In the first place, the community attachment pattern observed in the entire series of field studies carried out from 1979 to 1985 (Figure 5.1), and the two extensive postal surveys of the whole study area showed up no significant change over time. Overlay of the community attachment patterns from the two postal surveys from two totally separate and independent samples of households in fact corresponded so well that it was possible to combine the two to increase the accuracy of the plot. The stability of the social and affective spatial patterns between 1982/83 and 1992/93 relative to the rapid change in those for shopping and business have already been demonstrated. In addition, detailed comparative studies are available over time for two field study areas (Gilbert Valley and Southern Yorke Peninsula), with additional evidence from one less detailed study (Wakefield Plains). In the latter case a detailed study directed by the writer in the then Wakefield Plains District Council (Smailes and Clermont, 1994) was replicated for the (enlarged) Wakefield Regional Council by a consultant firm, confirming the earlier results, and noting a strengthening of allegiance to the smaller towns (EcoConnect 2006, 9). Figure 9.5 provides an empirical example from a comparison of the 1984 and 2000 Southern Yorke Peninsula (SYP) surveys.

Fig. 9.6   Location of the three clubs, societies and organisations most important to female household heads, Southern Yorke Peninsula 2000
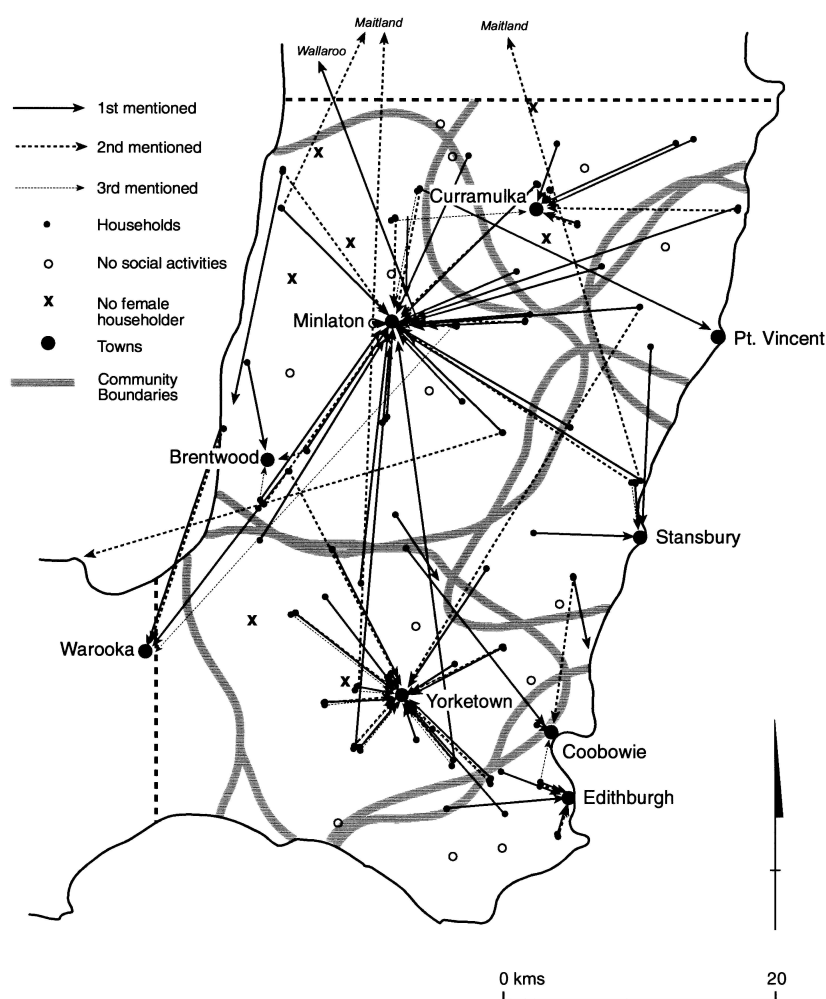
Source: author's Southern Yorke Peninsula survey, 2000

To show what this stated allegiance means in terms of social interaction, the male and female heads of each household gave details of their participation in up to three clubs and societies they each considered most important. For the males, the great majority of participation took place within their community of residence, except for the fairly extensive influence of the Port Vincent sailing club. The pattern for females is more interesting (Figure 9.6) since it shows firstly an increase in female social activity compared with 1984, and secondly an emerging tendency to cross-community society membership. For women the bulk of formal social interaction still takes place in one's own community; but in small communities such as Curramulka and Port Vincent, part of this interaction is directed to clubs in nearby larger centres, indicating a potential for the gradual upward transfer of a sense of belonging and identity.

An even stronger indication of the stability of social catchments and community identity is provided by the writer's decennial series of studies in the Gilbert Valley, which illustrate three principles of great importance to the argument presented later in this chapter. First, the spatial patterns of community identification have remained stable. Second, a sense of belonging, and degrees of social interaction, are found at several hierarchical levels, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Third, there is evidence of gradual transference of social allegiance upward in this spatial hierarchy, *without* the loss of the basic local identity at the lower levels.

Shopping catchment areas were originally defined in 1970 for the two main towns in the Valley (Riverton and Saddleworth) and this area was re-surveyed in 1980, 1990 and 2001 using practically identical sampling methodology – giving a time series of field data likely to be very rare in Australia. On each occasion, the spatial limits of the shopping catchments and the social loyalties within them have remained practically identical, both for the two main communities and their subsidiary neighbourhoods. Figure 9.7A shows the originally delimited outer boundary of the shopping catchments of Riverton and Saddleworth, in relation to the four former LGAs that since 1997 have been amalgamated into a single larger Council (the D.C. of Clare and Gilbert Valleys). The two closely spaced main towns occupy a central position in the Valley, each of them having a smaller settlement within its catchment: Manoora to the north, and Tarlee to the south. The latter two places have few remaining economic functions, but still retain a strong place-identity. Figure 9.7B shows the first and second-listed answers to the question

> Please name the country towns or localities where you and your family now carry out most of your social , sporting, church and visiting activities. (If there is more than one, put them in order of importance, with the most important first.)

This Figure is particularly useful, for it shows that the outline of the social areas has remained unchanged since 1970 vis-à-vis the neighbouring towns of Kapunda, Eudunda, Hamley Bridge and Balaklava. However, from these stable bases social interaction links have also developed upward through the hierarchy, from Tarlee and Manoora to Riverton and Saddleworth respectively, and from the latter two places to the regional centres of Clare to the north and Gawler to the south.

Fig. 9.7 The Gilbert Valley, South Australia:
(A) Riverton and Saddleworth   social and shopping catchment areas, defined
1970 and re-surveyed 2001;
(B) Places identified by rural householders as socially most important, 2001
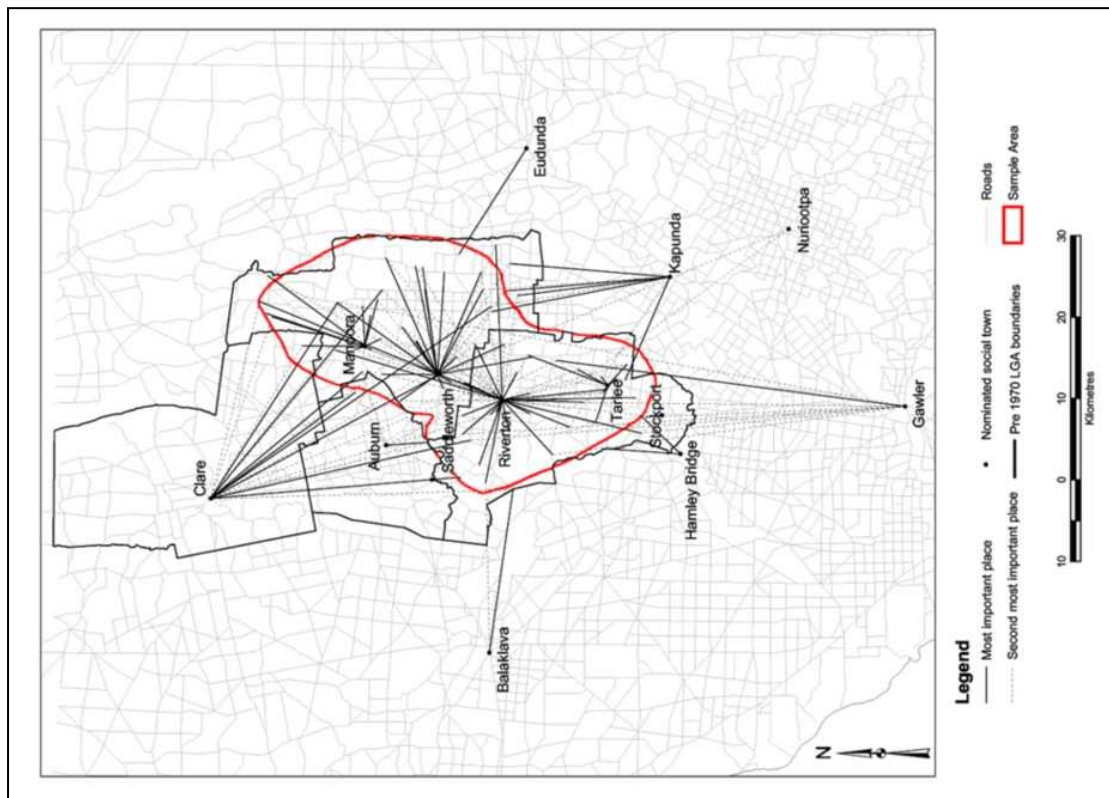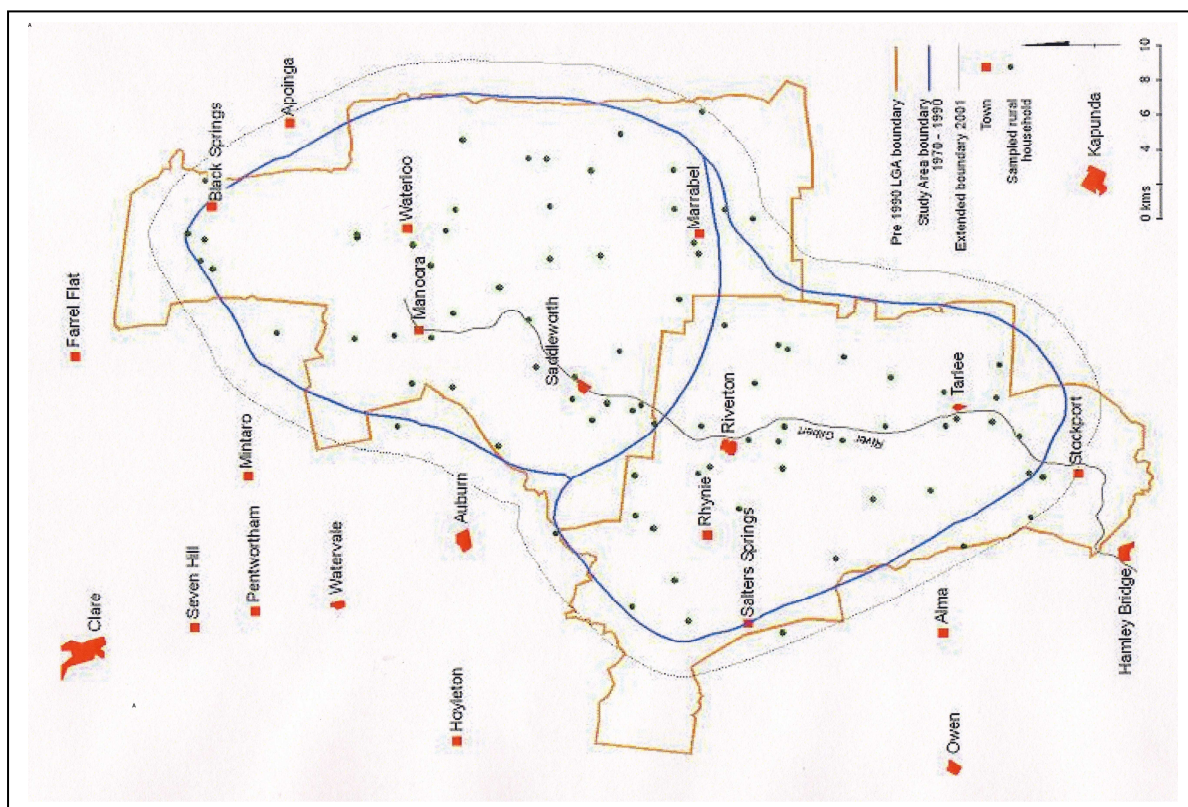
Source (both maps) author's surveys, 1970 and 2001

Business leakage

1. Up to 1993 business and shopping habits were changing much faster than social patterns., and the smaller rural communities were being weakened by increasing business leakage to larger centres. Has this trend intensified?

The Gilbert Valley case study also provides a clear demonstration of how business leakage to larger towns has increased over time. The area within which people regard Riverton and/or Saddleworth as their local shopping centre has remained unchanged, as noted. However, the proportion of the local shopping dollar spent within this spatial framework has steadily fallen, while the rising competitive power of larger towns has increased and been exacerbated by the loss of some significant local businesses. Table 9.4 demonstrates the effects of this process. In the case of Saddleworth, the main growth in competition came from Clare to the north, and for Riverton from the very rapidly growing centre of Gawler to the south. In 1970 both Riverton and Saddleworth appear to have retained about 60-70% of the potential business from their service areas, but lost ground at each successive survey. The more rapid rise in leakage in Saddleworth arose from that town's gradual functional specialisation in producer goods and services, and Riverton's in retail and consumer services.

Table 9.4 Business leakage and local spending in Riverton and Saddleworth trade areas, 1970-2001. Percentages based on reported location of dollars spent most weeks.

Destination of spending	Community of residence							
	Saddleworth				Riverton			
	1970	1980	1990	2001	1970	1980	1990	2001
Retained in own trade area	59	52	38	23	71	62	51	46
Adelaide & N. suburbs	21	20	19	28	15	21	22	13
Gawler	4	9	9	9	10	11	19	25
Clare	2	7	15	16	0	2	3	4
Other	14	12	19	24	4	4	5	12
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Authors' field surveys, 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2001.

There has been no new retail Census since 1992, and the only other available field data on change in leakage since 1993 comes from the Wakefield Plains study for the much larger town of Balaklava. In the week prior to the 1994 survey, residents of Wakefield Plains incurred 31% of the total reported shopping expenses in Balaklava. In the EcoConnect re-survey of 2005, the equivalent figure for Balaklava was only 16%; however, in the meantime the area and population of the Council had expanded by over 40% through amalgamation, so the figures are no more than indicative. In any event, there is no doubt that the field data are strongly consistent with the tendency described earlier for shopping and business habits to gravitate up the urban hierarchy much more quickly than social interaction.

From localism towards regionalism

2. A slow spontaneous tendency has been noted for a sense of belonging to move up the hierarchy of social units from small neighbourhoods to communities, and from small communities to neighbouring larger ones. Is there evidence that the sense of belonging is moving up to a still broader scale?

The above question is vital in developing the argument for 'redefining the local'. If spontaneous upward trends were emerging over the past decade the task of redefining the local to fit the new conditions of the 21st Century would be made easier, without losing the vital driving force and motivation to survive that localism and place attachment have been shown to engender. I have already pointed to the evidence, described in detail elsewhere (Smailes and Hugo 2003, Smailes 2002), that the strong localism in the Gilbert Valley is expressed at a series of different levels, and that over time a spontaneous tendency has emerged there for social loyalties to extend upward to a higher spatial level, without abandoning the most local loyalties. A number of other signs exist of potential broader linkages between the close-knit but socially over-strained small rural communities of the State.

Fig. 9.8 Location of the three households with which the most frequent visits with friends are exchanged, Southern Yorke Peninsula 2000.
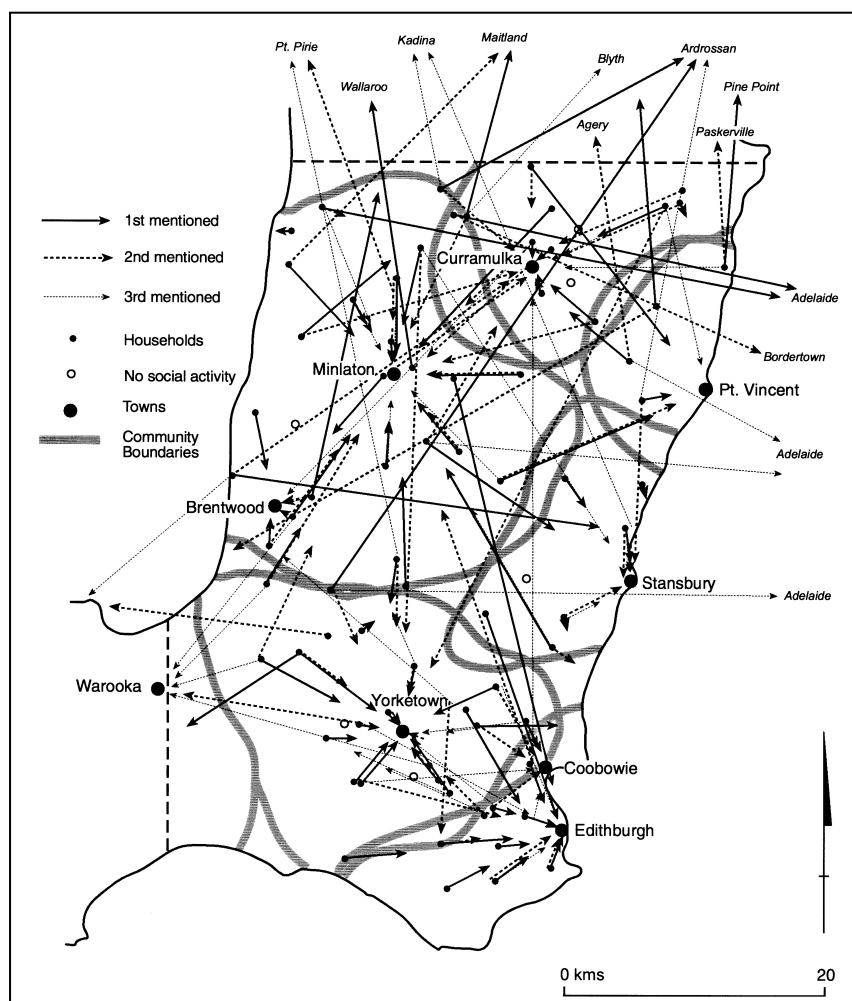
Source: author's Southern Yorke Peninsula survey, 2000

First, the increased personal mobility and better accessibility has expanded the range of informal personal visiting and friendships substantially. In Southern Yorke Peninsula, the 1984 study (Figure 5.11) showed that these informal patterns already linked up adjacent communities, and linked the region with Adelaide. In the 2000 re-survey (Figure 9.8) the proportion of informal contact visits outside the community of residence was about the same (40-45%) but the pattern of visiting ranged over a wider area. Visits to households outside the surveyed area doubled, from 9% to 18%.

In the same study, to further investigate whether localism is developing beyond the immediate community of residence, respondents were asked directly, in both 1984 and 2000, to indicate whether they felt a sense of belonging to any wider grouping. It was established that by 2000, three quarters (76%) of respondents felt they did belong to a wider district or regional grouping, as against 62% in 1984 (Table 9.5).

Table 9.5 Perception of a sense of belonging to a wider region beyond one's own local community, 1984 and 2000.

	1984		2000	
Type of wider region (if any)	No.	%	No.	%
Does not belong to any wider grouping	37	38.1	19	24.1
Broad regional area (eg, Southern Yorke Pen.)	48	49.5	40	50.6
Former or present District Council area	2	2.1	1	1.3
Group of adjacent towns	4	4.1	4	5.1
Nearby larger town	6	6.2	10	12.7
Other	0	0.0	5	6.3
Total	97	100.0	79	100.0

Source: 1984 and 2000 SYP Survey Data

As to the nature of the wider grouping, in both years about half the respondents nominated a regional name, such as Yorke Peninsula or Southern Yorke Peninsula. The main change was an increase of felt belonging to a larger nearby town in addition to one's own community, similar to the Gilbert Valley.

Fusing of labour markets

A further noticeable trend linking adjacent communities, emerging particularly from the Gilbert Valley and Wakefield plains studies in the old core settlement zone, has been a great increase in the volume of cross-commuting between country towns. Such an interaction pattern is bound to build up networks and linkages between communities. Throughout the State many local jobs in small towns were lost through rationalisation of public sector employment in the 1980s, but in the core zone, the pooling of labour markets means that the loss is not the problem it presents in a remote area like Eyre Peninsula, with its low population density. In the Lower North a net rural population density (excluding towns) of between 40 and 60 households (125 to 165 persons) per 100 Km^2, and town spacing of 10-25 Km. apart, gives

potential niches for many types of small business and self-employment. There have long been substantial cross-commuting flows between the numerous townships, and in recent years these have intensified. Some 26% of employed residents in Riverton and 24% in Saddleworth worked outside their own towns in 2001. Householder estimates of average estimated travel time to all the towns shown on Figure 9.7B, plus Tanunda in the Barossa, was no more than 40 minutes. Commuting to the CBD itself had become prohibitively time-consuming with an average estimated driving time of 90 minutes, and only two people from the 186 sampled households made the daily trip in 2001. The huge expansion of viticulture and wine production in South Australia over the past 10-15 years has generated many jobs, and allows for commuting from the Gilbert Valley towns to both the Clare and Barossa Valleys. The major change in commuting between 1990 and 2001, in fact, was not southward but northward towards Clare and the expanding viticulture region around it, attracting just under half of the 2001 commuters.

Additionally, a new chicken farming enterprise offering a number of unskilled jobs was being established north of Riverton at the time of survey. A large glassworks was also under construction on a "green-field" site near Roseworthy, between Tarlee and Gawler, to produce bottles for the burgeoning wine industry. This plant will be well within commuting range for the whole Gilbert Valley and parts of Wakefield Plains, and should offer many opportunities. Thus, rather than functioning as isolated, small and self-contained job markets, the employment fields of the various local communities have gradually overlapped into a broader-scale, more complex job market. It has not been necessary for every town to be locally self-sufficient in jobs.

The early impact of electronic communications

3. By 1993 neither social nor business patterns in rural areas had yet been much affected by the electronic communication media. The 1992 Arthur D. Little consultant's report on the urgent need for restructuring in the State does not even mention the Internet. How much impact has the Internet had on contact patterns since then?

Research since 1993 has shown that information technology uptake was still in its infancy at the turn of the millennium. The Southern Yorke Peninsula survey of 2000 specifically sought information on the relative importance of various media people used for interaction. While personal visiting and traditional mail remained important forms of communication, the survey showed up the continued dominance of the standard traditional telephone as the most commonly used medium. The more modern forms of communication were well established by 2000, but were still less commonly used than the older types. Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported using Fax, and 49% email, at least once per week, and a majority of the households (58%) had at least one mobile phone. The great majority of mobile phone connections had been established since 1994 (Figure 9.9). Although mobile phone coverage is not complete in SYP, the rise of the mobile phone had been accompanied by a reduced use of CB radio for local communication. By 2000, 39% of the surveyed households had at least one member with access to the Internet, with a sharp rise in household connections from 1998 onwards, and particularly during the year 2000 itself (Figure 9.9). The uptake of Internet connections varied by occupational categories, with farm households most prominent, followed by people in professional or 'white collar' occupations. Importantly for the local economy, the 2000 survey

found that shopping by Internet was still negligible in the area, though the closure of bank branches had led a small proportion of households to conduct some banking through the Internet.

Fig. 9.9 Southern Yorke Peninsula 2000: year of first mobile phone and Internet connections in respondent households.
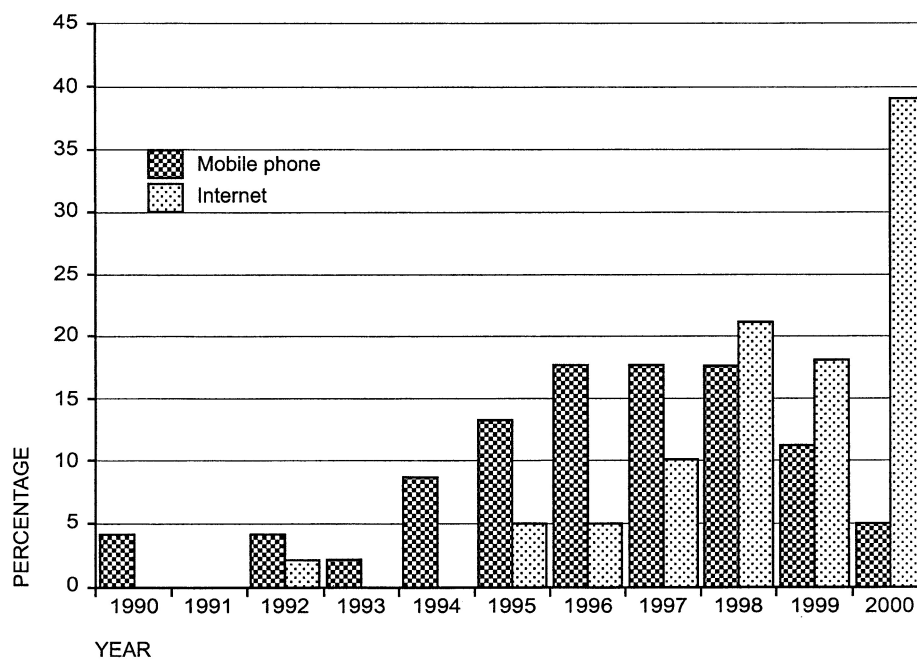
Source: Author's Southern Yorke Peninsula survey, 2000

The Gilbert Valley in 2001 also appeared to be similar to the average for Australian rural areas, in that some 45% of households had access to the Internet. However this proportion included about 7% of respondents with Internet access at work only, while others accessed the net only through casual sources (eg. library, friends). As in SYP, in 2001 recreational use and contact with friends dominated Internet usage, and practical use was still in its infancy[1]. (Table 9.6).

Shopping through the Internet began with a trickle of respondents from 1994, but was still negligible in its impact on regular shopping patterns. Given the closure of country bank branches, about 20% of our respondents considered Internet banking important or very important, especially in Saddleworth which lost its branches. However, usage of the Internet did appear to be reaching significant proportions in contact with business associates and gaining market information, especially among commercial farmers.

---

[1] At the 2001 Census, only 19.8% of the total State population aged 10 or over reported using the Internet at home, and only 11.6% of the workforce used the Internet at work. For the Yorke and Lower North Statistical Division the equivalent figures were 15.2% and 7.8%.

Table 9.6 Gilbert Valley survey, 2001: perceived importance of the Internet
(percentage of total respondents with regular access)

Type of Internet use	Perceived importance to respondent				n
	Nil	Little import -ance	Fairly import -ant	Very import -ant	
Shopping	85.3	9.5	1.1	4.2	95
Banking and financial transactions	66.3	12.6	9.5	11.6	95
Contact with business associates	48.9	19.1	17.0	14.9	94
Market information	52.6	11.6	16.8	18.9	95
Leisure and recreation	43.2	21.1	22.1	13.7	95
Contact friends outside the local community	41.1	13.7	16.8	28.4	95

Source: Author's 2001 field survey.

Opportunities for self-employment by people operating small computer-based industries have also been enhanced by the improvements in electronic communication infrastructure in the region. Though still lagging behind the metropolitan areas, a big improvement has been noted over the last decade. Some comments from local leaders give an idea of the perceptions of the importance of these job market developments, and of the business potential for farmers.

> Now the ability to travel, and travel safely, means we can live here and work somewhere else. … We didn't have Internet connections ten years ago. I mean even from my perspective, I work in a position now where I'm based at home and work with outlying communities. I wouldn't have been able to do that ten years ago.

> It's changed dramatically in the last twelve years. If you're a successful farmer today, you work in the global common, y'know, they watch the Winnipeg canola futures and actually look at the Canadian selling prices… they watch the Chicago futures market to decide when they're going to sell their wheat.

Land of Discontent: the political reaction

By the middle 1990s it was clear that the rural crisis, supplemented as it was by the general national recession of the early 1990s, had left a legacy that was both immediate and intractable. Ten years had passed since the Hawke government's irrevocable decision to open the Australian economy to global competition, and whatever benefits may have accrued to the main metropolitan cities, it was clear that the impact on the economy was highly uneven; rural and regional Australia was indeed a 'Land of Discontent' (Pritchard and McManus, 2000). The establishment in July 1993 of the Taskforce on Regional Development by the Keating government was an acknowledgement of this distress, and the opening pages of its Report (1993: the 'Kelty Report') set the tone for the neo-liberal approach to regional development that has lasted to the present. It set out a) a firm belief in the benefits of globalisation; b) acknowledgement that the supposed benefits were spatially uneven, so something had to be done about hardship and disaffection in the regions; and c) determination that

this 'something' would basically depend on self-help initiatives by the regions themselves, with infrastructure provided by the government in partnership.[2]

However, despite the change of government in 1996, as several researchers have commented (McManus and Pritchard, 2000) nothing could have concentrated the minds of the Labor, Liberal and (especially) National party on the disaffection in the regions like the rise of the One Nation party after 1996, and its success in the Queensland elections of 1998 (Davis and Stimson, 1998). Although One Nation was quickly seen off by internal self destruction and the closing of ranks by the major parties, the "perils of Pauline" did not disappear. As McManus and Pritchard point out (2000, 3-4) the disaffected voters who espoused the One Nation party are still there. Independent candidates elected in rural seats brought both the Bracks and Rann Labor governments (in Vic. and SA respectively) to power. As in Harold Hotelling's famous theorem about the two ice cream sellers on the beach, the near-consensual regional policies of both major parties compete for the political middle ground; but in doing so they expose the political vacuum on the Right.

Redefining the local: application of the study to regional development

Scale mismatch and sustainability: a fundamental problem

A general consensus appears to be emerging that only a 'triple bottom line' model can give a sustainable future for rural Australia. This requires a landuse system that does not degrade the environment, an adequate economic base, and a satisfying social life, all on a co-ordinated and ongoing basis.

As far as co-ordination between the economic and social elements of this trifecta is concerned, a major challenge arises from the scale mismatch between the local *community*, with its strong identity and sense of belonging but small size, and the broader *region* which ostensibly includes an adequate population, but falls short in identity and commitment. As I have shown, the greatest concentration of local loyalty, mutual trust and reciprocity in rural South Australia is found in small communities, which lack the critical mass of population and resources to influence economic development. They may also have problems of excessive conservatism, entrenched power elites, and so on – "conserving old structures of power while ignoring the world around them" to quote Kevin O'Toole (2001, 153). On the other hand, the various officially defined types of 'region' may in theory have the critical mass, aggregate population and scale to become a viable economic entity - but at this broader level, the vital sense of belonging, commitment and altruism that characterise localism are very much weaker, or in some cases may even be absent.

---

[2] Three terse citations from p. 3 of the Kelty Report (1993) put these intentions in a nutshell: first, "There is popular support for policies designed to open up Australia to greater competition, and to better integrate this country into the international economy." Second, citing a Keating speech of July 1993 "The process of structural adjustment has had geographic dimensions we cannot ignore. The dimensions are unemployment, hardship and disaffection". Third a further citation from Keating: "… in each case the starting point will be to ask not what the Commonwealth Government can do for a region, but what can a region do for itself. The role of the Commonwealth will be not to deliver money by the drayload but to assist the regions to take advantage of their potential."

In creating the larger units needed for planning a sustainable economic base, then, it would be extremely foolhardy for regional planners to ignore the pattern of social belonging that drives and motivates key rural people such as the leaders interviewed in the Gilbert Valley study. I believe that if the new regional approach is to work for the benefit of ordinary rural people who actually live there, the regions will need a (stronger) sense of common belonging and identification in their respective populations. The spatial definition of what constitutes a region, and how it is made up, is not a matter of indifference. The challenge, then, is to 'redefine the local' in such a way that it expands in scale to embrace this wider level – in effect, creating a new layer of localism better adjusted to the falling rural densities and increased mobility of people, while not destroying the fundamental 'own town' loyalty from which it sprang. Like any effort to win over 'hearts and minds', this cannot be done by administrative fiat, but by encouragement, example and fostering of any spontaneously developing trends in the desired direction.

The accepted distinction between 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital (attributed originally to Woolcock and Narayan, 2000) is relevant here. 'Bonding' social capital ties together intimate local groups in close-knit networks and is important in building individual community strength; 'bridging' capital is found in networks of individuals (e.g. community leaders, entrepreneurs, professional associations) which link up discrete local communities, or tie them to the broader society. The latter, sometimes alternatively called 'horizontal' links, tend to favour innovation and change, while the former 'vertical' links tend to maintain the *status quo* (Lyons, 2001).   A successful regional policy, I believe, should aim at maintaining stocks of bonding social capital (vertical links), while greatly building up the region's stocks of bridging capital (horizontal links).

The question of whether social capital can be deliberately engineered at a broader scale to speed up the slow natural processes of upward transition of community identity thus assumes great importance. Associated questions are the scale at which this effort could and should be applied, and how it should be tackled (Edgar, 2001). It appears most likely that networks of interaction, trust and reciprocity will be built initially between local leaders whose personal stocks of social and human capital endow them with prestige and influence, probably combined with the efforts of exogenous motivators and facilitators. At the same time, though, any such developments can only lead to regional sustainability if a regional cohesion among elites can be passed down to the rural population in general. And this depends on whether rank-and-file members of the smaller communities a) perceive a personal sense of regional belonging, and/or b) see planned developments as bringing some benefit to their own smaller communities, not just the large regional capitals.

The question of regions

Thus the questions of how large these higher-order units should be, how they are to be defined, and how they fit into the pattern of existing community belonging are vital matters in the project of redefining the local. So too are the associated questions of the administration, governance and functions of the desired larger units, including the role that the existing communities should play within them. If the objective of the exercise is indeed to provide a sustainable economic base for the people who identify

with and wish to continue to live in a region, then clearly the region must be large enough in area and population to achieve critical mass and an appropriate combination of economic enterprises – if possible a cluster of interacting enterprises which can create a growth focus (Porter 1998, 2000). However, to quote the South Australian Regional Development Task Force (SARDTF):

> Most people instinctively know what region they are part of. The ultimate test seems to be that people feel that they belong to a region, and 'compete' with other regions. This sense of emotional attachment is developed over time, and is difficult to undo. (SARDTF 1999, 5).

My contention is that redefining the local is not a matter of 'undoing' this incipient higher-scale sense of belonging (which in any case is so much weaker than the intense localism of the individual community) but building on it, strengthening it and extending it. Any top-down approach that simply seeks to gain scale economies by creating regions that meet some defined population threshold can too easily produce *ad hoc* spatial units which lack regional consciousness, popular sense of commitment and collective social interaction patterns and commitment. From a nation-wide survey Beer and Maude (2005, 62) comment that "In many instances economic development practitioners reported that they were not considered representative of their community and struggled to garner public support for their activities." Moreover, the scale at which such thresholds may be set at one point in time is also subject to rapid change in technology and economic conditions.

Regions in South Australia: nebulous, numerous and ephemeral

Excellent reviews and analyses of the Australian literature on regions and regionalism are available elsewhere (Beer, Maude and Pritchard 2003; Beer, Haughton and Maude, 2003; Eversole and Martin, 2005). Here only a brief examination is needed of the situation in South Australia, in relation to the possibility of redefining the local, and in the light of the findings reported in this thesis.

As a framework, Table 9.7 outlines the timing of the major milestones in regional development. In South Australia, the wake-up call of the Arthur D. Little Report's (1992,1) opening page "Industry today is structured for yesterday's conditions" came in the midst of the rural crisis, closely following the State Bank collapse, and on the eve of a change in government. After a long period of limited action on regional matters at Commonwealth level (Beer 2000), the Keating government's concern about disaffection in the regions produced some important developments in 1993 and 1994. The release of the Kelty and McKinsey reports, and the Commonwealth Government's establishment of Area Consulting Committees and Regional Development Organisations each involved (different) spatial frameworks for administration and reporting, using large regions as determined from Canberra, some of them crossing State borders. The Kelty Report's regions for South Australia (Figure 9.10 A) did not match the State's own planning regions of the time (Figure 9.10 B), and in two cases overlapped into Victoria and New South Wales.