



**Bound and Gagged by Neoliberalism:  
Sustaining Liberal Democracy by Unfettering Community Services**

**Christopher N. Walker**

DipCommServ(AODMH) DipMgmt DipEmpServ BPsychSc MMgmt MBA

 [orcid.org/0000-0001-5543-5878](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5543-5878) |  ResearcherID: C-7943-2018

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Macquarie Graduate School of Management  
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Macquarie University, Sydney

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Correspondence may be sent to  
[christopher.walker5@students.mq.edu.au](mailto:christopher.walker5@students.mq.edu.au)



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*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.*

*They are endowed with reason and conscience*

*and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.*

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (1948)

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**Summary**

Community managed organisations are integral to liberal democracy. They enfranchise the vulnerable, facilitate discourse, and uphold the social, civil, and political rights which assure the equality of worth and dignity inherent to citizenship and democratic process.

Many years of neoliberal reform have, however, undermined service providers' operational agility and sustainability, rendering them ill-equipped to survive the next phase of neoliberalisation – the competitive market environment of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Service providers' adaptability to these changes is, however, critical. Their actions over the next few years will have profound implications for Australian society, extending far beyond the consequences of interruptions in service to their consumers. As the mediators of citizen-state relations, whether – and how – community managed organisations survive competition, both with one another and with incoming for-profit providers, will substantively affect the nature of liberal democracy in Australia.

This thesis adopts a semiotics-informed approach to understanding how community-workers reconcile fundamental conflicts arising from neoliberalisation of the welfare-state within which they are systematically and ontologically embedded. It advances a conceptual framework for understanding sensemaking, identity, and agency within dissonant reforms; discusses the implications for non-profit sustainability and liberal-democracy; and contributes to sensemaking and community-development literatures.

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### **Statement of Originality**

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 21/12/2018

Christopher Neil Walker

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### **Abstract**

Community managed organisations are integral to liberal democracy. They enfranchise the vulnerable, facilitate discourse, and uphold the social, civil, and political rights which assure the equality of worth and dignity inherent to citizenship and democratic process.

In return for delivering services which redress, relieve, and prevent hardship and suffering in the communities they represent, community managed organisations receive most of their funding from the Australian government.

Since the election of the Howard government in 1996, however, intensifying neoliberalism has sought to limit democratic discourse and replace the egalitarian exchange orientation underlying community services with a new competitive morality. Through progressively eroded funding tied increasingly to obligations for managerialisation, neoliberalisation has, over this period, pruned community services' systems to meet the demands of competitive-bureaucracy, whilst limiting their capacity for advocacy and other activities.

Now faced with a new wave of neoliberal reforms, community managed organisations are mis-equipped for the competitive-market based funding environment of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and are struggling to make effective preparations. Whether – and how – community managed organisations survive competition, both with one another and with incoming for-profit providers, will have profound implications for Australian society.

This conceptual thesis integrates empirical and philosophical literature insights and suggests neoliberal transformational discourse has subverted worker narratives and effected an ontological assault upon them, which has relocated resistance *within* community organisations. It adopts a semiotic sensemaking approach to understanding community workers' reconciliation

of fundamental conflicts between this neoliberalisation of the welfare-state within which they are otherwise systematically and ontologically embedded.

This thesis contributes to the community and organisational development fields by presenting a visualised synthesis of prominent sensemaking and bricolage literatures, and proposes new insights for reunifying differences within the community sector and articulating values-consistent responses by which to survive – and perhaps redress – neoliberalism’s extremes.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

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*We hope that the arc of human history leans towards justice*

*but... it's not inevitable*

*What that relies on is people of good will*

*working together to make it happen.*

- Tanya Plibersek, (2018)

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The community sector means different things to different people, but at its core assures the citizenship crucial to liberal democracy. Nonetheless, given the complex differences between different communities, needs and associated funding; and the various configurations and legal definitions (within and across jurisdictions), landing on a formal or agreed definition of community services is strangely difficult. Despite a dedicated inquiry (see: Sheppard, Fitzgerald, & Gonski, 2001), subsequent attempts at clarification by both the Board of Taxation and the Australian Taxation Office, and establishment of its regulatory agency – the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits commission – definitions of Australian community services and the organisations that deliver them remain “marginal and ambiguous” (McDonald & Marston, 2002, p. 376).

Few researchers attempt to present a comprehensive definition of the community services sector when presenting their research (e.g.: Aimers & Walker, 2008; Cortis & Meagher, 2012; Wright, Marston, & McDonald, 2011), and nor will I attempt this here<sup>i</sup>. Delineating the complex (and dynamic) regulatory, resourcing, axiological and practical differences (and similarities) between services is worthy of research, but beyond the scope of this project. Acknowledging the subjectivity and overlap between the many terms used to describe the sector and the organisations within it, I will not nominate a

single term for use in this thesis, but instead use generalised terms interchangeably<sup>1</sup>.

For clarity *in this context*, community sector services will be defined as those which are:

- publicly-funded; and
- community-managed (i.e. not government or privately operated); and
- deliver services which relieve, redress, and/or prevent inequality, disability, or hardship – usually for people who are unwell, vulnerable, or otherwise disadvantaged.

Most welfare services in Australia are delivered by community organisations (also called non-government organisations, or NGOs) – often (but not necessarily) charities (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012). This research does not differentiate between NGOs registered as charities or otherwise.

### ***Positioning the Author***

Over the past decade, I have worked at all levels of the community sector. I have delivered services as a community worker; as a manager, senior manager, and consultant I have identified emerging community needs and designed and redesigned services to meet them; and as a chair and member on a board of governance I have contributed to the guidance and navigation of services through sweeping environmental changes. In all roles I have interfaced heavily with other organisations of various sizes, configurations, and foci<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> These include NGO (non-government/al organisation), NPO or non-profit organisations, also sometimes called non-profits, not-for-profits or NfP, CMO or Community managed organisation, community service, or community organisation.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. whether or not they are faith-based; generalist or specialised; state oriented or national etc.

In my experience, community workers of all varieties share a common and passionate commitment to the wellbeing and opportunities of the people who access their services; they have to– the work is poorly paid and often confronting (Ferris et al., 2016; Miller & Hayward, 2017; Travis, Lizano, & Barak, 2015). Many do it because they, as a carer, friend, or through their own lived experience, understand the plight of the people they work with (see: Aftercare, 2017; One Door Mental Health, 2017; Samarpan Inc., 2018), others develop that understanding on-the-job; in any case, it is a committed workforce and whilst some nuances apply across sub-sectors, it is pervaded by a common culture. Commonality across workers notwithstanding, through my experiences over the decade I have noticed an increasing cultural divergence within and between otherwise comparable organisations.

### ***Positioning the Organisational Context***

Many NGOs start out as small grass-roots organisations, in which “[p]eople participate in discussion and decision making about the organisation and the community it serves, and about their own role within it.” (Bullen & Onyx, 2005, p. 11). NGOs respond to a specific community need, often as the result of its members’ first-hand experiences (see: Aftercare, 2017; One Door Mental Health, 2017; Samarpan Inc., 2018). It takes a lot of time and energy to establish and run an NGO, and it has been my experience that these organisations are usually founded by people with few or no formal qualifications<sup>3</sup> or who are well-qualified but too burdened by other commitments to dedicate much time to the organisation. Board-members learn on the job and often fulfil various functions, and if the organisation

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<sup>3</sup> To be clear, this is not to say that the community sector is run by unskilled and unintelligent people, rather the opposite – the people behind successful NGOs have, because of their experiences, often been deprived of opportunities otherwise accessible to most other people; establishing a successful NGO is a testament to their intelligence, tenacity, and resourcefulness.



collects sufficiently reliable and consistent income to allow recruitment, employee responsibilities are often comparably diverse. Inasmuch, community organisations often build a flexible workforce and relatively flat hierarchy and may operate quite informally.

From the outside, NGOs' informality can look disorganised and inefficient and recent decades have seen increasing call for greater non-profit accountability (see: Cheverton, 2003; Johns, 2002; Productivity Commission, 2010). Defining 'efficiency' and effectively measuring services which deal with "human and often delicate complexity" (French & Stillman, 2014, p. 627) is problematic, however, and elides the nature and benefits of the services delivered (Gilchrist & Knight, 2017; Olssen, 1996; Onyx, 2008). Nonetheless, funding reforms have placed increasing pressure upon NGOs to formalise, potentially "changing the governance, leadership and outcomes adopted in the sector" (Future Social Service Institute, 2018, p. 5).

These reforms – understood by many researchers as part of a State program of (and international movement towards) neoliberalisation – systematically reshape the structure and substance of the welfare state (Mendes, 2009), and by which the very nature of citizen-state relations (McDonald & Marston, 2002; Shaver, 2002).

As a sector borne largely of advocacy (Cheverton, 2003), and whose primary function is to protect social rights (see chapter 2), community work inherently entails significant advocacy in opposition to, and apart from, government (McDonald & Marston, 2002; Power, 2014; Shaver, 2002), so this "panoply of changes [has] potential to undermine its core mission, vision, values and identity." (Future Social Service Institute, 2018, p. 98). Some organisations have thus resisted these measures by formalising as little as possible, whilst others have undertaken substantive formalisation of their

systems and processes, often accompanied by a deepening of hierarchical structures.

Despite the potential for affecting the sector's mission and the ostensive intention of improving outcomes, little research has actually been conducted into the likely consequences of formalisation within the sector (Future Social Service Institute, 2018), although some early findings by the Productivity Commission that "pressures to be more efficient have seen overhead spending reduced at considerable detriment to effectiveness" (2010, p. 13) imply negative consequences. Community organisations' mission-driven commitment to their clients, whilst *perhaps* inefficient in conventional terms, demands "[p]rocesses that appear messy and inefficient to outsiders can be essential for effective delivery of services, especially those requiring engagement with clients who face disadvantages and are wary of government and for-profit providers" (Productivity Commission, 2010, p. 13). Citing Drucker, Cheverton (2003) argues that in pursuit of expediency the community sector may be likely to undermine the values which differentiate it from private and public sector counterparts, and upon which the sector's unique value is drawn. If accurate, consistent efforts to force formalisation upon the community sector may be expected to fundamentally undermine its sustainability.

This threat to continuity may, however, be at least in part due to the sheer shock of transitioning from informal to formalised systems. Insights from Weick's (2005) sensemaking-perspective of theory and practice in the real world and Lévi-Strauss' (1966) bricolage suggest that these different ways of working reflect fundamentally different modes of thinking which may be a barrier to maintaining the constructive relationships necessary for effective change, as well as the underlying cultural values which found the bases for NGOs themselves.

Over many years, these reforms have undermined service providers' strategic viability (Carson & Kerr, 2010; Macdonald & Charlesworth, 2016; Mendes, 2009), rendering them ill-equipped to survive the next phase of neoliberalisation – the competitive market environment of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Service providers' adaptability to these changes is, however, critical. Their actions over the next few years will have profound implications for Australian society, extending far beyond the consequences of interruptions in service to their consumers. As the mediators of citizen-state relations (McDonald & Marston, 2002; Power, 2014), whether the community managed organisations who deliver these services survive – and how – will substantively affect the nature of liberal democracy in Australia.

### **Aims and Scope**

This research explores the sustainability of welfare and community services (community services) delivery by community organisations in Australia, and in particular adopts a social constructionist and semiotics informed approach to understanding the relationship between citizenship and neoliberalisation in Australia, the sustainability of its non-profit service providers and their role in liberal-democracy. This is a conceptual thesis and synthesises hermeneutic readings of diverse literatures (including philosophy, psychology, ontology, politics, economics, and civics), and constructs a graphic representation of sensemaking as a basis for further and empirical research. As a conceptual thesis, this research did not require ethics approval.

### **Research Objective and Thesis Structure**

The research objective binding this thesis asks: 'how does neoliberalisation of the community sector affect the capacity of NGOs to respond to its reform

initiatives?'. It consists of ten small chapters, divided thematically to implicitly explore three different aspects of the research objective:

1. Exploring neoliberalisation and citizenship, why they conflict, and how it affects community organisations
2. The impact of language on organisational capacity and sustainability in the community sector
3. Processes of sensemaking in the community sector context

### ***Thesis Overview***

Chapters 2 to 4 explore the interplay between citizenship, neoliberalisation, and the community sector. Chapter 2 introduces and presents a visual model of citizenship and the welfare state, followed in chapter 3 by an overview of neoliberalism (and its various interpretations). Chapter 4 combines these, by exploring the effect of neoliberalisation within the community sector.

The following two chapters are dedicated to describing the crucial role of language in ones' sense of self, capacity, and possibility. The first of these, chapter 5, introduces semiotics, narrative, and sensegiving; chapter 6 builds upon these to explain how neoliberalism has harnessed the power of language to retard resistance to policies of neoliberalisation, and by which managerialism is embedded and organisational capacities are eroded.

Chapters 7 to 9 show that how one makes sense of their experiences is central to their ontological security, explore emancipatory possibilities in organisational development literature, and advance a model for understanding sensemaking in the community sector. Chapter 7 graphically 'steps-through' Weick's sensemaking perspective and its basis in organisational and philosophical literatures; chapter 8 expands upon this model by synthesising it with recent theories of applied bricolage in the context of Lévi-Strauss' original use of the term, and applies it towards a more comprehensive understanding of sensemaking in the community sector. Chapter 9 reflects upon these insights

and their implications to leadership within the sector, concluding with brief recommendations for improving unity and sustainability within the community sector.

Concluding this thesis, chapter 10 reflects upon the research, and makes extensive suggestions for future research.

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*civil society [acting] in opposition to government... has helped to secure guarantees of formal legal, political, and civil equality.*

*It has helped to secure the law and institutions that safeguard the liberty to conduct ones[sic] business based on 'a kind of trust among non-intimates'[\*].*

*In other words, it has helped to secure a 'civil' society.*

*- Johns, 2002; \*Krygier, 1996*

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## Chapter 2: What is the Welfare State?

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*[NGOs are the] source of ideas on the society we might become, and of aspirations and ideas that should be... debated to provide a rich brew from which a vibrant society can develop*

- Staples, (2007, p. 4)

---

This chapter will briefly introduce the community sector and explain its importance in the development and sustainability of citizenship as the foundation of modern liberal democracy.

### **The Community Sector and Citizenship**

Charities and other community organisations have always played an especially integral role in the transition of modern societies from subjectivity to citizenship (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Shaver, 2002; Staples, 2007).

### **Subjectivity**

Before citizenship, we were subjects. As subjects, we were under the authority of (that is, subject to) the ‘greater wisdom’ of the state (paternalism). Subjectified peoples are not equal; differences of class, gender, and ability (to name only a few) shape and constrain individual identities and opportunities. Nor are they ever truly free; subjectified individuals are expected and coerced to act in accordance with ‘their place in society’, ultimately maintaining tribalistic divisions between the classes, and nationalistic tensions between states (see: Gauthier, 2004; Hinton, 2008).

### **Citizenship**

Bringing together over two-hundred years of political philosophy (Biesta & Lawy, 2006), a modernised conception of citizenship arose from the ashes

and horror of World War II, in recognition that subjectification contributed to the conditions from which two world wars resulted (McDonald & Marston, 2002; Shaver, 2002). Citizenship applies the lessons learnt from this calamitous era, by recognising and acting upon the delineable interdependence between individuals, populations, and their state(s) (Shaver, 2002). Citizenship enshrines equality of worth and dignity via a framework of social, civil, and political freedoms and rights (see Figure 1), held as integral to liberal democracy, influenced significantly by T.H. Marshall's essay 'Citizenship and social class' (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Marshall, 1950; Shaver, 2002; see also: United Nations, 1948).

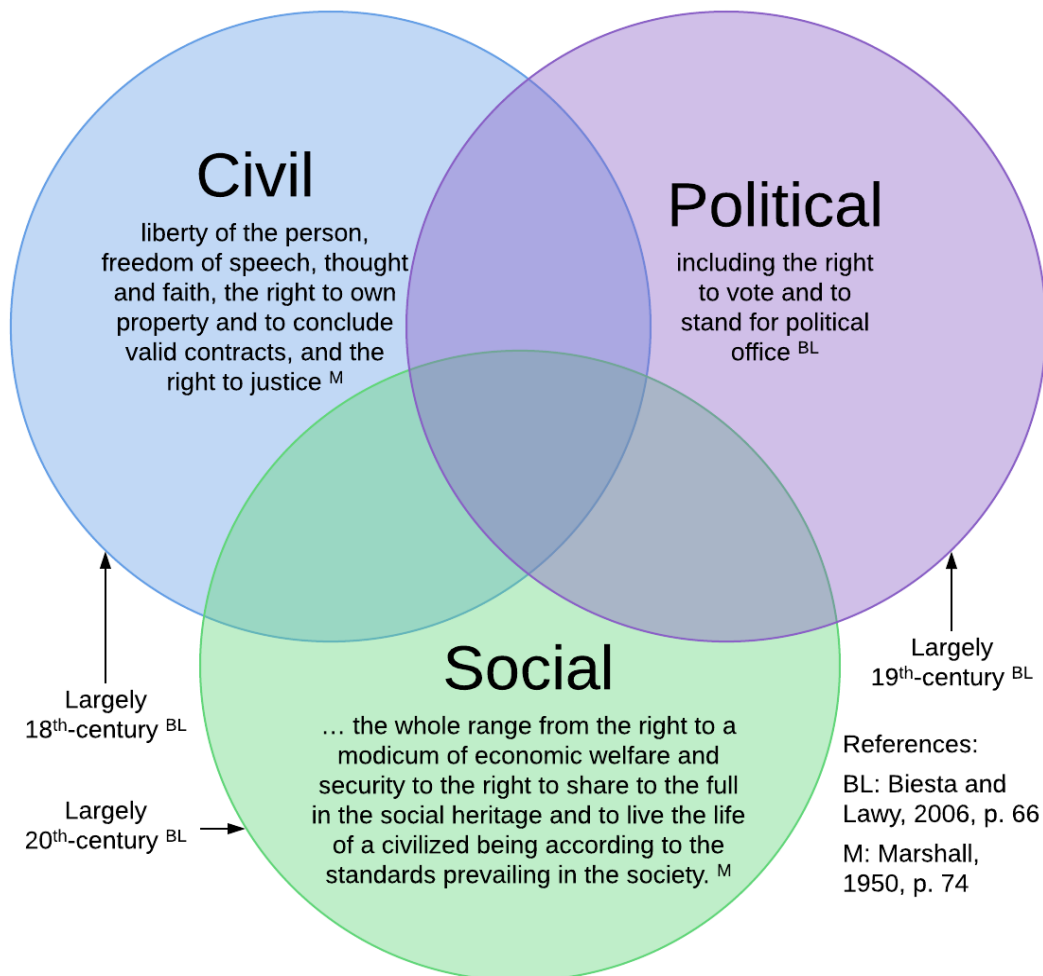


Figure 1. Marshall's three bases of citizenship (1950)

Taken together, citizenship assures representative public discourse and minimum standards of well-being, and enfranchises democratic engagement (Shaver, 2002).



***The Enduring Importance of the Community Sector to Democratic Process***

The apparatus of citizenship is varied, and theoretically differs by domain: “[c]ivil rights are protected by the court system, political rights correspond to institutions of local government and parliament, while social rights are associated with the welfare state” (Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 66). Given the interdependence between these civil, political, and social rights, however, the delineation in practice between the institutions which safeguard these rights is necessarily varied. The community sector is most typically associated with the welfare state (e.g. see: Casey & Dalton, 2006; Onyx et al., 2010; Raper, 1999), but its functions and role within modern democracy go well beyond social rights. Disadvantage, hardship, and psychosocial burden are, in part, systemic; they result from imperfect and unequal social, political, and economic systems, and they hamper individual capacity to reach their potential and improve their circumstances. Community services act upon social rights by providing material support during crises, but in so doing also inform individuals of their civil rights, and empower and support their execution of these and their capacity for political expression (including casting a vote). Much of this work is with individuals (and sometimes their families or small communities) but, as systemic problems, solving social issues effectively demands of the community sector their proactive engagement with the public discourse.

As community managed organisations, NGOs emerge in response to community needs and create opportunities for people of like minds, experience, or circumstance, to come together and articulate these within the public discourse. Since services are run by the community for the community, these providers ‘translate’ insights otherwise inaccessible to government services and policy-makers, inform society of issues mitigating

full engagement with citizenship, and advocate for solutions. In this capacity, they prevent minority needs (and awareness of their existence) from being eclipsed by the majority, and ensure that important issues and injustices have a platform in the public discourse.

Put another way, hardship and underprivilege marginalise and undermine the citizenship upon which democratic process depends. NGOs give the people their voice, facilitate public discourse, and inasmuch are the mediators of citizen-state relations (McDonald & Marston, 2002; see also: Meredyth & Minson, 2001); they are, therefore, on the ‘frontline’ of where social issues meet public policy, and as such many also deliver the welfare services which provide direct support to individuals’ whose circumstances may otherwise hinder their capacity to engage in the democratic process. As service providers, NGOs assure democracy by rebuilding and facilitating citizenship within and between individuals; as advocates, NGO’s ensure that those individuals are heard at a systemic level, and that their needs are accounted for.

Advocacy and service delivery cannot, therefore, be disentangled. Although true that most of the tangible activities of community services are concerned with realising social rights, that these are dependent upon civil and political rights inherently affects the scope and bases of the community sector. As such, the sector may be better understood as moderating at the intersection between social, political, and civil rights. This is illustrated in Figure 2, a working model I developed to approximate a visual representation of the community sector’s work<sup>ii</sup>.

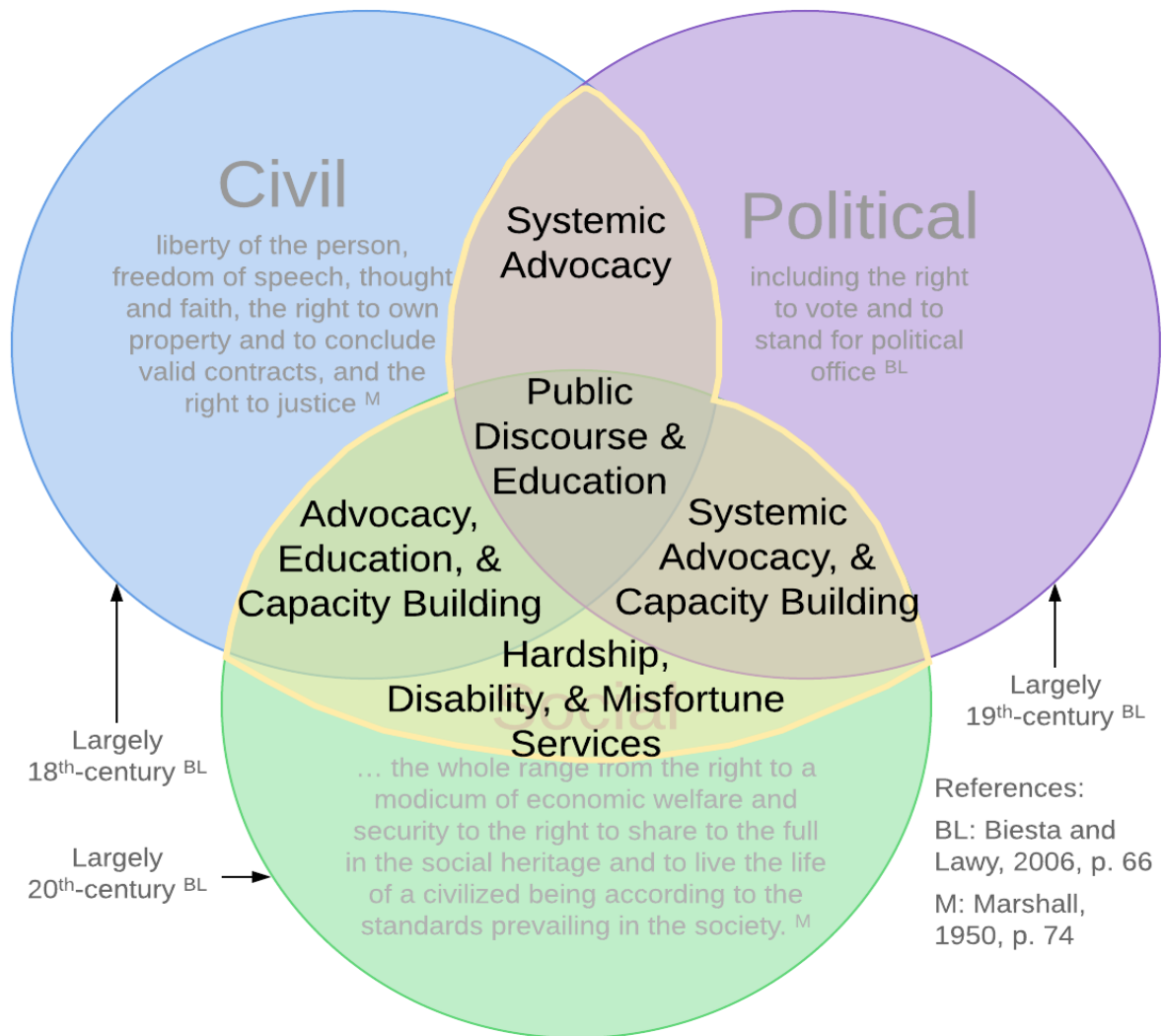


Figure 2. The Community Sector's Role in Citizenship

It is in these capacities that the community sector has been, and remains, crucial to the unprecedented cooperation, peace, and economic development resulting from the citizenship upon which all modern Western democracies and most United Nations institutions are built. Nonetheless, beginning in the 1970s, building momentum under Thatcher and Reagan in the 1980s, and intensifying and entrenching in Australia after Howard's 1997 election victory, resistance to Marshall's vision of citizenship has mounted in the form of neoliberalism (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Mendes, 2009; Shaver, 2002). Chapter three briefly explores its genesis and opposition to citizenship, and is followed in chapter 4 by a discussion of the neoliberalisation of the welfare state.

### Chapter 3: The Rise of Neoliberalism

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*With the first link, the chain is forged.  
The first speech censured,  
the first thought forbidden,  
the first freedom denied, chains us all irrevocably*

- Jeri Taylor, (1991)

---

Neoliberalism may be argued to be the manifestation of an unresolved tension between Marshall's citizenship rights and liberal economics. Marshall expected that connecting social rights to civil and political rights would usher in an era of democratic-welfare-capitalism, 'civilising' the free-market by curtailing its worst excesses, and permanently mitigate class inequalities (Biesta & Lawy, 2006). Marshall's social rights, however, presumed stable economic conditions and relied upon the classic liberal ideals of the individual as rational and autonomous (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Hekman, 2006; Olssen, 1996), overlooking "that meaningful citizenship demands active participation by citizens who possess the necessary resources<sup>4</sup> to facilitate participation" (Faulks, as cited in Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 67).

Similarly, and somewhat surprisingly in the post-war context, Marshall assumed class-agnostic government beyond the reach of influence by elites (Biesta & Lawy, 2006), leaving social rights especially open to challenge in periods of economic shock, during which the strained state become especially dependent upon taxing the wealthy to fund welfare policies.

By establishing these new social and regulatory norms, Marshall had particularly hoped that social rights would reconcile the conflict between

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<sup>4</sup> Including full and transparent information (author's note)

capitalism and collectivist philosophies (Biesta & Lawy, 2006); however, by “failing to transcend the agency-based approach to citizenship” (Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 67), he did not successfully address “the structural constraints which the market and coercive state place upon the distribution of the resources necessary for citizenship” (Faulks, as cited in Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 67). Consequently, access to social, civil, and political rights remains unequal, the balance between them has never been fully realised, and the debate between capitalism and collectivism remains unsettled (Ha & Cain, 2017; Hildebrandt & Wagner, 2016). As a result, when faced with the major structural transformations arising from globalisation (Doyle, 2018), opponents of the welfare state were in a much stronger position to make significant changes to the new order upon which post-war solidarity had been built (Biesta & Lawy, 2006).

### **Active Citizenship Subsumes Social Rights with Market Rights**

Social rights had contributed to stable economic growth whilst production and consumption remained largely within national borders, but imposed production costs ill-suited to competition within globalising economies.

Globalisation exposed industry to increasing competition and placed governments under pressure to attract capital investment (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; see also: Fleming & Spicer, 2003). Following a period of related unrest in the 1970s, Margaret Thatcher adopted the neoliberal position that “Keynesian demand-side economics and ubiquitous state intervention had created immobile and inflexible economies that sucked energy out of the market and overburdened the consumer with unnecessary taxes” (Keil, 2016, p. 388).

Thatcher, along with the USA’s President Reagan, enacted reforms to overturn these (purported) tax burdens, based around a claim that social

rights had eroded freedoms by creating dependency on the state and dissolving community virtues (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Keil, 2016). Their prescribed ‘remedy’ was to adopt the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s notions of the ‘active citizen’ (Shaver, 2002) as an exemplar for redefining the relationship between citizen and state (Biesta & Lawy, 2006).

Active citizenship redefined ‘good’ citizenship as self-reliant (as opposed to reliant upon Government support) and possessed by “a sense of civic virtue and pride in both country and local community” (Faulks, as cited in Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 69), cultivating a new moral narrative that social ills were due to mass failures of individual responsibility and participation (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Shaver, 2002). “In this way active citizenship followed the strategy of blaming individuals rather than paying attention to and focusing on the structures that provide the context in which individuals act” (Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 69).

In effect, this new moral discourse blamed the people for their socioeconomic ills, and implied differences between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ as bound in economic justice - a stark divergence from the universal equality of worth assured by social rights - and intended to facilitate their succession by new ‘market rights’ to empower economic mobility, comprising “the freedom to choose, the freedom to own property and have property protected, the freedom to spend money as one sees fit, and the right to be unequal” (Faulks, as cited in Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 68).

Freedoms to own and spend, however, were not threatened by social rights – and property ownership and protection was already assured by civil rights (Biesta & Lawy, 2006). Market rights and active citizenship are thus better understood not as additional economic freedoms, but simply more palatable terms for retracting social protections, and reorienting citizen-state

relations in a return to pre-war paternalism (Briggs, 1961; Olssen, 1996; Shaver, 2002).

Understandably, neoliberalism has since been the subject of significant academic and political interest; its use as a term is often unhelpfully broad though (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009). Before proceeding to describe how neoliberalism is applied in the Australian context, and in particular in relation to the community sector, the next section of this chapter describes different facets of neoliberalism.

### **Defining Neoliberalism**

In their 2009 attempts to find an ‘agreed’ definition of neoliberalism, Boas & Gans-Morse found that neoliberalism began as a ‘humanistic’ revival of classic liberalism, but its meaning was corrupted after adoption and misuse by Chile’s Pinochet dictatorship in the 1960s. Since then, English-language scholarship’s use of neoliberalism “no longer denotes a new form of liberalism with specific features and empirical referents, but has become a vague term that can mean virtually anything as long as it refers to normatively negative phenomena associated with free markets” (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009, p. 152).

Whilst Boas and Gans-Morse (2009) found that the contemporary use of neoliberalism as a term carries unquestionably negative valence, digging deeper, using ‘Gallie’s framework for essentially contestable concepts’, they also found “at least four distinct and potentially overlapping ways how neoliberalism is used in the study of political economy” (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009, p. 143).

### Economic Reform Policies

Economic reform policies encapsulate legislation and regulations which enshrine free market ideals, including infrastructural privatisation and deregulation (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009, p. 143). By weakening regulatory constraints, neoliberal economic reforms increase socioeconomic inequality (Offer, 2016) and therefore amplify the importance of community organisations. The National Disability Insurance scheme is an example of an economic reform policy in the Australian community sector context.

### Development Models

Development models extend beyond the policy suite and include the social reforms which facilitate the core economic policies at the heart of neoliberalism. Boas and Gans-Morse (2009, p. 144) describe these models as:

a comprehensive development strategy with economic, social, and political implications... a model involves a set of economic theories linking disparate policies together into a coherent recipe for growth or modernization; prescriptions for the proper role of key actors such as labour unions, private enterprise, and the state; and an explicitly political project to carry out these prescriptions and ensure that actors play by the rules of the game. Thus, many scholars maintain that the implementation of a neoliberal model involves a restructuring of state-society relations.

By imposing a 'prescription' and ensuring actors 'play by the rules', neoliberal development strategies both diverge starkly from the basic tenet of classic liberalism that government should not interfere with the market (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009), and adopts a paternalistic 'right to rule' more consistent with hegemonic authoritarianism than with



liberal democracy (Brie & Candeias, 2016; Bruff, 2014; Plehwe, 2016, see also: Freedom House, 2018).

### Ideology

Ideology is, like neoliberalism, itself a contestable term but broadly refers to system of political ideas with normative implications (J. L. Martin, 2015; Schull, 1992; Sygnowich, 2014). It is similar to development models, but refers to the ideals *behind* the policies, rather than the policy suite itself: “If a neoliberal development model is a specific plan for how a certain society *will* be organized, a neoliberal ideology is a more general statement about how society *should* be organized” (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009, p. 143, italics added)

In this context, neoliberal ideology sees citizenship as imposing social rights at the cost of personal liberty (see: Lazarev, 2005); it opposes collectivism and pursues maximal individual freedom, mediated by participation within the free-market (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009). Put another way: by removing social protections, neoliberalism enshrines the freedom to act, over the freedom *from* being acted upon.

### Academic Paradigms

The academic paradigm of neoliberalism relates to its ideological bases, in that they refer to the underlying rational ‘rules’ upon which its logic builds. In this respect, academic paradigms can be used to compare one country to another, although the gross divergences between neoliberalism’s initial intent as a liberal paradigm under Hayek and Friedman to an oppressive doctrine under Pinochet and process of authoritarian subjectification under Thatcher & Reagan injects significant variability in its use (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009).

### ***Re-Subjectification***

Neoliberalism reconstitutes citizens as subjects within competitive (as opposed to cooperative or exchange based) environments (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Foucault, 2010), and rejects social security as the role of government (Mendes, 2009). Because this fundamentally conflicts with Marshallian citizenship, neoliberal development models reconfigure citizen/state relations by dismantling social rights and prevent resistance by restricting the capacity for communities to become informed about, and participate in, discourse about policy reforms (Mendes, 2009; Power, 2014; Shaver, 2002)

Since social rights arose from the “sharpened sense of democracy” (Briggs, 1961, p. 257) following the war, the revocation of social rights is democratically dangerous; combined with its subversive inception and delivery (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Power, 2014), divisive populism and politician-prescribed moralities (Huber, 2016; Power, 2014; Shaver, 2002), and nationalistic ‘pride in country’ (Biesta & Lawy, 2006), neoliberalism seems spectacularly blind to the screamingly bright lessons of the recent past and thus poses a serious threat to the global peace and prosperity since constructed. Nonetheless, having gained momentum during the 80s and 90s, neoliberalism has entrenched in political discourse – so much so that New Labour’s ‘third way’ renewal adopted some neoliberal rhetoric and policy leanings (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Giddens, 2010).

### ***Neoliberalisation and Community Services***

In further parallel to pre-war conditions, since neoliberalisation, employment has become increasingly insecure (Baier, 2016; Western et al., 2007), and income inequality continues to worsen (Cingano, 2014; Offer, 2016; Wilkins, 2015). Whilst I do not argue in this thesis that it is the role of community organisations to challenge neoliberalism as a political system, as the mediator of citizen-state relations (McDonald & Marston, 2002) it absolutely *is* their

role to ameliorate the disadvantage which results, and to raise awareness which may prevent further disadvantage. Necessarily this includes participating in policy discourse. Neoliberal governmentalities have, however, actively suppressed community sector capacity for this vital advocacy, as is discussed in the next chapter.

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*The establishment of individualism and a free-market state is  
an unbending if not dictatorial venture  
which demands the prevention of collective action  
and the submission of dissenting institutions and individuals.*

- Gilmour, as cited in Biesta & Lawy, 2006 (p. 68)

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## Chapter 4: Neoliberalising Australia's Welfare State

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*[Human rights in Australia are] regressing on almost every front...we have a government that's ideologically opposed to human rights.*

- Gillian Triggs (Australian Human Rights Commissioner), (2017)

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This chapter will begin by briefly describing the neoliberal context in Australia, before discussing the implications to the Australian community sector.

### **Australian Neoliberalism**

Australia is unique amongst western nations as having only limited constitutional protections (Charlesworth, 1993; Kirby, 2018), no legal charter of human rights (Triggs, 2018), and an already underdeveloped model of citizenship that “Marshall would have seen...as defective” (Shaver, 2002, p. 339). Australia is sometimes differentiated from its peers as a *wage-earners'* welfare state (Mendes, 2009; Shaver, 2002). Although beginning its ascent during the Hawke and Keating governments in the 1980s, neoliberalism consolidated relatively late in Australia with John Howard's 1996 election victory (Shaver, 2002) and entrenched during his decade in office. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss neoliberalisation beyond the community sector context, but appropriate to acknowledge that it has created a context in which the human rights and the institutions which assure them – including, but not limited to, NGOs – are consistently under threat; examples include:

- Delegitimisation and disempowerment of the instruments of civil society, including statutory authorities such as the Australian Human Rights Commission (Gordon, 2017; Grattan, 2015; Williams, Reynolds, & Levin, 2017), and Office of the Privacy Commissioner (Mulgan, 2015)

- Restrictions on the right to protest<sup>5</sup> (Gotsis, 2015; Slezak, 2016);
- “heavy-handed and far-reaching...[limits] on freedom of expression and several other civil liberties” (Lidberg, 2018, para. 2; see also: Mcculloch, 2005);
- Centralising executive powers, and concurrently increasing government secrecy (Doherty, 2017; Dorling, 2014; McIlroy, 2017),
  - also incorporating measures for “aggressive leak investigations, including use of a telecommunications law to collect journalists’ metadata without a warrant” (Freedom House, 2017, p. 6)

Further, in 2014, the Institute of Public Affairs<sup>iii</sup> - an organisation otherwise hostile to NGOs social rights function, (Tim Thornton, 2003) – released a report finding 262 Commonwealth legislative provisions were found to breach fundamental legal rights<sup>6</sup>. By 2017 this had increased to 307 (Begg, 2017).

NGOs have long served an important role in Australian civil society, but having now faced over 20-years of neoliberal reform, their capacity to effectively enact their role in democratic discourse is severely compromised (Carson & Kerr, 2010; Mendes, 2009; Staples, 2007).

Although each of Boas and Gans-Morse’s ‘types’ of neoliberalism can be clearly observed in the Australian context, neoliberalising community services is an oxymoron. It juxtaposes incompatible ideologies and demands that workers deliver upon conflicting service imperatives. How – and if –

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<sup>5</sup> Notably, these restrictions came into effect in response to widespread community protests against mining and forestry activities

<sup>6</sup> These being: the presumption of innocence, and burden of proof; natural justice; the right to silence; and privilege against self-incrimination.

organisations and workers respond to balance these competing demands will significantly shape the service delivery landscape over coming years.

### ***Public Choice Theory***

An example of neoliberal academic theory, public choice theory (“PCT”) has been very influential on neoliberal policy and development model design. It professes a view that charity advocacy has “little to do with assisting disadvantaged consumers or alleviating poverty and far more to do with enriching themselves” (Mendes, 2009, p. 104; See also: Bennett & Di Lorenzo, 1985), and argues that NGOs self-interest skews civil discourse and undermines representative democracy (Johns, 2002). As such, PCT asserts that NGOs “should be excluded as far as possible from public policy debates” (Mendes, 2009, p. 104). In this context, PCT may be taken to suggest that transparent civil discourse is also a tenet of neoliberalism; indeed, transparency, along with efficiency and efficacy, are bundled together in neoliberal calls for greater accountability within the community sector. Australian neoliberalism is remarkably quiet, though, about corporate donations and lobby groups.

PCT is, however, not really about NGO accountability, but instead part of a development model which seeks to unseat accepted ideological norms underlying public impressions of the fundamental *value* of community services and the social rights they represent (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Evans, Richmond, & Shields, 2005; Shaver, 2002). Many accounts also suggest that PCT discourse facilitates the imposition of unsustainable bureaucratic burdens on community organisations, hobbling their capacity for advocacy or strategic foresight and agility (Carson & Kerr, 2010; Onyx, Cham, & Dalton, 2016; Tim Thornton, 2003).

### Funding Vulnerabilities

Traditionally, NGOs were funded under fixed service agreements (block-funding). In these arrangements, NGOs receive semi-regular and consistent 'blocks' of funding in exchange for delivering specific government-designed services to nominated at-risk or vulnerable population groups (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012). NGOs rely upon this funding, and thus are dependent on Governments' (across State and Commonwealth, including Territories) continued willingness to supply it. Although different organisations and services may be funded by different levels of government, all are dominated by the same two political parties, and from a policy and funding standpoint differences between levels of government evanesce, rendering NGOs to operating within a funding environment tantamount to monopsony – that is, a 'buyer's market', in which governments enjoy overwhelming buyer-power.

As economic theory would predict of this uneven market, community services' conditions have degraded consistently. Funding has grown increasingly difficult to get, is of lesser value and longevity, and tied to deliverables of escalating rigidity and breadth (Carson & Kerr, 2010). To survive, NGOs have had to redirect their already slender resources to competitive tendering and activity reporting arising from increasingly burdensome funding conditions. Redirecting focus on this scale is an intensive exercise, and comes at the cost of eroding other NGO capacities - including advocacy – and compromises basic organisational functions critical to their strategic and operational viability (Carson & Kerr, 2010).

With the next phase of neoliberalisation impending – the NDIS – this disablement of community services may prove fatal to many community managed organisations (see: Miller & Hayward, 2017).

### The NDIS

The NDIS is a fundamental paradigm shift for service providers and recipients alike and represents a landmark in neoliberal public policy implementation in Australia. Often referred to as “...the biggest social reform in this country since Medicare” (Bowen, as cited in National Disability Insurance Agency, 2016), the NDIS transfers choice and control (and with which, funding decisions) to service users via a market-oriented model of disability service funding. It marks the conclusion of the transition away from block-funded service-models towards wholly individualised (or ‘person-centred’) service funding, beginning with the Hawke-Keating-governments’ social care reforms<sup>7</sup> in the 1980s and 1990s, a process referred to by some authors as a move to a quasi-voucher system (Lyons, 1998).

In a quasi-voucher system, governments need not either design wholesale service programs nor fund them in full; instead, they fund particular activities at a set rate, and gradually transfer control of purchasing (and thus choice of provider) to the end-consumer. Neoliberal governmentalities are favourable to quasi-voucher systems not only because they dramatically reduce costs by eliminating program design and contract management functions, but also because they offer far greater granularity of control over cost levers:

Vouchers need not be denominated so they meet the full cost of providing services. They can be used to supplement a payment made by the consumer of the service. Vouchers can be adjusted in

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<sup>7</sup> Although neoliberalism in an Australian context is most obviously reified in the Liberal-National Party, each major neoliberal upheaval of the Australian social services landscape has begun with Labor-government reform agenda, that both the Hawke-Keating governments which started the quasi-voucher funding ‘revolution’ and Gillard government that advanced it into a full market-model were Labor-party governments, highlights a strikingly bipartisan assumption of neoliberal norms.



value according to a person's need or their capacity to pay. They can thus be targeted far more efficiently than can grants to [,] or contracts with[, ] an organization to provide a service. (Lyons, 1998, p. 425)

Under the NDIS, instead of receiving services devised by civil servants, service users select their services 'à la carte' direct from providers and pay by the hour. Immeasurably more flexible than traditional block-funded models, the NDIS affords service users unprecedented choice, and in the process is argued to create entirely new strategic opportunities for NGO expansion (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012).

These grand promises, however, distract from the cause of its growth potential: the NDIS *replaces* cooperation with competition. Just as service recipients are free to configure their services however they like, so too, may they carve up their services between providers. Free to divide these between as many providers as they choose, shopping around is, by design, inevitable (Macdonald & Charlesworth, 2016). As non-profit organisations, however, NGOs are not structured for competition; service provision and advocacy alike are both more effective as collaborative, rather than competitive, activities.

Under block-funded models, no single provider delivered every service; collaboration was incentivised, and communities of practice were common. By going into the NDIS, however, service providers will now have a *disincentive* to collaborate – shared client services could bleed clients to competitors, whilst contributing to communities of practice both incurs (unfunded) costs and shares strategically important intellectual property with competitors. Repositioning services to adapt to this new operating

environment is more than a simple change in revenue streams; it is a fundamentally different way of ‘doing business’.

### NGOs Have Baggage

As incumbents, existing NGOs’ staff, facilities, and systems (IT and otherwise) have evolved over time to meet entirely distinct ways of working – in most instances as a direct result of pressures faced under neoliberalisation. NGOs cannot simply repurpose and redeploy these to new operating contexts; re-orienting an entire operational infrastructure is complicated and expensive. Although all NGO incumbents will be ‘in the same boat’, their heterogenous nature disadvantages some organisations more than others; moreover, unlike the previous funding models for which they are built – in which most services were delivered exclusively by not-for-profit providers – the NDIS is also open to for-profit service providers.

Profit-oriented providers, as new-entrants, lack any of the legacy-burden beholden to incumbent NGOs and enjoy unparalleled flexibility. So too are they free of the broader social contract to reinvest their surplus into the community. After more than two decades of strangling reforms, however, NGOs have neither the infrastructure nor experience to compete with large corporations, nor the agility to outmanoeuvre small enterprise (see: Carson & Kerr, 2010).

Nevertheless, NGOs have little choice but to try - the social needs to which they attend will not dissipate under the NDIS<sup>8</sup>. Their capacity to adapt is crucial to their survival; their survival is vital important to both the health and

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<sup>8</sup> The NDIS funds only recognises lifelong conditions, and accessing it is a laborious process ill-suited to people with high-support needs or current crises (especially those without family support). It is more likely to obscure marginal needs, than address or prevent them.

wellbeing of the people who depend upon them, and vital to Australian democratic discourse.

NGOs are accustomed to challenge. They rise to address society's most challenging problems, are unafraid to speak out, all despite being notoriously under-resourced (Carson & Kerr, 2010; French & Stillman, 2014). To have survived 20+ years of neoliberal reforms, NGOs have developed resourceful cultures rich with resilience and tenacity. Perversely, their tenacity may be the source of their greatest challenge, as transformational discourse turns the sector's doggedness against itself (Power, 2014).

### **Through Transformational Discourse, Managerialism Re-sites Resistance within NGOs**

Strong cultures have strong narratives, and are resilient against direct confrontation. Maria Power (2014) suggests, however, that by subverting the assumptions and norms underlying these narratives through a process of 'transformational discourse', neoliberal governmentalities have reflected resistance unto itself, siting it within NGOs themselves, at arms-length from funders (Power, 2014), and impeding the sector's capacity to mount a response to neoliberalisation.

Power's account is well-researched and compelling, but takes place in the much smaller Irish context and, as a thesis, is not peer reviewed. Nevertheless, both transformational discourse and the implications Power (2014) describes have precedent and parallel amongst organisational behaviour and psychological science literatures; similarly, the descriptions Power provides of transformational discourse in action in the community sector are consistent with both the community development literature concerning neoliberalisation, and my own professional experience in the

community sector. Accordingly, in the next chapter I use transformational discourse as a base from which to identify and explore existing literature and models which may inform the underlying mechanisms of the community sector's muted response to neoliberalisation (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012).

## Chapter 5: Language Creates Meaning

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*Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt*

*(The limits of my language mean the limits of my world)*

- Wittgenstein (2010, p. 74)

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People make sense of the world and their place in it by telling stories; narratives which construct causational ‘truths’ to inform current expectations by past experience (Kohler & Riessman, 2005; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; see also: Rhodes, Pullen, & Clegg, 2010). This chapter is focussed on the foundational importance of language for forming ones’ sense of self and agency, and looks at how transformational discourse uses language to subvert resistance and reorient the community sector within neoliberal ideals. It introduces semiotics and narrative, and concludes by describing transformational discourse as a coercive form of sensegiving.

### **Language is Semiotic**

Words (and other signs) are only as meaningful as the interpretation ascribed by the perceiver, so transformational discourse changes meaning by reshaping semiotic associations underlying our narratives.

In semiotics, units of meaning are called signs. A sign can be any form of sensory input (e.g. this text, or a scent) and distinguishes between the referent as the *signifier* (or *signifying*), and the meaning one interprets as the *signified* (Belsey, 2002; Lévi-Strauss, 1966). Even though people who are relatively alike may use the same language in similar ways, and however well they seem to understand one another, when faced with an identical signifier there is always some difference between their signified meaning. Their meaning differs, because *they* differ – no two people have the exact same

experiences, so no two people can imbue their idiolects with the exact same meanings. Put another way, language is *differential*: it carves meaning by chipping away excess possibility (Belsey, 1993; Rizq, 2013).

Signifiers derive their meaning for individuals not by what they are, but by how they *differ* from what they are not (Belsey, 2002; Saussure, 1959). By distinguishing things as more or less similar to one another, people recognise what is likely to go together, what is not, and in what contexts, thus defining narrational parameters by which to interpret, plan, and anticipate possibilities (Bamberg, 2013; McGowan, 2006).

Because differentiation depends on experience, where people apply constraints on their worlds will vary; whilst a possible source of misunderstanding (and thus conflict), this is also the source of all innovation. Situationally, semiotics helps us to understand how otherwise amiable and well-meaning peers who appear to be saying the same thing can, for example, still miscommunicate. More broadly, by delineating signified meaning from the words typically used to signify concepts, semiotics opened opportunities to better understand how non-lexical signs may be used to transmit meaning differently, and to study how meaning may be altered by additional concurrent and perhaps conflicting signification. Figure 3 illustrates how signification often works in concert in even the simplest things:

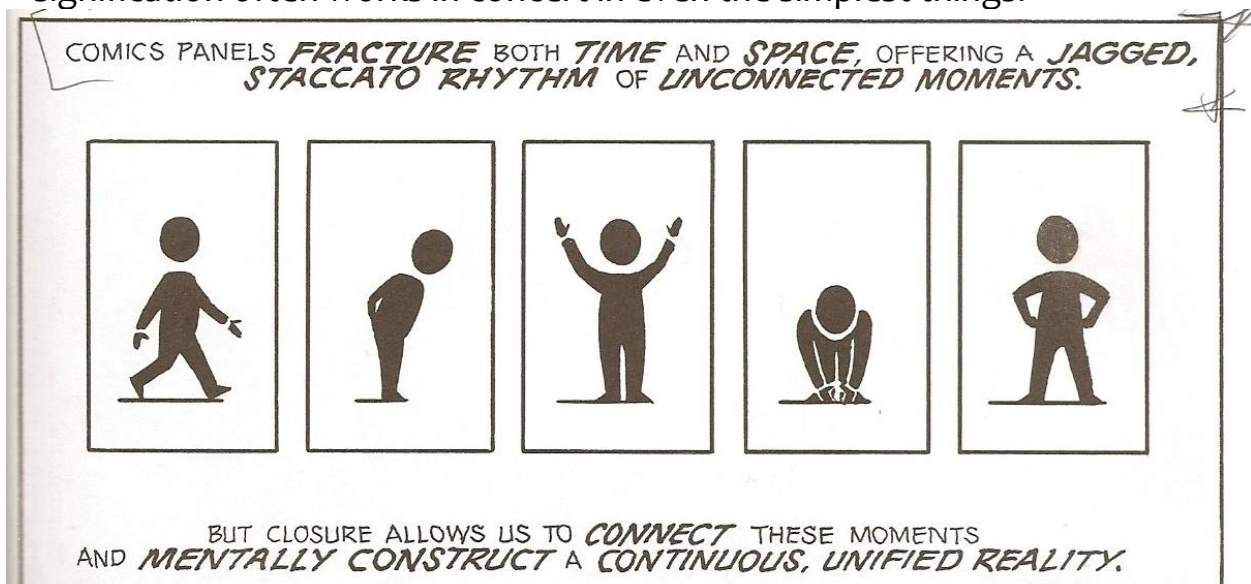


Figure 3. (McCloud, in Martin Irvine, 2013)

The simple combination of adding a box to each image implies that each is distinct from the others; combined with the uniformity of their layout and of the figure within, however, it infers a pattern which invites readers to overlay a sequential meaning. Irrespective of semantic content of the accompanying words, that they are in English also signifies the likely direction the comic should be read is left-to-right (Arabic would infer meaning should be drawn from right-to-left, for example), compounded too by the fact that the character 'walks in' *from* the left, facing towards the right.

Compare this with Figure 4, however:

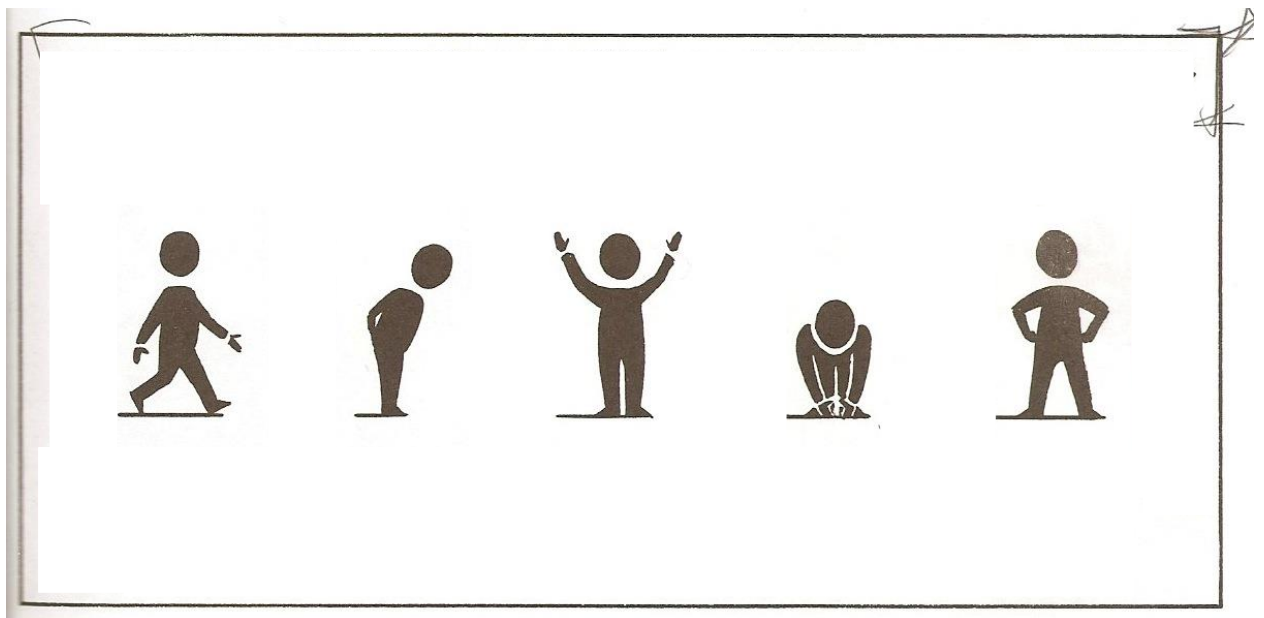


Figure 4. (McCloud, 1994) – modified to remove all content except outer border and characters

Without a box around each image, the comic *may* still be taken to signify the intended meaning specified in Figure 3, but could just as likely reference an unsynchronised yoga class, a caricatured pop-band, or something else entirely (especially had I not shown you the other, first). Signified conventions reduce ambiguity and by which increase the likelihood of transmitting meaning more (but not completely) accurately.

Interestingly, with the (signifying) borders removed, but knowing that the character is meant to be the same person throughout, it also becomes easier

to see the breadth of ambiguity in the picture (have they found some sand and excitedly made a sandcastle? Is she doing up her laces? or perhaps he dropped his keys? Do they have a bad back and it's time for their stretches?). By 'fracturing time and space', each figure, despite their similarity and that they represent the same person, is *differentiated* from the next, in this instance by their location in space and time, but also by their actions, and by the (signified) emotions which may be attributed. Differentiation also equips people to apply constraints by which to construct stable narratives and with which to navigate a coherent world, but which are malleable enough to continually reshape the possibilities within it. It is by the inherent ambiguity in these processes that transformational discourse fractures meaning and reorients the boundaries within a neoliberal image.

### ***Meaningful Narratives***

"Narrative is the cognitive process that gives meaning to temporal events by identifying them as parts of a plot" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 136); narrative assembles structured fragments of events and symbols into meaningful stories which make sense of experiences and one's place in the world (Kohler & Riessman, 2005; Rhodes, Pullen, & Clegg, 2010; see also: Belsey, 2002, 2006; McGowan, 2006). Through their stories, people create selves, oriented in relation to but distinction from others (Capella, 2017; Cornelissen, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007; Riessman, 2001); by the words people use in building their narratives, they refine how they understand them in context and set new constraints for future narratives (Power, 2014; Cabo & Rothman, 2013; Capella, 2017).

Narrative and semiotics are reciprocal; signification provides the materials by which narrative is constructed, and in its experience-borne nuances assures the depth and diversity of peoples' stories, as well as, importantly, their reconfigurability. Narrative establishes and revises the bounds within



which semiotic interpretations are attributed. Each shapes the other. Put another way, language affords agency and editorship by which people interpret and re-conceptualise their experiences (old and new, alike) into new possibilities and relations (Capella, 2017; Power, 2014; Scott, 1990).

The semiotic context of people's stories interplay with how they perceive language as used around them, but its imperfect transmission leaves semiotic narrative vulnerable to subversion. How language is used and understood has a significant effect on individuals' sense of possibility, and capacity for agency – both personal and political (Besley, 2002; Power, 2014). It is through subversion of the meaning underlying language that transformational discourse corrupts ontologies, and restricts perceivable possibilities for resisting neoliberalisation (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Power, 2014; Scott, 1990).

### **Division by Discourse; Conquest by Difference**

Transformational discourse inserts itself between semiotic and narrative reciprocity. It appears to 'buy in' to advocates' discourse by "the adoption of community development language by statutory agencies, albeit for different purposes" (Power, 2014, p. 198), but rearticulates it "to promote market-like or market-enhancing policies in the delivery of welfare services and community development activities" (Power, 2014, p. 72) to tame workers by normalising neoliberal ideals *within* existing welfare discourse (see: Ball & Olmedo, 2013). Transformational discourse infuses itself within semiotic meaning, infiltrating, subverting and supplanting the assumptions underlying worker lexicons, and becoming the language upon which their narratives are constructed: "it is a 'new' moral system that subverts and re-orient us to its truths and ends ... We are burdened with the responsibility to perform, and if we do not we are in danger of being seen as irresponsible" (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 88).

Since language is so fundamental to how one makes sense, subversion of its underlying meaning by transformational discourse corrupts ontological bearing, and restricts perceivable possibilities for resisting neoliberalisation (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Power, 2014; Scott, 1990). In this respect, transformational discourse is a form of sensegiving - intended to shape others' narratives and sense of meaning (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Monin, Noorderhaven, & Vaara, 2013; Sonenshein, 2010).

### **Sensegiving**

Through a combination of *sensebreaking*, *sense-specification*, and *sensehiding*, sensegiving uses discourse to promote 'legitimate' narratives and ontologies (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Monin et al., 2013; Vaara & Monin, 2010), illegitimise others, and confuse and suppress opposition (Power, 2014).

**Sensebreaking** "problematizes previous ways of thinking or acting" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 263) as a premise for 'breaking' with old ways of doing things (Monin et al., 2013). Neoliberal claims that society cannot sustain the welfare state's cost, for example (Bhatia & Orsini, 2016; Cappelen, Tungodden, & Cappelen, 2018; Pierson, 1996), are sensebreaking attempts intended to dissuade the populace from commitment to Marshallian social rights and used to justify substantive

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social work teaching is quite missing  
the point and much social work is  
useless at best and subversive at  
worst

- Tony Abbott (later Prime Minister of  
Australia), as cited in Alston, 2015, p.37

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changes to the welfare protections underlying liberal democracy (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Onyx et al., 2010; Shaver, 2002; see also: Johns, 2002). Sensebreaking statements may or may not be factual (or somewhere in between), and are often used to set the context for creating new moral or pragmatic orders.

Sense-breaking statements in the NDIS espoused that “existing disability support arrangements ‘are inequitable, underfunded, fragmented, and inefficient and give people with disability little choice’” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 35). They brought together PCT’s accusations of NGO unaccountability and inefficiency (Johns, 2002; Staples, 2007), with the sector’s (reasonable) complaints of underfunding, as a context to create the need for – or *sense-specify* – an entirely new type of market: “The NDIS is not another government-controlled social welfare scheme. It is underpinned by a new national consumer-controlled marketplace with enormous growth potential...[and] predicated on a market much broader than the current specialist disability marketplace” (National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), 2016b, pp. 6–7).

***Sense-specification*** uses signification to effect a change in norms (McGowan, 2006; Saussure, 1959). It coins new terminologies, enacts symbolism and, by articulating ‘decisions’ sets new standards; put another way, it explicitly defines the boundaries of thought, and rearticulates accepted parameters and authorities (Monin et al., 2013). Calls for NGOs to be more accountable to the state (Onyx & Dalton, 2004), and the

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... who is society? There is no such  
thing! There are individual men and  
women, and there are families

- Thatcher, 1987 (p.10)

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appointment of “a well-known anti-charities campaigner to head up the charities regulator” (Crosbie, as cited in Slezak, 2017, para. 7), were sense-specification strategies.

**Sensehiding** manipulates discourse by silencing and marginalising ‘unfavourable’ perspectives (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Monin et al., 2013). It draws on semiotic associations by selectively eliding

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The task is to limit the claims on the commons, to depoliticise much of life, to make it less amenable to public dispute

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- Johns, 2002 (para.14)

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or substituting words with undesirable associations, for example “merger...because in people’s unconsciousness, merger means absorption and absorption means job destruction” (Monin et al., 2013, p. 263). Sensehiding also includes obfuscation, suppression, and redirection (see also: Bull, 2002).

Sensegiving attempts to control legitimacy by controlling meaning and perceptions of consensus. Australian neoliberalism has a long and extensive history of attempts to delegitimise welfare, NGOs, and statutory oversight bodies<sup>9</sup> (Doherty, 2017; Gordon, 2017; Grattan, 2015), and has tenaciously sought to exclude NGOs from public discourse (Mendes, 2009, p. 104; See also: Bennett & Di Lorenzo, 1985).

### **Sensegiving Exercises Power in Discourse**

Sensegiving is not necessarily coercive but can be merely a mode of impression; sensebreaking can dispel myths, sense-specification may impart new truths, and sensehiding can clarify amidst interference. Sensegiving offers a perspective, with which one can ‘agree’ – and inasmuch refine their narrative – or resist. Sensegiving is a form of power, and only becomes

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<sup>9</sup> Since other researchers have already written extensively on these topics (for example: Meagher & Healy, 2003; Mendes, 2009, 2014; Staples, 2007), and since this is a conceptual thesis, it would not sufficiently add to the literature to expand further in this section.

problematic when paths of resistance are immobilised and possibilities for ‘practices of freedom’ become blocked (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Foucault, 2010). It is this immobilisation which appears to set transformational discourse apart from other sensegiving practices.

The next chapter explores transformational discourse as a state of domination, including how it embeds managerialism, co-opts workers, and abjects them. The chapter closes with a discussion of how these insights inform ways to constructively rebuild community sector capacities.

## Chapter 6: Domination by Division

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*Political language... is designed to  
make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and  
to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.  
One cannot change this all in a moment,  
but one can at least change one's own habits...*

- Orwell (1945b, p. 20)

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The previous chapter identified that through implication, connotation, and explicit new ontological narratives imparted over time, transformational discourse subverts meaning and recasts possible narratives within neoliberal ideals. It sensebreaks existing normative narrative assuming social rights as the basis of citizenship, and sense-specifies a 'new regime of truth' in which exchange is replaced by competition and "performativity is the new common sense" (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 89), "[c]hange and chaos within organisations are now presented as normal" (Power, 2014, pp. 65–66) and managerialism becomes perceived as the only way to survive.

### **Transformational Discourse is a 'State of Domination'**<sup>10</sup>

Managerialism ties funding to outcomes and makes managers dependant on workers to achieve them. Managerialism is itself an act of sensegiving; it signifies neoliberal preoccupation with "quantitative top-down accountability, performance monitoring and... outputs" (Power, 2014, p. 140), and demands workers' 'justify' their work through reporting measurement data (Brodkin, 2011; Power, 2014). Since the needs which bring people to community services are complex (Ferris et al., 2016; French & Stillman, 2014;

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<sup>10</sup> 'State of Domination' is borrowed from Ball and Olmedo, 2013

Moore, Ochiltrie, & Cann, 2002), “select[ing]...what to measure – ‘what counts’ – is [both] technically difficult [and] politically fraught” (Brodkin, 2011, p. 256), and rarely reflects the realities of community work (French & Stillman, 2014). Through discourse which adopts community sector registers, in particular, its workforce is “re-oriented and re-constituted in line with managerial rationalities...[effecting] a corresponding demise of the autonomous reflective practitioner and professional” (Power, 2014, p. 34; see also: Thomas & Davies, 2005).

Bound by performativity, however, managers come under increasing strain to justify service funding, and are dependent on workers to provide the data (French & Stillman, 2014; Power, 2014). As funders’ appetite for data increases, so does workers’ time providing it, reducing capacity for advocacy accordingly. Yet, breaking the cycle of disadvantage invariably necessitates some form of advocacy: disadvantage, hardship, and psychosocial burden are partly systemic; they result from an imperfect and unequal social system, and hamper individuals’ capacity for citizenship. Blocked by managerialism from acting upon clients’ advocacy needs, workers are both sensehidden and encumbered from achieving the outcomes upon which their performance is measured.

Transformational discourse reorients individuals and society within neoliberal governmentalities, imposing performative individualisation, and isolating us all in competition and processes of justification (e.g. reporting) (Ball & Olmedo, 2013). It sensehides resistors by presenting them as “out of touch’, ‘un-dynamic’ and a hindrance to progress” (Power, 2014, pp. 65–66), by which “problematizing the essence and ‘raw material’ [their] practices [and being]” (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 89). As a gradual process, however, neoliberalisation’s differencing effects are not always obvious, leaving

managers and workers within these new ‘regimes of truth’ without necessarily recognising how they came to be there (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Power, 2014). In their confusion and powerlessness (Power, 2014), the subjectified become demoralised, frustrated, stressed and depressed, and can enact only resistance to practices, re-siting their resistance away from the (now distanced) ‘chief enemy’ (neoliberalisation’s source) to focus instead upon the ‘immediate enemy’ (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Foucault, 1982), whose now differing (managerial) practices frustrate their own way of working (Weick, 2005). In this way, neoliberalism divides the community sector and conquers resistance, by relocating it away from funders, and within NGOs themselves, disorienting workers otherwise likely to stand in unity against neoliberalisation (Power, 2014), and leaving them confused and disempowered to “resist, raise objections to or at the very least understand what was happening” (Power, 2014, p. 198).

### **Transformational Discourse is an Ontological Assault**

Caught in a cycle of performativity, workers find their identities at conflict (see: Linstead & Thomas, 2002), on one hand descending into becoming an instrument of the neoliberal State, whilst on the other still in practice a critical defender of civil society (Alston, 2015; Cheverton, 2003; Power, 2014). Rather than empowered to protect citizenship, workers – already themselves a subordinated group (Ferris et al., 2016; McMurray & Pullen, 2008) – are co-opted in subjectification (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Power, 2014; Shaver, 2002), and abjected in ontological dissonance.

Abjection is the element of oneself that they mightn’t always want, need, or like, but is nonetheless ever-present. What someone excludes from their conception of self is as important as what they assimilate into their identity (Rizq, 2013; Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010); for community sector workers, being reconstituted within neoliberalisation threatens their sense of identity,



because it juxtaposes neoliberal norms with community sector narratives. Ordinarily, people are driven to reconcile incongruent narratives, either by incorporating new information into existing narratives (assimilation), or modifying narratives to ‘allow’ for the new situation (accommodation) (Capella, 2017; Matsumoto, 2009; Piaget, 2000). By attaching neoliberal ideals *within* existing welfare discourse, however, transformational discourse leaves workers without a language with which to articulate meaningful resistance.

Since narrative is central to identity (Bamberg, 2013; Capella, 2017; Fivush, Habermas, Waters, & Zaman, 2011) and broken narratives are associated with an inability to integrate images of the self into the present, past, and future (Capella, 2017), transformational discourse is tantamount to an ontological assault upon the sector and its workforce. It seems highly unlikely that community sector workers will be able to envisage themselves within the new operating environment of the NDIS, and likely they will feel powerless to act upon it in any meaningful way – effecting a form of learned-helplessness (see: Maier & Seligman, 1976; Moreland et al., 2015; Seligman, 1972).

When workers are left with only a choice between complicity and capitulation – neither of which consistent with the social purposes workers and their organisations strive towards (Cheverton, 2003; Power, 2014) – but are themselves subjectified within performativity, resisting neoliberalisation starts to look the same as resisting management. ‘Though both on the same side, Workers resist the managerialism on which their managers – and funding – depend (Brodkin, 2011; French & Stillman, 2014; Power, 2014).

Driven to protect their self-esteem, workforce-members are likely to focus upon ‘proximal’ tasks, with a low chance of failure, to ‘reinforce’ their sense

of self-efficacy through ‘small wins’ (Bandura, 1977, 2009; Grant & Parker, 2009). Workers and managers are, with their differing priorities, likely to focus their attentions differently; for workers, the ‘real work’ – supporting service-users – is most salient (Cheverton, 2003; Meagher & Healy, 2003; Power, 2014). Effectively, workers are likely to focus upon their ‘core-work’ over, or to the exclusion of, activities which ready the organisation for changing markets (Power, 2014), leaving matters of organisational sustainability entirely as the responsibility of management.

### ***Managerialism Begets Inefficiencies***

Managers, faced more directly with the pressures of neoliberalisation, are motivated to adopt increasingly managerial practices in their efforts to anticipate and prepare for new service environments (Carson & Kerr, 2010; Power, 2014; Weick, 2005), but in pursuit of expediency may undermine the values which differentiate NGOs from their new competitors (Cheverton, 2003; Evans et al., 2005; Onyx & Emerita, 2016). Since NGOs often start as grassroots organisations, their values are shaped and shared by their workers; any signalled change to organisational values – whether real or perceived – is likely to seriously undermine the solidarity of purpose upon which community work relies (Power, 2014), and alienate staff.

Isolated and vulnerable, workers are likely to be “sceptical that one could resist from the inside” (Power, 2014, p. 223) yet nonetheless engage in practices of ‘everyday’ resistance (Power, 2014); perversely, managers may as a result adopt firmer and more managerial stances to meet the imperatives upon them.

Transformational discourse appears also likely to be driving a wedge between workers and managers, even though they, in most cases, were often only recently also workers. It is unsurprising, therefore, that “many

organisations have conducted very limited work” making preparations for the NDIS (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012, p. 2). Being ready for the competitive environment of the NDIS necessitates some activities resembling managerialism, but in the current context few workers will be able to see past its previously corrosive legacy, and there is a real danger of narrative-split within the sector’s organisations. Since many participants (and staff) are wary of government and for-profit providers (Productivity Commission, 2010), and NGOs’ only other ‘natural’ competitive advantage is their knowledge of and proximity to their participants’ needs, any perception of compromising their ethos is likely to have dire consequences both for retaining and attracting participants in the new market.

### **Surviving the NDIS**

Making the operational and strategic change necessary to survive in the NDIS therefore relies upon resolving the ontological tensions begotten by neoliberalisation. For NGO staff to engage with change, they need to make sense of how it connects with their reasons for working in community services, and for choosing to do so in the organisations in which they do.

Tensions between workers and managers are common in most industries, and have been studied closely from many different angles, by many authors, for many decades (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011; Fleming & Spicer, 2003; Weick, 1995). During times of difficult transition, most industries reach for the change management literature; however, the community sector is unlike most others, and its current challenges are uniquely ontological. For NGOs, surviving neoliberalism demands a thoughtful, challenging, and robust internal dialogue. Whilst change management and other leadership literatures may provide useful insights, for these to be effective we need to

first understand how workers and managers each make sense of their challenges and possibilities.

The next chapter will introduce sensemaking and examine Karl Weick's 'theory and practice in the real world' (2005), for its insights into the differences arising within the community sector, and opportunities for redress.

## Chapter 7: Weick's Sensemaking-Perspective

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*Conflict, of course, comes about because of the misuse of power  
and the clash of ideals...*

*But it also arises, tragically, from an inability to understand,  
and from the powerful emotions which,  
out of misunderstanding, lead to distrust and fear*

- The Prince of Wales, (1993)

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As discussed in the previous two chapters, sensegiving literature informs how transformational discourse and managerialism divide the workforce in ontological dissonance. This chapter finds insights in the literature around *sensemaking* – the process of accommodating, assimilating, and coordinating narratives – which suggest that by preventing effective sensemaking, transformational discourse establishes workforce divisions as self-perpetuating.

### **An Introduction to Sensemaking Perspectives**

Sensemaking perspectives look at how people construct and consolidate a coherent sense of ontological order, primarily within organisational contexts (Aromaa et al., 2018; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995). Its roots can be traced to the 1960s, and it has been written on by many scholars and influenced by several fields, but since 1995 has become overwhelmingly associated with Karl Weick's 'seminal' work: *Sensemaking in Organizations* (Introna, 2018; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). Rather than provide a cohesive theory of what sensemaking is, however, Weick presents a *perspective* by which to “develop a set of ideas with

explanatory possibilities” (Weick, 1995, p. ix), constructed of properties summarised neatly by Aromaa et al. (2018, p. 2) as including:

the identity construction of the sensemaker; the cues that people draw on to enact a particular sense of a situation by making sensemaking utterances plausible; and the retrospective (attaching a sense to something after the event), ongoing (feeling the need to constantly make sense of the environment) and social (drawing on the relevant sensemaking of others) influences on how sense is made.

Weick’s sensemaking-perspective has been noted to combine cognitivist, social-constructionist, and interpretivist influences (Aromaa et al., 2018; Introna, 2018; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014), and has stimulated substantive scholarship, significantly broadening its scope of application (Introna, 2018; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Maitlis and Christianson (2014) identified at least ten different definitions of sensemaking within publications since Weick’s 1995 book, and Aromaa et al.’s (2018) paper identified over 51 publications extending or applying critical sensemaking (CSM) – a refinement building upon the literature discussing Weick’s (1995) sensemaking-perspective.

### ***Selecting Weick***

Although many of these sensemaking-perspectives could provide differently useful insights into sensemaking in the community sector, Weick’s ‘Theory and Practice in the Real World’ (2005) sensemaking-perspective seems most suited for constructing an initial understanding of sensemaking in the community sector because it deals specifically with differences between managerial and worker mentalities; moreover, since “sensemaking has almost become synonymous with Weick”(Aromaa et al., 2018, p. 2), using his own application of the sensemaking-perspective seems most likely to deliver

findings suitable for later comparison or synthesis with other (Weick-influenced) sensemaking research.

### Theory and Practice in the Real World

Weick (2005) describes how sensemaking in organisational contexts is influenced by a divergence of mindsets commonly observed by the organisational development literature, which he describes as summarised by Roethlisberger's distinction between A and B relations (as per Table 1, below).

A Relations	B Relations
Concrete	Abstracted
Non-logical	Logical
Subjective	Objective
Internal	External
Here-and-now	There-and-then
Mutually dependent	Simple cause and effect
Exchange	Unilateral
Reflexive	Irreflexive
Intransitive	Transitive
Symmetrical	Asymmetric
Cyclical	Linear
Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Satisfying, rewarding	Optimal
Process	Structural
Emergent	Planned, designed
Diffuse	Specific
Existential	Probabilistic
Etc.	Etc.
(Roethlisberger 1977, as presented in Weick, 2005)	

Table 1. Roethlisberger's A and B Relations

He proposes that because people become (semiotically) inculcated within the language they use, through consistent exposure to more or less technical or abstracted language, individuals become more or less oriented towards 'living forwards' in the moment as *practitioners* or 'understanding backwards' in analysis as *theorists* (Kierkegaard, 1843; Weick, 2005).

Practitioners are ‘real world’ oriented; they see the world as unknowable, unpredictable, and finite, and depend upon intuition, improvisation, and learning through trial and error to understand their place and possibilities within it (Sandelands, 1990; Weick, 2005; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Community work as a practice demands flexibility, reflexivity, and resourcefulness within constraint, consistent with Weick’s practitioner.

Theorists, by contrast, see the world as a sum of knowable relationships and infinite potential; they collate objective knowledge, push its boundaries and strive towards increasingly precise explanations through analysis and abstraction. They attempt to explain the world, impose order upon it, and through which create new possibilities in an otherwise chaotic universe (Weick, 2005; Weick et al., 2005). Managerialism unambiguously demands optimisation, structural control, and unilateral efficiencies (Casey & Dalton, 2006; Power, 2014; Staples, 2007) and inasmuch is consistent with Weick’s theorist: “[w]hereas in the past the typical profile of a community-sector program coordinator was that of an activist, the typical profile now is more that of a business manager” (Casey & Dalton, 2006, p. 28).

### **Dividing Theory from Practice**

To create plausible narratives, sensemaking connects ongoing experience with retrospective reflection (Aromaa et al., 2018; Weick, 1995); Weick relates this to Kierkegaard’s notion that to derive meaning, life must be lived forward but understood backwards. He suggests that the division between theorist and practitioner (as I have depicted in Figure 5, overleaf) creates a paradoxical contradiction which prevents theorist moments of foresight and practitioner moments of hindsight from converging (Kierkegaard, 1843; Weick, 2005) which mitigates sensemaking and development opportunities (Weick, 2005).



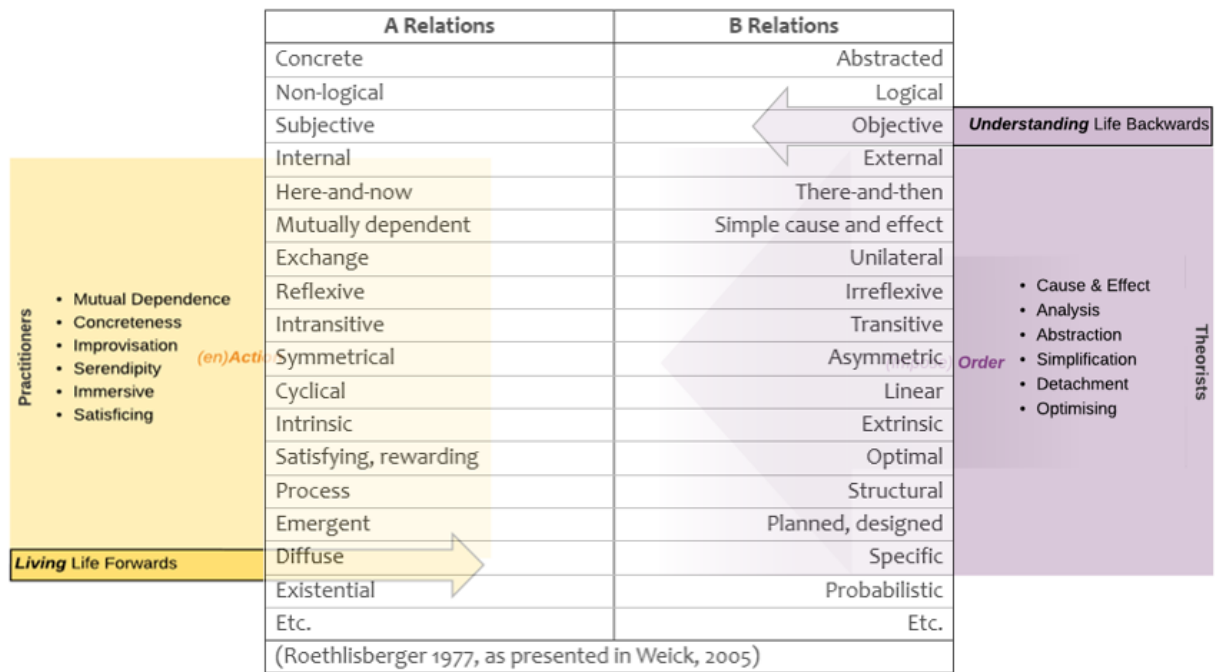


Figure 5. Divided, theory & practice separate understanding and explanation

Weick explains that whilst theorists strive towards understanding through explanation, understanding in the real world is know-how which develops by long and close experience more consistent with practice than theory; explanations know-*that* certain relationships exist, but not *how* to make them happen, in practice (Weick, 2005). Similarly, whilst practitioners hold this know-how, they lack the theorists' know-*that* which links cause with effect, as is necessary to developing full understanding. Consequently, understanding (and explanation) are kept from 'sole possession' by either practitioner or theorist (Weick, 2005), meaning that whilst:

Living forward does have its moments of hindsight...[and] understanding backwards has its moments of foresight...these shorter moments typically are incidental to the larger tasks of theory construction or everyday action. As a result, moments of theory-driven foresight or practice-driven hindsight furnish relatively minor inputs to theory and practice (Weick, 2005, p. 454).

The relationship between these is more clearly presented visually. Figure 6 below shows the distinction and relationships between theory and practice, explanation and understanding:

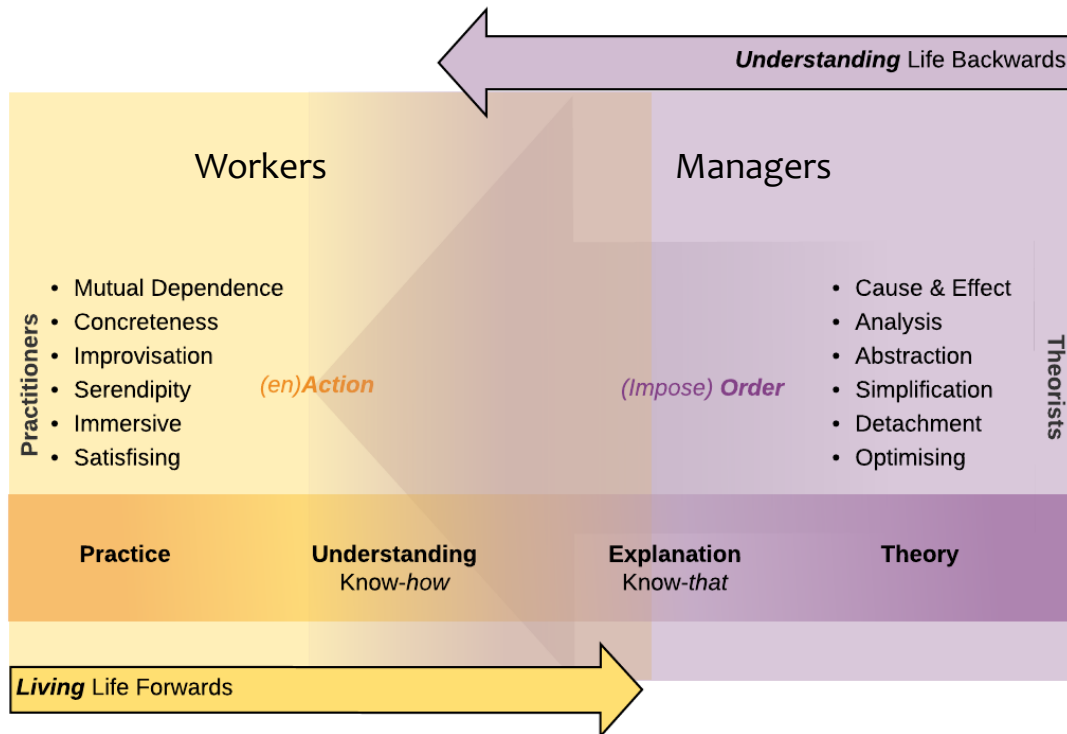


Figure 6. Practice, Understanding, Explanation, and Theory

### Entrenching Differences

Applying Weick's model to the community sector, funders are likely to think about service delivery as the *application* of theory and pass on this focus through managerialism. Funder expectations of what is possible and their judgement of service outcomes seem likely to be imbued with un-realisable ideals and inaccurate assumptions of what is within workers' control (Weick, 2005). Neoliberalisation confronts workers with perpetual change, and enforces managerialism through managers; it *makes* theorists of managers and subjectifies worker and manager alike (see: Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Power, 2014; Weick, 2005). Managers' attempts to make sense of services delivery for service reporting become attempts to *impose* order upon an "altogether different form of activity...less orderly and of a different order than it

appears in hindsight” (Weick, 2005, p. 454). Inasmuch, it relocates managers and workers in increasingly different mindsets, and reinforces these with each additional act of theory or practice which follows.

In the workplace, manager-theorists’ and worker-practitioners’ different paradigms are unavoidably juxtaposed (Weick, 1995). The further towards theory that the worker as practitioner (worker-practitioner) moves, or the closer towards practice that the manager as theorist (manager-theorist) veers, the less similarly they perceive the ‘terrain’ between them. Weick observes that practitioners commonly express frustration with theorists’ lack of connection to the ‘real world’, and suggests these are “*not so much complaints about a place as they are complaints about situated activity and the inability of people to conceptualize it*” (Weick, 2005, p. 454). Holding such different approaches to the world and interwoven by an inherent power imbalance (Haslam, 2014; see also: Linstead & Thomas, 2002; Ricard, 2015), manager-theorists and worker-practitioners may struggle to recognise and reconcile one another’s objectives (Weick, 2005). Moreover, because these paradigms are generally implicit and non-conscious (Weick, 1995), differences between workers and managers may be more likely mistaken as personal or professional affronts, than recognised as simply a consequence of their different languages (Roethlisberger, 1977, as cited in Weick, 1995, 2005) – especially where manager and worker otherwise appear ostensibly similar (Imhoff & Koch, 2017; Tresch, 2001). Even with the best of intentions, misunderstanding and thus conflict may be more likely between them (Roethlisberger, 1977, as cited in Weick, 1995, 2005). By entrenching differences between workers and managers and confronting them with one another, managerialism embeds conflict and division.

### Expanding Differences

Drawing on another philosopher, Weick (2005) describes the gap between A and B relations as being made more tangible by Heidegger's (1962) modes of engagement. Like the accounts already discussed, Heidegger observes a distinction between a mindset resembling Weick's practitioner, and another resembling theorists. By combining these with how people interact with the objects of their worlds, however, Heidegger's account more usefully provides deeper insights into how the division between theory and practice is likely to expand on its own momentum – as well as pointing to an opportunity to bridge the gap between modalities (Weick, 2005).

Occupying the concrete end of Heidegger's spectrum is the *ready-to-hand*, as shown in Figure 7:

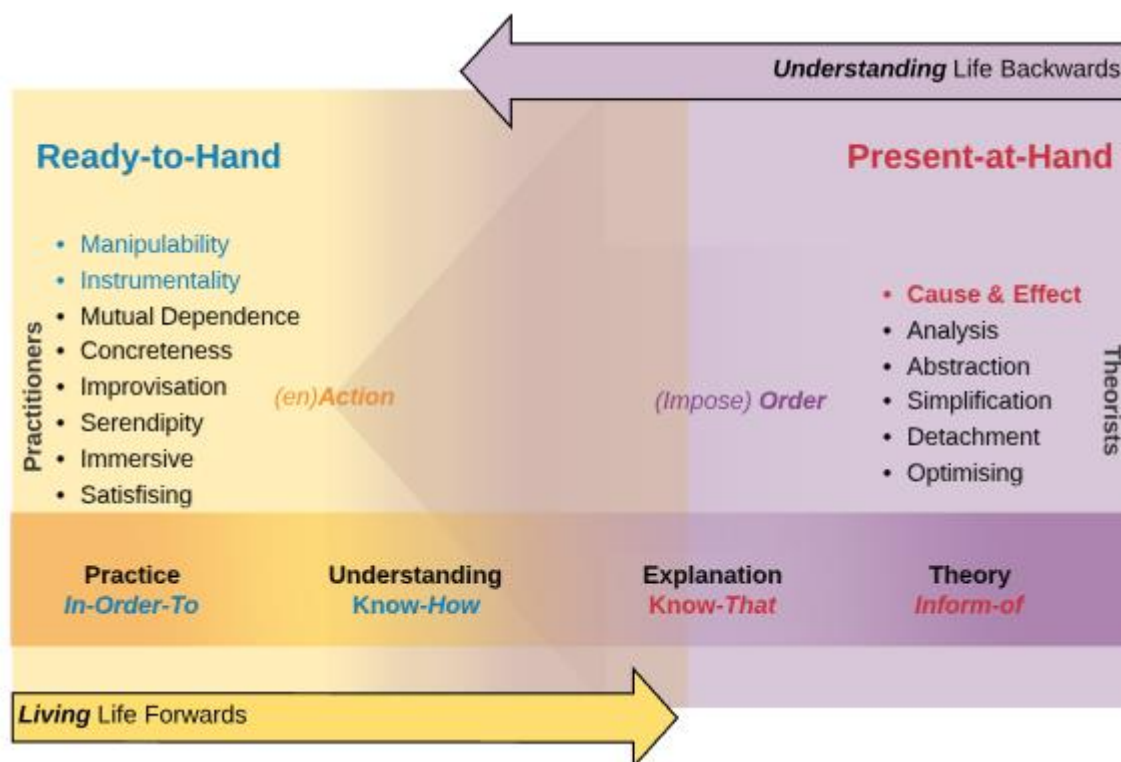


Figure 7. Overlaying Heidegger's Modes of Engagement

This mode of engagement is holistic and oriented towards practical action, wholes and place. Every object is a discrete entity with a prescribed place and

purpose; they exist within networks of potential constrained by predefined possibilities (Blattner et al., 2018).

Properties present-at-hand within objects and between them are at the heart of the sciences. Present-at-hand-modes of engagement are interested in the ontic: measurable properties present within objects and their constituent parts (e.g. weight, conductivity, psychometric scoring). Unlike concrete modalities, present-at-hand modes of engagement are also interested in things without physical being (Heidegger, 1962; Weick, 2005); that is, relationships between properties within objects (see also: Feenberg, 2000). Applied to Weick's distinction between practitioner and theorist, whereas practitioners rearrange objects *within the world*, theorists rearrange possibilities within (and beyond) the *things* which in their sum comprise the world, and by which create *new things with new possibilities*: "only by reason of something present-at-hand, 'is there' anything ready-to-hand" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 101)

Heidegger's modes of engagement are more tangible because they more clearly illustrate the semiotic foundations of the way people interact with the world (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1997; McGowan, 2006; Saussure, 1959), and with which their basis in *self-constraint*. Although not really an emphasis of Weick's analysis, when read from a semiotic perspective, the role of self-constraint emerges as influential and insightful in illustrating the mechanics underlying mindset divergence, as well as its value (as opposed to the otherwise negative view so far presented).

### ***Self-Constraint as a Strength***

Practitioners' ready-to-hand orientation prevents them from focussing upon the incalculable combinations which may paralyse a theorist in the same

situation, and allows them instead the efficiency of automatic thinking (Weick, 2005). Equally so, whereas theorists' infinite potential within objects allows infinite possibilities for their recombination towards solving a problem, the limitations upon practitioners' ready-to-hand worlds create the conditions under which constraints demand creative approaches to problem-solving (Sydow & Ortmann, 2006), through which creating insights uniquely accessible to this mode of engagement – although realising these synergies is often difficult.

### ***Self-Constraint Informs Divergence***

It is through this same mechanism that divisions between mindsets expand, as can be seen by updating my earlier graphical representation, as per Figure 8, below:

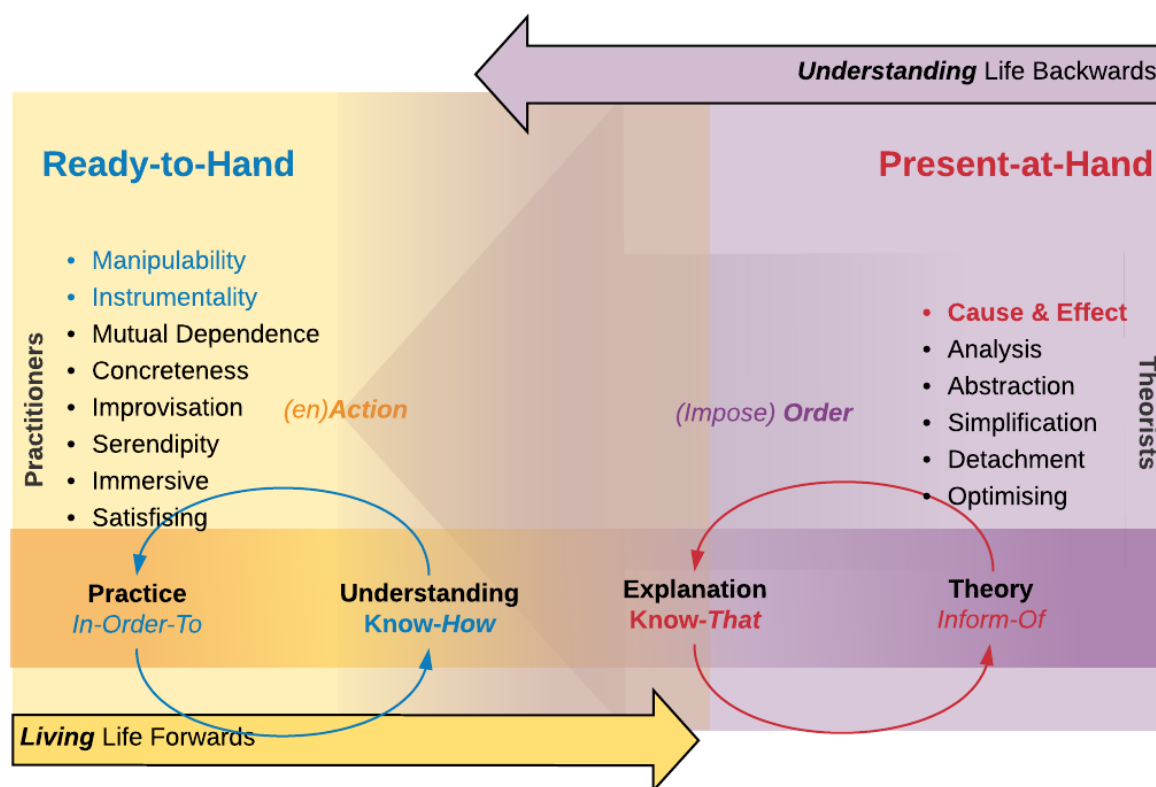


Figure 8. Reinforcing Mindsets

By combining Heidegger's more active modes of engagement with Weick's description of practice and understanding, and explanation and theory, the self-perpetuating effects of the disconnection between living

forwards and understanding backwards becomes clear. Because explanation is useless to understanding without a theoretical basis, and understanding depends upon a basis in practice to inform explanation, they add no mutual value to one another unless theory establishes more stable connections with understanding, and practice with explanation. There are no such natural limitations on the connection between explanation and theory, and practice and understanding however, so whilst:

[p]ractitioners are best able to spot the theories that matter in their world of practice when that world is interrupted. And theorists are best able to spot the situated action they should be puzzling over in their world of theory, in the presence of those same interruptions (Weick, 2005, p. 469),

The realities of people's priorities, and difficulties arising from existing communication difficulties are likely to discourage the effort. So long as theorists speak towards explanation instead of understanding, and practitioners speak for understanding without explanation, their differences of approach seem likely to reinforce their mutual isolation (see Figure 8). Workers, with their focus on the 'real work' of service delivery, seem unlikely to make a wilful construction of themselves within the inevitable new service contexts, limiting both their own and their organisations' capacities for surviving within them. Finding themselves leading a workforce increasingly disengaged from the challenges before them, managers' tendencies to 'impose order' may seem like the only tool at their disposal. Since workers (bound in grassroots advocacy mentalities) are likely to resist what they perceive as attempts to control them (Brodin, 2011; Power, 2014), however,

transformational discourse seems likely to enmesh managerialism and disengaged resistance in a cycle of escalating destructive potential.

### Unready-to-Hand Engagement as a Mediator

Unlike the binary differences so far presented, however, Heidegger also offers a third mode of engagement: the *unready-to-hand*. As shown in Figure 9, unready-at-hand engagement sits in the intersection between theory and practice, understanding and explanation, and offers opportunities to facilitate a practical interface between them (Weick, 2005).

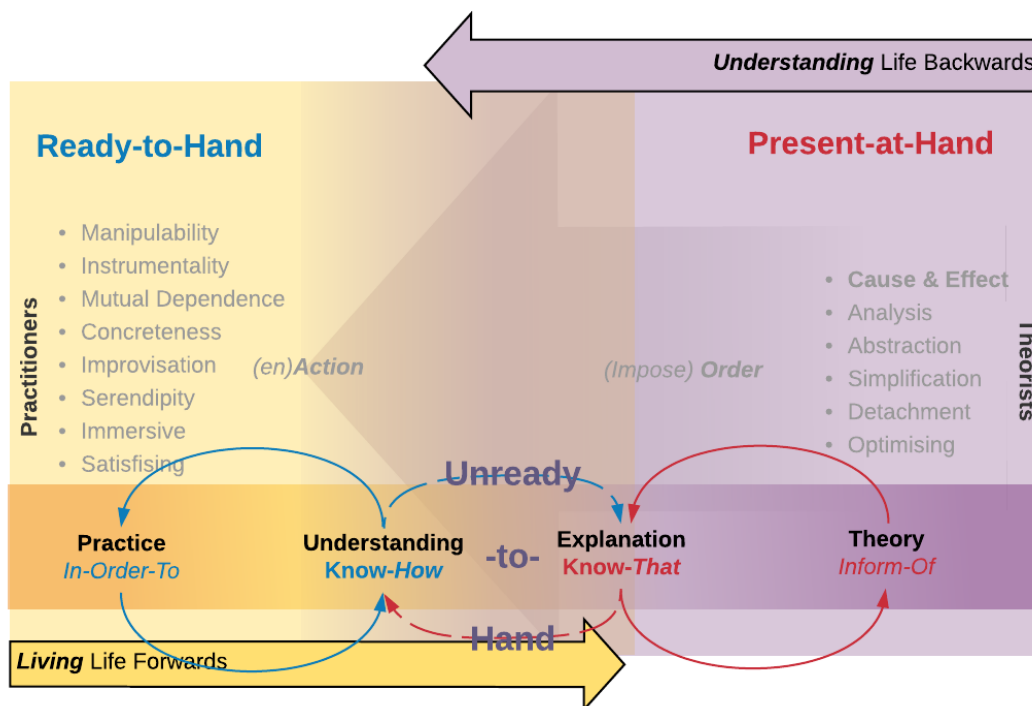


Figure 9. Unready-to-Hand Engagement

One is thrown into unready-to-hand relations when, in the course of their projects, an unexpected hurdle disrupts the practitioner's stream of experience, or theorist's explanations for cause-and-effect. Unreadiness-to-Hand may arise when encountering an event for which usual tools prove ineffective, or unexpectedly not accessible (and thus not to hand), or as a matter or object which unexpectedly demands attention before one may attend to than was otherwise intended (Heidegger, 1962).



Unready-to-hand situations benefit from both practitioner understanding and theorist explanation: theorists, with their knowledge of complexity elucidate new possibilities for action; whilst practitioners' familiarity with things in practice ensure real world applicability:

If theorists and practitioners alike focus on the interruptions of unready-to-hand, then the theorist is forced to sense more of the world as it is experienced by the practitioner and the practitioner is forced to detach from the flow of events, objectify portions of what normally is a flow, and adopt a mindset toward barriers similar to that of the theorist." (Weick, 2005, p. 454)

Unready-to-hand moments highlight both opportunities for ontological discovery and for connecting understanding and explanation, but they are also uncomfortable – the unready-to-hand is inherently uncertain, and exposes with force the unknowability of the world. During these moments, one can choose to wilfully and mindfully throw oneself into existential discovery, or defer to automaticity or avoidance (as practitioner or theorist, respectively). To defer is, in Heideggerian terms, inauthentic; and in Sartrean, bad faith – in each case an act of self-deception which denies responsibility to the self (Heidegger, 1962; Thompson, 2008). For it is through acting through the unknowable and unpredictable that people find themselves, and increase their capacity to understand others (Packer, 1985; Segal, 2017). Only by acting mindfully can the practitioner reconcile cause with effect; only by tethering explanation with practical 'reality' can the theorist reconcile ontological with the ontic (Pullen & Rhodes, 2015; Shapiro, 2014; Weick, 2005).

Unready-to-hand living coincides moments of action with dynamic sensemaking (Weick, 2005). Sensemaking during unready-to-hand moments

relies almost upon an inversion between practitioner and theorist modalities. During these moments, theorists reach further back and practitioners look further forward to reconcile understanding with explanation (Weick, 2005).

### **The NDIS Immerses the Community Sector in the Unready-to-Hand**

The NDIS is a salient example of the unready-to-hand within the community sector for both managers and workers (as well as service-recipients) alike. Isolated, confused, and resource-constrained (Carson & Kerr, 2010; Power, 2014), the sector workforce is unlikely to recognise the opportunity before them and, somewhat ironically, given its heavily theory-oriented basis, workers are likely to be unattracted to the model as it currently stands. Developing a deliverable framework to the sector is beyond the scope of this research, however, the following chapter strengthens these insights as a viable basis by discussing some of the limitations of Weick's account of theory and practice in the real world and complementing these with insights from anthropological literature.

## Chapter 8: Bricolage

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*The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning.*

- Michel Foucault, (1982)<sup>11</sup>

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This chapter complements Weick's cognitivist sensemaking-perspective with a behavioural account of sensemaking: bricolage. Combining bricolage and Weick's sensemaking-perspective provides a more cohesive model which better reflects the different priorities and practical needs of different actors, and suggests insights from recent organisational development literature which may prove beneficial to improving the community sector's operational capacities and ensuring consistency with organisational values.

### Introducing Bricolage

In theory and practice in the real world, Weick (2005) digests Heideggerian and Kierkegaardian philosophy and organisational theories into a perspective of individual sensemaking as fundamentally skewed towards either practical and experiential or abstracted and theoretical frameworks. Lévi-Strauss, having (separately but near-concurrently to Weick) observed a similar pattern across cultures, and also suggested people gravitate towards one of two complementary but nonetheless distinct ways of collating and using knowledge in (and of) the world.

Both writers articulate two different ways people make sense of and respond to their experiences. In each account the modalities are presented as complementary counterparts as though along a spectrum; Weick's

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<sup>11</sup> cited in Martin, Gutman, and Hutton (1988)

theorist is unlike the practitioner, and Lévi-Strauss' bricoleur is defined in contrast to his ingénieur. Both the bricoleur and practitioner are oriented towards the concrete, the interpersonal, and the tangible; they are concerned with the whole, the here, and the now. Bricoleurs and practitioners ("practitioner-bricoleur") constrain their worlds to perceptible experience whereas the theorist and ingénieur are highly conceptual. Inasmuch, Lévi-Strauss and Weick, despite their different foci and applications, both appear to offer comparable ontological perspectives, as illustrated in Figure 10.

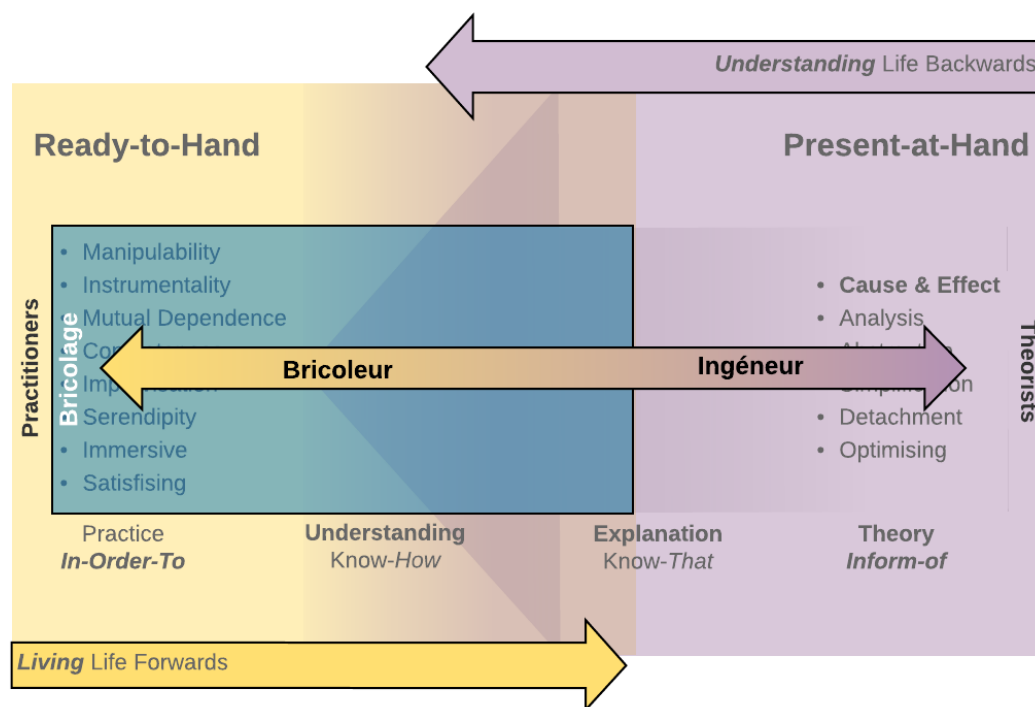


Figure 10. Overlaying Bricolage and Weick's Sensemaking Perspective of Theory and Practice in the Real World.

As complementary as their different modes of viewing the world may be, these differences also impede communication between theorist-ingénieurs and practitioner-bricoleurs and often create tensions between them (Weick, 2005). Similarly, without due care to strike a deliberative balance, practitioner-bricoleurs' need for autonomy and flexibility (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Di Domenico, Haugh, & Tracey, 2010; Weick, 2005) may easily clash with

theorist-ingénieurs' need for order and structure (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Weick, 2005).

### **Semiotics in Sensemaking**

Both perspectives build upon a semiotic perspective of meaning-making, although only Lévi-Strauss explicitly acknowledges this. Each scholar articulates that individuals' difference of experience causes them to ascribe different meaning to an otherwise identical referent; similarly, each new ascribed meaning influences future perception, compounding the differences between them. Lévi-Strauss (1966) saw the root of the differences between these diverging mindsets as, at its core, a difference in how tightly one connects perception and conception:

“Neither concepts nor signs relate exclusively to themselves; either may be substituted for something else. Concepts, however, have an unlimited capacity in this respect, while signs do not...

“the engineer works by means of concepts and the ‘bricoleur’ by means of signs...” (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 12,13)

The bricoleur lives in a tangible world, and both speaks and becomes through their combination and recombination of resources towards the end-at-hand, discovering with each new combination different possibilities of expression and of being (Lévi-Strauss, 1966). Whilst *what* is accessible for recombination is a function of the ingénieur, so too is the ingénieur constrained by their culture's relationship with the natural world, in their particular period and civilisation. This relationship, he contends, is borne of the constructs erected by bricoleurs. Inasmuch, the ingénieur and bricoleur are (unknowingly) enmeshed in a cultural symbiosis, the output of which is a

science reflective of the particular ‘facts’ and forms upon which the narratives and materials of their civilisation have been built (Lévi-Strauss, 1966).

This points to a key difference between Weick and Lévi-Strauss’ ontological perspectives. Whereas Weick’s sensemaking-perspective formulates the individual in *relation* to their experiences (as an individual), Lévi-Strauss’ perspective situates individuals as contributors within a social context.

Descriptions of their respective concrete and abstracted modalities are similar, but differences between them suggest Weick and Lévi-Strauss may be describing different aspects of the same phenomena. Whilst Weick’s sensemaking-perspective has evolved to incorporate social constructionist and interpretivist influences, it is generally regarded as retaining strong elements of its cognitivist heritage (Aromaa et al., 2018; Introna, 2018; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015), and could be described as interested in *how* people *think* their worlds into being; Lévi-Strauss, on the other hand, seems more interested in how people’s *behaviour creates their worlds* – an important distinction in both the psychological sciences, especially within cognitive behavioural psychology (Rait, Monsen, & Squires, 2010) – and ontological philosophy.

Lévi-Strauss’ work is also more relatable to the community sector, and likely to be more receptively received than Weick’s philosophically-dense insights which, somewhat ironically, to the average community sector worker, could be perceived as ‘a theory that too much theory can be solved by theory’.

The next part of this chapter considers how Bricolage provides insights useful to improving community sector capacity.

### **Bricolage in the Community Sector**

Lévi-Strauss originally described the Bricoleur as a resourceful and adaptive jack-of-all-trades, who “make[s] do with ‘whatever is at hand’” (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 11). Bricoleurs are creative thinkers used to operating within limited resources; they recognise potential within resources which others elide, and draw these together into ‘libraries’ for when they might ‘come in handy’ in the future (Lévi-Strauss, 1966).

Community work is ‘hands-on’; so, bricolage resonates more clearly with what workers *do*, than would Weick’s account of what they *think*. Practice assumes uncomplicated situations for which the practitioner has a familiar resolution. Community work, however, is complex, and the unexpected is standard (Ferris et al., 2016; French & Stillman, 2014; Huxham & Vangen, 1996). Policies, procedures, and the theorists that author them, can only *explain* what is expected of workers in either very broad, or highly specific detail. Workers’ work is in the space in between; when faced with the unexpected, workers rely on their long proximal understanding of how ‘the pieces come together’, to arrive at a solution that fits the situation before them.

Managerialisation assumes that community work can be reduced to identifying client needs through prescribed assessment and matching the client with service/s who cater to addressing these needs (Brodkin, 2011; Evans et al., 2005; Power, 2014). In reality, however, every step of this process requires workers to recognise how nuanced differences in service-user presentation and service-referral or service delivery options are likely to interact in practice. Workers need to *understand* these complex interactions in a way that procedural activity cannot even begin to emulate. This is informational bricolage (Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010; French & Stillman, 2014; Kincheloe, 2005); successful community work relies upon workers’ ability to

take the information in their repertoire and rework it to the situation before them; they must know more than what services exist, but also how different services compare in different ways; how are they most effectively combined; their limitations; who can help, and how much can be asked of them (French & Stillman, 2014).

### Individual Bricolage<sup>12</sup>

In both Weick and Lévi-Strauss' accounts of concrete practices, practitioner-bricoleurs vary in the degree to which they are more or less immersed in living forward. Duymedjian and Rüling's (2010) discussion of bricolage gives a more granular account of practice, which more clearly illustrates how bricoleurs may differ.

Duymedjian and Rüling (2010) expanded upon Lévi-Strauss' concept of bricolage by synthesising it with Laurent Thévenot's (2001) political-sociological reflection of pragmatic regimes. Using his concepts of familiar and convention-based governance practices, they effectively treated bricolage as a form of self-governance and upon which reconceptualised differences within bricolage as the difference between more or less 'loosely coupled' practices (Table 2, below).

	Familiar bricolage	Convention-based bricolage
Time frame	Extended period of time	Less co-presence, shorter period of time
Space	Co-presence, defined common space dedicated to the bricoleurs	More extended, non-exclusive space
Repertoire	Shared or mutually accessible	Separate repertoires, access regulated by conventions
Relationship	Closeness, resonance, trust	Negotiated, some conventions (which become part of a shared stock)
Conventions	None–informal	Informal–locally negotiated
Investments of form	Absent–low	Low–medium

Table 2. "Familiar and Convention-Based Collective Bricolage in Organizations, extracted from Duymedjian and Rüling (2010), p. 144

<sup>12</sup> Note: Duymedjian and Rüling actually call this 'collective bricolage', however in this instance I have opted to use a different term, both to avert any potential conflation with organic leadership or community sector terminologies, and to focus more on the individual contribution *within* the collective.



Incorporating this into my visualisation of sensemaking practices (Figure 11, below), familiar bricolage appears to align with practice, whilst convention-based bricolage maps against understanding (Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010; Weick, 2005).

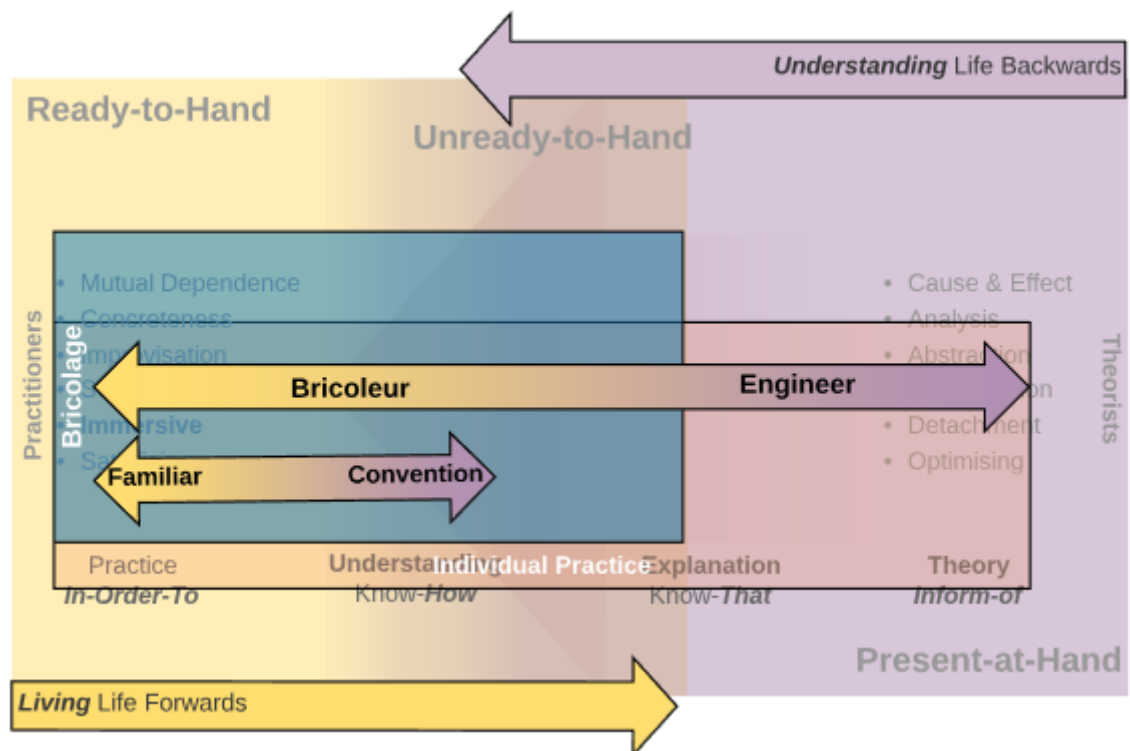


Figure 11. Individual Bricolage

Unlike the other accounts discussed so far, what is especially interesting about Duymedjian and Rüling's (2010) account of bricolage are the opportunities it opens for improved cooperation *without* demanding theorists or practitioners move towards unready-to-hand modalities as standard. By specifying the differences between familiar and convention-based bricoleurs, Duymedjian and Rüling create opportunities for bricoleurs to reflect more completely upon how they wish to harness their doing, knowing, and world-views (Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010; Rönkkö, Peltonen, & Arenius, 2014) towards the influence upon those around them and systems within which they operate.

Duymedjian and Rüling's perspective does not necessarily bring workers fully towards the moments of understanding backwards but has potential to legitimise worker methods whilst also opening the conversation for the value of different points along the spectrum and highlighting their mechanisms for choice. The worker is re-empowered with possibilities for action, and gains opportunities for dialogue by which theorists and practitioners alike may come towards a more comprehensively shared narrative of their current and impending challenges and opportunities.

### **Harnessing Bricolage**

Both Weick (2005) and Lévi-Strauss (1966) describe concrete and abstracted mindsets as reaching their greatest potential in collaboration with one another: informal practices preserve 'what works and when'; formalisation gives insights into why, and identifies other and new possibilities.

### ***Bricolage as a Basis for Organisational Culture***

In their highly cited study of 29 entrepreneurial firms, Baker and Nelson (2005) found an "emphatic[]" (Baker & Nelson, 2005, p. 356) case that bricolage was an engine of growth in resource-constrained environments.

Baker and Nelson (2005) found bricolage became a basis for potent organisational cultures in which employees could apply amateur skills to combine ready-to-hand materials towards novel solutions that would be unlikely arrived at by more formalised means (Baker & Nelson, 2005). Put another way, employees were able to "build[] something from nothing...by *refusing* to treat (and therefore see) the resources at hand *as* nothing" (Baker & Nelson, 2005, p. 356, emphasis added). Through these efforts firms developed a resilience characterised by a tolerance of "ambiguity[,], messiness[,], and setbacks" (Baker & Nelson, 2005, p. 356), extended communities of practice ('multiplex networks'), and strong firm identities

which revere bricolage and eschewed organisations deemed “unable to make do with the resources at hand” (Baker & Nelson, 2005, p. 348).

### ***Parallel and Selective Bricolage***

Baker and Nelson found that particular types of bricolage – parallel and selective – were effective at *different* stages of growth, and had a constraining effect when applied at the wrong time (Baker & Nelson, 2005). Both parallel and selective bricolage are conducted across five different domains (see Table 3) but differ to the extent that bricolage is conducted concurrently across them.

<b>Environmental Domains in Which Bricolage Was Used to Create Something from Nothing</b>	
<b>Domain</b>	<b>Description</b>
Inputs	
Physical	By imbuing forgotten, discarded, worn or presumed “single-application” materials with new use value, bricolage turns valueless or even negatively valued resources into valuable materials.
Labor	By involving customers, suppliers, and hangers-on in providing work on projects, bricolage sometimes creates labor inputs.
Skills	By permitting and encouraging the use of amateur and self-taught skills (electronics repair, soldering, road work, etc.) that would otherwise go unapplied, bricolage creates useful services.
Customer/markets	By providing products or services that would otherwise be unavailable (housing, cars, billing system, etc.) to customers (because of poverty, thriftiness, or lack of availability), bricolage creates products and markets where none existed.
Institutional and regulatory environment	By refusing to enact limitations with regard to many “standards” and regulations, and by actively trying things in a variety of areas in which entrepreneurs either do not know the rules or do not see them as constraining, bricolage creates space to “get away with” solutions that would otherwise seem impermissible.

*Table 3. Source: Extracted from Baker and Nelson (2005, p. 349)*

Bricolage had not come easily to the firms, however, and had required intensive, active, and ongoing efforts to build and harness the repertoires and skills necessary for workers to ‘make-do’.

### **Parallel Bricolage**

Staff in firms engaged in parallel bricolage often held ‘professionals’ in low regard (Baker & Nelson, 2005) and frequently crossed professional/trade boundaries in the course of their work. They were broadly but informally skilled, and had often self-taught whatever they needed to know on-the-job;

accordingly, firms engaged in parallel bricolage rely heavily on existing staff, whose responsibilities overlap substantially and can be difficult to differentiate. These firms have few, if any, formalised systems of prioritisation or inventory management, relying instead upon on staff's knowledge of their content and usability.

#### *Firms Outgrow Parallel Bricolage*

The strength of bricolage is that it grows from the ground upwards, formalising bricoleurs' understanding acquired via their trial-and-error innovations (An, Zhao, Cao, Zhang, & Liu, 2018; Baker & Nelson, 2005) and their close and longstanding familiarity with needs-in-practice (Weick, 2005, see also: Heidegger, 1962). Baker and Nelson (2005) found that whilst growth in the early stages required rule bending and creative recombination, as firms became more well established this became decreasingly necessary, and even counterproductive. Unconstrained, these practices can become entrenched and create a “nonprofessional closed culture that limits growth” (Rönkkö et al., 2014, p. 58). Of the 29 firms in Baker and Nelson's study, the nine who continued to engage in parallel bricolage after successful firm-establishment showed manifestly retarded ongoing growth.

#### *Selective Bricolage*

Bricolage is well-suited to penurious environments, but its major benefit lies not wholly in directly *generating* growth but in evolving the bespoke systems consistent with organisational priorities and by which this growth may be achieved and maintained. Common amongst the firms who continued to grow in Baker and Nelson's study, was a gradual reduction of bricolage. Instead of wholly formalised systems, as may be expected with attempts to managerialise, these firms gradually and *selectively* reduced their reliance on bricolage to only one or two areas of practice (Baker & Nelson, 2005).

Applied gradually, selective bricolage is much more flexible than managerial practices of formalisation, and is much more favourable to ‘selective’ reconcentration of resources on arising projects, or where warranted temporarily relaxing or suspending limitations (Baker & Nelson, 2005):

In four cases, we also observed a narrower temporary use of bricolage, limited to particular departments or functions within a firm. In each of these cases, supervisors requested that one or more employees take on new challenges or solve substantial problems without spending any money, to allow the firm to concentrate limited resources elsewhere... the firm was willing to live with some shortcuts and problems in exchange for getting the basic task accomplished without the need for additional resources (Baker & Nelson, 2005, p. 351)

Considered in the context of the model advanced through this thesis, selective bricolage moves towards the unready-to-hand (Figure 12).

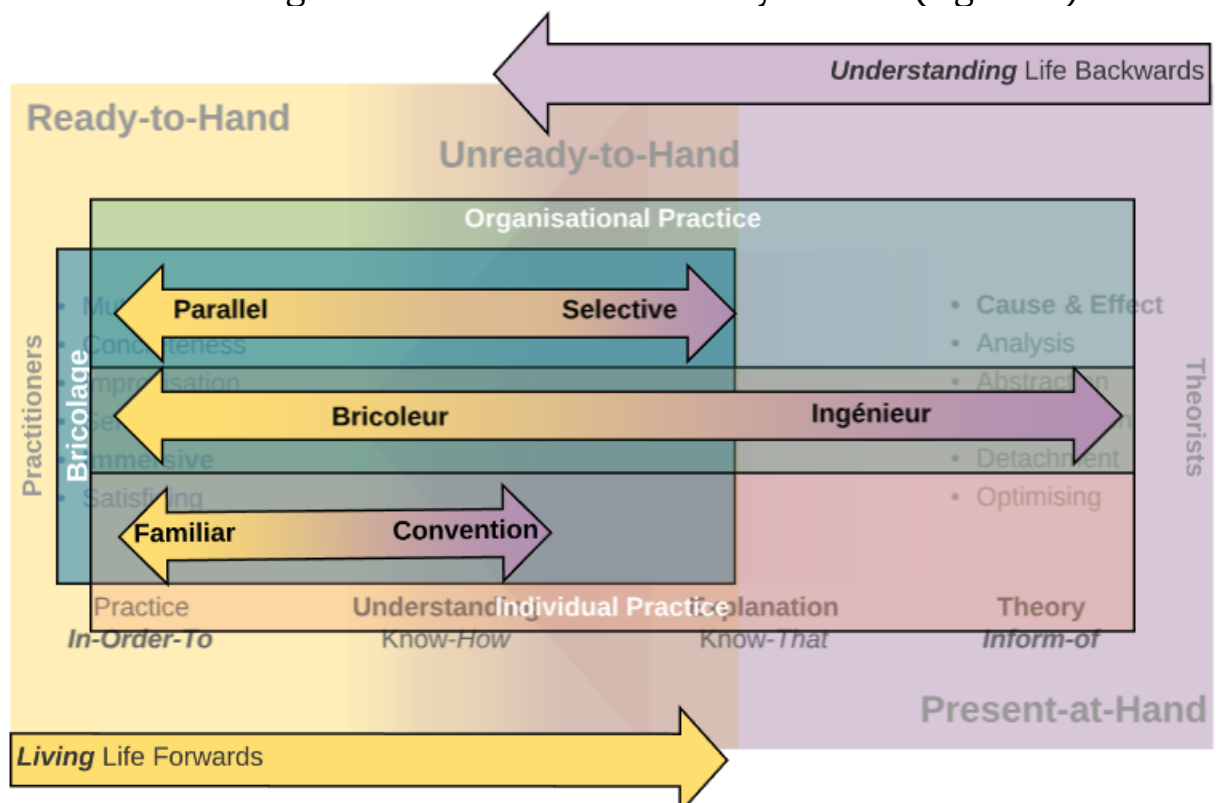


Figure 12. Combining Organisational and Individual Bricolage

environments and limited NGOs capacity for choice (Carson & Kerr, 2010); as a result, having formalised but without much capacity for choosing *how*, many services are likely caught in the middle between parallel and selective bricolage (see Figure 13).

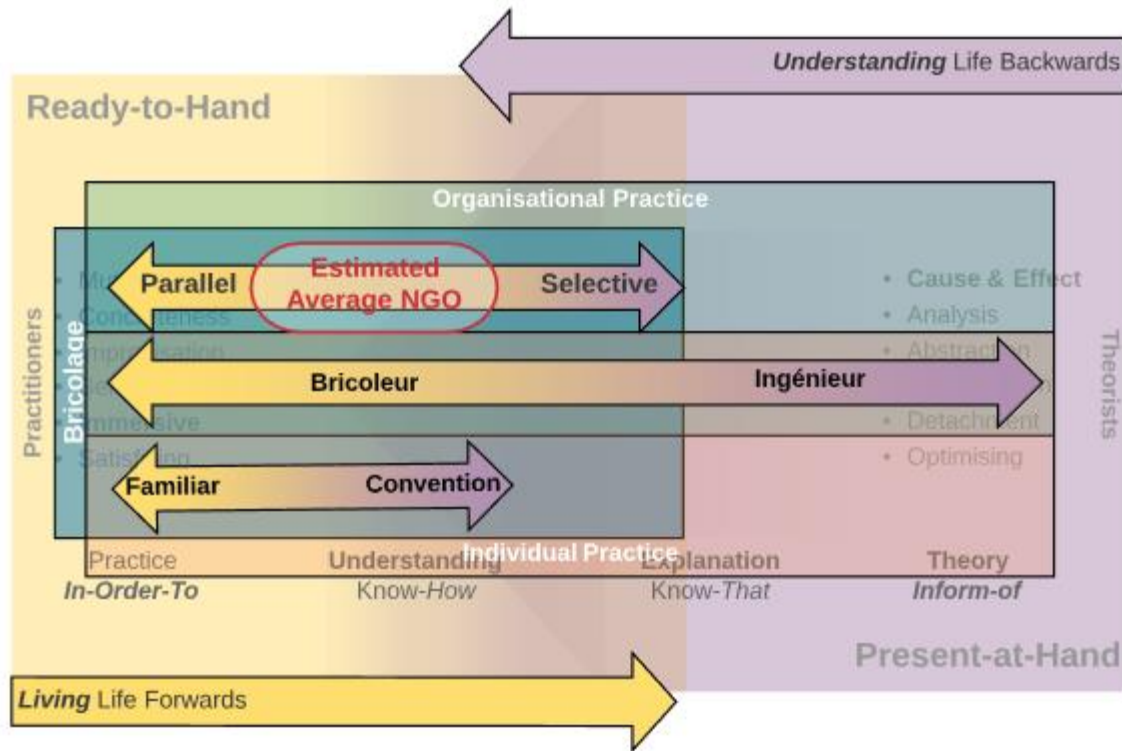


Figure 13. Locating NGOs in Organisational Bricolage

### **Transitioning to Selective Bricolage is Challenging**

Such 'messiness' seems likely to worsen neoliberal complaints against the community sector (see: 'Public Choice Theory' on p.38), yet also compromise staff and service user perceptions of the independence necessary for their engagement with services (Cheverton, 2003; Productivity Commission, 2010), and make it difficult for organisations to take steps towards more controlled selective bricolage – an already challenging feat; once embedded within firms, a strong culture of bricolage is self-reinforcing and difficult to adjust out of:

Having used bricolage to escape the constraints of a penurious resource environment, these firms appeared to have

created a set of interlocking behaviours and expectations that kept them on the path of parallel bricolage (Baker & Nelson, 2005, p. 348).

Some formalisation is likely to create opportunities for practitioner-bricoleurs to more completely protect and enfranchise citizenship at both individual and systemic levels (Baker & Nelson, 2005). The next chapter extracts insights towards deriving a balance of theory and practice suited to the sector's needs, and suggests a new management and governance framework suited to reunifying the sector, and creating more sustainable community services.

## Chapter 9: Reuniting, Renewing, and Re-Energising the Community Sector

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*If you assume that there is no hope,  
you guarantee that there will be no hope.  
If you assume that there is an instinct for freedom,  
that there are opportunities to change things,  
then there is a possibility  
that you can contribute to making a better world.*

- Noam Chomsky, (1997)

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The previous chapter showed that the benefits of unbridled bricolage are limited to the establishment phase of new ventures, and following which slow adoption of more formalised practices – selective bricolage – is key to growth. Whilst community organisations are not *necessarily* interested in growth, Baker and Nelson's findings highlight that the unique differences inherent to practitioner-bricoleurs and theorist-ingénieur are stronger together, but counterproductive when divided (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010; Rönkkö et al., 2014). This chapter begins by briefly highlighting some of the implications of disunity, and concludes by proposing organic leadership and other strategies towards a more unified and sustainable community sector.

### **Re-Legitimation and Reunification**

Bricolage constrains itself within relations between objects, but is unconcerned with (academically contrived) disciplinary boundaries (Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010). Since managerialism incorporates, but community work eschews, professionalisation (Baker & Welter, 2014; Brodtkin, 2011; Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010), and while differences between the



necessary bricolage of community work and the expectations of managerialism continues to widen, perceptions of (il)legitimacy emerges as a problem. Duymedjian & Rüling (2010) suggest that these doubts are most likely to be levied against the bricoleur, but it also follows that the worker-bricoleur, whose *understanding* of the work is, in their view, superior to managerial *explanations* of it (Weick, 2005), are just as likely to doubt the relevance of managerial expertise.

In combination with an increasingly recognisable power differential (Moberg, Blomqvist, & Winblad, 2018), workers are likely to “consciously and consistently” (2005, para. 335) reject the managerial way of doing things, and covertly subvert expectations in order to deliver services in ‘their own way’ (Brodkin, 2011; Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010). Notably, this is recognisable as a presentation of the resistance described by Power’s (2014) study (as introduced in chapter 3), and is likely to further distance manager-theorists from understanding service delivery in the ‘real world’ (Weick, 2005), and frustrate their efforts to prepare for competitive service environments.

Theorist-ingénieurs and practitioner-bricoleurs alike inform one another’s choices by bringing a balance to the sum and its parts. Combining these opens possibilities for community services providers to much better understand the systemic levers behind disadvantage, and by which deliver individual services which target accordingly to better enfranchise citizenship at the individual level, as well as structure effective advocacy to prevent disadvantage at a systemic level.

Selective bricolage provides a solid foundation for reunifying theory and practice within an unready-to-hand mode of engagement (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Heidegger, 1962; Weick, 2005). By providing a basis for mindfully selecting practices to formalise, selective bricolage is likely to not only bring

greater unity to the community sector, but also build upon its existing capacity for creating positive change in the world.

### **Selective Bricolage is a Strategic Advantage**

Parallel bricolage is wholly lived forward practice, without any capacity for backwards understanding and integration (Weick, 2005) and relies completely upon building human experience through trial-and-error. Without formalisation, NGOs have no way to retain the learning fragmented across individual workers and their individual experiences, nor opportunities to facilitate reflection upon them. Parallel bricolage thus constrains both organisational and individual growth, and elides opportunities to retain build, synthesise and retain organisational knowledge.

Selective formalisation reduces the cost of finding workable and effective solutions to the problems at hand (Ricard, 2015) and to sharing these insights, without needing to impinge upon the autonomy and creativity integral to effective to community work (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Brodtkin, 2011; Cheverton, 2003) - or the professional values underlying it.

### **More Sustainable Service Delivery**

More seriously, trial-and-error service delivery does not only imply additional financial costs, but when discussed in the context of the community sector there is a cogent reality that people's lives are 'on the line'. Most community services don't deal with crisis – although some do – but they *all* deliver services to vulnerable people who deserve equal servicing opportunities (La Rose, 2016). In a parallel bricolage-oriented service environment, the quality of services received can only ever be a function of how well-experienced, how reliably/consistently available, and how well-principled their worker; selectively formulated systems can provide these crucial assurances.

*Governance and Safety*

Parallel bricolage relies upon bricoleurs' good-intentions as its main form of governance. Assuming the best of people is an appropriate 'default', but there will of course always be the few who fail to respect the trust endowed upon them. Similarly, no matter how well meaning, people will make mistakes – formalisation will not prevent mistakes, but can mitigate their likelihood, limit their consequences, and facilitate provision of any necessary support appropriate to maintaining the wellbeing (and/or development) worker, or any other party involved. Selective bricolage is much better suited to assuring a minimum standard of ongoing service delivery, and a high standard of personal and professional safety to worker and service recipient, alike.

*Assuring Sustainable, Effective, Services*

Considering their constrained resources, NGOs cannot afford to operate perpetually in parallel bricolage. By moving towards selective bricolage, those NGOs currently more oriented towards parallel bricolage could free up resourcing necessary to support them into the new competitive environments into which they are being forced.

**Respecting and Reclaiming Resistance**

Despite the advantages of partial formalisation through selective bricolage, the community sector nonetheless carries the legacy of managerialisation, and its workers are likely to resist any form of managerialisation (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Brodtkin, 2011; Power, 2014). Resistance to formalisation, or resistance to structure, however, is only as effective in preventing domination as it is in creating an alternative. Failure to articulate organisational responses to competition ensures only that services cannot

compete; failure to stand in cohesion will surely subsume the sector in disintegration.

Some formalisation may be necessary for the community sector to successfully respond to the NDIS and other reforms, but does not infer a call for managerialisation, which, as this thesis shows, is an otherwise altogether hegemonic practice. Selective bricolage demands a much more engaged, and much less authoritarian management than is expected by much of the literature discussing managerialisation (see: Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Gruening, 2001; Metcalfe & Linstead, 2003), and may be realised through organic leadership (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011).

### ***De-Managerialisation through Organic Leadership***

Organic leadership is, in many ways, the exact opposite to managerialism. Somewhat resembling the grass-roots orientation of many community organisations, organic leadership shares power evenly and appoints responsibilities by interest, and leadership by the project (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011). It is well suited to values-oriented organisations, very effective for building trust, and generates a “form of self-control and self-organisation where people have a clear sense of purpose and autonomy within a particular context” (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011, p. 11).

Because organic structures assemble teams by need, interest, and skill, they also provide workers with opportunities to participate in policy level advocacy, thus reconnecting them with the opportunities for resistance otherwise negated by managerial practices. It also values differences between workforce skills, and creates greater capacity for organisational agility by removing barriers between skill-holders and opportunities to apply these in various contexts.

In the terminology of the models presented in this thesis, organic leadership legitimises bricoleur-practitioners and ingénieur-theorists alike as

equals. Together, they identify the unready-to-hand challenges facing their organisations and, informed by theory and practical experience, negotiate the balance between *familiar* practices and the standardising *conventions* upon which a selective form of bricolage unfolds.

Organic leadership seems extremely well suited to transitioning organisations engaged in parallel bricolage through to selective bricolage, without imposing hegemonic constraints or demands upon the workforce. It can be applied as discretely or globally as is appropriate to an organisation's needs; it could, for example, be applied only to a dedicated transition coordination team, or applied to whole departments or organisations<sup>13</sup>.

### ***Other Insights Suggested by this Thesis***

This thesis is constrained to understanding the conceptual basis of growing divisions within the community sector and is therefore most well suited as a basis for future research than for generating immediately applicable insights. Acknowledging the urgency of the community sector's need, however, below are some brief suggestions for how further insights from this thesis could be applied by NGOs and peak bodies to improve internal cohesion.

#### *Connecting Understanding with Explanation*

The biggest insight indicated in this thesis is the need to reconcile theory with practice by connecting understanding with explanation. Several strategies present themselves:

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<sup>13</sup> Like all change, organisations considering a change to organic leadership should plan for graduated steps, rather than adopt new leadership practices immediately en-masse.

*Reflective Practice*

To help workers manage the complex subjectivities, boundary management and self-care considerations inherent to community work, most community and welfare service training recommends regular reflective practice conducted in groups (Askeland & Fook, 2009). In my experience, few organisations adequately embrace this powerful tool, however, those that do are in a strong position to apply reflective practices to improving the connection between understanding and explanation.

Many peak bodies deliver training packages which include competencies in reflective practice, and are thus in an ideal position to lead a sector-wide effort to establish recognisable reflective practices across community services providers, and by which reduce misunderstanding within and between them.

*Mutual Legitimation*

Familiarising the workforce with models of bricolage could act as a basis for recognising stylistic differences (as opposed to interpersonal or professional differences) as the basis of emerging differences between workers and managers, and by which legitimise their different practices, and empower their choices.

The visual model of sensemaking advanced in this thesis may be used as a basis for such a process and provides the opportunity to customise the sequence in which different groups are familiarised with the concepts presented, according to need. Whichever configuration is used, the model should be applied towards fostering improved understanding and appreciation between theorist-ingénieurs and practitioner-bricoleurs.

*Collaborational Coordination*

Weick suggests that the most effective way to bring theorists into understanding, and practitioners into explanation, is to have them solve problems together (Weick, 2005). In their transition towards the NDIS, NGOs have no shortage of problems, so services have a perfect opportunity to reconnect managers with workers by convening groups charged with both identifying new needs and coordinating transitional efforts towards these, comprising of workers and managers, generalists and specialists, alike.

Guided explicitly by worker insights into service-recipients' experiences and perceived needs, and *informed* (i.e. not commandeered) by more abstracted data sources (e.g. policy; system limitations etc.), these groups will intermingle practitioner and theorist experience so that practitioners may "best able to spot the theories that matter in their world of practice" (Weick, 2005, p. 469), and theorists can "spot the situated action they should be puzzling over in their world of theory" (*ibid.*) and between them develop robust solutions which blend theory *as* practice, and practice *as* theory.

To be most effective, participants should have already developed an understanding of the differences between theorist and practitioner mentalities (see: Figure 14, overleaf), and membership should intermix people whose roles mean they typically spend little time with one another. The group should be guarded against domination – perceived or real – by any group or individual, and should encourage participation from all perspectives across the organisation. Access to the group should be as open as possible, and because workers are likely to be intimidated by power differentials within these groups, senior staff should recuse themselves from chairpersonship, group members should be held as equals within the context of the group, and any necessary authorities delegated thoughtfully.

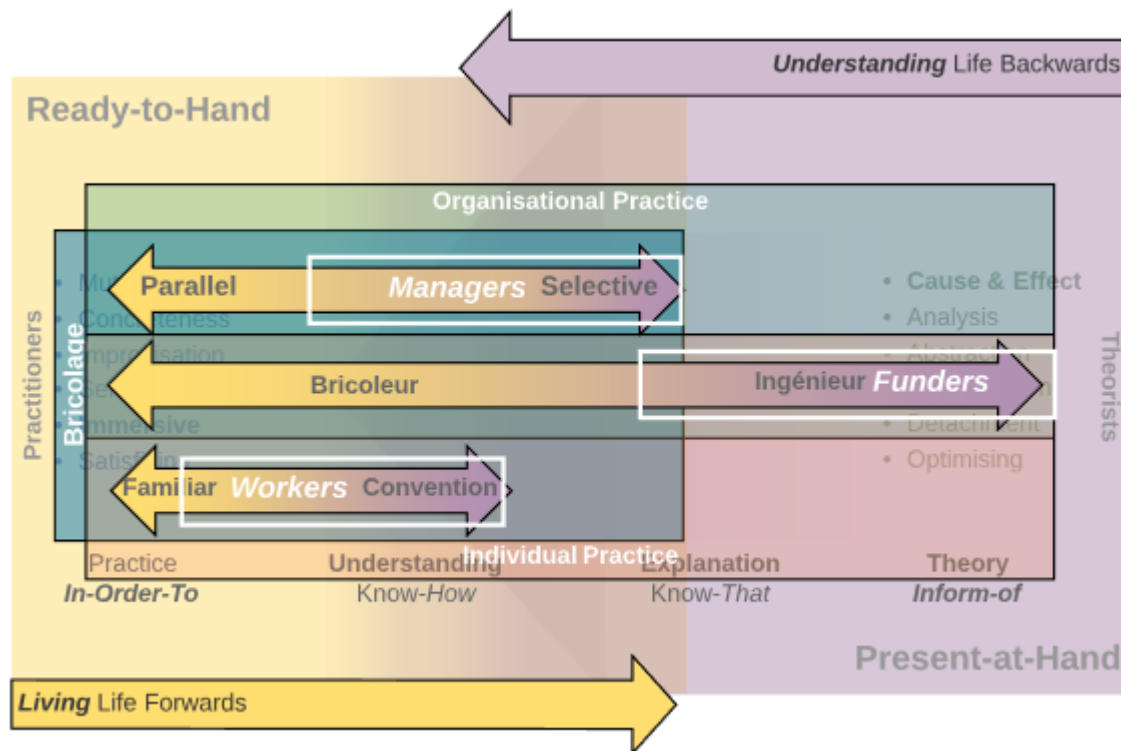


Figure 14. Locating the Actors within Sensemaking and Bricolage

Although these suggestions may appear radical, I have previously employed a similar model with great success, and many of its bases mirror organic leadership (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011).

### Re-Taking Language

Informed with the knowledge that transformational discourse has corrupted sensemaking through language, peak bodies can lead an awareness campaign and facilitate a process of reflection and scrutiny of the language used within, and in relation to, the sector, its underlying assumptions, their accuracy and their consistency with sector and organisational perspectives and values. Poststructuralist literature could also be consulted to develop a ‘toolkit’ for workers to better recognise and counter malicious sensegiving practices. The model presented in this thesis could also be used in combination with models of reflective practice for implementation both at a sector-level (during conference sessions, for example) and within organisational contexts.



### **Chapter Conclusion**

Community sector managers are often torn between their responsibilities and values; in my experience, most don't join the sector to *be* a manager, they come to the community sector to make a difference, only after which become a manager. They have no passion for reporting, but do what must be done to keep the service operating (and making a difference).

This chapter presented selective bricolage as a way for community organisations to bring practitioner-bricoleurs and theorist-ingénieurs closer together, and proposed that organic leadership may be applied to mitigate barriers to its implementation, and to better harness the unique advantages accessible to the different modalities. The following chapter concludes this thesis with a reflection on the implications of these findings to community sector sustainability, and makes recommendations for future research.

### **Chapter 10: Thesis Conclusion**

Neoliberalism has focussed more upon forcing providers and the populace into new mindsets and models than it has on supporting and facilitating their transition into these new ways of being. By forcing different styles into interdependence but without any support to prevent arising miscommunication and misperception, managerialisation has erected a barrier between service delivery and service administration practices and between the people who enact them, leaving workers “confused, overwhelmed, unsuccessful and under siege” (Power, 2014, p. 198).

Constrained within decreasing real-funding, managers and workers alike are under increasing pressure to deliver more with less (Carson & Kerr, 2010; Mendes, 2009), leaving them with much less time and headspace to maintain connections between them. Whilst ultimately sharing objectives, how managers and workers define these and the path towards them is likely to become increasingly – but non-obviously – divergent; since transformational discourse creeps neoliberal ideals into existing language though, workers and managers may be unlikely to recognise it as the source of the growing distance between them and find themselves increasingly in conflict (Power, 2014).

Transformational discourse effectively subverts cooperation by muddling comprehension, so meaningful differences in organisational culture and practices are also likely to result, effecting inconsistent and incongruent organisational practices and demands, and eventuating ontological dissonance upon workers who are engaged by services towards protecting citizenship but find themselves inexplicably but increasingly obviously complicit in neoliberalisation, but devoid of effective capacity for resistance (Alston, 2015; Perkins, 2008; Power, 2014).

The community sector workforce is concerned with social justice (Cheverton, 2003), so these abjected workers (Rizq, 2013) are likely to intentionally resist neoliberalised practices, but in their increasing organisational disunity are more likely to in practice resist organisational managerialism (as artefacts of neoliberalism) than coordinate a systematic response against subjectification (Power, 2014; Scott, 1990). That is, resistance that would have previously manifested in policy discourse ‘against’ the government is instead internalised within organisations. Government counter-resistance to efforts of resistance to neoliberalisation re-locates resistance away from funders and within the fundee (Brodkin, 2011; Power, 2014). In their subjectified positions, however, resistance may not be overt, and instead may manifest in other ways, including inaction, disobedience, or subversion (Brodkin, 2011; Power, 2014; Scott, 1990), frustrating organisational commitments to funders, as well as their capacity for ‘bigger picture’ re-positioning, as is necessary for the NDIS.

In this context, managers are unlikely to be able to sustain adherence to intensifying funder requirements (Carson & Kerr, 2010) and or coordinate effective re-positioning for the NDIS (Browne, 2016; Macdonald & Charlesworth, 2016; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012). As pressure mounts, managers may see little alternative but to exercise their coercive power to bring about urgent change, but in so doing increase subordination and worsen worker resistance to process - inasmuch further incapacitating organisational resistance to subjectification (Power, 2014; Scott, 1990) (see also: Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011; Mendes, 2009).

Due to ontological dissonance and fracturing organisational cultures resulting from re-sited resistance, community services providers are systematically and strategically disadvantaged for preparing or enacting

sustainable entries into competitive markets. Moreover, neoliberal governmentalities have actively suppressed the community sector's capacity for advocacy (Mendes, 2009; Power, 2014) and through constrictive funding arrangements have strained workloads and organisations' ability for strategic foresight and agility (Carson & Kerr, 2010; Power, 2014). As a cash-for-care competitive model, the NDIS is the epitome of welfare-state neoliberalisation and its fee-for-service programs, and the competitive markets seem likely to further amplify disunity as workers' employment becomes more precarious and dependent upon competitive success between peers.

### **Conclusionary Reflections**

When I began this research, I had assumed that community organisations and government funders were working towards essentially the same outcomes – improved social engagement. I'd assumed that incongruences between service realities and reporting requirements reflected a miscomprehension of community work's realities, by well-meaning but nonetheless distant civil servants; I thought that the expectation of efficacy and efficiency were reasonable attempts to judiciously manage public expenditure – albeit with, again, an insufficient understanding of why community work is hard to measure.

Similarly, I thought that the resistance I observed (as both a manager and a worker) to quantification of service outcomes reflected a misunderstanding at the service level of the importance of good and effective governance, and the relevance of measurable service outcomes towards achieving the best outcomes for service users. I thought the growing distance I observed between managers and workers, and outright disconnection from organisational directors (in each case, again, from both perspectives) was a symptom of compounding misrecognition of these, and resistance to

practices a result of its combination with the typically laissez faire management style of many NGOs. Each of which I felt to have become cultural norms of the sector, and norms which, were we to survive, my experience in the sector led me to believe needed to be reflected upon in the context of what's best for service users, both now and into the future.

Discovering through this research the extent of the differences between neoliberalisation and the welfare state has, therefore, been confronting – personally, professionally, and as a researcher. I started this research looking for a way to improve funder understanding of the realities of community work, and of workers to understand the benefits of better governance; the relevance of each is now in question. The literature seems to suggest that, contrary to my prior assumptions, as the dominant paradigm within the Australian context, neoliberalisation does not share the same fundamental democratic values as community services and even goes so far as to advocate for more *limited* democracy “less amenable to public dispute” (Johns, 2002, para. 14). Reacquainting mutual understanding does not, therefore, appear to be the core problem.

Rather than negate the relevance of this research, however, these findings amplify its importance. The democratic role of NGOs in Australia has never been of more importance than it is today, but many are in serious danger (Browne, 2016; see also: Connelley, 2016; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012) and have for some time had difficulties adapting to a new environment (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012). Their ability to survive depends upon their ability to organise a response; of which, most workers and service managers are, in my experience, only too aware yet fettered by an overwhelming sense of powerlessness. Some hope things will simply ‘sort themselves out’, whilst others hope for a late and substantive change in policy direction.

Decades of crippling neoliberal reforms show, however, that NGOs cannot rely upon a change in policy-atmosphere and must, and in some way, start articulating responses to the neoliberal agenda; but so too must they be ready to simply survive what is likely to be a period of intense competition. Both present a host of practical challenges, and danger of services 'losing their way'. For the sake of their services, service-users, and broader democratic process, NGOs must find a way to reconcile survival with their core values (Cheverton, 2003) and key role of democratic enablement (Onyx & Emerita, 2016; Staples, 2007; Wright et al., 2011).

### **Research Contributions**

*Resolving* challenges in the community sector requires much more than a thesis of this limited scope can accommodate; however, by synthesising diverse literature it offers new insights and provides a conceptual framework as the basis upon which to conduct empirical research. By connecting these in a visual framework, this thesis is itself an act of living forward and understanding backwards. It combines over a decade of lived forward experience in the community sector, with extensive reading of diverse literatures applied in backwards understanding. By combining these in hermeneutic review and converting the concepts into moveable graphics, I combined present-at-hand methods and ready-to-hand tools, to reconcile my understanding of challenges in community services practice, with explanations of its neoliberalising contexts.

This research furthers Power's (2014) research by demonstrating psychological and sensemaking bases for resistance relocated within the organisation. It builds upon this by connecting cognitive and behavioural accounts of sensemaking to draw further conceptual insights into communication and power dynamics within social groups. Synthesised in the context of neoliberalisation and its subjectification of citizenship (Power,

2014; Shaver, 2002; Staples, 2007), managerialisation of the community sector (Carson & Kerr, 2010; Mendes, 2009; Power, 2014), and emerging NDIS, these coalesce to present a theoretical picture of the present position of the community sector from which to both inform both further research and community organisation choices.

By connecting Weick and Lévi-Strauss, my research also brings together prominent theories and perspectives from two writers not typically associated with one another, and steps towards a more cohesive understanding of sensemaking. By presenting these models visually, this thesis also provides a more accessible representation of Weick and Lévi-Strauss' theories.

### **Where to from here**

My analysis finds that workers are likely to be motivated to resist neoliberalisation, and that they are likely to do so by resisting management as the site of managerialisation. Resisting the *site* of neoliberalisation is not, however, the same as resisting its *drivers*, and in this context is likely to prove counterproductive by decreasing managerial capacity to both coordinate organisational resistance at policy levels and ensure due representation in the civil discourse of the issues affecting service-users (themselves also disadvantaged by neoliberalisation).

### **Future Research**

The broad conceptual basis of my research presents many opportunities for future research of more refined depth; including broader efforts to expand, refine, and empirically test connections between presented concepts, and narrower studies evaluating their real-life applicability specifically within the community sector. Suggested studies include:

***Sensemaking and Bricolage in the Community Sector***

Informed by the synthesis presented in this thesis, future research is more suitably informed to embark upon qualitative research informing a better understanding of sensemaking in the community sector. Guided by this research, however, future research should also attend to the emerging difference between embodied and cognitive forms of sensemaking. Qualitative interviews remain appropriate to understand lived experience of reforms, and how people articulate sensemaking through narrative, this method should supplement other distinct research efforts to gain insights into what workers *think*, and (separately) what they *do*:

- Behavioural insights should investigate workers' 'doing' of behavioural sensemaking and their use of bricolage by using ethnographic observational research (with particular attention to team and organisational meetings, and in-field service delivery). Since community work involves vulnerable people and sensitive situations, this arm of my recommended research notably presents important but navigable ethical considerations<sup>iv</sup>
- Studies into cognitivised sensemaking are well suited to quantitative surveys of worker and manager experiences. Survey design should be informed by the insights presented in this thesis

***Testing the Model***

The next natural step for the conceptual model presented in this research is to test the perceived connections presented between sensemaking and bricolage literatures. Survey/s testing the properties and dimensions associated with different modalities can be used to gather data upon which statistical analyses can be applied to test expected associations within and between the perspectives, frameworks and theories synthesised into this thesis. Recommended research groupings include:



- Concrete and abstracted mindsets, and activities associated with ‘living forward’ and ‘understanding backwards’
- Ready-to-hand, unready-to-hand, and present-at-hand modes of engagement
- Roethlisberger’s A and B relations (1977)
- Practitioner and theorist modalities
  - Other research could also consider the consistency between Weick’s sensemaking-perspective and other sensemaking-perspectives, such as CMS (Aromaa et al., 2018) and the summary presented by Maitlis and Christianson (2014)
- Bricoleur and Ingénieur styles
- Features associated with different modes of bricolage, including parallel and selective, and familiar and convention-based typologies.

### ***Mapping the Community Sector and its Neoliberalisation***

Defining the community sector for the purposes of this research was exceptionally difficult. Future research will benefit from a more clarified definition of community services and the contexts in which they operate.

#### *Defining Community Services*

Efforts to define the sector could advance the concept provided in ‘Figure 2. The Community Sector’s Role in Citizenship’ (p. 27), but should remain diligently *descriptive*: definitions should delineate between service typologies, but should take care to not deliver prescriptive definitions which may be used to impose inflexible definitional boundaries upon service providers, as has been previously used in attempts to silence the community sector (see: Mendes, 2009; Staples, 2007; Tim Thornton, 2003).

### *Defining Community Work*

Research describing community services as above is a ‘top-down’ endeavour, and should be complemented by a ‘bottom-up’ exploration of the nature of community work as a practice, which should seek to answer the following questions:

- What is community services, as defined by its key stakeholders (as identified in complementing research)
- What is the ‘real’ work of community services? How does this vary?
  - Has community services work changed? How?
- What are the core skills and qualifications of a community worker in practice?
  - How does this vary across sub sectors?

### *Managerialisation of the Community Sector*

Research exploring the pace and process of managerialising the community sector may provide valuable insights into the process of transformational discourse. Document analyses including government documents (e.g. call for tender, service reports, funding agreements) and NGO documents, including annual reports, internal policies, minutes, and emails, and correspondence between government and NGOs may provide valuable insights into relevant discursive and linguistic tools employed through this process, and may provide further insights into typical responses and consequences.

These findings may be enhanced by other research exploring mindset differences in the sector, as described above.

### ***Translating Qualitative and Quantitative Practices***

Workers are likely to be more receptive to qualitative measures (Meagher & Healy, 2003; Power, 2014), but funders and, under the NDIS, prospective service-users, may find metrics more useful to evaluate differences between

services. There is, however, precedent for evaluating service outcomes qualitatively, as was the case in the Personal Helpers and Mentors Scheme (which also robustly anonymised service-user data). Future research should seek collaboration with the Department of Social Services to apply their experience of this measurement towards informing a sector-led attempt to develop qualitative measures which may be converted into metrics for more objective service evaluation. If undertaken by a major peak, or incorporating measures of social purpose, this research has potential to create a measurement standard applicable only to non-profit services, thereby partially compensating for the previously discussed advantages held by for-profit providers.

### ***Exploring Parallels in the Literature***

Parallels between sensemaking and bricolage literatures posed other striking questions worthy of further investigation:

#### *Connecting Weick and Lévi-Strauss'*

Understanding how two very different theorists arguably came to arrive at seemingly similar ontological accounts without sharing many common references or research interests, could provide rich insights of benefit to many literatures including psychological sciences, anthropology, sensemaking and organisational development. Future research to explore these parallels is warranted and could start with analysis of the references cited by each writer, and comparison of the key influences upon these.

#### *Exploring Connections beyond the Literature*

The consistently binary differences which presented themselves between the models reviewed in this research (itself of potential research interest) suggests possible connections with other literatures beyond the scope of this

research. Possible similarities between procedural memory and more concrete modalities of sensemaking, and between declarative memory and abstracted modes of sensemaking, for example, may provide uniquely valuable insights for both the organisational development and psychological science literatures.

### **Applying Bourdieu**

Bourdieu, who like Weick was influenced by Heidegger, but unlike Weick also influenced by Lévi-Strauss, he was interested in power dynamics in society and recognised language as a mechanism of power. His theories provide an alternative framework which future research may apply to understanding the broader context of the community sector within neoliberalisation, outputting different but likely compatible insights suitable for later synthesis with this and other research.

### **Conclusion**

Decades of government neoliberalism has sought to impose subjectification, and undermined community organisations' capacity to protect the social rights underlying citizenship. It has eroded and delegitimised institutional protections against authoritarianism, weakened social safety nets beyond efficacy, and dramatically expanded the gap between rich and poor.

My research expands knowledge of the community sector in the context of neoliberalisation by synthesising extensive literatures, towards a basic framework for examining the effects of worker ontologies within a neoliberalising welfare state and using which suggests escalating differences between community sector workers and managers as the basis for lacklustre preparedness for impending paradigmatic change to funding regimes.

Consolidating and building upon previous research, it finds that neoliberal managerialism constrains community sector resistance by relocating it within

organisations and effects an ontological assault upon the community sector workforce by dividing managers and workers through performativity, and isolating individuals in competition.

In conclusion, this conceptualisation of sensemaking in the neoliberalising community sector research finds that community organisations are systemically underequipped for the NDIS and suggests that survival of the sector and its role in assuring democratic engagement depends upon a wilful shift of consciousness. Whilst beyond its scope to propose a cohesive solution to this end, this research offers several immediate interventions appropriate for immediate execution and presents a wealth of opportunities for future research and a consolidated research base from which to launch these.

The 20<sup>th</sup>-century was characterised by conflict to settle the rights by which we define ourselves. In their next steps, community organisations and their workers answer an important question: are we subject or citizen?

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*Once the movement no longer clings tenaciously to the ideology of 'structurelessness', it will be free to develop those forms of organisation best suited to its healthy functioning.*

*This does not mean that we should go to the other extreme and blindly imitate the traditional forms of organisation.*

*But neither should we blindly reject them all.*

*Some traditional techniques will prove useful, albeit not perfect; some will give us insights into what we should not do to obtain certain ends with minimal costs to the individuals in the movement...*

*But before we can proceed to experiment intelligently, we must accept the idea that there is nothing inherently bad about structure itself - only its excessive use.*

- Freeman, 1970

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## End Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Many of the authors presented do comment minimally and broadly on some characteristics of the sector, but none of which comprehensively and, arguably, in each case not without exceptions. I tried hard to arrive at a standard definition of services, but in all cases found inherent contextual dependencies which rendered their use not suitable as an overarching term. I also contacted the Department of Social Services to ask if there is any ‘official’ guidance/determination on program and service taxonomy, whether this differs by jurisdictions, and whether from a funding perspective there’s any difference between a program and a service. The Department was, unfortunately, unwilling to assist.

<sup>ii</sup> I built this model as a representation of my intuitive impression of the community sector, informed by my experience working within it and my academic reading. I have since shown and discussed this model with an academic specialising in community work, a social work student, and a community worker in the mental health and youth work space. All agreed the model as consistent with how they understand community work.

<sup>iii</sup> Especially interesting because the IPA’s has a shared history with the current LNP government and is often portrayed as retaining a close relationship with the LNP. The IPA refute this connection, yet has four LNP senators, “several state MPs and members with regular media gigs” (Farrelly, 2016, para. 6). Tony Abbott – then future Prime Minister – referred to the IPA as “freedom’s discerning friend”, whilst he attended their 70<sup>th</sup> birthday gala at which Rupert Murdoch, the most powerful media mogul in Australia and quite possibly the world, gave the keynote address. Also in attendance were Gina Rinehart (the powerful mining magnate), Cardinal George Pell, later Attorney General George Brandis, and talk-radio host Alan Jones (Farrelly, 2016; Kelly, 2016; Tim Thornton, 2003).

<sup>iv</sup> Research model insights may be available through the Partners in Recovery program, which incorporated diverse research strategies to evaluate a wide variety of service iterations across the country; and through the Personal Helpers and Mentors Scheme which, unlike other programs, incorporated qualitative and anonymised measurements to assess service outcomes.

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