The Social Audit Cookbook

recipes for auditing the way we connect

Funded by the Lance Reichstein Foundation as a contribution to community groups wanting to use surveys and audits as part of processes of social change

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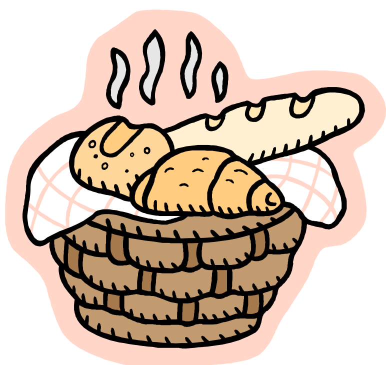
Contents



BEFORE WE BEGIN . . .

The good society

We may argue about what we define as a good society but, mostly, we agree that our societies could be made better than they are. This cookbook is designed to help you contribute to that process by carrying out social audits to find out how your part of society works.

For a long time, advocates have been using statistics and snapshot research findings to support their claims for communities in trouble. By using these material counts to indicate existing problems, such figures provide the basis for what we call social audits. These audits can be used as an effective means of countering official positions, especially when those positions are not supported by the facts.

Recently social auditing and social accounts have reappeared in new guises, exploring the harder to measure aspects of social connections and building on newly popular concepts of social capital. These new forms have arisen partly from approaches explored in community development activities, but also from the need to measure the qualities of social relationships and how these can contribute to communal well being. They offer new ways of assessing the strengths and needs of communities and can contribute to reporting on programs and activities.

We've called this a cookbook because it offers recipes and ingredients for carrying out social auditing. The measures build on recent research into what makes 'good' communities and organisations. For the purposes of this manual we are assuming more civil' societies to be ones in which people can enjoy life, be generous to strangers, accept necessary change, manage conflict and preserve what is valuable and valued. People in such societies interact civilly and respect diversity, recognise commonalities and seek to debate and accommodate differences. Civil societies recognise the need to explore possibilities of the common good and accept a certain amount of conflict as a healthy part of daily life as people express their differing needs and beliefs.

Using some of the social auditing measures presented here, community activists can engage in debates which move beyond the usual counting of bodies through doors or items of service. It moves beyond counting hours of services or cuts in these to looking at the capacities of communities and how these may be affected by perceptions of fairness, levels of trust, bridges between groups, sense of agency and other such measures which relate to effectiveness of connections. Using these measures, together with the more conventional ones also included, community based researchers should be able to show how well communities work, not just describe their economic or material characteristics.

Who is the Cookbook for?

This cookbook is for community activists who want to produce research reports to support submissions, lobbying and other forms of social action. Its users may not have much experience in community research, or alternatively they may have been involved in the wider debates on how to undertake social audits. As with all cookbooks, users can skip the familiar and not so relevant and find the recipes and ingredients that suit their purpose. It introduces new ways of researching communities and as well as information on more conventional forms of research.

The cookbook is not intended to be politically or socially neutral. It is being offered to community groups and others who want to use it as a contribution to making our social systems more able to deal with the consequences of current political decisions. It is based on the premise that we need to promote the importance of certain types of social links in making our society more equitable (the fair go), respectful of diversity and able to argue civilly, and irrepressibly, about our conflicts. It opens questions of what we may define as ethical communities -- but that is another volume!

Why a cookbook?

Good cookbooks combine tradition and more recent innovation and offer many options to meet diverse tastes and needs. They give us recipes for how to make known dishes, the ability to experiment to produce new ones and ideas for using ingredients creatively. Similarly this cookbook aims to give you a variety of recipes for social research. It contains a broad selection of ingredients that can be used to create a research design that suits your particular needs for measuring how people are connecting in your community. You may use some of the suggested measures to find out how people feel about a local park or precinct or perhaps you'll conduct a more in-depth social audit to see how new welfare policies are affecting the lives of your target groups. You may be puzzled about the difficulties of motivating local efforts or want to know how well community members are developing the ability to work together.

The suggested measures will also be useful in finding out more about areas of need in the community and looking at the connections and relationships which create or undermine social capital. You will find here new ideas and measures of social well being which offer alternatives to the economic or more quantitative results-focused statistics used by most official bodies. Such ideas and measures will then strengthen your ability to argue with funding bodies based on social indicators rather than purely economic ones.

The contents

The content is organised into two parts which are summarised below. The background reading in book one is important for understanding why some of the suggestions here differ from other more conventional measures you may have seen before. We have included extra material on social capital and ways of measuring social processes at the end of the first book with some suggestions for extra reading if you want to explore further.

A broad use of the methods in this cookbook would make it possible to develop a growing picture of the diversity and the similarities in neighbourhoods, communities and localities throughout Australia.

Use with care and remember the golden rule of research: ask yourself if the questions are necessary to find out what you want, or whether they are simply interesting. If just interesting, leave them out and keep it shorter and simpler. The cookbook is designed to be used with or without any expert assistance so, particularly if your audit is a first go, remember to keep it simple.

Part one: The menus

Part one introduces the concept of social auditing and explains some of the debates on new ways of measuring in this field. It will help you design your research by giving you a background for setting your overall aims. It suggests the broader impact your research could have in contributing towards the development of a more cooperative and trusting society. It also gives you suggestions for looking further into the concepts of social capital and social audits.

Part two: The ingredients

This is the how-to-do-it section with illustrative examples. You will need to define the aims of your own audit in order to determine how much or how little you use. Readers should dip in for ideas, though it is recommended that you start by reading through to understand why it may be beneficial to pick certain types of questions and not others. It is divided into six parts.

1. **Designing the audits** A guide to planning your audit and the range of things that can be included.

2. **Collecting new data** Examples of the questions you can use and the methods of collection. These have been divided into categories representing the social measures, encompassing participation, interest and trust.

3. **Using existing data** Examples of more traditional indicators of social capital and where to go to find such information. This quite often includes statistical information gathered within broader studies.

4. **Collating and analysing the findings** Putting it all together.

5. **Reporting the results** What the data suggest about the social connections.

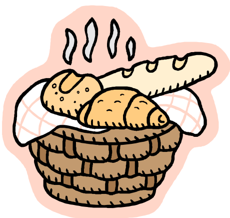
6. **Basic research ingredients** A quick how-to guide to basic research methods.

Acknowledgements

This manual has been produced by the Civil Circle at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) with financial support from the Reichstein Foundation. Some of the measures included have been shamelessly lifted from a range of sources including student work, the World Bank Web Page and other related sites and publications. Some are original and minimally tested. We have acknowledged some sources but often the material's origins have been lost and obscured by adjustment, reframing and replacement.

We thank all originators for their work and their goodwill in sharing the fruits of their labour. This publication is both advocate and resource, aimed at encouraging groups to be interested in social audits and to expand their horizons by looking at the structures of their social relationships.

Eva Cox July 2002



PART ONE
Establishing the menu

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL AUDITING

When trying to influence social change you need not only good ideas but a system to measure the outcomes of those ideas. The credibility of economists arises from their provision of charts, tables and other apparently scientific measures of social functioning and the way these are used to predict economic activity. Most of their predictions don't eventuate because there are too many aspects of human behaviour that they cannot describe or predict.

Social audits have been done in the UK for many years but have concentrated mainly on counting available services and resources. The concept of social auditing is now moving into wider use as a key method in planning and assessing the effects of economic and technological changes on many aspects of daily life. If used wisely, measures of social relationships may provide a better balance in this process not only by tracking the problems but by also finding some solutions.

By putting this manual into use and by continuing discussion on methods, it should be possible for community representatives to enter debates with information on how our social systems are travelling. By arriving at some agreement on how we carry out such research and by standardising methodologies without making them too rigid, social auditing can provide useful social measures and the health or frailty of social connections will become apparent.

Auditing social processes

Whenever we walk into a new place we start to assess how it works. We know when a meeting is being productive; we can recognize which work units are working well and which ones are in trouble. We recognize places that are pleasant to visit and live in and those that make us feel unsettled. We tend to gravitate towards those social relationships and processes that are pleasant and productive. We look and listen and base our views on how people interact with each other, how well tasks are done and how effectively people work, together and separately.

We make personal, political and commercial choices based on these expectations and experiences. We sift our perceptions, make stories from what others tell us and on what we see, hear and read in the media. All these contribute to our interpretation (or audit) and point of view. These are the processes by which we establish the culture of groups and communities. Yet few conventional social indicators measure these interactions, tending to focus mainly on 'facts' like material resources and numbers.

If most of us can identify whether particular cultures are functioning well or badly, then we should be able to measure the factors that contribute to those cultures, whose absence or presence are indicators of social well being. The distribution of socially productive relationships will vary across and within communities, groups, organisations and institutions. Nearly all groups will contain some people who are isolated or who have deliberately disconnected and others who have high levels of trust and commitment, even with strangers. The question is how to identify those which work well. These indicators relate to debates on what is and what is not social capital.

Is social capital a useful idea?

Social capital is a contested but useful term. For the purpose of this manual, we can define it as that quality of the relationships within and between groups which generates civil interactions such as mutual respect, ability to resolve conflict, shared values, networks and trust, which in turn facilitate collective action. Measures of social capital offer additional perspectives to the more conventional socio-economic social indicators on what makes a good society. These measures can be used to explain why some areas with apparently similar populations and material resources may react differently in similar circumstances.

In a range of areas, the evidence is mounting that high levels of social capital, linking diverse groups, correlate with better functioning social systems and higher standards of health and education. It appears that higher levels of trust create connections which make for better use of resources such as skills, money and knowledge. Low social capital appears to limit life chances and quality of life.

Social capital processes underpin:

- Working together collaboratively and with respect for each other's values and differences.
- Resolving disputes civilly by recognising and accepting the existence of different interests, within a framework, which takes account of the common good, not just sectional interests.
- Recognising that building trust requires fairness and equity to all involved and therefore prejudice or exploitation are negatively correlated.
- Ensuring that the building of internal cohesion is not affected by the exclusion and demonisation of others.

Trust

Trust is one of the most significant components of social capital and therefore measuring its function is an important element in community or other social audits. A satisfactory outcome for having trusted others should lead to an increased capacity to take the sort of risks that trust involves**.** Those who have good experiences are likely to trust new situations and strangers. Inequality and perceptions of unfairness may destroy trust.

Trust seems to be produced by cultures that show respect for difference, fair play in resource distribution, and conflict resolution based on reasonably egalitarian relationships. Where these types of relationships are not operating, distrust of change inhibits action as the risks of failure seem overwhelming**.** Distrust is often present in groups that have suffered discrimination and unfair treatment. Where this is part of the history of relationships within and between groups, it is difficult to establish a basis for working together and solving past and present problems.

Exploring the causes and residual effects of bad relationships and the misuse of power can cast some light on the problems that need to be overcome. The emphasis on trust in this context is not to be confused with blind faith or naivety but is a recognition that issues of discrimination, inequality and other forms of oppression need to be remedied before trust can be built and we can achieve good community relations and good societies.

Looking for signs of social capital

The development of social capital requires adequate levels of five basic attributes.

- **Interest:** People show attention to what is going on outside their immediate circle, can recognise others' needs and express respect for diversity of views and customs.
- **Participation:** There is engagement and interest in working collectively for common purposes.
- **Trust in people:** People are willing to trusting others, whether familiar or unfamiliar.
- **Trust in institutions:** People are prepared to work for change within the democratic process of government, and through the legal system.
- **Capacity to resolve conflict civilly:** People feel comfortable exploring and accepting the different and new.

By measuring these attributes we should be able to say whether or not a particular community is operating effectively with a high level of social capital or is beset with many problems resulting from low levels of social capital. Our task is to identify the community processes, as distinct from population characteristics, that can indicate the operation of social capital.

Most measurements can be recorded through observation, surveys, existing data sets, local reporting of news and attendance records and in other ways which are detailed in part two. The following are included as examples that illustrate the diversity and scope of the data that can indicate level of social capital.

Characteristics of high level social capital

- Accepted mechanisms used for conflict resolution between different interest groups.

- Wide variety of community activities (e.g. in various clubs, sports, crafts, the arts, plus informal use of public space for activities).
- Vitality of civic organisations and activities (new members, new people participating, long term commitment).
- High joint use of public spaces by diverse groups (young and old, long term and more recent residents, different activities accepted, e.g. dog walking, football, children playing.
- Observable friendly interactions in public places, streets, shops, etc., such as conversations, smiles, courtesy and eye contact. (Note, however, that there are cultures, including some Aboriginal ones, where eye contact is discouraged.)
- Helpfulness to strangers, responsiveness to needs of others in public spaces.
- Honesty (e.g. lost articles handed in, cars safely left unlocked, goods left in cars).
- Inclusive community activities (e.g. reconciliation meetings, Land Care).
- Feeling safe (children going to school, shops and parks on their own, people. walking freely in streets at night, few notices up about theft and security, unlocked entrances, accessible public toilets).
- Acceptance of new groups of residents and different populations into existing formal and informal groups (integration of different layers of migration, signs of inclusive networks, cross group friendships, respect for difference).

Characteristics of low level social capital

- Obvious levels of overt conflict without resolution (demonstrations and campaigns which involve violent and abusive interactions, gangs, street violence).
- Easy classification of unfamiliar people as “others”, a sense that “it’s their problem”.
- Obvious levels of anger in particular groups based on perceptions of unfairness or feeling threatened which could be expressed in high levels of litigation against local institutions such as local government, public complaints in newspapers, complaints to official ombudsmen or other arbiters, angry letters, stories in media, etc.).
- Hostility toward, or scapegoating of, particular groups (e.g. too many young people on the streets, sole parents are bludgers).
- Lack of civic pride (littering, vandalism, low maintenance of public spaces).
- Lack of interest in civic initiatives (low attendance at public meetings, low voter turnout for local elections, few nominations for political office).
- Little networking at local level with neighbours, few local shops, few connections with others and low use of public places and streets.
- Failure of community activities due to lack of support and participation.
- High levels of physical security (e.g., bars, alarms, security officers, gated communities), exaggerated fear of crime.
- Low levels of use of public spaces, perceived high risks (in parks, streets, public transport, fear of crime out of proportion to actual levels).
- High levels of street offences, harmful and risky behaviours (binge drinking, public order flouting, car burn offs, hassling pedestrians, begging, public hovering).
- High levels of mistrust of any form of development or change, particularly rejection of public amenities, protecting local real estate, police complaints about loitering.
- Highly stratified communities with little or no mixing of subgroups.

Looking further

Some more on social capital debates

(This section is for reading and thinking, rather than a necessary preliminary to understanding how to carry out social audits.)

In the last few years there has been some reappearance of social capital. New research and theories focus on issues of social cohesion, co-operation and other social skills and connections which contribute towards making us civilised beings. The interaction of the social and the economic has become more visible and there is widespread recognition that democratically based social cohesion and attendant levels of social capital are intrinsic to good economic performance as well as to a better quality of life. This is why groups like the World Bank have become more interested in social measures and why many voters no longer believe that economics must dominate the political agenda.

Social capital is a term that has been a part of debate for nearly a decade. It became popular in Australia during 1995, partly as a result of my ABC Boyer lectures, *A Truly Civil Society* (ABC Books), which popularized the concept. Like most such ideas, it has been claimed by multiple groups and defined in various ways. My preference is to use it as a shorthand term for describing how well we connect as social beings. It isn't something we can store away or be assumed to own but it can be detected by looking at how social systems are working by measuring patterns of attitudes and actions.

There are many debates on whether social capital is totally a good thing or whether it has a nasty side as well. There are forms of social cohesion which are used by groups to seek personal advantage or financial gain for their members, while group dominance may harm other groups and individuals and be more generally destructive. The inward looking solidarity of these groups is often based on top down demands for loyalty. Fear of "the other" may be used to create loyalty.

One way of thinking about social capital is to divide the concept into two and add a third link to the definition. This set of definitions comes from work by Michael Woolcock at the World Bank. The basic divide is between two varieties of social capital, bonding and bridging.

- **Bonding social capital** is found in the strong links between familiars, who are often a geographically based community which is relatively homogenous. The links may be fairly thick, multi-strand relationships between members of the group. These communities are often very supportive and nurturing for families and are shown in Robert Putnam's latest work to produce results as diverse as higher levels of health, lower crime rates and greater economic benefits.
- **Bridging social capital** is found in the less intense relationships we have with others who are not part of our more intimate circles. This involves relationships with groups who are not like us or maybe just not known to us. Such relationships might be with different groups within a geographic area, or with groups in different areas but whose interests and activities overlap.
- **Linking** involves groups interacting with institutions such as government and other providers of resources. Linking creates the potential for them all to work together effectively.

In some cases, networks of people may operate to deliver privileges for their members. It is possible to deliberately or inadvertently injure others by excluding them from a range of experiences and networks that could deliver benefits. These may be seen as types of bonded social capital which fail to bridge, working on exclusion rather than inclusion.

The debates on what constitutes social capital are intense, but for the purpose of our cookbook, we are assuming that social capital is useful for strengthening communities, for capacity building and other desirable outcomes. We also assume that the process of group interaction and relationship building creates and maintains social capital. Therefore it cannot be owned by individuals, but is evident in the ways it works within and across groups and communities. Even then, the whole society does not as such *own* the social capital so much as express it. Social capital differs from financial capital and from human and cultural capital in that it cannot be individually owned and is not depleted as it is used.

Definitions of social capital that focus on volunteers and other forms of involvement in community activities are looking at only part of the story and this emphasis often creates problems. Trust-building is also very important for social cohesion, as well as the provision of necessary material resources, if the programs or policies are to be effective. Social capital can be defined as the processes through which we learn and practise the skills of being civil and sociable beings and this learning facilitates collective action and the sharing of customs and values.

It is the bridging functions that may be the most important in creating more civil societies and in managing the complexities and conflicts of post-modern societies. With the increase in diversity we are now seeing, static and mono-cultural societies are increasingly rare. Where bridging social capital exists, the un-alike learn to trust each other sufficiently to allow civility and sociability to create a perception of common interests. These can be followed by collective action, the accommodation of difference and the capacity to look beyond self interest towards the common good.

In recent years, many organisations have lost membership. There is decreasing trust in political systems and banks, and loss of volunteer time. But this appears to have reversed in 2000, even excluding the Olympics. We have new manifestations of sociability: more meals out, more coffee shops, more multiplex cinemas, more reading groups, more people apparently going to public lectures. We have mass civic, social and cultural events such as communal fairs and festivals, the reconciliation marches, Clean Up Australia, land, coast and bush care, Mardi Gras, as well as people becoming increasingly involved in community activities through their workplaces. What we may be seeing are new forms of social interaction which bring people together for events, rather than for the support of organisations.

We need to explore what sort of daily interaction between people in the community, in public spaces and in workplaces is more likely to build social capital of this thinner bridging variety. It is this kind of social capital that is likely to be the most useful in our increasingly diverse and constantly changing social environment and that is likely to help us in problem solving. It can be seen in a range of interactions from minimal recognition of common interests to mutual respect, from allowing a car into a traffic flow, to eye contact and exchange of greetings in the street, to participating in difficult decisions and resolving differences and conflict.

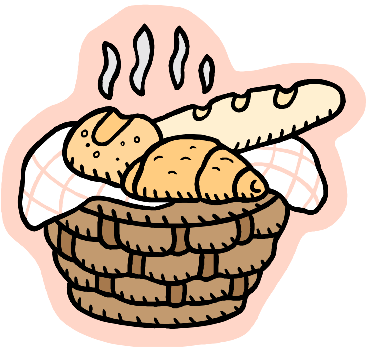
So community social audits may need to examine a range of social settings in order to identify the factors that increase trust, respect and conflict management. This could include the places where we work, where we live and where we spend our leisure time, as well as community involvement and civic engagement. This widening of sources of social capital makes the project very broad, taking it outside its immediate relationship to the community and what is sometimes defined as civil society.

We also need to be aware that the nature of active involvement in voluntary groups and civic affairs is changing. Voluntary participation in many non-government groups demands more than simply free time from the volunteer. Increasingly it is the volunteers' skills that determine whether they can be useful or not. If we accept that there is value in learning the democratic processes of debate and argument, of being able to look at the common good and the public interest, we must look at the range of venues and experiences in which these can be learned. By extending the framework of our investigations to cover short term events and other forms of engagement with friends, acquaintances and strangers, we can develop some different perspectives on how we learn social skills and connect together the range of experiences that fill our lives on a daily basis.

Bonding social capital will always be important as it fulfils our need to feel we belong. However, it has a dark side whereby it emerges in the form of toxic tribalism which scapegoats others and promotes fear of strangers and intense group loyalties. We need to question the inwardness of such groups, both in the mainstream and among our own communities, as this type of bond can cause problems. Open forms of bonding which encourage bridging are important and need to be consciously developed. However, the argument doesn't hold that these may grow out of closed groups once the members have gained more confidence. Some recent research from the Australian Institute of Family Studies suggests the two types may not necessarily be linked.

The important distinction here relates to the ways in which groups and communities can be supportive and generous on the one hand or excluding and oppressive on the other. The question is how far the social environments in which we work, play and live affect the ways in which we act collectively or in response to perceived mores. We can act collectively in ways that we would not necessarily act as individuals and this can be either detrimental to or supportive of civic good.

This is what makes the study of social capital so worthwhile. We need to develop a more thorough understanding of the type of social capital that provides possibilities for bridging diverse groups, solving conflicts civilly and facilitating ethical decisions. In the process of developing that understanding, we must question a range of assumptions we make about the future, about ourselves in relation to others and about the ways in which we interact. Working out what the ingredients are that make up a good society can be difficult, but making the improvement of our research methods a goal means that much more is possible.



PART TWO
Choosing Ingredients

1. DESIGNING THE AUDITS

Time spent in designing the research is time well spent. Matching time and resources to the needs of the group, and planning out the uses to which the information may be put is an essential step towards achieving the purpose of the project.

So step one is vital: before you decide *how* you are going to research an issue, you need to decide *why* you are doing it. The reasons why will affect the how. So define your purpose and your audience by asking yourself the following questions:

a. What do you want to achieve?
b. Who is your audience, i.e. who will read the report and act on it?
c. Who has funded it (if anyone) and what do they need?

Often points b and c will come in tandem with the funding body being your primary audience. Also, if this is a voluntary exercise, reliant on donations of time and other resources, it will need to be made very clear to the donors of the time and resources just what they are doing and why.

The purpose and audience will affect your choice of research method. It is no use deciding to do an elegant, speculative, in-depth exploration of an issue if your audience consists of politicians whose focus tends to be primarily on numbers. They will respond better to a survey of 500 voters than an in-depth study of a 20-person network. If you want to be able to claim that your research is representative of your community, you will need to use quantitative research methods. If numbers are important and if you are after funding, then the more conventional it looks, the more credible it will seem to bureaucrats and government bodies.

On the other hand, if part of the project is to involve local people in community activism and create higher levels of awareness of local resources and issues, opting for more limited data collections may be a better choice. These are slower but require more participation, which gives the people involved a sense of being taken seriously plus the time to develop some ongoing relationships.

Thus, social audit designers should make sure they clarify the expectations and the purposes of the processes and product for all those involved.

Designing the data collection

Good audits will often result from the development of a hybrid research strategy by which data is collected using a number of different methods. Most communities, groups and organisations will contain a range of views, both stated and acted on. Ideally the data collection will use a mix of techniques that will allow a comparison of what people express as attitudes with what they actually; the two do not always overlap. Similarly, they may report their activities selectively so more than one measure may be necessary to get a fuller picture.

Decide clearly whom you need to include. Sometimes researchers with limited resources will tend to talk to those people who are easy to access because it is quicker and cheaper. However, this may leave out some of the more important and vulnerable groups. For instance, daytime research often leaves out those in paid work; street interviewing leaves out those who are confined to the home or rarely go out. Phone interviews leave out those who have no phone. You also need to recognize that some respondents may have special needs so they can fully participate. Will your researchers need to speak community languages? Do you need communication aids like TTY (teletypewriter). Will child minding allow greater participation?

Methods of measurement

Given the task of measuring the ways in which communities and groups work, researchers can look at three broad types of measures:

a. Observing and recording what people do.
b. Asking individuals to express their attitudes and describe their activities, i.e. asking people how they feel and act.
c. Collecting official and other data sets that tell you what is done, such as attendance sheets, crime rates and records, and other traditional social indicators.

It is important to try to use some of all three approaches as this *triangulation* helps reinforce or validate the separate findings. It also avoids the possibility of coming to a mistaken conclusion by relying on one form of data collection alone. For example, all the people interviewed in an area may say that everyone is welcome and that they trust strangers, while street-based observations show that anyone new or different is regarded with suspicion.

The methods chosen must also be suited to the purpose of the project. Some work better in locality-based exercises while others may be more useful within small groups or bonded organisations. Other measures again may be more useful in diverse informal settings such as neighbourhoods, special events and other types of gatherings which are not defined by a formal structure.

A checklist for designing an audit

Make sure you use all three types of collection modes

- Include some forms of participant observation, for instance where people observe what's happening in groups, at meetings, in parks, etc., and also, when you count the number of young people of both sexes in the street on Saturday night.
- Do some surveys of attitudes and behaviour and make sure you cover an adequate number of different groups to be able to say something significant.
- Check the media to see what is reported about the area and include records and official data where relevant.

Make reliable findings

- Make sure you cover what people say they feel and do and then what actually happens. For example, if they say, "Ours is a friendly town", find out what really happens to newcomers.
- Run training sessions so that you are reasonably confident your data collectors are all doing the same thing in the same way. If they haven't done anything like this before, they will need some training. Make sure they understand they are collecting data, not offering counselling or arguing cases. It can be hard for a worker to change hats. If they usually do case support or community development then moving into the role of neutral observer takes some training. It is necessary for the data to reflect the views of the respondents rather than the views of the researcher. If researchers do not take a neutral role, they run the risk of missing what is actually happening by trying to look for things that support what they think is happening.

Provide internal checks on consistency and validity of the data

- Try and match the areas covered across the differing methods. So if your questionnaire is directed at older and younger people, run some focus groups (see below) or other qualitative collections to see if the discussions in these offer different or similar insights to the questions in the survey.
- Use different people in the same area of observation or data collection and see if what they report is similar.
- Debrief those involved and try to get some sense of how they see it. Allow some discussion of different views among the researchers.

Methods of Data Collection

Users should choose only what they need. Do not try to use all the suggestions. Design the research project by selecting the methods and data sources that best suit your aims.

The descriptions below look at the strengths and weaknesses of some common and less common methods of collecting data. The intention is to provide the information that is necessary to make effective choices of various ways of collecting the data.

Doing surveys and collecting information

Polls, surveys and other forms of collecting from relatively large groups of informants or respondents tend to be structured so as to achieve statistical legitimacy, using established formulae to determine how representative the sample may be of the wider group, or universe, it purports to represent. Numbers tend to be relatively large and, consequently, the data collection process has to be relatively limited to accommodate the numbers.

All methods may include both very simple and quite complex questions as well as those offering a choice of answers and open ended questions which encourage people to elaborate on their responses. Interviewing will allow the questioner to push for a response or prompt for more clarity. The ability of such surveys to reflect the distribution of views will depend both on the number of people answering and how representative the sampling was.

Listening, observing and conversing

These techniques are mostly used to produce in-depth and connected descriptions and explanations. The respondents are given more freedom to put their responses in ways that show how they make sense of the world. Focus groups and other less structured research methods place much more responsibility on the researchers, both in gathering and reporting the data, as they are not as easily classifiable and countable. On the other hand, if well done, focus groups can offer rich and powerful data and are much more likely to add to understanding and explaining what is happening than the simpler statistical data. Their strength is that they tell the stories and put in the context; their weakness is that they cannot be easily extrapolated to statistically supported results and rely heavily on the skills and judgment of researchers.

These methods are therefore not as useful in debates where numbers count. Nor do they carry, in public and political spheres, the legitimacy of the large and validated survey. As one of the aims of the social audit process is to put forward measures of social cohesion to add to financial and other economic measures, the capacity to provide counts and statistical data becomes important.

2. COLLECTING NEW DATA: EQUIPMENT AND INGREDIENTS

Equipment

The survey

The main quantitative research method for gathering information on individuals or household units is the survey. There are a number of different ways of administering larger surveys, including:

- **House to house door-knocking**
  Advantages: Easier to establish good communication.
  Disadvantages: Geographically limited, slow, expensive.
- **Telephone interviewing**
  Advantages: Easier and quicker than most other methods, possible to cover more ground
  Disadvantages: More difficult to establish rapport, no opportunity to read expressions and body language.
- **Postal survey**
  Advantages: Easy to administer and doesn't require the same level of expertise as interviews.
  Disadvantages: Very low rates of return, no control over who fills them in and tend to offer limited responses.
- **Self-administered survey** that people fill in themselves, either on the spot or distributed through schools, etc.
  Advantages: You can target groups through interest areas; easy to administer.
  Disadvantages: Poor return rate if not collected, limited information and, often, omitted responses.
- **Internet, phone or other survey, relying on self-selected respondents**
  Advantages: Tend to get interested people responding. Used on TV and in other media when people are asked to respond to certain questions.
  Disadvantages: Tends to distort views, as those who answer are often those who are most interested; does not reflect the range of views; respondents can vote more than once.

Group exercises

Participatory group exercises such as social mapping, problem trees, resource allocations and role plays are also included here as possible techniques to use in locality based and conflictual research.

Focus groups

Small groups of people are asked questions on how they think their community behaves or what their community values. These work best when relatively unstructured, leaving it to group members to decide how they discuss the topics.

In-depth interviewing
The interviewer may just have a checklist, leaving the interviewee to structure much of the content, with occasional questions from the interviewer. There is also a group interview process, where a group of people answer questions, together and sometimes with in-group discussion as part of the process. This can be confused with focus groups but differs in being much more structured. They are useful for targeting questions and exploring issues and feelings but are time consuming and require higher level skills both in interviewing and analysis.

Key people interviews
People in significant positions are asked what they see as going on in the community; these are often fairly unstructured. If there are opposing views in the community, informants should represent the range of views.

Tree Diagrams
Multi-purpose visual tools for narrowing and prioritising problems, objectives or decisions. Information is organized into a tree-like diagram with the main issue represented by the trunk and relevant factors, influences and outcomes showing up as roots and branches. As a community participation exercise, tree diagrams can help people to uncover and analyse the underlying causes of a particular problem or to rank and measure objectives in relation to one another.

Access to Resources
This is an exercise in which participants discuss with the researcher their perceptions of unequal access to resources, using a very broad definition of resources, e.g. people with expertise, with useful networks, with power, with time, access to money, access to spaces and fund rasing sources. The exercise clarifies how access to resources varies according to gender, age, marital status, parentage, employment status and so on. This analytical tool is applicable across cultures, and it can be adapted to a range of social variables.

Mapping
Can be used to gather descriptive and diagnostic information. They tend to encourage a high level of participation and the recorded visual output can be used immediately to bridge any verbal communication gap that might exist between local people and outsiders. The mapping exercise can be used to generate discussion about local priorities and aspirations, and the maps themselves are useful as verification of secondary source information.

Role playing
This encourages people to remove themselves creatively from their usual roles and their accompanying perspectives. It can assist people to understand the choices that another person might face and to make decisions and plans as if they had different responsibilities.

Issue Relays
A quick grab at ideas. Organised in teams, the participants write one word descriptions of the issues. Being organised as a game breaks down inhibitions and the participants aren't given the time to self censor through forming ideas of a right or wrong answer.

Content analysis
Analysis of, for example, stories in newspapers or broadcast on electronic media, or the issues that most often come up in council meetings such as local crime and vandalism.

Ingredients: Sample questions for surveys

This section offers a range of items for questionnaires for community social audits. There are various forms of the same types of questions - some simpler, some more detailed - so you can choose the ones that seem best for your purposes. Some of the questions require high levels of skill in listening to, recording and analysing what people have said and done. The answers to others can be filled in and collated by people with little experience. Choose those that suit your group, your purpose and your resources. Think through what you want to do with the material you collect and make sure you read the sections above that talk about designing projects and what you should put in.

Be selective and disciplined about keeping your research instruments, questionnaires and check lists reasonably brief and clear. The suggested questions focus on the measurement of perceptions and attitudes, as well as reported activities. These will provide a good base for developing a snapshot of how the people of an area or community are interacting. The measures are not intended to be personal but are related to assessing the state of the social infrastructure and its resilience. The questions are grouped under 18 headings covering their main focus.

Trust

The first question here is used internationally to assess national and other demographic differences between responses. It is not a very good question as we don't really know how people interpret it but it is comparable with other surveys and may show local differences to national averages. The subsequent questions are about networks of assistance and trust which may be important indicators of the presence or absence of community links.

Q. Which of the following is closest to your own view: (*tick one only*)

- ☐ Most people can be trusted.
- ☐ You can't be too careful nowadays in dealing with most people.

Q. Do you have anyone you trust with secrets, problems or personal issues? Yes/No

If yes, whom do you confide in or reveal personal things to?

□ Family members □ Friends □ Neighbour
□ Workmate □ Counsellor □ Partner
□ Other

Q. Who do you generally seek advice from if you need help?
□ Family member □ Friends □ Neighbour
□ Workmate □ Counsellor □ Partner
□ Expert □ Internet
□ Other - specify . . . .

Q. Who would you lend money to?
□ Family member □ Friends □ Neighbour
□ Workmate □ Partner
□ Other . . . .

Q. Who would lend you money in a crisis?
□ Family member □ Friends □ Neighbour
□ Workmate □ Banker □ Pawnbroker
□ Partner □ Other . . . .

Q. Thinking about your close friends:
Are there some you would trust with your personal problems? Yes/No
Are there some that trust you with all their personal problems? Yes/No
Are there some you would lend money to, if you could afford it? Yes/No
Are there some you would ask for money if you were in trouble? Yes/No

Q. How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements about receiving help from others? *(Answer one of: Agree strongly/mildly /disagree mildly/disagree strongly.)*
Generally, we should be able to manage without needing help from others.
I feel all right about asking for help and giving it.
I hate asking for help if I can't reciprocate.
Close friends and family should offer help without my needing to ask.
It's my duty to help others if I can afford it.

Perceptions of inequality and how these have changed over time

In some studies this seems to correlate with distrust so it could be an important factor in perceptions of how the world works.

Q. Do you think Australia is:
□ Becoming more egalitarian □ Becoming more unequal
□ Is stuck with present inequalities □ Just about right?

Q. Do you feel that the idea of a fair go in Australia:
□ Never existed

- Only worked for some
- Used to work well but doesn't now
- Gave everyone the opportunities we needed
- Will come good in the future

Civic trust

Measuring this involves looking at political attitudes and whether the respondents think governments and institutions can be trusted, whether they think they know what they are doing and whether they believe there is sufficient law and order. Again, these are useful indicators of the perceived power and fairness of systems of law and the institutions which implement them.

Q. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
(*Tick each statement once only*)

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
Governments are generally not to be trusted.				
Governments are OK but politicians are the problem.				
It is important to vote and think through whom to vote for.				
I usually vote the same way because I support the same party.				
I only vote because it's compulsory; it makes no difference.				
National governments can do little because of global forces.				
Political parties just want to stay in power.				

Q. Which of these statements is closest to your own view?
(*Circle a number between 1 and 5 for each pair of statements.)*

People on the local council are only there to look after their own interests	1	2	3	4	5	People on the local council try to run the municipality/shire for the benefit of everybody
State members of parliament are only there to look after their own interests	1	2	3	4	5	State members of parliament try to run things for the benefit of everybody

Federal members of Parliament are only there to look after their own interests	1	2	3	4	5	Federal members of parliament try to run the country for the benefit of everybody

Q. Do you trust the federal government to do the right thing?

☐ Always ☐ Most of the time ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

Q. Do you think Australians trust the following organisations/professions:	Always	Mostly	Some of the time	Seldom	Never
The judiciary and the law courts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The police	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The medical profession	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public hospitals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Welfare services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The legal profession	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small businesses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Big business	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Banks and financial institutions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Individualism and co-operation

Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Please give them a rating out of 10 with 1 meaning you totally disagree and 10 meaning you totally agree. Write your rating number in the box beside each statement.

Rating: (*Please write in a number between 1 and 10.*)

☐ It is up to us to be responsible for each other.

☐ I help others out because sometime I might need help.

☐ If you don't take care of yourself, others won't do it for you.

☐ I like doing things for others because it makes me feel good about myself.

☐ By working together, we can achieve more than working on our own.

☐ I only help others who will repay the favour

☐ People ought to stand on their own feet and not expect support from others.

☐ Most people in positions of power try to exploit you.

☐ What you think doesn't count very much.

☐ People in governments are not really concerned with what happens to us.

☐ No one is an island - we are connected to others.

Locus of control

Most of us develop some sense of our own power and competency at an early stage of our lives. To what extent we see ourselves as able to influence or change aspects of our lives and the lives of others becomes part of our personal script. Indications are that a personal sense of effectiveness can influence whether we become civic minded. Why would people want to become involved in issues when their experience and those they hear about from other sources such as the media, suggest that they have no power to make changes, even in their own lives? The only sense of power available to some is in the ability to resist or transgress, while for others it is in being passive.

Measuring the way people see themselves and their potential power and influence are keys to understanding why some people become involved in wider issues or have the capacity to become involved if stirred. Others may just opt out or resist. There are psychological tests of locus of control that ask where the individual sees the control over their life. The following questions draw on these and other more socially based sources.

Q. How much influence do you feel you have in your life and neighbourhood?
Please show how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. *(Tick once for each statement.)*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have control over the decisions that affect my life	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can influence decisions that affect my neighbourhood	☐	☐	☐	☐
By working together, people in my neighbourhood can influence decisions that affect the neighbourhood	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q. If you had problems about a local development would you be most likely to:
□ Talk to the neighbours about it. □ Help organise a meeting.
□ Read about it and fume. □ Decide there is nothing you can do to stop it.

Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel I don't have the skills to make a difference to my community.	□	□	□	□
My networks and contacts mean I can make a difference to the community.	□	□	□	□
I lack the confidence to get involved in community action.	□	□	□	□
I don't think people like us can make changes happen.	□	□	□	□

Optimism relates to a sense of efficacy:
Q. Thinking about life in Australia generally, do you feel it is getting:
□ Better □ Worse □ Staying about the same

Thinking about your own life generally, do you feel it is getting:
□ Better □ Worse □ Staying about the same

The following questions measure feelings of safety, which are an important indicator of trust.

Do you feel safe alone in your home? Yes /No

Have you increased security in the last five years? Yes /No

(if yes) Was it mainly for insurance purposes? Yes /No

Do you feel safe on public transport at night? Yes /No

Do you feel safe walking around the neighbourhood at night? Yes /No

Living with other people

The following are different versions of questions on neighbourhoods, and an example is given of different ways in which questions can be used. It is important that audit designers give some thought to these in order to choose the type that is most appropriate to their *project. Some emphasise opinions, some encourage reporting on actual types of neighbour contact, some relate to individuals, others to the area as a whole. So all have different emphases. Use of more than one set will sound like repetition to respondents so pick that which best fits the purpose of the survey and the skills of interviewers.*

Of the following examples, the first is based on reporting relationships, the second looks at how people see their relationships and the third is a wider record of local contacts.

Q. Which of the following fits your situation?
(*Please tick one box only.*)

- ☐ I know most of the people living in my neighbourhood by name.
- ☐ I know many of the people living in my neighbourhood by name.
- ☐ I know a only a few people in my neighbourhood by name.
- ☐ I do not really know any people in my neighbourhood by name.

Q Which of the following most closely describes your views?
(Tick one response only.)

- ☐ I prefer not to become close to my neighbours
- ☐ I would like to know my neighbours better but haven't time
- ☐ I feel accepted as part of my neighbourhood

Q. Please record your local connections.
(Tick as many responses as necessary.)

- ☐ I have family and/or close friends in the neighbourhood?
- ☐ I visit my neighbours in their homes.
- ☐ Neighbours visit my place.
- ☐ We help each other when there are problems.
- ☐ If the people in my neighbourhood were planning an event, I'd think of it as something w*e* were doing, rather than something *they* were doing.

This set of questions is more open ended and could be used if you were looking at image as well as reported contact. This type of questioning is, however, harder to code and interpret.

Q. What do you like about your community/neighbourhood?

Q. What don't you like about your community/neighbourhood?

Q. Would you recommend living here to friends? Why?

Q. Given the opportunity, would you like to move out of this neighbourhood? Why?

Support and interdependency

The following questions examine specific neighbourhood interactions and yields information about how different streets, precincts and population groups may interact. They are included here to complete the picture of the social life of respondents. There *may well be people whose involvement with family is intense and demanding and these may be very differently situated than those with few family contacts and no other involvements. Therefore the question on families and relationships may be important if part of the exercise is to identify areas with few connections of any sort. Building connections may need an understanding of the dynamics in areas including those with the more intense and demanding family ties.*

Q. Have you assisted neighbours or local friends with the following activities in the past year?
(*Please circle yes or no for each activity.*)

Listened to their problems	Yes/No
Helped them with odd jobs	Yes/No
Lent them household equipment	Yes/No
Looked after their house while they were away	Yes/No
Assisted them with shopping	Yes/No
Cared for a member of their family (children or adults)	Yes/No
Lent them money	Yes/No
Other (write it in)	
OR They didn't need any assistance	Yes/No

And/or
Q. Have your neighbours or friends assisted you with the following activities in the last year?
(*Please circle yes or no for each activity.*)

Listened to your problems	Yes/No
Helped you with odd jobs	Yes/No
Lent you household equipment	Yes/No
Looked after your house while you were away	Yes/No
Assisted you with shopping	Yes/No
Cared for a member of your family (children or adults)	Yes/No
Lent you money	Yes/No
Other (write it in)	
OR I didn't need any assistance	Yes/No

Q. Where do most of your friends come from:

- ☐ Childhood/long term connections/school/education

- Local /neighbourhood now
- Workplace
- Shared interest groups

Inclusion, exclusion and others

These scales for measuring local biases, safety feelings and sense of inclusion and exclusion take the story further as people articulate their perception of others in answering the following questions. The focus here is on feelings rather than reporting and may manifest distrust.

Q7. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Do you agree strongly, agree, disagree or disagree strongly? (*Tick each statement once only.*)

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
People around here are generally helpful if someone is in trouble or needs a hand.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most people around here are involved in their community.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel safe when I'm home alone.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel safe on the streets or in other public places around here.	☐	☐	☐	☐
This area generally doesn't have much crime.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel as though I belong in this area.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I get on well with people in the area.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I don't think people like me around here.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Nobody here would care if you were in need.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Strangers/new residents are not welcomed here.	☐	☐	☐	☐
You have to lock up everything here or it is stolen.	☐	☐	☐	☐
You have to fit in to be accepted around here.	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are too many migrants around here.	☐	☐	☐	☐
This is a respectable area and we want to keep it that way.	☐	☐	☐	☐
This area has become much more interesting since people from other countries arrived.	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are too many people on welfare around here.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q. What are some of the sorts of things that make you feel accepted /not accepted in your area?

Pitched more at the respondent's view of the community, the scale below offers a briefer set of questions which could replace some of the more detailed questions above and still work as indicators of acceptance and contact.

Q. What do you think about the neighbourhood that you live in? Please show how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (*Please tick one box for each statement*)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
People in my neighbourhood make it a difficult place to live	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am good friends with many people in this neighbourhood	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have little to do with people in this neighbourhood	☐	☐	☐	☐
I get involved with most local issues	☐	☐	☐	☐
People in my neighbourhood are very willing to help each other out	☐	☐	☐	☐
If I moved hardly anyone around here would notice	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find it difficult to communicate with people in my neighbourhood because of language barriers	☐	☐	☐	☐

The following questions are again quite detailed and tend to look at particular actions and attitudes which go towards inclusion. This could be particularly useful where splintering of population groups and isolation may be present.

Q. How would you rate your local community on the following things? *(Tick one box for each item.)*

	High	Medium	Low	Don't Know
Tolerance of people from different backgrounds	☐	☐	☐	☐
Friendliness towards strangers	☐	☐	☐	☐
General prosperity	☐	☐	☐	☐
Friendliness towards Aboriginal people	☐	☐	☐	☐
Friendliness towards ethnic communities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Friendliness towards sole parents	☐	☐	☐	☐

Looking after children	□	□	□	□
Looking after older people	□	□	□	□
Helping young people	□	□	□	□
Being a safe place to live	□	□	□	□
Being a friendly place to live	□	□	□	□

Involvement

The following section deals with the ways in which people become involved in local and other activities. The impetus for involvement at the local level often requires using local media to find out what is going on. Involvement is one of the dimensions that is most often touted as an indicator of social capital and is obviously an important sign of actual commitment and participation. What seems to emerge is that it is often the most sociable, as in having wide contacts with friends and neighbours, who are also likely to involve themselves in civic action. The volunteer may be the sort of person who is generally more active in diverse social fields. So the questions below are extensive and <u>need to be carefully selected</u> for the appropriate purpose.

Q. Which of the following best describes your views of your current level of involvement in community and other activities? *(Tick one only.)*

a. I am very content with my current social/community levels of activity.
b. I would like to do more, but current activities leave me little or no time for anything else.
c. I would like to do more but I have some problems getting around.
d. I would like to do more but don't know where to start.
e. I would to get involved in the community but am not sure what I could do.
f. At some later date, I would like to become more widely involved.

Barriers

Q. Thinking about your life now and how it was a couple of years ago, would you say you were: *(Tick one.)*

□ More active now □ About the same □ Less active

Q. Have you any physical problems which have limited your involvement in:

Household activities Yes/No
Paid work Yes/No
Personal interests Yes/No
Other *(specify)* . . . .

Q. What is most likely to make you become more involved in your community?
(Tick as many as necessary.)

More free time

Financial costs
Greater interest in issue
Being asked to contribute
Feeling less cynical
Feeling I had some skills to offer
Doing enough/too much already
Nothing, not interested

Q. If time, which of the following limits your time?

	Some	A little	Not a problem
Household activities	☐	☐	☐
Family relationships	☐	☐	☐
Health	☐	☐	☐
Other unpaid work	☐	☐	☐
Paid work	☐	☐	☐
Personal interests	☐	☐	☐
Pleasure	☐	☐	☐

Other *(specify)* . . . .

Types of Participation

This section deals with the reporting of actual levels of active involvement in local areas which may or may not be within formal groups. Many activities are primarily social, some involve organisations, but not necessarily membership. They can offer readings of the levels of connections which various areas or population groups display. The first is a long list and should be culled to suit the project and possibly added to in other cases.

Q. In the past 12 months, how often have you engaged in the following social activities? (*Please tick once for each activity and tick if in the local community.*)

	Once a week or more often	A couple of times a year	A few times a year	Rarely or never	NB Tick if local
Visited local family/family visited you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visited friends/friends visited you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visited neighbours/had neighbours visit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Singing, acting or playing music in a group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Attended church or religious group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gone to a social club	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Played sport/exercised with others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gone to a café or restaurant with others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gone to a club, pub or bar with others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Attended a reading/discussion group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gone to watch a sports event with friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Been to class/hobby group with friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q. Which of the following is closest to how you see yourself?
(*Please tick one statement only.*)

- ☐ I am very active in my local community.
- ☐ I do some things in my local community.
- ☐ I don't do much in my local community.

Formal membership of social groups

This is somewhat repetitive if used with the question above on engagement in social activities. This one focuses more on formal membership and may be used when this is important. Otherwise shortened and non overlapping versions of both could be created.

Q. Are you currently actively involved in any of the following types of clubs, groups or organisations? *(Tick as many as you like.)*

- ☐ Sporting/recreation group
- ☐ Church group
- ☐ Arts/crafts group
- ☐ Surf club
- ☐ Bushcare/environmental group
- ☐ Youth group
- ☐ Seniors group
- ☐ Precinct committee
- ☐ P&C, school council
- ☐ Community college/adult education
- ☐ Musical/drama group

Other *(please specify)* . . . .

These questions are more about reporting on people's formal engagement in the community and their perception of level of activism and how this may involve them in other levels of community participation.

Q Can you be a bit more specific about the involvement you have had with these groups?
(Prompt – for example. Tick as many boxes as necessary.)

- ☐ Fund raising
- ☐ Donating money
- ☐ Service delivery
- ☐ Management
- ☐ Participation in meetings

Q. In the group, do you feel:

	Rarely/never	Sometimes	Mostly	It varies
That you influence decisions?	☐	☐	☐	☐
That you are accepted and valued?	☐	☐	☐	☐
That you make a difference socially?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do you make and maintain friends there?	☐	☐	☐	☐

This is a question on the specifics of the organisation, i.e its name not its category, and the recent history of such organisations in terms of joining, leaving and maintaining memberships.

List below the name of any organisations that:

a. You have joined in the last year

b. Discontinued membership/subscription in the last year

c. Continuing membership and been actively been involved in during the last year not included above.

(List the organisations by name, and under the above headings i.e. whether they are new, discontinued or ongoing.)

Political involvement

Questions re political parties and government or political activity.

Have you ever been a member of a political party?
If yes, why did you join?
If no, have you ever thought about joining?
If yes, what stopped you?
If no, why not?
Why do you think people join political parties?

Q. Have you ever done any of the following during a local, state or federal election:

Handed out election material?
Scrutineering the votes for a candidate?
Been a candidate?
Been a campaign manager or participant?
Been a committee member, local, regional or central?
Attended fund raising for a political party?
Given money to a political party?

Q. In the last two years have you:

Attended a local council meeting?
Rung the council to complain?
Written to the council?
Contacted your local member of parliament?
Signed a petition?
Attended a protest meeting?
Rung talkback radio about an issue?

Local media

The following questions are examples of how to measure the levels of attention given to and interest shown in local events and issues. It is useful to include these questions or similar ones in any study of local communities that aims to investigate levels of local interest and maybe to relate this to levels of involvement.

Q. Do you receive a local paper?

a. If yes, do you read it? (*Tick one box only.)*

Always/regularly
Mostly/sometimes
Rarely/never

b. If you do read your local paper, what parts do you read regularly?
(*Tick as many as you like.*)

None
Advertisements
Local news
Local community events
Sport
Letters to the editor
Headlines
Other *(please write in*) . . . .

c. What about your local commercial radio station? Do you listen to that?
(*This is for regional areas, mainly.)*

Often
Sometimes
Rarely

Q. Do you ever listen to your local community radio? Yes/No

a. If yes, how often would you listen?

Often
Sometimes
Rarely

Use of public and local facilities

The importance of public spaces for people to share and use for more than individual activity is often underestimated. The first question below is of fairly general applicability while those which follow come from a student survey conducted in parks in an inner city suburb. It showed the social networks of park users were based on common interests such as dog walking but also on making connections of recognition with regular users. The capacity to share space between apparently incompatible groups also makes for greater comfort with diversity. Parks used by diverse groups are well used and feel safe. Local shops and other resources may be similarly significant. The questions below are useful examples for any of the areas mentioned in the first question.

Q. What public facilities do you use regularly in your local area at least a few times a year?

(Tick as many as mentioned.)

□ Parks	□ Pools
□ Local or corner shops	□ Children's playgrounds
□ Beaches	□ Tennis courts
□ Basketball courts	□ Football fields and ovals
□ Bike tracks	□ Walking track

For use in Parks (could be reworked for other facilities

Q. Why did you come to this park today?

Response 1…………………………………………………………………

Response 2…………………………………………………………………

Response 3…………………………………………………………………

Q. How do you usually get to this park?

□ Run □ Walk □ Bike □ Car □ Bus

□ Train Other . . . .

Q. How often have you visited this park in the last four weeks?

□ Daily	□ A few times a week
□ Weekly	□ Fortnightly
□ Monthly	Other . . . .

Q. Who do you usually go with?

□ Alone	□ With partner
□ With children	□ With dog

Q. Do you arrange to meet people that you know in park?

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No

Q Do you often meet people that you know without planning it?
☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No

Q. What contact do you make with other people in the park?
☐ Wave ☐ Talk ☐ Smile ☐ Play sport ☐ Other

Q. What makes parks feel safe? . . . .

What makes them feel unsafe? . . . .

Are there types of people who you think shouldn't be in the park? Yes/ No

If yes, who? . . . .

Q. Have you made any new friends or acquaintances from visiting the park?

☐ Yes, quite a few ☐ Yes, some ☐ Yes, one or two ☐ No

If yes, what sort of people have you met while using the park?

☐ People like me ☐ A range of different people ☐ Local residents

Q. What problems are there in the park, if any? . . . .

Social and political attitudes

General attitudes to policies on diversity, questions on how others are regarded and seeing the possibilities of relationships with others are all important parts of the conversation of daily life. Like views on other topics, they will be affected by personal experience. The role of media, however, appears more strongly here than elsewhere as people use a range of media experiences (films. news, soaps, radio shock jocks, etc.) to reinforce or develop viewpoints. It is often the outside validation of personal viewpoints which give people confidence to promote their views. In terms of social capital, it is these attitudes which often determine whether people will trust strangers and institutions enough to run the risk of problems.

Q. How would you rate the current Australian government's policy efforts in the following areas? (*Tick once only in each line.)*

	Gone too far	About right	Not enough	Don't Know
Tolerance of people from different backgrounds	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fairness in wages and living conditions	☐	☐	☐	☐
Economic prosperity for all	☐	☐	☐	☐

Recognition of rights of indigenous people	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fair go for battlers	☐	☐	☐	☐
Equality of opportunity	☐	☐	☐	☐
Good welfare system	☐	☐	☐	☐
Opportunities for young people	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fair treatment of older people	☐	☐	☐	☐
Access to affordable health care for all	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q. Who do you discuss political news and other social issues with? *(Circle response.)*

Friends	Often/ Sometimes/ Rarely/ Never
Family	Often/ Sometimes/ Rarely/ Never
Workmates	Often/ Sometimes/ Rarely/ Never
Neighbours	Often/ Sometimes/ Rarely/ Never
Other members (of club or organisation)	Often/ Sometimes/ Rarely/ Never

Q. Have you been involved in government activities?

☐ Meetings on policies/changes/information.
☐ Government committees.
☐ Volunteer work for government.

Demographics

The preceding pages have covered the substance of collecting data for a social audit. However, collecting basic statistical data on the people that you interview is also important, for at least two reasons. The first is that by using a few standard questions to ascertain the characteristics, or demographics, of your sample of respondents, you can then check how representative it is by comparing your results with the characteristics of the national population as revealed in the census. Secondly, if a number of groups develop local or organisational projects, they will be able to make comparison and maybe combine results in certain cases.

Questions on the following should be seriously considered for inclusion.

- **Age** This can be done in groups, rather than individual years, which saves time in counting. It is useful to follow the practice of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, grouping into five year ranges or multiples of these, so that national population details can be used to supplement your information and compare samples. ABS statistics are grouped from 0 to 4 years old, 5 to 9 and so on and can be used in varying ways. For example, in the student survey of park use, there no interviews with under 15s and the other age groups reflect life cycles with 20 to 24 being mainly young singles, 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 with or without younger children, 45 to 59 older but probably still in paid work and the 60-plus group more likely to be retired. So this choice of grouping suited the project of looking at the use of public space, and was represented on the questionnaire as follows:

Age group: <20 20-24 25-34 35-44 45-59 60+

Also provide a space for no information, for those who don't answer.

- **Sex** Male/Female
  If appropriate add, (Identify as **. . . . . . .)**

- **Income** This could be about source of income, e.g. government support, own business, wages, family income.

- **Employment/paid work** This is often quite difficult to classify and the following categories can be useful: professional, paraprofessional, higher management, middle management, clerical, sales, trade, personal care, domestic, unskilled

- **Education** If you want an indicator of socio-economic status, education is often a reasonable guide, particularly if you are looking at highest level reached.

What is your highest level of education? *(Please tick once only)*

☐ Did not complete High School	☐ Bachelor Degree
☐ Completed High School	☐ Higher Degree
☐ Basic Vocational	☐ Post Graduate Diploma
☐ Skilled Vocational	☐ Associate Diploma
☐ Undergraduate diploma	☐ Other . . . .

- **Postcode** Where people live may be very relevant and you may need more information than simply a postcode. Postcodes are difficult to translate into suburbs even small settlements, so add more detail if you need it such as suburb or local government area.

- **Living Arrangements** Household living arrangements are complex and can often provide useful information on a range of levels. Think about what you need to know about your respondents. Are they partnered or single, with or without dependent children? Do they rent, live with relatives or are they home owners? How many live in their household? How about shared households? Work out what is relevant and be selective. The following question is an example of what you may need to ask.

Which of the following best describes your living arrangements: *(Please tick once only.)*
□ Living at home with parents □ Living by myself
□ Living with partner □ Living with partner and dependent children
□ Sharing with other adults □ Living with dependent children
□ Other . . . .

- **Caring role**

Are you the main carer for any of the following? **(***You may tick more than once.)*
□ Children under school age □ Children at school but under 12 years
□ An adult relative or friend □ Other . . . .

- **Disability**

Do you have a disability which could affect the following: *(You may tick more than one.)*
□ Your mobility □ Learning ability □ Communication
□ Ability to manage your mood □ Other . . . .

- **Ethnicity (use one or two of these)**

Q. What was the main language spoken in your home when you were a child?
Q. Where were you born? Where were your parents born?
Q. Where did you do your primary schooling?

Using observation

Another way to collect data is through **participant observation**, or just **observation**. This is generally non-intrusive and can be useful in observing how people use spaces, such as parks. Or you might want to see what people actually buy in supermarkets against what they say they buy. This can often yield a more accurate picture of behaviour than asking people to report on their actions.

It can be time consuming, however, and require quite wide application to make sure the behaviour seen is typical. One problem is that once people know they are being observed, they may change their behaviour. Nevertheless, if done by someone who is not seen as an observer but as part of the group, it is often useful.

Participant observation is particularly important in comparing informants' actions with what they say they do. A participant observer who is on the scene for even a short time can get beyond the answers in an interview, and beyond the official structure of an organisation, simply by watching. The difference between what people say and what they do can be quite wide, because people try to *say* the right thing, regardless of what they *do*. A participant observer can collect a great deal of relevant information about actual behaviour in a short time, either in a community or agency setting. In longer and ongoing projects, a participant observer can build stronger relationships with people, to earn their trust, and to understand the complex beliefs, experiences and motivations behind both reported and actual behaviours. In-depth participant observation gets at the influences on people's preferences and leads to a better understanding of the obstacles and incentives to development work.

Some examples of projects for observation surveys

- Uses of streets, parks, stations or other public areas at various times of day
- The mix of people who congregate at particular times, how diverse they are by age, ethnic group, etc
- Who turns up for particular events or meetings
- Who uses public transport and when
- The range, sex and age of drivers
- Bicycle use
- Who drives politely/who doesn't
- What do children do on their own?
- How do children get to school. And who goes on their own, at what ages
- What types of children go to local schools, how do they differ.
- Who wears school uniforms neatly/who looks like a slob
- Who dominates the school playground
- What are the gender mixes of young people, in the daytime, at night, in playgrounds
- Who uses particular sporting facilities and when
- Who uses litter bins, picks up rubbish; who litters.
- How many people smile when they are walking along, greet others or react in any way to those they pass.
- How do people share spaces like playgrounds and parks
- Who buys newspapers, what do they read first
- How often do people use the banks, who goes in and who uses the ATM
- Who buys junk food, who buys health food at the shopping centre
- Who eats food in public
- What happens to people who want to sit in malls
- Who has mobile phones
- Who do the police approach in the streets, parks and malls

The possibilities are endless, but choices should be made on the basis of what the information is needed for and how it will be useful as a way of studying behaviour. This method is often used in anthropological studies.

Recording the observations

Each situation will require its own tally sheets or recording processes. Sometimes a taped record of who is on the street at certain times is a good means of recording it; a video or even still photographs may also be useful. Both record and share the experience with others. However, cost and practical problems may make pen and paper the mode most likely to be chosen. The tally sheet below shows a range of behaviours you may want to record.

An example: park usage record format which can be used for any other observation.

Name of observer………………………….

Date……………Location……………………………….

Time of Day	**Age**	**Sex**	**No. in group**	**Activity**	**Interaction with others**	**Effect**
7 am - 7:59 am						

Use a new page for each time period: 8:00 - 8:59 am; 9:00 - 9:59 am; 10:00 - 10: 59 am and so on

Any codes developed to make recording easier should reflect as many uses of public facilities as practicable. Make sure that all observers understand and agree on abbreviations and codes (e.g. for park usage, *pl* for play, *rd* for read, *sp* for sport, *sl* for sleep) so that the information collected is consistent.

The observers should not collect data for items not included on the tally sheet, although they can report on novel uses that you may wish to explore another time.

If your observation coincides with an unusual event (such as a community festival, National Playgroup Day, etc.) that increases the use of the facility for the day or week, you may need to discontinue observation on those days or compare usage when there is no community event in progress.

3. TRADITIONAL SOCIAL INDICATORS

At the beginning of any project, you should look at what research and statistics is already available. Find out whether there has been other research in the area and also what other information there is that may be useful in helping you decide what else you need to know. There are many official data collections including those from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and local councils. Most of what they have is based on counting what is easy to count, which often means money. So even those statistics labeled as social indicators tend to be about economic issues rather than how people feel and act.

By themselves, traditional indicators are not very effective in describing how to translate data on, for example, unemployment, service deficits, developments, education problems or housing types, into assessments of how well the community, group or society is actually functioning. Obviously the data indicate the existence of various situations but don't assess how these are affecting the way people see themselves and their relationships with others. For example, the local council may see itself as trustworthy and be prepared to offer proof of its new and improved policies on participation and planning, even figures showing levels of approvals granted. If, however, the residents don't believe the council has changed, it may not be trusted and may still find lots of volatile opposition to its local plans.

The following are examples of the types of traditional data that can be useful

Levels of unemployment	Levels of family breakdown or children at risk
Disparity in income levels	School truancy
Levels of business confidence	New business activities, successful enterprise encouragement
Population turnover	Morbidity, mortality and birth rates
Crime and safety	Health provision
Pollution levels	Cost of living
Shopping facilities	Cost of housing, access to housing, quality of housing
Education provision	Employment prospects
Climate	Recreation facilities
Travel to work time	School attendance
Immunisation rates	Violence statistics
Hospital admissions	Driving offences
Police discretion	Traffic behaviour
Street behaviour	Bus passenger behaviour
Gun law compliance	Driver behaviour
Compliance rates in paying tax	Cash economy
Tax avoidance	Petty theft
Social security cheating	Vandalism

Traditional social indicators are often gathered from existing data sources, and include:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics censuses and special surveys
- Welfare department registers of children at risk
- State government crime rate reports
- Chamber of Commerce surveys and reports
- Local government planners
- Pollsters and private consultancy reports.
- Government reports

Existing documents can yield some useful information. Check numbers on membership lists, check names for diversity of ethnic participation, check the minutes and attendance records for levels of active participation. You can count clubs and organisations in local directories and check if they are still operating and active.

This data is usually statistical, and all that is necessary is to re-present it so that it is easy to read and understand, pointing out how it relates to other research findings. These bits of information become part of people's narratives and often affect whether people feel optimistic or pessimistic about their personal circumstances and about what is happening to society at large. These may connect with other aspects of their environment such as:

Built environment and planning
Air quality
Water quality
Access to bush and other open spaces
Energy costs
Waste management and recycling

The list could be much longer as more information is now available than ever before, partly as a result of better technology and software. As in all projects, priority must be given to deciding on what data is necessary for your specific purpose.

4. COLLATING AND ANALYSING THE RESEARCH MATERIAL

So now you have done your community social audit and have collected piles of material using some of the methods above. Now it is time to collate the information and report on it. The following section is a brief overview of some of the ways in which the material can be processed.

Dealing with questionnaires

These are handled by counting the responses to questions and by being able to cross tabulate the responses to show which particular people gave which responses and if someone said x, what did they say to y. The best way of handling a large number of questions is by using a computer program, either one designed for this or a spreadsheet program to count up the responses and cross tabulate, correlate or otherwise assist in the presentation of results.

If you knew what the answers were likely to be when you were devising the form, then you would have been able to pre-code. If you knew some answers but not all, you could have put in some codes and left space for others. If you really were not sure what answers you were likely to get, you left your categories questions open ended, with room for more than one answer to other questions and set up your codes afterwards.

You do this by tallying the responses by hand and sorting them into categories, cutting the number of different responses but not reducing them too far, so that they still reflect what people said or did, and use this to set up a code sheet. We usually have a number code to represent the values (codes) as this is easiest for entry into a computer and tallying and cross tabulating. Use a computer program if you have more than 30 to 50 responses and more than ten questions as the computer is more efficient at that point. There are special programs such as SPSS and SAS which do this and some spreadsheet programs can manage simple counts.

Once the codes are set and the data entered, the process of counting starts. The first product should be a frequency count, i.e. a total tally of the responses to each question. Then you can decide which responses warrant further analysis. These might be where there is a scatter of answers sufficiently spread to make it worth cross tabulating the answers to one question by the answers to another, e.g. sex, age and another question. This allows you to identify who gave which answers.

The results should show which themes and concepts reappear and who might be expressing those views. The analysis tries to make sense of these patterns. The responses can be sorted into indicators such as those described in earlier sections to see what proportion of respondents indicate certain views or perform certain actions.

Reporting on focus groups or group interviews

Focus groups results can be reported in three different ways.

a. A report on the narrative i.e. the story the respondents were putting together to explain how they saw what was happening. This would include what was discussed and how different topics were connected, what was raised spontaneously, the level of interest and the attitudes revealed in the discussion. It may also be useful to note what issues were avoided, i.e. the ones that were raised but failed to generate interest, perhaps because someone quickly changed the topic or silence and discomfort were evident.

b. A content analysis of the material, grouping and categorising issues, reflecting both the interests of the researchers and the participants with a description of the process by which the categories were set and how the material was analysed. Some quotes and examples should be included as well. If another researcher is involved, keep them informed so that they can explore and add to the analysis.

c. A summary of the results, doing an overall analysis. However, until reseachers have become very experienced they should give priority to the first two steps which allow them to check their impressions and ensure they are not just seeing and hearing what they expect or want to see and hear.

How to do the group analysis

Write up an immediate impressionistic report, while the process is still fresh in the mind. This should include visual cues like body language, auditory cues like voice levels, and ambience. Note any avoidance or intensity of discussion. List the main points that emerged and their context and cues. Note also the ways in which opinions may have been influenced by others or may change in discussion.

Then set up categories from each group, e.g. issues discussed, attitudes, or whatever the point of the research was. Establish a process of content analysis. Look for categories and list them. Play back the tapes and mark out where there are points of interest and good quotes. Transcribe these areas only. Do not work from full transcripts unless you are very familiar with the tape or ran the group as the written word gives different impressions from spoken ones. Use transcription selectively for good illustrative quotes.

Read other work, and see whether your findings are confirmed or differ, and use logic and intuition to string the ideas together, to make patterns of the ideas raised. Do they make sense? Write a draft of findings, then review your notes from the beginning and see how they mesh.

Set up some presumptions about what is being said. Go back and look for supporting evidence. Then go through the tapes again and look for counter evidence. Where possible, test your analysis with another researcher to insure you have not been selective in your interpretations.

Use the material to create a narrative, a report which strings together the concepts as articulated under various headings. The advantages of this technique is that the material is in context and this can inform the analysis.

Draft a report on the groups as a whole. Check on how divergent views emerged and piece together the logic for them as well as the dominant themes. See how strongly people hold some views, or how they can be convinced to change them.

If you feel it helps, or is required, do a formal content analysis. There are programs such as Nudist which can assist you with this process. Count words, ideas and other variables and see how they compare, but remember that these type of research works because of context, rather than by separating out items.

Pick the approach that suits your aims best. Some projects may be better served by counting, others by intuitive induction carefully tested against the totality. The problem and the advantage of this type of research is that it depends on the skills and perceptions of the researchers.

Putting it together

Doing the analysis is a bit like tackling a crossword or a jigsaw puzzle in which a pattern or picture gradually emerges. While this is always the key to good analysis, in the present case we are suggesting this process of finding the stories and identifying their key components may be the core of the social capital measures. Different people will probably offer various versions and the researchers need to be able to extract common threads and comment on different perceptions. When the various accounts of what they see happening, i.e. the narratives, are identified they should offer some clear indication of whether there are adequate levels of social capital, often expressed as trust, to respond effectively to change and conflict.

Indicators of the existence of capacity to manage change and conflict would include optimism about the future and commitment to working for the common good. As well, people need to show they have the capacity to trust new people and to see the possibilities of change as being more than a threat. Negative indicators would include fear and pessimism such as are demonstrated in those who structure their lives to avoid new or alternate experiences.

The task for those researching such groups or communities is to identify the distribution of these indicative characteristics and the possibility of both positive and negative attitudes co-existing in sometimes contradictory ways. The challenge is then to develop activities which encourage and legitimate the more positive views that make for more resilient communities.

The following points are a guide on how to proceed.

a. Group all the data on particular items together, regardless of how they were collected so that different perspectives can be used to round out and check the data.

b. Use the discussions and observations to put together some strings, i.e. issues and ideas which go together or relate to each other, e.g., the area has changed, do not go out at night, fear of crime, too many young people on the street.

c. Look at how many different narratives are in circulation. They will emerge not just in the cross tabulation of surveys but in the groups, the observations and the other data.

d. Find out whether there are particular identifiable groups who hold certain views. Look for characteristics such as age, where they live, where they work, life cycle, etc., which may identify who they are and how many they might be in the larger population.

e. Use both figures and words to describe the stories or narratives and who tells them. Show where clashes may come and where trust may exist and whether it is growing or is being undermined.

5. REPORTING RESULTS

The protocols, conventions and practices of research exist so others can gauge how likely it is that your research has fairly represented the views and needs of the people you claim to represent. So reporting the results needs to be done in ways which recognize the needs of the readers or audiences. If you are using the material within your own group, then you would report differently than you would if it were for a funding submission or report.

Think through what you want to put into your conclusions. Go back to why you were doing the research and the original objectives you were trying to achieve. You will probably have a lot more data than you know what to do with. So be selective. Don't leave out important findings, which may affect what people do with the report. Be honest about significant findings that surprised you. Keep thinking about your readers and what they want to know and why, and make the report relevant to them.

Remember that the report you produce may well be the major source of information on your research for both those you have researched and those you want to lobby. The reality is that most people will not read the whole report, but will read the summary and conclusions. So make these really clear and readable. Put this section on the front of the report and keep it relatively short.

In a previous section, doing the analysis was compared to doing a crossword or jigsaw puzzle. Putting the results into a report is a similar process. The bits you start with seem quite unrelated and then slowly they start making patterns and some larger order finally appears as more and more connections are made. Read your data, think carefully about both the qualitative and quantitative findings and how they fit together. Remember that social relationships and communities are full of complex relationships and contradictions. Talk the findings through with others involved and put the bits together in various ways until it seems to be a good fit.

Drawing conclusions from social audits

Social capital and social audit measures are still not necessarily familiar to policymakers or community activists. So when you are reporting your findings you need to recognize that you may need to explain why you chose to use those measures and what you think the results mean. There are various research projects, including one by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, that are working on finding proper statistical levels and norms bases for these measures, e.g. how high a score on trust correlates with feelings of safety in a community.

As yet we don't have that type of information so we are left with common sense interpretation of results. If social capital measures are to be seen as legitimate, they need to be articulated and defined in ways which lend themselves to being applied and to being seen as useful. However, these are early days and when we have collected a substantial body of examples of this type of data, we will be better able to set benchmarks.

This manual is a starting point for developing community social audit measures. While we are still testing the ways these measures can be assessed, the results we are getting do make sense. For instance low levels of reported trust of strangers together with evidence that people avoid contact with newcomers can be used to indicate that there are exclusion problems within that population.

Once you have collected your information, you need to draw some conclusions from it. It would be a mistake to give equal value to all the variables you have collected data on. Some indicators should be given more weight because they are likely to correlate clearly with the accumulation of social capital. So areas like trust and respect for others are probably more important than just counting the numbers of members in groups which tell you little about the quality of the relationships that may be in place. The relative values placed on findings, at this stage, rely on common sense and other research, which may show connections.

For instance, we already know that certain types of trust correlate with better health, higher education and better jobs. We do not know how or why these are connected, but we can speculate that people on the lower levels of a visibly unequal system have reasons to feel powerless, and explore some evidence that inequality causes distrust. The pattern of relationships between variables will become evident with further research in the area.

Think about the results of your research and select those that seem to be most relevant to the issues that started the project. Are you most interested in how people relate in neighbourhoods? Is it important to the people in the area that attitudes to certain groups seem to be excluding or welcoming? Are there indications that blaming of certain populations is happening easily? These could be strong indicators that the area has other problems such as fear of crime and the likelihood of perceived problems with young people or other groups. A range of such indicators may point strongly to community problems.

We can make use of the results of questions on how well people know neighbours. How do they relate to family and friends? Do people shop locally? Work locally? Together with other more conventional indicators, such data could suggest whether an area needs considerable help to build links and trust.

Maybe your research has shown strong overlapping group memberships and links between some groups in the community. These could indicate a strong local culture, but on their own may not be good signs if they are not connected with other indicators of trust of the less familiar. There also needs to be evidence of resilience in situations of change. Some good indicators of civic involvement need to be considered in tandem with other indicators of tolerance and acceptance of outsiders and new people before we can be sure that these communities are civil in the broader scene.

Poor use of public spaces such as parks may be the result of lack of good design, proper lighting or public transport. Low use of libraries may reflect library management problems. Individual local problems need to be explored to see whether low use relates to such factors as fear of using public transport, being out at night, etc. Deep distrust may spread problems but it needs to be identified clearly as the cause, rather than just wrong opening hours or other such administrative short-sightedness.

Assess how much credibility to give to what people say they feel and do, versus what they actually do, with evidence from attendance records, observations and others' reporting. There are some people who will claim to be anti 'foreigners' but who in fact are very welcoming. Reported attitudes have been found to vary from actual actions in both directions. People will often report what they think you want to hear and, equally, will also report what they think they ought to do, rather than what they do do. So treat responses and reporting with some scepticism unless otherwise validated.

Basically use common sense to test whether the data seem to fit together and create some reasonably coherent and credible picture. If there are contradictions or the overall results fail to make sense, think through what you have and see if there are factors you haven't included or considered enough. If the results were just what you expected, make sure you haven't overlooked any counter evidence.

6. BASIC RESEARCH - FOR EXPERTS AND NOVICES

Open Questions

Open questions are those in which no answers are suggested. The question is posed and the respondent allowed maximum freedom how they answer. The interviewer can then probe further until the answer is clear in meaning and represents fully the respondent's ideas. Open questions are used mainly when the researcher cannot accurately predict the range of responses likely to occur. The answers must be recorded in full and verbatim, and often are useful in understanding the attitudes and opinions of the respondent.

Problems

One problem with open questions is that some skill is required on the part of the interviewer in drawing out a full response. Many respondents will be brief and not explicit, and poor interviewing can result in useless information. Another is that it complicates the process of analysis as these responses have to be categorised so they can be counted. This process of setting up categories is known as coding.

Open-ended questions can play a useful role in a pilot questionnaire which might involve a smaller sample of five to 15 interviews done before the main survey as a means of testing the questionnaire design. The answers to the open questions could be used to set up categories of answers to closed questions for the main survey.

Closed Questions

A closed question offers the respondent a choice of responses. The respondent can be asked to make either a single or multiple response to these questions.

(1)"*Which of the following papers do you buy on Sundays?"*
Sunday Telegraph / Sun Herald This could elicit both responses.

(2) *"If you had a choice of any one Sunday paper, which one would you choose?"*
Sunday Telegraph / Sun Herald Here only one answer is required.

The choices may range from Yes/No/Don't Know to selecting from a series of statements the one that seems closest to the respondent's own feelings as in the following example:

What is the main reason you are opposed to a block of units next door?

- ☐ It will look ugly.
- ☐ It blocks my view
- ☐ It will destroy my privacy.
- ☐ I don't like any home unit development.
- ☐ It will create traffic and parking problems.

The main problem with this type of question is being sure that the responses offered are representative of the opinions of those to be sampled or that, at least, the categories you provide are those that interest you. The responses provided become part of the question in that they direct the respondent into the answers you are expecting.

For example if you are asking the question, “What sort of migrants should Australia encourage by subsidising their passage?” you could structure the range of answers according to the purpose of your research:
a. Asians, Anglo, Black, Lilliputian, if you are looking for racial biases.
b. Italians, English, American, German, Yugoslavs, etc., if you are interested in ethnic or language groups
c. Labourers, tradesmen, technical people, professionals, academics, etc., if you are interested in occupations.

The respondent will possibly refuse to answer if they are faced with a series of unpalatable alternatives, or find none to match what they really think,.

Closed questions are quick and easy to answer. The interviewer has no writing to do and the respondent little thinking. The analysis is straightforward. But they are often less subtle and less accurate than open-ended ones.

Pre-coding

Some pre-coded questions are designed primarily for the interviewer's use and not to be read to the respondent. This is done to save recording time in the field and coding time later on. In this case the question is asked as an open-ender but the response is fitted into a given list of choices. For example, if the question is: "What TV programs did you watch last night?", there may be a list of all the relevant TV shows on the questionnaire. But as the survey is trying to find out the level of spontaneous recall of TV shows, the interviewer does not offer the list, which would act as a prompt.

Varieties of closed questions

Certain types of closed questions have specific uses and terms applied to them.

The checklist
This is a fairly extensive list that the respondent is asked to mark. An example might be a list of grocery items with the request to "check the ones you buy every week". Or it could be a list of qualities you would expect to find in a local politician with the request to "check those you think are important".

A rating scale
This is rather like marking school exams. The respondent is asked to rate an answer on a scale, say from one to six, where one is strongly negative and six is excellent. For example: Rate your local school on the following attributes:

Modern building	1	2	3	4	5	6
Staff	1	2	3	4	5	6
Library	1	2	3	4	5	6
Science facilities	1	2	3	4	5	6

This is a useful way of building a profile of a person, place, product, etc. It does require, however, respondents who are capable of evaluating opinions in numerical terms which some people find difficult. Some people will not really think about it. The attributes listed should be both positive and negative to check whether the respondents are really thinking about the answer - they might simply mark all the points at one end of the scale!

The points of the scale can be labelled with words rather than numbers. Instead of the number one, you could have "not important" progressing through to "very important" for the final point. Or you could range your scale from "disagree strongly" to "agree strongly".

This makes the numerical value more comprehensible. Rating scales can include up to 10 points but five is the preferred number as it is fine enough to offer gradations of opinion but does not make too great a demand of the respondent's perception of figure values. Most researchers use an uneven number to provide a neutral mid point.

Rank order

This is similar to rating except that respondents are asked to rank a series of responses in their order of preference. This means no two responses can have the same value. If you have ten variables, they are ordered one to ten. This sets up problems as people often cannot rank items so rigidly. It also does not indicate the distance between the items, i.e. is item nine only slightly better than item eight or is it much better?

A grid

This is a two-way checklist or inventory. The respondent is asked to hold two dimensions of response in mind, and reply on the point of intersection. For example: Can you tell me how often you take part in any of the following activities (on average)?

	Once a week	Once a month	Once every 3 months	Less often
Play bowls				
Go to cinema				
Go to theatre				
Swim				
Entertain at home				

Filter questions

Filter questions are mainly dichotomies, like Yes/No, In favour/Not in favour, and are a form of closed question because the wording directs the answers to two possible alternatives. They are called filter questions here because their main use is as a preliminary question to a further set, i.e., they temporarily filter out people with certain attitudes or characteristics which you are not interested in examining further at this point in the questionnaire. In most situations, scales or ratings are of more value than dichotomies with the latter of most use in filter questions or when asking about matters of fact. With a bit of extra attention to the layout, however, scales can also be used as filters.

How to avoid putting bias into your questions

A loaded question is one whose wording pushes the respondent towards a particular answer. The main type of loaded question is where only one possible answer is insinuated by the form of the question. “Do you think there should be more child care centres in this area?” pushes the respondent towards an easy yes answer by not suggesting the possible alternatives. Compare this to the wording in “How do you feel about child care centres in this area -- do you think there are enough or not enough?” Another example of a loaded question is where the use of emotionally loaded words for describing the same concept can produce very different answers, e.g. pro-choice, pro-life and abortion.

How to avoid getting unusable answers

Double barrelled questions

These are questions which can be answered in more than one way, i.e., where your variables are confused and you are really expecting one answer to two different questions. An example of this is where questions on attitudes to motherliness and being unqualified are asked as if the same attitude would hold for each.

Broad questions

The problem with using questions that are too broad is that you may not get the information you require. If what you really want to know is whether people prefer encouraging skilled or unskilled migrants to come to Australia and you ask a broad question like, “What sort of migrants should Australia encourage by subsidising their passage?” people will answer in terms not only of skills but of race and language groups, religion, industriousness, political beliefs, etc. This is a perfectly reasonable sort of question to ask, but not if you want your answer in terms of a specific characteristic.

Other questionnaire design considerations

Questionnaire flow and question order

Questionnaire flow is the internal logic of a questionnaire. Obviously it is easier, for both analysis and for concentrating the respondent’s attention, to group together questions on the same sub-topic. It is normal practice to ask all demographic questions at the beginning or end of a questionnaire. Apart from this, you should try to make the order of the sub-topics flow logically, in a manner as close to natural thinking patterns as possible. You wouldn't ask a series of questions about current use of community services and then throw in a few questions about needs for housing in the area, and then shoot back to perceived needs for more community services. This interrupts the respondent’s thought processes, jerks their minds about and makes them irritated -- not to mention causing you to have to search all over the questionnaires to find relevant questions at analysis time.

Once you've made sure that the questionnaire is logical in format, it is a good idea to vary the types of questions and this is where the use of filter questions is very effective. It is a strain for people to have to think about unfamiliar concepts, so open-ended attitude questions should be leavened with closed or forced choice questions which are easy to answer. This reduces any feeling of being put on the spot.

Question gently
Some people don't like to say that they have any problems themselves, even if they do. Usually people feel more comfortable talking in general terms. A device that is often used successfully is to ask respondents what is needed generally or by other people in a similar situation, and then follow this up with a question about their own needs or experience.

How to pick a sample: From random to purposive

Decisions on number of interviews, form of questionnaires or the type of data collection to be used will depend on time available, people resources, the size of the universe to be studied and a range of other factors. By "universe" we mean all the people who could answer the questions, be under observation or offer an opinion or view. The sampling process involves picking an appropriate and more manageable subset if the universe is too big. The question is who to select and how many of them.

If there are too few people selected, their individual characteristics may stand out so that the results are not really representative of the universe as a whole. If some groups are over-represented, their views will dominate and other views will be under-represented. If we only interview the people who offer themselves, we do not know if the others have different views. So there are many questions we need to consider before deciding on our sample. Note that it is all right to have an unrepresentative sample, if you are prepared to acknowledge the problems and not claim it to be more than it is.

Here are more detailed descriptions of various types of samples used in everyday survey research.

a. The random sample
In this type of sample, every member of the target population has an equal chance of being selected. If large enough, it is assumed to reproduce the characteristics of the total universe under study, with a calculable margin of error. An example of a simple random or probability sample of households in a suburb would be to list every dwelling in the area, cut it into pieces and then pull the required number out of a very

large hat. This is obviously only appropriate for very small target populations (see description under "Random numbers").

b. The strata sample
This can be used if the universe you are studying can be divided into groups in terms of certain characteristics such as age, sex or occupation. The first step is to look at characteristics of the target population whose incidence or distribution is already known (perhaps from census figures). For instance, you may find that your universe is made up of 17,000 Australian-born people, 2,500 born in European countries and 1,400 in Asian countries.

An ordinary probability sample (NEED TO EXPLAIN WHAT THIS IS AND HOW YOU DO IT) is then carried out within each selected sub-group (or strata) to form a sub-sample of any size you like. This is a help when you are interested in looking at minority groups, because you can enlarge the individual groups, or cells, out of proportion to their incidence in the actual population. This method overcomes the problem of having sample groups that are too small for statistical significance (i.e., less than 30). In the example given, if you were interviewing one per cent of the population, this would give totals of 170 of the people born in Australia, 25 of the European and 14 of the Asian. The two smaller groups could be enlarged to an acceptable size for statistical significance, but when the results are analysed they would be considered in relation to actual incidence.

If you are not interested in looking at minority groups, you would select the number of respondents in each stratum in accordance with their incidence in the target population. If you are interested in looking at both the overall results and particular minority group results, you could weight your results so that you could generalise from them as a whole. This is done by multiplying or dividing the population groups you surveyed by their actual proportions in the population they belong to.

c. The quota sample
This can be effective and economical, but there are some traps. It is similar to a stratified random sample, in that certain population characteristics, or strata, are selected and interviewing quotas of various sizes are set for each group (i.e., 50 male and 50 female respondents). If these quotas are set in proportion to the known incidence of the various groups in the target population, this increases the likelihood that the sample will be representative of your universe. As with a strata sample, cell sizes can be controlled and weighted back to population incidence so that generalisations can be made.

Interviewers are given target quotas of set numbers of respondents with particular characteristics, but do not have to call at particular street numbers or in any other systematic way. This is an extremely useful type of sampling method in terms of cost, but can only occur when you already know the incidence of some of the characteristics of a target population. Its main disadvantage is that the interviewer may get the entire quota from friends or the local tennis club, so some attempt to randomise the selection of respondents within each quota group should also be made such as instructions not to interview all your friends or only at one location. Look for a scatter of respondents to be more representative of differences eg a range of age groups.

d. The cluster sample

This is gives good results and can be economical. It consists of a series of random probability samples and is, in fact, the way we (or the ABS) would normally draw a household sample. If we wished to survey all of the Sydney metropolitan area, for instance, we first randomly select a certain number of local government areas, then within these a certain number of collectors' districts and, finally, within these a certain number of actual houses to form starting points for interviewing. We then do either a census or a systematic sample of the surrounding households (see description below of the systematic sample). The number of elements selected in the various probability samples would depend on the size of the final sample selected on the basis of final cell size.

e. The selective strata sample

This is an economical method and while not theoretically impeccable it is handy when you have limited resources. It's called selective because it makes no attempt, or claim, to survey the whole target group. You might want to check on the differences in experience with some service, for example, in terms of age, so you select only the under 20 years, the 30 to 39 years and the 55-plus age groups. This method assumes that there is a regular progression of attitudes or needs through the age groups and that the omitted groups will fall somewhere in between the measured ones. In short, it is of limited use (similar to a purposive sample - see below).

f. Random number sampling for defined populations

(Good, economical, but only limited application.)

This is used for sampling things like membership or hostel residents, where you can actually list individually the elements of your universe. Each element, such as a dwelling or person or room, is given a unique number and the required number for your sample can be ticked off using a list of random numbers (available at the back of most statistics text books). This is easier than actually making up a corresponding ticket and drawing out individual numbers like in a Melbourne Cup sweep. Choose a sample size that will give statistical adequacy.

g. The systematic sample

(Special applications only.)

This just means that a system apart from sheer randomness is used to select respondents, e.g. picking every 10th name on list (if you want a 10 per cent sample) or interviewing at every 3rd house in a block (in order to cover a whole collector's district). The main thing to watch here is that the elements are not arranged in some order which would bias the sample, e.g. groups with certain characteristics may be over-represented or missed out altogether.

h. The accidental Sample
(Cheap)
This is pretty naughty. It simply means that you don't use any formal sampling method but take the first X number of people you come across. This is okay as long as you don't claim that the results are representative of anything except the views and characteristics of those people interviewed. It can be useful for giving you extra ideas, but cannot be used statistically to say anything about the wider society.

i. The purposive sample
(Cheap, but special application.)
This is where you make no attempt (or claim) to be representative. You select people to be interviewed on the basis that you think their different characteristics will give a spread of responses relevant to the issue under investigation. Once more, remember you cannot claim the results as representing any broad population, just its respondents.

Running a focus group

This form of research has long been popular in advertising and market research and is becoming more popular in social and policy research. It can provide attitudinal measures quite quickly and relatively cheaply. When done well, it can be a very powerful research tool but when used inappropriately, or by people who lack the skills to analyse the data, it can be dangerous. The groups are usually small and of limited number, and are therefore vulnerable to sampling error if misused. There are various models including some forms of group interview using techniques similar to those described above for in-depth interviews.

The techniques described below can be adapted to the limited budgets of community groups. However, moderators should be chosen carefully and training given. There are various models ranging from the tightly structured which can also be called group interviews, to the less structured where the balance of control is shifted from the interviewer to the participants. This technique depends very much on the members of the group feeling free to express their views and therefore the moderator should not lead discussion.

The strategy of a focus group meeting is to capitalize on the atmosphere of a social setting to allow participants to freely contribute their insights. Effective at both community and agency levels, a well-run focus group will generate high-quality data. Focus group meetings are a relatively low-cost way to collect rather complex information and insight. The groups often work best when the participants in each group are homogenous but there is also a case for using strangers. Homogeneity among group members means that they have common concerns; it does not, however, imply that they will put forth only one opinion or that they will agree on everything. But the similarity of some participants' orientation toward the issue at hand can allow for information to be shared freely and for deeper insight into the issue to be raised.

Group size and the skill of the facilitator can determine the success or failure of a focus group. Although it is possible to have as few as four or as many as 12 discussants, the six to eight range is generally the most successful. The person who guides the focus group - the facilitator - uses group process skills to ensure discussants speak as openly as possible together and that they direct their discussion to the relevant topic. A well-trained facilitator will adapt to different communication styles among groups and across cultures, easing the discussion from general to specific and teasing out the public significance of personal opinions. Part of this skill is to allow the group to form without the facilitator being seen as the expert or the person with power who should be deferred to.

Focus groups are neither problem-solving sessions nor decision-making groups, and their utility for establishing consensus is not the point. In general, focus group work is more controlled than lengthier participant-observation and it is more likely to attend to participants' own concerns than pre-set interviews.

Moderating a group

This technique of the focus group is derived from marketing and advertising research where it is a very powerful tool for product testing as it explores attitudes and their dimensions better than more structured techniques. It is useful where concepts and their power for attitude change are sensitive areas which need a unstructured approach so that people feel comfortable about expressing a range of opinions.

The idea is that the participants talk among themselves with no one in a formal position of authority. This is important because people tend to seek to please the researcher or leader, or to annoy them, therefore distorting the views they express. As discussed above, the group will ideally be made up of six to eight participants and will run for 60 to 90 minutes. Larger groups can be difficult to keep on track as they tend to break into smaller groups.

Some groups just don't work. A very dominant member can sometimes ensure few other views are heard. Tension in the group where people are silenced by fear of the judgement of others also do not work, and neither do those where the pace and process makes it hard for the more timid to be heard.

So it is worth making clear some ground rules before starting: one speaker at a time, because of the tape recorder, give everyone a go, and talk to each other, not to the moderator. All groups start with silence as the group seeks to involve the moderator and make them lead the discussion. The moderator must resist this pressure and remove him- or herself from eye contact. One ruse is to leave the room for a short time with the tape running; within a few minutes, the group starts talking and after about 30 minutes the moderator can prompt or even join in and just be treated as a group member.

Let the discussion work on a free flow of information to establish the frameworks that participants bring with them. This setting of the scene allows them to form a group and exchange ideas and reveal attitudes.

Use a checklist to monitor the discussion and let the initial discussion set the order of issues without intervention. The moderator intercedes only if discussion begins to flag or goes right off track and shows no signs of returning or, towards the end of the session, to introduce issues not raised spontaneously.

The discussion must be taped with a reasonable quality recorder and the moderator should also take notes during the session. Taking notes is also a way of avoiding eye contact in the early stages, as the group will try both this and silence, to try and involve the moderator.

The stages of a focus group

Initial phase: introduce the topic in as general terms as possible, giving no cues as to what you are looking for. Try and pitch the issue more widely than your particular interest area so you can see where and how the respondents place the topic in context.

Phase two: once the group has formed and the moderator is no longer sought as an arbiter or authority, the process moves into the stage where the moderator can raise issues or ask participants for further information on points already raised. The checklist is used to ensure that points are covered, *not* as a questionnaire. Let the discussion follow its own course, as long as all the issues are covered.

Phase three: a series of questions by the moderator at the end can be used to ascertain views on issues not raised or inadequately canvassed. However, try and work out whether these issues were actively avoided because they were known but made people feel uncomfortable or threatened or that they were of little interest and therefore were not raised spontaneously.

Number of groups

Running four or more focus groups on a particular topic offer the researcher the opportunity to listen to others talking freely. The groups provide the listener with the language used to describe the issues, the points of major interest, the possible areas of conflict, the level of interest in the issue, points of avoidance, if any and the range of views expressed.

Usually, by the fifth group, ideas are repeating themselves and, depending on sex, life cycle stage, cultural variance and location variables, six to eight groups are often enough to provide an overview, with 12 ample for a thorough view. However, if you want diverse groups from different geographic areas or cultural backgrounds, you may need more.

This is because the interaction between group members means more views are expressed than are held by the individuals separately. This will, of course depend on an environment in which there is lively debate and discussion and all feel comfortable enough to contribute.

In-depth interviews

The use of **in-depth (semi structured) interviews** with experienced interviewers is one way to overcome the limits of the questionnaire technique by letting respondents answer and discuss in ways which allow them freedom to raise other issues. However this still tends to establish a basic question and answer relationship and the interviewer is still seen as the one in control guiding direction, needing to be pleased or annoyed, depending on the relationship, not the content.

In-depth interviews are partly structured by a written interview guide. The flexible guide ensures that the interview stays focused on the issue at hand, but that it is conversational enough to allow participants to introduce and discuss issues which they deem to be relevant. The guide, prepared in advance to be flexible but focused, can be collaboratively designed with input from the research team, the project team and representatives of the client or sponsor, if you have one.

The strategy of a semi-structured interview is to prepare in advance a minimum number of questions, say 10 to 15. This small number should be enough to convey the focus of the interviews, allows for conversational flexibility and enables interviewers to become very familiar with the subject or problem. It is critical that the interviewers are familiar with the interview guide in order for the interview to be conducted in a conversational, informal way.

Semi-structured interviews are useful for comparative listening to perspectives of diverse populations (such as male, female, young, old, landowner, tenant, buyer, seller, producer, etc.). The team of interviewers must therefore be prepared to add interviews in the event that unforeseen biases or perspectives become apparent

How to undertake in-depth interviews

- Design an interview guide with general topics to be covered with some more specific issues within each topic. The guide can be in checklist form so that the interviewers can be sure that they cover each topic thoroughly.
- Establish a sample size and method which determines who will be interviewed, and the number of interviews required to meet data needs.
- Pre-test the guide in a small number of interviews to revise or refine it as needed.
- Brief notes should be taken during each interview and a tape recording taken if agreed to. The tape is confidential and the respondent should be told it is for recording answers only
- Interviewers should elaborate on their notes immediately following each interview, particularly on visual and other cues that are not on tape.
- If there are several interviewers or research teams, interviewers should compare notes and experiences for consistency.
- Discuss results of analysis with participants for feedback on accuracy of results.

Creating a problem tree for a community issue

The materials needed are a surface on which to draw (newsprint, paper, chalkboard or the ground) and markers, pens or chalk. The simplicity of organising the exercise and its emphasis on visualisation and discussion make it easy to use across cultures in both rural and urban settings.

Participants briefly review the major problem orally. A tree trunk is drawn and a word or a symbol denoting the problem is drawn on the trunk. Limbs and leaves are drawn (by the facilitator or, preferably, by a participant) in several directions. Participants suggest different dimensions of the problem, and each limb is designated to represent a separate dimension. A root system, symbolizing the causes of the problem, is drawn under the tree. The group suggests possible causes of the problem; each root is marked with a picture or a phrase which represents a cause. Once the tree is completed, participants discuss the causes, probing the extent to which each cause determines the major problem. For example, a cause may be major or minor, one-time or permanent. A well-defined problem tree can be a useful place to start an objectives tree. Eliminating the root causes on a problem tree can become the branches of an objectives tree.

Role playing activities stimulate discussion, paving the way for improved communication and collaboration. Participants are involved as a group in analytic thinking and assessment and the activity can be quite powerful in exploring the perceptions, expectations and narratives for describing self and other.

Participants take on designated roles according to the problem drama which has been prepared to portray a specific concern. The problem drama should be read or described so that people have time to prepare for their roles. Participants should be encouraged to act out their parts. After the drama is played out, the facilitator should open up discussion and guide it to elicit alternative views of the causes and solutions to the problem. When the discussion has ended or tapered off, the participants should describe how they felt about playing their various roles. Observers should contribute their own impressions of what they saw. Tape recordings of the action might be useful to jog peoples' memories at the end of the activity. In a planning situation, the story can be modified several times to illustrate a variety of options for appropriate intervention. This could be useful in areas where there is conflict as people play out opposing roles.

Resource allocations

Because of the simplicity of this research tool, people of different backgrounds can participate together, regardless of whether they are literate or not. Since the tool draws upon everyday experience, the research process is demystified and everyone is reassured that their participation is both valid and valuable. In the community setting, it is useful for both men and women, as well as trainers, project staff and field workers.

On a table or on the ground, drawings (man, woman, child or city country person, black or white child, etc.) are put in a row. The resource cards showing jobs, health care, education, counselling, etc. are scattered below the larger drawings. Blank cards and pens are readily available to add further resources. Together, participants sort the cards. One by one, the resource cards are placed in columns under the appropriate large drawing (such as the man, the woman or the child), depending on who control of or access to the resource. This can be expanded by using local religious, cultural or institutional groups to see how inequalities and differences are seen.

Participants conduct the discussion. The facilitator should take note of resources over which consensus was hard to reach, and of whether any groups of people are not freely participating in discussion. When the sorting has ended, the facilitator should ask participants why they made the choices that they did.

Mapping

For monitoring, changes can be recorded on maps made during project planning. In evaluation, comparative maps reveal both the status of actual changes in community resources or infrastructure and of perceived costs and benefits of the changes that have taken place.

Social mapping shows the location of households, the relationships between them, and the factors relevant to their relative wealth and poverty. Health mapping uses symbols to show where people with different conditions live and perceived sources of health risks and care. Mapping can be used to analyse the patterns and inter-relationships of space use in a given area. Mapping exercises are useful to see how people place resources. For example, if community-drawn maps show residences and communal areas in one circle and health clinic and school facilities lying outside or in a separate circle, this may indicate that people exclude these institutions from the realm of their everyday lives.