Coal Seam Gas Development and Community Conflict: A Comparative Study of Community Responses to Coal Seam Gas Development in Chinchilla and Tara, Queensland

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Abstract

The Australian coal seam gas (CSG) industry has grown rapidly from around 1,000 CSG wells in 2009 to more than 6,500 wells in 2014. Exploration and development has occurred in the predominantly agricultural areas of Queensland’s Western Downs. The crossover of these two competing industries, agriculture and CSG, has placed the rural west under a great deal of socio-economic and environmental pressure and led to significant controversy. The rural subdivisions of Tara have become the centre of conflict as the residents have fiercely resisted CSG project development since 2009. Other communities have welcomed CSG and the associated economic development. The empirical research question I address is: Why has conflict emerged in Tara and not in the neighboring community of Chinchilla? The research employs qualitative methods by using ethnographic tools to compare the responses to CSG development in Tara and its rural subdivisions with the neighboring community of Chinchilla. This research follows the emergence and transformation of the CSG conflict in the community of Tara from 2009 to 2014, including the formation of the ‘Lock the Gate’ movement. This research demonstrates that what has been perceived in the media and simplistically labelled as a conflict driven by the environmental impacts of CSG is far more complex. The root causes of this conflict run deeper. Rather than using an environmental lens, this research rather takes a social identity perspective, which has yielded counterintuitive findings. The study reveals that the conflict dramatically emerged because the CSG industry became enmeshed in the stigmatised identity of ‘Blockies’, as the residents of ‘Blocks’ within the Tara subdivisions are called. I also elucidate the fact that the stigmatised Blockies’ failure to sustain this conflict ultimately led to its transformation. The anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ took issue with CSG as a mean to manage, dissolve, and negotiate the stigma attached with the label ‘Blockie’ that socially excluded, discriminated, and marked them as devalued since the subdivisions were established in 1980s. Behind the nexus between the Tara subdivision-based anti-CSG groups and the Lock the Gate movement, no shared encoded meanings or objectives exist. The Blockies’ convergence with the movement was merely commensal in nature, which thus provided the rejected self with a positive reference point and a moral argument for being evaluated through the movement’s identity.
Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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None.
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Keywords

Coal seam gas, conflict, agriculture, Lock the Gate movement, environmental resistance, social identity, social movement, stigmatised identity, Western Downs.

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### Abbreviations

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSA</td>
<td>Basin Sustainability Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSG</td>
<td>Coal Seam Gas</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSG Rescue NSW</td>
<td>Coal Seam Gas Rescue New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>DERM</td>
<td>Department of Environment and Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIDO</td>
<td>Drive In Drive Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNRM</td>
<td>Department of Natural Resources and Mines</td>
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<tr>
<td>EIA</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIFO</td>
<td>Fly In Fly Out</td>
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<tr>
<td>FoE</td>
<td>Friends of Earth</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCSG</td>
<td>Gasfield Community Support Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>LNG</td>
<td>Liquefied Natural Gas</td>
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<td>LTG Alliance</td>
<td>Lock The Gate Alliance</td>
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<td>LTG Movement</td>
<td>Lock The Gate Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>PRA</td>
<td>Property Rights Australia</td>
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<td>QGC</td>
<td>Queensland Gas Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>WDA</td>
<td>Western Downs Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>WDRC</td>
<td>Western Downs Regional Council</td>
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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Global Unconventional Resource Development

Because unconventional resource development is revolutionising the global energy sector, this phenomenon now lies at the forefront of the global energy outlook (Zittel et al., 2013). This sudden boost in development results mainly from technological innovation: the combination of hydraulic fracturing (also known as ‘fracking’) and horizontal drilling to extract trapped gas economically from complex geological formations. The current pace of this resource development clearly indicates that what was previously considered as ‘uneconomic’ can now be exploited commercially.

Unconventional natural gas in particular has proved to be a major source of energy. Whether it be Coal Seam Gas (CSG)/Coal Bed Methane (CBM), tight gas, or shale gas, unconventional gas is now considered a veritable game changer offering cheap, clean, and abundant energy for a resource-constrained world. Currently, natural gas is the third largest primary source of global energy in that it meets 22% of the world’s energy demand with an expected growth of 2.1% annually by 2030 (IEA, 2012a, 2012b). It is estimated that non-OECD countries will be sharing 80% of this demand growth. European economies also depend on natural gas which currently accounts for 25% of the primary energy demand (Belkin, Nichol, & Woehrel, 2013).

Various energy analysts believe that unconventionally sourced gas is a reality which should be considered as the best available alternative (e.g., Bocora, 2012; Roger, 2011; Wurzer, 2011). Experts argue that switching from coal to unconventional gas is not only important for increasing demand but that it is also an environmentally superior substitute in reducing CO₂ emission (e.g., Hayhoe et al., 2002; Gentry et al., 2011; Rutovitz et al., 2011). Therefore, a favourable international market, gas prices, mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, increasing energy demand, and diminishing conventional oil and gas resources provide reasons why recognising unconventional gas development as a ‘golden age of gas’ should be encouraged.

On the back of enormous unconventional resources, many countries are changing their status from net importers to exporters to ensure energy independence and long-term security. The United States has laid the foundation for unconventional gas extraction based on its enormous shale gas reserves, mainly concentrated in north-eastern states, the home of the Marcellus Shale Basin. Between 2006 and 2010, gas production there has increased tenfold and the region has become the world’s largest
gas producer, surpassing Russia. In addition, massive reserves of unconventional gas have been identified in China, Ukraine, India, Australia, Argentina, Mexico, Poland, Germany, United Kingdom, and France (Kuhn & Umbach, 2011). New discoveries and the development of unconventional resources is also altering the geopolitical scenarios; for instance, both the United States and Australia are now challenging the monopolies of traditional gas suppliers, such as Russia, Qatar, and Algeria.

1.2 Anti-Fracking Movement

However, the bonanza is not proceeding without disapproval. Along with many other social and economic impacts, critics are concerned with serious environmental impacts. Much of the contention has centred on the process of hydraulic fracturing: a method to enhance recovery of trapped gas (Rutovitz et al., 2011). The process requires the injection of fluids containing chemicals that are often abbreviated as BTEX (benzene, toluene, formaldehyde or hydrochloric acids) to keep fractured cleats open and stimulate the flow of gas. In particular, expansion of the industry in both rural agricultural and densely populated areas has been widely criticized. Concerns have focused on how industry has placed a strain on the water resources through depressurising or drawing down the water level, threatening regional groundwater usage, and contaminating groundwater through the injection of fluids (Hamawand, Yusaf, & Hamawand, 2013). In addition, concerns regarding serious health impacts and air quality have also been at the forefront where unconventional gas is being extracted (McDermott-Levy, Kaktins, & Sattler, 2013; Colborn, Kwiatkowski, Schultz, & Bachran, 2011).

In response to the controversial drilling technique, the global anti-fracking movement has emerged as the industry faces grassroots resistance from various communities and environmental groups throughout the world. The case against the industry is growing stronger every day. The anti-fracking movement has pitted many people against the industry through coordinated and formidable campaigns. Various environmental groups, such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth (FoE), Six Degrees, and other green political movements have played a vital role in mobilising the movement globally and creating anti-fracking sentiments. The movement has become so conspicuous that their actions provide frequent coverage in the daily media of protests, rallies, blockades, land rights claims, environmental and health impacts, petitions, and/or calls to action.

Owing to a fear of long-term environmental impacts, several countries have responded to public concerns by organising bans or moratoriums against the project development. For instance, France and the state of Vermont in the United States have already banned the controversial process of
fracking after it was linked to serious impacts on groundwater and health, and other environmental impacts. In other European countries, concerns about the impacts have similarly led to either bans or moratoriums; these include Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Germany, and The Netherlands, all of which boast large estimated reserves of unconventional oil and gas. A complete list of countries that have enacted bans or moratoriums is available at ‘List of Bans’ (n.d.)

1.3 Australian CSG on Local and Global Agenda

The Australian CSG industry is also experiencing a period of rapid growth with significant exploration and production; however, its exploration in Australia is not a new phenomenon. The industry has a history spanning more than 20 years, mainly concentrated in the Bowen Basin of Queensland where the commercial production of CSG began in 1996. The ensuing years have seen rapid growth in both CSG reserves and production. Most of the CSG reserves are concentrated in New South Wales and Queensland (Bowen, Surat, Gunnedah, Gippsland, Gloucester, Clarence-Moreton, and the Sydney basins). However, the largest known and proven reserves are trapped in the cleats of coal seams in the sedimentary basins of the Bowen and Surat basins of Queensland, estimated to represent 41,620 Petajoule (PJ) (Bureau of Resources and Energy Economics, 2014).

Although CSG and coal mining currently seem to be in competition with each other, during the early stages (the 1990s), these coal-based commodities had an intimate relationship. While most of the CSG sites in Central Queensland were neighbouring open-cut mines, until the late 1990s, CSG was not considered or prioritised by the Queensland State Government as a potential energy source. Because it was not expected to become the nation’s natural advantage in the following decades, the dormant industry was not regulated or studied. Furthermore, its science was not understood, including the potential environmental impacts of ground water abstraction. In a 1989 statement, former Minister for Resources, Lawrence Springborg, accepted that “coal seam gas was only a twinkle in the resources sector eye at that stage” (Keogh, 2013).

Later, in early 2000, driven by technological innovations in unconventional resource development, the CSG industry started to appear on the national energy outlook as a potential future fuel. In 2003, The Gas Supply Act 2003 was passed through state parliament to establish the new CSG regime and primarily served to resolve the previously mentioned competing interest between coal and CSG companies. The industry received overwhelming support from mainstream political parties. For instance, in 2007, Queensland’s then Premier, Peter Beattie, announced CSG as an energy advantage for economic prosperity and a cleaner burning fuel comparable to coal (Fitzgerald, 2011).
The present growth of the industry accelerated mainly with the construction of major Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) processing facilities in Gladstone and on Curtis Island, situated on the east coast of Queensland (e.g., Baker & Slater, 2008). To this end, three CSG-to-LNG projects are proposed for Queensland’s east coast targeting the Japanese, South Korean, Chinese, and Taiwanese markets, with likely further expansion to India and Singapore as the capacity increases (Makki, 2012; Shell, 2009). According to the International Energy Agency (IEA, 2011), if Australia’s proposed and under-construction LNG projects come online, the country will become the world’s second largest LNG exporter behind Qatar. With Australia’s vast CSG resources playing a significant role in supplying global natural gas, the nation is undoubtedly well-placed to establish long-term partnerships with importing countries.

With regard to domestic supply and consumption, natural gas is a significant source of energy in Australia in that it currently meets 24% of the country’s primary energy demand with rapid growth expected in the near future (AEMO, 2011). According to the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (APPEA), 90% of Queensland’s gas production is currently being sourced from coal seam produced gas. Therefore, to meet the increasing demand for gas, the supply rests largely with the development of CSG resources.

The global supply outlook for natural gas coupled with national incentives in the shape of domestic energy security, national and regional development emphasises the importance placed on CSG development in Australia. While this thesis does not examine international and national interests related to CSG development, it is important to recognise the strong geo-political pressures that are placed on government and companies to develop CSG resources. These pressures also compel communities to accept CSG developments. The rapid growth of the CSG industry and the corresponding growth in communities’ concerns and conflict is an important area for research enquiry.

On the back of its enormous CSG reserves, the Surat Basin is at the forefront of CSG development because intense project-related infrastructure is already in place. This project development is likely to contribute substantially to federal revenue in taxes ($243 billion), jobs creation, economic growth, and regional development (GISERA, 2011; Energy Quest, 2011). Moreover, in the second quarter of 2014, the burgeoning CSG industry delivered 30,700 jobs and $146 million to community funding and state revenue from royalties and taxation, an amount expected to increase to $561 million during 2015 to 2016 (Margolis & Hough, 2014).

Compared to Queensland, where the industry claims to have secured more than 4,000 land-access agreements with farmers, the progress of CSG development in New South Wales is relatively slow
with only 285 agreements so far (McCarthy, 2011; “Will NSW Run Short of Gas”, 2014). While the AGL Camden project is the only commercial CSG project in New South Wales, the company has also received approval to extend their project in Gloucester near Newcastle (AGL, 2014). In New South Wales, the Federal Government seems to be critical of the slow CSG progress, although such delays are usually blamed on the anti-CSG movement. Current Industry Minister, Ian MacFarlane, is a passionate advocate of the CSG industry, citing the development as “the most urgent resource issue facing the government” (Mazzarol, 2013, n.d.).

Many critics believe that multi-billion dollar CSG projects were given approval without proper consideration given to the science and with many questions left unanswered, particularly regarding environmental impact (e.g., Carey, 2012; Hutton, 2013; McGregor et al., 2013). The reason for the unprepared rush could be because, until recently, the industry has been operating under the umbrella of an adaptive management framework which has been criticised as being a guessing game or a scenario of learning by mistakes (Swayne, 2012, p. 3). In addition, established evaporation ponds and no available treatment for salt water are two poignant examples of unplanned development. With regards to the social impacts and land use issues, during the early period of the CSG project development, rarely were the words ‘landowners’, ‘compensation’, ‘social license’, or ‘coexistence’ uttered by either industry or government (Keogh, 2013). These matters are important to the communities and particularly landholders hosting CSG infrastructure because surface footprints of CSG projects are far more intense than those of conventional oil or gas production. The process requires the infrastructure to be connected with CSG wells (typically drilled to depths of 300 to 1,000 meters below the surface) positioned around 750 metres apart. Since these wells come with a connection of road networks, compressor stations, water management and gas processing facilities, and pipelines (CSIRO, 2014; de Rijke, 2013a) that support them, they have compromised the character of the rural landscape and land use, as well as having caused concerns about their environmental impact.

1.4 The Australian Anti-CSG Movement: Emergence of the Lock the Gate Alliance

Similar to the targets of the global anti-fracking movement, the Australian chapter of CSG development faces opposition, criticism, and much protest. The communities’ mobilisation against the industry has spread across the country and gathered momentum. The ongoing intense debate over CSG has attracted media attention and divided the communities of the nation (e.g., Carney & Agius, 2013; Lacey & Lamont, 2014). On one side, many community members, the government, and industry are eagerly waiting to develop these enormous resources while, on the other side,
environmentalists, community members, and concerned citizens activate under banners such as ‘Frack Off’ or ‘NO to CSG’. Although CSG development has occurred in Australia for the last 20 years, only recently has industry found itself caught in the social movement that inspire aggrieved communities to take to the streets.

The anti-CSG movement is spearheaded by the Lock the Gate (LTG) Alliance, which was established in November 2010, a non-cooperative, civil disobedience movement committed to protecting agricultural resources and communities from ‘invasive’ coal and CSG industries. The ‘Lock the Gate’ alliance is so-named because it ‘locks the gate’ on negotiation with CSG companies about any land access. Although this non-cooperative strategy parallels that of the global anti-fracking movement, the Australian case has concentrated on issues related to groundwater by eschewing coexistence between CSG industry and agriculture and opposing what is argued to be the irreversible environmental impacts (Hutton, 2012b, 2013).

Recently, this movement has succeeded significantly against the growing industry drawing attention to ‘people power’, as exemplified by different cases. For instance, on May 12, 2012, around 7,000 people marched against CSG development (Turnbull, 2012); a moratorium was placed on CSG development by the Victorian Government and extended until 2016 (Hagemann, 2015); a moratorium was introduced in Tasmania on fracking until 2020 (Foley, 2015; see also McCarthy, 2011) and on-ground confrontation resulted in significant delays to CSG development in the community of Tara, in the Western Downs of Queensland. This community action has revealed the strength of sentiment galvanising local and rural residents against CSG project development. The most recent win of the anti-CSG movement involved the suspension of Metgasco’s drilling licence in Bentley, New South Wales (Hinman, 2014). The suspension of the licence announced by the State Minister of Resource and Energy followed a performed blockade by nearly 2,000 people at the proposed drill site. The success of Bentley appeared as the “mother of all dust-ups” (Broome, 2014, n.d.) and became an example of people power and an indication that the LTG movement now had the upper hand.

1.5 The Blocks and the Black Soil: CSG Development in the Western Downs, Queensland

The predominantly agricultural region of the Western Downs, around 200 km west of Brisbane, is experiencing significant growth in CSG development by both national and international companies. This rapid growth has put the rural west under a great deal of socio-economic and environmental pressure. Ideal agricultural country is now adapting a changing lifestyle and economy as CSG
companies continue their quest to develop CSG projects. The crossover of these two competing industries, agriculture and CSG, has brought both positive and negative consequences. The industry emerged at a time when the region was already going through post-drought conditions. Thus, declining agricultural productivity, seasonal droughts, depopulation of rural communities, and a lack of economic opportunities all contributed to encouraging the CSG industry.

Although the LTG movement originated in Queensland to ‘lock down’ the rapidly expanding CSG industry, the movement and other entities of environmentalist activism around the country have failed to expand and recruit members in rural Queensland. Their non-cooperation strategy has been marginalised by both individual land holders and the agriculturalists of the Western Downs. This does not imply that communities of the Western Downs are not concerned about CSG project development; rather, they have organised themselves through their own groups, such as Basin Sustainability Alliance (BSA) and AgForce, while steering clear of the LTG movement. Even though the anti-CSG campaign has been framed as protecting agricultural resources from CSG development, LTG movement enjoys very little or no support from the agriculture-dominated communities of the region examined in this thesis.

Therefore, despite the controversies surrounding the issue of CSG and its potential impacts upon the agricultural industry, CSG development now stretches from Dalby to Wandoan in the Western Downs and coexists with significant agricultural production. One of Australia’s most important agricultural regions is now covered with CSG tenements spread over 24,000 square kilometres (Margolis & Hough, 2014). In Queensland, the region has now become an epicentre of CSG activities in facilitating most of the upstream CSG projects. For instance, currently there are four key proponents developing multi-billion-dollar CSG and LNG projects in the Western Downs region: QGC-BG Group (Queensland Gas Company) (QCLNG project), Arrow Energy, Origin Energy (APLNG project), and Santos. In the Western Downs, the small community of Chinchilla is now ready to deliver a world-first CSG-LNG supply to Chile, China, Japan and Singapore (“Chinchilla Coal Seam Gas Ready to Roll Out,” 2014).

1.5.1 Tara Rural Subdivisions: The Island of Resistance and Conflict Transformation

The small community of Tara is located in the Western Downs, and it borders the nearby community of Chinchilla on QGC’s Kenya gas field, located around 80 km west of Dalby (see Map 4.1). The area of Tara is climatically marginal and dotted with Brigalow and Belah. Most of the land is infertile and not favourable for intensive pastoral farming (Ferguson, 1962). Immediately surrounding the town area are more than 2,100 rural subdivision (Blocks), established during the
1980s. They are commonly 13 to 40 hectares Blocks in area, spread in an arc about 10 to 15 kilometres north and east of Tara town. The residents of these rural Blocks are often referred to as ‘Blockies’. The population of the Tara subdivisions is greater than the town itself.

The CSG issue did not spark controversy until 2009, when several residents of the Tara rural subdivisions were approached by QGC to negotiate agreements as a part of land access and negotiation process. A few individuals from the Blocks started to oppose this project development fiercely and established the very first anti-CSG group in Australia, the Western Downs Alliance (WDA). Over two years (2009 to 2011), WDA organised many protests and blockades at the frontline of opposition against the project. Because of this localised conflict, the community of Tara has been in the news headlines repeatedly, being represented by the media as a community hostile to CSG development. WDA resisted the project development on the grounds that CSG is an unconventional industry affecting their lifestyle, threatening their survival, and (as they claimed) the industry has exposed them to serious health threats. The group and other motivated residents of the subdivisions have rarely been concerned about the impact on groundwater and agricultural productivity.

WDA not only became responsible for highlighting the CSG issue to the main stream media but also engineered the idea of establishing a national social movement against the industry, which we now know as the LTG movement. Since its launch, the Tara-based anti-CSG groups have provided unique allies to the national movement and disseminated the anti-CSG narrative both regionally and nationally. However, while the intimate relationship between the LTG movement and the Tara subdivision-based groups was assembled, it bypassed the agriculturalists of the Western Downs, particularly in the neighbouring community of Chinchilla. This occurred mainly because the movement failed to gain their support which later became one of the main reasons for the LTG movement’s shift from Queensland to the Northern Rivers of New South Wales.

The conflict in the Tara subdivisions was transformed and eventually could not sustain itself, and thus terminated in late 2013. During late 2012, members of WDA shifted from a confrontational organisation to one focused on a negotiated outcome by forming a new group, Gasfield Community Support Group (GCSG), which was established to address place-based grievances and other issues with the CSG industry. The impetus for this was the LTG movement shifting its geographic focus to the Northern Rivers soon after it was established. However, another subdivision-based group called ‘Stop CSG Tara’ remained confrontational towards CSG project development during 2013 until the group decided to leave Tara for New South Wales under the new name CSG Rescue NSW.
Given the contentious history of the intense, on-ground, anti-CSG actions between 2009 and 2013, this change in behaviour begged the question: how could such a confrontational and hostile approach be transformed into one based on negotiation? What made WDA change from confrontation to negotiation and what was behind the shift of Stop CSG Tara from the rural subdivisions of Tara to New South Wales? These are some of the questions to be addressed in this study.

The development of CSG reserves has been heavily criticised for its adverse social and environmental impacts. However, potential CSG-related impacts could be less harmful for Tara than those of the neighbouring community of Chinchilla. This is mainly because, like many other communities of the Western Downs, the community of Chinchilla has a well-established agricultural and livestock-based economy whereas climatically marginal, economically desperate, and drought-stricken Tara has comparatively few development opportunities other than CSG. Despite possible greater CSG impacts, Chinchilla is currently hosting project development as planned and to an intensive degree. Explanations of these two neighbouring but contrasting cases are complex but indeed demonstrate how polarised the debate over CSG has become.

The divergent reactions of neighbouring communities, Chinchilla and Tara, to the project development raises questions: Are these reactions driven by specific contextual realities or factors? Is the conflict related to the CSG environmental impacts? These are difficult questions to answer particularly in the wake of various successes of the LTG movement in New South Wales, and their failure to expand in the Western Downs and thwart the CSG industry. Furthermore, the LTG movement was established with the help of Tara-based anti-CSG groups. As such, it is important to investigate the following: (1) why LTG failed to stop the project development in Tara despite the community appeared to be the frontline opponent of CSG development; (2) why the LTG movement shifted to New South Wales; (3) why Tara-based anti-CSG groups could not attract other neighbouring agrarian communities to their cause, and; (4) what led to the Tara subdivision-based anti-CSG groups’ eventual disestablishment?

To understand the complexity of CSG conflict in the Tara subdivisions, the scoping study helped to explain the community dynamics and identify future research needs requiring more in-depth investigation (see Section 3.5 for detailed discussion on the scoping study). It was realised that what has been perceived by the media and simplistically labelled as being a conflict driven by the environmental impacts of CSG is far more complex. The root causes of conflict in the Tara subdivisions run deeper and a focus on social identity, stigma, and social movement provides the
best framework for understanding the conflict’s emergence, the anti-CSG Blockies’ alliance with LTG movement, and the subsequent CSG conflict transformation in Tara.
1.6 Research Inquiry, Main Argument, and Theory Building

This is the group [the Western Downs Alliance] of people who are devaluing our homes, our town, and our Blocks of land. Make no mistake, it is these people who are destroying the value of our town, not the gas and oil companies. This is the group of mainly unemployed [...] abusing and threatening honest workers who try to come into our town to spend their wages. In this group there are many ‘look at me — look at me’-type non-achievers who are steadily devaluing our town’s homes, businesses, shops […]. The public money they suck on won’t stop and they have no plans to be employed.

[…] These people, who do not represent us, fraudulently continue to scream ‘hands off Tara,’ not ‘hands off the Western Downs’, ‘hands off Rural Blocks’ or Hands off my property’. Tara doesn’t need this. Many people participating in the protests do not live in or around Tara. […] ‘Western Downs Alliance,’ by association, is deeply involved in the threats to workers and damage to Tara.

These mainly unemployed drones […] do not represent anyone but themselves. They can’t even earn a living. There is little doubt there is a large ‘show me the money and I will desist in these activities’ component in all this. (Original letter from Tara residents about WDA, see Appendix 1)

The story of the CSG conflict in the Western Downs unfolds in the Tara rural subdivisions. The quote above is extracted from a letter that was circulated around the town of Tara in 2011. It expresses one reaction by residents of Tara to the numerous anti-CSG activities conducted by WDA. The letter, allegedly written by the members of the Tara Futures Group, did not reframe the CSG conflict itself but rather reframed the ‘identities’. It distinguished between us and them and simultaneously reminded the ‘Blockies’ from the Tara subdivisions that they were not socially valued. The reaction illustrates how people can be socially categorised and linked to identities that convey their attributes. According to Cass (1984), identity refers to “organised sets of self-perception and attached feeling that an individual holds about self with regards to some social category” (p. 10). At the heart of this situation is that ‘Blockies’ are being labelled and characterised by certain negative attributes which have led to this us and them distinction. Thus, Tara town residents reduce in identity “from [being] a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one”, which is Erving Goffman’s (1963, p. 11) description of stigma and stigmatised individuals.

If conflict over extractive resource development can expose the dynamics of a pre-existing but dormant localised identity conflict, then the phenomenon needs to be explored in detail. Because conflict is a pervasive and inevitable phenomenon of society (Burton, 1987; Okoh, 2007), it is wise firstly to ascertain the symptoms of conflict so as to diagnose its root cause. While this thesis begins by acknowledging the important role of conflict, its research seeks further means of discovering
how resource-based conflicts are fuelled, especially in contexts which are categorised and/or polarised by social identities. This research offers Tara, its rural subdivisions, and the neighbouring community of Chinchilla as its case study, within which different identities, attitudes, and reactions to CSG project development are analysed and compared.

This case study asks the following simple but important research questions: Why did conflict emerge in Tara and not in Chinchilla? Why did the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ fail to sustain their conflict and thus transform it? Overall, this will help to elucidate the role stigmatised identity plays in the transformation of this localised conflict. This research draws heavily from the theories of stigma (Goffman, 1963), social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) and social movement (Snow & Anderson, 1987; Snow & McAdam, 2000; Touraine, 1985). Understanding the complex relationship between stigmatised identity, social movement, and the extractive industry is of particular relevance to this research. The notion of ‘stigma’ originated with Goffman (1963) who describes it as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (p. 12). Following Goffman, many researchers have explored ‘stigma’ both theoretically and empirically to understand why a particular identity is devalued and stigmatised in a society (Crocker & Major, 1989; Watkins & Jacoby, 2007; Whitehead et al., 2001), discriminated against (Link & Phelan, 2001), and invokes power dynamics in the process of stigmatisation (Link & Phelan, 2001; Yang et al., 2007). The literature surrounding Goffman’s theory of stigma also invokes how, in response, stigmatised individuals manage the stigma (Anderson, Snow, & Cress, 1994; Hannem & Bruckert, 2012; Kaufman & Johnson, 2004; Plummer, 1975; Ponse, 1976; Taylor & Raeburn, 1995; Troiden, 1979; Warren, 1980), and explicates the process of identity negotiation (Swann, 1987; Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989; Khazzoom, 2003).

Researchers have also understood the involvement of stigmatised identities in social movements as emerging from both reactions to self-rejection and as a stigma management strategy (Anspach, 1979; Taylor & Whittier, 1992; Anderson, Snow, & Cress, 1994). Examples include the gay and lesbian movement, religious or ethnic-based movements, and the African American civil rights movement. However, comprehending the involvement of stigmatised individuals in a movement that is irrelevant to the source of stigmatisation or the root cause of a localised conflict between distinct identities—such as the environmental movement or contemporary anti-CSG movement—has rarely been discussed in the literature to date. Therefore, I argue that the literature about social movement and stigma should be cross-fertilised, particularly through the lens of identity work (Snow & Anderson, 1987; Snow & McAdam, 2000). This theoretical association will lessen the challenge of understanding the conflict in Tara and the nexus between stigmatised ‘Blockies’ and
the anti-CSG movement (LTG movement). This challenge stems from our awareness that no national anti-CSG movement existed prior to the formation of WDA in Tara.

There is also greater need to understand the consequences of stigma-management strategies (e.g., concealment of stigma, manipulation of social information, self-presentation) on social movements and localised conflict transformation. This research contributes to this understanding by focusing on three stigmatised Tara subdivisions-based anti-CSG groups (WDA, Stop CSG Tara, and Gasfield Community Support Group). The conflict transformation in these groups will be viewed in the immediate presence of Tara and Chinchilla Agrarian identities. This link will be identified and explained through thick description of fractured identities which predate CSG development and within the context in which the CSG conflict unfolds. This research understands and applies the notion of stigma to the complex and dynamic context of Tara in order to explore the role of stigmatised identity in stoking an unusual form of localised conflict against the CSG industry. I argue that it is important to contextualise previous theories, particularly as they relate to the concept of stigma and its consequences.

The literature invokes the concept of ‘place’ to signify an identity who belongs to where (Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi & Halton, 1981; Goffman, 1963). Scholars also suggest how context not only gives rise to distinct identities but also arranges them around shared self-definition, such as: ethno-religious groups, minorities, and immigrants (Langer, 2005; Stewart & Brown, 2008). The issue here is not just of a stigmatised place but a place that embodies a particular representation of self. This is important to acknowledge because stigmatised identity requires reference to a social context where self is being represented by the context. This implies that, if the self is removed from the context, then most likely the stigma would also be dissolved—a possible outcome of stigma management strategies.

This research, through Tara’s story, explains the localised conflict and challenges existing in the literature on CSG conflict by providing an alternative reading to those who postulate and comprehend the conflict to be the result of environmental impacts (e.g., Greer, Talbert, & Lockie, 2011; Carey, 2012; Adam. 2013; Lloyd, Luke, & Boyd, 2013; Scott & Shakespeare, 2013; Foley, 2014; “Qld CSG Protesters Won’t Back Down,” 2013). I argue that what has been perceived by the media and simplistically labelled as a conflict driven by CSG in the community of Tara is far more complex. The root causes of this conflict run deeper than a focus on environmental impacts associated with CSG project development. It is in fact a struggle against stigmatisation that has a history predating the CSG development. The conflict was fuelled by the CSG development primarily because the industry became entangled with the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ of Tara’s
subdivisions. The conflict provided the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ with an opportunity to challenge their stigma and join the LTG movement against the CSG industry. The LTG movement provided an authentic or satisfactory identity as a reference point for positive self-presentation and to negotiate the imposed stigma.

This research also provides an historical account of identity politics since the 1980s between ‘Blockies’, the agriculturalists, and the residents of Tara town. I explain how ‘Blockies’ were socially categorised, labelled, socially isolated, and discriminated against according to certain socio-cultural characteristics. Using the case of Tara and CSG conflict, I also demonstrate how carefully the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ crafted the conflict against the industry, concealed their rejected self, and new social networks with activists and environmental groups from outside were created (mainly in New South Wales). Therefore, this thesis uniquely interprets the CSG conflict and adds a critical perspective to the current literature on social movement and stigma using empirical research. The research site is under-explored, even though its inhabitants have been active and influential in the ongoing resistance against CSG development in Australia.

The nature of conflict and the community dynamics in the Western Downs of Queensland have unfortunately been largely ignored by the CSG industry. The limited attention has resulted in simplistic labelling using a ‘company–community conflict’ binary opposition. It has relied on stereotypes, such as professional protestors, environmentalists, anarchists, hippies, greenies, radicals, or anti-capitalists (e.g., Houghton, 2011; Lloyd, Luke, & Boyd, 2013). Therefore, this research eschews the generalisation of any conflict with an extractive industry and the multifaceted dynamics that may contextualise a particular conflict. In particular, in a context that is polarised by distinct identities, people’s struggle must be understood in terms of their definitions of opponents, their raised concerns and, more importantly, their objectives. Generalising the conflict is detrimental in that it leads one to believe that the opponents are at an impasse because of ideological differences or perceived environmental or direct impacts associated with the resource industry.

The research is particularly relevant to the fields of extractive industry-based conflict, community relations, engagement with stigmatised and marginalised groups, and overall, where community conflict is likely to occur because of fractured identities. From the exceptional case of CSG conflict in the Tara subdivisions, I will reframe the causes of conflict and explain how previous theoretical perspectives help to provide a coherent path to achieving three cognitive outcomes: first, the role of stigmatised identity in emergent conflict and its transformation; second, how stigma management strategies push or aid such transformation or behavioural change; and third, the nexus between
stigmatised identity and social movement, that is, a movement not formally linked to the source of stigma-based conflict.

1.6.1 Brief Note on Scope of Research

In seeking such a link between the social movement and constructed identity, it is necessary for me to clarify the scope and terms used in this research to prevent any possible misunderstanding. These terms are underpinned by several assumptions. I turn to them first. First, there are more than 2,100 Tara rural subdivisions, or ‘Blocks’, with an estimated population of around 3,000 residents, located on the outskirts of Tara town. These residents include retirees, lifestyle or ‘tree’ changers, hobby farmers, and ex-veterans. Therefore, to conceive of ‘Blockies’ as being a homogeneous group characterised by perceived negative social attributes would be empirically flawed. Yet, these diverse groups of people are narrowly defined and stigmatised by the residents of Tara town through the use of the term ‘Blockie’ to distinguish the ‘Agrarians’ (normals) from the ‘outsiders’.

The poor socio-economic and living standards in the subdivisions eventually led to the area of the ‘Blocks’ becoming known as an immoral place synonymous with social disorders. In seeking to understand the dynamics and movement of the conflict in Tara, rather than framing ‘Blockie’ as an assumed social categorisation, one of the purposes of this research is to illustrate the process of stigmatisation and expose the underlying assumptions associated with the continuous formation of this identity. More importantly, the study seeks to explore how this identity is implicated in the conflict. Therefore, it should be noted that throughout this thesis, the term ‘Blockie’, in relation to stigmatisation, will be presented in inverted commas. My intention here is to indicate criticism of the othering image assigned to residents of Tara’s rural subdivisions and their arbitrary portrayal and construction as being individuals possessing negative social attributes. The unchallenged reiteration and persistence of this kind of language, among respondents who identify as so-called normals further normalises and perpetuates deleterious social effects on the residents of the Tara rural subdivisions.

Second, I want to clarify that the terms ‘anti-CSG Blockies’ or ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups will be used to denote only those individual residents of the subdivisions in Wieambilla Estate and Golden Downs Estate who mobilised themselves against CSG development through the Western Downs Alliance, Stop CSG Tara, and Gasfield Community Support Group.

Third, the examination of the relationship between Tara’s stigmatised ‘Blockies’, their conflict with CSG, and their convergence with the LTG movement is a unique case. By no means does this research imply that other groups or identities, for instance those in New South Wales, are also
involved in the aforementioned arguments. Rather, this research focuses on explaining what motivates stigmatised individuals to correspond and converge with social movements, as a pretext to managing stigma.

Fourth, this research may appear to delegitimise the claims of both the Tara subdivision-based anti-CSG groups and the national anti-CSG movement. However, there is no such intention. It is important to juxtapose the case of Tara and its rural subdivisions with the neighbouring community of Chinchilla to enable the reader to appreciate a complicated story of conflict where identity and stigma play an important role in the context and provide an alternative interpretation of the environmentally based narrative. Therefore, the data and analyses on the case of the Tara rural subdivisions should not be considered in isolation. Having said that, this dissertation acknowledges and documents in detail all socio-economic and environmental concerns raised by the Agrarian identities, and particularly those of Chinchilla. These concerns entail the impacts associated with CSG-produced water, the drawdown of underground water aquifers, agricultural productivity, land use (the coexistence between CSG and agriculture), the influx of (fly-in fly-out [FIFO]) workers, and the impact on the local social and physical infrastructure (see Chapter 5 for details of the impact). In addition, this research recognises the legitimate concerns raised by the LTG movement associated with CSG development.

**1.6.2 Thesis Outline**

The next chapter seeks to explore the theoretical grounding for a social identity approach to understand conflict and its potential within social movement studies. The theory provides a lens through which to understand the differences among groups rooted in social structures and how and why the concept of social identity is important to understanding the heterogeneity of a social movement. The next chapter also discusses how identities are socially categorised based on certain negative attributes. I pursue this approach by first explaining the concept of stigma and its consequences. This will be followed by a discussion on stigma management strategies employed by the identity to manage his or her resistance to the social construct. In particular, I focus on the nexus between stigmatised identity and the social movement and, finally, discuss the consequential relationship between the identity and the social movement in light of stigma management strategies. Overall, this will suffice to highlight the unique role played by stigmatised individuals not only in conflict emergence (under ideology-based considerations) and transformation, but also in clarifying the understanding of the identity’s correspondence with a social movement.
Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology used in this research, and its suitability for conducting research in the context of distinct identities. I also explain how using qualitative methods with ethnographic tools exposes a researcher to enormous emotional and ethical challenges. Particular attention has been given to how dealing with stigmatised individuals makes a topic more sensitive in nature; I outline at this point the strategies I adopted and learnt during the fieldwork.

Chapter 4 contributes to the understanding of CSG and community conflict in the Western Downs by geographically depicting where project activities are happening and overlapping with agricultural land. In doing so, this chapter compares the two neighbouring communities of Chinchilla and Tara and offers perspectives into not only contrasting socio-economic characteristics but also the divergent relationship with the CSG industry. This helps to identify the risks associated with project development across communities and thus attempts to explain conflict with the CSG industry in the region.

Chapters 5 and 6 begin by introducing three main identities within the context: (1) Chinchilla Agrarians, (2) Tara Agrarians, and (3) the ‘Blockies’ from Tara’s rural subdivisions. I provide detailed information on distinct identities who have raised concerns about CSG project development. This will provide a background to understanding the peculiarities and the politics of identities, that is, how a local identity cleavage became entangled in a conflict with the CSG industry. In brief, these chapters attempt to understand the centrality of the conflict.

Chapter 7 compares distinct identity categorisation within the case study context from a social identity perspective. Together with Chapter 5, this chapter analyses the emergence and absence of CSG conflict, the identity-based groups involved, and their varying relationships with the CSG industry. Following a discussion of Agrarian-based groups, this chapter offers an analysis of three anti-CSG groups in Tara’s subdivisions (WDA, GCSG, and Stop CSG Tara). The chapter develops the social identity link between distinct identities and also explains the change in behaviour of the stigmatised Tara subdivisions-based anti-CSG groups. The behavioural change exemplifies a critical component of stigma theory and thus provides the basis for understanding the convergence of the stigmatised self into a social movement and the changing behaviour associated with stigma management techniques.

Chapter 8 returns to the research questions and reframes the CSG conflict in the Western Downs from a stigmatised identity perspective. It explores the significance of the findings for conflict emergence in a context where a resource industry becomes entangled with a stigmatised identity. Finally, Chapter 9 has two objectives: First, to restate the central research question and summarise
its key findings and, second, to elucidate the main arguments and outline their implications for a theory of stigma and social movements.
2

THE NEXUS BETWEEN IDENTITY, SOCIAL MOVEMENT, AND STIGMA

This chapter explores the theoretical grounding for a social identity approach and its potential role in understanding conflict and social movements. The chapter explains the differences among groups within social structures and how and why the concept of social identity is important in understanding the heterogeneity of social movements. This chapter discusses the social categorisation of identities according to their attributes. I pursue this course by first explaining the concept and consequences of stigma. I then discuss stigma management strategies that stigmatised identities use to deal with and resist stigma. Finally, this chapter discusses the consequential relationship between stigmatised identities and social movements in light of stigma management strategies. This will help to explain the unique role played by stigmatised identities, not only in conflict emergence and transformation but also their relationship with social movements.

2.1 Social Movements and Social Identity

Broadly, the notion of a ‘social movement’ according to Bebbington et al. (2008) can be understood as “… a process of collective actions that [has] sustained across space and time, that reflect grievances around perceived injustices, and that constitute a pursuit of alternative agenda” (p. 2892). Bebbington and colleagues’ understanding of the phenomenon also mirrors Zald and Ash’s (1966) analysis of a social movement organisation. Gorz (1982, p. 75) notes that a social movement is a phenomenon where an individual or a group struggles “not to seize the power in order to build a new world, but to regain power over their own lives” (as cited in Pichardo, 1997).

In commenting on the characteristics of contemporary social movements, Melucci (1995) considers Habermas’s (1987) view of a social movement as an imaginary colonisation of the life world. Habermas suggests that the emergence or manifestation of a social movement is certain when people’s meaningful practices are colonised, in that it affects their ability to control their own life and space. In contrast, Melucci argues that a social movement attempts to resist the intervention of the state and the market into social life to maintain personal autonomy (see Buechler, 1995 for a thorough theoretical discussion on this point).
Della Porta and Diani (2009) add to these assertions using examples of Nazism, the American Civil War, and the African-American civil rights movement. These authors see a “social movement as the manifestation of feelings of deprivation experienced by individuals in relation to other social subject, and of feelings of aggression resulting from a wide range of frustrated expectations” (p. 7).

However, social movements as a process of collective actions are far more complicated than the foregoing suggests. While many views exist, more pertinent to this research is the argument that a social movement is a heterogeneous phenomenon which must not be considered self-contained. This view is derived from the argument that social movements are shaped by informal networks of formal groups and individuals who cohesively struggle to introduce change in either a society or against perceived injustice (Diani, 1992; Gill, 1994; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Snow & McAdam, 2000). Similarly, Meyer and Whittier (1994) observe such networks as a collective struggle by different groups to change “the discourses about a particular topic” (p. 280). To clarify this argument, this research borrows the definition of social movement from Tarrow (1995): “collective challenges by groups with common purposes and solidarity in sustained and mainly contentious interaction with elites, opponents and authorities” (p. 228). Of consequence here is the term “contentious interaction” which points to those oppositional strategies that draw the attention of both opponents and allies (Tarrow, 1995). Therefore, the literature provides evidence as to how different groups cluster or organise themselves around a social movement to strengthen their power and address any imbalance.

One of the recurring themes in social movement literature is the concept of ‘identity’ within the dynamics of the movement (e.g., Snow & McAdam, 2000). The concept of identity is central to understanding the relationship between self, collective actions, collective identity, and social movement. The theory of social identity was first coined by Tajfel (1972) who viewed the self as an “individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significant to him of the group membership” (p. 31). This self-concept further explains “how human individuals are able to act as other than and more than just individual persons” (Turner et al., 1994, p. 460). Therefore, the theory of social identity critically links the self and an individual’s group membership. Central to the theory is the idea that self is influenced by self-belonging that distinguishes one from the other—the phenomenon of in-group versus out-group. This intrinsic relationship is of great importance to many researchers. However, for the purpose of this research, I focus theoretically on distinguishing me as a self and we as a category.

Brewer (1991) invokes the uniqueness of the self-concept and its relationship with social identity. She says that the ‘fundamental tension’ between similarities and uniqueness is balanced by a social
identity. This tension enables individuals to be the “same and different at the same time” (p. 477). Moreover, it enables the self to be absorbed by other groups or identities (Brewer & Gardner, 1996) while developing an inseparable relationship between self-concept and social identity. Stryker (2000) understands this expansion of self as a part of a social group where “membership is a matter of playing a role in a network of reciprocal role” (p. 30). What we see here is that the concept of social identity demands self-categorisation, namely, to view him- or her-self as a part of a specific group or category.

Stryker (2000) further differentiates categories and groups. He defines categories as “inclusive of persons sharing some characters” while a “group is a functioning unit of interacting persons typically occupying a differentiated position within the unit” (p. 30). However, the theory of social identity is not so much concerned in drawing distinctions between groups and categories; rather, it dissolves the boundaries and considers the terms as synonymous. This theory has been used for over 40 years to aid in understanding conflict, differences, and relationships between different categories, for instance, religion, ethnicity, nationality, gender, avocation, and political affiliation (e.g., Deaux et al., 1995; Goffman, 1963; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Pertinent to this research is the categorisation of the ‘stigmatised identity’ (Goffman, 1963) as detailed in Section 2.2.

Social identity applies to a social unit defined by both norms and roles of the members where roles characterise the group, rather than other way around (Turner, 1991). On the other hand, the theory of identity is concerned about self-differences within the group. Therefore, social identity relates to an individual’s awareness where one views him- or her-self as a member of a same social category “containing certain value and emotional meaning” (Klandermans & de Weerd, 2000, p. 71) and also to “achieve some degree of social consensus about evaluation of their group and their membership in it” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 15). What is crucial here is the dominant role of a category over the self.

The literature also argues that social categorisation could be multiple in nature where an individual may associate self with different groups at the same time based on shared understanding of a particular situation (Turner, 1991). Here multiple social categorisations point to a broader social category, the outcome of which can be understood by linking two theoretical concepts: depersonalisation of self and collective identity. Turner (1987) views self-depersonalisation as an essential process whereby “players come to see themselves as a collective or joint unit, to feel a sense of we-ness, of being together in the same situation facing the same problem” (p. 34). Brewer (1991) also mentions the importance of collective identity as a social identity where “I becomes we” (p. 476). Klandermans and de Weerd (2000) differentiate these interconnected concepts as
collective identity is established through “cognition shared by members of single group, whereas social identity concerns cognition of a single individual about his or her membership in one or more group” (p. 74). This raises an issue: that there are two separate levels of analysis between social and collective identity, although they are intrinsically related to each other.

Absorption of self in other group(s) can be described as ‘immersion’ in ‘large collectives’ because it involves comparing one’s own group with another (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). In fact, in the absence of social cognition or social comparison, the concept of social identity is incomplete. Social comparison not only shapes “how people think about people” (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p.1), but also defines a group versus group social interaction and behaviour. In other words, any observed behaviour or perception a group has towards another essentially links to how individuals identify both themselves and others as a part of a social category (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1999).

Turner (1999) essentially summarises and extends the abovementioned arguments when he says that social categorisation describes individuals’ “shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories” (p. 12). Therefore, once the self is categorised as a social identity, individuals begin to identify themselves as different from other groups. Implied here is that the group identities emerge from differences based on categories “between those who share some attributes, experience or label and those who do not” (Brewer, 2000, p. 119). The theory of social identity also includes the argument that one is inclined towards or evaluates/maintains their group association more positively (e.g., Padilla & Perez, 2003; Stryker, 2000; Swann et al., 2004). A positive self-concept is related to the point raised above that the self is derived from group identification which then leads to a social comparison between in-group versus out-group.

The differences between groups—in-group versus out-group—creates the possibility of intergroup conflict. Brewer (2001) sheds light on the complex phenomenon of in-group and out-group behaviour and conflict by explaining the fundamental commitment of self to a social categorization. As mentioned earlier, this commitment also encourages social comparison and establishes a group’s evaluation between different groups. On the process of self-categorisation that generates and shapes group behaviour, Foddy and Hogg (1999, pp. 312-313) state that:

Self-categorisation is thus responsible for self-definition as a group member, and is seen to be the basis for normative behaviour. Because groups furnish social identity … they not only tell us who we are and how should we think, feel and act; but also prescribe our worth in relation to other people and other groups.
Similarly, relevant explanations of intergroup behaviour and conflict can be found in the phenomenon called a ‘minimal group paradigm’ (Tajfel, 1972) linking both self-perceived categorisation and social comparison. This paradigm is observable when similarities and differences between in-groups and out-groups are defined. These real or self-perceived differences are based on attitude, behavioural norms, beliefs, or values (Hogg & Abrams, 1990; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). They lead to a practice of stereotyping, discrimination, and prejudice which may shape intergroup conflict (Brewer, 2001; Rothman, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The consequence of such differences is likely to appear in the form of identity politics.

Crocker and Major (1989) assure us that, in our society, many social groups based on distinct categories are stigmatised and that, consequently, behaviour towards a stereotyped group is affected. Here the term category implies an identity that possesses a stigma, a social construct coined by Goffman (1963), and explained below. What follows in this chapter seeks to explain the stigmatised identity and social movement nexus, as well as the implications of this link on both localised conflict and a broader social movement. I intend to explain why and how the theory of stigma is important, and I will then apply it to the dynamics of CSG conflict in the Western Downs of Queensland. The stigmatised identity that focuses this research is the residents of Tara rural subdivisions who are labelled as ‘Blockies’. I pursue this intention by first explaining the concept and consequences of stigma and then discuss its associated stigma management strategies as employed by the identity in dealing with and resisting stigma. Finally, this chapter discusses the consequential relationship between stigmatised identity and social movements in light of these stigma management strategies. Overall, this will be sufficient to focus on the unique role played by stigmatised identities, not only in conflict emergence (under ideology-based considerations) and transformation but also as associated with the identities’ relationship with social movement.

2.2 Stigmatised Identity

Goffman (1963) defines the construct, stigma, as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” and which reduces the individual “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (p. 3). In this work, he refers to autobiographies and case studies in determining how certain negative attributes can be identified among others to result in the labelling of an individual. This involves what it means to be stigmatised, the use of stigma to separate us from them, and the dehumanisation and discrimination of stigma possessors. More specifically, stigma reflects how stigmatised people present themselves to others (at micro-level interaction) and is thus concerned with the social
relationship, in which the spoiled self constantly struggles against the stigmatisation through managing stigma.

Following Goffman’s work, other research has contributed to development of the construct: Jones et al. (1984) view Goffman’s ‘attribute’ as being a distinct condition or characteristic defined by a social environment in that it ‘marks’ a person as ‘contaminated’ or spoiled (p. 2); Watkins and Jacoby (2007) understand a stigmatised individual as someone “being identified as different” (p. 851); and Stafford and Scott (1986) see it as “a characteristic of a person that is contrary to a norm of [a] social unit” (p. 80). One particular definition of stigmatised identity is useful to this thesis because it includes both the concept of identity and the role of context: Crocker et al. (1998) hold that “stigmatised individuals possess some attributes, or characteristics, that convey a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context” (p. 505). This means that such a “physical or social attribute devalues an individual’s identity and hence disqualifies the individual from full social acceptance” (Goffman, 1963, p. 9).

However, the difficulty is that because ‘stigma’ has been variously defined, its application to a particular setting or social issue may prove to be complicated. Variation in the application of stigma creates challenges for researchers, but simultaneously it creates possibilities, such as the promising multidisciplinary application of stigma ranging from research in psychology, anthropology, political science, sociology, and social geography. In this research, I have attempted to establish the relationship between different disciplines and multidisciplinary theories that have been used to conceptualise stigma and its application in the context of stigmatised residents of the Tara rural subdivisions in the Western Downs of Queensland.

Goffman’s seminal work has inspired many researchers to apply, study, and elaborate on the notion of stigma for various social issues related to specific matters. These comprise ethnicity and migration (e.g., African-American, Asian, and Jewish) (Cross & Strauss, 1998; Fangen & Lynnebakke, 2014; Fangen & Paasche, 2013; Khazzoom, 2003); sexual orientation (Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Martin & Hetrick, 1988); occupation (e.g., prostitution and other sex-related work) (Bradley, 2007; Couture & Penn, 2003; Sallmann, 2010; Shoham & Rahav, 1963; Sverdljuk, 2009), and health (e.g., AIDS, mental illness, cancer) (Butts, 1989; Fink & Tasman, 1992; Hayward et al., 1997; Kalichman & Simbayi, 2003; MacDonald & Anderson, 1984; Skinner & Mfecane, 2004).

While using the term “stigmatised identity” in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the term refers to negative attributes of an individual that shape punitive responses from the normals. This also points to the individuals’ association with a stigmatised group or places that thus defines the individuals’ potential culpability as a stigma possessor.
Literature from social psychology has contributed substantially towards providing insight into how people construct social categories or stratifications and link them to stereotyped beliefs. For instance, Link and Phelan (2001) explain the process of stigma, when it exists, and its four basic components: (1) distinguishing and labelling differences; (2) associating human differences with negative attributes; (3) separating us from them; and (4) losing status, all of which lead to discrimination, which is a process in itself, as detailed below. However, before this discussion, two points need to be made. First, because of previously imposed social hierarchies based on physical or social attributes and differentness, Goffman prefers to use the term ‘social identity’ rather than social status. He believes that these personal attributes of an identity cause him or her to be described as “less desirable” and “not quite human” (1963, p. 3-5). In this way, individuals are categorised, labelled, and discounted, to the extent that they are perceived as a reason for the decay of the socio-cultural norms in a particular setting (e.g., Major & O’Brien, 2005; Stafford & Scott, 1986; Watkins & Jacoby, 2007; Whitehead et al., 2001). Secondly, it is also important to question who a stigmatised identity threatens and why—“those who do not depart negatively from particular expectations at issue”; or, in other words, someone who is normal, as defined by Goffman (1963, p. 5).

2.2.1 The Consequence of Stigma

The immediate consequence of someone being discredited or devalued is a loss in social status, which Link and Phelan define as “undesirable characteristics that reduce his or her status in the eyes of stigmatisers” (2001, p. 371). Thus, categorised social hierarchies lead to discrimination because the normals beliefs not only justify the devalue-ness of the identity, but also isolate them to protect the “tidily ordered” (Douglas, 1966, p. 39) socio-cultural values of a setting from being contaminated physically, socially, or morally. Consequently, the victim of stigmatisation appears as the most disadvantaged owing to restricted or denied access to social and economic capital (income, education, well-being, housing, health, and mental/psychological health) (Druss et al., 2000; Link, 1987). Restricted access to socio-economic capital is likely to result in wider horizontal inequalities between so-called normals and the stigmatised. However, the more concerning implication lies in contexts where social disorders/issues are likely to occur. This could be an increase in the rate of crime, drug use, alcoholism, unhygienic living conditions, unemployment, heavy dependence on social welfare, or poor individual health (Harvey, 1996). From a normal’s perspective, these further highlight both a stigma attached to a particular group and the justification of seeing those associated with social disorder as a threat.
Two observations are pertinent here. First, discrimination is performed at a structural level and can be observed even where a stigmatiser is denying, hindering, or reluctantly allowing access to both social and economic capital, particularly in the shape of social sanctions, such as social gatherings or more formal representation in local councils. Noticing such normal behaviour can be used to identify discrimination against a particular identity as a possible cause of socio-economic inequalities. Second, the discrimination of a place may occur, in that such a place is viewed as a disadvantaged location. Thus, a place itself becomes a site of powerlessness or a location of structural discrimination.

2.2.2 Power Dynamics in Stigmatisation

Stigma cannot happen in isolation because the phenomenon is contingent on a relationship shaped by power. Goffman (1963) argues that to understand stigma it is important to understand the relationship developed and influenced by stigma rather than merely focusing on its attributes. To this end, Link and Phelan (2001) argue concisely that “stigma is entirely dependent on social, economic and political power—it takes power to stigmatise” (p. 375) and that “the amount of stigma that people experience will be profoundly shaped by the relative power of the stigmatised and the stigmatiser” (p. 378). Link and Phelan (2001) also suggest that the process of stigmatisation (labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination) described above cannot occur or be performed in the absence of a “power situation” (p. 367). Taking a similar standpoint, Yang et al. (2007) increase the significance of power to explain the concept of stigma ‘as a process’ in which social, political, and economic dimensions catalyse and influence how an individual is to be treated.

Two key elements emerge regarding the role of power in stigmatisation. First, an imbalance of power exists between stigmatiser and stigmatised favouring the stigmatiser to whom power provides the ability to label, discriminate, and bracket individuals in a setting that is stigmatised. On the other hand, because of socio-economic and cultural constraints the stigmatised has less, or no, power to challenge the dominant discourse. A second element is the question of whose cognition or reasoning will prevail, especially when a stigmatised identity challenges, resists, or reacts to stigmatisation. Link and Phelan (2001) argue that this social power ultimately defines whose cognition will prevail in the socio-economic and political sphere. The authors further elaborate that, in a scenario where individuals resist stigmatisation, direct or structural discrimination would be reperformed (including a direct reminder of someone being discredited or devalued). The reason for such behaviour, I argue, is to strengthen and sustain the power that is being challenged by the stigmatised.
Based on this discussion, two consequences of such power interplay can be identified. First, whereas further discrimination and marginalisation will be performed by the stigmatiser (at both the structural and the personal level), the stigmatiser is now permitted to delegitimise or disregard that identity’s concerns or claims regarding any socio-economic change. Second, the stigmatiser has to posture extremely against or firmly oppose the narrative of the stigmatised. Delegitimisation of the stigma possessor taken to the extreme becomes itself a symbol of power.

In light of these arguments, I conclude that when a stigmatised identity challenges the stigmatiser and their socio-economic interest, a strong reaction can be elicited from the stigmatiser, to both maintain the power imbalance and ordered socio-cultural values within the context. That this reaction defines the way a stigmatised identity will behave or react to a problem is, however, of considerable importance and relevance to this research. Sociology-based literature, in particular, needs much support to explain the relevance of power on stigmatised group behaviour, as its significance is evident. In light of these lacunae, in sub-section 2.3.2, I use Goffman’s (1963) work to elaborate the various stigma management strategies through which a stigmatised identity manages, reacts to, and deals with stigma. The conceptualised stigma management strategies will help to explain the stigmatised identity’s behaviour and the possible outcome of conflict when it affects the stigmatiser, the social movement, and the extractive resource industry studied in this research.

2.3 Interconnection between Stigma, Identity, and Place: The Social Context

An interesting concept that arises from reading various multidisciplinary scholars is that, in order for an individual to discover who they are, they need to understand where they are, or where they belong (e.g., Brewer, 1991; Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1994). These questions may be answered when one considers social identity as being attached to a social context in which particular social realities stimulate a certain social categorisation. The theory of social categorisation (Turner, 1987) as a developed form of theorised social identity explains that social identities are socially constructed and that an individual therefore “gains identity from being placed in context” (Turner et al., 1994, p. 458). For this reason, Proshansky et al. (1983) consider place identity as a cognitive structure which contributes to the categorization of self and suggest how a physical setting influences social identity processes (the theory of place identity was first coined by Proshansky et al. [1978] while considering self in an urban environment). They add that an identity in the context of a particular place consists of imagined cognitions that are based on ‘environmental past’ and where cognition itself represents
“memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings, and conceptions of behaviour and experiences that relate to the variety and complexity of the physical settings” (p. 59).

Nevertheless, the complex relationship between people and the environment and how people relate to a sense of place is still vague in the literature as the concept involves various factors (Cantrill, 1998; Stedman, 2002; Williams & Stewart, 1998; Williams et al., 1992). The overlapping concepts of place, space, geography, and landscape make this challenging and vague rather than simplifying our understanding of a social context. However, there is broader consensus over two main incentives that can build a sense of place: the instrumental and the emotional (subjective) values that a place offers (Low & Altman, 1992; Relph, 1976; Rowles, 1983).

Although this research project provides an important avenue to understanding the mechanism through which an identity emerges, it is not exclusively concerned with accounting for the relevant concept of ‘place identity’. Given its focus on stigmatised identity, this research project concentrates on the inescapable influence of a context which pronounces a self as being stigmatised. An examination of how places are ranked geographically and thus position (bracket) the identity on the margin based on associated social characteristics is also undertaken.

Lee et al’s (1990) definition of community in the context of social identity is an important source of understanding social categorisation in geographical areas, in that they define community as social systems based on the interrelationship between people living in a particular geographical area. They also add that, while social identity is not necessarily defined by the relationship between individuals living in a geographic location, it may be broadly dispersed within the larger collective identity. These assertions are consistent with Kusel, Doak, Carpenter, and Sturtevant’s (1996) distinction between ‘communities of place’ and ‘communities of interest’. Therefore, socially-based spatial boundaries are indeed self-explanatory because they establish a particular identity based on its attributes, as well as in its interaction with other identities. Hereafter, I use the terms ‘place’ and ‘context’ interchangeably to denote specific areas or sites that are characterised and bracketed according to certain social characteristics.

The literature of social psychology is particularly useful here because it conceptualises an identity through placing it in a social space. Social space refers to “a social structural space, that is, a relatively enduring pattern of social arrangements or interrelationships within a particular group, organisation, or society as a whole” (Gecas, 2000, p. 93). Such a social structural context not only gives rise to different identities but also arranges them around common interests or shared self-definities (e.g., ethno-religious groups, minorities, immigrants, and stigmatised and marginalised groups) (Langer, 2005; Langer & Brown, 2008; Stewart & Brown, 2007; Østby, 2006).
Another question pertinent to this research is: how do individuals or groups with different characteristics settling into an existing place with an identity construct their experiences and mediate them with existing place identity? Fittingly, while Cuba and Hummon (1993) offer several ways to understand the social mediation process, two are of greatest concern: integration with the host community (or dominant pre-existing identity) and time period spent in a place (see also Crocker & Major, 1989). These processes are prime determinants of attachment to a locale (Gans, 1962; Rivlin, 1982; Solomon & Steintz, 1986, as cited in Cuba & Hummon, 1993). Secondly, the period of residence in a place also contributes to the subjective meanings attached to it and thus establishes a place identity. This accords with the first point—social interpersonal integration or assimilation—which is likely to be influenced by the duration of residence within a community. This duration enables individuals to integrate into the social network and organs of a social setting, which further allows them to fill the environment with personal meaning. In this way a place becomes a biography for oneself—my town and my community. However, a sense of place can be eroded by the intrusion of external factors, such as resource development in the case of this research (e.g., Erikson, 1976; Fried, 1963).

So, how can we best understand the notion of stigma associated with a place? What is the influence of stigmatised place on self? The answers to these questions, I argue, will stimulate the thinking about what permits normals to mark an identity as undesirable and to be socially exclusionary by asking who belongs where? Gesler (1998) considers what might lead to the development of a certain image or reputation of a place, whether positive or negative, in asserting that “places achieve … a reputation because people perceive that they do or do not fulfil basic needs such as providing security, a feeling of identity, material wants or aesthetic pleasure” (p. 17). In this way, place image depends on what an environment offers to the well-being of a community’s individuals (De Vries et al., 2003; Gesler, 1992; Takano et al., 2002). Shield (1991) considers ‘places on the margins’ to explain how social classifications are spatialised. He adds that such ‘imaginary geographies’ become sites or zones which can be “associated with particular values, historical events and feelings” (p. 29).

We can now add that stigma intertwines with place to label a place as being different, and as having a different social categorisation, and thus shapes an identity that differentiates one’s self from another. The issue here is not just a stigmatised place, but a place which acts as a host of the stigmatised, resulting in a spoiled identity continually reminding an identity of who they are? This also points to a communicating role being played by a place (i.e., who is from where?) (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Goffman, 1963). The phenomenon of communicating an identity that emerges from a dynamic interplay of identity and
place has been well discussed in many geography-related studies. For instance, ranking a place socially is based on distinct physical, social, and cultural aspects (Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995; Canter, 1997; Cheng et al., 2003; Sack, 1992). The relevance of these insights is to raise the point that meanings associated with a place not only communicate an emplaced identity to others, define and divide us and them (social categorisation), position self into the context, but also influence the process of identification with a place.

The question then becomes: what does it mean to have a place which is itself stigmatised? The answer is not difficult to reconcile, as many people may be labelled and devalued because they represent a specific place or locality. Given such socially constructed boundaries, stigma intertwined with a place may result in an obvious form of discrimination or labelling against those residents within the boundary of that particular place. If someone is aware that others will devalue them because of stigmatised place association, that person will naturally always be reluctant to disclose their place association in order not to be devalued or discounted.

Apart from place-sourced discrimination, stereotypes associated with a place may also have ramifications on self-worth. Link and Phelan (2001) argue that fear of disclosing an association with a stigmatised place may result in defensive behaviour that avoids both contact with normals that may devalue them, but also conceal any association with the stigmatised place. This can also be considered as manipulation of self-information. One key implication of such defensive behaviour is a self-imposed social network sanction which limits access to the socio-economic capital essential to sustaining a social being in an environment. At the same time, this place-based discrimination forces the identity to be limited to a zone where self-worth is protected by associating with like identities—being with someone alike—to minimise the chance of social interaction with normals.

So how does one understand the imaginary margins drawn by the normals where the identity stigmatised applies? I call this space bracketed, being a region, zone, or place constructed by normals to enclose a stigmatised identity within a margin. These geographic or administrative boundaries, such as district, community, and municipality, can be used by anyone seeking to identify stigmatised places and insulated adjacent places or communities for prejudice (Douglas, 1996, 2002; Edelstein, 1988; see also Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). This of course is another way of suggesting that stigmatised places can be distinct in a wider landscape and may thus be demarcated; they also offer a context to understanding socio-economic or political exclusion of the population within a broader environment (Craddock, 1995; Sibley, 1995). Likewise, in the case of this research, the two neighbouring communities of Chinchilla and Tara (and in particular, the Tara rural
subdivisions known as ‘Blocks’) are strikingly distinct as to their physical infrastructure, housing, social, and cultural facilities, commercial and business activities, and the functional role of town. An additional problem exists: the physical distinction between places and herding stigmatised identities administratively/geographically (as discussed above) is insufficient for normals to socially isolate the identity. Different social interaction zones are created systematically to maintain socio-cultural order, however imaginary. In these designated zones, both the stigmatised and the normals divide their world. As Goffman (1963) observes, a stigmatised identity can find itself in three kinds of places: forbidden, civil, and back places (p. 82). Goffman further argues that forbidden places are those in which the identity’s presence would be considered as agonising or intolerable, or where any exposure of the stigmatised in a forbidden place would result in ‘expulsion’ (pp. 81-82). The second, civil place is where the identity is either carefully or painfully treated; and lastly, the back place is where the identity is living with their own kind or in actual identity form rather than virtual, as they do not require the associated stigma or manipulation of information to be concealed.

The above discussion serves only to name an outsider according to a normal or stigmatiser’s stereotypification of a place or a particular identity. However, this limited understanding does not embrace how the stigmatised identity apprehends a situation. Under such a limitation, mere perceptions or generalisations are likely to cause a place or any self to be stigmatised. As Greenberg and Schneider (1996) observe, some places might be perceived as negative by the outsiders but could be interpreted quite differently by an insider. To some extent, this argument is derived from the theory of place identity which states that a place offers more than just physical or instrumental value; it also offers an emotional or subjective value that characterises a place (e.g., Low & Altman, 1992; Proshansky et al., 1983). Nevertheless, based on previously introduced concepts from stigmatised perspectives (e.g., information manipulation, identity concealment, staging ‘back place’ carefully), I argue that this ought to be explored from an outsider’s or stigmatiser’s perspective, especially in cases where stigmatised identity has social movement as its pretext (see Section 2.4 for this discussion). The disclosure of reality is expected to be from a stigmatiser or normal who has marked, labelled, and socially demarcated an identity as spoiled. In this way, researchers can minimise the possibility of information manipulation and under-reporting, particularly when discussing the root causes of a conflict, back places, inter-identity relations, divided worlds, and selective networking.

Considering the previous discussion, I now highlight three aspects central to place and stigma: (1) The inescapable influence of stigmatised place on self, thus producing a spoiled identity, (2) the
negative consequence of stigmatised place on self-esteem, and (3) the role played by the 
*normals/stigmatisers* which determines whether a place sourced identity should be impinged.

### 2.3.1 Beyond Social Categorisation: Stigmatised Identity and Social Context

The matter is, however, more complicated than the previously presented discussion on identity, stigma, and place. Three points need to be made. First, given the ubiquity of the stigmatised identity relationship within a context, one may argue that with a change in environmental properties of any context, identity will also be changed. This means that contexts are not static in nature, as Ethier and Deaux (1994) have argued, particularly because social networks create and sustain the social identity:

> … a change in physical location or a change in the social environment would have some impact on identity. The ways in which the person had previously maintained the identity are no longer valid or useful in the new context, and the person must change the way in which he or she maintains the identity. Thus, in a new context, maintaining a social identity must include a process of remooring the identity to new social supports (p. 244).

Deaux (1993) agrees by recognising the fluid nature of context-dependent social identities and contends that social realities shift a social identity from one salient identity to another when context supports the social categorisation. Also in accord are Crocker, Major, and Steele (1998) who find that stigmatised identities are devalued in particular contexts. If so, then an individual might be stigmatised in one context but not in other. Furthermore, Padilla and Perez (2003) specify that:

> stigmatisation is not inextricably linked to something essential to the stigmatised attribute or the person who possess that attribute. The essential distinction is in the unfortunate circumstance of possessing an attribute that, in a given social context, leads to devaluation (p. 45).

Put another way, if it is the social context that stimulates social categorisation, then stigmatised identity cannot be considered as either static or fixed.

The second point for consideration is that individuals strengthen their position by selecting and using a context or a social reality that supports a social identity (Swann, 1983). This is perhaps a question of likely influence and control over a particular context or a claim by an identity— an issue of representation and reality. I argue that since stigmatised identity can be salient in one particular context but not another, it is not independent but rather defined and shaped by the fundamental role of its socio-cultural environment and the presence of a stigmatiser. Therefore, activating stigmatised
identity, its hostile relationship with other identities in the context, and behaviour in conflict depends on the context that makes the identity relevant.

The third point, I argue, is especially crucial to understanding the changing behaviour of stigmatised identity with changing context. Social identity theory holds that any observed inconsistency or variation in a particular social identity should not be considered as simply random but as strictly related to the change in social context: “they change with the context, not just with the attributes of the individuals” (Turner et al., 1994, p. 458). Seeking such a link between changing behaviour and context is not novel. It remains important to observe the discrepancies in stigmatised identity-based environmental conflict and its alignment with changing context or social realities. For instance, Deaux (1991, 1993) notes that any change in social context will demand that meanings related to that identity be reconsidered. In other words, the identity will involve evaluating those available choices which could define its relevance in the changing context. Deaux concludes that individuals may then change their self-category by both establishing a new identity or by leaving or seizing the existing identity, in response to changing context. This implies that changing context influences self-categorisation, thus changing the self-concept. Brewer (1991) therefore argues that change in self-definition will also impact on self-interest or motivation. Self-definition can also be changed through participating in a social movement (in search of an identity); this stigmatised identity-social movement nexus is discussed in Section 2.4. In the case of a stigmatised identity, changing the identity while being in the changed context seems difficult to achieve because of limited social mobility (within context), a lack of control or influence over the context, and also negative in-group identification or self-evaluation. Therefore, the most likely outcome, I argue, is vacating the context to reduce the stigma characterising and being communicated by a particular context.

From this evidence, I contend that the relationship of a stigmatised identity with context, and the literature on changing behaviour, the concept of managing stigma (Goffman, 1963), and the strategies for dealing with a stigmatised identity come into play. Therefore, another focus of this research is to understand the conflict transformation of stigmatised ‘Blockies’ resisting the CSG industry. I acknowledge that the theory of stigma is not the only one that deals with understanding identity’s behaviour (e.g., Deaux 1991, 1993). For instance, similar concepts are also available in social identity theory as in the case of any perceived negative status (as an outcome of social comparisons—‘self-verification’) different identity management strategies are adopted. Similarly, Either and Deaux (1994) use the “need for positive self-esteem” to question “what if a positive evaluation is not possible?” (p. 24). Tajfel and Turner (1986) similarly categorise three main strategies as: (1) individual attempt to leave the group and to become a member of a more positively evaluated group, (2) collective attempts to improve the group’s status, and, (3) attempts to redefine
the comparison process itself by choosing other reference groups or standards of comparison (as cited in Klandermans & de Weerd, 2000, p. 71). However, I believe that the map provided by Goffman (1963) delivers a more coherent path to follow the behavioural change in the case of stigmatised ‘Blockies’ of the Tara rural subdivisions to understand their CSG conflict transformation.

2.3.2 Strategies for Managing Stigma

The stigmatised individuals employ different stigma management strategies or techniques to deal with and resist the stigma that the identity finds entangled in a social and cultural setting. These stigma management strategies help individuals to not only dilute and cope with stigma but to also negotiate their devalued self. These strategies are important to understanding the role of stigmatised identity in conflict and then a reaction in the form of specific, and to some extent, predictable behaviour. Here, I pursue this objective by first specifying the theoretical concept of ‘self-verification’, which I argue provides a basis to employ stigma management strategies.

2.3.2.1 Self-verification and Overcoming Inconsistencies

Burke (1991) argues that individuals attempt to self-verify in the context assisted by the information sourced from the environment and then construct and reflect an identity. Assuming that individuals desire others to perceive them as positively as they perceive themselves, Stryker (2000) also suggests that verification is an important aspect of social identities. The relevance of self-verification to a stigmatised identity is that such an identity is continually in a processes of social comparison to evaluate how they perceive themselves and how others perceives their existence in the context (‘social comparison’ is central to Tajfel and Turner’s [1986] social identity theory). In addition, the concept of ‘reflective appraisal’ (Gecas & Burke, 1995) also helps explain how opposing or competing groups and identities perceive each other and thus shape a relationship. As a result of this social comparison and verification, a gap would be identified between how stigmatised individuals perceive themselves and how others perceive them. Because, with stigmatised identity, the aim is always to fill or minimise this gap, this identity undergoes enormous psychological fatigue in the challenge to awaken the individuals to their self and existence in view of others.

Here, two adverse outcomes of self-comparison can be identified: consistency and inconsistency between one’s self and another’s perception. According to Stets and Burke (1994), if an individual finds consistency in these outcomes, stigmatised individuals will more than likely sustain their behaviour and thus disclose their identity. However, if inconsistencies are found, the identity may
be observed as engaged in certain behaviours and thus be motivated to fill the gap in an attempt to change the perceptions of *normals*. Kaufman and Johnson (2004) refer to such behaviour as finding a ‘state of equilibrium’ (p. 812).

Although the above discussion suggests that self-verification and comparison define the behaviour of stigmatised identities, the question remains: How does the identity fill the gap or overcome inconsistencies between a *spoiled self* and others’ perceptions? This is exactly where we must introduce the concept of ‘moral career’ concerned with the effect of stigma on an individual and how a stigmatised person attempts a series of adjustments (Goffman, 1963). This concept could also be viewed as changing the *self* through ‘identity work’ (Snow & Anderson, 1987) over the period of time to address foregoing inconsistencies between the *normals* and the stigmatised. The concept of ‘identity work’ explains “the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of self-concept” (*ibid*, p. 1348).

A number of stigma management strategies are highlighted by Goffman (1963) to clarify how the stigmatised person manages his or her spoiled identity before *normals*. However, I find three such strategies employed by the identity that are relevant to this research: (1) passing the stigma and creating sub-hierarchies, (2) selective social networking, and (3) manipulating information. These strategies will be later discussed in light of the social movement literature to understand the *commensal* relationship between a stigmatised identity and social movements.

### 2.3.2.2 Creating Sub-hierarchies

This strategy refers to the way the stigmatised attempt to differentiate themselves from other stigmatised individuals or groups by tending to stratify their own (Goffman, 1963). This exemplifies the process of differentiation within in-group by creating *us* and *them* by members of the same social category. Clearly, from the perspective of the stigmatised, two objectives apply: to alter the perceptions of *normals* and to achieve the *normalisation* of the stigmatised identity. Goffman (1963) refers to *normalisation* as an “effort on the part of a stigmatised individual to present himself as an ordinary person” (p. 31).

While past research has also built significantly on Goffman’s arguments, more recently, Hannem and Bruckert (2012) assert that this in-group differentiation creates hierarchies to define the stigmatised and the less stigmatised. This is a kind of social boycott which may help to place the *spoiled self* in the sphere of *normals*. Other studies demonstrate the way individuals detach themselves from a stigmatised group by disowning any traits, actions, or behaviours associated with them (e.g., Anspach, 1979; May, 2000; Warren, 1974; Weitz, 1991). While differentiating between
social, personal, and ego identity, Goffman (1963) asserts that, if a stigmatised individual can enter a normal’s sphere, it is possible that s/he may feel less stigmatised or view him, or herself in ‘non-stigmatic terms’ (p. 107).

This behaviour also points to a unique form of stigmatisation in which every individual appears as a stigmatiser, labelling each of the others. Thus, when an identity is stereotyped, labelled, and generalised according to a specific social category (category-based on certain negative attributes), a pervasive and desperate in-group attempt is needed to differentiate oneself from those who have been marked as a socio-cultural risk by the normals in “protecting a sense of self and self-worth” (Hannem & Bruckert, 2012, p. 178).

2.3.2.3 Selective Social Networking

This strategy refers to how stigmatised individuals engage in various social situations where their main objective is to build a careful social network. Goffman (1963) describes this relationship building or selective social interaction as a path that a stigmatised individual adopts to deal with the notion of stigma. This involves establishing those network(s) that supports a stigmatised identity by selecting associations, developing personalised support group(s), creating a social network, and participating in a social movement (e.g., Anderson Snow & Cress, 1994; Becker, 1981; Kaplan & Liu, 2000; Levine, 1998; Ponticelli, 1999; Taylor & Raeburn, 1995; Weinberg & William, 1974). The involvement of a stigmatised identity with a social movement is pertinent to this research. However, I have confined this section to discussing the stigma management in the context of the normals. Section 2.4 specifically examines the nexus between stigmatised identity and social movements.

The need for carefully crafted networks can be explained as follows. Within such networks, a stigmatised individual’s self-esteem is shielded from comparison with those who are ‘non-stigmatised’ and, thus, from being reminded of being someone who is devalued (Crocker & Major, 1989; Goffman, 1963; Jones et al., 1984). The chance of stigmatisation is thus greatly reduced. Here, I have used the term ‘non-stigmatised’ to define those who are not stigmatisers or normals but those who are sympathisers or unaware of individuals’ stigma label. However, I argue that such an unaware sympathiser must be found outside the social context; because it is then a social interaction and it becomes much less socially threatening and stressful by comparison. In a few cases, we can also observe a stigmatised seeking support from outsiders who share a similar stigma in their own social context. Seeking the support of outsiders clearly enables stigmatised individuals to detach themselves from the normals in the context. This view approximates ‘identity work’ (Snow &
Anderson, 1987; Snow & McAdam, 2000) (see Section, 2.3.2) but only to the point where selective support, or support out of the context, characterises the activity. Goffman (1963) therefore argues that stigmatised individuals inhabit worlds split between those who know and those who do not:

The individual who is known about by others may or may not know that he is known about by them; they in turn may or may not know that he knows or doesn’t know of their knowing about him. Further, while believing that they do not know about him, nonetheless he can never be sure. Also, if he knows they know about him, he must, in some measure at least, know about them; but if he does not know that they know about him, he may or may not know about them in regards to other matters (Goffman, 1963, p. 66).

Another argument to explain the necessity of carefully crafted social networking comes from Goffman’s (1963) observation of stigmatised and normals occupying the same ‘social situation’, that is, in one another’s immediate physical presence, whether in a conversation-like encounter or in the mere co-presence of an unfocused gathering” (p. 12). Here Goffman points to the presence of a normal as a mixed contact who “is likely to reinforce this split between self-demand and self”. However, he also warns that “self-hate and self-derogation can also occur when only he and mirror are about” (p. 7). In mixed contact or the immediate presence of normals, it is obvious that both the stigmatised and the normals will arrange themselves in a way that could minimise social interaction, avoiding each other without compromising their defensive shield of cowering. From the normals’ perspective, as discussed previously, while the places are partitioned for stigmatised individuals into forbidden, civil, and back place, the stigmatised individuals would have to strive to organise their life compared to the normals. This is mainly because the consequences of any unplanned interaction with normals may expose the stigmatised identity to enormous discomfort or disrepute. Indeed, Goffman (1963) further emphasises the need to understand the way a stigmatised identity behaves in or accesses work or everyday social places. These arguments apply equally to social situations encountered by the identity and associated social restrictions.

2.3.2.4 Concealment of Stigma and Manipulating Social Information: Passing as ‘Normal’

The term ‘passing’ refers to a deliberate attempt by the stigmatised individual to conceal those attributes that convey valuelessness (Goffman, 1963). This helps the individual to present a spoiled self during social interaction. Similar to creating a sub-hierarchy, a previously mentioned strategy, concealment may also help an individual to be accepted as normal. While Goffman distinguishes conceivable from non-conceivable stigma, he argues that some associated sociological features define “an undesired differentness from what we had anticipated” (p. 5). In working to understand
the social interaction of stigmatised ‘Blockies’ of the Tara rural subdivisions with normal (agriculturalists) and LTG movements, this research is concerned with a stigma that can be concealed or masked.

Goffman (1963) reveals how stigmatised individuals process and manipulate information or, in other words, mask or conceal their negative attributes as a form of stigma management. In practice, the individual may not introduce him- or herself as being from a specific place or as a member of a stigmatised group (see Section 2.3). Since revealing such information will directly stimulate a hostile behaviour of normal, a stigmatised person will hide any detail which either devalues their identity or associates them with a stigmatised place or category.

Another behaviour resists accepting place that is either physically or morally stigmatised, and although overlapping the previously mentioned manipulating self-information (disassociating self from a place), it differs slightly because the individuals disapprove the process of stigmatisation. This behaviour may perhaps result from emotional value being assigned to the sense of place attachment in the theory of place identity. From the perspective of normals, this could be behaviour that either underestimates the seriousness of a condition or intentionally distorts the reality to hide vulnerability and the responsibility to act in re-engineering the image of place and other predicaments (e.g., socio-economy and culture which led to the stigmatisation) (e.g., Bickerstaff & Walker, 2001; Bush, Moffatt, & Dunn, 2001).

This highlights the significance of how stigmatised people manage their communication in order to conceal the stigma and their spoiled self. This research links the implication of these strategies on conflict with the extractive resource industry because the main intention behind stigma concealment or manipulating information is to hide stigma from public awareness so that those seeking this outcome appear normal, with legitimate concerns and community status.

Using behaviours (see above) as stigma management strategies, however, raises four problems, the first three of which I discuss briefly here, with the fourth being examined in some detail in Section 2.4.2. This will provide the foundation for detailing in Section 2.4 how a stigmatised identity dynamically relates to a social movement. The first problem is that the stigma is being managed at an individual level, rather than collectively. The reason for this is simple: the individuals are resisting normals and the dominant discourses in isolation, manipulating information with weak or negative in-group identification, and ‘gratification’ (Stryker, 2000, p. 35) or self-commitment, and with limited social and economic capital. Consequently, these self-serving individualistic strategies ignore the wider underlying causes of stigma and inequality. Also, the stigmatised expend effort to manage the situation, information, and social interaction, to overtly deal with the stigmatisation or
labelling. All of this constrains the ability of the stigmatised to function collectively, which is fundamental to sustain conflict or resistance for a longer period of time.

The second problem relates to predicting the outcome of stigma management strategies. During the 1970s, the initial interest of research into stigma was to understand the development and maintenance of identity more specifically for gay and lesbian identity formation, crisis, or maintenance. This research focused on understanding how stigma management strategies assist an individual to *come out*, disclose his or her identity, and thus reconcile with being gay or lesbian (e.g., Dank, 1971; Plummer, 1975; Troiden, 1988; Warren, 1974). However, this identity development and maintenance was later criticised for its assumed linear process of such reconciliation. The main argument was that strategising or managing the stigmatised identity is a complex process to the extent that multiple outcomes are possible. For instance, Kaufman and Johnson (2004) argue that social life cannot be explained in frameworks and models as many factors, such as self-perception, and in-group and out-group responses, interrelate and change over time. Goffman (1963) and Cain (1991) similarly suggest that managing or overcoming a stigma is a lifelong process.

A third consideration is that the complexity of context, in that it relates to social class, and other existing identities, is significant to this thesis as it deals with the context of two neighbouring communities of the Western Downs: Chinchilla and Tara. In this vein, Kaufman and Johnson (2004), encourage linking the stigma-based literature with that about self and identity. In this research, I thus combine the literature on distinct identities and intergroup conflict with that which reconciles the complexity of conflict, the construct of stigma, and the behaviour of the stigmatised. This approach will assist in comprehending the role of stigmatised identities in the conflict that emerges with the extractive resource industry and inter-identity relations, and conflict (i.e., normal versus stigmatised) at a localised level.

The rest of this chapter focuses on stressed relationship dynamics, beginning with a review of the literature on social movement and collective identity. Two kinds of ‘identity work’ (Snow & McAdam, 2000) are explained to shed light on distinct identities’ correspondence with the social movement, paying particular attention to stigmatised identity.

### 2.4 The Nexus between a Social Movement and a Stigmatised Identity

This chapter began with an introduction to the concept of social movements and the establishment of two basic arguments from the literature. First, the phenomenon of social movement must not be considered as self-contained as it is shaped by informal networks of formal groups or identities.
Thus, such heterogeneity offers an important perspective for understanding the relationship between social identity and a social movement. Second, it was noted that a shared sense of grievance and powerlessness unites different identities who struggle in a unique form of ‘social structure’ (Bebbington et al., 2008). However, this research is more concerned with the first because it shows a tendency to position distinct identities within a social movement.

2.4.1 Social Movements and Collective Identity

I use Taylor’s (1989) discussion on collective identity to explicate the formation of a social structure. Klandermans and de Weerd (2000) assert that collaboration “requires some collective identity or consciousness” (p. 69). The concept of collective identity has been used widely to explain multiple dimensions of social movements with great emphasis on their role in progression, sustainability, and continuation of the movement. For instance, Taylor (1989) defines collective identity as an aspect of group membership that produces “common interest and solidarity” (p. 771). Melucci (1995) agrees, but adds “the orientation of action and [a] field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place” (p. 44) to the definition. Routledge (2000) similarly conceives collective identity to be a shared space containing “different terrains of struggle” (p. 26). The common themes in these definitions are group membership, the sharing of the same grievances, powerlessness or deprivation, and common objectives. Routledge (2000) therefore values the pivotal role of a collective vision in holding and assimilating different identities to organise and struggle against one common enemy and to achieve a common outcome.

2.4.2 The Process of Identity Work

From a social movement perspective, however, collective identity also poses a problem, because the process of establishing a collective identity is contingent on the mediation between corresponding identities and the movement. From a social identity angle, collective identity means struggling to find self in the we-ness or giving a “meaning to themselves or others” (Schwalbe & Mason-Schrock, 1996, p. 115) in a process of identity negotiation. I revisit the literature on ‘identity work’ (Snow & Anderson, 1987) to explain how a social movement and social identities engage to negotiate boundaries (Kreiner et al., 2006) by noting two separate levels of analysis: one from a social movement and the other from a social identity perspective. While focusing solely on a social movement perspective can inform us about the mechanism of convergence, it will not provide a complete picture of identity work from a social identity perspective. Therefore, we need to consider these two levels while researching to understand the identity component in movement studies. More pertinent to this research is the concept of ‘identity work’, as aspect means of understanding the
relationship between the stigmatised identity and the movement. This research also seeks to elucidate the relationship between identity and social movements in the presence of other social identities. To explain the identity and movement nexus, I use two types of ‘identity work’: identity convergence and identity construction (Snow & McAdam, 2000).

Identity convergence involves “the coalescence of a movement and [an] individual who already identify with it” (Snow & McAdam, 2000, p. 47). From this definition, we refer to not just any identity but one pre-existing that must share the same beliefs, features, or nature with the movement’s collective identity. However, if one attempts to interpret the identity and social movement nexus in a different context, as this research does, it becomes complicated. So what facilitates such convergence? A substantial portion of research into social movements amplifies such complex convergence; therefore, much can be learned from the contemporary anti-CSG movement in Australia. I argue that we must attend to the mechanism that facilitates and enables such convergence. That is to say, the movement must identify and effectively use this mechanism to link a pre-existing identity with the movement’s identity.

Nevertheless, two more aspects of the interactive nature of the identity correspondence process must also be considered since they dominate the social movement literature on recruitment and participation: (1) ‘Identity seeking’: individuals who search for an identity—a collective identity—which must not only comply with the corresponding identity but also allow its expression; (2) ‘The role of solidarity networks’ is an important aspect in motivating convergence and expanding the movement in different geographies (Snow & McAdam, 2000). However, the key caveat of these aspects is the pre-existing link with a corresponding identity in the shape of “common social relations, [a] common lifestyle, and a common fate” (p. 48).

The process of identity construction occurs as a “process through which personal and collective identities are aligned, such that individuals regard engagement in movement activity as being consistent with their self-conception and interest” (Snow & McAdam, 2000, p. 49). In contrast to identity convergence, identity construction is only possible where there is an absence of already existing identity that could be approached by the movement. Following are four further sub-concepts: identity amplification, extension, transformation and consolidation. The first three are of relevance to this research, and they may be crucial to understanding the social identity and movement nexus in the context of Tara and Chinchilla. Identity amplification refers to strengthening an existing identity that corresponds with a movement’s collective identity, whereas identity expansion signifies an “expansion of situational relevance or pervasiveness of an individual personal identity so that its reach is congruent with the movement” (p. 50). In this thesis, it becomes
difficult to distinguish between an individual’s identity and the movement’s collective identity because the movement’s identity assumes the role of representation, to which Snow and McAdam refer as a *master status*.

Similarly, the third sub-concept of identity construction is identity transformation, which can be perceived as an attempt at *biographical reconstruction*. This activity not only indicates a change in perspective towards a social phenomenon under consideration but also introduces a dramatic change in self-evaluation under a new movement’s identity. Snow and McAdam (2000) argue that, consequently, one will see him or herself “strikingly different than before” (p. 52). I argue that identity transformation is pivotal to understanding the relationship between a stigmatised identity and a social movement. In the discussion section (Chapter 8), I explain how this process enables stigmatised individuals to reconstruct their identity with a new personal biography. This also highlights the discontinuity and fracture of the past and the current consolidation under the movement’s identity.

A double-edged process involving the dismantling of the past, on the one hand, and its reconstitution, on the other. Some aspects of the past are jettisoned, others are redefined, and some are put together in ways that would have previously been inconceivable. One’s biography is, in short, reconstructed in accordance with [a] new or ascendant universe of discourse and its attendant grammar and vocabulary of motives (Snow & Machalek, 1984, p. 173, as cited in Snow & McAdam, 2000).

The central aspect of identity work in the shape of both amplification and extension is that the movement may not necessarily need to exhaust its resources to construct an identity because participants of a movement would be readily available. The movement only has to identity those paths that may connect the pre-existing identity to the movement’s collective identity, as discussed above. Such pre-existing corresponding identities induce the process of identity work and make it easier for the movement to mobilise the grass-root activism. Snow and McAdam (2000) argue that such movements can gain momentum quickly because of already available salient identities in different contexts.

From a social movement perspective, the convergence of groups allows the sharing of resources (financial, informational, logistical etc.) which can then be collectively channelled to the social movement organisation in order to achieve common objectives (e.g., Bebbington et al., 2008). By social movement organisation, I refer here to “self-conscious—though not necessarily formally-organised—networks of activists who claim to advance the claims of unrepresented constituencies through sustained and contentious interaction on their behalf with opponents” (Tarrow, 1995, p.
The observation again returns us to the previously mentioned representational or master status role of a social movement. Indeed, such steering of ground resources enables the movement to search, gather, and create those sentiments that encourage and provoke other localised groups to be converged. This enables the movement to expand into new geographies.

Another approach led by different scholars illuminates the relationship between localised actions and how they provide strength to ensure that a social movement continues (Sklair, 1995; Dicken et al., 2001; see also Hibbard & Madsen, 2003; Bosco, 2001). Particularly in the context of the extractive industry and conflict, another important instrumental link may be noted here: a social movement remains challenged in maintaining the momentum of the conflict in the public realm. Regarding on-ground/on-site actions, social movements are episodic in nature and may lose their novelty after a certain period of time (Myers, 2000; Koopmans, 1993). While this does not indicate that a social movement fades away after a certain period of time, it does highlight the challenge of keeping both an issue under debate and the movement’s public visibility through protests or other on-ground actions. To this end, localised or community-based conflict plays an important role in allowing a movement not only to expand its presence but also to multiply the episodes of protests.

Not surprisingly, much research indicates that a social movement influences its participants to such an extent that such an influence applies to strong grass-roots mobilisation as participants come to view themselves as a part of social movement and collective identity (e.g., Routledge, 2003; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). Meyer and Whittier (1994) specify this so that the identities’ correspondence with the social movement and the influence of the movement over the participants may be more readily understood. They argue that “participants continue to see themselves as progressive activists even as organised collective action decreases, and they make personal and political decisions in light of this identity” (p. 281). This however is oversimplified, particularly because it does not explain the dynamics of the relationship between a stigmatised identity and a social movement.

Even though Snow and McAdam (2000) clarify the process of identity convergence through identity work, one important factor needs to be considered: the role of coordination between distinct and distant groups or identities, representing different terrains of contextual struggles but under the umbrella of movement’s collective identity. By ‘coordination’ I refer to what Jassawalla and Sashittal, (1998) consider as ‘collaboration’ or “the coming together of diverse interests and people to achieve a common purpose via interaction, information sharing, and coordination of activities” (p. 239). Although much research acknowledges that coordination is important, a consensus about both the nature and consequences of such coordination is lacking. For instance, social movements should not be seen as organisations but rather “networks of interaction between different actors which may either include formal organisation or not, depending on shifting circumstance” (Della
Porta & Diani, 2004, p. 16, as cited in Baser & Swain, 2010). Even if we do accept this argument, which principally supports a social movement as a heterogeneous phenomenon, a more significant question remains about organised coordination of distant groups in a particular location pursuing ground actions and promoting and supporting each other’s struggle under a movement’s identity; these actions reflect collectively on the movement.

2.4.3 Clarifying the Relationship between Stigmatised Identity and Social Movements

Assessing the nature of the relationship between stigmatised identity and social movements does not solely mean identifying contradictions or simply explicating inconsistencies, but rather, understanding the logic of the identity convergence and its consequences. We also have to ask why and for what reason a stigmatised identity negotiates with the movement’s collective identity.

Research into stigmatised identity and social movement relationships is not new because the involvement of those individuals or groups in a social movement who have experienced a sense of rejection in society has long been studied (e.g., Anspach, 1979; Taylor & Whittier, 1992; Herman, 1993; Anderson, Snow, & Cress, 1994). To understand stigma, these theoretical insights are helpful to appreciate both how a devalued identity renegotiates the self and how social movement affiliation serves as a kind of stigma management strategy. In principle, such social movement participation or affiliation is fundamentally motivated by the reaction to the source of stigmatisation as exemplified by movements concerned with gay and lesbian liberation, civil rights, religion and ethnicity, and immigration. The commonality between such movements is that they comprise individuals reacting to a threat to certain social categorisation that devalues or rejects. Often they are characterised by the tendency for the stigmatised identity being maintained and/or disclosed.

However, what remains difficult to comprehend is the presence of stigmatised identity in a social movement where this identity is completely irrelevant to the source of stigmatisation or the root cause of conflict between the normal and stigmatised, as occurs in the environmental movement or the contemporary anti-CSG movement. Despite a dearth of research that covers the nexus between social movements and stigmatised identity, Kaplan and Liu (2000) do recognise that a stigmatised individual’s association “with the collective movement may have no connection with the source of one’s own self rejection” (p. 219). Their analysis, however, is limited to the influence of adolescents’ perceived rejection and disapproval of social movement participation and social protest behaviour. However, understanding the stigmatised identity and social movement nexus while posing how and why questions remains important. These questions could explain: the process of convergence between the identity and social movement; the question of consequences of such an
unusual, contradictory, and commensal relationship; and, the relationship between previously discussed stigma management strategies on a localised conflict transformation and social movement.

Although searching for an identity is pertinent to the discussion about the social movement and stigmatised identity relationship, understanding the stigmatised involves more than the search for any identity (Kaplan & Liu, 2000; Snow & McAdam, 2000). Similarly, Klapp (1969) argues that, for a stigmatised identity, “any movement will do so long as it provides a more satisfactory identity” (as cited in Snow & McAdam, 2000, p. 43). This argument holds that a stigmatised identity has negative self-identification, self-evaluation, weak in-group identification, and lacks any in-group cohesion. Therefore, this 

satisfactory identity is self-chosen and voluntary (Andrew, 1991), a type of identity that may help to reconceptualise stigma and protect self-esteem or self-worth.

In the context of stigmatised identity and its nexus with the movement, I offer a more specific definition of the identity using Weinreich (1980): A person’s identity is defined as the totality of one’s self-construal, in that how one construes oneself in the present shows the continuity of how one remembers oneself in the past and aspires to be in the future. In contrast to the other definitions of identities, the association of one’s ‘biographical past’ and ‘aspiration for the future’ enables the individuals to redefine their self (as cited in Weinreich, 2009, p. 127). For stigmatised identities, their past spoiled biography will be repositioned and their future aspirations will be reflected through their association with the movement, however, underneath, the stigma is being managed.

However, the interconnection is more complicated than just searching for a satisfactory identity. The literature suggests that a social movement has its own explicitly defined goals to be achieved through ‘indirect targets’ (Meyer & Whittier, 1994, p. 278). This research acknowledges that these indirect targets are set by both a social movement and a stigmatised identity as a clever strategy for using and misusing each other to achieve secluded or hidden objectives. Differences exist between competing principles and objectives, which is serious, particularly for the movement when it is unaware of the concealed interest of the stigmatised. Thus, the stigmatised identity is purposefully dependent on a social movement but with no consensus over the objectives.

The central means of dealing with this contradictory relationship is to acknowledge that a stigmatised identity typically rides on the back of a social movement as a part of stigma management strategy. To understand this relationship, is necessary to understand that managing stigma is important in formulating a specific behaviour of the stigmatised. Goffman (1963) persuasively argues that a stigmatised identity conceals their stigma and belittlement through
“dividing their world into a large group to whom he tells nothing, and a small group to whom he tells all and upon whose help he then relies” (p. 95).

The question remaining is why? The reason behind such networking, I argue, is twofold. First, the identity needs to establish a positive reference point (in this case, a social movement) for his or her self-evaluation. Secondly, “they will neither have a capacity for collective action, or a stable and embracing pattern of mutual interaction….and the members of a particular stigma category will have a tendency to come together into small social groups whose members all derive from the category” (Goffman, 1963, p. 23). This is exactly the case with the movement as it tells a lot about a tactical use of a contextual stigma-based reality, which provides a social movement with a unique fertile land to not only nourish and represent a conflict but to also misinterpret it, since the movement has no connection with the stigmatisation. It is not hard to see that the movement is ignoring, possibly intentionally, the self-rejection and stigmatisation as root causes of localised conflict. More strikingly, in such a case, a social movement negates its fundamental principle of negotiating “between action that is deeply embedded in place i.e., local experiences, social relations and power conditions” (Routledge, 2003, p. 337).

Another issue here concerns ‘identity work’ (Snow & McAdam, 2000) (see Sub-section 2.4.2, although it is not well established in the theory of stigmatised identity). The argument about the importance of pre-existing identities to facilitate convergence with the movement contradicts the case of stigmatised identity for two reasons. First, the stigmatised identity lacks a common identity as the situation is being managed at an individual level. Secondly, while the identity may be salient, it performs under concealment directly related to possessed stigma and negative self-verification. Therefore, caution is required because we may assume in this case that the linkage between movement and stigmatised identity is ideologically driven, but this is not the case. The foregoing difficulty also applies when we try to understand what facilitates the convergence between the stigmatised and the movement.

We also need to consider the salience of the stigmatised identity in the presence of other identities within the context. Brewer (1991) asserts that social categories divide and define individuals, highlighting not only differences but also similarities among different groups. Hence, if a stigmatised identity manages to conceive similarities between their identity and normals, then there is a possibility of collectiveness. Here, collectiveness refers to a common struggle against a particular phenomenon or a shared understanding of a problem, for instance CSG development in this research. However, Brewer (1991) contends that this possible we-ness is somewhat limited because it is again controlled and defined by the social status, attitudes, norms, and attributes. This
means that, despite the common fate and agreed understanding of a struggle and its goals, a stigmatised identity may face social exclusion and discrimination based on social categorisation.

As such, considering the above discussion, the relationship between the stigmatised identity and the social movement may appear to be contradictory. Social movements both preserve their ideological philosophy (e.g., Castells, 2004; Pichardo, 1997) and influence the movement participants as they wish to view themselves as a part of the movement. The social movement may also shift its ground to another issue or promising venue, although, even if the movement migrates to another context or issue, identities maintain themselves under the influence of the movement (Alger, 1997; Bosco, 2001; Meyer & Whittier, 1994; Sklair, 1995). However, the point of concern around stigmatised identity is the consequence of the social movement shifting from a stigmatised context to another suitable context.

I turn, finally, to the important challenge of such a contradictory or commensal relationship between the stigmatised and the social movement. First, I assume that the social movement elected to ignore the stigmatised identity, as they are no longer considered to be legitimate actors of the movement and its goals. The main motivation behind such a strategy would be to avoid any inconsistency being apparent to the movement’s critics. In the case of the stigmatised identity, individuals may now prefer to leave the social movement and may adopt other strategies to manage the stigma. This may also result from participants realising that the social movement may no longer be well placed to assist in reaching those goals for which the stigmatised individuals have mobilised themselves.

The consequences are clear for both the stigmatised identity and the social movement: (1) Exclusion of a place-based ally, regardless of the identity categorisation, will affect the movement’s on-ground visibility and limit the episodes of protests (e.g., Harvey, 1996). This may also end up fracturing the social movement (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Even if the social movement successfully balances this dual function (between stigmatised identity and the movement’s goals), the matter of control or power difference will always cause a point of friction (e.g., Bebington et al., 2008); (2) On the other hand, a stigmatised identity will threaten informational, logistical, and financial support which is crucial to sustaining the conflict. More importantly, the identity will lose the satisfactory identity (Snow & McAdam, 2000), which offers the stigmatised a positive reference point for self-evaluation and self-presentation, losing, in other words, an opportunity for self-transformation and reconstruction of one’s spoiled self-biography.

Taken as a whole, the above theoretical perspectives reveal the heterogeneity of social movements and explain them as a complex phenomenon. Thus, different identities and the process of convergence itself must be understood. From an outsider’s perspective, the consequence of such
intentionally created complex networking is that it blurs the boundaries between distinct groups (e.g., Doyle & Kellow, 1995; Diani, 2013; Bosco, 2006). There is also little doubt that when reflected collectively under the master status of a social movement it is hard to conceptualise the multiplicity of interests and the motivation of involvement in the social movement—‘conflict by whom and for what?’ More importantly, such a generalised perspective would gloss over the reality of stigmatised identities’ involvement in the social movement whose manifestation has nothing to do with the localised conflict associated with the notion of stigma.

I conclude this discussion of the stigmatised identity and social movement nexus by anticipating its implications on the case of Tara and Chinchilla and mentioning the major caveat I have identified in this chapter. It involves a lack of understanding of the stigma discussed because the traditional understanding of social movement convergence with pre-existing identities does not inform us much about conflict emergence, its transformation, and the reasons behind the stigmatised identity and social movement nexus described in this thesis. Concerning the case of Tara, I will contextualise both the relationship between the stigmatised ‘Blockie-led’ CSG conflict and the LTG movement in order to understand how ‘Blockies’ manage stigma and how this has had profound implications on localised conflict transformation. I will explain how the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ established the anti-CSG groups while concealing their stigmatised identity and framed their conflict against the CSG development as ideology-driven (environmental concerns). The ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups became closely allied with the LTG movement, a movement which had no connection with the source of localised conflict: stigmatisation and historical antagonism between Tara Agrarians and ‘Blockies’. Through social movement literature, I will also explain why the LTG movement failed to connect with Chinchilla as the neighbouring community where intensive CSG development is taking place and has exposed the community to many socio-economic and environmental impacts. The next chapter will discuss my research methodology.
This chapter describes the research methodology. Following a discussion about the suitability of a case study approach to the research, the following sections explain how using qualitative research based on ethnography presents enormous emotional and ethical challenges. Particular attention has been paid to the concept of ‘stigmatised identity’ because such analysis makes the research more sensitive. This chapter also describes what strategies were adopted and adapted during the fieldwork.

3.1 Case Study Design

To understand the overarching question about why CSG conflict emerged in the Tara subdivisions but not in Chinchilla, this research engaged a case study design (e.g., Yin 1989; Stake, 1995). Suitability of the case study approach is based on three main conditions: (1) the types of research questions how and why (2) the degree of control a researcher has over the events and, (3) how much research explores contemporary or historical events associated with the inquiry (Yin, 1989, p. 16).

Since the case study is conducted in a particular setting, it allows the researcher to achieve a broader understanding of any social phenomenon that attracts research investigation (Andrade, 2009). Therefore, case study methods are useful where the purpose is to explore the conditions of any context and the associated “multiplicity of perspectives which are rooted in [that] specific context” (Richie & Lewis, 2003, p. 52). In addition, to examine the social structures which shape a particular place or community, case study research provides a suitable approach to understanding the uniqueness of a case (Armitage, 2005; Baxter & Jack 2008; Zuker, 2009). The approach also allows research questions to emerge from the cases, for instance, why a particular phenomenon is happening within the context (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1989).

However, since multiple meanings could emerge from a particular case about a particular phenomenon, it is important to provide a thick description of the case so that readers can generalise the presented data using their own perspectives. In other words, case study research not only provides a systematic way to collect, analyse, and present contextual data, it also, more importantly, does so in a natural form (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).
Given these conditions, this thesis takes a case study approach because the research questions are contextual and thus leave the researcher with no control over, for example, the nature of the CSG company—community relationship with Chinchilla and Tara (what is happening); emergence of conflict in the community of Tara (why the conflict emerged) and what contextual dynamics influenced the CSG conflict (e.g., distinct identities and the politics of identities).

Table 1.1: Studied Cases - Chinchilla and Tara

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case where CSG conflict did not prevail</th>
<th>Case Study 1: Chinchilla</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proponents: QGC and Origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community’s main avocation: Agriculture and livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project activities: CSG-LNG pipelines, CSG production/operating wells and associated infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome summary: Despite some local concerns, CSG is being developed on an intensive scale with no prolonged conflict and minimal resistance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case where CSG conflict prevailed</th>
<th>Case Study 2: Tara and Tara Rural Subdivisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proponents: QGC and Origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community’s main avocation: Beef, wool, and marginal agriculture, such as wheat production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project activities: QGC’s CSG-LNG pipeline, Origin’s domestic gas supply project (Ironbark project) and is in preliminary stage (EIS yet to be approved).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome Summary: Strong resistance to CSG development by residents of the Tara subdivisions, immediately surrounding the urban area of Tara. The region has been a centre of activity for agitation—protests, marches, blockades—and raising grievances. The place is represented as industry contending with a hostile community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Researching a Sensitive Topic and Dealing with Polarised Identities

It is important to understand why certain topics are sensitive and how to deal with them (Dickson-Swift et al., 2006; Glibert, 2001; Lee, 1993; Lee & Renzetti, 1993). This section argues for a greater need to respond to the sensitivity of studies that deal with different social identities. This concern is significant to this thesis because it researches individuals and groups in a stigmatised context. The following segment of the chapter draws from field experience to reveal how I was exposed to many ethical and emotional challenges when conducting this research. It also reveals how researching stigmatised identities complicated my fieldwork and demonstrates the strategies that I learned, developed, and adopted during that research journey.

Why are certain topics considered to be sensitive and why do they demand an unusual methodological approach? In truth, while no adopted formula can answer this question, to assess a
topic’s sensitivity, there are sufficient psychological and behavioural studies to shine some light on the approach. The research topic may become sensitive when it involves matters of public awareness and is therefore sufficient to induce participants’ emotions as it deals with contrasting perspectives about the topic (Dunne et al. 1997; Saunders & Reinisch, 1999). In addition, the health literature has mainly viewed the issue of sensitivity within research as a matter of ethics (e.g., Alty & Rodham, 1998). For a researcher, this complicates the research process, especially during data collection and the dissemination of gathered data (Lee & Renzetti, 1993).

CSG-related study is a sensitive topic, mainly because of the intense and impassioned debate over CSG development which has left the nation divided. On the one hand, many community members, and representatives from the industry and government eagerly seek to develop the enormous CSG reserves. On the other hand, there are many concerned citizens, community members, and environmental organisations screaming ‘Frack off’ and saying ‘No to CSG development’. These two narratives are very much polarised in nature, with the ensuing conflict dominated by an ideologically driven narrative (environmentalism). Therefore, distinct identities holding contrasting views may feel concerned by a researcher’s attempts to compare opposing narratives as it may support or criticise a particular entity’s view. Such attitudes may become further aggravated if a particular entity is marginalised or stigmatised by the so-called normals of society within any geographic location. So, perception of sensitivity certainly varies within and among concerned citizens.

However, it is not just the communities as respondents who are concerned with a researcher’s perceived intrusion in a sensitive zone. The industry also has a stake in how topics are seen to be covered. For instance, I underestimated that the CSG companies developing resources in the Western Downs of Queensland would be concerned with and suspicious of an academic researcher infiltrating the communities. Despite providing necessary information regarding my research, my supervisors’ details, and their bona fides, the industry declined my request to conduct interviews. This has been identified as a key limitation of this research. Furthermore, since I was denied access to interview CSG company representatives, I avoided making any claims or statements in relations to the industry’s perspective or role, particularly in the context of Tara and its rural subdivisions.

While the CSG industry has previously supported academic research, in my case the attitude was different which I attributed to two reasons. First, I deliberately avoided any CSG industry and CSG legitimising body or institution, as my involvement could have jeopardised my working relationship with anti-CSG groups and individuals. Second, in my fieldwork, I was spending significant time with the anti-CSG groups (especially in Tara rural subdivisions) to observe their blockades,
meetings, protests, etc. I believed that this made the industry and related organisations wary of my intentions, which, in hindsight, is understandable. As a social scientist entering dynamic fieldwork, I predicted and accepted these challenges, especially when dealing with such a controversial and sensitive topic as CSG. However, what became more important was how I, as a researcher, could ethically and positively deal with these challenges in ways that would leave a positive mark in the community.

### 3.2.1 Does Stigmatised Identity Add Another Dimension to Sensitivity?

As the term ‘stigma’ is regarded to be “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” and an “undesired differentness from what we had anticipated” (Goffman, 1963, p. 5), we can infer that the interaction between a stigmatised identity and a normal one (Whitehead et al., 2001; Watkins & Jacoby, 2007) would be contentious. This normal versus stigmatised contention thus intensified the sensitivity and the ethics of my research into CSG. This research also faced the racialisation of research subjects (e.g., Wyatt 1991; Senior & Bhopal 1994) when dealing with marginalised respondents, because I also labelled such individuals or groups as stigmatised i.e., reinforcement of stigma for the purpose of data analysis and reporting.

This further complicated my situation when some participants, whom I saw as stigmatised identities, wished to conceal their spoiled self in the research. In my field experience, the normals of the communities were relatively open to discussing the stigmatised individuals and to point out various social diseases or negative attributes associated with the ‘Blockies’. This is understandable since the normals or stigmatisers are the ones who do the labelling to socially categorise and place the spoiled on the margins. Also, this attitude allows normals to justify their act of stigmatisation, why a particular identity is a threat to social and cultural norms, and why there is need for insulation or social exclusion.

Even if informants, both stigmatised and normal are willing to share their views, it is hard to achieve openness or receptivity, as they might not recognise, be ready to accept, or attempt to hide a social reality from a researcher, particularly an outsider. For instance, even though various community members and landholders in Chinchilla are against CSG development, when asked why they were not participating in anti-CSG activities organised by the ‘Blockies’ of the Tara subdivisions, the usual answer was “no comment”, “it’s their [the Blockies’] businesses, they [the ‘Blockies’] are doing well but we have a different life”, etc. Similarly, even if a stigmatised individual accepts the spoiled self or negative categorisation by the normals, they may fear being exposed or feeling regret. For instance, in the case of stigma revelation, respondents may feel that a
researcher will develop a negative judgement which could lead to two effects: first, it might undermine the value of their opinion on the topic of inquiry; and, second, their stigmatisation and devaluation could be portrayed or used in the research findings.

The most valid source of in-depth and open information for me came from participants—or in other words, normals—who were in open conflict with the stigmatised. This inter-identity antagonism was contextually located between Tara town and ‘Blockies’ of the rural subdivisions in the district of Tara. Also, the cleavage between identities were first seen in their socio-cultural characteristics but then in the differences in opinion about an externally introduced socio-economic change from CSG development in the area.

The existence of pro and anti-narratives concerning an extractive industry project is nothing new. However, in the case of the Tara town and the landholders (Agrarians), the presence of stigmatised ‘Blockies’ encouraged the emergence of a strong and vocal pro-CSG narrative. Initially, while such extreme positions taken by the identities were very puzzling, it was later revealed that the presence of the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ in the context was an explanation of Tara town’s pro-CSG narrative.

In brief, it is worth noting that the social identities including the stigmatised are context-dependent (e.g., Turner et al., 1994; Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Goffman, 1963). Therefore, the context of a phenomenon is an important aspect in defining an inquiry as sensitive and must not be ignored. Lee’s (1993) model of sensitivity illustrates that it is not the topic but, in reality, the research context which becomes enmeshed with the topic, to result in an enquiry being deemed as sensitive.

3.3 Strategy of Inquiry: Using Qualitative Methods to Study Conflict and Distinct Identities

To understand the complex factors responsible for shaping conflict at a community and inter-identity level (e.g., Humphreys, 2005; Nnoli, 1998; Stewart & Brown, 2007), the choice of methodology is crucial to developing an appropriate research design, sampling process, and data analysis. In addition, the process assists the researchers to deal with ethical and field-related challenges, especially in studies dealing with polarised identities, ethnicities, stigmatised identities etc. While this research recognises that much identity-based research is quantitative in nature, my research explains how and why a qualitative methodology has been adapted and strengthened in order to understand the CSG conflict using a social and stigmatised identity perspective based on contextual, socio-economic, cultural, and historical dynamics. In addition, in dealing with the sensitivity characterising this research (explained above), I am further strengthening the argument for embracing qualitative techniques in contrast to quantitative.
A qualitative methodology is most appropriate to investigating the multifaceted contextual details related to conflict in the Western Downs region since such inquiry would be difficult to achieve using quantitative methods (e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative research enables an understanding of “how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced” because the researcher can holistically analyse a phenomenon (Mason 1996, p. 4). In the case of this thesis, the qualitative approach helped this research to determine the socially constructed relationship of two communities (Chinchilla and Tara) with the CSG industry using social identity theory. More importantly, the approach enabled me to understand how different identities representing different communities played their roles within the CSG conflict.

In the general case of social inquiry, where a researcher needs to be deeply involved so they may perceive a phenomenon through research participants’ eyes (those who are living with the reality), qualitative strategy offers flexibility by using, for example, ethnographic tools (Limb & Dwyer, 2001; Gubrium & Holstein, 2000; Patton, 1990). In the case of this research, this flexibility allowed me to analyse what I had observed during the fieldwork, even when the recording of interviews was inappropriate as events, such as protests, blockades, confrontations, and other gatherings were occurring in public places. Such flexibility applies to observations and informal interactions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) but also informal but channelled conversations (Mishler, 1986).

Because ethnographic research is highly interpretive in nature, we should bear in mind that the findings should not necessarily be judged as representing matters of fact. For example, during my fieldwork, I experienced two cases where body language was an important source of information. One respondent showed discomfort while commenting on stigmatised ‘Blockies’. Another reacted emotionally while sharing her painful experience of being labelled and socially excluded by the normals (Agrarians of Chinchilla and Tara). She was also concerned about her media trail highlighting poor living and hygiene conditions.

To understand the respondents’ or communities’ perspective, qualitative methods certainly offer an opportunity to understand and thus analyse their feelings, experiences, grievances, or stories. However, we should not ignore the fact that qualitative research becomes difficult when entangled with ethnographic tools. As a result, field challenges are sometimes beyond the control of the researcher. More importantly, qualitative methods with ethnographic tools become more problematic if a social inquiry is sensitive in nature, and thus exposes researchers to enormous ethical and emotional strain and significantly affects the research–respondent relationship. This is because both the researcher’s intrusion into the respondent’s life and the emotional involvement of a researcher in the setting exposes researchers to a number of practical and ethical challenges. For instance, besides the topic or nature of inquiry, a researcher’s presence on the scene (e.g., protests,
meetings, or blockades) is treated as suspicious to ensure that the access or information provided is going into the right hands and that the researcher will reflect the true picture of their narrative and will not manipulate results or use these results against them. Sword (1999) endorses this attitude or concern that qualitative research is personal work and the researcher is influenced by a specific narrative which can guide the research outcome.

3.4 Emotional Processing and Involvement in the Setting: A Researcher Perspective

Conducting research on the contentious topic of CSG development and the broader conflict in the Western Downs has been a personal journey involving many challenges. The literature also indicates that such studies certainly involve a degree of immersion (Dickson-Swift et al., 2006). This means that there is a great possibility that interpretation of data is filtered through the prism of the researcher’s emotional involvement. I did not anticipate that the personal and emotional challenges I experienced would be greater than attempting to gain access to the anti-CSG groups. Before continuing, I should say that I closely observed the academic code stating that it is the researcher’s responsibility to ensure that any emotional involvement that s/he might feel does not shape the data outcome.

Consequently, there is a greater need to reveal the emotions experienced while collecting and reporting on research (Gilbert, 2001) and to also understand the influence that a researcher’s involvement may have on the research process. Ironically, the nature of academic writing itself discourages the expression of a researcher’s emotions to ensure neutrality and objectivity of the research.

Without any funding from the CSG industry or other vested groups, I entered the field without intending to make personal perceptions a part of the debate about CSG. However, a researcher’s neutrality is influenced to some extent once they are exposed to many social, health, and environmental impacts, as well as frustration about the stress and powerlessness of the various landholders dealing with the CSG development. For instance, my involvement with the activists, environmentalists, CSG impacted landholders, and other concerned community members left me wondering how I would react to the CSG project if it took place in my backyard or community, and to what extent my life would be affected. I also reached a point when I faced the emotions of two members of the community as described above. Such reflection may affect a researcher and, thus, how they conduct the research when wary of upsetting those concerned.
As a researcher, I expected my relationship with landholders and other anti-CSG individuals and groups to remain impersonal; I had not anticipated that these relationships would evolve into friendships or that I would be spending weekends and occasions, such as Christmas, with the respondents. Certainly, it was that shared emotional space, built on trust, which kept lines of communication open to me. In this emotionally charged situation, it is very difficult for a researcher to detach themselves from the network and friendships formed over an extensive period of time.

Watts (2008) explains the role of personal feelings in research: “Emotions act as a ‘doorway’ to the inner terrain of people ... and [as] a doorway [that] can be open or closed” (p.8). However, what if the revelation of a social reality and supplemented data attempts to repress those who kept these doors open? The simple reaction could likely be doors shutting, and possibly very loudly.

Specifically, the stigmatised identity of the ‘Blockies’ as research respondents exposed me to enormous ethical and emotional challenges. The anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ do not organise themselves alone against CSG but are instead strongly aided by various activist groups from New South Wales who have no, or very little, idea about community dynamics or identity politics between ‘Blockies’, Tara town, and other neighbouring communities. However, the permanent nature of Blockies’ isolation, social exclusion, socio-economically deprived situation, marginalisation, and being perceived as a threat to the normals, are all physical and social realities which predate CSG and cannot be ignored. The unique access I had into their world was based on trust and thus offered great insight into the contextual dynamics. However, it also made me feel the social exclusion and isolation experienced by the ‘Blockies’. Consequently, when writing this dissertation, I realised the potentially adverse implications of my emotional involvement with the ‘Blockies’. There was potential for me to feel guilty about betraying my research subjects if I failed to write what they wanted, or expected, me to write.

Apart from environmentalists and anti-CSG individuals, many landholders hosting CSG infrastructure on their properties in the community of Chinchilla continued to hope that the CSG industry would realise the intensity of social, environmental, and psychological impacts on the individual landholders. However, at the same time I personally felt low enough in spirit so that the enthusiasm I felt about conducting the research weakened when CSG companies (both QGC and Origin) declined my requests to conduct interviews. As social scientists, we do and should understand the sensitive position that the economic and political elites might be in, especially when involved with contentious, impassioned, and polarised matters associated with CSG as it faces many questions but provides few answers. However, the main motivation to engage with the industry was to map their understanding of the conflict and their priorities for the socio-economically deprived community of Tara, the conflict zone. Additionally, I felt it to be my ethical
and research responsibility to make industry understand where the conflict is rooted, and which contextual dynamics were responsible for the emerging conflict within the Tara subdivisions and among the Agrarians and the ‘Blockies’. I sought to determine the industry’s priorities in order to address and mitigate the concerns. However, the industry’s closed-door response created a sense that economic elites do not care about the on-ground realities. They appear to be oblivious to the community dynamics in the case of Tara and its rural subdivisions, which is evident in their EIA reports and other documentation.

3.5 Scoping Study as Pre-Cursor: Gaining Trust and Access

Pitts and Miller-Day (2007) advise that it is important to develop rapport with research respondents (see also Kapila & Lyon, 1994). Gaglio, Nelson, & King (2006) also suggest that the mutual trust between the researcher and respondents is a two-way process that helps to develop a relationship before conducting formal fieldwork. Such relationships become more significant when dealing with distinct identities in conflict. The involvement with the identities through different means is a precursor to the researcher’s role and helps to gain trust and establish the relevant networks to obtain information. These pre-fieldwork activities significantly help to position researchers inside the conflict and remove any sense of being an outsider.

My past academic research into the oil and gas industry (conventional resource development) from a management, global, and national perspective motivated me to undertake research in what we call the new age of unconventional resource development: CSG development. My interest in the study of conflict surrounding the CSG development was instigated by a massive public rally that I was fortunate enough to witness in Lismore on March 12, 2012, when more than 7,000 people marched against the CSG industry. Certainly, different people had contrasting views over this public outcry; however, it was obvious that the issue of CSG would be a central topic for years in Australia and Queensland specifically.

During 2011 and 2012, I made several trips to the Western Downs of Queensland, to the townships of Dalby, Chinchilla, Wandoan, and Tara, often accompanied by activists, and met various landholders with different narratives about the CSG development. These informal visits allowed me to build local networks. I also had the opportunity to grasp the cultural setting, people’s anti-CSG sentiments, the social and environmental impacts, and generally what was happening on the ground. However, it took some time to realise that, in the case of Tara, there was an anomaly in regards to CSG development and that the conflict there was linked in some way to the Tara rural subdivisions. By the time I commenced my formal fieldwork, I already had several contacts in place with the
residents of Tara rural subdivisions and members of the Tara subdivisions-based anti-CSG groups, Western Downs Alliance, Stop CSG Tara, and Gasfield Community Support Group. I noted that two neighbouring communities, Chinchilla and Tara, revealed contrasting relationships with the CSG industry—Tara was in conflict with the industry, while Chinchilla hosted CSG activities and had insulated itself from the conflict in Tara. The contrast between Chinchilla and Tara towards CSG development led to my selection of these two communities as comparative case studies.

Obviously, I was ready and willing to discover the common issues related to conflict over extractive resource development (socio-economic and environmental) including impacts such as: the power of large CSG companies faced by small communities, mistrust, negotiation, and compensation issues, the potential harm to ground water and agricultural productivity, and the coexistence with CSG, and the health-related impacts (e.g., Huth et al., 2014; de Rijke, 2013 a, b; Lloyd, Luke & Boyd, 2013; Williams, & Walton, 2013). I also discovered how the local communities have developed collective agencies to aid in their struggle against CSG development. All of these concerns are well defined in this research. However, these observations were inadequate to account for the totality of the conflict in the Western Downs region. The situation in Tara and its rural subdivisions is much more complicated than what both the anti-CSG movement and current research has identified. This preliminary insight into the conflict motivated me to raise two questions: (1) why CSG conflict emerged in the Tara subdivisions but not in the neighboring community of Chinchilla and (2) why the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ failed to sustain their conflict and thus transformed it. An understanding of the latter is also crucial to determining whether the CSG impacts on the Tara subdivisions may be understood as a ‘stigmatised identity crisis’ in accounting for the conflict in this location.

3.6 Researcher Role and Research Ethics

The nature of research questions determines the researcher’s role and should be aligned with the methodology. Additionally, the interpretive nature of a qualitative study requires researchers to be aware of their own position during data gathering and analysis stages (Stake, 1995). As discussed earlier, the descriptive nature of this study from a distinct identities perspective demands that the researcher understand his or her relationship with the informants, because to intrude into their lives presents the researcher with some degree of moral obligation. Complying with research ethics is of particular importance to social inquiry that is emotive in nature (Ryan, 1997). A researcher’s questions potentially risks invoking emotions.

The University of Queensland has a formal ethics approval process in which a researcher seeks approval from an ethics committee to conduct research when it involves human participation. As
part of this approval process, this research followed the ethical guidelines and received ethical approval from the School of Communication and Arts. In addition, researchers are encouraged to adopt an approach that maintains the confidentiality and the anonymity of participants. Interestingly, in this research and also based on personal experiences, the issue of ‘confidentiality and anonymity’ appeared to be of minimal relevance to the respondents, with the exception of only a few cases. This was mainly because polarised identities, particularly in the community of Tara, were already in an open conflict with each other, whether holding anti or pro-CSG narratives. Yet, it may be argued that it is the researcher’s moral obligation to limit potential prejudice towards vulnerable groups by ensuring their anonymity during data analysis and reporting. Respondents with a stigmatised label or members of vulnerable groups may potentially face negative consequences or be harmed if their identities are revealed (e.g., Baez, 2002). Therefore, each respondent was assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. These pseudonyms have been used in the interview quotes presented in subsequent chapters. It is also important to acknowledge that the proposition of anonymity barely fits in with this research, which is comparative in nature and aims to understand the socially constructed phenomenon embedded in distinct socio-economic and cultural characteristics, identities, and historical factors, such as in the case of Tara and its rural subdivisions. Therefore, this research has revealed the origin, location, and individuals’ affiliation with a specific identity or group; otherwise, it is impossible to discuss a case based on the socio-economic characteristics of a community and social categorisation of a specific identity in a particular context. The absence of such considerations could lead to homogenisation or a blurring of the boundaries between the distinct identities involved in the conflict.

As mentioned previously, this research recognises the topical sensitivity and contention of the CSG issue in general. Therefore, I always endeavoured to keep my perspectives or opinions on the subject as neutral as possible to avoid hurting or challenging individuals’ emotions or their feelings about the project development. However, I was keen to remain receptive to the range of concerns, views, and understandings that individuals have constructed towards the industry, without being judgmental.

During my visits to Chinchilla, Tara, and nearby locations, people were often suspicious of my allegiances. They would ask, “Is he working with or for industry? Is he funded by a CSG Company?” So, I faced the enormous challenge of dealing with scepticism from the community although my association with the School of Communication and Arts afforded me some neutrality in the eyes of the research participants. During my research and involvement with anti-CSG groups, I was asked a number of times whether I was against or in favour of CSG development. I had to ensure that my research had no specific agenda, and that it would not undermine any narrative; my
purpose was to understand the communities’ dynamics regarding the conflict and to highlight their concerns, issues, and grievances.

Another common question that many researchers face during fieldwork is “how will this research help the informants?” For my part, I always responded honestly by explaining that this was purely academic research, but that it seeks to contribute towards highlighting various socio-economic and environmental impacts and conflicts caused by the CSG development. I avoided making any statements, whenever possible, as to whether CSG development was sustainable or not, or whether the development was likely to have positive economic impacts on rural Queensland or not. This was especially important to those respondents living in the remote Tara region and its rural subdivisions.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

3.7.1 Secondary Data

To address the contextually based research questions, a mixed method approach while drawing on ethnographic tools was adopted to understand localised CSG conflict in the Western Downs of Queensland. To initially understand the broader context of CSG development and ongoing conflict, I reviewed available secondary data including contextual information, organisational reports, impact assessment reports, senate submissions and inquiries, newspapers, and existing literature covering resource industry, identity, and conflict. However, apart from that which is related to the anti-CSG movement, there is unfortunately little secondary data available about the establishment of the Tara subdivisions, which is central to this thesis. Therefore, to provide a pre-CSG account, I drew mainly from my primary data and personal observations (see Sections 4.2, 4.3 and Chapter 6).

From the beginning, I was interested in the ongoing conflict between the CSG companies and the communities; therefore, I followed, reviewed, and compared the incidence of protests, blockades, and other on-ground actions performed by anti-CSG groups both in Tara and Chinchilla. In order to develop my argument, I made a comprehensive list of most of the on-ground actions conducted by the anti-CSG groups in the Tara subdivisions during 2010 and 2013 (see Table 4.5). Assembling the key anti-CSG incidents that had occurred in Tara enabled me to build a plausible argument about the contrasting company-community relations in the communities of interest, Tara and Chinchilla. Documenting evidence of anti-CSG incidents merely explains cause; so, to argue rigorously, I needed primary data in the form of interviews aimed at understanding local community dynamics within the Tara region (see Chapters 5, 6, and 7).

From the very beginning of my research activity, I joined a range of social media outlets and various other websites that provided a flow of information about any development related to CSG
and its associated conflict. The social media outlets I mentioned included the LTG Alliance, Stop CSG Tara, Western Downs Alliance, Knitting Nannas, Aussies against Fracking, Rights Undermined, Evocation Grounds, and the Chinchilla Community Forum. While one might question the credibility and biases of these social networks and posted information, the use of social media did provide valuable information and updates about the continually changing environment and how various anti-CSG groups interact.

3.7.2 Direct Observations

I conducted intensive fieldwork over two and a half months during August, September, and October of 2013. I made 12 further trips before and after my formal fieldwork, especially to observe protests or blockades in the Tara subdivisions. The fieldwork was conducted in Tara town, the Tara rural subdivisions, and the neighbouring community of Chinchilla, in order to understand the complex identity politics. I observed several anti-CSG protests, blockades, and demonstrations conducted near the Tara subdivisions, often at QGC’s Kenya RO and Gas field (25 km northwest of Chinchilla). In most cases, my presence was quite noticeable so I needed to introduce myself and explain the reason for my attendance at these activities. However, during on-ground actions or protests, I passively observed and took notes for my own understanding. I also attended two activist training sessions conducted by Stop CSG Tara to equip participants or activists to deal with the situation and to know what to expect when police or security arrive. I also attended a meeting in the Tara subdivision-based anti-CSG group Gas-field Community Support Group (GCSG) to which representatives from government, churches, and NGOs were invited and during which a range of issues and impacts related to CSG were discussed.

During my stay in Tara, I had several conversations about my research quandaries concerning the Tara police, the Tara subdivisions’ residents, regional council members, and other residents living outside Tara’s boundary. These informal interactions provided me with rich information about community dynamics. Moreover, I always considered ‘getting lost’, sometimes deliberately, in the maze of the subdivisions’ roads as an opportunity for informal conversations with residents. I often lost my sense of direction in the Tara subdivisions. Navigational devices or maps could not be relied upon, since they are usually out-dated. Asking anyone in the Blocks for direction mostly started with my introduction and ended up in brief informal conversations regarding their opinion towards CSG, Tara town people and what they think about anti-CSG groups. Through these informal encounters, I also met a couple who were among the very first families who moved to the Tara subdivisions in the early 1980s and had witnessed the ‘ups and downs’ of the region. Later, I was fortunate to be able to conduct a formal interview with this couple.
3.7.3 Semi-structured Interviews

In general, interviews allow participants to relive their past experiences through a process of constructing and reconstructing particular matters in a comfortable conversational environment which other methods may not offer (Mason, 2002). Interviews are the best means of determining another person’s perspective as they enable a researcher to interact directly with a participant (e.g., Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

It is important to note that creating a conversational environment allows participants to express the topics that are of greatest importance to them and thus help the researcher to understand them from the participants’ standpoint. Failure to create such an environment can make a respondent consider how bad they will appear if they are perceived as contentious or always complaining. There is also the possibility that the respondents will become concerned about the researcher’s reaction to what might be an unpopular stance. Ignoring such outcomes will not only place the respondents in an uncomfortable position but the researcher’s attitude may also be considered as insensitive.

In this research, the interviews were guided by a list of open-ended but also adaptive questions, containing different themes designed to help understand the vivid picture of research inquiry (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Before interviews were conducted, the respondents were provided with a project information sheet and informed consent form (see Appendix B), containing detailed information regarding research objectives and associated possible risks (emotional, psychological, and social). All of the interviews were tape recorded (with permission) and then transcribed in full.

A total of 39 semi-structured interviews were conducted as a source of primary data with landholders from Chinchilla and Tara town and its subdivisions in the Western Downs. Members of the Basin Sustainability Alliance (BSA) and the LTG movement were also interviewed.

Twenty-four semi-structured interviews were conducted in the community of Tara. Eleven residents from the Tara rural subdivisions were interviewed, along with 13 residents of Tara town (including landholders, local business owners, representatives of local council, Tara Neighbourhood Centre and the Tara Futures Group, and three members of the Community Liaison Committee (Origin’s Ironbark CSG tenement in Tara). In Chinchilla, 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with landholders hosting CSG wells and its related infrastructure, local business owners, and representatives from Chinchilla Community Commerce and Industry, Chinchilla Family Support Centre, and the Basin Sustainability Alliance.
3.7.4 Identity Matched Interviews: Advantage and Disadvantage

Considering that the nature of this research deals with various distinct and opposing identities, traditional sampling procedures (e.g., Seidman, 2012; Collins et al., 2006) were of little use. The sampling procedure becomes further complicated, and to some extent impossible, when certain individuals manipulate self-information. For instance, many anti-CSG individuals from the Tara subdivisions did not reveal their ‘Blockie’ identity and often preferred to associate themselves with the Agrarians, as being a landholder “15 kilometres northwest of Chinchilla” or as “a member of the LTG movement”. Revealingly, it was noticed that, during many protests and media appearances, the ‘Blockies’ preferred to tag themselves with LTG signs rather than those belonging to the WDA.

It is, therefore, important not to analyse distinct identities merely in relation to anti- and pro-CSG narratives. So it is essential to design and conduct identity-matched interviews considering different social identities regardless of their narrative. This process can benefit both the respondents and the researcher as there is a greater chance that the posed questions would receive an in-depth explanation of inter-identity relations and how different identities perceive the CSG project development. Neglecting this approach, for instance, disregarding the presence of a stigmatised identity and the nature of a particular conflict, the researcher might be exposed to profound ethical and perhaps even safety challenges or end up in embarrassing situations. Therefore conducting research in each pool of identity requires different strategies in order to gain access and trust.

However, there are three disadvantages associated with identity matched sampling. First, the approach might lead to too much focus on the context of a problem, particularly related to identity and the social stratification of population. Second, a particular identity might be reluctant to reveal their identity as it might conceal the stigma associated with them. Consequently, a phenomenon which is directly linked to an identity would be under-reported. For instance, I found that, during the fieldwork, the residents of the Tara subdivisions tended to provide very little information regarding identity politics and the negative perception that communities of Chinchilla and Tara town have developed of them.

The third disadvantage relates to confidentiality and anonymity. Where the names of the respondents particularly represent vulnerable groups, it would not be hard for the readers to ascertain who this group or individual might be, particularly those individuals who are associated with the issue of CSG. These individuals may be concerned about being perceived as troublemakers. This drawback of identity-matched interviews exposes the research to confidentiality and ethics risks. In the case of this research, because of stigma attached to the Tara subdivisions, a few respondents concealed or manipulated their actual self (Goffman, 1963) by
referring to themselves as residents of Chinchilla. For such individuals, it might appear that the researcher labelled them on the basis of socio-cultural characteristics (e.g., Rai, 1995).

3.8 Data Categorisation and Analysis

After completing my formal fieldwork, I replayed all of the interview recordings, organised the field notes, and identified different themes in the data, which were then clustered around the research questions (Yin, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As suggested by Stake (1995) and Yin (1995), the concepts that were extraneous were separated (Neuman, 2000) but thematised separately to supplement the thick description of the case. This proposed strategy helps to analyse the data according to theoretical concepts and research questions. As such, an alternative explanation of a social phenomenon could be derived. This helped to structure the data, particularly those gathered from semi-structured interviews. I also considered the data theoretically and conceptually by comparing them to the relevant literature in order to establish a coherent link between the gathered data and theoretical framework (e.g., Baxter, 2000). The themes that emerged by analysing the cases of Chinchilla and Tara and its rural subdivisions were then compared in order to conceptualise their common threads.

Yin (1989) also proposes an analytical strategy to enable the gathered data to explain the case in the form of narrative. This thesis integrates this strategy to encourage relevant emerging themes to explain three phenomena: why CSG conflict emerged in the community of Tara subdivisions and not in Chinchilla; why the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ failed to sustain their conflict and thus transformed it; and whether the CSG conflict in the Tara subdivisions can be understood as a stigmatised identity crisis. The next chapter will investigate the geographies of conflict in the Western Downs of Queensland.
This chapter compares two neighbouring communities—Chinchilla and Tara—and offers insight into not only their contrasting socio-economic characteristics, but also their divergent relationships with the CSG industry. In doing so, the chapter discusses each case site, its location, socio-economic landscape, and the scale of its CSG infrastructure. This will help to identify the risks associated with the project development across the communities and to identify possible explanations of conflict with the CSG industry in the Western Downs of Queensland. The chapter focuses on analysing the competing perspectives held by the CSG industry and the traditional agricultural economy, as well as how project development has diversified the rural economy. This discussion will help to develop a contextualised narration of wider CSG development in the rural domain of the Western Downs. The research findings revealed here constitute part of a larger identity-driven CSG conflict and community relationship which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

4.1 Case 1: Chinchilla — The Land, Community, and CSG Development

The community of Chinchilla is centrally located within the Surat Basin on the Warrego Highway, around 80 kilometres west of Dalby, in the Western Darling Downs Region. The community, with its booming town serves as a regional centre and connects its rural communities to the states of Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria. In 2012, Chinchilla was recorded as having a population of 7,668, with a significant average growth rate of 3.6% over the past five years (WDRC, 2012). The community has a rich agricultural and forestry-based economy, including grain, feedlots, cattle grazing, intensive livestock (beef, sheep, pork, and poultry), and broadacre cropping. Both the quality farming and grazing lands have long provided strong foundations for the agricultural-driven economy, contributing significantly to both local and state revenue. In 2013, the agricultural industry accounted for 45.5% of all businesses, followed by construction (13.8%), and the rental and real estate industry (7.3%) (WDRC, 2012).

The community hosts the largest cypress pine forest in the southern hemisphere—the Barakula State Forest. The name ‘Chinchilla’ is in fact thought to be derived from an Aboriginal word, ‘Jinchilla’, which itself means ‘cypress pine’; and, since 1844, when Chinchilla was explored by the German scientist, Ludwig Leichhardt, the district has been eminent for its widespread cypress pine (Lewis,
The unusual Boonarga Cactoblastis Memorial Hall (built in 1936) is situated approximately 10 kilometres south-east of Chinchilla and honours the insect responsible for the successful eradication of the prickly pear cactus during the 1930s. According to one estimate, 25% of Australia’s melons are produced by the community (WDRC, 2012).

One of the first major CSG-related investments hosted by the community of Chinchilla was made in June, 2004, when CS Energy announced the construction of the Kogan Creek Power Station and its $1.2 billion investment (Queensland Government, 2007). The CSG production at commercial scale commenced in 2006, however; and the pace of project development can be assessed by the fact that, six years later, the community was hosting around 25 major resource industry and power generation projects, including underground coal gasification (UCG) (WDRC, 2014). Since then, Chinchilla’s economy has radically transformed. In the year 2011/12, the gross regional product (GRP) reached $609 million, and the extractive industry was the major contributor, adding approximately 33.2% to the total GRP.

This inland boom has changed the outlook of an idealised agriculturalist country town. The community is forced to adapt to a changing lifestyle and the transformation of the traditional agricultural economy as resource companies continue their quest to develop CSG and other mining and power station projects. The project development has transformed the small, unremarkable community into one capable of serving and providing various services to nearby communities. These services include health facilities, housing, entertainment, and educational and retail trade facilities. The community now seems to be taking advantage of both its CSG reserves and central location in the Western Downs; its connection to the Warrego Highway and the Western railway line, which runs from Toowoomba, has placed it in close proximity to most of the CSG infrastructure.

In addition to CSG-induced change to the rural landscape, the 2008 amalgamation of Chinchilla Shire with the Dalby, Murilla, Tara, and Wambo shires to form the Western Downs also caused significant challenges to local government in regard to project planning and approvals, regional infrastructure development, and the role of local council. Therefore, both the project development and 2008 amalgamation exposed the small rural community to significant socio-economic change; and, within a few years, the community drastically transformed from one with an economy dependent upon agriculture to one which now played a proactive role in regional development.

Currently, there are four key proponents carrying out CSG activities in Chinchilla: Arrow Energy ($6 billion), Origin Energy ($20 billion—APLNG project), QGC (BG group) ($15 billion—QCLNG project), and Santos. Table 4.1 contains a list of all of the CSG projects and other mining and power
projects being developed in the community. In regard to CSG extraction and production, Chinchilla has provided land for 12 QGC (BG group) and 2 Origin gas well sites. BG has extensive fields in the Dalby-Tara-Chinchilla triangle. Each of these CSG ventures is going ahead as planned: CSG wells and connected high-pressure pipelines are busy feeding APLNG and QCLNG pipelines, which are linked to LNG processing facilities on Curtis Island, near Gladstone, to export gas to China, Japan, and South Korea. Another process, underground coal gasification, has been allowed to set up three pilot plants—one in Kogan, another in Chinchilla, and a third in Kingaroy. Taken as a whole, the proposed CSG development is the single biggest project in Queensland’s history (Hutton, 2013). There are presently around 355 CSG drilled wells and they are mainly clustered in the Columboola, Nangram, Wieambilla, and Condamine areas which shares its border with the community of Tara (with around 38 appraisals, 305 developments, and 12 explorations) (see maps 4.1 and 4.2).

**Table 4.1**: List of CSG and Other Resource Projects in the Community of Chinchilla

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Proponent</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QCLNG Gas Fields</td>
<td>BG Group</td>
<td>South of Chinchilla</td>
<td>CSG</td>
<td>Commenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APLNG Gas Pipelines and Fields</td>
<td>Origin/ConocoPhillips</td>
<td>Chinchilla region</td>
<td>CSG</td>
<td>EIS partly approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLNG Gas Fields</td>
<td>Shell/Arrow Energy</td>
<td>Chinchilla region</td>
<td>CSG</td>
<td>EIS underway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunstate GTL</td>
<td>Pacific GTL</td>
<td>Chinchilla region</td>
<td>CSG</td>
<td>Feasibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinchilla Power Station</td>
<td>Line Energy Hopeland 1 and 2</td>
<td>Near Chinchilla</td>
<td>UCG</td>
<td>Prefeasibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrow Surat Pipeline</td>
<td>Arrow Energy</td>
<td>Chinchilla region</td>
<td>CSG</td>
<td>EIS partly approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warra/Glen Wilga</td>
<td>Tarong Energy</td>
<td>12km S of Chinchilla</td>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbot Point Gas Pipeline</td>
<td>Energy World Corporation Ltd</td>
<td>Chinchilla region</td>
<td>CSG</td>
<td>Feasibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QCLNG Pipeline</td>
<td>BG Group</td>
<td>Miles to Chinchilla</td>
<td>CSG</td>
<td>EIS submitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkie Creek Expansion</td>
<td>Peabody Resources</td>
<td>45km SE of Chinchilla</td>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>Feasibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNG Processing Plant</td>
<td>QGC/BOC</td>
<td>35km NW of Chinchilla</td>
<td>CSG</td>
<td>Feasibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kogan Creek Solar Boost</td>
<td>Areva/CS Energy</td>
<td>25km SE of Chinchilla</td>
<td>Solar</td>
<td>Commenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar Dawn</td>
<td>Areva/CS Energy</td>
<td>25km SE of Chinchilla</td>
<td>Solar</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columboola To Western Downs</td>
<td>Powerlink</td>
<td>Miles to Chinchilla</td>
<td>Power &amp; Transmission</td>
<td>Approved – Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orana Substation</td>
<td>Powerlink</td>
<td>Chinchilla</td>
<td>Power &amp; Transmission</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEQ 2</td>
<td>AGL Energy Ltd</td>
<td>Chinchilla</td>
<td>Power &amp; Transmission</td>
<td>Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Downs Substation</td>
<td>Powerlink</td>
<td>Chinchilla</td>
<td>Power &amp; Transmission</td>
<td>Construction (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkie</td>
<td>Linc Energy</td>
<td>Chinchilla, Kogan</td>
<td>UCG</td>
<td>Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinchilla North</td>
<td>Golden Cross Operations</td>
<td>Chinchilla</td>
<td>UCG</td>
<td>Proposal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WDRC (2014) List of Major Projects in Western Downs Region
Map 4.1: CSG Development in the Western Downs, Queensland.

Map 4.2: Distribution of CSG Wells in the Western Downs of Queensland.
However, the unprecedented growth of the CSG industry is not without criticism or controversies, particularly regarding various social and environmental impacts. With regard to social and economic impacts, for instance, project development has resulted in rapid population growth (See table 4.2). Consequently, the small rural community has expanded, placing enormous pressure on existing services and physical infrastructure, such as housing availability and affordability, capacity for medical care, and high volumes of traffic. In response, the industry has taken some commendable initiatives, in collaboration with the regional council, to ease this pressure. For instance, as a part of its Integrated Housing Strategy, QGC has committed to invest $5.7 million in affordable homes around Dalby, Chinchilla, Condamine, and Wandoan (QGC, 2012).

4.1.1 The Contest between CSG and Agriculture

A large area of land in the Upper Condamine region of the Western Downs has been declared as strategic cropping land (SCL) (see map 4.3). SCL categorise certain zones or land in order to protect highly suitable or prime cropping areas from both mining and urban development. The Queensland State Government defines SCL areas based on the quality of soil, climate, and other features related to the landscape (Queensland Government, 2011). Based on the CSG proponents’ Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and a detailed report published by the Australian Coal Association Research Program to understand the conflict between coal mining/CSG and the agricultural sector, it was found that the CSG-LNG tenements significantly overlap with SCL (ACARP, 2012) (for graphical representation see map 4.4). In addition, a significant area of irrigated farmland spread across the region is dependent on underground aquifers known as the Condamine Alluvium.

It may be argued that neither the agricultural nor the CSG activities function in isolation. The coexistence between these two competing industries is not only limited to land use but also to interactions with wider consequences, such as the issue of underground water. In order to increase the flow of gas, the process of CSG drilling extracts large volumes water, usually saline in nature, from the Walloon Coal Measures. The key concern here is that, owing to CSG-induced depressurisation, the water may make its way from the Condamine Alluvium to the Walloon Coal Measures, as they are connected (Hutton, 2013). According to ACARP (2012), an annual average of 75-125 GL of water (as a CSG by-product) will be produced over the life of CSG-LNG projects in Queensland, and will reach its peak between 2020 and 2030 (Queensland Water Commission, 2012). This depressurising of coal seams may result in a drawdown of water levels, and, the controversial process of fracturing can result in contamination. Considering the agricultural land use in Chinchilla, and the approved and proposed CSG activities, the agricultural industry may compete...
for water with the project development. Based on the existing CSG infrastructure and proposed development, it is clear that most of the water consumed by the CSG industry will be from the Upper Condamine region (including Roma) where the land has been categorised as SCL (e.g., Kaye et al., 2012). Therefore, both agriculture and CSG projects are competing for both land usage and potentially water resources.

Map 4.3: Distribution of Strategic Cropping Land in the Condamine-Balonne. Source: Kaye et al., 2012 - Australian Coal Association Research Program (ACARP, 2012)

Map 4.4: Major CSG-LNG Project Tenements in Condamine-Balonne. Source: Kaye et al., 2012 - Australian Coal Association Research Program (ACARP, 2012)
In addition to the total contribution of 16.3% of agriculture in GRP in 2012 (WDRC, 2012), cattle grazing is also an important sector for the region especially in Cameby, Hopeland, Columboola, Wandoan, and Miles. More importantly, during the frequent drought periods, the competition for underground water is heightened and may have serious consequences for sustaining Chinchilla’s traditional economy which is totally reliant on the underground water supply. As a CSIRO (2007) report indicates, underground water consumption in the Condamine-Balonne area increases from 18% to 60% during dry seasons (as cited in Kaye, et al., 2012).

Therefore, the current pace of CSG project expansion can result in potentially serious consequences for agricultural productivity and a sustainable rural economy. The aforementioned threat posed by CSG is not only limited to Chinchilla but also applies to other predominately agricultural areas of the Darling Downs. Consequently, this has become the main area of contention between the local communities, agriculturalists, and the CSG industry, and has also been flagged by the anti-CSG movement. These direct impacts of CSG activities on agricultural land and unprecedented project activities overlapping with agricultural land can be viewed in map 4.5. With the project expansion, more pressure will undoubtedly be exerted on the agriculture producing area and will potentially impact or deplete underground water sources.

Map 4.5: Distribution of CSG Wells in the Condamine-Balonne
Source: Kaye, et al., 2012 - Australian Coal Association Research Program (ACARP, 2012)

In terms of the contemporary CSG debate, the agriculturalists have been portrayed as opposing CSG project development (e.g., Carey, 2012; Farmer, 2010; McCarthy, 2012; McManus & Connor, 2013). Despite the tension between the agriculturalists and the CSG industry (Willacy, 2014; Williams & Walton, 2014), there are many who have embraced project development, viewing it as
an opportunity to diversify the drought stricken regional economy, and who have seen CSG development as another source of water supply. For instance, in some regions around Chinchilla there is significant demand for CSG-treated water for grazing land or feed lots. To this end, in the Dalby region Arrow Energy is already supplying up to 4 ML of CSG-produced water a day to local cattle feedlots (e.g., Ogg, 2009; de Rijki, 2013b, Kaye et al., 2012).

The massive CSG-driven investment has diversified the regional economy. Since 2006, the community has witnessed a significant shift in the rural economy; and, today, the resource sector contributes 28.5% of total GRP (WDRC, 2013). Similar to other agricultural-based rural communities in Queensland, Chinchilla has also found this economic transition to be challenging, where the concerns of the farmers seems to be relegated. The declining economic value of agriculture, climatic conditions declining, and an ageing rural population have resulted in a lack of employment and economic opportunities. In this vein, CSG has been pitched as an ‘alternative boost’ to diversify and sustain the rural economies of Queensland (Haslam et al., 2013). Regional economic plans and indicators continually explain that the resource industry has now taken precedence over the traditional agricultural and forestry-based economy. For instance, in its commissioned report the Department of State Development magnifies the resource industry’s role and significance in the context of Surat Basin (see below) and recognises the development and changing economy as a new future for the region.

1 Gross Regional Product (GRP) in the Surat Energy Resources Province is anticipated to at least double by 2030 as a result of developing the resources sector, and could potentially quadruple, making the region one of the greatest regional contributors to GRP;
2 Gross Value Added activity (or Gross Regional Product, GRP, lower taxes, and subsidies) in the Surat Energy Resources Province could reach $9.3 billion per annum by 2031;
3 Employment in the Surat Energy Resources Province is projected to increase by an additional 12,500 full-time equivalent positions by 2031 as a result of developing the Surat Energy Resources Province (not including increases due to ancillary services) occurring outside of those pertaining to the development of energy resources);
4 Growth is expected to be primarily in the sectors of mining, electricity, gas and water, finance and insurance, transport, and storage and manufacturing. (cited from Haslam et al., 2013, p. 248)

On a positive note, this massive surging investment by the industry has contributed to new infrastructure and enhanced the local services sector’s capacity in terms of community assets. Apart from contributions in the form of taxation and royalty revenue from gas production (Houghton, 2014), these include the newly opened $16 million Woolworth’s retail centre and IGA store expansion, hospital upgrade with $10 million investment, $400,000 for Chinchilla kindergarten,
$1.29 million for upgrade of the Miles water and sewerage network (Broome, 2014), and recon- 
struction and capacity building of the Chinchilla Community Centre supported with $3.6 million 
(Doreen Goldsmid, Manager Chinchilla Family Support Centre, personal interview, September 03, 
2013; see also QGC, 2012).

Recent research also indicates that local employment and family incomes have increased by a 
substantial 15% (Fleming & Measham, 2014). The ‘youth injection’ (people aged between 15 and 
29) has also been well documented during the period from 2006 to 2011, from 1,112 in 2006 to 
1,618 in 2011—an increase of 46%. Interestingly, this influx is not limited to the outsourced CSG 
workforce (FIFO and DIDO) but mainly the permanent residents of the community who left 
previously because of lack of available employment and educational opportunities. It is also very 
encouraging to notice that within the community of Chinchilla, the female employment rate has 
increased by 26% between 2006 and 2011, from 1204 to 1516, which Fleming and Measham (2014) 
recognise as ‘reversing rural decline’.

4.1.2 Project Outcome: Resistance Did Not Prevail

Regardless of the fact that potentia
tial risks to the underground aquifers are higher in the community 
of Chinchilla, the agricultural community of Chinchilla has generally welcomed national and 
international CSG companies, though they have some reservations about impacts. The declining 
value of agricultural productivity, and depopulation of community all became predicaments that 
made development of CSG an attractive option, and an opportunity to diversify the rural economy 
as well as raise individual earning in terms of landholder compensation: off-farm income (Huth et 
al., 2014; Swayne, 2012).

The LTG movement, anti-CSG groups from the Tara subdivisions, and other activists around the 
country have tried to mobilise Chinchilla against CSG development. Since early 2011, the LTG 
movement has framed the issue as a CSG invasion of the agricultural areas of the Darling Downs 
and has shown support for agriculturalists. The resistance movement has mobilised a few 
individuals in Chinchilla who have refused to sign access agreements with the CSG industry; 
however, the overall project development is going ahead as planned and there has been no 
manifestations of conflict observed between the industry and the community. The Chinchilla 
community has shown considerable support for project development, with one research respondent 
seeing it as the “once in a lifetime opportunity” for rural Queensland. The aforementioned 
economic facts reveal that there is a strong realisation of diverse local and regional economy
facilitated not only by CSG, but also by other resource development projects which account for an increased share of Gross Regional Product.

In Chapter 7, I show that the CSG resistance fomented by the LTG movement was not welcomed by the individual landholders hosting CSG infrastructure and Agrarian-based groups. For instance, since the establishment of Western Downs Alliance (WDA) and then the LTG movement, the Basin Sustainability Alliance (BSA) has distanced itself from both the national movement and Tara-based anti-CSG groups. Interestingly, the Agrarians have organised themselves under their own identity-based groups, such as the BSA, AgForce, and PRA, and these will be discussed in Chapter 7. This does not mean to imply that Chinchilla’s community members and the landholders hosting CSG infrastructures are totally satisfied with project development, or that they have no issues or concerns. In fact, in Chapter 5 I provide detailed insight into the range of socio-economic and environmental concerns raised by the community members and Agrarian-based groups.

4.2 Case 2: Tara — The Land, Community, and CSG Development

The Tara district is situated on the margin of what is popularly termed as the Brigalow country of South East Queensland (Dick, 1960; Ferguson, 1962). The term ‘Brigalow’, thought to be an aboriginal word, refers to uncleared country with limited pastoral use. The small rural community of Tara is located around 85-90 kilometres south-west of Dalby (and south of the Warrego Highway), between two westward-flowing rivers, the Condamine and the Moonie. In June, 2009, the estimated population of Tara district was 3,870 (WDRC, 2011). Sharing its border with Chinchilla, the district encompasses an area of about 11,680 square kilometres (see map 4.6). The region is famed for its spread of rural subdivisions, commonly known as lifestyle Blocks. The district also contains ironbark, spotted gum, and cypress pine trees on its eastern outskirts, providing a strong foundation for the timber industry. In 2013, with regard to the industries, the largest contribution was made by Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing, with approximately 33.1% of the total GRP for Tara, followed by Mining (10.4%), Construction (10%), and Education and Training (5.1%) (WDRC, 2013). The unemployment rate in Tara is higher than that of other communities in the Western Downs. In September of 2011, the unemployment rate was recorded as 6.9%, reflecting an increase of 0.7% in 2010 (WDRC, 2012).

A first look at the Tara town conjures dull creamy and off-white coloured houses with wooden exteriors, in serious need of painting, reflecting a kind of drabness to the town. Beside the railway line and Day Street (the main Street of the Tara town) a rusty old 1930s model truck lays alongside some vacant land covered by grass, indicating that the town is suffering and there has not been
much that has changed for a long time. The established small town of Tara and its compact, small businesses close to the railway line hints that the rail service has played an important historical role in the growth of the town.

The appearance of the Tara subdivisions further distinguishes them from Tara town and Chinchilla. During the fieldwork it was observed that many Blocks are tightly packed with dense foliage beside unsealed dusty roads. Small shack-like residences were commonplace, with worn paint, portable water tanks and toilets, and no lawns or gardens. Properties were littered with rubbish, such as tyres, mattresses, scrap metal, broken refrigerators, wrecked car bodies, and empty cans. By contrast, Tara town and Chinchilla are more visually appealing mainly owing to the wealth generated by recent coal seam gas developments. Especially in Chinchilla, the streets are tidy and feature attractive shops, busy cafes, flourishing retail businesses, new houses, busy roads with traffic signals, and newly constructed public buildings. A recent study of community expectations conducted by Williams and Walton (2014) reveals a strong sense of community attachment among Chinchilla’s residents based on positive social interactions (a friendly place offering a country lifestyle in a close-knit community), physical aspects (a clean, safe, and secure environment with schools and recreational activities), and economic sufficiency (its central location in the Western Downs, rich agricultural industry, and strong retail sector). By contrast, Tara’s sense of wellbeing is much lower (Walton et al. 2014).

During the 1920s, Tara Shire comprised grazing land and small dairy farms and was known as a drought-stricken, prickly pear-infested area without promise. The prickly pear curse eventually destroyed the Shire, especially in economic terms: the lack of employment opportunities forced residents to desert the ‘no promise’ land. Tara’s socio-economic journey was one fraught with struggle. The introduction of the cactoblastis moth during 1927/1928, however, solved the prickly pear problem and subsequently alleviated Tara’s socio-economic situation. By the end of World War II, Tara appeared on the map of the Darling Downs with a new look but could never shake its more dominant former negative image (e.g., Dick, 1960; Ferguson, 1962). An important consideration is that in contrast to many other districts within the state of Queensland, Tara had not been influenced by mining development or any other resource industry activities until April of 1961, when the Moonie oil field was discovered. The oil produced was transported to Brisbane through a 200-mile-long pipeline (Ferguson, 1962).

During the 1950s, the struggling Tara Shire experienced some real progress in the shape of the wool boom, along with some wheat production. This resulted in considerable population growth during the 1960’s, to over 3,000 (see table 4.2). Until the 1950s, the community’s economy had its origins
in grain, beef, and wool production; however, these industries were dismantled following the severe droughts of the 1990s. The population censuses of 1986 and 1991 also reflect modest population growth in the region. Two main factors explain this growth: considerable improvements in the physical infrastructure, such as road networks, and the establishment of subdivisions on Tara’s outskirts, where most of the Blocks consist of 13-40 ha of land.

Table 4.2: Population Trend in Tara before the 2008 Amalgamation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>3,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>3,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>3,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>3,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>3,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>3,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>3,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3,806</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statics – Tara (s) Local Government Area – Quick Statistics.

Currently, the region is considered as being climatically marginal because most of its land is infertile, salinised, and largely used for timber production, the wool industry, and livestock farming. The land is not suitable for intensive pastoral farming (Ferguson, 1962). This does not mean that the region is completely unproductive. In particular, the area known as the ‘Brigalow belt’, which stretches between Goondiwindi and Taroom, is certainly favourable for pastoral use, including grain production (which also takes place in Tara, in a limited capacity). The successful land clearance in the Tara and Wandoan (Dick, 1960) communities has also produced wheat and sorghum, in association with cattle and sheep farming. However, the overall utilisation of land is low because of the widespread growth of Brigalow and the challenge of clearing them.

4.2.1 CSG Proponents and Project Development

The CSG industry arrived at a time when Tara was already socio-economically cornered. The project development provided an economic opportunity for the deprived community, especially the landholders and local businesses, who had suffered from the effects of droughts. It is important to note that Tara District has not yet hosted CSG development at an intensive scale compared to
neighbouring communities, such as Chinchilla or Dalby, but the region is prospective. For instance, Origin (CSG Company) plans to develop the Ironbark project in Tara, on a property owned by a resident whom I interviewed. This project aims to supply to the domestic gas market, however, the application for full-scale production is yet to be approved. Just on the outskirts of Tara town, the project will cover an area of 72,300 hectares, and will involve drilling 800 wells, two gas plants with field compression, temporary and permanent accommodation facilities, and water management infrastructure. The gas produced will then be fed into the CGS-LNG pipeline to be transported to Origin’s Darling Downs Power Station near Dalby (‘Oliver’, personal interview, September 14, 2013; WDRC, 2011). Origin has planned to invest $1.5 billion in the project which will become the largest domestic gas supply project (see table 4.3), delivering 1,600 PJ of gas from late 2015 and over the next 40 years (Origin, 2011).

Nevertheless, owing to ongoing CSG activities taking place around Tara (Chinchilla, Kenya, Kogan, and Condamine) there has been a marked improvement in infrastructure, such as roads. Additionally, some business have been brought back to the town, including pubs, motels, shops, cafes, road works, earth-moving firms, and direct and indirect job creation as a result of the industry. Furthermore, the CSG industry has contributed to community development through various community-based projects, with the collaboration of the ‘Tara Neighbourhood Centre’. For instance, QGC has committed $1.24 million towards improving medical and dental services, provided mobile clinics and medical transportation, and $150 million mainly towards minimising impacts on housing and physical infrastructure (such as roads, traffic, and safety) (Roslyn Wade, Centre Coordinator—Tara Neighbourhood Centre, personal communication, August 22, 2013). In addition, the Kenya region, a few kilometres south of the Condamine Highway intersection and on the border of Tara, is known as a gas hub with CSG-related infrastructure (including compressor stations, water treatment plant, and worker accommodation) operated by QGC.

Table 4.3: List of CSG and Other Resource Projects in the Community of Tara

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Proponent</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia Pacific LNG</td>
<td>ConocoPhillips, Origin, Sinopec</td>
<td>Tara</td>
<td>LNG Upstream</td>
<td>Construction (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironbark Project</td>
<td>Origin Energy</td>
<td>Tara</td>
<td>CSG</td>
<td>Planning (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya to Goondiwindi Pipeline</td>
<td>ERM Power</td>
<td>Tara</td>
<td>CSG</td>
<td>Operation (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland Curtis LNG (QCLNG)</td>
<td>QGC / BG Group</td>
<td>Tara</td>
<td>LNG Upstream</td>
<td>Construction (2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WDRC (2014) List of Major Projects in Western Downs Region
4.3 Tara Rural Subdivisions: The Blocks

Fierce community resistance to CSG project development since 2009 has made the community of Tara a centre of conflict and agitation. However, during the fieldwork I conducted in the communities of Chinchilla and Tara, it was apparent that resistance against CSG development is mainly located in Tara’s residential Blocks, also known as the ‘Tara rural subdivisions’, or ‘Blocks’ (dwellings) (‘Blockies’ being the name given to their residents). I will discuss, in more detail, the social categorisation of ‘Blockies’ in Chapter 6. This section discusses the characteristics of the Tara subdivisions. Something that made my research difficult, however, is the fact that limited information concerning the origin and growth of the Tara subdivisions has been published to date. Therefore, I draw the bulk of my information from data gathered from my respondents and other sources during the time I spent in the Tara region. This section briefly outlines some of the important aspects of the Tara subdivisions so that contemporary issues regarding CSG conflict, and the cleavage between Tara town and its subdivisions, may be put into perspective and understood.

In 2010, the Western Downs Regional Council published the Western Downs Health and Well-being Profile. This report clearly indicates that Tara is a disadvantaged community, based on various socio-economic and health-related indicators. The following facts relating to Tara in table 4.4 have been taken from the profile (WDRC, 2010) and aid in understanding the socio-economic context in which CSG development is occurring.

A report published in 2010 by the Western Downs Regional Council (WDRC) clearly indicates that Tara is a disadvantaged community when measured on several socio-economic and health-related indicators, compared to other nearby towns such as Dalby, Chinchilla, and Wandoan. Table 4.4 provides a summary of the key indicators comparing Tara with Chinchilla and Queensland as a whole. It shows a high unemployment rate for Tara in 2010 compared to nearby Chinchilla and the Queensland state average, and there are fewer young people in learning or employment. Compared to Chinchilla and Queensland as a whole, Tara has a much higher proportion of jobless families with young children (30.4%, compared to 12.3% for Chinchilla, and 14% for Queensland). Tara also rates higher on health indicators. Nearly 15 per cent of residents receive a disability support pension, compared to 4.9 per cent for Chinchilla, and 5.1 per cent for Queensland. Compared to Chinchilla and the Queensland state average, a greater proportion of people in Tara present with one or more major health risk factors (69.5%), are in fair or poor health (22.9%), and have high psychological stress (14.9%). The only indicator where Chinchilla is disadvantaged concerns low income families experiencing rental stress, which is a direct result of the growth of mining and gas
projects that have led to a rapid rise in property prices and shortages in affordable accommodation (WDRC, 2010).

Table 4.4. Summary of health and well-being indicators Tara, Chinchilla, Queensland (WDRC, 2010, pp. 2-8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health and Well-being Indicator</th>
<th>Tara &amp; District (%)</th>
<th>Chinchilla &amp; District (%)</th>
<th>Queensland (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People with private health cover</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment (aged 15-64)</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour participation rate (aged 15-64)</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People on unemployment benefit</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in learning or employment (aged 15-19)</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>77.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent families</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobless families with children under 15 years</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income households with rental stress</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income households with mortgage stress</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with at least 1 of 4 major health risk factors*</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with fair or poor health (15 years and older)</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with high psychological stress</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Support Pensioners (aged 15-64)</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The four major health risk factors are smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, incidence of obesity, and lack of physical activity.

In addition, it is difficult to differentiate the population of Tara town and the dispersed rural subdivisions. The problem in analysing the population census were compounded when the Tara shire was amalgamated in 2008 with the towns of Dalby, Murilla, Chinchilla, Wambo, and the southern part of Taroom Shire to form Western Downs regional Council. The 2008 amalgamation indicates that it was necessary to re-draw administrative boundaries because the former Tara Shire’s economic position was not satisfactory to meet the town’s needs. The redrawn boundaries were welcomed and made it easier for the local councils to provide services to the scattered population of the Tara subdivisions.
4.3.1 Project Outcome: Resistance Prevailed

By 2009, the CSG industry had already expanded its infrastructure in the community of Chinchilla and around the Tara subdivisions (Wieambilla, Kogan, Kenya, and Condamine area). However, the first clash in the Western Downs was witnessed when QGC approached 14 residents of the subdivisions for land access, in order to construct a 16 km pipeline, which was to pass through private properties and be linked with the Kenya gas plant (see map 4.6). As soon as the initial contact was made by the proponent, some of the residents started to raise concerns about the CSG activities and soon after, the first anti-CSG group, Western Downs Alliance (WDA) was formed.

The anti-CSG motivated individuals from the subdivisions expressed their resistance and concerns through confrontational approaches. From August 2010 to May 2011, aggressive anti-CSG activities were organised by WDA, with a view to halting the industry’s operations through blockades, protests, demonstrations, and even by threatening the CSG workers.

In contrast to the community of Chinchilla, the anti-CSG groups were predominately concerned with health impacts and the potential impact that CSG may have on their adapted rural lifestyle. Hence, the ongoing resistance in Tara’s subdivisions shifted the subject of the CSG debate from environmental impacts to social impacts. For example, WDA (which has been the key anti-CSG group resisting project development in the rural subdivisions) argues that the industry has caused serious health issues, eroded their rural lifestyle, and created acute social problems by dividing the community on the issue of CSG. It is important to note here that, in comparison to other communities of the Western Downs, the Tara subdivisions are more closely settled and have a much higher population density.

In an attempt to understand the CSG conflict in the context of the Tara subdivisions, I consider the ‘Tara rural subdivisions’ as a place where some people have organised themselves against CSG development. Further, I observed that the residents of the subdivisions were socially categorised based on certain negative attributes. This group has been stigmatised by both the residents of the Tara town and the neighbouring agriculturalist community of Chinchilla and has labelled as ‘Blockies’. Therefore, some residents of Tara’s subdivisions organised themselves in a context which supported their social categorisation as ‘Blockies’. This provided them with a unique opportunity to establish groups composed of a specific stigmatised identity. Chapter 6 will discuss in more detail the stigmatisation of the residents of Tara rural subdivisions, and Chapter 7 will discuss the formations of three ‘Blockie-based’, anti-CSG groups in the Tara subdivisions.
4.3.1.1 The Two Narratives in Tara District

The conflict in the subdivision produced two competing narratives about CSG development based on distinct identities: Tara town and Tara rural subdivision. This resulted in a subsequent breakdown of social relationships within the community and reflected a fragile situation for the industry which is eager to establish infrastructure in the near future. The Tara subdivision narrative invokes a concern for general environmental, but predominantly health-related, impacts of CSG project development. Issues related to impacts on the agricultural industry and groundwater, are rarely of concern. Erosion of their ‘lifestyle’ is also among the concerns of the anti-CSG motivated individuals living in the Tara subdivisions. The Tara town narrative, however, has an emphasis on establishing the industry in order to gain economic opportunities for a sustainable community. This constructs Tara town as being strongly in favour of the CSG industry. In order to explore the ongoing struggle over the CSG development, Chapters 5 and 6 will provide insight into each of these identities, along with the community of Chinchilla and its concerns about the project development.

4.4 A Cross Comparison of Chinchilla and Tara: Demography, Geography, and Economics

In an effort to explain the presence or absence of the conflict, I will now consider and compare the socio-economic and demographic facts in relation to Chinchilla and Tara. Scholars argue that the demographic characteristics of a region can shape conflict, which may also apply to the extractive industry (e.g., Cuba et al., 2014; Young, 1987; Hegel et al., 2009). Geographic characteristics are also important. A recent Oxfam research report, entitled Geographies of Conflict which identified overlapping issues between extractive industries and agricultural land use in Ghana and Peru concluded that owing to ineffective management and policies, the resource sector becomes a ‘recipe for social conflict’ (Oxfam, 2014). Therefore, the relationship between geographical and demographical characteristics and conflict may explain the absence or presence of conflict in the Western Downs.

Table 4.5 summarises the population of the communities in question. This table shows that in the community of Chinchilla, the population’s growth rate is high. This growing population is also related to the project development, which has been observed in communities within the Surat and Bowen Basins in recent years (Fleming & Measham, 2014). Based on this, we may argue that larger communities with high population growth may not provide a suitable context to conflict against CSG development. Small communities with small populations concentrated in a demographic
location on the other hand, offer a close-knit social structure; hence, for such communities it may be easier to mobilise individuals and establish collective actions against project development. However, contrary to this argument, even though Tara town has a high population density, conflict did not occur. Conflict did happen in the case of the Tara subdivisions. The population of the Tara subdivisions exceeds that of the town itself, but is widely scattered with a lower density than the town. So, why there is this dichotomy of CSG narratives within Tara district?

Table 4.5: Communities by Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communities</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinchilla</td>
<td>6,119</td>
<td>6,302</td>
<td>6,648</td>
<td>7,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara</td>
<td>3,870</td>
<td>3,896</td>
<td>3,874</td>
<td>3,960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WDRC (2011, 2012)

Similarly, if we consider the proximity of the CSG infrastructure to the actual communities, one might expect that the communities further from the infrastructure (which includes gas wells, reverse osmosis plants, pipelines, or compression stations) would be less likely to suffer any negative impacts, and therefore be less resistant to project development. While this argument may be applicable to the context of Tara town where there is currently no CSG development taking place, it does not explain the conflict in the Tara subdivisions where, in comparison to Chinchilla, the CSG industry is at a preliminary stage and yet to commence operations at commercial scale.

Economic factors should also be considered when attempting to explain the presence and absence of conflict. Economics may help to understand the relationship or behaviour of the residents in Tara and Chinchilla and their articulated concerns towards project development. To serve this possible explanation, the comparison between the communities of Chinchilla and Tara also informs us that the local economy only provides a limited explanation of conflict patterns. For instance, considering that Chinchilla has its strong foundation in an agricultural-based economy, the community has a lot to lose in the case that project development generates socio-economic and environmental impacts. The traditional agriculture-based economy provides already existing sustainable economic growth. Current and proposed CSG projects significantly overlap the predominant agricultural land. In other words, the community whose existing economic base is being threatened by any extractive resource projects with potentially significant environmental impacts—particularly impact on and competition over water resources—might be expected to resist any economic development prompted by the extractive industry. However, the case of Chinchilla paints a very different picture.
In the case of Tara and its rural subdivisions, the community has a declining agricultural industry due to poor climate conditions and one of the lowest socio-economic and well-being indicators in the whole of the Western Downs. At first glance Tara has few other economic alternatives than that offered by the proposed CSG development. Hosting CSG could contribute significantly to the shape of the community and infrastructure development, create an alternate source of water supply (reverse osmosis-treated CSG-produced water), encourage economic diversity, and also serve an ongoing revenue source (for accommodating CSG wells on properties). Still, these offered or potential economic benefits were not convincing to the residents of the Tara subdivisions. Since 2009, the CSG industry has attempted to expand in the Tara subdivisions categorised as ‘scrappy bush’ and unproductive land (e.g., McCarthy, 2014) and where the residents are already marginalised and living under economic and social stress (as discussed under Western Downs Wellbeing Profile, see section 4.3). The residents have opted to confront and resist project development despite the potential socio-economic outcomes CSG might offer.

Therefore, it is difficult to rely on economic factors alone to explain the emergence of CSG conflict in the Tara rural subdivisions. In the case of Chinchilla, we have observed that the community has a rich agricultural industry as an economic base; however, there are also indications that the project development has been accepted and recognised by the community as an important industry for diversifying the regional economy. So far the industry has established intensive CSG infrastructure in the predominantly agricultural area (overlapping with SCL) but not yet in the vast area of drought stricken Tara and also in its rural subdivisions. There might be some technical reasons behind this CSG planning however Tara has been identified to host significant CSG reserves that could feed the LNG pipelines. The above discussion raises the question why did conflict not occur over the CSG industry in the community of Chinchilla. The case of Chinchilla suggests that it is not only the economic factors that have motivated the community of Chinchilla. The Agrarians communities have formed a constructive relationship with the industry. Certainly, the potential of the CSG industry to provide additional source of income might be important in explaining the receptivity of the CSG in some part of the Western Downs region, but are not enough to account for the absence or presence of conflict.

In summary, the comparison between Chinchilla and Tara, including Tara’s rural subdivisions, reveals contrasting relationships with the CSG industry. Geographic location, population, proximity to the CSG infrastructure, and direct impacts alone cannot explain the prevalence of conflict over the CSG project in the Western Downs.
4.4.1 Conclusion

The above comparative analysis between the case of Chinchilla and Tara reveals that direct CSG related impacts are not sufficient to explain the conflict against project development. I do not mean to imply that conflict is not a consequence of environmental or direct impacts. Disputes and concerns over competing land use, competition over water, and impact on agricultural productivity are obvious concerns of agriculturalists (such as Dalby, Cecil Plains, Chinchilla, Wandoan) and certainly many individuals and Agrarian-led groups (BSA, AgForce, PRA) are advocating against the unrestrained development of CSG in the region. But my argument is that merely focusing on impacts is not enough to explain the totality of the conflict in the Western Downs. Nevertheless, project-induced impacts should be considered as important ingredients that may support or increase the resistance or conflict. Therefore, the direct (environmental) impact of CSG must not be considered to be the only determinant of shaping conflict, as it has been portrayed by the media and by the anti-CSG movement and, more specifically, the anti-CSG groups in the Tara subdivisions (case study).

Similarly, we have also noticed that geographic and economic factors alone cannot account for the conflict emergence. Through the comparison, I have explained that unlike other predominantly agricultural communities of the Western Downs and broader Darling Downs, CSG development in the district of Tara is at a very preliminary stage. The only CSG infrastructures in place are the Origin’s Ironbark project (pilot project) and 14 km QCLNG pipeline (QGC-BG Group) in the Tara subdivisions area. Nevertheless, these CSG activities have been criticised for exposing the residents to various environmental impacts, including health, noise, and erosion of the rural lifestyle of the Tara subdivisions.

The communities of Chinchilla and Tara are sharply divided between productive agricultural land and poor grazing country. The extensive stretch of cypress pine forest also indicates the presence of sandy, alkaline soil. Therefore, in terms of land productivity and stock-carrying capacity, the region is very poorly endowed. Considering both its climatic marginality and lower socio-economic status there is limited potential for the competition between CSG and agriculture. However, considering the emergence of the CSG conflict in the Tara subdivisions and health related concerns, CSG development would likely adversely impact the community of Tara.

The above discussion reveals that the community of Tara has a stable population while its neighbouring communities (such as Chinchilla and Dalby) have improved their socio-economic regional profile and are experiencing an increase in population growth. The challenge for the community of Tara has been primarily associated with drought stricken conditions and lack of other
economic opportunities to sustain the community’s socio-economic profile. This is precisely the reason, that the community leaders and business representatives are more than keen to welcome and experience CSG development in the Tara district. Because of the role that the Tara subdivisions have played as the frontline against the CSG development, many respondents from Tara town have accused anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ of threatening the economic future of the region.

We have now considered the geography of the CSG conflict in the Western Downs and found that environmental and demographic perspectives are not sufficient to explain the incidence of conflict. We now shift the discussion to explore the social aspects. The next three chapters aim to understand the social dynamics of the communities as an explanation as to why conflict emerged in the Tara subdivisions and not in the community of Chinchilla. The comparative study of Chinchilla and Tara offers a unique opportunity to compare not only distinct demographic and economic characteristics, as discussed in previous sections, but also distinct social realities intertwined with social identities.
To explain the dynamics of the conflict and relationship of each community with the CSG industry, I argue, the context must be understood based on two features: First, through observing social identities in the context; and, secondly, through grasping the concerns expressed about CSG project development by each identity. In doing so, this chapter will provide insight into the two main Agrarian-based identities within the context: Agrarians of Chinchilla and Tara (in both the township and as landholders). Chapter 6 will provide insight into the ‘Blockies’ of the Tara rural subdivisions. My key argument is that, for agriculturalists, the CSG issues are related to a collective Agrarian identity.

With regard to the CSG-related concerns, the literature surrounding the extractive industry and conflict in general, and currently available studies on the CSG conflict in the Western Downs, focus heavily on impacts related to the environment and competing interests between the agricultural and CSG industries (e.g., de Rijke, 2013 a, b; Kaye et al., 2012; McGregor et al., 2013; Miller, Van Megen & Buys, 2012). Through the comparison of Chinchilla and Tara, however, I will explain that despite the fact that those community members with an ‘Agrarian’ identity are exposed to social, psychological and environmental impacts, the level of conflict with CSG companies has been extremely low.

### 5.1 Chinchilla Town and Landholders

The unprecedented growth of the CSG industry is commonly argued to have placed the broader Darling Downs region and its traditional agricultural industry at risk. This is mainly because CSG and agriculture share the same geographies and have clashed over a variety of social, environmental and land usage-related issues (for a geographical representation of the land use contest between CSG and agriculture, see section 4.1). For instance, within the Darling Downs, CSG reserves are concentrated in those areas known for their highly productive soil, often referred to as fertile ‘black-soil plains’ (highly productive cropping lands for wheat, cotton, oil seeds, and chick peas). The fertile land around Dalby alone produces half the grain-fed cattle produced in the country. In addition, the communities of Oakey, Chinchilla, Condamine, Wandoan, and Roma have some of the richest soils in the region (Miller, van Megen & Buys, 2012).
Similarly, the agriculturalist community of Chinchilla weighs the CSG development in relation to the long-term sustainability of its traditional economy. The Agrarians are primarily concerned with the long-term impacts of CSG operations on the groundwater which determines the sustainability of the agricultural industry. The environmental concerns related to water include contamination, groundwater, surface water disposal and drawdown. However, despite serious controversies surrounding the issue of water, CSG development in the community of Chinchilla is proceeding without resistance. The real question for the small rural agricultural community is how to maintain a balance between the competing industries. It is certainly a challenge for Chinchilla to optimise the advantage of its burgeoning CSG industry without compromising its traditional regional economy, which is dependent upon agriculture. A lack of strategies and policies designed to protect the agricultural economy will result in a narrowing of the existing sustainable economic base of rural communities.

The long drought periods, diminishing financial returns, floods, and other climatic changes have made the agricultural industry vulnerable and reduced both the social and economic context of rural farming (McKenzie et al., 2013). Therefore, Chinchilla recognises the significance of the CSG industry as an important factor in diversifying the rural economies. One can argue that the economic benefits of CSG in the context of post-drought conditions, have somewhat muted the concerns of Agrarians. As a matter of fact, the industry emerged a time when farmers were suffering from post-drought conditions and resulting financial constraints, which is one of the key reasons industry still enjoys a different standing in Queensland, compared to that in New South Wales.

On a positive note, for many community members and landholders, it is encouraging to observe the drastic transformation from a small town to a busy regional centre serving the resource industry and many small communities. CSG has brought economic opportunities and diversified the rural economy. The streets of Chinchilla are now busy with CSG workers—commonly known as ‘glow worms’ (due to their high visibility clothing) and a younger population is now moving in, owing to the range of career opportunities now available, related to both the CSG industry and retail sector. Recent CSIRO research conducted by Fleming and Measham (2014) also indicate that many rural towns of the Surat and Bowen Basins are experiencing an influx of young people. In Chapter 4, I have described the case of Chinchilla, where a population decline was reversed owing to resource activities.

CSG development has offered an opportunity for the community of Chinchilla to improve community services, diversify and expand rural economy and sustain its population. The socio-economic transition of the traditional agricultural industry and rural lifestyle has become a great
concern, as the Agrarian identity is embedded in country’s complexion and agriculture has been their main avocation. For instance, during several interviews it was repeatedly mentioned that because of competition between these two industries, agriculturalists are finding it nearly impossible to compete in the labour force. Similarly, Fleming and Measham (2014) also reveal that many females have left the traditional agricultural and manufacturing industries and moved to CSG and mining-related employment. As a consequence, this socio-economic shift is making the local economy specialised rather than diversified, and restraining the availability of the workforce is one result. Similar issues have been identified by Hossain et al. (2013) regarding the impact of CSG development on the mental health of landholders and rural agricultural communities in South West Queensland, including Chinchilla.

Another important Agrarian concern is the issue of housing and its affordability. Respondents revealed that the community has experienced the flight of many individuals and families who were the backbone of the community, such as those involved in the retail, services, education, and health sectors. This has caused a negative shift in the community’s population, especially since many cannot afford to live in the community any longer. The gravity of the housing issue can be illustrated by the fact that it costs more than $1,000 a week to rent a two-bed room house in the region of Chinchilla and Miles. Similarly, during an informal conversation, a shop owner, who runs a small hardware business in Chinchilla, complained that every month the rent increases by $100 (Local resident of Chinchilla, personal communication, September 23, 2014).

5.1.1 CSG Industry and Government Responses to the Agrarian’s Concerns

Considering the simple fact that significant CSG development is overlapping with predominantly agricultural land, the community of Chinchilla is far more prone to the CSG impacts, and particularly the environmental impacts, when compared with Tara. These, and related concerns have received a concerted response by both government and industry. For instance, earlier in 2011, in response to the growing tension between the competing land usages, the Strategic Cropping Land Act (2011) was introduced and later passed in the Queensland Parliament in January 2012. The legislation was a response to the expanding resource industry and was intended to protect land and its productive capacity (Queensland Government, 2011; Swayne, 2012).

The Act was not limited to the CSG industry, but also aimed to regulate the resource industry overall, including open-cut mining, underground coal gasification, and urban and industrial development. The legislation restricts resource companies to undertake project activities in the areas which have been declared a ‘Strategic Cropping Land’ based on the soil quality, topography and
rainfall thus highly suitable for commercial agricultural activities. The main aims of the legislation were to ensure the protection of highly productive cropping land, to provide a degree of certainty to both the agriculturalists and the resource industry, and to achieve a balance to ensure sustainability of food security (e.g., Lawrence, Richards, & Lyons, 2013; Queensland Government, 2011; Dart, 2011Santos, 2012).

In addition, in October of 2013, the Darling Downs Regional Plan was developed by the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning to identify and categorise ‘Priority Agricultural Areas’ (PAAs). The draft proposed PAA coexistence criteria, with the aim of ensuring that any resource development project would not impact the viability of PAAs. The statutory regional plan was another step towards providing strategic directions for planning and development, and ensuring a balanced approach towards the coexistence.

However, various landholders in the Western Downs associated with the agricultural industry have reacted to the abovementioned Darling Downs Regional Plan, perceiving it as a threat to the future of the agricultural industry. For instance, the Basin Sustainability Alliance claims that vast areas of the productive land in the Western Downs have been excluded in the PAA classification and the group has referred to the categorisation as ‘open slather’ (“Darling Downs Plan May Place Farm Land,” 2013). The BSA believes that the definition of, or the criteria attached to, the term ‘coexistence’ is ill-defined in the draft and seems to involve forcing farmers to accommodate the resource industry on their land. For instance, although Wandoan’s economy predominantly revolves around cattle farming, the soil is considered as being highly suitable cropping (Hutton, 2013).

The establishment of an independent statutory body, Queensland’s GasFields Commission (GFCQ) in July 2013, and the CSG Engagement and Compliance Unit (formerly known as the CSG Enforcement Unit) are playing integral roles to bridge perspectives. Both work in partnership with the Department of Natural Resource and Mines (DNRM), the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (DSDIP), and the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP). Supplemented by legislative power, both the Commission and the Compliance Unit aims to promote proactive engagement, transparency between stakeholders, and an improved sustainable coexistence between the landholders and the CSG industry (Gasfields Commission Act, 2013 - Cahill, Liew, & Tickle, 2013). The onsite presence of the CSG Compliance Unit is responsible for the enforcement of laws and policies, and also the management of the CSG industry through resolving landholders’ complaints and disputes, site inspections, and other enforcement action (Queensland Government, 2013). However, the Compliance Unit’s capacity for dealing with such a
large-scale development is questionable, as it is currently operating with 38 staff members, while monitoring thousands of CSG wells (e.g., Moore, 2013).

5.1.2 The Use and Misuse of the Term ‘Coexistence’

It is very interesting to note that the Queensland experience with CSG industry has been used as an example for New South Wales landholders. For instance, APPEA and the Federal Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane have both repeatedly praised Queensland’s experience as being a success story; however, a number of issues are being overlooked. Promoting the case of Queensland, the CSG industry argues that other states should also take advantage of their promising CSG resources and learn from the sensible attitude adopted by the state of Queensland with regards to diversifying its regional economies. As evidence the industry cites benefits such as, jobs and revenues, and the more than 4,500 landholder agreements that are in Queensland to promote the existence of a social license and mutual coexistence. However, this purported notion of ‘social licence’ and ‘coexistence’ overlooks the clear power imbalance between the landholders and the industry. This power imbalance resides in the fact that the landholders have no right to refuse project development. Therefore, in such uneven power dynamics, the number of land access agreement in Queensland is not an unambiguous indicator of success.

From an agriculturalist perspective, ‘coexistence’ is the most significant issue in determining who wins and who loses. I argue that an understanding of CSG must not be limited to its broader socio-economic or environmental impacts, but that the social dynamic of coexistence should also be explored in regard to individual landholders hosting CSG infrastructure. In its report, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) also called for a greater understanding of the social dimensions of the resource industry (as cited in Solomon, Katz, & Lovel, 2008).

The meaning of ‘coexistence’, in terms of different land uses, (i.e., between prime agricultural land, irrigated land, livestock farming, and lifestyle rural residential areas) must be understood. Every type of land use or farming enterprise is unique and, therefore, requires specific attention. For instance, intensive livestock or organic farming is very different from grazing or conventional farming. de Rijke (2013) argues that coexistence, in the context of livestock farming, has proven to be effective so far. Similarly, it may be argued that CSG-treated water is an alternative source—‘the liquid gold’—for the communities in which underground water is saline in nature (for instance, in both Chinchilla and Tara), as a treated water supply may become beneficial for both livestock farming and other irrigation purposes (including crops and vegetable farming). To this end, in
October 2013, Deputy Premier Jeff Seeney welcomed a $1 billion investment in QGC’s Kenya Water Treatment Plant by the industry, and the company committed to supplying water to 20 landholders for irrigation purposes and also to the town of Chinchilla as a support to drinking water supply (Wells, 2013). At that time, the inauguration of the plant was widely promoted as a means to achieving coexistence and ‘working together towards a common objective’ by making the farms ‘drought-proof’. This also indicates the value of water for agricultural purposes, and not just as a CSG by-product.

The question of coexistence becomes especially controversial, however, when CSG development overlaps with prime agricultural land (Lawrence, Richards, & Lyons, 2013; Dart, 2011). Both the government and the CSG industry have been criticised by individual landholders and agriculturalist groups, such as the BSA and AgForce, for ignoring social and environmental impacts to land and threatening prime agricultural areas. The availability of water and good soil ensures the prosperity of the agricultural industry; however, the provision of approvals to the industry for the extraction of unlimited volumes of groundwater linked to the Great Artesian Basin (as a by-product), is certainly of concern to agriculturalists (Hutton, 2013). Similarly, the Vegetation Management Act of 1999 rigorously regulates the clearing of native vegetation on individuals’ properties. In a similar water exemption extended to the CSG industry, however, companies are permitted to clear the land in order to establish the required infrastructure.

In their report of 2012 (CAL, 2012), Cotton Australia recognised the positive role of the CSG industry in rural economies and also regional development; however, without proper regulation and enforcement, the industry may pose significant risks to the agricultural industry. During interviews, respondents repeatedly emphasised the importance of addressing agriculturalist issues and that the implications of a CSG rush could severe in terms of food production. Among Agrarians, there is also increasing dissatisfaction with the alteration of legislation and strategies that were originally put in place to protect agricultural land. These changes seem to favour the resource industry and undermine landholder rights; and, therefore, it is a key challenge to maintain the coexistence between these two competing industries.

5.1.3 What Went Wrong? The Stories behind the Seams

There has always been some form of resource-based activity in the Western Downs region; therefore, the community was not initially very concerned about the CSG project development. However, CSG late became a source of significant concern especially for those individual landholders who agreed to host CSG infrastructure on their properties. Soon after the launch of the
LTG movement, I observed various landholders in the community of Chinchilla who became the source of news headlines and demanded the protection of landholder rights to ensure a meaningful coexistence between the landholders and CSG. These individual Agrarian-based cases certainly offered real-life examples to the anti-CSG movement in highlighting CSG related impacts and insight into life near the gas fields. During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to interview the five landholders in the Chinchilla district who had been the source of headlines over the past few years.

During the interviews, these Chinchilla landholders repeatedly stated that during their initial encounter with the industry, the issue of water was of little concern. It was revealed that it was the issue of land rights, landholder relations, and compensation that concerned them. I view these issues as being part of the social dynamics of coexistence with the industry. In response to the ‘corporate attitude’, farmers started to research the subject and became aware of other impacts, such as the issue of water, water aquifer contamination, drawdown and its long-term impact on the Great Artesian Basin, impacts on the broader agricultural industry, farm life, and the business of breeding stock. The following revelation by a landholder, who manages 6,000 acres of land with 680 head of cattle, and who is also interacting with two CSG proponents, will establish the foundation for a detailed discussion to follow:

If you ask me the question, “was the concern with water?”, my answer is “no”. It was really the case of how they [CSG industry] were and are treating the landowners: walking over the top of, lacking respect for and disregarding the rights of the landowner. It was that attitude which caused people to look at the wider picture. And the issue of water wouldn’t have happened until people’s [water] bores started to drop, but, because of their attitude, people started to look at the other issues (‘Daniel’, personal interview, October 09, 2013).

Certainly, the landholders are compensated in different ways, depending upon the severity of activities and impacts (e.g., Swayne, 2012). However, my argument is not so much about the process of negotiation or compensation, but about the power imbalance between the landholders and CSG proponents, and how a failure to recognise landholder rights (both in legislation and onsite activities) led to grievances against the project development. This difference is crucial, since industry repeatedly misuses the term ‘coexistence’ by reflecting the number of access agreements attained and attempting to quantify the term based solely on economic indicators (both in terms of regional royalties and individual compensation). Based on the gathered data, there is overwhelming evidence in regard to the way companies treated landholders, disregarded the importance of land, and generally failed to develop a healthy company/landholder relationship.
In exploring the notion of coexistence and landholder relations in Chinchilla, the following section will explain and distinguish between different voices, concerns, and objectives of the Agrarian identity. This will not only serve to establish a comparison with the identity of the ‘Blockies’, but also to outline the dynamics of the anti-CSG movement, which will be discussed in Chapter 7. The insights provided stem from formal interviews, informal chats, and observations made during farm visits. The following section will demonstrate the social dynamic of coexistence and how an understanding of the land and an emphasis on direct company-landholder relations serve as important factors, irrespective of environmental impacts faced by the agricultural community. I have detailed four main themes: (i) land access agreements and the process of negotiation; (ii) company and landholder relations; (iii) lack of trust, and; (iv) a disregard for the land and the landholder. These emergent themes are significant in understanding the grievances of landholders and what led to the limited, but unholy, alliance between some farmers and environmentalists. Before I examine these themes in more detail, however, I would like to first provide an ethnographic perspective which will aid in understanding the tension between some landholders and the CSG proponents.

5.1.3.1 It is My Land and I Know it Better: An Ethnographic Account of Farm and CSG

Through formal interviews and observations during farm visits, I discovered what land really means to a farmer. I have learnt that both the industry and academic researchers who struggle to understand CSG-related concerns have ignored the sense of land attachment that exists among farmers: to them, their land is like part of their family. A landholder takes care of the land and its environment because it determines both their economic and social being. To a farmer, a disregard for their land value and environment reflects a lack of respect for the farmer and his or her family. In a recent study, Huth et al. (2014) described the “farmer’s perception of coexistence between agriculture and large scale coal seam gas development”, which resonates well with the discussion in this section. In the context of an individual farmer/landholder hosting CSG infrastructure (‘the unusual mixture of elements’) , the study reveals that a sense of land attachment and place identity is not properly considered by the industry (p. 20).

It was not surprising to find that the landholders know a lot about their land. A subject for concern, however, is how little the CSG industry’s representatives know or care about farms and their related activities. I was made aware that small actions are significant for the land and its operations. For instance, ‘gates’ and ‘fences’ are always critical to a farmer. Landholders observe what they refer to as a ‘golden rule’: “you must always leave the gate as you find it.” Gates are sometimes closed to segregate livestock, and, at other times, left open to allow the animals to gain access to water. Any
minor negligence not only potentially results in considerable economic loss, but also reflects an attitude of carelessness.

A farmer can detect whether or not someone has been to a particular paddock. When checking and feeding pigs or herding sheep, they can determine certain things by observing how much mud has settled on the animals’ feet. Feeling the wind and noticing its direction is enough to inform a farmer where their livestock are at any given time. Based on experience, the farmer knows that sheep walk against the wind, while cattle walk with the wind. Minor noise pollution may affect the hearing sensitivity required to locate sheep. Unusual traffic disturbance may upset the stock, and cattle do not eat grass covered with dust. Farmers do not want concrete in their paddocks, since it inhibits grass growth and disrupts water flow. They are aware of such factors due to their intimate knowledge of the land.

My visit to a farm where a crop was being grown on sloped land around two centrally-located CSG wells revealed an example of the CSG industry’s ignorance of farming operations. In this case, it was not even possible for the landholder to access the field. I was also informed about how farming in Chinchilla and Wandoan differs from that of other areas, owing to the rough-ridged land and particular soil type. Daily decisions related to the farm’s operations and land planning may change instantly, and not always in accordance with the original plan. For example, fire and inclement weather are difficult to predict, and a farmer needs to be able to relocate livestock instantly to avoid such perils.

Fieldwork revealed that a lack of onsite engagement with landholders may result in the oversight of apparently simple elements that are crucial to land operations. A landholder understands what happens to a tractor’s GPS capability, for instance, if there are a few wells drilled on their land, and when there is a road between those wells. Such well placement will make GPS viability impossible. In short, the question of what benefits the landholder has been widely ignored in the context of the CSG and landholder relationship. How can a landholder be expected to accept an industry’s plan for his or her property without an opportunity for input? How is coexistence to be achieved without the knowledge of fundamentals, such as the location of a cattle yard and its access points? What reaction should we expect from a landholder when CSG wells have been drilled on his main paddock, along with fences and multiple entrances, without his opportunity to input on the siting? Furthermore, a landholder may be forbidden from driving a tractor, car, or any other vehicle, over that paddock for the following 40 years, for fear of damage to the connecting pipes. In addition, any minor negligence in anchoring fences or compacting trenches may result in the loss of livestock and, consequently, significant economic loss. During an interview, a landholder alleged that, owing
to QGC’s negligence, he lost 26 head of cattle during a pipeline construction which took place in the summer of 2012.

My aim here is to demonstrate the importance of understanding the land and its associated activities in order to achieve coexistence. To maintain harmonious CSG company and landholder relations, there is no other solution than to embrace participatory engagement and communication. The CSG companies must not rely on those desktop studies and designed infrastructure which have been mapped away from the country without landholder inclusiveness and participation. The industry must recognise that its business is being imposed over an existing one and the companies have failed to learn how an existing business operates and activities are daily carried out on the farm.

5.1.3.2 Land Access, Agreement, and the Process of Negotiation

The initial interaction between landholders and CSG companies occurs when a landholder is approached with a view to conducting preliminary activities (for instance, land assessment and mapping land use, CSG activities, or test drills). These preliminary activities are carried out without any formal agreement between the landholder and the CSG proponent. Therefore, at this stage the landholder is not entitled to any compensation and will not be entitled until advanced activities commence. Preliminary activities are considered to have no, or only very minimal, impact on the existing land use.

However, as soon as a CSG company sets foot on land in order to perform advanced activities, a landholder is exposed to various socio-environmental impacts. The advanced activities require the landholder and company to be bound in a formal agreement, after negotiating terms and conditions. It is important to note here that the landholder is obligated to negotiate the agreement and to allow companies to perform any activities. In other words, the landholder cannot question the legality that compels him or her to allow the companies to be on their land. This is because the major CSG projects are linked to the LNG infrastructure (APLNG, QLNG, and QCLNG) and have already secured their approvals as an ‘Infrastructure Facility of State Significance’ (IFS) under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act (1ld) 1971. Put simply, the state has assigned power to the companies in order to acquire suitable land for project-related activities.

The Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 provides a statutory framework where an agreement must be reached within a minimum of 20 business days, regardless of the intensity of the CSG activities. If the landholder does not agree to the terms and conditions, an additional 20 days are provided by the companies as an ‘election notice’. In the case of there being a disagreement between the parties, the company is legally empowered and entitled to file the case in the Land
Court. And, after a period of 10 days since being filed in the court, the proponents are allowed to commence activities on the land they have selected. So, there is a total period of 50 days from the company’s introduction to the landholder to the commencement of project-related activities on the particular piece of private land. During the early 2000s, the ‘Land and Resources Tribunal’ had the power to make the final decision if a landholder was not satisfied with an agreement.

Ironically, the issue under the court’s consideration will not be whether a landholder can grant access to the CSG proponents but only the amount of compensation that should be received in terms of impacts. In brief, the CSG industry can commence operations and the landholder is powerless to refuse. However, the industry’s right, in terms of taking a non-compliant landholder to the Land Court, is infrequently exercised. This is largely owing to potential litigation and legal costs, as well as concerns about possible damage to the company’s public profile, should they lose the case (see also Hutton, 2013).

During interviews, landholders repeatedly reported that companies implied the inevitability of their proposed activities, as well as the landholder’s lack of a right to refuse these activities. Many respondents perceived this as being a threatening and deceptive means of intimidation. They were kept under the impression that, first, the landholders have no choice other than signing the agreements with the companies, and secondly, if they failed to come to an agreement the issue will be perused in land court and even if the case is in land court companies are entitled to commence their activities, as mentioned above. The landholders found this realisation of having no control over their lives or land highly stressful; and, for these people, the industry became a symbol of obnoxiousness. The following excerpt was taken from a letter that one of my respondents received from a CSG proponent, entitled Proposed Infrastructure for Your Land: “[…] If we are unable to reach a mutually acceptable access and compensation agreement, [the company] may, as a last resort, ask the Coordinator-General to acquire interests in land on behalf of [company] for the purpose of the project” (“Jayden”, personal interview, September 19, 2013).

A landholder feels more helpless when they notice both economic elites (CSG industry) and political elites on the same page, along with other regulatory authorities which form part of the CSG establishment. During a recent conference held by the Committee for Economic Development of Australia, the Minister for Industry, Ian Macfarlane, was quoted as saying, “In terms of gas reservations, read my lips: Over my dead body” (Mather, 2014). The minister’s statement clearly indicates that the industry has the full support of the state and federal governments, and that the issue is dominated by an economic agenda. With a strong emphasis on the meaning of land and the control an individual has of their property, another informant, “Gilbert”, described the power
imbalance. “Gilbert” hosts two test wells and ten Powerlink towers which pass his property near Chinchilla with 35 access points. He is deeply concerned about the current roles being played by the government and regulators which, in his view, only serve to protect the companies, while ignoring landholders. For instance, the *Land Acquisition Act 1967* (section 36) gives CSG proponents the right to intrude on an individual’s property in the name of strategic infrastructure. He continued his argument by giving a relevant example as a perspective of powerlessness: If an individual buys a car from a dishonest dealer he has the option of avoiding that dealer in the future. However, he explains, in the case of CSG, a landholder has no such option. He concluded that he feels powerless and that he has partially accepted the fact that if more companies approach him, he will be forced to sign the agreement.

They [CSG Company] don’t say, “Can we come in? Would you mind if we come in? Can we put a well here?” or “We are sorry our activities caused you trouble”. It’s just, “We are coming here and we will be putting wells here and there” (“Gilbert”, personal interview, September 22, 2013).

While individual landholders are entitled compensation depending on the extent of direct impacts of infrastructure, landholders do not receive remuneration for the significant time spent in negotiation. Unfortunately, neither the *Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004*, nor the CSG companies recognise the time and involvement of a landholder during the negotiation process, which also has social and psychological implications. Crucially, this results in an enormous cost that a landholder incurs because of an activity that they may reject, or have no right to reject, and where the project will only benefit the CSG companies. Therefore, for an individual landholder there are few incentives to form an agreement with a CSG company, particularly in light of the socio-economic or environmental impacts a landholder may experience. However, the steps taken by one CSG proponent (Origin) and Powerlink must be commended: a number of respondents revealed that Origin pays landholders around $200 per hour as recognition of time lost during negotiations and other related meetings.

### 5.1.3.3 Understanding Negotiation Fatigue

The only legal document I have ever signed is probably my legal marriage certificate and I regret it [laugh]. These people [CSG industry] come here and flash up many things: Sign here and sign there, do this does and do that (“Davis”, personal interview, August 08, 2013).
During my fieldwork, I became aware that traditional farmers are sometimes known as a ‘jack-of-all-trades’ since, in order to manage land, a farmer needs a variety of skills across many different areas, such as mechanics, veterinary science, soil assessment, and carpentry. However, farmers are not necessarily skilled in conducting negotiations with big resource companies, which requires advanced legal knowledge.

For a landholder, signing an agreement with the proponent results in fulltime engagement and, also, frustration. When a landholder begins to interact with a CSG company, they are sacrificing their time, which translates in to money in the context of farming. Time expenditure is not limited to arranging the agreement, but also occurs during the construction phase. This phase involves monitoring CSG activities to ensure that their business and land use is not being compromised and that there is no damage or loss arising from these activities, extra travelling to check gas wells and pipeline infrastructure, ensuring that gates have been shut properly, checking fences, and inspecting livestock for any signs of exposure to dangerous chemicals or other substances. This is time demanding; and, when a farmer is responsible for thousands of acres of land and livestock that may number in the hundreds, there is certainly no time to be wasted. In addition, it is a long-term management cost that a landholder has to face, as a contract has been signed where pipeline or gas wells may exist for the next 40 to 50 years.

Sometimes, a landholder has to deal with more than one CSG proponent and also other companies, simultaneously, which are linked with project development. For instance, for QGC pipeline construction, MCJV is the principal contractor and Powerlink provides necessary power-related infrastructure. Such interaction exposes a landholder to an enormous amount of emotional and psychological stress. For instance, during the fieldwork, I personally witnessed a situation between a farmer and his wife, where a farmer wanted to increase the compensation amount, on the advice of a lawyer. However, his wife’s exact words were, “No. I don’t want to listen to this [CSG] in the house, I’m sick of it. There was a time we used to talk about a lot of stuff but now all we talk about is gas and coal” (Local resident of Chinchilla, personal communication, August, 2013).

Similar sentiments were shared by other respondents. “Donald” from the Cambey region of Chinchilla (personal interview, September 22, 2013) and “Daniel” (personal interview, October 09, 2013) who also serves on the BSA board, explained to me, in great frustration, that there was a time when the Western Downs’ farmers enjoyed the luxury of thinking about how to improve livestock genetics, improve soil, the new equipment available on the market, pastures, ground cover, and moisture retention. Now, however, farmers have less time for these considerations, as they are coping with the enormous pressure of dealing with companies; and their confidence and motivation,
as landholders, are being eroded. Many are just waiting to see when their turn will come. An informant, who manages 1280 acres of property with 100 stud cattle and 100 commercial cattle, mentioned that he is seeing a therapist because of the industry, which is always on his mind and that this is something companies do not realise. A farmers’ life has become ‘Gas’ and they are now known by this moniker whenever they introduce themselves to someone anywhere. Another landholder, who is currently hosting both QGC and Origin infrastructure on his property, said that because of uninvited CSG companies at his property his personal life is being impacted. He now misses mentioning to his son how much he is proud of him taking care of the land.

5.1.3.4 CSG Companies and Landholder Relations

Well, they [CSG companies] shot themselves in the foot. They didn’t realise country is a completely different world (“Gilbert”, personal interview, September 22, 2013).

Initially, there were many small Australian companies involved in the exploration and production of CSG reserves in the region. A few respondents mentioned that during the early years of CSG activities in the Western Downs, the land access officers were aware of both local culture and the farmer’s mentality. However, with the passage of time, CSG became a promising resource in the global supply outlook and began to attract more buyers and international interest. Consequently, multinational companies started to engulf the smaller companies. For instance Pure Energy merged with QCC, and later, QGC became a part of BG Group in October, 2009. This is precisely when many respondents identified the problem regarding the failure of CSG companies-landholder relations; and they noted a distinct change in the way landholders were dealt with during the rush to secure land access agreements. According to the respondents, the new influx of land access or relation officers was mostly comprised of outsiders, who had very little information about the locale or the land. Interestingly, locals have assigned different names to the land access or liaison officers, remembering them as, variously, ‘junior agents’, ‘the shiny ones’, ‘talkies talkies’, ‘expert liars’, ‘the tensions’, ‘guys who have no clue’, ‘stock and station agents’, and ‘the cheaters’. In addition, a number of respondents complained that during the early 2000s, landholders had to deal with frequently changing faces of the land access or liaison officers and the challenge of starting discussions from scratch.

Respondents also observed that the involvement of international interests led to completely different terms of land access and compensation agreements. This suggested that the CSG companies either had no understanding of how the farming activities on the land are carried out, or that they did not
care. The companies’ chief objective was to secure maximum land access agreements in order to ensure maximum profit and gas supply. For many, the industry’s unprecedented growth was perceived as walking over the farmers in total disregard of their land.

During my fieldwork, I also discovered various individual cases in which the industry completely ignored the landholders’ grievances. This reflected the insincere attitude that the industry initially sometimes showed towards landholders. For instance, a small group of farmers near Columboola mentioned that they organised a meeting with the LNG Compliance Unit officials on November 30, 2012 and presented some concerns; however, the officials never reported back to the landholders. Similarly, another landholder from Hopeland, whom I interviewed, informed me that he wrote a letter on April 29, 2012 to the Compliance Unit regarding extensive land erosion associated with the QGC pipeline. However, the concerned landholder never heard back from the Compliance Unit (“Jayden”, personal interview, September 19, 2013).

Many respondents made it clear that they are not against the project development, *per se*. The corporate attitude became of prime concern to the landholders. For instance, QGC was widely amongst informants known for its negative corporate attitude when dealing with landholders. A commonly held belief is that if the industry had dealt with the landholders in an appropriate manner, discontent may have been avoided. The farmers’ eventual loss of faith and emergence of the LTG movement began to trouble the burgeoning industry. Unfortunately, instead of improving company-landholder relations at the ground level, the industry became preoccupied with a million-dollar PR campaign (especially QGC-BG Group).

I wish they [CSG companies] would have worked with the people. We were not after big money, as in the past there never had been any big compensation. It was just the attitude of companies... (they) walk over the landowner and will do whatever they like to them...the bluffers. The more CSG started to ramp up there were more cases of companies’ attitude towards the landholders. BG almost had the attitude that we are the colonial masters. And that’s what really started the landowner to resist (“Timothy”, personal interview, September 28, 2013).

Nevertheless, various respondents acknowledged that the industry has improved, but this took many years to achieve. During fieldwork, I had the opportunity to interview ‘Christine’, who is currently dealing with three different companies: QGC, Origin, and Powerlink. She manages 1,000 acres of land near Chinchilla with around 100 sheep and 150 head of cattle. She revealed her contrasting relationship with different companies she is engaged with in regards to CSG activities. Interestingly, she was confidently satisfied with both Origin and Powerlink in terms of landholder
relations, compensation, land usage, and the way they dealt with her concerns, overall. According to her, since her first interaction with the companies, her inclusiveness was ensured in every matter including the placement of CSG wells and the mapping of pipeline, access roads, fences and even working hours. She did not hesitate to add that both Origin and Powerlink are both welcome on her property and that she is happy to sign future agreements. She also mentioned another property she owns in Woodland in the Wandoan region, on which she also hosts nine CSG wells operated by Origin, and says that she has had no major concerns at all. However, her journey with QGC has been a complete different scenario and will be discussed in the following section. ‘Christine’ shared with me text correspondence between her and the companies Origin and Powerlink (see below). This gave me an understanding of how small gestures and actions can ensure minimum impact on the land, and also helps to sustain a good company-landholder relationship.

[Company Personnel] “Please remove any open gate signage on those gates now and I will get the signage updated for you.”

[Company Personnel] “Thanks ‘Christine’, I have left the gates open as you said. See you on Tuesday to sort out your accesses.”

[“Christine”] “I am shifting cattle now so please leave the gate open.”

[Company Personnel] “Not a worry.”

[Company Personnel] “Just to let you know there will be some new faces coming in. I will update you later.”

5.1.3.5 Lack of Trust

Now trusting CSG companies we call it bullshit […] it’s as rare as rocking horse shit (“Gilbert”, personal interview, September 22, 2013).

I was informed and also personally observed that country nature is to ‘believe’. If you come forward and say something, a farmer will believe you. Shaking hands is considered as an agreement, and a farmer takes your word as it is. In fact, Australia’s farmers have been ranked as among the most trusted individuals and professionals in the country and have maintained this trustworthiness over the last couple of decades (Locke, 2013). However, the burgeoning CSG industry in the Western Downs region has changed the conventions of rural business to which farmers were accustomed. Exhausting, complex, and untrustworthy engagement, particularly with the land access officers, turned their world upside down.
Landholders have an increasing distrust in the CSG industry and the trust deficit is so acute that it has constrained simple choices available to the landholder. A range of factors have led to this trust deficit between the landholders and the industry. However, based on my interviews and observations, I have identified certain perceptions which have become widespread and eroded the trust between individual landholders and the CSG companies. To some extent, the following discussion also parallels Williams and Walton’s (2013) study of social licence in the context of CSG development. For instance, they have placed an emphasis on “trust, openness, accessibility, and mutual respect” (p. 6) to attain a meaningful relationship with the communities.

During fieldwork, I was made aware by respondents that for hosting CSG infrastructure on a property, there is no standardised compensation rate and that it varies widely, for instance, with regards to the magnitude of compensation per well head per annum. It was revealed that most of the initial land access agreements were signed, offering compensation of around $250-260 per well head per annum; and an important matter to note is that these agreements were non-negotiable (Landholder from Chinchilla, personal communication, September, 2013). Some respondents said that, if a landholder compares this amount with both the land’s productivity (economic turnover) and the amount of money a well generates, the landholder becomes the loser. Above all, the land’s sustainability is always at stake, owing to the potential impact of groundwater.

By contrast, Sakmar (2011) presents a different picture of compensation agreements between landholders and companies in the United States, where landholders are entitled to negotiate up to US$25000 per acre, i.e., around 25% of the royalties from underground hydrocarbon resources (as cited in Swayne, 2012). Many landholders in Australia declined to sign agreements, however, as their awareness of these matters increased and upon their realisation that the compensation offered by the CSG companies was nominal, when considering the potential negative impact.

Of greater concern is the variation in compensation offered to different landholders (even often in the case of neighbouring landholders) and the confidentiality clauses attached to the agreements. I personally encountered two cases where one landholder hosting CSG wells on his property was receiving $260 per well head per annum in compensation (having signed the agreements during 2005-2007), while their immediate neighbour was receiving $8,000 to $10,000 per well head per annum. With regard to the latter point, until 2012 there was a ‘confidentiality’ clause in the land access agreement, stating that a landholder is legally bound not to disclose the amount of compensation they receive in return for hosting CSG infrastructure. Many respondents suspected that the clause was intended to be divisive. CSG companies now claim that the confidentiality
clause has been removed from the access agreements, yet many instances of its inclusion still exist. In light of this, “Dennis” believes that:

Industry and city folks don’t realise that we talk with each other and we always know what’s happening around. It’s not Brisbane... You can’t hide something and make a fool of someone for a long time … this is what country is (―Dennis‖, personal interview, August 31, 2013).

Another interviewee I spoke with about this subject was “Naomi”, who lives near Condamine with her family. “Naomi” was very well connected to the anti-CSG individuals and groups. I toured her property and listened to many legitimate concerns the family had raised about CSG wells and a reverse osmosis plant around one kilometre from their property. The family clearly stated that if they had been offered more satisfactory compensation (which they had expected to be approximately $10,000 per well head per annum), rather than being forced to sign an agreement for $250 per well head per year, they would never have opposed the industry (personal communication, October 13, 2013). In a related example, involving Xstrata’s proposed takeover of farms in Wandoan, farmers went to Land Court and received compensation of $13 million. This was double the amount the company had originally intended to pay, and the incident prompted the news headline “Win for Wandoan” (Rowling, 2013). Another case was that of “Christine” and “Donald” from Chinchilla, whom I interviewed, and their fight for better compensation regarding QGC’s pipeline and creek disaster. These both made news headlines and were later highly promoted by the anti-CSG movement across both social and print media. A landholder also advised me that it is not in a rural dweller’s nature to forget the past:

We learn from it. How can I forget they made me sign for a compensation of $265 [per well per annum] and the way they behaved, bluffed, and took advantage of me? (“Thomas”, personal interview, August 19, 2013).

The above-mentioned case of “Christine” and her strained relationship with CSG companies further aids in understanding the trust deficit between landholders and corporations. On December 27th, 2010 she signed an agreement with QGC regarding a 2.6 km pipeline which passes through her property. According to the agreement the construction phase was supposed to take place over three months; and, in compensation for land disruption, she was offered $26,000, which she happily accepted. However, when I interviewed “Christine” the pipeline was still under construction, due to unexplained delays in construction. She was about to mark her third Christmas still waiting for the
pipeline to be buried and with her land yet to be rehabilitated. This has caused her an enormous financial loss as, for the past three years she has been unable to run her property properly, or cultivate her land to ensure its financial viability. She believes that she has lost 50% of the land usage, as she was unable to access half of her property for more than a year. This therefore affected the potential income she may have generated from the land. After a two-year battle, “Christine” has been offered $7,000 in compensation for two and half years of land disruption. In conclusion, she states,

Now I will never ever sign a pipeline or any gas stuff through my place because of the experience I have had with QGC (“Christine”, personal interview, October 18, 2013).

The above revelation also points to the arguments I made earlier, in section 5.1.3(ii) regarding the individual’s negotiation skills and the availability of detailed information to make an informed decision. Overall, this issue has caused an acute trust deficit between the companies and the landholders and has created a sense of the latter having been exploited. This mounting ill-will, trust deficit, and sense of losing to giant gas companies gave landholders a reason to oppose the industry.

It may be argued that the rate of compensation depends on the current land use, its economic value, and the degree of potential impacts. Certainly, it is important to evaluate the economic value of the land, as well as competing interest with the CSG industry (for instance, in the case of agricultural productivity). However, the greater need to formulate a responsibly standardised rate of compensation per well per annum must not be ignored and should be distinct from other impacts considering the land and its productivity. A number of respondents believe that such standardisation would result in fairness and transparency and that it would address many grievances. A strong realisation of undervalued compensation has also been noticed by the CSG industry. For instance, in their statement, APPEA mentioned that it is important to separate individual compensation from royalties received by the state government on behalf of landholders (APPEA, 2012).

The industry’s initial behaviours described above were questionable and to some extent disturbed community cohesion. What industry did not realise was that the social being of agriculturalists is sustained on dispersed different pockets of small like-minded social groups. For example, I was made welcome in the small community of Cambey located just outside the Chinchilla town centre and attended various community gatherings and events. Here, around ten members of the community have formed a group called the Cambey Concerned Citizens Committee (CCCC). The group meets on a fortnightly basis, and its aims are to discuss issues surrounding CSG and mining, share information and experiences with each other, and support each other’s causes. It is groups like
these that provide an important source of information and knowledge sharing and a collective sense of identity and approach towards the industry.

5.1.3.6 Lack of Information

Companies treat us like mushrooms, feeding us little and keeping us in the dark (“Kylie”, personal interview, October 22, 2013).

A balanced negotiation is highly dependent on the available and full disclosure of information regarding CSG activity on a particular property. Research respondents who are currently hosting CSG infrastructure have admitted to initially having had little knowledge about CSG, legalities, and also their rights, particularly in regard to the land access agreements. Respondents believed that the industry took advantage of this ignorance. In addition, the initial impression that the industry gave to the landholders that they have no right to say NO to the proponents was later also perceived as complete misinformation – bluff and lie, as respondents explained - consequently this eroded trust (see also, Hutton, 2013). Certainly, the CSG companies have the real information and the true picture of long-term planned activities. However, the respondents repeatedly complained about the companies’ reluctance to reveal everything. The respondents mentioned that the industry is always reluctant to share relevant information crucial to the understanding of potential impact, such as: the intensity of CSG activities, the current status and potential impacts on water bores, vehicle numbers, noise pollution, hazard assessment, flood modelling, and soil studies. They claim that landholders have to discover such information themselves. Respondents also complained that it is even hard to get the answers to simple questions. For instance, little information is available regarding how long it will take for a company to construct a pipeline or gas wells? How many workers will be on the property and for how long? What is the lifeline of a pipeline or a gas well? How and when will the gas wells be decommissioned? And how will the land be restored or rehabilitated to its original condition? All a landholder knows is that the company is there to drill CSG wells. A respondent described that because a landholder is always kept in the dark, the CSG wells or related infrastructure can be thought of as a cancer: it starts with small and then spreads all over the body.

Oils Ain’t Oil, Pipe Ain’t Pipe

To further explain the issue of lack of information, or misinformation, in this section I will present two cases of CSG-LNG pipeline construction in which respondents from Chinchilla found themselves trapped after signing the agreements. Before I present these cases, it is important to
understand that the approval for both CSG wells and CSG-LNG pipelines undergo a rigorous process involving environmental approval studies and management plans. However, neither assessments nor management plans are site specific, so it is difficult to establish how a particular company will comply with environmental regulations on a particular property.

Both of the landholders in this case were approached by QGC during 2010 and 2011 and were informed of the company’s intention to construct a pipeline 1.25 to 2 meters underground. The respondents were under the impression that once the pipeline was put in place, it would have no effect on farming operations. The access agreements were signed with agreed compensation and the construction phase commenced. What the landholders failed to realise, however, is that the definition of ‘pipeline’ in the context of the CSG industry and in the ‘Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act’ is entirely different. After signing their agreements, both of the landholders were exposed to the real pipeline, which was in the process of being connected to the other operational compression stations, worker camps, and meter stations. The landholders are now aware that the proponent can erect a power pole, pumping station, or underground fibre cable network, and put an employee in place to monitor the equipment around the clock (for whom a house, complete with a kitchen, laundry, and bathroom may also be constructed). In addition, they later found that the 40 meter agreed and signed easement actually meant 46 meters (three additional on each side). Finally, when one of the landholders consulted a solicitor, he was informed that as he did sign for the pipeline, he was unable to revoke, or even renegotiate, the agreement based on terms and conditions.

In addition to the abovementioned cases, a few other respondents also described how problematic the process of dealing with the industry is. For instance, “Gilbert” refused to sign the agreement because the CSG proponent refused to remove the letter ‘s’ from pipeline(s) in the contract; he found that it made him feel uncertain as to what would be constructed on his property. An identical situation was shared by “Davis” after he was approached to sign an agreement regarding the construction of ‘Evaporation Pond and like facilities.’ (During the early 2000s, evaporation ponds were allowed to be built; however, they have recently been banned by the regulatory authorities). Similar to “Gilbert”, “Davis” also refused to sign any agreement for such ‘like facilities’ as the proponent had failed to explain exactly what that entailed. He was very satisfied that he did not sign the agreement, as it may have resulted in ever-expanding infrastructure and intrusion on his property without adequate compensation.

Such practices have resulted in an acute trust deficit between the some farmers and the CSG industry. When the industry did not pay due concerns to these issues, the grievances among the
landholders mounted. This naturally led to questions as to why the landholders were misled and not given the true picture of CSG and how they could trust the industry, based on their unpleasant experiences. The failure to establish harmonious CSG company-landholder relations and improve communication indicated that the industry was falling short of their promise to landholders, despite what was advised in the *Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act*.

5.1.3.7 A Disregard of Land and Landholder

Respondents widely believed that their concerns are so marginalised that if a landholder requests or suggests altering a minor CSG planned activity on their property, the answers invariably get lost in legal clauses of environment or work code practices. Even though landholders have recorded their complaints regarding different incidents of misconduct on their land, their issues have often been ignored. For instance, during an interview, a landholder recalled an experience when he was not informed that a company had excavated a three-foot deep hole on his property. He said that, he almost ran his bike into it and his cattle may have been injured too. He also claimed that CSG workers never understand the importance of gates and fences and that this is evidence of a total disregard of landholders. Owing to one worker’s negligence, a landholder complained that two bulls (worth $36,000) escaped that later suffered the effects of grain poisoning and ostosis, which needed to be treated twice. This all happened because of ignoring one simple but golden rule of the land: “if a gate is open keep it open, if it is closed leave it closed”. Landholders hosting CSG infrastructure now regularly carry cameras in order to record any misconduct.

The issue of widespread disregard of the landholder can be seen in another example that was shared by “Timothy”, a respondent who manages 9,630 acres of property near Chinchilla. “Timothy” explained that he was informed by the CSG company that a well would be drilled and anchored on a flat, levelled, and cleared main paddock. However, he refused to allow well placement on the site concerned, as he felt it would negatively affect the visual amenity and create an entrance hazard. According to “Timothy”, the company’s response to his refusal was simple, but irritating: “Alright, we can drill somewhere else” even after the company had previously insisted on the well’s original location (“Timothy”, personal interview, September 28, 2013). Another landholder informed me of his first encounter with QGC, in 2005, regarding drilling CSG wells on his 700 acre property near the Hopeland area of Chinchilla. He claims that he was simply informed based on a map prepared by the company, that there were pre-selected well sites which would not be altered. Like “Timothy”, he also refused to allow the company to place wells on their terms alone.
In a related example, a landholder informed me of an issue of frequent trespassing on his property, by workers from a CSG company who were conducting surveying activities in preparation for a pipeline construction. He reacted by reporting the incidents to the Chinchilla Police. However, police officials informed him that they would bring the issue to the attention of the company. The respondent considered this response to be a blatant insult and a show of disrespect of a landholder and their property. He expressed his feelings by saying, “What if I do something like that? It’s our land which we live for and you have to respect it and us, gentlemen” (“Kai”, personal interview, October 17, 2013).

Consequently, such resentments increased, and CSG proponents forced many landholders into choosing one of two options: approach the media or seek legal advice. The landholders exercised both options, and many stories made their way to the mainstream media. In some cases, an ‘unholy alliance’ with the LTG movement (environmentalists) was also observed, but this seemed to be taken as a last resort. The anti-CSG movement gave the landholders a voice when they were not being heard by the industry. This is exactly what happened in the cases of some landholders whom I personally interviewed in Chinchilla. The respondents’ struggle was not ideologically driven; but rather, their concerns were related to issues of compensation, land usage, respect, and landholder rights, as previous sections demonstrate. Individual landholders’ unheard grievances were used by the anti-CSG movement in order to serve its own agenda. The anti-CSG movement took these individual stories to the mainstream media, in an effort to expose the industry, highlight socio-economic and environmental impacts, and to demonstrate the way CSG companies are legally and politically protected.

5.2 Tara Town and Landholders

Despite living in a different climatic zone and hosting only marginal agricultural industry, the residents of Tara town and its surrounding agricultural properties share a number of similarities with the residents of Chinchilla, owing in part to their historical agricultural avocation, and social and familial ties resulting from sharing a border. In comparison to Chinchilla, the community of Tara has not yet been affected by project development, and has thus not yet been exposed to any significant socio-economic or environmental impact, positive or negative. The only two projects that lie in the vicinity of Tara district are Origin’s Ironbark project (a pilot project) for which the company aims to drill around 800 CSG wells, and QG’s CSG-LNG 14 kilometre pipeline, which passes through the Tara rural subdivisions (for details of CSG projects in Tara, see section 4.2). Therefore, this section will mainly comment on the perceptions of the Tara’s Agrarians and attempt
to understand their concerns related to CSG project development, and also their stance towards the emergence of conflict in the Tara rural subdivisions.

During interviews, it was interesting to note that the agriculturalists of Tara repeatedly compared their community with the neighbouring communities of Chinchilla, Dalby, and Miles, which have changed their outlooks and now experience economic development resulting from CSG development (such as jobs, improved infrastructure, and a diversified economic base). Historically, Tara mainly supported sheep and cattle farming, and limited wheat production. Tara is not a prime agricultural area and has no other strong alternative economic base. Considering this history (see section 4.2), among respondents there was a realisation that the already neglected community has been left behind in the race to develop CSG. For many landholders, however, CSG is a hopeful prospect for their socio-economically depressed community. One resident of Tara expressed his perception of CSG by saying:

Believe me, there was a time during the drought in the 1990s when people were struggling to feed themselves……and we had three years of drought and the sheep market was flat. So, yeah, CSG is certainly an advantage, especially its economic benefits (“William”, personal interview, August 16, 2013).

The contrasting perceptions held among agriculturalists of Chinchilla and Tara proved to be very interesting. For instance, in an interview, former Tara Shire councillor, “Gordon”, emphasised the much-needed economic benefits Tara may potentially gain from CSG development, both in terms of individual compensations and other broader benefits (“Gordon”, personal interview, August 27, 2013). Two other community heads and business owners whom I interviewed believe that the industry is on a neglected community’s door step and must be welcomed not only for the broader economic opportunities but also to make the properties drought proof. Considering the saline nature of Tara’s underground water, respondents believe that both the community and marginalised farming may benefit from reverse osmosis-treated water, especially for land irrigation.

Although not significant at this stage, business growth and local infrastructure improvement are nevertheless noticeable. For instance, during my stay in Tara I observed the movement of industry vehicles to and from the local shops that were busily serving the CSG workforce. A lady working at the local FoodWorks, whom I interviewed in the Tara Emergency Centre, informed me that the store’s opening hours had to be changed to 7:00 am-7:00 pm in order to accommodate the CSG workers who drive through the town during those times (Local resident of Tara, personal communication, August, 2013). In another related example, the owner of a local pub and Tara
Commercial Hotel informed me that the CSG boom in the region has increased his business significantly. He believes that half of his (and his staff’s) income depends on visiting subcontractors and CSG workers (“Oliver”, personal interview, September 14, 2013). Similarly, I was informed about a local QGC sub-contractor who has significantly contributed to the local economy by employing 160 staff members from the local community; and many of these workers come from the marginalised Tara subdivisions, or ‘Blocks.’ When asked his opinion of the CSG industry, one respondent gave this response:

We must welcome CSG industry and industry must come to the community. If not, we will be the loser, not them - it would be a catastrophe if they stopped (“Parker”, personal interview, August 19, 2013).

According to many respondents, the small town is on the verge of an economic crisis and there has always been a challenge to sustain the population and keep youth attached to the land, because of lack of economic and educational opportunities. A landholder informed me that both his 29-year-old son and 25-year-old daughter moved out of the town owing to the lack of job opportunities to ensure a secure future (local resident of Tara, personal communication, August 22, 2013). During an interview, Roslyn Wade, Coordinator of the Tara Neighbourhood Centre, also confided that her older son had to leave the town some years ago. For all of these community-attached residents, this experience has been like the tearing apart of a family unit. With the potential for CSG development in the region, there is a realisation among the Tara town residents that, irrespective of the bitter past, the community will not be able to offer their next generation economic opportunities, particularly in terms of jobs and skills-based education. Roslyn Wade’s son has now returned to the town, and when he bought a house in Tara, it was one of her happiest moments. Another of her sons also now works as a contractor with the CSG industry and commutes to Chinchilla every day.

There has been a significant increase in traffic in the region, resulting from CSG activities, and this has become of key concern to community members. Respondents also acknowledged, however, that the industry has significantly addressed the issue and that road conditions have noticeably improved. For instance, the road that connects Tara with Chinchilla has been significantly upgraded. I was also briefed that the industry has sponsored various building upgrades, such as the showground facility and community hall, and that it has funded both the local hospital and school (for details on CSG community contributions, see section 4.2.1). However, both the Tara Neighbourhood Centre and President of the Tara Family Support Committee, Mr Graham Muller, believe that event sponsorship and PR-targeted funding can only serve in the short term. They
believe that there is a greater need to work with the local council in order to elevate the socio-economic profile of the community.

Despite the abovementioned positive perceptions of the project development, similar to those held in Chinchilla, Tara’s residents and landholders are still concerned about the issue of housing availability and affordability. Although the community has always suffered from a housing shortage, the arrival of the industry has created further pressure. I was informed that before the CSG boom in the region, the average rental cost was $120-$150 per week. However, the same properties are now demanding $700-$750 per week. Considering the community’s weak economic base, meeting these skyrocketing rents has become impossible. Consequently, for some community members, such as teachers, nurses, and the elderly, there is no alternate but to leave town.

As observed in Chinchilla, competition for jobs has been another key concern raised by respondents. Two business owners in the town (the hardware shop owner and the local motel owner) informed me that local businesses now face the challenge of attracting and retaining staff, since an individual can earn more than $50 per hour working for the CSG companies or subcontractors, compared with what local businesses offer (a maximum hourly rate of $25). Local business owners also express a feeling of increased uncertainty about their town’s future, and wonder what will happen to the businesses which have been established on the back of the industry once the boom is over in the next 30-40 years.

Finally, it was interesting to note the narrative of Tara landholders in regard to the issue of groundwater and CSG impacts on the agricultural industry. Their solidarity with the agriculturalists of Chinchilla and others was evident during the interviews in which respondents warned the industry not to expand in the prime agricultural areas surrounding Dalby, Chinchilla, Cecil Plains, and Goondiwindi—the black soil. However, hosting CSG does not concern the respondents, since the Tara region is not a prime agricultural area, and is only suitable for hobby farming. The respondents repeatedly volunteered their community which can be considered as the ‘Yes In My Back Yard’ approach. One respondent shared his opinion as follows:

We are probably lucky that they [Origin] are on our worst productive country…The country was pretty good as a ‘wool ground’ but is not productive for anything else…..This [Tara] is a rubbish country which they [CSG industry] can put wells on…and so be away from those prime agricultural areas around the edge of Dalby and into Toowoomba (“Oliver”, personal interview, September 14, 2013).
However, these insights do not imply that respondents are not concerned about the other social impacts, particularly those regarding their rural lifestyle. For instance, respondents suggested that the industry should avoid project development in the rural residential Blocks because of small landholders (13 to 40 ha of properties) and population density. The preference would be that project developments take place outside the residential lifestyle Blocks area where there are thousands of acres of semi-grazing and unproductive land.

Similar to revelations made by Chinchilla’s residents, Tara’s respondents also felt that, initially, the CSG industry arrived with a negative corporate attitude and completely ignored the landholders. They also described the acute communication failure between the landholders and the CSG industry. During an interview with a community member, the corporate attitude of CSG companies was described:

> What they [CSG companies] did was sort of say, ‘we are coming and we will get all of your gas or your coal and then we will send it to Gladstone and then we will send it overseas’. They fluffed their feathers out and with very little consideration for the land owners (―Riley‖, personal interview, August 17, 2013).

However, the respondents acknowledged that over the years, the industry has learnt and improved significantly and that it has, to some extent, addressed the communication gap. There was a particular acknowledgement of Origin, which is at an early stage of environmental approval (for details about Origin’s Ironbark tenement, see section 4.2.1). The community heads who were interviewed frequently mentioned that the company keeps them informed and that it always responds to their concerns and issues. I was fortunate enough to interview the landholder who is hosting Origin’s pilot project on his land near Wieambilla Estate. The landholder, ―Oliver‖, is a well-connected community leader who manages 15,000 acres of land in the community, on which he has a cattle farm. With regard to Origin, he currently hosts around ten to twelve CSG wells, and has been engaged with the company since 2007. “Oliver” mentioned that he is receiving payments of $15,000 per well head per annum. While considering the soil composition, land productivity, and drought-stricken conditions, for him this compensation represents a positive outcome. In addition, he is satisfied with his relationship with the company, and feels confident about welcoming the industry to the community of Tara. However, in a similar sentiment to that expressed by the agriculturalists of Chinchilla, “Oliver” mentioned the need for standardised well compensation, as current variations have created a trust deficit between the landholders and the companies (―Oliver‖, personal interview, September 14, 2013). Another landholder informed me that she has lived in Tara since birth and has a good understanding of the area. In 2012, some test wells were drilled on...
her property and she did not experience any problems or issues with the company. She is satisfied that the industry is creating economic opportunities for the forgotten and neglected community of Tara.

5.2.1 Condamine Bubbling: A Reality or Myth?

In May, 2012 the issue of bubbling observed in the Condamine River received significant mainstream media attention (see for example, Heron, 2014). The issue was discovered west of Chinchilla, on the 30-40-metre-long patch along the Condamine River beside the Tara subdivisions. Anti-CSG individuals and the LTG movement accused the CSG industry of being responsible for this unnatural occurrence. Drew Hutton from LTG explicitly blamed CSG operations and declared the incident to be a consequence of dewatering and fracking. A video can also be found on YouTube (Hutton, 2012a) shot by Mr Dayne Pratzky (also known as “The Frackman” from the Tara subdivisions), in which Drew Hutton is showing the bubbling occurrence. It is alleged that, owing to CSG activities around the region and the resultant depressurisation of underground water, the gas is making its way to the surface through water bores and ground cracks (e.g., Hutton, 2013). However, the CSG industry denied any link between the bubbling and CSG activities and dismissed the news as misguided speculation about a natural occurrence.

During my fieldwork in Tara, I asked the residents of the Tara town about this incident, which was reported as being ‘unnatural’. Their narrative was very different and they were puzzled about what the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ and the LTG movement portrayed. My purpose here is not to disregard any claims made by the movement or the anti-CSG groups in the Tara subdivisions, but to highlight the Tara agriculturalists’ view and the link of their position as a ‘stigmatiser’. In a discussion in Chapter 8, I will explain how and why the stigmatiser denies claims made by the stigmatised and assumes an attitude of strong opposition. In brief, the appearance of Tara Agrarians in the inter-identity conflict became so important and grew so strong that their own legitimate concerns became incommensurate. Or, in other words, the stigmatisers’ view coincided with the CSG industry, which empowered them to dominate those anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ who were socially categorised as a threat to socio-cultural norms.

When asked about the issue of Condamine bubbling, I was informed by a number of landholders, particularly third-generation farmers, that water bores and the bubbling of the Condamine River is not an uncommon occurrence in the area and has always been a known fact. Respondents revealed that anyone who has grown up on the farms will report having been familiar with the water bubbling. Interestingly, there are many stories in the memories of Tara’s residents regarding this
occurrence. For instance, during my stay in Tara, I encountered an elderly woman with whom I shared a cup of coffee on the main (Day) street of Tara. She told me that bubbling has taken place here for a long time. She recalled that, 40 years ago, when she was in primary school, she remembers dried ‘spitting’ bores and kids lighting up the escaping methane. She further remembered going fishing and swimming in Undulla Creek and the Condamine River and that bubbling was always present. In her opinion, the videos and accusations of CSG-caused bubbling amounts to rumour, misinformation, and a politicising of the issue. She believes that this phenomenon is a natural occurrence as the trapped gas has nowhere else to escape, especially after recent floods which recharged the ground aquifers.

Similarly, “Pamela”, who moved to Tara during early 1980s, informed me that around seven years ago during the drought season, people used to source water from the bores and that witnessing gas leakage was an everyday experience (“Pamela”, personal interview, August 18, 2013). I also noticed some posts on the ‘Chinchilla Community Forum’ (a Facebook page) in which some community members shared information indicating that this bubbling has been occurring for the last couple of decades and that the industry must not be blamed for it. Also, around the Tara region, there are dead, scrubby areas which many people connect with natural gas leakage from the ground. For instance, if one drives from Montrose Road towards the Kogan-Condamine Road, for about 500 meters along the right-hand side, the entire bush is dead. A resident informed me that the area has been lifeless for the past 30 years, owing to methane gas leakage up through the ground. Similarly, “Robert” and “William” criticised the anti-CSG movement and the CSG concerned ‘Blockies’ to blame the industry for something which, in their opinion, is a natural occurrence. “Robert” states:

During the severe droughts 12 years ago on our property we used the bores. Those bores were around 600 - 700 meters deep and we had to bleed gas out to get the water. You turn the tap on and you get all that gas out and I remember my dad used to say ‘don’t light the bloody smoke out here or your arse will be blown off’, and that was way before CSG. Condamine River and Undulla Creek have both been bubbling for at least the last 60–70 years (“Robert”, personal interview, October 07, 2013).

“William” says:

This bubbling water in Condamine? Let me tell you I am a fisherman by profession. I have been fishing in that water and this bubbling was happening way before the CSG, I guess at least for the last thirty years. It’s not because of these boys [CSG industry], it’s a natural occurrence. I’m not sure what the exact cause is, but it’s certainly not CSG (“William”, personal interview, August 16, 2013).
6
THE ‘BLOCKIES’ IDENTITY: TARA RURAL SUBDIVISIONS

This chapter explores the role of geographical context in generating a stigmatised identity among residents of the Tara rural subdivisions in Queensland’s Western Downs. This chapter has two objectives: First, it seeks to understand how the Tara ‘Blockies’ existence in the middle of an agrarian region resulted in the assignation of a stigma that has marked them as different, and subsequently devalued their social status. The chapter explains that this distinction and category division of the normals, referring to Tara’s Agrarian residents, led to an antagonistic relationship that prevented successful socio-cultural assimilation. Using the case of Tara and its rural subdivisions, I demonstrate how an immoral place becomes disadvantaged, resulting in poor wellbeing, and how imposed labels threaten the self-esteem of its occupants. The chapter then illustrates how ‘Blockies’ were socially and geographically categorised, labelled, isolated, and discriminated against according to certain socio-cultural characteristics. Second, the chapter reframes the CSG conflict by examining the peculiarities of the politics of identities as to how a locally contentious identity cleavage between the Agrarians (see the previous chapter, particularly the Agrarians of Tara) and ‘Blockies’ influenced a conflict with the CSG industry. I argue that Tara’s social divisions provide an explanation for its apparent opposition to CSG developments. Tara’s geography, history, and community structure, which have led to the apparent social divisions between ‘Blockies’ and normals underpin the role in the emergent LTG Alliance, the national organisation campaigning against coal and gas developments. This chapter also seeks to analyse the anti-CSG Blockies’ concerns about CSG project development, and the distinct claims or understanding of CSG compared to the Agrarians of Chinchilla and Tara.

Before proceeding further, I briefly describe the role of the Tara subdivisions in the ongoing CSG conflict. This will help to reveal a causal argument that the CSG and community conflict is happening in a particular location and that anti-CSG activities are performed by a particular identity: the ‘Blockies’ of the Tara subdivisions.
6.1 The Tara Rural Subdivisions and the Island of Conflict

Since 2009, the rural lifestyle Blocks or rural subdivisions became the frontline against CSG development and turned into a symbol of the tense relationship between the communities and the industry. The Tara subdivision-based anti-CSG groups created a stir in the Western Downs with many individuals being accused of abusing, intimidating, and confronting the CSG workers and halting operations, and organising protests, blockades, and demonstrations. The localised conflict provided many headlines for the mainstream media. The conflict emerging with the industry was portrayed as a struggle against the direct impacts of CSG. However, the roots of the conflict will be argued to be intimately linked with the stigmatisation of the residents of the rural subdivisions by the Tara town folk and landholders.

6.1.1 Main Anti-CSG Incidents and Representation of the Subdivisions in Conflict: Connecting the Dots

Since beginning of this research, I have been monitoring the media and the coverage of the resistance against the CSG industry. During my fieldwork, my involvement with activists and anti-CSG groups in Tara revealed to me aspects of the problem that had been ignored or not commonly discussed up until this point. Below, I outline a specific pattern of anti-CSG activities and other related events in the Western Downs from 2010 until November 2013 (see Table 6.1). This table covers the majority of the protest events occurring in Queensland. The pattern reveals that the activities have occurred in a particular location around two kilometres from the Tara subdivisions at the Wieambilla Estate (see Map 6) and were organised by individuals from the subdivisions with the help of activist groups and individuals sourced from New South Wales. Analysing media accounts of the subdivisions associated with CSG conflict illustrates the ways Tara has been represented, though a full account of the media representation is beyond the scope of this research. Accounting for the anti-CSG activities will establish a causal argument regarding place and identity-based resistance. What follows outlines the anti-CSG protests and blockades organised by the Tara subdivision-based anti-CSG groups. Many of these incidents became news headlines and were disseminated widely around Australia.
Table 6.1: List of protests and blockades organised by anti-CSG groups in the Tara subdivisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No of protestors (as reported)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 10, 2010</td>
<td>Very first protest was organised and led by Drew Hutton against seismic testing in Tara.</td>
<td>QGC Kenya processing plant 25 km northwest of Chinchilla near the Tara rural subdivisions.</td>
<td>More than 20</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 19, 2010</td>
<td>Blockade was performed and protestors attempted to stop trucks from entering and leaving QGC site.</td>
<td>QGC Kenya processing plant 25 km northwest of Chinchilla near the Tara rural subdivisions.</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 16, 2011</td>
<td>A protest blockade was performed. A 70-year-old lady was arrested and charged for blocking a large bulldozer from entering QGC site.</td>
<td>QGC Kenya processing plant 25 km northwest of Chinchilla near the Tara rural subdivisions.</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td><a href="http://coalseamgasnews.org/qld/grandma-is-arrested-at-gas-protest/">http://coalseamgasnews.org/qld/grandma-is-arrested-at-gas-protest/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 3-4, 2011</td>
<td>A protest was organised against QGC’s pipeline construction spearheaded by Drew Hutton. Police were criticised over protest handling.</td>
<td>QGC Kenya processing plant 25 km northwest of Chinchilla near the Tara rural subdivisions.</td>
<td>More than 30</td>
<td><a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-04-05/police-criticised-over-csg-protest-handling/2629142">http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-04-05/police-criticised-over-csg-protest-handling/2629142</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 12, 2011</td>
<td>A protest was organised against QGC’s pipeline construction. Bob Irwin was arrested and charged with breaching Petroleum and Gas Act.</td>
<td>QGC Kenya processing plant 25 km northwest of Chinchilla near the Tara rural subdivisions.</td>
<td>More than 30</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sixdegrees.org.au/content/bob-irwin-arrested-tara-blockade">http://www.sixdegrees.org.au/content/bob-irwin-arrested-tara-blockade</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Related Links</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1 – 5, 2011</td>
<td>A protest campaign, the ‘Tara Showground’, was launched against QGC’s pipeline construction. Blockades were performed and on May 4th and protestors held up QGC’s work for around three hours.</td>
<td>QGC Kenya processing plant 25 km northwest of Chinchilla near the Tara rural subdivisions. Near Wieambilla road and Kogan-Condamine Road.</td>
<td>More than 30</td>
<td><a href="http://coalseamgasnews.org/qld/people-blockade-day-51lock-the-gate-festival/">http://coalseamgasnews.org/qld/people-blockade-day-51lock-the-gate-festival/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 11, 2011</td>
<td>The Tara coal seam gas protest visits Ipswich.</td>
<td>Ipswich</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 20 – 25, 2013</td>
<td>Six-day campaign, the ‘Tara Surge’, was launched against CSG development in Tara while targeting QGC.</td>
<td>Around Wieambilla road; Van Renan’s Road ‘Kogan-Condamine Road.</td>
<td>More than 30</td>
<td><a href="http://aidanricketts.com/tara-surge/">http://aidanricketts.com/tara-surge/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| May 24, 2013    | - Numbers of ‘rolling’ blockades (hit and run) were performed by Stop CSG. - Three fired shots were reported. - Protestors attempted to stop CSG worker to leave the accommodation camp.                                         | Around Wieambilla road; Van Renan’s Road ‘Kogan-Condamine Road.  
| May 30, 2013    | Protestors attempted to stop FIFO – DIDO bus and to leave accommodation camp near Kenya gas field.                                                                                                             | Near Van Renan’s Road.            | More than 10 | Personal participation and observation                                                       |
| July 11, 2013   | Blockade near QGC site  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 15, 2013</td>
<td>The Stop CSG Party announced Brian Monk from the Tara subdivisions as a candidate for senate election and to lead the party in Qld.</td>
<td>The Tara rural subdivisions, Qld.</td>
<td>___</td>
<td><a href="http://www.stopcsgparty.org.au/press_releases#sthash.yiw9IkKJ.dpuf">http://www.stopcsgparty.org.au/press_releases#sthash.yiw9IkKJ.dpuf</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Others**

**The Frackman:** Mr Dayne Pratzky, commonly known as 'The Frackman', is a resident of the Tara rural subdivisions. He has been actively involved with the national anti-CSG movement and has been the subject of several documentaries (including 'The Frackman Movie') and interviewed on radio and televisions.

**Stop CSG Party:** Mr Brian Monks, who contested the Australian senate election, is also a resident of the Tara rural subdivisions. He has been actively involved in the LTG movement and has been point of interest of many documentaries and videos. He himself maintains a YouTube channel highlighting CSG impacts including health, gas leakage, and the US shale based experience.

**Ms Debbie Orr:** A mother of six living in the Tara subdivisions have been was the first one to raise the health concerns related to the CSG industry. She with her family appeared in several videos, newspapers, documentaries etc. She was recently paid a visit by PM Tony Abbott in Tara.

**Aussies against Fracking:** A celebrity based group was launched in the Tara subdivisions. Active members include: Doc Neeson, Bob Brown, Ash Grunwald, Pete Murray, John Butler, Xavier Rudd, Marcia Hines, Troy Cassar-Daly, Leo Sayer, Alan Jones, and a few more.
Map 4.6: Tara Rural Subdivisions/Estate Map

Map shows the rural subdivisions area demarcated as ‘Estates’ bordering Chinchilla. There are 21 Estates located on the outskirts of Tara town (estimated population 3,000). The anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ were the residents of ‘Golden Downs Estate’ and ‘Wieambilla Estate’. During 2009–2013, the anti-CSG protests and blockades were performed near QGC Kenya Gasfield bordering with Wieambilla Estate.
Map 4.7: Property boundaries: the map shows the division of around 2,100 rural subdivisions (‘Blocks’) in Tara and major unsealed roads. Each Block has an area of 13-40 ha.
In the following sections, the data presented were collected from observations and interviews. Various questions were asked about life in the subdivisions, the label of ‘Blockie’, what it is like to live in the subdivisions, how the subdivisions’ settlement was perceived by the host community of Tara, how Agrarians positioned themselves in the debate on CSG, and what the role of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ was in the broader anti-CSG movement. It is important to note that the data collected in Tara and its rural subdivisions focused broadly on understanding the emergence of CSG conflict in the Tara subdivisions, not specifically on revealing instances of stigma.

Tara’s historical background indicates that the district has long been considered a marginal place, based on its marginal agricultural success given the harsh climatic and environmental conditions. More importantly, the case of the Tara subdivisions provides a firsthand account of the residents’ long struggle with stigma and its interplay with CSG conflict from late 2009. The successful integration of the newly arrived settlers into the subdivisions was, therefore, perhaps destined to fail from its inception. Results from the semi-structured interviews with residents from the subdivisions suggest that they experience structural, social, and geographical elements of stigma. To this end, three main themes emerged: (a) the Tara subdivisions are a stigmatising setting; (b) the stigma is applied to the ‘Blockies’, and (c) details of the socio-cultural aspects of stigma and the process of stigmatisation. The following section will discuss the first two of these themes. This will be followed by details of the Blockies’ experiences with the four interrelated components of stigma offered by Link and Phelan (2001): separation (us from them), labelling, discrimination, and loss of status. I also explore attempts at closing the rift between Tara’s Agrarians and the ‘Blockies’. Lastly, the stigmatised context of the Tara subdivisions will be framed within the context of the CSG conflict.

6.2 Place, Identity, and Stigma: A Case of Tara and Stigmatised Identity of ‘Blockies’

Section 4.2 provided a history of the subdivisions and the economic and social decline of the community of Tara and its rural life. During interviews, the residents of Tara accepted and expressed a negative community image. Many referred to Tara, unprompted, as ‘prickly pear’, ‘scrubby’, ‘rubbish country’, ‘wattle infested’, and ‘marginal land’. This negative image of Tara and its rural community related to its demography, marginalised agricultural land, and historic catastrophic prickly pear infestation, was confirmed by those living outside the community in Chinchilla, Miles, and Wandoan.
Unfortunately, Tara’s challenge did not end with its marginal position in the agricultural industry. It was further compounded by the settlements in the Tara rural subdivisions or the ‘lifestyle’ Blocks. The housing in the Tara subdivisions is associated with high levels of unemployment, poverty, and other social diseases (see also Section 4.3). When considering the subdivisions’ settlement, there is no doubt that the negative socio-cultural aspects are the source of the opinions of outsiders about the Tara region. As detailed below, two occurrences are important to recognise here as leading to the stigma: (1) the establishment of the Tara rural subdivisions and, (2) the influx of ‘outsiders.

6.2.1 The Tara Rural Subdivisions as a Stigmatising Setting

The Tara subdivisions were developed in the early 1980s by Washington Development. Tara town was retained as the centre for commerce, communication, and services for the population. Currently, there are more than 2,100 Blocks with an estimated population of around 3,000 residents, located on the outskirts of Tara town. Initially, the land was offered very cheaply. During interviews, many residents revealed that citizens could acquire a 30 or 40 hectare property with just $100 to $200 to be paid up front. In addition, no local council or government authority monitored or enforced regulations. Therefore, these Blocks were sold without any infrastructure, such as power, roads, sanitation, water supply, or other utilities. In fact, many Blocks which are currently available for sale still have no basic facilities necessary to maintain a reasonable living standard.

During my fieldwork in the Tara subdivisions, I visited many Blocks and most of them can be broadly described as tightly packed with dense foliage beside unsealed, dusty roads. Many residents use broken microwaves or deep freezers for a letterbox. Small shack-like residences were common with unpainted tin roofs, wooden walls with worn paint, portable water tanks and toilets, with no lawns or gardens. Their grounds seemed to be mostly littered with tires, mattresses, scrap metal, broken refrigerators, wrecked car bodies, and extraneous rubbish. They were generally surrounded by bushland littered with empty beer cans. Several people interviewed placed much of the blame for the stigma attached to the subdivisions on the way they were developed and sold without basic infrastructure and facilities. “Bob” recounts his experience of buying a subdivision in 1981:

When we moved up here, it was all bush. There was no power, no roads, no sanitation, almost nothing really. Once in a Brisbane newspaper, we were portrayed as those ‘living in humpies’ and it was right, to some extent. But as we moved along we tried to improve our properties and the area. In the beginning kids were learning at home as we had no schools and no school bus for the kids. In the early days we had to walk for miles. This road [Tara-Chinchilla] was one lane and was just a track (personal interview, August 05, 2013).
Similarly, according to “Wayne”:

After we went through the residential Blocks, the council really fell down on the game plan; it was open slaughter when Washington Development opened the Blocks for sale without any basic infrastructure in place. The people who came didn’t have a lot of money. Some of them screwed up pretty badly. In fact people had no money and the council had more burdens to bear (personal interview, August 12, 2013).

Yet, respondents perceived themselves as part of a small, harmonious, supportive community. One of the local community groups, the Tara Futures Group, is working diligently to improve the negative image of the rural community. For instance, during my fieldwork, the community hosted the Tara Festival of Culture and Camel Races with around 10,000 people from around Australia in attendance. One member of the Tara Futures Group believes that he personally experienced how this festival is highlighting the “true colours” of Tara and thus is changing its negative perception:

Tara is a fantastic country town and we do realise that the community could be stronger, but it’s a good community. We have good agricultural, cultural, and camel shows and we’ve got two great schools, and a community care centre….and for a small town like Tara it’s great. We have a low crime rate, our kids are safe, they are not going to be mugged, and it’s a beautiful country town (“George”, personal interview, September 08, 2013).

This brief introduction to Tara indicates that the district has long been considered a marginal place, based on its minimal agricultural success given the harsh climatic and environmental conditions. The successful integration of the newly arrived settlers into the subdivisions was therefore perhaps destined to fail from its inception. Results from the semi-structured interviews with residents from the subdivisions suggest that they experience structural, social, and geographical elements of stigma.

6.2.2 Influx of ‘Outsiders’: Identity Construction of ‘Blockies’

The discussion so far has focused on how the Tara subdivisions are stigmatised through the historical and socio-economic predicament and how this stigma is perceived by the residents as well as the neighbouring communities. However, analysis highlighted another dimension of stigma in the context. This research found that the stigma associated with Tara was applied not only by the broader Western Down’s communities but also within Tara itself. There, the stigma tended to be associated with those who live in the subdivisions. Since the 1980s, when they were established, the settlement was perceived by the dominant residents of Tara town and Chinchilla as a threat to socio-
cultural values of the agricultural community. All those individuals who settled in the Blocks were labelled as ‘Blockies’. One resident of Tara town commented: ‘Blockies’ are backward, whinging, uncivilised, and a bit grubby, with a baggage full of social diseases like violence, drugs, and gambling” (“Peter”, personal interview, September 17, 2013). The term is not only used to communicate negative attributes ascribed to the residents of the subdivisions, but also to differentiate the ‘Agrarians’ (normals) from the ‘Blockies’.

Compared to the Agrarians of Chinchilla and Tara, the ‘Blockies’ were considered to be stigmatised, ‘outsiders’, ‘brought in’, ‘not locals’, ‘misfits’, and a wholly different sub-culture within the Western Downs. The Blockies’ identity did not share any socio-economic or cultural similarities that could connect them with the Agrarians. This research observed frequent concerns about the influx of ‘Blockies’ into the agriculturalist community. The stigmatising label of ‘Blockie’ was commonly used by the Tara Agrarians when referring to the settlement. For instance, two respondents explained the justification behind the labelling and social categorisation of ‘Blockies’ based on their negative attributes:

The perception of the ‘Blockies’ has always been as dole bludgers\(^2\) and druggies. Another fact is that a lot of them came here for the cheap land to establish themselves and started off from a caravan. These were the people who found it impossible to live in the city. […] These people hiding in the bush, who knows what they are doing? But certainly it gave Tara a bad name (“Luke”, personal interview, September 12, 2013).

Yes, we had a lot of undesirable people coming in here because it was an easy way to get the Block in place, no matter if you’ve got money or not. Many came here, grew their dope and when they got a little bit of heat they moved on. […] These [‘Blockies’] were the people who couldn’t make their living down in the city, financially or whatever, but they brought their culture from the city out here in Tara. […] it’s not like they can’t afford to live reasonably off the ground, but they chose to live in shanties, they chose to buy alcohol, they chose to get drunk, they chose to get drugs, and more than above the average are doing the same thing. […] They have no concept of how to handle money, how to live, produce, and arrange food for family […] It must be what they have been like in the city. I guess I don’t know (“Patrick”, personal interview, August 19, 2013).

However, this generalised classification of ‘Blockies’, which was used to label all those living in the subdivisions, was contested by a few respondents who described them differently. They claimed

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\(^2\) The term ‘dole bludger’ refers to someone who not only receives unemployment benefits but also exploits the system unjustifiably and has no intention of seeking any employment.
that there is a different class of people settled in the subdivisions who can be classified as retirees, lifestyle or ‘tree changers’, ex-veterans, and those whom country life suits because they have health issues. Yet, respondents generally believed that despite their social class, those who had settled in the Blocks found it difficult to remove the negative image of ‘Blocks’ and ‘Blockies’ from the minds of those who observed them. One respondent remarked that, “Certainly, there are still a few bad guys out there, but there are a lot of decent people who are struggling to keep up their lives. We have self-funded retirees who have established decent homes, so you’d better not put everyone in the same basket” (“Tony”, personal interview, August 27, 2013).

Some attempts have been made at destigmatisation, particularly when the local council itself realised how the connotation of ‘Blockies’ affected the image of the community. Nevertheless, even though the council and other community heads responded by attempting to replace the term with ‘hamlets’, ‘Blockies’ was too deeply engrained in the minds of the community and the attempt proved futile. “[The] past is present in a variety of ways” (Massey, 1995, p. 186) and “the present also […] engages with the past” (Kemp, 2011, p. 6). One resident of the Tara subdivisions exhibited discomfort with the term and expressed his concerns by saying, “Well, it’s a verbal intimidation if someone calls me a ‘Blockie’. Here it simply means you are a ‘troublemaker’. I even get upset when I read ‘Blockie, Blockie, Blockie’ in the newspaper. How stupid they [the journalists] are” (“Tony”, personal interview, August 27, 2013).

Further to the above negative attitude towards the ‘Blockies’, my visit to two particular properties changed my own perceptions. Their properties—one on Timothy Road along the main Chinchilla-Tara Road and Gazzack Road, and one on Humbug Road, quite close to Origin’s Ironbark tenement — were undoubtedly the most attractive and well-kept properties, not only within the subdivisions, but in the overall Tara district. Therefore, to conceive of ‘Blockies’ as a homogeneous group characterised by negative socio-cultural and economic attributes would be empirically flawed. Yet the term ‘Blockies’ constructs these diverse groups of people as a singular, stigmatised identity.

Many respondents from the subdivisions admitted two challenges: first, living in what is regarded as a stigmatising place has exposed them to a confronting situation; and, second, the subdivisions being seen as subordinate to Tara townies has circumscribed and dominated their lives. Their identity as ‘Blockies’ has made many stigma management strategies necessary (e.g., Goffman, 1963), for instance, to keep the stigma secret from others. There is a common desire amongst the ‘Blockies’ to present themselves as normal, especially during social interaction. One resident expressed a fear of the stigma and his reaction because of the association with the stigmatising context when in a Brisbane hospital:
I remember when I was in hospital in Brisbane, I was ashamed to tell the staff that I came from Tara because people then say, ‘Shit, you are from Tara’. And this is what I felt for 30 years. You can’t even say ‘I come from Tara’. One time, I used to say, I live halfway between Chinchilla and Tara because I never wanted to associate myself with the Tara region. I was always afraid of the reaction, ‘Oh you people from Tara are the ‘Blockies’, you live in tents and cabins’ (“Bob”, personal interview, August 05, 2013).

6.2.3 Socio-cultural Characteristics or Stigma in the Tara Subdivisions

Several incidences of stigmatisation were reported by the respondents and also observed during my intensive field research. This revealed that the notion of stigma ran across all three components within the context as argued by Link and Phelan (2001). The first two: labelling and separation between us and them has been discussed in the above sections. Here, we will observe the third component: the discrimination resulting from stigmatisation. However, I must first describe another theme that is related to discrimination and stigmatisation: the interpersonal relations between the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ and the Tara Agrarians. This theme will also help to frame the relationship between ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups and the Agrarian groups of Tara and Chinchilla, as will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Interpersonal relations in this thesis refer to the stigma experienced by the individuals in the context of social relationships and interaction with the normals. It was revealed during the interviews that the Tara community seldom witnessed any integration of ‘Blockies’ either with the broader community or with the neighbouring community of Chinchilla. There were many instances described by the Tara Agrarians concerning disintegration of ‘Blockies’ in community groups, sporting activities, church services, or other voluntary pursuits, such as the fire brigade and emergency services, which are necessary to run the community. Importantly, during the conversations, I observed that the rejection and isolation of ‘Blockies’ has been internalised and consolidated over time. The following two texts provide insight into the poor integration of ‘Blockies’ with the community and also the internalisation of stigma:

They [‘Blockies’] are probably only connected with their neighbours, but as a part of wider community we don’t find them being involved in community groups or activities. Most of them bring their children to school and take them off, but they are not involved in any kind of voluntary based activities which are necessary to run a rural community. If they are coming to the town they are coming here to get what they can get out of the town, not putting back into the community itself (“David”, personal interview, August 05, 2013).
Importantly, during the conversations, it appeared that the rejection and isolation of ‘Blockies’ has been internalised and solidified over a long period of time:

Now, over 30 years, they have accepted the fact that they are ‘Blockies’, as we have. They never ever tried to tie with the community, trying to get as much welfare as they can and means to break the rules a little bit. But they won’t build a house (‘Alf’, personal interview, August 24, 2013).

It is clearly evident that Tara’s Agrarians contributed to the separation of the ‘Blockies’ from their own kind. Being labelled as druggies, grubby, dole bludgers, alcoholics, criminal offenders, homeless, or disabled is a means of stigmatising difference, which is used to justify social exclusion. Furthermore, the reputation of Tara’s stigmatised ‘Blockies’ has spread beyond the immediate district. A recent feature article in the state newspaper, The Courier-Mail, described Tara as: “A town full of misfits. For many, the scrappy bush blocks outside ChinchILLA are a sanctuary, an escape from a world they’ve moved on from… dysfunctional deliverance country” (McCarthy 2014). In this excerpt, we can observe the conflation of the terms ‘scrappy’ and ‘misfits’ to lead to labelling this place as ‘dysfunctional deliverance country’.

Respondents from the Tara subdivisions were well aware of these stereotypes as seen in the intense marginalisation and isolation by the Tara Agrarians, as acknowledged by most respondents from the subdivisions. However, it needs to be recognised that being called a ‘Blockie’ can also imply dependence on social security or the dole, support for disabled children, or assistance with personal health issues. Coupled with social exclusion imposed by the Tara Agrarians, it is difficult for ‘Blockies’ to find the time and energy to engage with others (the normals). Therefore, they usually find themselves in the isolated world of the Blocks. A respondent explained his feelings about self-rejection, social exclusion, and devaluation by the Tara town residents in particular, and by agriculturalists of the Western Downs in general:

We [‘Blockies’] are considered as ‘Negroes’ of Western Downs. […] They [Tara town dwellers] are the ones who avoid us. They have a fear of us and our reaction to their fear is aggressiveness. They have always been suspicious about the people who are living here in the Blocks. And we are the outsiders as we were not born here, remember? (“Michael”, personal interview, August 05, 2013).

Not only does being from the Blocks result in stigmatisation, but also, as one participant suggested, Agrarians could be easily distinguished from ‘Blockies’ by their physical appearance, which visibly signifies negative socio-cultural attributes associated with their character or identity. For example:
I can tell you who is who. Country blokes are not hard to identify; they are different. You can tell who has lost their pride. [...] Many of them ['Blockies'] are in dirty, untidy clothes and are in need of a proper shower. Few are so excited when buying septic toilets. [...] I think it’s the way place claims the people (“Blake”, personal interview, October 12, 2013).

Self-improvement — also emerging from the interviewee was how few residents of the subdivisions attempted to destigmatise, manage, or combat the stigma associated with their identity. They strove to improve the interpersonal relations between the Tara town people and the residents of the subdivisions with their negative image, as well as improving their living and hygiene conditions. For instance, a resident of the subdivision explained that, during the early days of establishment, it became important for residents of the subdivisions to take responsibility for changing those attributes which led to the stigma of their identity. Such self-actions, self-motivation or self-help demonstrates that people labelled as ‘Blockies’ were aware of being negatively perceived.

I was informed by a family residing in the subdivision since the 1980s that they had worked very hard to build the Wieambilla Country Club, where the new settlers could come together, learn to survive, share their problems, and help each other. Additionally, the respondents explained that they were aware that many families who settled in the Blocks needed intense social support to assimilate into the broader community. The club attempted to address the issues of drug use, heavy reliance on social security, poor money management, personal hygiene, and living conditions. Once a week, the club organised classes to educate people about how to cook healthy food. One resident stated, “We wanted to change their lifestyle from takers to givers. We still have to change their lifestyle” (“Patrick”, personal interview, August 19, 2013).

Another resident of the Blocks, a retired building inspector who had moved into the Tara subdivisions during the early 1980s, recalled his volunteer involvement to help many other families to build their homes. He described his experience with his own socially categorised identity:

People shifting out here were and are different and are not used to doing work like cutting wood and making sure their roof is put up. They were too bloody lazy, didn’t want to do anything. They had no concept of house renovation or hygiene in their dictionary. I helped many families as I know the construction business. [...] We all know that there is no way we can build our fortune out here, but one must do the work. For many it was like all of a sudden they realised, ‘Oh shit, we don’t have water. How are we gonna get the water?’ A time came when I became sick and tired of helping those who were just sitting and watching (“William”, personal interview, August 16, 2013).
Stigma, however, reaches beyond the realm of interpersonal relations. Many respondents from both Tara town and the subdivisions also reported discrimination, which is an integral component of the stigmatisation process. During an interview, a community head from Tara town himself admitted that:

“When I first came here to Tara, I heard stories of people out in the Blocks trying to get jobs at the council, and that the council said, ‘We do not want Blockies’. It was just like they don’t belong in here. This is how it was and I can see we have given them every reason to be disconnected. But I reckon the situation has improved (‘Charlie’, personal interview, September 12, 2013).

Structural discrimination was also the focus of stigma in the context of accessing economic opportunities offered by the CSG industry. A resident of the subdivisions complained that CSG companies discriminated against residents of rural subdivisions when employing workers, stating:

“When the [CSG] industry came along, there were promises of thousands of jobs and wealth. But this is all for the townies… Nobody gave them jobs, I mean to the ‘Blockies’, because of the tag they’ve got… I know a nice bloke who got a security licence and was struggling to get a job with the gas people, but I told him to forget it. Companies aren’t giving him jobs because he owns his property at the Estates [the subdivisions]. So for them, [‘Blockies’] there are no jobs (‘Bruce’, personal interview, August 21, 2013).

However, two different narratives or interpretations apply to structural discrimination. First, a few respondents did contest or disapprove of such discrimination, particularly with regards to CSG-created jobs. Respondents mentioned their friends and others who they know are now working for the industry and improving their lifestyles. The only way to confirm these claims is through data accessed from the CSG companies. Unfortunately, however, despite requests, industry would not provide details about the number of jobs created by them for the residents of the subdivisions. Nevertheless, a general realisation among the respondents from the Tara subdivisions was that all of the community development programs facilitated or sponsored by the industry were exclusively focused on the Tara town area, thus further depriving the subdivisions (e.g., improving physical infrastructure).

Secondly, some Tara town residents accused the ‘Blockies’ of not making themselves available for job opportunities. Their main argument was based on the Blockies’ dependence on social security and having a ‘taker’s’ lifestyle. One resident said: “We have a guy here and he has seven children, five of them have disabilities. $1,000 is for himself and his wife, $450 per child per fortnight, and an
additional $100 per fortnight for their disabled children. That is a hell of a lot of money, and if he goes to work, he won’t get that money” (George”, personal interview, September 08, 2013).

6.2.3.1 The Severe Drought of the 90s and Bridging the Divide

The severe drought experienced during the mid-1990s briefly bridged these two identities. As mentioned earlier, after many difficult years, the 1950s wool boom that lasted until the 1990s was the only real progress that Tara experienced. But as the drought escalated in the 1990s, the wool producing area suffered. The industry was eventually dismantled, and has never been revived.

According to a resident of Tara town, during the 1980s, the community used to host more than 50 wool shearing companies in one of the most labour-intensive industries, but has since declined to only two or three. So, the industry collapsed and the economic environment was unable to sustain the rural community.

The ripple effects of this drought were soon felt by the businesses in Tara and the community’s survival was threatened. For example, the only transport company serving the Tara district, Harvard Transport, was forced to close. Consequently, as a result of these hardships, the only factor that sustained the town was the role that ‘Blockies’ played as residents of the subdivisions. They were the only ones who had a steady stream of income (mostly funded through federal social security) which allowed local businesses to survive for a long time. Therefore, during the trauma of the drought, when many small rural towns were dying, Tara managed to endure. A local business owner said that, “The town would have died if people from the Blocks did not help us; the people who were never welcomed by the town” (“George”, personal interview, September 08, 2013).

The role played by the residents of the subdivisions prompted those of the Tara township to reconsider their negative perception of the stigmatised ‘Blockies’. In addition, efforts were made at government level for an effective place-based engagement between government and the community of Tara (the so-called ‘Tara Engagement Model’, see Cruickshank & Darbyshire 2004; King & Cruickshank 2010), to improve its image and highly disadvantaged status in the Western Downs. In particular, the establishment of the Tara Community Action Team (TCAT) in October 2001 played a significant role in the context of the Tara rural subdivisions to capacity build and to address the issues of high levels of unemployment, disability, crime, domestic violence, and health. Further attempts to destigmatise included an attempt by Tara Council to replace the term ‘Blocks’ with ‘hamlets’, to remove the negative connotation of ‘Blockies’ from the entire community’s image. However, the stigma associated with the subdivisions was too deeply engrained in the minds of the community and the attempt was futile. Also, the two distinct identities that had been categorised by
socio-cultural characteristics re-emerged, this time more strongly when CSG development commenced in the region.

Based on the case of Tara and its rural subdivisions, it is now evident that the Agrarian identity of Tara town did not welcome the influx of outsiders with distinct socio-cultural characteristics and held negative attitudes about the disorganised manner in which the rural subdivisions were established. These two dimensions are important to understanding exactly where the division and friction originated and how it evolved into the ‘Blockies’ being stigmatised. The discussion has contributed to an understanding of the relationship between identity and place in a stigmatised context of Tara’s rural subdivisions. For the ‘Blockies’, discrimination on the part of the normals (referring to the Agrarian identities living in Tara town and nearby Chinchilla) and their subsequent self-rejection is a social reality and part of their everyday lives. Results from the fieldwork show how the Blockies’ settlement—the result of a problematic subdivision—in the midst of an Agrarian context has long devalued, socially excluded, and marked them as different. This difference has led to an antagonistic relationship between the Tara Agrarians and the ‘Blockies’, resulting in poor socio-cultural assimilation and social inequalities. Although there is evidence to suggest that these antagonisms waned during the 1990s, the appearance of the CSG industry has refuelled the pre-existing antagonisms, primarily due to contrasting CSG discourses.

In summary, the Agrarian identity of Tara town did not welcome the influx of outsiders with distinct socio-cultural characteristics and held negative attitudes about those who populated the rural subdivisions that were established without basic infrastructure and were physically separated from the town. Townspeople attached negative labels to all those who settled in the subdivisions, thus constructing ‘Blockies’ as a homogeneous group characterised by drug and alcohol abuse, substandard living conditions, poor hygiene, and joblessness. Attempts at integration failed; meanwhile, residents from the subdivisions established their own community groups to address the community’s problems, further isolating the subdivisions from Tara town.

In the following section, I discuss how this stigmatised identity re-emerged when the CSG companies began their activities in the subdivisions. I will also provide data to explain the reaction of the Tara Agrarians to the anti-CSG narrative of a few ‘Blockies’, which further heightened the stigmatisation and re-established us and them. Three main themes emerged from respondents’ feedback: (1) disassociation strategies adopted by the Tara Agrarians, (2) the negative image of Tara, and (3) the impact of health issues raised by anti-CSG motivated ‘Blockies’.
6.3 Re-framing the CSG Conflict: A Stigmatised Identity Perspective

Although ‘Blockies’ were already victim to social exclusion based on their negative social attributes within Tara, disassociation strategies were once again exercised by the Tara Agrarians when residents of the subdivisions started to engage in anti-CSG activities. Thus, as the stigma of the Blockies’ identity became more central to the issues associated with CSG, their stigmatised past became more crystallised. The Mayor of Western Downs, Ray Brown, remarked to a newspaper in April 2010, “We thought things had died down … but now they seem to have escalated,” (Callinan, 2010).

6.3.1 Hands off Tara: Representation and Reality?

In light of the region’s bourgeoning CSG industry, the anti-CSG motivated ‘Blockies’ were conflicted by a number of issues which affected the world of both ‘Blockies’ and the Tara Agrarians. The strong reaction from the latter against the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ is the focus of this section. The Agrarian’s reaction was to disown and isolate the anti-CSG individuals. I will also provide a window to understanding the perspective of the stigmatised anti-CSG groups and individuals in the immediate presence of the stigmatiser.

Throughout my fieldwork, I observed two strategies of the Tara Agrarians related to CSG development and the emerging resistance from the Tara subdivisions: (1) disassociation with ‘Blockies’, and (2) disassociation with the ‘Blocks’. Many respondents from Tara town believed that the anti-CSG individuals were a tiny minority and not truly representative of the broader Tara community. Two peculiarities provide evidence of this belief. First, not one anti-CSG protest has been organised in Tara town. Second, nobody from Tara town has any association with ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups. This revelation validates what is revealed in Table 6.1: that all of the anti-CSG protests and blockades were performed in and around the Tara subdivisions.

Respondents from Tara town were concerned about the economic future of the community. Conflict with CSG threatened this objective. My interviews revealed the negative attributes of ‘Blockies’, such as reliance on social security, unemployment, and poor living conditions. These reinforced the argument that, to sustain the population residing in the subdivisions, the local council needs revenue, and the CSG industry had offered the only opportunity for the resources to assist this deprived community. There was widespread concern among the Tara town residents that any moratorium, or delay in project development, would in fact compound the social problem for the residents of subdivisions themselves.
Respondents further expressed that they did not want contact with anti-CSG groups or individuals because of what they believed was a self-serving approach that ignored the broader community’s interest and economic future. Another issue for town residents was that many anti-CSG individuals, who appeared in documentaries and newspapers, could not be recognised as locals. This relates to the issue discussed above regarding poor interpersonal relations between the two identities and social exclusion, whether self-imposed or not. A local shopkeeper remarked:

Don’t tell me they represent Tara. I have been here forever. I’ve probably been here for 47 years and the people living here in the subdivisions were here for 30 years max. I know most of the people here. There was news about the ‘Tara protest’ a few months ago, where they showed ten or fifteen people on the camera, but I have never seen one of them before. They are not from Tara and even if they are, then this is how well they are connected with the community (“Oliver”, personal interview, September 14, 2013).

The majority of the respondents from Tara town believe that most of people who are organising anti-CSG activities (e.g., protests and blockades) come from New South Wales and thus do not represent Tara. Respondents viewed these outsiders as professional protestors. During the time when I was conducting interviews with the Tara Agrarians and town people, anti-CSG activities were at their peak with a recent event conducted by the famous “Frackman” (Mr Dayne Pratzky), a resident of the Blocks, making news (e.g., “Concert at Ground Zero to Fight CSG,” 2013). I attended the event, which was covered by the media, and accompanied the crowd to the QGC Kenya Gasfield facility near Wieambilla, as many protestors loudly chanted ‘Frack Off’. The next day, the media reported that around 150 people protested against the CSG development in the community of Tara (“Protestors Voice their Concerns,” 2013). However, based on my personal observation, the overwhelming majority of the participants were from outside Queensland. In addition, during other visits to the Tara subdivisions before conducting formal fieldwork, I attended a number of other protests and blockades staged by the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’; my observations validate the ‘outsiders’ phenomenon which greatly concerned the Tara town residents. For instance, one resident expressed concerns about outsourced protestors dominating Tara’s so-called outcry against the industry:

Oh LTG, the ones they are shipping in by bus? They are not locals, and they should mind their own business. What happens here doesn’t impact them. They are just getting in on the cause which has nothing to do with them. Even if they are concerned, then why are they not coming to the town? You’ve got all these newcomers coming in and out. They’re not hanging out in Tara, but are just meeting some specific people. They are coming to the people who are just takers [‘Blockies’] (“Pamela”, personal interview, August 18, 2013).
Among the Tara town respondents, some vigorously contested what they called the falsely reported image of Tara. Many considered it to be biased misinformation by the media about the community. There was a view that, although Tara already had a bad image, the anti-CSG activities organised by the ‘Blockies’ had exposed the community to an even worse stigma. The media was criticised for reporting the community as violent, dangerous, and anti-CSG and thus creating a negative image of all those living in the community. As one respondent stated, “The media is busy portraying how bad Tara is … They will take photographs of tin sheds, tin lying out on logs, rubbish around everywhere, torn clothes, and cars everywhere like we can’t afford a living.” The respondents from Tara town were particularly concerned that the media reported the community exclusively in the context of CSG and conflict. One respondent, a volunteer member of the Tara emergency services, complained that, as a result of such bias, all people know about Tara is that it is a hostile social climate opposed to the CSG industry. Many believed that this has negatively influenced the industry to avoid spending and expanding in Tara and that anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ are to be blamed for this. A resident said:

Media didn’t come to me. I have no problem with the gas mob. They have improved roads, made it possible to make money for a neglected community. They [media] never mentioned Chinchilla, why just Tara? … Media put dirt on the name of Tara (“Parker”, personal interview, August 19, 2013).

So far, I have discussed the perspective of Tara town and landholders against the ‘Blockie-based’ CSG resistance. However, the perspective of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ on the above mentioned issue is equally important. This research reveals that the stigmatised anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ negotiated their identity at various spatial levels. However, for most of them, their anti-CSG stance resulted in social isolation. An increase in marginalisation was also experienced, particularly in the form of a social boycott. This social exclusion was exercised on two levels, first, from the Tara Agrarians and second, from the residents within the subdivisions.

In the first case, the anti-CSG residents from the subdivisions were aware that, since they had raised concerns against the industry, the town people, particularly those involved in different businesses, were not happy with them. Their anti-CSG stance was likely taking business away from the ‘townies’. Anti-CSG subdivision residents also believed that influential people in Tara had been ‘bought off’ by the CSG companies. For example, two anti-CSG individuals from the subdivisions reported that soon after they started to struggle against the industry, their own neighbours became reluctant to maintain any relationship with them. When asked the reason behind such behaviour, both residents stated that their neighbours had signed agreements with the CSG companies and thus
simply did not care about the impact of the project. The point here is: instead of finding solidarity and support, the anti-CSG individuals in the subdivisions were isolated and marginalised by their own reference group.

There were several examples provided by respondents and also observed during the time I spent with anti-CSG individuals in the subdivisions that, because of their stance, they became subject to increasing victimisation and stigmatisation. For instance, I was provided with a copy of an ‘anonymous’ letter which was circulated in Tara and also published on *The Courier-Mail* and QGC websites, although later removed from the company. The letter clearly disowned the anti-CSG activities conducted by some ‘Blockies’ and also reminded them of the negative social attributes ascribed to them (see Appendix 1). Many believed that the letter was crafted by the Tara Futures Group representing the business owners of Tara town. A respondent who has been actively involved in the anti-CSG activities described the behaviour of Tara town:

> Now we do not go anywhere, and are shunned by the community. We have been forced out of the town, the town where our children were studying. Our neighbours have signed contracts with gas companies and have informed us that they can no longer be in contact with us (“Stephen”, personal interview, October 11, 2013).

When anti-CSG individuals regularly began to appear in the media (for instance, Dayne Pratzky—“Frackman”), “Diana”, “Matthew”, “Stephen”, and “Bruce”) they were no longer welcomed in Tara town, and thus confined to the ‘back place’ (Goffman, 1963)—the Blocks. As a consequence, it was observed during fieldwork that they had to invest considerable effort in concealing their identity and being selective in their social interaction. Some regularly shopped either at Chinchilla or Dalby so as not to risk being exposed to the town people. One respondent compared it to risking his personal security as he was afraid of being either verbally or physically abused. He further shared an unfortunate incident that happened in 2009 when he was falsely charged and convicted for abusing and intimidating CSG workers at a local bakery. Since that incident, Tara town and its shops, in particular, were out-of-bounds to him and other anti-CSG individuals. In addition, the division within the residents of Tara subdivisions, as mentioned above, further complicated social interaction even within their home subdivisions. This was one of the reasons the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ had to establish new social contacts, mainly based outside the Blocks, as their previous social network within the subdivisions were dissolved.

Discrimination and marginalisation of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ not only occurred at an interpersonal level, but also at a structural level. For instance, in September 2010, soon after the abovementioned
2009 incident, a child was removed from Tara State School in reaction to negative comments made by a school teacher about the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ (Callinan, 2010). During my interviews, a number of respondents also claimed to have been falsely convicted of breaking laws, reportedly receiving death threats, and being humiliated repeatedly when forced to appear in the local magistrate’s court. Others complained that, because of their role in the CSG conflict, they are always on the radar of local police and CSG security staff who monitor their activities. These people even accused the CSG industry and the Australian Federal Police of hacking their email and Facebook accounts. One respondent stated that he has been pulled over by police several times, merely because of his anti-CSG profile.

6.3.2 The Toxic Blocks: Coal Seam Gas, Stigma, and Health Issues

Even though the neighbouring community of Chinchilla, which hosts intense CSG infrastructure, is closer in distance to CSG wells and infrastructure (see Table 4.1, Map 4.1 and 4.2), the issue of health has been raised as a problem only by the residents of the Tara subdivisions. In Chapter 4, I demonstrated the geographic proximity of the CSG infrastructure in the communities of Tara and Chinchilla. In the case of Chinchilla, CSG proponents are dealing with landholders who often own properties of hundreds of hectares. In the case of the Tara subdivisions, the CSG companies have to deal with individuals from more than 2,100 Blocks on the outskirts of Tara town where one Block comprises 13 to 40 hectares. Therefore, for the industry, it is more convenient to deal with the big landholders than with so many small Block owners. The limited CSG activities so far in the residential Blocks (QGC pipeline and Origin’s Ironbark Project) have already led to grievances where project activities are located a few hundred metres away from an individual’s home. However, the residents are not legally entitled to compensation because the infrastructure is not on their land. Similar concerns were also raised by the anti-CSG groups (WDA and GCSG) which will be discussed in Sections 6.2 and 7.3.

This research recognises that, in comparison to Tara town, the residents of the subdivisions live closer to the CSG infrastructure, such as the Kenya gas field and Origin’s Ironbark tenement. A unique dimension of stigma was introduced by the anti-CSG individuals themselves: an industry-based stigmatisation of place. Both ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups and the LTG movement project an image of CSG as an industrialised landscape, a weblike structure of densely concentrated CSG wells, and that living in a gas field is an unhealthy place to be—an industrialised disaster zone (e.g., Zonca, Hough, & Judd, 2014). In such a scenario, the immediate impacts that are perceived are those of air and noise pollution which may threaten the health of the residents. It is important here to highlight that the place has been stigmatised by the anti-CSG groups and spatially described
within the Western Downs as an unhealthy place. Here, this research seeks not to lessen the raised health impacts but rather to explain stigma as a social consequence of health impacts that emerged as a key theme during interviews with the Tara Agrarians. This sequence of interviews about health follows. First, I present the CSG-induced health concerns raised by the residents of the Tara subdivisions and follow this with the views of the Tara Agrarians.

“Diana”, a mother of seven, is known to claim that her family has been exposed to various health issues because of the CSG activities around her property. During my interview, she explained her experience: she moved to the subdivisions in 2001 to find a peaceful area where she could raise her five children. She said that everything was fine until 2009 when CSG activities commenced closer to her property. Since then, all of her children have developed health problems, including headaches, nose bleeds, sore eyes, and rashes. “Diana” expressed that her six-year-old son first experienced the headaches when CSG wells were drilled around her property; one well is 200 metres away while another five wells are within two kilometres. Initially, she could not comprehend the relationship between the health complaints and CSG, but later, with the help of “Matthew”, a member of the Tara subdivisions-based anti-CSG group, WDA, she learned that similar problems had been experienced by residents near Shale Gas wells in the United States. Various studies and residents have raised concerns about Shale Gas infrastructure in the states of Colorado, Pennsylvania, and Montana. The issue of health has been associated with air and water pollution, and seepage of gas (accompanied by pollutants, heavy metals, and volatile organic compounds) into the domestic water supply causing respiratory sicknesses, nausea, adrenal and pituitary tumours, nose bleeds, rashes, and cancer (Brown, 2007; see also McDermott-Levy, Kaktins, & Sattler, 2013; Colborn, Kwiatkowski, Schultz, & Bachran, 2011). According to her, these problems mirrored those of her family. She mentioned that around 30 other families of the subdivisions have experienced similar symptoms, such as body tingling, nose bleeds, temporary paralysis, skin rashes, severe headaches, and nausea (e.g., Swan, 2013). She went on to say that:

We got this black stuff coming here like toxic rain, banging on our heads. I’ve got seven children, and every single one is impacted because of the air. The boys work all the time so they are not home and feel better. My daughter comes home from university and she gets headaches. We don’t get out. We have another neighbour who locked himself inside because he gets sick when he goes out [“Diana” crying] (“Diana”, personal interview, September 16, 2013).

3 “Diana” had been a contact point for other CSG concerned residents of the Tara subdivisions. She has accused the CSG industry for the health impact that she and her children are facing. She has appeared in many newspapers and documentaries, representing a case of a mother against CSG development. Her concerns have been well documented by the anti-CSG movement within Queensland and across Australia. “Diana” even managed to get Prime Minister Tony Abbott to visit Tara and listen to her complaints about CSG and health impacts.
Firstly, “Diana” expressed her concerns to a government official to ascertain whether any health impact-related studies had been conducted. Although some studies had been conducted by both QGC and the Queensland Department of Health, she was frustrated when reports failed to find a link between the CSG activities and her declining health. On the contrary, a research conducted by Southern Cross University presented findings that in the Western Downs of Queensland, the level of methane and other toxic gases are at a significantly higher level in relation to CSG project development (Maher, Santos & Tait, 2014). Late in 2010, “Diana” became an active member of WDA and began informing people about the serious health impacts of the industry. In 2012, she played a key role in establishing a new group called Gasfield Community Support Group (GCSG) (see Section 7.3 for a detailed account of WDA and GCSG).

Two more prominent residents of the Tara subdivisions, who are mainly concerned with health issues, are “Bruce” and “Jacob”. In addition to questioning the health impacts, both take issue with noise, dust, and water quality at their properties resulting from CSG exploration. “Jacob” (a 47-year-old) bought his Block in the subdivisions near the Kenya gas field because his two children suffer from cerebral palsy. However, he claims that the growth of the CSG industry around his property has been a nightmare for both he and his family. He blames QGC for his wife’s three nervous breakdowns and CSG for causing health issues, such as rashes, dizziness, sleeplessness, nose bleeds, and breathing problems. The issue of air pollution caused by the CSG activities is also one of his concerns. In response, although QGC recently offered “Jacob” $100,000 to soundproof his property, he refused the offer in favour of being relocated (Well, 2014).

Similarly, “Bruce”, whom I interviewed, is a key anti-CSG campaigner in the Tara subdivisions and owns a 5,000-hectare property with no CSG infrastructure. He also ran for the Australian senate election in 2013 through the Stop CSG party. “Bruce” is convinced that the CSG activities in the region have severely affected the health of his family and many others. Like “Diana” and “Jacob”, “Bruce” has reported headaches, nose bleeds, and numbness. In addition, his water bores have been frequently investigated for gas leakages; he published his protest on his anti-CSG YouTube channel. After several tests conducted on his water bores, experts representing the CSG-LNG Compliance claimed to find no ignitable gas leakages from the bores. Like other concerned anti-CSG ‘Blockies’, “Bruce” was not satisfied by the investigations which disproved any link between the health impacts he raised and the CSG activities in the region.

However, when I asked the residents of Tara town about their views on health-related concerns, they disassociated themselves from these concerns. A number of Tara town respondents expressed the view that the concerned residents of the subdivisions were receiving much information from
very selective media sources (e.g., the documentary Gasland I and II) and linking the issue with the US shale-based experience which in their view was a different case to CSG. The respondents believed that concerned individuals in the subdivisions are confused by their knowledge of CSG and are falsely blaming the industry for health-related impacts.

These respondents related the said health impacts to poor socio-economic and living standards in the subdivisions. This is another example of labelling ‘Blockies’ as a devalued identity with negative socio-cultural attributes. In general, the respondents of Tara town were sceptical about the Blockies’ view that the industry is damaging their health, blaming it instead on the Blockies’ own poor personal hygiene. One resident said that frequent health complaints had been addressed by the industry and that the government had invited medical specialists to the community. While they offered service to anyone experiencing health issues that they believed were related to the CSG activities, nobody from the subdivisions consulted with the medical experts. It was thus argued that if the anti-CSG Blockies’ concerns were legitimate, they would have reported them. The following extracts from interviews with residents of Tara town explain their understanding of health-related impacts raised by the residents of the subdivisions:

There are thousands of wells and thousands of people living around those wells, look at Chinchilla and Dalby. But there are just a few people complaining. Does this make sense to you? They’d better take a good shower and clean their so-called house and they will feel better. Anything that has come from these people, I have never seen any proof of their claims […]. If I believed that this was impacting my children, I would simply leave the place and would prefer to live on street rather live in a place which is leading my children to health issues, not making them a show for TV and papers. Every mum would do that. My children would come first (“Luke”, personal interview, September 12, 2013).

They talk about rashes and stuff. My kids get rashes. I get rash and I am allergic to any bush. […] Tell me, this lady left the area and had another child and brought that child back in here, I know. So, if you were so concerned, you wouldn’t do that, would you? You would stay where you were or you would find an alternative place where your children were safe. You wouldn’t come back here and say, ‘Oh, gas has made us sick’. It’s all made up (“Blake”, personal interview, October 12, 2013).

Another response noted during an interview with a community head revealed a link between the historical stigmatisation of the ‘Blockies’ and re-stigmatisation when the CSG industry appeared (i.e. when the rural subdivisions began to be represented as a stigmatising context) (see Sub-section 6.1.1). The resident informed me that, when health impacts were repeatedly being flagged by a few
‘Blockies’, he wondered why the industry did not respond by arguing that the reasons were more likely due to a complex range of social issues. He stated that a company official had informed him that the industry did not want to reveal the real causes of the health problems because raising the topic of the ‘living conditions’ of the ‘Blockies’ could result in problems with the local council. This is because the subdivisions were established without council approval or following proper regulations including basic infrastructure. The respondent believed that, in such a scenario, most of the Blocks would be demolished.

6.3.3 Objectives behind the Conflict

When I asked respondents about their views on the motivations and objectives of the anti-CSG conflict, divergent responses were noted. However, a common response expressed by both the Tara Agrarians and the ‘Blockies’ was that anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ were motivated to move out of the Tara rural subdivisions. For example, during the interviews, two anti-CSG individuals prominent in the Tara subdivisions explicitly mentioned that they wanted the industry to buy their properties and relocate their families. The reason provided was that CSG exposed them to health problems and impaired their lifestyle. In response to the question about the intentions of anti-CSG individuals, “Diana” and “Matthew” respectively stated that:

Well that’s it. We always fought for everybody. I am at the point now where I am tired and I have to think about my children. We have now been surrounded by gas wells. Kids can’t play outside. People talk about our personal hygiene and stuff rather than investigating the impacts. I don’t want to be here anymore, but I have been informed that QGC won’t buy my property (“Diana”, personal interview, September 16, 2013).

I’m out of here. Yes, I’ll probably leave soon. My prognoses are that I need to go to a different climate and I have to look after my wife and children. And if I die here they will never be able to get out of here. I am not fussed about this all now. I’m done (“Matthew”, personal interview, August 21 and 29, 2013).

During fieldwork in Tara town, I was also informed by respondents that many individuals from the subdivisions never opposed the industry until QGC refused to buy their properties. Considering the CSG project-related factors the industry had no plan to construct any infrastructure on these properties. In response to the company’s reluctance, individuals began to resist the project development. However, this was not a surprise as, during my interviews, it was also clearly
communicated by the anti-CSG individuals that they wanted their families to be moved out with reasonable compensation, as stated above.

Recently, news that almost all of the anti-CSG campaigners from the subdivisions had been ‘bought off’ by QGC with millions being spent by this company to buy residential Blocks in the area emerged (e.g., “CSG firm admits health impacts,” 2014; McCarthy, 2014). People have speculated about the money paid to the anti-CSG individuals, as ranging from $300,000 to $800,000. As far as the research respondents are concerned, Dayne Pratzky, “Stephen”, “Diana,” and “Matthew” (residents of Wieambilla and Golden Downs Estates) are among those who settled with the company and have recently moved out of the subdivisions to other places. While people have talked about offers made to “Bruce” and “Jacob”, they have not accepted them, believing that the offers are an insufficient incentive for relocation. Others are also determined to leave the stigmatised context and have raised similar health-related impacts on their families.

Notably, “Diana” and “Matthew” are no longer challenging the industry, even on social media. However, Dayne Pratzky still campaigns against the industry but is mainly active in New South Wales; he has been a prominent figure in many documentaries and interviews. Similar to the respondents from the Tara subdivisions, interviewees from Tara town believed that the motivation behind the conflict is to escape a stigmatised context. A respondent shared their view against anti-CSG ‘Blockies’:

The only thing I can put this down to is the financial gain. It’s all about the money, a complete drama. It’s just like, ‘I’m here and I don’t want to be here and you need to buy me out and give me enough money to make it worthwhile. And you need to buy me another place to live in, too”. So, if it’s not monetary gain and finding a reason to get out of the Blocks, what is it? This is all blackmailing, this is what it is. These people have got nothing else to gain (“David”, personal interview, August 05, 2013).

Another issue raised by the anti-CSG individuals was that, even if they wanted to leave the context because of CSG-related health problems, the industrialisation of the landscape has significantly devalued their properties. However, Tara town respondents contested this view while once again reinforcing the stigma on the ‘Blockies’. For instance, according to a respondent, the concerned ‘Blockies’ came from ‘scum areas’ in the city and that the lifestyle they created in the subdivisions was also poor. Although the Blocks have been unattractive to prospective buyers, it was still claimed that many people around Australia, mainly retirees, were buying these properties as a lifestyle choice. However, many residents of Tara town and a few from the subdivisions blamed the
anti-CSG individuals for property devaluations of $30,000 to $35,000, as they have presented a very negative image of the community to the outside world.

It is clear from the above discussion that, over the last 30 years, the residents of the subdivisions have been stigmatised, not only by the Tara town people but also by neighbouring Agrarian communities, such as Chinchilla and Dalby. Certainly, social exclusion has socio-economic consequences. The purpose of this chapter was twofold. First, to understand the consequences of social exclusion and discrimination, and, secondly, to explain how the stigma attached to the residents of the subdivisions offered a unique context to understand the Blockies’ resistance to CSG project development. In this chapter, as in Chapter 5, I have argued that understanding the Agrarian identities of Chinchilla and Tara and the stigmatised identity of the ‘Blockies’ is essential to understanding the conflict in the Western Downs region and the relationship of the communities with the CSG industry. The central argument of this thesis is that identity differences are the dominant factors in explaining why the conflict emerged in the Tara subdivisions, but not in Chinchilla, and why that conflict was unable to be sustained. Having examined the identities of the Agrarians and the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ of the Tara rural subdivisions, and their concerns about the CSG project development, I now turn to the relationship between different identity-based groups and the nature of their relationship with the CSG industry.
While chapters 6 and 7 provided a baseline from which we can compare distinct identity categorisation (the Agrarians [Chinchilla and Tara] and the ‘Blockies’) and their concerns about CSG development, this chapter develops the social identity linkage between different identity-based groups, and examines the emergence and transformation of three ‘Blockie-based’, anti-CSG groups. Together, chapters 5, 6, and 7 provide an assessment of the emergence and absence of conflict in the studied communities, the involvement of identity-based groups, and their varied relationships with the CSG industry. Maintaining objectivity will help avoid making generalisations about the conflict taking place in the Western Downs. This chapter will introduce the LTG movement and its objectives, followed by an overview of the networking process, as well as the mechanism adopted for converging corresponding identities under the movement’s collective identity. Next, two main Agrarian-based groups—the BSA and the Tara Futures Group (which are active in Chinchilla and Tara)—will be discussed. Finally, in the context of the stigmatised Tara rural subdivisions, three anti-CSG groups (WDA, GCSG, and Stop CSG Tara) will be examined, in order to understand the emergence and transformation of the conflict. In Figures 1 and 2, I have presented active groups representing distinct identities involved in the region and their position vis-à-vis the project development.

7.1 The Lock the Gate Alliance as an External Linkage

The LTG movement has its origins in a local conflict that occurred during 2009 in the rural subdivisions of Tara involving a key CSG proponent: QGC. Initially, it was the subdivision-based, anti-CSG group, Western Downs Alliance (WDA), which was fiercely resisting the project. However, after an encounter that lasted for more than a year between WDA and QGC (2009–2010), the group saw the necessity of a broader social movement at a national level which could legitimise their struggle against the project. The chief motivation behind this strategic move, as discussed in Chapter 6, was the social isolation that accompanied the Tara subdivision ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups’ failure to gain the support of the neighbouring Agrarian community of Chinchilla or Tara. Later, in November 2010 in Warra in the Western Downs, the idea of launching a nationwide social movement against mining and unconventional resource development was discussed in the presence
of two groups: Friends of the Earth (FoE, an environmental NGO) and WDA (representing the community of Tara). The role of WDA in establishing the LTG movement cannot be underestimated because it provided local legitimacy to project a localised conflict into the broader public realm. The founder of the LTG movement, Drew Hutton, explains the depiction of the ‘Blockies’ as being a ‘militant’ group that was an important resource in establishing the national movement:

I became involved in the campaign against coal and coal seam gas when I was approached by ‘Blockies’ […] near a town called Tara. They persuaded me that this was a major issue for them and I spent much of the next few weeks travelling from farmhouse to farmhouse, finding out what people were going through and what they wanted to see happen (Hutton, 2012b).

Michael Bretherick [founder of WDA] put a great deal of effort into making the mining company and the State Government deal respectfully with the residents while another resident, Dayne Pratzky [also known as Frackman and founder of Stop CSG Tara], liaised with the producer of Channel 9’s 60 Minutes to do a show on coal seam gas development on the Downs….. [WDA], though small and with few resources, was a key organisation in the development of the Lock the Gate movement (Hutton, 2013).

The beginning of resistance was a difficult journey for WDA; however the LTG movement and WDA shared a common objective: both were against CSG development and were convinced that CSG would threaten the rural lifestyle and the agricultural industry. In the face of these challenges and with the assistance of FoE, the anti-CSG motivated individuals eventually launched a ‘non-cooperation’ campaign, on November 22, 2010. The campaign had two initial tactical aims. One was to launch a non-cooperative campaign (locking the gates) to encourage landholders not to negotiate access agreements with the gas companies. The landholders were also encouraged to engage in ‘civil disobedience’, as the legislation bound the lease holders and landholders to negotiate the land access agreements. The movement’s famous slogan, ‘Lock the Gate’, was based on Michael Bretherick’s position towards CSG: “We’ll lock you out of the estate. And if you get in, we’ll lock you in” (Hutton, 2013, p. 97).

Two observations in regards to the LTG movement are worth noting here. First, FoE is an urban environmental NGO, which played a significant role in establishing the movement; and also, Mr Hutton a veteran himself is environmental advocate and co-founder of the Greens political party. However, the LTG movement explicitly positioned itself as a landholder movement, rather than an ‘environmental movement’. This strategy certainly made sense in the context of rural Queensland.
Rural landholders have historically clashed with urban green movements particularly over issues such as vegetation cleaning. Interference by the Greens or environmentalists in a campaign might not be welcomed by the farmers. Despite this history, an ‘unnatural’ alliance emerged between the environmentalist and political rural communities of the Western Darling Downs, especially in Tara. Another consideration was that, although the official birth place of the LTG movement was the Western Downs of Queensland, within few days it was shifted to New South Wales. The reason was simple: the movement did not receive a favourable reception in the Agrarian communities of the Western Downs.

The second aim of the campaign was to bring different corresponding groups into a common network, and offer a shared space for mutual support, coordination, and grassroots mobilisation at a national level. This shared space would offer distant and disparate groups an opportunity to coordinate with each other under a common agenda, i.e., to struggle against the CSG industry and any institution pushing a CSG agenda (see LTG website; Hutton, 2012b). Eventually this ‘non-cooperation’ campaign grew in to an alliance comprising more than 100 community-based groups from around the country (Hutton, 2012b; Hutton, 2013; Find a Member Group, n.d.). To date, there are precisely 175 support groups listed on the LTG’s website representing different communities, regions, and states. The alliance has also established state and regionally based networks, mostly in order to sub-regionalise and decentralise the movement (in such areas as North-West New South Wales, Hunter Central River, the Northern Rivers of New South Wales, Victoria, Central Queensland, and the Darling Downs). The founder of the LTG movement describes the political, socio-economic and cultural heterogeneity of the movement:

At the Tara blockade in early 2011, I slept on the ground with my fellow blockaders in the middle of a mouse plague with the little critters scuttling across us during the night. In the Northern Rivers of New South Wales I attended rallies, concerts, and blockades with a social mix of hippies, cattle producers, croppers, and tourism operators, while at a blockade of the proposed Hume Coal mine […] in the Southern Highlands of NSW, I was served French champagne. The movement consisted of farmers, environmentalists, activists, businessmen […], political activists, professional people, housewives, and, significantly, those who had moved to areas like Queensland’s Semic Rim and the Northern Rivers for lifestyle reasons (Hutton, 2013, p. 103).

Given the involvement of such a diverse range of localised groups in the nationwide movement, attaining a unified vision or objective is paramount. This is also significant in terms of delivering a common network through which resistance could be channelled. To this end, establishing a
collective vision is the key strategy of the movement, which has amalgamated this web of networks and delivered a collective identity. The movement’s vision may be understood through organisational aims and guiding principles as follows (Missions, Principles, Aims, n.d.):

1. To protect Australia’s natural, environmental, cultural and agricultural resources from the invasive coal and coal seam gas industries.
2. To educate and empower all Australians to demand sustainable solutions to food and energy production.
3. To grow as a campaign of peaceful non-cooperation and assert our right to protest.
4. The communities should have the ultimate say in the decision making process.
5. And, the movement will support all and any communities who support the objectives of the Alliance.

This established vision of the LTG movement also entails the operational nature of the movement—the convergence of different groups under the movement’s collective identity, enabling the social movement organisation (SMO) to mobilise diverse groups to perform against the industry, collectively. This networking also promises to strengthen local resistance through coordination and collective participation. This convergence may therefore be classified, under the LTG umbrella, as being passive in nature i.e., different group promoting each other’s localised resistance but mobilising as a unified force.

7.1.1 The Process of Networking and Theatres of Conflict

To understand the contemporary anti-CSG movement, one must examine the complex mechanism that facilitates the process of networking or convergence between the LTG movement and corresponding groups. Based on my interpretation of the Alliance and its complex networking, I identify three main operational tactics which facilitate the process: (1) communication and information sharing, including formation of a virtual community (the role of social media), (2) mutual support and solidarity to the corresponding localised groups (providing finance, skills, and a voice to marginalised groups), and (3) coordination for on-site actions to support and sustain the localised conflicts (collective blockades, demonstrations, and protests). This discussion will set the stage for what I have discussed in the subsequent sections (7.1.2 and 7.1.3) regarding the importance of the availability of corresponding groups in different contexts to the movement; and, also, the consequence of the conflict transformation in the case of ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups on the LTG movement.
7.1.1.1 Communication and Information Sharing: An Electronic Fabric of Struggle

The Internet, as a means of communication and coordination, is the main pillar of the anti-CSG movement. The LTG movement mainly operates via its website (www.lockthegate.org.au) and its Facebook page. The LTG website provides information about the history of the alliance, such as its guiding principles, upcoming events, calls to action, media releases, information about CSG impacts, and other fact-based reports from around the world. In addition, the LTG movement has included an entire section, entitled ‘Get Organised,’ which encourages the communities to form action groups and to join the collective vision of the movement.

As previously mentioned, there are 175 support groups listed with the LTG movement, but it is apparent that the majority of these groups are based in the Northern Rivers (predominantly in the Lismore, Nimbin, Pilliga, Ballina, and Bentley regions, also include Newcastle and Kingaroy). Interestingly, the number of groups representing the Darling Downs or broader Surat Basin (where, in reality, intense CSG infrastructure is located) is very low. The Queensland-based groups in alliance with the LTG include: ‘Ipswich Region against Coal and CSG’; ‘North Queensland Conservation Council’; ‘Queensland Rural and Regional Greens’; ‘Stop CSG Brisbane’; ‘Toowoomba Coal Mine Action Group’; and, ‘Western Downs Alliance’ (WDA). Only the WDA could be described as representing the Western Downs and WDA is a Tara rural subdivisions based group.

Apart from the LTG movement, there are several other social media-based groups that offer discussion forums and information sharing regarding any development related to the CSG industry. These include Aussies against Fracking, Knitting Nannas against Gas4, Save North Coast Nature, Global Information against Coal Seam Gas, Girls against Gas, Stop CSG Brisbane, Beyond Zero Emissions, Coal Seam Gas News, Friends of Pilliga, and the Hunter Valley Protection Alliance (a full list of support groups may be accessed via the LTG website). Some of these groups have their separate calls for actions, online petitions, discussion forums, submissions and messages, however, with significant overlapping memberships. Through this virtual network, different groups have become a voice for one another, encouraging other groups to participate in various localised on-site actions against CSG development. For instance, to organise the protest and blockade in the Pilliga forest, Narrabri Shire (November 15-26, 2013) and the Bentley blockade, New South Wales (May, 2014), the call for actions were highly publicised through this virtual social media-based network.

4 ‘Knitting Nannas against Gas’ is New South Wales based anti-CSG group established in June 2012 in response to CSG development. The group members knit in yellow and black to identify with ‘Lock the Gate’ sign. The slogan of this group is: “The Knitting Nannas Are Watching You”. See website: http://www.knitting-nannas.com/
7.1.1.2 Digital Coalition between Distant Groups

Therefore, the Internet-based information and communication platform plays a very important and effective role in facilitating network building. More importantly, this offers a voice to those marginalised groups or individuals who are not well equipped with communication techniques, have failed to legitimise their concerns, or who lack the community support necessary to organise on-site actions. For instance, in the case of the Tara subdivisions, for more than one year, WDA was in confrontation with both the CSG industry and the Tara Agrarians. The stigmatised identity of the ‘Blockies’ caused a complete disassociation with the Tara Agrarians. Therefore, because of the lack of community support, worsening inter-identity conflict (Tara Agrarians versus ‘Blockies’), and lack of unity within the ‘Blockies’, the anti-CSG groups needed to first establish and then converge with the LTG movement (as discussed in Chapter 6). The LTG movement offered the stagnant campaign in the subdivisions with a powerful channel to project the anti-CSG Blockies’ concerns, sustain their conflict, conceal their stigma and become a legitimate actor in the conflict against the CSG industry.

The effectiveness of the communication network may be demonstrated by an event that I personally witnessed during my fieldwork in the Tara subdivisions. In August 2013, a small number of anti-CSG residents from the subdivisions reported a continuous shower of an unidentified, toxic black substance (tar) emanating from Origin’s Ironbark pilot project. In a very short period of time, the claim became viral on social media and the news was disseminated by different anti-CSG groups around the country. It resulted in a ‘call for action’ and ‘request for petition’ on many websites, garnering more than 25,000 signatures: “Cease Operations at Ironbark Coal Seam Gas Immediately” (e.g., “Company Rejects fears CSG cause of,” 2013; Potter & Kehoe, 2014). However, the industry explained the concern as the result of residue produced by lerp insects which has fouled the surfaces beneath tress and the rooftops of cars (for details of this investigation see Origin, 2013).

Apart from an attempt to gain a wider reception, the main objective of nurturing virtual space is to influence the relationship between the CSG industry, local communities, or the general public, by sharing cases of environmental and social injustice at the hands of unconventional resource experiences around the world. For instance, both the LTG’s website and blog note the details of gas well locations, which companies have received approvals to carry out CSG operations, environmental impact assessments, updates on senate inquiries, experiences of unconventional gas development in other countries (mainly in relation to the United States shale industry), and other relevant information regarding legislation and socio-environmental impacts. The sections of the
The point to highlight here is that these widely varying sources of information provide every detail necessary to motivate individuals and communities to resist the CSG industry. These information outlets are also prepared for counter narratives in response to any news from the CSG industry, public relations, or even other research in support of the CSG agenda.

Lastly, the images and videos available, mainly through YouTube and documentaries, have been influential in encouraging anti-CSG sentiments among the wider audience. For example, videos included accounts of the ongoing gas bubbling in the Condamine River near Chinchilla, ‘toxic black rain’ impacting the families of Tara, leaking gas wells, igniting water bores, creek damage, water spills, radioactivity, health impacts, aerial views of industrial landscapes, police brutality, and law enforcement against protestors. Anti-CSG sentiments were also spurred by a Four Corners public affairs program ‘The Gas Rush’ produced in 2012. The documentary strengthened the anti-CSG narrative while magnifying the question of coexistence in the context of agriculture: *who wins* and *who loses*? Besides these domestic productions, the American production, ‘Gasland’ also played a significant role in fuelling the resistance against the industry. In Australia, the production was screened extensively in Northern Rivers and in Queensland. In brief, these sources serve as a ready introduction to the potential consequences of unconventional resource development and what it is like to live in the gasfields.

**Cyber Activism: Opportunities and Challenges**

The aforementioned information-based network is a pillar of the anti-CSG movement in the age of digital communication, and has certainly facilitated the process of convergence. The movement is a classic example of processing and the use of ‘controlled’ information, both horizontally and vertically. What I mean here is that, on the one hand, the movement has been successful in making headlines in the mainstream media, mainly owing to on-ground activities or actions; but, on the other hand, it has created an alternative, cyber-based media, which is entirely controlled by the movement and its network without any interference. The aim is simple: to influence the minds of the public and to create a negative perception of the industry while reflecting various socio-economic and environmental impacts.

However, some consider these sources and providers of information to be ‘propaganda organs’. Also, the excessive flow of information creates what can deemed an ‘information blizzard’

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5 The Gas Rush can be accessed online: [http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/special_edts/20110221/gas/](http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/special_edts/20110221/gas/)
6 Gasland full length documentary can be accessed online: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uczGpoD3inc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uczGpoD3inc). Also Gasland II at: [http://www.gaslandthemovie.com/](http://www.gaslandthemovie.com/)
(Ensemble, 1994, p. 132, as cited in Routledge, 2003) or ‘data smog’ (Shenk, 1997). In the context of the anti-CSG movement, the information blizzard can be viewed as the gap between the information the audience understands and the overabundance of information it receives. Therefore, the exhaustive information conveyed via numerous groups, active on the Internet and social media creates problems for both the audience and the social movement itself. The authenticity and reliability of the information being disseminated on these forums may be called into question, as one may argue that the movement is its own editor. For instance, during fieldwork in Chinchilla, I asked a number of respondents about the available information regarding the issue of Condamine bubbling, perceived CSG related health impacts, and toxic rain on social media. In response, one resident criticised the available information as biased and as misinformation: “This crafted information is just a mixture of cherry-picked facts, figures, and US-based experiences [shale gas] which have nothing to do with CSG and are just self-perceived, self-serving, delusional, twisted and selective, and simply a distortion of facts” (“Mark”, personal interview, October 26, 2013).

7.1.1.3 Mutual Support and Solidarity in Action

Apart from the abovementioned mechanisms that are in place to facilitate the process of convergence in the different, corresponding groups, various anti-CSG groups also organise community trips or caravans. The participants in these trips represent various communities and their localised struggle against CSG and/or the mining industry. The visiting individuals or groups not only share their experiences, but also train the other members in terms of how to conduct effective activism. For instance, I was briefed by Stop CSG Tara and other experienced activists from New South Wales about what to expect if police turned up during a protest (in terms of blockades, in particular), which they were about to perform, and what our reactions should be, in order to avoid any charges or penalties.

Particularly in the case of Tara, the town’s residents were concerned about this mutual support between the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ and visiting activists from New South Wales. These groups are often referred to ‘busloads’, ‘influx of outsiders’, ‘activist tourism’, or ‘imported activists’, as they play a significant role in supporting the Tara subdivision-based resistance, both logistically and tactically. This idea of ‘non-local objectors’ is the phenomenon that I observed, first in Tara (2010-2013) and, more recently, in Pilliga and Bentley. And for both the CSG industry and its establishment, it has been a source of frustration. Here, we must acknowledge however that the environment is a ‘common property’ and is intrinsically connected with the broader society, and not just the local communities.
Returning to the concept of mutual support, we can see that the different groups embedded in the anti-CSG movement’s network also provide a means of generating funds in order to support one another’s causes, both logistically and financially. To this end, anti-CSG group websites routinely attract funding in the form of fundraising, such as carnival-like festivals, concerts, Stalls (e.g., the Knitting Nanas), and the LTG online shop. Various group websites incorporate dedicated sections headed, for instance, ‘donation’, or ‘support us’. As an example, the LTG movement and another Brisbane-based group, ‘Bridging the Divide’, requested funds in support of a Chinchilla landholder who was fighting a legal battle with a gas company regarding an LNG pipeline, which was to pass through a farming property. This initiative also motivated many anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ to purchase radioactivity detectors and related equipment. A similar call was also recently made on behalf of a landholder residing in the subdivisions: ‘John Jenkyn Protection/Defence Fund’. The funds will be used to help John Jenkyn to fight his case where he has been charged for posting threatening messages to QGC (“Man Charged After Threatening,” 2014).

A few groups have also raised funds in support of agriculturalists and other rural landholders, especially in hard times of drought. For instance, just before last Christmas, ‘Knitting Nannas against Gas’ ran a campaign in New South Wales to collect gift hampers to be sent to the landholders, especially those living in Pilliga (New South Wales) and Tara (Queensland). Through this ‘solidarity in action’, the residents of the Tara subdivisions, and particularly the children, were sent many toys as gifts. The purpose was to convey that the families of the subdivisions with children are suffering from the health impacts because of surrounding gas fields.

The above sections demonstrate that the anti-CSG movement is not limited to what could be termed as ‘activist tourism’ or something merely embedded in ‘electronic fibre’ (Cleaver, 1999). Instead, it is a movement that involves solidarity in action, two-way communication (sharing experiences and information), and the support of each other’s struggle against the industry, both financially and logistically. All of these efforts encourage the identified, related groups, in their different contexts, to merge under the movement’s collective identity.

7.1.1.4 Coordination: The Route to On-Site Actions

As CSG development has spread, ‘direct action’ on CSG sites has become the strategy most favoured by the anti-CSG movement. In particular, the blockade is a powerful tactic that has received significant media attention and proven popular among protestors. Such direct actions have great potential to attract the media’s attention and offer an opportunity to spreads a message to a wider public audience. Based on my personal, limited involvement in several blockades performed
near the Tara subdivisions and Wieambilla estate on the boarder of Chinchilla and Tara, I observed that, even with very few vehicles and a limited number of people, one can easily bypass the CSG security or police with minimal risk of being stopped or fined. For industry, this tactic may cause both operational and financial risks. It may also result in bad publicity and call into question a company’s ‘social licence’ to operate, consequently affecting the goodwill of the whole industry.

Apart from blockades, on many occasions I have personally observed responsible behaviour from the protestors, especially during the ‘theatrical mannered activities’, such as music, the carnival-like atmospheres, Knitting Nanas-type groups, sit-ins, and concerts, all of which created an atmosphere of celebration. These occasions attract participants, increase recruitment, strengthen the groups’ networks, and send industry the clear message, via the media, of unity and growth. In addition, the presence of different groups representing different communities and their conflict with the industry, all in one location, offers a valuable opportunity for media response. The main purpose is always to expose the industry, government policies, and other institutions that are in support of the CSG development. At such gatherings, one sees a range of defiant slogans, including ‘No Social Licence for CSG’, ‘Social License is Not for Sale’, and ‘Save Our Darling Downs’. Targeting different conferences and meeting venues (for instance, during APPEA’s 2012 and 2013 conferences on CSG development), conveys a symbolic message to the industry, its investors, and the government, that the CSG industry should be prepared to face community opposition.

As mentioned earlier, these direct actions are usually peaceful in nature, and have an aim of generating public sympathy, as well as attracting media attention. The involvement of the most peaceful and admired group such as the Knitting Nanas against Gas, is always consistently visible during different ‘direct actions’ throughout New South Wales and the Western Downs. The involvement of outsiders does raise the ‘numbers’ during particular on-site actions, and some activities do result in intense situations. The violent and non-violent nature of these acts depends on individual cases. For instance, there have been several incidents reported near the Tara subdivisions which have resulted in confrontations with gas company employees; and, in some cases, several arrests were made and charges laid. Some other incidents include the hanging of the LTG banner on QGC’s 200-metre Kenya RO and Gasfield plant (Farrow-Smith, 2013), individuals intimidating QGC workers in Tara town, the theft of seismic equipment and pipes reported in New South Wales (MacKenzie & Turnbull, 2012), and a bomb threat at Metgasco’s office in the town of Casino (Duffy, 2012).

To some extent, such untoward situations ensure media coverage and draw the attention of the greater public; but, they also create a negative image of the anti-CSG movement which contrasts
with their claim of being a non-violent, peaceful movement. Therefore, this may create a negative perception among their audience and alienate some individuals, whom we may refer to as the ‘silent majority’. It is also one of the reasons that many CSG-impacted landholders, both in Chinchilla and its surrounding communities, whom I interviewed, showed no interest in being involved in any blockade or protest. For them, these activities usually end in someone taking the law into their own hands. In order to avoid negative publicity, the movement describes these incidents as ‘isolated acts’, yet the support and presence of the LTG movement and other groups cannot be discounted. For instance, I have mentioned repeatedly that many blockades and protests, which were performed in and around the Tara subdivisions, were spearheaded by a handful members of WDA or Stop CSG Tara, but the overwhelming majority of the protestors were sourced from outside the area (mainly New South Wales).

Finally, another key aspect to be observed is that no matter who is involved in the localised protests or blockades, the movement makes sure to portray that particular ‘site’ or ‘community’ as being against the CSG development. The reasoning behind this strategy will be discussed in the following section. However, it is important to consider the consequence of such coordinated on-site actions and the decision to symbolise that the whole community is against the CSG project development, especially in a context where different identities are involved. For instance, after receiving the support of ‘non-local objectors’ and the pronouncement of Tara as a frontline community against the CSG development, the Tara Agrarians and the business community showed great concern about the projection of a negative image of the community and suppression of their own pro-CSG narrative. This also heightened the marginalisation of and hostility towards the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ of the Tara subdivisions, and both of these identities found themselves in open conflict with each other. This has been discussed in detail in Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1 and 6.3.2. Another noticeable reaction appeared from the Agrarians of Chinchilla in 2011. Around 50 members of the LTG movement along with Drew Hutton intended to participate in a May Day celebration at the Chinchilla Showground. However, they were turned back with a loud signal to the movement that the Agrarians would not allow the movement to ‘claim’ the community of Chinchilla. In simple words, Lock the Gate had the gate shut on them.

7.2 Organisations Representing the Agrarian Identity: Chinchilla and Tara

In this section I will provide details about the two main Agrarian-based CSG-related organisations in the communities of Chinchilla and Tara: the Basin Sustainability Alliance (BSA) and the Tara Futures Group. Both groups are representatives of the Agrarian identities. The BSA was born out of
the CSG struggle and has appeared as one of the most influential groups to represent the communities. This will be followed by a brief introduction of another Agrarian-based group, AgForce, which is active in the broader context of Queensland. The Tara Futures Group is a small, community-based group that has received criticism for its pro-CSG narrative. Even though the group has been serving the community for many years, it has only recently engaged with the CSG industry since 2010. Their pro-CSG narrative has much to do with the CSG conflict led by the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ in the Tara subdivisions. This provides an additional comparison within the Agrarian identities of Chinchilla and Tara.

To protect the rights of individual landholders, ensure productivity of the agricultural industry, improve the regulatory and planning process, and maximise benefits for the local communities, all three groups are actively engaged with the CSG establishment. However, the BSA is the only group that emerged from the issue of CSG.

7.2.1 Basin Sustainability Alliance

The Agrarian group, Basin Sustainability Alliance (BSA), was formed in early 2010 in response to the CSG issue, when the projects dramatically escalated throughout the Western Downs region. In contrast to other collective agencies in the Western Downs, for instance the anti-CSG groups in the Tara subdivisions, the BSA emerged from a larger and stronger background for predominately eastern and central Downs’ farmers with deep foundations in agricultural politics and the socio-economic context of agriculturally dependent communities. The BSA is composed of nine board members, under the Chair of Lyn Nicholson. The group’s members represent agriculturalists, and are not aligned with any environmental ideology or green philosophy, but offer a wide range of expertise relevant to the agricultural industry, such as conventional farming, pastoral business, cattle farming, agricultural consultancy, economics, environmental engineering, veterinary science, and soil biology. The BSA places itself in the debate about CSG to support agriculture under threat of CSG development in agricultural areas. The group has become a voice for agriculturalists and claims to represent landholders and communities who are concerned with the unprecedented growth of CSG industry.

The BSA recognises and welcomes the economic benefits CSG has offered to the state, and also to rural Queensland, in terms of jobs, royalties, diversifying the rural economy, and improving infrastructure. However, the Agrarian group is also concerned with project development and the potential for CSG to compromise the sustainability of the agricultural industry and undermine landholder rights. The BSA’s concerns can be divided into five main categories: (1) Ground water
impacts; (2) Land and environmental impacts; (3) Social and lifestyle impacts; (4) Lack of landholder rights; and, (5) Regulatory issues. Understanding these concerns in relation to the CSG industry and the group’s relationship with the industry will also help to compare the Agrarians (Chinchilla and Tara) with the stigmatised identity of the ‘Blockies’.

The BSA believes that under current regulations and because of many unanswered questions, particularly regarding the impact on groundwater, the agricultural industry may suffer serious consequences from CSG development. It is widely acknowledged that the projects took off at a rapid rate, without an understanding of the science behind potential environmental impacts. Therefore, the group is concerned that the unprecedented growth may compromise agricultural sustainability which surrounds the town of Chinchilla.

The BSA published their position in March 2011, in their *Blueprint for Sustainable CSG Operations* (BSA, 2011). While the document identified many potential impacts of CSG on regional Queensland and individual landholders, it also recognised the positive potential of the industry, and clearly stated that the group is not against the industry or economic progress. In fact, the group is known for their members’ ability to embrace the new industry, while finding a reasonable balance between the needs of agriculturalists and the resource industry. The group contends that without proper regulation and enforcement, the industry poses significant risks to the agricultural industry. Similar to the BSA, two more Agrarian-based groups—AgForce and Property Rights Australia (PRA)—have strategies in place which recognise the importance of project development for regional development but that prioritise the health of the traditional agricultural industry. Although this research is not intended for outlining the roles of AgForce and PRA (mainly owing to word length limitations), I will briefly highlight the position of AgForce in regard to the CSG industry in the region. The purpose is to make a brief comparison between the groups, which will enable us to see the consistencies between the BSA and AgForce in terms of the objectives and concerns of Agrarians in the context of CSG, and also adopted strategies to struggle against the industry.

Established in 1999, AgForce claims to be a unifying voice for beef, sheep and wool, and grain producers in Queensland. The farming lobby group represents around 6,000 members committed to the sustainability of the agricultural industry. Currently, the group is actively engaged with the CSG industry to: protect the rights of agriculturalists; improve the flow of information; improve CSG regulations; protect prime agricultural land from the extractive resource industry; protect individual landholders’ rights; and, to attain a meaningful coexistence between competing industries. The potential for CSG-related impact on groundwater is also a key concern of the group. However, the
group publically states that “AgForce is not anti-CSG and recognises that the industry may deliver economic benefits to certain regions, but at what cost to the environment and longer-term agricultural production? Where is the balance?” (AgForce, 2012). In addition, AgForce has dedicated a unit within its organisation known as the ‘CSG team’, which conducts various ‘CSG landholder information sessions’. They also run another project, the ‘Advanced CSG Negotiation Support Workshop’, through which the group has provided support to more than 3,800 landholders across the state (for details see website: http://agforceprojects.org.au/).

Returning to the BSA, the group considers sustainable agriculture to be more important than any short-term resource activity and thus, that prime agriculture land must not be compromised. The group’s main concerns about the project are inextricably related to the issue of coexistence and on which terms and conditions (i.e., who will lose and who will gain?) During an interview, one of the BSA board members stated that: “The issue of CSG is not a black and white issue and we do have interest in conversation with the industry […] our objectives are just pulling [CSG] off and make it right” (‘Daniel’, personal interview, October 09, 2014).

In 2014, the BSA compiled ten overarching principles of coexistence: 10 Commandments of Coexistence (BSA, 2014). These coexistence principles to a great extent echo those concerns held by the agriculturalists and individual landholders of Chinchilla (which I have presented in section 5.1 as a social dynamic of coexistence). These include: the right to say no, the improvement of the process of land access agreements and negotiations, adequate compensation, an improved information mechanism, company and landholder relations, lack of trust, and disregard of land and landholders. In brief, the very first point in the BSA’s coexistence criteria is to address the power imbalance between landholders and the CSG industry (the ‘right to say No’). The BSA believes that there is a considerable power imbalance between the CSG industry and the landholders, especially during the process of land access and negotiation agreements. Other considerations include: the CSG project activities must protect long term productivity of the land; ensure ground water supplies and quality (depletion and contamination); avoid mining and energy extraction in high quality agricultural areas; giving priority to the agricultural industry; and ensuring fair compensation for individual landholders.

Since the establishment of the BSA in early 2010, the group’s activities and influence can be noted both in terms of insightful policy development and the constructive role it has played through robust engagement and communication with government, industry, and researchers. In contrast to the Tara-based anti-CSG groups and their confrontational approach, the BSA has articulated strategies which have enabled them to communicate and negotiate with the industry. For instance, the
Agrarian group has acted as a conduit between different stakeholders and has been actively engaging with the Dalby Chamber of Commerce, Property Rights Australia, Santos Water Working Group, APPEA, AgForce, the Queensland Resource Council (QRC), and the Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF). In addition, the BSA has appeared before parliamentary committees and represented the landholders and their concerns regularly in mainstream media, including in *The Australian, Queensland Country Life,* and *The Courier-Mail.* The group has also served on the ‘Gas Industry Social & Environmental Research Alliance’ (GISERA), an advisory committee, and considers the role of UQ’s Centre for Coal Seam Gas (CCSG) to be crucial to finding facts in regard to CSG industry.

However, the BSA’s focus and strategy concerning meaningful engagement with the industry has attracted great criticism from the LTG movement. For instance, Hutton (2013) believes that rather than confronting the industry, this negotiation-based strategy has resulted in a weak position; otherwise, he argues the movement might have stopped the burgeoning industry in and around the Dalby region of the Western Downs. The LTG movement’s criticism is not limited to the BSA but also includes two other key agriculturalist-based groups—AgForce and the PRA. In contrast to the civil disobedience-based movement, the role of agriculturalist-based groups has been perceived as just a means of informing the communities and landholders about their rights, negotiation agreements, and potential impacts.

The main objective of the Agrarian-based organisations has been to raise the importance and concerns of the agricultural industry and the landholders and to maximise the group’s influence over policy decisions. For instance, with regards to policy development, we should recognise that the BSA has provided significant and meaningful input in the form of submissions to numerous government discussion papers, policies, legislation, and regulations. Through these constructive...
steps, the group has taken the opportunity to create awareness of the agriculturalists’ concerns and has also highlighted ways to achieve sustainable project development. Examples include the: ‘Water and Other Legislation Amendments’ (WOLA 2011), prohibiting evaporation ponds; stressing the role of CSG-LNG Compliance Unit; improving the relationship between companies and landholders; improving information mechanisms; offering coexistence criteria; and highlighting the importance of baseline monitoring for groundwater. These must all be considered and appreciated as being key achievements of the BSA as an Agrarian-based group.

In 2013, the BSA launched ‘CSG Watch’ (see CSG Watch, n.d.). The main idea behind this tool was to empower landholders to monitor underground water resources. This tool is similar to what the CSG-LNG Compliance Unit later introduced as ‘CSG Net’, a water bore-monitoring program designed to gather information, on a monthly basis, about both short and long-term CSG impacts on groundwater.

The BSA recognises the steps that both the industry and the government have taken to retain a better balance between the landholders and the CSG industry. Such steps include: the Queensland Government’s Regional Planning Interest Act (mid-June, 2014); Strategic Cropping Land Act (2001); improving land access and fair compensation; and, the role of the Queensland Water Commission in monitoring and managing underground water and CSG impacts, all of which aim to protect agricultural land and landholders’ rights and which mark a step towards prioritising the agricultural industry over the resource industry. The BSA is confident that such steps will address landholders’ grievances and ensure meaningful coexistence. In addition, the group also acknowledges that, throughout the years, the CSG industry has improved in terms of community engagement and raised concerns have been heard by the industry. However, there is still a great need to understand the technicalities involved in the process of gas extraction, particularly related to fracking, water management, and underground water modelling. The BSA suggests that landholders should not bear the cost of CSG industry development, and that long-term impacts on the land must be mitigated. Understanding and addressing the communities’ concerns is the only way to maintain coexistence between the competing industries. Overall, the BSA has proven that the agriculturalists in the Western Downs are united with a stronger and legitimate voice, thus having created a constructive relationship with both the State bodies and the CSG industry.

In addition to ‘CSG Watch’, BSA has also launched ‘CSG Well Calculator’ and ‘CSG Globe’. These tools have been developed to provide landholders with better understanding of CSG infrastructures (CSG wells, exploration permits, petroleum leases, pipeline licenses etc.) and how CSG development may impact individual landholders.
The Tara Futures Group

The Tara Futures Group is a community-based organisation that has been serving Tara long before CSG expansion in the region. Before Tara Shire’s amalgamation in 2008, the group was known as the ‘Shire of Tara Development Association’, and later renamed the ‘Tara Futures Group’. The group’s main objective is reflected by its name; during an interview, the group’s president, “Robert”, stated: “Our main objective is to drive Tara forward into the future and also drive value for the people. We try to connect and spread awareness and positive image of the community” (“Robert”, personal interview, October 07, 2013).

The purpose and motivation behind the Tara Futures Group is not directly linked to the issue of CSG, as will be discussed in detail below. They are unique when compared to the BSA, PRA and AgForce which are more actively involved with the CSG issue. The natural question to ask is then why to introduce the Tara Futures Group? I argue that, the current role of the Tara Futures Group is fundamental to understand the conflict in the subdivisions. Since 2009, when a small number of anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ stood against project development, the Tara Futures Group reacted strongly to reclaim the community’s representation and they pronounced the ‘Blockie-led’ conflict and their CSG related concerns as false. In addition, the anti-CSG narrative of the ‘Blockies’ was considered as a threat to the economic interests of those living in and around the town area.

The composition of the Tara Futures Group predominantly represents the local businesses, such as hardware, hotel and motel, roadworks and earthmoving, pharmacy, pastoral company, newsagency, and construction. Therefore, the group basically plays a role of a Chamber of Commerce. The group also encompasses representatives from the local school, hospital, and local council. The Tara and District Family Support Committee, which works closely with the Tara Neighbourhood Centre, are also on-board with the group. The group also organises many events in the community, such as the ‘Tara Festival of Culture and Camel Races’. It also encourages a ‘Shop Locally’ program, supports the Tara Polocrosse Carnival, and also conducts business award ceremonies.

With regard to CSG development, the Tara Futures Group has emerged as a strong platform for community members and local businesses to communicate with the major CSG companies operating in the region, or those that are interested to expand their operations to Tara. The group is in close association with the two main CSG proponents in the region, QGC and Origin, along with Murphy Pipe and Civil (Queensland pipeline construction company) and Thiess. The group highly values the opportunities CSG companies may offer to the economically deprived and neglected community in terms of local employment, infrastructure improvement, and in diversifying the economic base of the marginal agricultural industry. The group publically encourages and
welcomes the CSG industry to Tara. In fact, it is stated on their webpage that the website is “proudly supported by QGC” (Tara Futures Group, n.d.). This website was not available when I was conducting interviews in Tara town but the group members informed me of their plans for developing the website and the motivation behind this necessity.

The sudden appearance of the Tara Futures Group in the context of the CSG industry is closely tied to an unfortunate event which occurred in Tara town in 2011, when Scott Collins, a 43-year-old member of ‘Blockie-based’, anti-CSG group WDA, was accused of abusing and attacking gas workers in the Tara town (Farmer, 2010). During my fieldwork in the Tara subdivisions, I met Mr Collins several times and he denied any such actions. As a consequence, QGC cautioned their staff against visiting the town of Tara to ensure personal safety. The unfortunate event and the company’s reaction concerned many community heads, particularly those of the Tara Futures Group. Two immediate approaches were observed by the Tara Futures Group. First (as mentioned earlier and provided in Appendix 1), the group allegedly published and circulated a letter disassociating the Tara community from the ‘Blockie-led’ anti-CSG conflict. Second, during the interview, the president of the Tara Futures Group informed me that improving and reengineering the community’s image became a main challenge and that many efforts had been made to regain the confidence of the industry and change perceptions of the community. The group believes that the handful of protestors from the subdivision do not adequately represent the community. I was further briefed that, through the ‘Tara Camel Races’ (organised in 2013) they have attempted to convey a positive message in terms of Tara welcoming the CSG industry. The event hosted more than 10,000 people who visited Tara from all over Australia and was sponsored by both QGC and Origin. Staff members of the CSG companies, identified through their uniforms, were stationed at the information desks. However, there were no signs of anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ at the event.

Finally, representation of the Tara Futures Group, along with the Tara District Family Support Committee, and Tara Neighbourhood Centre are prominent in QGC’s ‘Southern Gas Field Community Committee’. The committee was assembled during March, 2010 (QGC, 2013) with the aim of increasing awareness of the community’s concerns and issues related to the company’s operations in the southern region of Surat Basin, which includes the community of Tara. Currently, the following are members of the committees, representing the community of Tara and were also interviewed during the fieldwork: Ms Patricia Peck (founder of Wieambilla Country Club), Ms Roslyn Wade (Tara Neighbourhood Centre), Mr Graham Muller (Tara and District Family Support Committee) and Mr Richard Thornbury (Tara Future Group). Patricia Peck, in particular, acts as the contact person for community members (including the residents of the subdivisions) who may have any concerns about CSG development. She is a member of one of the few families who have
witnessed both the Tara town and its subdivisions development from the beginning. Interviews revealed that the Tara Futures Group and other abovementioned groups are committed to working with the industry to ensure long-term sustainability and change the future of the small socio-economically disadvantaged community. Apart from a wider improvement of economic indicators, the Tara Neighbourhood Centre’s main objective is to improve the health and educational infrastructure, which has been noticeably neglected across the whole Western Downs region.

Here one must appreciate that the Tara Futures Group is known for its extreme pro-CSG stance; however, it positions itself quite differently to the BSA and AgForce. One must also understand that the group has emerged as the most powerful voice, not for the Agrarians, but in reaction to, or against, the established anti-CSG groups in the Tara subdivisions. For this reason, the group has become a desirable platform to be used by the CSG industry.

7.3 Organisations Representing the ‘Blockies’: Tara Rural Subdivisions

This section has three objectives: First, I analyse the three main anti-CSG groups in the stigmatised context of the Tara subdivisions: WDA, GCSG, and Stop CSG Tara. I explain how these groups originated based on a shared stigmatised identity. I then discuss the strategies adopted by these groups to resist CSG project development. Second, this section seeks to analyse the anti-CSG Blockies’ concerns about CSG project development, and the distinct claims or understanding of CSG compared to the organisations representing Agrarians of Chinchilla and Tara. Third, this section examines the dramatic conflict transformation in the localised stigmatised context of the Tara subdivisions. Examples of behavioural change in the anti-CSG groups include the emergence and dissolution of GCSG (Gasfield Community Support Group) and Stop CSG Tara, and the relocation of Stop CSG Tara to Pilliga, Narrabri Shire under its new name, CSG Rescue NSW. The emergence of GCSG and Stop CSG Tara from the mother group ‘WDA’ will be seen in terms of the conflict transformation and changing behaviour towards the CSG conflict.

7.3.1 Western Downs Alliance (WDA): The Seed of CSG Conflict

The anti-CSG group, ‘Western Downs Alliance’ (WDA), was formed during late 2009 when 64-year-old ‘Matthew’, a resident of the Tara rural subdivisions, was contacted by QGC (Queensland Gas Company—a BG group). “Matthew’s” property is under QGC’s tenement. “Matthew” claims that it was made clear to him that under no circumstances would he be able to resist the industry’s plan to install wells on his property. So, “the only way the encroachment could be stopped was through some actions. It was Thursday when I had a meeting with QGC, and by Monday Western
Downs Alliance was formed and we were now after them” he mentioned during an interview. He further admits that, it was a family based group and sometimes “we are just two or three people involved in blockades or running behind the company but we have to pretend we are massive in number” (“Matthew”, personal interview, August 21 and 29, 2013).

During late 2009 and early 2010, many CSG site photos, videos of leaking gas wells, and much information sourced from the United States shale gas experience started to become part of WDA website’s gallery. However, “Matthew’s” description of the group’s allegedly rapid formation, over a five-day period, is a half-truth. Something he did not mention (and which few people were aware of) is that a website, ‘www.tarablockies.com’,12 was formed during June of 2009, with the help of another local resident, “Ralph”. The name of the website clearly indicates the collective action of a particular group or social category, the ‘Blockies’, as those in opposition to the CSG industry. The website was limited to two main CSG-related concerns: (1) ‘insensitive clearing of waste areas of the native forest’, and (2) ‘unlined waste water ponds’. During that time, the CSG-related health impacts and impacts on ground water were not on the radar. Interestingly, the issue of health later became of major concern to the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’.

The formation of the ‘www.tarablockies.com’ site was quickly deemed to be a mistake. The website was subsequently shutdown and the group renamed as the ‘Western Downs Alliance.’ I postulate two reasons for this transformation. The first is the stigma attached to the Blocks, and to being a ‘Blockie’. The ‘group’ realised that it was not favourable to provide people a reason to re-interpret the opposition as coming from the devalued and discredited ‘Blockies’. Secondly, the new title—‘Western Downs Alliance’—captures a wider audience in a public realm, and does not declare their specific, stigmatised context or social categorisation. Later, as the broader anti-CSG social movement gathered pace spearheaded by the LTG movement, both in Queensland and New South Wales, this strategy of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ proved to be successful, as they were projected in a way that they anticipated or desired.

Unfortunately, WDA’s website is no longer available online. Before the webpage was ceased, however, I was fortunate enough to note the contents, particularly their philosophy and objectives. According to the group’s website, their main objectives were: (1) ‘to ensure the right to clean air and water’; (2) ‘to lead their lifestyle free from any interference’; (3) ‘to raise awareness about the danger of hydraulic fracturing to our environment and human health’; (4) ‘to expose gas and oil companies who use unsafe and exploitative methods in their operations’; and, (5) ‘to hold our

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12 On July, 09, 2009, Hunter Valley Protection Alliance’s website (http://huntervalleyprotectionalliance.com) reported that a Tara blockies based group has been launched - ‘Welcome Tara Blockies Action Group’ http://tarablockies.com/). Note: website is not available anymore as the group transformed itself into Western Downs Alliance (WDA).
democratically elected representatives accountable for their actions in dealing with the gas and oil companies’.

For a long time, the website and its blog page served to highlight various CSG issues, impacts, and misconduct. The group also repeatedly targeted the alignment between the Queensland State Government and CSG companies. The group was primarily concerned with the expansion of the CSG industry in the Tara subdivisions and was committed to stopping the industry using a confrontational approach. Clashes between the CSG industry and anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ began to take place spurred by the WDA and Tara became a hotbed of anti-CSG protests. On October 8, 2010, WDA staged a blockade against QGC’s intention to conduct a seismic survey in the Tara region. This was followed by another blockade, during February, 2011, when the company intended to transport pipelines to connect existing exploration wells. The agitation from WDA led to a 95-day delay in operations, halting a task anticipated to take two weeks (e.g., Hutton, 2013). Soon, WDA group members were widely viewed as the most extreme protestors. Many were criticised for their approach and for taking laws in their own hands, such as abusing and intimidating CSG workers, interfering and damaging CSG wells, staging rolling blockades, and shooting at CSG workers. However, like the case of Scott Collins, the members of WDA (see section 7.2.2), deny any involvement in such extreme, antagonistic, or illegal activity. One respondent referred to such accusations as ‘QGC’s propaganda’.

For a period of about twelve months (between 2009 and 2011) (see Table 6.1), various anti-CSG activities were performed in and around the Tara subdivisions. Blockades continued to be WDA’s strategy, particularly to stop QGC’s construction of a pipeline passing through the subdivisions. In response, many complaints were made by the company mainly claiming that their staff members had been threatened at both the CSG project sites and in Tara town. The situation worsened until QGC finally instructed their employees to keep out of Tara town for safety reasons.

Two key points must be recalled here in order to provide the basis of a discussion about a further two anti-CSG groups in the Tara subdivisions. First, as discussed in section 7.1, the LTG movement has its genesis in the CSG conflict involving the ‘Blockies’ of the Tara subdivisions. The stigmatised ‘Blockies’ not only challenged the industry in the Western Downs, but also became responsible for the fastest-growing anti-CSG movement—the LTG Alliance. Drew Hutton, along with other environmentalists from New South Wales, including John Thompson (representing the Hunter Valley Protection Alliance13) were invited, welcomed, and assisted by the anti-CSG WDA. Second, WDA and their struggle against the industry functioned without any support from the

13 See the Hunter Valley Protection Alliance’s website at: http://huntervalleypretectionalliance.com/
neighbouring Agrarian community of Chinchilla, or Agrarian based groups BSA, AgForce, or the Tara Futures Group.

7.3.2 Gasfield Community Support Group (GCSG)

In early 2012, an interesting and significant transformation occurred in the localised conflict of the Tara subdivisions. A new group—the ‘Gasfield Community Support Group’ (GCSG)—emerged from the mother group, WDA, but with a profound change in the strategy of resistance, as well as the focus of CSG concerns. According to one key group member, the main objective was to establish a ‘support group’ in order to empower the residents of the subdivisions concerned with health impacts. I have already discussed the issue of health concerning the residents of the subdivisions from the stigmatised identity perspective in section 6.2.1. This section is confined to understanding the role of GCSG with regard to the CSG conflict. GCSG claimed to act as a ‘contact body’ between CSG companies, the residents, and regulatory authorities in order to communicate concerns while demanding that the project development ‘prove itself safe’. The group claims to represent around 30 families living in the subdivisions that are experiencing similar health issues and connects these impacts to the CSG activities. Therefore, the group mainly focuses on health issues; and it consistently calls for health investigations.

However, what is interesting and potentially confusing is that the GCSG group was formed and run by the same people who formed WDA. The new group GCSG became active at a time in which WDA almost ceased to exist. For instance, it was noticeable that the blog, Facebook page, and website of WDA went into hiatus. The group members also ceased fundraising and updating information. The question is: what motivated members of the WDA to establish GCSG? And why did they change their strategy? This will be discussed in detail after I present the objectives of the GCSG group.

According to the members of the GCSG, they came to realise that they needed a group that was not political or activist in nature, but purely a support group. Furthermore, they felt that any distinctions between ‘us and them’ or ‘right and wrong’ should be avoided. The group members also recognised the importance of dialogue and communication to address their issues and concerns. In contrast to the WDA, the new group, GCSG, did provide the members with credibility to negotiate with the CSG industry as WDA ‘the protestor group’ was too radical. Engaging with industry was not on their agenda.
At the time of writing, GCSG had conducted five meetings with different stakeholders including CSG companies, NGOs, the CSG-LNG Compliance Unit, and regulatory authorities. During 2012 and 2013, the support group organised fortnightly morning teas with industry-affected community members. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to observe a GCSG meeting, which was conducted on August 29, 2013, in the Chinchilla Catholic Church Hall. During the meeting, predictably, the atmosphere soon became one filled with aggressive encounters and heated arguments, and Ian Heiner (Director of the CSG Engagement, CSG Compliance Unit at Department of Natural Resources and Mines [DNRM]) was placed in the hot seat. After four hours, no progress had been made.

The GCSG was considered a promising platform, by the CSG industry and government. It provided a mechanism for community engagement and for responding to the concerns raised by the residents of the Tara’s subdivisions. Initially, the platform was well attended by various stakeholders, including the CSG industry, such as QGC and Origin, and other representatives from the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM), Lifeline (NGO), and members of the Catholic Church. The CSG industry sponsored the gatherings financially. For instance, QGC took responsibility for three meetings, paying for catering, travel, and mediation costs. Both DERM and the LNG Compliance Unit considered the meetings as an opportunity to engage with the concerned residents of the Tara subdivisions. The active role of QGC was appreciated by the members of GCSG and other stakeholders involved. However, QGC was soon accused of ‘hijacking’ the platform and the group members decided to transfer the responsibility of minute taking and the role of ‘Chair’ to a catholic priest in order to ensure neutrality.

The anti-CSG Blockies’ engagement with the CSG industry via the GCSG did not result in any reduction in terms of resistance, and Tara remained the centre of protests and blockades against the industry. By mid-2014, an unexpected outcome was observed in regards to the Blockies’ struggle against the industry. The group members ended the conflict and moved out of the Tara subdivisions, resulting in a sudden silence in the Tara subdivisions after years of confrontation with the CSG industry. My key research respondents representing GCSG, ―Diana‖ and “Matthew”, left the Tara subdivisions. “Matthew” stepped down as chair of the GCSG. “Diana” declined to comment on her move, but reassured her followers that she has not forgotten the affected families left behind. She further clarified that the churches have now taken over the group and advised any concerned residents to contact the church. During the same time, we learned that many individuals’ properties in the subdivisions had been bought by QGC, “to support the development of long-term infrastructure” (as stated by a company official) (McCarthy, 2014). Many subdivisions residents
believe that these anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ have been ‘silenced’ and ‘bought off’. More interestingly, within the ‘Blockies’ based anti-CSG group, these ‘sell outs’ have been criticised for compromising the movement in the subdivisions.

7.3.3 Internal Conflict within Tara Anti-CSG Groups: Emergence and Decline of Stop CSG Tara

I will now return to a question posed earlier in this section: what motivated the establishment of the GCSG in order attain what WDA or its convergence with the LTG movement could not achieve? To answer this question, we must consider both the ‘Blockies’ based anti-CSG groups and the national anti-CSG movement, as well as the interplay of both internal and external dynamics. Here, I refer to internal as the politics within the WDA and to external as the shift of power and focus of the broader anti-CSG movement under the LTG Alliance.

As discussed in the previous section, WDA acted as a ‘seed’ and influenced the process of launching the LTG movement; however, the establishment of LTG movement resulted in both advantages and disadvantages for WDA itself. On the one hand, LTG helped the WDA to attract a wider public and make their conflict legitimate; but, on the other hand, a dramatic power shift occurred. The growing LTG movement took control of the anti-CSG movement and its objectives and shifted their focus to New South Wales, where meetings are now being held, policies are being developed, and where the movement’s main focus is on CSG impacts, related to ground water and prime agricultural land. This simply diminished what WDA was fighting for in a stigmatised context. The founder of WDA expressed this discrepancy as: “We [‘Blockies’] are fighting for our life and they [LTG, environmentalists] are fighting for ideals” (“Matthew”, member of the Western Downs Alliance, personal interview, August 21, 2013).

Secondly, an internal rift within the WDA between active members of the group resulted in the formation of the GCSG. The rift was said to result from ‘interpersonal problems’. In addition to interpersonal problems, differences also emerged regarding strategy of resistance. Because of the power shift and altered focus of the LTG movement, the key members of WDA preferred to adopt a more cooperative, or negotiation-based strategy, which was in contrast to what they were doing initially (i.e., blockades, protests, hands-off Tara, and simply NO to CSG). This change in strategy was not well received by some of the group members and was perceived as compromising the movement and jeopardizing the three long, frustrating years of work (between 2009–2012). The key figure in opposition to this new negotiation-based strategy was Mr Dayne Pratzky, a young resident of the subdivisions, who had recently returned from the US where he was working for an
underground pipeline construction company. Mr Pratzky is also known by his now famous pseudonym, “The Frackman”. Consequently, he started another group on his own entitled Stop CSG Tara. He made it clear that the new group would be decidedly different from the GCSG and WDA and their new negotiation-based approach.

As noted in Table 6.1, after two intense years of anti-CSG activities (2010 and 2011) there was a period of approximately one year when there was not any noticeable anti-CSG activity performed in or around Tara the subdivisions by WDA. This period represents WDA’s new strategic approach and the presence of internal disputes. However, Table 6.1 also indicates a sudden increase in on-site actions, which occurred one after the other. Once again, the community of Tara made news headlines and was on anti-CSG frontline. Numerous anti-CSG activities and events were conducted, including the Tara surge, rolling blockades, protests, violent confrontations with CSG workers, and activists being placed under arrest. All of these actions were performed during 2013 by the new group, Stop CSG Tara, under the leadership of Mr Pratzky, “The Frackman”.

I have had the opportunity to observe and attended four major blockades and protests led by Stop CSG Tara. The first time I noticed the internal conflict among the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ was when I observed the continuous absence of key group members from the WDA or GCSG, such as “Matthew”, “Diana”, “Bruce”, and “Jamie”. This division became more apparent when I was in Tara to conduct formal fieldwork and when I was conducting interviews with members of WDA and GCSG.

In addition to the sudden revival of anti-CSG activities, a new two-pronged strategy was also observed, adopted by Stop CSG Tara. First, this new group was determined to conduct as many on-site actions as possible to ensure media attention and make their way into the news headlines. Second, the group adopted a media-oriented strategy which enabled them to successfully attract many celebrities and public faces, including people from the music industry. A strategy of self-projection was also noticeable. For example, “The Frackman” appeared at different venues across Australia, inviting people in Tara to anti-CSG events but referring to such events as “Dayne’s Party” and Dayne’s Car Pool Party”. In addition he has been cast in several documentaries that are currently available and a few that are still in production: Frackman14; 60 Minutes Australia’s ‘Undermined15’ and; The Project’s ‘Coal Seam Gas16’.

14 Frackman: (Online available: http://www.frackmanthemovie.com/)
15 60 Minutes Australia ‘Undermined’ (Online available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PELxZ3K2o0c)
16 ‘The Project’ Coal Seam Gas (Online available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sz9LHqEjiI).
In contrast to Stop CSG Tara, WDA and their new group, the GCSG, have always projected *collectiveness* and focused on mobilising *others* while remaining in the background (i.e., keeping their stigmatised *self* concealed). I personally observed how WDA successfully received support from many groups and individuals, especially from New South Wales, which further helped them to legitimise their conflict, and which also offered logistic and financial support for conducting successful blockades and protests. However, because of a new personal, self-focused, media-based strategy and without any support from the in-group (i.e., the residents of the subdivisions) which Stop CSG Tara adopted, the group soon lost its groundings within the subdivisions. Therefore, it was obvious that Stop CSG Tara would struggle to maintain its standing in the social context. Hence, as I expected, during late 2013, the group was shut down in the subdivisions and converted into another group, CSG Rescue NSW. The new group is now active in the Pilliga region of New South Wales and is currently resisting Santos CSG ventures.

In summary, the behavioural changes exhibited by the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups described in this chapter completely transformed the dynamic of the conflict in the Tara subdivisions. ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups failed to integrate themselves into the larger Agrarian communities of the Western Downs. Above all, the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ were vilified by the Tara Futures Group representing the residents of Tara town and the business community due to their pursuit of CSG industry. In section 7.2, we see that the Agrarian groups, BSA, AgForce, and the Tara Futures Group, emerged as more inclusive Agrarian identities and excluded both the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ and the LTG movement. In Chapter 6 we saw the antagonistic relationship between the Tara Agrarians and the residents of the Tara subdivisions, which became more acute during 2010 and was closely tied to the emerging CSG resistance organised by the stigmatised ‘Blockies’. It was increasingly apparent to WDA that it could not sustain the conflict in the presence of complete insulation imposed by the Agrarians and their groups. In November 2011, with the help of WDA, the LTG movement was established. From a social identity and social movement perspective, the convergence of stigmatised ‘Blockies’ with the LTG movement produced a context in which the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ was disguised under the movement’s identity. However, we later observed that the LTG movement shifted its focus to New South Wales. Soon after, in 2012, we also observed a dramatic change in the behaviour of WDA, in the shape of the emergence of two new groups: GCSG and Stop CSG Tara. GCSG emerged with a negotiation-based approach, while the other group continued to resist CSG project development through confrontation. At this point, however, we are not able to make a plausible explanation of the changing behaviours, detachment from the LTG movement, or conflict transformation. What is certain, however, is that the conflict transformed dramatically. Therefore, we are still in need of a
mechanism and a robust explanation to understand the convergence between the stigmatised identity, the movement, and behavioural changes.

So far I have outlined four important pieces of information: (1) the stigmatised social categorisation of the residents of the Tara subdivisions ‘Blockies’; (2) the convergence of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ with the LTG movement; (3) the complete disassociation of Agrarian-based groups from the Blockies’ struggle against the CSG industry; and, (4) a dramatic change in the behaviour of ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups. We also know from the research thus far that the emergence of the GCSG and Stop CSG Tara groups in 2012 and 2013, respectively, appear to coincide. From a social-identity perspective, we may have a plausible explanation for the convergence of the WDA with the LTG movement, which then facilitated the sustenance and legitimisation of localised conflict. However, we still lack the explanation behind the shift of the LTG movement to New South Wales given that we also know that the CSG industry was expanding at intensive scale in the Agrarian communities of the Western Downs. The overreaching questions are: why did the LTG movement fail to expand in the Agrarian communities? Why were the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ the only locals to be recruited by the LTG movement? These questions will be answered in Chapter 8. In Chapter 8, I highlight observations that may be drawn from the theoretical discussion in Chapter 2. Chapter 9 concludes the thesis and summarise the empirical research presented in earlier chapters.
The debate about developing CSG resources is highly complex and controversial. The conflict between the industry and local communities has significantly challenged both the CSG companies and government. In the case of the Western Downs of Queensland, conflict over environmental and health impacts has compelled the industry and regulatory bodies to commit to addressing communities’ concerns (e.g., Lloyd, Luke, & Boyd, 2013; GISERA, 2011, 2012, Williams & Walton, 2013; Queensland Health, 2013). Even so, as we have seen, this multifaceted conflict is not as simple as many researchers and commentators have led us to believe (e.g., Greer, Talbert, & Lockie, 2011; Carey, 2012; Adam, 2013; Lloyd, Luke, & Boyd, 2013; Scott & Shakespeare, 2013).

In the thesis to date, I have argued that one should not let the existing literature or the contemporary anti-CSG movement to lead one to think that the conflict in the Tara rural subdivisions is based on environmental or associated CSG impacts. This research has argued that the notion of stigma is the key thread linking the emergence of a localised conflict in the Tara rural subdivisions and the Blockies’ motivation to resist, which to date has been largely ignored. I argued that the conflict deeply intertwined with stigmatisation predates the CSG development.

The literature on stigmatised identities draws our attention to the much-ignored relational dynamic of the construct describing the interaction between the stigmatised and normals (Goffman, 1963; Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998). To understand this relational aspect of stigma, one must ask why a particular group with certain negative attributes is stigmatised (Crocker & Major, 1989), discriminated against (Link & Phelan, 2001), and becomes the most disadvantaged in their social setting (Druss et al., 2000; Link, 1987). This question of devaluation and stigmatisation is closely linked to being categorised according to negative physical or social attributes (Goffman, 1963). Obviously, stigmatisation cannot be derived without there being undesirable differences among groups or identities. Similarly, the literature has emphasised the role of power in the process of stigmatisation (Yang et al., 2007) by arguing that power within socio-political and economic settings determines how one is to be treated (Link & Phelan, 2001). In the context of Tara and conflict with CSG, I have combined these theoretical arguments to ask: (1) how boundaries are
drawn based on socio-cultural differences and justified in regional settings in a manner that determines an identity living under stigma; (2) what roles the stigmatised identity plays in nourishing a conflict when the identity challenges the extractive resource industry; and (3) what articulates the behaviour of the stigmatised individuals and groups in a situation when the social context no longer supports their resistance. Emphasising this approach, the conflict in the stigmatised context Tara rural subdivisions is unique, both in its emergence and transformation.

While using a stigmatised identity perspective, this research acknowledges that other contextual factors are also important. Therefore, the discussion proceeds as follows. First, I re-summarise the historical antagonism between the residents of the Tara subdivisions and the Tara Agrarians and interpret this through theory of stigma. This will be followed by a section explaining the unique stigmatised context which offered a fertile land for conflict emergence. The chapter will then explain how the stigma was managed, and the relationship between different identities in the context. I will clarify the nexus between the stigmatised identity and the social movement and the reasons behind the conflict transformation.

8.1 The History of the Blocks and Agrarian Domination: Construction of the Identities in 1980s

Since the establishment of the subdivisions in the 1980s, inequalities across different levels of the community reflected communal imbalance marked by several upheavals between the Tara Agrarians and ‘Blockies’. In Chapter 6, I have provided details about the establishment of the subdivisions, stigmatisation and the 40-year-old cleavage between the Agrarians and the new settlers. In addition, there is no doubt that little attention has been given to the region to improve the socio-economic situation faced by the community. This research noticed the stigmatisation of ‘Blockies’ based on three main observations: (1) ‘Blockies’ were considered outsiders; (2) the Tara rural subdivisions (‘Blocks’)) attracted those who were already rejected by society (alcoholics, drug addicts, unemployed, disabled etc.); and (3) the Blockies’ settlement in the midst of an Agrarian context was itself odd.

For the Agrarians the influx of ‘outsiders’ was not welcomed. In a similar manner to what many other studies have argued (Whitehead et al., 2001; Stafford & Scott, 1986; Major & O’Brien, 2005; Watkins & Jacoby, 2007), the presence of the ‘Blockies’ was perceived as a threat that ‘contaminated’ the social and cultural values of the Agrarians community—a threat because of negative attributes (Goffman, 1963), which were related to the residents of the subdivisions, who
were viewed as drug addicts, grubby, misfits, ferals\textsuperscript{17}, unemployed, dole bludgers, criminal offenders, alcoholics, and homeless etc. The residents of the subdivisions were held responsible for exposing the broader community to many social problems and creating a bad image to the outside world. Therefore, those who were living in the subdivisions were ‘marked’ as different (Watkins & Jacoby, 2007, p. 851) and as possessors of stigma, and were thus devalued (Goffman, 1963).

Consequently, the dichotomy of identities became embedded in the context which can now be distinguished as ‘Blockies’ and the Tara Agrarians. This distinction played a fundamental role in building social hierarchies within the context pronounced as an ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Link & Phelan, 2001). The term ‘Blockies’ itself was used to communicate negative social attributes possessed by the residents and widely pronounced by the Agrarians in the context to draw a distinction between the normals and the stigmatised. This social categorisation then also drove the neighbouring communities, including Chinchilla, Miles, Wandoan, Dalby, to perceive and evaluate the Blockies’ existence as stigmatised.

As expected theoretically, negative attributes and negative group identification fostered placement of ‘Blockies’ on the margins in order to shield the Agrarians’ social and cultural values or norms from being polluted. Social categorisation and bracketing in the subdivisions were the first steps towards exercising Blockies’ social exclusion (\textit{who belongs to where}). This identity-based cleavage based on ‘less desirables’ (Goffman, 1963, p. 3), I contend, justified the stigmatisation. Although, there was significant heterogeneity among the settlers in the subdivisions, the bifurcation still occurred based on socio-economic and cultural status/characteristics. I argue that this specific and generalised classification of ‘Blockies’ led to the isolation of all those who were living in the subdivisions and their becoming geographically bracketed by the Agrarians. The Tara subdivisions’ became a place possessing stigma synonymous with social disorders. Consistent with observations in Tara, the literature suggests that such a context gives rise to different identities based on social categorisation and also serves to arrange the stigmatised around a shared self-definition (Stewart & Brown, 2007; Langer, 2005; Østby, 2006).

Such stigmatised places, I argue, are exploited for various purposes, mainly by the normals. Labelling places obviously distinguishes one from another, for instance, Grønland Street in Oslo is named ‘Lille (little) Pakistan or Somalia’ indicating the ethnicity of the immigrants’ enclave. While not all place labels carry a stigma, the label of the Tara’s Blocks does.

\textsuperscript{17}Ferals are considered as poorly dressed, spoken, and educated people at the lower end of the socio-economic scale, residing on the edge of civilisation.
The consequences of the Blockies’ stigmatisation appeared in the form of a devalued status and thus discrimination (Druss et al., 2000; Hannem & Bruckert, 2012; Link & Phelan, 2001). Also, this research observed poor interpersonal relations and integration of ‘Blockies’ with the broader community. In Chapter 6, I explained these dimensions including both the relational and structural discrimination of ‘Blockies’, which was mainly observed in the form of limited or denied access to social and economic capital or opportunities.

While the poor planning of the subdivisions and the residents undoubtedly exacerbated the Blockies’ deprivation, the imposed social sanctions by the Agrarians were also key to the widening horizontal inequalities between the identities. In other words, disadvantage should be viewed as a consequence of stigmatisation. In addition, it was revealed during the fieldwork that ‘Blockies’ settling in the midst of the Agrarian space led to the psychological distress. Certainly, since the 1980s, it has been difficult for the ‘Blockies’ to align themselves with the Agrarian identity. Either in response or to cope with this stigmatisation, the ‘Blockies’ isolated themselves from the normals, thus leading to further poor socio-economic and well-being status. In brief, such an identity encounters stigma-induced discrimination at both a personal and structural level (Hannem & Bruckert, 2012).

It is also notable that, during the 1990s, the Tara Agrarians did realise the need of repairing the stigma. To some extent, the Agrarian perception was changing. However, the appearance of the CSG industry in the area once again placed the identities against each other, mainly because of contrasting CSG narratives (for details see Section 8.2). An important observation therefore needs to be made in the case of Tara which resonates with Goffman’s theory (1963). Even though the Agrarians did attempt to destigmatise and change the perception of the ‘Blockies’, the CSG development motivated a “transformation of the self from someone with a particular blemish into someone with a record of having corrected a particular stigma” (Goffman, 1963, p. 9).

Walton, McCrea, and Leonard's (2014) recent CSIRO-based study in the context of CSG, ‘Community wellbeing and responding to change’, is important to discuss here for two main reasons. First, the research reveals that in the community of Tara, “personal safety, community spirit, income sufficiency, community cohesion, social interaction, services and facilities, community participation, and employment and business opportunities” are at an unsatisfactory level (p. 31). The survey reports that the community of Tara is at a significantly lower level of overall wellbeing compared to the other communities in the Western Downs. Secondly, the survey indicates that only 9% of the Western Downs residents reject CSG development. Resistance was observed at the lowest level in Chinchilla (i.e., 2.02%) in contrast to Tara (i.e., 7.22%). The sample
comprised respondents that classified them as the residents of ‘in town’ and ‘out of town’. This research agrees with Walton et al (2014) regarding the socio-economic predicaments faced by the community of Tara and the resistance to CSG development. However, I argue that these views alone are inadequate to explain the poor wellbeing and why the conflict only emerged in the community of Tara. Therefore, we must consider the historical background of the establishment of the Tara subdivisions to understand where exactly their socio-economic issues and CSG conflicts reside. Unfortunately, this historical perspective is not well-known or documented so far. Hence, I complete the picture presented by Walton et al. (2014) by adding that the ‘Blockies’ of Tara in the Western Downs did not simply appear as low on the social wellbeing scale, but that the situation is intrinsically linked to the stigmatisation of the ‘Blockies’ residing in the subdivisions. I argue that we must not reduce or simply link the identity of the ‘Blockies’ with the two relatively homogeneous identities of the Agrarians of Tara and Chinchilla. The simplistic view of the conflict is that the agriculturalists of the Western Downs are resisting CSG development or that the community of Tara, as a whole, is against the expansion. Both of these notions are incorrect. Section 6.1 shows that, while the poorly planned Tara subdivisions host resistance against CSG development, their real opponents are the stigmatisers (the Tara Agrarians).

While the social mediation processes are mainly based on integration with the host community (the pre-existing identity), they are also affected by the amount of time it took to fill the area with personal meaning. Biographical construction is relevant to this research (Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Crocker & Major, 1989; Gans, 1962). Section 6.2 discussed the inter-identity relationships from the perspective of both the ‘Blockies’ and Tara Agrarians to understand how well the residents of the Tara subdivisions are connected or integrated within the community of Tara and also with the neighbouring Agrarian communities (e.g., Chinchilla, Cambey, Condamine, and Wandoan). In brief, the research findings revealed that, in addition to poor economic outcomes and wellbeing, the residents of the Tara subdivisions also have negative interpersonal outcomes. Although one can argue that settlement of the subdivisions and the influx of ‘outsiders’ is a relatively fresh phenomenon, as the subdivisions were only established during the early 1980s, since then, a clear separation and antagonism exists between the host (the Tara Agrarians) and the ‘Blockies’ with poor socio-cultural assimilation.

Based on the research findings and Goffman’s (1963) theory of stigma, I argue that the history of the Tara subdivisions in the midst of the predominant Agrarian identity explains both the inter-identity antagonism and the social construct of stigma. It is this context coupled with certain negative attributes attached to the incoming ‘outsiders’ that led the Agrarians to perceive the residents of the subdivisions as someone devalued and a social threat, and thus stigmatised. The
remainder of this discussion chapter is organised around five interrelated concerns, each serving to link the stigmatised identity with the CSG conflict.

The first concern involves the emergence of the CSG conflict in the subdivisions. I then discuss why health arose as the primary issue of the stigmatised Tara subdivisions-based anti-CSG groups. My third concern analyses the relationship between different identities within the area and their relationships with the CSG industry. Lastly, I explain the overreaching nexus between the stigmatised identity and the social movement (LTG movement); how the conflict transformed in the Tara subdivisions; why the conflict could not sustain itself; why the Tara subdivisions-based anti-CSG groups’ confrontational behaviour changed into negotiation when their stigmatisation characterised the process; and finally, I ascertain why the conflict entirely evaporated out of the stigmatised context.

8.2 Understanding the Emergence of CSG Conflict in the Tara Rural Subdivisions

Initially, the Tara Agrarians thought it was necessary to socially isolate the ‘Blockies’ to prevent any socio-cultural contamination. This exclusion, however, became a problem for the Tara Agrarians when the CSG industry appeared on the border of Tara. The moment the few residents of the subdivisions were contacted by QGC to negotiate pipeline construction in 2009, they began to organise themselves as the very first anti-CSG group in Australia: the Western Downs Alliance. The group became the frontline against project development by organising various blockades, protests etc.

The question before us here is why the ‘Blockies’ only reacted when the CSG industry commenced their activities in the subdivisions and not when the industry had already established intense infrastructure in the neighbouring community of Chinchilla and beyond, such as in Roma, Cecil Plains, Dalby, and Miles. The immediate and logical answer could be that the industry was then expanding in the subdivision, thus exposing the residents to various environmental and health problems. Also, in comparison to the scattered population in the Western Downs, the subdivisions’ population density is much higher and more closely settled. However, in the unique case of the Tara subdivisions and their stigmatised residents, Goffman’s (1963) theory of stigma helps us to consider alternative explanations of the conflict emergence.

Regardless of what instrumental or emotional values a place offers (Low & Altman, 1992; Relph, 1976; Rowles, 1983), the Tara subdivision is one to which a certain stigmatised social category applies. My research reveals that the expansion of CSG activities in the subdivisions represented an
intrusion into what Goffman refers to as a ‘back place’ (1963, p. 82). Consequently, the CSG industry had to face NIMBY syndrome (see e.g., Drew et al., 2002; Coppens, 2007; Freudenberg & Pastor, 1992; Menegaki & Kaliampakos, 2014). Resisting project development on the subdivision was a natural reaction and the means of self-preservation because the subdivision was a back place where the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ sustained their social being with their own kind and avoided social interaction with normals to minimise the chances of stigmatisation. The Blockies’ world was already divided into forbidden (Tara town area) and a back place (the subdivisions). The situation worsened when a clear place sanction was imposed on the known anti-CSG ‘characters’ so that the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ were not welcome at all in the forbidden place, thus limiting them to the back place. Consequently, they could only access the civil places where their spoiled biography would not be revealed, such as in New South Wales (e.g., Goffman, 1963). I argue that the conflict in the Western Downs emerged because the CSG companies became entangled with the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ when they encroached on their ‘back place’. The stigmatised context and the identity became the strength for the residents to mobilise against the industry.

A closer look from this perspective reveals that, although CSG development is happening at an intense scale in the neighbouring community of Chinchilla, not a single anti-CSG activity (blockade, protest, demonstration etc.) was organised by the ‘Blockies’ in Chinchilla or in the Tara town area (see Table 6.1 for a list of main anti-CSG activities and the locations). The use of the Tara subdivisions as back place was also observed during anti-CSG activities which were organized with the help of the LTG movement and activists from New South Wales.

However, the extreme anti-CSG position taken by the ‘Blockies’ worked against the stigmatiser, the Tara Agrarians. The question, though, is whether the extreme pro-CSG narrative of the Tara Agrarians has something to do with the extreme anti-CSG narrative of the ‘Blockies’. It is a difficult question which I have discussed in Section 8.4. My purpose here is to emphasise that two entirely different CSG-related positions emerged in the context and drove the debate over the dichotomies of identities, namely, the Tara Agrarians as pro-CSG versus the ‘Blockies’ as fiercely anti-CSG, and then also between the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ and the CSG industry. I analyse this dichotomy to understand the little-researched dynamics of interaction between the stigmatised and non-stigmatised (Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998). I argue that the Blockies’ identity was to some extent dormant until the CSG industry’s activities began in and around the back place. Before the CSG ventures, the Agrarians as normals insulated or disassociated themselves from the stigmatised ‘Blockies’. However, because of the emerged CSG conflict, both identities were forced into direct contact with each other, which became a source of discomfort for both.
Because of their distinct social identities, both perceived the CSG issue and its associated impacts in different ways. For the Tara Agrarians, the industry was considered as an economic opportunity with Tara struggling to sustain its declining community. The ‘Blockies’ invoked into their narrative the environmental damage and the associated erosion of their lifestyle and health allegedly caused by the CSG industry. It is important to note here that the anti-CSG position of the ‘Blockies’ threatened the economic interests of the Tara Agrarian who was their stigmatiser. The historical antagonism between them became more acute and eventually determined the politics of identities that go beyond the narrower understanding of the CSG conflict.

As a result of the Blockies’ struggle against the industry, antagonism was welcomed once again by the Tara Agrarians, this time induced by the CSG industry. It appeared as a conflict against the industry, however, the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ were struggling against their historical stigmatisation and self-rejection. The CSG industry provided an opportunity for the ‘Blockies’ to adopt an extreme position in the CSG debate which was tactically used to negotiate their stigmatised self.

The Tara Agrarians not only disassociated themselves from the Blockies’ struggle but pronounced it as meaningless with its health concerns being viewed as illegitimate and false. Another important question to be asked is why such a vocal pro-CSG narrative did not appear in Chinchilla, despite the existing pro- and anti-CSG narratives. I argue that the answer is tied to the unique contextual dynamics of Tara and that, in Chinchilla, the community is not fractured by distinct identities. Thus, the ‘Blockie-led’ CSG conflict had had little effect on Chinchilla residents.

8.3 Living in the ‘Blocks’: Stigma, Social Exclusion, CSG, and Perceived Health Impacts

In Chapter 2, I discussed the emotional and relational aspects of stigma while now I extend the concept of stigma to explain its implication on perceived or raised health issues. In the case of the subdivision-based anti-CSG groups, the overwhelming concerns were alleged impacts on health, such as bleeding noses, rashes, headaches, nausea, and rashes (see Sub-sections 6.2.1 and 7.3). While I do not take a definitive position at the legitimacy of these concerns, I do argue that greater cross-fertilisation of the literature on stigma (including place-based) and health is needed to consider the likelihood that concerns about health could in fact be linked to stigma rather than attributable to the resource industry. Then we will have a point of departure for our inquiry when I argue that, in the case of the Tara subdivisions, the CSG industry may not necessarily be to blame for exposing individuals to health risks. This will also help to explain why the Agrarian identities’ narrative about the CSG impacts is opposite to that of the stigmatised anti-CSG ‘Blockies’. The
core argument here is that the environmental and specifically the health impacts associated with CSG development might gloss over the identity issues that underlie the CSG conflict.

Recent literature has significantly contributed to the understanding of the relationship between place and health (Macintyre et al., 2002; Wakefield & McMullan, 2005; Gesler, 1992). Most pertinent is Watkins and Jacoby’s (2007) research into rural settings in that they insist that stigma and social exclusion faced by the individuals is essential to understanding the health impacts. A similar argument appears in the literature explaining the general health impacts of poverty among economically disadvantaged groups within a specific rural setting (e.g., Cloke & Little, 1997; Kempson & White, 2003; Asthana & Halliday, 2004). Also important to note is the agreement among scholars about the implication of stigma in relation to health. This further broadens the understanding of how and why stigmatised groups in a society are more exposed to health impacts and how they are related to stigma that defines social exclusion (Major & O’Brien, 2005; Reidpath et al., 2005; Blank et al., 1995). I link the literature on stigma and health to understand how perceived health impacts or risk perception relates to stigmatised identity relating to the CSG project development.

The case of the Tara subdivisions exemplifies the importance of a place’s socio-economic context (see discussion in Section 4.3). In addition to its unemployment and disadvantage, two predicaments emanated from the ‘Western Downs Health and Wellbeing Profile’ (WDRC, 2010) and Walton, McCrea, and Leonard’s (2014) recent study of the CSG ‘Community wellbeing and response to change’. First, the population represents an area with a high rate of physical inactivity, profound disability, and poor mental health compared to other communities in the Western Downs. Secondly, WDRC’s report reveals the highest rates of alcohol consumption, smoking, and psychological distress among the population that exposes it to greater health-related risks compared to any other community in the region. The data gathered from the residents of Tara town during the fieldwork confirms these findings and reveals the negative perception about the poor and the unhygienic living conditions of the residents settled in the subdivisions. The relevance of these observations is to argue that the Tara subdivisions and its residents were already subject to many health-related issues and dependencies before the CSG industry appeared on the map.

To exemplify, I present two related arguments: First, I explain possible reasons for the health impacts and their implications for the localised conflict; and second, I explore a possible psychological reaction by the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ due to the process of stigmatisation. The stigmatisation of ‘Blockies’ resulted in discrimination in the form of limited or denied access to socio-economic capital. This further widened the horizontal inequalities between the normals and
the stigmatised. In particular, the social exclusion of ‘Blockies’, either by the Tara Agrarians to protect their socio-cultural norms, or self-imposed to minimise the chances of stigmatisation, limited their access to social networks or a wider community support system which were important to cope with health-related issues. The importance of such social networks is undoubtedly connected to health-related issues (e.g., O’Brien et al., 1994; Blank et al., 1995).

Before I introduce the second argument, I will first place the CSG industry and Agrarians’ concerns in context. In Chapter 5, I have discussed at length the issues raised by the both Agrarians of Chinchilla and Tara with regard to project development. Although, the Agrarian group, BSA, believes that CSG development will impact on the health of local communities, their major focus has been on social impacts, the coexistence of agriculture with CSG, polices and regulations, and the issue of groundwater. Interestingly, the individual landholders interviewed in Chinchilla and Tara hosting CSG infrastructure are concerned with a range of CSG-related impacts, but none of them raised health as an impact. In contrast, the main concern of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ has been the issue of health. More interestingly, none of the anti-CSG residents of the Tara subdivisions has been hosting any CSG infrastructure on their properties; however they have been exposed to CSG activities in the vicinity of the subdivisions (such as the QGC Kenya Gasfield near Wieambilla estate and Origin’s Ironbark pilot project).

However, the question here is why the Agrarians hosting CSG infrastructure are not concerned with the health risks when they are more exposed to intense CSG related-activities both at a community level and also at the individual landholder level. Is it because of the foregoing discussion on the relationship between stigma, social exclusion, and health impacts? More in-depth study is needed to establish or dismiss this link. However, what we do know is that, because of the negativity or stigma assigned to the ‘Blockies’, their identity lacked their legitimacy to convince authorities, or even the population of the Western Downs that health is an issue.

In response to the alleged health impacts, the industry and concerned authorities including the Department of Health of the Queensland Government responded on two fronts. First, the investigations that were conducted encouraged the residents of Tara and also Chinchilla to register their health effects and consult a government medical team. The resultant reports of complaints were made publically available although they found no clear link between the raised health impacts in Tara and the CSG activities. The reports further contested that available evidence did not support the residents’ concerns that health issues resulted from exposure to the CSG emissions or any project-related activity (Queensland Health, 2013).
Secondly, an unfortunate local reaction by the local media, regional council, and the CSG industry simultaneously played out. The existing poor living and hygiene standards in the subdivisions were implied to be responsible for health issues. For instance, a local newspaper reported that: “No power, no sewerage, no worries says Tara ... It’s just the standard of living is not satisfactory in this day and age” (Casey, 2009; McCarthy, 2014). In addition, respondents from Tara town completely disassociated themselves from the alleged health issues because they considered them false and exaggerated. The Agrarians repeatedly said during interviews that the health issues resulted from poor hygienic and living standards.

Besides the constant reminder from the Tara Agrarians, echoed by the industry, the ‘Blockies’ were now a topic of public consumption. Their radical or militant actions against the industry placed them in the public spotlight far from the isolated (now lost) world of the Tara subdivisions. Thus, the Blockies’ actions were now accessible to the wider public and the Tara Agrarians used this noticeably to publicise the spoiled self of the anti-CSG individuals. This strategy suited the CSG industry because it marginalised their main opposition. They also pointed out the opportunism and inconsistency of shifting the focus from lifestyle and vegetation issues to health issues.

If we accept that the health ailments raised by the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ were not caused by the CSG activities then we might understand the complaints as a form of blame shifting for the poor health context that the Blockies found themselves in. Due to the scepticism that the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ have about science, authorities, and institutions they nurtured their beliefs as the only possible interpretation of their circumstances. This is a stage where stigma becomes more solidified, mature, and deep. The real root causes of the conflict or perceived health impacts: stigmatisation, marginalisation, self-rejection, and suffering fade into the background.

This behaviour can be considered as one of the extreme consequences of stigmatisation, that to interpret the situation in such a way as to derive comfort and simplify an individual’s suffering. Thus, the stigmatised self becomes unable to comprehend other ‘truths’. I also argue that perhaps this attitude becomes necessary to guard the self-esteem of those whose self has been rejected by the normals. Such a rejected, devalued, discredited self is left only to reside in a judgmental atmosphere controlled by oneself in a ‘back place’ without community support (e.g., Goffman, 1963; O’Brien et al., 1994; Blank et al., 1995). In the case of the Tara subdivisions, accusing the CSG industry of causing the health impacts could be considered an easier way to comprehend the situation and reject or conceal the negative attributes possessed by the identity. This stigmatised behaviour may also not be confined to CSG development because, if true in the subdivisions, CSG just offered a judgemental atmosphere, and other external foils could have easily replaced it.
8.4 Understanding Identity-based Organisations and their Relationship with the CSG Industry

In the following section I explain the relationships and conflicts between different identities. First, I discuss the relationship between the Agrarian groups from Chinchilla and Tara: the BSA and the Tara Futures Group. I then sketch the relationships between the Agrarians and the LTG movement. This is followed by an analysis of the relationships between the stigmatised ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups: WDA, GCSG, and Stop CSG Tara. Finally, I describe the relationship between the identity-based groups with the CSG industry.

8.4.1 The Agrarians and the Stigmatised ‘Blockies’

While in comparison to Chinchilla, the community of Tara is agriculturally marginal, there is a strongly shared identity. From this perspective, agriculturalists are the central component of the two studied Agrarian-based groups: the BSA and the Tara Futures Group. In Figure 1, the Agrarians’ groups are situated on the left. The BSA in particular has emerged as a unified voice for the identity in the wider Darling Downs region. In addition, both groups share similar strategies and objectives to raise their concerns about CSG development. While the figure notes the presence of AgForce, PRA and CCCC, this discussion is limited to the BSA.

![Figure 8.1: Identity-based organisations and their relationships with the CSG industry](image)

The ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups are presented on the right side of Figure 1: WDA, GCSG, and Stop CSG Tara. All three are united with two main commonalities. First, the groups share a common objective or motivation of stopping CSG project development. Second, all members of
these groups reside in the Tara rural subdivisions. The only difference among these groups can be located in their adopted strategies of resistance. For instance, both WDA (from 2009–2011) and Stop CSG Tara (from 2012–2013) pursued a confrontational approach in resisting project development (see Section 7.3). In contrast, during late 2012, a new group, GCSG, appeared with a negotiation-based approach for engaging industry. However, note that GCSG was established by the same members who organised WDA. What is important here is to understand that this shift in approach or transformation affected the localised conflict on two main fronts. First, Stop CSG Tara kept on pressuring the industry through the usual confrontation strategies. On the other hand, GCSG was attempting to become a legitimate actor in the conflict, as they had previously failed to attract the Agrarians to their side because negotiations with CSG were not on the agenda of WDA.

8.4.1.1 Cross Comparison between the Agrarian and ‘Blockie-based’ Organisations

I have previously outlined that the concerns of the Agrarian and ‘Blockie-based’ groups differed substantially (see Chapter 5 and Sections 7.2, 7.3 & 8.3), however, the ‘Blockie-based’ WDA did initially create an impression that the group represented the Agrarians of the Western Downs. The WDA failed to attract the Agrarians of the Western Downs to their cause. Even after the formation of GCSG and the adoption of a negotiation-based strategy the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups remained isolated.

My analysis of identity based intergroup relations reveals that the extreme position of the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups was repudiated by the dominant Agrarian-based groups. This exclusion occurred because the Agrarians mobilised through their own groups (i.e., BSA, PRA, AgForce & the Tara Futures Group). Further the Agrarian groups distanced themselves from the Blockies’ struggle against the industry. I argue that it was the notion of stigma that defined the exclusion of WDA, Stop CSG Tara, and GCSG.

Both Stop CSG Tara and WDA have been closely linked to the LTG movement. In fact, some of the group members, for example “Stephen”, are also full members of LTG. Various anti-CSG activities performed in the vicinity of the Tara subdivisions were organised with the help of the LTG movement. This highlights that WDA and Stop CSG Tara were part of the broader anti-CSG movement. Both the LTG movement and the ‘Blockie-based’ groups shared the same intention: to stop CSG development at any cost. However, they only differed over their means of resistance. For instance, the LTG movement claims to be non-violent, while the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups were more confrontational.
While ‘Blockie-based’ groups were excluded by the Agrarians, the LTG movement has also been marginalised by the Agrarians of both Chinchilla and Tara. One can observe a lack of organisational-level support between the Agrarians and the LTG movement. For instance, there is no space for or representation of the LTG movement in the BSA, AgForce, PRA, and the Tara Futures Group. This also explains why, in Chinchilla, we have witnessed no, or very little, confrontation on the ground compared to what has occurred in the Tara subdivisions. This also explains the failure of the LTG movement to persuade individual landholders hosting CSG infrastructure in the wider Western Downs of Queensland to be examples of victims of CSG for the national movement.

Before I conclude this section, there is another layer of analysis that offers a subtle distinction between the shared Agrarian identity of Chinchilla and Tara. What distinguishes the Tara Agrarians from Chinchilla is their use of an extreme pro-CSG narrative, to the extent that it appears in complete submission to the CSG industry. I argue that it was the presence of stigmatised identity in the complex context of Tara that led the Tara Agrarians to acquire such an extreme pro-CSG position. This unique dynamic which distinguishes the Tara Agrarians from those of Chinchilla is linked to the relationship between stigmatiser and stigmatised. This contrast emerged particularly when the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ attempted to challenge the economic interest of the dominant identity. These reasons are detailed in Section 8.5.

8.4.1.2 The Identities and CSG Industry Relations

The Agrarian-based groups not only show a common and unified identity but also a consistency in their relationship with the CSG industry. For instance, in the case of both Chinchilla and Tara, collaboration between Agrarians and different stakeholders is visible. The BSA since its establishment in March 2010 has successfully developed a persuasive and constructive relationship with the CSG companies and also with the wider CSG industry and government organisations: QRC, the Surat Basin Liaison Committees, various departmental offices, State and Federal politicians, APPEA, the GasField Commission, and the CSG-LNG compliance unit (see Section 7.2). The Agrarians’ willingness to engage with the industry has also proven to be fruitful in addressing diverse issues related to land use, negotiation and compensation, and legislative improvements. Figure 8.2 presents a model of identities and their relationship with the CSG industry.
In Figure 8.2, I do not intend to suggest that there is complete consensus between the Agrarians and the industry as there are still structural differences underlying many issues related to coexistence and to the current legislative approach towards project development. It is also on record that the BSA has called for a moratorium on CSG development until full scientific studies address uncertainties particularly related to the impact on groundwater aquifers. The group strongly believes that the unprecedented growth of CSG has proceeded despite a lack of monitoring and research. Yet, rather than taking a stance against project development, the BSA shows commitment to “working with industry and government in the hope we can achieve a CSG industry that preserves our groundwater resources, our lifestyle, and our ability to produce food and fibre for future generations” (the BSA website: http://notatancost.com.au/). This relationship indicates that the industry and relevant bodies are also part of the same wider goal of the Agrarians’ struggle: getting the balance right between agriculture, individual landholders, and the CSG industry (BSA, 2010).

Although, compared to Chinchilla, the community of Tara has not yet been impacted significantly by the industry, it has, however, had similar concerns about and position towards project development. In the community, the Tara Futures Group represents the voice of local businesses and the wider community and works closely with industry. The group recognises the importance of CSG development for economic development and thus publicly encourages the industry to expand its infrastructure in the community. In addition, the Tara Neighbourhood Centre, along with the
Tara Futures Group, represents the community on QGC and Origin’s Community Liaison Committees. However, as mentioned earlier, in comparison to the community of Chinchilla in general and the BSA in particular, the Tara Futures Group holds a very strong and bold pro-CSG narrative which is in open conflict with anti-CSG groups in the Tara subdivisions.

In contrast to the Agrarian-based groups in Chinchilla and Tara, the anti-CSG groups in the Tara subdivisions (WDA & Stop CSG Tara) have taken a more confrontational approach to the industry and performed a series of on-ground actions from 2009 to 2013. In Section 4.3, I provided a list of anti-CSG activities conducted by the groups, where many incidents became news headlines and pronounced the community as the frontline against the ‘CSG invasion’. In addition, I argue that the subdivision-based groups lacked any consistency in opposing the industry. This can be observed on two fronts: First, establishment of WDA and then its re-emergence in the form of GCSG with a dramatically changed approach and also the shift of Stop CSG Tara from the subdivisions to the Pilliga region under a new name, CSG Rescue NSW. Secondly, shifting concerns from first, echoing the negative impacts of the US shale-based experience to CSG, the impact on lifestyle, and vegetation, to then focusing on health risks. Compared to the Agrarian-based group, I argue, the anti-CSG groups in the Tara subdivisions are characterised by a lack of stability, consistency, and clear objectives against CSG project development.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this research has observed: a clear distinction between the identities of Agrarians (Chinchilla and Tara) and of the ‘Blockies’; the adoption of variant strategies to struggle against project development; and, a qualitative difference between the behaviours of distinct identities regarding the relationship with the industry. Therefore, this research explains why conflict emerged in the Tara subdivisions and not in Chinchilla by the identity differentiations and the presence of the ‘Blockies’ stigmatised identity. I argue that the different bases of the identities produced different consequences for the CSG industry as both identities struggle for their own causes within the boundaries of their identities, thus shaping a different relationship with the industry. I have also noted that the industry related more constructively with the shared identity groups (Agrarians of Chinchilla & Tara: BSA, AgForce, PRA, the Tara Futures Group), rather than with the stigmatised groups who, exhibited interpersonal or in-group divisions (WDA, Stop CSG Tara, and GCSG). Thus, the stigmatised not only lacked unity but also consistency in their concerns. These are the reasons why the Tara subdivisions-based anti-CSG groups could not sustain their conflict and the localised movement evaporated. In contrast, the Agrarian-based groups have sustained their relationship with the industry and continued to influence the CSG industry to coexist constructively with agriculture, to improve landholder relations, to improve communication, and to ensure a sustainable traditional agricultural industry.
8.5 Understanding the Nexus between the Stigmatised Identity and Social Movements

In this chapter, I have discussed the relevance of stigma and how identity influenced the inter-group relations with the resource industry. Therefore, I am now in a position to offer some thoughts on the under-researched and ill-defined nexus between social movements and stigmatised identity. Here, I will explain how and why the stigmatised anti-CSG groups from the Tara subdivisions became associated with the LTG movement and why they failed to relate to the Agrarian communities of the Western Downs, particularly the neighbouring community of Chinchilla. More specifically, in the case of Tara, I will elaborate on the ways in which the stigmatised identity converges with the movement, the nature of their relationship, and the implications of such convergence for the movement. This inquiry focuses on the ideology of the opposition to the CSG project (the LTG movement) but has no relationship with the root causes of the localised conflict (i.e., stigmatisation). To do this, I first identify various factors behind the process of convergence. I then explain the implications of various ‘identity works’ (Snow & Anderson, 1987) of both the Tara-based anti-CSG groups and the Agrarians of Chinchilla and Tara, the mechanism behind the convergence process, and lastly, the implications for the movement.

Before explaining the stigmatised identity and social movement relationship, I return to an important point made in Chapter 7. I discussed that the birthplace of the LTG movement in the Western Downs was a consequence of the conflict in the Tara subdivisions. WDA played an integral role in the establishment of the LTG movement because, between 2009 and 2011, WDA conducted various anti-CSG activities in and around the subdivisions area. However, it failed to attract the neighbouring Agrarian identity to legitimise its conflict and concerns about the health issues, and also to access the public realm. Many factors were behind this failure as have been discussed throughout this chapter. Consequently, it became necessary for the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ to seek or design a platform which could serve on four fronts: (1) biographical reconstruction through a movement’s identity; (2) seeking a positive reference point (a satisfactory identity); (3) forming a movement with imminent goals to guide their fight and strongly prosecute their cause; and (4) under the movement’s identity, concealing the stigma. Hence, in late 2011, WDA with the help of FoE and Drew Hutton established the national LTG movement.

8.5.1 The Identity Work Process: Identity Convergence and Construction

To understand the relationship between the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ and the LTG movement in the fight against CSG, the concept of ‘identity work’ needs to be considered. This concept helps to elucidate
two components: ‘identity convergence and identity construction’ (Snow & McAdam, 2000, p. 47). With regard to the first component, as I discussed in Section 2.4, identity work requires identification of a pre-existing identity in the context which shares the same beliefs, values, and objectives. The cases of Chinchilla and Tara offer a unique comparison where the presence and absence of CSG conflict can shine light on the pre-existing corresponding identity. I discussed in Section 6.2 that, before the LTG movement was established, the Tara subdivisions had already proven themselves as a conflicting constituency where, since 2009, only a small number of residents mobilised against the industry under the group WDA. When the LTG movement was established in 2011, it desperately needed on-ground examples of the social and environmental impacts related to the CSG industry. Thus, the stigmatised anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ became close allies as a corresponding identity for the newly established movement (ibid, 2000, p. 42). What we observed in the Western Downs region was that the anti-CSG motivated residents of the Tara subdivisions were exclusively targeted by the movement despite their identity being stigmatised and even though the root causes of the conflict had less to do with CSG project development.

In Chapter 2, while discussing the nexus between social movements and stigmatised identities, I used Snow and McAdam’s (2000) argument that the availability of a pre-existing identity is crucial to assist the process of convergence despite the contradictions of the stigmatised identity. The underlying cause of this contradiction is twofold: First, the stigmatised identity lacks a common identity because it resides in an individual context. Secondly, although the identity may be readily available to the movement and salient to the context, performing under a concealed identity necessary under the weight of stigmatisation is difficult. There is a real similarity here between these two points emanating from identity work and the stigmatised case of Tara. The LTG movement established itself on the pre-existing identity of the ‘Blockies’ and their already active organisation (WDA) was available as a corresponding identity to be converged under the movement’s collective identity. Therefore, the Tara context is problematic for the above analysis because it assumes that the link between the LTG movement and the stigmatised identity of the ‘Blockies’ is ideologically driven. This, however, is not realistic.

Essentially two lines of argument present: First, I have repeatedly argued that the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ failed to gain the Agrarians’ support under continual self-rejection and exclusion. This exclusion also arose because the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ were not allowed to seek or use the Agrarian identity to represent their conflict. Therefore, it became necessary to secure an identity which Andrews (1991) and Snow and McAdam (2000) refer to as a satisfactory identity. Also worth noting is that the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ selectively presented an environmental narrative in the debate under the umbrella of the LTG movement, which offered them a moral argument, a kind of
legitimacy when opposing the CSG project development. As a result, many environmentally related concerns became part of the Tara subdivision-based anti-CSG groups, which were not apparent earlier. The issue of groundwater, regulations and policies, and impacts on agricultural productivity exemplified these concerns. However, the issue of health remained the greatest concern of the stigmatised anti-CSG groups. One can also see this as a ‘change in self-concept’ (Kiecolt, 2000, p. 111) and a discontinuity of the past (Snow & McAdam, 200) wherein converging with the LTG movement helped to develop a *normalised* positive image (Goffman, 1963).

The second argument, using the movement’s identity and its goals as a pretext, interrelates with the first. I argue that the LTG movement provided the ‘Blockies’ with such an identity that was a positive reference point because, in such a network, there may be no relationship between the source of the *spoiled* identity and the goals of the movement (e.g., Kaplan & Liu, 2000). In the case of the anti-CSG Blockies’ correspondence and convergence with the LTG movement, no link can be found between the root causes of localised conflict, that is, the stigmatisation of ‘Blockies’ and the goals of the LTG movement. The conflict in the Tara subdivisions was motivated by underlying identity-based issues and not simply by the CSG industry-related perceived impacts on the environment or heath.

Existing research accords with these observations reminding us that many people use a social movement for their particular concerns by developing new identities (Castells, 2004; Mosher, 2002; Touraine, 1985; Zurcher & Snow, 1981; Snow & McAdam, 2000). I observed that the ‘Blockies’ were isolated and marginalised until the arrival of the CSG industry in the region. The stigmatised ‘Blockies’ found a new identity within the broader anti-CSG social movement.

These arguments raise two significant points about the broader anti-CSG movement (LTG movement). First, the literature suggests that an intrinsic relationship exists between place-based groups and social movements, which is fundamentally important to fuelling and sustaining the social movement (e.g., Sklair, 1995; Dicken et al., 2001; Hibbard & Madsen, 2003). Similarly, the case of Tara subdivisions shows that the relationship between the anti-CSG groups and the broader anti-CSG movement was intimate. The Tara subdivision-based anti-CSG groups sourced the informational, logistical, financial, and political resources of the movement to critically help them to perform anti-CSG activities between 2011 and 2013. In addition, the LTG movement had necessary ingredients that the stigmatised individuals were lacking: collective identity, political influence, firm objectives, unity, and ‘legitimate’ concerns.

In the context of a stigmatised identity, this dimension of a movement has been widely ignored in the literature. All anti-CSG activities were organised and performed exclusively in the *back space*,...
the Tara subdivisions, and were organised with the help of the LTG movement. This relationship was used by the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ to strengthen the dwindling conflict in the Tara subdivisions. On the other hand, the stigmatised identity provided to the national movement the very first examples of CSG ‘victims’ who appeared as the faces against the industry, and whom the LTG movement needed. “I was looking for a group that would take the resistance to the resource industry to a new and more militant level” (Hutton, 2013). This also served the movement to expand its geographical or multi-scalar presence. Indeed, we have good reason to recognise such organised coordination in the case of anti-CSG activities performed in the Tara subdivisions (i.e., blockades, rallies, demonstrations, and onsite activism). What is clear, however, is that this is exactly where the flagged collective identity of the movement blurs what should be distinct identities, namely normals and stigmatised identity.

Second, although this research is primarily concerned with the conflict emergence in Tara, one implication is that the internal identity cleavage between the Tara Agrarians and ‘Blockies’, the external role of the LTG movement, and Chinchilla’s distancing from the movement and the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ are all strongly interconnected. I thus argue that a combined analysis is necessary. As discussed in Section 7.1, the LTG movement’s main goal is to protect the prime agricultural land from CSG and other mining activities. In view of this, the Western Downs is the region where CSG is expanding, competing, and coexisting with predominantly agricultural land. However, that the LTG movement was not only marginalised but also discouraged by the Agrarians of Chinchilla is evident. This does not mean that the communities of rural Queensland are not concerned with CSG development, or that the absence of collective actions indicates an ‘unnatural’ relationship between the environmentalists and the politically conservative landscape of rural Queensland. While I argue that the Agrarians already had a strong enough common identity to struggle against the industry, I provide three reasons behind the LTG movement’s failure at identity work and in winning the acceptance of Agrarian communities. The first is that earlier environmental campaigns resulted in the Queensland Vegetation Management Act, which placed restrictions on the practice of land clearing. During that time, Drew Hutton (the founder of the LTG movement) was the face of the Queensland Greens and was a key instigator of the enforcement law. Therefore, for the Agrarians, Mr Hutton was blamed for the laws which led to strong anti-environmentalist feelings in the Darling Downs. In 2011, when the LTG movement attempted to expand in the Western Downs, particularly in the Upper Downs (Chinchilla, Wandoan, Miles, the regions mostly affected by the vegetation management plans), the movement was not welcomed by the Agrarians. Evidently, it would be surprising to see any of the triangular LTG signs hanging on any farmer’s land in Chinchilla or Wandoan.
At first, many were cautious about me, because farmers and environmentalists had been on opposite sides of the fence on many contentious issues. At one farm on the Western Downs, I met Wayne Dennis who said, “You’re the bastard who caused all my problems in the first place” (meaning the tree clearing laws passed by the state government in 1999). However, when I asked if that meant he didn’t want to talk to me, he said, “No, of course, not. Come in have a cup of tea. Let me tell you about those bloody gas companies” (Hutton, 2013, p. 95)

Second, there is a different understanding of the CSG issue amongst both the Agrarians and the LTG movement. For instance, Agrarians believe the LTG movement’s intention to stop CSG at any cost is too narrow and idealistic a premise. Drew Hutton (2013) said that the LTG movement “would not do it as the farmers organisations or how the BSA wanted to, by accepting that the [CSG] companies were too big to fight, and so we should negotiate the best deal we could get straight away” (p. 101) In Section 7.2, I argued that while the Agrarian-based groups recognise the significance of CSG development for the diversification of the rural economy, they insist on retaining a right balance between the competing industries. Therefore, the absence of the Agrarians in the social movement spearheaded by LTG is also closely linked to the objectives of the movement and the differences based on distinct identities. During my fieldwork, I observed this lack of synchrony especially throughout the protests and other anti-CSG activities performed in Tara rural subdivisions, where attendance by Agrarians was never visible. In addition, the Agrarians held conferences and meetings (PRA, BSA, & AgForce) at which the LTG movement or its associated allies were not invited. A landholder from Chinchilla whom I interviewed mentioned that the members of the LTG movement or other environmentalists are guided by a particular ideology which does not represent the Agrarians or their concerns or grievances. He further added that the Agrarians are not against CSG but struggle to protect landholder rights and ensure agricultural sustainability.

Although, this research is limited to understanding the conflict in the Western Downs of Queensland, the situation of New South Wales is not so different. For instance, Section 1.5 described the victory of Bentley at the blockade site where more than 2,000 people massed beside the property of a 44 year old farmer. His willingness to host the CSG activity on his land became a nightmare for him and his family when hundreds of protestors camped around their property. He labelled the protestors ‘imported green extremists’ and ‘carbon phobic’ when they ‘criminally harassed farmers’ and ‘divided the local community’. He claimed about the blockade: “it’s not about the farmers but a fundamental hatred of mining or any fossil fuel extraction’ (Devine, 2014). While the concerns regarding CSG development on prime agricultural land are very real, the
farmers and many interviewed community members and individual landholders hosting CSG infrastructure in the community of Chinchilla perceived that the ‘professional activists’ are exploiting their concerns for self-serving interests.

The third reason holds that the LTG movement was established in the Tara subdivisions with the help of the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ but without any contributions from the Agrarians of Chinchilla or Tara in general. This also indicates that: (1) both the stigmatised identity-based groups and the LTG movement did not show much interest in the links between the Agrarian communities of Chinchilla and Tara; and (2) the LTG movement either failed to persuade the Agrarians as a corresponding identity, or the Agrarians were not interested in seeking the movement’s identity. Nevertheless, there were structural differences and disagreements between the Agrarians and the LTG movement. The alliance between the LTG movement and the marginalised anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ observed by the Agrarians consequently reduced the possibility of a convergence of the Agrarians and the LTG movement.

When one considers that LTG specifically targeted the ‘Blockies’, Agrarians articulated their concerns and issues through their own identity. Convergence with the LTG movement on its terms was not a viable option for the Agrarians anyway, not only because of the divergent understanding of the CSG issue but also due to philosophical and political disagreement. For instance, the BSA, AgForce, and the Tara Futures Group did not share common concerns with the LTG movement and there was no formal or informal association between them. In response, the Agrarians mobilised themselves through forming their own identity-based groups. For instance, the BSA and PRA were established during late 2010 in reaction to the WDA that was formed in 2009 and the LTG movement in November 2010. Formation of the BSA and activation of the pre-existing AgForce helped the Agrarians to frame the CSG debate on their own terms. Therefore, because of the lack of goal uniformity these distinct identities (i.e., the LTG movement, the stigmatised ‘Blockies’, and the Agrarians) must be analysed in a more thorough way based on an identity understanding.

Nevertheless, because of the rapid increase in CSG development in Queensland, Hutton does claim the emergence of an unholy alliance between the farmers and environmentalists (the natural enemies). For instance, Hutton (2013) recalls his speech at a rally conducted by Save Our Darling Downs (SODD) in May 2010 (before the LTG movement was established): “There was a lot of

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18 SODD is an agricultural-based group in the region active in opposing CSG development, particularly in the prime agricultural area surrounding the Condamine Alluvium Floodplain. This group is openly calling for a moratorium on project development with their strategies of resistance involving peaceful protests, rallies, and a non-cooperation approach with the industry. On May 19, 2010, the SODD group organised a protest in Waverley, Cecil Palins, with more than 400 farmers protesting against the Arrow Energy plan to drill CSG wells on the black soil plains producing cotton and sorghum (Hutton, 2013). There is a close association between the BSA, PRA, and SODD.
publicity about this new green-farmer alliance and ‘Queensland Country Life’ did some very positive media on me. This was ironic, given that a decade earlier I was one of the main objects of hatred by country media” (p. 96). This relationship, however, can only be described as weak ties. In addition, links might be observed on an individual basis, there remains an ample disconnect between the Agrarian-based groups (i.e., BSA, PRA, & AgForce) and the environmentalists. This situation can be described using the concept of ‘identity consolidation’ (Snow & McAdam, 2000, p. 50), which refers to a relationship between two distinct incompatible identities (because of prevailing differences in subcultures, traditions, or politics). As Doyle and Kellow (1995, p. 90) argue:

[It] is the common goal or ideology that binds the participants together. In most cases these goals or shared values are specifically issue-oriented, whether based on an environmental campaign or a particular type of a political system. These interconnecting lines ignore organisational and groups’ boundaries, for these networks fundamentally are concerned with relationships between individuals operating inside and outside other formal and informal collective forms.

8.5.2 The Mechanism for Identity Convergence

Yet, the challenge for the LTG movement was always to find a mechanism which could enable convergence (Snow & McAdam, 2000). This mechanism is important because the LTG movement is currently uniting local and regional actors. The previous lack of attention to grassroots collective action and group convergence is indeed puzzling especially when we observe that locally contentious collective action has become an everyday way of protesting against the CSG industry.

In addition, convergence in the form of a loose or strong association of communities has enabled the movement to be sustained over the years and expand into different regions across Australia. For instance, different on-ground activities have been organised nationwide with strong localised network ties in communities such as Bentley, Tara, Gloucester, Pilliga, Casino, and Lismore. The problem is to recognise the entrapping mechanism responsible for the convergence between the LTG movement and corresponding identities at a community level. In Chapter 7, I examined the operational structure of the movement and revealed three strategies used to stimulate convergence with pre-existing identities. As they apply to the CSG conflict in the Tara subdivisions and the convergence of stigmatised anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ with the LTG movement, these strategies comprise: (1) communication and information sharing (the role of social media); (2) mutual support and solidarity (providing finance, skills, and voice to marginalised groups); and (3) coordination of
on-ground actions (collective blockades, demonstration and protests). I deal now with the first and the third of these.

First, the significant support offered by the LTG movement to the anti-CSG groups in the Tara subdivisions is evident. This helped the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ to organise successful protests and blockades to strengthen their conflict in the absence of Agrarian participation. The mechanism for mediating the process of ‘identity convergence’ and ‘identity construction’ was very visible during many ‘demonstration events’ (Snow & McAdam, 2000, pp. 49-54). Two examples are notable: the anti-CSG events at the Tara Show Ground (on May 1-5, 2011) and the ‘Tara Surge’ (a six-day blockade campaign on May 20-25, 2013). Through this convergence, WDA sourced both financial and logistical support especially to carry out the on-ground actions against QGC. We can also understand this relationship through push and pull factors which will further strengthen the argument regarding the movement’s failure to network with the Agrarians. The push factor refers to the attitude of the Agrarians of Tara and Chinchilla who, from the beginning, distanced themselves from the localised conflict and the LTG movement, and thus pushed the outsider activists to the Tara subdivisions. This Agrarian attitude certainly limited the movement by confining them to network only with the stigmatised groups operating in the Tara subdivisions—the back place. This also indicates the disregard Agrarians felt for the stigmatised identity and its conflict or, in other words, ‘places on the margin’ (Shields, 1991). However, it is not just the push factor that has enabled the outsiders to link themselves to the stigmatised identity. There is an alternative pull factor that attracted and welcomed the outsiders. This helped WDA and subsequently Stop CSG Tara to show numbers and strength. To achieve this, the subdivision-based anti-CSG groups moved to invite and motivate various groups and people from distant places; the overwhelming response came from New South Wales. The most notable anti-CSG event was organised in 2013 by Stop CSG Tara under the leadership of the “Frackman” attracting around 300 people.

Secondly, social media has dramatically increased the ability of contemporary movements to act and react through their own ‘digital bubbles’. Cleaver (1999) terms the development as an “electronic fabric of struggle” (p. 3). The participation of different groups in these virtual networks has become significant in contemporary times (Jones, 2011; Castells, 2004; Keck & Sikkink, 1998). For the LTG movement, this offered unique possibilities for connecting with distant groups and organising anti-CSG activities. The numbers of anti-CSG groups on social media are astounding (see Sub-section 7.1.1). This economical and uncontrolled medium of communication has expedited and simplified the flow of information, by-passed traditional media, controlled the hierarchies of communication, decentralised the organisation of the movement (e.g., Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2002; Garrett, 2006), and, more importantly, eased the process of convergence with the
corresponding identities or groups with whom the movement had no alternative social links. The contemporary power of social media remains immeasurable as a resource for current social movements and the convergence of their distinct and distant identities (Bennett & Segerberg, 2011).

Also, there are some external urban based groups, such as Bridging the Divide Inc., which have acted as a third party to establish a communication link between socio-politically distinct identities, such as the Agrarians and stigmatised ‘Blockies’, and Agrarians and environmentalists. Bridging the Divide Inc. is a Brisbane-based non-for-profit organisation focusing on grassroots communication and support between rural and urban Queensland. I have personally been involved with the group, attended their meetings, and gone on their trips to the Western Downs region. Whether the Agrarians acknowledge it, or not, they receive information from such groups which adds content to the network of the LTG movement.

Because of this decentralised and complex networking around the movement, conceptualising the association of individuals with a particular group when they overlap with others is difficult (e.g., Doyle & Kellow, 1995). The issue here is that the complex web of the social movement disguises the distinctiveness of identities and can thus confuse the root causes of conflict, as in the case of Tara and its rural subdivisions. This may also remove the so-called expansion of the movement from the adherents’ control.

Accordingly, Klandermans and de Weerd (2000) argue that, “individuals may identify with a cause without identifying with [the] group or organisations that work for the cause” thus limiting a collective identity (p. 75). This is because a collective identity must be shared characteristically and emotionally. This is exactly the case with Chinchilla’s Agrarians and the LTG movement. Although, many farmers and community members are against the CSG development, they do not identify with the movement. The Agrarians have mobilised under different group identities.

8.5.3 Implications for the Movement

Despite the theoretical argument that social movements may shift their focus or ground to another issue or venue, participants or identities maintain their struggle under the influence of the movement (Meyer & Whittier, 1994; Sklair, 1995; Bosco, 2001; Alger, 1997) because the movement has to preserve its ideological philosophy (Castells, 2004; Pichardo, 1997). Indeed, the case of Tara rural subdivisions contradicts this argument regarding maintaining identities and the social movement because the CSG conflict transformation influenced different outcomes to what the literature predicts. It is precisely this argument that is central to my account of the stigmatised identity and its relationship with the social movement. My argument here must be distinguished
from the contention about the coherent struggle needed to change the “discourses about a particular topic” (Meyer & Whittier, 1994, p. 280). Conversely, the site of contestation for ‘Blockie-based’ resistance was determined by self-rejection, stigmatisation, and discrimination associated with the struggle. Therefore, the convergence of anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ with the LTG movement is itself confirmation of contradiction.

However, the point at issue about the stigmatised identity is the consequence of shifting from the stigmatised context to another suitable one. For example, soon after the LTG movement was established in Warra, Queensland, the movement shifted to New South Wales with multiple reasons behind this shift, including conservative rural politics and the presence of a distinct strong Agrarian identity which prevented the movement from expanding. I also demonstrated that no convergence of the Agrarians’ collective identity is level with that of the movement. Therefore, the LTG movement was mainly relying on the stigmatised anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ of Tara subdivisions.

However, as soon as the LTG movement shifted its focus to New South Wales, the behaviour and stance of Blockies’ based anti-CSG groups dramatically transformed from conflict to negotiation. This transformation resulted from the LTG movement’s New South Wales shift and the accompanying ‘power shift’ that challenged the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups. The LTG movement was now focusing on New South Wales and running meetings, conducting rallies, and strategising anti-CSG priorities. More importantly, the movement focused more strongly on the issues of environment, water, agricultural productivity, and protecting prime agricultural land from CSG development. This focus marginalised to a large extent the issues of the Tara subdivision-based anti-CSG groups who were thus isolated in their struggle.

Despite the success achieved through impressive coordination between ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups and the LTG movement, significant differences remain within the movement. A member of WDA said of the differences, “We are fighting for our lives; they are fighting for ideals” (“Matthew”, member of the Western Downs Alliance, Personal interview, August 21, 2013). I argue that the motivation behind the convergence was to rehabilitate the stigmatised identity, conceal or dilute the label of ‘Blockies’, and find a positive reference point. The stigmatised/movement link became even more complex when the Blockie-based anti-CSG groups attempted to act against the LTG movement, by dramatically changing strategy from confrontation to negotiation. This also points to the fact that stigmatised-based conflict is always involved in the realities of a social context.

To further illustrate the above argument about the nexus between the stigmatised identity and the movement, let us consider two possibilities. First, let us agree with what the LTG movement
claims: that the anti-CSG movement is a cohesive force held by its ‘collective vision’, a common enemy (the CSG & mining industry) and driven by an ideological agenda. This means that the movement remains unwilling to negotiate with industry because they differ ideologically to the extent of claiming no mutual ground or understanding between each other. For instance, neither LTG, FoE, nor WDA, found room to negotiate with the CSG industry under the belief that their ‘collectiveness’ can avert any CSG development.

If we agree with the argument that the stigmatised identity is ‘purposely affiliated’ or converged with the movement, the root causes of localised conflict would not relate to the movement’s objectives. Then certainly, if and when the stigmatised identity would be ready to negotiate their rejected self with the CSG industry or with the stigmatiser, this will leave the movement with fractures. This possibility also depends on two contextual factors. First is the strength and legitimacy of an identity, such as, in Tara rural subdivisions, the development of a ‘negotiating’ group (GCSG) from the genesis of a conflictual, non-negotiating group (WDA). This change in the behaviour and approach towards the CSG development occurred because the stigmatised member of WDA failed to sustain and legitimise the CSG conflict in the Tara subdivisions. The LTG movement’s shift to New South Wales played an important role in this abrupt conflict transformation. Second, the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups encountered an intense pro-CSG narrative or reaction because of their extreme position. To this end, Bebbington et al (2008) argues that, once a movement is confronted by an equal force, it is likely to be unsuccessful as was exactly the case in Tara. There, the Blockies’ anti-CSG narrative was openly and equally confronted by the Tara Agrarians who focused primarily on disclosing the stigma to the outside world and completely disassociating themselves from the mobilised anti-CSG groups. Apart from the Tara Futures Group and its mobilisation against the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ of the Tara subdivisions, the ‘Blockies’ also lacked support from the agriculturalists of Chinchilla thus exemplifying a strong counter-narrative in the context. However, I add to Bebbington and colleagues’ argument that in the case of Tara, the presence of a strong pro-CSG narrative was only because of the presence of the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ who were perceived as a threat to the socio-cultural values and norms of the normals and the economic opportunities brought by the industry.

Further to my earlier discussion about the nexus between anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ and the LTG movement, the conflict in the subdivisions was not directly related to the CSG impacts such as the impact on groundwater aquifers, or the issue of environmental sustainability. The ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups were resisting CSG by claiming the presence of environmental impacts but this was only a pretext. The root cause of the conflict was the quest to renegotiate their stigmatised identity and leave the Tara subdivisions to dissolve the imposed stigma—the label ‘Blockie’
intertwined with the ‘Blocks’. Therefore, the shift of the LTG movement to New South Wales virtually said that the movement does not necessarily recognise or support what the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ are struggling for and the movement was thus not motivated for or ready to take on the burden of the courtesy stigma (Goffman, 1963).

In reaction, as discussed previously, a new group ‘Gasfield Community Support Group’ (GCSG) was established by the same members who had organised under WDA. Although the formation of GCSG could be confusing to many, it was a natural and rational decision. I argue that this transformation occurred because the participants realised that the geographic shift of LTG meant a loss of positive reference point, the absence of which meant being stigmatised, discredited, and socially excluded without any support from other groups or identities within the context. This new group’s members attempted to negotiate their identity and this practical aspect has been discussed in Section 8.7. Hence, the case of Tara clearly explains that the stigmatised identity may dislocate the movement.

Once we have acknowledged the detachment of the stigmatised Tara subdivisions-based anti-CSG groups from the LTG movement, we can then grasp that, although the LTG movement was grafted in the Tara subdivision-based conflict, the movement lost support as WDA ceased to exist and GCSG was persuaded through negotiation to engage with the CSG industry. Consequently, it is not coincidental that, during 2011 and 2012, we observed complete ‘silence’ until a new group ‘Stop CSG Tara’ emerged. This exposed the LTG movement to some difficulties because the conflict transformation was happening at a time when the LTG movement was expanding in different geographies and successfully resisting project development in Bentley, Gloucester, Pilliga, and Coonabarabran. Both the movement and localised conflicts needed to gain strength by changing the weak and vulnerable behaviour exhibited by the stigmatised identity.

Three arguments conclude this section. First, the LTG movement did not understand the social reality of the context and acted blindly as an instrument (as a pre-text) of the stigmatised identity. Second, the nexus between the stigmatised and the movement is tied to the local dynamics rather than the national or ideological agendas against CSG development. Therefore, the stigmatised identity responds to the social realities which most likely impoverish the movement. Lastly, and most importantly, I argue that it is inevitable that the stigmatised must view their identity through the normals’ eyes. In the case of Tara subdivisions, I interpret that the objective of the members of the new group ‘GCSG’ did not include working within the principles of the LTG movement but were to align with the objectives those Agrarians could accept. The following section generally (but more specifically in Sub-section 8.6.2) will confirm and strengthen these arguments.
8.6 Understanding Conflict Transformation

Without understanding the conflict transformation from a stigmatised identity perspective, one can confuse cause with effect. However, first we need to think carefully about the profound influence of the previously discussed disconnect between the Agrarians and the stigmatised anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ because it will lead us to the point where localised conflict started to transform. In this section, I discuss the strategies adopted by the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ to help them manage the identity and carefully craft the conflict with the CSG industry. This discussion provides necessary elements to understand the conflict transformation expressed in Sub-section 8.6.2.

8.6.1 Managing the Stigmatised Identity and ‘the Conflict’

To understand the significance of the stigmatised identity in the context of the CSG conflict, I now closely examine the stigma management strategies adopted by the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’. In Chapter 2, Sub-section 2.3.2, I offer a coherent theoretical route to understanding how an identity manages stigma and the identity reacts behaviourally. This research understands the stigma management strategies applied within a complex context, such as in the case of Tara and its rural subdivisions. This also leads to understanding the role of the identity and its implication when confronting the resource industry and when approaching an ideologically driven movement. This section will particularly help one to understand the carefully planned conflict by ‘Blockies’ against the CSG industry and the previously discussed use of the LTG movement’s identity as a positive reference point.

The research analysis indicates that the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups’ strategies fit quite well with the map of stigma management provided by Goffman (1963). I summarised in Figure 8.1 the framework explaining the interplay of stigmatised identity with the CSG industry, the Blockies’ management of stigma including convergence with the LTG movement, and also the outcome of the conflict. In addition to Goffman (1963) the discussed framework draws from Burke (1991) and the consequences of stigmatisation (Hannem & Bruckert, 2012; Link & Phelan, 2001).

The literature suggests that the process of stigmatisation is relational in nature and demands self-verification (e.g., Burke, 1991; Crocker & Major, 1989; Kaufman & Johnson, 2004; see also Stets & Burke, 1994). I similarly argue that, when a small number of anti-CSG motivated ‘Blockies’ started to resist the CSG industry and develop a counter narrative against the stigmatiser (the Tara Agrarians), they were well aware that they were stigmatised. In evidence, this research observed that before WDA the group was briefly formed under the banner of ‘www.blockies.com’. The website openly disclosed the Blockies’ identity and explicitly indicated that they were against CSG
development. However, later the website was ceased and the identity re-presented itself under a new name of the Western Downs Alliance (see section, 7.3).

The action suggests that a specific identity possessed with negative attributes (from the stigmatiser’s perspective) was revealed by the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’. It also represents a discrepancy between what the ‘Blockies’ are and what they might or want to be. Goffman (1963) interprets such a discrepancy as between stigmatised actual and virtual social identities. This also reveals the consistencies between one’s ‘self-perception’ and the perception among the normals (Stets & Burke, 1994). In Section 2.3, I argued that such self-verification defines the behaviour of a stigmatised identity and how it attempts to adjust. In the remainder of this section, I present four strategies employed by the stigmatised identity: (1) bifurcating the Blockies’ identity; (2) seeking selective networking; (3) using the back place; and (4) manipulating self-presentation.

First, Goffman (1963) advances our understanding of managing stigma through the notion of creating sub-hierarchies within stigmatised groups. This points to a unique tendency within the stigmatised identity to detach from in-group members. While this appears to be a protest against their group members, it can simultaneously be considered as an attempt to reach the normals’ sphere or an attempt to normalise the stigma. In Goffman’s (1963) words, this distinguishes the less stigmatised from more stigmatised. Similarly, disassociation within the Blockies’ actual reference group was well observed but mainly against those who were anti-CSG motivated. The anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ recognised that, because of their stance against the industry, they were socio-economically excluded from the wider community, a kind of social boycott. The Tara Agrarians in particular utterly disowned any CSG activity or association with the subdivision-based anti-CSG ‘Blockies’, referring to them as a tiny minority fraudulently representing the community of Tara. Section 6.2 provides much empirical evidence of such behaviour within the Blockies’ identity and also of the disassociation with hostility by the Tara Agrarians.

Second, Goffman (1963) recognises selective social networking as a strategy which helps stigmatised individuals to deal with the stigma. This is a strategy in which the identity manages itself in various social situations (e.g., Anderson, Snow, & Cress, 1994). Similar to what Goffman (1963) argues, the case of the Tara subdivisions reveals that the anti-CSG individuals and groups engaged them in particular social networks and also approached those support groups that were mainly sourced from outside the context, predominantly New South Wales. This outsourced networking was also observed during different on-ground actions performed in the subdivisions (e.g., blockades, protests, demonstrations, etc.). I offer four main reasons behind such careful social networking. First, for ‘Blockies’ it was necessary to build a relationship with those who are
unaware of their stigmatised self and where their social categorisation could be kept concealed. Second, the ‘Blockie-led’ organisation (WDA) failed to gain attention and support from both the Agrarians of Chinchilla and Tara. Third, complete disassociation was exercised within a ‘Blockies’ in-group against those who stood against the industry. Lastly, to add to the first three, careful social networking also helped the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ to detach themselves from the stigmatiser (the Tara Agrarians) and thus minimised their chances of stigmatisation (e.g., Crocker & Major, 1989; Jones et al., 1984).

This complete absence of the Agrarians from the ‘Blockies-led’ struggle against the CSG industry and the reliance of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ on the LTG movement reflected the 40-year-old necessity to manage the spoiled identity (Goffman, 1963). Therefore, it is possible that it was not the anti-CSG narrative of the ‘Blockies’ or their association with the LTG movement per se that led to the Blockies being excluded from consideration. However, it was the stigma possessed by the residents of the Tara subdivisions that categorised them as ‘Blockies’ and forced them to seek social networks where their actual identity could be concealed and virtual identity be acceptable.

The third and fourth stigma management strategies adopted by the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ are intrinsically related to the above mentioned strategy: using the back place and self-presentation through identity concealment. With regards to the first, as previously mentioned, almost all the anti-CSG protests and other activities were performed within the boundaries of the Tara rural subdivisions’ ‘back place’ (Goffman, 1963, p. 82). Interestingly, very few were observed either in the ‘forbidden place’ (Tara town) or a ‘civil place’ where they could expect to remain anonymous (e.g., Chinchilla or other communities in the Western Downs). Table 6.1 lists locations of all key protests, blockades, and other on-ground confrontations conducted exclusively in and around the subdivisions. This use of and control over the subdivisions further strengthen the argument presented in Section 8.2 regarding the consequences of the CSG companies entangling with the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ when introduced in the back place, namely, the Tara subdivisions—the Blocks.

I argued in Chapter 2 that the relationship of the stigmatised identity with a social movement is a part of stigma management strategy. Goffman (1963) would explain this by noting that the stigmatised self conceals stigma by dividing his “world into a large group to whom he tells nothing, and a small group to whom he tells all and upon whose help he then relies” (p. 95). Here, I consider the ‘large group’ to be the social movement and the ‘small group’ to be stigmatised fellow ‘Blockies’ in the back place (e.g., WDA, GCSG, & Stop CSG Tara). I believe that the stigmatised identity/social movement nexus would allow positive self-presentation if social information is manipulated to conceal the actual self.
To explain further, I now address the last strategy promoting self-presentation and identity concealment which allows negotiation around the implication in different social situations (e.g., Goffman, 1963; Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). However, these authors focus on the interpersonal costs of stigma concealment with a dearth of research into understanding the implications for conflict. There is a greater need to understand the conflict, particularly within the resource industry, in which the stigmatised identity is likely to converge with a broader social movement as a pretext. I argue that concealing the stigma or manipulation of self through manipulated self-presentation has several implications for understanding the conflict and the distinct identities involved.

This research observed the strategy at two levels. First, the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ often presented themselves to the media and the public as farmers or Agrarians. While the LTG movement also manipulated the anti-CSG Blockies’ identity as Agrarians against the CSG development, this did not apply to the Tara subdivisions. Similar to how Gesler (1998) explains the negative image or reputation of a place, Goffman’s (1963) view on the ‘communicating role’ played by a place through the manipulation of self-information was also observed when the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ introduced themselves as being from Chinchilla but not from Tara. For instance, my fieldwork showed that anti-CSG motivated individuals from the Tara subdivisions portrayed themselves as Agriculturalists or being from Chinchilla, or residing kilometres North West of Chinchilla. While a few respondents from the Tara subdivisions accepted this behaviour, they also revealed the reasons behind such behaviour (see Section 6.2)

Second, during the anti-CSG activities and in media appearances, the anti CSG ‘Blockies’ communicated those symbols that presented them as environmentalists or members of the LTG movement. The reality that many members of the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG movement were members of the LTG movement cannot be denied. Also, I am not negating the concepts of collective identity and multiple shared identities within the broader social movement (e.g., Turner, 1987, 1991; Brewer, 1991; Klandermans & de Weerd, 2000). These are indeed integral concepts of social movement theory. However, I choose to seek the reasons behind the convergence with the movement’s identity as discussed in Chapter 7. There I showed that associating with the LTG movement only started when the Agrarians of Chinchilla and Tara distanced themselves from the stigmatised anti-CSG groups by organising themselves under their own identity-based groups, namely, BSA, PRA, and AgForce. We must also not forget that the groups, WDA, GCSG, or Stop CSG Tara were struggling in complete isolation without any support from the BSA, AgForce, or the Tara Futures Groups. This suggests, as I have repeatedly argued in this thesis, that the convergence with the LTG movement was motivated by these groups’ desires to conceal their spoiled identity and to use the movement’s identity for their positive evaluation and self-presentation.
Goffman’s (1963) map of stigma management (discussed above) followed by the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ points to the significance of communication and presentation management from the stigmatised end. To resist the stigma, the ‘Blockies’ sought to conceal their association with a certain place category or identity. More specifically, I argue that the main intent of this concealment and Blockies’ manipulated self-information was so that they could present themselves as *normals* in order to legitimise their concerns and increase their standing in the conflict to avoid disqualification. What are the ramifications of such behaviour or their conflict strategies against the extractive resource industry as in the case of CSG development in the Western Downs of Queensland? The stigma which was concealed by the stigmatised, the Tara subdivision-based anti-CSG groups, led the CSG conflict to be trivialised as ideological by the Agrarians of the Western Downs.

*Figure 8.3:* CSG Conflict Transformation and Stigma Management by anti-CSG ‘Blockies’
To further strengthen the argument about the implication of the stigma management strategies in conflict-related studies, I close this section by questioning: why do researchers, the CSG industry, and perhaps the LTG movement fail to see the root causes of conflict in the Tara subdivisions and the hidden aim of the orchestrated conflict? I argue that it was mainly the careful self-presentation, identity concealment, or masking as a strategy of managing stigma that rendered the root causes of conflict insoluble (e.g., Goffman, 1963; O’Brian, 2001). This conundrum also introduces an important reason for using Goffman (1963) to understand the careful self-presentation of anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ in the public realm while they mask their spoiled self. The tragedy is that the identity concealment that masqueraded as normal was not easily visible until viewed through the lens of stigma and distinct identities within the context. More explicitly, I argue that the whole anti-CSG conflict in the Tara subdivisions was crafted carefully with significant ‘backstage’ planning (O’Brien, 2001, p. 291). This approach was necessary for the stigmatised anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ who were concerned with the consequences of inconsistencies between the presented virtual and actual self being detected (e.g., Goffman (1963) states as being either virtual or actual identity. These references are important to understand the dynamics of the conflict in the Tara subdivisions and to explain why for the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ it became important to present the spoiled self particularly as agriculturalists and also as environmentalists? Why did the Agrarians disassociate themselves from any of the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups? And then why did the conflict fail to be sustained, even when the new group, GCSG, attempted to mediate with the CSG industry?

8.6.2 The Conflict Transformation

The discrepancy between the virtual and actual self of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ in the conflict was well-known to the Agrarians. However, to outsiders trying to make sense of the conflict anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ were successful in performing what Goffman calls “work of careful dis-attention” (Goffman, 1963, p. 41). I argue that completely insulating the Agrarians from the stigmatised Blockies’ struggle dragged the ‘Blockies-based’ anti-CSG groups to a corner where conflict transformation started as a result of the change in the behaviour of three previously mentioned anti-CSG groups: WDA, GCSG, and Stop CSG Tara. I argue that the behavioural outcome must not be considered as linear but two dimensional. First was the dramatic change in the position of the Tara subdivisions based anti-CSG groups against the CSG conflict, from radical/confrontational to collaborative/negotiation. Second was the stigmatised identity giving up the physical setting and seeking a more suitable, non-stigmatised context. Regarding the anti-CSG groups in the Tara subdivisions, it appeared that both outcomes were achieved as this research continued. The revamp of WDA into GCSG indicated changing behaviours through engaging with the industry to solve the
stigmatised identity issues. On the other hand, converting Stop CSG Tara to CSG Rescue NSW showed the group to be no longer relevant to the context. I argue that, for Stop CSG Tara, shifting to the Pilliga region of Narrabri Shire, offered an ‘anonymous situation’ where the struggle was continued in the absence of any past spoiled biography (Goffman, 1963, p. 85). While this can be viewed again as an opportunity to develop and present an image which is virtual, not actual, it was only possible in a new context which could allow biographical discontinuity.

However, in both cases, two profound similarities are observed which can also be viewed under stigma management strategies (see Sub-section 8.6.1). First, both groups added a negotiation aspect to their resistance by limiting their opposition to the industry. Secondly, although the groups pursued different strategies, particularly during 2013 when Stop CSG Tara was radically opposing project development. However, both groups tactically controlled the stigma-related facts while continuing to conceal their actual identity. Throughout the struggle, both groups tried to be seen on the agriculturalists’ side and so this indicates that the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ and the Agrarians were on the same side. I argue, however, that this signified more a case of carefully concealing their identity. In sum, the Agrarians allowed neither group to participate in their allies’ formations or to associate at any organisational level (see Section 8.4).

I now focus on GCSG which remained as the only active anti-CSG group in the subdivisions after Stop CSG Tara left the context. Even though GCSG appeared to be changing behaviour from late 2012 onward (from confrontational to negotiation), it failed to gain acceptance from the Agrarian groups or a normal status. Goffman (1963) would view such transformation and its implication as simply a “transformation of the self from someone with a particular blemish into someone with a record of having corrected a particular blemish” (p. 9). He says that such behaviour is to diffuse the stigma and to reach the sphere of normals. But the question remains, how it was possible for the Agrarians to be involved with the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ when the agriculturalists themselves categorised and labelled the ‘Blockies’ as ‘discredited’ (ibid p. 12). Throughout the journey of GCSG, it engaged with the CSG industry without including the Agrarians from either Chinchilla or Tara. This clearly showed a lack of coordination or consistency among ‘Blockie-based’ groups and the dominant Agrarian identity.

There is another theoretical explanation for negotiations between GCSG and the CSG establishment in the absence of the Agrarians. After challenging the stigmatisers and being accused of portraying a negative image of the community Tara, the effect was that the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ became isolated in their back place, the Tara subdivisions, and the town areas became a forbidden place for known anti-CSG characters.
According to Goffman (1963), in such a scenario, the stigmatised are always concerned about how their identity will be perceived by the *normals* or what would be the *normals’* reaction. Such a stigmatised identity is also afraid of being exposed when interacting with the *normals*. Goffman (1963) explains this behaviour as stigmatised identity “feels unsure of how we *normals* will identify him or receive him” (1963, p. 23). This would explain the GCSG’s decision to engage with the CSG industry in the absence of the Agrarians, including Chinchilla’s. How else can we explain the absence of only the Agrarians from GCSG’s meetings, while various NGOs, church representations, and other CSG concerned individuals were in attendance? I argue that GCSG was formed to fulfil the practical task of stigma management and negotiation of their stigmatised *self*. However, even so, stigma was still being managed at the individual level and under complete concealment.

As I mentioned above, although various other environmental groups and CSG concerned individuals were part of the GCSG’s meetings with the industry, they were not aware of the stigma and *spoiled* biographies of the GCSG members. Therefore, while engaging with the industry, it was in the GCSG’s interest to exclude the Agrarians (*normals*) and anyone else who might be aware of the *actual self* possessed by stigma (e.g., Goffman, 1963, p. 66). Such a careful interaction enabled the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ to minimise the chances of identity disclosure (e.g., Bickerstaff & Walker, 2001) and thus shield their self-esteem (Crocker & Major, 1989; Jones et al., 1984).

The foregoing discussion not only clarifies the historical antagonism between the distinct identities in the context but also elucidates why the stigmatised anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ failed to sustain their conflict and thus transformed it. These views were detailed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3 and in Chapter 6, Section 6.2.

It may be possible to deduce from the analysis presented above that the more *boldly* the stigmatised mobilisation advances under a concealed identity (*virtual self*) using their conflict as pretext, the sooner will be the failure. This argument is hard to validate without further research. However, one thing is clear from my research: that once the stigma is internalised (the devaluation), the stigmatised group ignores its inconsistencies and thus fails to achieve equilibrium or show interest in finding its positive *self* in the context. Consequently, the stigmatised identity of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ became fragile and weak. The stigmatised groups adopted stigma management strategies that became self-destructive so that their change in behaviour came when they realised that their rejected *self* and resistance against the industry were irrelevant and lacked power. Thus, ‘leaving the context’ remained the only option for the subdivision-based anti-CSG group, who challenged the interests of the stigmatiser (the Tara Agrarians) and had to deal with self-rejection and an imposed label.
In summary, by first connecting the history of the Tara subdivisions, social categorisation, and the stigmatisation of the ‘Blockies’ by the Agrarians, and then considering the consequences of stigmatisation we can understand the complex emergence of conflict in the Western Downs of Queensland. The careful selective networking, masking of their actual self, virtual self-presentation, changing concerns towards project development, and convergence with the LTG movement, shows how carefully the stigmatised anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ crafted and presented their conflict and self against the CSG industry. Also important was the obvious and predictable outcome of the conflict. I argue that the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ built their resistance on the CSG issue as a pretext which, in fact, implied: resistance to the stigmatisation; reaction towards imposed social hierarchies and intrusion of the industry into the back place; and negotiation of their stigmatised identity through leaving the context. The Agrarians of Chinchilla also proved to be socially distant from the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’. Although the Agrarians of Chinchilla did raise many socio-economic and environmental concerns related to the CSG project development, their position resonated with the Tara Agrarians. What resulted was a constructive relationship with the CSG industry and disassociation from both the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups and the LTG movement. Rather than associating with the movement, the Agrarians organised themselves around their own common identity which helped them to highlight their distinction from the stigmatised ‘Blockies’ and their stance towards CSG project development.

8.6.2.1 Understanding the Reaction of the Stigmatiser and Stigmatised to Conflict Transformation

In this section, I look closely at the consequence of changed behaviour in the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups to complete the picture of the conflict’s evaporation. I have discussed the power dynamics involved in the process of stigmatisation in Chapter 2, Section 2.4. Link and Phelan (2001) accordingly argue that “it takes power to stigmatise” and the process of stigmatisation cannot occur without the exercise of power (p. 375). These authors believe that power lies in the socio-economic dimensions of the context. I argue that the role of power in the stigmatisation is far more complex and has implications for both the normals and the stigmatised. In particular, understanding the consequence of changed behaviour on the power dynamics is necessary. The case of Tara contributes to the argument regarding the implications of changing behaviours on the power dynamics or vice versa.

In the Tara subdivisions, because of change in the behaviour of the anti-CSG groups, which I call conflict transformation, two totally distinct situations, ‘extreme power of stigmatiser’ and ‘extreme powerlessness against the stigmatiser’ were challenged. I argue that the conflict transformation in
the context was defined by the power of the Tara Agrarians. The appearance of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ as a frontline against project development impaired them in the eyes of the Tara Agrarians. Therefore, welcoming the CSG industry, disclosing Blockies’ spoiled identity (negative attributes), disregarding their CSG related concerns and disassociation from their resistance expressed the power of the stigmatiser. The situation can be observed in the case where the Tara Agrarians took an extreme pro-CSG position by disregarding any health or environmental related concerns raised by the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’.

Active labelling became a sign of strength. While these expressions showed the stigmatiser’s power, they also denied the emerging power of the stigmatised. I argue that the Tara Agrarians’ reaction was obvious because their categorisation was designed to maintain not only the ‘tidy social order’ (e.g., Douglas, 1963, p. 5) but also their domination. Therefore, the conflict led by the ‘Blockies’ was considered as an attempt to reshuffle the power and domination and was perceived as a threat. Challenging economic interests is itself a form of challenging power. For instance, in the case of ‘Blockies’, the identity’s anti-CSG position was perceived as a threat to the economic interests of the Tara Agrarians. Permitting the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ to challenge CSG, as such, served to challenge both their economic and social power.

I argue that the reaction from the Tara Agrarians as stigmatiser grew to the extent that their own concerns became incommensurate with CSG project development (socio-economic and environmental). In other words, there was a complete submission to the industry which meant the stigmatisers had to maintain and prove their dominance over the stigmatised. Any other narrative or position would be a sign of weakness. The rejection of the issues of health and Condamine bubbling (see Sub-section, 5.2.1) as caused by CSG activities in the region, showed that any of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ concerns, whether real or not, would be considered as illegitimate. The case of Tara further reveals that this antagonism shaped a force of open discrimination, marginalisation, and victimisation against those who challenged the power of the dominant Agrarian identity in the context.

On the other hand, the changing behaviour of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ placed them on the lowest degree of power and another step closer to conflict transformation which could also be called conflict exhaustion. Both the behaviours of GCSG and Stop CSG Tara, I argue, were signs of internalising the stigma. I argue that it is hard to comprehend ‘leaving the context’ without internalising the stigma to an incredible extent which becomes itself an expression of lacking the strength to resist the stigmatiser, not the CSG industry. This is exactly where transformation or exhaustion of the localised conflict started. For instance, the shift from confrontation (WDA) to
negotiation (GCSG) followed a path of compromise, turned against their-own actions, and retracted from the previous settled objectives of the WDA which were aligned with the LTG movement. The anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ were no longer challenging the dominant Agrarian identities in the context and showed interest in negotiating with the CSG industry.

According to social identity theory, the competition between distinct identities becomes responsible for escalating an intergroup conflict (Brewer, 2001). This research also reveals that the notion of stigma boosted intergroup conflict as it frequently supplied all those ingredients to both normals and stigmatised to act and react against each other. This peculiar ability that stigma has to feed intergroup conflict explains why the Agrarians of Tara are in open conflict with the stigmatised anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ of the rural subdivisions. I have argued that to understand the multifaceted conflict in Tara, the concept of stigma explains the emergence of conflict in a specific locality by a specific identity. However, I am not suggesting that stigmatised identities will always be the most prominent and influential force in intergroup identity conflict but will shape a hostile relationship when they entangle with an external trigger like the extractive industry because then the stigmatised may challenge the economic interest of the normals.

Two further observations can be taken from the case of the Tara subdivision to understand the implication of stigma on the conflict transformation. First, I argue that to maintain and sustain the conflict, one needs consistency and an objective approach. Secondly, it is necessary to have a united or strong positively evaluated and verified shared identity to sustain the conflict. However, the stigmatised ‘Blockie-based’ resistance had no clear goal, consistency, or objective. Underneath, there was no common identity with which anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ could associate themselves and organise a unified struggle against the industry. In addition, the internal conflict within the subdivision-based anti-CSG groups deviated from the LTG movement’s principles. This revealed that any comprehensive unity and consistency in the plurality of events was lacking. I argue that these ingredients were necessary to establish a strong identity and then stand against the CSG project development. Certainly, such deficiencies could be also considered as a consequence of stigmatisation. These ingredients also set the stage for conflict exhaustion by the Tara subdivisions.

The rise of sub-hierarchies within the stigmatised Blockies’ identity, strong reaction from the Tara Agrarians and active labelling, insulation of the Agrarian-based groups from the Blockies’ struggle against the industry, internal conflict within the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups, all became factors which drained the strength of the Tara subdivision-based resistance. This changed the whole perspective of the conflict and threatened the whole struggle. The anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ became
fragile and weaker so that the stigmatiser, the Tara Agrarians, became stronger and stronger. For GCSG and Stop CSG Tara, it became impossible to regain the power and reappear in the context.

Consequently, the groups were placed on the path where the only option left was to ‘leave the context’. Stop CSG Tara had already shifted to Pilliga, New South Wales under a new name during late 2013. During July 2014, almost all the group members of GCSG were ‘silenced’ when their properties were bought by the industry (McCarthy, 2014), and left the stigmatising context. At first glance, it appears to be conflict exhaustion and failure. Perhaps this is what the groups and the stigmatised individuals desired: negotiating their stigmatised identities while leaving the context—a desire for a condition or context where self is no longer rejected, and thus suffers. As previously mentioned, “Diana”, Stephen” and “Matthew” are no longer active against the industry, yet Mr Pratzky “The Frackman” is still campaigning in New South Wales but not Tara. He was and still is ‘an icon’ against the CSG industry. His appearance before both the normals and the stigmatised ‘Blockies’—as his actual reference group or actual identity—and appearance as an ‘accidental activist’, I argue, were his attempt to establish a fully normal status and a living model, as he has proved. In fact, “a stigmatised person may find that the ‘movement’ has observed his whole day and that he has become a professional” (Goffman, 1963, p. 37-38).

However, Goffman’s (1963) argument is applicable when the person is committed to representing their stigmatised identity. In contrast, when “The Frackman” successfully moved into the spotlight and found himself exposed to social interaction outside the context (i.e., in an anonymous situation with the discontinuity of his past spoiled biography), he did not represent his actual identity but concealed it. The “Frackman” caused a ‘sense of betrayal’ among other anti-CSG individual and groups, as it was revealed during the fieldwork, where respondents accused him of using the movement for his personal interests. For instance, he has been recently accused by other anti-CSG individuals of ‘fabricating’ the upcoming documentary on his character, ‘The Frackman Movie’. This movie portrays him as an ordinary landholder from Tara who turned into an ‘accidental activist’ to stop the CSG invasion because of health and lifestyle impacts. The movie portrays scenes of blockades being formed in Tara under the “Frackman’s” leadership. He can now often be found as a guest speaker during the movie’s screenings across Australia and on social media for publicity, proudly boasting 800,000 views of the trailer.

However, I agree with the above criticism to some extent because the movie was shot on an anti-CSG gathering entitled ‘Dynes party at base camp’ of around 3,000 (mainly New South Wales) people in the Tara subdivisions at his property, which I had an opportunity to observe personally for two days. The absence of other key Tara subdivisions anti-CSG groups’ members (WDA & GCSG)
was noticeable. However, what nobody expected was that it was the last show organised by him. It was indeed successful and made major news headlines. Consequently, his fellow anti-CSG motivated individuals in the Tara rural subdivisions dissociated themselves from these activities. On one occasion, the “Frackman” himself admitted that, because of no local support he had no other option than to leave the context, thus explaining why he first established his own group, ‘Stop CSG Tara’, despite two existing groups and later shifted it to New South Wales under CSG Rescue NSW. While he certainly successfully used the opportunity offered by the CSG industry and the LTG movement to develop and present his image, it was virtual, not actual. Even he has left the stigmatised context of the subdivisions and thus the spoilt personal identification behind. It is not difficult to understand, what “version of the kind of person he used to be and the background out of which he came”, as argued by Goffman (1963, p. 97).

Lastly, I argue that the anti-CSG individuals escaped the stigma by leaving the context and their spoilt biography behind, without re-evaluating the identity, overcoming inconsistencies (Stets & Burke, 1996), and disclosing their stigmatisation (Goffman, 1963). The individualist’s management of stigma covertly left the root causes of conflict unaddressed. This made the problem more acute especially when the conflict transformation provided the stigmatiser with extreme power. For the CSG industry, the ideologically driven anti-CSG groups, and the broader LTG movement, as well as researchers were led to believe that the conflict in the Tara subdivisions was caused by CSG-related impacts. In fact, in the case of Tara, the CSG industry did not provide a target for conflict. What needed to be forcibly opposed was the stigmatisation of their self, their poor socio-economic state, and their social stratification by bridging the divide between the normals and the stigmatised. The error in the ‘Blockie-based’ conflict was the treatment of stigma which continued to widen the distance between ‘Blockies’ and the Tara Agrarians.

Although conflict in the Tara subdivision has now vanished, two ongoing developments or concerns are important to raise before closing this section. First, there are few more ‘individuals’ emerging from the Tara subdivisions standing up against the industry and following the same narrative and strategies of resistance (e.g., Mortimer, 2014; McCarthy, 2014). Second, the most precipitative situation currently in the subdivision is the vacuum created by the departure of WDA, GCSG, and Stop CSG Tara, which is now being filled by a ‘second wave’ of resistance. During January 2015, more than 20 residents from the Tara subdivisions gathered at the Wieambilla South Country Club to discuss the impacts of CSG in the locality although their approach is yet to be observed. However, preliminary observations suggest that the mobilisation seeks to develop a constructive relationship with the industry to achieve more ‘satisfying outcomes’. The question is how the Tara
Agrarians will react to this development and how the industry will engage with the emerging second wave.

These ongoing developments may make their way to many news headlines, but the outcome of the resistance is likely to remain the same as was in the case of first wave. The explanation is simple: the possessed stigma by the place ‘the Tara subdivisions’ and the resident ‘Blockies’ will be managed at an individual level in the absence of any positive reference point or satisfactory identity and in complete isolation. This is because the Agrarian-based groups will continue to isolate themselves from ‘Blockie-led’ conflict. The stigmatised individuals’ exclusion will be repeated unless one realises that the Blockies’ struggle must not be interpreted by their resistance against the industry. Both the LTG movement and the CSG industry will be used, as before, merely as a pretext to conceal the negative spoiled, bruised, and rejected actual self.
CONCLUSION

In this thesis I posed the question “Why did CSG conflict emerge in the community of Tara but not in Chinchilla?” The secondary research question, “What role does stigmatised identity play in the transformation of conflict?” helped to narrow down the research to understand the dynamics of conflict transformation. Before I present the key findings, I revisit the quandary which motivated this research. If environmental or other CSG-related direct impacts were the key motivators of conflict then why was conflict absent from the community of Chinchilla? Like many other communities of the Western Downs, Chinchilla has a well-established, agriculture-based economy and has a lot to lose when forced to coexist with the CSG industry, whereas the economically challenged and drought-stricken Tara has comparatively few development opportunities other than CSG. Yet, the rural subdivisions of Tara became the centre of conflict. In Chapter 4, I detailed the comparative evidence found in the divergent reactions of these two neighbouring communities to ascertain alternative causes of the conflict in the Tara rural subdivisions.

Although, the CSG conflict in the Tara subdivisions has been considered from an environmental perspective, I have argued that the root causes of the conflict run deeper than what has been simplistically labelled as conflict caused directly by CSG. Rather than using an environmental lens, I paid more systematic attention to the social identity perspective. Two theories involving the studies of both social movements and stigma were combined to explain why and how the conflict in the Tara subdivisions emerged. In addition, these theories assist in the understanding of the alliance formed between the Tara subdivisions-based anti-CSG groups and the LTG movements, and why both these groups failed to engage the agriculturalists of Chinchilla.

I have argued that the conflict in the Tara subdivisions can be explained by examining the stigmatisation of the subdivision’s inhabitants. I have revealed the key influence of stigma and how it shaped the politics of identities. Chapter 6 clarified how this led to the distinction and category division of normals and stigmatised and how the ‘Blockies’ were socially excluded, discriminated against, and placed on the periphery. I have demonstrated how such places not only appear as the most disadvantaged, but also how they—immoral places—threaten the occupants’ self-esteem. This allowed for an understanding of the relational aspect of stigma and how such stigmatised identities live through continual negotiation and management of their stigmatised self. Such aspects have been underestimated by researchers who have been more interested in understanding the conflict.
emergence in the Tara subdivisions of the Western Downs and its relationship with environmental narratives. I restate these arguments as follows.

The social categorisation of ‘Blockies’ based on their negative social attributes and their self-rejection is a social reality and part of everyday lives in the region which predates the CSG development. Stories from the residents showed how their existence in the midst of the Agrarian context has been considered as a stigma possessor, devalued, socially excluded, and marked as different. Such an existence revealed frustration, negative self-esteem, and a lack of verification from the imposed label. I have explained that this difference led to an antagonistic relationship between the Tara Agrarians and the ‘Blockies’ with poor socio-cultural assimilation.

I have contextualised the conflict and explained the notion of stigma as a theoretical framework not only to understand the discussed social categorisation of ‘Blockies’ but also to link it with the emergence of CSG conflict in the Tara subdivisions. I found that, within the Western Downs, the CSG conflict boundaries in the community mark the site of stigmatisation and marginalisation. I have argued that the conflict dramatically emerged because the CSG industry became entangled with the presence of the Blockies’ stigmatised identity. The CSG expansion in the subdivisions intruded into what Goffman (1963) calls a ‘back place’ (p. 82). I demonstrated that the Tara subdivision is a place where the ‘Blockies’ sustain their social being among their own kind and avoid social interaction with the norms to minimise the chances of stigmatisation. Therefore, while the stigmatised context on the one hand led to the negative self-esteem and isolation of the ‘Blockies’, on the other hand, the subdivisions became a site of struggle and empowerment once the CSG project development commenced.

My investigation into the significance of stigmatised identity and the conflict in the Tara subdivision brought to light two interrelated aspects of stigma: the re-pronunciation of stigma and worsening antagonism between the ‘Blockies’ and Tara Agrarians, and the community being represented solely in the context of CSG development. I have argued that the emergence of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ further sharpened the divisions between already fractured identities (Tara Agrarians versus ‘Blockies’). In Chapter 6, I described how the residents of Tara town and the agriculturalists were concerned with the negative projection and false representation of the community to the outside world. The role of media was also criticised by the Tara Agrarians as only presenting the narrative of the CSG-concerned ‘Blockies’ and facilitating the stigmatised identity to colonise the representation of Tara. The important questions here are: How challengeable are these media representations? Which identity and whose narrative has been marginalised or suppressed?, and
Whose version is legitimate: the *normals*’ or that of the stigmatised? Therefore, how the community is socially represented is critical here, and, this dynamic should be explored in detail in the future.

I have argued that the anti-CSG stance of the ‘Blockies’ was highly contested by the Tara Agrarians. In reaction, the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ were socially boycotted by the Tara Agrarians who felt that their socio-economic values and opportunities were threatened. Because of the ‘Blockie-led’ anti-CSG conflict, the Agrarians further disassociated themselves from the ‘Blockies’ and pronounced their struggle as meaningless and their concerns as illegitimate. More importantly, the historical stigma was re-introduced by the Tara Agrarians, once again by publicising the *spoiled* biographies of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ and exposing their living conditions, as discussed in Chapters 6 and 8. I have also argued that the reaction of the Tara Agrarians gave the rejected *self* of the ‘Blockies’ a social meaning—a value, and thus, a reality.

Given these arguments, what can we conclude regarding the relationship of the community of Chinchilla with the CSG industry and what can we learn from the community’s comparison with the case of the Tara subdivisions? I have argued that social identities are worthy of serious analysis because they are key to understanding the behaviour of those involved in the CSG debate. In Chapter 7, Section 7.2 and Chapter 8, Section 8.4, I have clearly distinguished the identities of the Agrarians (Chinchilla and Tara) from the ‘Blockies’ of the Tara subdivisions. In doing so, I have both argued that different identities adopted different strategies to struggle against the CSG project development and that the Agrarians’ behaviour towards the CSG industry qualitatively differs from that of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’. This suggests that the explanation and emergence of the conflict in Chinchilla and Tara is grounded in identity differentiation and, more importantly, with the presence of the stigmatised identity in the Tara subdivisions. I have argued that the CSG industry constructively relates to those groups. I have categorised the following as shared agriculture-identity-based groups in Chinchilla and Tara: the BSA, AgForce, PRA, and the Tara Futures Group. My judgment is made by comparing their interaction and social networks with the stigmatised-based identity groups (WDA, Stop CSG Tara, and GCSG) who faced rejection, negative self-esteem, and ultimately destruction with the internal and external division caused by their stigmatisation. Through the analysis of identity-based groups, I revealed that the Agrarian-based groups have not only sustained their relationship with the CSG industry but also continued to keep their constructive influence over the industry to improve coexistence between agriculture and the CSG industry.

These observations occasion another reflection about the case of the Tara subdivisions. The anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ have distinctly proclaimed their concerns about CSG project development. In
Chapter 7, Section 7.3, I explained that the anti-CSG individuals and groups are more concerned about health-related issues, which do not resonate with the Agrarians of Chinchilla and Tara. Therefore, I have suggested that to understand the context of the Tara subdivisions through the lens of stigma will help to explain the reason for these distinct concerns. The social psychology-based literature linking the relationship between stigmatisation, social exclusion, and health related impacts was detailed in Chapter 8, Section 8.3. Most important in this account is that the Tara Agrarians (normals) virulently alleged that the Blockies’ poor living and hygiene standards in the subdivisions were responsible for their health issues. I explained how these counter-allegations assisted the Tara Agrarians to shift the cause of health issues from the CSG industry to the ‘Blockies’ themselves. This shift might, however, gloss over the identity problem that underlies the CSG conflict. Linking stigma with the perceived impacts of CSG or even extractive or industrial developments has received little attention so far.

Yet, I questioned my own arguments for judging the impacts as perceived by the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ based on their social categorisation and discreteness. Using the comparison of the Tara and Chinchilla communities, I explained that the devalued identity of the ‘Blockies’ failed to convince the wider public that health was an issue. Following the argument of Link and Phelan (2001) about the role of power in stigmatisation, I argued that the question should not concern who is right or wrong, or legitimate or illegitimate, but that the research should rather examine how the normal represents a case and then frame the stigmatised in a particular setting. I discussed that delegitimising the concerns and struggles of the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ should serve to remind us of the rejected self of ‘Blockies’ and how they might withstand the power of the normals. The major caveat I identified is that the Tara Agrarians completely submitted themselves to the CSG industry. I thus acknowledge that this caveat puts only the promising economic opportunities offered by the CSG industry behind the Tara Agrarians’ pro-CSG narrative. However, I argue that, under or with the CSG industry, the Tara Agrarians as stigmatisers needed to gain, regain, and maintain their power to dominate those anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ who were first perceived as a threat to their socio-cultural norms and then to their economic interests. In defining such a stigmatised context in ways that intersect with the notion of power, the resource industry, social exclusion, rejection and re-rejection of one’s self are ways of legitimising the industry’s narrative. In this way, a complete disassociation by the normals is performed to legitimise the status quo and to take control of the setting and the power relations.

Throughout this thesis, I have stressed the need to understand the commensal relationship between a stigmatised identity and social movements. What would this entail? At different points in the thesis, I have discussed the necessity for the stigmatised identity to correspond and converge with the
social movement and the implication of such a relationship. I have also concretely confirmed that from the stigmatised identity perspective, such a nexus is a part of a stigma management strategy. I now summarise this duality and why each end is important.

Although much literature sees the importance in understanding the nexus between stigmatized identity and social movements, work in this area remains conceptually ill-defined. Clarifying this relationship through identity work processes is essential to this thesis. In contrast to the literature (e.g., Snow & McAdam, 2000), the case of Tara reveals that the LTG movement found itself in a much better position to gain the commitment of the stigmatized and socially excluded anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ than to the agriculturalists of Tara and Chinchilla. In Chapter 7, Section 7.3 and Chapter 8, Section 8.5, I argued that the stigmatised anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ has dominated the LTG movement’s recruitment and that the stigmatised context of the Tara subdivisions was key to the movement’s succession of identity work processes. On the other hand, in Chapter 8, Section 8.4 I listed the factors that undermined the identity work processes in the broader Western Downs and particularly in the community of Chinchilla.

This suggests that, behind the nexus, no shared encoded meanings or objectives existed to bind them together. The conflict in the Tara subdivisions was motivated by underlying identity-based problems intertwined with the notion of stigma and not simply by the CSG industry-related impacts. I argued that the ‘Blockie-led’ anti-CSG groups were struggling against the stigma and were successfully managing to negotiate their stigmatised identity. To understand how it came to be seen as a vehicle for some rejected self, I focused on the stigmatisation of the ‘Blockies’ that cemented this relationship. I argued that the stigma management strategy (Goffman, 1963) necessitated the stigmatised activism under the veil of a social movement and normality by suggesting that the conflict in the Tara subdivisions followed a theoretical route of managing stigma.

I argued that, initially, the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ presented their role in the conflict as being ‘agriculturalists’. However, as demonstrated in Chapter 7, Section 7.2 and 7.3, Chapter 8, Section, 8.4, the ‘Blockies’ failed to attract the Agrarians’ support in their struggle against CSG development. The isolated physical circumstances of the ‘Blockies’ led the residents to suffer the consequences of a fractured and rejected sense of self which further denied the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ a role in ‘doing community’. Consequently, it became essential to seek another satisfactory identity. To this end, their alliance with the LTG movement in 2011 provided legitimacy defined by a moral argument. For anti-CSG ‘Blockies’, I further argued that convergence with the LTG movement and its members was as a result of careful social networking mainly with outsiders from New South Wales. In Chapter 8, Section 8.6, and with reference to Chapter 2, Section 2.3, I offered two
motivations behind the careful selection of the social network. First, it was necessary to develop a relationship to gain support from those who are \textit{not known} by their possessed stigma and to whom their devalued social categorisation could be kept \textit{unknown}. Second, the Agrarian led groups completely disassociated from the ‘Blockie-led’ conflict and thus isolated and weakened it. This means that the relationship with the LTG movement strengthened the Blockies’ dwindling conflict by detaching them from the \textit{normals} (the Agrarians) to minimise their chances of stigmatisation.

I suggested that it was not the extreme anti-CSG narrative held by the ‘Blockies’ \textit{per se} that led to their exclusion by the Agrarian-based groups. It was rather these groups assigning negative social attributes to the residents of the subdivisions that forced them to seek social networks where their \textit{actual} identity could be concealed and a \textit{virtual} identity be developed. This social exclusion was achieved by the Agrarian (or self-imposed) creation of a ‘back place’ to which the ‘Blockies’ were ‘herded’ and charged with keeping tidy to the standard of the \textit{normals}. However, such exclusion afforded the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ complete control over the Tara subdivisions insofar as almost all the anti-CSG protests were organised within its boundaries. This returns to my earlier argument regarding the consequences of the CSG companies confronting the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ within the Tara subdivisions.

While discussing the conflict transformation exhibited by the subdivision-based groups in Chapter 7, Section 7.3, I explained the dramatic change in the behaviour of the anti-CSG groups. The rejected \textit{self} of the ‘Blockies’ and complete exclusion from the Agrarians dragged the subdivision-based groups (WDA, GCSG, and Stop CSG Tara) into an inevitable conflict and also a predictable transformation. The upsurge of sub-hierarchies within the stigmatised ‘Blockies’, strong reaction from the Tara Agrarians, and internal conflict within the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups, caused the transformation or exhaustion of the subdivision-based conflict. First, this research observed the change of WDA (radical/confrontational) into GCSG (collaborative/negotiation) through engagement with the CSG industry to solve their issues and concerns. Conversely, the conversion of Stop CSG Tara to CSG Rescue NSW showed the group to be no longer specific or relevant to the context thus changing the whole outlook of the conflict in the subdivisions. Stop CSG Tara’s move to the Pilliga region of Narrabri Shire as CSG Rescue NSW thus discontinued the anti-CSG struggle in the Tara subdivisions but offered new opportunities in the Pilliga region without any past-spoiled biography (i.e., biographical discontinuity).

However, even with the negotiation-based approach that GCSG adopted to gain acceptance from the Agrarian groups, they could not bridge the social divide. Despite GCSG’s changed behaviour, the Agrarians could not possibly be involved with those whom they themselves had marked as ‘less
desirables’ and, thus, a social threat. The difference between the virtual and actual self of anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ in the conflict was undoubtedly known to the Agrarians.

Yet, the overreaching question was: What was the motivation or reason behind the formation of GCSG and the shift of Stop CSG Tara to New South Wales? I argued that we must understand the conflict transformation through a stigmatised identity perspective or risk not understanding that the cause and effect in the changing behaviour of the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups resulted from stigmatisation. I have thus confirmed that, throughout the journey of the Tara subdivision-based anti-CSG group, the objective was to make up the terrain for negotiating the stigmatised identity. The issue of CSG was used as a pretext to dissolve the Blockies’ assigned stigma by negotiating the identity through leaving the Tara subdivisions that socially excluded, discriminated, and marked them as devalued since the subdivisions were established in the 1980s. As expected, during July 2014, almost all the group members of GCSG were ‘silenced’ when their properties were bought by the CSG industry and they left the ‘Blocks’. Therefore, the climax of the conflict completes the desire and the quest of the bruised, rejected and spoiled self, a desire of a condition or context where self is no longer rejected and suffers. However, we must be cautious about writing off the conflict in the Tara subdivisions as some seem eager to do.

Hence the social identity perspective is crucial to both uncovering and understanding the conflict that is deeply rooted in stigmatisation but appears to be a so-called environmental conflict. If we are to understand such a conflict then we need to engage with the concept of stigma (Goffman, 1963) and study its much-ignored relational aspect. Other explanations merely focusing on impacts and understanding the ideology-based conflicts can only be partially valuable. It is especially important to understand how the dynamics of stigma and identity play out in a scenario when the stigmatised identity is entangled with the resource industry and a social movement at a micro level, which has been under-considered during social movement analyses. Therefore, the stigmatised self must find its way into the discussion of social movements and must not be limited to understanding the relational aspect between the normals and the stigmatised but also the process of identity work within the movement. Considered together, the understanding of three conditions will be improved: first, the process of convergence between the social movement as an external factor, and different identities; second, the nature of the relationship with the stigmatised identity; and third, the mechanism behind the process. In particular in the case of the subdivisions, a mechanism was identified that facilitates the role of stigmatised identity convergence with the movement (see Section 8.5). We must not underestimate this role which, while encouraging the activism, provides a rejected and spoiled self with a positive reference point for evaluation through the movement’s identity.
In summary, I have explained how the CSG conflict in the Tara subdivisions is intimately linked to a perception based on stigma derived from past experience and developed in light of how the ‘Blockies’ were seen by both the Tara Agrarians and people living outside Tara, including the communities of Chinchilla, Dalby, and Condamine. I argued that the history of the Tara subdivisions was crucial because it records both the social hierarchies imposed on the ‘Blockies’ by the Agrarians and the consequences of stigmatisation that explain the unique emergence of conflict in the Tara rural subdivisions. The careful selective networking by the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’, the concealment of their actual self, their manipulated self-presentation, the changing concerns about the project development, and their convergence with the LTG movement were merely a pretext. This shows how carefully the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ crafted and presented their conflict against the CSG industry. The convergence of the ‘Blockie-based’ anti-CSG groups with the LTG movement was an attempt to hide behind a veil of normality. The desired consequence of such stigma management by the anti-CSG ‘Blockies’ was to disguise the conflict as being opposed to the CSG industry. In fact, it was their resistance to the stigmatisation and the suspension of their stigmatised identity that came from leaving the context.

In particular to the case of Tara and its rural subdivisions, this research demonstrated the importance of geographic stigma, that is, how places can suffer stigma and become immoral and disadvantaged, resulting in poor wellbeing. It explores the significance of the findings for the emergence of conflict in a context where the resource industry becomes entangled with a stigmatised identity. More importantly, the study illustrates the importance of social identity perspectives as crucial to both uncovering and understanding a conflict that is deeply rooted in stigmatisation. It is especially important to understand how the dynamics of stigma play out in a scenario where the stigmatised identity is entangled with the resource industry. On a more practical level, the findings of this research have implications for strategies undertaken by local government and the CSG industry to re-engineer or re-invent the spoiled image of Tara.

Although the research has achieved its aims, the lack of access to the industry’s perspective over the conflict in Tara is a key limitation of this research. In addition, despite its potency, the finding of this study must be regarded with some caution; as such an empirical ‘qualitative’ research attempt is rare and highly contextualised in nature. As this research is confined to the investigation of CSG conflict emergence and its transformation in Tara, indeed, the contextual nature of this study has facilitated data collection and controlling diversity, but it has also limited the generalisability of the findings because of other possible exogenous factors and their influence. Yet, this also warrants future research attention as to how the results can be incorporated and considered in other settings where the stigmatised identity entangles with the resource industry. Lastly, to keep the study within
manageable proportions to ensure rigorous investigation, and to maintain parsimony, the study was confined to understanding only those theoretically driven issues which are relevant to the stigmatised context of Tara rural subdivisions. The study did not follow the experience of those respondents—stigmatised anti-CSG ‘Blockies’—who left the subdivisions and dismantled the anti-CSG groups (WDA; GCSG; and Stop CSG Tara) based on confidential agreements with the CSG companies.

Although the findings presented in this paper are highly specific to Tara in understanding the relational aspect of stigma intertwined with place, I believe that the arguments surrounding the arrival of a resource-based industry in the ‘back places’ (Goffman, 1963) are relevant to other contexts. Additional work on identities of rural communities faced with the arrival of extractive industries would further illuminate the extent to which conflicts faced by the people of Tara, following the emergence of the CSG industry, is typical of such stigmatised places.

Outside the scope of this research but substantially appearing in the case of the anti-CSG individuals in the Tara subdivisions are questions that arose around social movements and social psychology: What determines a change in self-concept, self-belief, or personal transformation (Kiecolt, 1994) when the rejected self participates in the social movement? How is change in the self-concept possible? To what extent is stigmatised identity genuinely committed to a movement’s objectives? Is it possible that it may have happened principally because the rejected self has placed itself under the veil of normality i.e., a social movement’s identity to be positively interpreted and concealed to one’s actual self? If so, will it not only be an error of interpretation? Is it possible to attain a desired fully normal status and to what extent? Is it possible to leave behind one’s spoiled biography and background (Goffman, 1963)? The findings of this research have relevance well beyond the case of Tara and Chinchilla. I hope this study helps to stimulate more theorising about the nexus between the stigmatised identity and social movements and the relationship with so-called environmental conflicts.
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“WESTERN DOWNS ALLIANCE”

This is the group of people who are devaluing our homes, our town and our blocks of land. Make no mistake it is these people who are destroying the value of our town, not the gas and oil companies.

This is the group of mainly unemployed drones who whilst having their snouts in the public trough are abusing and threatening honest workers who try to come into our town to spend their wages.

In this group there are many “look at me — look at me” non-achievers who are steadily devaluing our town’s homes, businesses, shops and the few valued large employers here. They don’t care. The public money they suck on won’t stop and they have no plan to be employed.

The workers they abuse and threaten are the same people paying the taxes which help supply their “benefits”. Public money, which these lazy drones often have the audacity to refer to as their “wages”.

These people who do not represent us fraudulently continue to scream “hands off Tara” not “hands off Western Downs”, “hands off rural blocks”, or “hands off my property”. Tara doesn’t need this.

Many people participating in the protests do not live in or around Tara. “Western Downs Alliance” as the organisers, encourage these professional protesters. “Western Downs Alliance” by association are deeply involved in the threats to workers and damage to Tara.

Protesters chain themselves to machinery stopping honest workers with wives and children they care about and support from earning a living. Many of the workers do actually live on the rural blocks around Tara. The unemployed protester drones simply don’t care.

These mainly unemployed drones, threatening violence, abusing workers, holding up signs and screaming “hands off Tara” smashing vehicles into gates, trespassing, threatening honest Australian working men and destroying the values in our town do not represent anyone but themselves. They can’t even earn a living.

There is little doubt there is a large “show me the money and I will desist in these activities” component in all this. “Western Downs Alliance” participant names and other details are attached below.

Recently given Base Camp Address: Lot 7 (218) Old Tara Road, Chinchilla end. Turn left off Beatties School Road.

Drew Hutson: Ph. 38462.309
Scott Collins: Ph. 4669 2260 (Mob. 0438361435)
Dayne Pratley Ph.: 0414675275
Debbie Orr Ph.: 46653999
Michael Bretherrick: Ph. 4669 4864 (Mob. 0408823167)

These are the people claiming to represent Tara. They will in fact continue to devalue our town by their self serving thoughtless and often unlawful actions.
Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Name of Project: Communities’ experiences of coal seam industry engagement processes in Western Downs, Queensland: An exploration of power and conflict.

Investigator: Muhammad Makki
PhD Candidate,
School of Journalism & Communication,
Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining
The University of Queensland, Australia

Date: ………………………………………………………………………………

- I acknowledge that complete details, methods and nature of this research have been explained to me, and I have been given a written research project information sheet to keep.
- I understand that my participation will involve an interview and I agree that the researcher may use the findings as described in the information sheet.
- I have been informed that with my consent the data provided will be treated strictly confidential and will be safely stored in a locked office cabinet.
- I understand that my name, organization and designation will be kept anonymous and confidential.
- I understand that my responses in this study are anonymous and confidential and will ONLY be used for the purpose of this study.
- I understand that my participation in this research project is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw my participation at any stage of the project without any penalty or prejudice from the researcher.
- I have been informed that there is no financial benefit for my participation in this research.

I hereby agree to be involved in the above research project as a respondent. I have read the research information sheet pertaining to this research project and understand the nature of the research and my role in it.

Name: …………………………………………………………………………..

Signature: ………………………………………………………………………

NB: This study adheres to the Guidelines of the ethical review process of The University of Queensland. Whilst you are free to discuss your participation in this study with project staff, if you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, you may contact the Ethics Officer on +61 7 3346 8288.