

Change in social capital requirements for implementing NRM policy through communities-of-place

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The 1944-46 Rural Reconstruction Commission and the 1975-77 Commonwealth-State Collaborative Soil Conservation Study focused on networks, norms, and relationships (social capital) for communities-of-place at two levels: the state/territory jurisdictions and the national government. The 1978-86 Australian Environmental Statistics Project envisaged social capital flows and formation within and between communities-of-place at five levels: local government areas, their aggregates as intra-state biophysical regions, the Murray-Darling Basin as a multi-state region, the state/territory jurisdictions, and the nation.

The 1997-2002 National Land & Water Resource Audit also identifies regional communities-of-place at intra-state and multi-state levels; but goes further by recognising needs for social capital formation below government jurisdictions. The 2006 Population and Housing Census introduces a new statistical geography of some 300, 000 to 400, 000 Mesh Blocks, relatively close in number to the place names within the national gazetteer.

The four examples seem sufficient to demonstrate Australia's perceptions of its communities-of-place hierarchy have changed significantly in recent past. Morphological boxes showing the upper limit of communication nodes and ties are constructed for each example. The paper therefore illustrates change in the social capital requirements consequent to shifting NRM policy implementation from government to governance.