in the public domain under their own names, such as letters to newspapers, such are not my responsibility in terms of anonymity.

Apart from problems of anonymity, factors of time and timing were a second study limitation, rendering field work somewhat ‘complex and cumbersome’ (Fontana & Frey 2000, 661). Participant attrition was one such limitation. I had not realised how mobile the Island people were. I assumed participants would be available for all three phases of the multiple interview process, and had also organised my domicile for six ‘less active’ Island winter months when I thought people would be more likely to stay put, rendering access to them straightforward. However, some of the original participant group preferred this period for travel off-Island, with attrition a consequence for rounds two and three. At various points during the months of interviewing, some of my cohort unexpectedly departed the Island for mainland or overseas for business or personal reasons, sometimes for extended periods. Some did not return before the end of fieldwork; others did, but not soon enough to be interviewed all three times, which somewhat limited data. Some transferred in mid-project to off-shore employment, others were at sea or multi-tasking across the Island, beyond telephone range. Fortunately, further interviews would not have brought in fresh information, for the data saturation point, at which no new information appears, had already been reached.

There was another time-related limitation that I could not foresee. As Mason (2005, 7) advises, qualitative researchers should complement a sound research strategy with ‘a sensitivity to the changing contexts and situations in which the research takes place’. National politics unexpectedly changed face shortly after field work was completed. Data collection occurred at a time when the federal Liberal government disowned the concept of global warming and the scientific view of anthropogenic climate change. Barely eight weeks after completion of field work a Labor government took office and strongly promoted policies to manage climate change. Thus interview timing possibly meant that prevailing orthodox political views were prioritised in interviews, while the latter policy may have dominated responses had I interviewed Islanders two months later.

Attrition of time itself was a further limitation during the field-work period. Field time is finite, expensive and precious: reduced time means reduced opportunity to collect rich data, review it, chase up loose ends and progress the project. But however tightly organised fieldwork is in the planning stage, unexpected local factors crop up. The lesson here was that extra time must be set aside to organise oneself once *in situ*.

One unanticipated frustration was communication problems of several types. First, access to potential participants was complicated by out-of-date Internet contact details for some community organisations, thus I had to find a discreet way to trace potential participants that would respect later requirements of anonymity. Second, it cannot be assumed that mailed information sheets and participant copies of interview transcripts will actually be received or, in some cases, remembered. Potential participants may visit central post office

mailboxes irregularly, or be off-island for the long-term, requiring others to be recruited to replace them and inducted as rapidly as possible into the project.

A third communication problem in my remote research setting was the loss of several weeks' field time awaiting arrival of distant mainland authorities to set up initial telephone and Internet communications in my rental accommodation. Valuable field time also vanished while I learned to negotiate the unique weekly Island rhythm. Fruitless phone calls revealed that few participants were at home on Thursdays and Fridays, when most went to town, meaning initial delay in contacting them to set up interview appointments and venues. Island rhythms also reflected busy lives—the researcher needs to discover, then avoid certain peak times in the farm calendar such as calving. Due to their often tight timetables, a number of participants requested follow-up phone reminders of their interview times, thus a log of these people had to be kept and diligently acted upon. Some people simply overlooked appointments, so that alternative times for travel and interview had somehow to be squeezed into a tight schedule.

On occasion, elapsed time was a limiting factor, as when recording observations in public. Field notes, the researcher's invaluable personal text to later consult and analyse (Fontana & Frey 2000; Kearns 2005), present a problem. Open note-taking, or requests to tape-record dialogue in public spaces may inhibit spontaneous conversation and behaviour (Kearns 2005). I dismissed covert taping (Fontana & Frey 2000; Stake 2000) as unethical, agreeing with Stake (2000, 447) that 'scholarly intent ... does not constitute license to invade the privacy of others' or to deceive them. My alternative was

to make notes of spontaneous conversations as soon as possible afterwards, in the privacy of my vehicle, at the same time regretting that the nuances of conversation were ephemeral, and short-term memory fallible. Hence this particular observance of ethical practice is a form of research limitation, but the earning of participant trust is a far more important consideration.

In summary, although the study revealed difficulties in participant anonymity, time constraints and participant attrition, the overall value and productivity of field work far outweighed the costs of such limitations.

## 2 Ways and Means

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*Ettrick River mouth winter tidal pattern, King Island 2007*

*River grit and research data—  
each but scattered specks formless at source,  
ultimately patterned, orderly at journey's end.*

## Unfolding

The objective of this study was to reach conclusions, its methods and strategies being the means to that end (Janesick 2000). In the previous chapter I have located myself in my topic, and detailed the choice of research site and my relationship to it. This present chapter maps the path I constructed to reach my study findings. First I explain my choice of methodology. Next I show how scholarly insights and amassed data informed my research questions, how I generated data and ordered people's perceptions as themes by which to achieve certain insights. I refer to further limits encountered in case study and field work. Finally I reflect upon the matter of research ethics and investigative rigour.

I selected qualitative research methodology for this study. This paradigm accords with my philosophical position—a concern with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced and constituted. As a situated activity, qualitative methodology would place me in the world, and make that world visible to me through its set of interpretive, material practices. My selected set of practices comprised semi-structured individual interviews, observation, and documentary evidence—all sensitive to the social context.

I was at the same time aware that qualitative research often uses some form of quantification (Ellingson 2011; Mason 2005; Miles & Huberman 2008).

However, qualitative methodology does not give central importance to statistical forms of analysis, for example (Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Mason 2005). Further, it is suggested that a great strength of qualitative research is the

fact that ‘it cannot be neatly pigeon-holed and reduced to a simple and prescriptive set of principles’ (Mason 2005, 3). Qualitative methodology is not deductive (Janesick 2000), thus charting of *surface* patterns, trends or correlations, for example, does not have a place in my inquiry. Rather, by using a qualitative approach I anticipated collecting data that emphasised people’s life experiences and their understandings. That approach would also allow me to trace their perception of events, processes and structures in their lives, and to connect such meanings to participants’ social context.

My theoretical discoveries had two sources. There were the documented insights of others, principally scholars of three geographical concepts—place, island, and good governance; and the thus-far unharvested, unstudied perceptions of a specific group of island people. It has been important to focus upon the general characteristics and particular issues of global-local place, modes of governing, and islandness. These fields have provided the conceptual warp of the research into which was then laid the empirical weft of the case study data. While theory does not determine fieldwork experience, it ‘may provide the dictionary with which it is read’ (Van Maanen 1988, 98).

These scholarly insights were signposts along my path into the ‘under-researched, multi-disciplinary field of island governance’ (Warrington & Milne 2007, 397). The process of selecting individual scholarly themes is valid.

According to Glacken (1967, viii), although the researcher ‘does not easily isolate ideas for study out of [a] mass of facts, lore, musings and speculations, there is nothing disembodied about them ... they are living small parts of complex wholes ... given prominence by the attention of the student’.

## Literatures that illuminate the project

### Literatures of place

I have given the notion of place prime epistemological and ontological roles in this research; a position implied rather than stated throughout the work, but nevertheless an important foundational point.

Place is now generally regarded as a valuable social construct (Harvey 1996; Malpas 1999; Massey & Allen 1984; Relph 1976; Stokowski 2002). It ‘shimmers with import’ as a centre of ‘hotly contested struggles for meaning’ (Hay 2004a, 19). Some consider that place cradles and contextualises all human actions including modes of governing across multiple scales (Casey 1997; Relph 1976), yet research about *the* island arguably ‘proceeds with ... little acknowledgement of what is now a vast theoretical literature on the nature of place and place attachment’ (Hay 2006, 31), not to mention that on scale.<sup>4</sup>

On such understanding, I paired the concepts of place and island, a combination that has promised fertile insights. Place theory is a consideration of how humans interact with their world, a reciprocal person-place relationship whose practices define places (McDowell 1999). A foremost interactive practice is people’s modes of governing of-and-in place in response to a location they perceive as the ‘centre of felt value’ where needs are satisfied (Tuan 1977, 5). The significance of these observations is that place, including island place, contextualises efforts to manage global changes at the local scale.

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<sup>4</sup> There is much literature on relational place and scale as relation, for example Amin (2004); Evans et al. (2007); Howitt (1998, 2002); Massey (2004); McGuirk (1997); Meadowcroft (2002); Stratford (2004, 2006b); and Streeten (1993).



From the literature of place I selected a cluster of conceptual currents that might invigorate the study, noting that these themes of place are often complex, and that some flow into and mingle with others.

Sense of place—how people feel and think about place, the nature of attachments they establish with place through experience—earned a central position in this study. I have sought to elucidate the nature of particular interactions between people and place, since the meanings they attach to place would likely shape their governance responses to contemporary global-local change.

Place theory holds that people-place interaction is a reciprocal process.<sup>5</sup> Senses of place will underpin place-making (or place-breaking) decisions and actions. Indeed, nowhere is the sense of place notion more powerfully expressed than in the defence of place response that people deploy when confronted with threats to home, community or favoured public environments (Bartmann 1998; Hay 2002a, 2004a; Raco & Flint 2001; Read 1996; Relph 1976, 1981; Terrell 2004; Young 1995–96). This defensiveness is an impulse wrapped in the Heideggarian notion that responsibilities include defence of home in all its material and intangible particulars. The majority of people will always seek to guard their personal places against threat (Read 1996). Defence of place is a deeply embedded response. It endures from generation to generation into the future. It will always be available in the face of conflict

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<sup>5</sup> People create 'sensescapes', infuse place with meaning and from that created place draw further understandings (Lopez 1986; Relph 1981; Tuan 1977).

even if its presence is not immediately apparent (Young 1995–6).<sup>6</sup> Defence of place outcomes are never certain and invariably they are long-fought campaigns.<sup>7</sup> This notion has been revealed as a powerful characteristic of highly territorial islanders (Terrell 2004), providing a possible clue for my project.

A third motif in place studies is global place, the geographical stadium in which globalisation is played out as ‘the intensification of flows across space and between places’ (Rofe 2009, 296). Numerous geographies describe its contested origins, modes and outcomes.<sup>8</sup> Globalisation is habitually presented as a juggernaut (McCall 1996)—a set of rather indomitable forces now part of the contemporary world. Such a juggernaut is central to my project as the progenitor of the global-local changes that need to be managed in King Island.

Acknowledging that motif, my focus is rather on two aspects of place—one local and one relational (Amin 2004; Howitt 1998, 2002; McGuirk 1997; Meadowcroft 2002; Stratford 2004). I understand local place in terms of locality—a place, district or spot that may have no reference to things or persons in it. I understand relational place to bring into play those things and persons. In terms of islands, relational place is characterised only partly by small size and remoteness; neither can insulate places from global influences

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<sup>6</sup> Young’s study of the Franklin (Tasmania) township indicated that sense of place remained a latent force suffocated by powerful outside interests; ‘nobody complained’ until eventually sense of place surfaced and triumphed (1995–96, 121).

<sup>7</sup> For example, the decade-long, finally successful, citizen resistance to a private developer who attempted to subsume a government-protected wildlife sanctuary in a tidal bay at Lauderdale, Tasmania and construct a canal estate (Stratford 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Examples are the Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology 2009; Baldacchino 2004c; Baldacchino & Greenwood 1998; Bartmann 1998; Clarke 2001; Doyle 2001; Flannery 2005; Hamilton 2007; Hay 2002b; Lovelock 2006, 2009; McDowell 1999; Rofe 2009; Sandercock et al. 1999; and Seis 2005.

and both tend to generate those aforementioned impulses to defend place. Such considerations are essential underpinnings of my study.

In all these respects, the concept of relational place is essential to investigate modes of governing because, as some research suggests, places are more than bounded territories. Rather, they reside in a swirl of social, political, economic and historical contexts and, in reciprocal fashion, shape those contexts (Hubbard et al. 2002). McDowell (1999, 4) offers the useful image of ‘overlapping and intersecting places with multiple and changing boundaries’. So, too, Allen and Massey (1995) promote the idea that the genesis and shape of places are often determined far beyond their territorial boundaries.

Arguably, small<sup>9</sup> and remote King Island is caught up in these swirling and shifting ideas of global-local change and relational place. Consider, for example, the Island’s two mainlands—a dominant yet detached southern jurisdictional parent (Tasmania), and a northern continental federation of which Tasmania is a part. Consider, too, the manner in which change flows to and from it, and influences relational place.

As a substate jurisdiction, King Island is much too distant from its two mainlands to be considered merely ‘off-shore’ or ‘peri-continental’ and decidedly is not an ‘open-ocean’ island as defined by Depraetere and Dahl (2007, 71). In jurisdictional terms, ‘continental island’ erroneously implies primary dependence on continent Australia rather than island-state Tasmania.

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<sup>9</sup> I use relational place as the means to describe King Island as ‘small’ insofar as it is areally dwarfed by Tasmania to the south and the Australian mainland to the north; and is a place where it is claimed that everyone knows everyone else, and where many feel small in the face of change. I note in passing that there is no agreed definition of ‘small island’ among scholars (Azzopardi 2004; Depraetere & Dahl 2007; Hay 2006; Péron 2004).

Some of the influences of King Island's two mainlands manifest in terms of governing, population, land use and tenure and climate change, and are examined in depth in later chapters.

Implicit in notions of sense of place, defence of place, global place and relational place are multiple scales of fluidity and uncertainty (Casey 1997).

Some suggest that place is changed when powerful global influences flow between and among multiple networks and nodes at all scales (Allen & Massey 1995; Hubbard et al. 2002; Stratford 2004). These scales include the local: contemporary societies experience rapid and dramatic global-local change in all spheres of urban and rural life across social, political, economic and historical domains (Hubbard et al. 2002). Some changes are considered particularly threatening, such as global warming, overpopulation and depopulation.

As geographical entities, islands are part of this affected spectrum. The idea of place in flux offers useful insights for this project. On one hand, the arrival of global change may see place either 'invented and reconstituted' or lost (Baldacchino 2005, 35); the information 'explosion' may involve a loss of knowledge, possibly valuable or desirable knowledge (Sandercock et al. 1999). Others signal several other losses from global-local change—evaporation of sense of place where influx of newcomers may gradually dilute local understandings of place, and people may no longer feel included in and responsible for their local area (Hay 2006; McDowell 1999); loss of social cohesion as a result of increasing mobility, where some places may acquire new inhabitants who live together yet at a distance; and loss of stability and

certainty because, although customs and institutional structures clearly persist through time, rapid change is also possible.

In this project, these losses were relevant considerations in terms of the modes of governing deployed and which resulted, deliberately or otherwise, in place-making. Some scholars suggest global forces may imperil place particularity, identity, sense of community, security, even viability (Baldacchino & Greenwood 1998; Clarke 2001; Cresswell 2004; Doyle 2001; Hay 2002b, 2004a, 2004b, 2006; McCall 1996; Sandercock et al. 1999). Some suggest that the outcome is that local places are subsumed in ‘one world of trade, one world of society, even ... one world of culture’ (McCall 1996, 1). However Harvey (1996) offers another plausible and perhaps more positive perspective—that within combined, free-flowing social, cultural, physical and biological processes, the currents do sometimes crystallise into permanences or relatively stable elements within general instability. Harvey adds that these permanences may be reinforced through tradition, a value Relph (1976) too counts as crucial to prevent places becoming ephemeral. Massey and Jess (1995) provide a variant of change: places emerge or ‘become’ according to historical or cultural change, as new elements appear and old ones vanish. Thus understanding of place may vary over time as both place and people’s perceptions of it alter—a relevant shape for my study.

A further pertinent theme concerns place, people and power. People have a ‘natural’ tendency to control and shape place. For centuries, human desire for ‘order and purpose’ has framed place-making (Glacken 1967, 3). Place and territory are fundamental elements of politics—the activity through which

people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live—for the power of the state is expressed through land possession and control (Massey & Allen 1984) and government occurs within cartographically visible boundaries (Stratford 2006a). Individuals or groups invest land with meaning (Dryzek 2005; Hay 2004a; Lopez 1996), directing the actions of society by means of discourses—written or verbal articulations of ideology, power, control, conflict and dominance (Hubbard et al. 2000; Stokowski 2002). The purpose is to promote and foster an individual's or group's beliefs and values in order to advance a preferred 'reality' (Cresswell 2004; Dryzek 1992, 2005; Hajer & Laws 2006; Harvey 1996; Hubbard et al. 2002; Massey & Allen 1984; Stokowski 2002). Further, there is always potential for places to be discursively manipulated for individual and collective ends (Dryzek 1992; Harvey, 1996; Stokowski 2002).

## Literatures of island

Arguably a subset of place is island, the locus of a young discipline, island studies, the 'interdisciplinary study of islands on their own terms' (Baldacchino 2004c, 272). I support the view that 'islands are not just uniform, uncomplicated "little worlds"' (Terrell 2004, 9)—they would appear to be among the most easily defined natural phenomena, yet the more closely one approaches their study, the more indefinable they become.

At the time that this research was in its design stage, from a vast range of topics then being examined (Baldacchino 2004c) I nominated several themes that promised insights into King Islanders' modes of governing to manage

global-local change. The first theme concerned island scale, specifically the ‘size matters’ debate (Anckar 2002; Royle 2001; Skinner 2002b; Villamil 1977; Warrington & Milne 2007). In one view, size is part of a contested set of shared island characteristics—‘islandness’—a compendium which ‘contours and conditions physical and social events in distinct, and distinctly relevant, ways’ (Baldacchino 2004c, 278). However, orthodox approaches to islandness do not properly account for all the characteristics by which an island might be governed, including its institutional structures and mechanisms of social order, and its people’s interactions with them (Warrington & Milne 2007). The ‘size matters’ debate threads through islanders’ modes of governing, their mindsets, practices and outcomes. Therefore I regarded as significant the following possibilities: first, size—and specifically small size—might influence decisions about the degree of autonomy thought appropriate for an island (Watts 2009). A second notion became increasingly relevant to the research proposition as interviewing continued: namely, that some aspects of smallness might influence how and why island people exercise or do not exercise civic powers (Royle 2001). Small scale might be associated with lack of personal anonymity and associated problems of ‘living apart together’ (Hache 1998; Lowenthal 1988; O’Collins 2006; Péron 2004).<sup>10</sup> Suggested difficulties included preferred modes of socialising in small communities that are not conducive to good governance (Bethel 2002; Skinner 2002a, 2002b); the possibility that islanders might be a psychologically distinct ‘race’ compared with mainlanders

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<sup>10</sup> Lowenthal (1988, 8) cites the Faroese who ‘nurture communal harmony by avoiding competing interpretations of events, overt expressions of disagreement, and social criticism that might be divisive. The point is to get along’.

(Cambers 2006; Clarke 2001);<sup>11</sup> and that the intensity of global impacts was heightened within a small, physically contained island area (Hay 2006).

Scholars scrutinise how certain elements might influence Islanders' responses to global change: elements such as relational place (Baldacchino & Milne 2009; McCall 1996; Watts 2009), isolation (Bartmann 1996; Hooper 1973; O'Collins 2006; Stratford 2006b) and its binary, 'connectiveness' (Hay 2006; Hooper 1973; Terrell 2004; Villamil 1977), and double insularity—isolation relative to two mainlands (Hache 1998, 64). These relational threads may constitute especially complex island politics.

At that early point in the research it became necessary to decide whether King Island was indeed 'small' and I deemed it so, relative to its two mainlands—continental island Australia and subnational island Tasmania. I reflected on whether and how smallness and insularity might stimulate specific or unorthodox governance practices and outcomes. For example, what is the geometry of 'twin' mainlands? Is it asymmetrical? Overtly or subtly? Are King Islanders equally conscious of both their mainlands? Where does their allegiance lie—to the jurisdictional or non-jurisdictional mainland? Does the relationship change with time? How transferable is the concept of 'mainland'? Is the term 'mainland' even appropriate? As an adjective, mainland denotes a place that is 'leading, foremost, chief, principal, important, vital, necessary, indispensable, essential' (Christ 1961), relational terms that situate mainlands

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<sup>11</sup> Clarke's (2001, 333) criteria for considering islanders as a 'distinct psychological race' include 'similar tastes and sensibilities ... comfortable with simplicity and silence ... instinctively friendly and welcoming ... would not trade their isolation for a paved road, electricity and more choices in the island store ... as hungry for community as they were for solitude ... confined their wants to 'the natural necessities'.



as principal forces for smaller entities and imply dependence of some type.

How do these aspects apply to modes of governing in King Island?

Apart from the value islands hold as research sites, there are quicksands to be negotiated. Apparent ‘fault lines’ in the theorising of island (Hay 2006)—healthy signs of struggle towards theoretical maturity in a youthful discipline—are visible in conceptual cross-currents and new studies that beckon, such as the notion of archipelago (Stratford et al. 2011). This instability does not reduce the utility of the island setting for research, but confronts the researcher with sometimes difficult choices. Not least is ever shifting, contested language, particularly in terms of key concepts such as ‘island’, ‘small island’,<sup>12</sup> and ‘islandness’ (Azzopardi 2004; Baldacchino 2004c; Bartmann 2006; Hay 2006; Kelman & Gaillard 2009; Péron 2004; Warrington & Milne 2007).

The instability of islandness as a pivotal concept is evident in its passing parade of partial, contingent or limited attributes: vulnerability, resilience, remoteness, peripherality, distance, insularity, isolation, separation, boundedness, connectedness (Armstrong & Stratford 2009; Baldacchino 2004b, 2004c; Hache 1998; Hay 2006; Royle 2001; Warrington & Milne 2007). The value of long-embraced metaphor in island theorising is challenged (Hay 2006; Péron 2004), and others head into uncharted ‘nissosophy, an island theory of knowledge’ (Rasmussen 2008), or the thorny thickets of archipelago

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<sup>12</sup> Defining ‘small island’ became a research limitation—‘drawing the line between something that is too large to be an island, or too small to be an island, ultimately remains an arbitrary decision’ (Depraetere & Dahl 2007, 57). Péron (2004, 328) fashions a fair definition: ‘Small inhabited islands: those specks of land large enough to support permanent residents, but small enough to render to their inhabitants the permanent consciousness of being on an island’. At that point, I decided to refer to King Island as ‘small’, but did so relative to neighbouring continental Australia and subnational island Tasmania (itself not a small island); see chapter three.

(Baldacchino 2012a; Depraetere 2008; Stratford et al. 2011; Warrington & Milne 2007) and accompanying jousts over germinal terminology (Baldacchino 2012a; Hayward 2012). How confidently, therefore, may a researcher traverse this shifting ground, conceptualise ‘islandness’ or ‘isolation’? Insularity, a term more or less discarded in favour of islandness because of ‘negative baggage’ (Baldacchino 2007a, 15), is creeping back into scholarship. By following the approach offered by Armstrong and Stratford (2009, 189) of ‘thinking about “islandness” as a way of being’, I hope to circumvent customary island variables. At the same time, I speculate that people’s ways of being in King Island—in particular their behaviours connected with governing—might be influenced by small scale and implications of the ‘size matters’ island debate (Skinner 2002b, 209).

In all this speculation, I am mindful that Warrington and Milne (2007, 379–80) advise researchers not to categorise islands by theme—for example, convict settlement or treasure island—since the practice may lead to an undesirable one-dimensional viewpoint, reductionism, and sidelining of ‘variegated and more complex’ subject matter present in that site. I am vigilant in avoiding this trap: I amass, describe, analyse and interpret ‘variegated’ and indeed very ‘complex’ perceptions of lived experience, ways of being that incorporate governing to manage global-local change. Having identified four diverse change cases, my consideration of place theory, with its difference-respecting qualities (Hay 2006), provided added insurance against tunnel vision. I have generated data partly by means of conversations with persons across the island community; residents identified multiple governance, socio-economic and

environmental changes—perceptions that are certainly ‘variegated’ and ‘complex’. There is a further caveat that ‘The mere fact that an island is an island does not and cannot account for all the characteristics of its governance’ (Warrington & Milne 2007, 398). I have accommodated that concern by venturing that some of the reasons for apparent shortfalls in governing may be (island) place specific, and other reasons more general.

### Literatures of governance

Governance looms large in the literature as a means to manage global changes that span space and places, and to operate in an interconnected world across environments, societies, and economics (Lemos & Agrawal 2006). It does so in relation to both macro-projects and micro-projects that cover the entire field of social action (after Malpas & Wickham 1997), and tripartite formal relationships among public, private and civil sectors.

I make a clear distinction between governance and good governance. Much attention is paid in the literature to the latter (Graham et al. 2003) and to its specific principles and values. These normative statements have a certain authority, having evolved from the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); they inform my consideration of participant observations of governance.

The notion of good governance entails an ideal, prescriptive understanding of how to govern (that is, how to conduct oneself in ‘micro-projects’ or one’s institution in ‘macro-projects’). It comprises numerous principles, including legitimacy, transparency, responsiveness, accountability, equity, rule of law,

inclusiveness, integrity, effectiveness and efficiency. Such principles provide a guide for those who govern place. Participation by all men and women in decision-making is one of the principles of good governance listed in the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) 'Governance and Sustainable Human Development' from 1997 and, as later chapters illustrate, is of particular salience to this study, not least because of its focus on relational place, the defence of place and allied ideas.

Arguably, adherence to the principles of good governance is urgently needed at all geographical scales—global, national, regional and local—and its advent is affected by 'notions of a borderless world [that] loom large in the modern imagination' (Rofe 2009, 292) even as 'locality has come within global reach' (Baldacchino 2004c, 280). Thus, I have sought to identify perspectives held by members of one 'local' island community, and to appreciate how their modes of governing, such as participatory decision-making, enable management of change at multiple scales.

The local scale is significant as a locus of stimulating studies of 'new choreographies of governance' (Swyngedouw 2005, 2003). The literature reveals shortcomings in local (including municipal) democratic processes, particularly those highlighting asymmetries in civic engagement to manage change.<sup>13</sup> In this context, Allen (2004) observes that governing is stereotyped

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<sup>13</sup> Geddes (2005, 19) notes that 'the trend from (local) government to (local) governance seems now to be a fact of life for most commentators.' There is an extensive literature on the transition in Western democracies from forms of centralised 'government' to 'new', more inclusive modes of 'governance' (see, for example, Amaladas & Joseph 2005; Bevir et al. 2003; Dean 1999; Eckersley 1995; Graham et al. 2003; Hubbard et al. 2002; Mol & Van Den Burg 2004; Porter 2002; Rose 2000; Rydin 2003; Rydin & Pennington 2000; Smyth et al. 2005; Swyngedouw 2005; Verspaandonk 2001).

as either centralised or distributed, as concentrated or diffuse, when the realities are far more complex. Nevertheless, for my understanding of change processes on King Island, it is valuable knowing that the tendency to oversimplify governing exists.

Irrespective of the tensions implicit in the ideal/real binary noted above, important to my project is that for political, economic, social, environmental and administrative purposes decision-makers now reside in a union of state, civil society and market (Campbell 2006; Lemos & Agrawal 2006; Swyngedouw 2005). Importantly, citizens have been accorded a stronger voice in decision-making through governance, while maintaining their rights to limited engagement in government, most typically via suffrage.

Citizen participation in governing attracts much interest in the literature. Sandercock (1998) points out that the underlying principles of governance are meant to ensure that normally silent voices are heard and included in whatever decisions follow. Early in the research I speculated on the extent to which this principle of inclusiveness would be a crucial criterion to assess how King Islanders manage change across scales. Therefore, I read about numerous mechanisms of governing (Dean 1999); participatory forms of local governance including deliberative democracy (Davies et al. 2003; Dryzek 1992; Jacobs 1995; Young 1999); the importance of reciprocity and trust within government institutions (Kernaghan 2003); and inter-institutional dialogue (Reddel 2005). That work then influenced how, in later chapters, I have detailed modes of participation in decision-making, central to the research questions posed.

The literature also offered numerous analyses of the shortcomings of governance as a tool to manage change. Governance was seen to be flawed by the idealism implicit in the principles that inform it, its presupposing a ‘better world, society, way of doing things, or way of living’ but forever ‘fundamentally utopian’ (Dean 1999, 33). Governance was also adjudged ‘fragile, a partial, a contested activity ... always blind to the inevitable failure to which it is destined’ (Malpas & Wickham 1997, 105). There were claims that the much-lauded participatory initiatives of new governance failed to meet governance challenges (Crowley & Coffey 2007); that the ‘new constellations of governance’ did not uphold democratic values (Stoker 2006; Swyngedouw 2005, 1999); and that, however small, communities tend toward social monopolies, to be elite dominated (Eckersley 1996; Villamil 1977) and marked by uneven power relations (McGuirk 2001). Further, it was considered difficult to achieve collective decisions from multiple, competing interests and opinions (Flyvbjerg 1998; Kernaghan 2003; McGuirk 2001; Stoker 2006) so that ‘there is no gainsaying which group is right and which should have its ends served’ (Rittel & Webber 1973, 169).

However, I looked beyond these assertions of governance failure to reflect upon more hopeful, productive modes of governing that decision-makers might utilise in future change management (for example, Dean 1999; Fuller 2009; Lemos & Agrawal 2006; McGuirk 2001; Péron 2004; Stoker 2006; Swyngedouw 2005). In particular, I linked such ideas with specific research for *island* governance (for example Baldacchino & Milne 2009; O’Collins 2006; Péron 2004; Royle 2001; Watts 2009) and detected optimism that subnational island jurisdictions

‘are the rich breeding grounds for unique adaptations of governance in the modern world’ (Baldacchino & Milne 2009, 5).

## The case study

What directed the choice of a single island case study? The case study is a common tool of qualitative research (Stake 2000; Yin 2003) that permits a researcher to unfold people’s perceptions about management of global-local change in their location. Sometimes—if trust is strong—this tool permits a scholar to hear and understand people’s innermost beliefs, thoughts, values and feelings, otherwise neither visible nor accessible. These understandings were of prime importance to the consideration of modes of governing for the four change cases in King Island. Bryden (2009, 60) reflects that research in rural areas ‘is a joint product with our subjects: co-operatives, corporate bodies, government, politicians, civil society organisations, real people’. Like Bryden, I sought to involve participants from all walks of life because decision-making for new governance is conceived as community-wide, not simply the business of institutional or professional personnel. In particular, I wished to engage directly with the range of King Island citizens whose privilege within new governance is to contribute to the design, decision-making and delivery of governance of place, part of which increasingly involves decision-making for global-local place change.

In writing by Terrell (2004, 14) I found that ‘When we think about islands and islanders, we have got to see them for what they are, not for what we think they are’. A further encouragement was the assertion that knowledges are produced

in various locations by interactions between ‘knower’ and researcher—  
‘situated agent’ and ‘interpretive theorist’ (Kogler 1996, 4). Focus ‘in some  
depth in one place’ (Castree 2005, 541) positioned me to seek what was both  
distinctive and commonplace about the case, and to be alert to the possibility  
that final (if always contingent) conclusions might illuminate ‘something of the  
uncommon’ (Stake 2000, 438). In this sense, I came to appreciate that the case  
study is an open-ended research process: the researcher does not simply re-  
present a phenomenon as pure description (Cook 2005) but adheres to  
principles of qualitative investigation to produce explanations or arguments  
(Mason 2005).

The King Island case and its capacity to provide insights about modes of  
governing in relation to global-local change is unique but not singular (Castree  
2005; see also Baldacchino et al. 2009; Clarke 2001; Royle 2001). For this  
reason, case studies have epistemological value as examples of more general  
processes that may be theorised (Bradshaw & Stratford 2005; Haraway 1991),  
and theories that may be refined (Stake 2000).

In exploring the most productive ways to carry out case research, I shaped  
‘personal, particularised experience’ (Stake 2000, 449) by means of an  
embedded single case design. I chose an embedded design as superior to an  
holistic approach where, according to Yin (2003), the entire nature of the study  
may shift and evidence may tend to address unintended research questions.  
Notwithstanding, there were also traps with the embedded single case design,  
as I later show. I heeded advice by Geertz (1973, 311) to seek balance and  
frame an analysis of meaning that was circumstantial enough to be convincing,



yet sufficiently abstract to advance theory: ‘These are equal needs: choose one at the expense of the other and you get blank descriptivism or vacant generality’.

## Of ethics

I followed selection of a single case study with its organisation, which included project approval prior to data collection.

Institutional responsibilities as researcher properly involve a strict code of ethics and general principles of ethical engagement with individuals and community (Stake 2000). The Australian Government (2007a) requires researchers to apply for clearance to undertake research involving people. The process evaluates a project’s methodological merit and provisions for data storage, funding, recruitment of study participants, conditions of anonymity and confidentiality as mentioned above, and assessments of various forms of risk. These I provided to the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network. The committee required copies of various documents: a letter of introduction and project information sheet for each participant (Appendix 1.1); informed consent form (Appendix 1.2); copies of research documents, including the transcript of a telephone preamble to be used when follow-up contact was made (Appendix 1.3), and lists of interview question themes. The project application, tendered on 23 March 2007, was promptly approved two days later, after which I was free to commence field work. I have been required to provide the Ethics Committee with annual progress reports of the project [Ethics H0009315] and will submit a final report at the end of examination.

Apart from meeting the requirements of university research authorities, I derived further insights on ethics from field work literature (Fontana & Frey 2000; Glesne 2006; Mason 2005; Spradley 1980; Stake 2000; Thomas 1993; Winchester 1996). I read of principles involved when engaging participants, ‘human beings with problems, concerns, and interests’, and the use of the interview, ‘a powerful tool for invading other people’s way of life’ (Spradley 1980, 22). I noted concerns about participants whose values do not necessarily coincide with those of the researcher (Spradley 1980) and which require the researcher’s respect and ‘constant input from conscience’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2011, 247). Forewarned by Winchester (1996), I realised that the rigidly circumscribed ethics procedures I was subject to actually provided less than total control over some aspects of the interview process and experiences in the field, as I have noted in the previous chapter.

## In the field

Next, I entered the King Island community and introduced the project to Islanders. How this task was accomplished was crucial for subsequent success (Fontana & Frey 2000; Kearns 2005; Ostrander 1995). I identified an Island leader who could initiate contact with others. My supervisor, as chief investigator<sup>14</sup>, wrote in September 2006 to that person. She introduced and described my intended project as of interest, importance and value to King Islanders, and invited additional input into its conduct, which was welcomed by that community leader.

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<sup>14</sup> It is stipulated that the Chief Investigator is ‘the researcher with ultimate responsibility for the project’ and ‘may not be a student’ (Human Research Ethics Committee [Tasmania] Network 2013, 1).

Acceptance of the project was followed by two short reconnaissance visits (Kearns 2005) to King Island, the first with my supervisor, during which time we met a small number of key Islanders and discussed the study. On the second visit, with my husband<sup>15</sup> I arranged logistics for an extended stay. We then became local citizens for six months, renting a cottage in the main settlement, updating our electoral status to that of local residents, and enrolled as borrowers at the local library. We wished to make ourselves useful to the community. My husband contributed much time and expertise to community activities: an Island emergency service, State Government environmental field work, bush and coastal observations for the King Island ornithological database, and regularly shared his aero-modelling skills and materials with an Island youth group. At first I respectfully stayed on the fringes of places and events, mingling but ‘within a frame of guarded intimacy’ (Glesne 2006, 73) in order to retain ‘objectivity’. As I became familiar with the community, this approach relaxed and the richness of Island life became apparent. During my residence I met a cross-section of Islanders at community activities such as the dawn and morning Anzac Day observances and community breakfast, weekend football matches, community meetings, barbecues, fairs, dinners and other social events; shopped at supermarkets, bought crockery and saucepans, newspapers, posted mail, purchased fuel for my vehicle; and explored the main settlement. Thus I settled gradually, quietly into the community, researcher-as-

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<sup>15</sup> I am a retired teacher of history and geography. My husband was my research assistant, also a retired teacher, and together we lived on the Island for six months. Given our seniority in age, his assistance was deemed highly appropriate by my supervisor and the School’s Graduate Research Coordinator.

observer, to understand the contexts of everyday life (Dawson 2002; Kearns 2005) and generate primary data.

For six late autumn, winter and early spring months of 2007 I learned from the locals as much as possible (Dawson 2002; Glesne 2006; Spradley 1980; Vidich & Lyman 2000). I used a multi-method approach throughout the field period—a spread of community observation, local documentary evidence, and individual participant interviews. That approach was designed to ensure research rigour by providing a form of cross-checking, so achieving broader and often better outcomes (Fontana & Frey 2000, 668; also Mason 2005; Winchester 1996). For example, participant perceptions of governing practices shared in interviews could be supported or challenged by my own community observations, a process that encouraged reflection and invited further enquiry. The three-way cross-check of community observations, documentary records and participant perceptions was invaluable, made possible by the decision to live on-island rather than fly in and fly out after a short period of engagement—a practice that for various reasons, the constraints of research funding not least among them, is reported to happen all too often in qualitative research (Cheek 2011).

### Community observer

Community observation was my second method of data generation. I structured my time to ensure that I observed and learned about Islanders' everyday worlds. I appreciated Mason's (2005, 90) caution that 'Simply hanging around in an unfocused way can be notoriously time consuming, unproductive'. A

prime goal was to understand the various faces of local governing, thus I first sought instances of governing practices and citizen concerns about Island changes. When referring to local government I distinguish between ‘council’ and ‘Councillors’. ‘Council’ means the King Island Council, a body corporate and creature of the Tasmanian Local Government Act 1993. As presently constituted, council includes professional personnel and elected representatives, of whom the latter are referred to as ‘Councillors’; these are the nine resident Islanders elected by rate payers to represent their interests and also the interests of other residents—a matter not always understood or appreciated by rate payers.

To comprehend local government and its forms of conduct, during my stay I attended all King Island Council monthly public meetings at the Council Chambers in Currie, a council extraordinary general meeting to consider a contested development application, and two public meetings to foster citizen awareness of climate change. Further afield, I explored the level of community compliance with council’s land use regulations for coastal scrub preservation. I also visited coastal areas approved for development through the local planning scheme, and inspected award-winning council waste management initiatives.

To find how multi-tiered governing operated in a small Island, I noted interactions among the Island and the Australian and Tasmanian Governments. These connections were visible in legislative and on-ground arrangements for protected areas, the coastal margin, educational and medical provisions, the

Port Authority and a general Service Tasmania<sup>16</sup> community support office. Links with the Australian Government and the Cradle Coast Authority (CCA)<sup>17</sup> were visible in natural resource management activities, freight equalisation arrangements, the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, and umbrella legislation such as the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999—the Australian Government’s central piece of environmental legislation to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places. The Australian Government was also represented on each Anzac Day by two armed service personnel to honour King Islanders killed in past wars. All such information complemented the material I gathered in interviews.

I also observed how people responded as citizens. I witnessed their various reactions to planning activities, including a development application for a residence beside the Island’s most revered icon, the Cape Wickham Lighthouse. I noted the degrees of civic interest in monthly council meetings, community meetings for natural resource management and climate change, and multi-agency fire-fighting planning on the heels of recent major wildfire. Insights and patterns emerged from these community observations, as did certain silences, later described, which suggested topics for interviews. Six months’ community observation allowed me to link views obtained in

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<sup>16</sup> Service Tasmania provides citizens with one-stop access to Tasmanian Government transactions, services and information, and to a number of local, state and federal government agencies.

<sup>17</sup> The Cradle Coast Authority is a regional cooperative organisation comprising the nine local governments of north-west Tasmania. Its primary foci include regional economic development, tourism and natural resource management.

individual interviews with my accumulating store of insights obtained in the broader community, and from the literature.

Apart from observing expressions of governing, I also absorbed the more general world of Island society. Like Madriz (2000), I spent time in Islanders' familiar settings and public spaces: the library, cafés, supermarkets, harbour, port, cultural centre, town beach, post office, and main street. Various community events often supported points made in interviews. As mentioned above, one example was the winter weekend football matches played in the towns of Currie and Grassy. For this traditional competition Islanders could now field only three teams, instead of four as in past years, which confirmed both population decline and its social impact, themes raised in participant interviews. Similarly, I attended a public exhibition by local artists. There I saw a striking representation of a solitary white-timbered rural church, now marooned in a sea of pastureland, but which once offered solace to a sizeable farming settlement—in my view, another concrete testament to population loss. I also noted a particular council representative 'down the street', invariably engaged in conversation with small groups of Islanders, which conflicted with some participants' perceptions of the approachability and accessibility of their representatives. I set aside time to observe further social activities. Among them were the Anzac Day remembrance services and community breakfast at the Golf Club, an annual produce and craft market in the settlement of Grassy, and a public post-wildfire debriefing and barbecue. These and other such occasions provided valuable data and insights of the social world of the Island.

In addition to planned, organised community observations there were a cluster of unanticipated, unpremeditated opportunities. One such occurred at the Island airport on the morning following my arrival. Cargo weight limitations for the small eight-seat aeroplane from the Tasmanian mainland meant my luggage had to be flown in and collected the following day. As I waited for it in the Island's small airport reception area, an elderly Islander seated beside me explained to companions that this moment meant farewell after a life lived on the Island—in my view, a tangible sign of ageing, emigrating Islanders that tallied later on with interview data for population decline. I gained a second spontaneous community insight when I had to seek hospital treatment. Clients filled the tiny waiting room, sharing views with the whole group about the recent local drought, shortage of water and fodder for cattle, and 'clean coal'. These comments gave further substance to participants' concerns about fresh water availability and, more generally, climate change.

Use of these adventitious observations should not be construed as reports of mere gossip. The synonyms for 'gossip' include 'scandal', 'slander', 'rumour', and 'hearsay' (Waite 2006, 359). 'Gossip' means '*idle* talk especially about the affairs *of others*' (Delbridge et al. 1982, 769; emphasis added). In turn, '*idle talk*' denotes 'of no real worth, importance, or significance' (Delbridge et al. 1982, 881). In the airport case, rather than being 'idle', I considered the departing resident's comment heartfelt, and to refer to the speaker alone and to no other. Further, it would be presumptuous to claim that this Islander's farewells lacked 'worth, importance or significance' either personally or for companions. Similarly in the hospital observation, the talk did not touch upon



the personal affairs of others, and there was no reason to judge the views of those present as superficial, ‘of no significance’. I endorse the view of Angrosino and Mays de Pérez (2000) that it is the *quality* of what is recorded that becomes the measure of usable observation data. Certainly, venues where people are closely grouped and talk among themselves in the hearing of others are not devoid of quality data. In like manner, Madriz (2000) usefully observed interactions in a senior citizens’ dining room, a church basement, a classroom—public gathering spaces, as were my airport and hospital cases. As Mason (2005, 91) explains, what researchers see will be shaped by ‘how, where and in what ways we look’—in my case the ‘how’ included both planned and adventitious observation of social settings and behaviours which imparted quality insights of the Island people and their place.

### Documentary evidence

A third qualitative inquiry tool involved location of materials, the fabric of people’s life experiences, that corroborated or contested the outcomes of my other research tools—community observation and participant conversations, and inspired further questions about governing practices in King Island. I found such material in Island places and further afield, and amassed it in two phases.

The first phase, prior to fieldwork, involved documentary analysis since ‘to understand a phenomenon, you need to know its history’ (Glesne 2006, 65). Thus, before travelling to the Island I spent a number of weeks in the state capital Hobart reading all editions of The King Island Courier published weekly in the two years preceding the study. That immersion in the content of

the Island's local paper ensured a thorough working knowledge of context. I also interrogated Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data for King Island and scrutinised tattered, well-thumbed antique survey maps that located Island timber, fresh water and promising soils. I consulted Tasmanian Government management prescriptions for the Island's pre-eminent protected area and an endemic mammal now deemed a pest species. I accessed documents available on the King Island Council website, such as the local government planning scheme, 2003 partnership agreement with the Tasmanian Government, the council's obligatory code of conduct, its meeting minutes, annual reports and newsletters to residents.

I consulted other documents throughout my stay on the Island. The King Island museum held copies of local government meeting minutes, historical photographs, newspapers and letters which might support, extend and challenge my perceptions of modes of governing on the Island. Four residents volunteered Islander-authored histories and copies of institutional documents. In the public library and news agency I found copies of a burgeoning Island literature of descriptive works, histories and memoirs. At the office of the King Island Natural Resource Management Group (KINRMG) I accessed several scientific texts of Island flora and fauna written and published by the group, partnered by geological, ornithological and native vegetation surveys. I identified numerous discourses embedded in public texts such as local government documents that sought to create community commitment to a cultural code known as The King Island Way.

Plentiful examples of material culture—physical objects and spaces that people use to define their culture—were also available for consideration. A quilted synthesis of the Island’s history invited analysis, as did the 1974 King Island coat of arms and various renditions of it, and an airport-based representation of the present-day assemblage of native flora and fauna. In the Cultural Centre were numerous artistic interpretations of King Island (Jones 2009). Further, in the main street, imposing elderly non-native pine trees and new non-indigenous animal-themed seats—which some might read as statements of the community’s natural values priorities—kept company with an aged anchor and handsome metal plaque in honour of past lighthouse superintendents, appropriately sited where the road from the lighthouse enters the main town. The significance of the sea in Island life was inescapable: the commitment of other eminent citizen-mariners is commemorated in the Island’s two main settlements, Currie and Grassy, as is Currie’s own lengthy service as main Island port until eventually superseded by the development of Grassy Port.

### Conversations with citizens

Extensive use was made of the formal interview, the most common form of which ‘involves individual, face-to-face verbal exchange’ (Fontana & Frey 2000, 645). I selected the semi-structured form, an approach compatible with my ontological view that King Island is not a single entity but is constituted of many realities of place and time, created and situated in the minds of countless persons.

I planned to interact with King Islanders through question-directed conversation. This dialogue would emphasise ‘depth, nuance, complexity and roundness in data’ (Mason 2005, 65) and provide diverse meaning, opinion and experiences (Dunn 2005). Such an approach contrasts with broad surveys of surface patterns that other methods such as questionnaires might provide. In addition, the scholarship of Iris Marion Young (1996) had inspired me to research the focus group interview. According to Fontana and Frey (2000, 651), this technique varies considerably in structure and operation as it ‘straddles the line between formal and informal interviewing’. It is increasingly used as a major tool to research social issues (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis 2011; Madriz 2000).

What were the benefits in organising multiple groups of perhaps five to twelve King Islanders to share ideas and experiences? A facilitator would direct the inquiry and the interaction among participants; with participant permission such discussions might be tape-recorded and the data later transcribed for analysis. Compared with the individual interview, focus groups allow not one but two interactions: vertical interaction between researcher (facilitator) and participant, and horizontal interaction among group members, offering the possibility of high quality data (Madriz 2000).

Focus groups are thought stimulating for participants, aid recall, and offer a flexible format (Fontana & Frey 2000). However, it seemed possible that certain limitations might cancel apparent benefits, or even that the individual interview method might also offer some of those benefits. For example, one asserted strength of the focus group method was a ‘softening’ of the vertical

interaction between researcher and group members (rather than the researcher taking the ‘command role’ as in the individual interview), a difference considered to free the expression of ideas. However, past field work convinced me that individual interviews also achieve free expression, provided the researcher builds effective rapport and earns participant trust (Janesick 2000). Further, I had doubts about the focus group’s paired vertical-horizontal characteristic: was it not possible that the horizontal aspect might operate *adversely* upon focus group members? For example, rather than encouraging exchange of views, horizontality might see some members less involved than others in discussion, so reducing the method’s data-collection value. Some participants might feel ill-at-ease, especially when called upon to voice their ideas in front of others; some might not wish to disagree with other group members, and thus not volunteer their thoughts; some might feel pressured to agree with others; some might doubt the acceptability of their opinions, even if the facilitator assured the group there were no right or wrong answers (Madriz 2000). Fontana and Frey (2000) report several distinct focus group problems not found in the individual interview: the facilitator must prevent domination by one person or a small coalition; must encourage recalcitrant members to contribute; and must obtain responses from the entire group to ensure fullest coverage of the topic.

In addition, I had to consider the possibility of participant attrition, a potential trap in choosing focus groups. Some studies (for example Madriz 2000) report a high rate of non-attendance in focus groups: a commitment to participate may be given but not honoured later on. Last-minute family or other emergencies

might force the researcher to organise replacement focus groups, potentially a major complication, given a researcher's tight schedule and finite time for field work. That is not to say that the individual interview method is free from such a hazard; however, in that method, if attrition occurs in the *initial* round of a multiple-round interviewing format, it would be rather less time-consuming to recruit an *individual* replacement than a segment of a group, especially if homogeneity of members was part of the design, with members of discrete groups matched according to age, gender or other such characteristics.

A final consideration regarding use of the focus group was the question of how to provide for participant anonymity and confidentiality (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis 2011). As discussed previously, island literature indicates that island people highly value their anonymity. Such anonymity could be best (though, admittedly, not entirely) accounted for if I selected the individual interview format to generate data, rather than a focus group setting where responsibility for a commitment to confidentiality is more widely spread. I considered it unrealistic to expect focus group members not to disclose members' identities or the content of their discourse.

Thus I decided to devote my available field time to individuals rather than focus groups. However, I do not infer that semi-structured interviewing is free from limitations.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Among numerous constraints identified by scholars, Mason (2005, 64) considers that a fundamental weakness is that 'the interview method is heavily dependent on people's capacities to verbalise, interact, conceptualise and remember' (see also Study limitations in chapter one).

The interview remains a most productive route to participant values, meanings and actions of everyday life (Jacobs 1999) and I used it with confidence.

Conduct of my interviews required certain groundwork. Before taking up residence on the Island I recruited project participants whom I located via the council website (King Island Council 2006), which listed Island organisations and office-bearers. I used criterion sampling to locate the majority. I required participants to be current King Island residents, have present or past involvement in municipal, Tasmanian or Australian Government, business or service sectors, or be citizens interested in Island issues. In all, I enrolled 31 participants. They represented all community spheres—economic, social, political and environmental. All were adults, 12 women and 19 men. In age they ranged from approximately the thirties to 70 plus years. I did not target a particular range of ages or consciously omit people in early adulthood—as a result of snowball sampling I had visited the workplace of a potential young adult recruit, but was told that person had left the Island for an indeterminate time to attend to personal matters. Rather I considered that the asymmetrical age structure of my eventual participant cohort mirrored King Island’s skewed demographic profile, where nearly three-quarters (71 percent) of King Islanders were aged 25 years or more in 2007.<sup>19</sup> It is possible that the council list of organisations that I had drawn on for potential participants also echoed this pattern.

I initially recruited participants before I went to the Island. By March 2007, I had sent information sheets and introductory letters to 19 potential participants

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<sup>19</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011)

before arriving in the Island. To gain as wide participation as possible, when later on the Island I recruited eight more people through opportunistic sampling (Bradshaw & Stratford 2005) including impromptu conversation in the course of daily life and at community events. A final four were recruited by snowball sampling (Thomas 1995); during the course of round one interviews I asked already-recruited participants if there was someone else I should speak to, and followed up a number of recommendations.

My original aim was to enrol as many Islanders as possible. However, I heeded Bradshaw and Stratford's (2005) observation that in qualitative research the number of people interviewed is less important than the quality of those involved. Thus in all I enrolled 31 participants who represented all community spheres—economic, social, political and environmental. Many had very varied life experiences, working or holding various offices through time and across the range of community activity.

I arrived in King Island on 14 April 2007 and on 27 April arranged by telephone the venues and interview times for initial interviews, the first occurring on 30 April. To fulfil ethics requirements, at their initial interview all participants signed an informed consent form that detailed regimes for privacy and protection from harm. Participants were asked if they had additional questions, and were advised of their right to terminate participation at any time. I have referred throughout to those interviewed simply as Participant, followed by a numeral to indicate position in the interviewing sequence, for example Participant 26 was twenty-sixth of 31 spoken with in the first set of interviews. Present on the Island for six months, I used five, between May and September



2007, to interview people in their workplaces, homes, community venues or, as a last resort, my own home, for a total of three rounds of interviews. Each conversation was tape-recorded with participant consent, and lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. Over the half-year of interviewing, participant attrition occurred in the second and third interview rounds, which I later refer to.

I organised three distinct interview rounds—multiple, sometimes lengthy sessions (Fontana & Frey 2000). Purpose and questions posed varied from round to round. In May 2007, first round investigation directly addressed the research question ‘What governance challenges are identified by the people of King Island?’ I asked 31 participants to identify Island matters that concerned them. First there were introductory questions to establish trust and rapport, two factors that contribute to a successful interview (Healey & Rawlinson 1993), and other questions to help me understand what it meant to be a King Islander. I used the notion of quality of life, a central construct within many disciplines (Australian Centre on Quality of Life 2008). Quality of life refers to how people feel about life as well as to the material conditions in which they live. I considered it possible that governance issues—and modes of governing—my foci here, would surface in everyday life satisfactions or discontents. My investigative framework was the SWOT Analysis: strengths, defined as factors that enhanced quality of life; weaknesses, impediments to Islanders’ wellbeing; opportunities for achieving a satisfactory quality of life; and threats, challenges or risks to Islanders’ welfare.<sup>20</sup> As interviews progressed, I included questions

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<sup>20</sup> The paradoxical design of the SWOT analysis, its juxtaposition of internal and external values, and positives and negatives, facilitates clarity and sharpens insight, for example, where a weakness may be the opposite expression of a strength; perceptions of strength and weakness

relating to comments made in preceding interviews. The first round brought forth valuable themes of global-local change that would increasingly confront governance in King Island. How the themes became apparent I explain later in the chapter.

The conduct of interview rounds two and three differed from the first round. In round two I interviewed fewer people, 21 Islanders compared with the original 31. Participant attrition occurred for various reasons, some unclear. Three of the original participants, all in managerial positions, gave hour-long round one interviews but declined to commit further to the project, as was their right, spelled out in the statement of informed consent. One of the three suggested I approach the Hobart headquarters of the enterprise for any further information and gave me contact details; I made three fruitless attempts by telephone to contact the second participant to arrange a follow-up interview; the third person, leaving the Island for business, declined to make a further appointment and offered no reason. Each of the three had granted long initial interviews; in addition, one provided a guided tour of his facility, and another had travelled some distance from his workplace for our interview, thus it seemed possible that, as managers, they felt their time was scarce. I also thought it possible, when I asked if we could later follow up points made in their interviews, that they considered they had nothing further to discuss with me. Of the others, one departed to travel; one moved out of easy reach due to employment; yet another transferred to a post in mainland Tasmania; four others exhausted their

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involve no absolutes, thus may be simultaneously valid, or may follow one upon the other, thus productively expanding analysis. Outcomes are a singular interpretation.

contributions as the data saturation point, at which no new information appeared in the data, had been reached.

Once preliminary analysis had led me to identify as particularly salient the four change cases that form central foci of the research, in round two the way was clear to explore how people understood those cases. Unlike my approach to round one interviews, questions sought a deeper explanation of what had been said in each participant's initial interview. I aimed to link questions more closely to participants' community roles, to draw upon their rich Island experiences.

I then moved to the final round of interviews. In addition to discussing current modes of governing, I explored participants' thoughts about future paths by which they might manage change. In round three, I again spoke to fewer people than in the previous round: 16 participants, five less than the 21 in the previous round. Attrition in that round arose from two participants being off-island at the time of the final round, and three having exhausted their contributions. In all, I conducted 68 individual interviews in three rounds with 31, 21 and 16 participants respectively.

During June 2007, I transcribed all 31 round one interview tapes. I mailed transcription copies to participants with a covering letter asking that I be notified if alterations were considered necessary. Two participants requested changes, one the deletion of politically inexpedient comments and the second in regard to a matter of fact and interpretation. The balance of interviews, those conducted in rounds two and three, numbered a further 37 audio-tapes. I

transcribed them between 1 and 20 December 2007 and 2 January and 5 February 2008, a lengthy process. As required by the ethics process, I mailed copies of these transcripts to all participants for verification. At that point I also mailed or emailed additional questions to some participants, to fill information gaps I discovered at the conclusion of round three interviews.

## Seeking meaning

The making of meaning actually began during the data collection phase, ‘for data collection itself is an interpretive process’ (Ezzy 2002, 78). As my awareness of the local accelerated, interesting issues surfaced and caught my attention during early interviews, community observations and documentary searches. Once interviews were completed, data were scrutinised by means of a sequence of categorisation, description, analysis, synthesis and interpretation of the meaning of the data. Use of all steps but the first is demonstrated in each following chapter. In this present chapter I describe how I evaluated and organised participant material as themes which would later ‘bring out’ my dominant concern, my proposition (Stake 2000, 440).

It became apparent that interpretation of others’ understandings would not be a straightforward task. One complication was the need for selectivity, for the production of knowledge is always a selective and partial process (Sundberg 2003). As Stake (2000, 441) points out,

what is necessary for an understanding of the case will be decided by the researcher ... many a researcher would like to tell the whole

story but of course cannot [because of a] strong obligation to winnow and consolidate ... less will be reported than was learned.

Thus it is researchers who decide whose voices they will or will not represent (Fontana & Frey 2000). I had decided that specific phenomena would be my focus—issues that participants regarded as of major importance to their quality of life. However, such issues had to satisfy the requirements of my research question and proposition: they had to be examples of global-local change, and to lie within the decision-making function of local government—issues that would allow me to develop insights around the key research questions I had posed (Mason 2005). As it was, a number of major quality of life issues that concerned participants lay outside these criteria: for example, high costs of travel, living and freight; difficult access to and from the Island; and poor communications were not selected, as I later detail.

I was aware of problems of interpretation of participant understandings. For example, my close readings of interview transcripts were mediating knowledge and experience that were others' expressions of self-understanding at a moment in time and place. The researcher can merely produce from such interviews a representation of people's understandings: the interviewer is one place removed from the participant's *interpretation*, and thus two places removed from the participant's actual *experiences*. Important here is scrupulous attention to detail and later to similar or contrasting insights in the literature. The only practical way to manage this problem of representation was to frequently revisit the audiotapes in conjunction with the interview transcripts. Yet in that process, selectivity and representation were potential threats to

credibility, thus it was critical to ensure rigour in the initial categorisation process, the basis of all subsequent project meaning. Therefore I sought to recognise both what was represented and how/why it was represented (Fontana & Frey 2000).

I was aware of further watch points when reading social texts: potential differences between public and private accounts (Jacobs 1999; Winchester 1996); whether personal agendas advanced by some members of the community represented a majority community view (O'Collins 2006); possible significance of silences (Ezzy 2002; Winchester 1996) and recognition of which individual and composite community voices were heard, silent, or silenced (Van Maanen 1988). Further concerns about the data included my positionality in relation to my participants. I was an outsider, seemingly elderly, married, female, from an academic institution. My field work, conducted in an unfamiliar location, required me to earn the trust and respect of people who were by contrast insiders, both younger and older than me, of varying marital status, both female and male, with diverse occupations and backgrounds, and some of whom belonged to social and political elites. I was aware that the multiplicity of participant identities would introduce unequal power levels, and possibly issues of gender relations, into interviews (Winchester 1996). If I was not alert to these possibilities, views of the more powerful might swamp some participants' understandings and come to drive data collection, direction and outcomes of the research. One way in which I sought to minimise such risks was to treat perceptions of government officials and of ordinary citizens as distinct units when analysing each change case.

Also essential was reflection as to how I related to individual participants, how appropriate were those interactions, and how intrusive were any personal prejudices.

### Making sense of round one material

It became difficult to maintain focus and perspective amid the mass of detail.<sup>21</sup>

I found it useful to visualise the project as a pyramid: at the apex my questions awaited confirmation, challenge, or extension by some alternative, more relevant set of explanations (Yin 2003). I ‘scaled’ the pyramid to revisit those questions, then returned to the base with my direction reinforced. It was necessary to repeat this process numerous times. Between May and July 2008 I read all first round transcripts closely and frequently for participant ‘interpretations and understandings’ (Mason 2005, 19). I sought ‘patterns of data’ (Stake 2000, 448), the shapes of participant understandings, the project’s analytical keynotes carried in the beliefs, values, feelings and emotions of 31 first interview round transcripts.

I did not use computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), those ‘comprehensive, feature-laden tools of immense value to many in the qualitative research world’ (Davidson & di Gregorio 2011, 627). Such tools help the researcher analyse qualitative data but leave the researcher to perform the ultimate analysis (Weitzman 2000). Some scholars had reported in 2000 that such technology was becoming relatively commonplace in qualitative

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<sup>21</sup> Qualitative research produces masses of data in forms that are difficult to interpret or digest all at once—an increasing mountain of interview transcripts, hours of audiotapes, pages of observation, notes, diagrams, photographs, maps, documents, newspaper clippings, hunches (Cope 2005; Fontana & Frey 2000; Mason 2005).

research, but eleven years later they discovered that these tools were still only used by ‘a small minority of qualitative researchers ... the major initiatives in qualitative inquiry have not taken up these technologies’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2011, 565-6). I wondered whether this statement might mean that researchers had encountered pitfalls in such programs. However I agreed with Mason (2005) that individual researchers should assess how useful such CAQDAS might be for their own purposes.

My assessment suggested that all methods of qualitative analysis, including CAQDAS, have benefits and disadvantages (Ryan & Bernard 2000; Weitzman 2000). Advantages include facilitation of indexing and retrieval of copious quantities of text; ‘exciting possibilities for creating interactive links between different types of data’ such as text, image and sound (Mason 2005, 165); and writing memos that may be linked to text and codes. However, the literature also documented certain CAQDAS disadvantages. One major concern was that such methods might distance me from my fieldwork and empirical materials: in this regard, some assert that CAQDAS methods assume ‘an objectivist, realist, foundational epistemology, and their use ... takes for granted the interpretive procedures and assumptions that transform field notes into text-based materials’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, 638). Another view was that some packages encourage over-emphasis on codes and categories, and produce endless variable analyses that, as above, fail to take account of important contextual factors; coding and retrieval schemes might under-emphasise the multiple meanings of experience in concrete situations (very much a focus of my study), which raised the possibility that the researcher might develop



understandings based on *mis*understandings (Mason 2005). Even the advantages provided for indexing and retrieval of data were, in one view, considered very time-consuming and labour-intensive tasks *regardless* of whether CAQDAS was used or not (Mason 2005). Of concern too was the risk of ethical problems when using computer methods, in particular a potential loss of participants' anonymity, and problems of security of confidential data if exposed in multi-user systems (Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Gatson 2011). I concluded that, for this study, documented problems outweighed the advantages of using CAQDAS. I would use the traditional approach of qualitative researchers, carrying out the mechanics of analysis by hand.

There were dozens of recurring perceptual threads from these round one interviews. In a necessarily slow process I refined them as commonalities.<sup>22</sup> I restated each thread as a short descriptive phrase, remaining as literal as possible (Miles & Huberman 1994), conscious that each new refinement or re-presentation took me further from the original participant representation. I sought to be watchful in order to avoid distorting participant perceptions.

I colour-coded the phrases across the transcripts according to phrase correspondence (Cope 2005). Next, I clustered like phrases into a 'higher-level commonality' (Miles & Huberman 1994, 70), listing any *disconfirming* cases or insights. I repeated this grouping process several times using different clustering patterns until finding a feasible shape. However, there were still too many clusters to analyse, so on average I required three stages of successively

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<sup>22</sup> Mason (2005, 151) comments that text-based data such as 'a semi-structured interview transcript made from an audio-recording is likely to be ... disorganized, eclectic, incoherent in places, and may or may not take the form of a sequential narrative'.

higher-level clustering of perceptual threads to obtain a number manageable for the purposes of written analysis. Use of Excel spreadsheets and contrasting colour blocks rendered this extended process physically and visually manageable.

The outcome of these processes was a concise set of distinct, precise themes that illuminated participant views on the following:

(a) six strengths (community values, attractive lifestyle, isolation as beneficial, good level of services, liveability of the environment, and proximity to everything);

(b) five weaknesses (high cost of living, isolation as a negative aspect, lack of provision of services, change in the ‘quality’ of the population, and problems with various tiers of government);

(c) four aspects of opportunity (opportunities abound, the Island was well-equipped for development, abundant opportunities resided in local industry; and, in a disconfirming vein, a view that opportunities for growth were problematic, limited and declining); and

(d) seven threats or challenges from global-local presences pertinent to local decision-making (land aggregation; corporate farming; population loss; labour shortage; fresh water depletion; and specific and general concerns regarding local, state and national governance of the Island).

I reflected at the time that threats were the most likely of the four fields to yield insights of people’s concerns about governance. I reflected also whether a

particular response did in fact reflect global-local change. For example, participants most strongly identified the very high cost of living as a weakness of life on the Island (see (b) above). However, I discounted the view that high costs were attributable solely to present global-local change on the basis that some considered such costs were ‘always’ a feature of King Island life, a circumstance I confirmed with documentary evidence from the local museum and informal conversations with a retail business person who had lived for many decades in the Island. After comments about the cost of living had been aired, participants most often raised concerns about changes in the mode of land use and its tenure, a downward spiral in Island population, and the performance of all tiers of government.

In varying degrees, most participants were also concerned about fresh water problems. I have considered such issues and shortages as potentially linked to the global-local matter of climate change, and justify that choice in chapter seven. In this case I long reflected on whether the theme qualified as one identified by participants, for round one interview responses for this issue were very mixed. While some King Island authorities in the participant group recognised the issue of climate change, as they had had general directives concerning it from the Tasmanian Government, generally others’ transcripts conveyed unawareness of or unconcern about the subject. I selected the issue of climate change, with its interesting institutional-citizen inconsistencies, as the fourth change case related directly to the research questions. In such manner I came to crystallise the change cases that form the chapters to follow.

## Making sense of data from rounds two and three

Next, I refined a series of insights from discussions with participants on the change cases gathered in interview rounds two and three. I used the same categorisation methods as for round one. Again I coded, clustered and categorised participant views, using spreadsheet and colour.

There were certain differences between round one and the following two. Issues were probed much more deeply in the latter two rounds. Whereas a common question set was used with all participants in round one, in rounds two and three question sets were a mix of common queries about the four cases, participant-specific questions that flowed from the first interview and tapped individual fields of expertise, and lines of enquiry about Island perspectives that other participants raised earlier in the round. There were also temporal differences between rounds two and three: the former concerned King Island ‘here and now’; the latter included perceptions of future King Island in three time periods—immediate future in five years’ time, mid-term future in 20 years, and long-term outlook 50 years hence.

I learned much, not least about methodology. For example, at one point in round two I posed questions about perceptions of good governance, which led me into a trap inherent in the embedded single case design—the case study came to emphasise good governance and detoured from the larger unit of analysis, modes of governing for management of change reflecting global-local dynamics (Yin 2003). However, I overcame this trap by refocusing on why and

how each case illuminated modes of governing, rather than becoming immersed in theme content.

In summary, I refined large quantities of data through categorisation to determine certain meaning—four themes pertinent to the Island, and of much wider salience. In addition, my material was organised for efficient retrieval and application to the research questions at hand.

## Enfolding

I previously touched upon the matter of research rigour and, in summarising this chapter, seek to re-emphasise it here. I undertook this research to share with others, thus others must be able to consider it credible and founded upon good practice (Bradshaw & Stratford 2005; Stake 2000). Interpretation of data in qualitative research is a responsibility that demands meticulous practice (Mason 2005). However, because such enquiry is a personal process to which researchers bring their own insights and experience (Dawson 2002) it is essential to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation (Stake 2000) by adopting practices that reassure the reader that the endeavour is trustworthy. Thus I built certain procedures into my research design, as follows.

To show that my work is plausible I demonstrated that it is adequately informed by relevant scholarly research that provides the conceptual basis of my work. Further, I documented my understanding of and compliance with research ethics requirements. I precisely recorded my work at all stages and maintained fieldwork and daily project journals to guide reflection on my emerging understanding of the data (Ezzy 2002). I fully accounted for my

methodological practice, including problems encountered. I drew upon multiple sources of data (Mason 2005) which allowed cross-checking for accuracy of meaning (Stake 2000) and addressed bias in primary data.

In a process to ensure credibility of my work, my interpretive community checked my work for integrity and good practice (Bradshaw & Stratford 2005). Among other things, my supervisor provided feedback on research design, ethics processes, field logistics, methodological detail, and the writing contained in several working papers, data analyses and draft chapters. I formally presented aspects of my research at conferences at my academic institution (Jones 2008) and overseas (Jones 2009). I arranged for three people, well-versed respectively in the practice of Tasmanian land use planning, the scholarship of climate change governance, and the practise of local governance in King Island, to comment on draft chapters. My supervisor and Graduate Research Coordinator annually reviewed all my research activity. Prior to starting fieldwork, my supervisor organised group seminars to present methodological issues including research rigour. I piloted my proposed interview question schedules with my peers, who commented on their utility and validity (Healey & Rawlinson 1993; Mason 2005), and received valuable insights from two colleagues familiar with Tasmanian local government.

A further important strategy was to make myself accountable to my participant community, engaging them in my whole research process. I ensured accuracy and thus credibility of my work by having all participants check my representation of their contributions: I sent out 68 transcribed interviews, made amendments if required, and achieved a one hundred per cent return from

participants. One accepted my invitation to provide comment on a draft chapter.

In this chapter I had two aims. The first was to describe my data collection process. I immersed myself in the literatures of place, island, and governance. I then selected a single case study design by which to generate data to satisfy my research question and address my proposition. I discussed aspects of case study including design, ethics involved, several modes of field work, individual interview procedure and certain drawbacks encountered in field study.

My second aim was to account for the ways in which I sought meaning from my data. I described three rounds of interviews over a half-year of Island residence, and showed how I made sense of each round of interview data. The meaning thus arrived at laid the foundation for four exemplary chapters intended to satisfy my research question and allow confirmation, challenge, or extension of my proposition. I emphasised my application of rigour to my research practice to ensure credibility and reader confidence in my project conclusions.

I next describe how participants understood the research setting, King Island, their arena of global-local change.

### 3 King Island, its People and Global Change

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*King Island upon the Southern Ocean horizon*

*The global sea of change:  
its crests trailed by swales—  
both contoured from afar*



## Unfolding

In this chapter I introduce the reader to the research setting—the place the researcher enters, inhabits and exits (Mason 2005). A case study examines a case within its real-life context (Yin 2003). My study is a case of small-island governance to manage global-local change, examined within a real-life context: King Islanders' governance to manage global-local change—a local representation of something wider. Does this selected context offer the elements necessary to my case? To determine such, first, as a newcomer I inspect King Island place, its people and their systems of government. Second, participants reveal understandings of themselves as Island people, their Island's future, and global-local changes of concern in governing, population, land use and tenure, and climate.

## An incomer's perspective

Seen from the air, King Island's symmetry of pasture, windbreak and dam announce a 'working island' (Khamis 2007, 25), a performance of Australian rurality (Figure 3.1). Extensive improved pastures nourish prime export beef cattle and dairy products, especially world-renowned cheeses (Figure 3.3).<sup>23</sup> Just 1,098 square kilometres (424 square miles) in area, it boasts two settlements of any size, Currie and Grassy (Figure 3.2). According to the latest available population census, King Island supports 1,567 residents (ABS 2011).

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<sup>23</sup> King Island exports dairy products to Hong Kong, China, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, USA and the Australian domestic market, and beef to domestic and Japanese markets. In addition it sends rock lobsters, kelp, and bottled rainwater to mainland Australia, Europe and Asia.

This represents a decline from the 2006 census total of 1,640 persons, the population total one year before field work was conducted.<sup>24</sup>



Figure 3.1 King Island from the air  
Source: Author

There is almost full employment. The two major industries have been King Island Dairies and Tasman Group abattoirs. The kelp industry and tourism are also major contributors to the economy (Tasports 2007). The private sector accounts for approximately 85 percent of positions held; over time, these have principally been in fishing, kelp harvesting,<sup>25</sup> beef and wool production, and the dairy industry (ABS 2001).

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<sup>24</sup> The Australian Census of Population and Housing is taken every five years.

<sup>25</sup> Kelp is beach-cast marine vegetation which is harvested, dried and used as a thickening agent and food stabiliser, among other uses. Granulated kelp is supplied to domestic customers and exported to Scotland and Norway.



Figure 3.2 Currie, administrative and main population centre  
Source: Author

King Island has contributed significantly to the economy of Tasmania. Its highly reputed Island produce has found ready markets in Australia, Europe, Japan and the USA; the kelp industry alone has provided up to \$2.5 million per annum in export earnings, the majority flowing directly back into the community (Forrest 2005b). King Island has produced 17 per cent of Tasmania's prime beef and 60 per cent of its lucrative rock lobster exports (ABS 2005).



Figure 3.3 Extensive cattle enterprise, Egg Lagoon 2007  
Source: Author

On the other side of the coin, King Island was defined as a remote area in the 2001 Census (Australian Government 2003) as its residents endure significant penalties due to geographic isolation. Among those penalties are significantly higher costs of living, for example inflated fruit and vegetable prices up to 300 percent above Tasmanian and Victorian prices (King Island Courier 2005b). Power tariffs have been reported to be the highest in Australia (Forrest 2005a). Elevated transport costs are attributed to disadvantage: the only passenger access to King Island is by air, and sea freight charges are considered exorbitant (Forrest 2005a; Vowles 2005b).

King Island lies on its own, 140km (90 miles) equidistant from each of its mainlands. It is a continental fragment of an ancient inundation. Close to the lip of the Australian continental shelf, it lies at oecumene's austral edge at latitude forty degrees south (Figure 3.4).



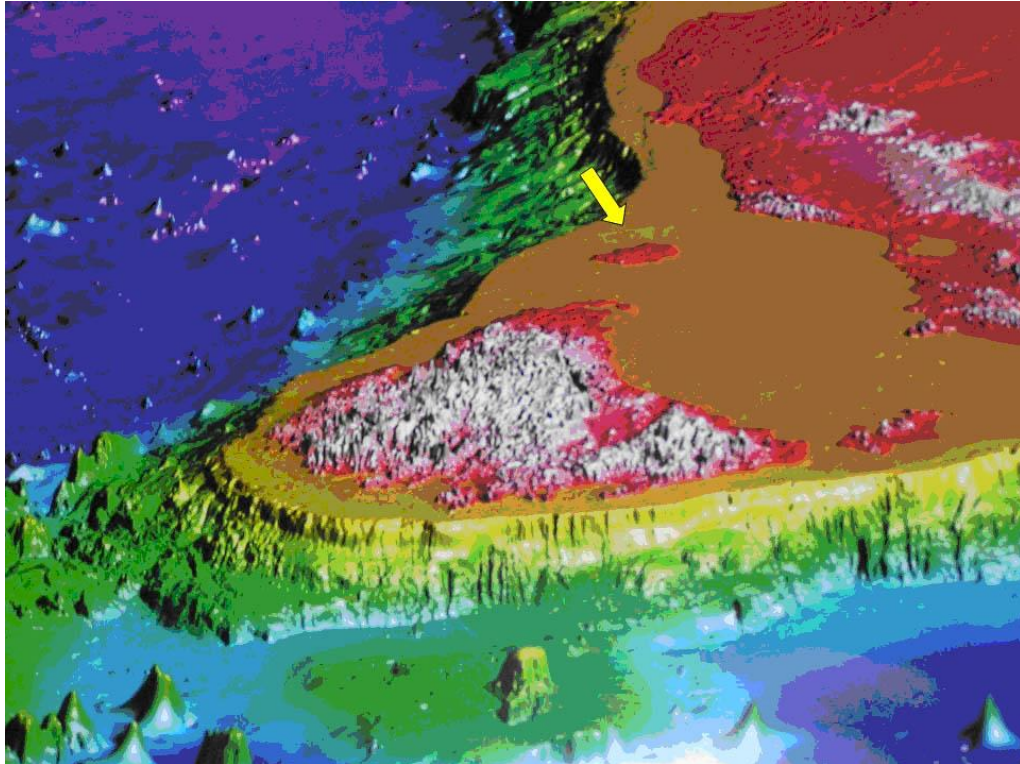


Figure 3.4 King Island and its two mainlands

Source: Commonwealth of Australia. Geoscience Australia and National Oceans Office 1997

Geologically distinctive, the fabric of King Island is sculpted from the west by the prevailing ‘roaring forties’ that gather in the Southern Ocean. Coastscapes feature angled rock-spines, shredded beach-cast marine vegetation, and some formidable cliffs. Too-numerous colonial and modern shipwrecks stud perilous guardian reefs in restless waters, reminding local lobster fleet crews of the hazards of their livelihood, even with today’s technology. Respect for and knowledge of the sea and weather are paramount around the 264km (164 miles) of coastline (Partridge 1999, np). On land over time European styles of management have largely ousted indigenous cool temperate rainforest and sclerophyll vegetation (Barnes et al. 2002) which now mantle but a third of the island (Tasmanian Land Conservancy 2006).

I spoke with a variety of residents: beef and dairy farmers, local business owners and managers, community volunteers, descendants of late nineteenth century pioneer families, educators, sons and daughters of Second World War soldier settlers, non-government organisation representatives, commercial fishers, craftspeople, manufacturers of dairy and marine products and energy, and local, state and federal government personnel. I connected with a community cross-section of 31 of these King Islanders and was privy to some of their thoughts, feelings, values and emotions of place attachment, and some of their ideas about change and challenge. In the small community some participants filled several positions and some, now private citizens, once served as local government Councillors, their multiple perspectives contributing richness and breadth of experience to the study. Participants, or their forebears, originated from every Australian state except Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. A handful of older participants were Island born<sup>26</sup> and three migrated from overseas.

## Governing King Island

There are three spheres of government in Australia: the Australian Government, state governments and local governments (Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) 2006).

Senior federal and state government levels have jurisdiction over most domains of life. The Australian Government is wholly responsible for foreign affairs, defence, and air transport, and plays a major role in social security and welfare

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<sup>26</sup> Women travel to one of the mainlands two weeks before childbirth (Participants 3 & 5).

domains. Below this level, at the subnational state tier, the powers and responsibilities of the Tasmanian Government are secured in a British Parliamentary statute, the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900 (Sawer 1975). Tasmania has its own constitution, legislation and economic activities (Stratford 2006a). State powers cover education, energy, health, transport, development, agriculture, housing, police and justice systems, and service delivery. Some consider that federalism produces considerable duplication and overlap of service delivery mechanisms and a ‘corresponding loss of accountability and citizen influence’ (Lawson & Gleeson 2005, 78).

A regional *governance* tier also exists. It is constituted of formal partnership agreements between and among clusters of Tasmanian local governments organised spatially as three independent entities, the Cradle Coast Authority, Northern Tasmania Development, and Southern Tasmania Councils Authority. These bodies deliver federal and state government requirements or aspirations for natural resource management, tourism, regional transport and regional economic development.

The Cradle Coast Authority represents nine local governments including King Island; coordinates and drives economic development across the various local government areas of north-west and western Tasmania; identifies regional priorities; and brokers partnerships across different tiers of government, industry and community groups to address those priorities. The Authority engages in a wide range of regional initiatives including tourism, natural resource management, health education, training and workforce development, industry development, transport, local government, water resources, and other

issues identified by its Board or representatives of the nine local member municipal councils (Cradle Coast Authority 2009). King Island Council seeks to work with the Authority on regional initiatives that have the potential to benefit the Island (King Island Council 2004). There are visible connections between Island and region: the region's educational institutions accept students from King Island; a certain proportion of Island people choose to retire to this part of the Tasmanian mainland; and King Island is part of Cradle Coast's natural resource management organisation.

Finally, King Island sits at the lowest tier of the Australian government system; it is a municipal or local government area. State, not federal, legislation created local government in Tasmania and King Island and, according to some, positioned it amidst 'complex and contested constitutional arrangements' (Lawson & Gleeson 2005, 80) of a federal-state-local amalgam where, significantly for this study, 'the shape of local politics ... is far from fixed' (Geddes 2005, 31). King Island became a political entity in three jurisdictional steps, evolving over time and negotiating the transition from one mode of governing to another as have other islands (Warrington & Milne 2007). First, the very few settlers present in 1825 gained a new administrative parent, Tasmania, then known as Van Diemen's Land, when the British Government revamped its administration of imperial colony New Holland, now Australia (Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament 1921).

In a second advance, Tasmania and King Island were transferred smoothly to the aegis of the newly proclaimed Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 (Clark 1982; Sawyer 1975), when the previously British colonies became federal



Australian states and territories. The Island reached its final jurisdictional milestone in February 1908, two decades after full survey of the Island and release of its land for small-scale settlement, when the Tasmanian Government granted the Island status as a local government jurisdiction (Tasmanian Government 1908). Municipal representatives were elected in the previous December to serve the needs of a new population (Figure 3.5).

The Local Government Act (1993) prescribes 351 powers and processes that King Island Council must abide by (Australasian Legal Information Institute 2009) and which the Tasmanian Government supervises. Accountability is provided for: King Island Council must present an annual report, and hold both an annual general meeting and regular public general meetings. Among its responsibilities are community health, safety and welfare; representation of community interests; and provision for the peace, order and good government of the jurisdiction (LGAT 2006). Its duties include waste disposal, provision of gardens and cemeteries, and community centres.

Local government is the ‘sphere of government that is closest to the people’ (LGAT 2006, np). Expansion of practices of government to embrace strategies of governance offers Islanders direct involvement in governing. In strictly representative government, public participation is largely limited to electing Councillors for four year terms, with half elected every two years; and mayors and deputy mayors at two yearly intervals (LGAT 2006).



Figure 3.5 The first King Island Councillors, elected 19 December 1907  
Source: King Island History Museum, Currie

Alternatively, new governance encourages community input into policy development: Goal 8 of the Tasmanian Government's '*Tasmania Together 2020*' vision<sup>27</sup> promised governing that 'listens' and welcomes 'community participation in the decision-making processes' (Tasmanian Government 2006, 22).

<sup>27</sup> *Tasmania Together* is a social, environmental and economic plan for 2000–2020 developed by the Bacon Labor government. It has made significant commitments to sustainability, adopting environmental goals, benchmarks and indicators. While community driven, it has also been strongly directed from the top in terms of leadership, conviction and process (Crowley & Coffey, 2007), and was considered a 'living' strategy (see *Tasmania Together Progress Board* [2011] and chapter four).

In October 2012, Premier Lara Giddings announced that the Progress Board would be axed, and replaced by a *Tasmania Together* unit in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, a move the Board chairman described as 'the death of accountability' in the reporting of progress 'across a range of social, economic and environmental goals' (Clark 2012, np).

The Tasmanian Government directs its councils ‘to operate generally in a manner which allows for meaningful consultation with their residents’ (Department of Premier and Cabinet [DPAC] 2009b). The General Manager, chief executive officer of the local government body, advises Councillors when to employ consultative mechanisms. As I later show, two such ‘citizenship mechanisms’ (after Dean 1999) are readily available in King Island: public consultation, defined as seeking community engagement and inclusion in decision-making for the places people inhabit or regard as significant; and public participation, that is, combined consultation and opportunities for people’s active involvement in governing processes (Davies et al. 2003). With local government in Australia in transition these modes of governing acquire significance, as I demonstrate in the next and subsequent chapters.

## The participants’ Island

Primarily in the first round of interviews, I asked people to tell me what King Island meant to them; they described it both at its best and as a place with concerns and challenges. In its most positive light, King Island was variously seen by most—but not all—as a small tightly-knit or close community, until recently a family Island, a great place to rear children in the safety of the rural community. It was highly valued as a haven from most crime and vandalism, other urban pressures and industrial pollution. One considered King Islanders ‘a community of strugglers, wealthy achievers and those in the middle’. For others the community was a ‘good fit’ of diverse people, ‘country folk’, ‘very self-aware’, ‘knowledgeable’, egalitarian, easy-going, friendly and welcoming,

considerate, compassionate, caring, nurturing, supportive in times of need, generous community volunteers, trustworthy and industrious.

Aside from perceptions of themselves, many (but not all) thought the place itself to be a land of pastoral, horticultural, and tertiary or service opportunity, with ‘enormous’ development potential. A number were proud of King Island’s ‘clean, green’ reputation and the way it seemed to attract people. One sensed that the community had ‘confidence in a tightly operated sea service’ to ship out its live cattle; there was pride that its farmers were the youngest farmer group in Australian agriculture and were presented with ‘big opportunities ... a great place to start off with the land still affordable’ for on King Island the price of farmland was lower than in northwest Tasmania, and thus it was ‘easier to buy, easier to establish yourself as a farmer’ (Participant 30).

There was a certain faith in Tasmanian Government predictions that primary production would remain the Island’s dominant industry for at least two to five years (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] 2008). Some enthused over Island opportunities for growth; a newly established horticultural venture set an example (Figure 3.6). Others hoped the scheelite mine<sup>28</sup> (King Island Courier 2007a) would reopen and boost population, businesses, jobs for community tradespersons, and offer school leavers apprenticeships. Some saw various opportunities in other business and

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<sup>28</sup> From scheelite is extracted tungsten, a strategically important metal first mined on the Island in 1914. It became King Island’s most praised contribution to Australia’s wealth (Khamis 2007) over the next 70 years. During the 1970s the mine employed 400 Islanders. Depressed world prices brought about the mine’s closure in November 1990.

service sectors, and heartening community support for several Islander returnees who had set up retail and other businesses.



Figure 3.6 New market gardening venture, Camp Creek May 2007  
Source: Author

As with island people elsewhere (Clarke 2001; Royle 2001), numerous participants homed in on tourism possibilities. Assessed as a ‘major driver of the local economy’ (Department of Communications Information Technology and the Arts [DCITA] 2006), tourism was predicted to expand by 2012 (DEEWR 2008) and some participants welcomed ‘massive’ opportunities ‘to open up tourism’<sup>29</sup> if only they could address the high cost of air fares, sometimes sub-standard tourist infrastructure, and expansion of Grassy Port to receive passenger vessels. Some participants were highly selective in regard to clientele, preferring to receive wealthy ‘five star’ tourists rather than backpackers or grey nomads. Others emphasised ‘environmentally considerate, non-glossy approaches’. A small core of participants considered the Island (today bereft of historic relics except a few shipwreck graves, museum

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<sup>29</sup> Tourism is ‘now the world’s largest industry’ (Royle 2001, 188).

building, no-entry colonial lighthouse and a not-easily accessed sealers' killing wall) rich in potential ecotourism offerings: geoheritage of the highest order, ornithology and river gorge walks. Several suggested promotion of winter tourism or cold water tourism to 'show the Island for what it was' (Figure 3.7).



Figure 3.7 'Winter tourism' opportunities: the Southern Ocean at Stokes Point July 2007  
Source: Author

Some participants saw their community as the fount of yet further opportunities in the technologies of modernity. Once wholly tied to imported diesel fuel for power generation, Islanders were diversifying their energy sources. In 1998 Tasmania's first windfarm was established in the Island at Huxley Hill and expanded in 2003 from three to five turbines. In the same year cutting-edge technology was introduced: a revolutionary storage system for wind power was installed to supplement the Island's four diesel generators. A huge rechargeable vanadium flow battery optimises use of the wind energy. It accounts for periods of strong wind when the turbines generate more electricity than

required; the battery stores the surplus and distributes it in periods of weak or no wind when turbine output ceases. As at 2007, such technology promises much: to reduce substantially the quantity of fuel burnt by diesel generators, cut costs and at least 2,000 tonnes of carbon emissions each year, and thus transform the role of wind energy (Thwaites 2007) (Figure 3.8). Installation of solar panels was to be followed by test beds on the Island's west coast to trial wave power.<sup>30</sup> Further plans were to erect two additional wind turbines. One resident predicted that the Island might become a major energy producer.<sup>31</sup>



Figure 3.8 Combined distillate, wind and solar power generation,  
King Island power station April 2008  
Source: Don Jones

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<sup>30</sup> The Island newspaper reported that, for the financial year 2008–09, 35 percent of King Island's energy needs were supplied by renewable energy (wind and solar), saving approximately 1.39 million litres of diesel fuel (King Island Courier 2009).

<sup>31</sup> The participant's prediction seems well-founded. In late 2012 Hydro Tasmania released plans to build a \$A2billion wind farm in King Island which, with 200 turbines, would be the largest wind farm in the southern hemisphere, employ up to 500 people in the construction phase and about a dozen during the life of the project, and foster other jobs in the King Island economy. Hydro Tasmania noted that the support of the Island's community would be crucial for project success (The Examiner 2012). In June, 2013 King Islanders were reportedly sharply divided over the benefits and costs of hosting a wind farm that would occupy 40 percent of their Island's land surface (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2013).



I found more than appreciation of and pride in the material assets, initiatives and potential of participants' Island home. Conversations with many were polished with senses of belonging, of place attachment. Hache (1998, 51) notes of islanders elsewhere that some 'belong to' rather than 'live in' islands. I found similar understandings among participants. One explained:

There are a lot of the people who identify a certain part of the Island, whether it's a bushwalk or a beach or a fishing point, that they almost feel is theirs ... it's a real sense of not only belonging to your house or block of land, but much broader than that ... you can feel a real sense of belonging, not just to people or jobs or even family ... it's the part of this Earth that I can feel is part of me (Participant 19).

A large cluster of participants expressed similar senses of belonging. They saw King Island as their 'soul home', 'my homeland', 'home, no doubt about that', and 'feel I belong here'. One understood that 'the community is my family'. An incomer adopted the Island as 'my home, the first place I have felt to be my home, and I have put my roots down here'. Belonging was evident in rituals of connection such as the 'King Island Wave'<sup>32</sup> that some interpret as an acknowledgement of being in community:

the finger raised on the steering wheel to passing vehicles ... a greeting and courtesy ... an old-fashioned thing and one we hold

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<sup>32</sup> This is a common custom in remote, sparsely populated regions of the Australian continent, but is no longer readily apparent in the Tasmanian mainland.



dear ... part of King Island and the way we do things around here  
... which made me feel so welcome here (Hunter 2006, 4).

I observed that some rituals of connection with place were in fact those of reconnection with place meanings. One participant explained that ‘When I come home to the Island, the first thing I do when I come from the airport, I drive to Currie harbour to feel the air, breathe it in, and then I come home’ (Participant 24). There is no doubting that for numerous participants their attachment is deep:

It is just stunning ... if you go there at low tide, it’s like the most beautiful mosaic you’ve ever seen. All that rock! All those different colours! Pinks, greens ... and the waves have washed it all smooth and shiny ... it’s really special (Participant 28),

and

Every time you go down [south] it’s different. There are very few days that sea doesn’t move. The mood of the sea changes every day. It’s magnificent. It’s magic down there. You go down there fishing for a day and come back up the bank and you’ll sit there for ten, fifteen minutes before you’ll come home again, just watching the fish because of that sort of feeling you get there and then of course, when the muttonbirds<sup>33</sup> come in at night ... (Participant 14),

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<sup>33</sup> Short-tailed shearwaters, an annual migratory seabird from the northern hemisphere.

and

The beauty of this Island ... Cataraqui Point<sup>34</sup> ... well, it talks to you down that way, standing there on a real windy day ... it talks to you. [Cape] Wickham<sup>35</sup> talks to you on a windy day, a day like today with the wind and the drizzly rain ... to stand there it talks to you, I always reckon (Participant 29).

These ways of being, these connections with whatever it is that lies at and beyond the Island edge, would imply much of worth to defend in the face of adverse changes—if such evaluation could be agreed upon. Would threat to such sources of belonging kindle in Island citizens a ‘defence of place’ response? Certainly, numerous participants mentioned where their respective senses of place were anchored: in the largely pristine natural environment; the ‘kind’, virtually drought-free climate which promised reliable farming seasons and production; ever-changing ‘four seasons in a day’; a ‘fairly unblemished coastline’; easy access to the solitude of diverse pink, silver, white, blue-grey, fawn or golden beaches ‘where the only footprints on a beach are yours’. As I show in later chapters, these material and intangible place values, so important to being in place, are indeed affected in varying degrees by global-local change. What might participant responses be to increasing uncertainty?

No in-depth conversation with King Islanders is free from some reference to isolation of Island, Islander, or both. ‘Our isolation is a two-edged sword’ (Participant 19) in numerous spheres of life including Island governance. ‘To

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<sup>34</sup> Site of Australia’s worst maritime shipwreck.

<sup>35</sup> King Island’s northernmost point – a place of shipwrecks, death, several graves and monuments, subsequently erected lighthouse, and now-vanished stone lightkeepers’ station.

isolate’ means ‘to place apart, detach or separate from so as to be alone’ (Delbridge et al. 2004, 1371). King Island is physically isolated from its two mainlands. It stands alone, surrounded by notoriously rough Bass Strait and the Southern Ocean. To varying degrees, its isolation touches all who dwell there (Figure 3.9).

The majority of participants felt some sense of isolation on this ‘rock in the middle of Bass Strait’ (Participant 3). An ex-resident has written that

Despite the ready availability of metropolitan daily newspapers, radio and television services, there is still a feeling of isolation, and one only needs to look out to sea, or have the King Islander [the sole Island cargo vessel in 1973] delayed for a week or more by storms, to appreciate this (Hooper 1973, 20).



Figure 3.9 Isolation: last sea-link for seven days. Cargo vessel MV Seaway Mersey heads into a storm, outward bound with cattle for the Australian mainland August 2008  
Source: Author

On a night in October 2005, isolation was palpable when

a service fault shut down King Island from midnight for 12 hours when all telephone and mobile communications were lost; the Island was cut off from both its mainlands until a technician could be flown in from [the continental mainland] the next day. The mayor stated that the incident could have ended in disaster (The Mercury 2005, 13).

And in 2007 the situation continued:

Bass Strait contributes to our isolation here ... I definitely feel isolation here. You can't get any more remote than being on an island in the middle of a wild sea where the only way on and off is by plane and knowing planes can't always go in and out; a two-day sea fog makes you realise how isolated you are (Participant 24).

Isolation is not the same for all. Some King Islanders consider the Island physically isolated, but not themselves for they adapt: 'Isolation is not the worst thing in the world; we live with it, we survive' (Participant 22).

Nevertheless, to varying degrees a majority of participants<sup>36</sup> regarded both themselves and King Island as alone and separated from 'away' by Bass Strait, considerable distance and the vagaries of weather. They might even embrace

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<sup>36</sup> Participants' understandings of themselves and/or the Island as 'isolated' were diverse. For some well-travelled participants, where the metropolis is but 50 air-minutes distant and frequently visited, the notion of isolation was unremarkable (Participants 20, 22 & 23). Two participants (one 'recently' arrived; one a long-term resident) considered neither King Island nor themselves isolated (Participants 2 & 14). Another understood the *Island* to be 'stuck in the middle of Bass Strait' but did not *feel* isolated, having 'reasonable access to both mainlands as needed' (Participant 5). However, the majority of participants understood King Island as 'isolated' or 'remote' from elsewhere.

and celebrate their ‘contained and simple life’ (Participant 13) enhanced by the ‘omnipresence of the sea’ (Péron 2004, 330). From isolation flowed valued intangibles: freedom from ‘those other mad worlds’ (Stratford 2006a, 581), urban pressures of consumerism, crime, metropolitan bad habits, frenetic traffic, crowds, and atmospheric pollution that elsewhere threatened quality of life and suffocated individuality. Some explained that isolation bestowed solitude, personal space, privacy, and the opportunity simply to be.

But Islands are paradoxical places (Baldacchino 2007a, 2007b; Terrell 2004; Warrington & Milne 2007) where an individual’s interaction with isolated place may also be unpleasant (Relph 1976; Tuan 1974). A majority of participants mentioned personal examples. The Island’s aloneness might cast shadows visible as high costs for necessities of life such as food, fuel and power; families splintered when children departed to attend mainland schools; disrupted personal life and community businesses if planes did not arrive or the MV Searoad Mersey, the cargo vessel that supplied the Island once a week, occasionally suffered mechanical problems and local firms were not provisioned; ‘horrendously expensive’ air access and vexatious Bass Strait freight charges. In addition, feelings of physical remoteness were accompanied by perceptions of jurisdictional isolation. Tasmanian Government neglect and inequity rankled; some complained that ‘we get left out of things ... time and time again ... day-to-day issues, everything else ... Tasmania forgets us’:

I don’t think any of the [state] Cabinet have been here for some time. Some of the local [electorate] members come over here, but we never get the high profile Cabinet people, ministers, that type of

thing, here these days. We used to, but for the past two or three years we haven't seen them (Participant 30).

Another looking back over four decades believed that 'We just don't get, and never have, any good recognition or representation' (Participant 26). This lack of concern by state authorities may thrive on geographical isolation: according to Royle (2001, 45), remote offshore island dependencies of larger political jurisdictions must compete against resourcing needs of larger populations closer to the locus of political power, and 'inevitably lose out' (2001, 46). Yet senior governments would seem mindful of King Islanders' isolation despite considerable rivalry for their largesse: state and federal administrations furnish King Island with material benefits intended to palliate isolation, service delivery and financial challenges. Islanders are sedated with status as a 'remote area' (Participant 12; Wilde et al. 2004); receive 'a lot more services than would be expected in a rural area of 1,600 people'; enter into bilateral agreements as do small islands and larger governing units elsewhere (Baldacchino 2006; Hache 1998); receive financial allowances for offshore student Islanders, social security, taxation and health care. As with other small governments (Stratford 2006a), the King Island Council harnesses isolation as a jurisdictional resource (Participant 27). To pursue opportunities, its personnel consider that local government cannot remain isolated or afford to follow current state and federal government policy of debt-avoidance, thus they actively network with the parent Tasmanian Government, playing a 'new ball game' of securing grants and finance for sustainable projects (Participant 7).

People's feelings of geographical and jurisdictional isolation may be furthered by a psychological dimension that conditions community and individual, and may influence aspects of civic participation in governing, as I later show. There are further considerations: 'Coming to an island to live, you have to think carefully about whether you can cope with it and survive it, because it's a big ask' (Participant 10). Some incomers discover and resent the fact that beyond the pale of established social groupings 'you're always doomed as an outsider' (Participant 16; Lowenthal 2007). Certainly, isolation does not suit all. It compels some to leave the Island after just a few months. Some time may be needed to recruit and induct new personnel, with loss of momentum in areas such as Island governing (Participants 7 & 9), as I explain in chapter four. In a Tasmanian Government enterprise on the Island, no less than two years were needed to assemble a 'very good administration group, well qualified with a great work ethic' (Participant 16).

Further, isolation and Island size may combine forces against the individual, so that a number of participants conceive the surrounding water bodies as a physical curb, and mentally restrictive too. Interviews exposed a persistent Islander refrain related to the inability to 'get in your car and drive several hundred kilometres' to see children, grandchildren, mother, family, relatives. Thus, 'sometimes the Island is a little small; sometimes we feel the need to escape, be anonymous, not have to acknowledge anyone for a few days' (Participant 8), an impulse embedded in the King Island lexicon as 'feeling coasty' (Participant 10). And, as Royle (2001, 224) well puts it, 'Holidays apart ... one cannot really ever escape from the insular constraints of small islands',

the close public scrutiny. So it is that public ‘invisibility’, a metropolitan given, is cherished but rare within small communities (Alston 2004b; Baldacchino 2002; O’Collins 2006) and may prove elusive (Péron 2004). A number of participants acutely feel its absence. They report that community propinquity spawns local rivalries among diverse demands, expectations and aspirations, outcomes found to be present in small communities elsewhere (Hache 1998; Malpas 1999; Nunn 2004; Péron 2004).

In a small community constant public exposure ‘takes a bit of adjusting to’ (Participant 10). Research about islanders elsewhere shows that, of necessity, they must learn to live together, not necessarily getting along well but co-existing by keeping individualism at bay (Lowenthal 1988), realising that personal needs must not threaten collaborative needs. Such adjustments affect Island governing. As will be shown in chapter four, what requires examination is the manner of ‘adjusting’ to lack of anonymity, the degree of learning and practice of personal management skills (Participant 18; Srebrnik 2000).

Whether King Islanders experience isolation as geographical, jurisdictional or personal, as of benefit or disadvantage, as minimal or overwhelming, this characteristic of islandness— isolation—powerfully flavours participants’ existence, mindset and thus how they make decisions for their place.

King Island’s geographical isolation, smallness and measure of administrative autonomy may shape it and other such islands as sites of political innovation (Baldacchino 2006; Baldacchino & Milne 2009; Hay 2003). Certainly, innovation is no stranger to King Island. Participants proudly cast themselves as innovators, able to introduce something new, to make changes to anything



established. They are ‘always full of new ideas’ whenever a problem or crisis is identified (Campbell & Jones 2003, 7); ‘inventive people [who] think about a solution rather than running to someone else for it’ (Participant 18). In short, ‘if you can’t do it, someone else will’ (Participant 24).

Innovation is the child of ‘can-do’, itself a mindset of self-sufficiency that some consider born of isolation, and whose outcome is practical people who can ‘cope better with life’s knocks than city people’ (Participant 29)—positive, resourceful, creative, independent, fairly self-reliant people used to having to find their own solutions. One long-term resident explains:

[We] learn to be inventive, self-sufficient ... to adapt and change.

It leads one to be independent, making-do, doing without things, or making the most of your opportunities, being creative. All that’s to do with our lifestyle here—anywhere that’s distant, people learn to be innovative (Participant 18).

That inventiveness is evident within King Island’s mix of locally- and offshore-owned and operated enterprises. On one hand, external bodies control and drive some Island industries, for example the dairy, pelletised bull kelp exports (Forrest 2005b), part of its beef production, and distillation of local native plant oils (Wilde et al. 2004). On the other hand, local people initiate and command their share of economic pursuits that utilise the Island’s natural resources in original and creative ways. One bottles and exports pure drinking water worldwide. Two individuals collect plentiful bull kelp to create, manufacture and market unusual

condiments (Vowles 2006a). Yet other Islanders harvest and dry the kelp fronds, craft them into black or brown leather-like, highly original artwork, and market it locally. The over-abundant, officially designated pest-species, the native wallaby,<sup>37</sup> is converted into popular smallgoods sold in one settlement and at the airport. Other residents, having an eye to the Island's extensive grazing pastures, produce and market distinctive clover honey. Another Islander has commenced a market garden business to supply the community with fresh vegetables which otherwise must be imported. This revival of a past attempt at community self-sufficiency that was thwarted by extreme weather, epitomises Islander 'can do'.

At a collective level, the local council has actively encouraged and supported innovativeness. Most notably this body has received prestigious national and state awards for its Currie Sewage Treatment Wetland—the first project of its kind in Australia—an innovative solution designed to enhance the environment. King Islanders also welcome innovation from external sources. For example, an Australian Government-University of Tasmania joint project investigated translocation of southern rock lobster (crayfish) from the Tasmanian southwest coast to trial sites including King Island waters as a possible way to increase yield and value in the fishery (Gardner & Van Putten 2005). Council has also welcomed and supported a proposed waste cardboard recycling scheme that Island industries envisage will encourage efficient use of energy (Forrest 2005b; Vowles 2005a).

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<sup>37</sup> The wallaby is a smaller member of the family Macropodidae that resembles the kangaroo, a herbivorous Australian marsupial.

Such instances of Islander inventiveness support, to varying degrees, research conclusions that innovation is characteristic of small island peoples (Cambers 2006). Scholars observe that isolation and a distinctive islander identity may be linked (Péron 2004); a sense of ‘islandness’ may shape aspirations for self-reliant behaviour (Bartmann 1996); isolation demands self-sufficiency on islands (Clarke 2001); island communities display ‘inspiring examples of creativity and initiative’ (Bartmann 1998, 6); and islands stand out as sites of originality, of ‘deliberate or coincidental path-breaking events’ (Baldacchino 2007a, 3). Significantly for my research, innovation is considered essential for successful, long-term development for any jurisdiction (Baldacchino & Milne 2000), a point especially pertinent in view of the ‘permanent nature of many of their hurdles ... the inescapable recurrence of the physical constraints of insularity’ (Hache 1998, 54). One person values King Island as

a great community for seeing a situation for what it is and developing a response that fits. Nothing is put into the too-hard basket; we’ll try it this way and, if it doesn’t work, we’ll try it another way (Participant 24).

There was a strong sense in participant conversations that Islanders’ ‘can-do’ ethos well-equipped them to engage global-local change. In view of this optimism, is the future of King Island in fact threatened, challenged, uncertain? I asked participants how they thought the Island would fare in the long-term. I suggested three future time-frames—immediate future (five years hence), mid-future (10 to 20 years) and distant future (about 50 years).

However, most people found it difficult to visualise circumstances in King Island half a century ahead, and even one to two decades hence—the mid-term future. Perhaps understandably, responses for the immediate future were the most enlightening. Of the four global-local issues considered in this study, the most worrying were land use and tenure, and population. Contest surrounded the matter of land use: some favoured residential and recreational developments that they thought would trigger a marginal increase in population, while others expected emigration to continue due to lack of employment opportunities, especially for youth, and a certain disappointment in the trend to coastal development. Some held hopes that the beef and dairy industries would persist as the backbone of the local economy. Some were cautiously confident. There would ‘always be good farmers here’. The Island reputation as desirably clean-and-green would persist. Some climate change predictions suggested a wetter, warmer Island that would become the food-bowl of Australia. Land values would increase considerably. These positive mindsets would be needed in the face of the following four global-local change challenges that King Islanders identified as matters for good governance.

## Four faces of Island change

### Governing

Islanders offered varied insights about the relationship between the Australian Government and King Island. One concern was that they were being treated unfairly in relation to telecommunications, their needs dismissed by reportedly common federal responses such as ‘No, you live on *King Island*, you can’t

have this' (Participant 13). Paradoxically, in regard to federal quarantine legislation, which applies to all states, one participant observed that some King Islanders and visitors resisted regulations to protect the Island's natural and cultural heritage, and that Tasmanian Government bureaucrats were seen to discourage prosecutions (a federal responsibility) that might give the Island 'a bad look'.

Another view was that federal policy biases placed economic considerations above Island interests. In one instance the Australian Government was held responsible for rendering farm management much more difficult by 'pushing' its firearm legislation onto the states to administer. This action increased regulatory pressures on farmers attempting to control wildlife, a significant Island problem. The local farmers and graziers group had reached the point where it was 'cracking at the edges just trying to stave off some of this legislation coming out of Canberra [seat of the Australian Government] ... it's scary ... what you can go to jail for now' (Participant 17).

Another participant reported poor federal commitment to its own national program for natural resource management. The Islander observed that the federal government was not prepared to

go that extra step ... you never see them bragging about their natural resource program ... they put the [wallaby eradication] program in place to tick a box ... [but] they ... don't *really* support it ... I never see them talking about their [federal] program, which signals to me that they are not really serious about it ... we're [federal] government funded but

there's also government-funded messages on the other side, on economic development—not to worry about the environment if it's too much of a hassle (Participant 31).

Some adjudged as second-rate certain administrative aspects of the federal natural resource management program. One participant found that when Islanders tried to implement projects, they struck innumerable obstacles. The Australian Government 'would support it to a point as long as it doesn't affect anyone economically, and that's as far as they will go'. Further, when the first natural resource management strategy was written for the Cradle Coast region (of which King Island is part), the consultation period stretched out to 18 months to enable further consultation and review of project priorities. Even so, Islanders 'didn't have a chance to do it that time ... the federal government set a tight deadline and the community consultation was missed out' (Participant 31). There was a sense too that federal decisions always privileged the needs of Canberra above those of King Island. One considered the Australian Government far from perfect, a body that 'makes decisions up there based on their needs in that office', decisions that 'affect people in a big way' (Participant 31). Nevertheless, another resident looked beyond the present with hopes that the state tier would disappear from government, leaving a smoother, more desirable Australia-wide federal-local duality (Participant 25).

In governmental terms, King Island is under the sovereignty of Tasmania by virtue of the fact that it is a municipality as defined by the Tasmanian Local Government Act 1993. However, participants invariably identified specifically as *King Islanders*, not as Tasmanians, or described themselves as natives of

Victoria or other Australian mainland states. The fact that King Island is interconnected to two mainlands thus made participant commentaries on political and cultural identity more complex than one might anticipate from a discrete, bounded (island) population. Most participants identified with continental Australia, their identity and interests detached from Tasmania; a few, mostly those born in mainland Tasmania, went south occasionally to visit family, receive medical attention or conduct business. Many participants had scant interest in the state jurisdiction, having concluded that ‘King Island is part of Tasmania, but is not’ (Participant 24); a number found dependant interconnection uncomfortable, frustrating and unproductive.

In contrast, few ‘mainland’ Tasmanians, including politicians, ever undertook the costly, sometimes difficult air journey to King Island (Campbell & Jones 2003; Vowles 2005b). Some participants read such absence as jurisdictional neglect, as being ‘left out in the political cold, too small to count, not enough votes to matter’ (King Island Courier 2005c, 1), and as the application of ‘different rules of engagement’ to the Island (Participants 25 & 26). For example, the latter resident compared King Island to ‘sister’ Flinders Island, far-distant in the eastern reaches of Bass Strait. The participant speculated that the Tasmanian Government must have drawn a north-south ‘Mason-Dixon Line’ across the Tasmanian land mass because it seemed that all places on the eastern side of the ‘Line’, including Flinders Island, received superior political notice, resourcing and consideration. Further, such claims of neglect by Tasmania(ns) contrasted sharply with dislike of suffocating Tasmanian Government attention to King Island, perceived as over-regulation and the

imposition of policies inappropriate for their Island circumstances. Another participant commented that it was a very slow process to get Islanders to realise they were part of Australia and Tasmania. He correctly argued that both federal and state governments had the authority to control, legislate and direct certain matters on the Island, and stated that Islanders needed to recognise that position.

Some participants reported that other tiers of government were disappointing and deficient in good governance, particularly in terms of inclusiveness, equity and responsiveness. Some referred to regional governance by the Cradle Coast Authority, and its associated environmental arm, the Cradle Coast Natural Resource Management Committee (CCNRMC), both of whom acknowledge King Island in their institutional logos (Figure 3.10).

The Authority's logo positions King Island as the head of the body [Tasmania] whose north-west flank is closest to the viewer [thus foregrounding the local government areas that comprise the Authority rather than other regions of the state]. A form of rhetorical flourish, this paper-based acknowledgment of the Island is in contrast with what one participant described as a limited regional mindset, namely that jurisdictional responsibility ended prematurely at the Bass Strait coast of the Tasmanian mainland. In short, that water body constitutes a barrier of multiple dimensions between mainland and Island.



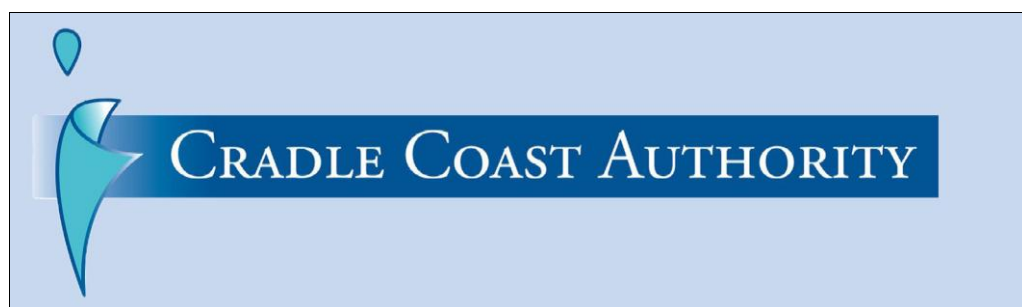
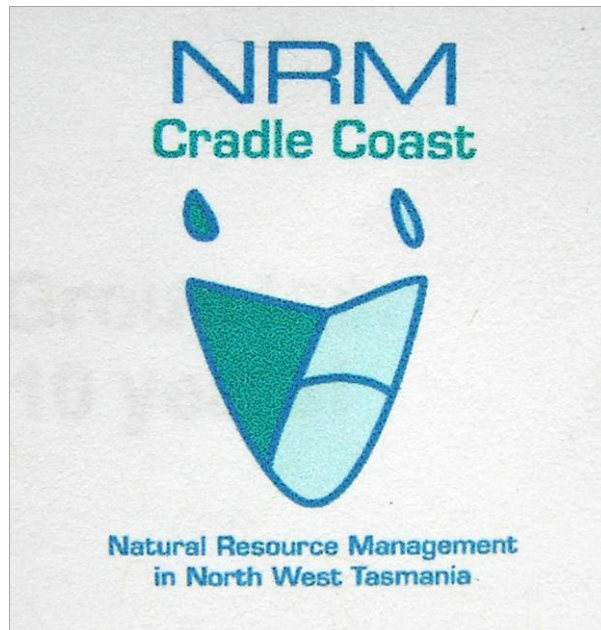


Figure 3.10 Acknowledgment of jurisdictional inclusion of King Island in the regional governing body and in its natural resource management arm  
Source: Cradle Coast Natural Resource Management Committee, 2007–8

While some applauded the provision of much core funding from the Cradle Coast Authority and a visit to King Island Council by its executive chairman in 2007, others claimed deficits in good governance, resourcing, and outcomes in the work of the Authority. Furthermore, some considered remoteness from the Tasmanian mainland prevented King Island from sharing the benefits of Cradle Coast Authority projects including tourism initiatives, schemes that bonded the other eight mainland member municipalities. Island representatives found it difficult to be heard in meetings on environmental matters. Other reported

disappointments included slowness to respond to planned projects, a wait and see attitude to funding, and failure to regard King Island as a special case in Cradle Coast Authority deliberations.

Finally, a number of participants pinpointed as problematic to governing what they deemed inertia among Islanders. In relation to governing practices on King Island, suggestions were made that in local governance activities (by which I mean collaborations across public, private and civic sectors) many citizens variously participated in group meetings or workshops. However, some considered the population in general resisted taking personal responsibility for decisions and their ramifications, an apparent reticence echoed in democracies elsewhere, and which I later discuss. Some were thought unwilling to voice concerns to council; others welcomed and used frequently deployed mechanisms of governance—invitations to make submissions to government on behalf of organisations or communities, engaged in natural resource management activities, or participated in voluntary work. Perceptions of civic indifference did not reflect a scarcity of governance issues; to the contrary, participants pointed to a host of significant matters that required whole-of-community consideration—not least population decline, land use and tenure, and fresh water concerns. In practice however, fora to consider these issues were considered to attract inconsistent public involvement, despite well-advertised and promoted opportunities.<sup>38</sup> I examine

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<sup>38</sup> Participants identified tensions surrounding current council policies and processes, including plans for coastal development and control of population drift (Participants 4, 19, 27 & 29); how to balance ‘develop or conserve’ options (Participants 1, 10 & 27); ‘the bottom line is the economy’ stance (Participants 4, 5, 21 & 29); the belief that some ‘very successfully play

change in governance in chapter four; I note the manner in which this apparent disengagement from governing practices is at odds with the literature on new governance but also in harmony with citizen behaviour in other places. Such writings suggest that, while active citizenship is requisite, it may require a long apprenticeship.

## A dwindling population

Some participants suggested that King Island replicated the decline of rural Australia. The Island's previous peak population of approximately 3,000, reached during the boom days of the now-inoperative scheelite mine had, as noted previously, halved to 1,567 in 2007 (ABS 2011). A number of participants regarded change in population totals and composition as the major Island issue. They considered demographic imbalance highly problematic, for the ageing population would provide fewer residents to operate essential community volunteer services. Continuing emigration was also seen as a major threat: if numbers sank below critical mass, the Island would lose essential services in education, health and air transport, and retail business would decline.

A further concern was social instability associated with changes in the composition of the Island population. There was already a shortage of skilled labour. Even farming, the Island mainstay, was considered an industry at risk, finite, a vocation challenged by the entry of agribusiness into the Island. Rising land prices encouraged landowners to sell to corporate interests. A number of

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politics' in the small community to the detriment of the needs of others (Participants 21 & 24); and the need to find ways to manage change, including social change (Participants 2 & 26).

participants linked population woes to corporate farming: decline of small ‘family farms’ and the rural work force they demanded; withering farming settlements and demise of schools; departure of working-age people off-island; and a depleted labour pool that meant many Islanders now filled multiple work positions. Fewer King Islanders, including young people, were able to return permanently for, according to some, opportunities were few. As in other islands (Lowenthal 2007), clear social change was noted in the Island community, not all of it welcome. Some considered transient workers, brought in to bolster the work force, too detached from local community life and values. Others found sea-changers<sup>39</sup> either too ‘pushy’ in local life and politics, or too solitary and uncommitted to common Island causes. I examine the issue of change in Island population in chapter five.

## Land use and tenure

Participants were very concerned that land, the third face of King Island change, was being transformed by global forces. One expression of such change was corporate farming. This was a ‘fairly new development worldwide’ (Participant 30) which commenced in King Island during the 1990s and, as Villamil (1977) notes of small island systems, represented an additional pastoral input into a closed Island farming system. This was a period when islands generally were becoming ‘subject to the whims of transnational companies’ (Royle 2001, 134). These bodies acquired substantial property

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<sup>39</sup> ‘Sea-changer’, an Australian term, denotes a person who relocates from metropolitan or suburban living to a coastal dwelling (McFedrie 2002).

including established farming enterprises by means of managed investment schemes (MIS).<sup>40</sup>

Numerous participants regretted the arrival of a handful of such companies in King Island. According to Participant 7, foreign interests had acquired on the open market nearly half the Island farmland, aggregating small and medium-sized beef and dairy properties into extensive cattle enterprises and sending profits off-shore. One described this innovation in farming as a significant challenge for Island governing, a wait and see issue that the council was powerless to resist or directly resolve as it had no jurisdiction over matters of land tenure.

Property sales to MIS began to replace a traditional practice in which some farmers moved off the land when they reached retirement age, so giving other Islanders opportunity to buy in or to expand their current holdings. Participants regretted several outcomes: land prices that had risen beyond residents' reach, a now-redundant rural labour force and settlements, and distortion of the population profile, as mentioned previously. Now shut out from parts of their Island, some felt a sense of disenfranchisement (Participant 18), a loss of 'what the land means to us'. There was a further fear that MIS would attempt to convert their farm pastures to silviculture when the market became favourable, a move one predicted would spell the end of the land, pastoralism and thus the Island (Participant 7).

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<sup>40</sup> On 1 July 1998 the Australian Government's Managed Investments Act introduced the concept of the managed investment scheme (MIS) to which people may contribute finance to gain benefits including tax advantages.

Another global-local current observed to be reshaping King Island was a growing demand for coast land for recreational purposes. Some participants worried that entrepreneurs were promoting King Island as cheap coastal real estate for national developers. Internet technology and global networks enabled advertisement of the Island to all, everywhere, as a recreational heaven of ‘unique beach estates’ in a ‘yet to be discovered paradise’ (Vladi Private Islands 2006, np). Some participants feared damage to fragile coastal values and to Island quality of life; others predicted a reduction in traditional open access to the Island edge. Land use and tenure change are the subject of chapter six.

## Climate change

The fourth global-local change to concern participants involved aspects of climate. A less well-agreed challenge, there was contest as to whether atypical climate and weather were precursors of climate change—human-induced or otherwise—or simply natural climatic variation. However, many participants were seriously concerned about declining rainfall, falling water table and depleted fresh water supply, uncharacteristic of the rainy, windswept Island’s precipitation in all seasons and consequent pasture growth throughout the year. Several months prior to interviews there had been a drought, a ‘pretty savage dry period’ (Participant 9) and major shortage of cattle fodder. Lack of rainfall to fill dams and tanks increasingly forced Islanders to pump groundwater, whose capacity they did not know. In addition, crucial fresh water aquifers

were at future risk of saline infiltration from predicted sea-level rise. I discuss challenges of climate change and governance responses in chapter seven.

## Enfolding

In this chapter first I described three aspects of the research setting—King Island, its people, and its system of government—to emplace the reader within the Island context which is present from hereon.

Second, I showed that this specific setting contained examples of global-local change that would require governance for their management, thus enabling me to address my research aims. I offered two representations of King Island. One was an outsider's conventional portrait of King Island's physical and human geography. The other representation offered Islander understandings of their community and opportunities, attachment to Island place, innovativeness, responses to Island isolation, and future visions; in addition, participants depicted global-local change challenges in government, population, land use and climate.

The next chapter examines the first of these themes, changes in governing, key to successful management of the remaining three change cases.

## 4 Change in Governing

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*King Island Council Chambers, Currie, c.1930*  
*Source: State Library of Tasmania, Hobart*

*Island seat of governance –  
partnered government, private and civil sectors*



## Unfolding

In this chapter, I consider whether, how and to what extent modes of governing fail or succeed to support management of global-local challenges of change in King Island. To such ends, the chapter provides the first of four exemplars, change in governing, the ‘framework conditions’ of my proposition (Castree 2005, 543).

Initially, to assist an understanding of governing I refer to representative democracy, direct civic participatory democracy, relational place, and the neoliberal approach to governing. Second, I portray King Islanders’ exercise of a specific principle of good governance, namely direct public participation by dint of active citizenship, and consider the viewpoints held on this by citizenry and the local council (recall here I mean elected representatives and employees). A third task is to describe and interpret participant perceptions of the polarity and paradox of governing practices between the Tasmanian Government and King Islanders, and which have implications for local governance (by which I mean tripartite engagements across government and the private and civil sectors).

## Background

Politics is the activity by which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live (Heywood 2007). One of its contested forms, the democratic system of rule (Barnett 2008; Stoker 2006), involves decision-

making grounded in the principle of majority rule among adult citizens<sup>41</sup> and the right of each individual to nominate matters of concern (Bullock & Trombley 2000). One of democracy's multiple models and rival views is liberal democracy, a form grounded in Western Europe, Australasia and North America, whose meaning is strongly contested. For some liberal democracy means a system that balances the principle of limited government against the idea of popular consent (Heywood 2007). For others, liberal democracy is an unworkable oxymoron where,

on one side, we have the liberal tradition constituted by the rule of law, the defence of human rights, and the respect of individual liberty; on the other, the democratic tradition whose main ideas are those of equality, identity between governing and governed, and popular sovereignty. There is no necessary relation between these two distinct traditions (Mouffe 2000, 3).

This tension drives conflict and change: liberals and democrats constantly strive to interpret the ideology of liberal democracy in ways better suited to their respective aims. However, the incompatible logics of liberalism and democracy 'cannot be reconciled' beyond 'contingent hegemonic forms of stabilisation of their conflict' (Mouffe 2000, 5). Hence for the last three decades or so the 'form of stabilisation' that has emerged as the orthodox discourse of liberal democratic government is the ideology of neoliberalism (Lemos & Agrawal 2006), a subject I later revisit.

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<sup>41</sup> In Australia, voting is compulsory for every eligible Australian citizen who is 18 years or older.

The ideal of democracy is political equality (Barnett 2008; Heywood 2007) with political power distributed as widely and evenly as possible to all adult citizens who participate in making ‘collective decisions ... in matters that affect them’ (Stoker 2006, 8). Most commonly this participatory precept is achieved via the principle of representative democracy (Heywood 2007).<sup>42</sup> However, with all responsibility, decision-making and accountability vested in elected representatives, system inconsistencies surface: for example, once elected, a government does a great many things which it had not announced it would do, for it must respond to changing circumstances; as a body it may also be corrupted by the experience of power (Passmore 1981).

There is a vast literature on liberal democratic governance (Lemos & Agrawal 2006). Much of it demonstrates that, in view of various shortcomings, representative government has recently expanded from

old fashioned systems of representative democracy and  
bureaucratic-technocratic decision-making and policy  
implementation ... [to] more participative mechanisms of  
community consultation and involvement in which citizens are  
encouraged to take a more active, rather than passive, role in local  
politics (Raco & Flint 2001, 585).

Participation features in a language of expanded governance and in imperatives for statutory policymaking organisations (Pain & Francis 2003). It is one of a group of principles of good governance identified by the UNDP (1997) as a

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<sup>42</sup> Representative government is a form of indirect participation: citizens vote for decision-makers to act on their behalf; the majority vote prevails; and the elected are deemed accountable to the electors (Heywood 2007).

guide for sustainable development for those who govern place. Good governance does not guarantee effectiveness.<sup>43</sup> It is a practice that requires systems and processes to provide citizens with the right to participate in the exercise of political power (Marshall 2006), including planning, management and decision-making (Porter 2002).

Direct civic participation has numerous modes<sup>44</sup> (Davies et al. 2003; Dryzek 1992; Eckersley 1995; Jacobs 1995; Young 1996, 1999) and many significances: as avenues for members of political communities to claim rights to voice, difference and flourishing (Friedmann 1998); a means to engage people in decisions about their interests and significant places (Davies et al. 2003); an opportunity for institutional ‘window-dressing’; a means to neutralise dissident opinion; an extensive exercise of time and effort without guarantee of success because ‘it is still possible to win debates and lose in power play’ (Dryzek 1996, 121); and a process flawed by failure to acknowledge dimensions of power and antagonism and their ineradicable character (Mouffe 1999).

Devolution of political power, involved in transition from government to governance, is problematic. More than a simple top-down transmission of power, it requires intricate distributions of power and raises questions of representation, accountability, legitimacy, and contradictions (Allen 2004; Swyngedouw 2005). Communities may welcome open, deliberative

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<sup>43</sup> Defined as an ideal, good governance is approachable but not ultimately attainable (Amaladas & Joseph 2005), certainly not a given (Baldacchino 2005; Clarke 2001; O’Collins 2006; Rapaport 2006; Royle 2001; Watts 2009).

<sup>44</sup> These forms include collaborative planning, discursive democracy, radical planning, deliberative democracy, communicative action, communicative democracy, and agonistic democracy.

approaches to political, economic, social, and environmental planning and management, and greater voice in policy-making (Barnett 2007; Barnett & Scott 2007; Campbell 2006; Davies et al. 2003; Eckersley 1995; Heywood 2007; Lemos & Agrawal 2006; Porter 2002; Swyngedouw 2005). Enhanced opportunities for citizen participation may foster a culture of civic engagement (Lemos & Agrawal 2006; Raco & Flint 2001).

Yet the transition to governance is beset with problems. Substantial ‘democratic deficit’ is claimed by Swyngedouw (2005): centralised government is actually expanded rather than devolved.<sup>45</sup> Does the existence of direct participatory opportunity necessarily lead to its *exercise* by citizens and authorities at various scales? Is the notion of individual and collective ‘social capital’<sup>46</sup> recognised as a local government resource (Baldacchino 2005; Felt 2009)? How valued is the individual civic voice? (How) do local authorities employ governing mechanisms (Swyngedouw, 2005)? Does a local culture of civic engagement emerge? These questions inform analysis of the four change cases in this and the next three chapters.

In some cases participation merely ‘remains a buzzword’, rarely fully employed (Pain & Francis 2003, 48), or weakened by ‘an emerging, more problematic relationship between state and civil society’ (Swyngedouw 2005,

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<sup>45</sup> Swyngedouw (2005, 1999) asserts that ‘the internal power choreography of systems of governance-beyond-the-state is customarily led by coalitions of economic, socio-cultural or political élites ... new constellations of governance articulated via a maze of opaque networks, fuzzy institutional arrangements, ill-defined responsibilities ... the state plays a pivotal and often autocratic role in transferring competencies and in arranging these new networked forms of governance’.

<sup>46</sup> Felt (2009, 152) considers that this factor is ‘recognised increasingly as a potentially important contributor to local social and economic development’ but that relatively little attention has been paid to what promotes its creation or mobilisation in support of specific development practices.

2000), a relationship seen to be ‘increasingly strained and detached’ (Raco & Flint 2001, 586), because the success of civic engagement may depend on

the willingness of more powerful individuals or organizations to acknowledge the need for change, or for that matter the emergent data itself, especially where it is critical of their own organizational processes and practices (Pain & Francis 2003, 52).

To what extent do ordinary citizens individually and collectively recognise, value, accept and exercise expanded democratic opportunities of governance? While Brown (2005) reports an Australian trend since the mid-1990s towards increased citizen, community and market engagement in regional decision-making, conversely others voice concerns about declining status of ‘active citizenship’<sup>47</sup> (Armstrong & Stratford 2009; Dean 1999; Marshall 2006; Raco & Flint 2001; Stoker 2006; Swyngedouw 2005). Nevertheless,

ultimately, democracy must involve citizens in more than simply selecting leaders to govern them. It must be about the capacity of citizens to engage in and influence policy debates and outcomes (Stoker 2006, 22),

yet,

many individuals and social groups have fully or partially ‘opted out’ of political participation and have chosen other forms of political action or plain rejection (Swyngedouw 2005, 2000).

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<sup>47</sup> By active citizenship is meant direct contribution to local politics through participatory democratic forms.

Numerous scholars consider civic participation limited, declining or inconstant in society (Barnett 2004; Brown 2005; Marston & Mitchell 2004; Raco & Flint 2001; Stoker 2006; Swyngedouw 2005). Its shortfalls are partly bedded in a ‘sense of disenchantment and divorce from politics that pervades ... democracies’ (Stoker 2006, 14) and in a ‘decay of democratic trust ... widespread civic disengagement and the withering of social capital’ (Barnett 2004, 58; see also Passmore 1981). Such factors were neatly pinpointed by a correspondent to an Australian mainland newspaper who was very concerned that

our near inertia of today as compared with 40 years ago, as we face threats of pollution, climate change and population, seems to show that we seem to have lost that collective will that once helped us to achieve the seemingly impossible. Maybe it’s time to reclaim our ambition (Field 2009, 12).

One Australian survey has found local residents the least represented and most difficult group with whom to establish meaningful ongoing contact (Cuthill 2001). Thinly-spread, often ‘semi-detached, occasionally assertive citizens’ (Stoker 2006, 87) typify the civic disengagement that stamps western liberal democratic rule (Dean 1999; Stoker 2006). Inflaming the situation are disparate doctrines such as liberal individualism and radical democracy (Heywood 2007; Marston & Mitchell 2004). These ideologies offer citizen choices between

liberal individualism<sup>48</sup> and self-interest, or radical democracy<sup>49</sup> for the ‘common good’, so that the mismatched dual logics of liberal democracy tend to direct how (and if) ‘ordinary’ people contribute to political decision-making as ‘active citizens’<sup>50</sup> involved in political matters (Dean 1999, 161). Useful models of factors held to influence citizen engagement include those circulated by Cuthill (2001) and Stoker (2000).<sup>51</sup>

Effective civic involvement extends beyond mere opportunity and capacity: it requires conscious action. Each citizen in some way has the potential to be an initiator, planner and advocate for his or her community (Cuthill 2001).

However, Allen (2004, 20) points out the fallacy of conflating the *possession* of power and its *exercise*, which are treated as if one and the same, with power considered as an entity ‘capable of being marshalled and wielded at will’.

There is no automatic ‘flow-on’: to the contrary, much of politics involves the ‘don’t cares’ on a particular issue versus the ‘care-a-lots’ who are directly affected (Stoker 2006, 6)—a case of the ‘silent majority and the screaming minority’ (Streeten 1998, 357).

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<sup>48</sup> ‘Liberal individualism’ holds that the purpose of democracy is to establish, through civic participation, a framework of laws within which people may conduct their *own* affairs and private interests; fear of democracy may be present and they may reject direct or participatory forms of democracy (Heywood 2007).

<sup>49</sup> ‘Radical democracy’ promotes democracy as a general principle that applies to all areas of social existence; individual and community destinies are seen to be strongly linked; people are considered to have a basic right to participate in the making of any decisions that affect their lives, and do so through the collective process of democracy (Heywood 2007).

<sup>50</sup> Peak bodies such as the Australian Local Government Association describe active citizenship as the non-discriminatory participation of all citizens in creating democratic communities which share power (Cuthill 2001).

<sup>51</sup> Stoker’s (2006) five-point CLEAR model: ‘Can do—the resources and knowledge to participate; Like to—a sense of attachment that reinforces participation; Enabled to—a set of supporting civic institutions that makes participation possible; Asked to—mobilized through direct invitation from public authorities or community organizations; and finally, Responded to—visible evidence that citizen views have been considered by public authorities and those engaged more regularly in the political process’.



A further challenge for civic engagement is that the citizen body does not endure unchanged through time and across place; rather it is dynamic, non-linear, elastic, able to ‘expand or contract in different moments’ and ‘is often under construction’, responding to large and small economic, social and cultural processes and movements (Marston & Mitchell 2004, 110). Indeed, the meshed associations, loyalties and motivations between and among citizens, places, contexts and networks of interaction require much better understanding (Raco & Flint 2001). Other concerns regarding civic engagement include the individual’s attitude towards responsibilities of citizenship—as Miller and Rose (1990, 18) reflect, does the citizen accept or reject the notion that governing is ‘a personal matter’ that operates through the people?

## Of the influence of elsewhere

The geography of relational place defines the activities and responsibilities of any government (Amin 2004; Howitt 1998, 2002; McGuirk 1997; Meadowcroft 2002; Stratford 2004). The meaning of place itself resides in social, political, economic and historical contexts (Hubbard et al. 2002); all places are relational in the sense that they are interconnected on global, national, state, regional and local scales (Australian Government 2007b). Remoteness cannot shield places from global influences, for place is in flux and jurisdictional boundaries are entirely open and permeable (Allen & Massey 1995; Casey 1997; Felt 2009; Hubbard et al. 2002; McCall 1996, 2002; Stratford 2004), their shape often determined from far beyond (Allen &

Massey 1995; Villamil 1977) as I further illustrate in chapter six in regard to the impact of neoliberalism.

Thus the global is as much a context as the many local contexts that comprise it (Castree 2005; McDowell 1999). Local governments increasingly experience external effects of different strengths and durations which flow in from all scales; the institutional arena is now shared with non-government organisations, multi-national enterprises, and other national and supranational organisations. Places are now defined by sets of social relations found at a range of interconnecting scales (Malpas & Wickham 1997; Stratford 2006c). Partnerships are one such example, central mechanisms in the shift to local governance (DPAC 2011b; Geddes 2005). Considering place in relational terms reveals that parent governments may experience trouble responding appropriately at other scales (Meadowcroft 2002); there is widespread criticism of the ‘short-termism’ built into present-day politics, and preoccupation with immediate issues while decision-makers rarely think beyond the next election (Meadowcroft 2002).

Understanding the governance of King Island necessarily requires a multi-scalar perspective. Of three aspects of scale—size, level and relation—scale as relation has not been well-recognised (Howitt 1998). However, its use to explore an island’s spatial relationships within and across a diversity of scales will provide meaningful context for a consideration of local governance (Malpas & Wickham 1997; Stratford 2006a). Relational webs are also basic considerations when exploring complex geographies such as those including

King Island, with its ‘double insularity’ in relation to two mainlands (Hache 1998, 65).

Allen (2004, 21) points out that people continue to assume that centralised governing capabilities still prevail despite recognition of a more diverse redistribution of power between institutions and across the scales of geographical activity. As a result, citizens ‘succumb to an inflated sense of power’s reach across the landscape’, believing that power is a set of capabilities which someone, somewhere possesses. For this reason, people in dependent island territories seem caught between two opposing pressures (Bartmann 1988; Warrington & Milne 2007; Watts 2009), demanding to share benefits available in the parent state while deploying their geographical separateness, sometimes opposing state decision-makers who fail to recognise that islands ‘are not simply miniature continents’ to which scaled-down continental solutions can be applied (Nunn 2004, 319), and perhaps partly motivated by the notion of subsidiarity<sup>52</sup> (Baldacchino et al. 2009; Lipton et al. 2009). Apart from relational place, a second contextual thread from elsewhere is the impact upon governing of the ideology and application of neoliberalism (Beer et al. 2005; Geddes 2005).

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<sup>52</sup> The concept maintains that decision-making and the resources to implement decisions should be located at the lowest geographic level ‘for the best possible governance and outcomes’ (Baldacchino et al. 2009, 6); thus local governments ‘are critical elements in ... subsidiarity’.

## Governing for change management

King Islanders are vested with decision-making authority to pursue the present and future wellbeing of their local government jurisdiction. As Lipton et al. (2009, 142) note,

The authority to make decisions on behalf of the local people is central to local governance. Issues regarding service delivery, community and economic development, and even the environment (among others) are largely local issues, requiring local solutions with the input and support of local residents.

Such decisions increasingly require consideration and management of impacts of global-local change. How well are King Islanders seen to be geared to governing for change management?

To gain insights on such matters I probed two distinct King Island perspectives—those of its institutional representatives and officials, and of ‘ordinary citizens’ in other Island spheres. First afield are the authorities.

### Council perspectives

Council pursues a five-year Strategic Plan and Annual Plan to satisfy citizens’ wishes, and accounts for its labours in a freely-available yearly report and public annual general meeting (LGAT 2006). There are additional regular public council meetings and workshops to consider specific Island issues, and individual Councillors are delegated to attend meetings involving local farming, health, fisheries, tourism, natural resources and other civic groups,

and relay Islanders' concerns to council. Councillors and professional staff seek to support the community in terms of leadership, service delivery and affordable infrastructure, advocacy of civic issues, development of the Island's full potential, and shared endeavour with other levels of government and organisations (King Island Council 2008a). During four-year terms (Tasmanian Electoral Commission 2009) the representative component of council—nine elected Councillors—develops and delivers policy assisted by four council professionals. Importantly, the corporate body is guided by 'conference with all our people on the Island' (Participant 7), consistent with the Tasmanian Government prescription that local governments provide citizens with meaningful consultation opportunities (DPAC 2009b).

The requirement to be consulted and to participate may be easier to state than to achieve. According to Lipton et al. (2009) councils are closer to residents than are larger governments. The latter, according to Dahl and Tufte (1973, 62), 'contribute to a sense of estrangement' between citizen and government, whereas local governments are better able to generate citizen participation. However, Richards (1982, 159) disputes this 'smallness equals greater opportunity' view; rather, smallness tends to assist better understanding of the political structure and individuals involved, 'but does not necessarily ensure greater participation'. Certainly, the assumed advantage of proximity of citizens and government does not generally apply to municipalities in Tasmania (DPAC 2009a) nor, it would seem, in King Island where some local government officials report a weak citizen response to council invitations to participate in certain forms of decision-making. It is possible that the

Tasmanian Government bears certain responsibility for this situation. Its statutory body, the Local Government Board, visited the Island in 2002 for a routine municipal review. In its report the Board entirely ignored the participatory principle of new governance, considering the ‘old government’ separation of council from community the operational mode:

A Council does not operate in a vacuum. It has opportunities to work with other Councils, the State Government and with other organisations [regional bodies, partnerships and so on] for the betterment of its community (Local Government Board 2003, 94).

General citizen detachment from and indifference to newer forms of participation appear prevalent, reported both on a broader geographical front (Barnett 2004), above, and among King Islanders (Hooper 1973).<sup>53</sup> By 2008, council was much concerned about citizen inclusion in decision-making: its annual report to King Islanders contained a new goal—to encourage community participation and consultation in policy-making (King Island Council 2008a).

Opening a matter for public consultation was not a straightforward matter (Participants 9, 20 & 27). First, it called for fine judgment and balance and might involve uncertainty. Second, numerous procedural and social curbs emerged at all stages of the undertaking. Prior to consultation, several dilemmas might arise. For example, one official (Participant 9) doubted

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<sup>53</sup> Hooper (1973, 130) comments of King Island in the past: ‘Interest in municipal affairs fluctuates: at the 1970 election, for instance, five candidates—four farmers and a mine superintendent—stood for the south ward, with one seat at stake, and two candidates for the north ward’. In 1971, on the other hand, elections were unnecessary as no retiring member was opposed.

whether advertising calls for comment in the local newspaper had much effect, whereas a second believed it to be effective because ‘nearly everyone on the Island’ read the local newspaper (Participant 18); a third believed newspaper advertisements needed to be supplemented by a householder mail-out (Participant 20). Yet another claimed the Island newspaper occasionally failed to print council press releases or publish them on time, and said that Islanders rarely read front page news, which featured political issues and governance strategies (Participant 27). One Island official reported a successful proactive, alternative approach for increasing civic participation that attracted to a forum an ‘excellent’ number of citizens from a range of groups,

but we did a fair bit of legwork leading up to it, were sure to give people plenty of time, sent letters out, sent information out, and then did follow-up contact and saw people in the streets, which gets a high level of response. Three or four of us took a role in getting as many people there as we could (Participant 24).

Another problem at this stage of the public participatory process was disagreement about how frequently council should call for civic input. One council employee considered that council overused the mechanism, and that Islanders were ‘community consulted-out ... there is so much of it on the Island’ (Participant 12), and cited recent requests concerning the Main Street makeover, three public workshops for the Integrated Centre project; meetings to discuss development of King Island branding; the Currie Harbour Strategic Plan which drew field naturalists, historians, Cultural Centre and tourism association representatives, local businesses and fishermen and was followed

by second and third meetings. All indicated a community where ‘not much happens just because council says so’ (Participant 12). However, an opposing view was that in fact council ‘does not consult a lot’ because it was mindful of ‘the dilemma that confronts all spheres of government’:

You may consult but no one will engage; and when you don’t [consult] you get crucified. The simple answer is that there are issues where you must; others where you could and should; and some where you should have (Participant 9).

Compounding this quandary was an ongoing transformation of the citizen body through time and across place, reshaping in response to large and small economic, social and cultural processes and movements (Marston & Mitchell 2004). Thus an ever-present problem for local authorities was the potential to misjudge elastic, difficult-to-read community sentiment. Note, for example, an apparently controversial development application where one officer was astonished at the lack of public reaction:

Regardless of whether [that development] is right or wrong I cannot believe, *cannot believe*, that *not one person* on this Island put in a representation to say ... that they don’t think a house should go next to a heritage lighthouse ... their icon. *They just let approval happen* ... Does silence mean agreement? Maybe they’re happy? (Participant 9; original emphasis).

According to Jacobs (1995, 65), the formal consultation mechanism chosen by council offers ‘both the forum and the means of implementation’ of citizen



involvement and governance outcomes. This advantage appeared largely lost in King Island due to the unpopularity of formal written submissions. In the experience of one authority, when council did employ this mechanism, ‘we get very little comment’. Such was the case when council made available to the public 70 copies of a major draft plan, and only two dozen were collected (Participant 27). The object of that consultation was to seek comment on a wide range of planning and development issues that touched all residents in some way: matters of coastal development, township enhancement, agricultural and industrial land protection, and development and environmental issues in sensitive coastal areas (Connell Wagner 2007). Of approximately 1,250 adults on the Island<sup>54</sup>, 14 (one per cent) submitted written comment, certainly fewer than officials had hoped for (Participant 27). The limited comment disadvantaged and disappointed those in council who considered that ‘what we’re doing has a big bearing on people’s lives’. This comparative public silence reinforces the view that governing practices can never be thought to achieve complete control over operations (Malpas & Wickham 1997). Further instances of partial, incomplete governing occur elsewhere in Tasmania (Jones 2004), as when citizens bypass the consultative process by directly lobbying their local Councillors to attend to a matter. A council officer considered this practice potentially risky because, if those Councillors do not respond, or if they misread the legislative or regulatory environment that applies, ‘you have

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<sup>54</sup> This figure is an estimate from the 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing Basic Community Profile for King Island LGA, and comprises the 1,280 people aged 20+, and an estimate of those aged over 18 from the 71 people enumerated as between 15-19 years of age (ABS 2006).

no comeback—[to be safe] you’ve got to be part of the [formal] process’  
(Participant 9).

Beyond these problems, post-consultation complications might also arise: reportedly, Island citizens would often complain *after* development had occurred, as in a case where

there was no comment [against a development application] so Councillors approved it. Well, you can’t go back and appeal a development two years after it was approved. You need to be conscious of when these developments are happening, and comment on them then (Participant 9).

The often protracted nature of the public consultation process was a second complication. For example, preparation of a recent draft policy was expected to take a mere three months (Participant 7) but extended to 16 months, more than a year beyond the allotted time-frame (Participant 27),<sup>55</sup> during which time its proposals circulated afar among four groups—a mainland Australian consultancy, Island citizens, council officers and Councillors. To ensure that Islanders would ‘own’ the policy, council required that 80 to 90 per cent of participating citizens should be satisfied with draft prescriptions (Participant 7).

Apart from noting that consultative silence was linked to matters of process, some officials looked more closely at the Island people themselves. Several thought King Island citizens generally complacent, satisfied, acquiescent,

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<sup>55</sup> This document, the King Island Strategy Plan, was initiated on 11 December, 2006 and its final draft completed seven months later on 30 July, 2007 (Connell Wagner 2007); the final document was adopted on 15 April, 2008 at the Ordinary Meeting of King Island Council (King Island Council 2008), 16 months after initiation.

unprotesting, compliant, submissive, resistant to change, prone to saddle council with all decision-making (Participant 27), wanting things but not taking ownership of issues (Participant 7), failing to ‘educate’ or advise Councillors if they thought them heading in the wrong direction. One view was that citizens did not often report complaints to council, preferred ‘politicking’ down the street or complained publicly, but did not attend council’s public meetings where prior written complaints were tabled. Authorities noted that non-attendance was a pattern considered typical of most Tasmanian municipalities (Participant 9). Some wondered if the system might be at fault: one official maintained that the three o’clock meeting time suited self-employed Councillors rather than citizens locked into employment hours:<sup>56</sup>

If you want to encourage community participation, you have to gear it toward the community generally. The majority of people have their leisure time from five o’clock onwards, when they’d have the choice of attending. If they cannot attend because of work commitments, basically they are debarred from participation in their local government (Participant 27).

Not all participants conceded these deficits. For one representative, decision-making was properly the province of Councillors, not the polity (Participant 30). Another representative considered constituents did in fact speak up (Participant 18), and that citizen silence simply signified that people were contented with matters. However, to a greater or lesser extent, the large

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<sup>56</sup> For a brief period following interviewing, council meeting times were altered to five o’clock, but soon returned to three o’clock.

majority of Councillors and officials confirmed scholarly assertions mentioned above that people elsewhere in the world were in general disinterested in active citizenship. Some King Islanders observed that civic disinterest confronted them in their official endeavours, and represented a governance challenge.

### Citizen perspectives

I turn from council's understandings of governance practices and difficulties to the perspectives of other participants deemed 'citizen' for the purposes of discussion in this section. How did members of this diverse group consider they and their neighbours contributed to governing practices, including those involving tripartite decision-making and engagement? While council was clear that its role was to lead the community and advocate Island needs (King Island Council 2003), new governance principles were intended to promote *interplay* of citizens and authorities in decisions for place-making, population strategies, land use and tenure, and climate change, among others. Were citizens interested in influencing policy debates and outcomes (Stoker 2006)? One resident considered King Islanders not sufficiently involved, recommended what was required, and appealed to the populace to become active citizens:

Council need to know what King Islanders want and don't want.

The mechanisms are there to be used, complaints and compliments can be registered easily at the Council and writing a letter is not a hard task. We need to realize the irreversible damage we are causing through inaction (King Island Courier 2008, 5).

Thus, the Island government experienced limitations in its reach towards ideal good governance. These limitations might suggest that King Islanders were, in certain ways, similar to people in democracies elsewhere. Citizens in other parts of Tasmania, Australia or more distant western democracies, in either metropolitan or rural settings, tended to avoid political decision-making, according to scholarly literature mentioned previously. Yet in other respects King Islanders were politically responsible citizens. Although voting is not necessarily the most appropriate or sole indicator of political participation (Dahl & Tufte 1973), King Island residents unquestionably supported the principle of indirect representative government: the municipality invariably provided one of the two or three best resident turnouts to its non-compulsory municipal elections (Tasmanian Electoral Commission 2005; Participant 9). King Islanders were also outstandingly energetic volunteers: during 2007 their small Island population held pride of place as the most active volunteering community in the whole of northwest Tasmania (Participant 24). Similarly, consistent with citizens' strong voting in local government elections, public meetings about Island 'issues' were reasonably well-attended. For example, a set of three consecutive gatherings during a single winter weekend in July 2009, to review a fauna species recovery plan, attracted a citizen cross-section of at least 70 people on each of two days and 90 or more on day three, numbers considered to represent a 'huge' turn-out for King Island (Hunter 2009, 1). Similarly, approximately 80 residents attended workshops in 2003 for a community visioning exercise, adjudged an excellent result, and there were 'good' audiences for other public issues meetings such as two climate change

information evenings in May 2007. Residents *were* concerned about certain Island issues. However, council's more formal participatory mechanisms appeared to lack general appeal. As I later show, among possible explanations for this tendency was a reported fear of community backlash if Islanders spoke out 'against' community members. Instead, some participants noted that people confided in others in the supermarkets or the tourism body, rather than commit their information to writing. In one such case, visitor feedback about apparently substandard accommodation was not followed up at the time because authorities considered 'it's just talk' until the details were offered in writing (Participant 8).

Participants noted apparent weaknesses in some aspects of participatory governance. For example, who was involved, and how? Was there 'meaningful' dialogue, or was one argument privileged? Two observations are instructive. First, in one consultative gathering 'the facilitators continually gave dissenters more chance to speak while those with information to share were not so readily called on' (Participant 5). In another forum, 'whoever in each group had the texta [pen/marker] was the person who had the ideas put forward' (Participant 25). These negative assessments conflicted with another's view that the second gathering was a 'very open forum for the community, who were certainly encouraged to give an opinion or even voice concerns' (Participant 27). Several citizens thought that democratic processes seemed highly contested and partial: one discovered that '*the intent* of such a meeting can be easily changed if not well run, and if people aren't clear at the start what it's about' (Participant 25). Another regretted that the same meeting was 'rushed

into': the lead-up was neither well-paced nor effectively presented to the community because it 'came straight on top' of another major consultation on a separate council project, which affected community representation. 'They did not get a lot of people there ... mostly the power-pushers ... A lot of people who should have been there weren't represented' (Participant 10).

Apart from unpopularity and shortcomings of consultative exercises, participants also mentioned unproductive citizen silences such as a failure to acknowledge or constructively critique the labours of elected representatives; and a near-deserted public gallery at council meetings. What accounted for such silences? Of several participant suggestions, one was that King Islanders were simply uninformed people who 'complain, assume, read a caption in the local paper and think they know everything about an issue or somebody told them so they take that as gospel' (Participant 3). Another thought Islanders 'bury their heads in the sand' about major issues such as climate change (Participant 15). One saw the people as 'part of a pervasive culture that accepted individual prejudice and justified institutional recriminations' (King Island Courier 2008, 5), a culture perhaps born of an 'overarching pressure for conformity' in a small polity (Richards 1982, 155).

Probing more deeply into the citizen mindset, Participant 10 regarded 'the cynicism factor' as a second possible explanation for disengagement, a response to King Island's 'extreme' remoteness. The thought here was that isolation stultified thought, decision-making and innovation at all levels; it manifested as failure to follow-through, and was driven by a 'why bother ... didn't work before, folds after a couple of years ... we don't need that idea

here' attitude (Participant 10). It is a view that echoes Stoker's (2006) observations that people may often find it difficult to think beyond their own experiences, in general dislike making a lot of effort for little reward, and offload responsibility onto others—a very common coping mechanism in political circumstances. According to Participant 10, the upshot was that excellent ideas 'get lost' in King Island and, although they were constantly heard about, it was uncertain if they would eventuate, in contrast to experience of communities elsewhere where proposals were reportedly followed through (Participant 27).

Is the expression of King Islanders' political voice linked to their society's small geographical scale? Research for political and government practice in small island states<sup>57</sup> identifies a characteristic paradox—an emphasis on conformity and compliance in regard to beliefs, values and aspirations on the one hand, and a deep factionalism expressed as personal, intense, emotionally charged differences present on certain occasions (Richards 1982). Such group conflicts are considered likely to be explosive, polarised and dangerous in small systems; coalitions 'spring up in response to a conflict and die out when it ends' (Dahl & Tufte 1973, 92). Indeed, small island societies may 'move from situations of harmony to conflict and/or vice versa, and on multiple levels of engagement' (Baldacchino 2012b, 110). For example, a participant described the eruption of such factionalism during an Island public meeting:

It was a 'dog's breakfast' ... a lot of people nearly stormed out. I nearly left at one point. I was so angry because

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<sup>57</sup> Richards (1982) conducted case studies of the Faroe Islands, Malta and the Isle of Man.



everybody was being shouted down by [a particular interest group]. The consultants did not have control of the meeting (Participant 10).

Similarly, in 2013 the debate over a proposal to construct a huge wind farm on the Island

has become very nasty, splitting up families and groups of friends ...there are situations where sons don't want [the development] but fathers do and so they are hardly talking (Twomey 2013, np).

As researchers suggest, in political communities of small islands, where existing harmoniously with others is of paramount importance, both friendships and enmities run deep and range over many aspects of life (Baldacchino 2012b; Richards 1982). In the face of these extremes, more than voice alone may be needed for exercising participatory rights: politics also requires that one listens (Stoker 2006) and that citizens, consultants and politicians attempt to understand and honour that requirement.

Apart from the influence of factors of conformity and factionalism on how people speak up and contribute to local decision-making, other characteristics of small systems may play a part. For example, scholars recognise that however small, communities tend to be dominated by an elite (Eckersley 1996) and that uneven power relations are significant in decision-making (McGuirk 2001). Certain privileged interest groups appear to participate more than others, dominate comment, and be better organised to press their demands on

government (Jones 2004). Public officials are reported to be much more responsive to such elites than to other citizens (American Political Science Association 2004). In King Island I experienced a pervasive ‘you’re not a local’ distinction drawn by certain Islanders who held that ‘newcomers’ (of 44 years’ residence, in one case) had less right to speak up than those longer connected to the Island. Lowenthal (2007, 209) detects similar friction in other islands, where ‘Incomers and visitors feel especially excluded because they cannot share islanders’ immersion in the past’. It could be said that these two sources of asymmetrical power relations—elitism and generationally-based rights of voice—had created an ‘us’ by the determination of a ‘them’ (Mouffe 1999). Some residents said that such distinctions meant that they kept their views on Island matters under wraps.

There is a possible further, related explanation for inactive citizenship in the mould of new governance. Scholars suggest that, in other small islands and rural areas, people find it difficult to maintain impersonal role relationships and impartiality (Baldacchino 2002; Lipton et al. 2009; O’Collins 2006; Péron 2004; Richards 1982); there are powerful and multiple social ties to be navigated. Activity fields overlap in a small society, as when people play different roles to the same audience through shared membership of organisations, peer groups, neighbourhoods, and family structures (Boissevain 1974). Individual networks are central to small island systems: people are in contact with each other and, through others’ contacts, with yet other residents. Small system networks facilitate the rapid transmission of information: any people with whom a resident has dealings also know everyone else, and can

exchange information about shared experiences, problems and acquaintances.

Some participants mentioned that in King Island an individual cannot take refuge in anonymity, except in regard to the Island newspaper which on occasion prints anonymous letters. However this advantage is offset by the openness of council's complaint and objection process, which does not conceal complainant identity.

In such societal webs, values are defined, transmitted and enforced (Bossevain 1969), and the approved norms or 'code' conformed to. Dahl and Tufte (1973, 92) find that motivation to conform is stronger in smaller systems than in larger ones; in small systems,

a higher percentage of the population adheres to a single code, the norms of the code are easily communicated by word and example, violations are visible, sanctions are easy to apply by means of both gross and subtle forms of social interaction, and avoidance of sanctions is difficult.

Some King Islanders thought that nonconformity might reap years of backlash: 'if you speak up [against a prevailing stance or another person, for example], there will be repercussions' (King Island Courier 2008, 5). Others insisted that residents had long memories about supposed injustices and were 'incredibly hostile' towards those who speak out, with the result that 'no one will speak up because you cannot get away from anybody here; you'll run into one of a whole lot of relatives, and your card is marked' (Participant 3). Apart from fear of retribution, there were further claimed barriers to speaking up: for example,

the very idea of being categorised as a serial complainant was unpalatable. Perhaps even more concerning was the long-term possibility that failure to speak out might become an inter-generational behaviour; already one resident found that ‘the young ones do have ideas but say they’re a bit afraid to take them outside the house because the older people wouldn’t know what they’re talking about’ (Participant 29). For whatever reason, citizens discovered and practised a looking outwards-looking inwards compromise that might typify island dwelling (Baldacchino 2004a; Clarke 2001; Péron 2004), a strategy for survival within a ‘complex mesh of relationships’ (Baldacchino 2002, 356), connecting with Island life yet isolating themselves when necessary, retreating inside self to survive (Participant 10). In Lowenthal’s (1988, 8) view, islanders need to find a balance, not allow personal needs to threaten collaborative needs, learn to co-exist—not necessarily ‘get along well’ but exist comfortably by keeping individualism at bay. Among King Islanders were those practising this strategy, as one explains:

I didn’t have a word to [council] about it ... no ... I suppose it was apathy on my part that I didn’t ... you tend to sort of live and let live ... it’s a different way of life and living ... you’ve got to live in harmony because it’s no good fighting with people in such a small place (Participant 14).

In the same vein, another reasoned: ‘Because you like to interact with people, you have to work together as a community ... if people have a comment or criticism, they are very reluctant to report it’. Did this apparent fear of speaking up, that embraced issues both small and large, inhibit potentially valuable input

about council's policies to counter growing global-local pressures? The King Island Mayor believed so, publicly stating that

if anyone needs to remedy a problem, they need to be prepared to stand up and be counted ... if we as members of our community are too scared to stand up for what we consider to be right, we may as well forget about the future well-being of our community (Arnold 2008, 7).

Beyond citizens' views of their own limited public involvement in governing, how did they regard the endeavours of the council? In first round interviews Councillors and officials earned praise from some participants for governing effectively, providing facilities and visible initiatives and working actively to meet the needs of Island and Islanders. Nor did such efforts by the King Island Council go unnoticed in mainland Tasmania:

At a time when there have been widely expressed concerns that many politicians are not listening hard enough to the wishes of the community, the approach of this Council is a heartening change ... (Nicklason 2007, 19).

Conversely, a number of participants claimed various deficits in council's governing practices. Some might argue that these shortfalls illustrate Malpas and Wickham's (1997) view that governance fails because it never has complete control over its operations and practices. Claims of governing deficit included slowness to develop and implement policies; a sometimes difficult body to work with; operational and resourcing weaknesses; complacency

among some representatives; some Councillors who ‘very successfully play politics’ to the detriment of some citizens; council intolerance of certain minorities and minority views; failure to make hard decisions in difficult and divisive matters; being afraid to say ‘no’ to constituents; allowing public opinion and global pressures to tie their hands; inability to strike a policy balance between development and natural values conservation; inappropriate governance for change; and sometimes lack of equity. Several others mistrusted local planning processes that they viewed as heavy-handed, inconsistent and producing unfair decisions. One constituent lacked faith in the quality of Councillors’ knowledge of issues, while another stated, ‘I do not feel represented by any of the Councillors; I regard myself as a community member but at the moment there is no Councillor I would consider discussing issues with’. Such perceptions suggest lack of trust or faith in council. Certainly, according to various participants, it would seem that Islanders did not always report their concerns to council, and thus lost opportunities to have concerns seen to.

Interview rounds two and three opened other windows on citizen regard of council. Two particular matters of governance process emerged. The first concerned channels of communication employed to achieve ‘meaningful consultation’. As Anckar (2002) notes, understanding is facilitated if and when open channels of communication exist between those who govern and those who are governed. In King Island, officials advertised calls for public input via multiple modes. There is no Island radio station thus the main avenues used were the local newspaper, municipal Internet website, and regular council

newsletter mail-outs to residents (King Island Council 2008b). Some residents saw that council invited citizen input, but claimed that bureaucrats and Councillors did not properly promote this need. Some council personnel questioned the effectiveness of the local newspaper after a resident, who subsequently tendered a written submission, reported being unable to find the relevant advertisement in the newspaper. Two others had problems accessing material for comment placed on the council website. Another was unaware of any call for comment on the draft development plan referred to previously, despite a whole-of-front-page article in the King Island Courier that detailed where copies could be obtained, and the invitation to comment (Figure 4.1):



Figure 4.1 Fully-detailed front-page announcement of council's draft development plan, and clear request for public comment  
Source: Author

According to a local government officer, experience showed that ‘in any community if you do something they’ll say, “I didn’t know about that”, which is their defence for not doing anything about it’. Similarly, Scott (1989, 33–4) suggests that ‘feigned ignorance’ of issues is an individual, everyday form of political resistance, a citizen ‘technique of first resort’ which council personnel might well take into further consideration. In any event, only a handful of participants reported obtaining copies of the document provided for citizen awareness and comment. Only one participant reported sending a submission to council. Two local non-government organisations were also contacted but made no submission, deeming it necessary to remain ‘apolitical’. Another participant expressed lack of trust in council, cynical of the outcome of a development application to which ‘there’s no point objecting because the application will go through anyway’ (Participant 21).

Beyond perceptions of communication deficits was the matter of council’s public persona. Certain participants suggested that some citizens had neither accepted nor adapted to council’s transformation from a once more intimate set-up of ‘nine councillors–council clerk–two office staff’ into today’s 20-complement corporation: nine Councillors, general manager, three directors of services and seven office staff (King Island Council 2008a). This size increase was council’s necessary adjustment to its increased responsibilities; central governments everywhere downloaded functions to lowest tiers as part of ‘new governance’ (Freshwater & Tomblin 2009). Yet for some residents, ‘new governance’ appeared to have become too sophisticated, bureaucratic,



complex, or multi-layered, the consequence being apparent shrinkage of public contact and input. The formal consultative mechanism had in part succeeded a previous, perhaps more intimate, style of ‘fact-finding’. Two thought that Councillors ‘talk about the need to develop awareness in the community, but they don’t go out into the community and develop awareness’. Previously, informal oral exchanges were valued;<sup>58</sup> ‘if you wanted information from the people, Councillors went around and saw people ... that’s the only way you’ll get [input] now because today most people don’t have the time to write submissions’ (Participant 14). One can appreciate why such is the case: Participant 11, for example, estimated that comment for larger documents required six to eight hours’ work:

First you have to read it, then think about it, then you have to write the submission [so you require] knowledge, stamina, ability to express oneself, ability to speak and write ‘government-speak’, know how to write a concise letter or submission.

In the case of documents such as the 120-page King Island Strategy Plan 2007, ‘there are not many people who can take such a document apart and write a submission which actually makes sense’ (Participant 11); a consultation period of a mere few weeks was considered very short for the size of the task. It would seem that King Islanders did not generally find the more formal mechanisms of new governance particularly appealing, and instead continued to follow the network-based patterns of the past. This preference echoes

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<sup>58</sup> See Bethel (2002) and Skinner (2002a; 2002b) for studies on preferred formal and informal, oral and written modes of communication among islanders.

Villamil's (1977) observation that, in a closed island system, the capacity to absorb further inputs (such as King Island's 'new' governance) is restricted; any extra input will be a *substitute* for something already in the island (such as King Island's 'old' government processes). Villamil adds that a government of a closed system must carefully regulate what is introduced into it, if the society is to escape adverse impacts. As previously mentioned, some ordinary citizens continued to use old pathways of communication; they continued to contact Councillors about issues rather than follow council's preference that residents refer to it instead. As Dahl and Tufte (1973) suggest, the smaller the scale of society, the more likely it is that first, leaders gain their information about citizen wants by *direct* communication and observation, and second, that ordinary citizens choose to deal *directly* with a top leader.

Thus far, discussion has illustrated how participants pinpointed certain major deficits in governing practice across council and citizenry. I now expand my focus to a more powerful place to King Island's south, turning from the local to ponder relational place and the mechanisms of government that tether King Island to Tasmania.

## An Island of an island

Once remote at the fingertips of the globe (Boyles & Hay 2005), King Island is increasingly buffeted by powerful forces from all spatial scales. The Island does not stand alone (Local Government Board 2003), being relatively secure as an entity of its parent jurisdiction, the Tasmanian Government (Figure 4.2). It is an alliance of consequence: the Tasmanian Government is the principal

administrative authority for King Islanders and nourishes their educational, energy, health, transport, development, agricultural, housing, police, justice and service systems.



Figure 4.2 Governance at a distance: Parliament House, Hobart,  
seat of the Tasmanian Government  
Source: Chuq 2006

The King Island Council acknowledged its role to provide for the health, safety and welfare of its citizens, represent their interests and purvey peace, order and good government (Local Government Association of Tasmania 2006).

Simultaneously it recognised that it could not function in isolation but must pursue opportunities in order to obtain best results for the Island by actively networking face-to-face with Tasmanian Government personnel (Participant 7). Necessary to this purpose was local confidence that the central authority would exercise good governance, recognising the reciprocity involved: active citizen participation from ‘below’ and active institutional participation from ‘above’. Yet, as I have described, practise of the former was considered a pale shadow of the participatory ideal upon which the legitimacy of the political system

rests (Stoker 2006). How responsive and cogent, then, was the jurisdictional parent within its inter-scalar relationship with King Island?

Certain challenges were clearly evident in the state-local government relationship. One was the need for constant adjustment to Tasmanian Government alterations to the operation of local government. For example, the scope of local government responsibility was expanded following Tasmanian Government review in 2002 of the Local Government Act 1993 (DPAC 2009a).<sup>59</sup> The review revealed changes in local government since the Act's inception, to which the Tasmanian Government responded by introducing innovative partnership agreements with local governments to foster closer working relationships between local and state government spheres (DPAC 2009b).<sup>60</sup> Another form of governance created in 1993 provided Tasmanian Government support at a subaltern level through the Cradle Coast Authority. This body has a regional partnership with the State; in turn by means of its municipal affiliation with Cradle Coast Authority, King Island is able to tap into Authority initiatives that have the potential to benefit the Island (King Island Council 2004). Such arrangements illustrate the resourcefulness of *island* jurisdiction (Baldacchino 2010, 33ff). However, the apparently closer working relationship between parent and dependant expected to result from these forms of governance is not a given nor yet, according to some, a 'reality'. One participant pointed out that, after five years, King Island's 2003 bilateral

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<sup>59</sup> Changes included introduction of a code of conduct for Councillors, and a redefinition of their roles and that of the General Manager (DPAC 2009a).

<sup>60</sup> The 2003 Tasmanian Government-King Island Council partnership was designed to lead to improved economic opportunities and a greater sense of community wellbeing for the 'small and isolated community', and was welcomed by the King Island Council.

agreement with the Tasmanian Government has not yet shown significant results despite Tasmanian Government assertions to the contrary (Tourism Tasmania Corporate 2009). The tribulations of governance across these two scales of relational place do not end here.

## Dichotomy and paradox

Governance across relational place is a complex and contested affair.

According to Malpas and Wickham (1997), each governing project, activity or practice involves a number of actors, objects and a particular setting within which each practice operates. They add that in such circumstances a governing operation cannot be expected to address all possible aspects of an issue, nor completely control all the elements that comprise it; in fact, governing acts against itself, and thus against success (Malpas & Wickham 1997). The case of King Island is additionally complex as it involves practices of governing between an ‘island *of* an island’, and that Island having *two* influential mainlands).<sup>61</sup> Not surprisingly, the narratives of numerous King Islanders exuded criticism of an often disappointing, uncomfortable association with the Tasmanian Government. One legacy of the island of an island relationship was problems in policy, resourcing and good governance inherited from the larger entity, with dire consequences for some King Islanders, as shown below.

According to Meadowcroft (2002) it may be difficult for parent governments to respond appropriately at other scales. This assertion was borne out in King Island’s case in the following ways. First, ‘main’ denotes ‘leading, foremost,

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<sup>61</sup> The latter two circumstances bear further investigation, but are not the province of this present study.

chief, principal, important, vital, necessary, indispensable and essential' (Christ 1961, 178). These are customarily attributes of a mainland. It may be the case that new governance has softened the crisp assurance of that status, and that in attempting to provide for Islander needs via partnerships and regional alliances, Tasmanian Government personnel were yet adjusting to the rhythms of such modes of governing. There is continual expansion and contraction of governance in Australia and elsewhere as government shifts from central to local focus (Geddes 2005); or reverses that shift (Swyngedouw 2005). Thus, excessive centralism may sap morale at local level and destroy innovation and experimentation (Geddes 2005). Other forms of transference of powers may be experienced<sup>62</sup>; or hybrid modes of governing may be adopted (Genoff 2005; Lemos & Agrawal 2006; Reddel 2005) and produce a 'fuzzy terrain ... neither state nor private' (Swyngedouw 2005, 1996).

Second, each governmental entity attempts to adjust to change, on occasion withdrawing from the other entity, at other times linking with it. Thus, actions of the Tasmanian Government were considered vacillation between neglect and autocracy, as I show below. King Islanders also wavered between twin demands of internal and external place, between self and other. They attempted on one hand to remain as separate and independent as possible and 'resist being managed' (Clarke 2001, 236) and, on the other, to cling to the power of jurisdictional parent for political advantage and a portion of the fruits disbursed

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<sup>62</sup> For example, in 2008 Tasmanian Parliamentary legislation divested responsibility for water and sewerage provision from local government and from July 2009 transferred it to three new regionally based corporations independently run but owned by local municipalities.

to mainland Tasmanians.<sup>63, 64</sup> Each entity's response fuelled mutual discomfort in governance. As yet there seems no middle path for either entity; some would caution that King Islanders at least, 'cannot have it both ways'.

How significant for King Island's governance are such instabilities of relational place? Is there a discernible impact? Consider eight participants' praise for past State Governments' support of Island education and health; and that others acknowledged that islands are expensive for parent governments to support. Yet close reading of transcripts reveals a polarity in Tasmanian modes of administering King Island: a sagging warp of political and institutional neglect (out of sight, out of mind), diametrically opposed by a weft of policies that appear rigidly oriented or inappropriately applied (one size fits all).

Short-termism was held partly responsible for the first problem, out of sight, out of mind neglect: Participant 30 considered that 'in actual fact King Island doesn't fare terribly well from the state because we just haven't got enough votes here; they look after health and education pretty well, but nothing much else'. Some participants decried mainland Tasmanian institutional aloofness and condemned politicians' and agency officials' lack of personal contact as an ongoing problem where 'it's impossible to get anyone [in Government] to come here automatically from Tasmania' (Participant 10). There was resentment that 'Tasmania forgets us; we get left out of things, time and time

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<sup>63</sup> Hence there have been periods when Islanders have agitated for political independence from Tasmania following frustration at state failure to 'properly assist' the Island in crises. Several participants advocated that Australia adopt a two-tier, national-local government format, or that King Island secede from Tasmania.

<sup>64</sup> This latter desire is unsurprising for, according to scholars, most small island dependencies 'cannot even entertain the thought of anything resembling self-reliance' (Baldacchino & Greenwood 1998, 13), a sentiment observed in citizens in other dependent island territories (Bartmann 1988; Watts 2009).

again’ (Participant 21); ‘we’re not fully owned by Tasmania—we’re not included’ (Participant 10) and, as previously mentioned, there was suspicion that the Tasmanian Government had different rules of engagement for King Island (Participants 25 & 26). Good governance principles were found wanting. For example, consider reported instances of Tasmanian Government unresponsiveness to various citizen communications or a Government department’s ‘unexplainable red tape’, which delayed a vital project (King Island Council 2007, 2). There were also apparent examples of protracted delay to resolve what are considered exorbitant Island electricity costs, which council has been pursuing with the parent body. Participant 9 described that process as taking, to date, ‘four years—that’s not acceptable—all you do is get through one process and then they put you in another process’. Finally, there were alleged occurrences of lengthy delays in signing off an eleven year old draft Tasmanian Government management plan to protect the Island’s largest conservation area and fragile Ramsar site. The local newspaper editions of 2005–6 were peppered with Islander charges of Tasmanian Government bureaucratic bungling, procrastination, indecision, discriminatory application of legislation, and unacceptably high electricity prices. These and following perceptions of deficient multi-tier governing exemplify the partial, incomplete character of governing in both local and relational place, and how, as a consequence, any attempt to govern ‘always stands within the shadow of failure’, according to Malpas and Wickham (1997, 92).

Council found it necessary to complain about cost-shifting, pointing out to the Tasmanian Government that state and Australian Governments have devolved



significant issues to local government in terms of planning, environment, public health, financial reporting and public infrastructure, without any increase in recurrent funding. The Tasmanian Parliament recorded an Opposition party reminder that King Islanders were Tasmanians and should be treated in the same way as mainland Tasmanians in regard to power prices (King Island Courier 2005a). There were further participant perceptions of neglect and of apparent contempt by mainland bodies: threadbare professional attention from some Tasmanian Government agencies, and a draft environmental management plan written in 1998 without consulting Islanders (Participants 5 & 26). Government unresponsiveness rankled: ‘We say it all the time but nothing changes’ (Participant 10).

The factor of geographical smallness was associated with perceptions of jurisdictional disregard of King Island. As Royle (2001) points out, it might be thought that small offshore islands dependent on a larger political unit would be of minor concern in decision-making. Some Islanders agree that they

have no voting power because we’re such a small part of the electorate. King Island’s issues would never be addressed because of our [minimal] demographic power ... most politicians would have a handle on issues at least, but what can they do about them (Participant 25)?

State political and bureaucratic sensitivity to locals’ circumstances and desires might temper institutional unresponsiveness but, according to participant input,

authorities did not seem (able) to honour their political contract to listen and respond.

‘One size fits all’ was the second limb of the Tasmanian Government’s dichotomous modes of governing in King Island. It was the extreme opposite of ‘out of sight, out of mind’ neglectful governing referred to above. How significant was its use to the wellbeing of King Islanders? One size fits all involved use of blanket ‘second-hand’ policies that were not necessarily appropriate to Island circumstances. Islands are not merely ‘miniature continents’ to which scaled-down continental solutions can be applied (Nunn 2004, 319). On the contrary, as Lipton et al. (2009) note, the idiosyncratic challenges and possibilities present in small rural municipalities differentiate their governance needs from those of larger centres, and call for separate strategies and agendas. One citizen detected resentment among King Islanders who perceived Big Brother coming in from Hobart to take control. ‘Control’ in this sense included imposition of one size fits all policies designed for mainland Tasmania—document-oriented, anticipatory planning processes that elsewhere Sandercock (1998) identifies as prosaic and uninspired, and the practices of administrative rationalism (Dryzek 2005) where planners seek no local input, rather skirting social, environmental, economic and political differences between jurisdictional mainland and Island constituency. Scholars note similar cases elsewhere of island places that become victims of central government efforts to render them more like mainland communities (O’Collins, 2006; Péron 2004; Royle, 2001). Participants looked askance at

two inappropriate one size fits all Tasmanian Government policy overlays in King Island, which I detail here.

King Islanders, the ‘locals’, best understood their place. They considered that ‘some policies which are good for mainland Tasmania don’t always work over here’ (Sayer 2006, 15) because ‘King Island is unique and cannot be bundled up with statistics based on Tasmania’ (King Island Courier 2006a, 13). The Tasmanian Government assured its constituents that it was committed to ‘community participation in the decision-making processes’ (Tasmanian Government 2006, 22) as explained in Goal 8 of its ‘Tasmania *Together* 2020’ vision. However, participant experiences described above reveal little Island-mainland integration in decision-making for longstanding Island issues. Community participation was seen to have been largely ignored when the Tasmanian Government conducted a low-key, abbreviated consultation (Participant 9), then in May 2003 introduced, without exemption, legislation that prohibited clearance of threatened native Tasmanian vegetation communities (Resource Planning and Development Commission 2006 [now Tasmanian Planning Commission]). Some residents resented what they considered very unjust repercussions: land became a liability because the Tasmanian Government had failed to understand that certain protected vegetation on its mainland was not endangered in the Island, yet vegetation clearance for farming purposes was prohibited there, the Island not treated as a unique case. This strategy provoked anger and resulted in some people attempting ‘to beat the system’. Limited amendment of the policy a long four years later somewhat eased injustices for some landowners but other

individuals remained severely affected. Tasmanian Government forethought and adequate prior consultation of locals, two measures of good governance, would have averted considerable inequity and injustice.

However, participants reported persistence of the one size fits all approach in the imposition of the Protection of Agricultural Land (PAL) Policy 2007, which some Islanders claimed to be a grave threat to the Island's farmland (discussed in greater detail in chapter six). Tasmanian authorities, with an apparent eye to neoliberal market possibilities, withdrew earlier legislation that protected King Island farmland from silviculture, a use prohibited by the King Island planning scheme. Local government has been in dispute with the Tasmanian Government in a protracted, costly legal contest to protect the very core of its existence—finite pasture land and its prime beef industry. The parent body appeared unaware of the significance to Islanders of the land and their long-standing pastoral tradition; indeed the Tasmanian Government was seen to be

hell-bent on driving forestry ... it's got to the point where they pay lip service to the fact that we've got world-wide recognition of our products, but they couldn't care less if we were an unfortunate casualty of their policy (Participant 7).

Potential consequences were feared: 'If the Tasmanian Government wins, we're going to turn the lights out because the King Island [food] brand will disappear' (Participant 7). For some participants, such manifestations of mainland Tasmanian neglect and autocracy described above evidenced a

deficient Tasmanian Government mindset where decision-makers operated in ignorance of the Island. One participant keenly felt the dilemma of government at a distance:

The problem is we have people making decisions, considering reports, who have probably never been here, never appreciated living here ... there's no comprehension of some of those issues that we face day-to-day because they don't experience it in their daily life. There's no appreciation of the differences we face in these remote places (Participant 9).

The foregoing narratives may suggest several things: that people in power generate tensions within governance relationships, lose sight of good governance principles, sidestep dialogue that emphasises human worth and interconnection, fail to consider the authenticity of the other (local) person, and are unwilling to work with and through conflict.

## Enfolding

This chapter has examined the first of four change cases intended to show whether, how and to what extent modes of governing fail or succeed to support management of global-local change in King Island.

First I contextualised the theme of governance: I explored concepts significant for governance such as representative democracy, direct participatory democracy and the citizen, relational place, and the neoliberal approach to governance. I then examined modes of governing in King Island to address an

aspect of my research proposition that local governance may succeed or fail for reasons that somehow are embedded in local (island) place. To examine how responsive King Islanders were in terms of governance, I considered whether and how factors of local place were implicated in governing outcomes. Some local government participants saw deficits in active citizenship: unpopularity of the consultative mechanism of written submissions; council uncertainty as to how often and on what issues to consult; the protracted nature of the process; and the altering character of the Island population. On the other hand, citizen participants pinpointed poorly managed public meetings; asymmetrical power relations within the local social structure; certain dissatisfaction with a devolved, corporate mode of governing compared with the previous style; and a general reluctance of residents to step outside the protection afforded by anonymity and declare personal views in such a small society.

I also examined participant views of governing by the Tasmanian Government: Participants saw several major flaws in its jurisdictional parenting, not least frustrating counter-productive swings between local and central policy foci as the state body itself attempted to adjust to new governance partnerships at various scales. Tasmanian government 'blanket' policies were seen to be inappropriately imposed upon the Island, while urgent needs of local place were repeatedly ignored at the policy level. In addition, there has been no hint of a middle way between Islanders' [paradoxical] resistance to being managed by mainland Tasmania and remaining as independent as possible, yet all the while clinging to parent jurisdictional power for political advantage and

material benefits. In short, while such deficits in governing might be influenced by aspects of local (island) place, more general reasons are also influential.

Governing practices affect the capacity of people to create and maintain a flourishing economy and ecology, community wellbeing and good governance (Armstrong & Stratford 2009). How are these King Islander portraits of local and multi-tier governing practices significant for Islander management of global-local changes? Of value are two criteria—partiality and contest (Malpas and Wickham 1997) mentioned previously, that I use here to frame local understandings of the King Island governance experience:

First, in one sense, governing practices in King Island might be termed ‘partial’—incomplete. On the one hand, it might be asserted that the mechanism of participatory governance did not successfully support management of global-local change in King Island. In general, Islanders did not warm to the formal, written mode of input into decision-making desired by council. Yet, on the other hand, while formal consultation largely fell by the wayside, Islanders undoubtedly continued to embrace their more familiar, tried-and-true technology of governing. The framework of Island democracy endured; as shown, Islanders were not thought to have abrogated their democratic responsibilities. One might speculate on any number of reasons for Islanders’ incomplete use of formal written submissions—perhaps self-interest, a conservative population, dislike of formal processes, corporatisation, social elitism, a felt need to conform to the general viewpoint, or fear of consequences for speaking up. Governing in King Island might also be thought partial in a second sense. As Malpas and Wickham (1997, 93) assert, the

separate governing acts that constitute a whole project (such as a local one) may provide ‘instances of (limited) success’. However, when that project is viewed across the passage of time, and against the *larger* frameworks of governance (across multiple jurisdictions), failure seems clear: it is not possible for governing to address *every* element of a project.

As Malpas and Wickham (1997) further contend, governance is also an essentially contested activity. As witnessed in this change case, external governing practices interfered with, restricted and overlapped the governing efforts involved in specific Island practices and/or operations. Contest was visible in the conflicting approaches of over-responsiveness and of neglect of the King Island municipality by the Tasmanian Government.

Watts (2000) asserts that there is no single universal best model of governance applicable to all islands for dealing effectively with their internal and external problems. The prognosis of Malpas and Wickham (1997) is that, regardless of *which* model is used, governing will proceed beneath the shadow of eventual failure unless people learn to acknowledge the innate limits of governance.

Perhaps Villamil (1977) offers the clearest governance brief: that while many of the external forces that penetrate small islands cannot be halted, small island governments must determine how to govern so that change does not disrupt the local society. In the next three chapters I discuss further global-local change issues that challenge Island governance.



## 5 Change in Population

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*Anzac Day Memorial Service, Currie, King Island, 2007*

*'At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,  
we will remember them', those who departed for war.*

*Since then, another half legion or more—  
civilians this time—have farewelled this shore.*

## Unfolding

The collective noun ‘population’ is defined as ‘the total number of persons inhabiting a country, town, or any district or area’ (Delbridge et al. 2004, 1345). As population-related problems emerge globally, regionally and locally, they are made visible by means of demography, the study of population change and characteristics. This approach holds that change in size and composition of population arises from the interplay of three processes: fertility, mortality, and inward and outward migration (Kraly 2005). Each of these processes is involved in endless interactions with social, economic, political and environmental changes. Population has a dual interaction with change, sometimes acting as a trigger, at other times as a consequence. In this chapter, I focus upon certain island population matters referred to by King Island participants: migration, ageing, rurality and remoteness.

I take as my context population decline and imbalance in age structure. By reference to Islander perceptions I aim first to document interactions among islands, islanders and change, and the historical and contemporary growth and decline of the King Island population; then, to describe and analyse how migration, ageing, rurality and remoteness colour such decline. I inspect the nature and intensity of participants’ concern for their shrinking numbers; ask how population decline is a governance concern; and report on council’s and citizens’ approaches to and solutions for this Island dilemma. In this manner I aim to find whether, how and to what extent modes of governing fail or succeed to support management of major change.

## The island-islander association

Three things are clear. First, nearly one tenth of Earth's people are island dwellers (Baldacchino 2007b). Second, global-local change stamps the lives of those islanders wherever they are located. Third, an island population is numerically unstable, elastic. Over time Island populations shrink and expand in response to economic, environmental and social change that must always be front-stage in acts of planning.

This numerical variability is cyclic. In general terms, like the island tidal sequence, islander numbers burgeon and fall away and rise again. There are three surges. The first occurs when people settle on islands, in some cases millennia ago and in others by means of colonisation. In yet other instances, those involving terra nullius,<sup>65</sup> oecumene's reach expands when sovereign states assist immigrants to trial the extent to which available resources on islands are exploitable (Hooper 1973; Potts et al. 2006). The second surge is an historically and geographically choreographed inflow-outflow, rarely in balance. A stronger inflow sees a burgeoning island population from outside and later within, reaching towards a peak; pioneers from alien places may claim the island as their preserve and establish themselves across generations. In time, settlements develop, industries boom, employment opportunities multiply and diversify, services expand, markets flourish, commerce prospers, demographic patterns attain symmetry, population increases. Most likely such an island society will have developed or inherited a system of rule, of

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<sup>65</sup> This term denotes land freely available for occupation and exploitation (Attard 2008).

governance. However, it may be that the system is sternly challenged by sets of tensions (Warrington & Milne 2007)—perhaps between islander autonomy and dependence, or resource conservation and development, or population inflow and egress. Managing harmful change may be rendered difficult (Stoker 2006) by multiple competing interests and ontologies, and ‘unfolding and constantly changing’ practices of citizenship among its population (Marston & Mitchell 2004, 101).<sup>66</sup> Islanders may be unable to respond appropriately to such impacts. Global currents may reduce a peak population. Vigorous economic, social, environmental and political influences may foreshadow both new opportunity and major challenge for an island and its dependants.

In islands so affected, a third surge may follow—population drift that outstrips replacements (Connell 2007; Royle 2003). Major social pressure may follow: there are fewer individuals to share the community load; one by one, services are withdrawn, infrastructure frays. The island may ‘limp along’, its future clouded by the possibility of becoming an unpeopled island, its heritage no longer lived (Royle 2003). Place reverts to mere space until a point when change initiates a new cycle, another person-island relationship, and re-entry into oecumene.

What aspirations drive islanders? The physical fabric nourishes them as they make the most of what the world has lent them (Terrell 2004) either by means of prudent stewardship or by ignoring environmental responsibilities and wounding place (Addison 1995; Barnes et al. 2002; Nunn 2004; Rapaport

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<sup>66</sup> Marston and Mitchell (2004, 101) refer, in more general terms, to the state ‘composed of innumerable pieces and players ... often locked in internal, intra-state struggles between different bureaucratic factions operating under the same rubric’.

2006). In western culture the contest between ‘a dominant tradition that places humanity at war with other life, and a minority tradition that lodges humanity harmoniously within it’ (Hay 2002a, 13–14) is played out with intensity in islands. Parent administrative systems past and present partly engineer this tradition—external imperial, national and state regimes—whose values, ideals and imperatives flourish in contemporary ideologies. Embedded within one such—present-day neoliberalism—is the mantra of social inclusion,<sup>67</sup> a virtual ‘recipe’ for being ‘raptured out of the mundane into redeemed life’ (Haraway 1996, 365) by which means government re-moulds citizens as ‘effective’ participants in all aspects of society. The ideal composite citizen will consume, produce, politically engage and socially interact; will possess personal capacity, self-confidence and individual resilience to make the most of opportunities, choices and options in life (DPAC 2008b).

No less is expected of an island citizen tied to a dominant mainland. The Australian Government, which took social inclusion unto itself in 2007 (DPAC 2008a), considers that its citizens value six opportunities: to work, access the services they need, connect with family and friends, become involved in their local community, have the skills to deal with crises when these might arise, and have the chance to make their voices heard (DPAC 2008a; 2008b). In turn, the subnational Tasmanian Government patterns itself upon the social inclusion

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<sup>67</sup> Social inclusion is a relatively new concept in social policy. Modern usage of the term ‘social exclusion’, first applied in the 1980s in France, referred to a range of marginalised groups that had remained unaffected by traditional policy interventions. The concepts of social exclusion and its opposite, social inclusion have since been adopted in varying degrees in individual member states of the European Union (EU), most notably the United Kingdom and Ireland and, since 2007, in Australia. The current Tasmanian Government claims that social inclusion theory is gaining wider acceptance because it promotes individual and community ownership of circumstances by attributing rights and responsibilities and recognising the link between contributing to society, self-value and positive social engagement (DPAC 2008a).

notion in its drive for a thriving Tasmania (DPAC 2008b),<sup>68</sup> asserting too that the entire community must be actively involved, speak up about services needed, and make best use of available opportunities. Its map of the ideal quality of life for constituents, including its offshore islanders, plots communities of active, confident, supported, connected individuals and families. Indeed, the Tasmanian Government entertains high hopes for its communities. They are to possess a sense of vitality which attracts and retains people; foster new businesses and social enterprises that create job opportunities; provide spaces and activities where people can share knowledge and ideas; and generate improved health and job search capabilities. However, while the Tasmanian Government expects this vision to stimulate economic activity (DPAC 2008a; 2008b), I later show that participants are sharply divided as to availability of opportunities in their Island.

At present, the parent government would adjudge King Islanders dutiful constituents, people who contribute significantly to the economy of Tasmania. They husband a fifth of the State's beef cattle; and from cheeses, seafood, beef and bull kelp generate six per cent of Tasmanian export income, 'not bad for a population of only 1,700 people. All these achievements are made without the Tungsten Mine at Grassy, which has the proven potential to deliver another \$25m–\$30m a year in further export dollars' (King Island Council 2002, 5).

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<sup>68</sup> The Tasmanian Government created a special social inclusion unit to develop a 'fairer Tasmania' wherein all citizens are to have access to the 'personal, social, economic and civic resources and relationships that make life healthy, productive and happy' (DPAC 2008a, 2008b, np).

## A populace gathers

### Genesis

Understanding present changes in population requires an historical bedrock, for from such a base the cyclical nature of population decline in King Island becomes clear. There was no contemporary indigenous presence when Europeans arrived (Edgecombe 2004; Hooper 1973; Khamis 2007; Parks & Wildlife Service 2000; Potts et al. 2006). Throughout the Island's two centuries of occupation, numbers have fluctuated according to geography, the political economy and climate. Despite several settlement surges spanning a century from 1888, decades separate initial contact and the first of these booms. Thus person-place interaction first occurred when late eighteenth century mariners in sailing vessels sighted the Island, after which sealers<sup>69</sup> smartly set up operations on its coasts (Kostoglou 2005) and curious European nations with imperial designs saw to its exploration and charting (Figure 5.1).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Hunters of fur and elephant seals (sea elephants) whose blubber was rendered down for oil for cooking, lamps and fabric softener (Khamis 2007); the sealing industry in Australasian waters commenced in Bass Strait in 1798, was short-lived and had largely collapsed by 1810 (Parks & Wildlife Service Tasmania 2006).

<sup>70</sup> For example, in 1802 British naval commander Matthew Flinders explored Bass Strait for the colonial government of New South Wales, landed on the Island (Potts et al. 2006) and charted its 'dangerous rocky shore' and fresh water sources (Figure 5.1).

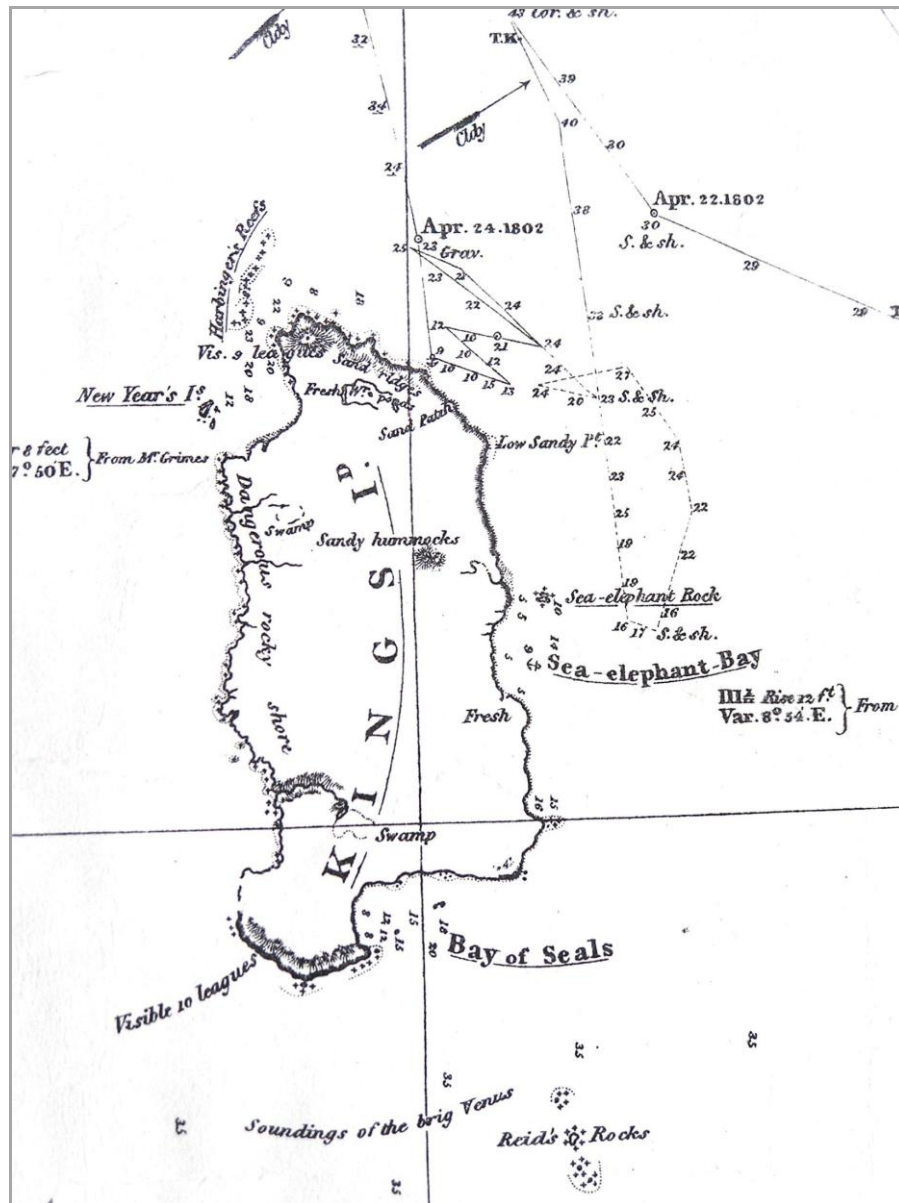


Figure 5.1 King Island, 'Chart of Terra Australis ...  
M. Flinders, Commander of HM Sloop *Investigator* 1798, 1802 & 1803'  
Source: Royal Society Collection, Morris Miller Library, University of Tasmania, Hobart

The year 1887 was a King Island population watershed when, 60 years after the first audit, the Tasmanian Government again surveyed the Island, this time with favourable results that stimulated settlement and promoted population



growth (Local Government Board 2003).<sup>71</sup> In the following year the Tasmanian Government opened King Island to small-scale selectors, triggering a land boom that launched the second phase of the cycle of Island settlement and population expansion (Figure 5.2).

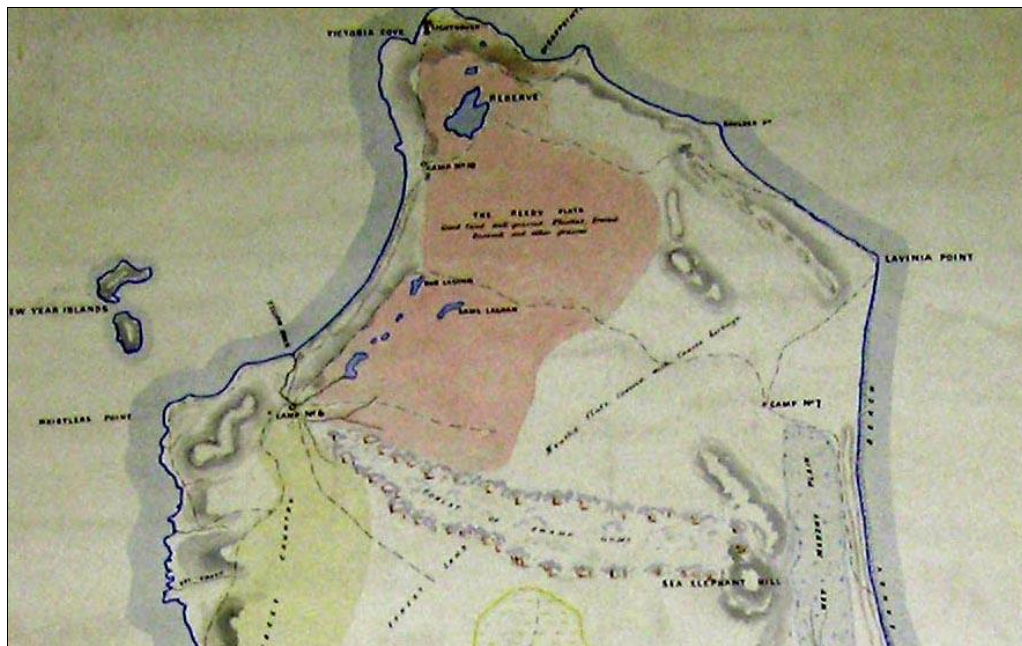


Figure 5.2 Section of Tasmanian Government survey of King Island,  
10 August 1887  
Source: Office of the Surveyor General, Hobart

<sup>71</sup> No doubt Tasmanian decision-makers were heartened by the highly successful settler economy established in both mainlands by the 1890s (Attard 2008), and by this period of prosperity (Felmingham 2005; Fenton 1884), accompanied by demand ‘for arable and grazable land’ in Tasmania, where there was much ‘inaccessible mountain and forest country’ (Hooper 1973, 79) and where more than one-third its total acreage was already ‘occupied either by purchase or rental’ (Fenton 1884, 432).

Development accelerated (Vokes 2005) with provision of services,<sup>72</sup> survey of the first township, initial land sales, extension of farming to five localities, and discovery of scheelite-bearing quartz. The first newspapers revealed a burgeoning economy and society, and gave pride of place to announcements of births of Islander sons and daughters (Figure 5.3). A Road Trust was elected to promote intra-Island access (Edgecombe 2004), followed by the formation of the first local government council (Vokes 2005).

Within two decades, 92 per cent of available land in King Island was taken up,<sup>73</sup> and the population able to mount its first agricultural show and stock sale (Khamis 2007). Pioneer settlers continued to arrive from Tasmania,<sup>74</sup> Victoria<sup>75</sup> and overseas, chiefly England,<sup>76</sup> a considerable proportion of this last category without agricultural experience and resources (Crespin 1903; Crisp 2006a). New settlers selected crown land, and laid the foundation for successive generations. Some became disillusioned by difficulties and the sheer hard work involved; their selections were resumed by the government (Edgecombe 2004, 97).

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<sup>72</sup> Examples include a resident postmaster and police constable, store, hotel, and King Island Dairy.

<sup>73</sup> Between 1892–98, dwellings increased fourfold to accommodate 155 residents; by 1910 the number had mushroomed to 778 (Edgecombe 2004).

<sup>74</sup> Hooper (1973, 118) suggests that the ‘early permanent settlers’ were Tasmanians, while many subsequent arrivals, including soldier-settlers, were Victorians.

<sup>75</sup> The State of Victoria, nearest Australian mainland state.

<sup>76</sup> The latter undertook a perilous and often harrowing twenty-one thousand kilometre (thirteen thousand mile) sea passage direct from the ‘old country’ to Australia to take up land in promise of a richer life (Charlwood 1981).

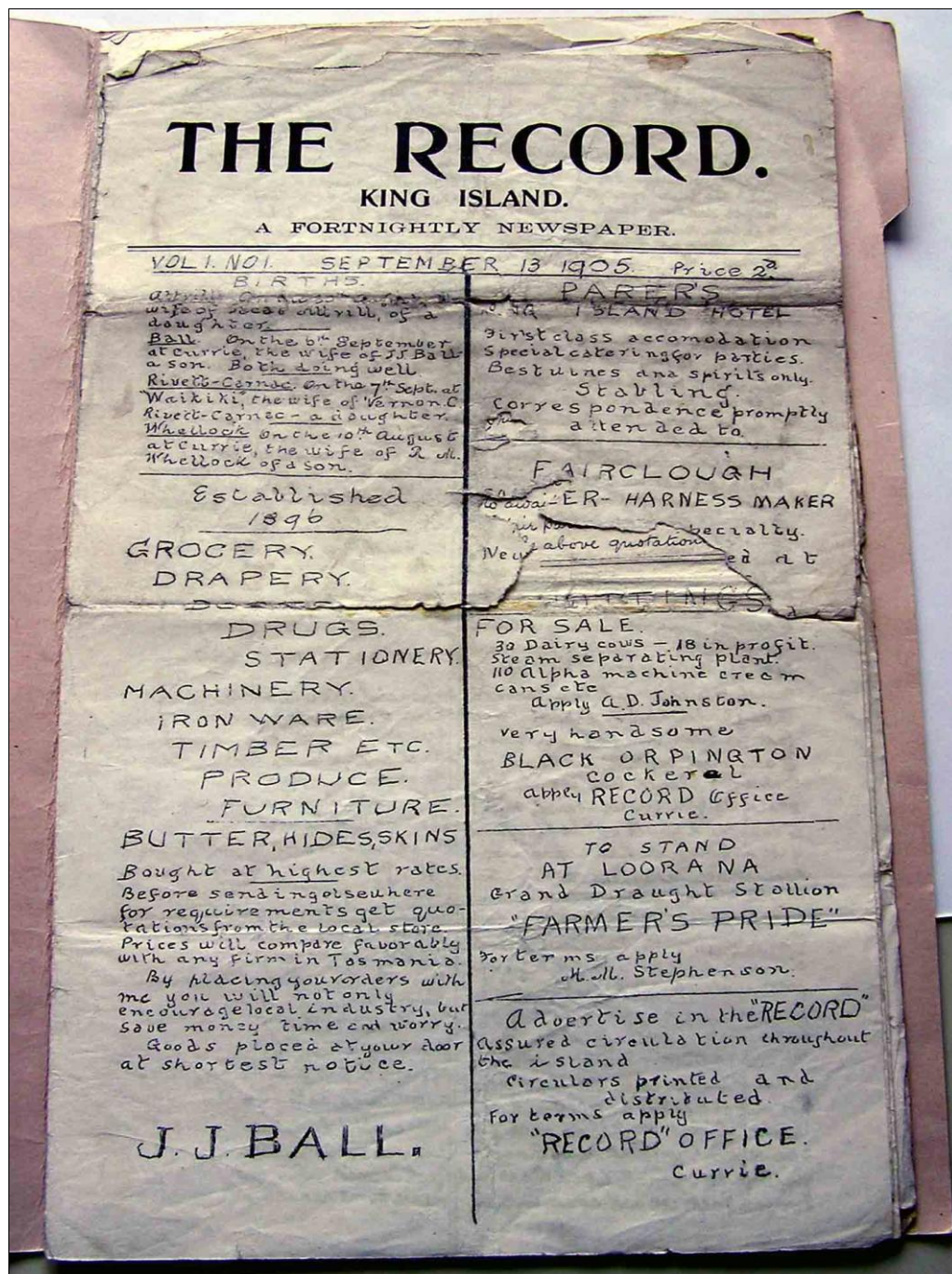


Figure 5.3 Handwritten and duplicated first edition of *The Record*, one of the earliest King Island newspapers, 13 September 1905  
Source: King Island Arts Council, Historical Society Museum, Currie, King Island

Small settlements grew throughout the Island in the following decades. Rising above alternating waves of economic vigour and exigency,<sup>77</sup> the people of King Island gradually established and consolidated marine and terrestrial extractive industries,<sup>78</sup> employment opportunities and services, commerce and markets. Two world wars absorbed a large number of Islanders into the defence forces,<sup>79</sup> followed by a dramatic reshaping of local agriculture and rural population when each conflict was followed by an Australian Government national soldier-settler scheme.

Returned servicemen, often novice farmers, competed for King Island land blocks by ballot and were required to extensively clear them and develop productive farms. However, Island population sank once again: holdings were too small to be viable and there was a very high ‘walkout rate’ (Khamis 2007, 19). Yet, the King Island soldier-settler scheme persisted from the First World War to the next despite the devastating Great Depression in the interim.

Population continued to take root. True to the Island cyclic rhythm, numbers rose and fell in the short term but increased overall until the last decade of the twentieth century. The peak of more than 3,200 recorded in the 1970s (Participant 30) then crashed to almost half, 1,797 residents by 1996, principally due to the 1990 scheelite mine closure (Bradshaw & Williams

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<sup>77</sup> Particularly there was a disastrous national depression 1890–96 (Clark 1982) and two twentieth century global conflicts that dampened King Island’s agricultural development and production.

<sup>78</sup> The discovery of scheelite-bearing quartz in 1904 was the basis of seven decades’ fluctuating extraction, its importance rising in periods of war. Depressed world prices closed the mine in 1990. It was a major employer; in the 1970s workers numbered 400 out of a population of 3,000 (Hooper 1973).

<sup>79</sup> A greater percentage of King Island’s population enlisted for service in both world wars than anywhere else in Australia, depleting the male labour force (King Island Courier 2006c, 1).

1999). Islander exodus continues: in the period 2001 to 2006, 36 people left the Island, and population declined by 1.2 per cent, compared to Tasmanian mainland growth of 3.8 per cent (Demographic Change Advisory Council 2008a). As mentioned elsewhere, a further gap appeared in the populace when in 2012 overseas owners of the Island abattoir closed it down, casting approximately 100 workers onto the job market. Twelve months later, it remains idle.

## Present-day rhythms

Two tides, the flood and ebb, order population numbers and demography in present day King Island. Of the two forces, the weaker flood tide supplements long-term ‘traditional’ Islander pioneer and soldier settler descendants, and numerous other settlers mentioned above, by means of three main currents. The first bears process workers and sometimes their families from northwest Tasmania<sup>80</sup> to fill some of nearly one hundred positions in the local abattoir, and a further number at the cheese factory.<sup>81</sup> A second current deposits, since the mid-1990s, incomers associated with offshore agribusiness investment enterprises, the subject of chapter six. The third current brings ‘sea-changers’ who, it will be recalled, relocate from urban places to the Australian coast and trigger real estate development there. Since the 1990s a number have discovered King Island (Participant 17); long-term Islanders observe among

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<sup>80</sup> Subsequently a number arrived from further afield including South Korea. The Mayor encouraged Islanders to welcome and embrace newcomers ‘irrespective of their colour, class or creed’ (King Island Council 2011, 4).

<sup>81</sup> Local people usually comprised this labour force until patterns of land use changed and numbers departed the Island (chapter six).

newcomers an asymmetry of purpose, some choosing permanent residency, and others an irregular, seasonal sojourn in their alternative King Island homes.

With the drawing-in of new population to a small island, uncertainties seep into the planning and management arenas of governance (King Island Council 2003). Will people stay—will the ‘transients’, the process workers, feel accepted, establish long-term tenure, support the local economy; and more sea-changers relocate than revisit? Will the arrivals shore up the economy—patronise local enterprises rather than bring in their needs from both mainlands? Will each group attach to the Island place, deem it ‘home’, become ‘active citizens’, participate in matters of Island need? Will they respect the ‘King Island Way’, the official statement of identity that King Island Council is at pains to ‘preserve and improve’? Will they make a gentle entry into their new society or will they ‘dominate, direct and tell’? And above all: might employment opportunities really be boosted in the Island? Will there be enough jobs generated for intending permanent residents, including the much-needed young family groups to refresh the present ‘apple core’ shape that expresses King Island’s demographic imbalance? As Villamil (1977) contends, if small-scale territories adopt technologies from abroad, they face significant problems: how will they deal with new global economic activities to generate local employment in the quantity and kinds needed? According to the International Labour Organisation (2012, 9), at the start of 2012 the world faced ‘widespread decent work [full-time and long-term] deficits’, a global backlog of 200 million unemployed, and a worsening outlook for global job creation.



## Uncertainties ...

The ebb-tide, second of King Island's population tides, expands such unknowns. Today there are 'many people coming and going, more now than before' (Participant 9). But the 'going' is currently the stronger stream; departing residents outstrip replacements (ABS 2005). Considerable emigration carries away King Islanders of all ages. Among the outward-bound are older 'traditional' Islanders including retiree farming families and also families 'we wouldn't have expected to leave' (Participant 9) who may have spent all or the best part of a lifetime on the Island. There are elderly Islanders moving offshore to life with mainland relatives or conveniently closer specialist medical services. There are some, more often middle-aged, sometimes disillusioned, sometimes affected by changed land use (a process referred to in chapter six); one participant knows that 'a big percentage were on farms [but] family groups have not only left the land, they've left the Island (Participant 14). Then there are the young, as King Island shares with islands everywhere the perennial problem of annually departing senior students and career-bent school leavers, an outflow particularly keenly felt on islands (Cambers 2006; Clarke 2001; Hay 2006; Jackson 2006). Opportunities for most young Islanders lie beyond the horizon, and so 'the young people are moving off ... a lot have to get off the Island ... the factory and abattoir absorb some but nothing like when we had the mine going' (Participant 14). The 2003 community Future Search Conference expressed confidence that Island children 'offer hope for the future', exemplified by some who went away then 'made the right decision about coming home' to buy existing businesses or start their own, or go into

farming or market gardening (Campbell & Jones 2003, 57). However, as one participant pointed out,

It's all very well to talk about young people coming back and starting up things, but you'd need an awful lot of them to make a difference. Those people [who do return] are largely just replacing someone who was here before or someone who has got too old to carry on; often a continuation of an existing business. I can't think of a lot of new enterprises that have started here in the last few years (Participant 30).

A participant who did employ a returned young person in a solid professional position found there is a 'bigger picture' to respect:

I can't blame young \_\_\_\_\_ who [came back and] has worked with us [but is departing again]. Young people should not stagnate in this place for the rest of their life. They should get experience, and then if they want to come back ... But if they want success in their profession, they should be looking at larger areas (Participant 7).

The challenge occupies island scholars who ponder how to overcome the possibility that young emigrants may never find a reason to come back or to make a constructive contribution to island life from afar (Hay 2006). This exodus will not be easily stemmed: a number of participants are unable to identify opportunities for germinal careers—apprenticeships, professional



traineeships, businesses openings—for school leavers<sup>82</sup> or returning Island youth and few, if any, opportunities for creating jobs here (Participant 25).<sup>83</sup> The lucrative crayfishing industry, now streamlined, provides few openings for youth and others (Participant 23);<sup>84</sup> nor can young Islanders look any longer to farms for full-time employment, an issue I touch upon in chapter six. School-aged children bound for Tasmanian or Australian mainland boarding schools, and young adults commencing or consolidating career paths only available off-island, are customarily part of the ebb-tide. For families, the options involved in this annual Island ritual of separation and reunion are ‘often agonising’ (Stephen 1988, 3). Some families join the ebb-tide: according to one, ‘It’s no good wanting to follow your children but so many now seem to want to do that, seem to feel it’s better for them and their children to go’ (Participant 14).

## Four contexts of King Island population change

### Migration

Migration is a paradoxical force that boosts and depletes island populations. I use the term to denote both permanent and regular longer-term geographic mobility (such as annual absence for education). The above historical account of King Island’s settlement reveals Islander numbers over time as a human tide

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<sup>82</sup> Only seven of 20 secondary school graduates in 2006 planned to remain on the Island, the majority opting to leave King Island to continue their education on the Tasmanian mainland (McFadzean 2006). Online learning may change such patterns.

<sup>83</sup> Noteworthy exceptions are the launch of small businesses by returning young islanders, and a professional position secured in local government (Participants 3, 9 & 30).

<sup>84</sup> Since introduction of the Tasmanian Government’s quota system for lobster (cray) fishing, the local fleet has shrunk from a peak 28 vessels to 15 (Participant 23).

that flows in and drains away in response to demand and supply of its economic and social resources.

Scholars make clear the significance of migration for island places: migration characterises islands (Connell 2007), is a major preoccupation of island states (McCall 1994), and involves them in a ‘generally intense engagement’ with the process of inflow-outflow (King 2009, 53). In some places the core concern is that inflow is exceeded by emigration that sometimes is precipitated by quality of life factors which vary among age and other groupings (Bryden 2009).

These triggers may include lack of educational and career opportunities, non-affordable housing, depleted labour pool associated with aggregation of farmland, high energy and transport costs, inadequate access to health and related care services, and remoteness from family and friends (Bryden 2005; Forrest 2005a). At a time when falling birth rates deprive Australian regions of population replenishment (Forth and Howell 2005), the solution is sought in pairing stepped-up immigration and reduced departures of permanent residents.

For some King Islanders, migration is a fact of life within which emigration is a concerning trend. Yet the term ‘migrate’ is not evident in the Island lexicon. Movement is relative to Island place rather than to people. New arrivals are ‘outsiders’, people ‘from away’. The reverse act of departure is softened: families, young people and elderly ‘leave’ the Island, ‘go off-Island’, ‘go away’, fade into elsewhere, but never refer to the act as migration. Perhaps non-use of the term represents a verbal insulation against the worst-case scenario of eventual depopulation, a strategy similar to retention of a sign near Currie Airport that resolutely but erroneously announces a population of 2,000,

now diminished. And perhaps, to remove or update this landmark would be to acknowledge or emphasise the Island's predicament; better that it remain and be interpreted as an objective. But census statistics for Island emigration are less accommodating. They expose harsh companion realities: year by year a gradual emptying, a gradual ageing (ABS 2001, 2004, 2008; Demographic Change Advisory Council 2008a, 2008b). When 1,750 Islanders saw in the new millennium, numerical decline was well-established. Now, 'the community is half what it used to be' (King Island Council 2002). The drift is gradual but persistent. It defies the overall Tasmanian growth rate (ABS 2009), languishing at an estimated 1,716 in 2008 (ABS 2008). The die appears cast: King Island has among the strongest predicted decreases in Tasmania for 1999–2021 (ABS 2001), firing the community crusade to double its residents by 2013 (Campbell & Jones 2003).

## Ageing

Consider ageing—a second population strand interwoven with emigration. Those who depart King Island leave behind an increasingly older populace.<sup>85</sup> Age structure is an important demographic characteristic of a population, for residents at both ends of the age spectrum must be supported by members of the labour force<sup>86</sup> (Kraly 2005; Péron 2004). Population changes in island places reflect subnational, national and global trends in age structure. A global

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<sup>85</sup> A parallel is New Zealand, whose workforce is losing people aged 20 to 40 due mainly to emigration, a process that is driving up the median age of the population (Jackson 2010).

<sup>86</sup> In Australia, three gross cohorts of population have traditionally been considered as children [0–14], labour force [15–64] and aged [65+]. This division may be rendered anachronistic by changes to legislation dismissing an age of retirement for many sectors of the economy, and enforced compulsory education and/or training to Grade 12 or matriculation—typically 17 to 18 years of age.

template of falling fertility rates now patterns much of the developed world (Kraly 2005) so that population growth currently depends primarily on immigration. Australia, Tasmania and King Island are part of this global pattern—less children and more older persons (ABS 2008). Tasmanian residents are an extreme case: declining fertility rates, increased life expectancy and interstate migration place them as the oldest Australian age group, and ageing at a faster than national rate. For King Islanders the case is more extreme, both in numerical and structural terms (ABS 2008). As a population characteristic, ageing is a legacy of emigration and particularly of departures by the young. Population mean and median ages rise, there is a decline in the proportion of children, and a rise in the proportion of retirees (Alston 2004b; Bryden 2009; Eversole & Martin 2005). Rising annually, the median age of King Islanders is now 41.3 years, noticeably exceeding 38.1 years for Tasmania as a whole (ABS 2008).

Concerns about the impact of migration upon population numbers and age structure typically prioritise the permanent departure of youth (Bryden 2009). The flocking of young people to Elsewhere's opportunity and novelty is striking. For example, between 1996 and 2006 there was a remarkable exodus from Tasmania to other states of 20 per cent of young working age persons of reproductive age, seeking employment opportunities and wider horizons (ABS 2008). Undeniably such an outflow leaves social and economic impacts. Youth departure enervates some Australian communities (Forth & Howell 2005):

unevenly represented age groups<sup>87</sup> mean fewer volunteers to share the community task load; the local economy is negatively affected, for it is the young who buy houses and white-ware, take out first mortgages, produce future local citizens (Jackson 2010), contribute taxes that support the dependant old and young, pay municipal rates that supply services, and affirm and confirm the *raison d'être* of community endeavour. Unfortunately, governance is sometimes found wanting, as when the Tasmanian Government compounded economic and social impacts inherited from youth emigration by recruiting numbers of *older* people to share its support services, already strained by an ageing population—a caution that those wishing to reverse outflow and attract various age cohorts might usefully attend to. As Bryden (2009, 54) notes, rural areas need to be very clear on what groups to attract if their population is to remain viable in the future. Further, Baldacchino (2005, 37–8) advises that Islanders:

only have ourselves to blame if we cannot hold onto, or bring back, those who have left, usually for their own good; the real challenge is not to prevent the mobile and able from leaving but to learn how eventually to tap their new skills for local purposes.

## Rurality

Rurality denotes the geographical characteristic of large, sometimes isolated areas of a territorial entity. It is often concerned with agriculture and

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<sup>87</sup> The two numerically largest groups identified in King Island in the 2006 census were pre- and school-aged children, and working-age residents aged 35–64 years (ABS 2008). Increasingly absent are those aged 15–34 years, 'in the prime of life' and with young families (ABS 2008).

pastoralism, and frequently associated with low population density and disadvantage. The first two characteristics apply in King Island, the last does not, with the exception of a pocket of disadvantage in Currie (Participant 9). Rurality is often also associated with isolation, remoteness and backwardness. In such light, does dissatisfaction with quality of life explain King Island's population exodus? If so, how has it become untenable for some? Some answers lie in the global domain. Rural areas in Europe, North America and Australia are in decline (Alston 2004a, 2004b; Bryden 2009; Eversole & Martin 2005; Forth & Howell 2005; Kraly 2005).

What accounts for this collapse? The decline is seen to be an outcome principally of population loss, including youth. It is part of a global rural-to-urban diaspora.<sup>88</sup> Rural decline is fuelled by numerous factors, among them loss of fulltime employment due to changes in agricultural production;<sup>89</sup> labour market restructuring; privatisation and rationalisation policies at state and federal levels; and shrinkage of public—and private—sector services (Alston 2004b; Forth & Howell 2005).

Another factor is the democratic paradox (Mouffe 2000) in full spate. According to Alston (2004b), there are conflicting mindsets among Australian policy makers, some of whom consider country towns must help themselves or inevitably decline, while others fight to preserve and support rural communities, seeing them as essential to national development; successive Australian Government ministers are seen to dismiss the notion that a function

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<sup>88</sup> Seventy-four percent of the populations of the world's developed countries now live in urban areas (Kraly 2005).

<sup>89</sup> Such changes include mechanisation and the ongoing aggregation of farm units.

of governance is to preserve and protect rural communities or their public services, if they represent a cost burden (Alston 2004b). In Tasmania it is rural areas that suffer the greatest proportional population decline (Demographic Change Advisory Council 2008b). In turn, census data show that King Island, with its mainstay agrarian and pastoral livelihoods, is hard-hit. I discuss that matter in chapter six. Island life would appear untenable for many, as emigration levels suggest.

The dilemmas of rurality are seen to rebound on youth. For example, does farming remain an attractive vocation for youth and young adults? Some suggest currently elevated land prices may discourage this age-group from returning to the Island to set up in agriculture. One asks,

Could you see a young farmer coming out of agricultural college now and buying enough land to have a reasonable income?

There's no way they'd be able to come up with the two million dollars that it costs, unless his father has land here and could come up with succession planning, but he'd have to pay out the other siblings (Participant 3).

According to another Islander, more small-scale farmers should be encouraged into the inland, estimated to be under-stocked by 25 to 30 per cent (Participant 22). Yet requirements of the Tasmanian Government may daunt prospective young farmers: is farming too heavily regulated, and paperwork an intolerable addition to the workload of some farmers?

We're a small farm, but the amount of paper work ... worker's compensation, cattle care, every needle we give our animals, where it goes, what time it leaves ... we've just got to keep the information. It's checked twice a year ... everything we do, every chemical we've got, copper, what the dose is, the measuring cup used and if the measurements on it are correct. It's to keep the [King Island] brand up. It's easy for big business, but for the little family farm ... the way federal and state animal welfare legislation's gone, it's just becoming too hard. For a small operation it's becoming so onerous, and scary as far as having an asset to pass on goes (Participant 17).

So, for some participants, the farming scene on King Island conjures alternatives that may include flight. For them, various global pressures mean the farming vision has become too expensive, too regulated, perhaps too undependable. Such challenges as these may well dissuade school leavers and young families from carving out a life on the land, and on the Island itself.

## Remoteness

Geographical remoteness is the fourth critical context I explore here. The adjective 'remote' whose Latin root is *remōtus* (removed), has many nuances. From those nuances I employ 'far distant in space' and 'distant in relationship or connection' (Delbridge et al. 2004, 1462), finding interpretive richness in the nuances, as I show below. I have discussed more fully elsewhere the notion of islandness, an isle's perceived qualities. Remoteness is not a light matter;



indeed, distance has been personified as a tyrant whose power shaped Australian society (Blainey 1966). The concept is expanded to islands by another: ‘island life is subject to the tyranny of distance’ (Royle 2001, 115). This statement applies to King Islanders in two respects.

First, remoteness—being ‘far distant in space’—conjures up physical attributes. In various guises it inserts itself into, between and across the different layers of Islanders’ lives and may provoke temporary or permanent flight to places ‘away’. For arguably Islanders are shackled to the legacies of distance, among them inflated cost of living, high prices for perishables<sup>90</sup> and other commodities, housing purchase and rental, and land (Crisp 2006b),<sup>91</sup> air travel<sup>92</sup> and power tariffs<sup>93</sup> levied on the Tasmanian mainland (Forrest 2005a; Vowles 2005b). Some arrivals reject the burden of an unaffordable Island living, and depart again (King Island Council 2002). Recall King Island’s status as a remote area, recognition that its people existed under layers of financial burden. But Australian Government subsidies did not compensate in every respect, for an individual’s adjustment to remoteness and isolation was not a given. Among departing Islanders were those blistered by the enervating hardships of islandness (Campbell & Jones 2003), those unable to adapt to Island life. According to one resident the ‘real problem’ was this: numerous families arrived from the Australian mainland;

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<sup>90</sup> A Tasmanian Legislative Council election candidate drew attention to inflation of King Island fruit and vegetable prices up to 300 per cent above Tasmanian and Victorian prices. However, in 2010 Camp Creek Gardens, a local market garden venture established in 2007 advertised for sale quantities of new season’s vegetables (King Island Courier 2010a).

<sup>91</sup> ‘Residential [property] around Currie [the main settlement] has gone up 200–300 percent in the last two years ... a simple, three-bedroom home on 900 to 1,200 square metres has gone from \$120,000 to \$300,000’ (Crisp 2006b, 52).

<sup>92</sup> Recall that the only passenger access to King Island is by air.

<sup>93</sup> Recall that electricity prices on King Island are reported to be the highest in Australia (Forest 2005a).

they intended to put down roots and make the Island their permanent home; however some found that ‘it just didn’t suit them down here ... nice people, but they just couldn’t adjust to island life ... so many people can’t’ (Participant 14). Thus, for that number, geography prevailed.

Note, too, the manner in which remoteness from state and federal governments added twin problems: how to *attract* incomers, a necessary transfusion of ‘fresh blood’ to fill roles; and how to *retain* employees for a reasonable time span. The Island’s location off the beaten track was seen to discourage suitably qualified people from accepting posts and living on the Island, despite generous lures (Participant 7).<sup>94</sup> Some employers found recruitment a challenge (Participants 16 & 24). Others were clearly disappointed, as in the following case:

We generally find that we get someone in the early stages [of their career], on the way up trying to learn, or we get people on their way out, past being totally engaged in a day’s work. We scrape the bottom of the barrel if they’re not older, and we have a tendency to pick the older people who are going out ... it is a major problem in remote areas (Participant 7).

Loss of employees posed ongoing difficulties for government in this remote Island:

If you lose too many out of the senior management group, you can lose momentum very quickly. In a small organisation things can

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<sup>94</sup> Incentives include subsidised housing, special zone allowances and ‘a lot of give-aways’ (Participant 7).

just stop: a senior position will take three or four months to fill. By the time someone resigns, you get yourself organized, you advertise, you select someone, they give four to six weeks' notice if they are in a senior job ... it will take up to six months to fill a senior position. So you just lose momentum (Participant 9).

And loss of governing impetus might persist: 'If you get someone from away, no matter what their experience you have a six months' lag waiting for them to get a feel of the place and gain the knowledge' (Participant 24). Ideally, 'if you can keep the management group together for five years, you get through a lot of stuff. But in today's world, that doesn't happen' (Participant 9).

This first interpretation of 'remoteness'—being 'far distant in space'—and involving internal–external relativity, was balanced by a second nuance—being 'distant in relationship or connection'. It was possible that geographical remoteness cultivated and nourished personal distance and inward-looking tendencies among its people (Participants 10 & 29), including an Islander distinction between established 'us' and newcomer 'them'. This division was visible in several ways: the sharply-argued print media contest to establish who was 'a local' or 'non-local';<sup>95</sup> a tendency to judge those who did not comply with Island norms; and putting up barriers 'if we think people are not going to stay' (Campbell & Jones 2003, 22). One participant, who subsequently

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<sup>95</sup> One resident complained of being 'sick and tired of being reminded on King Island like nowhere else I have ever lived, that I am not a local' (King Island Courier 2006b, 4); another maintained that one had to be in King Island at least 25 years to qualify as 'local' (Honess 2006); two, each more than 40 years on the Island, were 'still not a local' (Participants 5 & 26); another believed that 'I don't qualify as a local' (Participant 9); yet another: 'I wouldn't be a King Islander because I wasn't born here ... you've got to be born here ... when I first got here 16 years ago, they said you have to be here for ten years, then it was fifteen, then twenty-five, then it was forty—you've got to be born here, right?' (Participant 20).

departed, considered that ‘You’re always doomed as an outsider in King Island’ where dominance of ‘the old families’ was immutable (Participant 16). Lowenthal (2007, 209) makes the point that most islander bonds are not chosen but inherited, and require ‘multiple ties of memory and kinship’.

Indeed, some Islanders used subtle epithets to distinguish newcomers from ‘locals’. Those incomers on fixed assignments of just several years were ‘tourists’ (Participants 1 & 2). Sea-changers might be alluded to as ‘blow-ins or ‘fly-ins’. Process workers, whose length of residence might be short or uncertain, were ‘the transients’, a somewhat pejorative term sometimes used to imply unsociable and little-understood people challenged by the need to balance wages that were lower than those on the Tasmanian mainland, and a substantially higher cost of living on the Island (Participant 18). Such conditions might prompt their subsequent departure and thus population decline.<sup>96</sup> The claim of abundant ‘community friendliness’ recorded in the Vision Statement for King Island (King Island Council 2003, 2) was sometimes considered a mixed message by incomers. Occasionally an Islander would reveal traumatic scars:

I hate to say it but it’s people from away that are causing the trouble. It was outsiders that burnt our church down. We have our naughty ones ... but anything serious, we don’t have it here. If you want to come and work on King Island, you should have a police check (Participant 29).

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<sup>96</sup> One Islander described such ‘outsiders’ as not of the ‘community mould’—rather, a challenge to local norms of security and conduct, to the point where local authorities supported the introduction of a code of conduct for incoming workers (Participant 30).

Was such antipathy a legacy of past pressures of remoteness? Previous waves of incomers who imported different, sometimes unpopular ‘outside’ attitudes and values, also failed to earn community approbation:

it was the same in the past when we had ‘New Australians’<sup>97</sup> come after the [Second World] War to Yarra Creek Camp to build the roads, and there *was* trouble. The King Island people told their children not to mix with the New Australians (Participant 29).

Refreshingly, some King Islanders admitted the existence of this self-imposed social distance (Campbell & Jones 2003). Its presence was discernible too in other islands (Cambers 2006; Jackson 2006; Scottish Countryside Alliance Educational Trust 2008). If sufficiently abrasive, this detachment might direct some away from an Island they experienced as neither the ‘idyllic place’ nor ‘little paradise’ portrayed by its local authorities (King Island Council 2009).

## Islanders and governing of population change

I have referred to the cyclic character of island settlement and decline, the settlement narrative of King Island, present-day Island migrants, and certain influential contexts of King Island population change. I turn now to participant understandings of existing challenges and governing to manage them.

Were participants particularly anxious about population drift, particularly of their most productive age groups? How were population urgencies properly a

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<sup>97</sup> ‘New Australian’ is a 1950s term for post-World War Two immigrant settlers, usually displaced people from war-torn Europe. Australia was suffering a desperate shortage of labour and there was a growing belief that substantial population growth was essential for the country’s future. Today’s Australian immigration program is global.

governance matter? What were Islanders' antidotes for these difficulties? To what degree were the solutions formulated and owned by the populace? Were participants troubled that neighbours, colleagues, business and social acquaintances had been lost to Island enterprise and civic life, leaving generational and cultural hollows in their wake? One such hollow appeared among traditional long-established Islanders, now fewer than 50 per cent of Island people, who were 'slowly dying off' (Participant 9). The same Islander remained optimistic that the decline had 'bottomed'—'I've said for three years that we are at the bottom of the trough'; and another observed a small reprieve (Participant 22). However for various participants the idea of an emptying Island was grim, concern unmistakable. They observed that 'Population loss [is] a worry for us' (Participant 30); 'this thing of numbers worries me quite a bit; we can't afford the population to go any lower. If we can only hold the population where it is ...' (Participant 14). Another said, 'we're in a very precarious state' (Participant 9). Furthermore:

We can't afford to lose population. We've lost a critical mass now ... we had 3,200 people and everything worked nicely ... a full-time dentist and most services ... over the last 30 years our population has halved, so a lot of things are struggling—the golf club and some businesses ... there are less services—the dentist only comes one week a month, that sort of thing (Participant 30).

The leaving-of-King Island fed fears of an unviable Island economy should resident numbers slide below a certain threshold—a threshold never stated in order to sidestep community pessimism and loss of confidence (Participant 17).

Emigration was seen to cast a massive shadow over Islanders' present and future. Departures had depleted the labour pool. Local unemployment was negligible. Many residents held multiple posts, the small population being unable to fill plentiful positions in the cheese and kelp factories, abattoir and kelp-harvesting. There was reliance on new and prospective arrivals who, however, in turn might be dissuaded from permanency by a shortage of family rental accommodation and costly air access (Forrest 2005a). Skilled workers were in short supply, particularly in specialised construction and electrical trades (Participant 24). Notwithstanding antipathies born of Island remoteness, referred to above, participants looked to newcomers to swell resident numbers, boost local government rates revenues for provision of infrastructure, drive stronger demand for local services, and confirm economic and social viability. In the depletion of the labour force there were hidden social costs, such as disruption of social mores including

a very, very strong work ethic among young people who grow up on this Island, often start their first job at 12, and by age 15 often have more than one job as well as being at school, and whose parents may both work, and in multiple positions (Participant 24).

So, how were population decline and its associate, ageing, a governance matter? First, recall that 'new governance' vested King Islanders—government authorities, business sector and citizenry—with decision-making authority to pursue the present and future wellbeing of their jurisdiction; and that such decisions increasingly entailed management of impacts of global-local change such as population changes. For a rural community to successfully

adjust to change, reduce threat and seize opportunity, it especially needed governance and material resources that would attract settlers, including new residents of child-bearing age (Bryden 2009). A key factor for attracting them was an economy able to employ and sustain long-term populations, and provide sufficient hope for the future so that young islanders would choose to remain there (Royle 2003).

These were matters for governing, and their legitimacy was certain—King Island Council received from the community in 2003 a clear mandate to reverse emigration, recruit permanent residents, provide opportunities for work and housing, maintain numbers including youth, and repair demographic imbalance. As described in chapter four, participants generally expected local representatives to manage population problems, in some cases supplemented by their own support. Armed with the powerful tools of shared ‘new governance’ and active citizenship, and buoyed by the Tasmanian Government’s high hopes outlined above that communities would share knowledge and ideas (DPAC 2009b), progress might well be expected. However, project participants were sharply divided about availability of opportunities in their Island.

Management of population change is a governance matter because of the magnitude of the task. The worst-case scenario was that, after two centuries of settlement, the Island would empty. Restitution of its numbers to ‘safe’ levels required the determined leadership of elected representatives supported by all community sectors. And magnitude was accompanied by urgency: the momentum of population drift cannot be quickly turned around (Kraly 2005);



delays might produce a ‘ripple effect’ to upset the ‘finely-tuned community balance’ (Participant 8) via much-feared downscaling of air services, school, hospital and local business sector services<sup>98</sup> (Participant 19). But might it already be too late? Many socio-economic needs of Islanders were regularly met from both mainlands<sup>99</sup> but a Tasmanian Opposition parliamentarian had been

concerned to hear reports that important [Tasmanian] Government service providers in the area of health, who have in the past visited the island on a regular basis, have for almost 18 months failed to visit King Island on a regular basis to enable people to access important services (Rockliff 2008, np).

These concerns about a shrinking place were also the concern of governing. With good cause local people voiced uncertainty about their present and future. Recall first that federal government census statistics, noted above, revealed two realities—that King Island suffered one of Tasmania’s largest proportional population declines between 1996 and 2006; and second that the Island faced the greatest projected annual decline of all Tasmanian municipalities from 2007 to 2032 (Demographic Change Advisory Council 2008b).<sup>100</sup> Morale

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<sup>98</sup> These fears continue to be justified: in February 2010 the Island office of an income tax specialist announced its relocation from King Island to mainland Australia due to ‘not experiencing the reasonably satisfactory level of activity expected from King Island’ (King Island Courier 2010b, 1).

<sup>99</sup> Among them, for example, are medical and dental specialists, farriers, insurance agents, land developers, piano tuners, government officials, lawyers.

<sup>100</sup> These data are drawn from the 2007–32 Medium Series statistics produced by the Demographic Change Advisory Council, a key advisory body on demographic change issues likely to affect the Tasmanian community and economy over the coming years. The Council comprises representatives with a mix of community interests and expertise from the unions, government, business and community sectors (Demographic Change Advisory Council – Tasmania 2008a).

slumped: ‘We just haven’t got the people ... life will only get tougher and tougher while we’re down where we are [with] too few people sharing the load’ (Participant 9); retail business was a ‘numbers game’ with shrinking opportunities (Participant 14),<sup>101</sup> and the extensive volunteer arena mentioned above was losing members.

What governing practices might act as antidotes for these global-local pressures? What was the way forward? Clearly, the challenge of how to manage global-local population change lay at the heart of King Islanders’ very existences. Clearly too in terms of legitimacy and responsiveness, and of magnitude and urgency, pressing population problems were matters of governing.

Therefore what avenues had Islanders, as agents of government, explored thus far? First, it seemed that solutions to the various Island population difficulties might not materialise from external agencies. For example, from time to time when King Island and associated regional rural Tasmanian municipalities examined the dilemmas of population decline at their LGAT meetings, outcomes were negligible: ‘They talk about it—every meeting they talk about it—express concerns and so on, but nothing ...’ (Participant 30). One Islander rationalised that the Island ‘must help itself’ (Participant 5), echoing Villamil’s (1977) direction that islanders themselves had to determine their overall

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<sup>101</sup> Data from 2003 describe the majority of King Island businesses as small, with fewer than 10 employees and concentrated in agricultural, fishing and forestry sectors (190 businesses). Other industries with more than 10 businesses on the Island include retail trade, construction, and transport and storage. One manufacturing enterprise employs more than 100 people; three manufacturing and wholesale trade businesses employ between 50 and 99 employees (Connell Wagner 2007).

objectives for their future. Another agreed that population rebuilding was first and foremost a local community responsibility (Participant 9).

Second, then, what local actions were undertaken to address the population dilemma? In terms of the principles of good governance, council was responsive, ready ‘to assist the community to fulfil its future directions’ for population growth, and promised strong leadership (King Island Council 2003). In 2002, with the guidance of many constituents, King Island Council responded to a Tasmanian Government routine municipal review which had found the council fully represented the community ‘in its commitment to the Island’ (Local Government Board 2003, 3). Its actions were visible in the documents from that period. For example, the King Island Future Search Conference Report (Campbell and Jones 2003) detailed a council community visioning process to define citizens’ hopes for the coming decade. The King Island 2013: Strategic Plan 2004–9 defined 17 major community development goals that were shaped by the search conference process. Top priority among the goals was population increase; the 2003 total was to be doubled to approximately 3,000 residents within a decade (King Island Council 2004). To achieve success here, council would promote residential development in coastal and other strategic Island locations. It would also seek opportunities for better air and sea access from mainlands partly to encourage into the Island new businesses and the opportunities they would provide. Youth opportunities were catered for in the ninth goal (King Island Council 2003, 8);<sup>102</sup> council

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<sup>102</sup> Such opportunities include apprenticeships and cadetships in established Island spheres, increased intergovernmental support via a Youth Development Officer, and full involvement with community and service groups (King Island Council 2003).

decided that it was ‘essential to provide opportunities that allow [youth] to remain, and return following off Island experiences’ (King Island Council 2003, 8).

Management of population challenges was also central to a third document, the King Island Strategy Plan 2007 (the Plan), another major council action for economic revitalisation. In the same way that Villamil (1977) advocates special emphasis on land in an island’s survival planning, council commissioned offshore consultants to survey the Island and Islanders and make recommendations to open up sparsely settled coast lands in the west and south (Connell Wagner 2007). Community and local government were to fine-tune Plan prescriptions which, when ratified by the Tasmanian Government, were to be incorporated into the Island’s Planning Scheme (Participant 7). However, in contrast to the 2003 search conference process and community meetings, individual submissions that offered support, important contrarian views, and alternative solutions regarding the draft Plan, were low in number. One official commented that council could not know what it was not told (Participant 9).

However, during our interviews participants did reveal various ideas about the population dilemma. There emerged, for example, a glaring mismatch between the official population goal determined by 80 Islanders in 2003, and the mostly publicly-undisclosed preferences of participants. Their estimates of an optimum population ranged from one or two thousand people, to one view that any population growth was unwarranted (Participant 11), and another that King Islanders should be satisfied with modest increments:

any half dozen people make a difference, particularly if they are families with children, because they keep your other services going ... if it keeps going like that, it's okay (Participant 14).

What total might be pursued? As mentioned, the figure of 3,000 had been determined in 2003, a time when Island resources such as fresh water availability were not thought threatened by potential sea level rise, and Islanders were yet to be unsettled by their first drought in living memory, in addition to the changing agricultural scene and its reduced employment opportunities, less affordable arable land, and decline of the once dominant family farm.

Most (but not all) participants agreed in principle that population decline had to be contained, yet the *how*, including Plan proposals, was an interesting sticking point. For some, the Plan appeared to be a welcome panacea, a blueprint for development of Islanders' economy, jobs, housing, population and hence quality of life; for others, it seemed a harbinger of threat.

The majority of participants were hopeful of reprieve, ever-optimistic that Island opportunities were plentiful, limited only by the imagination, and bolstered by their capacity as an innovative people, noted in chapter three. For this majority, 'more people' was the mantra: bring in bearers of economic energy; donors to a vigorous, stable, well-skilled labour pool; guarantors of adequate passenger and freight transport, health and education services, infrastructure and public works; 'new blood' with energy and desire to support and contribute to local governance; volunteers for emergency service

callouts.<sup>103</sup> Some placed faith in recruitment from away via stepped-up immigration—new people bringing fresh enterprises and job openings for incomers, and the hoped-for reopening of the scheelite mine. Various participants advocated continuation of the battle to ‘normalise’ costs of living, freight and passenger transport and electricity tariffs. Successes here were expected to inspire newcomers and investors to try their hand at an Island living,<sup>104</sup> employ new residents, and provide reasons for Island youth to remain or later return. Employment was considered key, as was tourism, which one participant observed had ‘kicked in here’; tourism would bring more visitors, maintain crucial Island air services at their current level, and shore up the Island accommodation industry (Participant 30). On the other hand, one asserted that the official council population target of 3,000 was not feasible unless tourism was profitably developed:

The main Island industries are finite and it is very difficult to envisage their development to the point where they could sustain a large population; tourism has the biggest ability to provide an income and also support a large population. [But] to double the population in a very short time period of ten years, you’re going to need the mechanisms there to support that size of population. The income has to be derived from the Island so I see tourism as the major development in the next ten years (Participant 27).

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<sup>103</sup> All King Island emergency services except police are staffed by volunteers.

<sup>104</sup> A vain hope? Three years later, in 2010, the issue remained a ‘political hot potato’ with King Islanders paying ‘close to three times as much for power as other Tasmanians, with no off peak or stepped tariffs’, and with the supplier, Hydro Tasmania, and the Tasmanian Government both claiming that power price parity was the responsibility of the other (King Island Courier 2010c, 6).

It may be a valuable argument: ‘Given the limited resources of the typical small island and the unique characteristics of tourism that sees money made elsewhere brought in to spend, tourism is seen as a universal panacea for islands in the modern world’ (Royle 2001, 206). Finally, a number placed huge faith in the projected revival of scheelite mining<sup>105</sup> to stimulate permanent residency, offer apprenticeships to keep youth on the Island<sup>106</sup> and plentiful opportunities for tradespeople.

The other side of the coin was an apparent pessimism regarding population solutions. A cluster of residents could not foresee any solution, and predicted that King Island’s future population ‘will be small’ (Participant 21); others, including parents, were troubled that dwindling, minimal, or non-existent opportunities would continue. And within this disparity was further divergence: on one hand a belief that there were no opportunities to create jobs in the Island; on the other hand, a sense that there *were* many opportunities but that Island people had no desire to change to take advantage of them. Some commented on the finitude of the Island’s renowned primary industry (Participants 3, 26 & 27). One described the King Island family farm as a ‘wonderful vocation if you can afford to get in’ (Participant 30); another observed that it faced extirpation due to rapidly escalating land prices (Participant 7). Was there then really hope in tourism, bolstered by a developing interest in the notion of cold water island tourism (Baldacchino

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<sup>105</sup> In 2007 it was announced that King Island Scheelite and Hunan Nonferrous Metals Corporation had signed a A\$110 million joint venture agreement to redevelop the King Island scheelite mine, with employment projected to commence in 2008 and peak in 2009. However, as at August 2013 the mine remains ‘disused’ (King Island Council 2013).

<sup>106</sup> In the past, 20 apprenticeships were offered in one year to school leavers (Participant 14).

2004c, 2004d; Gössling & Wall 2007)? Or was tourism ‘a double-edged sword, which could harm a resort area as well as supporting it’ (Royle 2001, 206)? Some Islanders saw few opportunities for employment in King Island’s small tourism sector, and little point in encouraging a tourist ‘invasion’<sup>107</sup> that might threaten to swamp the ‘real islanders’, a fear also expressed by islanders elsewhere (Péron 2004, 336).

The various plans, strategies and ideas outlined above typify an Island conundrum: a tension between faith in self-help and disavowal of that notion. Among participants were those who continued to seek answers in the arid territory of distant bureaucratic arenas. The Strategic Plans for the years between 2004 and 2020 specify that close links would be fostered and maintained with local organisations and state and federal governments, in order to achieve local goals. But this viewpoint, that parent governments should respond to their dependants following decentralisation, runs counter to orthodox neoliberal ‘small government’ ideology. Recall that, in the terms of its social inclusion policy, the Tasmanian Government promotes individual and community ownership of local circumstances, by attributing rights and responsibilities (DPAC 2008a). Some Islanders saw problems with multi-tier relationships: one thought that adherence to the neoliberal norm made Islanders captive to private enterprise and market forces (Participant 30), and another that there was no guarantee that higher-level assistance might reverse the

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<sup>107</sup> Reasons included absence of financial grants, a facilitator and other resources necessary for its progress (Participant 8); feared environmental damage to the ‘pristine, sensitive coast’ (Participants 19 & 21), and perceived Islander disinterest in harnessing specialised local knowledge of King Island’s natural values (Participants 5, 15 & 26).



population exodus, a position that is shared by certain scholars.<sup>108</sup> But regardless of such considerations, largesse continued to be sought from the Tasmanian Government:

We're reliant on state government funding, and on rates,<sup>109</sup> which won't increase unless our population increases ... the Tasmanian Government could help with some more resources to attract more people (Participant 12).

## Enfolding

In this chapter I explored participants' views of governing for management of global-local population change. I gave historical and contemporary contexts as background, then discussed significant themes—migration, ageing, remoteness, and rurality—that contextualise global-local population change. Next I considered the nature and degree of participants' concerns about population change, viewed the problem as a concern of governance, and described how council and citizen participants understood the matter.

The central purpose of this chapter was to illuminate the research aim of whether, how and to what degree forms of governing fail or succeed to support management of population change. Here I consider 'success' in governing to mean achievement of a political undertaking for societal benefit, in accordance with the principles of good governance (previously mentioned). 'Failure' in

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<sup>108</sup> For example, in writing of government support for Irish island life, Royle (2003) notes that despite official support and commitment of the parent government, depopulation still continues with departure of traditional residents.

<sup>109</sup> Rates are an annual municipal levy on each property owner.

governing means non-achievement of such undertakings. The work of Malpas and Wickham (1997) is pertinent here. Recall one of their considered limits of governance: it is partial, incomplete. Participants' data for governance for population change reflects this characteristic.

Did the Island council succeed during eight years of governance to manage population change? On the basis of its strategic objectives, its success might appear mixed: two 'failures' and one 'success'. Comparison of the Strategic Plans for 2004–09 and 2011–20 shows that progress towards the priority goal—to increase population—was 'not achieved', as council stated in an annual report (King Island Council 2012, 16). A second goal, to 'encourage new residential development and services' (which would help draw in new residents), was also listed as 'not achieved'. Perhaps, in terms of the short time those goals had existed, lack of success was not unusual. Further, as Malpas and Wickham (1997) assert, the partial character of governance, its incompleteness, means that *no* governing practice can address all possible aspects of an issue. Therefore a governance operation (for example, one designed for population growth) can never be in control of all its elements. In this case, the elements might be considered daunting. Residents had provided council with a huge directive in 2003: reverse emigration, recruit 1500 new residents within 10 years, create work opportunities, supply adequate housing, provide hope for young people, and rebalance the skewed demography of the Island. This set of objectives had then to be achieved in a context of devolved government responsibilities, shrinking opportunities amid rural decline, changed labour market, and an altered agrarian system. In addition, as Malpas

and Wickham (1997, 93) observe, such parts of an operation (in this instance, to recruit residents) *individually* involve ‘ongoing practices of governance, control or regulation’. On this basis, it might be fair to say that no single governing system could ever hope to command complete control of all such elements, practices and operations in order to achieve governing success, particularly in the short term.

However, Malpas and Wickham (1997, 93) do allow that, subject to the general inevitability of failure, ‘the separate acts that may [constitute a] project may nevertheless provide instances of (limited) success’. In this regard, council stated it had ‘achieved’ its goal to encourage new businesses, including investment and major development (King Island Council 2012). The major development was a firm proposal in 2012 for a world-class championship golf course, associated facilities and 80 holiday accommodation units; a second such golf links is also planned. Council expected that the developments would greatly enhance tourism and employment opportunities (King Island Council 2012), create the necessary positive and confident atmosphere that intending businesses and investors seek, and attract both new settlers and Island youth who needed positions to return to. Council enjoyed further ‘small successes’ that might assist population growth—a mineral sands mining operation that commenced on the east coast, and renewed negotiations to re-open the scheelite mine.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> These and other investments and developments were particularly significant. Recall that in 2011-12 a setback to Island employment occurred when the Island abattoir, essential for the prime beef industry, ceased operation. Apart from creating the problem of how to ship 40,000 head of live cattle from King Island without loss of condition, approximately one hundred workers lost their positions, further depleting population (King Island Council 2012).

Not all citizen participants supported council's population initiatives. Council preferred a majority of community support so that in terms of good governance principles, decision-making had legitimacy (Participant 7). However, as shown, participants' ideas of future directions were at odds. They disagreed about such population matters as whether opportunities existed to attract newcomers, if population increase was merited or desirable, what population total was 'best', if the pastoral industry should be further developed or whether the Island should concentrate on developing tourism instead.

Despite these differences, in terms of the research question, Islanders in general supported local management of population change. Council set goals following community consultation, wrote residents' requests into strategic plans, set objectives for population increase, and looked to establish and maintain economic viability to support that anticipated increase. To date it had announced a mixture of goals achieved, not achieved, and ongoing. In terms of good governance, council showed it was generally responsive and accountable to community needs.

## 6 Change in Land Use and Tenure

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*B. Bowling (artist) Pass River Country, King Island 2007, acrylic*

*Pass River land accepts both sun and shadow.  
Sun also shimmers Southern Ocean's horizon.  
Beyond, landlords*

## Unfolding

In the last chapter I examined population change in King Island, in terms of local governing applied to its challenges. In this chapter I take a further global-local theme that concerns participants: change in land use and tenure in King Island. I explore certain dimensions of relational place in the broad before considering local and external influences on land use and land tenure and how King Islanders responded to these impacts.

To contextualise the land theme I describe in broad terms the nature of the person-land association; phases in land-holding and use in King Island; and present day land use on a corporate scale. I identify and discuss four critical contexts of change in land matters in King Island—conservation of place particularity versus development; the role of planners in the protection of King Island's lands; the vexed matter of Islanders' diminishing ownership of the Island; and land policies of state-directed economic growth and of neoliberalism.

The remainder of the chapter analyses how Islanders responded to their land use and tenure challenges. Were participants much concerned about this issue? Are land use and tenure issues in fact matters of local governance? Were there local solutions for managing these land affairs? What were council's and citizens' understandings of such solutions?

## Land, place, people

The noun land is time honoured and broadly nuanced.<sup>111</sup> As an element of physical geography, land is defined as the solid terrestrial third of the planet (Clark 1998), ‘the surface of the earth and all its natural resources’ (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary 2010). Human geographers see land as territory geographically or politically bounded, perhaps constituting an entire nation—‘a land’ or ‘the land of’—controlled by political organisation. In social terms, land may indicate a way of being, as for example life lived upon a rural farm holding (Delbridge 2004; Merriam Webster Online Dictionary 2010). In economic terms, people may value Earth’s surface according to the abundance or dearth of natural resources and their transformation to commodities.

Some legal codes deem land to be property—that is, any part of Earth’s terrestrial surface and everything natural or human-made and annexed to it. Such property may lie in public or private possession, with rights assigned to an individual, collective or corporate body such as a commercial entity, each having exclusive rights to such land parcels, from which other members of the community may be excluded without consent of those who hold right of tenure (United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation [UNFAO] 2011). The term ‘the land’ may distinguish rural from urban land.

Land tenure relationships may be well-defined and enforced in formal courts of law or through customary structures in a community. Alternatively, they may

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<sup>111</sup> The term *land* may be traced back to the period of the 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries: the Old English (Anglo-Saxon) noun *lond*; the 6<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries Old High German *lant*; the 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries’ Middle Irish *lann*; and its 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries’ evolution as Middle English *land* (Online Etymology Dictionary 2010; Merriam Webster Online Dictionary 2010).

be relatively poorly defined, and characterised by ambiguities that permit adverse use or consequences of use. In the case of small islands such as King Island, land ownership may be a traditional hub of Islander existence—a source of economic production and a basis of social relationships and cultural values. Sometimes land ownership is a source of prestige and power.

What then can be deduced about how people relate to their milieux, a crucial consideration that directs how they govern land and develop land use and land tenure regimes?

First, many nuances inform how land is understood and made meaningful; this suggests that relational place also has numerous faces. On one level, the association is compulsory, rendered so by gravitational force and physiology that tie humans to the Earth. In contrast, on another level the nature of relational place is that of free choice. Some people may pursue an altruistic liaison with land. Others may adopt self-centred approaches to it (Hay 2002a; Leopold 1949; Relph 1976, 1981; Rolston 1988). *Homo sapiens* would seem eminently well-credentialed to adopt the former—environmental sensitivity—for ‘sapiens’ denotes intelligence and prudence in a species considered equipped to amass knowledge and available understandings to guide its future actions, reflect on past and present conduct, and learn from experience (Glacken 1967; Harvey 2000; Wheeler 2004). To the best of our knowledge are not people, alone of all terrestrials, geared to function as moral agents, protectors of global biodiversity (Godfrey-Smith 1979; Kirkpatrick 1999)? To these three aspects of relational place must be added a



fourth—an enduring overarching struggle over the terms of enlightenment (Hay 2002a).<sup>112</sup>

What accounts for this deeply divided mindset? Philosophical and practical distinctions, and countless possible blendings are involved. For example, the land owner may be an individual or a collective, in private or public sectors. The land value may be intrinsic or material, or both. The land use may be active or passive; nurturing or destructive; of short-term or intergenerational expectation; of agricultural, industrial, residential, spiritual, scientific, genetic bank, and/or recreational intent (Casey 1997; Godfrey-Smith 1979; United Nations Conference on Environment and Development [UNCED] 1992). The lands of islands are similarly owned, valued and used by island peoples; and the same potential for divisiveness toward land use and ownership pertains there.

Second, this fundamental human divide excites debate as to the rational use of land (Hubbard et al. 2002; Relph 1981; Stokowski 2002). It generates persistent concerns. Some say ‘it matters crucially which side is right’ (Dryzek 2005, 26); or that humans have intergenerational responsibility (Kitissou 2004); or issue ‘final warnings’ and ‘eleventh hour’ assessments of perceived self-centred exploitation of the land (Lovelock 2009; Morton & Arup 2009). Yet, the majority, uninformed by a ‘declaration of interdependence’ (Nash 1990, 15)<sup>113</sup> ignore portrayals of their species as some malignancy that infects

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<sup>112</sup> Conflict is exemplified by the philosophical divide between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism.

<sup>113</sup> Treating all other species as we would like to be treated is equivalent to the ‘golden rule’ in some ethical codes.

and consumes life on Earth (Lovelock 2006), or invaders in pursuit of Earth's natural bounty (Leopold 1949; Passmore 1974; Regan & Singer 1976). Some hold that people regard land as a commodity that belongs to our species alone (Leopold 1949), or view land primarily as a resource bank for agriculture, industry, commerce and land tenure regimes (UNCED 1992; Parks & Wildlife Service Tasmania 2001).<sup>114</sup> Others depict people principally as consumers (Price 1995) in a world of continual 'getting and spending' (Wordsworth 1807).<sup>115</sup>

Third, these portrayals paint relational place as typified as much by disconnection as association. For example, there is scholarly concern with placelessness (for example Glacken 1967; Harvey 2000; Hay 2002a; Leopold 1949; Lopez 1986, 1996; Lovelock 2009; Relph 1976; White 1995). Some are perturbed by transformation of Earth's natural abundance from 'givens [to] obligations' (Rolston 1988, xi).<sup>116</sup> Others understand that environmental degradation is now all but beyond redemption (Chasek & Miller 2005; Dryzek 2005; Flannery 2005; Lovelock 2006, 2009; Millstone & Lang 2008; UNCED 1992).<sup>117</sup> Yet others point to a moral void (Lovelock 2009; Nash 1990; Rolston 1988) as people tend to claim innocence of impacts of harsh land use practices

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<sup>114</sup> This stance is exemplified by The Nut State Reserve Draft Management Plan 2001 devised by the Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania. Its planners prioritised a set of use values which largely privileged people and the tourist industry. Draft prescriptions presented the site as a morally empty space in which resident other species were to be subject to inhumane treatment, human interference, and non-protection from harmful human infrastructure, issues that the Service addressed following public consultation.

<sup>115</sup> UNCED (1992) determined that the major cause of global environmental deterioration was the unsuitable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialised countries.

<sup>116</sup> Evidence is seen in the ecological crises of the latter half of the twentieth century, according to ecophilosopher Holmes Rolston (1988).

<sup>117</sup> Such scholars cite intolerable pressure on land, water and air related to the operation of the global food system, and fears that land use practices have reduced proficiency of forest, soil and water to generate, flourish, nourish and regenerate—one says mortally.

(Hay 2005; White 1995). Such avoidance also blinds place-makers who envisage natural resources as the building blocks of economic growth and prosperity (Massey & Allen 1984).

Fourth, there is little evidence that state authorities regard decisions about land primarily as a matter of ethical choices (Brown 1987). Indeed, some scholars assert that powerful corporate enterprises influence decision-makers, and ‘steer the ship of state’ at the expense of the democratic process and the common good (McKnight 2010, 13; also Allen & Massey 1995; Walker 1999). Further, some scholars understand that active government promotion of private sector development proposals may threaten natural values (Kirkpatrick 1999; Stratford 2009). There is also concern that consumption of the land’s renewable resources, for example trees and water, for private gain frequently occurs at a rate greater than the time needed for their replenishment through biological reproduction or other naturally recurring processes (Eversole & Martin 2005). This outcome is predictable in a society that yet awaits an agreed land use ethic to guide environmentally well-considered, responsible choices by all sectors (Leopold 1949).

Fifth, disputes about land, its use and tenure course through all tiers of government and modes of governing. Pressing challenges for governance are exposed: how to meet the needs of all spheres of society and of voiceless land-dependent species, maintain quality of human and other life on Earth, and protect distinctiveness of local place. Devolution of government functions has brought administrative complexity that may disadvantage rural areas and agrarian islands. Local control over land may be diminished or even lost to

global corporations, seen by some to be ‘commanding space, making individual places much more vulnerable to their whims’, planning uses for far distant land without seeking local community input (Harvey 2000, 63).

Where such modes of governing persist, relational place may be complicated (Allen & Massey 1995; Eversole & Martin 2005; Harvey 1998; Thompson 2000). For example, absence of a national land use plan promotes land planning tensions between Australian state and local jurisdictions (Williams 2007); federally-promoted development schemes that are not synchronised with local planning legislation may bring dire results for the smaller entity (Participant 30). In the civic arena, state or local jurisdictions may or may not provide good governance with satisfactory citizen consultation in land use matters (Zehner & Marshall 2007). Citizens themselves may be unfazed by proposed land use changes, while in small islands—where they may risk censure from the population at large—active citizens may be forced to enter political, economic and environmental battlegrounds in order to gain democratic rights of voice (Hay 2002b, 2004a; Nash 1990; Rolston 1988; Stratford 2009). Yet relationships between people and place are crucial in terms of how modes of governing are used among the public, private and civic sectors: This is especially so in terms of how changing modes of land use impact upon social, economic, environmental and political contexts (Harvey 1998).<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> For example, Harvey (1998) asserts that massive global industrial, technological, demographic, lifestyle, and intellectual transformations swept agricultural regions of mainlands and islands during and following the Industrial Revolution.

To appreciate how such changes affect King Island's land use and tenure regimes, I draw upon its historical context, and ask how has land been thought of across time? Then, when global-scale change was recently visited upon the Island's existing pastoral regime, how did local authorities and citizens respond and what have participants shared in that regard? For ease of reference I use the term Government of Tasmania to mean also Government of Van Diemen's Land as it was styled until 1856.<sup>119</sup>

## People harness the Island

### Genesis and ascent

Land use in King Island is a narrative of three chapters: genesis, ascent and the present moment. From the time Europeans settled this remote Bass Strait land pocket,<sup>120</sup> they have plucked from it numerous economic, social, residential, and recreational advantages. The first footsteps were those of a steady procession of explorers, colonial government surveyors, hunters of fur seal, kangaroo and wallaby, minerals and timber. There were, too, passing sailors and shipwreck survivors, lighthouse installers, shipwreck salvagers and botanists (Hooper 1973) (Figure 6.1).

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<sup>119</sup> In that year Responsible Government was granted to Van Diemen's Land and the jurisdiction renamed Tasmania (Denehey 1961).

<sup>120</sup> Settlement followed the first verified human interactions with the Island, shipboard sightings in 1797 and 1799 (Kostoglou 2005).

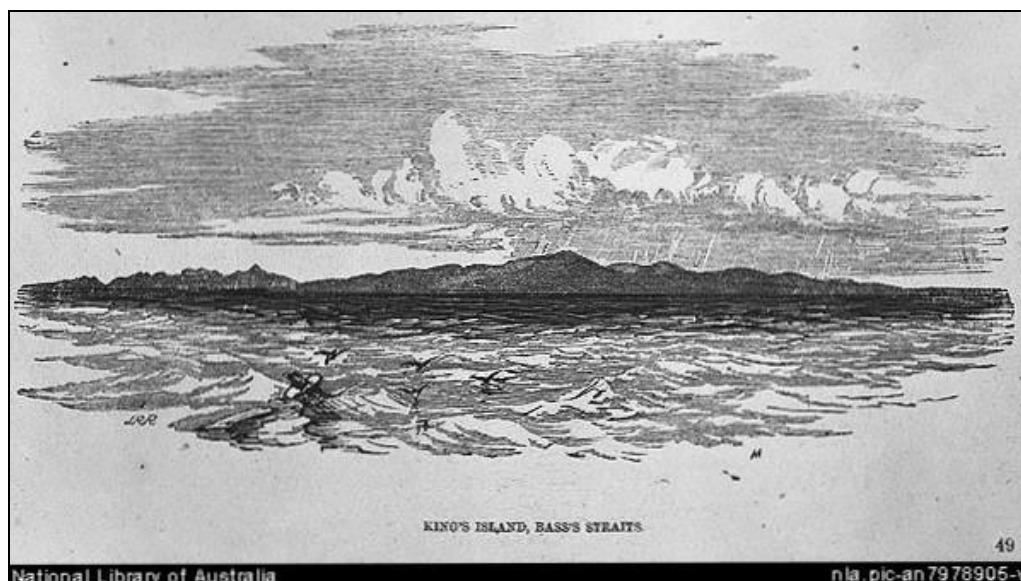


Figure 6.1 Remote, largely uninhabited King Island depicted in a wood engraving by Mason, 1857

Source: National Library of Australia

Prior to Australian federation in 1901, colonial state governments' land audits and legislation controlled the pace, direction and detailed pattern of settlement (Powell 1978). Early surveys of remote King Island from distant Hobartown in 1810 and 1827 discouraged settlement by all but a handful of pioneer yeoman<sup>121</sup> lease-holders permitted from 1836 (Finzel 2004; Kostoglou 2005) whose wool-growing attempts succumbed to fluctuating boom and depression (Figure 6.2).<sup>122</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Common meanings of *yeoman*, from the Middle English *yoman* or *yeman*, include first, a farmer who owns and cultivates a small farm and belongs to a class of English freeholders below the gentry (Merriam-Webster 2010); and second, the smaller or 'middle-range proprietor' (Powell 1978, 34).

<sup>122</sup> The first colonial Australian-Van Diemen's Land pastoral boom ended in a depression at its peak in 1842 -1843, a mere eight years after the first stock were introduced to King Island (Attard 2008).



Figure 6.2 Colonial Government six-transect survey 1827  
 recording vegetation, soils, fresh water sources and possible mill sites  
 Source: Royal Society Collection, Morris Miller Library, University of Tasmania

Lease negotiations between intending farmers and colonial bureaucracy often fell through.<sup>123</sup> Development of pastoral land use was slow and painful: the few pioneer pastoralists experimented, unsuccessfully, with inappropriate subsistence practices (Finzel 2004; Hooper 1973; Powell 1978) and battled dense bushland and forest, unproductive soil, minimal fodder grass, fleece-damaging, burr-infested bushes and native grass, and hazardous coastal access. Animals, machinery, houses and fences were largely abandoned (Hooper 1973). Species extinctions, deforestation and the exotic invasions that may follow colonisation of islands (Rapaport 2006; Royle 2001) were repeated in King Island: non-human co-tenants vanished,<sup>124</sup> timber harvesting and wildfire brought deforestation (Finzel 2004); and exotic introductions<sup>125</sup> reduced the habitat of dependent native species. Land settlement stagnated and the virgin soils of King Island slumbered for a good eighty years after European discovery.

Use of the unharnessed soils of King Island became more likely when the British Government granted Responsible Government to the Tasmanian colony in 1856. Between 1858 and 1870 state legislation was enacted to transform

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<sup>123</sup> The early settlement of Tasmania was carried out under regulations framed for disposal of Crown lands in New South Wales, of which colony it was, at the outset, a part. After its constitution under a separate administration in 1825, regulations for the settlement of Crown lands in the parent colony were applied to Tasmania. In 1828 the first land sales in the island colony took place, but very low prices were obtained. In January 1831 the system of issuing free grants of land was abolished (ABS 2010).

<sup>124</sup> Unregulated hunting destroyed marine and terrestrial life. King Island's elephant seal breeding colony (Australia's sole site) was extirpated, its fur seal populations depleted; on land, marsupials—quoll and wombat—and flightless King Island emu were speedily wiped out by men and hunting dogs (Hooper 1973).

<sup>125</sup> Examples were imported hard-hoofed domestic stock and exotic pasture grasses (Finzel 2004).



Tasmanian rural land use.<sup>126</sup> The settlement model favoured was a yeoman farmer class to establish British-style agricultural settlements of small, intensively cultivated fields (Powell 1978). Re-survey of King Island in 1887 located suitable land for agriculture (Figure 6.3) and, eight decades after European discovery, Island acreage was offered for sale to small-scale settlers (Hooper 1973).

People slowly established a pastoral tradition whose course oscillated between economic ‘boom and bust’ (Local Government Board 2003). State and federal land use policies shaped three settlement booms. The initial growth surge that followed government release of Crown land for the first public land sales, mentioned above, saw eager small farmers snap up 92 per cent of all land offered (Hooper 1973) (Figure 6.4). Settlers moved inland during the early 1900s to fell and incinerate hardwood forest and dense scrub, making way for pasture grasses (Figure 6.5). They established further rural settlements (King Island Tourism 2007).

In tandem with state authorities, the federal government stimulated two more Island settlement booms in the aftermath of both twentieth century world wars when it introduced soldier settlement schemes into the Island. Returned servicemen were placed on Crown or acquired land as individual primary producers (Figure 6.6).

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<sup>126</sup> For example, The Waste Lands Act 1870 gave power to the Governor (the British Monarch’s representative) to reserve land for public purposes, and the lands not so reserved were categorised as town, agricultural, and pastoral lands (ABS 2010).

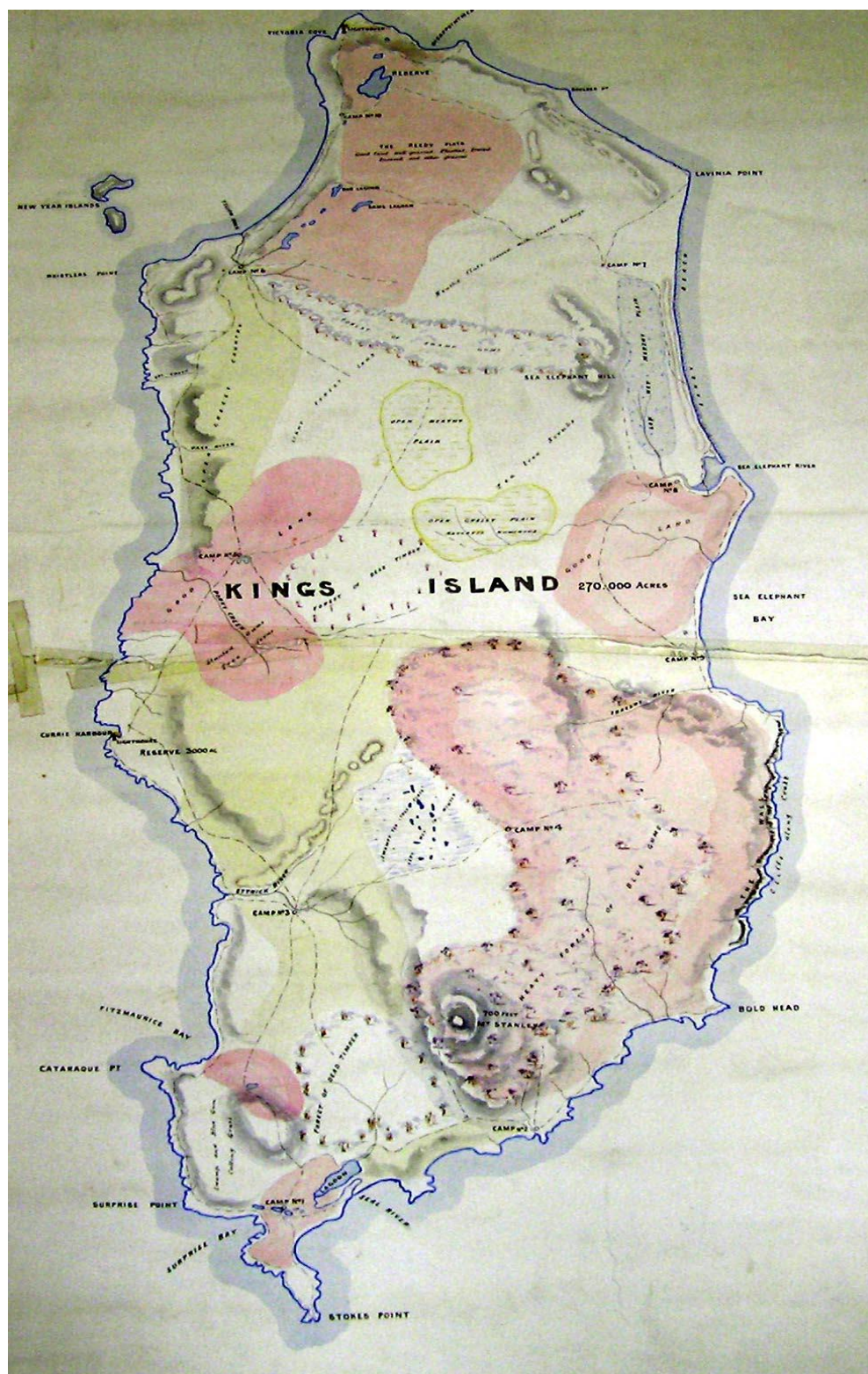


Figure 6.3 Tasmanian Government survey of King Island 1887  
indicating 'good land' (shaded pink)  
Source: Office of the Surveyor General, Hobart 2008

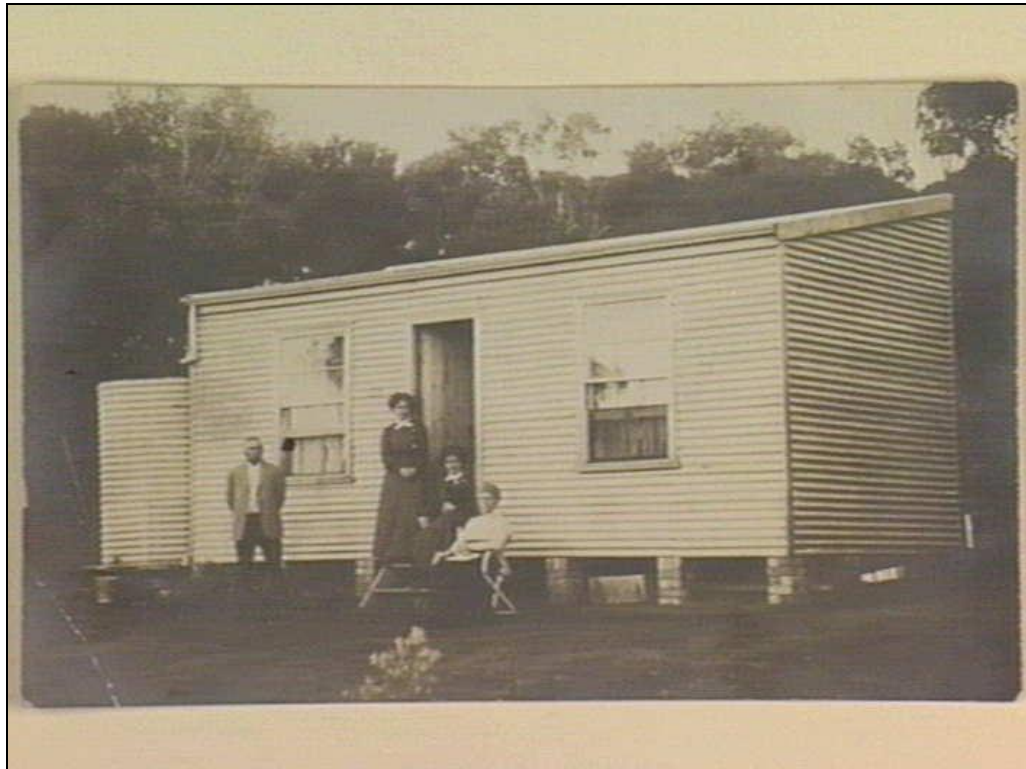


Figure 6.4 Early settlers, King Island 1908  
Source: State Library of Victoria



Figure 6.5 View across uncleared scrub to a King Island farmhouse, c. 1915  
Source: E Glascodine, Museum Victoria



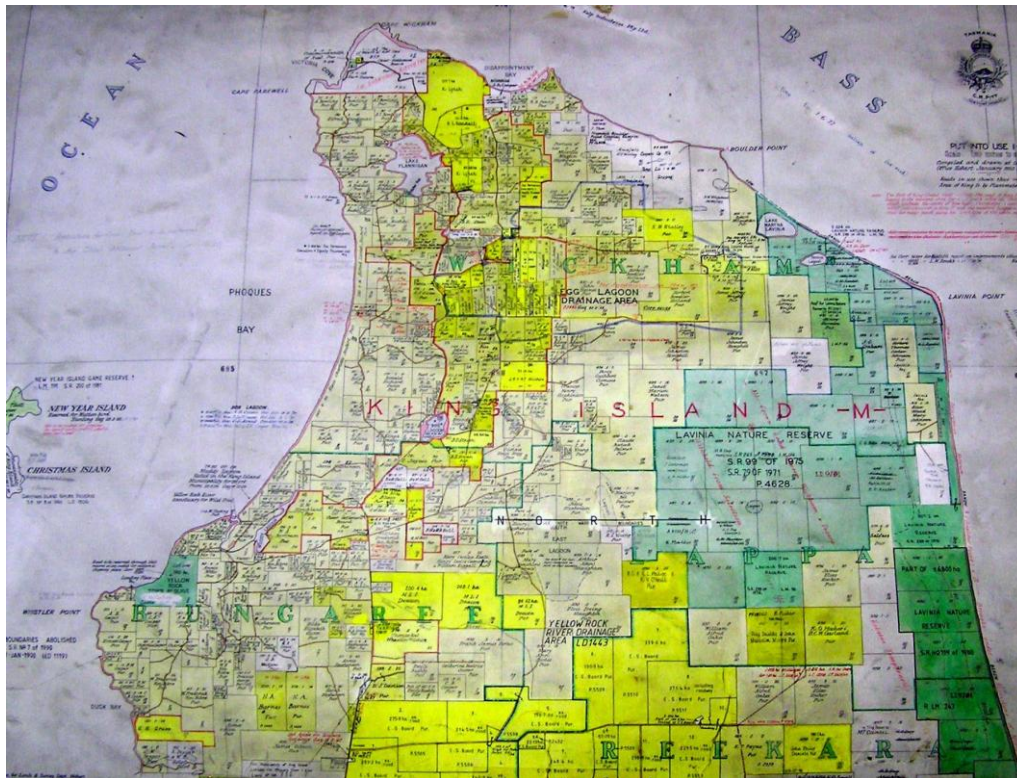


Figure 6.6 Land tenure map, northern King Island, 1952, in part reflecting holdings of the Soldier Settlement Schemes  
Source: Office of the Surveyor General, Hobart, 2008

Soldier settlement land use policy channelled approximately two hundred families into King Island, each granted a block of virgin land of a few hundred acres (Wood 2010). To prepare for stock new farmers rolled, logged, cleared, levelled, broke for cultivation and in the autumn sowed the virgin land to pasture. One resident found this process that transformed the Island panorama ‘a wonderful experience, the challenge of clearing the land’ (Addison 1995, 42). Today the majority of Island acreage is under pasture (Figure 6.7).

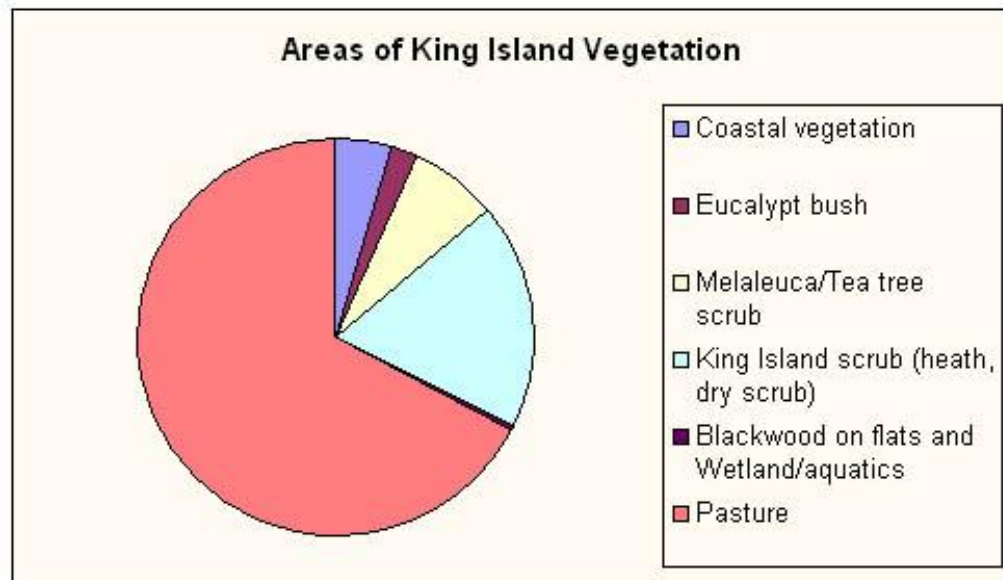


Figure 6.7 King Island's vegetation types shown as a percentage of total area; an indication of substantial vegetation clearance to create an agrarian Island  
Source: KINRMG Inc. 2001

Bureaucracy acknowledged<sup>127</sup> and some older present-day Islanders recall<sup>128</sup> shortfalls in good governance attending the two schemes. Some lessons illuminated a more closely managed scheme after the Second World War (Richardson 2005) with government loans for stock purchases, fencing, water supply and some machinery (Payne 2010). Other lessons went unheeded; by the 1960s some 28 percent of Tasmanians who were settled after 1945—King Islanders among their number—had ‘failed’ for want of better administration and funding (Richardson 2005). But for other King Islander settlers this place

<sup>127</sup> A 1926 Royal Commission into soldier settlement found governance deficits included too lenient qualification rules, unworkable financial obligations, and undue political influence (Archives Office of Tasmania 2006).

<sup>128</sup> These Islanders referred to a dearth of official assistance (Payne 2010); undersized dairy, beef and sheep allotments incapable of supporting families (Paterson 2001; Wood 2010); poor seasons and fluctuating world markets; some settlers’ farming inexperience; and environmental problems such as pith rush, an unexpected scourge of fresh pasture (Paterson 2001).

remained their ‘centre of felt value’ (Tuan 1977, 5). They, together with descendants of Island pioneer farming families, enabled generational continuity of land use into the present millennium (Figure 6.8), although not as an intact mode of use, as I later show. Thus, the pastoral settlements required approximately a century from 1888, and several farming generations, to firmly establish. Today their endeavours are memorialised in the ordered, productive Islandscape, and honoured in the King Island coat of arms.



Figure 6.8 Present-day King Island family farm property 2007  
Source: Author

Economic downturns shadow the King Island land use narrative, a chronicle of ‘periods of rapid growth and great promise interspersed with decline and disappointment’ (Local Government Board 2003, 3). The first instance of

downturn, referred to previously, undermined the several pioneer wool growers in the 1840s and set the pattern for fluctuating land-based fortune through the twentieth century and into the present one. Notable was the Great Depression of the late 1920s and 1930s when a number of Island farming families walked off unviable holdings (Archives Office of Tasmania 2006; Richardson 2005). However, amid cyclic boom and bust, the original institutionally designed British yeoman-family farmer model endured unchallenged until the end of the twentieth century, when unsettled by transformative global forces of present-day agribusiness.

### Present-day rhythms

Today pastoral King Island hosts co-tenants. The lush agrarian Island attracted a corporate land use regime in the 1990s, still present in 2007. When multinational land investment currents swirled across rural Australia (Alston 2004a), corporate attention turned from the drab investment canvas of drought-stricken mainland Australia (Alston 2005) to King Island's highly reliable rainfall and lush perennial grasslands (Oakey Holdings 2007). Supported by the immense power of globalisation (McCall 1996), aggressive marketing and federally-supported tax-effectiveness, agribusiness<sup>129</sup> (or corporate farming, as Islanders refer to it) arrived to challenge local pastoral tradition. Soon-to-retire farmers transferred land tenure on the open market to MIS to fund their retirement on or off the Island (Participants 3, 13, 15 & 22).

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<sup>129</sup> The ideology of agribusiness—economic efficiency and rationalisation (Montague 2008) and the increase of corporate empires—is realised through centralised control of the entire global industrial food production process (Beeson and Cloney 1997; Millstone and Lang 2008). The notion interlinks a small number of transnational companies, corporations and large land owners.

By 2007 King Islanders ceded approximately four in 10 Island farms in what two people described as ‘a dairy land-grab’ (Participants 3 and 4) where the output of ‘more than a hundred dairy farms’ was now met by just 20 operators, and small dairy farms vanished inside larger, corporate high-technology Island properties for prime beef monoculture (Participant 4), in the image of corporate farms elsewhere (Baldacchino & Milne 2000; Ilbery & Bowler 1998; Troughton 2005).<sup>130</sup> The transformation was rapid: one estimate was that between mid-1990s and 2007 investment schemes purchased and aggregated no less than 40 per cent of small or intermediate beef and dairy farms (Participant 7) (Figure 6.9).<sup>131</sup> Corporate farming ventures reached their peak there in 2007.<sup>132</sup>

Agribusiness investment schemes have earned a mixed reputation. Some consider them a ‘land bank’ that represents an exciting and expanding segment of the specialised agricultural fund management industry (Great Southern Plantations Ltd 2006-07); others see them in terms of an avalanche of foreign capital used to control agricultural production and inputs, and expand production for export; and yet others condemn them as one of the most divisive

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<sup>130</sup> Other examples of agribusiness monocultures are timber plantations, vineyards, cotton, and orchards.

<sup>131</sup> The speed of property transfer in present King Island is demonstrated by the Office of the Surveyor General, Hobart, which in 2008 informed the author that it had produced no recent or current maps of King Island land tenure as it was unable to keep pace with changing ownership. Similarly, the King Island Council had no extant publicly-available map of local property aggregations.

<sup>132</sup> Paradoxically, agribusiness is both creature and casualty of global forces. Since its Island pinnacle in 2007, when participant data were gathered for this study, there have occurred the 2008–09 global financial crisis (GFC) and recent federal tax changes. A joint committee of the Australian Government found its taxation incentives for agribusiness MIS disadvantaged traditional agricultural enterprises that attempted to compete for scarce land and water resources (Parliament of Australia 2009). These events have disrupted corporate farming enterprises in King Island as elsewhere—MIS companies failed and subsequently moved to sell their assets (Wallace 2008).



trends in Australian agriculture and an arm of the tax avoidance industry (Montague 2008; Wallace 2008), of little value to the host community because profits flow offshore, forever lost (Millstone & Lang 2008; Montague 2008) (Figure 6.10).



Figure 6.9 Corporate farming 2007. Company sign on one King Island MIS livestock breeding and fattening property, supplier to Asian and other world markets  
Source: Author

The coming of agribusiness prompted a further development in Island land use and in governance. The imported regime forced local authorities to rethink the use of land, their major asset, in order to ensure the future of the Island. I next describe a cluster of influential impulses—two planning issues, two political proclivities—that are the context of reactive land use governance in King Island



Figure 6.10 Corporate farming, King Island 2007  
Source: Don Jones

## Critical contexts of change in King Island land use

### Conserve or develop

Severe social and economic impacts of King Island corporate farming intensify the urgency to confront the Island conundrum:

whether to preserve precious separateness of identity and uniqueness of culture, doing so at the expense of living standards and at the cost of high rates of emigration of enterprising island youth; or whether instead to pursue development, knowing that this course may imperil island cultures and island identity (Stephen 1988, np).

Of course this dilemma is not specific to King Island: it is also keenly felt on islands elsewhere (Cambers 2006; Clarke 2001; Hay 2006; Jackson 2006; Péron 2004; Stephen 1988; Stratford 2006b). In particular, Villamil (1977) emphasises that the survival of small island systems requires residents to clarify their aspirations for their society, and set out in detail their overall objectives. However, in King Island there was no participant consensus, and one or two expressed disappointment at what they considered some Islanders' self-interest rather than care for Islanders' common good (Participants 7, 15 & 29). Should planning seek to conserve the worth and benefits of King Island's established way of life? Or should decision-makers interpolate into the local(e) whatever opportunities may be sourced from offshore and which may irrevocably change that way of life? Before the choice may be made, King Islanders will need to address hard questions that presently appear to be avoided (Participant 7).

Conserve or develop? Islanders do not find the choice straightforward; indeed, the options may often be painful (Stephen 1988). Some residents relish the Island's distinctive peace and calm pace that, once modified, die. For some its 1960s flavour idealised as a 'Hebridean existence between land and sea' (Murray-Smith 1969, 15), its mid-twentieth-century-Tasmania pace of life complete with comfortable social traditions long since vanished elsewhere, linger today, to be valued and preserved, not rendered down as is the fate of elsewhere (Participant 3). One Islander feared that local decision-makers had 'lost the uniqueness of the Island' (Participant 29), a loss hastened in other islands by inward and outward human tides and invasive offshore cultural

influences (Hay 2006; Jackson 2005; Péron 2004). Another Islander sensed that the placid old-world charm of this once remote Island outpost was already diluted by metropolitan effervescence:

A lot of people here live very ordinary normal suburban lives, drive on tarred roads, go to work every day, get their pay and trot off to the pub, buy Melbourne bread which is flown in, buy UHT<sup>133</sup> milk ... don't know anything about where anything comes from [even though] we've got factories, an abattoir, we've got the Dairy ... suburbia is here (Participant 13).

On the other hand, those who wished the Island to 'move forward' on a crest of economic development saw opportunity present in all spheres of Island industry. They reasoned that choosing to preserve present-day King Island would not work: 'We have to decide if we're going to be victims of what's happening, allow our population to keep going down, and lose ownership of the Island we live on' (Participant 18).

Population drift, ongoing local loss of land tenure, foreign ownership of the dairy industry, 'corporate feudalism' thought to convert Islanders into 'a bunch of serfs' (Participants 15 & 18)—none of these overly concerned a small minority of participants. Others hoped for revitalised commerce: land development, opportunities to pursue the tourist dollar (Participant 8), dynamic markets, business investment, all with a view to a secure, viable, repopulated Island more effectively opened up to visitors, and counteracting socio-

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<sup>133</sup> UHT (ultra-heat treatment) milk is sterilised by a process invented in the 1960s. It has a typical shelf life of six to nine months until opened.

economic legacies of local corporate farming. While most participant local authorities regarded land use alternatives as the only solution, citizen participants disagreed as to which of the two roads, conservation or development, to tread. If unaddressed, such dissent would undermine the legitimacy of any decision-making for land development and raise questions of good governance.

### The best laid plans ...

A second critical context in land use governing is a planning issue. Land development and planning in Tasmania predominantly operate at the local level. Their most significant role is to regulate most land use and development activities in accordance with the objectives of the Tasmanian Resource Management and Planning System<sup>134</sup> (Environmental Defenders Office [EDO] 2001). It is a devolved system based on local council areas—state authorities require each local authority to design and administer a key regulatory planning instrument, a Planning Scheme,<sup>135</sup> important for the delivery of sustainable development at the local level (Jackson J. 2004; Thompson 2000).<sup>136</sup> Planning schemes may be amended: the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC) approves justified amendments to local council planning schemes, such as rezoning applications; a parallel state body, the Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal (RMPAT) hears appeals against local council

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<sup>134</sup> This suite of legislation regulates and plans land use. The three principal Acts of the RMPS are the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act (LUPAA) 1993, State Policies and Projects Act 1993 and the Tasmanian Planning Commission Act 1997.

<sup>135</sup> This requirement was developed under Part 3 of the LUPAA 1993.

<sup>136</sup> A local jurisdiction is segmented into various land use zones; conditions indicate which use and development may take place in each zone.

planning decisions. Within this structure the King Island Planning Scheme 1995 (hereafter KIPS) is required:

to provide for the social and economic welfare of the community  
by encouraging the proper management, use, development,  
protection and conservation of the Municipality's natural and man-made [sic] resources (King Island Council 2010, 1).

I interpret 'proper management' to entail 'good governance'; 'land' to constitute a 'natural' resource; and the foundational Island agrarian establishment a 'man-made resource'. Of six KIPS objectives, two affect its land use. The first, 'to recognise the natural and economic assets of King Island and promote balanced use and development while minimising conflict between competing demands on the Island's resources', reiterates state policy for ecologically sustainable development. The second objective is 'to protect the rural economy of King Island as an essential part of the wider economic base (King Island Council 2010, 1).

In general terms, land tenure may be well-defined and enforceable in a formal court of law. Alternatively, it may be relatively poorly defined with ambiguities that are open to exploitation (UNFAO 2011). Two participants considered the latter to be the King Island case, that the KIPS is too-general and has failed to protect its pastoral domain and dependent socio-economic fabric from external decision-making and control (Participants 9 & 30). The KIPS provisions were seen as too loose (Participant 30) and to simply skim over stated planning goal and objectives. Such modes of governing are

observed to give way to what Baldacchino & Greenwood (1998, 19) have elsewhere called an ‘eclipse of community’—a blotting out of Island population, social fabric, rural settlement, viability of small business and service provision. Some local authorities believed the play of market forces meant that the King Island government was powerless to act (Participants 9 & 30).

How did this perception of governing powerlessness develop? Certainly, in drafting the Island’s first planning scheme in the past, Councillors appear to have missed certain opportunities, and thereby contributed to this sense of ineffectiveness. For example, they were empowered to ‘make *any provision* which relates to the use, development, protection or conservation of any land in the area’ (EDO 2001, 26; emphasis added). Councillors thus had wide scope to plan land use and tenure but apparently overlooked the possibility of exogenous threats to their prime land and agrarian regime. This oversight occurred despite the fact that ‘Councillors are able, and it would be argued are required, to consider the future implications for growth and development within their jurisdiction’ (Beare & Szakiel 2008, 42). Parenthetically, such challenges are not exclusive to King Island. As Allmendinger (2009, 197) observes more broadly, planners face the problem that ‘society is changing and changing quickly, while planning as a practice and as a collection of processes remains wedded to ideas and procedures from a different age’.

The importance of the planning scheme as a technology of governing cannot be understated here: the King Island planning scheme has major impacts on economic growth and productivity, and yet inefficiencies in its construction

and administration defy the call for such instruments to be as efficient as possible (Beare & Szakiel 2008; EDO 2001). There would appear to exist more precise ways to draft protection of an island's land and its 'essential' rural economy. Others seem to have 'got it right'; for example sibling Bass Strait municipality Flinders Island, whose council specifically declared it would foster the social and economic wellbeing of its island community by ensuring 'that future changes and use or development ... avoid undesirable ... social impacts' (Flinders Island Council 1994, 14). Here was a valuable precedent for King Island land management. Above all, local councils have power to revise or replace their planning schemes (EDO 2001). In King Island, federally-encouraged corporate buy-ups of small and medium Island dairy properties have not been challenged or reined in despite their impact upon the Island's socio-economic fabric.

Perhaps the intention of the blanket 'balanced use and development' objective in the KIPS might have been to provide equal encouragement of external and Islander interests. But this principle raises fundamental questions such as who are the clients of planning (Allmendinger 2009)? Further, who are the *primary* clients of planning? Do councils, as planning authorities, have duty first to their electors or to the agribusiness developer who generally is in place solely for profit (Owen 2011), dispatches those profits offshore and little benefits the Island? As Villamil (1977, 5) observes, 'the question which must be asked prior to all others is, development for whom?'

Had council failed to properly manage rural change or guard its assailable rural economy and social base? It must be recognised that councils face daunting



challenges, five of which are outlined here. First, small island jurisdictions may lack institutional wealth to underwrite pressing planning scheme amendments, even if they see the need ‘to spend money to make money’ (Participant 7). The amendment process is costly,<sup>137</sup> requires councils to submit proposals to the TPC—a distant state body<sup>138</sup> and endure lengthy delays for outcomes (Participant 9).

Second, what degree of local support may Island representatives expect in this sparsely-populated Island? Citizens are entitled to help formulate or revise the planning scheme (EDO 2001), but recall that on this matter many participants consider Islanders generally inactive or disengaged.

A third defence of the council might reside in the complexity of the planner’s task. Scholars locate ample evidence that planning systems elsewhere are ever-evolving conceptual amalgams (Planning Institute Australia 2010; Thompson 2000); imperfect, under-achieving, highly-bureaucratised constructs (Allmendinger 2009; Healey 2005) that lack broad theoretical thinking<sup>139</sup> and are riddled with conflict (Allmendinger 2009). Others charge that planning is essentially a political activity, rife with value judgments, and that planners are constrained by a need to defer to their institutional employers (Krumholz 2001). There is, too, the infinity of human place associations, a societal patchwork of intrinsic, material, private, public, individual and collective values to be accommodated by land planners. How then might place-makers

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<sup>137</sup> For example, there is a precedent of gradual but continual fee increases: in 1994 the fee was \$A50; by 2001 it had risen to \$A55; in 2007 to \$A57. The original reason for a fee is given as providing both a deterrent to vexatious appeals, and an element of formality to the process.

<sup>138</sup> The RPDC has since been renamed the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC).

<sup>139</sup> This claim is in comparison with, for example, the disciplines of economics or politics (Allmendinger 2009).

account for the Island's multi-sectoral community of residents, consumers, investors, developers, public authorities and their respective, often conflicting but equally legitimate aspirations (Planning Institute Australia 2002)?

Fourth, recall the further intricacies of governing for change in land use. A prime difficulty is governance at a distance, a particular challenge for a small, not wealthy, remote Island of a sovereign subnational island state which has recently devolved governance to the local level. Recall that devolved governance is still in its transitional phase.

Finally, add in a complication—multi-tiered governance that inserts separate, seemingly uncoordinated elements into Island issues. Villamil (1977) observes that, to a significant degree, decisions which have an important impact on a small island society such as King Island are made beyond its boundary. Thus, an Island initiative (much-desired protection of agricultural land) jousts for attention with (and protection from) 'upper level' competitors—an unpopular state-wide initiative (non-clearance of vegetation policy), and an equally unpopular Australian Government encouragement of offshore investment in its land. It is claimed that this particular external policy, that transcends state borders, limits the governance capabilities of small islands in their attempts to control local economic processes (Villamil 1977). But, as Eversole and Martin (2005, 247) assert, initiation and resourcing of change are not the sole preserve of local community or central governments or global bodies, for change occurs at contact points among diverse institutions and tiers of government. Thus while council accepts crucial federal financial assistance, it must also suffer an Australian Government neoliberalism that underpins transformation of Island

society. At another level, local-state interlocking with, and obedience to, specific State Policies for land use are required.<sup>140</sup> As mentioned elsewhere, this matter is a running sore with King Island authorities. It is the case that Tasmanian land use policies are progeny of well-entrenched institutional rational planning,<sup>141</sup> a process which entraps significant, tangible Island resources within maps and blueprints for ready reference, cogitation and legal redress. The borderlines that slice the Island skin into zones are in constant flux. Inside the prime boundary—the Island Edge—internal borderlines materialise, migrate and erase according to predilections of permanent resident, transient global incomer, KIPS principles, or distant place-planners. Observe a further complexity in planners’ endeavours: that, to privilege technical and/or scientific professional knowledge may mean failure to validate precious intangibles, local understandings which, for planners, tend to remain an impractical fringe concern (Healey 2005; Massey & Jess 1995; Rodda 2010; Sandercock 1998).<sup>142</sup> Planning for place, for land use, is fraught with challenge.

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<sup>140</sup> The most relevant here is the State Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land, which recognises the particular importance of prime agricultural land, and aims to conserve and protect it so that it remains available for the sustainable development of agriculture.

<sup>141</sup> ‘The apex of positivist planning theory’ (Allmendinger 2009, 77), rational planning arose in the 1960s and 1970s to become a fundamental tool of planning practice: the process of identifying a problem, establishing and evaluating planning criteria, creating alternatives, implementing alternatives, and monitoring progress of the alternatives. Banfield (1959) notes constraints—for practical purposes alternatives and consequences are considered as fully as the decision-maker can afford to consider them, given the time and other resources available to him. Allmendinger (2009) condemns the model as without context or content, as does Relph (1981) for its destructive consequences and disrespect of place.

<sup>142</sup> Such failure is detected at grassroots level: a mainland Australian farmer concluded that ‘apparently computer modelling is of far more value [to local authorities] than 100 years of our local knowledge’ (Rodda 2010).

From this consideration of planning as a mode of governing, I now move to reflect on statist developmentalism and neoliberalism, two political impulses that inhabit Islander ontologies, land use priorities and practices. One of this pair is foundational to and entrenched in King Island, the other a comparative newcomer. One impulse did not supplant the other: the former shaped the agrarian Island; the latter challenged the former's dominance, Islanders' social and economic security, and also forced a change in local government's approach to land use.

### State developmentalism

The first political influence is state-directed economic growth, also known as statist developmentalism (Walker 1999). From the earliest days of the Van Diemonian penal settlement, successive governments have pursued and embraced its values in order to promote and regulate economic development.<sup>143</sup> Its prescribed goals and objectives are laid out in state legislation, specifically the Resource Management and Planning System (RMPS) (EDO 2001; TPC 2012). The Tasmanian Government endorses 'a planning system which promotes sustainable development' (DPIWE 2003, 4). It seeks this goal through the resource conservation-development paradigm. One scholar considers that this policy is chiefly concerned with balancing development and environmental interests through 'fiercely anthropocentric' management policies that recognise some limits to material growth but still regard natural

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<sup>143</sup> Statist developmentalism is based on several assumptions: economic development as a primary value and goal to be pursued; state social responsibility to citizens and economic efficiency in promoting growth; and the need for partnership and cooperation between business and government (Walker 1999).

values as ‘out there’, something that ultimately can be controlled (Doyle 2001, 63). A contrasting view finds statist developmentalism to be a path to sustained economic growth and a guaranteed prosperous industrialised Australia (Walker 1999).<sup>144</sup> Advocates consider statist developmentalism imperative, popular, and advantageous,<sup>145</sup> assumptions that are used to justify state-wide harvest of abundant natural capital (Mercer et al. 2005; Walker 1999).<sup>146</sup>

But some might well argue that statist developmentalism does not ensure good governance for small, distanced King Island. Politicians are thought too ready to blame land policy failures on geographical adversity rather than to pause and reflect on their governance (Walker 1999).<sup>147</sup> Errors in soldier settler policy, such as supply of farming blocks too small to support settler families, are a case in point. Further, some assert that state decision-makers have avoided devolution of governance powers, instead retaining previous authority and continuing to lead, guide and control much development from the centre (Beare & Szakiel 2008; Walker 1999). Certainly it is clear that over-zealous pursuit of statist developmentalism in twentieth century King Island came at terrible environmental cost, for ‘the natural environment changed beyond recognition’ (Finzel 2004, 55):

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<sup>144</sup> Short-term material advantages of the approach are clear: for example, the Legatum Prosperity Index (an independent measure of material health of a country, including wealth, quality of life and life satisfaction) found that Australia topped the 2008 rankings for 104 nations for quality of life and economic strength (The Legatum Institute 2008).

<sup>145</sup> See Wallerstein (2004) or Walker (1999) for an analysis of the growth of the ideology of Development and its offspring, Developmentalism.

<sup>146</sup> ‘Natural capital’ denotes a material source of wealth that occurs in a natural state and has economic value, for example timber, fresh water, or a mineral deposit; and considered ‘a free good’ in most liberal democracies (Mercer et al. 2005).

<sup>147</sup> Commonly used political explanations are the ‘one in a 100-year flood event’, the ‘worst drought in living memory’, ‘good seasons followed by bad’, remoteness, salinity and aridity. The ‘jury is still out’ as to the complicity of climate change in project failures.

In the decades between 1940 and the 1980s there was an emphasis on clearing and developing as much land as possible with little consideration of the long term impact on the environment.

Successive [state] governments encouraged large-scale clearing and cultivation to achieve an increase in food and fibre production (Finzel 2004, 67).<sup>148</sup>

A century of state land development policies has stamped King Island as an agrarian Island (Australian Government 2010a). From its first settlement, where soils were bared and bent to human will, nearly a century would pass before outcomes of the approach became visible: how state-sponsored land clearance deeply wounded agricultural and pastoral productivity;<sup>149</sup> how farmers ‘did the wrong thing in clearing and leaving no shelter belts and tree lines [so that] today there’s not that much bush on King Island’ (Participants 5 & 22); how people must better protect and manage the Island’s natural resources (Addison 1995; Finzel 2004). But, in contrast to local governance, federal and state governance has been ambivalent (Participant 31) and these tiers have been seen to promote their developmentalist culture through, for example, pursuit of legislation to enable MIS to use the Island for forestry (Participant 7). Yet, on the other hand, the federal tier leavened these threats

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<sup>148</sup> Two thirds of King Island’s original vegetation cover has been destroyed; it hovers precariously above the minimum necessary to maintain biodiversity (Barnes et al. 2002).

<sup>149</sup> Barnes et al. (2002) recorded adverse impacts: increases in salinity, soil degradation, erosion, and declining water quality. They suggested that retention of native vegetation could protect the land from erosion, degradation and salinity; provide shade and shelter for livestock; help protect wetlands, catchments and water quality; and maintain the natural diversity of animals and plants for future generations.

with initiatives for natural resource management<sup>150</sup> and occasional distribution of alms for remnant vegetation restoration work<sup>151</sup> on the Island<sup>152</sup> as Islanders belatedly attempted to make good previous vegetation clearing and burning. A better understanding of environmental needs has seen revegetation on some properties, and a developing mindset to support natural resource management and protection of the remnant plant community (Participants 10 & 11; Addison 1995; Finzel 2004).

## Neoliberalism

A second political impulse is neoliberalism. In the shape of corporate farming, neoliberalism entered the Island as an economic tributary of globalisation and vehicle of a global way of agricultural being. Progeny of Australian Government-approved MIS, this widespread phenomenon of rich western market democracies (Treanor 2005) arose in the early 1970s when corporate elites revived economic liberalism, developed a commanding set of global economic policies (Wallerstein 2004) and harnessed powerful financial institutions<sup>153</sup> to channel their resources into lucrative global investment fields

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<sup>150</sup> Natural resource management has been fostered and developed in Australia for two decades from the 1990s by a number of government programs, both federal and state, and through regional and local initiatives. The Tasmanian Government has adopted an approach to natural resource management that aims to bring together industry, resource users, land managers and conservation interests. The Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Framework 2002 and the Natural Resource Management Act 2002 provide a structure and mechanisms for delivering management of natural resources in the state (DPIPWE 2011).

<sup>151</sup> Narrow bands and small fragments of vegetation survive mostly in central, southeast and northern King Island (Tasmanian Land Conservancy 2006).

<sup>152</sup> One example is Australian Government Land and Coasts (AGLC), a cross-departmental team comprising staff from the Australian Government departments of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Staff jointly manage delivery of the Caring for our Country project and develop and implement environment and resource management policies.

<sup>153</sup> Three such are the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

such as regional land use ventures. Australia was absorbed into the neoliberal investment network with the assistance of its national government<sup>154</sup> (Allmendinger 2009; Beer et al. 2005; Geddes 2005; Treanor 2005; Wallerstein 2004). Neoliberalism turns from state-dominated economic developmentalism towards ‘small government’ (McGuirk 2005; Passmore 1981), that is, a reduction of state involvement and provision in favour of increased power of ‘marketisation’ groups (Harvey 2005, 2006; Ruming 2005; Swyngedouw 2005). Neoliberalism permeates economic and land use policies of those major Australian political parties<sup>155</sup> who privilege the interests of big business, liberalism, and economic free trade<sup>156</sup>. According to Allmendinger (2009), most state neoliberal planning approaches share the belief that some form of land use control is necessary, and all prefer that control to be centrally directed and orientated to assist rather than hinder the market.

What does neoliberalism mean, in terms of land use as a mode of governing in King Island? Some claim that various Australian Governments have had an eye to closer economic ties with Asia in order to transform the Australian economy (see for example Beeson & Cloney 1997; Hughes 1998); this decade-long concern has most recently manifest in a white paper entitled Australia in the Asian Century (Australian Government 2012). The chosen pathway is neoliberal: to privilege market forces; sanction, stimulate and advance corporate farming (Troughton 2005); empower agribusiness through

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<sup>154</sup> Recall that the Australian Government introduced tax incentives which favoured MIS such as agribusiness.

<sup>155</sup> Liberal, National and Labor Parties.

<sup>156</sup> Economic free trade policy favours the most efficient, well-capitalised farms, especially agribusiness corporations, and has forced small family farmers and graziers off the land (Allmendinger 2009).



legislation; act in concert with powerful allies such as MIS which attract supporters with agrarian innovation, economies of scale and capital well beyond the reach of the average farmer (Troughton 2005); and link with financial institutions that nourish agribusiness.<sup>157,158</sup>

Most significantly, neoliberalism introduced a new circumstance into Island governance: corporate farming revealed that the practical reach of devolved local governance was impotent. Scholars acknowledge this outcome: they agree that land use reconfigurations such as corporate farming, where one group of humans alters social landscapes and local economies, may well counter a community's best interests (Essex et al. 2005). For others the swing from 'big governance' to corporate centralism poses further community dangers such as sapped morale, stifled innovation and experimentation (Geddes 2005). Yet others point to innate contradictions and shortcomings of neoliberal practices: anti-democratic character; freedoms made contingent on market priorities; autocratic governance (Allmendinger 2009; Beer et al. 2005; Dean 1999; Harvey 2005; Mouffe 2000; Swyngedouw 2005); or democratically unpalatable dogmas of property rights, all-embracing virtues of the market, and profound inequalities (Mouffe 2000). And the Australian Government became

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<sup>157</sup> See Mercer (1997) on investment environments and Australian agribusiness.

<sup>158</sup> Troughton (2005) notes that governments including the major Australian political parties sanction and empower large agribusiness interests. The Australian Government's Managed Investments Act 1998 encouraged the MIS concept.

sufficiently concerned by local neoliberal socio-economic transformations that it convened several parliamentary investigations of them.<sup>159, 160</sup>

## Islanders and governing of land changes

Thus far I have considered several land use perspectives: our associations with Earth's terrestrial crust; King Islander-King Island relationships from settlement to the present day; and some significant mindsets, planning practices and ideologies that mould local land governance. Next I pose several questions. Were participants particularly anxious about change in land use? (How) are land use concerns properly a governance matter? How did Islanders respond to challenges of changes in land tenure and land use?

The short answer to the first question is that participants were indeed anxious about global-local changes that were transforming land use and tenure in King Island. In other places some members of communities may resist change while others may well accept it, a contrast visible in the reputation of corporate farming as 'one of the most divisive trends in Australian agriculture' (Smithers & Wilson 2005, 374; see also Wallace 2008). Further, the three other change cases of this study clearly show that King Islanders often disagreed among themselves about many matters, including economic development opportunities and future directions. However, participants were unanimous that

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<sup>159</sup> For example, in October 2009 the Australian Senate (the house of review) investigated agricultural and related industries following the collapse of corporate farming ventures 'including the greatest cattle scam of all time'. One non-aligned Senator, Nick Xenophon, portrayed Australian Government support for MIS as 'obscenely generous tax write-offs' and hoped that their failures would 'jolt the major parties to reconsider their support for this ill-conceived policy' (Commonwealth of Australia 2009, np).

<sup>160</sup> In time, MIS generally ran their course in King Island and some attempted to divest themselves of their acquired lands.

corporate farming did not offer a single advantage to King Island—quite the opposite. They identified its unhindered spread through their Island as the equal greatest threat<sup>161</sup> to their quality of life and future. One person felt that state and federal policy-makers spurned small farmers and counselled them to ‘get big or get out’ (Participant 15). Another observed that ‘corporate farming is beyond our control and it’s speeding up ... it’s a massive change for the Island’ (Participant 19). The ‘massive change’ linked King Island to rural areas of numerous countries elsewhere, where similar complex demands, pressures, challenges and far-reaching social implications for rural place were being faced (Essex et al. 2005).

There was a sense of economic disadvantage as land prices soared out of the reach of Islanders<sup>162</sup> (Participants 7 & 20). There was, too, a sense of injustice as corporate agribusiness profits were sent offshore, lost to the local economy (Participants 7, 15 & 18). Further, there was a sense of economic vulnerability and uncertainty: some felt the Island’s past success stories were no longer guaranteed and predicted a ceiling to growth of local primary industry, mainstay of the Island’s good fortune (Participants 3, 26 & 27); conversely, one participant considered the Island beef industry had not yet achieved its potential (Participant 22). Recall the social ramifications of local corporate farming: depleted agricultural labour force, disruption of traditional rural activity, closure of rural schools and community halls, ‘gutted’ outlying family farming settlements (Participant 4). All were apparent casualties of urban and

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<sup>161</sup> It shared top ranking with the threat of uncertain availability of fresh water.

<sup>162</sup> In May 2007 Island land prices had escalated from \$A1,500 an acre to \$A3,500 per acre, ‘good for the locals who are selling, but they grab the money and go [off Island]’ (Participant 7).

rural decline in this present age of global upheaval, general economic restructuring and technological change (Canadian Institute of Planners 2010; Davis & Bartlett 2008). There were serious concerns that commercially-based MIS decisions might oppose Islanders' best interests, dairying future and cheese production (Participants 14 & 15), or that corporate land maintenance might not be sufficiently diligent (Participant 24).<sup>163</sup> Higher-level government interference reinforced such concerns:

We have only X amount of land before we hit the sea. Of that land, only so much is arable, productive. [But] we have a [state] moratorium on cutting down native vegetation on the Island, so no further paddocks can be created. If we lose the existing land through bad management or through [Tasmanian Government-promoted] forestry or other land uses, the major beef and dairy industries are very much at risk (Participant 27).<sup>164</sup>

More deeply still, the presence and processes of corporate land use unsettled participants' identities as King Islanders, and faith in the continuity of generational belonging and the possibility of future vision. Doubtless participants in general appreciated that

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<sup>163</sup> One participant was concerned that a particular dairy property once used 15–16 people to work two farms. 'Corporates bought it for beef and use two single men to work it—you wonder how can two single men look after and run a property of that calibre?' (Participant 22).

<sup>164</sup> Krumholz (2001) raises a parallel sentiment, noting that Britons regard their land as scarce and wish to more tightly control its use, but that the British planning system favours policies that will advance the broad public interest, over and above individual property rights—the converse of the case in King Island where, were policies introduced to retain land tenure in local hands, the Island's 'broad public interest' might be better protected from external, global private interest.

to farm is to enter into a union with nature ... There is a close association with the tenacity and cycle of life, with the weather and the seasons. Each season is a preparation for another, planting in spring to harvest in the fall, haying in summer to feed in winter, breeding in one season to calve or lamb in another. The years flow together in an indefatigable, bucolic continuum (Burley 2008, 20).

This general way of being bonded King Islander and the land. Of numerous modes of land tenure, one is private ownership—the assignment of rights to a private party, be it an individual or a corporate body. Overall, land ownership was the traditional hub of Islander existence, not only a source of economic production but also a basis of social relationships and cultural values, and sometimes a source of prestige and often power.

The resulting social networks built up within a specific social and cultural group are a very important asset in ensuring sustainability of livelihoods of rural households (UNFAO 2011). As participants recall, ‘We started off with all the land being owned by Island farmers’ (Participant 7), ‘originally all owned by the people who live here, the pioneer families, soldier settlers and the community’ (Participants 4 & 15) where ‘everyone was on a smaller scale’ (Participant 15). Several regretted that the Island would never return to its once exclusive Islander ownership (Participants 4, 15 & 20) now that there were ‘people from away owning your Island’, one of the Island’s worst threats (Participants 18, 19 & 20). Perhaps it was wishful thinking that tinged council’s rhetorical internet portrayal of King Island as ‘our little paradise’

(King Island Council 2008a), no longer an Eden, nor wholly ‘ours’. Now it incorporated off-shore owners whom one participant considered to

rape and reap and leave ... they’re only entrepreneurs waiting for capital gains on the land and then they will get out of it ... people have been wounded over the last ten to fifteen years by a couple of them who came here and weren’t much good at all, didn’t do any good for the place ... Some of them don’t have many small-community ethics. They use people, use the businesses, don’t pay their bills, use people for their capital gains—that’s where most of the problem comes from (Participant 22).

Some Islanders recalled how their forebears learned the hard way how to relate to the land, survive on the Island, endure ‘the pain ... early disasters and disappointments’ to forge successful dairy, prime beef and wool industries (Paterson 2001, 298). The advent of agribusiness marked the end of exclusive local control of the Island livestock industry, ‘the tradition and mainstay of the Island’ (Partridge 1999, np), ‘the backbone of the Island economy’ (King Island Council 2008a) and engine of rural life. Participant 15 condemned the new dual land tenure mix—‘the [corporate] landholders and the [traditional] others’—as a descent into ‘feudalism. For another, agribusiness destabilised, disassembled a long-established cultural identity entwined with their land (Participant 18). Some who had not sold their holdings resented sponge-like corporates roaming the global economic tide, crossing their Island edge, ‘gobbling everybody’ (Participant 7). Participant 5 swam against the tide of opinion, stating that King Islanders could not expect uncontested dominion

over their very desirable agricultural land. Yet, with very few locals now employed on corporate farms<sup>165</sup> and effectively alienated from parts of their Island, two others revealed they had lost their sense of ‘what the land means to us’ (Participants 24 & 31)—identity as an established family community, an identity fixed in place through the certainty of tradition (Participants 18 & 21; Relph 1976).

In some people, offshore purchase and aggregation of farmland generated a sense of deprivation. ‘Not much is left for the people who are actually running the community’ as opposed to ‘outsiders, temporary residents for three, four, five years’ (Participant 18) who were thought to lack genuine attachment to the land. Participant 24 observed that ‘Whenever you have ownership that doesn’t have a feel for the place, then there’s a risk of how they might make a decision—it might be purely commercially based rather than based on any attachment to the land’ (Participant 24) or upon King Island practice.<sup>166</sup> Others viewed corporate farmers as isolates, not involving themselves in King Island’s natural resource management (Participants 11, 20 & 31). ‘All these corporate farmers coming in—they’re just not interested in landcare or a landcare group’, nor engaged with the KINRMG<sup>167</sup> (Participants 20 & 31). However, although the ideal was reciprocation between community and local corporate personnel, Islanders had not attempted collaboration with corporate farm managers: ‘there

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<sup>165</sup> Typically a single property manager replaced whole farming families, thus displacing locals (Participants 15, 18 & 20).

<sup>166</sup> Examples include realising the value of wind breaks to shelter pasture and animals from cold winds; and non-use of fire to clear land in line with the present Tasmanian Government prohibition (Participants 11, 13 & 15).

<sup>167</sup> The mission of KINRMG is ‘to promote coordinated and integrated management of natural resources, which will contribute to the economic and environmental sustainability of King Island’ (KINRMG Inc., 2007a).

is no conscious policy by natural resource management to recruit newcomer corporate farmers into landcare activities—we have to start working on it; it has to be addressed’ (Participant 11). In contrast it must be noted that several participants criticised one or two *local* Islanders for poor stewardship and flouting of land controls.

Above all, interview transcripts revealed concern about Islander emigration (described above) and an already changing Island lifestyle (Participants 9 & 19). Might corporate farming land buy-ups and land price escalation prevent resident numbers increasing sufficiently to sustain the Island society? Further, beyond participant perceptions of economic and cultural disadvantage, the arrival of corporate farming painfully exposed local government inability to defend land tenure in King Island (Participants 7, 9 & 30).

The second question I pose is: (how) are land use concerns properly a governance matter?

At the most basic level, the planet’s land is the very wellspring of survival and flourishing; governance is the organisational device by which people order their relationships with it. Land use is a governance matter; and constant change in the world of work and living increasingly complicates the relationship and governance of person and place (Canadian Institute of Planners 2010). The world economy has produced ‘complex reconfigurations of the spatiality, scaling and governance of economic, social and political spaces’ (McGuirk 2005, 60), which limit the capabilities of small islands to control economic and social processes within their boundaries.



In the case of islands, ‘the smaller the country, the worse becomes the problem of control’ because imported development models may not be in scale with islands, but should be so to minimise disruptive impacts (Villamil 1977). Thus, ‘in these times of global upheaval, communities must often adjust to shifting economic forces that affect growth and employment’ (Canadian Institute of Planners 2010, np). On King Island, participants described transformations in all these spaces—political, economic, social. Some Islanders saw an encroaching corporate floodtide directed not by them but by absentee landlords and few onshore managers; one saw the primary threat as an advancing ‘land grab’ by powerful outsiders (Participant 3) and Islanders’ helplessness to protect their way of being. They looked to local representatives for solutions to socio-economic decline and an inadequate land use planning instrument mentioned earlier:

We can prevent obvious degradation but cannot direct *where* beef or dairy activities can be run—we’ve got no control over that type of thing. *It worries everybody. Our planning scheme is too general.* Councils have very little sway, when it comes to private enterprise, how people utilise their land (Participant 30; emphasis added).

The state Land Use Planning and Approvals Act (LUPAA) 1993 requires council to enforce its planning scheme (Tasmanian Government 1993). But it contains nothing to prevent local land being freely sold on the open market to all comers (Participant 22). It is the case that

if someone wants to sell his [sic] block of land, get out and retire, and wants top dollar so he can retire, and the only person who can afford that is a corporate farmer, who is the government to say you can't sell to that person? I don't think there's an answer—what can [council] do about it? The only alternative is for the [Tasmanian] Government to buy it, and it won't (Participant 9).

Newly devolved governance authorises local authorities and citizenry to decision-make for the wellbeing of their place. Such decisions increasingly entail management of global–local change as humankind pursues its economic imperative of endless growth. Yet, King Island authorities cannot protect place from external MIS which purchase properties offered for sale by retiring farmers. And this oversight in the KIPS infects companion planning instruments, for example the five-year King Island Council Strategic Plan 2004–09 that is intended 'to serve the community in a timely manner' (King Island Council 2003, 3) and 'to provide leadership for the community by advocating the issues that affect the community's ability to grow to its full potential' (King Island Council 2003, 10). Yet after some years of experience of incomer agribusiness, the issue of corporate invasion had not permeated this strategic plan's 17 aims and objectives. There were no statements of intent to protect arable land, King Island's mainstay, from extensive off-shore acquisition. The closest approaches repeated state government sustainability policy of environmental-economic balance, rather than address change in land tenure and ways to protect the present rural society and economy from adverse

impacts. The KIPS and council's strategic plans were silent about such concerns.

In other quarters certain change was noted. There were claims that state sovereignty, a 'cornerstone of the present international system, was being 'challenged and gradually altered' (Snarr & Snarr 2005, 63). The King Island experience supports this view. Recall the Australian Government's hand in triggering corporate farming throughout its federation of sovereign states, and the ease and speed with which MIS occupied a significant percentage of King Island without council and community input. This shift occurred despite the recognised role of council to promote 'the economic, social and environmental welfare of the Island' that resided in their land (King Island Council 2003, 2). In pointing to contradictory precepts of planning, Stein (2008, 1) first asserts that planning is employed for the 'common good' and thus overrides private property rights; and is then critical that planning is essentially an unwarranted deprivation of private property rights. Tasmanian planning law finds that private ownership of property in King Island, acquired on the open market, rules supreme. Thus it would seem that future land tenure and land use in King Island should involve multi-scalar decisions that take into account local socio-economic character, needs and protection from corporate enclaves in the Island.

My third question is: How did Islanders respond to challenges of changing land tenure and land use?

The participant cohort deprecated the presence of the corporate farming enclave, considering it complicit in their altered social and economic fortunes, emptying of rural settlements (Participant 4) and emigration of families and other residents (Participant 9).

I consider first the responses of council. These circled around the view that the Island and Islanders would, at least in the short term, remain ‘captive to private enterprise and market forces’ (Participants 9 & 30) until such time as those forces altered, and a revision of their planning scheme might be initiated.

According to Villamil (1977), to continue with external development models (such as agribusiness) means that the problem of survival becomes critical. In the search for solutions council faced a daunting task, for among Islanders ‘a lot of people are looking away because [the corporate land tenure situation] might become too hard, and there have to be some hard decisions made’ (Participant 7).

Council made moves towards its hard decisions. Whereas islands within archipelagos have opportunity to reap considerable benefits of economies of scale in research and planning activities when devising development policies (Villamil 1977), this was not the case for solitary King Island, parent-governed from a distance. Council veered away from the imported, federally-supported corporate development within their Island and set about ‘coming to grips’ with the question of survival (Participant 7). Some participants offered solutions. Participant 18 suggested that King Islanders forego their traditional reliance on cattle and dairying so that authorities might use the land for niche industries suggested by a number of participants—gorge and coastal ecotourism and

geoheritage, food and craft, alternative wave energy, expansion of the retail arm of the cheese factory, information technology, and ever the constant wish-list item—the projected reopening of the scheelite mine.

Villamil (1977) advises people intent on survival in small island systems to emphasise what is unique to their place, and recommends that land is the island resource that deserves special attention. This was the choice made by council. In a sense it repeated the Island settlement experiences of 1888 and twentieth century post-war periods, deciding this time to open up the sparsely-settled coastal lands that were of little value to the local corporate enclave.<sup>168</sup> The council blueprint for survival took form as the King Island Strategy Plan [the Plan] (Connell Wagner 2007).<sup>169</sup>

To satisfy council's key target, population growth, 'areas of low or no agricultural value' would be offered for residential development in response to claims of 'mounting pressure' to open up parts of the coast, and an alleged 'intense interest' in the west coast for residential settlement (Connell Wagner 2007, 25).

The Plan was an exercise in small government neoliberalism and the play of market forces. Unlike the previous soldier settler schemes, the Tasmanian Government sat outside this Plan apart from its duty to ratify proposed land

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<sup>168</sup> Some participants feared that MIS would undermine King Island's primary production by converting corporate pastureland to commercial tree plantations (Participants 3, 4, 7, 14 & 15). Participants strongly resisted, and contested state authorities' agricultural land policies which favoured MIS. One participant had grave fears that 'obviously other [Island] properties will sell out to tree farmers, which will threaten the needs of the population because they would destroy farming very quickly ... tree farms would lose the Island its clean green image and close down the cheese and beef industries'; reconversion of plantations to pasture would be impossible within a lifetime (Participant 4).

<sup>169</sup> The Final Report was adopted at the Ordinary Meeting of Council on 15 April 2008 (King Island Council 2009).

zoning changes; any amendments would then be incorporated into the local planning scheme. The comparatively inexpensive, ‘affordable, yet high quality coastal environments’ would provide ‘sweeteners’ to promote the Island to mainland Australians (ibid., 27) (Figure 6.11).



Figure 6.11 Proposed zoning (three black-dotted ovals) of western and southern coastland for King Island residential development  
Source: Connell Wagner 2007, 32

Global-local remoulding of land is unrelenting: strong desire for ‘waterfront’ property drives advances upon sites revered for their solitude and naturalness. International and local developers increasingly pursued Island vendors and buyers; glossy words morphed King Island coast land into magnificent beachfront hideaways. Inland farmers created opportunity as the marketplace embraced their agriculturally poorer, once low-value coastal blocks. Used mainly for winter stock agistment, such land was ‘now worth a fortune if it’s got beach frontage’ (Participant 19).

Change had already arrived here: a limited mix of locals and newcomers trickled in to build upon the coast land—locals who had the opportunity to buy coastal acreage; people looking for somewhere to retire to; others living interstate who had bought or built an ‘away’ home, ceding metropolitan life for a few months each year.

The Island survival Plan represented a multi-level governance operation. Local government would fine-tune the Plan recommendations which, when ratified by the Tasmanian Government, would be incorporated into the Island’s Planning Scheme (Participant 7). The expectation was that King Island would blend traditional Island farming, corporate agribusiness, and the rezoned coastal pastures for immigrants and interested locals. An eleventh-hour antidote for an emptying Island, the Plan was a major planning intervention to restore human lifeblood to this largely undeveloped Island. The recovery goals were set: a ‘strong demographic profile’, mushrooming employment, settlements, and sustainable population (Connell Walker 2007, 19), all to be achieved within the decade 2007–17.

Citizen responses to change in land use and tenure were wide-ranging. While citizens agreed in principle that global-local land changes held challenges for the Island, they disagreed over detail—for example, the degree of threat, the type of possible solution. For some, sale of plots on west and south coasts was an infant concept: many had not yet considered its ramifications; most participants had not read the draft Plan; a number had ‘missed’ publicity about Plan contents, and the invitation to submit comment.

Yet, ‘ordinary citizen’ interviews revealed diverse insights about coastal and population themes. Although few seemed to recognise the Plan for what it was—an Island survival mechanism—participants adopted one of several stances. First, wholehearted exponents of a developed Island welcomed ‘such a high quality report’, thought it would curb undesirable ad hoc development, and insisted that Islanders

need to look at developing the land ... get the Joe Citizens in here who will live in the place, spend their money on the place and grow their families on the place ... and make those opportunities available for people to take up so that we can increase our population (Participant 18).

While some applauded plans to create a land-and-seaview environment to draw in new residents and revitalise the economy, uncertainty continued over optimum Islander numbers. Some thought the firm community decision to aim



for 3,000 people<sup>170</sup> was too conservative, and one suggested council should revise the figure to 5,000 residents, with firm regulation once achieved:

Get to 5,000, put a cap on it as in Noosa,<sup>171</sup> with controls on development. We don't want 10,000 people on King Island ... we want more people to share the load, but we don't want a huge mecca (Participant 9).

Another coastal development advocate had faith that council would avoid visual pitfalls such as ribbon development, and find 'a sensible way to cut up the coast' in order to improve economic prosperity (Participant 20). Several local entrepreneurs saw 'tremendous scope' for the sparsely settled Island to support many more people. They also saw 'enormous' development potential, particularly in the international market that could profit from the established and respected King Island food brand.<sup>172</sup>

Such optimism was countered by conditional support, caution and resistance among other participants. Part of this group was a pro-development cohort which approved coastal development and change in certain parts of the Island fringe but was mindful of potential for harm to the fragile coastlands. This group required social, environmental, aesthetic and good governance caveats, for 'we have to be very careful—this small patch we live on is such a unique ecosystem that it wouldn't take much to upset the balance' (Participant 24).

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<sup>170</sup> This number is close to that enumerated during the 1970s peak.

<sup>171</sup> Noosa is a coastal settlement in the Australian state of Queensland, whose local government decided against further development and capped the population through planning controls on development (Participant 9).

<sup>172</sup> Existing precedents include King Island Dairy, which exports products to Hong Kong, China, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand and the USA, in addition to the domestic market.

One within this group was anxious that ‘the whole world is starting to look at’ King Island’s coastal real estate property, now globally exposed in Internet marketing campaigns; and that possible implications for Islanders had not been explored, particularly such matters as residents’ traditional access to the coast (Participant 31). Freedom of access was founded upon residents’ respectful, responsible use of traditional track-ways across private property to the Island fringe. In the past such users were well-known to property owners, which would cease to be the case with a large immigrant influx. According to some participants, residents frequently discussed coastal access, newcomer purchase of Island private waterfront property, locals’ fears of being ‘locked out’, and the significance of free access as a traditional ‘right’ of Island living,

being able to go into paddocks with tracks giving access to the beach. But people who come from away want a holiday place but haven’t built it yet, or only come for their holidays—they put up big gates and padlocks and want to stop people from going in ... they’re not [permanently] here, and they’re stopping us from doing what we’ve always done (Participant 13).

One worried that coastal development might affect livelihoods, that for the sake of peace and quiet sea-changers might block kelp-harvesters from major collection areas during the hours of darkness, so terminating a 30-year traditional right. ‘If you start dividing it into blocks out there, people are going to want their peace and privacy ... you have to attract people’ (Participant 4). Besides this perhaps necessary compromise between potential new residents and kelpers, some participants were more concerned with matters of detail:

fears of planning laxity and insensitive residential building design, where ‘you could end up with a box on the beach’ (Participant 12); constructions too close to, or illegally overlapping the protected Coastal Zone boundary<sup>173</sup> (Participants 14 & 15); or planning efforts that failed to account for Island scale:

It just worries me how big business might be attracted to the place, being only an hour by air from Melbourne—it would be a perfect place to set up a retreat centre. I’d like to think that would be done sensitively, in line with the way the Island is at the moment. And I think that can be achieved. But I would be disappointed if we ended up with some big resort facility and high density development right on our coastline (Participant 24).

This participant cluster also expected council to rigorously regulate coastal development approvals in the initial stages of building, to avoid ‘a precedent that, as it’s okay to build at the Island icon, so it’s okay to be building everywhere else ... that worries me’ (Participant 12).<sup>174</sup>

Some decades ago a visitor appealed to King Islanders to resist development of their home, a place he portrayed as having an ideal way of being that elsewhere was increasingly being destroyed (Murray-Smith 1969). Today a third, small participant group carried forward the sentiment, apprehensive of any land

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<sup>173</sup> The Coastal Zone is a narrow fringe stretch of foreshore, beaches, headlands and bays protected from most development by the State Coastal Policy (1996) of the Tasmanian Government.

<sup>174</sup> This reference is to a successful planning application to construct a private residence next to the Island’s historic heritage lighthouse site, despite a Tasmanian Government Heritage Office appeal.

development, whether coastal or elsewhere within the Island. Its members rejected the pro-development discourse that proclaimed, ‘if we try to make King Island a museum piece, we may as well leave tomorrow’ (Participant 18). Instead, the group feared loss of values they attached to undeveloped parts of their Island. There was also the concern about who the land would be opened up to. Some interpreted the ‘populate or perish’ council option as ‘populate *and* perish’—a collapse of quality of Island life and uniqueness. They disputed alteration of the status quo and challenged the need for continuous development. Some among them did not fear shrinking services as population continued its decline. ‘Difficult to retain doctors? The school will close? The air service? This, that and the other? I just can’t see that!’ (Participant 21).

And,

Why aim for so many newcomers? Why is it not sufficient to stop at 1,500 to 2,000 people, perhaps 2,200 rather than 3,000, especially with the scheelite mine going ahead as planned? A population of 3,000 just doesn’t make sense (Participant 11).

For another, the Plan intention to rebuild population numbers was

only ‘dreamland’. *That* won’t bring much population into the Island, [only] people who will buy ten acres and put up a house and fly back here for a few long weekends. No one’s going to live out in those places and travel daily in to the abattoirs to work (Participant 22).

Further fears were linked to development. One Islander considered that council's Plan repeated major development errors that had occurred in southern and eastern coastal regions of mainland Australia. King Island's special values, its 'wonderful lack of all things big and flashy and pretentious like in mainland Australia' (Hall 2007, 5) were admired and envied by outsiders as well as many Islanders. Only two years before, a visitor had praised King Islanders for 'holding onto values that small towns on the [Australian] mainland have lost and would envy' (Harden 2005, 18); similarly, two participants recalled similar pleas by sight-seeing visitors to 'leave the Island as it is'. A strong environmental impulse led some participants to defend coastal integrity, 'a precious commodity so easily spoilt'. One conceded that 'It's probably very selfish of me not wanting the coast to be built on, but we have to preserve some aspects of King Island which are very important' (Participant 19). Another mourned lost values:

I don't agree that they should let people come in to the land they are going to open up ... when you're out in a boat, it looks awful when you look back and see these houses on the shoreline. They've lost the uniqueness of the Island (Participant 29).

And although the possibility of coastal ribbon development was discounted by the Plan consultants, two Councillors and the TPC, anxiety remained:

It's a fear of mine that over the next 20 or so years we will have the coast ringed with houses and shacks.<sup>175</sup> One of the proposals is that

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<sup>175</sup> Shacks are Tasmanian holiday cottages.

at the Ettrick [River] there will be little nests of houses, which is ...

No! Let's have town and let's have country! (Participant 19).

Some participants were also concerned about who the coastal land would be opened up to. A likely outcome appeared to be a mix of established and new permanent residents, and newly arrived sea-changers. The possibility drew a variety of responses from established Islanders. First, some Councillors and others particularly welcomed intending permanent residents, especially those with young families who would help swell and retain Island services, fill skilled labour gaps (Participant 24) and energise Island debate and directions:

Some of the people that have come in over the last ten or fifteen years are among the most active people in community groups ... some of their ideas mightn't bounce that well initially, or there might be a compromise between the two, but we definitely need new blood on a lot of the committees (Participant 17).

Another participant agreed that absence of change was 'very narrowing' and pondered, 'Is it good to have turnover and fresh ideas, or is it good to have institutional continuity and stability—the balance is hard, very difficult' (Participant 19). Some participants tolerated initial disruption of Islander ways by newly-arrived residents and sea changers alike, and were patient while newcomers made the transition to Island living:

About a decade ago they first came here and then realised they had to live here. They were used to living in cities, with padlocks everywhere; after a while a lot of them became human, saw they

don't have to treat people like when they first came. Some of the areas that were locked up are more accessible now (Participant 22).

A separate group of Islanders simmered with various degrees of resentment. In particular they considered temporary residents, especially sea-changers, to be isolates who revelled in small-island values of privacy, personal space and solitude, 'a lot of "come in for a holiday" type people ... don't get out into the community ... don't want to know Islanders ... don't become 'one of us' ... don't contribute to the nice thing about the Island—the community type of thing ... don't patronise the supermarkets or local services but come in loaded with their own stuff, fly their own plane. That happens a lot, so it doesn't help [the Island]' (Participant 13). Some found new arrivals overbearing, pushy, intrusive, a threat to the status quo: 'A lot of people come here and want to change it ... why don't they go back where they came from?' (Participant 14). Another Islander agreed:

some [local] people don't like change ... they don't like outsiders coming in and saying, 'Hey, this is how you should be going'. They'll get their backs up straight away, and that's fair enough—this is their land (Participant 29).

Sea-changers, those who acquired land for short-term, irregular occupation, evoked mixed emotions among long-term Islanders. How might their influx affect the land (Figure 6.12)?

In other places sea-changers were thought to have driven up real estate prices to the detriment of locals (Freshwater & Tomblin 2009) in the same way

corporate farming had done with land values in King Island. This price escalation in other places led some participants to question the worth of encouraging sea-changers to King Island. ‘If you’re going to put a lot of homes [on King Island] only to be used for a month in the year, is that good for the Island? If you compare it with corporate farming, it’s probably just as negative’ (Participant 9). Similarly, Royle (2003) observes that Irish offshore islands have been losing population for many decades as traditional residents depart. Although holiday homes have appeared on these islands, Royle makes the point that a struggling, traditionally populated island where some land is owned and seasonally occupied by outsiders, cannot be considered a case of genuine repopulation. In particular, dwellers in such houses cannot be said to constitute, or be part of, a traditional island community.



Figure 6.12 Privately owned King Island vacation dwelling overlooking Bass Strait  
Source: Author



Whether King Island's permanent population would eventually be replaced in this manner was not yet known (Participant 17). This high degree of uncertainty fed concern about time frames: how soon might significant immigration bring economic and social benefits? Council and some Islanders had knowledge of possible answers that lay within the prescriptions of the Plan.

## Enfolding

In this chapter I considered in broad terms the nature of the person-land association, historical land-holding and use in King Island, and present day land use and ownership for corporate and recreational purposes. I discussed contexts critical to an understanding of King Islanders' land use and tenure—two local planning issues and two overarching political impulses. Finally I considered aspects of Islanders' governing to manage global-local land change—participants' degree of concern about land matters; land use and tenure issues as a governance matter; and how council and citizens responded to global-local land change.

What did people's views about changing land use and ownership reveal about how King Islanders decision-make for matters of global-local import? Did modes of governing succeed or fail to support management of challenges of change? My community observations, inspection of council documents and close readings of the participant transcripts suggest that council demonstrated good governance in this major global-local matter of Island survival. On the heels of societal disruption linked to changed land use and tenure, council constructed a strategy to generate positive change—an influx of new settlers,

investments and employment opportunities. In addition, council could be said to have satisfied certain precepts of good governance: it was revealed as responsive to the urgent need to find solutions, and responsible and transparent in its distribution of Plan information to the community. Further, it was seen to seek policy legitimacy when it attempted to include Islanders in decision-making by means of consultation and participation. It partly succeeded in this objective: it recruited a large number of Islanders as participants in the Island visioning exercise of 2003; it also organised public fact-finding workshops to collect Islanders' views of Island development, upon which consultants founded their recommendations to council as the core of the final Plan.

Yet, in the terms of Malpas and Wickham's (1997) understanding of governance, some might adjudge council's efforts in this change case as incomplete and thus to have failed. Certainly, this change case revealed (as in the first change case for governing itself) that council had not successfully deployed one of its chosen governance modes—the mechanism of formal written submissions, which had proved generally unpopular with the community. This meant that council's attempts by such means to capture the wealth of citizen perspectives about coastal development, fell short of their expectations. As Hillier (1998, 14; emphasis added) argues,

planning should be *with* rather than *for* people ... planning is essentially intertwined with a range of other participants and their networks, each bringing to the process a variety of discourse types, life worlds, values, images, identities and emotions.

Yet, even though Island governing had not yet assumed the form of new governance in its full tripartite sense, participant interviews suggest that citizen perspectives were abundant. Some of these views gained currency in the public visioning and workshopping exercises; perhaps other perspectives would find exposure in various venues of voice—to Councillors when they attended regular meetings of their designated Island organisations and societies; or when informally shared and debated within and among the various Island collectives, and ‘down the street’.

## 7 Change in Climate

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*Rainwater tanks for sale, Currie, King Island 2007*

*Fresh water,  
Islanders' survival currency*

## Unfolding

In this chapter, I examine a fourth global-local theme, climate change in King Island. Climate change remains a controversial notion of global change; I accept its scientific validity whereas others may not. To ensure internal consistency in my argument I use here the same framework that shaped the previous three exemplars. Thus, first I briefly describe scientific constructs of atmosphere, climate and weather; the nature of the bond between people and Earth's atmosphere; and the phenomenon of contemporary climate change, its implications for the world's islands, and people's responses to it. Next I consider national and global contexts that influence climate change governance. Then I examine residents' responses to the phenomenon. Finally I draw conclusions about King Islanders' governance to manage climate change, enquiring how their actions demonstrate good governance principles of responsiveness, inclusiveness and effectiveness.

## People and Earth's atmosphere

Global and national governments gird themselves with the science of climatology in order to confront global climate change. They attend to foundational scientific constructs including atmosphere, climate and weather. Climate refers to generalised weather conditions such as annual temperature and precipitation for a region or the whole planet, averaged over a series of years (Delbridge 1982; Flannery 2005). The second notion, weather, denotes atmospheric conditions present at a particular time or over a short, temporary

period such as one day (Delbridge et al. 2004; Duxbury 2010; Flannery 2005).

Phenomenologists assert that while climate is measured and ‘recorded’, weather is experienced as multi-sensory encounters with atmospheric conditions (Ingold 2005; Ingold & Kurttila 2000).<sup>176</sup> How do the planet’s citizenry and decision-makers think of and relate to these phenomena?

Climate and weather suffuse people’s lives, even though the atmosphere—critical regulator of global climate and weather—generally remains an abstraction, a vast invisibility (Adger 2003; Flannery 2005; Rolston 1988; Snarr & Snarr 2005). Duxbury (2010) clarifies the abstraction, offering an atmospheric mosaic of sunshine, heat and cold, humidity, air pressure, cloud, rainfall and wind, supplemented by topographical influences and multiple marine, terrestrial and atmospheric interactions. These elements are of prime concern for the planet’s people. The atmosphere protects and nurtures their mobility, nourishment, reproduction and wellness.<sup>177</sup> It is the servant of all species, although ever fickle, both ally and adversary of human endeavours in agriculture, commerce, habitation, cuisine, attire, physical and mental health, or creative and leisure pursuits (Duxbury 2010; Ingold 2005, 2007).<sup>178</sup> The rhythms of the planet’s great seasonal cycles occupy individuals’ inner being, senses, and metaphorical language (Duxbury 2010; Glacken 1967; Ingold 2005, 2007; White 1995). It is very much in people’s interests to know, value, respect and daily engage with weather in order to avoid its vagaries (Duxbury

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<sup>176</sup> Thus weather ‘is about *what it feels like* to be warm or cold, drenched in rain, caught in a storm’ (Ingold & Kurttila 2000, 187; emphasis added).

<sup>177</sup> The atmosphere absorbs ultraviolet solar radiation, warms the surface through heat retention (greenhouse effect), and reduces temperature extremes between day and night.

<sup>178</sup> Adverse weather may afflict both mind and body, as in ‘winter ills’ of Western society, conditions such as seasonal affective disorder in high latitude dwellers, and physical disasters such as seasonal inundation and loss of life in densely inhabited river deltas.

2010; White 1995). People anticipate, experience and interpret the weather (Ingold 2007), and continue to mark the seasonal cycle. ‘In old days the people went out at dawn to welcome the advent of spring’ (Holden 1906, 55), and even now await the moment when, ‘each year, after the midwinter blizzards, there comes a night of thaw when the tinkle of dripping water is heard in the land’ (Leopold 1949, 3). Internet sites such as Weatherzone now satisfy the same craving to know, to be prepared for that which is predictable.

Equally, climate and weather inhabit the lives of islanders. In their geographical aloneness islanders are captives of ‘fickle, fast-changing weather’ (Clarke 2001, 144). Certainly in higher latitudes their isles are weather warehouses. There are stockpiles of dark shipwreck lore, lichen-crusting tombstones, and savagely wind-graven vegetation. There are ‘good days and simply terrible days ... when the wind would blow ... a dog off his chain’ (Edgecombe 2004, 19). Coniferous bastions protect pastures and stock. There are casualties - smashed jetties, blown-in windows and storm-stripped lighthouse paintwork. Islander needlewomen capture ideal sunny, blue-sky, blue-water Island images<sup>179</sup> and island seamen’s knitted garments are personalised with traditional family motifs that identify kin lost at sea.<sup>180</sup> In islands, passage to elsewhere is contingent on the state of the atmosphere; weather contours life.

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<sup>179</sup> An example is the King Island Bicentennial Quilt 1988.

<sup>180</sup> I recall here the traditional clothing of Aran Islander fishermen.

## Contemporary climate change

As a phenomenon, modern climate change progressed through conceptual adolescence towards mature scientific, political and social presence. In 1992 the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conceived it as a change of climate attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climatic variability observed over comparable time periods.

A decade later, in 2010, the ABS stated that

climate change is a global problem with global consequences.

Warmer-than-average temperatures are being recorded across the world. Glaciers and polar ice caps are melting and sea levels are rising. Mounting evidence indicates that these changes are not the result of the natural variability of climate.

By 2011, advances in climatology permitted confident addition of a time-scale and the complicit nature of human activity to the definition:

climate change is the change in global climate patterns apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards, attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels (Oxford University Press 2011).

Contemporary climate change—human-triggered warming of the climate system as a whole—is now generally considered the supreme global challenge, ‘the pre-eminent social, economic and environmental issue facing



contemporary society' (Steffen 2009, iii), a challenge that, unbelievably, embraces the entire planet, albeit with great local variation (Aall et al. 2007; Buizer et al. 2011; Flannery 2005; Salinger 2010), a steady, subtle degradation of Earth's biosphere as

white ice fades away, the green of the forest and grassland fades  
into the dun of desert, and the oceans lose their blue-green hue and  
turn a purer, swimming-pool blue as they too become desert  
(Lovelock 2009, 1).

Climate change has become the primary governance concern of humankind. Numerous scientists and scholars believe it surpasses all other world threats combined. It challenges civilisation as humans know it (Flannery 2005; Purves 2005). For life on Earth to prevail, decision-makers at all levels are required to govern urgently and appropriately. The subject spawns an extensive literature, diametrically opposed discourses (Dryzek 2005) and copious rhetoric both supportive and dismissive of the notion's underpinning science.<sup>181</sup> Current climate change attracts the most extensive scientific research and policy assessment program ever undertaken (Swart et al. 2003). Yet, despite this industry and mounting scientific and popular concern, the planet awaits practical international political action.

## Islands and climate change

The thousands of islands and millions of islets that fringe Earth's continental archipelago (Depaetere & Dahl 2007) are captive to the warming global

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<sup>181</sup> One powerful example is the film, *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim 2006).

atmospheric system. Climate change information about many of them has slowed since 2001; non-autonomous small islands of continental countries are now less subjected to climate studies, while autonomous tropical and subtropical islands currently receive most attention (Mimura et al. 2007). Scholarly island literature includes rare suggestions that climate change may actually increase islander opportunities—in expanded agricultural production in some high-latitude islands (Lovelock 2009)<sup>182</sup> or, in others, profits from ‘dark tourism’ (Farbotko 2010).<sup>183</sup>

Scholars and climate scientists have pursued various island themes, in particular islands’ vulnerabilities to the phenomenon. A dominant and constant motif is sea-level rise: encroaching seas may destroy protective reefs, breach eleventh-hour seawalls, wash away land and eventually drown settlements<sup>184</sup> particularly in islands with low-lying coastal areas or regions liable to floods. Many low-lying small islands may be abandoned due to land erosion and loss<sup>185</sup> (Arenstam Gibbons & Nicholls 2006; Hess et al. 2008). Such outcomes are expected during the twenty-first century and beyond (Arenstam Gibbons & Nicholls 2006; UNFCCC 1992). Owing to the extensive length of islands’ coastlines relative to their land area, Nunn (2004) clusters island inundation,

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<sup>182</sup> Lovelock (2009, 11) ponders the possibility that islands in temperate oceanic locations—Japan, Tasmania, New Zealand, the British Isles and a number of smaller islands—may enjoy a climate that promotes abundant agriculture, so placing them ‘among the lifeboats for humanity’.

<sup>183</sup> Farbotko (2010) observes that low-lying Pacific islands are being publicised in a range of practices as disappearing islands, and their inhabitants as future climate refugees.

<sup>184</sup> Examples are Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, the Maldives, and the San Blas Archipelago off the coast of Panama, all styled ‘drowning islands’. Observers on some of them refer to water trauma and residents’ expectations that their homes and sacred graveyards will vanish under water (Meakins 2012).

<sup>185</sup> Even for Tasmania, a relatively large island, it is predicted that in the next 50 to 100 years, 21 per cent of its coast is at risk of erosion and significant recession due to sea-level rise (Sharples 2006).

beach erosion and disruption of coastal settlements, agriculture and infrastructure as potential impacts. Sea-level rise may also promote food-borne diseases, human illness and collapse of island fisheries (Birdi 1997; Dow et al. 2006; Hess et al. 2008; Mimura 2007; TPC 2009).<sup>186</sup>

The theme of sea-level rise in islands is partnered by a second serious climate change concern—depletion of fresh water. The vast majority of Earth's water resources are saline. Only 2.5 per cent are fresh water, and because approximately 70 per cent of Earth's available fresh water is frozen in the icecaps of Antarctica and Greenland, only the remaining 30 per cent (equal to only 0.7 per cent of total fresh water resources worldwide) is available for consumption. From this remaining 0.7 per cent, roughly 87 per cent is allocated to agricultural purposes (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] 2007). According to the IPCC (2007), climate change will shrink the planet's fresh water resources. Research in rural islands identifies limited surface water resources, small catchments, short rivers, rare small lakes, and dependence on groundwater as necessary supplements to increasingly unreliable rainfall (Bryden 2009; Mimura et al. 2007). However groundwater itself is vulnerable in quantity and quality: excessive extraction, pumping and damming may lower and pollute the water table and affect people's health, especially on low-lying islands; water-borne diseases are predicted to continue in the future and require adaptation strategies such as desalination (Adger et al. 2006; Arenstam

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<sup>186</sup> Climate change is considered likely to significantly affect marine-based resources; on some islands, especially those at higher latitudes, ocean warming has already displaced some local species. Mid- and high-latitude islands are virtually certain to be colonised by non-indigenous invasive species, previously limited by temperature conditions unfavourable to them (IPCC 2007).

Gibbons & Nicholls 2006; Mimura et al. 2007; Royle 2001). Fresh water depletion may be hastened by sea-level rise itself if salt water from the coastal fringes infiltrates aquifers and increases salinity (Hess et al. 2008; Royle 2001), threatening human health, agriculture and industry (Birdi 1997).

Apart from considering the nature of climate change and its implications for life on Earth and for islands in particular, two further and linked elements are the question of complicity in such change, and the diversity of people's responses to it. The ideal response of governments and individuals would be to concede that climate change is quite possibly human-induced and to then regard pursuit of atmospheric health as the prime consideration. Such a response seems apt, given that science deems people to be implicated in long-term combustion of fossil fuels whose emissions contaminate the atmosphere and distort its chemistry and climatic patterns.

It is a sobering thought that scientists made the first calculations of human-induced climate change more than a century ago<sup>187</sup> yet only in the most recent two and a half decades has there emerged intense, rigorous scientific investigation of global warming (IPCC 2011). How then do people generally react to climate change? It is a crucial question: some would assert that unless citizens acknowledge that people have contributed to climate change, they will not engage in the issue nor accept responsibility to find and implement solutions. Yet there is no global consensus about anthropogenic climate change. Personal convictions, ethical precepts and membership of advocacy

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<sup>187</sup> Pioneers in such investigations include late nineteenth century Swedish scientists Arvid Högbom and Svante Arrhenius (Flannery 2005; National Aeronautics and Space Administration [NASA] 2012).

groups mould disparate views within populations. Such views are typically a scattering of support, doubt, denial and indifference.

The first of these perspectives—support for the notion of human-induced climate change—is likely to be held by those who have been influenced by dominant scientific opinion, particularly that enunciated by the IPCC: that the global atmospheric system is warming; and people stimulated climate change through greenhouse gas production (IPCC 2011). In Australia a majority of citizens appear to have adopted this line of thought (The Australian news poll 2011). However, mere citizen acceptance of the notion is insufficient unless partnered with proposals for solutions. While a majority of Australians desired immediate action by their national government to manage climate change rather than await global consensus, they had no clear idea as to preferred management plans, for example setting a carbon price or establishing an emissions trading scheme (Garnaut 2011).<sup>188</sup>

The second stance pertaining to climate change is scepticism. Sceptics, unconvinced persons who examine evidence before accepting an argument or theory, may be unpersuaded by that evidence (Seis 2005). Numerous citizens remain uncertain about conflicting aspects of climate change, findings of science and the significance of personal observations of weather events near and far, past and present (Howes 2005; Seis 2005). Sceptics may, on one hand, acknowledge a changing climate but, on another hand, perceive it as natural

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<sup>188</sup> The Australian Government created the Garnaut Climate Change Review team, which in turn commissioned Australia's national science agency, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), to investigate Australians' views on climate change (Garnaut 2011).

variation within climatic cycles that have featured regularly through the planet's history (Seis 2005).

A substantial minority in Australia remain unconvinced of either the presence of climate change and/or of its asserted human origins. Indeed, scepticism may be increasing in Australia and elsewhere (Garnaut 2011); in 2011 fewer Australians than before 2008 considered human activity and climate change were linked. This trend, reflected in other Western countries, has deeply coloured the climate change debate, and revealed that more knowledge is required about how Australians understand climate change policy options, their support for those options, and their willingness to pay within each policy option—all significant considerations for modes of governing. Apart from support and scepticism, a third climate change perspective is denial. Deniers repudiate the charge that human activities have triggered climate change (Flannery 2005; Garnaut 2008; Lovelock 2009; Morton & Arup 2009). In Australia and elsewhere their ranks include vested interests that oppose proposed government mitigation legislation.<sup>189</sup> Climate change deniers may exert significant pressure upon climate change decision-makers (Schmidt 2011).

Added to these three particular positions on climate change, the silence of indifference is a significant posture which I later revisit. Each of these four climate change perspectives is manifest in King Island. It is not unexpected, then, that the diversity of opinion among climate change supporters, sceptics,

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<sup>189</sup> These bodies include the Australian Industry Group, the Australian Chamber of Commerce, and the Industry and Business Council of Australia (Morton & Arup 2009).

deniers and the unengaged might severely challenge council efforts to achieve policy legitimacy and good governance to manage local climate change.

## Critical contexts of climate change

### Uncertainty

Uncertainty, a condition of all life including political life, is a dominant presence that influences climate change governance. Modern decision-makers are climate change novices—there is no governance precedent for the phenomenon. Experts find it difficult to predict long-term consequences of large-scale risk scenarios, especially for particular regions or locales (Adger et al. 2011; Heise 2008); increasingly random intense weather events heighten citizens' senses of vulnerability of human life, assets and livelihoods (Huxley 2012). Aspects of climate science itself are uncertain: it is paradoxical that intense expert scrutiny established the credibility of climate science and the certainty of climate change,<sup>190</sup> then generated further uncertainties;<sup>191</sup> constant developments in climate science foster scientific indecision<sup>192</sup> (Hamilton 2007). Thus, while governments find themselves required to lead with strong

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<sup>190</sup> Garnaut (2011) concluded that advances in climate change science broadly confirm that the Earth is warming as a result of human activity.

<sup>191</sup> One example is the prediction that changes in the physical world are likely to be more harmful than climate science previously suggested (Garnaut 2011).

<sup>192</sup> A typical question concerned whether changes are simply relatively short-term shifts of climate variability, or long-term climate change associated with greenhouse gases. Another concerned uncertainty about the scale of impacts (Dryzek 2005).

statements, often they cannot provide necessary, appropriate information and detail.<sup>193</sup>

National scientific bodies in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia felt the need to produce explanatory reports that listed climate change questions and answers. One such body, the Australian Academy of Science, admitted its uncertainty about climate change mechanisms and their operation at regional and smaller scales, where adaptation measures are required (Australian Academy of Science 2010).<sup>194</sup>

No less affected by uncertainty were departments at state government level: in the space of a few years, their climate change theory shape-shifted (DPIWE 2004; Department of Primary Industries and Water [DPIW] 2008). Uncertainty assumed several forms: lack of confidence in local data ‘collected for 30 to 40 years’ but considered too short a span to allow reliable calculations; doubt about reliability of projections to 2100 (DPIWE 2004, 1; DPIW 2008, np); and the difficulty uncertainty injected into projected climate change scenarios and how these scenarios would play out at the local level (DPAC 2011a). Indeed, almost their only certainty was a promise of public updates as new information became available.

Similarly, local planning for climate change is uncertain. As at state level, information deficits abound (LGAT 2011). One council requested detail of the

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<sup>193</sup> Such was the case when the Tasmanian Government made it clear that the issue is not *whether* Earth’s climate will change, but when, where, and to what extent (DPIW 2006; Department of Premier and Cabinet [DPAC] 2011a; Fleming & Vancley 2009; Sharples 2006; Wilson 2006).

<sup>194</sup> The Academy is the peak Australian science body, comprising distinguished Australian scientists.



extent climate change would affect its municipality. Would climate change bring more people relocating from warmer climates? How might council plan for this possible population influx? Would more outsiders arrive in their area, attracted by its reasonably reliable rainfall (Kentish Council 2011)? Such uncertainty frustrated local governance. The only certainty was that every local area was expected to be affected differently depending on its topography and other factors (DPAC 2011a).

### Science supreme

A second crucial context of climate change governance is the focus on science as decision-makers' prime source of climate knowledge. Scientific organisations around the world<sup>195</sup> have determined that it is too late for people to halt global atmospheric changes, the challenge now being whether Earth's nations can agree on ways to minimise predicted threats (Hamilton 2007). Science, 'the application of human reason in its most rigorous form' (Hay 2002, 5), was conscripted by governments to defend life on Earth. The thousands of expert scientists who form the IPCC<sup>196</sup> offer a 'clear scientific view' of the current state of international climate change knowledge and potential environmental and socio-economic impacts for decision-making

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<sup>195</sup> Principally the UK Meteorological Office, IPCC (global), CSIRO (Australia), and NASA (USA), among a dozen others.

<sup>196</sup> The IPCC, established in 1988 as part of the UN Environment Program to assess scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant for understanding the risk of human-induced climate change, concluded that humans are responsible for the rising temperatures, mostly due to greenhouse gas increase in the atmosphere brought about by the burning of fossil fuels (Flannery 2005).

(IPCC 2007),<sup>197</sup> ‘an excellent scientific underpinning’ for climate change decision-making (Steffen 2009, iii).

However, exclusive focus on climate science is highly problematic. Some question whether science is capable of meeting the challenges involved in climate change (Lovelock 2009; Stoker 2006).<sup>198</sup> There is certain distrust of the IPCC modus operandi. Its blended membership of scientists, associated experts and government representatives prompts charges that the IPCC confines findings to the ‘lowest common denominator’ in order to mollify fossil-fuel dependent nations. The IPCC mechanisms are found wanting, amid demoralising claims that its consensus model of decision-making favours industrialised nations (Flannery 2005) and that ‘the good science presented at [a particular] session was manipulated until it satisfied all of the national representatives present’ (Lovelock 2009, 8).<sup>199</sup> Such charges may well undermine confidence in the value of science for decision-making.

But the most crucial difficulty is that reliance on climate science taps a comparatively narrow knowledge base, and therefore its findings do not always resonate with ordinary people, and fail to attract their support. Climate scientists have not convinced the populace as a whole of the implications and

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<sup>197</sup> The IPCC’s 2007 agenda included ‘observed changes in climate and their effects; causes of change; climate change and its impacts in the near and long term under different scenarios; adaptation and mitigation options and responses, and the interrelationship with sustainable development, at global and regional levels; the long-term perspective: scientific and socio-economic aspects relevant to adaptation and mitigation ... robust findings, key uncertainties’ (IPCC 2007, np).

<sup>198</sup> Lovelock (2009) claims that climate forecasts for decades ahead are at present too unreliable for planning detailed action, and that the IPCC has as yet failed to account for even the present climate.

<sup>199</sup> Thousands of experts from all regions of the world contribute to the preparation of IPCC reports as authors and reviewers, and provide policy-relevant summaries for decision-makers which are subject to line-by-line approval by all participating governments (IPCC 2010).

urgency of their findings (Aall et al. 2007; Flannery 2005; Garnaut 2011).

There are calls for climate scientists, as the field's knowledge providers, to include multidisciplinary perspectives of the dilemma and so better meet decision-makers' information needs (Buizer et al. 2011; Pielke & Sarewitz 2005). While scientists consider that the IPCC 'provides an integrated view of climate change' (IPCC 2007, np), in fact it provides only an integrated *scientific* view. Other valuable realms of human thought remain outside orthodox discussion, yet they have definite roles—for climate change

will be felt in some way by every person and every organisation, public or private, and at all levels, from strategic management to operational activities. The affects [sic] will impact across environmental issues, economic performance, social behaviour, infrastructure and other aspects of human existence (Australian Government 2006).

Good governance requires committed politicians supported by an informed, aware citizenry if they are to make hard decisions and legitimate policies. But scientific findings often seem too complex, 'in house' and unrelated to ordinary life for public comprehension and acceptance (Aall et al. 2007; Buizer et al. 2011). This distance is evident: there is no IPCC group working on cultural themes such as placelessness. While the IPCC's brief (IPCC 2007) does include limited, narrow social and economic aspects of climate change—prices, economic values and energy options—its scientists

cannot accurately capture the things that matter most about places: they may be able to price the replacement cost of damaged houses, but not the loss of 'home' ... price the cost of replacing a destroyed museum but not the loss of the heritage items it contained ... price the cost of relocating island populations but not damage to the traditions of the cultures they sustain (Adger et al. 2011, 16).

Hence, prices and economic values are an incomplete guide for decisions about irreversible loss of natural systems or cultural assets in the context of climate change. As a result, the topic of climate change has become a public relations battle to sell the 'inconvenient truth' of worsening climate, human complicity and policy options in an urgent, clear and frank fashion (Garnaut 2011; Morton & Arup 2009). There is increasing international, national and local pressure to broaden the current physical and material science information base with cultural and social knowledges.

This new vision appears well-merited. Cultural enquiry, though less analytically penetrating than scientific language, has the advantage of tapping subjective narrative, descriptive and interpretive techniques, mechanisms familiar to people in all walks of life. Cultural knowledges take account of person-place attachment and meaning, and thus may have a dual benefit: because people imbue place with meaning, cultural approaches to climate change may achieve better communication of its complexities, and better inform decision-makers of considerations other than the scientific. Scholars have begun to address this need, applying the lens of place to socio-economic aspects of climate change. Community life, place and culture are being woven

into scientific themes of sea-level rise, coastal erosion and inundation (Adger et al. 2011). The need for immediate action on climate change is more likely to be heard by populations if people understand that their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health require an intact, comfortable relationship with place, yet climate change threatens those crucial attachments and their very health status (Hess et al. 2008). Other crucial cultural input is increasingly available to the scientific climate change narrative, particularly the valuable perspectives of youth (Stratford 2011, Stratford & Low 2013). Developing technologies newly position youth within the climate change dialogue.<sup>200</sup>

In addition, decision-makers' preference for scientific authority takes no account of powerful individual tellings of climate transformation, such as the British Cape Farewell project, the 2008 Australian Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology exhibition, and Pacific islands' Water is Rising project,<sup>201</sup> designed to alert the general population to the threat of climate change (Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History 2010). Indeed, it may be said that every world citizen has observations to share, to awaken in others including decision-makers an awareness of the urgency for immediate action.

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<sup>200</sup> One such knowledge pathway for young islanders is the 'Stormy Weather' climate change unit in the Webbing the Islands project (Stratford 2007). By 2015 this program is expected to be a leading international, intergenerational program that provides socio-cultural opportunities for people around the world to connect, share, discuss, debate, and create their island lives, cultures and environments. Such networks and flows of information between remotely placed individuals and groups should eventually, as Adger (2003) suggests, enable better decision-making.

<sup>201</sup> The first-named project transports artists and writers to the high Arctic to create climate change related works for public exhibition. The 2008 Australian initiative featured climate change paintings, photography and sound-scapes whose themes were species extinction, environmental degradation, global warming, and over-consumption. In the Water is Rising project (2010), performers from low-lying Pacific islands Kiribati, Tuvalu and Tokelau use song, dance and poetry to educate US citizens about climate change threats to their island nations.

Good governing would marry cultural insights to climate science, enrich its offerings and expedite decision-making.

## Deficits in modes of governing

Climate change is a troubled, stultified political issue (Swart et al. 2003). A third significant challenge for dealing with it lies in the limitations of governance itself, at all levels. Global-local climate change has high political salience amongst politicians and scientists.<sup>202</sup> With nations perceived to regard the atmospheric commons—property of all people, crucial to their survival—as a free waste dump (Flannery 2005), emissions are inherently the concern of global governance. Yet, at this international level, responses and outcomes are seen to be disappointing and inadequate (Howes 2005). In 1972 the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) attracted no less than 114 national governments to discuss issues surrounding environmental degradation (Seis 2005). However, good intentions were difficult to sustain: another 20 years would elapse before the first serious discussions on reducing greenhouse emissions to limit global warming were organised. In numerous subsequent conferences and summits<sup>203</sup> self-interested

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<sup>202</sup> This importance is demonstrated by such international gatherings as the 2005 G8 summit, a forum for the governments of eight of the world's largest economies (since supplanted by the newer G20), and the March 2009 Copenhagen gathering of 2,000 scientists.

<sup>203</sup> Among them were the Stockholm Conference 1972, Rio Summit (UNCED) 1992, Berlin Conference 1995, Kyoto 1997, Marrakesh 2001, Copenhagen Accord 2009, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Mexico) 2010.

nations disagreed about emission limits and appropriate policies to reduce atmospheric contamination and temperature rise.<sup>204</sup>

This disappointing history of international response demonstrates how difficult it is for governments to effectively address critical global warming risks (Howes 2005), and how policy-makers armed with scientific evidence of threat yet make hard work of the task. Emission limits initially agreed to by industrialised nations in the 1990s have met firm challenges.<sup>205</sup> There is no universal confidence in human ability to deliver appropriate solutions for climate change threats. Some have faith that societies will adapt to climate change due to their ability to act collectively (Adger 2003); others, it will be recalled, question whether in fact politics can effectively manage climate change challenges (Stoker 2006; Wilson 2006), or assist negotiation (Kjellen 2006, viii), or address the winners-losers scenario expected from measures such as carbon taxes on fossil fuel industries (Hamilton 2007).

Have governments at *national* tiers responded more effectively than global bodies to the threats of climate change? In the case of Australia, a dozen years of neoliberal denial of climate change and squandering of valuable time for taking action were followed in 2007 by a newly elected legislature that

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<sup>204</sup> In 2002 the Government of India illustrated the conflict that exists between wealthy emitters and poorer low emitters: it alerted its constituents to sources of greenhouse gases, types of severe weather incidents and use of sustainable energy; it also claimed that devastating droughts, floods and other extreme weather events of climate change 'are caused by the world's richest countries' (Government of India 2002). However, only five years later in 2007 India joined the polluters (Guardian Environment Network 2010).

<sup>205</sup> The challenges are that emission-producing fossil fuels underpin modern economies; there is no easy substitute for them; powerful fossil fuel industries have a vested interest in maintaining the *status quo*; some sceptics inflame ever-present aspects of scientific uncertainty, discussed above; and climate change conferences are claimed to be contests between wealthy industrialised emitters and poorer developing non-emitters (Howes 2005; Seis 2005).

acknowledged global warming, its anthropogenic source, predictions of future change, and the part played by greenhouse gas emissions (CSIRO & Bureau of Meteorology 2007). The Australian Government asserted that, as a nation with the highest rate of carbon emissions per person in the developed world, Australia had a responsibility to join in the global effort. One of its first actions was to sign the Kyoto Protocol and to commission the Garnaut Climate Change Review, an independent study of climate change impacts on the Australian economy. It recommended policy frameworks to improve the prospects for sustainable prosperity. In 2010, the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency issued *Adapting to Climate Change* and a position paper, *Adapting to Climate Change in Australia*, to increase public awareness about adaptation to climate change and outline the Australian Government's vision for adapting to predicted global-local changes. It defined six national priority areas for action (Australian Government 2010b).<sup>206</sup> Then, having abandoned its original policy for an emissions trading scheme, it selected an electorally unpopular carbon tax introduced in 2012 (Australian Government 2011). Due to present political instability, the fate of this measure is uncertain.

While binding emissions agreements are the business of international governance, action to confront climate change involves all levels of governance (Wilson 2006). Do local governing practices achieve any better results than national and international bodies? Some suggest local governments are overwhelmed by the combination of mounting complexity of climate change problems, and pressures of adapting to constant innovations in modes

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<sup>206</sup> These areas are water, coasts, infrastructure, natural ecosystems, natural disaster management, and agriculture.



of local governance (Buizer et al. 2011).<sup>207</sup> In some cases it is individuals who initiate responses when prompted by extreme climate events, whereas other actions are undertaken by governments on behalf of society. Sometimes the actions may be proactive, but are often responses to individual climate change events (Adger 2003).

In this light, local government in Tasmania has operated largely in a cocoon of uncertainty. The Tasmanian Government has committed to being part of the global solution.<sup>208</sup> However, uncertainty has cloaked many of its initiatives, policy statements and bulletins, for predicted climate change impacts vary considerably from region to region and from season to season. Local councils have been forewarned of likely general impacts but at the same time cautioned that much work is needed to analyse regional impacts and pinpoint the most vulnerable areas (Australian Government 2011).<sup>209</sup> The State Government reminded local councils that ‘This is the critical decade for action’ (DPAC 2011a). It armed them with initiatives and state-local partnerships<sup>210</sup> whose effect was somewhat dampened with reminders that municipal uniqueness of topography and future community vision make planning difficult (DPAC 2011a). The federal government provided support: its response for business

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<sup>207</sup> Recall that with devolution in Western governance systems, new modes of governance have mushroomed: multilevel governance by various administrative levels, network-like arrangements of public and private authorities, self-regulated business organisations, self-organised neighbourhoods, state-municipal coalitions, natural resources co-management by local or regional or national authorities and local communities, among others.

<sup>208</sup> In 2008 Tasmania became the second state in Australia to set an emission reduction target in legislation.

<sup>209</sup> The impact categories are the coastal zone, extreme events, agriculture, human health, and natural environments (Australian Government 2011).

<sup>210</sup> Examples are a Coastal Risk Management Plan template and supporting guidelines to aid local planners and managers to manage coastal zone assets vulnerable to sea-level rise; the Tasmanian Coastal Works Manual; and the Tasmanian Coastal Adaptation Decision Pathways Project to assist adaptation planning (DPAC 2011a).

and governance (Australian Government 2006) forewarned local governments that climate change presages agrarian risks—increasing drought sequences, temperatures ‘damaging to plant and livestock viability and production’, reduced pasture growth and carrying capacity, and possible southward spread of tropical pests and diseases; more frequent heat-wave conditions and new demands on geriatric or emergency response services which some local governments may be less able to meet (Australian Government 2006, 12). Thus uncertainty has cast a long shadow upon local climate change planning.

Wilson (2006) suggests critical governance factors that councils might consider: political, professional and technical support; collaboration with other arms of government to share benefits of best practice; thinking beyond conventional policy objectives; and acceptance that climate change cannot be ‘solved’ at local level. Councils might also weigh community acceptance of options, governance constraints on adaptation, and the place of adaptation in local economic development (Adger 2003; O'Brien & Leichenko 2000).

However, the arrival of climate change has exposed an Achilles heel in Tasmanian local governance, a shortfall in professional, technical or political support (Fleming & Vanclay 2009; LGAT 2011). The Tasmanian Government has been careful not to trespass upon local jurisdictional autonomy, always emphasising communities’ individuality and right to difference in climate change policy (DPAC 2011a). However, in some councils there is a lack of awareness that climate change and its effects are expected to last many

years,<sup>211</sup> that adaptation in addition to mitigation will be necessary, and that principles for good governance of climate change are readily available for the guidance of local government (LGAT 2011). Is there, as some suggest, failure to recognise that local government is as responsible as international and national administrations for climate change policy and implementation (Aall et al. 2007; Wilson 2006)? Failure of the climate change message to engage citizens might, in part, be laid at the door of local government. Tasmanian council statements and information about the threat are, with one or two notable exceptions, limited or non-existent. For example, in 2011 only 40 percent of the state's 29 local council websites clearly, directly advised constituents of the official understanding, policies and planning for climate change.<sup>212</sup> The exceptions, which constitute excellent models, are clear, frank and to the point that climate change

is the most urgent and threatening issue facing us. Unaddressed it can have catastrophic consequences for humanity and, in its extreme, life on earth. It is a global issue that requires local action to reduce our emissions, adapt to its impacts and develop truly sustainable communities and lifestyle (Kingborough Council 2011, np).

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<sup>211</sup> A local representative in one Tasmanian council reflected that '*If Council chooses to commit to climate change adaptation there will likely be a need for Council officers to commit time to it and they will therefore need to be resourced to do so*' (emphasis added). Further, Councillors considered that 'a number of climate change adaptation management options available included '1. *Make no consideration for climate change adaption [sic] in any of Council's functions*'. According to LGAT principles, this option was out of order. The finally selected option was to assess all new development applications within a designated coastal zone and develop 'clear and specific policy' in relation to the acceptable level of risk for a given asset or development type (Heritage and Environment Committee Meeting, Brighton Council, 10 August, 2010).

<sup>212</sup> The search phrase 'climate change' raised no information whatever on 60 per cent of municipal websites; conventional policy objectives dominated meeting and workshop agendas, despite diverse climate change information and advice from LGAT.

This particular council's personnel declared their responsibility that, as the tier of government closest to the community, their role is to lead that community and develop responses to climate change. Accordingly, they are armed with detailed policy—a strategic Climate Change and Energy Action Plan to reduce local emissions and energy use, preparation to adapt to the impacts of climate change, and working with the community to increase awareness of the issue and assist in transitioning to a low carbon lifestyle. Similarly, a second Tasmanian local government acknowledges climate change mitigation and adaptation as 'an important issue for local government throughout Australia' (Tasman Council 2011). At all governance levels—local, national and global—hard, perhaps electorally unpalatable decisions are required in order to reshape present socio-economic practices, freedoms and excesses.

## King Islanders and climate change governing

'King Island has always been put up there as drought-free' (Participant 17), a rainy, windswept isle with year-round rainfall and winter maximum (Parks & Wildlife Service 2000) that favour year-round plant growth (Barnes et al. 2002) so that less than 50 percent of Island dairy farms are irrigated (Australian Government 2007c). However, the recent 'pretty savage dry period' of 2007 'shocked people' (Figures 7.1.a-c).



Figure 7.1 Empty Lake Flannigan in mid-autumn 2007 (top), Attrill's Lagoon in spring 2006 (middle) and in the following autumn 2007 (bottom), King Island  
Source: Author

This year scared us a bit with the lack of rainfall ... We were pushed to the limit ... the stock cleared out all our dams but two ... we had to truck water to one dam with the pump on just to keep the water going ... never had to do that before ... three or four days of running around. We need a couple of good wet winters to get the Island [groundwater] bores up for the Dairy and the abattoirs. Land prices are still holding up on the basis that the Island is drought-free. If it's dry two years in a row ... (Participant 17).

One Islander concluded that, Australia-wide, 'water is a real issue for everyone now' (Participant 1), and King Island was part of this situation:

Water is going to become a problem on the Island. I've lived on this property for 50 years and I've seen dams empty this year [2007] that I've never seen empty in 50 years, and they weren't just empty at the end of summer, they were empty by Christmas [early summer] ... We haven't been getting big rainfall events ... not enough to get water flowing across the paddocks, into drains and filling up dams (Participant 30).

Lack of rainfall increasingly directed Islanders to their groundwater supplies. They had no measure of subterranean water reserves (Participants 17, 23 & 31), did not regulate how many bores were sunk (Participants 5, 6 & 30) and discovered that the Island water table had dropped (Participant 9).

In addition, Islanders might have to grapple with a thorny emergent governing issue—state politicians' decision to subsume control of all Tasmanian local

government water facilities. Such a move would bring council into conflict with the parent government, being looked upon as yet another ‘one size fits all’ policy thought to offer minimum advantage to remote King Island (Participant 7).

I introduce participant voices from all three sectors of Island governing—elected representatives, professional staff and constituents—to establish whether global-local climate change is considered present in King Island. Then I explore their governing responses to its threats.

## A transforming Island

First, did participants consider low-lying King Island threatened by climate change, in company with inhabitants of other island and continental places (Lovelock 2009; Mimura et al. 2007; Purves 2005)? Or was climate change simply a hoax, a now well-worn and battered cliché (Flannery 2005)? Among participants, slightly more than half did not volunteer climate change as a local governance issue or threat to quality of life. Those who did acknowledge the notion adopted one of three positions: climate change might exist; climate change was indeed present and a matter of concern; or climate change existed but was not of great or immediate concern. A fourth voice encountered in the Island’s public spaces but not among participants denied climate change and human triggers. The first of the three participant groups I identified comprised those sceptical of the notion and the role of humans in climate change. Daily familiarity with weather signs, patterns and exceptional events led these residents to conclude that the phenomenon might exist but was clouded with uncertainty. One person spoke of the ‘so-called’ rise in sea-level (Participant 7)

and how most of the Island appeared safe from inundation. A second participant conceded that local climate had

changed a bit, but is still pretty kind compared to the rest of Australia ... rainfall hasn't decreased that much ... this year was a bit drier than normal... it is becoming a bit of a trend, this talk of climate change in towns and cities all over Australia (Participant 22).

Another person, self-styled 'not a climate change person in the normal sense' understood that

climate is such a variable and fickle thing ... it just cycles, up and down ... it is conceivable that the world-wide climatic patterns are changing, but I don't think it's related to anything mankind has done ... it's been going on ever since Adam was a boy ... it's just variability (Participant 6).

Yet another long-time observer was uncertain whether changes in rainfall volume and patterns indicated climate change, partly because other natural elements did not confirm it:

We seem to be getting different rainfall patterns, in the last 35 years, but whether that's climate change or not, I don't know ... the amount of rain falling is less, and the patterns come in a different time ... it's more cyclic than uniform. I wouldn't say the weather is more



extreme—the muttonbirds<sup>213</sup> still seem to be coming through ... I don't really know what to base climate change on (Participant 26).

The second group of participants, those who believed the phenomenon was both present in the Island and of concern, considered local climate change perfectly 'obvious':

I've seen it here on the Island for the last six years, when the wind started coming from the east instead of the west [the prevailing Westerlies]. There's definitely something going on; totally unseasonal weather (Participant 21);

and

climate change—it's happening. Our own creek flows only a few months of the year now, whereas in the past it was suggested the flow could be used for power generation (Participant 11);

and

climate change is going on, for sure. Whether it's a natural cycle or man-made, it's still happening ... something's happening and there's something we humans can do about it (Participant 30).

Changes in the patterns of bird species that visited Island gardens were considered further evidence of climate change (Participant 11). This second group echoed the world's majority of climate scientists and interested lay

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<sup>213</sup> Muttonbird is the common name for the Short-tailed Shearwater (see Footnote 30), an annual migrant along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway between Siberia, King Island and points further south. Their abundance or scarcity may partly reflect weather and climatic conditions.

people who support the notion (Kjellen 2006, ix). For these participants climate change represented a quality of life concern and significant governance issue. Participant 15, motivated by climate science and direct daily evidence, had relocated to a safer haven,

shifted to King Island from a land of extremes ... flood, drought and fires, with global warming going to aggravate things ... I'm not a sceptic when there's something like a thousand scientists all agreeing about what's happening (Participant 15).

Participants' evidence was an amalgam of observed events and perceived climate impacts: increasingly severe wildfire, declining availability of fresh water, less reliable rainfall, falling water table, controversial first Island drought in living memory, and institutional encouragement of urban residents to install rainwater tanks (Participants 6, 10, 11, 22 & 31). Matters of water supply seemed a more immediate, more tangible harbinger of changing climatic conditions than, for example, sea-level rise. The uncharacteristically dry period of summer 2006–07, when 'dams were empty this year that I haven't seen empty in 50 years' (Participant 30) 'shocked' some Islanders and exposed an unanticipated, unprecedented King Island agrarian vulnerability (Participant 10). Recall that most islands have only limited sources of fresh water and that some small islands rely fully on rainfall and groundwater (Mimura et al. 2007). King Island is such a place. In the past blessed with adequate water for its valuable cattle herds, farmers 'put in dams because they've got a reliable rainfall' (Participant 26), a security now challenged by changed weather regimes:

they didn't [get rain] last year or again this year ... a lot of dams up north aren't full yet ... this far through September [2007] they should be overflowing but they're not going to fill up ... they'll run out of water about March unless we get some reasonable summer rains (Participant 26).

This group's observations conveyed a sense of concern and a desire that state and local authorities should find solutions including the strategy to regard water as a commodity that has to be purchased, as elsewhere in the nation (Participant 11). Certain Island enterprises were seen to be 'really struggling with water' (Participant 1); rainfall was reported 'a third below normal' for the past three to four years, and cartage of water to the abattoir and King Island Dairy was necessary (Participant 15). Businesses reduced water consumption as much as possible, but several participants believed water shortages might yet threaten factory expansion and future economic growth. The Island had no water reservoir; to date, rainfall and aquifers in the west coast dunes had been adequate for the needs of the main town, and farmers had tanks for houses and dams for gardens and livestock (Participant 6).

But there was a view that farm dams now suffered from increased evaporation (Participant 26):

historically the farmers here have made the dams too small; they've assumed a good season every year. The dams are capable of going for two years; most have [water during] March, April, May, then they're down to nothing (Participant 6).

Those of this second group who regarded climate change as present and of concern were also uneasy about the sparse knowledge of Island fresh water sources and capacity (Participants 21, 26 & 31).<sup>214</sup> Most Islanders were thought to be unaware of the local water shortage problem (Participant 26) and to ‘waste so much water’ (Participant 31). This reported unawareness and wastage occurred despite local press tallies of declining rainfall totals, creek flows that now slowed or ceased, and periodically dry lakes and lagoons. There were also reports of a nation-wide imbalance between groundwater and surface water demands (Jokic 2009)<sup>215</sup> and, in the Island, town growth was expected to place Island aquifers under increased pressure. Aquifers are vulnerable to climate change impacts: in other places, coastal aquifers are reported threatened by salt water intrusion from climate change sea-level rise (Kundzewicz et al. 2007; LGAT 2007).<sup>216</sup> Indeed, with reduced rainfall and surface water, bores to access groundwater were becoming increasingly important (Participant 6) but there was growing concern about their unregulated use, a freedom not available in other parts of Australia. One thought, ‘It could be that if we get another couple of dry summers, the [main town] bore will just stop pumping’ (Participant 30).

Apart from Island climate change sceptics, and those who supported the notion of climate change and a need for immediate attention to it, a third participant

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<sup>214</sup> According to Participants 21 & 26, the source of the coastal springs on the west coast is unknown.

<sup>215</sup> Jokic (2009, np) advises that ‘we really need to look after our groundwater [in Australia] ... taking groundwater means taking today the water that would have flowed in streams tomorrow as surface water ... there must be a groundwater-surface water sharing plan: people need to understand how groundwater is connected to their stream’.

<sup>216</sup> Kundzewicz et al. (2007, 185) assert that ‘climate change will affect groundwater recharge rates (the renewable groundwater resource), and groundwater levels ... However, even knowledge of current recharge and levels in both developed and developing countries is poor’.

group believed that climate change existed but was not yet a pressing governance issue—any changes would be gradual and quietly build up. One did not know ‘whether global warming is going to be a major factor for King Island—I haven’t really thought that through’ (Participant 19); another, who observed changed weather patterns, believed ‘we’ve yet to see what is going to happen ... perhaps in a couple of years’ (Participant 21). Two maintained that dairy and abattoir source wells were constantly flowing, even over summer (Participants 20 & 26), in contrast to previous participant observations of shortages.

Overall, while almost half of all participants referred to climate change in one form or another in regard to King Island, the remainder—the slight majority of the participant cohort—were apparently indifferent to, or as yet oblivious of, the matter.

### Island climate change governance

All government tiers embrace climate change. King Islanders themselves hold decision-making authority and responsibility for their present and future wellbeing;<sup>217</sup> how then did they meet local climate change challenges?

First, I focus upon Councillors and the King Island Council. Council received little forewarning of climate change challenges. The world’s early speculations about climate change found no echoes in Island images such as the impressive coat of arms, devised in 1974, that represented a secure economic base and

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<sup>217</sup> Recall that the Local Government Act provides for establishment of local councils to plan for, develop and manage municipalities in the interests of their communities. A council’s functions and powers include provision for the health, safety and welfare of the community (Tasmanian Government 1993b).

flourishing terrestrial and marine environments. Similarly, the 1988 King Island Bicentennial Quilt's portrait of everyday activities across two centuries of European settlement shows no hint of current drought and fresh water concerns, potential coastal inundation, depleted biodiversity, or affected fisheries. But current decision-makers experience mounting climate change pressures. Indeed, they might well look upon 2007 as a defining year for King Island in terms of climate change impacts—an unprecedented dry spell styled by some as the Island's first drought in living memory. Some stream flows ceased, smaller farm dams evaporated, water shortages were seen to occur at the Island abattoir and cheese factory, and fodder stocks for the mainstay Island beef and dairy cattle ran very low. When rain eventually arrived it was torrential, flooding, short-lived. At year's start, soaring summer temperatures had accelerated a disastrous coastal wildfire that blackened ten percent of the small Island, depleted biodiversity and disadvantaged a number of primary producers. Researchers increasingly link global warming both to severe wildfire (Reilly 2009, 5) and to small declines in Tasmanian lobster fishery catches between 2006 and 2009, an industry to which King Island is a major contributor (The Mercury 2009).

It might be argued that this catalogue of Island events provided council with much to consider in regard to potential climate change challenges. In addition, research referred to previously (Adger et al. 2003; Nunn 2004) cautions that livelihoods that depend on climate-sensitive resources—such as pastoralism in King Island—are at greatest risk from climate change-induced fresh water scarcity and floods, sea-level rise, inundation, beach erosion and disruption of

coastal settlements, agriculture and infrastructure. Accordingly, participants observed council responses to the issue. Some reported a council focus on how to reduce further carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels, and ways to adapt to present and anticipated climate changes. Council drew upon the community, appointing a small climate change working group to operate in consultation with the local school, industries, and the state government; its objective was ‘to look at the ways we do business and so reduce the use of power’ (Participant 7 & 30). More widely, residents were offered two climate change awareness meetings in May 2007 at the council chambers. These measures were seated in the present. But also at this time, when council was planning its crucial 2007 survival strategy (mentioned previously), climate change appeared to escape council’s notice. The Plan was to provide a decision-making framework for the next decade that would identify key strategic planning challenges for the Island, and issues of concern for the council and Councillors—‘tourism and settlement growth, industrial and agricultural development and environmental sustainability’ (Connell Wagner 2007, 19). If sustainability was indeed a consideration, climate change would seem crucial to all three above objectives. Scholars caution planners to avoid such oversights and omissions: Wilson (2006, 611) understands that ‘a critical anticipatory role’ is required in the face of a changing climate.<sup>218</sup> Similarly Millard (2008, 8) emphasises that ‘potential future risks and liabilities should be considered when preparing future strategies’. Further,

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<sup>218</sup> Wilson (2006) reviewed local government plans in the UK to see how far they acknowledged climate change as an important factor affecting context for planning. Only half the plans reviewed by him acknowledged that climate change needed to be considered in local government policies and proposals.

building climate change considerations into planning processes and systems allows early action ... Research shows ... a need to make such planning explicit, and to raise awareness in strategic and local planning decision-making ... there would be some direct and indirect costs of incorporating climate assessment into planning, with possible impacts on land and property prices, or increased construction, development and insurance costs ... [but] these costs would be considerably less than the 'do nothing' option (Wilson 2006, 611).

In addition, global-local climate change matters apparently did not surface during a community workshop the Plan consultants led to identify 'emerging issues' of importance to future Island development. According to the consultants' report, climate change, sea-level rise, and other potential social-economic-environmental impacts of climate change upon the Island were not identified. One issue, 'sand dunes', appeared to hold promise; however, it referred only to 'erosion from human impact' such as cattle grazing and recreational vehicles (Connell Wagner 2006, 25), with no mention of predicted stronger wind speeds (LGAT 2007), sea-level rise, storm surge or inundation—climate change planning considerations currently informing policies elsewhere in local government jurisdictions of coastal Tasmania.<sup>219</sup> Water availability concerns were limited to the 'quality of the drinking water'. No reference was

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<sup>219</sup> For example, the Tasmanian coastal municipality of Tasman has determined climate change mitigation initiatives. The first is improved coastal planning and development for its vulnerable coastal environments, to be achieved by training the community to monitor the shoreline and provide local and State authorities with data for coastal development decisions. Second, there will be preliminary talks with Tasman Landcare Group Inc. about a project to help farmers become more prepared and resilient to climate change (Materia 2008).



made to threatened *quantity* of fresh water supply (LGAT 2007),<sup>220</sup> or to the possible need for adaptive measures for salinity, erosion, wind, water retention, water legislation and regulation (Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 2008) and deeper dams to keep dam water cool and prevent evaporation (Participant 26). Secondary impacts of climate change—effects of rising temperature and extreme weather on people’s use of more sustainable travel modes such as walking or cycling, or economic impacts (which may be negative or positive) on tourism and cafe culture, outdoor spaces, and recreation—also failed to make the list of emerging issues of the next decade, and were not later inserted by decision-makers as relevant considerations. ‘Emerging issues’ identified by the Plan bore no apparent relationship to the scientifically-established threats and risks of climate change. Rather, they were ‘emerging issues’ that were alienated from *the* emerging issue—climate change—and thus in this strategic document escaped government, industry and community policy for a range of future impact scenarios (LGAT 2007, np). In terms of planning for climate change, the Plan appeared to represent an opportunity missed.

Yet council faced difficulties in its governance of the issue. One was uncertainty about the implications of climate change for the municipality, an uncertainty that was considered to constrain its planning:

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<sup>220</sup> The severe drought in the summer of 2006–07, when certain residents ran out of water (Participant 17), post-dated by a month or two the consultants’ community workshop. In hindsight the drought may now signal to some Islanders imminent water supply difficulties that they were unaware of when consulted in September 2006.

No one has yet come up with what the [climate change] problems will be. There is a climate change committee for LGAT but they can't tell us with any accuracy what [sea level] rise there might be. At present the best we're looking at is, say, one metre over the next century ... when somebody *tells* us what it's going to be, then we can do something about it ... at this stage I don't think there's any land I can think of that is in any jeopardy (Participant 7).<sup>221</sup>

Thus council had considered forward planning needs: according to the same participant, it would eventually make provision for climate change in its planning scheme. Considering the coastal locations of the three areas rezoned for settlement (Figure 6.11), such provision would seem to be a priority.

How had the other arm of local governance, the King Island citizenry, responded to climate change? A clear-cut division was apparent. On one hand, a number of participants acknowledged climate change threats and had clear ideas about what action council should take to ensure Islanders' safety and welfare. Some urged Councillors to be seen to confront climate change. Others wanted to see education of Councillors and citizens about climate change. Some supported development of policies for emissions reduction, threatened coastal areas, coastal development issues, and fresh water depletion. 'Get climate change into people's minds because it will affect our coast and water availability'; make a dent in the carbon footprint; identify areas at risk of

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<sup>221</sup> This problem is well illustrated by a recent occurrence. Recall that research has found that in the next 50 to 100 years, 21 per cent of the Tasmanian coast is at risk of erosion and significant recession from predicted sea-level rise (Sharples 2006). However, when the aforementioned screening of *An Inconvenient Truth* was held at council chambers, the visiting presenter found it necessary to apologise for the omission of King Island from a state map of those parts of the Tasmanian coast at risk from sea-level rise.

inundation, landslip and collapse; plan for predicted sea-level rise; address liability claims connected with past and current coastal development applications; reconsider approvals for several buildings on foredunes very close to the sea and vulnerable to sea-level rise; conduct fresh water studies of available resources apart from rainwater, and how much is available for farming (Participants 3, 5, 11, 15, 20, 21, 27, 30 & 31). One provided insight into the consequences of small-island pressures that bore down upon the council:

In the planning approvals issue ... council have got a long way to go. Being this small community, they're a bit afraid to say 'no' to most people ... Most of our coast is so soft; they shouldn't be approving any building on the foredunes ... erosion will be a major factor and people could end up with a sand blow all around their house (Participant 31).<sup>222</sup>

Individual participants' concerns were reinforced by some community organisations. The local branch of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association acknowledged climate change as 'this important issue ... a new priority' for farmers (King Island Courier 2007b, 2). The KINRMG included climate change in its current agenda (Participant 11), 'looking at climate change ... more on a state-wide level; the Tasmanian Government is doing risk assessments ... it would be good to find out what the risks are' (Participant 31).

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<sup>222</sup> A sand blow is an expanse of sandy soil denuded of vegetation by wind action.

The KINRMG addressed climate change challenges in May 2007. It attracted 24 residents to a public meeting to shape 2008–11 planning. Climate change actions were among its recommendations and vital matters of Island water resources were highlighted.<sup>223</sup>

In contrast to these participants and Island collectives, slightly more than half the participants were silent about climate change. They too had parallels among Island collectives: the King Island artist colony was silent on the issue, in stark contrast to artists in other parts of the world, mentioned previously. Island scholars report how island arts engage with land, sea and community, and find that artists address the large questions of existence within a context of island particularity (Hay 2003; Stratford & Langridge 2012).

Certainly King Island artists explored and expressed their senses of local place, celebrating its skies, seas, winds, wildlife, waters, rocks, light and pastoral activities. But in their photography, painting, drawing, sound, sculpture, wood, fabric and ceramic expressions I found no sensory interpretations, no imagery, to convey how climate change might transform King Island. There was silence about potential barren warming seas, consuming wildfire, flood events, withered pastures, empty lagoons, eroded coasts, vanished birdlife, arid skies—plausible themes of a King Island language of place change in tune with the concerns of artists elsewhere. Two years later, the director of the Island

Cultural Centre reported continuing absence of climate change themes that

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<sup>223</sup> Recommendations included the following: that groundwater resources be monitored; that licenses may be required to take groundwater; data loggers should be installed in bores; KINRMG should collaborate with local government to monitor water use on farms, bores, groundwater resources and irrigation issues on farms; and a water resource management plan should be developed (KINRMG 2007b, 3–4). According to Participant 31, ‘We just don’t know how much reserves we’ve got here under us; we need to find out’ (Participant 31).

might have served to advance the message that local place is at risk, and increase citizen awareness and engagement.

Limited engagement with climate change issues extended yet further into the Islander population. As shown above, one community workshop highlighted a broad unawareness of, or indifference to, climate change threats. The ‘emerging issues’ that did attract notice concerned other, more immediate problems: a larger Island population, current lifestyle activities, desire to be agrarian market leaders, and interest in concrete, visible, ‘hands-on’, achievable environmental challenges.<sup>224</sup> Climate change was ‘not in people’s minds’ (Participant 11; Jones 2009); there was ‘not a big awareness of it on the Island’ (Participant 21).

What accounts for this void? The possible reasons call for identification for, as Flannery (2005) observes, there may be a price to pay for denial or indifference in the event that people are called on to combat real crises and participate in community decision-making. First, non-engagement may be a matter of deficient state and national government leadership.<sup>225</sup> There are uncertainty and indecision about the presence, nature of impacts, scale, location and timing of climate change (DPIW 2006; Kjellen 2006; LGAT 2007; Mimura et al. 2007; Wilson 2006). Participants 10 and 13 thought that such doubt and indecisiveness transmitted a ‘wait and see’ message that promoted a *laissez-faire* mindset in an Island that ‘soothes you into complacency’.

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<sup>224</sup> Such activities included clearance of exotic weeds, plastic bag pollution, wallaby control, and prevention of dune erosion by recreational vehicles (Connell Wagner 2007).

<sup>225</sup> Journalists Morton and Arup (2009, 9) write that this indecision reached the point where ‘leaders in Canberra and elsewhere appear hamstrung when faced with the enormity of the threat of climatic disaster’ and where ‘there are a number of policy makers who do not understand the scale of the climate science’.

Second, there was no national leadership on climate change between May and September 2007, the study's participant interview period.<sup>226</sup> The government's subsequent electoral loss suggested that voters expected their governments to lead by example and pursue change (Crowley 2007, 5). Then, the abstract, almost invisible character of climate change may account for people's detachment and their tendency to go on 'as they always have, without any real challenges to what they're actually doing' (Participant 31).

Third, extreme weather events (such as the 2007 'first-ever' drought) were yet comparatively rare; considerable time was needed for sufficient evidence of change to accumulate and constitute a trend (Flannery 2005).

A fourth possibility was human diversity: 'everyone's different ... it comes down to personal belief' (Participant 31). Aspects of living life on a small island, mentioned previously, meant that 'people tend to regard criticism as an attack on their beliefs ... there is an entrenched defensive attitude here and people won't declare themselves' (Participant 10). Perhaps individuals also find climate change difficult to evaluate dispassionately because it might entail high stakes (Participant 4), deep political and industrial implications, and create winners and losers as people seek to address the dilemma (Flannery 2005).

Finally, climate change presents a 'doom and gloom' eleventh-hour scenario (Morton & Arup 2009); for three decades the public had been hearing about scientific fears of climate change (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2007) and final warnings (Lovelock 2009) about a crisis that 'does not necessarily get

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<sup>226</sup> The incumbent Australian Government's twelve-year rule saw it follow the lead of the USA during which time it failed to accept conclusions of the scientific community and, some would say, wasted valuable time needed to seek and implement solutions.

better, only worse' (Participant 11), and might even lie beyond the scope of international governance (Lovelock 2006; Stoker 2006; Wilson 2006).<sup>227</sup>

## Enfolding

In this chapter I explored challenges of climate change to ascertain whether, how and to what extent local modes of governing succeeded in managing global-local change. First, I reviewed several matters: the essential association between people and the planet's atmosphere, contemporary climate change, and the wide range of human responses to it. Second, I considered three global and national contexts that influence climate change governance—uncertainty, political reliance upon climate science, and deficits in modes of governing at multiple scales. Next I described participant understandings of climate change in King Island. Finally I offered possible explanations for the general unawareness of climate change in the Island. Such suggestions might cast light on mindsets that barred the way to successful local governance of climate change.

Participant understandings suggest two questions. First, did participants consider council's governing responses to climate change challenges successful or otherwise? Overall, council responses to the issue were thought mixed. Problems of relational place appear to have complicated council responses. King Islanders' international, national and state 'models' of climate change governing were invariably characterised by inconsistent decision-making and leadership. In addition, King Island Council depended upon the resources of

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<sup>227</sup> The impasse continued in 2011; see 'Rich nations give up on climate treaty' (Harvey 2011).

the Tasmanian Government to provide political and technical support in regard to climate change, and to do so within a reasonable time frame. However, some Islanders found Tasmanian Government assistance inadequate, which limited and delayed Islanders' decision-making about climate change. This lack of comprehensive information may also have contributed to an apparent early focus on sea level rise at the expense of other potential risks for small islands. However, participants observed that council took action in certain directions: it involved community sectors in a discussion body concerning mitigation, and organised two public meetings where a visiting expert delivered information to increase community awareness.

In other directions council's response to the dilemma of climate change might be considered less than successful. It did not appear to respond sufficiently in terms of *future* vision for the jurisdiction. Citizen unawareness of the issue might underpin this lapse: when residents were asked to nominate 'emerging' King Island issues that decision-makers should address, residents provided none related to climate change. Thus Councillors missed an opportunity—climate change-related policy objectives were not included in the major strategic plan for the coming decade.

Apart from council's responses, how responsive were citizens considered to be to the climate change issue? With small exceptions—local environmentalists, primary industry people and a small core of other individuals—King Island citizens were in general understood not to engage with the matter. It might be the case that, as Stoker (2006, 66) states, the impact of globalisation means that 'doing politics in the twenty-first century is hard ... people's sense of doubt



that politicians can cope with the big issues that matter may have fuelled a sense of disenchantment'. It might also be argued that the contention of Malpas and Wickham (1997) could apply here: that governance success was limited by its incompleteness—in King Island by incomplete local government control over its operations, non-provision of initial planning information by the Tasmanian Government, and patchy community acceptance of this global-local challenge. Some would agree with Adger (2003) that *effective* governance requires accord between decision-makers and constituents alike.

## 8 Discussion and Conclusions

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*Common Terns overfly King Island as a storm gathers 2007*

*Long-lived dwellers of ocean and island and atmosphere,  
Terns survive:  
shared decisions,  
common destination*

## Unfolding

In this chapter I restate my research process and weigh its value: does the case study permit me to assess whether, how and to what extent modes of governing fail or succeed to support management of global-local change? From the change cases I drew various conclusions, considered how they might apply to the world's other islands and places not islands, and suggested research directions prompted by the study.

Steps that brought me to this point began with selection of the project frame. I recognised that global pressures generate complex change in all spheres of life, and at all scales including the local, and wondered how decision-makers might best manage such change. There is a range of views about this matter. Watts (2009) finds no single tried and tested mode of governing that might be adopted by all islands. Others suggest that governing practice is shadowed by eventual failure, although such failure is thought to promote new governing activities (Malpas & Wickham 1997). For Villamil (1977) the way is clear: small island governments must discover how to govern so that change does not disrupt island society. To weigh whether, how and to what extent governing practices fail or succeed to support management of global-local change, I investigated how people in a small Island grappled with *their* challenges of global-local change.

Chapter one introduced the study, outlined chapter content and study limitations. Chapter two detailed the work's qualitative approach: the study of literatures of place, governance and island studies; research ethics; field work

issues; single case study; interviewing techniques; and importance of rigour. I pursued the research question, How effectively do people in the Tasmanian jurisdiction of King Island respond to their global-local governance challenges? Four change cases were identified, in governing, population, land use and tenure, and climate. Chapter three introduced the case study setting: King Island, its people and system of government. Two perspectives were used: incomer researcher, and participants. Thumbnail sketches introduced the dissertation's four change cases.

Chapters four to seven formed the heart of the study. Chapter four explored Island governance and change. Aspects examined included insights of governing to manage global-local change, place factors that might bear upon outcomes, concepts of government and governance, relational place, and neoliberal governance. Participatory governance in King Island was considered as a pertinent expression of good governance, and its practice examined. Governing practices of jurisdictional parent, the Tasmanian Government, were also explored.

Chapter five examined change in population, specifically matters of migration, ageing, rurality and remoteness; numerical decline, emigration, lack of opportunity and drift away of young people, and perceived impacts on the economy and Islanders' futures.

The theme of chapter six was change in Island land use and tenure, in particular corporate tenure and land use for agribusiness; local tension between conservation of place and Island development; decline in Islander tenure; land

policies of state-directed economic growth; and the impact of neoliberalism. The remainder of the chapter inspected decisions Islanders made about such challenges.

Chapter seven explored local governing to manage present and future climate change impacts. I considered as background the phenomenon of contemporary climate change and its implications for the world's islands and islanders; critical contexts for governing; and participant understandings of how King Islanders responded to climate change as a governance matter.

Did the change cases reveal whether governance and governing succeeded or failed to support management of global-local change in King Island?

**Did governing succeed or fail in relation to the four change cases?**

Good governance is an ideal; it is unattainable but may be aspired to. In this study, all four change cases point to perceived successes and failures in local governing. Participants identified examples of demonstrated good governance such as responsiveness; and other points where, for example, council lacked control of its policies and/or practices, as at the Tasmanian Government-local government intersection, the outcome of which was incomplete governing. Participatory governance, a face of new devolved governance, had thus far failed to establish in the political culture of the Island, despite council efforts. However, it is fair to say that this particular deficit is part of the contemporary civic malaise within Australian and more distant governments (Barnett 2004;

Cuthill 2001; Dean 1999; Stoker 2006). The change cases suggested that King Islanders had repositioned newly arrived *governance* as a hybrid mode of governing. New and largely devolved multi-tier partnerships, qangos and participatory-consultative modes of governing jostled for political space with the residues of past government, especially those of minimal citizen involvement and maximum policy-making by elected representatives. These two expressions of governmental practice—the traditional and the novel—pulled against each other, delivering partial, incomplete governing.

As mentioned previously, I understand success in governing to mean achievement of political duties and undertakings for the benefit of society, in accordance with the principles of good governance. In turn, I understand failure in governing to mean non-achievement of such duties and undertakings. Such achievement or non-achievement may be total or partial. I draw upon the viewpoints of Malpas and Wickham (1997) and of Villamil (1977) when considering whether King Islanders succeeded or failed to manage global-local change. As Villamil (1977) points out, governments cannot completely halt many of the powerful global influences that penetrate islands. This inability is demonstrated by the four King Island change cases and by those participants who felt that such pressures shadowed their quality of life. However, because King Island is ‘still open for business’ and ‘weathering the storm’, it might be argued that local government has successfully grappled with these global influences—persistent emigration, transition to devolved governance, an altered ownership and use of its lands, and the apparent onset of climate change. But Villamil also suggests that the target of small island governing is

to discover *how* to ensure that changes from elsewhere do not disrupt the island society. Did King Islanders' governing of global-local change enable the Island to avoid social disruption, where 'to disrupt' means to interrupt or impede activities or processes?

Measured in these terms, the first change case revealed participant experiences of disrupted governing activities or processes. For example, intended practices of devolved new governance, such as the mechanics of newly expanded citizen participation and consultation in decision-making, were shown to have been impeded by disinterest; Councillors found it necessary to formulate decisions without the input expected from the people, who continued to embrace their familiar technologies of 'old' government as do citizens in numerous other Western democracies. In addition, governing across place bore witness to policy inconsistency by the Tasmanian Government, as for example in its inappropriate land use policies whose impacts local government could not control, and which impeded the enterprises of various landholders.

The second change case, change in population, would suggest limited local governing success. Some participants recalled significant emigration and social disruption that followed closure of the large mine in the 1990s; this event was closely followed by the arrival of corporate farming in the Island. Participants considered that agribusiness disrupted rural population patterns, emptied small outlying settlements and schools, and undercut the future of the family farm. One fear was that continued population egress would provoke cut-backs in services, businesses and employment opportunities important to residents' quality of life; people saw that the occasional business was selling up, or read

advertisements in the press which notified that others were relocating to the Australian mainland (King Island Courier 2010b). However, local government responded in positive terms with major rezoning of coastland to attract permanent residents. State Government predictions, referred to previously, that tourism would expand by 2012 (DEEWR 2008) and similar participant hopes expressed during 2007 both seem closer to fruition—in 2012 the Mayor stated that tourism was becoming the growth industry of the Island (King Island Council 2012). Council had worked to attract investors in the Island, specifically a tourist development proposal for two golf links developments that would draw in visitors (and, hopefully, potential residents), provide employment for newcomer Islanders and livelihoods for returning Island youth.

Such planning might represent examples of the ‘small successes’ of governance described by Malpas and Wickham (1997). However, in terms of overall success, council remains hard-pressed to arrest the receding population and its societal disruptions. Resident numbers continue to decline in 2013; and participants are among the emigrants. Closure of large Island employer, the foreign-owned abattoir vital to the Island’s beef industry, has exacerbated departures. For those one and a half thousand people remaining in the Island, demographic imbalance and the ageing of their society continue. On this basis, and at time of writing, it may be concluded that the goal set by the community in 2003 to double the local population by 2013 has not been achieved. This particular global-local dilemma persists.

The third concern, change in Island land tenure and use, also persists. Its ongoing presence bears out Villamil’s assertion that local government is



unlikely to completely halt this global-local process. Land represents Islanders' most valuable asset, yet for Islanders (those who do not sell their holdings) its security remains elusive, and futures based upon it appear uncertain. There is no indication that matters of tenure might be altered to privilege Islanders as owners, local governments having no authority over such matters, and retiring farmers free to dispose of their holdings to local or offshore buyers as they wish. A new face of land use—council's 2007 strategy to sell coastal blocks to new settlers, referred to above—may, if successful, prevent societal disruption from ripple effects of ongoing emigration.

However, the change case suggests that, despite council efforts, global-local impacts continue to shadow futures based upon the land. In 2007 some participants spoke of their forebodings about the future of the King Island beef industry; in contrast, as mentioned above, the Tasmanian Government expected primary production to remain the Island's dominant industry for at least two to five years, that is, until 2012 (DEEWR 2008). However, in 2012 the offshore-owned Island abattoir ceased operations. The closure was considered a 'massive setback' to the King Island beef industry, and placed the local economy under 'enormous pressure' (King Island Council 2012, 5). Further land-use uncertainties surround corporate farming which suffered its own setbacks such as the 2008-09 global financial crisis, and changes to federal tax incentives for agribusiness (Parliament of Australia 2009). Local corporate farming ventures moved to sell their Island assets. A further major governance land use issue is a current controversy among Islanders over proposed use of 40 percent of their total land surface for an extensive wind farm. This issue and

the developments above suggest that land use governance in King Island faces further change and challenge. As Villamil (1977) suggests, the crucial consideration for council will be to determine how to govern to manage such changes so that they do not disrupt the Island society or trigger further emigration.

According to some participants, change in climate, the fourth and final change case, has already arrived in the Island. Has local government discovered how to successfully manage the matter, or has the phenomenon impeded quality of life in the community? Disagreement among participants reflects the controversial nature of this global-local change. However, the views of some accorded with IPCC findings that fresh water availability may present a potential problem for islands; a drought, fresh water shortages that affected industries, stock watering and fodder supply, and increasingly impure groundwater from bores were immediate concerns.

Council climate change governance was, for a period, hampered by lack of information from the State Government. In a positive move, council formed a committee drawn from the community to discuss the issue, convened public awareness meetings, studied mitigation possibilities, and encouraged town dwellers to install rainwater tanks. However, although King Island had always been considered drought-free, several participants suggested that council should have looked ahead and introduced regulation of Island bores, or organised an assessment of available water resources. But, as Malpas and Wickham note, governments can never command of all elements of a situation.

It might be argued that any failure in council's governance of climate change was defensible: there was no available climate change governance precedent, in any tier of government. As noted above, the Tasmanian Government reportedly failed to supply climate change information to council, forcing it to await official guidance. In the Island itself, an apparent gap in climate change awareness possibly explains why residents did not raise climate concerns as important emerging Island issues at the time consultants and Councillors were gathering data for their 2007 Strategic Plan. Some participants' interview narratives revealed unease about potentially disruptive aspects of climate change: risks to fresh water availability, coastal inundation, and fears that structures were being approved and erected too close to the waterline.

Governing to manage climate change revealed apparent successes followed by council's failure to maintain its original momentum. Initially it had addressed climate change on both local and broader fronts. Many participants were proud of council's bid to sign the Kyoto protocol to limit greenhouse emissions—a move by the small remote Island that impressed other local, state and national governments and attracted much publicity (for example, see Wood 2006).

However, some thought that council's climate change initiatives lost force, and noted that most Councillors had not attended the public awareness meetings. At the same time, apparent blind spots appeared in strategic planning. Decision-makers attended to the *quality* of drinking water but there was no mention of the IPCC-reported concern of the world's small islands—*quantity* of available fresh water and the possibility that future consumption might need to be rationed. As scholars noted of other local governments, decision-makers were

finding it difficult to keep pace with the implications of climate change (Wilson 2006).

Climate change governance also appeared incomplete in terms of public input. Case studies of islands elsewhere, including coastal municipalities in mainland Tasmania, emphasise the importance of public input into decision-making for climate change, and provide information to educate people and thus foster civic understanding and ownership of policies (Calado et al. 2011). As Heywood (2007, 360) confirms, ‘without support from the public ... policy implementation becomes difficult, perhaps impossible’. However, council did not appear to foster broad awareness of climate change. For example, there was no climate change information among council’s comprehensive display of informative brochures and pamphlets in 2007, unlike the practice in other communities (Calado et al. 2011). Resident newsletters, official website, annual reports to the community, strategic plans for 2004–09 and the major strategy of 2007 were also silent about climate change. Council’s undertaking to ‘show strong leadership’ (King Island Council 2003, 2) was evident in its several initiatives—its small community climate change committee, consideration of mitigation and so on. However, the change case revealed a broad lack of climate change awareness or sense of immediate concern among a number of participants; local cultural silences contrasted sharply with initiatives in small islands elsewhere.

Some aware participants were impatient for council action and information about that action—announcements of policies about emissions reduction, predicted sea-level rise, coastal areas vulnerable to inundation, landslip and

collapse, coastal development issues (a particular concern), and fresh water security and assessment. It is possible that council's failure to take a broad public-education role here may have contributed to civic uncertainty about climate change. Divergent views within populations, as elsewhere in Australia and further afield, have many sources including personal conviction, ethical precept, and membership of advocacy groups. Yet, while it might be unjust to place claims of citizen uncertainty about changing climate solely at council's door, the fact remains that, unlike a number of other coastal Tasmanian municipalities, as at 2013 information about climate change and King Island is not yet offered to residents via the council home page. In the arena of global-local change, departing residents and threats to the land-based economy appear to be council's most immediate governance concerns.

## How did governing succeed or fail in King Island?

To appreciate how governing both succeeded and failed to support management of global-local change in King Island, I consider some factors of local and relational place revealed in the four change cases.

### Mindsets of local (island) place

People's mindsets and governing are indissolubly linked. Government is a construct of the mind. Place—for which governments are responsible—is also, in one view, a construct of the human mind. People's mindsets—their attitudes of thought—shape their interpretations of and responses to places and situations, some of which will entail matters of governing. Among King

Islanders a number of mindsets were detected, among them sense of place, defence of place, Island smallness, and declining identity.

*Sense of place, defence of place*

Sense of place—how people think and feel about place—is embedded in governing, directing decision-making for place creation and management (Massey & Jess 1995). The second mindset, the defence of place impulse—the readiness of individuals and groups to protect home, community or a favoured public place against destructive forces—is considered the most powerful expression of sense of place (Bartmann 1998; Hay 2002a; Péron 2004).

Terrell (2004, 9) writes that islands are ‘not uncomplicated places’. Their complexity is captured in the intricate ways mindsets form and permeate governing. Generally the operation of the defence of place mechanism may be seen when it influences governing, as in cases in Tasmania, Australia and elsewhere (Read 1996; Stedman 2003; Stratford 2009). However, this study suggests that many Islanders do not exhibit this impulse, which in turn may partly explain disinterest in participatory governance there. It may be the case that strong sense of place does not necessarily stir a defence of place response or motivate more than a smattering of residents to actively protect revered place from global-local threat. Most participants held deep attachments to their Island home, were aware of the powerful global forces that threatened that place, and some knew that local planning legislation did not protect Island lands from external investors. However, sense of place and awareness of threats to it did not spur most to accept council invitations for their input, rather

than leaving solutions entirely in the hands of elected representatives. Thus on the basis of this finding I cannot agree with Péron's (2004, 530) finding that 'highly territorial' islanders quickly form a 'united front' to oppose external threat. This statement holds true in respect of council—which initiated a legal defence against the Tasmanian Government's attempted control of King Island's prime agrarian lands for forestry purposes. Even so, as land was continuously forfeited to outsiders, citizens—including those especially protective and proud of their pastoral Island's 'clean, green' status—watched with concern. Yet, though they railed against what they saw, some rationalised the flawed local planning scheme as a matter beyond their authority. The only solution seemed to be a most unlikely land purchase by the Tasmanian Government. Surprisingly, few Islanders appeared to view council's coastal development survival plan as a defence of place opportunity to offset the associated problems of vanishing local land tenure and population decline. Some people said they were unaware of the plan, a response council read as an avoidance strategy.

Although most participants reported they had not recently contacted council or used official channels to voice concerns (discussed below), a few rowed against the tide. That small cohort might draw energy from Young's (1995–6) finding that sense of place does not always immediately flare into a defence of place response—it might hibernate until the eleventh hour. Among Islanders were those for whom that crisis point seemed far away, and sense of place had not yet spurred them to enter into decision-making. On this understanding I do

not concur with Read (1996) that the majority of citizens will always seek to guard personal place, become individually involved, and speak up.

The apparent dissociation of these two mindsets—sense of place and defence of place—was puzzling. How was it that most King Islanders appeared to reject new, *direct* political participation yet so diligently continued to support the political principle of *indirect* representative government? The latter behaviour would suggest that their rejection of new governance was not principally a lack of citizenship, but rather that sense of place did stir people to support their Island society, which they protected in *indirect* ways. Otherwise, how was it that King Islanders continued to have one of the strongest voter turnouts in Tasmanian non-compulsory municipal elections, hold top position in the Cradle Coast region for community volunteering, and manage reasonable support of public meetings about some Island issues? There is the inference here that sufficient time—perhaps a generation or more—is needed to allow adjustment to the new system and that council would need to carefully direct that adjustment.

### *Island smallness*

A further factor of local (island) place that may have contributed to governing deficits was King Island's geographical smallness, in the absolute sense. Small scale evoked in King Islanders a particular reciprocation with place that discouraged involvement in decision-making. The study suggests that, in King Island, small scale was associated with inhibited political voice. Small Island size meant proximity to everything and everyone, which appeared to stifle



many Islanders and encourage in them a particular mindset. For a number, Island smallness meant a loss of personal anonymity. They responded by adjusting their ways of being. They were reluctant to expose their views to public gaze, believing it a simple matter to identify anyone who spoke out in their small Island. This reaction to proximity is common to other small island societies (Baldacchino 2002; Hache 1998; Lipton et al. 2009; O'Collins 2006; Péron 2004).

The influences of Island smallness and proximity upon governing could be observed in examples of governing deficits where different practices sometimes competed with each other. For example, as an advocate of community wellbeing, council managed often sensitive citizen complaints and objections—but used non-confidential mechanisms to do so. Thus the process failed on occasion: fear of the consequences of public exposure meant several participants did not report matters that troubled them, expecting backlash from aggrieved Islanders and social notoriety as serial complainants. Instead they prioritised harmonious interaction with others and bracketed personal silence with working together as a community.

This mindset paralleled Lowenthal's (1988) studies of the Faroese, who took care to live and let live by avoiding potentially divisive interpretations of events, overt disagreements or divisive social criticism. A clear demonstration of the extent to which citizen silence pervaded the King Island community and disabled political voice, appeared in the local newspaper when the mayor appealed to citizens not to be frightened to stand up and be counted. In addition, the Island newspaper accepted for publication both signed and

anonymous letters, the latter providing a safe route for controversial comment. Those who dismissed fear of retribution as mere Island myth were contradicted by others who had witnessed its wrath and kept their counsel and the peace. Any pathway to participatory governance in King Island would require citizens to develop personal skills to deal creatively with conflict (Jackson 2011) and so avoid witnessed instances of political immaturity, ill-managed meetings, and open confrontation. Such skills are not developed in hibernation from retribution.

Such factors of local (island) place—King Islander mindsets, the transforming Island society, and a particular mindset seeded by small scale—appear complicit in the failure of participatory governance and governing to manage four cases of global-local threat. Participant understandings showed that the Island was not a receptive seedbed within which free political expression could develop and establish. In 2013 it continued thus; business people were reported unwilling to reveal to news media which side they took in the current wind farm controversy, saying that those who had spoken up had lost clients as a result (Ogilvie 2013). Perhaps a generation or more is required in order to develop an appropriate mindset, participatory skills and a local culture of citizen engagement. King Islanders had had the benefit of only half that time since central power was transferred to their local government.

#### *Island population change – mindsets of decline*

Aspects of local population change provided evidence that government lacked full control over its own operations, meaning that its governing practice was

incomplete and ultimately failed. In one view, the fact that a population is small is a handicap for island governing (Warrington & Milne 2007), in terms of minimal voting power and the tendency of the centre to sideline peripheral places. But the study's population change case suggests that council's difficulties were more broadly situated in fluid global processes and movements (Marston & Mitchell 2004) that combined as governing challenges: ongoing emigration and numerical decline, comparative population instability, an ageing society and markedly skewed age profile.

First, extra pressures were placed on remaining Islanders, strains that became visible in examples of deficient governing practice. Population decline reduced numbers available to serve as elected council representatives and professional personnel; when senior professional positions fell vacant, sometimes offshore or multiple applicants were attracted and recruited; time needed for selection of an applicant and a period of induction cut across the business of council policy-making and implementation, sometimes for as long as six months.

Council faced a nigh impossible challenge to maintain its momentum, grapple with other major concerns of finance, complexities of devolution of political power, difficult new allocations of local power and responsibility (Allen 2004; Swyngedouw 2005), and generally to function for the welfare of Island society—where the majority expected council to continue to manage everything as before.

Second, diminished social cohesion complicated the task of local government. In the previously family-oriented agrarian-mining Island, people had tended to stay put, became well-known to each other, and were readily contactable for

purposes of government. In the now more mobile Island cohort, established and newer residents, temporary managers, process workers, tradespeople and professionals, sea-changers and tourists all lived together within the Island perimeter, yet lived generally more detached lives from each other than in the past.

This comparative detachment had at least two impacts on governing. It meant some people—for example, temporary residents and workers—had less incentive to become active citizens during a short-term residence, and thus the appeal of participatory governance was weakened. Council was aware that this detachment contributed to incomplete governing practice and to its inability always to achieve desired outcomes. For example, one key official reported currently finding it impossible to know every Islander in this more mobile setting, unlike in the past when, although the population was almost twice the present size, it was more static and easily accessed, and one could know who was who. Its changing composition and current mobility meant council found it increasingly difficult to gauge community sentiment about Island issues. One mechanism employed for this purpose was the written consultation. However, one in council found this mechanism problematic, considered it a challenge for all tiers of government, and that it invited failure. Public consultation required a decision as to when, how, and how often to consult—a less well-known population meant that misjudgment was possible at any of these three decision points. To make appropriate decisions, even further mechanisms were required—fine judgment between under- and over-consultation, and not least a sound working knowledge of the local people, not now easily acquired as

mentioned above, although two council employees made special efforts to maximise contact with citizens and compensate for this deficit. Thus the practice of relying upon written consultations was an instance of government non-control over its own operations—it could not force citizens to use the mechanism, and it was a difficult process to successfully implement.

The study suggests that further factors of local population worked against successful governance to manage change. For example, were incompleteness and deficits shaped by hardships of Island life that left many citizens little space, time or inclination for active citizenship? While local population change meant problems for the Island government, local society itself experienced challenges. Although the very first sentence on council's website introduced King Island as an 'idyllic place', scholars contest the notion that islands are paradises for their residents (Cambers 2006; Hache 1998; Lowenthal 1988; Nunn 2007; Péron 2004). Accordingly, during the community future search visioning conference numerous King Islanders had described a general struggle to survive in King Island (Campbell & Jones 2003). Although devolution offered new opportunity for inclusive decision-making, in many cases everyday pressures might have submerged this aspect of citizenship. The study found many participants were occupied with issues of immediate import: costly travel and freight, food and electricity; dearth of rental housing; skilled labour shortage; and not least the socio-economic ramifications of local corporate farming. In such circumstances people might find it difficult to think beyond their own testing experiences (Stoker 2006) or make the conscious decision to become active in broader matters of local society (Allen 2004; Cuthill 2001).

The King Island case did not support suggestions that societies might welcome opportunities for easier, open, deliberative approaches to political planning and management (Barnett & Scott 2007; Campbell 2006; Davies et al. 2003; Eckersley 1995; Heywood 2007; Lemos & Agrawal 2006; Swyngedouw 2005). Most King Islanders did not seem to welcome tripartite governance. Yet, in a democracy people must do more than merely select leaders (Stoker 2006), for the change cases demonstrate the gravity of global-local challenges—an Island grappling with a hybrid form of governing, waning-ageing-transforming population, loss of identity as exclusive Island land owners and users, first apparent manifestations of climate change, and the disruptions of foreign investment. Recruits were needed to take part in and influence policy debates and outcomes. How was this need to be met? The study offered council fertile ground for thought: Participant 27 advised that council had to gear participation practices to the community. Here too, fine judgment was required: should participation be unstructured and informal—which might be a way to raise local participation levels and understanding of issues—or more structured and formal, which might enable more challenging issues to be addressed (Eversole & Martin 2005)? To its credit, council had employed both forms, although it had much less success with the latter option.

### Factors of relational place

Local governments are creations of relational place, embedded within its processes, continuously moulded from beyond their borders (Allen & Massey 1995). Even remote islands cannot avoid its influence for there is ‘no necessary

correspondence between the geographical boundaries of islands and the ... political boundaries of islands' (Terrell 2004, 13), their perimeters being entirely open to the governmental paraphernalia of relational place (Allen & Massey 1995; Casey 1997; McCall 1996, 2002; Stratford 2004). In this light, how did factors of place other than those of local (island) place shape governing failure in King Island?

Warrington and Milne (2007, 384) refer to an island's 'all-important external relationship', which this study confirmed as necessary for understanding deficiencies in local governance and governing. In reflecting on the four change cases that comprise this work, below I have used the perspective of relational place to consider Malpas and Wickham's (1997) assertions that government continually operates against itself in the intersection and competition between differing governing practices; never has control over its own operations; is characterised by incompleteness of governing practices; and will inevitably fail to manage change, leaving uncertainty in its wake. Such failure occurs in *place*, which as Casey (1997) notes, contextualises everything people do, including their governing. Therefore it is appropriate that relational place is considered here in order to tease out how such failure occurs, and that thought is given to the multi-scalar dimensions of place that link people, institutions and systems of governance across regional, state, national and global scales (Amin 2004; Howitt 1998, 2002; McGuirk 1997).

The notion of relational place profits my discussion. It makes tangible the tensions and failures that accompany governing conducted across external spaces. Such tension surfaces in scholars' depictions of islanders as

paradoxical people who hover between material dependence upon a distant sovereign and their own surges of utter independence (Bartmann 1988; Clarke 2001; Warrington & Milne 2007; Watts 2009), achieving not comfortable equilibrium but often failure and abiding uncertainty. The notion also enables appreciation of the labyrinthine context of governing—an environment that entails at any given moment, in any tier of government, the possibility of a complex ebb and flow of events—continuity and change in government personnel, policies and institutions; regular cycles of elections; and promulgation of legislation (Meadowcroft 2002). Such flux and intricacy of governing context, such potential to not-be-in-control, would seem to invite failure in change management.

King Islanders' governing occurs across an extensive, often thorny network of relational place. The immediately apparent linkages lie between and among King Island Council, 28 other Tasmanian councils and three regional bodies including Cradle Coast Authority; the Tasmanian Government; five other Australian state and two territory governments; the Australian Government; individual national governments and subsidiaries; international collectives with elaborate networks; and the vast global 'mainland' itself. Thus it is entirely feasible that decisions made by and on behalf of King Islanders are influenced by these many other governments, each a sponge that absorbs and exudes diverse political influences across multiple tiers.



### *Relations with the Tasmanian Government*

The study confirmed findings elsewhere that governments struggle to navigate ‘elaborate, multi-tiered’ governing (Meadowcroft 2002, 176). Numerous fractures were revealed in governing across relational place. Just as a local power blackout once disconnected King Island from every other location across relational place, so too political linkages between the Tasmanian Government and King Island Council sometimes failed. In imitation of the common islander ‘litany of woes’ noted by Hache (1998, 52), participants stitched their own good governance patchworks of Tasmanian Government incompletenesses—unresponsiveness, ineffectiveness, information deficits, non-accountability. Some Islanders found the relationship with the Tasmanian Government disappointing, frustrating, offensive and uncomfortable, ambiguous, unsubstantial, even incompetent. Some found the Tasmanian Government swung unpredictably between stretches of institutional neglect and periods of excessive administrative zeal that reversed the devolution process and expanded rather than withdrew its central power. In this respect, Hajer and Laws (2006) observe that people experience unease when they cannot ‘read’ a situation; among Islanders uncertainty generated doubts about the value of the state node of the relational network; some pondered advantages of Island secession from the Tasmanian mainland, or a switch to bipartite local-national government that excised the state node, or replacement of the state tier with a ministerial-level Bass Strait Islands advocate. These reactions were evidence that the state tier of government, involved with its own global-local challenges, had failed to effectively govern a dependant that was also grappling with the same weighty matters.

How were fractures in the relationship between King Island and the state visible as governing failure? Do the claims made by Malpas and Wickham (1997) hold—is it inevitable that actions to manage change fail? These scholars contend that governing fails because governments never have control over their own operations. It is the case that governments express their power through land and its control (Massey & Allen 1984) and it emerged in the study that the Tasmanian Government was unready to concede its authority over the agrarian lands of King Island. Locked into its culture of statist developmentalism, the Tasmanian Government ignored Islanders' crucial need to protect the integrity of their land, foundation of their mainstay beef and dairy industries: it competed against the Islander government for control of local lands. In one instance, it pursued legislation to enable offshore corporate investment schemes potential future use of Island agrarian land for forestry. It lost control of this objective when King Islanders successfully banned tree farms on their rural lands. In an attempt to regain control, the Tasmanian Government disputed council's ban; once again, King Island Council retaliated with a legal case to uphold its ban on timber plantations. Thus far, local government had successfully defended its assets against an intractable, competitive state government, but the contest continues as a 'Mexican standoff', uncertainty the principal outcome, neither institution achieving control. However, this issue provides evidence that small dependent island governments may indeed prevail over higher, more powerful tiers in relational place.

A second source of failure at the Tasmanian Government and the King Island Council intersection was the former's simultaneous adherence to incompatible

ideologies. This discordance reflects an Australia-wide pattern of conflicting mindsets among Australian policy makers for rural places (Alston 2004b): that, on one hand, rural places must help themselves; on the other hand, it is politicians' duty to fight for and support such societies. For King Islanders, competing state orthodoxies meant central policy inconsistency, confusion and uncertainty, and complications in governing for global-local land and population threats. Statist developmentalism arguably delivered top-down, forcibly-imposed, oxymoronic resource development-conservation policies. These provisions were applied across distance via policies that some Islanders considered misinterpretations of their circumstances.

In addition, statist developmentalism seemed incompatible with neoliberalism, whose small government ethic empowered 'marketisation' groups (Harvey 2005; Ruming 2005; Swyngedouw 2005) to introduce global threats into Island population and land spheres. The state vacillated between forceful involvement in Island land affairs, and withdrawal in deference to market forces. Arguably, local leadership regarding climate change was a casualty of the small government mindset—for a period, Councillors were unable to obtain adequate information of sea level rise from the Tasmanian Government, and appeared not to commence public awareness initiatives at the optimum point. These polarised modes of governing—forceful imposition of inappropriate policies, and neglectful withdrawal—exemplified how state governing operated against itself, incomplete, an indication of governing failure according to the criteria of Malpas and Wickham (1997). Wracked by this internal ideological inconsistency and continual adjustment to the devolution process by both

government tiers, local governing failed to dent global-local threats, and Islanders' governing, population, land, and climate change pressures continued, as the change cases indicate.

In similar vein, the system of participatory governance did not gather momentum, establish as an Island culture, or find obvious practical assistance at the state-Island intersection. Scholars observe that devolution of political power is complex and problematic, involves difficult distributions of power including citizen participation, and raises hard questions of representation, accountability, legitimacy, and contradictions (Allen 2004; Swyngedouw 2005). Nevertheless, this study suggests that responsibility for modes of governing lies equally with the Island population and the State Government. I have discussed, above, reasons of local place that colour Islanders' part in this failure.

On the part of the Tasmanian Government, such inconsistencies and lack of control over its own operations—examples of incomplete practice—were linked to its struggles with the devolution process. As a jurisdictional parent it apparently failed to model practices of good governance to its dependent Island undergoing the same process. Yet, on balance, Allen (2004) observes that, in any case, devolution of governmental authority is but partial—for citizens continue to assume that centralised governing prevails. The study demonstrated as much: although several participants were firm that Islanders must help themselves, others felt there was always Big Brother—the Tasmanian Government—ready to assist. Arguably, the customary looking outwards/looking inwards paradox of island dwelling (Baldacchino 2004a) is a

seedbed for continued failure of participatory governance. Despite Islanders' anger at the policy ambivalence of its distant parent government, they will continue to look outwards and rely on the Tasmanian Government: King Islanders must remain mendicants, reliant for survival on State Government funding from the Australian Government. This umbilical cord drains their capacity for self-reliant, independent decision-making.

#### *Relations with the Australian Government*

Islanders also experienced failed governing practices at their intersection with the Australian Government. It is tempting to employ arguments of geographical peripherality and political invisibility as reasons for such failure at this intersection of relational place. But failed governing here was not primarily a matter of a powerful national government's ignorance of a miniscule island society. Indeed, the Australian Government had identified and included King Island in its fold of remote national locations that merited special assistance. Rather, failure in governing practice occurred when one tier operated against the best interests of another. Such failure was partly a matter of flaws in the federal-state government model: *state* legislation established local government in Tasmania and King Island, whereas the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia does not account for the local government tier.

Thus positioned at the lowest tier, local governments are required to negotiate complex, contested constitutional arrangements, a web within which their governing shape and reach are not yet resolved (Geddes 2005; Lawson & Gleeson 2005): there are many areas of inexact responsibility. For example, as

Williams (2007) observes, there is no national land use plan such as might have guided inter-tier land policy and averted tensions of the kind that exist between the Tasmanian Government and the King Island Council described above.

Federal quarantine regulations to protect Island primary industry and the natural environment have on occasion been contested by Tasmanian Government and local personnel. The Australian Government transferred administration of its federal firearm legislation to the states, reportedly severely complicating some Islanders' farm and land management and control of wildlife, a significant Island problem. In addition, as Genoff (2005) observes, the Australian Government dictates the states' financial resourcing, an arrangement that strongly influences state government aspirations and increasingly subjects the King Island Council to Tasmanian Government cost-shifting.

There was too, another sense in which the Australian Government acted against itself—a case of global-local change where the practices of one tier seriously operated against the interests of another. Guided by the neoliberal small-government ethic, the Australian Government promoted globally managed investment schemes in agribusiness. Its legislative support for those schemes had deep socio-economic ramifications for King Island society and failed to account for the possibility that market-driven investment targets might include small scale, easily disrupted island societies.

In a second sphere of global-local threat, climate change, the Australian Liberal Government that held power during the field stage of this research failed to provide timely leadership: incompleteness of good governance was visible in a

long-lasting denial of climate change and failure to model leadership in the issue to its other tiers of government. One outcome of this leadership vacuum in King Island was a general unawareness of the magnitude of the threat, its nature, and its urgency. In this and foregoing examples, modes of governing between the Australian Government and King Island Council demonstrated certain incompleteness of practice that spread across relational place to model and reinforce governing failures at state and local tiers. In these terms, Malpas and Wickham's (1997) assertion that governing fails to manage change is well-founded.

## Generalising conclusions

This case study permits significant conclusions. It accords with the assertion by Malpas and Wickham (1997) that failure shadows processes of governing to manage change. It illustrates that such failure is associated with competing, inconsistent and incomplete practices, and an inability to control operations (including systems, processes, structures and actions).

However, council in part balanced its governing deficits with certain positive initiatives which, it was hoped, would reverse or reduce the adverse outcomes of change. It conceived an alternative approach to population decline, part of which proposed rezoned sections of west and south coasts of the Island for residential development. In a second instance, council protected its lands when it resisted moves by the Tasmanian Government to legislate for the use of Island agricultural land for purposes other than agriculture. The former action may be read as success in internal governing, the latter as success in governing

across distance. The two instances unsettle an associated view that local communities have little capability to resist pressures born of wider contexts or distant places (Eversole & Martin 2005).

Might such conclusions for governance and governing in King Island have a wider resonance (Mason 2005), for example for small islands elsewhere? As a strategy of enquiry, the case study has long been the subject of misunderstandings, one of which is that researchers cannot generalise findings on the basis of an individual case. Flyvbjerg (2011, 301) roundly refutes this conventional judgment of case study, attacking such assessments as ‘so oversimplified as to be grossly misleading’. In turn, Mason (2005) strongly encourages qualitative case study researchers to establish a wider resonance for their work by reflecting whether particularities of the case setting, topic, or researcher might prevent generalisation. I adopt these criteria as follows.

First, does the particularity of this *case setting* permit generalisation? Is this case—a case of governance to manage global-local change—a *commonplace situation in small islands*? If so, generalisations of this study’s particularities may be considered and possible lessons learned. One possible benefit may be the effective criteria (principally those of Villamil and Malpas & Wickham) I used for analysis of governing practices. Governing is a process not easily observed and interpreted; those indicators might be used to advantage in other single island studies, and elsewhere.

Other small island governments might be encouraged to regard failure as essentially productive, for in this case study failure generated change and held



out opportunity for success; it indicated that this small island government was *not* powerless to prevent reconstitution of its place when other more powerful tiers of government attempted such. Thus researchers pursuing single studies of island governing may find useful this conclusion that failure is potentially productive.

The attention paid to the small scale of this study's Island setting may also be found useful for other case studies of small islands where democratic voice appears inhibited. The influence of mindsets associated with smallness of place might well be investigated, for island-dweller difficulties with proximity and lack of anonymity are a recurrent scholarly theme. Notwithstanding these observations, in one sense the particularity of the case setting may *impede* generalisation of this case—a place of geographical double insularity, unusual for an offshore dependent jurisdiction (Hache 1998). Governance tensions between and among the triad of King Island and its two mainlands (one *also* an island, a further analytical issue) are not yet researched, nor their implications for active citizenship hypothesised.

Second, do particularities of the *topic* prevent generalisation of this study's findings? On the contrary, this topic—small island governance and governing—is under-researched. The discipline needs to target island governance (Warrington & Milne 2007). It invites further exploration and appreciation of yet-to-be-revealed lessons available from the people who inhabit these small places but are presently neglected, especially in small dependent continental islands and Australian examples of them (Jackson 2004; Mimura et al. 2007). Therefore, it is to be hoped that this research offers

lessons for similar island jurisdictions—and other settings such as continental rural places and remote, sparsely populated places.

Third, some may regard *researcher* particularity as a limitation to generalisation of findings. My epistemological and ontological stances guide me towards evidence not in universal truths but in multiple realities—of people's lived experience, their reciprocation with place, the wealth of perceptions they hold within themselves, rarely unveiled but accessible through the depth and richness of qualitative enquiry. Thus in this study I have featured the thoughts, beliefs, feelings and values of several dozen individuals to further my knowing and understanding.

## Enfolding

This research endeavour—to understand and be understood—is a contribution to a young, restless discipline. Island Studies is an exciting sphere of investigation, with much uneven terrain to challenge the researcher. For this reason island research leaps ahead; the archipelagic turn gains prominence and increasingly absorbs island scholars. Future refiguring of my homeland Island Tasmania as Archipelago Tasmania will doubtless reposition my single case study—of a *presently* remote, *un-neighbourhooded* island—and place it within a novel sea-of-islands context where processes of governing will be scrutinised by new ways of thinking. However, there will always be a place for the powerful single case study, the investigative tool that strongly seeks out the 'how' of a matter (Yin 2003). It will prevail despite having long-existed in a

‘methodological limbo’ among social science methods (Flyvbjerg 2011, 315).

At its door, unknowns of island governance and governing queue for attention.

Others’ insights have signposted my route into the ill-explored field of island governing (Warrington & Milne 2007); in return, I offer the following research possibilities prompted by my investigation. In particular, during my research I encountered two frustrating knowledge gaps that researchers might pursue to advantage: What might be learned from a study of ‘an island of an island’ such as King Island—a remote dependant of a sovereign jurisdiction? What might be learned from a comparative case study of sister Bass Strait entities King and Flinders Islands? The notion of archipelago offers exciting windows here.

Also, what might be learned about island governing from a study of double insularity as posited by Hache (1998) and which applies to King Island?

The study prompts further avenues of investigation, for example, (how) do people in other small island jurisdictions respond to global-local threats?

Scholars admit how difficult it is to observe processes of governing. There would be much value in case studies of specific dilemmas—well-known to island administrators—that arise when political power is devolved to small islands. In this respect, I support the well-founded call by Warrington and Milne (2007) for more research in the area of administrative capacity in island governance: a vision not implemented is merely an hallucination.

Governance (and its failure) in small islands is not well understood, although advances are being made. Comparatively little is known of *how* the system of governance is introduced into small dependent islands, in particular its

participatory function. Vodden's (2009) Canadian studies provide an entry point into researching how to educate islanders, parry resistance to change, and stimulate civic exercise of political power in order to manage change. There are yet further knowledge gaps: if islanders have been granted decision-making power, are they sufficiently aware of this privilege? How might they be encouraged to become active citizens? Who is responsible for providing this encouragement? How much time is needed—a year, a generation, several generations—for societal transition between one mode of governing and another? These and related puzzles await examination.

Finally, Raco and Flint (2001) draw attention to important gaps in knowledge of the networks of interaction among and between people and place. In relation to islands, local governments could profit from knowing where their constituents' loyalties lie—with the island itself, mainland, possible other mainland, nation, birthplace, all, none, some? What mindsets direct islanders? Further, how do the units of an island's intricate governance network—its multi-tier partnerships, qangos, non-government organisations and the like—intersect with each other and with local government and citizens?

Hopefully, other island scholars may fill some of these blind spots for the benefit of island places, their peoples, and the Island Studies discipline itself.

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## Appendix 1.1 Project information sheet

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Participant's address

2 April 2007

Dear

### **Information Sheet**

#### **Issues of island governance: a study of King Island, Tasmania**

We would like to invite you to take part in a University of Tasmania research project. The project will concern King Island residents' views of present and future opportunities and challenges for their island.

Although islands support only ten percent of Earth's population, international studies of quality of life issues suggest that these places are becoming world leaders in innovative economic, social and environmental directions. However, research has focused on Pacific Ocean and Caribbean islands. Very little attention has been paid to Australian continental islands such as King Island, which may indeed be found to hold much promise as a quality of life governance model for Australia and other places further afield.

Our research team comprises Dr Elaine Stratford (Chief Investigator), Dr Peter Hay, and Ms Elizabeth Jones. This project is being undertaken to fulfil the requirements for a PhD degree in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania, by Ms Jones. The aim is to find what King Island people consider important to the island's present and future.

Given this background, we would be delighted if you would take part in several conversations with Ms Jones between May and September 2007. The meetings would take about 35-45 minutes at your workplace or other mutually agreed venue, at a time convenient to you. We will seek your permission to audiotape the conversations. The conversations will be transcribed and a copy promptly sent to you to check and edit as you wish. Once this has been done, the tapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University.

In any such discussions there might be a small risk of discomfort, social harm if confidential information were disclosed, or commercial or legal effects of consequences. In relation to these, please rest assured that

- your participation is entirely voluntary and that you are able to withdraw from the meeting or the full study at any time without prejudice;

- we will organise the meetings to occur at a time convenient to you and in your workplace or other mutually agreed venue;
- we will explore only the question noted above;
- the process of de-identifying transcripts and organising findings thematically will protect your confidences;
- we will note any commercial or legal sensitivities that you bring to our attention and seek your guidance on any part of your conversation that must not be quoted or referred to in any way; and
- you will be given a copy of this Information Sheet and Statement of Informed Consent to keep.

This project has received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network (HREC). Inquiries of a general nature about the project may be directed to the Chief Investigator, Dr Elaine Stratford (0413 036 351 or 6226 2462 or Elaine.Stratford@utas.edu.au). You can contact the Ethics Executive Officer with any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research is being conducted (phone (03) 6226 7479; email human.ethics@utas.edu.au).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. To determine your willingness to assist with this research, we will contact you within two to three weeks of this letter being mailed. Many thanks in anticipation of your valued involvement.

Yours sincerely,

Elaine Stratford

Chief Investigator



## Appendix 1.2 Statement of informed consent

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### Issues of island governance: a study of King Island, Tasmania

- 1 I have read and understood the *Information Sheet* for this study.
- 2 The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
- 3 I understand that the study involves the following procedures: (a) several 35-45 minute taped conversations with Ms Elizabeth Jones to explore what King Island people consider important to the island's present and future; (b) an opportunity to review conversation transcripts and make corrections and elaborations; and (c) an opportunity to review material arising from this study, that might enter the public domain, before such time in order to make comment on it or to protect my confidences or anonymity if necessitated.
- 4 I understand that any risks of embarrassment, social harm if confidential material were disclosed, or commercial or legal effects, as a result of my involvement, are lessened by the precautions listed at point 3.
- 5 I understand that all research data will be de-identified, securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises in locked cabinets and databases by the Chief Investigator for a period of five years. Any electronic copies will be stored away from the mainframe or shared computing facilities. The data will be destroyed at the end of five years (or, if the researcher plans to retain the data for longer than this period, the data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises until no longer required, at which time it will be destroyed).
- 6 Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
- 7 I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a participant without my prior written permission. I understand that I may be identifiable due to my official position or title, or the nature of my work.
- 8 I understand that my identity will be kept confidential and that any information I supply to the researcher will be used only for the purposes of the research.
- 9 I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without any effect and, if I so wish, may request that any personal data gathered be withdrawn from the research.

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Name of investigator\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

School of Geography and Environmental Studies, Private Bag 78, University of Tasmania, Hobart TAS 7001

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<http://www.scieng.utas.edu.au/geog/>

## Appendix 1.3 Telephone preamble

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### Telephone Preamble

Good morning Mr/Mrs/Ms (participant),

My name is Elizabeth Jones.

You may recall that I wrote to you approximately two weeks ago. The letter was an invitation to take part in the University project I plan to undertake on King Island during the next six months.

I am calling this morning to see if you will take part in the project and, if so, to arrange a convenient time and place where we could meet.

Do you have any questions at this point?

Thank you for your time and I look forward to meeting you soon.