

**A Comparative Study of Two Small & Remote  
Urban Communities: Implications for Social Policy  
and Practice  
(A tale of Two Towns)**

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**A Comparative Study of Two Small & Remote Urban  
Communities: Implications for Social Policy and  
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(A tale of Two Towns)**

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## **ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning".

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Reuter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "J" and a trailing flourish.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Defined as resource communities and independent urban centres, Raetihi and Ohakune are two small and remote towns on the North Island of New Zealand's Central Plateau. They have similar sized populations and are set approximately 12 kilometres apart, yet present as totally different communities. Raetihi is a declining farming service centre, with a majority Maori population and the statistics of a town facing relative disadvantage. In contrast, Ohakune is a bustling tourist town of predominantly Europeans, with a statistical profile that indicates relative prosperity. However, this is only a part of the picture.

This research presents a more complete picture, including a historical review which details the stories of these towns, set within the context of the wider changes occurring throughout the country. The model of resource community cycles (Taylor and Fitzgerald, 1988) is used to provide an overview of the development of these towns, covering the eras of sawmilling, railways, farming, market gardening and more recently, tourism.

Theories of civil society and social capital provide a framework for analysis of the internal dynamics of the communities. This analysis contributes to possible explanations for the existing disparities, as well as to strategies that address them.

Indicated through this analysis, was a shortage of stocks of bridging social capital, both within and between the towns. These are the bridges between different social networks that enable communities to "get ahead" (Kozel and Parker 1998; Barr 1998; Narayan 1999). Strategies suggested to develop bridging social capital include: the development of networks of interest, such as a youth network; and activities that promote common interests, such as the arts, sports, shared celebrations and the importance of families. Also highlighted was a need for capacity building, particularly within the Raetihi community. This is in order to foster more effective processes for public engagement required for the development of strong bridging social capital, as well as linking social capital, i.e. the vertical links referring to the dimensions of social class and group power dynamics.

A comparative approach has highlighted cultural differences between Maori and European based understandings of the concepts of family, community, voluntary work

and associational life, which has implications on theories of civil society. Cultural differences in values were also seen to be reflected by attitudes towards the mountain and rivers in the area. Europeans saw them as economic assets, whereas the Maori view was that they held a spiritual significance as respected ancestors.

The dominance of the European view was promoted through the public sphere with an emphasis on tourism and economic development, and the exclusion of community development, representing a hegemony of values.

There was a need identified for more inclusive processes for community decision making and a mandate that addresses the pervasive inequalities that exist. The communities' experiences of government agency initiatives highlighted a resulting shortage of sustainable community development outcomes. This was seen to be mainly due to the agencies being centrally located and controlled, with limited interagency communication. There was also a tendency for agencies to operate from a model of service provision to a passive community, rather than the dialogical partnership relationship (Ife 1997:133) necessary for effective and equitable community development. With a limited mandate held by local government for such community involvement, a small and stretched voluntary sector, the inevitable result has been the maintenance of the status quo.

Efforts need to be made to support a viable future for these independent urban centres, as they face predictions of a declining and aging population and increasing inequality. Traditionally, efforts that promote equitable development through the redistribution of resources and power are built on arguments of social justice. However, a contribution of theories of social capital and civil society is to highlight the need for equality within and between communities, to ensure the capacity, strength and efficiency of the social networks necessary for strong, sustainable, economic development. To maximise a community's economic performance, equitable community development must first be addressed.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Driving through the main streets of central North Island small towns Ohakune and Raetihi, one can't help but notice the contrast. Ohakune presents the face of a modern ski town with its tidy shops, accommodation and cafes, all catering to the many tourists who visit to enjoy the benefits offered by a town located at the base of Mount Ruapehu. Only 12 kilometres away the farming service centre of Raetihi resembles a ghost town with its quiet wide main street lined with numerous empty shops in various states of disrepair. Upon closer inspection, the detail and structure of some of Raetihi's buildings create a sense of faded grandeur hinting at some distant era when the town experienced its heyday. Conversations with any of the older locals reveal that there have been huge changes in the towns over the years. These changes have affected their economies, demographics and essential characters. As a consequence these two small rural towns, although in the same proximity and with very similar sized populations, currently have very different statistical profiles. Raetihi has a predominantly Maori population whereas Europeans make up the most common ethnic group in Ohakune. Ohakune's population fares significantly better with educational achievements, employment and income levels. However these statistics contribute only a small portion of the picture of these two towns.

This research aims to create a more complete picture by describing the levels of social capital within and between the communities. It illustrates the social networks that connect community members to one another and to those outside of the communities. With an analysis of the different dimensions of social capital, that is the aspects of bonding, bridging and linking social capital, the strengths and weaknesses within these social networks can be identified. Extending these descriptions is an examination of civil society that operates in both towns. Civil society being the component of associational life, the values underlying these associations and the ways that community members participate in the democratic processes around decisions that affect their lives. These different aspects of civil society within each town are also assessed for their strengths and weaknesses.

Adding further depth to this picture is a historical review. Theories on resource community cycles are applied to the developmental histories of each town. The conceptual framework upon which this research is based is provided by such theories on resource communities, that is communities that are dependent upon natural resources, in addition to theories on social capital and civil society.

With a full overview established of the complexities within and between the towns, comparisons can be made. This research aims to provide insights that can help explain the current disparities between the towns by comparing similarities and differences between the towns' profiles, histories, stocks of social capital and civil societies.

These explanations are valuable as the acquired understanding can assist in the development of policies and practices which contribute towards improved community outcomes. These insights and their implications, while specific to the towns of Ohakune and Raetihi, can be applied to similar towns and communities in other rural areas. Research in such areas is seen as valuable in that they are more likely to be shunned by mainstream social science in New Zealand.

Resource communities by nature of their size, isolation and dependency on natural resources tend to share similar trends and issues. However each community is also unique with regards to its external environment, internal make-up and the way these factors interact and play out into each one's particular story.

This research aims to tell the stories of these two towns in the hope that any lessons learnt can help contribute to strategies to improve their future social, economic and community development.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a tradition of community studies in New Zealand reported in books such as Somerset's *Littledene: a New Zealand rural community* (1938); Pearson's *Johnsonville: continuity and change in a New Zealand township* (1980) ; Bell's *Community issues in New Zealand* (1997) and Chile's *Community development practice in New Zealand: exploring good practice* (2007). Such studies document social change in New Zealand over a range of social settings and course of time, grounding analysis of macro-social forces through local expression. These studies also serve to highlight some of the contested meanings and expressions of the term community. Such meanings include community as a reference to people within a locality, as well as those who share common ties or bonds such as ethnicity or occupation. The term also refers to an idealised notion of community, leading to a gap between rhetoric and reality, with a resulting tendency to overlook diversity and mask inequalities.

The scope for this review begins with a focus on literature that helps set the research in context, by identifying issues and trends pertaining to similar communities to the ones under study. A number of case studies of rural communities are chosen for review, with the aim that a contrast of findings will create useful insights. Literature which provides the background to changes in rural areas or resource communities in New Zealand contributes towards explanations for the developments in the communities under study and suggests directions for the future.

With the establishment of the local context and history, the focus of the review shifts to a broader perspective of a more political analysis of society. Literature on theories of social capital and civil society are explored for their contribution towards the research design and identification of a framework for analysis. Discussions on developments in civil society thought are included for their value in providing explanations for the course of politics and social change. As part of this discussion the different dimensions of social capital, cross-cultural interpretations and deliberative dialogue are elaborated on for their contributions to understanding the dynamics and construction of community life. Of particular

interest is research that helps to develop understandings of Maori experiences of civil society due to the significant Maori population in the towns of this study.

The literature covered in this review is seen to contribute towards a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of the perpetuations of ongoing inequalities. The aim is that through the discussion and application of theory, insights are gained on ways that people living in such small, remote centres can adjust to change, and build their capacity to participate on equitable and sustainable terms in their local economies and communities.

## **2.1 Changes in Rural New Zealand**

As the focus of this study is on two small towns in rural New Zealand, literature pertaining to the impact of changes in the rural economy on communities is a relevant starting place. Technically however, Raetihi and Ohakune can be defined as independent urban centres as both have populations that are just over a thousand people, with less than 20% of the population working in a main centre (Statistics New Zealand experimental classification for Urban and Rural profile, Bayley & Goodyear, 2004). The standard classifications describing such areas, being based purely on population size, were revised in 2004 for the urban/rural profile study to take into account the proximity of a community to a main centre and hence degree of urban influence. Although not an official classification, this change in definition for towns, such as Raetihi and Ohakune, from minor urban centres to independent urban centres is useful as it recognises their remote location and lack of urban influence.

Another term used in the literature to describe such towns is resource communities, defined as communities that depend on the primary production or processing of natural resources (Taylor and Fitzgerald, 1988). With the main industries in the area being farming, market gardens, forestry, timber and pulp processing, and ski-field based tourism, this dependency on natural resources creates similar characteristics and patterns of community formation and change.

Rural New Zealand has experienced massive economic and social changes over the years which echo trends that have been occurring in most other

industrialised countries in the world. The most obvious of the social changes is the ongoing de-population of many rural areas and small towns (Benseman, 2006; Taylor et al, 1999).

The New Zealand Planning Council (1982) proposed that with the increasing trend in the development of lifestyle blocks, rather than depopulation, the tendency was for a change in the location and composition of the rural population. This proposition was confirmed by Statistics New Zealand's Urban/Rural Profile (2004) which found that in fact, rural areas that were close to main centres and had high urban influence, showed significant increases in population while independent urban centres and remote rural areas were decreasing in population. The causes for these changes were seen as multifaceted and interlinked.

Perhaps the most evident precipitant to change in New Zealand's farming sector was the major shift in agricultural economic policy with the introduction of a market philosophy approach in 1984. Prior to this, government policies had been interventionist, guaranteeing farmers minimum prices and subsidies, to ensure they had a reasonable standard of living. Such policies aimed to encourage farmers to maintain and improve their farms and thus increase export revenue. These policies had the effect of raising the profitability of farming above what it otherwise would have been, thus sheltering farmers from the instability and volatility of the global market.

The new agricultural policies set out in the 1984 budget resulted in the loss of subsidies to farmers, an increase in interest charged on loans, and introduced user pays for inspection services provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF - now known as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry). The following year, tax allowances were lost, the supplementary minimum price scheme abolished and an end was put to trading advances.

These developments represented a shift in the dominance from special or micro-economic policies in agriculture to macro-economic policies, that aimed to integrate the agricultural sector into the total economy (Johnson, 1992).

Having lost the protection of the interventionist policies, rural communities were exposed to the realities of the global market with its changing commodity prices.

## 2.2 Results of Changing Economic Policy

As a result of these changes in economic policy many rural areas experienced hardship in comparison to the halcyon days of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Farmers' incomes plummeted and they faced the social costs of an increased strain to make ends meet. Many of them stopped farming. Nationally there was a loss of 9,700 male sheep farmers and 2,800 female sheep farmers between the 1986 and 1991 censuses (Pomeroy 1997:4).

Research commissioned by MAF in 1997 on the sustainability of farming in the Rangitikei was of particular relevance as the Rangitikei district borders Ruapehu, the district in which towns under study are located. This research detailed the immediate and devastating impact on many farming families resulting from the changes to agricultural economic policies.

Gilling (1997: 7.1) writes:

*The changes since 1984 were needed – no farm families doubt that – but the radical nature and rapidity of change have placed a heavy burden on the sector that is reflected in the responses of those interviewed, and the amount of stress and depression.*

Instead of a long period of progressive adjustments that gave farmers a chance to adapt to new policies and practices, the extent and speed of the changes created much confusion and uncertainty among the farming community.

The changes affected the fundamental assumptions, norms, roles and relationships that farming had been based on. What was considered 'normal' had changed in a number of areas including the increase of off-farm employment for both men and women; and changes in expectations, attitudes and practices with succession (Gilling, 1997).

The need to be competitive on the international market encouraged changes in technology and the organisation of work, including subcontracting and shift-work. Such changes had the effect of increasing labour productivity while reducing employment (Taylor, Fitzgerald, McCLintock, 1999).

The changes also impacted upon the industries supporting farming, causing the closure of meat processing and fertilizer plants, cheese factories and traditional stock firms. Subject to mergers and takeovers, this resulted in a smaller number of centralised, larger plants. This rationalisation of business affected both big business, (such as meat processing, pulp and paper, and banking), and small business (such as cream and milk factories, clothing stores, groceries), removing major employers from small communities.

Compounding these developments, further major policy changes were introduced to the state services sector. The concepts of centralisation, corporatisation, privatisation, and an emphasis on competitive modes of operating, were applied to state services. This resulted in major government restructuring, affecting state-owned agencies such as NZ Rail and Ministry of Works which had major rural depots, as well as NZ Forest Service, telecommunications, local government, and health and education services. Such developments led to a further loss of jobs and services particularly in the smaller, remote, rurally-based centres, such as those that are the focus of this study.

Industrial shutdowns and mass redundancies tend to impact upon rural areas severely. Urban areas are more able to absorb large numbers of people with the same job experience, skills and employment characteristics entering the labour market at the same time. Closures in rural areas however, accelerate urban migration of the young and financially uncommitted, highly skilled and managerial people. Those left behind tend to be the unskilled, and the middle aged and older population who are unable to sell their homes for a price sufficient to re-establish elsewhere. Those who fear the loss of their community and support networks and have little confidence in their ability to retrain and find work (Peck, 1985).

“The negative impact of these changes has been the lowering of the viability of rural centres and an increasing dependence on more distant towns and cities” (Benseman, 2006:2).

As a result of accumulating frustrations arising from the huge changes and their ongoing impact, many in the rural areas developed negative perceptions of local and national government. The fundamental assumption that government

would always come through for the farmers was no longer true. Farmers argued that they and farming had been marginalised.

### **2.3 Effect on Rural Communities**

Another of the fundamental norms that was affected by the economic changes was the relationship between farming families and their communities (Gilling 1997).

Community groups and services experienced an increased difficulty with the recruitment and maintenance of volunteers as many adults, men and women, worked 'off farm' to make ends meet. The traditional expectations on farming families to get involved in community work, whether it be with the volunteer fire brigade or helping with fundraising and working bees, were challenged by the practical realities of the new climate.

Using the wider definition of resource communities which encompasses families involved in activities such as farming, forestry, mining, tourism and fishing, Taylor et al (1999) confirmed the decline of associational life. They noted that 'traditional' community organisations were weakened by the loss of key people from "middle management level" who had played strong roles in them.

Community groups also experienced an increasing amount of bureaucracy and demand for paperwork required by the new accountability regulations. The experience of burn out was reported for the limited numbers with the skills and availability of time (Gilling, 1997).

Sampson and Goodrich (2008) commented that such impacts upon associational life in rural areas of New Zealand may be more pronounced than in urban areas due to the greater role that voluntary support played in many aspects of community life. Geographical isolation and the small size of the communities tend to limit access to wider resources and the availability of market solutions that contribute towards community wellbeing. Examples given included access to after-school childcare options, and the voluntary fire brigade which provides a vital service in rural communities.

## 2.4 Rural Maori Population

Taylor et al (1999) noted that between 1986 and 1996, many resource communities experienced increases in the number of Maori as a proportion of the population that were significantly higher than the national growth rate for Maori. They also noted that much of this increase was due to immigration by non-local iwi.

However research conducted in the Mangakahia Valley in Northland noted an increase in the Maori population due to the return migration of many Maori to their tribal land (Scott, Park & Cocklin 2000). This was one of a number of demographic changes in the Mangakahia Valley which also included a decrease in traditional farming families and an increase of commuters and lifestylers.

The most common reasons given by Maori to the researchers for returning to the Mangakahia were: wanting to live on family land because of their ancestral connections to that land, preference for raising children in the countryside and near family, and the cost of living being more affordable than in the cities.

Many rural Maori migrated to urban areas in New Zealand during the long boom period from 1945 -1973. Nationwide, 75% of the Maori population lived in rural areas in 1945, but by 1981, 80% of Maori were urban dwellers (Metge, 1995, p.22). This urban migration was a consequence of high rural unemployment combined with a demand in urban areas for labour from the expanding manufacturing sector. During the settler colonisation period starting in the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Maori were alienated from their land. This declining resource base rural resulted in Maori being no longer self sufficient (Poata-Smith, 2008).

More recently, with the shift towards a post-industrial society, vulnerability resulting from changing global markets and a reduced need for a largely unskilled labour force in the cities, it appears there is a reversal of the urbanisation trend in the Mangakahia, which many Maori returned to in the late 1980's (Scott et al, 2000).

## 2.5 Increasing Diversity and Decreasing Cohesion

The research undertaken by Taylor (1999) et al highlighted that resource communities across New Zealand have become more diverse socially, culturally and economically. With this increased diversity, they reported reduced community cohesion. In line with these findings Scott et al (2000) noticed that in the Mangakahia, class, ethnicity and gender were strong modes of social differentiation. That “ethnicity cross cut or aligned with class to create deep, if often unrecognised difference” (p433).

The demographic changes in the Mangakahia Valley induced a mixture of responses from the existing community, revealing deep divisions in cultural values and hegemonic assumptions. A telling example presented in the research when during an interview with one of the researchers, a Pakeha woman commented on the number of Maori families returning to family land in the district. And then in the next breath she explained that there were “almost no families left” in the district, as she counted off the handful of remaining Pakeha farming families.

Another example given relates to changes in the Resource Management Act (1991), which have meant that for any significant resource development proposal there is the requirement for consultation with Maori, in their roles as “tangata whenua” (people of the land) and “kaitiaki” (guardians over precious resources). Accustomed to being independent in their work, many farmers in the Mangakahia Valley objected strongly to this requirement, seeing it as an infringement on their personal property rights (Scott et al, 2000). They expressed their frustration that “good farm land” was going into plantation forestry and lifestyle blocks or was unused, scrub-covered Maori land, while they, “the backbone of the country”, were unacknowledged and unsupported. They tended to view the trend of Maori return migration as disruptive to the social fabric of the Mangakahia, with the view that Maori were returning “to nothing”.

A further illustration of cultural difference was indicated with the researchers finding that the loss of basic services had different meanings and implications. The

loss of the bus service, post offices and shops tended to be missed by farmers as places to meet and feel part of the community. The intersecting social relationships involved with the previous provision of various services, along with earlier forms of farming, had supported a stronger sense of belonging and community.

In contrast for many, predominantly Maori, people on low incomes, the loss of such services emphasised increased financial hardship. Unlike the farmers and lifestyleers who had the resources to be self reliant, the lack of means of transport and costs involved, presented significant problems for poorer, mainly Maori, families. These families, being the least able to afford more regular trips into the city, often didn't have the convenience of deep freezers, and were forced into reliance on each other for transport and other basic facilities. For example, the sharing of washing machines was a common practice.

Scott et al surmised that the loss of community the farmers described wasn't shared by Maori as:

*Maori family and social life normally provides for high levels of interaction, whereas that of Pakeha doesn't and therefore needs to be structured by interactions in the context of built environments such as local stores, post offices, sports clubs and the like. Maori identity, by contrast was resourced by whenua (land) and whanau (family)" (Scott et al, 2000, p443).*

Their findings indicate a diverse set of values between the groups, based on core differences in identity construction. This leads to the finding that Maori valued community infrastructure for the material resources provided, whereas the value for Pakeha was in the sense of belonging and affiliation.

## **2.6 Social Sustainability**

The lay discourses discussed above reflect a corresponding tendency in much rural academic discourse and policy to treat rural communities as homogenous in nature ignoring the diversity in ethnicity, class and occupational status (Cloke and Little, 1997). There is a hegemonic assumption that rural means agricultural, as if rural communities were composed entirely of farmers.

Evidence however, indicates increasing levels of diversity, deprivation and inequalities in wealth distribution both within and between communities. Although some resource communities had experienced a period of growth and affluence, the analysis weighted heavily towards relative disadvantage, with some communities identified as being very disadvantaged relative to the total New Zealand population (Taylor et al,1999).

In the late 1980s the government was lobbied extensively to form a Ministry of Rural Affairs to address the impact of the changes in economic policy on the rural sector. Instead the government decided to extend MAF's brief to include 'healthy communities', human resources and rural affairs perspectives. As a result MAF managed an unofficial rural development policy from 1991 to 1998 through its Rural Affairs Unit.

MAF's focus however, was on agriculture and the concerns of the farm community, rather than the rural community per se (Gilling, 1997; Pomeroy 1999; Scott, Park & Cocklin 2000). This was evidenced in one of MAF's policy reports: "improving farm profitability is the single most effective contribution MAF can make to improving the viability of rural communities" (Webber and Rivers, 1992, p. 7).

Pomeroy (1999) commented that MAF's goal was to support sustainable agriculture, and as such it didn't have the mandate to improve the well being of the rural sector as a whole. MAF's rural development work effectively stopped in 1998 when it was restructured.

Allen and Sacks (1992) noted however, that poverty and social equity issues were a result of models of unsustainable agriculture. They identified a need to address the cause of such inequities which they saw as being inherent in the current social and economic relations of production. The point was made that it was insufficient to merely address the effects of the loss of family farms, community disruption and environmental degradation.

Communities dependent on natural resources have tended to display unstable and volatile employment patterns creating periods of unemployment and relative poverty (Freudenburg and Gramlin, 1994; Taylor and Fitzgerald;1988)). The experience has been that development in such communities doesn't necessarily filter through to wider sectors and general regional development.

Instead of a wide, uniform economic growth, centre-periphery occurs. It's not enough for these communities to wait for the next rise in commodity prices for their prosperity. For while communities wait, resource extraction may shift elsewhere (nationally or globally) dependent on factors such as capital, labour costs, political context and environmental policy. The argument is for a more critical and sustainable approach to the assumed positive relationship between wealth and resource extraction.

One of the key conclusions reached from the research carried out by Scott et al (2000) is that the concept of "sustainable rural communities" should be treated as a folk category, due to the tendency in academic discourse and policy to interpret rural communities as farming communities, creating a hegemony of values which in turn define what is sustained and what is compromised. Sustainability is not possible in a social system that is characterised by a proportion of the population who live in absolute poverty, or in which increasing economic disparities exist (WHO, 1997; Wilkinson, 1998).

Rather they advocate the use of the concept of "social sustainability", described as "having a local, historically defined content which will include elements of livelihood, social participation, justice and equity" (Scott et al. 2000, p 443). This concept, they say, "contextualises the analysis of inequalities in rural society in the national and global field while de-emphasising assumptions about rural or community homogeneity or discreteness" (p.444). Similar to economic and environmental sustainability, it represents a global struggle expressed in locally specific ways.

## **2.7 Changes in Resource Communities**

From their observations in rural New Zealand, Taylor et al (1984, 1989) present a model where changes in resource communities are seen in the context of an ongoing cycle of change common to communities dependent on natural resources for their survival. This cycle involves planning and development, growth, maturity, leading to shutdown, recession and then beginning the next cycle with planning for a new activity.

This model was initially developed from research carried out during the era of “Think Big”, when government policy was focused on large scale developments such as in energy, petrochemicals and metal processing. They noted that while the resource development decision-making and economic benefits derived from it were centralised, the negative impacts of the changes and social costs involved were substantially borne by the regions and communities, in which the developments were located. This lack of regional analysis was in fact explained by a tendency for planning and research to occur centrally and be focussed on national rather than regional benefits (Taylor and McClintock, 1984).

Key factors which affected the nature of resource communities were identified as: a) the level of the influence and alliance between the interests of multinational capital and the State in resource development; b) the role of technological change (and imported technology) and its influence on work and its organisation; and c) the power of the corporates to restructure local society.

“These interacting, extra-local influences, when focused on resource exploitation, bring changes to regional and local communities and their physical environments which are not anticipated or always welcomed” (Taylor, Fitzgerald, McClintock, 1999:4).

## **2.8 Diversification in Resource Cycles**

The work by Taylor et al (1999) found that some communities had developed alternative economies that had buffered them against the negative impacts of resource cycles. This was found to be particularly true when the main alternative activity was tourism or an economic activity that wasn't resource dependent, such as manufacturing, or the development of retirement and lifestyle villages. However they noted that tourism had experienced contractions for a time in the 1990s and in this respect “tourism is far from a panacea, despite considerable growth since a low point in the late 1980s” (Taylor et al 1999). They stressed the need for economic development to be based on alternatives that aren't dependent on natural resources and vulnerable to related cycles.

Tykkylainen and Neil (1995) point out that the capacity of a rural region to survive economic restructuring depends on the nature of its particular “mosaic” of

resource communities and the ability of its population to draw on more than one natural resource type. The remaining population also needs to be of the size, composition and ability to maintain the necessary social organisation to sustain social life and collective action.

## **2.9 The Role of Social Capital**

Research on the ways that the small Westcoast towns of Whataroa and Harihari adjusted to the closure of the indigenous timber industry and diversified their economies to include dairy farming and tourism highlighted the importance of social networks, reciprocity and trust (Sampson & Goodrich 2008).

This research explored the relationship between family and community in order to understand how rural families draw upon, and contribute to stocks of social capital in the face of change.

Putnam defines social capital as “those features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Putnam, 1993 p 167). Social capital, representing the sociology of economic development, is seen as a social resource with a productive capacity. It is seen to contribute to other forms of capital such as financial, physical, environmental, cultural and human capital. Similar to other forms of capital, it can be accumulated, traded or transferred. And similar to cultural and human capital but unlike other forms, social capital isn’t reduced through use. Rather it is seen to increase – creating more to reinvest. This social resource is embedded in social relationships and structures and expressed through the contact, communication, cooperation, sharing, and reciprocity that are inherent in ongoing relationships.

Sampson and Goodrich’s research found that aspects of the social life and social structure in these communities assisted the rural families to negotiate the effects of rapid social and economic change. The social networks developed by families played a critical role in accessing the social and physical resources that promote family wellbeing. High levels of trust and reciprocity enabled the families to support each other and “get ahead” in the context of significant change.

However the researchers highlighted the limitations of any attempts to create social capital at the local level through policy directives. As a resource of the collective, expressed in the everyday lives of individuals, families and communities, they emphasised the need for local initiative and control over the processes involved in building it.

*Hence, at best, policy directives can facilitate access to resources, by fostering bridging opportunities and providing financial and technical or advisory support. Furthermore, agencies taking approaches that embrace the norms inherent in social capital itself, such as trust, reciprocity and mutuality, will be better able to take the community along with them. In their absence, the direct involvement of the apparatus of government is likely to be totally counter-productive to the establishment and facilitation of enduring social capital. (Sampson & Goodrich, 2008:6).*

## **2.10 Bonding, Bridging and Linking Social Capital**

To understand the mechanisms by which social capital assisted the families of Whataroa and Harihari to cope with the changes in their communities the researchers differentiated the forms of social capital which the families engaged. The concepts of bonding and bridging social capital, distinguish different types of social networks and their varying roles (Putnam 2000; Narayan, 1999).

Bonding social capital refers to social ties, obligations and trust among people who are “alike”, in terms of gender, or ethnicity, or social background or any other dimension. Whereas bridging social capital refers to social ties among people who are “not alike”. These concepts parallel the use of “strong” social ties and “weak” social ties in the work of Mark Granovetter. Close friends with strong social ties, have frequent overlapping contact within their relatively homogenous social group, forming a “densely knit clump of social structure” (Granovetter, 1983, p202). Whereas, acquaintances with weak ties are more likely to be diverse and heterogeneous in experience and social location; not known to all of each other’s social circle and have less frequent and intense contact. Weak ties provide the

“social bridges” between the tightly knit bonded groups, thereby exposing members to different sets of social experiences and resources. In contrast, those with few weak ties are limited to the relatively homogenous views, information and resources of their immediate social world (Granovetter, 1983).

Sampson and Goodrich (2008) noted that the Westcoast families drew upon both bonding and bridging ties to develop social capital that contributed to their well being. The different networks of both strong and weak ties allowed them to access different sets of social and physical resources that provide solutions for them and their communities. For example, bonding social capital in the form of strong kin-ties provided the necessary support with childcare to enable parents to work. Newcomers typically arrived with very few or no bonding ties to their new community, and establishing them became critical to their gaining acceptance and settling into the community. These social support networks are a key function of bonding social capital and play an important role for people facing health problems or socio-economic hardship (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004; Brisson & Usher, 2007).

While bridging ties were useful in the later stages in the establishment of a family business, strong ties to the immediate community accessed bonding social capital used to generate the custom necessary in the early stages. Conversely, an excess of strong bonding ties and lack of bridging ties confined another family’s options to those available within their rather homogeneous immediate social world. This family’s experiences are consistent with the notion that an excess of bonding ties allows people to simply “get by” (Briggs 1998; Holzmann and Jorgensen 1999). Weak bridging ties are of value in accessing different sets of resources and enabling people to “get ahead” (Kozel and Parker 1998; Barr 1998; Narayan 1999). Several examples from Sampson and Goodrich’s research were given illustrating how weak bridging ties with their wider networks helped resolve employment problems, as well as encouraged participation in community activities and support for fundraising.

Woolcock (1999) argues that different combinations of bonding and bridging are responsible for a range of outcomes and it is necessary for development to incorporate a dynamic component in which different optimal combinations change over time. Using the example of the family business dependant on its immediate

community support for its initial establishment, this bonding social capital ensures that the business foundations, such as the necessary skills, structures and resources, are in place. The business then draws on bridging links to access wider markets as the business expands in along a sustainable development path.

Empirical evidence cited by Putnam (2004) suggests that from the standpoint of ethnicity, bonding and bridging social capital may be complementary. That is, the more a person bonds with their own group the more likely they may be to bridge with those outside their own group. The social ties from within each group are in a sense extended to include those in other groups.

*Dutch researchers, for example, have found that the Turkish immigrants who are most actively involved in broader Dutch society are precisely those who are also most actively involved in the life of the Turkish community itself. Bonding, in short, can be a prelude to bridging, rather than precluding bridging. (Putnam, 2004:7).*

In contrast however, there are also forms of bonding where groups achieve internal cohesion at the expense of outsiders, who can be excluded, treated with suspicion, hostility and outright hatred. The Mafia and the Ku Klux Klan are examples of groups with social capital in that they achieve cooperative ends on the basis of shared norms, but who produce major negative externalities for the wider society in which they exist.

According to Fukuyama (1995), this propensity among human beings to divide the world into friends and enemies is the basis of all politics. He explains this human propensity through the concept of the “radius of trust”. All groups with social capital have a radius of trust, or a circle of people who operate within co-operative norms. If the group’s social capital produces positive externalities for the wider society, the radius of trust is larger than the group itself. This radius of trust can also be smaller than the group as, for example, in a large organisation that only fosters cooperative norms among its management. Traditional culture social groups, such as tribes, clans and village associations often have a narrow radius of trust which reduces the ability of the group members to cooperate with outsiders

often creating negative externalities. With less weak ties, traditional societies lack the opportunities to be exposed to new ideas, information, innovation and access to resources.

Groups with strong bonding social capital are more effective when they link together vertically and horizontally, forming cross-cutting networks that can push issues to the next level, and develop alliances across the lines of class, ethnicity, gender and age that are built from a strong grassroots base (Edwards, 2004).

In addition to bonding and bridging social capital, a third dimension of linking is often added to make the “social capital trilogy” (Woolcock, 1998). Linking refers to the vertical links, or social ties among individuals or groups at different levels of power, status or access to resources.

Healy (2004) notes that linking social capital is more difficult to measure and observe than bonding and bridging social capital but is an important and useful concept as it introduces the dimensions of social class and group power dynamics into the analysis of social networks.

Strong bonding may accentuate inequities as associations are used to promote the interests of only the groups concerned and can cause blocks in the system with special-interest politics. However, without the security provided by the strong bonding ties, bridging may expose those on the margins to situations where they can't compete on equal terms, or may just benefit the few who can prosper at the expense of the majority who are left behind (Edwards, 2004).

With strong bonding ties present, bridging should reduce the inequities over time as people resolve their differences in the interest of wider common good. Whereas linking should help all groups to prosper as they develop associations with institutions that can help them access support, resources, opportunities and influence (Woolcock, 1998).

Robinson (2006) views the dimensions of bonding, bridging and linking as each representing “different forms of incomplete social capital within discrete systems with the incompleteness being revealed when one system comes into connection with another”. That is, the social capital being incomplete in terms of either its content or reach. In more complete systems, information flows instantaneously and everyone has accurate knowledge of each others' interests

and consequently good reason for trusting or not trusting other individuals or groups. John Cody commented on these concepts with reference to James Coleman's notion of a "*perfect social system*" in which "*social capital is complete: all actors can interact with all others, each has full knowledge of others' interests in resources and sanctions are certain*" (Cody, 2002).

## **2.11 Social Capital and Civil Society**

Putnam highlighted the political function of social capital in its role of supporting modern democracy through the medium of civil society (1993). He documented the decline of civic participation in America warning of the consequences to society and modern democracy (2000).

Civil society however, is a widely contested concept, being used by both those to the left and the right of the political spectrum as an answer to many of the problems faced by the modern world.

Edwards (2004) identifies three schools of thought on civil society. The first being the school of associational life, is currently the most dominant. This school is represented by scholars such as Putnam and Tocqueville, who see civil society as a part of society -the world of voluntary associations. The second school of thought focuses on the ideas of the original civil society thinkers, such as Aristotle and Hobbes, and represents more of a kind of society that is identified with certain ideals – "the good society". And more recently philosophers have developed the third set of theories- civil society as the "public sphere", where citizens debate and discuss with one another the current issues affecting them with an ongoing sense of the "common" or "public" interest.

## **2.12 Civil Society as Associational Life**

In this school of thought, civil society is seen as a sphere of society that is distinct from states and markets. It is commonly referred to as the "third" or "not-for-profit sector" and includes all associations and networks between the family and the state in which membership and activities are voluntary. This includes NGOs,

labour unions, churches, political parties, professional and business associations, social movements, community and self-help groups, and independent media. Proponents of this school believe that voluntary associations contribute towards the development of the values and skills required for democratic life and act as the “gene carriers” for the good society.

This tradition has its roots in the work of Alexis de Tocqueville, who viewed associational life in 19<sup>th</sup> century America as a way that Americans compensate for their excessive individualism which he saw as the vice of democracy.

The neo-Tocquevillian tradition represented by Putnam, values civil society for its role in teaching people the skills for living a democratic life, and nurturing positive social norms and values such as cooperation, trust and tolerance. Such functions are seen to foster stability and strengthen social capital. In turn social capital is seen to promote collective action for the common good, or to develop the social ties that are necessary for the effective functioning of modern economies. The normative effects of associational life in maintaining stability are a key feature of neo-Tocquevillian thought.

The voluntary nature of associations with the notion of choice is seen as important. Acknowledging that many associations employ staff as well as have volunteers, the key criteria is that membership is consensual rather than legally required. This means that exit is possible without loss of status or public rights and benefits. Voluntary mechanisms are used to achieve objectives, leading to dialogue, bargaining or persuasion instead of enforced compliance by governments or market incentives by firms (Post & Rosenblum, 2002).

Critiques of neo-Tocquevillian traditions focus on the structural obstacles that prevent some groups from articulating their interests, the ethnocentric and unreliable assumptions about associations and their effects, and a failure to recognise the impact of globalisation, economic restructuring, political corruption and various power relations (Edwards, Foley & Dani, 2001). These critiques build on a history of critical thought including that of Karl Marx and Antonio Gramsci. Marx saw civil society as another vehicle for furthering the interest of the dominant class under capitalism, whereas Gramsci differed from his intellectual master in

that he also saw civil society as a site for rebellion against the orthodox, as well as the construction of cultural and ideological hegemony.

### **2.13 Cross-Cultural Perspectives**

Civil society theory, having been developed in Europe and the United States, makes a series of assumptions about the rights and responsibilities of associations, the norms they should nurture, and the roles they should play in society that may not transfer very well to other cultures, countries and different periods of time.

Chambers and Kymlicka (2002) comment on the notion that the spheres of market, state and civil society each have their own logic, and that according to the literature, the sphere of civil society operates on the logic of voluntary choice. They note that the logic of voluntary choice is grounded in the value of individual autonomy which is linked to Western liberal tradition. They note that civil society also operates under the logic of undistorted communication which is grounded in the value of deliberative democracy. Both assumptions of deliberative democracy and individual autonomy reflect a Western and liberal conception of how society should be organised. More collective and traditional societies think differently about belonging, solidarity and citizenship. Rather than the concept of voluntary choice the concept of cultural obligation is often more relevant.

In a New Zealand context, research carried out on Maori perspectives on volunteering and cultural obligation identified the term “mahi aroha” as the closest to the concept of voluntary work (Oliver, Porima & Wolfgramm, 2007).

A number of differences were established between the Western concept of voluntary work and mahi aroha.

The first was that mahi aroha is derived from a sense of duty or participation that is intrinsic to Maori tikanga (protocol) and identity. As such there is a strong cultural expectation on commitments of unpaid labour to the community, rendering the concept of free will or free choice irrelevant

Secondly mahi aroha relates to a concept of self as part of, and representative of, wider networks of whanau (extended family), hapu (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribe), with roles to play in respect of past and future mana (standing) and well-being of these systems. As such mahi aroha typically involves work with whanau, hapu and iwi.

Rev. Maurice Manawaroa Gray (2002) commented that for many Maori, voluntary activity, or service to the whanau, hapu and iwi, is seen as “an expression of the Maori philosophical cornerstones of collective consciousness, of collective well-being, and of collective responsibility, as espoused in the overarching philosophies of the people” (2002:41).

In comparison, Western definitions of civil society generally focus on networks outside of family through a wide range of community associations. This involves a conceptual separation of family from community. Giving to someone you don't know is generally taken as a higher level of altruism than sharing with someone you know. The very notion of charity is that the donor doesn't benefit from the gift. And it is a common practice to give through a formal organisation that acts as a filter or mediator between the donor (of time and money) and the cause for charity.

However for many Maori, it is impossible to distinguish between whanau and community benefit. Whanau is community and vice versa (Oliver et al. 2007).

Robinson and Williams (2000) describe the difference by defining the European concept of volunteering to be “giving”, whereas the Maori concept of cultural obligation is defined as “sharing”. With sharing, the person contributing also participates in and benefits from the activity with the others. So it is a joint or collective activity, rather than a gift from one person to another, with the sharing belonging to the group, sometimes linked through blood ties. The idea is that the activity takes place in the community in which the “volunteer” or “sharer” is a part of, and a formal organisation or structure isn't required for this sharing to occur.

The other difference relates to the purpose and nature of Maori civic associations with mahi aroha reflecting a response by Maori to a perceived threat to the retention and survival of Maori cultural identity.

Robinson & Williams (2000) make the point that relationships in Maori civil society tend to develop around informal associations rather than formal organisations. Contrary to mainstream organisations, membership in customary Maori associations tends to be through a verbal process that is implicit and obligation driven rather than rule-driven, specified and written-down. Often the obligation based membership is based on common ancestry and a cultural expectation to act in ways that develop social capital. Connectedness and belonging from these relationships is an intended consequence of whanau and iwi relations and although the social capital that develops may not be articulated, its value is understood.

Theories of associational life rest on the assumption that by enabling multiple and diverse groups to be represented, pluralism can be promoted both within and through civil society. However there is a need to reflect upon some of the common assumptions that underlie the definitions of associational life and acknowledge cultural differences in forms and functions that may impact upon equitable participation.

## **2.14 Civil Society as the Good Society**

The first two schools of thought are often combined with the assumption that healthy associational life will contribute or even produce, “the good society”. That is, the “forms” of associational life produce the “norms” of the good society. However it’s also noted that a strong civil society doesn’t necessarily mean that a society is strong and civil.

This second set of theories defines civil society in normative terms, where civil society is seen as a type of society, a “good society”.

Edwards (2004) highlights the reality that norms and values, and thus visions of “the good society”, vary between different associations in the same society or culture, and between different cultures and society.

As evidenced earlier in the discussion of cross cultural interpretations, concepts such as community and voluntary work have varying meanings. Even norms such as trust and cooperation have different values for people in different circumstances. For example, when power is unequally distributed and information incomplete, such as in societies characterised by corruption and exploitation, it is a dangerous strategy to be uncritically trusting. In such situations both trust and mistrust are discriminating.

Cooperation based on exclusive and prejudiced values and norms can lead to negative externalities, such as the actions of the Mafia, Ku Klux Klan, and the citizen groups which operated during Adolph Hitler’s rise to power.

Edwards also noted that the most common factor evident in volunteering is in fact enthusiasm, rather than any social activism driven by a particular vision. Voluntary associations are sites for the expression of personal ambition and power, as well as sacrifice and service. These mixed, often unconscious, motivations have the potential to influence outcomes to favour individuals at the expense of the greater good.

Thus, the high level of diversity in associational life challenges the assumed link between norms and forms, or means and ends, that denotes voluntary association as the ‘gene-carriers’ of the good society. Diversity therefore challenges the assumption that lies at the core of neo-Tocquillian thinking.

Inequality is another issue that poses problems for civil society theory, as different associations and their members have different access to social resources that are often used for individual rather than collective gain. Significant differences in power exist in terms of various associations’ abilities to have their voices heard, their agendas met and public acceptance of their generalised norms.

In order to address such inequalities of power, access and opportunity, Edwards (2004) advocates government action to “level the playing field” as a precondition for the good society. Neo-Toquevillians however, have trouble with the idea of such government intervention, despite the fact that government is involved in securing the preconditions for equal, civic participation and legal protection for associations. They view the problem to address is a collapse in morals, rather than a collapse of the support structures which “enable still-moral beings to fulfil their potential as citizens, carers, parents and volunteers, as well as workers and consumers” (Edwards, 2004:51).

Modern society is permeated by a culture of separation as capitalism provides no collective identity to bring people together besides that of consumers. (Bellah, 1995). The dominance of market philosophies and associated effects of global market integration, the pace of social and technological developments, and increases in the mobility of people and global capital have heightened levels of personal insecurity. With the decline of traditional support systems such as the nuclear family, the welfare state and labour unions, people are looking more towards civil society for support and solidarity as a way to address their growing feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability. (Edwards, 2004). As people form associations based on shared values and visions of the good society, the focus needs to be on the means by which the various visions and agendas are debated and decisions on future directions made.

## **2.15 Civil Society as the Public Sphere**

Rather than norms and forms, the public sphere provides a democratic framework for reconciling diverse visions and promoting common interests. For civil society to be more than just a collection of varying interests, the need exists for forums to express diversity so that groups can find a balance between individual autonomy and the demands of the social whole.

Contributing towards critical theory, Jurgen Habermas emphasised the importance of a “discursive public sphere” where people could openly discuss matters in conditions of freedom, equality and non-violence. He believed that through rational argument, the best ideas, rather than the loudest voice, would prevail and a consensus reached based on logical conclusions.

The availability of such public spaces is seen as vital to a healthy democracy in acting as a complement to representative political systems. Through the public sphere people have the opportunity for greater input into the decisions that affect their lives, besides merely casting their vote every three years. The devolution of power is emphasised in theories of the public sphere and is seen to occur through the inclusiveness of debate and the accountability processes of Government, business and civil associations.

Habermas argued that modern states faced a crisis of legitimacy with the commodification of the public sphere, as people were manipulated by state policy rather than playing a role in shaping it. The increasing commercialisation and concentrated ownership of the media; a tendency to lowest common denominator consensus; sound bites and slanging matches instead of rigorous debate; a general dumbing down of content; the distortion of politics by money, inequalities in public voice and participation; and the demands of the modern capitalist economy which lessen the time and energy people have for civic participation, are some of the trends identified by Edwards (2004) as affecting the health of the public sphere.

Questions over legitimacy are raised by Hucker (1997) with relation to the effects of the local government reforms in New Zealand in the late 1980s which

rendered local government an apolitical arena. Carried out in the name of efficiency, the changes resulted in a shift of power from the elected community councillors to the council officers. The effect has been a decrease in the democratic ability of local communities to determine the nature of service delivery and the priority of needs.

Another threat identified is the tendency to avoid controversial debate in the name of protecting civility as politeness. Research on volunteers in America found that public debates about politics were frowned upon as being “divisive” or “uncivil”, leaving important thoughts to be dealt with in their private interaction (Eliasoph, 1998). Extremes in political correctness can also have the effect of deadening debate resulting in a superficial consensus that disguises differences of class and income, race and gender, for the sake of convenience for those in authority (Edwards, 2004). The need rather is for a process that allows for honest, robust discussion that ventures beyond such superficial interpretations of pluralism.

This leads to the key problem of pervasive inequalities that threatens the very foundation of the democratic public sphere, challenging Habermas’ theory of rational debate. In contrast to the theory of dialogic politics and public interaction, the reality is “one of continued, entrenched inequalities in voice and access, and the domination of certain orthodoxies over others, which legitimizes ideas through raw power instead of through the power of rational argument between different but equal actors” (Edwards, 2004 :69).

In the case of groups who have been historically isolated and marginalised, there needs to be some acknowledgement that these groups can’t be expected to engage with the public sphere on equal terms. Expecting people living in poverty to share, participate and cooperate as equals is unreasonable unless efforts are also made to create the conditions in which this is the safe and rational thing for them to do. Strong bridges of public engagement are dependent upon strong bonds of capacity and confidence in communities.

## **2.16 Social Capital, Deliberative Democracy & Sustained Dialogue**

Theories of the public sphere have been relatively marginalised partly due to the ascendancy of conservatives and conservative thinking in Western politics that has led to the dominance of associational school of thought. Such theories provide a framework for looking at civil society as a way to bring about change.

In the New Zealand context, Robinson (2006) has moved his focus from assessing the nature and number of voluntary associations to the way in which people communicate within and between networks within a deliberative democracy model. This represents a shift from the school of civil society as associational life to that of the public sphere, or from an emphasis on structure to process.

Building on his research on the nature of social capital in Maori and non-Maori society, Robinson looked at the “free” space formed by civil society within which people interact and where social capital is created and constrained by culture and history. He noted that these spaces vary among different cultures, with the definition of culture including “the medical culture” and “culture” of professionals as well as different ethnic groups. Such cultures were seen to create and sustain dominant norms and values in specific environments.

Robinson made the point that the existence of these spaces for interaction isn't enough for the development of social capital. Also required are forms of dialogue that enable an equal exchange of information and ideas that reveal people's interests, providing the opportunity to build “public knowledge”. That is forms of dialogue that enable people's public opinions to be translated to public or collective knowledge.

Robinson's research (2006) addressed the issue of the loss of peoples' capacity to engage meaningfully in the process of making decisions about issues of concern, and thus their ability to test norms, values and implement sanctions. Rather, he noted, these functions have shifted to the state sector and to a range of officials and professionals, resulting in disconnections being experienced by a fragmented citizenry within an increasingly “organised” and “managed” society. These disconnections are exacerbated with an increasing diversity in ethnicity,

culture, religion and status, and a considerable lack of trust between groups. He sees these disconnections as an incomplete form of social capital and encourages deliberative, ongoing and sustained forms of discourse within and between groups as a way to move towards more complete systems of social capital in which people can engage in meaningful decision making.

Robinson brought his work on social capital together with that on deliberation and sustained dialogue. He suggested that the dimensions of bonding, bridging and linking social capital each require a different type of discourse relating to its function.

Developing high levels of bonding social capital, he noted, requires cohesion and the reinforcement of existing cultural and moral norms and values. To achieve this, discursive internal forms of discussion are necessary that involve all members of the group. This means communication strategies that are broad based and deliberative rather than hierarchical and one-directional. Robinson noted that this doesn't mean that customary bonded groups are internally static, but that change in the nature of custom is internal, on its own terms, rather than imposed from the outside.

Developing higher levels of bridging social capital requires structures to bring different groups in society together creating opportunities to interact, and time to develop trust and understanding of each others' norms and values. This need for time means that ongoing discussions in the form of sustained dialogue are necessary in building bridging social capital. This sustained dialogue needs to be combined with a deliberative approach that develops and explores a range of views and options. Both the range of views and options and the ongoing nature of this dialogue identify the process for developing bridging social capital as sustained deliberation.

And finally for the development of linking social capital, the need is for connections to other levels in society, using either individuals to act as connectors, or structures that draw the "lower" or isolated levels into position of participation. It's not seen as important to have lots of group members connecting with others, but rather that key people are identified with a mandate from their own group.

These key people make the connections and report or feedback information in an interactive way.

Such a framework from Robinson highlighted the importance of “time” as well as information. Time was seen as necessary to absorb and analyse information, as well as time to gain an understanding of each others’ norms and values and come to shared understandings. He noted the need is not necessarily to develop “shared norms”, but rather to build a “shared understanding” of each other’s norms, in the hope that this can lead to the creation of a new, shared norm of “acceptance of difference” (Robinson,2006).

This framework indicates that through the process of deliberation and sustained dialogue in the public sphere, associations can sort through their differences and legitimise consensus on the path towards the good society, in a fashion that is democratic and just.

Edwards (2004) notes that standing alone, theories on associational life, the good society and the public sphere are each incomplete. However by combining their strengths and weaknesses, they can all benefit from a positive and conscious interaction. As a goal to aim for, a means to achieve it and a framework for engaging with each other about ends and means, these different perspectives can be integrated into a mutually supportive framework.

This literature review has covered research focused on rural communities in New Zealand and has detailed many of the changes affecting the rural landscape.

The changes experienced by the communities of Raetihi and Ohakune are to be compared with the rural trends identified through the case studies and other literature in this review to reveal any similarities or differences.

A historical perspective of Raetihi and Ohakune is to be explored and the model of resource cycles (Taylor 1999) applied.

The concept of social capital has been discussed and the dimensions of bonding, bridging and linking social capital applied in the research design and analysis. A key strategy of the research has been an assessment and comparison of levels of bonding, bridging and linking social capital both within and between the

towns. This involves an identification of the disconnections that Robinson (2006) refers to and an establishment this disconnection in terms of content and reach.

Theories of civil society have been detailed and Edwards' (2004) framework adopted for the research analysis. The concept of civil society as associational life defines the focus and population for this study. Notions of the good society are to be explored through the establishment and comparison of the norms and values upon which the various groups and agencies operate. And the concept of civil society as a public sphere integrated through the examination of public spaces available for discourse, inclusiveness of processes and quality of debate. The role of the media is also to be looked at as to how it contributes to the healthy functioning of the public sphere. The effect of inequalities on the public sphere is to be assessed to establish whether they translate into disparities between the voices being heard, the norms accepted and agendas met.

Literature relating to critical theory will be drawn upon to assist in providing explanations for identified disparities and to inform possible strategies to address them. In these ways the literature review has served to inform both the research design and framework for analysis.

### 3. RESEARCH APPROACHES

This research intends to contribute towards the documentation of social change in rural New Zealand in the tradition of local community studies. As a research approach community studies has been criticised for being over-descriptive, yielding diminishing returns and failing to engage explicitly in theoretical debate (Mills 1959; Bierstedt 1977; Kent 1981). In contrast it has also been praised for its potential to ground and test general theories of social change which otherwise might remain as elusive and speculative ideas (Crow 2002). Highlighting trends in social theory which predict the collapse of community, Crow promotes the use of community studies to contest the notion of set patterns of social change over which individuals have no control. This is “rooted not only in the propensity of community studies to throw up unexpected findings and their capacity to reveal the scope for agency; it is also a reflection of the contribution to comparative analysis that they have the potential to make” (Crow, 2002 p8). By making comparisons across space and time, such studies have the potential to show that social change doesn’t unfold uniformly in a deterministic fashion. Through their active engagement individuals and groups can affect the shape of their social worlds. As a holistic approach, community studies can also engage with several big ideas at once revealing the interconnected nature of different social forces.

It is these ideas that lie beneath the comparative approach of this research. As exploratory research focused on the development of insights that contribute to positive social change, descriptive data is purposely selected for its contribution to such insights. These descriptions build on a clear theoretical framework which integrates concepts of social networks, values and the public sphere as a tool to analyse the complexities of the communities’ development.

Initially I favoured a more “traditional” qualitative approach to the research. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999, p.4), “traditional” qualitative research assumes that (a) knowledge is subjective rather than being the objective Truth, (b) that the researcher learns from participants to understand the meaning of their lives but maintains a certain stance of neutrality, and (c) that society is structured

and orderly.”

As I began carrying out the interviews and observations I found that due to my personal involvement in the communities under study I struggled with the assumption of being a neutral researcher. I also found that far from being structured and orderly, the communities rather were messy and riddled with shifting power plays and agendas. Upon reflection it became clear that rather than a position of neutrality I had a strong personal interest in the research improving the physical and social environment in which I and my family and friends live and work.

The approach taken was influenced by my background as a social worker and the experience of working with a focus on social problems and with people from disadvantaged communities. Through my work experiences I had developed a critical perspective on the cause of these problems and courses for action. This perspective views that the causes of the reality observed on the surface are connected with deep structures or unobservable mechanisms lying beneath it. That what is observed is actually only part of the picture and is often misleading. A critical perspective notes that misconceptions can occur as human senses and knowledge are limited. The illusions society assumes are reality allow some groups to hold onto power while others are exploited. And that this process is not necessarily based on any conscious deception.

Applying a critical perspective meant that I would be looking for inequities in the communities under study, attempting to expose the underlying dynamics that contribute towards these inequities and working towards a means to change the status quo. That is, critical perspectives have research strategies that are openly ideological and have empowering and democratising goals.

Traditionally conducted social science research has been criticised for silencing many groups marginalised and oppressed in society by making them the passive object of inquiry (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). From a critical perspective positivism tends to defend the status quo as it assumes an unchanging social order rather than viewing current society as particular stage in an ongoing process. More interpretive approaches are critiqued for being overly concerned with subjective reality. They see all points of view as equal and don't take a strong value position, nor actively help people to see false illusions around them so they can improve their lives. A critical perspective maintains the view that society is

essentially conflictual and oppressive. It explores power structures, such as hidden dichotomies, which allow social groups to operate as hidden mechanisms of control to reproduce the status quo.

Thus my role took on an aspect of social critique with the goal of social change, rather than that of being a purely objective observer. As such, there is a need to acknowledge that this research was not conducted in an environment free from values.

A grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1997) was also integrated with the critical. I aimed to develop theories based on emerging evidence which exposed hidden causes of inequities. As such a focus of my research was an exploration of power relationships and processes within and between groups in the communities (bonding and bridging social capital), as well as between groups and decision-makers or power and resource holders, (linking social capital) and the degree to which groups' voices were heard in the public sphere. That is looking at relationships between different actors on the micro-level as a source for macro-level outcomes. By exploring these relationships and processes I hoped to gain insights and develop theories on how any inequities were being created and possible strategies to address these inequities. This inductive approach involved an ongoing interplay between data collection, analysis and theory development in the search for general statements about relationships among the categories of data. The flexibility within this approach offered the advantage of being able to allow the data and theory interact, and the chance to be open to new directions in the research, following developing lines of inquiry as the study evolved.

My personal reflections became integral to the emerging analysis of the communities and informed the evolving process of data collection. These reflections were filtered through a critical lens, seeking underlying power dynamics in the communities as well as an ongoing critique of the research process itself. This process was to ensure that the research was on track in fulfilling its aims as well as offering an authentic and valid account of reality. French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, argued for the need for reflexivity in social research: that is the need for research to study and criticise itself as well as its subject matter. He also argued that social research is necessarily political (see Schwartz, 1997).

Initially, when I first conceived the idea for the research proposal, I was only interested in carrying out a case study of Raetihi and its community and history. From my familiarity with the area, Raetihi was clearly a town suffering from an economic downturn with associated social problems and in need of more effective community development interventions. However the scope of the proposed study expanded into a comparative study between Raetihi and its neighbouring town of Ohakune. The idea was that by comparing Raetihi to Ohakune, which in contrast was prospering economically, valuable insights into the cause of inequities could be gained. "Comparison is central to the very acts of knowing and perceiving" (Warwick and Osherson, 1973:7).

The research used both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to build up the profiles of the two towns. These profiles aimed to describe each town and their respective histories and changing dynamics within community life. The quantitative data provided an objective picture with further details added by the thicker descriptions from the qualitative data. The aim was that these thicker descriptions might also offer some explanations for the more statistical profiles. This mixing of methods provided some triangulation of data which, when combined with findings from the literature review, could to help paint an accurate picture of the reality of life, both past and present in the communities under study.

A comparative case study of two communities is the overall strategy for the research with the focus of inquiry being groups and organisations within each community. This, typical of case studies carried out from a qualitative approach, entailed immersion in the setting and rested upon both my own and the participants' worldviews. It involved multiple methods to collect the data including statistical data for the profiles, in-depth interviews, participant observation and content analysis. This combination of methods was chosen so that the limitations of one method were compensated by the strengths of a complementary one. For example, participant observations provided data on participants' unconscious thoughts or behaviours, not available via the in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews avoided data-observer effects and provided a chance to follow up from observations to clarify issues in depth. Content analysis however provided an efficient way to examine a wide range of data using unobtrusive techniques.

The use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis were also a form of

triangulation designed to address the bias inherent in this study. The combinations of quantitative data, observations, interviews and content analysis aimed to reduce the study's vulnerability to error, as the different types of data could provide cross data validity checks.

The sampling strategies employed included the use of stratified purposeful sampling (Miles and Huberman 1994), which was selected in order to facilitate the comparison of civil society between the two communities. Purposive sampling was chosen to extend, test and fill in information through selection of participants. Theoretical sampling was used where the theoretical framework and concepts, such as different forms of social capital, guided the choice of sample. Cases were carefully selected for new insights they might provide as grounded theory was developed. Sampling stopped when the balance between the research limitations and the point of data saturation or redundancy was reached: that is, the point the collection of data began to yield diminishing returns, and sufficient data was collected to complete the research goals within the limitations of time and resources.

Interpretive methodologies were applied in order to develop a deeper understanding of the patterns of community life and social structures, as well as the meanings that people give to them. The aim was to further understand the explanations that participants gave for the developments in their towns as well as explore possible explanations for similarities and differences. It also helped in establishing the different values, norms and worldviews of those within the various groups in the communities. The methods and theory from the interpretive approach however were used in a critical context to expose inequalities and contradictions.

In-depth semi-structured interviewing was employed as one of the main interpretive methodologies in the study. These interviews, typical of the qualitative approach, were very much like conversations rather than formal processes with predetermined response categories.

“The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's views but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses” (Marshall and Rossman 1999:108).

With this more informal, natural approach it was hoped that the participants would feel more comfortable, therefore increasing the likelihood of rich and authentic data.

Representatives from a range of community groups from each town were interviewed for their contributions to understanding the development and dynamics of associational life.

The other group identified for interviews were power and resource holders. These were representatives of either local or government departments or government-funded agencies charged with the role of community development. I was particularly interested in any insights they could add to a developing understanding of the underlying dynamics contributing towards inequities in power and resource allocation. The aim was to understand their prescribed role in the community and assess the community's actual experience of their interventions and outcomes; i.e. the link between policy and practice. I hoped that through this process any contradictions, conflicts or paradoxes could be identified. I was also interested in their processes for community engagement as well as their perspectives on any differences or similarities between the two communities.

Participant observation, being both an overall approach to inquiry and a data-gathering method, was also integrated into the research design. By immersing myself in the setting, attending meetings and events related to community development in the area, I aimed to observe participants' behaviour and relationships and learn directly from my own experience of the setting. From observed behaviour patterns and naturally occurring conversations, any inferred norms and values would contribute towards understandings developed from other sources of data, such as interviews and document content analysis.

And lastly, content analysis was used to study forms of communication that were relevant to the study. These forms of communication, which included newspapers, formal policy statements, emails, websites and minutes of meetings, helped illustrate the frames of reference for various groups and organisations, provided a record of events and actions, and supplemented data gathered from other sources. Such frames of reference were seen to serve as a tool to highlight any gaps between the rhetoric and reality of agency activity.

Historically content analysis was seen as a method to translate forms of

communication into more quantitative descriptions, where it was important to count the mention of particular items in each record. However it has in recent years been seen more generously as a way to describe and analyse the artefacts of society and social groups (Marshall and Rossman 1999). It is from this latter view that content analysis is applied in this study. The “public sphere”, or the space where democratic deliberations occur, is of particular interest in this research as a key element of civil society. And so the examination of forums for deliberation and the representation of different views, such as newspapers and discussion documents, was an important facet of the research design.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

Following the previous section which outlined the approaches used to inform the research design and selection of methodology, this section provides details of how that methodology was carried out via data collection and analysis.

### **4.1 Data Collection**

#### **4.1.1 Profiles**

Data contributing to the profiles of each town was collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The majority of the quantitative data was accessed from the Statistics New Zealand website and describes recent and historical indicators including: population, demographic and mobility trends; income, employment and educational levels; households; business; and involvement in voluntary work. To clarify the boundaries of the research, the statistical data is based on land area units for Raetihi and Ohakune as defined by Statistics New Zealand. Using their experimental urban/rural classification categories, the towns are defined as independent urban centres, recognising their distance from urban influence, and compared with similar townships. Ideally the definition would have included the hinterland surrounding the towns as people living in the surrounding farms have significant relationships with the towns that serve them. Such relationships affect developments such as the schools, the economy, business, health services, government, politics and the essential character of the towns. However for practical purposes, rather than redefining the boundaries of statistics collected, data relating to resource communities is included to acknowledge this integration with the surrounding hinterland. With the focus of this exploratory research on insights rather than a quantitative measurement of relationships, such a compromise was seen to be acceptable.

Other sources of quantitative data for the profiles included: crime statistics sourced from local police as well as conflicting crime statistics reported in Ruapehu District Council's State of the District Report 2008; Ruapehu District Council's Survey of Outside Ratepayers 2008 and Future Ruapehu- Community Outcomes Survey 2005; the Social Report 2009 from the Ministry of Social Development

website for participation in local elections; the Ministry of Tourism's website for visitor number forecast and Education Review Office's website's for data on local schools. As well as data specific to the towns of Raetihi and Ohakune, data was collected which related to the Ruapehu district and nationally. This was in order to make comparisons between local, regional and national trends.

Photographs taken from various sites representative of each town were also presented in order to provide a visual comparison of the towns. Photos of equivalent sites in each town, such as library, visitor information centre, main-street and police station, were included to illustrate differences.

The data on the historical perspectives of the two towns was sourced mainly from literature on the history of the area as well as from interviews, newspaper articles, and relevant websites such as [mtruapehu.com](http://mtruapehu.com) for history of skifield developments. The history of more recent developments was based largely on the interviews as well as analysis from local newspapers, details of Ngati Rangī's strategic plan from its website [kahuimaunga.com](http://kahuimaunga.com) and tribal links and boundaries from Te Puni Kokiri's website's directory of iwi and Maori organisations.

#### **4.1.2 Interviews**

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out as a source of information to add to the community profiles and explore similarities and differences between the towns, changes and their possible causes. Histories, descriptions of community life, levels and dimensions of social capital, the operation of civil society and the role of resource holders in community development were the main topics discussed during the interviews.

Seventeen in-depth interviews were held in all. Participants were given information sheets about the research and signed consent forms following AUT procedures. Each interview was audio-taped with transcripts being written up as soon as practical after the interview. Personal reflections were recorded in a journal immediately following each interview and were added to as the transcripts were written up. Some of the interview participants were followed up for further

clarification or to discuss further developments. Summaries of these conversations were made and added to the transcribed notes.

Fifteen of the in-depth interviews were held with community members representing associational life in the towns. These were representatives from voluntary agencies, not-for-profit groups, community action groups, sports clubs, hobby clubs, schools and preschools, community education and health initiatives, churches, community organisations and marae and cultural groups that exist (see appendices for full list of the groups represented.) Initially I had selected a much larger sample of community groups from a population of approximately 23 groups/clubs based in Ohakune and approximately 21 groups/clubs based in Raetihi. These population numbers were derived from lists of clubs and organisations in the local phone book plus other groups I was aware of from my involvement in the community. The intention was to interview one representative per group aiming at about fifteen interviews per community. However as I began the interviews I found that in fact each participant had some involvement with at least three different organisations. Some of this involvement was historical, contributing towards understanding changes over time, and also represented participants' changing needs and interests over their life progression, e.g. involvement with pre-school groups when children young, then schools and sports clubs, then political groups.

This involvement in multiple organisations is a characteristic of community minded types of people. Putnam (2000, p121) comments on how "giving, volunteering and joining are mutually reinforcing and habit forming": that organisational involvement seems to "inculcate civic skills and a lifetime disposition towards altruism". With the limited numbers of people in small communities it may be that there is more pressure on community minded types of people to be involved in a number of organisations in order to keep them going.

I found these participants to be very open, communicative and insightful. I also found that the process for the interviews and transcribing and analysing them was incredibly time-consuming and that more groups interviewed didn't necessarily mean more insights. And so the sampling strategy evolved to focus more on these community minded people as information-rich cases which proved to generate both deeper insights and time and resource efficiencies. The purposive sample was

selected on the basis of being representative of associational life in both towns, as well as aiming for a balance in gender, ethnicity, and interests from different sectors. The choice of groups for the sample was partly based on my own knowledge and experiences of working and living in the community. Snowball sampling was also employed where cases of interest were identified by participants who knew which further cases would be information-rich. This dialogic process enabled further participants to be selected in order to extend, test and fill information. Due to the small size of the towns the choice was obvious in some cases, e.g. there is one group per town representing business interests.

Two further interviews were held with representatives from Ruapehu District Council and Ruapehu REAP (Rural Education Activities Programme), organisations defined as resource or power holders. Information from these interviews was added to data sourced using other methods such as participant observation, feedback from community members and content analysis to provide details on community development in the area. Other resource holders involved with community development represented were the Ministry of Health and the Department of Internal Affairs. Data about these organisations' involvement was sourced through telephone conversations with representatives, document analysis, observations and interviews with community members.

Initially I had planned to select and interview a further group of recognised historians from established families in the area. However, during the course of the interviews with community group representatives I found that many of them were long term residents from established families and provided valuable data on the history and changes in the communities over the years.

The majority of the interviews were held with a single participant, however three were held with two participants and one with three. Of the twenty people interviewed from community groups, eleven were based in Raetihi and nine in Ohakune, although many had been involved in both communities, either by residence, family connections or work involvement. Of the total twenty two people interviewed, fifteen were female, nine Pakeha and six Maori, whereas of the seven men interviewed, five were Pakeha and two Maori.

The format for the interviews with the community group representatives comprised of a number of standard questions asked of all the participants, in

addition to selected questions relevant to each participant depending on their experiences. The standard questions included the participant's history in the area and involvement in community organisations, general information about the organisations, their purpose and history, types of people in the organisations and their norms and values, decision making and communication processes, relationships within and between groups, relationships between groups and power or resource holders, group's role in public sphere, similarities and differences between towns and possible explanations for those differences, groups or activities where mixing of different groups occurred, values shared across different groups and ideas to improve cooperation and collaboration.

Questions specific to each participant included their feedback on involvement with the community developments under study, such as *Chills Off*, budgeting service, integrated health centre, and decision of Ruapehu District Council to scrap community boards. Further questions were asked to invoke discussions about various topical documents included in the content analysis, such as the article in *North and South* magazine on Raetihi or articles and letters in local paper. Some of these questions were prepared before the interview and some were spontaneous, asked as the interview evolved. Topics were also generated by the participants' interests during the interview.

A similar format was true of the power resource holders, with the general questions for all those interviewed including: history of involvement in community development in area, aims and values of the organisation, resources available, resources being distributed and rationale behind allocation, communication and decision-making processes, any difference between involvement with towns, perceptions of similarities and difference between towns, processes for and success of community input and participation, ways that the organisation facilitates collaboration and cooperation among community groups, and background and residence of those within organisation. The specific questions were also related to the participants' involvement in developments under study and evolved with the interview.

The interviews were informal and conversational in tone. Although I mainly asked questions and clarified answers, I also contributed towards the conversation by way of sharing information. This was done in order to enhance the

researcher/participant relationship by making it more natural and reciprocal, as well as to adding to the participants' information base. During the course of my research I learnt much about what was going on in the community and noticed that one of the findings was a lack of opportunities to network and share information, partly due to the physical distances between people but also related to a pattern of groups working in isolation. I felt that it was ethical to pass on useful information learnt if I felt it wasn't affecting confidentiality issues, such as it was public knowledge, and it was beneficial to the overall research aims of community development. An example of this was when I passed on the information that a budgeting service was in operation to both the local council and REAP representatives to encourage them to get involved.

#### **4.1.3 Participant Observation**

Another key method used to collect data was participant observation. A number of initiatives related to community development were selected for observation in order to develop an understanding of developmental processes and the roles of both community members and resource holders. The initiatives selected aimed to ensure representation from both towns as well as cover developments for the whole area. They also held interesting histories contributing to the explanations for changes in the community. The initiatives included the *Chills Off* project- a fundraising initiative to heat the Raetihi swimming pool; the establishment of the Waimarino Budgeting Service; Ohakune Kaumatua Meetings – monthly community networking meetings; the attempt to set up a Ruapehu Accident and Medical Health Centre in Ohakune; REAP community consultation meetings; Raetihi Promotions AGM and subsequent meeting to address a funding application.

This data collection process involved attending community meetings as well as follow up conversations with participants to clarify events. My participation with the *Chills Off* project and budgeting service was the most extensive involving attending numerous meetings and follow up discussions and emails. With these initiatives I explained my research to the meeting and presented information sheets. Consent was given for my role and recorded in the minutes. Besides the Ohakune

kaumatua meeting I wasn't as explicit with the participants at the meetings about my research, mainly for practical purposes. There were 12 participants at the Ohakune networking meeting and we all introduced ourselves which was an appropriate time to mention this research, unlike the Raetihi Promotions AGM attended by about 50 people or the community meeting to address the integrated health centre attended by approximately 80 people.

I wrote notes during the meetings of my observations which included numbers, gender and ethnicity of the participants of the meeting as well as organisations represented. I also recorded the discussions and the ethnicity and gender of each speaker. At the end of the meetings I reflected on the course of events and wrote up these insights in my journal. Summary notes were also made on any follow up conversations.

The level of participation in my role as a researcher depended on the nature of the meeting. For Raetihi Promotions AGM, the Health Centre, and Ohakune kaumatua meetings I was a passive observer whereas for the other meetings I also asked questions to clarify what was being discussed as well as to assess responses to suggestions and challenges. I felt it was ethical to reciprocate when I could, such as getting involved in fundraising activities like sausage sizzles and selling raffle tickets for *Chills Off*. I also made suggestions when I knew of possible resources that might assist the groups in their work.

At one point during the process of the establishing the budgeting service, by virtue of being the only consistent local community member to have attended the meetings, I found myself organising the AGM. I also reluctantly allowed my name to be recorded as a member of the committee so that the service could maintain a legal structure and keep operating. I was uncomfortable about playing such an active role, however ethically I felt it was important and subsequently advocated for the involvement from community development agencies. This lack of local volunteers and distance of community development agencies contributed to my findings.

#### **4.1.4 Documents and Written Communication**

The collection and analysis of written communication relevant to the research was the final method employed for data collection. The forms of communication included newspapers, formal policy statements, power point presentations, emails, websites, magazine articles and minutes of meetings. Policy documents, evaluations, discussion documents, trust deeds, plans, memorandums of understanding, reports and concept papers helped illustrate the frames of reference for various groups and organisations as well as detail the history of the developments. Documents studied related to the initiatives detailed in the participant observation section, as well as the following: The *Raetihi Community Charitable Trust* (Local Action Research Project - LARP initiative by the Department of Internal Affairs); *CURE* (Centre for Unemployed Resource Centre); *Te Puke Marae's Ngati Uenuku Whanau Development Project* (funded by the Ministry of Social Development); report on *Ohakune 2000* achievements; *Raetihi Promotions 20/20 Vision: vision for Raetihi*; *The Waimarino review: final report and recommendations*. Prepared by the Health Funding Authority and Good Health Wanganui (Rimmer, M. 2001).; *Future Ruapehu: community outcomes survey*, Commissioned by Ruapehu District Council (Hooker, M. & Taylor, S. 2005); Ruapehu District Council's long term district plan (2009); and Ruapehu District Council's survey of ratepayers living outside the district (2008).

It's noted that the initiatives *CURE*, *LARP* and the *Te Puke Marae's Ngati Uenuku Whanau Development Project* are no longer in operation but their history provides valuable insights into current developments. Minutes of various meetings relating to many of the initiatives mentioned were also analysed to ascertain course of events or to corroborate information from other sources.

Copies of the weekly local paper, *The Ruapehu Bulletin*, from February 2009 to February 2010, as well as the monthly *Raetihi Times* from November 2009 to February 2010 were also collected and analysed. They were scanned for any news relating to community events and associational life as well as for articles reporting on the initiatives under study. Articles and letters to the editor about controversial developments, such as the Ruapehu medical centre, the scrapping of the community boards and other council consultation processes were particularly

valuable in establishing differing points of view within the community as well as the discourses behind these opinions. As well as the content of these publications, a critical analysis was applied in noting whose views were regularly represented and whether there was a balance of views.

Finally an article in the November 2009 issue of *North and South* magazine was also analysed for content and viewpoints and provided a valuable topic for discussion through the participant interviews.

## **4.2 Data Analysis**

The quantitative data describing the towns were collated, analysed for trends, and presented with accompanying graphs. These profiles provide pictures of the two communities, how they are changing, and indicate ways in which they are similar to or different from each other.

The data from the interviews, participant observations, content analysis and journal reflections was analysed in a number of different ways. The process was not linear in that an initial analysis was carried as each portion of data was being collected. These analyses were then reconsidered as further information was gathered and again reassessed at the end of the research. This involved an ongoing search for patterns or relationships amongst the data as in the tradition of building grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1997).

Data on concepts or categories that had been predefined by the literature review and resulted from general questions asked of all participants was grouped according to those concepts. These included the categories of bonding, bridging and linking social capital; issues affecting associational life; values; experiences with community development agencies; involvement in the public sphere; recent and earlier history on the towns; as well as participants' thoughts on and explanations for the differences between the two towns and the changes over the years. Within these categories other categories of data evolved as the information was interpreted and themes emerged. Practically this inductive process for data analysis involved searching the computer written text of the interviews, documents, and notes made from observations and journal for categories of meaning. As each

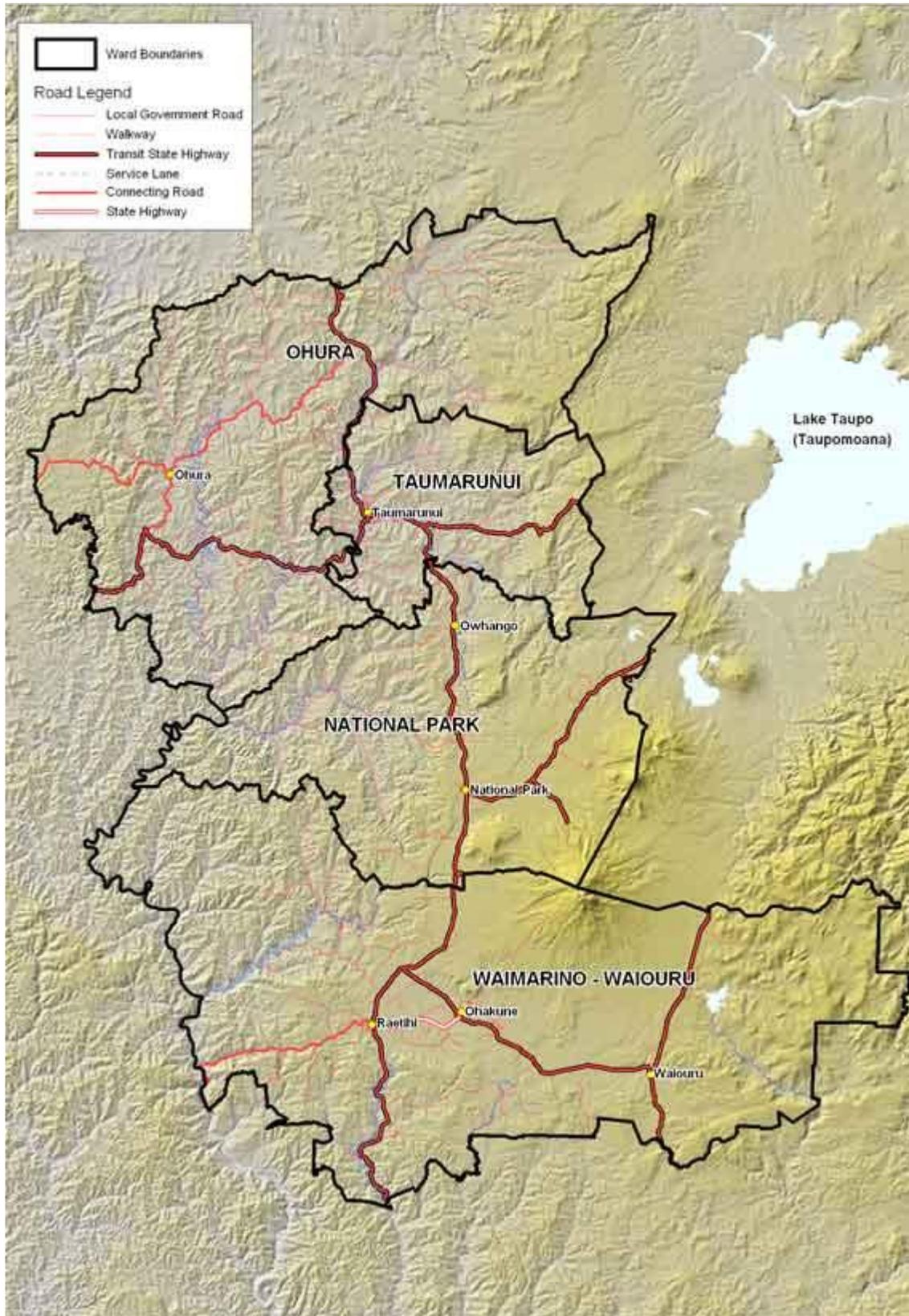
segment of text was identified as a generating or illustrating a category it was cut and past into relevant folders. In the analysis process links between the categories were identified and propositions about these relationships noted down. These emergent understandings were then tested by searching for negative instances of the patterns and exploring alternative explanations for the relationships identified. Cross checks were made to determine whether the different methodologies corroborated each other or whether there were any inconsistencies. By critically challenging the categories and patterns discovered, it's aimed that the conclusions reached and grounded theory developed will be the most plausible and accurate.

## **5. RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Profiles for Ohakune and Raetihi**

This research focuses on Raetihi and Ohakune, which are two small townships situated approximately 12 kilometres apart from one another, on the North Island of New Zealand's volcanic central plateau. The towns lie at the southern end of Tongariro National Park, close to the south western slopes of the active volcano, Mount Ruapehu. They are located within the Manawatu-Whanganui region and the Ruapehu District. The Ruapehu District has a total land area of 6,730 square kilometres and covers most of Mount Ruapehu, the headwaters of the Whanganui River, and land to the south, west and north of the mountain. The district is predominantly rural, being characterised by steep hills, large farming properties and a relatively small geographically separated population (13,569 in 2006 census). Taumarunui, with a population in 2006 of 2622, is the main centre and base for Ruapehu District Council, the district's territorial authority. Raetihi (1035) and Ohakune (1101) along with Waiouru (1383) are the smaller centres within the Waimarino-Waiouru ward. Raetihi and Ohakune are both viewed as area units by Statistics New Zealand, servicing the hinterland surrounding them. Along the northern boundary of Ohakune, beyond its railway line, begins the ancient podocarp forest of conservation area Tongariro National Park. The 16 kilometre drive from Ohakune through the forest leads to the base of Turoa skifields at an altitude of 1600 metres. Immediately surrounding the town and the hinterland between the towns is flat, fertile volcanic plains upon which the area's market gardens thrive. The land surrounding Raetihi is a mixture of flat, undulating and steep areas upon which pastoral farming is based. To the east of Ohakune is WPI's (Winstone Pulp International) Tangiwai sawmill and pulpmill and Karioi pine plantation forest, with its Waimarino plantation forest to the west of Raetihi. The closest city is Wanganui (42,639) which is approximately a 94 kilometre drive from the midpoint between Ohakune and Raetihi and takes about 1 and a half hours by car along the winding Parapara State Highway 4.

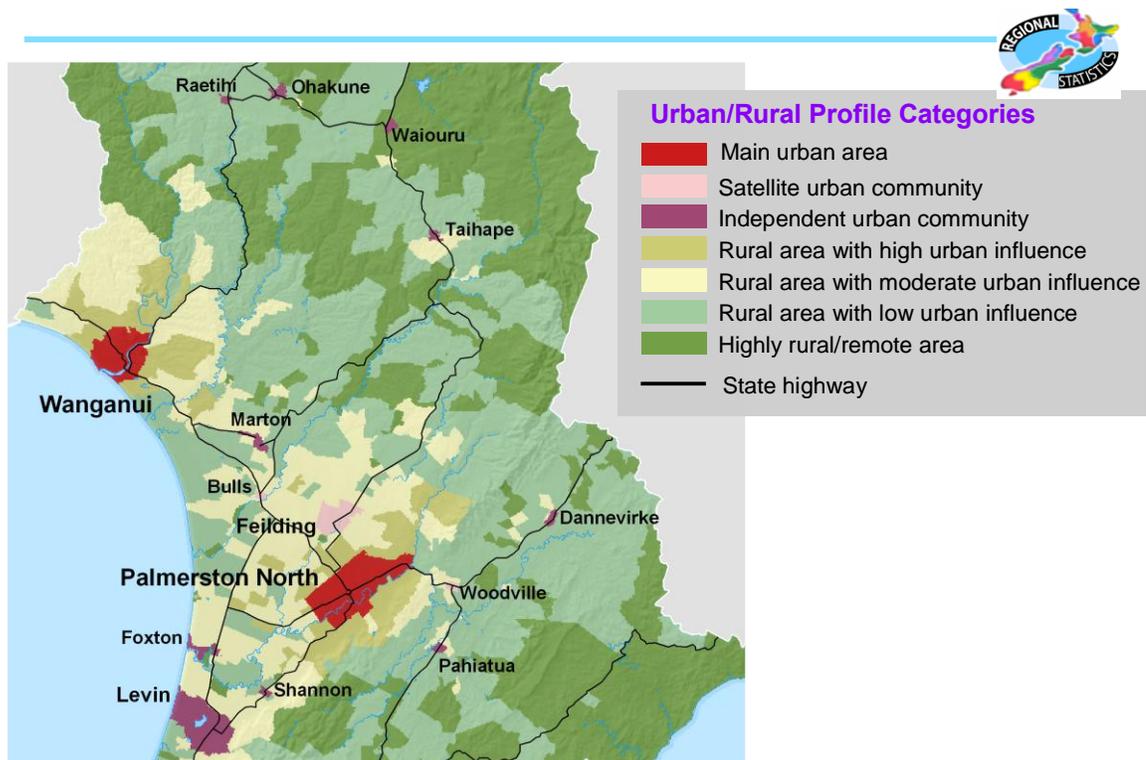
Figure 1: Ruapehu District (Ruapehu District Council)



Using recent experimental classifications from Statistics New Zealand

(Bayley & Goodyear 2004), Raetihi and Ohakune are defined as “independent urban centres” recognising their distance from urban influence. The towns are surrounded by areas classified as rural with low urban influence. With the threshold differentiating urban from rural centres to be a thousand people, and Raetihi having a population of 1035 and Ohakune of 1101 (2006 census), these towns are at the lower end of the scale. Therefore low population numbers, isolation from urban areas and influence, and strong rural influences are features of both towns.

**Figure 2: Urban and Rural Categories for Manawatu-Wanganui Region (Stats. NZ 2009)**



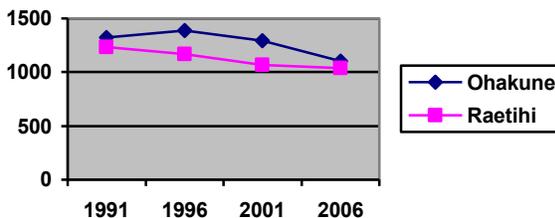
## 5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC TRENDS

### 5.2.1 Populations

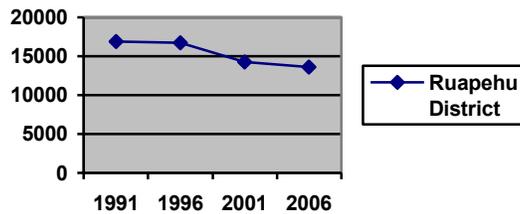
The population of both towns have been gradually declining over the past 15 years, with Ohakune losing 16.59% of its population from 1991 to 2006 (from 1320 to 1101), and Raetihi's population declining by 15.85% over the same time frame (from 1230 to 1035). This follows a population decrease in the wider Ruapehu District, in which the towns are located, for the same period of 19.51%, but is in contrast to national trends where New Zealand's general population has increased by 20.39% for the same period.

It is interesting to note differences in patterns of population changes between the two towns over this period. While initially Ohakune gained a 5.23% increase between 1991 and 1996, the population has since been in an accelerating decline, shrinking 6.91% from 1996 to 2001 and losing 14.85 % of its population between 2001 and 2006. Raetihi's population, on the other hand declined 5.12% between 1991 and 1996, then again shrunk between 1996 and 2001 by 8.23%, with the latest rate of decline slowing to 3.36% between 2001 and 2006. This more recent slowing in rate of decline is in line with wider trends in the Ruapehu District where the rate of decline slowed to 5% from 2001-2006 compared to 14.6% during 1996-2001.

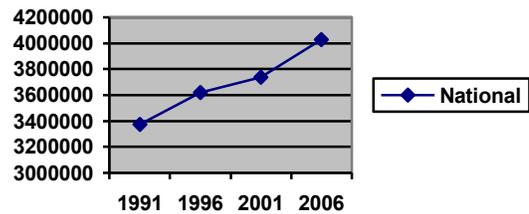
**Figure 3: Population Changes  
Ohakune Raetihi**



**Figure 4: Population Changes  
Ruapehu Dist**



**Figure 5: Population Changes  
National**



When compared to wider changes in mobility, these decreases in population numbers are a local reflection of national level net internal migration losses from independent urban areas between 2001 and 2006 (6,900) and rural areas with low urban influence (14,900). It's noted that during the 2001–2006 period, there was a significantly reduced net internal migration loss from independent urban areas (6,900) compared with the 1986–1991 period (16,400). In contrast, rural areas with low urban influence had a much larger population loss (down by 5,000) in 2001–2006 (14,900) compared with 1986–1991 (9,900). This large net loss of 14,900 people from rural areas with low urban influence mainly consisted of a net loss of people in the ages of 15–24 years, or from people who had specified personal incomes less than \$30,000.

Projections made by Statistics New Zealand (Subnational Family & Household Projections: 2006 (base) -2031, 2009) are that by 2031 Ruapehu district will be one of 32 territorial authorities in the country that will face a population drop.

## 5.2.2 Trends in Ethnicity

The changing demographics indicate shifts in the ethnic makeup of the communities of the towns. In 1991 Ohakune's Maori community totalled 35.6% of the total population, which has remained steady in 2006 at 35.69%. In comparison, Raetihi's Maori population has increased significantly from 46.71% of the total population in 1991 to 58.2% in 2006. This represents a 24.17% increase in the percentage of Maori who make up the population of Raetihi over the 15 years. This is higher than national proportional increases, where the in 1991 Maori

represented 12.88% of the population increasing to 14.04% in 2006. As such, both towns have significant proportions of Maori populations and Raetihi is a town where the majority of the population are now of Maori descent.

In contrast the proportion of Europeans has decreased in both towns, with Europeans making up 66.36% of Ohakune's population in 1991 and 64.61% in 2006, and 60% of Raetihi's population in 1991, down to 49.85% in 2006. In comparison, Europeans made up 83.18% of New Zealand's overall population in 1991, decreasing to 67.6% in 2006. National figures illustrate significant increases in other ethnic populations such as Pacific Island and Asian groups. Ohakune has a significant Asian population, mainly descendents of Chinese immigrants who have contributed to the development of market gardening in the area. In 1991 Asians made up 4.55% of Ohakune's population, increasing to 6.46% in 2006.

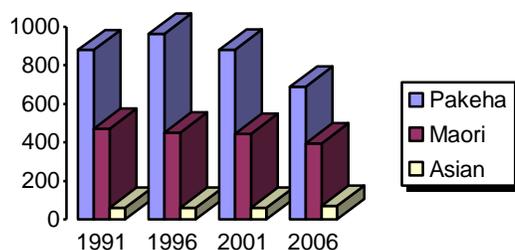
Looking at changes within the Maori populations of each town compared to overall population changes indicates some differences between the towns. Between 1991 and 2006 the Maori population in Ohakune decreased by 16.56%, reflecting the overall population loss of 16.59% for Ohakune. Raetihi's Maori population however increased by 4.5% over the same period, compared to total population loss for Raetihi of 15.85%. Nationally the Maori population increased by 30% over the 15 years from 1991 to 2006. Focusing on more recent trends indicates that the Maori population has increased nationally by 7.42% between the 2001 and 2006 census, whereas for the same period in Raetihi it remained stable and in Ohakune decreased 11.49%.

These patterns indicate that the Maori population in Raetihi is more stable than the other populations in the area. Although compared to national rates of population increase, the indications are that a percentage of Maori are still leaving the town.

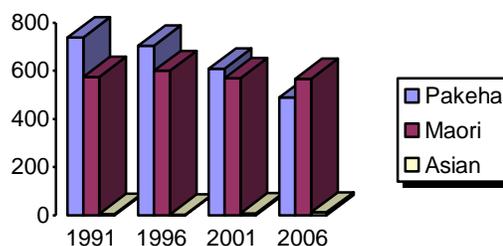
Looking at wider mobility trends related to independent urban centres, movers of Maori ethnicity to main urban areas from independent urban areas comprised a larger proportion of all moves to main urban areas (42 percent of movers of Maori ethnicity) and had increased between 2001 and 2006. This was partly a result of the Maori ethnic group having a younger age structure than the European ethnic group and the tendency for younger adults to move to main urban

areas (Population Mobility of Urban/Rural Profile Areas Report, Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

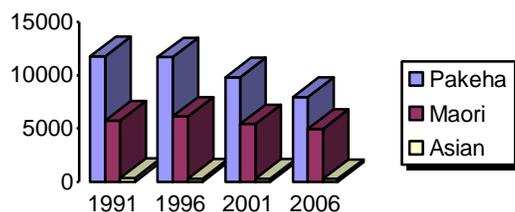
**Figure 6: Ethnicity in Ohakune**



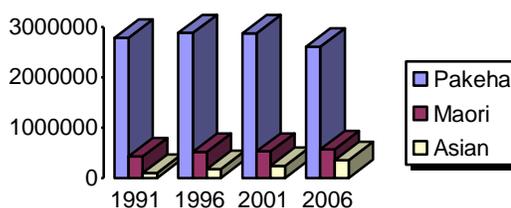
**Figure 7: Ethnicity in Raetihi**



**Figure 8: Ethnicity Changes in Ruapehu District**



**Figure 9: Ethnicity Changes in New Zealand**



### 5.2.3 Trends in Age

The population in Raetihi is younger than in Ohakune. The median age in Raetihi in 2006 was 29 years, whereas Ohakune shared the national median of 35 years. Raetihi has a significant proportion of the population aged under 5 years of 10% which interestingly has increased from 8.67% in 2001. This is in contrast with both Ohakune and national figures, which recorded decreases in the proportions of the population aged under 5 years, with Ohakune at 6.85% (decreasing from 7.2% in 2001) and a national figure of 6.69% (decreasing from 7.13% in 2001).

In 2006 there was a higher percentage of people under 15 years in Raetihi (29.3%) compared with Ohakune (22.9%) and New Zealand as a whole, (21.5%). The percentage of the population of those under 15 years has declined slightly since 2001 in Raetihi (32%), similarly with national trends (22.7%). Whereas in 2001 Ohakune's population under 15 years was 26.9% compared to 22.9% in 2006.

Of the population in Raetihi 9.6% were aged over 65 years in 2006, the same as in 2001. Whereas Ohakune had 8.7% in 2006, up from 7.1% in 2001.

These figures were less than the national figure for older adults of 12.3% in 2006 and 12.15% in 2001.

#### **5.2.4 Households**

The average household size in Ohakune was 2.5 people whereas in Raetihi it was 2.9 and nationally 2.7. Of the total number of families living in Ohakune 40% were couples with no children, 40% couples with children and 20% one parent with children. This is in contrast to Raetihi where only 28.2% of families are couples with no children, 44.7% are couples with children and 25.9% are one parent with children. Nationally 39.9% of families are couples with no children, 42% couples with children and 18.1% one parent with children.

Of the households in Ohakune, 31.1% are one-person households compared to 24.5% in Raetihi and 23% nationally.

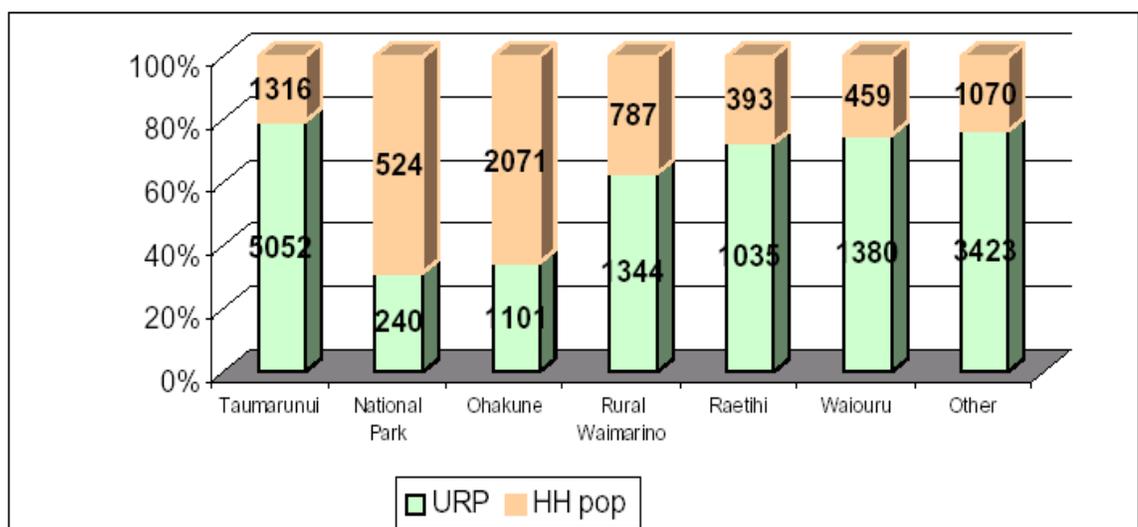
Projections from the Subnational Family and Household Projections: 2006(base)-2031 Report by Statistics New Zealand (2009) are that small rural towns will struggle to survive as families get smaller and the populations get older. The ageing of the population and the rise of childless couples will translate into more households but fewer people. The difference in rates of childless couples between Ohakune and Raetihi outlined above indicate that there may be some regional differences to this trend.

Ruapehu district as a whole is one of three districts in the country, along with Buller and Westland in the South Island, that are predicted to have the highest share of one-person households by 2031. It's predicted that by 2031, 41% of households in the Ruapehu district will be occupied by one person. For the Ruapehu this represents a significant increase from the 2006 share of 28%. Nationally the number of one-person households is predicted to increase by 257,000, from 363,000 in 2006 to 619,000 in 2031, an average increase of 2.2% per year. The increases in this type of household are mainly due to the increasing number of older people, with 80% of all New Zealand's growth occurring among those aged 55 years and over.

There are 438 occupied dwellings in Ohakune and 342 in Raetihi. However in Ohakune there are a total of 1014 houses, with 56.8% being classified as unoccupied compared with Raetihi having 21.9% unoccupied and the national average of 6% (Statistics NZ 2006). Most of the unoccupied homes in Ohakune and Raetihi are holiday homes which are used mainly over the winter ski season. A survey carried out by Ruapehu District Council in 2008 found that of the total of residential properties, 62% were used as holiday homes by the owners, 23% were rented out on a seasonal basis and 15% were rented out fulltime (Ratepayers Living Outside of the District Survey, 2008). The analysis of these numbers shows that 1608 of the 2200 outside ratepayers own 'holiday homes' in the Ruapehu District, are either rented out seasonally or not rented out at all but used from time to time by owners.

The following graph shows the percentage and number of usual residents (URP) and the percentage and number of holiday home residents (HH) that could be in residence at one time in the various areas that make up the Ruapehu District. It shows that the percentage of holiday home residents in Ohakune and National Park (the closest town to the Whakapapa skifields on the Western side Mount Ruapehu) is larger than the usual residents at peak times, and that there are a significant number of holiday home residents overall.

**Figure 10: Peak Populations in the Ruapehu District (Ruapehu District Council Survey of Outside Ratepayers 2008)**

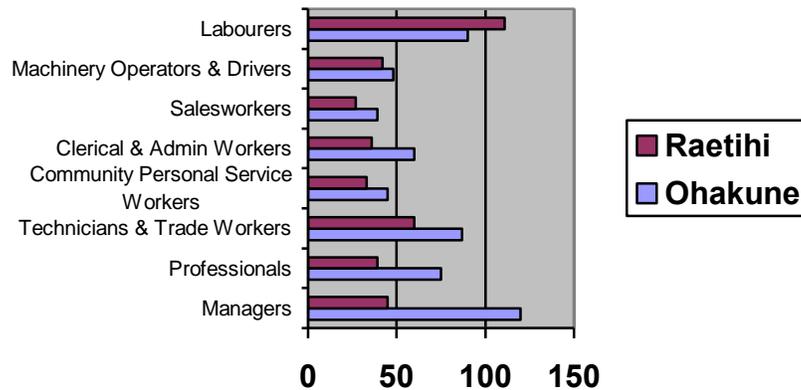


## 5.2.5 Income, Employment, Education Levels

The education, employment and income levels in Raetihi are significantly lower than those of Ohakune. In 2006, of the population aged 15 years and over, 28.6% in Raetihi had a post-school qualification compared to 38.3% in Ohakune and 39.9% nationally. Of that same population group, 45.3% in Raetihi had no formal qualification compared to 29.4% on Ohakune and 25% nationally.

People living in Raetihi are less likely to be employed, with an unemployment rate of 7.9% in 2006, compared to 3.7% in Ohakune- which is less than the national figure of 5.1%. Of those aged 15 years and over in Raetihi 30.75% are wage or salary earners and 9% are self employed or have their own business. In Ohakune 35.34% are wage and salary earners and 12.72% self employed or business owners. Those living in Ohakune are more likely to be employed fulltime (60.64%), compared to Raetihi (45.08%), and indeed nationally (48.44%), in 2006. The most common occupational group for Raetihi was labourers (24.5%), while for Ohakune it was managers (19.42%), and nationally, professionals (18.85).

**Figure11: Occupations of Employed Aged 15 yrs + (Census 2006)**



The median income for people aged 15 years and over living in Raetihi was \$19,100 in 2006. This is less than Ohakune at \$24,700, the median income for the Ruapehu District of \$21,100 and the national median of \$24,400. The majority people aged 15 years and over from Raetihi earn \$20,000 or less at 52.2%, compared to Ohakune where only 42.3%, and nationally 43.2% do so. Only 7.7% of those aged 15 years and over in Raetihi earn \$50,000 or more, which is

significantly less than those in Ohakune at 16.3% nationally at 16.2% and a little less than the Ruapehu District at 10.8%.

And looking at ethnicity, of the Pakeha population aged over 15 years in Ohakune, 19% earn over \$50,000, compared to only 9.6% Ohakune's Maori population. This disparity between Maori and Pakeha reflects national patterns where 18.6% of the European population aged over 15 years earn over \$50,000 and 9.1% of Maori. This disparity also exists within the Ruapehu District but with lower percentage totals with 12.8% of Europeans over 15 years earning over \$50,000 and 6.3% of Maori. Interestingly in Raetihi there is less disparity between ethnicities with 9.6% of Europeans being over 15 years and earning over \$50,000 and 6.7% of Maori. These statistics indicate that ethnicity is a significant factor in income with greater disparities in Ohakune, Ruapehu District and nationally than in Raetihi.

Only 41% of those in Raetihi have access to the internet, 50% in Ohakune compared to 66.9% of New Zealand. Due to these low statistics free internet access has been made available at libraries in both Raetihi and Ohakune in 2009 as part of the government's national digital strategy.

### **5.2.6 Schooling**

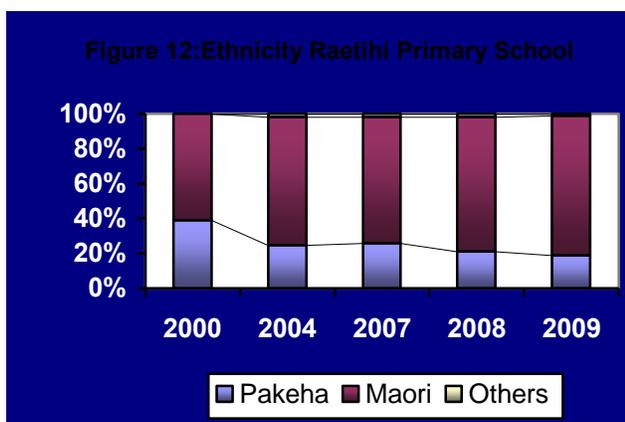
Schools in the Manawatu/Wanganui region, in contrast to national trends, are showing one of the biggest declines in pupil numbers in the country. Based on Ministry of Education figures for March 2009 the Manawatu/Wanganui region had the third biggest decline in numbers after Northland and Hawke's Bay (Wanganui Chronicle 14 August 2009). Within the Manawatu/Wanganui Region, Ruapehu district had the largest decrease in pupil numbers since 2005 at 26%, followed by the Rangitikei district at 11% and Wanganui district at 9%. This is in contrast to a national increase in numbers of pupils.

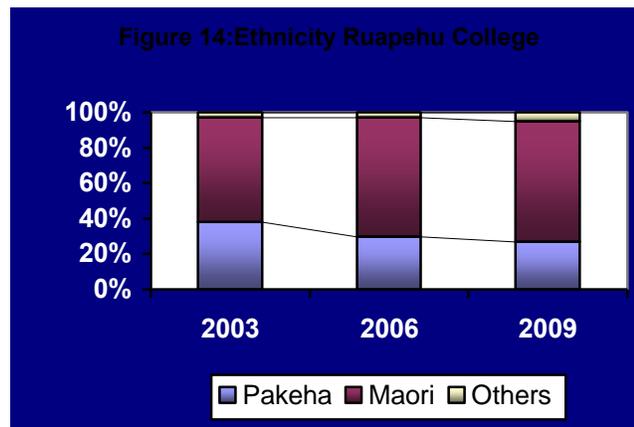
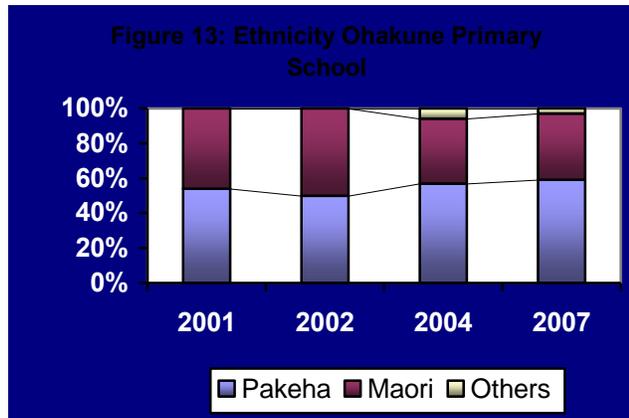
A closer examination of individual schools within the area covered by this study reveals a degree of divergence in the trends. Worst affected by decreasing rolls in the Ruapehu District is Raetihi Primary School which has declined in numbers from 269 pupils in 2000 to 122 in 2009, representing a 54.64% decrease (figures from

Education Review Office website). In contrast Ohakune Primary School has increased from 222 pupils in 2001, to 248 in 2007 representing an 11.71 increase. Ruapehu College, the high school serving Raetihi and Ohakune, has also suffered a decline in numbers from 231 students in 2003 to 183 in 2009, a decrease of 20.77%. Finally Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ngāti Rangī, based at Maungarongo Marae in Ohakune, decreased its numbers from 38 students in 2004 to 29 in 2008, a 23.68% decrease.

Changes in the decile rating for each school reveal some interesting trends. The Ministry of Education uses a decile rating system for school funding purposes. Each decile contains approximately 10% of schools. Schools in decile 1 have the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Schools in decile 10 have the lowest proportions of these students. Raetihi Primary slipped from a decile 3 ranking in 2000 to a decile 1 in 2009; Ohakune increased from decile 4 in 2001 to decile 5 in 2007; Ruapehu College remained steady on decile 3 from 2003 to 2009; as did Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Ngati Rangī at decile 2 from 2004 to 2008 (Reports from ERO website).

A closer look at the variable of ethnicity within the changing populations of each school adds to the description of changing demographics. (Figures sourced from ERO website).





Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Ngati Rangī has been 100% Maori since its first review by the Education Review Office in 2004.

From these graphs we can see that the ethnic composition of both Raetihi Primary School and Ruapehu College has had a trend of increasing proportions of Maori with a current Maori majority (Raetihi 80% Maori and Ruapehu College 68% Maori in 2009). Whereas Ohakune Primary School, since 2002 when there were equal numbers of Maori and Pakeha, has become increasingly European (59% Pakeha in 2007). The decreasing role at Raetihi school has meant that three classrooms which were burnt down in a fire in May 2009 won't be replaced (interview with member of school board of trustees). A number of children, particularly but not exclusively Pakeha children, go out of the district to boarding schools in Wanganui, Palmerston North and Feilding when they get to high school age, partially explaining the low numbers at Ruapehu College. From the interviews and personal conversations with other parents, it appears this trend is increasing with parents putting their children's names on boarding school waiting lists well in

advance of their children leaving primary school.

The Education Review Office's report on Ruapehu College in 2009 documented a mixture of improvements in and concerns about student achievements and quality of teaching practices, although improvements were mentioned in the main. Relationships between students and teachers were identified as a strength however concerns were expressed with the number of suspensions and overrepresentation of Maori students in underachievement figures and truancy issues. The review also documented progress the school had made in working with the Maori Education Strategy – *Ka Hikitia*. Such progress included strong relationships between the school and local iwi, student participation in powhiri (welcoming ceremonies) and kapa haka (Maori performing arts) with Maori students' cultural identity being affirmed and celebrated.

The February 2008 ERO Report on Raetihi Primary School reported unacceptable levels of underachievement, particularly in literacy. In Years 3 to 8, 70% of students were below expectation in reading with many at critical levels. Bullying behaviour among students was also noted with some students at the school feeling unsafe. The May 2009 report indicated improvements in the school's response to previous concerns on the ineffective use of assessment information, the lack of student engagement and issues with middle management leadership. These factors had been seen to contribute towards the lack of student progress. Maori language and culture were promoted through the school's bilingual unit, participation in cultural events such as hosting the area schools' annual cultural festival and schoolwide practices and programmes that reflect bicultural contexts (ERO 2007).

In contrast Ohakune Primary School's report from 2007 indicates high levels of student engagement and achievement, including data showing Maori students achieving well. The report noted that the school had identified a need for teachers to further promote use of *te reo Maori* (Maori language) and further understandings of *te ao Maori* (Maori worldview) within the school environment. The school used to have a bilingual unit but closed it some years ago which some in the community perceived as a lack of commitment to the promotion of Maori culture.

### 5.2.7 Crime Statistics

An interesting finding was a discrepancy between crime statistics for the two towns sourced directly from the police sergeant at Ohakune Police Station and those found on Ruapehu District Council's *State of the District Report 2008*. The council's report (figure 16), accessed from their website, indicated that Ohakune's crime rate was significantly lower than Raetihi's whereas the statistics from the police clearly show the opposite situation (figure 15).

Fig 15: Crime Statistics (NZ Police 2009)

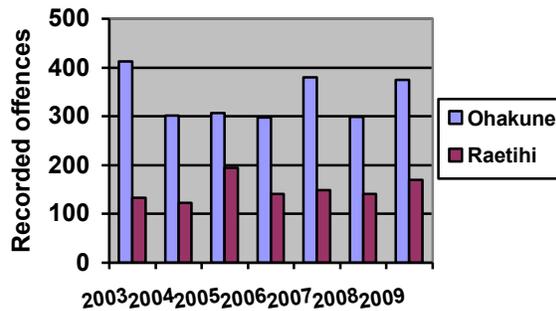
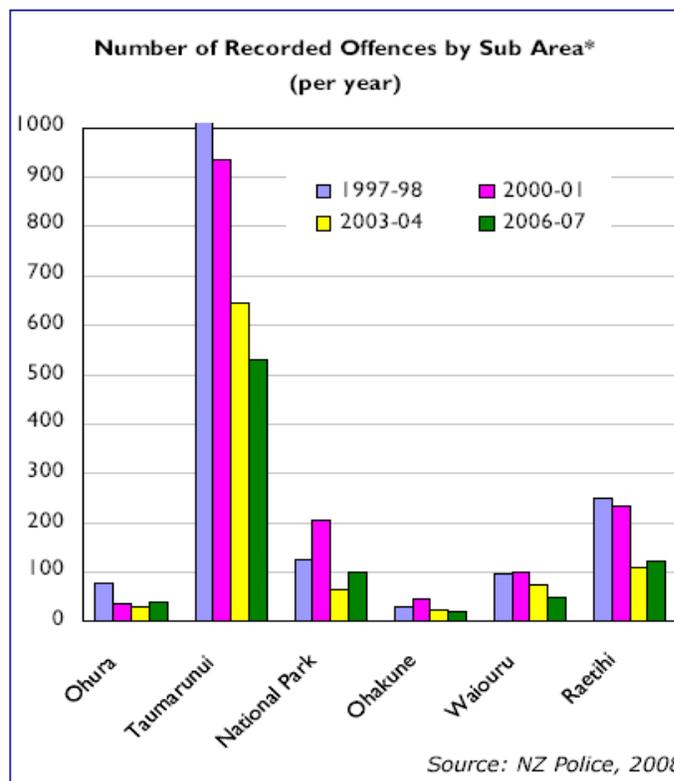


Figure 16: Crime Statistics for Ruapehu District (State of the District Report 2008)



Ruapehu District Council

Discussions with local police confirmed that the Council's statistics were blatantly incorrect. Ohakune's crime rate is recorded as being less than Ohura's, which is a settlement of 165 people. They also highlighted, as did a review of the breakdown of statistics for types of crime, that much of Ohakune's crime related to it being a tourist town. A high number of burglaries of holiday homes and a peak in the crime rate over the winter tourist season were reported. Raetihi on the other hand tended to have more domestic incidents than Ohakune.

My discussions with the Council indicated an oversight. It's suggested this oversight highlights a lack of familiarity with the area and limited application of data gathered.

### 5.2.7 Civic Participation

Voting rates are an indication of civic engagement and are reported at a district level. Voting patterns in the local body elections indicate declining participation from voters within the Ruapehu District as a whole, particularly for the election of council members which dropped from 49% of registered voters in 2001 to 29% in 2007 (Social Report, MSD, 2009). This table describes the key features of the election of councillors for Ruapehu District Council (RDC) at the last three elections (Social Report, MSD, 2009).

**Table 1: Election Council Members to RDC (The Social Report, MSD 2009)**

	2001	2004	2007
No. of council positions	11	11	11
Average no. of electors per council position	832	771	746
No. of candidates in election	29	16	18
Percentage of council members re-elected	28%	44%	56%
Gender elected councillors	Male:82%Female:18%	Male:73%Female:27%	Male:73%Female:27%
No. of enrolled electors	9,150	8,482	8,209
Number of actual voters	4,524	3,402	2,397
Percentage of turnout for the election	49%	40%	29%

The next table describes the election of community board members for the local elections also indicating a decline in voter participation (Social Report, MSD 2009).

**Table 2: Election Members Waimarino-Waiouru Community Board of Ruapehu District Council (MSD 2009)**

	2001	2004	2007
Number of community board positions	6	6	6
Average number of electors per community board position	375	494	459
Number of candidates in the election	8	8	5
Percentage of community board members re-elected	83%	67%	50%
Gender of elected community board members	Male 67% Female 33%	Male 83% Female 17%	Male 83% Female 17%
Number of enrolled electors	2,252	2,961	2,752
Number of actual voters	1,295	1,324	-
Percentage of turnout for the election	58%	45%	-

The low voting rates are consistent with wider trends in decreasing participation. Nationally voter turnout in the 2007 local authority elections was 44%, down from 46 % in 2004. This was the lowest turnout since the restructuring of local government in 1989. Voter turnout peaked at 61 per cent in 1992 and has declined steadily since then, except between 1995 and 1998 when it increased from 53 per cent to 55 per cent (Social Report, MSD 2009).

### 5.2.8 Community Outcomes Process

In 2005, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2002, Ruapehu District Council carried out research to identify *Community Outcomes* for the district (Future Ruapehu, Community Outcomes Survey, Hooker & Taylor 2005).

The aim was that these Community Outcomes would provide an indication to the Council and other stakeholders of the type of community people in the district would like to live in. This would then help inform their activities.

From the survey the *Community Outcome* which the highest level of agreement and priority was “*The incidence of crime and violence are reduced and police are open and accessible*”. The *Community Outcome* with the lowest

weighted score was “*A community that respects and promotes understanding of the environmental values of tangata whenua*”. However there was a significant disparity evident for the responses from Maori and Non-Maori for this outcome. Almost 9 out of 10 Maori respondents (89%) *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that this *Community Outcome* should be a priority compared to 66% of Non-Maori respondents. Maori rated this outcome 12th, much higher than Non-Maori respondents, 42<sup>nd</sup> out of 44. This was the only significant difference in weighted scores between the ethnic groups.

The next most important issue facing the community identified by residents was “*Reducing unemployment/creating employment opportunities*”.

There was some confusion reported as to whether the Council has the ultimate responsibility for realising the vision established through the *Community Outcomes Process* rather than it being a “holistic community perspective” where many organisations ultimately contribute (Taylor and Hooker 2005).

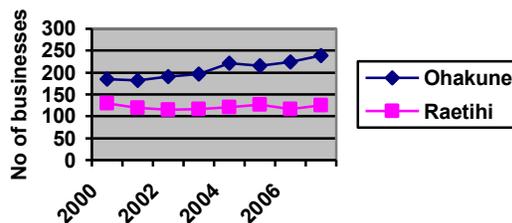
### **5.2.9 Unpaid Work**

In 2006, 846 people in Ohakune participated in at least one of a range of unpaid activities, that's 76.8% of the population. In Raetihi 732 people or 70.7% participated in unpaid activities. These figures are fairly consistent with national trends on volunteering. The 2008 report “*How do New Zealanders Give*” by James King found that in 2007 75.4% of New Zealanders aged 10 years and over supported the community and voluntary sector. This was by any combination of giving, volunteering or other support. When compared to this population average, the differences between ethnic groups or different personal or household incomes were relatively small. However the types of organisations that New Zealanders support and whether they give to or volunteer for these organisations varied significantly by ethnicity and income. For example, Maori had high rates of volunteering for marae and were more likely to give to pre-school education. Large numbers of people on low personal and household incomes gave and volunteered, but having a middle to upper income was found to increase a person's likelihood of giving or volunteering (King, 2008).

## 5.2.10 Business Statistics

Business statistics reflect Ohakune's transition of its economic base from agriculture to tourism. They highlight its tourist town status with increasing levels of tourism related employment. Raetihi's statistics reflected its history of a declining farming service centre with a recent slight increase in accommodation and food services which was likely to be tourism related.

Figure 17: Business in Raetihi & Ohakune



There was steady increase in the number of businesses in Ohakune between 2001 and 2007 from 185 to 239 (Industry by Area Unit 2000-2007, Statistics New Zealand). In contrast Raetihi showed a slight decrease in the number of businesses from 130 in 2000 to 125 in 2007. The definition of a business being a company, partnership, trust, estate, incorporated society, producer board, local or central government organisation, voluntary organisation or self-employed individual. That is the number of distinct enterprises that are operating within the given area (Statistics New Zealand).

An examination of trends in the number of employees in different industries between the two towns over the years yields some interesting results. The four industries employing the most number of people in the area are agriculture; retail; accommodation food and service; and education and training (Employment Size Groups for Geographic Units 2000-2008, Statistics New Zealand).

The number of people employed in agriculture has decreased significantly over the years in both towns. Between 2000 and 2002 Ohakune had an increase in the number of employees working in agriculture which overtook Raetihi's numbers, but has since decreased to below Raetihi. From the other graphs it seems that Ohakune has rather picked up its employee count from retail and food and

accommodation industries as tourism has taken off in the town, while Raetihi has not developed in retail but is just starting to increase in the accommodation and food service industry. Employment in the education and training sector has been relatively stable with Ohakune employing double the numbers than Raetihi.

Figure 18: Agriculture Employee Count

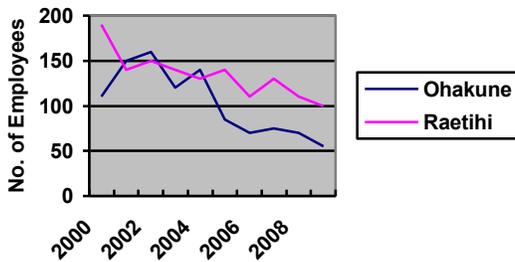


Figure 19: Retail Employee Count

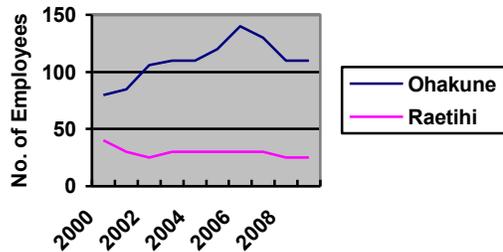


Figure 20: Accommodation & Food Service Industry Employee Count

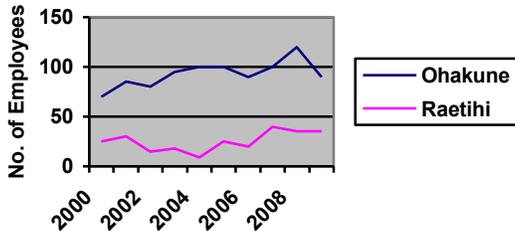
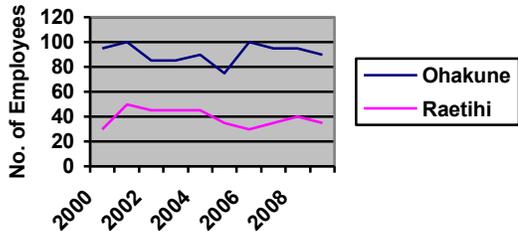


Figure 21: Education & Training Industry Employee Count

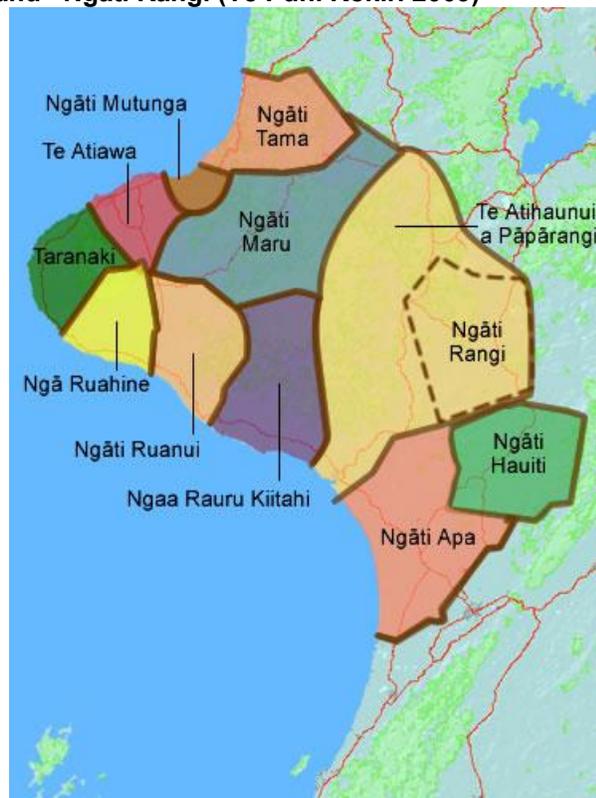


Regional data from the Ministry of Tourism is that the total number of visits by travellers to the Ruapehu Regional Tourist Organisation is forecast to rise from 866,800 in 2009 to 908,100 in 2015 – an increase of 4.8% or 0.7% per annum with the majority being domestic visitors.

## 6. HISTORY OF OHAKUNE AND RAETIHI

The predominant iwi that are based in the area are Ngati Rangi and Te Atihaunui a Paparangi. It is acknowledged that while the hapu and iwi in the Ohakune and Raetihi area are separate in identity in that they trace their lineage back to different ancestors, they are also connected in many ways through marriage and, indeed, shared common ancestors.

**Figure 22: Iwi Boundaries indicating Te Atihaunui a Paparangi and Ngati Rangi (Te Puni Kokiri 2009)**

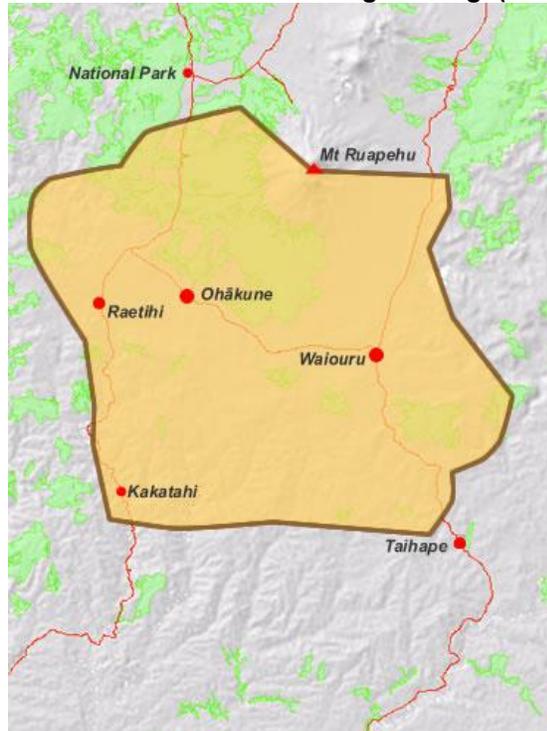


The predominant iwi based in the Ohakune area is Ngati Rangi. Ngati Rangi is an ancient pre-migration iwi, descended from Moururu, an ancestor older than Kupe. When Kupe arrived in New Zealand he noted that the home fires of occupation were burning at *Te Kahui Maunga* – the mountain region of the Central Plateau.

The tribal identity of Ngati Rangi comes from Paerangi-i-te-whare toka

(Paerangi) and is linked to Te Kahui Maunga. It is from three of Paerangi's descendants, Rangituhia, Rangiteauria and Uenuku-manawa-wiri, that Ngati Rangi claims lineage. Many of their descendents intermarried with descendants from the great migration waka Aotea, particularly Te Atihaunui-o Paparangi of the Whanganui River. Maungarongo is the marae at Ohakune, belonging to the hapu Ngati Tui-o-Nuku, which has become the base for the iwi.

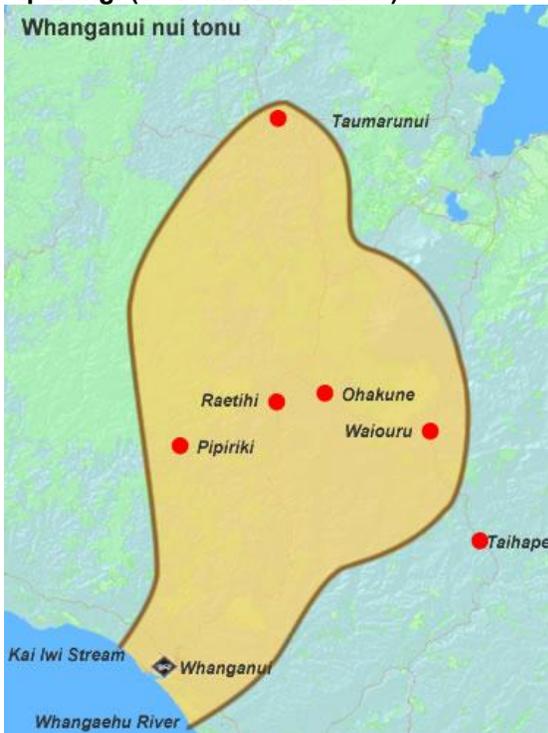
**Figure 23: Iwi Boundaries for Ngati Rangi (Te Puni Kokiri 2009)**



Paerangi's daughter, Uenuku-manawa-wiri, moved from the Karioi area, near Ohakune, to Raetihi. It is to this strong woman that the hapu, Ngati Uenuku-manawa-wiri, claim lineage. Other hapu in the Raetihi area that also affiliate with Ngati Rangi include Ngati Tamakana, Uenuku Tuwharetoa and Ngati Uenuku.

There is another hapu called Ngati Uenuku which affiliates with Tamahaki, who along with Tama Upoko, connect with the middle section of the Whanganui River, and link to iwi Te Atihaunui-o-Paparangi.

**Figure 24: Iwi Boundaries for Te Atihaunui a Paparangi (Te Puni Kokiri 2009)**



Prior to European settlement the Waimarino area consisted of large areas of dense podocarp forests of rimu, matai, beech, totara, and miro trees. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the main population of Maori lived on the banks of the Whanganui and Manganui-o-te-Ao rivers with villages in the Karioi area. There was a high degree of mobility related to the seasonal sourcing of food such as the hunting of particular birds and eels.

There was a time when the Waimarino, being situated within the boundary of the King Country, was forbidden land to the Pakeha. In 1856 Maori had declared the King Country area Rohe Potae, a refuge for Maori and an independent territory which no European was allowed to enter. This Maori resistance to European expansion was in response to growing concerns about the large amounts of Maori land that were being sold, the validity of those sales and the poor prices that were paid. The boundary of the Rohe Potae became known as the Aukati Line, beyond which very little European settlement occurred for the next thirty odd years after its establishment. This was in contrast to the European development which carried on

throughout the rest of the country. In 1883 the Government reached an agreement with a number of iwi in the area to survey the land in order to build the Main Trunk Railway Line.

In 1887 the government purchased 458,500 acres known as the Waimarino block, a huge block of land forming a triangle of the eastern bank of the Whanganui River between Pipiriki and Taumarunui to the summit of Mount Ruapehu.

This purchase is currently the subject of a land claim in the Whanganui Lands Inquiry , with the Crown admitting in its closing submissions to the Waitangi Tribunal, that an unfair price had been paid for the land and the sale was not undertaken in good faith (Ruapehu Bulletin 21 December 2009).

According to Tom Bennion, barrister acting for two claimant groups' interests, the Crown paid a local chief to take the application into the court, filled out the application form for him, and then rushed through the application before senior chiefs could attend. At the time, the Native Land Court had named about 1000 people as owners and the Crown immediately started offering cash for their land. The Crown proclaimed itself the only purchaser so Maori owners could not deal with anyone else.

*Perhaps the most astonishing thing is that in the months prior to the purchase, Native Minister John Ballance had discussed reform proposals at length with Whanganui leaders. He even went as far as pushing ahead as fast as possible with the purchase while a parliamentary inquiry into the Government's purchase tactics was under way (Bennion, quoted in Ruapehu Bulletin 21 December 2009).*

The Waimarino Block was subsequently surveyed and cut into sections with 300 acres being set aside for the future township of Raetihi. It was intended that Raetihi become the centre of a district of small farms.

John McKenzie, Minister of lands in the 1890s, was the son of a tenant-farmer, from a part of Scotland where he saw small farmers cleared out of their homes to provide deer forests and grouse moors for wealthy strangers. Committed to an egalitarian set of ideals for Europeans he led the House of Representatives to pass laws to prevent the accumulation of such estates in New Zealand and break up those that had been formed in earlier years. He and other ministers of the old Parliamentary Liberal Party were concerned not only to combat land

aggregation but to bring farm ownership within the reach of men of moderate means as well as put the land to productive use. The Land for Settlement Act was passed whereby the government could divide up land which was then leased-in-perpetuity, that is leased for a term of 999 years, to settlers with a maximum of 320 acres each. Under the Special Settlement Scheme, several small farm settlement associations formed and began to settle land in the Waimarino. Initially the settlers would pitch tents among the tall trees and using axes begin felling the trees until there was enough of a clearing to build a dwelling. The government also set aside sections as educational reserves which were then leased and the revenue used to build schools.

In the 1890s the primary means of transporting goods and settlers to the area was via the Whanganui River to Phipps and from there on horseback along a rough bush track for 17 miles to Raetihi. In 1893 business partners, Alex Bennett and John Punch, and Punch's young family, took this journey to Raetihi and set up the first sawmill in the Waimarino district. Pioneer sawmills supplied timber for local demand delivered in horse drawn wagons as there were significant difficulties finding markets further afield, with no way to transport the timber out of the area. Local demand was low and so timber was stockpiled waiting for completion of Main Trunk Railway Line.

Pushing up from the south and down from the north, the two ends of the railway line eventually met in 1908 with the driving of the "last spike" just north of the Maunganui-o-te-ao viaduct between Ohakune and National Park, creating a link between Auckland and Wellington.

The railway line had reached Ohakune in 1906 at which time the European population in Ohakune numbered 87. The central section of the line was still under construction as the deeply indented country of the central plateau presented many difficulties requiring the building of huge viaducts and the Raurimu spiral. Over these two years train passengers were taken over the gap by horse drawn coaches. As the railway advanced, settlement in the area increased and tradesmen and shopkeepers came in to cater for the needs of the growing population of settlers, as well as railway families who flooded into Ohakune. By 1908 the population of Ohakune had burgeoned to 600, with a second centre for the town built up around

the railway station, an area now known as the Junction. The original centre for Ohakune was a mile and a half away from the Junction. In contrast to Raetihi, it wasn't a planned town but rather had developed on its own accord around a clearing on the banks of the Mangawhero River where surveyor, John Rochford, had built his hut while finding the best route for the Main Trunk Line.

Prior to the completion of the Main Trunk Line, Raetihi had been the largest settlement in the Waimarino. However, the railway line bypassed Raetihi, and its arrival in Ohakune with the consequent influx of settlers, railway workers, sawmillers, and accompanying families, put Ohakune in the ascendancy.

With the Main Trunk Line in operation and a means available to transport timber to outside markets, a flood of new sawmillers moved into area and set up mills. A sawmilling boom ensued causing the make up of the population of the Waimarino to shift from being predominantly settlers to sawmilling families. Over 50 sawmills operated within a 12 kilometre radius of Raetihi and Ohakune between 1920 and 1925. In 1917 the Raetihi branch line was added to the railway system improving the transport options available to the sawmills of the town. The mills prospered and sawmilling in the Waimarino county reached its peak in the 1920s with the population of 1926 being 6911. The mills tended to look after their workers' welfare, sporting and entertainment needs. In 1916, when electricity came to Raetihi, John Punch of the Bennett and Punch mill built the grand Theatre Royal for the showing of cinema films.

Raetihi was also an important live-stock centre in the area and as such the new branch line was invaluable in transporting great numbers of stock to and from the sales yards there. Two trains would run each day between Raetihi and Ohakune carrying goods and passengers. Saturday was shopping day in Raetihi and the morning train from Ohakune would come into Raetihi Railway station with a full load of passengers from the mill settlements along the way for a day out on the town.

In 1918 a huge bush fire burnt out much of township of Raetihi including offices of both Waimarino County Council and Raetihi Town Board destroying many of their records. For this reason much of the recorded history of the area, upon which this summary is based, is built from oral histories of those people

whose families lived in the area.

The 1920s signalled the beginnings of the development of market gardening in Ohakune pioneered mainly by the local Chinese population. The Chinese had arrived to the area as workers constructing the Main Trunk Railway Line and upon its completion offered to clear farms of the tree stumps remaining from the milling of the bush. In return for this work they negotiated short term leases on the cleared land to plant vegetables. The railways allowed ready transport of the vegetables to the city markets and the Chinese and market gardening prospered.

As the forests gradually disappeared before the saws, timber companies moved their mills further north and the population of the area declined. By 1945 there were just six sawmills in the Waimarino county, with the last sawmill closing in 1955. As the sawmills closed down, traffic on the Raetihi Branch line began to fall off and the line closed in 1968. As sawmilling ebbed away, farming took its place as the main economy of Raetihi. For many years Raetihi existed as a thriving farming service centre until the 1980s when it was affected by the downturn in the farming economy.

**Figure 25: Census Figures for Waimarino County from 1891-1956 (Sourced from Allen,1984).**

<b>Census Year</b>	<b>Total number of People</b>	<b>Increase or Decrease over previous Census</b>
1891	31 excluding Maori	
1896	282 excluding Maori	Plus 251
1901	691 excluding Maori	Plus 409
1906	1879 excluding Maori	Plus 1188
1911	4161 excluding Maori	Plus 2282
1916	4873 excluding Maori	Plus 712
1921	6101 excluding Maori	Plus 1228
1926	6911 including 526 Maori	Plus 810
1936	5749 including 743 Maori	Minus 1162
1945	5599 including 937 Maori	Minus 150
1951	6262 including 1230 Maori	Plus 663 *
1956	5500 including 1314 Maori	Minus 762

\* The increase for the period 1945-1951 is not true reflection of population as the 1951 census figures included 299 members of a Waiouru construction camp.

The census data for the Waimarino county 1891 to 1926 reflects a growing population which was due, in the large part, to the development of the sawmilling industry. Figures for the Maori population were not available until 1926. Maori in the area tended to work on the farms, particularly as shearers and shed hands, with relatively few employed in the mills or logging. Maori numbers began to increase at a time when the Pakeha population was on the decrease with the closing down of the sawmills.

The opening of the Parapara road between Raetihi and Wanganui in 1917 signalled the beginning of road transport by motor vehicle in the district. With gradual improvements made in roading and transport technologies, increasing challenges were presented to the railway system. By the 1960's competition from cars, planes and buses resulted in the passenger numbers on the Main Trunk begin to dwindle, subsequently affecting the number of railway workers in the area in the 1970s. In the late 1980's road transport was deregulated opening up competition for freight transport which further accelerated the decline of the railways.

In 1952 Ohakune formed the Mountain Road Association, with the aim of opening up Mount Ruapehu's southern slopes for skiing and developing an alternative industry for the town. Local volunteers began working on the road, mainly during weekends, meeting their target of "a mile a year", building the 17 kilometre road which was opened in 1963. In 1970 the Tongariro National Park Board issued a prospectus worldwide for the development of Turoa skifield, to which they received a number of different proposals. It wasn't until 1977 that the park board signed a long term agreement with Alex Harvey Industries and in 1978 the new skifield of Turoa began operation.

In 1995 and 1996 Mount Ruapehu erupted causing major disruptions to the ski seasons of those years and the local businesses servicing the ski industry. As a result the skifield went into receivership and was later purchased in 1999 by Ruapehu Alpine Lifts, a public unlisted company who had been running Whakapapa skifields on the Western slopes of the mountain. The development of the skifields at Turoa has had a significant effect on the town of Ohakune with

winter tourism being a major contributor to the local and wider economy alongside market gardening.

The other significant employment related developments in the area are the pulpmill and sawmill at Tangiwai, located between Ohakune and Waiouru, which are run by Winstone Pulp International (WPI). The pulpmill was built in 1978 as a joint venture with a Korean Company. The business diversified with the purchases of the nearby Tangiwai sawmill in 1993, then the Waimarino Forest in 1989 and in 1990 the cutting rights to Karioi Forest. . After a number of changes in local and foreign ownership, the company was bought by Malaysian owned Earnslaw One Limited in 2008. It employs a significant number of people from both towns with a reported tendency for its managers and technical staff to reside in Ohakune and the more unskilled workers to live in Raetihi.

## **6.1 Governance**

The Waimarino area has been included in turn, in the counties of Patea, Waitotara and lastly Wanganui. The early settlers, being dissatisfied with Wanganui County's lack of progress with road access, made representations for the area to become a county in its own right. As a result in 1902 the Waimarino County was formed. Initially Raetihi and Ohakune were both towns administered by the county, but as they grew, each formed its own town board. Later they became boroughs with their own mayors and councils, Ohakune in 1911 and Raetihi in 1921. In 1989 with the major reform of local government in New Zealand, the boroughs of Ohakune and Raetihi were merged with Taumarunui, Waiouru and National Park to become part of the wider Ruapehu District, with the territorial authority, Ruapehu District Council, being based at Taumarunui.

## **7. RECENT HISTORY OF OHAKUNE AND RAETIHI**

There have been many changes which have affected the towns of Raetihi and Ohakune over the years, and older members of the community were a valuable source of information about these changes and their impacts. People talked about the decline in population and related effects such as diminishing school rolls, the closing of shops and banks, decreasing employment opportunities and threats to the viability of associational life. The other main developments mentioned included: the centralisation of local and national government; developments in technology affecting communication and transport; changes in shopping habits; changing farming practices; decreasing family size and the development of tourism. The decrease in the sense of community was a key theme that emerged, particularly from older participants in Ohakune. In Raetihi, however the emphasis was more on the decrease in resources and a sense of powerlessness with frustrations in dealing with government.

### **7.1 Recent Changes and Developments in Ohakune**

#### **7.1.1 Decline of Railways and Introduction of Tourism**

There were a number of long term Ohakune residents who initially moved to the town as children of railway workers during the time when Ohakune served as a centre for the railways. After the decline of the sawmills and before the development of the skifields, the railways were a focus of Ohakune.

*They had train control.. they had a big operation here, they had porters, they had refreshment rooms . The Junction seemed to me like the main area of Ohakune in those days. If you came to Ohakune you came on the train because people didn't have cars back then. You came on the train and you just hung around up there. There was a little dairy and a clothing shop... it was a drapery. There was a theatre, a dentist and many other shops.. so that really was our centre.*

Participants spoke of the railway workers and their families representing a significant yet separate part of the Ohakune community. They described how members felt a strong sense of connection to one another, not just within Ohakune but to the greater railway community around the North Island.

*You just belonged and you knew everybody. Everybody knew everybody.. because it was mostly railways and you knew the shop people.. and it felt homely. We were the railway people. My dad worked with the railways.. so we didn't mingle a lot with others. We were like a separate community. And the railway thing was beyond here because you travelled by train a lot. And the men all knew each other and families were known. So if we'd get on a train anywhere in New Zealand.. they'd be like.. oh, you're so and so's girl.. and you'd get looked after and they'd be checking on you when you were travelling. That sort of thing. So, the railways had its own community really.*

A major change in the community identified is that before the decline of the railways and the development of the skifield, the houses in the town were mainly occupied all year round by local families. The more recent experience of local families having to leave their homes when the rents were raised for the winter season was raised as a concern affecting the sense of community.

*In the 50's and 60's there were 150 railway houses and all of them were full. The size of families was a lot bigger then. A lot of the houses have been shifted out now. The schools were a lot fuller too.... full of baby boomers. Now what's happened is that the rents have gone up with the seasonal demand for accommodation from the skifield and families have trouble affording the rent and so move away....especially as the work here is so seasonal.*

Many participants spoke of the effect of having so many empty houses in town, and the transience of the skiing population as having a detrimental effect on the sense of community.

*When I arrived it wasn't a friendly place at all. And I figured later on they just had so many people come through the town... short term people.*

*Things have changed because now every other house in the street is empty for most of the year. It affects how you feel about the place... how connected you feel to other people.*

As well as the railways, Ohakune was known as a centre for a number of government services. These included a NZ Forestry depot, a Post Office and mail sorting centre with the post being delivered to the town by train, a telephone exchange, local council and Ministry of Works Depot. As such, the town was

significantly affected with the loss of these services resulting from the restructuring of the state services and local government in the late 1980s.

Participants commented on how smaller shops and local businesses around Ohakune closed with the introduction of a New World supermarket and the nature of the shops changed with the introduction of the skifields.

The shops at the Junction end of town closed after the decline of the railways, only to reopen later as bars, restaurants, nightclubs and ski rental shops as part of the après ski area. As such they close during the summer months and open in the winter.

*Ohakune has changed now in that its only got one grocery shop, one full time dairy, and everything else is set up for visitors. When we first came here there was a shoe shop, a butchers, a vege shop and Bucks drapery was a big shop with a menswear and ladies wear. There weren't a lot of shops but there were more shops... more basic every day services that the people who lived in the town needed than there are now. A lot of the shops in Ohakune now are geared to tourism - cafes, restaurants, ski rentals.*

Many people spoke positively about the introduction of entertainment and facilities with the skifield developments, particularly for activities for local youth to get involved with.

*Look what tourism's done for Ohakune. I know that Saturday night when we want to take the kids out for dinner in the winter we have this amazing variety.*

*When you have a predominantly young population and their needs are night life, they need food prepared for them so that brings up the infrastructure for restaurants, bars and nightclubs, then that spills over to the locals because then they have that opportunity to eat out.. and the young people go to the nightclubs and bars and have that connection to a night life which wouldn't happen normally in a community of this size.*

The opportunities for local children and families to learn to ski and snowboard at affordable prices was seen as a benefit, as were the employment opportunities.

However the skifield developments were also seen as a challenge to attitudes of respect for the mountain, particularly from a Maori cultural perspective.

*All the jobs that are related to the skiing and the children are all wanting to become skiiers and boarders and there's that whole different sports interest that comes into play. But the mountain, when I was young, was a great and glorious thing and that you treated with great respect. You walked on it.. but that was it. It wasn't a play area.*

Many participants spoke of the economic benefits that the skifield and associated tourism developments have brought to Ohakune. Yet others, mainly established locals, felt that these developments had in a sense destroyed the heart of the community. Several examples were given where people talked about instances where they had felt “ripped off” by entrepreneurs seeking to profit from the skifield developments increasing levels of mistrust and introducing a clash of values.

*That's what's underlying a lot of what's in Ohakune people, if you talk to old locals. They hate the skifield. They hate the mountain because the mountain has brought all these turkeys to the town. The skiers.. they park all wrong.. they drive too fast .. they create queues in the supermarket.*

*Personally I was never very excited by it. To me it felt it would not be a good thing for the town. You know it was that hype thing about a lot of people from overseas coming, bringing money and big opportunities to make a lot of money. I feel like the town has lost a lot since the ski industry. Before the ski industry took off the community seemed more social and we pulled together to do things... like saving the swimming baths.*

In fact this tension between those who support tourism development and those who don't represents one of the key themes that has emerged from this research and is an underlying issue in discussions on the development of Raetihi. However it seems that over time, people in Ohakune have grown to accept the skifield and the changes it has brought to their town.

*I've noticed a change in attitude to the tourists. The locals used to be rude to them, then they tolerated them, and now they see them as contributing to the viability of the town. It was them and us at the beginning. But it's mellowed out a bit now.*

When Mount Ruapehu erupted in 1995 and 1996, causing catastrophic effects on much of the town's tourism industry, people were forced to take stock of developments in their town.

*The eruptions in 1995 and 1996 had major effect on town.. we didn't have an easy time.. Ohakune was a pretty sad little place during 1995, 96 when the mountain erupted. It was really depressing. The eruption made it very clear how dependant we are on winter.*

The economic fallout after the eruptions was a motivator for a number of community members to get together and form a group they named *Ohakune 2000* to actively plan and promote further development in the town. The name, it's said, reflects not just the year the group formed but also the number of things they want to do, and the number of people they want to attract to the town.

*"The name isn't so important it's what we do. The initial aim was to promote the area after the eruption. It was to start a ripple... it was to make a difference".*

A key feature of the group was that it was made up of new people who had moved to the area as well as a number of established community members, most of whom were business people whose livelihood was affected by the economic downturn caused by the eruptions. They worked with plans made by a previously existing retailers group and raised funds to develop the town centre of Ohakune, a project called Mainstreet. This project was one of a number of projects in the mid 1990s around the country supported by the National Mainstreet Trust which aimed to promote the development of town centres as partnership initiatives between local government, business communities and wider communities.

*It's all part of history. I really believe, if you look back, Mainstreet started in 1995. I think we were an incorporated society in 1996 or 7. So Mainstreet was like the initial ripple when you throw a stone in a pond. Everything that came out of that, and what Ohakune is today, started in 1995 with going back to council and saying, hey we need Mainstreet. And we raised \$60,000 in cash.. not counting the money from shopkeepers to pay for the posts and verandahs .. I would say a total of \$120,000 dollars we raised from the community between 1996 and 99 and then we started.*

*I remember when we got the plans from the previous group. We went through them. We had 5 or 6 people on the Mainstreet project. We had public meetings.. we went to the people.. we had public submissions. We had a high number of rural people saying yes we want that upgrade. It was a one and a half million dollar project and*

*after the eruption you can imagine, we thought if we could get half of it, it would be fantastic. And we applied for one and a half and we got it... because we went over every hurdle.*

*Ohakune 2000* spearheaded an upgrade of the main business area of the town and with the momentum continued to be involved in a number of projects contributing to the town's tourism development.

*The Mountain came and Ohakune did embrace it and there is no doubt that all those things... Mainstreet.. the building boom.. it didn't come from nothing. It happened because the skifield invested money. It's just like a spiral... It's like a snowball getting bigger and bigger and that's what we started with doing the main street and doing the other things.*

Other projects that *Ohakune 2000* have been involved with include the development of the Mangawhero River walkway; promoting the building of a new tourist information centre and council offices and library; upgrading of the Junction après ski area; development of the Old Coach Road walkway; and promoting the area in a successful bid for the building of two projects for the *National Cycleway Initiative* – the *Central North Island Rail Trail* and the *Mountains to the Sea* rides. The group has built strong relationships with the local council and tourist organisations with the aim of promoting summer activities, so that the town is seen as a year round tourist destination.

However, not all community members are in agreement with *Ohakune 2000* taking the credit for all of these developments, nor with the tactics used in their promotion. A contesting view was that rather than being development focussed, the group was originally formed with the purpose of being a watchdog over the local council, to “*keep the council honest*”. Some participants expressed concerns at the focus of the group being on tourism rather than the local community, believing that the group had lost some of its original direction and integrity.

*The mainstreet development...the emphasis was all about making the town look good for the tourists rather than making it good for the community.*

Other changes occurring in Ohakune were also identified as having a negative effect on community cohesion such as the closing of the Ohakune Playcentre, the decline of the local high school and associated pressure to send

children out of the district to boarding school, and changes in the structure of marketing gardening industry.

*It's not quite like it used to be. Like there used to be lots of smaller growers. We used to have a market gardeners' Christmas party .. and they were the ones who would keep feeding more and more money back into the community. Predominantly the market gardeners' kids didn't go to boarding school.. they were needed to help out in the weekends. And they bought locally and put their money into the local community.*

### **7.1.2 Town Festivals**

Participants spoke of the increasing difficulties of organising community events with the diminishing involvement of local community members. The example of the cancellation of this year's *Carrot Carnival* due to lack of volunteers to organise it, was given as an example.

*We only have a small core of local people who live permanently in the town to provide social activities and events for the rest, including people who are not living here.*

The history of the *Carrot Carnival* and the *Mardi Gras*, the main two events in Ohakune's annual calendar, offers an interesting reflection on the recent history of the town. Bell (1997) writes on the phenomena of the development of small town festivals in New Zealand in the 1990s as a positive local response to the economic decline affecting small towns in the mid to late 1980s.

Such celebrations, along with initiatives such as Mainstreet, were designed to raise the profiles of small towns and promote each town's unique locality. As part of a deliberate construction of town identities, small town festivals were a public relations exercise created so that small towns might benefit from the development of tourism in the 1990s. Seen as symbols of local community identity promoted both to the community and outsiders, the development of the Ohakune *Carrot Carnival* and *Mardi Gras* offer insights into the changing identities of the town.

The *Carrot Carnival* was designed to promote Ohakune's local market gardening industry, a town identity also supported by the large iconic carrot "statue" positioned at the entrance to the town. In the early days Ohakune's *Carrot Carnival* was organised by the initial retailers' group and held in September. In

1997 it was combined with the *Ohakune Mardi Gras*, which had been established the previous year in response to the Mount Ruapehu's eruptions, and held in July. Both events were run independently through an incorporated society and were primarily run for the local community.

*With running the Mardi Gras, the people involved were the ones interested in the community...initially. We needed something because the mountain had blown up again and everybody was down and the whole community was sort of squashed flat.. and we needed something to build it up .. everybody was talking to everybody and getting prizes donated so that we could run this big thing and it was just for everybody...RAL became involved and they supplied all the tickets and they supplied some prizes and the following year we got Ford as sponsors. They hoisted this Ford Explorer on top of the Powderhorn Chateau and we had it sitting up there for three weeks advertising their sponsorship and the Mardi Gras and things. There used to be lots of kids and families along.. the Mann brothers brought their sideshows to the Carrot Carnival which finished at 2:30pm then up to the Mardi Gras at the Junction.*

These descriptions reflect Bell's insight that such celebrations represent the community's efforts to "enthuse vitality in the face of onslaughts of social change" (p224). Both festivals at that time could be seen to celebrate the symbolic sense of community that Bell writes about, where all are living happily in social harmony. For a number of years a small group of local volunteers ran both events until 2002 when the *Ohakune 2000* group agreed to take over the running of the *Mardi Gras*. A coordinator was employed and the event started to be run commercially on behalf of a trust involving some of *Ohakune 2000* members as well as owners of businesses located up at the Junction, called the *Ohakune Charitable Events Trust*, as a way of marketing the region to visitors.

*Then of course they started charging megabucks... because they got someone to facilitate it.. he was employed to do that. Now you see it's been taken over by the Ohakune Events Charitable Trust with local business owners... it is business oriented now rather than a community event.*

The *Mardi Gras* is now seen to play a significant role in raising the profile of Ruapehu region, through "destination branding" of the community and providing "an

*additional but complementary activity to season's calendar*". It supports local businesses by bringing in significant amounts of money for the town – accommodation, bars, retailers, petrol station, supermarket. The 2009 *Mardi Gras* was the biggest ever selling 7663 tickets. The event is seen to "*contribute to the social fabric and entertainment opportunities for the young people in the region*". And in 2009 the sideshows were gone being replaced by more local fundraising stalls mostly selling food. "*It's good to have these community things coming back as a way that the community can benefit from the event*".

These positive aspects of the *Mardi Gras* were raised in an article in the local paper quoting the promoters of the festival. The article reported discussions about a survey Ruapehu District Council conducted in 2009 to provide feedback from the community to "*allow improvement as to how the Mardi Gras and other community events are run in the future. Without high levels of community support it would be impossible to have an event like the Mardi Gras*"(Ruapehu Bulletin 14<sup>th</sup> July 2009).

Concerns had been expressed over the years, by a number of community members about the high levels of intoxication of young people, assaults, disorderly behaviour and amount of rubbish left behind. The event once seen to be a community celebration had become an event for "*young out-of towners*" and "*the ski crowd*". However the results from council's survey were "*almost all positive*", indicating that improvements had been made in the running of the event and that "*even those lukewarm on the Mardi Gras could recognise the major economic benefits to the community*" (Ruapehu Bulletin 14<sup>th</sup> July 2009).

Some of the participants interviewed for this research were sceptical of some of the expressed aims of the *Ohakune Events Charitable Trust*, not having seen any evidence of their fulfilment. These aims include: to promote, organise and provide educational, vocational and training activities, courses and programmes for young people within the Ohakune area. Their opinions were summed up as: "*The Mardi Gras is just a great exercise in selling booze*".

The *Carrot Carnival*, while also being run through the *Ohakune Events Charitable Trust*, has taken quite a different journey to the *Mardi Gras*. This difference was seen to

mainly be due to the reliance on volunteers and sponsorship for its organisation. For the last three years two local volunteers have been running the event.

*Before that there was a group of about 14 people... but they have done their day and moved on.*

While the event, similar to the *Mardi Gras*, promotes the area to visitors, it is also seen as a community event attracting mainly locals to celebrate the market gardening industry, enjoy a market day, participate in a wearable arts competition and parade, and carry out fundraising activities. The timing of the event was moved again, this time from the middle of winter to October.

*The community see it as their fun day at the end of winter when everything is drab and dreary.*

One of the volunteer organisers was moving out of the area and so the remaining organiser appealed through the local paper for assistance.

*It brings so much promotion for the town and our families, the kids get so much out of it but I can't do this on my own – it is just too big. I have asked numerous people to come on board and help but as of yet no one is interested. Carnival brings community together for a massive street fair and promotes the region, attracting a growing number of out of town visitors. We spend a good 25 hour week on it and in the month leading up to it be upwards of 30-40 hours.*

The organisers believed that one of the reasons it has been hard to find a core group of volunteers may have been a misconception that Ruapehu District Council pays for the event. Whereas in fact the Council gives with one hand and takes it away with the other.

*This year the council has given \$1900 which will cover most of their road closure costs. We appreciate the donation but it's just a drop in the bucket. The rest is made up from major sponsors such as Fresh Zone and the amazing generosity from local small business and without their support we wouldn't have a carnival.*

A later announcement was made that “*Ohakune's annual Carrot Carnival is cancelled as the organising committee can no longer plan for the event due to other commitments, which combined with the lack of support in recent years has led to their decision*”.

As symbols of town identities, such changes represent the replacement of market gardening, which focused on the local community, with an identity based on promoting the town as a fun venue for visiting youth – the winter party town. This new identity is interesting in that it completely abandons the notion of the town celebrating its “symbolic community”. Rather than inviting visitors to share celebrations with the local community, of the local community, the invitation is for visitors to come, spend lots of money and use the town for their own celebrations. It is also interesting that organisers maintain that the event promotes community interest by emphasising the recent opportunity for community groups to benefit from fundraising stalls, as well as the group’s status as a charitable trust. Writing on the example of the earlier timing of Ohakune’s *Carrot Carnival* to coincide with the peak in visitor numbers, Bell commented that “*under the conditions of post-modernity the spirit of the commodity can penetrate the very heart of the vernacular domain*”. She noted that this process involves “*the commodification of the vernacular and a vernacularisation of the commodity*” (1997: 229). The effect of modernity is to iconise the traditional vernacular and small towns capitalise on this effect by marketing their folksiness. The changing nature of Ohakune’s *Mardi Gras* and the cancelling of the Carrot Carnival due to a lack of community support, completely sidesteps the vernacular and could be interpreted perhaps, as an example of the spirit of commodity possessing the town!

### **7.1.3 Maori Developments**

Totally separate from the skifield and associated developments, the Maori community in Ohakune, based at Maungarongo marae, have been progressing.

*The marae there is very strong and they have kept their own and do what they want to do around their own development. They have been very separate from groups like Ohakune 2000 who drive the economic basis of that town... and I guess have needed to as the ski industry has changed that town.*

In response to the health and education needs of the iwi, Ngati Rangi has opened at Maungarongo marae the Ngati Rangi Health Centre and a school, Te Kura Kaupapa Maori o Ngati Rangi. There have also been significant developments with research and submissions for land claims at the Waitangi Tribunal and a comprehensive strategic plan to address the wider needs of the iwi. Ngati Rangi started its initial research into its claims against the Crown in the late 1980's. In the early 1990s, the Ngati Rangi Trust was formed, with support of the Whanganui River Maori Trust Board, to progress claims work in the mountain region. However over time the Ngati Rangi Trust found it had to focus on other areas besides claim work, such as working with the Department of Conservation, local authorities, Genesis Energy, Ruapehu Alpine Lifts and Winstones Pulp Mill. As a result a separate claims committee was formed in 2004 to work on the claims so that the trust could be freed up to carry on other work. Comments were made that over the years members of the Maori community in the area had become increasingly savvy acquiring specialist skills which have been used to assist with the development of the iwi. The intergenerational nature of the treaty claims work carried out was also commented on.

*There's been grand parents who started it, because they know the history. Then there's been the next generation who've taken over...who've listened to the previous generation and gone, this isn't right, something has got to be done. And they started writing it all up, doing the research. And now another generation has come along and many of them have research capabilities and things like that and they're getting stuck in. And that's the way it's been done.*

“Te Ara ki to Moungaroa”, (our pathway to the Milky Way), is the iwi's strategic plan for future. It includes strategies to address the areas of health, politics, people, environment, governance, operations, business and education. The plan encompasses 14 marae within the area, Te Kahui Maunga, and a number of organisations have offered help in carrying out the plan, such as Horizons Regional Council, Genesis and Meridian Energy and Winstone Pulp International. With aims to increase Maori participation in all sectors of education, a full employment programme and governance structures to control its own destiny, Ngati Rangi seem focused towards a bright future.

## 7.2 Recent Changes and Developments in Raetihi

### 7.2.1 Decline of Town

The most common story about the changes in Raetihi told by participants revolves around the economic demise of the town. Comments were made on the number of shops in the main street that have closed over the years and the increasing shabbiness of the buildings. Participants commonly referred to the exchange in the town's fortunes with Ohakune... that once upon a time Raetihi had been the bustling town, existing as a farming service centre with a healthy economy and thriving community.

*When you think that 30 years ago there was just a little private ski field in Ohakune and Raetihi was the much bigger town. Everyone used to flock here on a Friday night....from Waiouru, Ohakune, Taihape, Taumarunui... to go shopping. It was the place to be.*

Accompanying this exchange in fortunes between the towns, participants also spoke about a related exchange in feelings of superiority.

*I feel that the people in Ohakune look down on the people that live in Raetihi, whereas it used to be the other way round when Raetihi was doing well with the farming and everything was here. Then, Ohakune was just the little satellite town. But once the mountain started up and people started coming in and setting up in business associated with the mountain... then that whole thing changed. When I said I was going to live in Raetihi, a real estate agent said to me, "What on earth do you want to go and live in that run down little shabby town for?" That was his real estate mentality mind... in as much that houses here were \$100,000 less than Ohakune... so therefore that had more snob value to live over there.*

Many of the interviews included an inventory of the shops and banks that had closed: a chemist, a large shoe shop, a hardware store, a Westpac bank, a Bank of New Zealand, a Postbank, butchers, bakery, stock agents, dairies, two clothing shops, a bookstore and a Farmers Trading Company which closed in the 1980s and early 1990s.

The decline of the shops was seen as a very public display for the residents to watch the economic decline of their town. This was seen by some to affect the morale of the town's residents and sense of pride in the town.

*You've got no pride in your town.. you can't have any pride the town.. because there's nothing to be proud of looking at those buildings.*

This perhaps explained what was seen by outsiders as a somewhat obsession by some residents with the buildings of Seddon Street, the main street.

*The biggest bugbear people have is the shops... they don't seem to get past it. Every discussion on the development in town seems to focus on it. The negativity of it all is quite off putting.*

The November 2009 edition of North and South magazine even made the decline of the main street the focus of an article by Stacey Anyon titled, "*Small town lament*", with the leading caption, "*What's to blame for Raetihi's stagnation- Rogernomics, recession, apathy, or an Auckland property developer who's buying up the main street?*" (Anyon p.66).

The crux of Raetihi residents' gripe is that an Auckland property investor has bought the majority of the shops in the main street, at a time when the market was at its lowest. The buildings have since remained mainly untenanted, increasing in their state of disrepair. These drab and empty shop fronts create a rundown look to the town, affecting the viability of existing businesses.

*Empty shops are always hard when you've got existing businesses as they struggle trying to get the customers to come to them, rather than going down the road and buying from somewhere else. Unfortunately economic recession hits the smaller towns in their retail element in a big way.... certainly if your populations start declining as well*

The developer is reported to be reluctant to carry out the costly renovations necessary to bring the building up to scratch as he doesn't believe he'll get a return on the investment.

*It's a catch-22: if he does up the properties he'll need to put up the rents.*

While there has been talk by the investor of wanting to help develop the town, residents have seen little change and are cynical of his true motives.

*He came in and bought all those buildings and just let them fall down, literally, around his ears. He's not got any ties to the area. He's just an Aucklander that came and saw something and .. really to us you see.. it's just a tax job.*

*It's speculators who buy up cheap properties in small communities like this who don't have that community commitment and understanding. Then they wait for the market to change. They do it all over the world.. they buy in cheap areas and then they sit until the market improves. They're only in it for the dollar. They're not into it for community improvement. The community can't afford to buy it for themselves otherwise they would.*

Some participants saw those who are concerned about the state of the shops as being mainly those who have moved to the area in the last ten or fifteen years. In particular it was an issue to those whose livelihood is affected by the number of people visiting the town.

*The majority of the people who are born and bred in Raetihi... it doesn't bother them whether their town has cobblestone stone streets or nice streetlights or hanging baskets. It's not that they don't care about their town... it's that those sort things don't really bother them. They're not into the pretty things ....they don't really care what other people think of the town when other people come and look at it. It's their town. They're not really involved in the industry in it and they don't really care if there's money spent on the town as far as the shops and things go.*

While the main street's ongoing neglect may certainly be affecting future development in the town, it's pointed out that it was wider forces that brought about the economic conditions that caused the demise.

### **7.2.2 Changes to Farming**

Some of the participants raised the impact of changes in farming structures as the main cause for the economic downturn and decline in the population of the town.

*Farming is a very important industry but what happened in the last twenty years is that, in Raetihi, you haven't got the amount of people any more to sustain your communities in farming alone. What's happened is that farming units are getting bigger and only a few people are needed to operate them...with technology and innovation. So that's why Raetihi has declined.*

To maintain competitiveness in the global market small family holdings had been amalgamated and replaced by larger corporations, employing less people. These were run by farm managers and employed contract workers.

Ironically such land aggregation is contrary to John McKenzies' (Minister of Lands in the 1890s) initial intention for the farm ownership to be within reach of "men of moderate means".

Participants pointed to the changes in agricultural economic policy in the 1980s which removed subsidies and exposed farmers to changing global commodity prices. Being mainly sheep and beef farmers, they were hugely affected by a trend for low prices for their products. This led to some participants raising the need for the local economy to diversify from farming into alternative income sources, such as tourism.

### **7.2.3 Council Amalgamation & Developments in Health Services**

Others highlighted the effects of amalgamation of local government in the late 1980's and the closing of the Raetihi hospital in the 1990's as being detrimental to the town's population. With the loss of local governance there was an accompanying general sense of loss of self determination and control of resources. Many participants also spoke about how this loss was compounded with the hospital closing down.

*We had our own mayor and township ... and there was a feeling of self determination. As soon as it moved to Ohakune and then Taumarunui, whether it's true or not, the perception is that there's no self determination. I'm not sure whether things were really different but certainly the perception was different. We may not have got any more of the money.... I'm not sure....but the people in the town felt like they had some power. I feel like now the majority of the people feel that they haven't.*

With the loss of the local hospital, people had to travel to Wanganui for many of their health needs, further affecting spending in local shops and the local economy.

*The hospital closed so that people needing help had to go to Wanganui and so they did their shopping there ... in big department stores such as the Warehouse and K-Mart. This changed things.*

Participants spoke about the previous importance of the hospital as a place many locals had been born and how the local community had fundraised and built a day room there.

*It all closed and that was so sad. People fought really hard. They were closing hospitals all around the country. The next one to go I think was Kawakawa hospital ... and they downsized Taumarunui. And when they went to pull it down... normally they get in touch with residents in the area... but they just pulled it down!*

After its closure the hospital building was left for many years, falling into disrepair, attacked by vandals, and then came to a sorry end in 2009 when it was dismantled and burnt by government contractors. There was a public outcry when it was burned as local residents hadn't been informed and children at the nearby early childhood centre were affected by the smoke. The general feeling was that the community had been treated badly by those in charge and Raetihi locals were angry.

It is this history that led to much of very vocal opposition by Raetihi's residents to the proposed development of an integrated health centre in Ohakune mid-way through 2009. The imminent departure of the long standing GP in Ohakune, concerns about trends in primary healthcare delivery in rural areas and the ability to attract another doctor to the town, and the high costs of sending injured skiers off the mountain to Wanganui hospital were several of the motivating factors that led to the development of a proposal for a new model of a medical centre in Ohakune. Concept plans for the proposal were funded by Ruapehu Alpine Lifts (RAL), drawn up by the Whanganui Regional Public Health Primary Health Organisation (WRPHO). Together with a proposed governance structure and clinical service model, they were then presented to the community board and Ruapehu District Council. The proposal had the backing of the district's mayor, RAL, Ngati Rangī iwi (based in Ohakune), the WRPHO and several community leaders. The mayor suggested the centre be built on a council owned site, offered a peppercorn rental and a couple of community meetings were held to ascertain public support for the

proposal. These meetings were well attended with heated debates taking place and staunch opposition expressed by Raetihi residents to the proposal to build the centre in Ohakune. They pointed out that the Waimarino Health Centre in Raetihi, built in 1994 to replace the old hospital, was only a ten minute drive from Ohakune and could be developed to accommodate cases not able to be dealt with by the medical centre on the skifield. The health centre in Raetihi was built to house a three-bed medical inpatient service, a service which was later withdrawn after several reviews. Raetihi locals were concerned that some aspects of the proposed centre in Ohakune were “the thin end of the wedge” and would lead to the viability of the Waimarino health centre being threatened.

*All the specialists come to Raetihi.. and the fear was... oh no not another thing we are going to lose.... and I think for us it's more kind of like we don't want to lose what we have. For a lot of our people here we can't travel over to Ohakune.*

The only public transport available is a bus service that runs once per fortnight from Raetihi to Ohakune and back again.

Suspensions were raised that the proposal, rather than being a genuine plan to address the health needs of the area, was part of a wider marketing exercise to promote the skifield and Ohakune to tourists.

*I know those people who are mountain people who come here and don't even know where Raetihi is. They want to be able to market things by saying we support a fully functioning A and E in Ohakune.*

The plans for the integrated health centre in Ohakune ended up being put on hold when a doctor, while visiting the town on a skiing holiday, agreed to take on the role of being Ohakune's GP solving the town's imminent health crisis!

As well as emphasising the significance of history to the town's current predicament, the health centre developments highlight a theme in the research of a loss of resources and services, and tension in Raetihi's relationship with Ohakune. Many of the participants from Raetihi expressed resentment towards Ohakune with the perception that while Raetihi was losing its resources, Ohakune was gaining them.

#### 7.2.4 Schooling Changes

Several participants expressed concern at the decreasing numbers at Raetihi Primary School and the “white flight” to Ohakune Primary school. Mention was made of the flow-on effects to the local economy with Raetihi parents doing their shopping in Ohakune, as well as transferring their time and energy input into local activities to Ohakune. Several reasons were offered to explain this trend ranging from management and structural issues within the school to wider social problems within the community such as alcohol and drug abuse and violence. Some felt that the changes were indicative of increasing divisions between Maori and Pakeha communities in Raetihi. The desire to ensure that children were a part of the dominant culture of their school was a somewhat frank admission as a factor in choice of schools.

*I know someone very staunch Raetihi but is sending her kids to Ohakune now. Her kids felt like they were the only white kids there.*

*A lot of parents are sending their kids to the likes of Nga Tawa and Wanganui Collegiate because they want them with others who are similar... and it's terrible but its true. I think it's a big thing with the boarding school kids.*

The concerns at Raetihi Primary School were believed to also have a flow on effect with the local high school, Ruapehu College.

*I think with all the changes over at Raetihi school, with all the 3rd formers who have come from a school with bugger all discipline and management and we have to pick them up. The behaviour problems up at the college... it comes from a generation where a lot of kids who are coming through now are those whose parents hated school as well and there's a natural anti-education thing. The college is an interesting one because I would say the majority of the kids now would be from Raetihi ... a lot of the Ohakune kids are going away.*

Mention was made of the difficulties experienced by parents with these schooling decisions, realising the potential implications for the town.

*It wasn't about being loyal to the school but being loyal to Raetihi....feeling like you're pulling away from your community.*

Concerns about schooling were cited as a common reason for families, particularly European families, to leave the area.

*I think a lot of Europeans felt uncomfortable about their children's education and the schools. We had a report done 2 or 3 years ago through the council, only a very brief one, and looked at what was going on demographically with young people shifting away... and education for children was a significant factor and also lack of work.*

One of the reasons given to a participant by a parent pulling a child out of Raetihi Primary was “there was too much Maori stuff going on so they were going to Ohakune where they didn't get it”.

*ERO reported that Te Reo is used throughout the school to varying degrees and all of the junior school are involved with kapa haka.*

The school has hosted the annual Ruapehu school's Maori culture festival for a number of years, which involves most of the schools in the area, drawing large crowds.

### **7.2.5 Developments in Maori Community**

Many Europeans have left the town. Between the census years 2001 to 2006, Maori became the majority population in the town. Supporting statistical trends it was pointed out that a tendency for Maori in Raetihi to stay in the area was contrary to national mobility patterns for Maori in independent urban areas.

*Generally, Maori are more likely to come from the area...to have deep cultural roots to area. They're not going to move. And it's unusual that there are still a lot of Maori who are still within their iwi. . Not many have shifted into bigger towns or cities. That's unusual.*

The Maori community in Raetihi is more divided along tribal lines than Ohakune, with thirteen different iwi and hapu being represented. Uenuku-manawa-wiri, based at Te Puke Marae in Raetihi, has strong links to Ohakune's Ngati Rangi, sharing the common ancestor of Paerangi. Another Ngati Uenuku is a subtribe or hapu of Tamahaki and affiliate with Te Atihaunui-o-Papurangi of the Whanganui River. While recognising that the different iwi and hapu identified with different ancestors, the point was made that all were also related and connected.

*There are different factions that won't associate with Maungarongo. They won't associate about the tupuna and so forth. Although we're one and we do get on with everyone.*

Some people felt that the lands claim process had exacerbated divisions between the groups, with the practice of differentiating lineages rather than focusing on connections and working collectively for the common good. When Raetihi's Te Puke marae was developing the *Ngati Uenuku Whanau Development Project*, there were difficulties in reaching a consensus on the name of the project due to the differences in people's affiliations.

*In order for them to move forward we agreed that the name should be Ngati Uenuku.*

In contrast to Maungarongo Marae in Ohakune, Te Puke Marae is a community marae, whose kawa or protocol changes depending on the affiliations of the group using it.

*If they're Ngati Rangi descent then of course Ngati Rangi tikanga and kawa is practised. Whoever's hui it is they run it as their own. So it changes.*

Initially the marae was owned by a number of families who linked to Uenuku-manawa-wiri, which affiliates to Ngati Rangi. The marae church, a historic landmark at the entrance to the town, was a Methodist church which changed with the spread of the Ratana faith.

*When Ratana became well known and so forth... a lot of Maori followed Ratana and turned to him and the majority of Maori here in Raetihi followed him and so they changed the church from Methodist to Ratana ... without any consultation... they just did it.*

In Raetihi in the early 1950s, there wasn't a place "*that many Maori could call a marae or pa to take their dead and so forth*". And so the whanau that were at the Te Puke Marae legally changed the structure of the marae to make it a community marae. "*They did it at the time to be inclusive*".

Although some felt that in hindsight this might have been a mistake as it has weakened the unity of the marae it was done with good intentions.

*“It's done. Our old people did that in aroha for the rest of the community”.*

In 2001 the Ministry of Social Development, in its attempt to reduce social inequalities and build community capacity, contracted Te Puke Marae Trustees as one of six providers throughout the country, to undertake *Whanau Development* pilot projects. This project was funded for four years and was developed from a community needs assessment (*Whanau Development Project* Final evaluation report, MSD 2004). The basic marae facilities at Te Puke marae were upgraded and a number of education and training programmes were successfully run, which while focusing on the local Maori community, were inclusive.

*Although the majority of the programmes were run at the marae, most were for the community - Maori and non-Maori working together. And we had someone talk, especially to non-Maori, about what its like on the marae and what to do. The school teachers came up for hui. It was awesome. The whole community was working together.. and it showed that in the evaluation reports.*

*We had statistics to prove that at the beginning of the programme we had a higher rate of unemployment, the education and achievement of kids was really low and we had the health statistics and so forth and for the short length of time this programme was running how those statistics had changed dramatically. Prior to it coming to an end we put in a proposal to run a MaraeNet programme.... for the whole community. We were going to put computers on the Marae and have people able to come and access them and learn how to use them at different levels. We had six months of negotiations. And we were made promises, we'll have computers in here. CEGs (Community Employment Group) liked the proposal and were quite positive about the whole thing and so were Te Puni Kokiri. In that time CEGS changed and when they restructured that was it. At the end of the day none of the funders came through.. and the whole thing just stopped....which was sad because the morale of the people was quite high.*

### **7.2.6 Wider Community Development Initiatives**

In 2003, the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) was involved with a different pilot project in Raetihi using a “sustainable community development approach”. Raetihi was one of two communities selected for a Local Action

Research Project (LARP) which ran for three years and aimed to test the potential for the use of a DIA community advisor in a community broker role. In community broker roles, the advisers work closely with the community action groups to develop local community outcomes.

An evaluation of the project (Paulin, 2007) indicates a lack of direct outcomes, stressing the need to be realistic about what can be achieved in three years as such projects take time to get off the ground.

Those who had been involved in the earlier marae based programme saw the LARP as duplicating what they were already doing and taking their funding away. As such, the marae and local Maori community had little buy-in to the project.

*When they gave her the putea.. wow we jumped up and down then.. she came in to do a community project that we were all doing. The work that she was actually doing crossed over to what we had already done. She was using us a lot to give her information. We were very reluctant to give too much. We were just so blown away.*

Other participants interviewed saw merit in the project's aim to link different groups in the community and develop a more collaborative approach. They felt that the timing of the project was wrong for the community, the concept wasn't well articulated or understood, and that there were issues with changes in DIA personnel.

It was also pointed out that the project was supposed to be a partnership between the community, central and local government in working together on the community outcomes defined in council's district long term plan.

*And then council didn't play the game. Council are potentially key players who aren't getting involved at all. The government had brought in the community outcomes process by law and saw this as a way of supporting it to get good information... but they never came. I think they saw it as an idea that was ahead of its time and that the framework would've had to be a paradigm shift for the council to see it as a viable process. That was my understanding but it just didn't work... it became a very frustrating thing.*

Te Puke Marae's Whanau Development programme was one of a number of initiatives mentioned that the Maori community had been involved with in the past, but had been discontinued. However, some of the courses from the

programme, such as cultural education and business development, were still running, through *Te Wananga o Aotearoa*.

Another discontinued initiative was *CURE* (Community Unemployed Resource Entity) which was started in the 1990s as a response to local workers being laid off from the mill. It placed people in programmes such as Community Taskforce and Taskforce Green, as well as provided a space for various social services to share- a predecessor to the Heartlands concept. However, Raetihi was later unsuccessful in its proposal to set up a Heartlands office.

One project that was reported to have had a high level of engagement from all sectors of the community in days gone by, was a project called *Chills Off* which fundraised to heat the local swimming pool. Starting in the 1980s the project was reported to have raised nearly \$300,000 to build a structure over the swimming pool in an attempt to heat it. The project was recently revived to fundraise to buy new solar panels as the cover had proved ineffective at raising the water temperature. An observation was made that members of the original *Chills Off* committee were keen to share with new members the learning they had gained through the initial process. There was also a sense that this project may revive some of the community spirit and connectedness that the community had felt in the past. After many meetings and fundraising events throughout the course of this research the committee was recently put on hold due to a decline for an application for funding, relationship dynamics between members, key people leaving town and a subsequent lack of people available to be involved.

Raetihi does however have a strong history of ongoing community activities and events. These include the Waimarino rodeo which recently celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> year, the Theatre Royal which has been staging productions for many years, the Raetihi Agricultural and Pastoral show which will have its 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary in 2011, the volunteer run information centre, the Maori Cultural Festival, Raetihi Christmas Carnival and the more recently established Raetihi country market.

Other positive developments mentioned include the reopening of a local early childhood centre, closed for two years due to the lack of qualified early

childhood staff. The preschool had closed after a drawn out debate on the necessity of qualifications over experience, with government legislation eventually sealing the preschool's fate.

### **7.2.6 Raetihi Promotions Group**

*Raetihi Promotions*, a community trust, was set up by locals in 1990 with the aim of reversing the town's economic decline. It was reported that in recent times the waning committee wasn't operating effectively and was hoping for new blood to be elected at the AGM in July 2009.

*There needs to be more cooperation and contact. I mean with the Promotions Group, it used to meet once per month and they would talk about all the things that needed to be done. And then the next month would come around and still nothing had been done.*

There was a general consensus expressed that Raetihi had lost its sense of identity. Concern was expressed that if something wasn't done the town would miss out on upcoming tourism opportunities within the area, such as the *National Cycleway* and the sealing of the Raetihi-Pipiriki road. The well attended AGM was a good chance to hear some of the issues that concerned local residents about the future development of the town. When the suggestion was made to work closer with *Ohakune 2000*, another long term resident commented on the significance of the suggestion as representing a substantial shift in mood in the town. Some interpreted this change as a signal that the community was willing to "embrace tourism". However, there were also strong concerns raised that any development in Raetihi needed to focus on the locals, particularly the youth, not just the tourists.

*When you make the place better for you and yours... and you and yours for me is the whole community.... you improve the value of the place for you to live in, which to me should be the only motivator. It shouldn't be an economic motivator.. which I think is my complaint about some of the people who come in to town now... who think that by doing such and such the town will improve economically and therefore they will get a benefit economically... other people will get jobs in the town but they personally will be winners. Money is their sole motivation to improve the town. I don't want people to come here for those reasons. It's not a place where you'll make money. It's a place to live.*

Concern was raised about the possible effect on housing affordability if the town was promoted for holiday home investment.

*I don't want absentee landlords in Raetihi because the renting ability for the people at home will get less and less. So where will our people fit?*

Discussions at the meeting were valuable for the number of new members, including the new chairperson, who were voted onto the group at the AGM. Building on a previous document, *A Future for Raetihi*, which was created in 2000 after community consultation, the new *Raetihi Promotions* group developed another development strategy document called *Vision 20/20*. This strategy includes addressing both local and visitor needs and has a timeline with members assigned to various tasks.

*We are not trying to reinvent the wheel. More like taking all the good work already done in previous strategies and with the ideas they have come up with in the past, try and get the ball rolling. I see the role of the committee is to act in a coordination capacity to help the town not only honour its history but develop its potential.*

Many participants spoken to in the research felt very positive about the new mix and direction of Raetihi Promotions.

*The 20/20 vision... they .all volunteered to do part of it. When I went to meeting I thought, yes.. you beauty. Getting their vision right and actually doing it. And the other thing is they're compromising with each other.*

*I think we're lucky in Raetihi at the moment because the people who are moving in, their values for Raetihi.. they don't want to turn it into a city. They value it being historic but they want to make it better. To improve what's there really. I think that's good. Raetihi needs the tourism money but it doesn't have to be like Ohakune. It's got the potential to be itself.*

## **8. FINDINGS USING CIVIL SOCIETY FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical concept of civil society is a useful way to both explain the course of change in the towns and provide a possible framework for future solutions. An examination of civil society in Ohakune and Raetihi is presented using a framework based on Edwards' three schools of thought: civil society as associational life, as the "good society" and as the public sphere.

### **8.1 Associational Life**

Many participants in both towns spoke of a decrease over the years in participation levels in associational life - a decrease in involvement with the world of voluntary groups. People spoke of several reasons for this trend, including the reduction of the availability of time with increasing employment demands, the changing role of women, a shift in the relevance and effectiveness of existing community group structures, and a general decrease in the value placed on civic participation.

Most participants spoke about an increasing sense of disconnection within the communities. Some attributed this to a societal trend of becoming more individualistic. It was pointed out that over the years of technological and economic advances there has been an increase in individual ownership of resources. This individual ownership has removed the need to share resources, affecting opportunities for collaboration. An example given was the use of telephones. In the past many people didn't own phones, resulting in the need to share them. Also the use of party lines was common necessitating collaboration. Cars and the increasing use and availability of private transport were other examples given. The rise of private ownership of cars has also resulted in increased mobility levels affecting local community involvement.

*Everybody has a car and so everybody goes somewhere rather than stay in the same place. If you're not mobile you're more likely to look within your local community.*

The historical contribution of women to the social fabric of community life, generational differences and the changing demands on women to earn money were common themes mentioned affecting associational life.

*There are a lot of Mums who are working full time because that's what the government created.. working mums. And they don't have the time. They don't meet other mums and they don't form community groups and they don't find an incentive to stay. Like it's easier to move to another town and carry on with their job.*

*I think in the old days when people ran swimming pool committees and squash clubs and stuff, women in particular had a lot more time. They had between 9 and 3 most days and then at night their partners would be home. But I think that has changed lately. People have huge commitments everywhere.. work etc They have less time and have no current history of being on a committee as being a worthwhile thing. It used to be that what it was...a worthwhile thing. There are a number of women around in the age group.. late 70's and 80's.. who were very staunch in their support for community groups. There's a whole lot of them and that was the way the town operated. Everyone knew that those people had a huge input into lots of different things.*

Changes in government requirements for accountability and increased formalisation from community groups were other issues raised. The associated increased demands for paperwork and specialised skills caused stress, taking some of the fun out of voluntary work. Such findings confirm trends in other resource communities identified through the literature review (Gilling,1997).

*It used to be cruisey and fun but now it's all so formal. I feel it's sometimes getting so anal with what OSH wants you to do. All these requirements... I'm finding with kindy now, we've got to do budgets. You know we're mums. We're just bloody there to do some cake stalls. I have enough of that shit in my own job.*

From interviews and observations carried out, a major finding from both towns was that with such low populations there were very limited numbers of people available to be involved in associational life. There was also a shortage of people with relevant skills and knowledge to carry out many of the functions required to run voluntary organisations, such as drawing up budgets, making

funding proposals and developing policies. There was a tendency for a small number of people to serve on a number of organisations, risking “burn out”.

Stress of the demands placed on the small group of kaumatua and other iwi leaders to participate in ongoing consultation processes with organisations such as council was mentioned as a concern. The need for Maori to have the time to fulfil cultural obligations, such as that related to tangihanga and whanaungatanga, was seen as vital but often involved a delicate balancing act with other commitments.

Such findings confirm research by Oliver et al. (2007) which noted that the personal costs of involvement in mahi aroha were huge for Maori. They pointed out that the workload and stress on kaumatua in particular was due to a generation gap in traditional skills and knowledge. There was also an increasing need for people with professional skills, such as lawyers, IT workers and educators, to assist with iwi and hapu work. The demand on those with these skills, similar to the demand on kaumatua, was disproportionate causing a drain that impacted on them and their whanau.

Observations of the ongoing difficulties in sustaining a budgeting service in the area were an example of the pressures on local volunteers. During the course of this research, the district representative for the *New Zealand Federation of Family Budgeting Services* called numerous meetings and contacted a number of different groups in order to re-establish the *Waimarino Budgeting Service*. The previous service had folded due to the increased demands for budget advisor training, which is held in Wanganui, and difficulties in finding people to be on the management committee.

*We tried to set up a management committee. We'd ring up people and see if they were interested. I think we had about five of them... and no-one would turn up. The volunteers were retired or at home and wanting something to do ...but none of them came to the meetings.*

Again the problems with the increased demand for paperwork from the volunteers were mentioned.

*I offered to help them with their policy writing which I started to do. But the Federation manual was so full of legalese, and I tried to adapt some of these general policies to fit with what they wanted to do locally... but it was such a big job. I didn't get very far.*

*There is a need for someone to do all of this donkey work. It's a lot to ask of volunteers. There are less and less people prepared to be donkeys these days. Most people have to work now.*

Many were put off being involved in re-establishing the budgeting service because of the training demands, lack of time to attend meetings, the demands of other commitments, and the feeling that there were too many rules. The point was made that there weren't enough well resourced retired people in the community, a common group from which to source volunteers

*It's the same people who get involved in community work... and it takes a lot of energy .. and they get burnt out. Volunteers are hard enough to find at the best of times. You can't burn them out. You have to give them the freedom to have a life if they need a life. You can't dictate what you expect...in terms of certain monthly meetings. You can't say if you miss three then I'm afraid we can't be a trust and we'll have to look for something else. You can set parameters. If you want people to contribute without pay or any financial benefit you have to accept that they give what they give. Because when you start demanding of them to do this.. and that's the difficulty. We don't have enough retired people of the ilk and capacity and financial ability to freely drive around, spend some petrol to do these sorts of things, on a generous basis. So we manage it that the volunteers we get and the way we run it, get the best benefit.*

Some felt that the traditional committee structure and meeting format weren't effective or relevant for the towns due to the small and widely dispersed population. The traditional structure, requiring a chairperson, treasurer, secretary, plus quorum of committee members was seen by some to be impractical considering the small number of people available to be involved in such committees and the high number of existing groups in the towns. The point was made that while people wanted the availability of a similar level of activities and services as larger towns and cities, such as a choice of sports to play or access to

budgeting services, there simply weren't the people available to manage them. The opinion was expressed that many found the formality of the traditional committee alienating and as such their contribution was lost.

*There are lots of things that people are good at but we just ignore them because we have this set process around committees. And if you aren't in a committee process then you aren't going to have any value to the community as a whole because you aren't putting into that old format. There are people who have just as much to give but don't want to sit through that formal process. I think the committee process was established because it was seen as a way you could safely run an organisation. So there was accountability. But I believe we can invent new ways for accountability in ways that recognise and draw on individual skill sets of people in this community.*

Some felt that the formal and traditional structure of committees was particularly alienating to many Maori. It was observed that during the research process, the projects *Chills Off* and the establishment of the budgeting service had a number of Maori involved with the initial meetings and activities, petering off to no Maori participation towards the end of the research. The reasons given for the discontinued involvement were the pressure of other commitments and personal feelings about some of the other group members.

Rather than traditional committee structures, models where people could have an input without having to attend regular meetings were raised. Using more collaborative models were suggested where instead of each committee working separately, there is linking between different groups and sharing of resources. The Raetihi Sustainable Development Project run by Internal Affairs as a LARP was based on this model but as detailed earlier was unsuccessful mainly as it failed to gain buy-in from the wider community.

A suggestion was made that a paid role could be created to carry out the onerous tasks for a number of different organisations. And that these tasks could include policy writing, funding proposals, and running finances which require a certain application of skills.

*I reckon they should spend some money to employ someone locally for all the communities who would know where to go for the funding and would support them and say... yeah I'll help you do a lottery commission application.*

It was noted that the Victim Support organisation had a paid part-time coordinator and reported a committed, stable membership of volunteers. It was also noted that when Te Puke marae had paid coordinators to drive initiatives through the MSD funded Marae Development Project, many successful programmes were run. The evaluation of the Internal Affairs LARP- the Sustainable Community Development Approaches project in Raetihi mentioned earlier, suggests that Crown-funded community development workers with a single project focus and on-site availability may be able to achieve more than DIA part-time community workers in the same amount of time (Paulin 2007).

However it was also pointed out that when community groups become employers there is an increased workload for voluntary based management committees, with the necessity for contracts, tax payments and the meeting of obligations under Employment Relations and Occupational Health and Safety laws.

## **8.2 Bridging, Bonding and Linking Social Capital**

An examination of the social networks within Raetihi and Ohakune expands understandings of associational life and their potential for the development of social capital.

### **8.2.1 Ohakune**

Participants spoke of the many different social networks within Ohakune and how they exist quite separately from one another. "*Ohakune is really disjointed. I think there's too many fingers in too many different pies going on*". The networks identified tended to be based on occupation or ethnicity, or both, like the Chinese market gardeners.

*Ohakune is quite an unusual community in that it's quite fractured. You've got your growers, your farmers, your tourism, your mill workers and then you've got your businesses. And then of course you've got the newcomers from out of town. So there's quite a lot of different activities going on and none of those groups get together. And then within that you've got Maori, and the Chinese. Many of them married Maori outside of the Chinese group. Economically they are a huge group really. They just quietly put their heads down and got on with it and worked really well for their families.*

The networks mentioned that stood out as having particularly strong bonding ties included people who are involved with the skifield; the Chinese community; the business community involved in *Ohakune 2000*; and Maori involved with Maungarongo marae.

*And now there's the mountain people.. and they are definitely their own group. They socialise very tightly within themselves.*

*I think the market gardeners have their own group going on... they used to be really collective.. especially the Chinese .. I think the European farmers tend to be more individualised... the Chinese are more collective. They work together and share ideas.*

*Ohakune 2000 are a group who are very focussed and motivated on the economic success of the town. They are business people, with the same vision and they understand money and how it works.*

It is noted that the level of homogeneity or heterogeneity in a social network is relative. What may be called bonding from one perspective could also be seen as bridging social capital.

*I think our big advantage is the diversity in our community. I think that because we have got a far greater mix of new people and old people than say Raetihi and that's not trying to sound negative but it's just because of the town we are. Lots of people coming and going but some get stuck and stay here. We've got a fantastic breed of people.*

This quote, similar to the last one, refers to the group *Ohakune 2000*. The group can be seen to display both bonding and bridging social capital depending upon the perspective. From the perspective of members being a mix of established locals and newcomers to town, the group is heterogeneous, but from the perspective of having business backgrounds with similar values and vision, the

group is homogenous.

The seasonal nature of the tourist industry and transience of the community involved with the skiing industry has the effect of creating separate communities within Ohakune of “*the ski bunnies and the locals*”. Some of the newcomers to the town expressed difficulties in being accepted by the more established community.

*There's lots of coming and going. A lot of the people that live in Kune are fly by nighters. They might only live there for 6 months of the year while the ski season is on and they come to work on the mountain. And then they bugger off and go to the States or wherever to work on another mountain.. very transient.*

*It's so disjointed. People don't settle for long. There's always been this funny thing about Ohakune.. we've had this joke about locals...that they should have a locals' queue at the supermarket. But then try and define a local. That's one of the hardest things about Ohakune. When do you become a local? How do you fit in? How long do you have to stay? How many generations? And how long are they going to stay? And to me that's part of the problem. Maybe some people aren't willing to let other people become part of their town.*

On the one hand this coming and going of people in Ohakune is seen as a positive aspect in that it increases the level of diversity of the town, which brings in an exchange of ideas and contacts, contributing towards business development in the town. On the other hand it is seen as disruptive to community life, creating divisions, increasing levels of mistrust and is perceived as a lack of commitment to the town.

Some participants spoke of the difference between the visitors to the town who come to ski and the locals, in terms of wealth and social class. They noted that the difference in access to resources caused resentment in some locals and was a justification by some for committing crimes against the visitors.

*These people park their vehicles in town and they go in to the pub or something and they come out and find their skis are gone, the radio aerial on the car's snapped off and hubcaps gone.. and its locals!. We don't want you here. Suddenly there are BMWs in town and Audis.. and what.. we're Holdens and Fords here. So they're targets you*

*know. But I think that's changed a bit. What's happening now is they've shifted from aerals and skis to raiding all the chalets which are empty over the summer. The point is these things occur in tourist towns. It happens in Wales... it happens anywhere in the world where a group of people come in who have more than the locals and are so well off they can afford to leave the place empty while they live somewhere else. It causes resentment.*

*Ohakune 2000* represents a social network in Ohakune that has also developed very strong linking social capital. The group has strong relationships with Ruapehu District Council, having members who have been councillors in the past, and thus an understanding of council processes. *"Sometimes when the council changes you have to re-educate them to understand where you're coming from"*.

It also has strong relationships with the local business sector as most of its members are business people and understand business practices. These relationships have helped in raising funds for a number of projects that the group has been involved with. Using these seeding funds the group has been able to raise further, large amounts of funds.

*Ohakune 2000* has made a point of nurturing relationships with influential organisations in the region offering its support when necessary. For example the group supported Ruapehu Alpine Lifts, owners of Whakapapa skifield, in their bid to take over the Turoa skifield after the previous owners, Alex Harvey Industries, had gone bankrupt in the wake of the eruptions.

*We supported Ruapehu Alpine Lifts because at that point we thought that it was the best option of them all... to have one mountain... and we supported that . And we had people going to Wellington who spoke at those hearings. So that's another aspect of how we've involved ourselves*

The group also submitted their support to Ruapehu's Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO), *Visit Ruapehu*, in its successful application to the Council to reinstate promised funding.

*There was no funding for RTO in the long term plan by council and so our submission helped put the funding back in. Things like that... understanding the dynamics of certain things around you.*

Inviting people in positions of power, or people who hold valuable information, along to speak at their meetings was a key strategy to build linking social capital and ensure the group had access to all available information and resources. By supporting other groups when necessary the dynamic of reciprocity was engaged whereby relationships developed were mutually beneficial.

*It's just talking to the right people. We are not afraid to invite ministers or members of parliament and talk to them. The RTO chair, we've invited to speak. We want to know what is going on.. and we submitted our support to them when they wanted to get funding. Also we invite people like the school principal along to present at meetings... all to keep informed what going on.*

*Ohakune 2000* also has strong relationships with the local media, especially the local newspaper, the *Ruapehu Bulletin*, who took over the running of a website and publication promoting the town from the group.

*We do the Ohakune information website and brochure. We started to do that then we gave it to Robert at the Bulletin. And we did all of that for Ohakune. Now he comes to us... we need to change the website, we need to change the brochure. But those are things we've got a professional to do. We don't have to worry about that anymore. It's all about relationships.*

Together with the Department of Conservation and the Tongariro Natural History Society, *Ohakune 2000* was involved with the development of the Old Coach Road track - a walking track along the old road that at one time joined the two railheads of the Main Trunk Railway Line prior to its completion. It's believed that this partnership and the work carried out so far, contributed to the project gaining government funding for the track to be included in the *National Cycleway* development. Along with the town's accommodation, restaurants and other tourism businesses, the group was part of an infrastructure which could cater to the tourists predicted to arrive. To see such an infrastructure in place was one of the government's requirements to gain the inclusion in the *Cycleway* and funding.

Due to their role in the successful *Cycleway* bid, the Ruapehu's Mayor supported *Ohakune 2000's* application for \$52,000 of council funding to go towards a

footbridge leading people from the railway station and the Junction business part of town towards the beginning of the Old Coach Road. This is a further example of the effects of strong linking social capital.

Mention was made that there is a time to focus on bridging social capital and a time to focus on bonding in order to achieve outcomes for the town. In their work in developing the town's Mainstreet, *Ohakune 2000* initially organised a town assessment where feedback from the different sectors of the community was sought as to the direction of development. This was a form of bridging social capital, although it's noted that the assessment process and interviewing were carried out by an external group who had skills and funding for such purposes. The requirement for this assessment to be done externally was seen to be necessary to maintain the objectivity and credibility for funders. This further illustrates the group's access to linking social capital.

*They called in the people, they interviewed, they did all that work for us. We got a special deal from the town centre people. And we went to the full council and said.. we need to look at this. It's important. Because we need someone else telling us whether we are on the right track or not. And that's made a big difference to us.*

After the town assessment the group focussed on their close ties and collective vision- they accessed their bonding social capital to provide leadership and achieve their outcomes.

*I think that because of the projects' scope that we undertake there are not many people who can go with us in that regard. That's why we did at one stage this town centre assessment.. to reach into other parts.. but in the end, it is like somebody has to lead. If there is no leader then nothing happens. We pick up the project and try to develop them as quick as we can.*

A number of participants also spoke of examples illustrating strong bonding and linking social capital within the Maori community involved with the Maungarongo marae in Ohakune. They spoke about how the strong bonds reached beyond Ohakune, particularly with leadership roles in Maori Catholicism. The iwi Ngati Rangi and Maungarongo marae have a high profile, strong power

base and command a certain mana or prestige within and beyond the local community.

In 2009 the marae hosted the *Hui Aranga Easter Maori Festival* at Ruapehu College, a well established annual event for Maori Catholics that attracted about 1500 people from around the North Island. They were also involved with *Te Kahui Maunga Festival*, also held at the college, linking marae from the mountain area of the Central Plateau and attracting around 700 people.

Several participants mentioned that there is also another group of Maori in Ohakune, the Tey Street families, who are not connected with the marae but who demonstrate a certain level of bonding social capital with each other based on the commonality of living in the same area in town.

*Maungarongo is so strong. A strong group of people.. and they're deeply family based. The connections are very strong... and I mean in Maoridom.. not just in Ohakune. But there's also that separateness of other Maori from Maungarongo. Like the Tey Street families.. mostly they're not connected to the area. Most of them are from up North They go for the events at the marae but they're not really part of it.... and everybody knows it....and that's quite obvious in Maoridom.*

The mana which Maungarongo held was seen to help in the development of relationships with a range of government and business relationships. Some of these relationships are based on iwi consultations required by the Resource Management Act as well as contracts held, such as with the Ministries of Health and Education with the running of the marae-based health centre and school. It's understood a contract with the Ministry of Social Development for the marae's Community Max workers to work on the tracks for the *National Cycleway* is an outcome of a partnership between the Ministry, the iwi and Ruapehu District Council's Mayoral Taskforce for Economic Development. These relationships represent strong linking social capital for the marae. These links were developed often with the assistance of people with relevant skills, such as in policy development and financial and strategic management, who lived elsewhere but affiliated to the marae through tribal connections. These skills were also being put to use in the development of the marae's strategic plan and negotiations with the Waitangi Tribunal.

Some concern was mentioned about possible resentment from other Maori in the area caused by the dominance of the Ngati Rangi iwi, and hope was expressed that the skills and success would be shared.

*Ngati Rangi have memorandums of understanding with people like Mighty River Power, Genesis, Ministry of Education, Social Welfare, Horizons...RDC. They've formed these partnerships. And they've got highly skilled people driving it and then you've also got the families who are the keepers of the culture so to speak. They are pulling together their talent and driving their people forward. The only worry I have, is they will outstrip other iwi and there will be this jealousy thing. So I'm hoping they will offer their services to Raetihi and Ngati Uenuku.*

*That release of Ngati Rangi's strategic view in Ohakune to me is almost a turning point.. where they are looking ahead for quite a number of years.. and they are looking to embrace the whole community .. not just Maori.*

This document, *Te Ara ki to Moungaroa* is mentioned earlier in the development of recent history of Ohakune. It was noted that there wasn't a lot of bridging social capital between Maori and Pakeha communities in Ohakune, although some weren't initially aware of this pattern.

*At first I thought... of course we mix. But thinking about it... no we don't. We want to believe it's all ok, when actually we're quite separate. When the public bar was open there was a lot more mixing. Having separate schools maybe is part of it – you've got the kura down there. My perception though would be that the separation of the cultures would be worse in Raetihi than in Ohakune.*

The public bar of a hotel in the main street of Ohakune was closed in 2008 when new owners decided they only wanted to run the restaurant and accommodation section of the establishment due to the amount of trouble known to occur at the public bar.

Other social networks identified by participants in Ohakune include those defined by the venue where people socialise; by the sports people play; and by the area they live.

*There used to be the people who drink at the club, the people who drink at the pub, and the people who drink at the Junction....so where you drink is your group. And also maybe the sports you play.. like I think the squash club is a very strong group and they hang together quite tightly and I know there's the badminton club and they do a lot of socialising together. It's like they've got that commonality.*

*There are small communities within communities like the settlements of Horopito and Mangaturoa. Horopito have a ratepayers association which is involved with the old school, has pot luck dinners and had a fireworks night. And that's what country communities used to be like.*

Very few participants spoke of significant bridging relationships between the groups in the Ohakune community, with many speaking of the disconnectedness of the different networks.

The only structured opportunities to develop bridging social capital mentioned were monthly Ohakune Network Meetings also known as Kaumatua Network Meetings. However the majority of those attending these meetings are paid staff of government or social service agencies from outside the area. The meetings are held to coincide with monthly visits to the area by staff from Inland Revenue Department in Palmerston North and Community Law Centre from Wanganui. At a meeting attended to make observations for this research, only two of the twelve participants were local and all were paid staff. The main purpose being networking, the format was a round of introductions and catch-up with those present followed by a guest speaker invited to share about their particular service. The meetings themselves were not aimed as a forum for discussion, however valuable exchanges often occurred after the meetings when participants went out together for coffees afterwards. The meetings were started about ten years ago by the Ruapehu District Council as part of the council's involvement with *Safer Communities*. The council used to provide the venue, coordinator and organise the meetings and do the minutes. When the council stopped *Safer Communities*, the police picked up the role and the coordination is done by the Victim Support coordinator. In the past local kaumatua would attend the meetings, opening and closing them, but their attendance has since declined mainly due, it was reported, to ill health related to aging.

## 8.2.2 Raetihi

Many participants spoke of the population in Raetihi as being a lot more stable and established than Ohakune with many of the families in the town having lived there for a number of generations. Mention was made that there was still a solid core of the original settler families in the town. Several people commented on the close-knit connections within extended families. *“It seems like everyone in Raetihi is related”*. The strong bonding social capital within whanau, hapu and iwi was a feature of the town as Maori make up the majority of the population. Most participants felt that these family connections and stability contributed towards a strong sense of community in the town.

The general theme in discussions about the social networks in Raetihi revolved around the town being divided along class and ethnicity lines.

*There was a certain elitist element in Raetihi ... a huge racial tension. There's a lot of us and them.. not necessarily just about Maori but also about being well off and not well off. It was an elitist club.. and I think it continues to be that way.*

*You had the farming community which was very strong in Raetihi and had a lot of families who value learning and culture and those sorts of things. Raetihi had quite a strong set of those families. So I think socially it was like that.. there were those people and those people.. was more divided than Ohakune across those lines, and definitely Maori and Pakeha. But there were kids from families in Raetihi who often were the top scholars... an imbalance really.*

The topic of racism evoked a range of responses, of which all agreed that it existed in the town but with differing opinions as to its prevalence or effects. A number of examples were given illustrating racism from both Maori and Pakeha. There was however a sense for some that relationships had improved in more recent times. Examples given were a change in the acceptance of the bi-lingual unit at the primary school and an increase in people mixing socially at the local *Cosmopolitan Club*.

*When we first lived here there was this kind of anti the Maori unit at the school being there and then gradually people were ok with it*

*And what I've noticed since I've been back here is that Maori and non Maori have got together and it's a lot more noticeable how they frequent at the Cozzie Club. I went to a band there and it was awesome to see. I think the communities get on good. However I think you're going to find there are Maori who are anti and non Maori too. I think people have mellowed over time. I left here in the 90s and people were anti this and that. But there's been this coming together. They've had to work together. Actually I think racism exists everywhere.*

The predominantly European farming community was described as well bonded with a number of overlapping associational networks within it. That is there were individuals who were members of a number of different organisations within it.

*There's a bit of a conversation going on between the rodeo committee, the shearing committee, and the A & P Show committee. They're all linked. There's about three common people to the groups. There's a dialogue going on because it's all about the same things.. all of the things around agriculture. There's also the dog trialling group. There's some diversity but there's more commonality.*

It was commented that many of the businesses in Raetihi cater to the farming community and locals rather than to tourists, as in Ohakune.

Also in contrast to Ohakune, the Maori community has several tribal divisions, causing difficulties when iwi consultations and representations were called for.

*They talk about how there is no Maori representative on the board of trustees.. because there's something like 33 iwi and hapu. No one person who could represent everybody.. whereas in Ohakune they adopt Maungarongo as their representative. And they're so strong within themselves. And anyone else.. well you're either in or you're out.*

It's suggested that the main impact of these divisions relates to linking social capital and to some degree bridging with the wider community. The strength of close family ties, was seen to demonstrate strong bonding social capital within the Maori community in Raetihi. There was a coming together of different iwi and hapu on at certain times to achieve shared goals. Such times include the contract with the Ministry of Social Development to deliver *Te Puke Marae's Ngati Uenuku Whanau Development Project*; the welcome of the foreshore and seabed hikoi onto

Te Puke Marae; and the annual Ruapehu schools Maori culture festival at Raetihi Primary School. Another significant event that, depending on the perspective taken, develops either bonding within the Maori community in the whole area or bridging between the different hapu and iwi, is *Tira Hoe Waka*. This annual event involves a 16 day trip on the Whanganui River staying at different marae for all Maori who affiliate with the river. This includes most Maori in the area including those from Ohakune's Ngati Rangi. This event provides an opportunity for the strengthening of cultural bonds as kaumatua share stories of tupuna and teach local tikanga.

Mention was made that one of the hapu groups, which didn't have strong connections to the other groups, had approached Ruapehu District Council for help with setting up a facility for youth in the area. One of the issues in providing support to the group was that they didn't have a legally recognised umbrella trust structure. In this case, the need for an established legal administrative body and the requirement for accountability processes were identified as factors affecting access to linking social capital.

It was observed that there wasn't a lot of bridging social capital being demonstrated between Maori and Pakeha within associational life in Raetihi. Groups such as *Chills Off*, the theatre trust and drama group, and *Raetihi Promotions* were predominantly Pakeha. Some concern was expressed that Ruapehu District Council had seemed to nominate *Raetihi Promotions* as the town's main lobby group when it didn't in fact represent the majority of the population.

Maori who had previously tried to get involved with the group reported experiencing difficulties in being heard. It was felt that procedural conventions were used as a method to exclude their opinions. For example a suggestion raised verbally was required to be put in writing, which was then declined.

*Like meeting a brick wall.. that any of your ideas... because that's why you're there... to give some input on your own way of seeing things...are never brought on board , stonewalled really.*

The perception of racist or “redneck” attitudes was mentioned a number of times to explain the reluctance of Maori to get involved with groups involving the wider community.

Maori associational life, similar to the Maori community in Ohakune, tended rather to focus on groups related to cultural activities and support for the whanau, such as Treaty claims work, iwi developments, Maori performing arts, work relating to consultation and Maori protocol, marae committees, tangihanga, cultural events and the Maori Wardens Association. Other associations revolved around sports activities and ways to directly support low income families, such as the volunteer-run opportunity shop and the Breakfast Club at the primary school.

Some felt that Maori had been busy with their focus on the Treaty claims process and that this had affected their availability to be involved with more bridging activities. The pending outcomes of the Treaty claims were thought by several participants to have a significant effect on the Maori community in the area.

*The treaty stuff and the amount of work and resources.. some people have worked over 35 years on this and it's taken all their time. They didn't engage in the community in any way. They didn't have time .. and that's a fact.*

*I think it's a tender time with the Treaty claims settlements. Everyone is in a state of limbo and not saying much. It's common knowledge that that iwi will get some money but nobody knows what the outcome will be. People are just waiting to see what happens. And I think when the payouts happen the next generation will really be the ones who benefit and I don't necessarily mean financially. I think the previous generations have carried the burden of the Treaty not being honoured. Once things are settled, the acknowledgement ... the feeling of being vindicated... will raise the mana and the self esteem of the youth.*

Another significant group in the town mentioned was the Baptist Church, known as *The Centre*, which was seen to “*have a lot of influence at the moment because there are so many Baptists here in prominent positions.. like the plumber and the doctor*”. Members of the church have been quite active in the community over the years, having been involved with the budgeting service in the past, running an *ICONZ* group for youth and establishing the monthly Raetihi Country Market in the church grounds on Raetihi's main street.

The market was mentioned as a community space where mixing of different groups occurred regularly contributing to the informal development of bridging social capital. However the church members tended to be predominantly Pakeha, and so while some bridging social capital was developed through the church, it was limited in its reach.

Groups that were involved and used the theatre had formed bridges within a sector of the community. As well as the theatre trust, these groups included the drama group- the Phoenix Players, the garden club, and the Waimarino Art Awards. It's noted that these groups were predominantly Pakeha groups. It's understood that this trend related to issues of trust based on familiarity with the building, which was built from trust and familiarity with each other.

*At the moment the building is not entirely safe. We have been criticised for not hiring it out and that only Phoenix players get to use it. But that's not true. We do have other groups use it. But we tend to hire it out to other people who are involved with us, who actually know the pitfalls of the building and can say, don't go out there.*

While the core of Raetihi's population tended to be made up of people who had lived in the area for a long time, there was another group identified as newcomers to the area. Some resistance to the newcomers was expressed, "*I think there may be still that kind of a you know.. they've come into our town and they're doing this and they're doing that*". The need to preserve the town's history and the harnessing of passion of those with strong roots in the area were identified as important reasons to ensure the continued involvement of established elderly members of the community.

*The theatre is run by a trust. We've got some older people who have been there for a while. We could do with some new blood but there's so much history that we've got to keep the older ones to keep it fresh in your mind because they are the ones that know and are passionate about it.*

The majority of the participants saw the arrival of new people to the town as positive and encouraging. They tended to be younger, from the city, technologically savvy and have wider networks. Newcomers had started a local paper, called *The Raetihi Times*, which was received positively.

It was pointed out that when people move into a town, it is generally the result of a positive choice made for a better life and this positive outlook affects the community.

*I think that the balance of people that actually live here has changed. People are actually coming to live in Raetihi because they want to live in Raetihi... not because they have to live in Raetihi. People who want to live in a town are positive about it. People who have to live in a town aren't quite so positive.*

Some of the outspoken representatives of the community were seen as negative, and while it was accepted that this negativity might be justified, it wasn't always seen as the best approach for the town.

In fact it was this negativity and internal politics that was seen as affecting opportunities to develop bridging and linking social capital in the community. A need was identified for strong, positive leadership in the town.

*Unfortunately internal politics is holding the town back. Certain groups of people who want it to happen but don't want to let it go to the people who can sometimes make it happen. And I think you'll have that in any small community. Unfortunately sometimes in a small community people cut off their noses to spite their faces despite it being the best thing that could happen but if it's not happening because they're championing it ...it doesn't happen.. it gets sabotaged.. and that's a real pity. You need energy. Like anything there needs to be leadership.. clear leadership.*

The Raetihi Promotions Group, while having strong bonding social capital, was seen by many to not have access to strong bridging or linking social capital. This was seen as a result in the make-up of the group's members, although this was reported to be changing with a new influx of members to the group.

*The Promotions Group is made up of community people rather than monied business people like Ohakune 2000. People with no business drive.. and the local business people really weren't interested in coming and putting their spoke in.*

It's of interest to note that others in Raetihi saw the group as being tourism and business focused rather than community focused. Upon reflection, many of the group's members did indeed run businesses that would improve with an injection of tourism, but they certainly appeared less driven, with weaker linking social capital

than those in Ohakune 2000. It was suggested that as the majority of local businesses tended to service the farming community and locals, the drive to promote the town to tourists wasn't an incentive for them to get involved, unlike the business community in Ohakune. One participant believed that Raetihi had more people working as employees whereas Ohakune had more business owners which affected the mindset of the towns in terms of entrepreneurship.

Some participants commented that there was a need for the focus to be on people and processes in order to access resources primarily for the community. Again strong positive leadership was mentioned, as well the ability and processes to be inclusive and effective.

Inefficiencies in the way organisations were run was another reason given for problems with access to resources. An example was given where the community had missed out on a funding opportunity due to inadequacies in the communication process between the community and the District Council.

*I think if I look at the big picture, I've always believed it's about people not resourcing. So if you have good drivers you'd be able to get money from anywhere.. if we'd had been the big driver,. we would've been able to get that money, we would've known early enough how to apply for it, what we needed to do, where we were economically.. what is a good idea.. we've had lots of ideas.*

*We just need something that's going to incorporate everyone. Need to bring ideas to the table.. and sort them out.. and the ones we're going to run with lets make it happen.. because there are heaps of funding people that we can go to.. that can help us but over the last five years we haven't seen anything happen. I don't know whether they're just waiting for each other to do something or whether somebody should take the lead. Lets look at what we can do collectively as a group...spread out the ideas so it's not too much for us to take on.. be realistic. We need people to take a lead role.*

Some participants commented that although there were bridges within certain groups in the town, they were generally limited to similar networks in the town, such as the farming network, or the church network. A need was expressed for improved communication and resource sharing between groups. It was noted that this was the intended purpose of the *Sustainable Community Development Group*, or LARP.

*What was needed was for everyone to be linked. To connect all the groups that weren't communicating. .. RDC, the community. People were just focussed on what they were doing. And also the government requirement for local councils to meet community outcomes... LARP was the process for how that interface was going to occur. And the whole sustainable thing...it was a way that national government could say to council this is way to coordinate the community to get outcomes. But it was ineffective as council didn't buy in.*

It appears there were differences between Council and the community in terms of understanding the purpose of the project with relation to the formation and fulfilment of the *Community Outcomes*. The group were disappointed that they weren't consulted as one of the stakeholders about the approach the Council took to define the *Community Outcomes*. Discussions with Council indicate the stakeholders were randomly selected.

Interestingly, the stated priorities of the project were: "To build social capital for resolving persisting problems, for community planning (i.e. the Local Government Act) and for implementing sustainable development (From DIA Project Specification, 2005).

The theatre trust and Chills Off were both groups that were thinking about linking in with Raetihi Promotions as a way of sharing resources, skills and information.

*We're talking about going under the umbrella of Promotions. We're quite happy to do that. I think they have skills we need. We don't need all these different groups working separately.*

Shared celebrations, such as the annual Christmas Parade in Raetihi, were mentioned as a medium to develop bridging social capital.

*Looking at the parade the other day.. if we had something like that happening three times a year in the town... that brought everyone together. It's hard work.. but I think the more you did it the more people would get involved.*

This is an example of the role community events are seen to play in symbolising social cohesion and encourage the participation (Bell,1997).

One of the values attributed towards bonding social capital is its tendency to create a sense of security among similar types of people (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004; Brisson & Usher, 2007). It is suggested that there is a need to encourage people to break out of their comfort zones and develop bridges with others. One of the ways mentioned in the research of achieving this is through creative endeavours. This process was seen to be starting to occur at the theatre in Raetihi.

*I think what Raetihi has got.. especially with the pantomimes.. that breaks people out of their comfort zones and creates bridges.. . . . and Raetihi seems to have that sort of inspirational stuff happening now.*

### **8.2.3 Bridging Social Capital between Ohakune and Raetihi**

Many of the older participants spoke of a long standing rivalry between the towns. This rivalry was used to fuel competitiveness in events such as the annual shearing competition between the towns and various sports events.

Rather than rivalry between the towns however, it seemed more like a lack of bridging social capital, issues with outside agencies and transport problems have caused difficulties relating to the provision of programmes in the towns. Difficulties were reported in combining numbers between the towns to reach minimum thresholds necessary to run various educational courses.

This splitting of numbers was also a factor in the viability of Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) programmes run at both primary schools. With outside agencies, Ruapehu Rural Education and Activity Programme (REAP) based in Taihape running the Ohakune programme, and YMCA based in Wanganui running the Raetihi programme, these two agencies competed with each other for children to attend their respective programmes. An example observed was REAP undercutting the YMCA programme's charges to families. It's understood that the prices charged by REAP were perceived by the YMCA as being so low they were unsustainable.

It was unclear as to whether other programmes REAP was contracted to deliver were compromised by these actions. It was clear however, that a competitive rather than a collaborative approach wasn't appropriate for the delivery of social programmes in such small communities with limited numbers and

resources. It was observed that the competition between the programmes heightened levels of mistrust and had negative effects of the relationships between the schools. This was an example of how a competitive model can detract from the development of bridging social capital between towns, and how non-locally based community development can have negative impacts.

Failings of such agencies aside, bridging social capital was however demonstrated between the schools when Raetihi Primary School sustained much damage after a fire mid-way through 2009.

*The school is overwhelmed with offers of support, including from all the local schools that have offered resources. This is an opportunity for us to pull together as a school and community.*

Interestingly the crisis of the fire was said to improve bonding social capital within the school community.

*I have to say with the fire it was a real sad thing, but the principal and senior management, OSCAR, the staff, the board of trustees have all worked together to help....like running the breakfasts. All sorts of great things are happening at the school now.. making things, drama, music. I can't put it down to one thing.. but I think it's because we've all networked together.*

Bridging social capital was demonstrated between the two towns with networking between the organisers of the *Raetihi Christmas Carnival* and *Ohakune Carrot Carnival* to share information and resources. Both communities were reported to support each others' celebrations with attendance and timing.

*The Carrot Carnival and the Raetihi Christmas Parade.. they work together in that they don't encroach on each other. You know like Ohakune doesn't have a Christmas parade because Raetihi does.*

Other examples of bridging social capital between the towns include shared membership in a variety of groups such as the Waimarino Garden Club, the Waimarino Arts Awards, activities at the theatre, a variety of sports groups, participation in the cultural festival, cadets, senior citizens groups, hunting clubs and service clubs.

A recent development of bridging social capital was communication between *Ohakune 2000* and *Raetihi Promotions*, with *Ohakune 2000* sharing their experiences on ways to work effectively as a group and progress developments. This sharing was seen to be valuable for Raetihi in gaining ideas on how to strengthen their linking social capital as well as systems for effective bridging for different community groups. It was encouraging that *Ohakune 2000* was happy to offer this support, seeing benefits in working collaboratively for the region.

*There's no real opportunity for different groups in the community to get together and discuss where we want to go. And that's what Ohakune 2000 talked about ... having a group that was central, that had a vision, that consulted around that vision so that all the other groups in the town added to that vision.*

*I think that with two communities focusing on the right issues we could go much further by pulling in the same direction.*

### **8.3 The Good Society**

In defining what in fact are the right issues and directions for the community, we address the second school of thought on civil society. In this section we look at the norms, values and motivations which guide the actions of those in the community. The interest is in establishing any conflicts of interests, or clashes in values between various groups, as well the identification of shared interests as a means to express collective visions of the good society.

Some general themes emerged around the differences in values represented by the developments in the two towns. An analysis of the narratives (White & Epston, 1990) related by community members of these developments was in many ways symbolic of the underlying norms and values held by each town. In a similar fashion that small town events can contribute towards a community's sense of identity (Bell, 1997), such narratives also play a role in affirming accepted constructions of identity and the values that shape them.

For Ohakune, this story was about the building of the Ohakune Mountain Road by local volunteers, starting in the 1950s and taking nearly twenty years. This story was seen as representing an ethos of hard work, based on a vision, and the right to enjoy the rewards of the hard work undertaken. It was a story of

the values of independence and personal responsibility for the creation of a better future. These values were expressed by a member of *Ohakune 2000*:

*The people who built the Ohakune Mountain Road, they did it voluntarily in their own time over the years. They were Ohakune people. They put in the hard work because they had a vision. This is the spirit that inspires us.*

In response to the crisis of the eruptions, the *Ohakune 2000* group formed and together with other likeminded people, built on these values and created their vision for the town. This vision was one generated from the desire for economic sustainability for Ohakune. Seeing the mountain as their main asset and tourism as the most viable path to economic success, Ohakune created itself as a tourist town. This focus on a vision and the success of the achievement of that vision seemed to be mutually reinforcing norms for people in Ohakune.

*We are focussed. Totally and utterly focussed. We take a project on and focus on it and finish it. And that is, I would say our core values ... total and utter determination. And I believe it gives us credibility, and if you're professional and focussed, you can make a difference. And I would say that we are attracting a certain mix of people who want to be part of it. And I don't want to sound arrogant... but success attracts success.*

This vision and its accompanying values seemed to resonate with many of the newcomers to the town. The importance of the town as a place for people to have fun was reinforced by the sign greeting visitors to the town: "*Welcome to Ohakune where Adventure Begins*". Such a vision was also relevant to the underlying values raised in the earlier discussion on the development of the *Mardi Gras* and their contribution to the town's identity.

However, it seemed that not all members of the Ohakune community shared this vision. Many of the older residents viewed the tourist developments as undermining the local community and sense of connection to one another. The values of security, safety, support and stability that come from these connections were seen as having been compromised, as had the wider sense of local ownership and control of the town.

The *Ohakune 2000 group*, which initially was viewed by many community

members as a local watchdog to keep the council honest by advocating accountability to the community, had been seen by some as having lost its integrity as its purpose seemed to focus solely on the development of tourism.

The general conflict expressed was that the importance of the town as a play space for visitors was being prioritised over the value of the town as a place for the locals to live. The lack of affordable accommodation for locals in winter was given as an example of this. The changes in nature of the *Ohakune Mardi Gras* from an event organised by volunteers that attracted local families, to a huge commercial operation catering to adults and youth from mainly out of town, also illustrated this trend.

The words and actions of Ruapehu District Council seemed united with the *Ohakune 2000* vision, demonstrating a belief in the value of promoting ongoing visitor growth in the area. *“In a time of recession local tourism is one shining light that proves the importance of diversifying our economy”*.

When a bridge on Ohakune Mountain Road was recently completed, at the opening ceremony the mayor thanked the general manager of Ruapehu Alpine Lifts (RAL) for his commitment to building the Ruapehu economy.

*RAL is an amazing corporate citizen of the Ruapehu District whose support and commitment has made the difference to many projects. Today's Ohakune Mountain Road Association that have been responsible included RDC (Ruapehu District Council), DOC (Department of Conservation), RAL, local iwi and NZLTA (New Zealand Land Transport Association).*

The original Ohakune Mountain Road Association however consisted of local volunteers, whereas the alliance attributed with achieving the latest development of the road, were mainly paid staff representing private business and government agencies. This difference could perhaps be seen to be representative of the changing values placed on work on the road. With the economic contribution of the mountain having proved its worth, the access road was seen as vital infrastructure to support the local economy and was thus prioritised.

Attitudes towards the mountain and rivers, where they were viewed as

assets in economic terms, rather than respected as sacred with deep spiritual significance, represented a clash of cultural values.

*And of course the whole thing with me being Maori and the mountain...the sacred mountain ... not a play thing to make money from. There's a lot of sort of heart stuff in it for me.*

In fact the story for Maori in Ohakune is a separate one of parallel development set at Maungarongo Marae and based on a totally different set of values. For the people of Ngati Rangi, Mount Ruapehu is seen as an ancestor or tupuna maunga. Traditional values of communal ownership, a spiritual connection with the land and waterways, whakapapa or genealogical ties, and the role of the iwi as guardians or kaitiaki of the land, were underneath all aspects of the work that the iwi did. The iwi expressed a strong sense of responsibility for the well-being of its people and right to self determination which guided developments on the marae such as the health centre and school, as well as the strategic plan for the future.

Many participants, particularly those from Raetihi, saw the tourism developments in Ohakune as indicative of the dominance of the value of money over people. That is the compromise of community and social development by a focus on economic development.

The loss of council's community development coordinator during the course of the research, led to certain initiatives not being followed through by council, such as forming a locally based steering committee. This was seen by some as a lack of council's commitment to local community development, and a limitation on the diversity of community voice.

Council staff however, viewed their role in technical terms, as just carrying out the wishes of the ratepayers. They were clear that if anyone wanted more services from the council, they could pay for it through targeted rates. They noted that Council worked on the principle of "public good" through which individual good is sometimes sacrificed. This principle involved making decisions which were seen to yield benefit to the most number of people for the lowest cost. There was also an emphasis expressed on the need for activities carried out by council to be clearly visible and measurable.

*You're only delivering what you've been told to deliver according to the book. So the book says at the end of the year this is what the community wants and is rated for it and is prepared to pay for it. Your officers are delivering technically what the community's asked for. So in terms of community development, it tends to be the bigger type stuff... libraries, facilities and things. If you're advocating for a community development officer in your area ... and we'd look and see in a specific targeted area. Are you prepared to pay for it? There would be a universal benefit and there would be a targeted benefit... and you'd be rated as such.*

Hucker saw such an approach to be a result of the 1989 local government reforms, where:

*They are conceptualised as service delivery, administrative and regulatory units with peripheral political functions, instead of as essentially political institutions performing those functions among others for the common good or in the public interest.... The focus is therefore on the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of a variety of individual services, rather than on their collective impact on the wellbeing of communities. (Hucker, 1997).*

The point was made, in the research, that community and economic development are heavily entwined, and that much of what happens in the town that is of benefit to tourists also benefits locals. There was a call to stop differentiating and focus rather on the concept of people.

*The need is for an economic vision that focuses on people in general... not tourists and visitors.. but people. Get rid of the idea of visitors and tourists, they are people first. It doesn't matter where they are from. And they shop in your shop.*

Another way of expressing this idea is that customers are customers or business is business. A business approach is indifferent as to whether customers are locals or visitors. The driving philosophy underlying the business approach is based on the requirement to make a profit.

This leads to one of the narratives seen to represent the development of Raetihi. This involves the story of the Auckland property investor who purchased half of the shops in the main street, only to leave them empty and derelict. Debates within and between the towns around the investor's behaviour are seen to illustrate a clash between the values of actions for the greater good and actions for private

interest. However, from a business approach, the investor is simply practising sound business principles by taking the most profitable course of action. Such principles are supported by government legislation providing incentives such as tax breaks for losses on investment properties, irrespective of the context and wider effects of these losses.

*Raetihi needs to stop focusing on those shops. It's private ownership of property and there's nothing they can do. Or what they can do, is make the town a place that people want to come to and so once they build it up, then the shops will be full.*

The story highlights the difference in values between local and “foreign” ownership. By not living in the area, the owner has no vested interest in making the town a better place to live. Rather the motivation is purely commercial – to make a profit. Many see this personal profit being made at the town’s expense.

Another of Raetihi’s narratives is about loss. With government and agricultural restructuring the town lost its hospital, its services and agriculturally-based wealth. Also within the Maori community there was talk of the loss of the Marae based programme, loss of potential for the development of a number of Maori business ideas and loss of the CURE centre. In this story, the town’s residents see themselves as victims of a range of injustices caused generally by an uncaring and disinterested government. There was a certain amount of nostalgia noted about better days and a sense of a battle to revive the values and norms which had served the town in the past. Such notions resonate with observations about the development of small town festivals to “*demonstrate the persistence and viability of sentimental notions of community*” (Bell, 1997).

There was a strong element of grievance and blame about the town’s predicament. Several outside voices offered advice to the town, based on the premise of self responsibility.

*No doubt there are always issues out there that need to be recognised and looked at but sometimes it is for the sake of holding on. And that's where you have to decide, do you want to hold on or is it time to let go? Sometimes people don't like change. Simple as that and you know. It's very important that if you want to go with the change...your change is planned well...that you know where you*

*want to end up.*

*Every town has to look in the mirror – you can't expect anybody to do things for you, you've got to do it yourself. It's nobody's fault Raetihi is the way it is. You just have to attract people. If you don't shine yourself up, people won't come.*

*You don't demand things of council – you get onside, show them your plans and ask how you can help them reach your goals. Send a submission – not a petition!*

The third narrative heard in Raetihi involved its revitalisation and development of a new identity. This created an opportunity for an exchange of ideas and viewpoints, revealing some of the value systems and interests underlying the contested visions.

After attending a conference on small town development, a member of *Raetihi Promotions* fed back ideas for a town identity based on a theme, such as *Unforget -a-Bull Bulls*. This branding or marketing approach to the town's development reflects earlier ideas raised in the discussion on the development of small town festivals, with the aim of promoting the town to tourists. The idea of branding Raetihi as a historical *Tlmbertown* was raised again, after initially being noted in the visioning strategy, *A Future for Raetihi*, which was written ten years earlier.

Such ideas reflect a tendency prevalent within the European community in the town to predominantly recognise the European contributions and influence to the town rather than a more holistic view incorporating Maori history in the area. Although discussions had taken place on this concern and statements made that Maori history would be included, the recently released brand logo for the town, focused on the words, "*Raetihi since 1893*". The year 1893 being the year the settlers arrived, thus ignoring Maori involvement in the area prior to this date, and in a sense alienating the heritage of 60% of the population.

Maori who attended the *Raetihi Promotions* AGM stressed the need to include a place for local youth in the town vision, rather than just focusing on ways to bring tourists into the town. A lack of constructive activities for youth to be involved with and concern about risk taking behaviour and exposure to the negative effects of alcohol and drugs were common themes raised.

Other themes raised were the need for greater educational and employment opportunities. Concerns were also expressed about whether the possible benefits of tourism would be distributed throughout the town and a belief that only the few involved in the industry would gain. The feeling was that there was a potential for the town to be sold out, “like „Kune”.

For some, the idea of potential development in the town posed a threat of the introduction of the values of promoting self-interest at the expense of others. The value of a close and supportive community and a sense of communal responsibility were seen as a priority.

*If you're wanting it to be like a city, as in having all those things around us ...well some of us came here to not have those things around us... to have some collectivity... living in an enjoyable community that wasn't pushing others down to get what they want, over and above them. It's not about any one getting a better deal or a worse deal than anyone else.*

Shared values identified across the different groups in Raetihi for a potential shared vision included the importance of family, interest in sports and the arts, and the value of history

Interesting points of difference however were the boundaries of different cultural definitions of family, with Maori definitions inclusive of extended family networks into the wider community. This wider sense of identification had implications with involvement in any shared community developments.

*I think that Maori in particular like to be part of something that works really well but you don't individually put your head up. You as a group put your head up. So you're allowed to be a tall poppy if you're a group of people but you're not allowed to be a tall poppy if you're just one because your not a collective then.. and so there needs to be collectivity and linking between groups of people.*

Education is another shared value mentioned by both Maori and Pakeha, although each placed a different emphasis on its value. For Pakeha the tendency was to talk about the importance of attending good schools to increase employment opportunities and social standing, whereas for Maori education seemed to be viewed as a path to self determination and power. The desire to share this value of education was one of the motivations for running the courses at Te Puke Marae and through the *Wananga o Aotearoa*.

*To us as a family our father really instilled education. We need an education, it's a priority. You know education is power. That was instilled in us as kids growing up and there were 20 of us. So half of us are school teachers and our kids are school teachers. We knew the importance of education and that's why we ran those programmes. We understood the importance of an education and we wanted people to find out for themselves.*

The boundaries of community interests and rewards for efforts made were values raised in discussions on developments of local community fundraising initiative, the *Raetihi Ripper*. The *Ripper* was an annual motorbike ride that had for many years been raising money for Raetihi based causes, such as the pre-school and school. As the amount of funds raised increased, so too did debates over how the funds would be distributed. With the children of some of those involved in the organising of the event moving from Raetihi to Ohakune School, the argument to widen the net of those benefiting from the event strengthened.

*The problem with any group that's making money is that people have different views on how that money should be spent. We had one year we made 30 grand plus profit and for a fundraising effort, that's a huge amount of money. There was a huge debate about where the money should go.. and you got to see that people's agendas were based on the things they were involved in .. not just their children but them as well.*

*They said we're putting all this time and effort in, we want our kids to benefit from it.. and some of them might be involved in rugby and want the rugby club to get the money. I think there was the feeling among the group that some of the Raetihi community were letting themselves down because they were moaning about not getting the money but they never provided the people to help.*

Differences in values, affiliations and lack of compromise were raised as possible reasons to explain difficulties with groups in the community working together to achieve shared goals, such as activities for youth.

*Probably why people don't bother talking to anyone else is each group has their own values. And if you just stay within your own organisation and do your own thing you don't need to compromise. Like this ICONZ group for youth that's started off for example. Ideally perhaps if they'd worked in with the iwi youth group...but there's been no discussion as far as I'm aware . ICONZ structure is dictated by the national ICONZ group and there may not be that flexibility.. like it has*

*to be associated with the church and various criteria .. and so maybe there's not a lot of opportunity to work in with what other people are doing. It could be a values thing. It's clearly stated that it's Christian values that they're promoting.*

While the goals may have been shared, it seemed that if the values on which the means to achieve those goals were in anyway seen as exclusive, the potential was for the result to be alienation. And sometimes, it seemed people were unaware that their values may be exclusive.

Stressing the need for a collective approach, a senior European member of the community castigated the audience at a community meeting about the proposed Ohakune Integrated Health Centre. Her beef was that instead of focussing on the individual stories of each town, there should be a shared story told.

*What's all this about Raetihi and Ohakune? We've worked together for fifty two years and have always been referred to as the Waimarino. It's only since the skiing started in Ohakune that it's been separate. If we're divided we'll never get anywhere. I'm sick and tired of hearing Ohakune this, Raetihi that. How about using the word Waimarino?*

Her point was that the introduction of the skifield development had heralded what she saw as a change in values between the towns which was causing friction and affecting the ability of the communities to work together. She also raised the rhetorical value of a shared name.

At the same meeting a representative from Ngati Rangi offered another view.

*From a Maori perspective Raetihi and Ohakune are different. And we acknowledge that there are different iwi based in each. However we are also one people. And the Ngati Rangi health strategy is to improve the well being of our people.*

Both women were saying the same thing in that the need was to look at the bigger picture and work together to address the health needs of the area. However, the Maori worldview emphasised the importance of acknowledging the different tribal identities associated with the land, as well as their unity. Each iwi had a different history, different tupuna and different tikanga . As with iwi consultations the need was to acknowledge this to respect the mana of each iwi.

## 8.4 Public Sphere

While theories of associational life focus on the makeup on the different networks involved in the community, and those on the 'good society' examine the values and visions that guide it, theories of the public sphere consider the democratic framework by which community visions are defined and achieved. They look at the processes and public spaces through which groups engage in dialogue, the culture which defines these spaces, and any inequalities of power and voice.

In highlighting the issues involved for communities to engage in decision making processes, the potential is revealed for more inclusive paths which allow communities to actively create their destinies.

During the research much of the discussion relating to the public sphere focussed on concerns on the access of the community's voice to local government. Access to national government was very rare being nearly an hour's drive to visit the electorate's Member of Parliament in either Taihape or Taumarunui. As such, communication processes with local council were the primary focus of ways to build linking social capital, followed by issues in the public sphere affecting bonding and bridging social capital.

One of the themes that emerged with regard to the effectiveness of the public sphere in Ohakune and Raetihi was concern around the communities' experiences of the consultation process with mainly local and national government agencies. The experiences related indicated the perception that the consultation processes used were superficial and were carried out to meet organisational requirements rather than genuine interest in community voice.

*All this tick box stuff, it all sounds good and wonderful when it's put on paper, but in actual fact nothing happened.*

A number of examples were given, by both Maori and Pakeha, of reports on results of consultation processes being written up and then shelved with no outcomes seen. Community members reported feeling used, losing trust in government agencies and being reluctant to participate in the future.

*We've kind of lost heart. We did extensive research on health. And for a lot of families... they didn't want to participate because they were sick and tired of doing surveys. So we managed to convince them to give us the information... confidential information that we needed in order to obtain funding. And then, thank you very much for the report... and nothing happened. To me, my integrity means everything and I'm a bit reluctant if there was another contract and we were asked to participate. Because they'll think of what happened in the past. We went through all this and then... gone. People lose trust in the government through these experiences. People are sick of consultation processes that don't lead to anything*

A number of examples were given, such as the Ohakune Health Centre development, where people believed that consultation had occurred too late in the process.

*The architect's Health Centre plans got people's backs up as they saw it as a foregone conclusion. The mayor's involvement didn't help either.*

Rather than employing the consultation process as a means of manufacturing consent, Hucker (1997) emphasises the need for community consultation to foster critical public debate about a range of options.

There was a general perception of not only government agencies but also government contracted community based agencies, such as Ruapehu REAP, spending much time and resources on the organisation's structural needs at the expense of the community. REAP (Rural Education Activities Programme) is contracted by the Ministry of Education and Tertiary Education Commission to address gaps in education in rural areas. Observations were made of community meetings held in Raetihi with the stated purpose to gain community feedback to inform the agency's activities. However due to recent staff changes, no record was made of the outcomes of those meetings and it's understood little activity will be carried out in the community for at least six months while the organisation undergoes a major restructuring process.

*When REAP asked us what we wanted we said we wanted someone based in Raetihi to organise community programmes. But they said*

*no, that wouldn't happen and that we would have a satellite worker based in Taihape. But in the last few years we've not seen them do anything here. They seem to be too busy in Taihape and generally unavailable.*

Of concern to many was a proposal by Ruapehu District Council to scrap the Waimarino-Waiouru community board as a cost-cutting measure. Introduced as a response to the amalgamation process of the local government reforms in 1989, community boards aim to provide a vehicle for local expression and influence and to help overcome the remoteness of the larger territorial organisations. The concern was that scrapping the board would compromise the community's access to a voice in Council. Despite the criticism that community board members were ineffective as they didn't have a vote on council, it was viewed that they still increased the channels that the community could be heard within the local government structure.

Rather than scrapping the boards, Hucker (1997) advocates for a greater devolution of budgetary and policy-making powers to enhance their status, thereby increasing the influence of the community over its own destiny.

One of the arguments put to the Electoral Commission by the Ruapehu District Council for disestablishing the boards was that the towns had good lobby groups such as *Ohakune 2000* and the *Raetihi Promotions*.

*"But it was pointed out to the Commission that using incorporated societies disenfranchises people who aren't members".*

The lobby groups were seen as not being representative of the community. *"They are business groups that don't have the community's interest at heart."*

In these discussions, RAL was also cited as a body which *"gets quite a bit of hearing"* with council but doesn't represent the community.

The community board was viewed as a human face for local people to communicate with, rather than *"the daunting task of fronting up to the council table with issues"*. It ensured that the process was clear and open.

*"Otherwise it's just about strong and powerful interest groups. And you don't get to hear the voice of everyday community members"*.

It was seen that a different type of person stood for community board membership than for council.

*They think they're saving money in name of efficiency but the issue here is effectiveness. Council is meant to work for us rather than other way around. Councillors tend to be people with money who are self-employed....who can afford time to go to meetings. Community board members tend not to be of that ilk and so are more representative of the community. Things need to be fair so that a range of points of view are heard and that decision makers have empathy for other points of view.*

It was however pointed out that there had been difficulties finding enough people to stand for community board election and a general complacency about civic participation was prevalent. Such complacency is reflected in the decreasing level of participation indicated in local body election statistics.

*The community itself is not supporting the community boards. So in as much as people will say it's shocking that they are going to get rid of our community boards but I bet when it comes to submissions not many will make an effort. People in general are very complacent.*

However, in fact numerous objections and submissions were heard by the Commission at the hearings held in Taumarunui, most in favour of retaining the community board. The commission listened and made the decision to retain the board, but with a reduced number of representatives.

Public submissions were one of a number of communication methods employed by the council to access the community's voice. Others observed included surveys, public meetings, community group meetings, ward tours, and recently introduced touch screen surveys where ratepayers prioritise community outcomes.

*Council meets with all of its community groups at least once every three years as it develops the 10 year plan (LTCCP). Council also meets with any groups as necessary or when they want to (Both of these tend to happen on and off). Various officers are meeting regularly with community groups and other people. Also there are other submission process, like Annual Plans, or more discrete submission process when there is something that affects a smaller area, like a community.*

Council stated that the current level of communication was seen as a minimum and they would like to improve it.

Very few of the participants spoken to had ever made a submission to council, citing a lack of awareness of and difficulties with the process, as well as issues around access to specific and relevant information.

*The process to make a submission is difficult for your average person. You need to be able to write well. Even if you make an oral submission you still have to have it in writing. And it is quite a scary process. The other issue is that we need better information in order to make submissions. How do I know how much council is spending in Raetihi? I don't know. There is nothing to tell me. It's all put into the big conglomerate picture of what they've done for the Ruapehu district. Therefore how can I make a submission on what I don't know?*

The Council appeared to be making efforts to improve feedback processes from the community. A couple of years earlier Ruapehu District Council had held community meetings on the process of making submissions pointing out that in fact it is more effective to lobby council informally prior to the formation of the long term district plan. Six months prior to the most recent plan, Council had been meeting with community groups to discuss issues of interest and reported that this increased level of engagement by council had been invaluable. Council intended to survey submitters to the plan on the consultation process *“to understand how to improve the process and encourage a wider section of community to engage with Council's planning”*.

*We try to get people to be very proactive when it comes to the annual plan time. We try to get as many people engaged in the process. Some people don't actually know how to make a submission. The power is in the process of the people. But they can't wait until the plans come out in May as those decisions have already been made by way of feedback or officer experience. They can see yes that's easily visible and measurable and the community would like it and so they put it in. By the time it gets to the point of submissions basically all you can do is adjust things ... more of or less of... but it's difficult to put something new in. And to that extent the formal part is too late because you're commenting on what they're suggesting. What you want to do is put the suggestions in so the power is with the people at the beginning.*

The *Dominion Post* cites Lawrence Yule, *Local Government New Zealand*, “If more people understood how councils operated they would be more likely to vote. It would give people a transparent set of advice and they will then be able to make informed decisions “(Dominion Post, 29 October 2009).

This quote relates to proposed changes to the community outcomes process defined in the *Resource Management Act*. The community outcomes process being identified as another way for people to have input into the definition of a community vision and the determination of council priorities.

*Part of local government is that we have to produce community outcomes that work within our long term plan. And the community outcomes give us an idea of where the community aspirations are...as to what sort of community it wants. The proposed changes are for the outcomes to be more specific to what council can do and not so general...to be measurable. The current outcomes are seen as not all achievable by council but rather by other agencies and the community. The proposed changes aim to compartmentalise our role. The aim is to fit in with the culture of council - kpis (key performance indicators) and accountability. So we can achieve results which can be seen and measured.*

The proposed amendments to the Local Government Act consolidate the position of the local council focusing on its “core services”. Hucker (1997) discusses one of the local government traditions that defines these core services as being the four Rs- rubbish, roads, rats and rates. Additional functions such as community development and even planning tend to challenge this more limited view of council’s role which avoids the undertaking of social responsibility.

With the lack of success of the Department of Internal Affairs’ *LARP*, ( the *Raetihi Sustainable Development Project*) in engaging with Council and the community to address Community Outcomes, there appears to be no process or agency responsible for the development and implementation of an overall, holistic vision for the development of the community, the task being left to struggling, local, voluntary groups.

There were calls for Council to take more responsibility in its community development role, especially in assisting communities to access funding. Some felt

that rather than council telling community members there was no money for such activities, it should be driving the idea. And to do otherwise indicated selective listening, disempowering alternative voices to those pushing for tourism development.

*I personally think there are resources we could get which could identify and hone our views to a collective ideal. If we decided this town needed youth to have a go, then we would have a shot at getting money ...DIA have got money for youth. We could get youth worker training... we could do all sorts of things. But there are no drivers. Nobody will take that up and drive it well. And so my push with Council was for someone to be that driver. And their response was no.. we're getting rid of our community workers and we can't afford that. But you don't come up with the ideas Council. We come up with the ideas.. but you help us as the driver. You go for the funding.. you organise this workshop. Their job is to ensure that they drive it through. They don't have the idea but they support it. A bit like a rugby scrum.. they've got the idea up the front and the scrum pushes it along in the right direction.*

Discussions on the merit of investing in community development seem to focus on the linking of economic contribution to the distribution of benefits and the establishment of causal links between community and economic development.

Added to this mix is the idea linking economic contribution to representation in decision making. Contesting views were heard from both the tourism and agricultural sectors about the significance of their contributions to the economy and associated significance of voice in council.

Wanganui Federated Farmers requested the electoral review of council make structural changes to give better representation to the rural community's interests as they saw the council as being urban stacked. Farmers were concerned at the high cost of rates they were paying compared to other districts and a lack of adequate consultation with them around spending on backcountry roads.

*They simply didn't understand the effects and consequences of their policies on the engine-room of the Ruapehu economy, because farmers' views were not well represented on council.*

Feedback on council's roading tour and public meeting, "*to hear directly from local people about local issues*", was that after the council presentations there was little time left to fully discuss their concerns.

Public meetings were seen as a good forum to gauge general feedback and open discussion on issues of interest to the community. However it was seen as important that these meetings be well advertised, with plenty of notice, be held at suitable venues, be well facilitated and have timely follow up.

*I went to a consultation process when the pre-school was shut down and I can see why I don't go more often . You need such a skilled facilitator for something like that.. so it isn't just this person letting off steam and you go off thinking what was all that about. Perhaps people need the public forums to vent their anger. But I think if you start the process with those public forums, like that health centre one...it should've been followed up quickly with another one to sort things out because all those questions were fresh... when they have their next meeting they're going to have to start again.*

There was common agreement that *Ohakune 2000* was the most well represented community group at the Council. Some saw this as indicative of the like-mindedness within the group, of holding similar values and vision as the council, and of a very assertive approach.

Council commented that their policy processes apply to all communities the same "*whether they are Raetihi, Taumarunui, Phipiriki, or Ohkune.. it doesn't matter*" and that "*technically the answer is that there should be no difference*", but also noted that some community groups were stronger, more organised and savvy in knowing how to lobby Council.

*Like you've got Ohakune 2000 that is a large organisation that will lobby Council for specific things. They've got themselves together and they'll say look here.. this is how you can do it and this is how much it will cost and this is what the community will do for it.*

The group put their lobbying success down to having a combination of new community members and established community members, consistent leadership, a structure of subcommittees under one umbrella, focus, determination, a professional approach, access to good information, thorough planning and an understanding of council processes.

*What ever we do, it is absolutely thought through. We never go to council without a plan. When we go to council it's not "Why did Raetihi get it and we didn't?" We go there and say we've got a plan and this is the way we could do it. We can provide some rocks and we can do some physical work, that's probably worth 30 or 50 thousand dollars, and if you come to the party we can do it so much cheaper. And that's how we do so many projects.*

Whilst it was acknowledged that *Raetihi Promotions* didn't have as strong a voice at council, they were seen as the group in Raetihi favoured by council for consultation. Some felt that Raetihi and Ohakune both had the same opportunities but Raetihi needed to be more organised and active in making representation to council.

This view was reiterated by Council but also noted was the need for groups to make contributions as well.

*You don't know until you ask as far as knowing what council can do. You see that's the point nobody's asking. So you're relying on council to do its own thinking on it. And you've got elected members ...they are fighting for the benefits of what the community wants. And when they're looking at how things are things are distributed... it's about how things are contributed as well as distributed.*

The need to be part of a group was raised as a significant factor in being heard by decision makers as individual voices were valued less than those seen to be representing a number of people.

*You can have communities that band together and lobby together strongly. Because a group of people is stronger for council to listen to than a single voice. A single voice says to council, I can hear something's not right but we can't address individual needs. Council works on the public good.*

Credibility of leadership was also identified as crucial to the reputation of each group and the perception of authenticity of its voice. While passion for the groups' goals was seen as desirable, it wasn't enough to earn the group credibility. In a small community, people tended to know more about each other's backgrounds and as such, personal integrity was raised as being important. Behaviours such as dishonesty, drug and alcohol abuse, self interest, inactivity and negativity were raised as concerns affecting credibility of leadership.

A lack of integrity by leadership generated a lack of trust and hence others were less likely to engage with the group.

Council was asked by outside agencies at times to ascertain the credibility of certain groups and individuals, such as in the process to form a budgeting committee.

*If they want to go for certain funds we can stand beside them and say yes these people are genuine and not bogus and have been operating. They do service the population here and are capable of delivering whatever it is they're asking for.*

Changing government policies, changing funding priorities and changes in staff were named as major effects threatening the quality of dialogue between the local community and government, and future community sustainability.

*More frustrating than anything was that the people we were dealing with at the Ministry changed about five times. People went to other jobs, and so we had to go over and over everything. The government pulled the funding when there were a few opportunities that we wanted to research which would then provide some self sustainability for our community.*

Ineffective group structures, a lack of understanding or practice of consensus decision making, and a reluctance to listen to other ideas, were some of the reasons given which affect the quality of debate and consequently decision making and support of community groups. It was also noted that the more diverse a group was the more difficult the consensus process was.

*The traditional committee structure favours some over others. I think that people have been anti Ohakune 2000 and Promotions because they see a group of people who make decisions that have got nothing to do with what the rest of the community want, and it's because it's an old-school approach. They're making decisions on behalf of the town that no-one is really approving of or supporting. There is no say and it's not about consensus, not about bringing up an idea and having it discussed. It's only about someone else having an idea and you just going yes or no. Vigorous debate isn't what those committees are about. There's always those people who bully their way through and don't understand about a good robust discussion. What I think that happens with committees is they have ideas and they hold onto them because they don't want to give them up to anyone else. So they won't want to think about another way of doing that, or combining the way. I have noticed this.*

*There is no collectivity and I think it's true of all committees and it's always been true... except in the old days when there was more collectivity because most people were the same. For example all the women were at home with their babies and all the men were out working.*

The nature of living in a small community was also seen to affect the honesty of debate due to fear of reprisal or fallout from consequences. This was observed as being especially true in situations where voluntary groups were assigned responsibility in the employment of staff and were reluctant to engage in decisions with potential negative affects on another's livelihood.

The monthly network meetings held in Ohakune were the only regular, facilitated open public spaces identified where different groups came together. With a range of service providers coming from outside of the area, they are seen as a good opportunity to develop both linking and bridging social capital. Observations were made at the meetings of some valuable discussions around practice issues and service provision, based on the sharing of experiences. It's seen that the meetings have the potential to be a forum for public accountability, where service providers could be asked or challenged about their role or agency. However reluctance for the meeting to be controversial or uncomfortable for guests was expressed as a reason for not encouraging such interactions. Networking was the primary goal of the meeting with most of the valuable interactions in the informal connections made at the end of the meeting. The other main problem affecting the meetings in terms of providing a local public space for exchange is that very few locals go and engage in the meetings. Issues were raised about the lack of an interface between these outside agencies and local possible recipients of the services. Having noted that all those attending the meeting were paid staff, the suggestion is made that the problems relate to both a lack locally based paid community workers and a lack of local voluntary workers with the time, resources and inclination to attend community network meetings.

### 8.4.1 Media

And finally, to conclude the research findings, the subject of local media is broached. The main form of media used in the area which represents the public sphere was the weekly local paper, the *Ruapehu Bulletin*. The more recently established monthly newsletter, the *Raetihi Times*, with its associated social media networking site, was also providing a good forum for sharing local dialogue. Some felt that the *Ruapehu Bulletin* was biased against Raetihi as it was based in Ohakune and the inconvenience of driving out to Raetihi had proved a deterrent in reporting in the area. Some commented that interviews were often carried out on the phone and that Raetihi people had to supply their own photos for stories as the paper's photographer was also based in Ohakune.

An analysis of the papers over the year revealed the tendency for organisations that were savvy at media marketing, such as *RAL*, the Regional Tourism Organisation (*Visit Ruapehu*) and the Major Regional Initiative (*Te Kahui Tupua*), to receive a fair amount of exposure. It was noted that these organisations regularly had positively angled articles printed in the paper providing updates as to their latest activities. Being tourism based agencies this promotion is part of their marketing strategy and as such appropriately skilled staff are employed. In this way the local media is also used as a tool to promote tourism.

The "letters to the editor" provided a regular valuable forum for public comment and debate on topics of interest, many of which focused on local and regional council activities.

There was however, concern noted that in *the Ruapehu Summertime Bulletin* for 2009-10, a two-page ad, put out by tourist organisations *Visit Ruapehu* and *Te Kahui Tupua*, didn't once mention Raetihi in its list of things to do in the area. Ohakune activities such as the *Mardi Gras*, *Carrot Carnival*, après ski culture and *Easter Hunt* were mentioned. But perhaps the most telling detail is that well established iconic Raetihi events, the *Waimarino Rodeo* and the *A and P Show*, are listed as occurring in Ohakune!

## **9. Analysis of Findings and Implications**

### **9.1 Comparison of Town Profiles**

Defined as both independent urban centres and resource communities, Raetihi and Ohakune follow national trends for such remote resource dependant communities. These include declining populations, increasing diversity, greater inequalities and decreasing community cohesion with struggling arenas of associational life.

Upon closer inspection of the towns' population trends however, a difference is revealed with regards to ethnicity. In both towns the decline in population numbers has predominantly occurred within the European population, whereas the Maori population, while having declined in Ohakune, has remained steady in Raetihi. The effect is such that Maori now make up the majority of the population of Raetihi.

Related to this difference in ethnic makeup of the two towns is also a difference in the age and family structures. Ohakune appears to be following general household projection trends for independent urban areas towards a declining and aging population with more childless couples and one-person households. In contrast Raetihi, with a higher number of families with children and an increasing proportion of children aged under 5 years, appears to have the potential to at least stabilise its population.

From the findings, such as demographic trends, interviews and literature (Taylor et al 1999, Scott et al 2000), it appears that the wider changes affecting such resource communities have contributed to a greater negative impact upon European population numbers in Raetihi, than upon Maori. Another contributing factor to such trends was likely to be the younger Maori population and higher birth rate, indicated by the higher percentage of Maori in Raetihi aged under 15 years (35.1%) compared to Pakeha (29.6%). Such trends were reflected in the changing compositions of the local schools.

Declining proportions of Europeans at Raetihi Primary School and Ruapehu College in Ohakune indicated a pattern of "white flight".

In comparison to national statistics both towns and all schools in the area had significant Maori populations. A greater level of recognition of Maori values was indicated at Raetihi School and Ruapehu College, with Maori language and culture being affirmed through schoolwide practices. A need was acknowledged however, for further promotion of such practices through Ohakune Primary School (ERO reports 2007, 2009).

The reduction of agricultural-based wealth in Raetihi and the development of the tourism economy in Ohakune, evidenced through changing business profiles and interviews, are major factors contributing to the differences in the socio-economic profiles of the two towns. The statistics highlighting the predominance of labourers in Raetihi and managers in Ohakune, as well as reported patterns of roles and residence distinctions among the staff at the WPI Mill, also indicate differences in social class related to social and economic relations of production.

Ohakune fares significantly better than Raetihi in terms of income, education and employment statistics. In fact for some measures, such as unemployment rates, full time work levels and median incomes, Ohakune scores higher than national figures. Raetihi however, has the statistics of a community of relative disadvantage. This disadvantage is reflected in the low decile rating of the local school and the state of disrepair of the main street's buildings with the owner's belief that any investment won't warrant the return.

It appears there are greater disparities within Ohakune than Raetihi, as well as between the towns. The significantly higher income levels of Europeans than Maori in Ohakune (16.3% of Europeans aged 15 years earn over \$50,000 compared to 9.6% Maori), indicate a correlation between income and ethnicity in the town, reflecting wider district and national patterns. It appears the developments in Ohakune have tended to disproportionately benefit Europeans. The disparities in Raetihi for the same data categories however, aren't as significant (9.6% of Europeans and 6.7% of Maori aged over 15 earn over \$50,000).

Ohakune reflects its dependence on the skifields and tourism sector. Seasonal variations in population numbers result in an increased instability in the community with greater diversity in people and a higher urban influence. The majority of its houses are unoccupied for most of the year and the rents and house prices are significantly higher than Raetihi. Ohakune's crime rate is also significantly higher than Raetihi's with a peak over the winter tourist season. Many of its shops are tourism focused, as are its main lobby group and town events.

Raetihi's community by comparison is seen as more stable, with the number of long term residents and the old buildings adding to a sense of history about the town. As opposed to Ohakune's shifting, diverse mix of people, Raetihi compares with Northland's Mangakahia Valley where "ethnicity cross cuts or aligns with class to create deep, if often unrecognised difference" (Scott et al, 2000). The community is distinguished by the split between its significant Maori and Pakeha populations. It also has a greater rural influence having retained a number of farming families, the shops that service them, a proportion of its population working in shearing gangs and as farm labourers and having a tradition of established agricultural-based town events. However with the loss of farming's dominant position in the community, there is the sense that Raetihi is seeking a new direction for its economy.

## **9.2 Resource Community Cycles**

Applying the model of resource community cycles is useful in providing an overview of the development of Raetihi and Ohakune, encompassing the evolving economies of the towns over the years.

In the early years while the forests were being cleared, native timber was the main resource and the development of the communities reflected the course of its exploitation. The populations boomed at the height of the sawmilling era, only to wane once the forests were gone and the millers moved northwards. Contributing to the boom was the building of the Main Trunk Line as it opened up a means of transporting the timber to wider markets. The development of the railways itself represented another cycle shaping the growth of Ohakune. Overlapping the

evolution of Ohakune as a railway town was the beginning of the cycle of the market gardening industry, with the significant contribution of Chinese who had been building the Main Trunk Line. With economic and technological changes contributing to ongoing restructuring, the market gardening cycle has evolved, currently maintaining a strong economic position in the town. As the dominance of the railways declined, and the local state services dismantled, the growth of tourism based on the skifield developments began its cycle, which today plays a significant role. However, the eruptions and poor snow seasons have demonstrated the vulnerability of the dependency on the mountain and as such the town has started, with support from local government, to diversify into the development of summer tourism.

Raetihi on the other hand, has experienced less of these resource cycles. After the clearing of the native forests, farming replaced sawmilling as the predominant cycle, with the town acting as a farming service centre. It's suggested that with the prolonged and encompassing success of farming, supported by the protectionist policies of the earlier governments, there was no incentive or need for Raetihi to develop any alternative economies. However, with the removal of these policies and the exposure of farmers to the fluctuations of commodity prices, particularly low prices for lamb and beef, the farming resource cycle has moved into a period of recession (Taylor et al, 1999). While the farming sector has restructured considerably, its once dominant position has been weakened. Combined with the withdrawal of public sector operations and lack of development of alternative economies, the result is a community experiencing a spiral of decline. Such communities are unlikely to have the energy to lift themselves out of this decline without intervention (Pomeroy 1999). Using this resource cycle analysis, Raetihi has yet to plan and develop another activity to begin another cycle. Diversification into tourism has for many small towns, such as Ohakune, provided the alternative economic path after the decline of agriculture in the 1980s (Taylor et al, 1999 ; Goodrich & Sampson, 2008; Bell, 1997). While headlines in the local paper may declare "Raetihi ready to embrace tourism", many community members express reservations about this direction. The town is at the stage of clarifying its vision for the future.

### 9.3 Associated Regional Development Cycles

The previous analysis included cycles of public service related development, such as the railways. It is debatable whether such developments can strictly be defined as resource cycles, as they don't involve a dependency on local natural resources. They have however, followed a similar cyclic pattern, providing and subsequently removing significant employment and economic opportunities and as such are relevant in any discussion on regional development affecting resource communities.

The notion of including such associated cycles in the development analysis can also be extended by examining the role that government agencies, such as the Ministry of Social Development and the Department of Internal Affairs, as well as government-contracted agencies, such as Ruapehu REAP, have played in community development in the area. This involves applying a critical analysis to their interventions carried out to address the social costs, such as unemployment, that have been a by-product of the resource cycles. These initiatives have tended to follow a pattern of being centrally controlled with lifespans dependant upon the social policies and programmes favoured by incumbent party in government at the time. They include initiatives such as MSD's *Ngati Uenuku Whanau Development Programme* at Te Puke Marae, DIA's *LARP – the Raetihi Sustainable Development Project*, OSCAR, *CURE*, *CEGS*, *Taskforce Green*, *Community Taskforce* and its latest incarnation, *Community Max*.

While some value has been contributed by these initiatives, their effectiveness was limited by their short-term nature, agency staffing issues, the use of competitive business models, the need for more specific community capacity building and the failure to address the lack of sustainability inherent in social and economic relations of production.

Te Puke Marae's *Whanau Development Programme*, for example, was cut just at the point the community was embarking on some ideas for sustainable community business development. The *Raetihi Sustainable Community Development Project* which followed, while incorporating valuable ideas such as developing bridging and linking social capital, didn't access the necessary widespread community buy-in.

This, in part, was due to its timing and community perception that it was undermining the successful continuation of the Marae's *Whanau Development Programme*. It was also only run as a pilot project with limited input and was cut after three years.

Programmes such as *Community Max* and *Taskforce Green*, while providing some valuable outcomes such as enhancement of the community and environment and maintenance of work habits, don't appear to have provided sustainable employment opportunities. Once the *Community Max* workers have finished developing the *National Cycleway*, how will they benefit from the increase of tourism?

It's understood some iwi have been working in partnership with local government and national government organisations, such as Te Puni Kokiri and the Department of Conservation, to develop business ideas that capitalise on the potential for tourism. Pipiriki House on the Whanganui River is such an iwi initiative that aims to accommodate tourists as they ride the river section of the *National Cycleway*. It's suggested that iwi in Raetihi, particularly those who don't affiliate to Ngati Rangi in Ohakune, would benefit from support with capacity building to take advantage of any such developments.

Ruapehu REAP has potential with its mandate, to be involved with such forms of community development but has demonstrated a lack of understanding of community development principles. Rather it has focused on the delivery of programmes in this area with limited success. Not having locally based staff has limited the running of such programmes, as has a stipulation for minimum numbers to be enrolled on its courses. Benseman (2006) makes the point that the social diversity represented in rural communities means a corresponding diversity in educational needs, but small populations and the "tyranny of numbers" limits the ability to respond to these needs.

Local government, the Ruapehu District Council, rejects a mandate for community development, stressing rather their restricted role as a provider of town services.

By the very nature of the power differentials between the State and community, without interventions that contribute to capacity building and a process of conscientisation, the community acts as passive participants in the delivery of state defined programmes. This passivity of the community, particularly from sections that are socio-economically marginalised, and control by the state and some of its contracted agencies, is in contrast to the dialogical partnership relationship (Ife 1997:133) necessary for effective and equitable community development.

Rather than being providers of services, subsidies and policies, government and its contracted agencies need to shift the emphasis to capacity-building and collaborative models in order to overcome the barriers to development (Crozier, 1997). Without the appropriate support and interventions, government and its agencies will continue to be ineffective in meeting the diversity of local needs.

To apply a critical analysis, it's proposed that agencies involved with community development, that are centrally based and controlled, running centrally designed policies and programmes, will continue with a tendency to primarily serve the needs of the organisations themselves, albeit unconsciously. The effect will be a continuation of their function in maintaining the status quo rather than bringing about sustainable community change.

The need to address rural unemployment, social and economic relations of production, centre-periphery and social equity issues are seen as vital in a critical approach to regional sustainability (Allen and Sacks 1999; Freudenburg and Gramlin 1994).

Chile (2004) uses the oft mentioned community development analogy of teaching people how to fish rather than giving them a fish. He takes the analogy further by suggesting that fishing lessons are no longer sufficient in the context of effective community development. Rather the need is to address capacity issues such as whether there is bait to attract the fish and critically, who controls the fish-pond and therefore access to fishing resources.

#### **9.4 Analysis of Social Capital Networks**

While the resource community cycle provides a useful model for contributing clarity on the external features of the evolving local economies, an analysis using the concept of social capital provides some understandings on the functioning and capacity of the internal networks. This analysis is a generalised assessment of stocks of bonding, bridging and linking social capital within and between each community, identifying the strengths and the “disconnections” (Robinson 2006) within the systems.

Both towns demonstrated several examples of strong bonding social capital. As a resource that is inherent in large, well established, extended families, the predominance of such families in Raetihi contributed to the town’s ample stock of bonding social capital. This was true within both European and Maori families, although it was affected by the outflow of Europeans from the town.

With their strong bonds and ancestral links to the land, the families, whanau and hapu of Raetihi were seen to access the support they needed to survive the changes and the difficult economic times and “get by” (Briggs 1998; Holzmann and Jorgensen 1999). It was also noted however, that the social costs of the difficult economic times had contributed towards the development of certain unhealthy norms in some parts of this bonding social capital. Dysfunctional norms such as domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse were concerns raised during the interviews and discussions with police.

It was evident from the research that there was however, an absence of bridging social capital, particularly between the Maori and Pakeha networks. This reduced social capital was likely to have reflected a narrower “radius of trust” (Fukuyama 1999) and affected cooperation between groups. This had the result of alienating each network from a wider access to available resources. The limited use of the Raetihi’s theatre is an example of this effect. In a small town, with limited resources such effects are of concern. These findings were consistent with other

research where increased diversity affected community cohesion and cooperation (Taylor et al 1999; Scott et al 2000).

Although there was strong bonding within the extended family networks of Maori whanau and hapu in Raetihi, the number of different iwi and hapu, and the dynamics related to the land claims, posed some difficulties. One perspective on the issues is a conflict between affirming individual hapu identity, versus surrendering that identity to a wider definition. In a sense this represents a collective interpretation of the individual/collective dichotomy. These difficulties hindered the development of a united voice, affected representation in different organisations and the sharing of skills and resources. These difficulties heightened levels of mistrust and were also likely to have contributed to lower levels of linking and bridging social capital and thus access to resources and capacity building.

This shortage of bridging and linking social capital is likely to contribute towards difficulties faced by the town in “getting ahead” (Kozel and Parker 1998; Barr 1998; Narayan 1999). They were however overcome when the community united for the *Whanau Development* contract at Te Puke Marae.

The political inclusion mandated by processes within the Resource Management Act and Treaty negotiations offers potential for improving linking social capital and access to resources, but further capacity building and improved bridging social capital would help this potential to be realised.

In contrast, the Maori community in Ohakune, with the united voice of Ngati Rangī, the accessing of wider iwi networks and the sharing of skills and resources within the iwi, created high levels of bonding and linking social capital. However a shortage of bridging social capital could've been limiting the inclusion of wider networks and involvement in wider deliberations, possibly affecting both access to and sharing of information and resources.

## **9.5 Combinations of Forms of Social Capital**

Healy (2004) proposes that the combination of bonding and linking social capital may give better leverage with regard to specific ethnic community concerns. He also notes however, the effects of separating the community from wider

deliberations on stocks of bridging social capital. It's suggested that the Maori communities in both towns have been focusing on bonding social capital and developing linking social capital to consolidate and focus on iwi development and Treaty claim work.

This need for consolidation and mutual support is seen as particularly important for groups who are not part of the dominant culture, to maintain identity and reinforce cultural norms. Without a strong sense of a separate identity, there is a risk of a weakening of the group's values, practices and voice, as the values and norms of the dominant culture take precedence.

Robinson and Williams (2000) suggest that government policies in New Zealand over the years, such as the economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, have required Maori to draw on their stocks of social capital in order to sustain themselves.

*Where Maori have become more introverted and consolidated in their views, their social capital has become isolated and less accessible for connecting with society as a whole. However in areas such as the arts and sport, where social capital is shared between cultures, isolation and access issues become less apparent and participation has served as a bridging function (Robinson & Williams, 2000 p.56).*

As such, the discourse for developing cohesion and the reinforcement of cultural and moral norms and values requires internal communication strategies that are broad-based and deliberative rather than hierarchical (Robinson, 2006). Such customary forms of dialogue allow for and enable change which is internally generated rather than imposed from the outside.

Another suggestion is that strong bonding, having the benefit of improved linking, may assist in being a "prelude to bridging, rather than precluding bridging" (Putnam, 2004). That is, the bonding and linking combination develops the capacity and confidence of communities to build bridges for public engagement (Edwards, 2004).

Strong bonding and linking social capital have also been an effective combination for the achievements of Ohakune's predominantly European business

community, represented by the *Ohakune 2000* group. The mixture of new and established community members has been valuable, reflecting both enhanced bonding or bridging social capital depending on the perspective taken. It's suggested that "selected bridging" has assisted the group gain access to skills, information and resources enabling the town to "get ahead", yet hampered a more equitable redistribution into the wider community. The combination of focusing on bridging for the consultation phase of a vision and then bonding for focusing and achieving the goals is an effective strategy for development demonstrated by the group.

The strong bonding and unity of the *Ohakune 2000* lobby group provided the focus, drive and sharing of expertise to develop high levels of linking social capital. However, there was also a shortage of widespread bridging social capital between groups in Ohakune, resulting in limited sharing of different social experiences and resources. While some bridging occurred during the consultation process in the development of the town's vision, the group then drew on its bonding social capital to develop the focus and drive necessary to implement the plan. Having achieved many of its goals, it has now started to become involved in building bridging social capital with Raetihi.

The experiences of *Ohakune 2000* in the town's development and the iwi development processes reflect Woolcock's (1999) insight into the need to incorporate a dynamic component with different combinations of bridging, bonding and, as this discussion suggests, linking social capital which changes over time.

The experience of *Ohakune 2000* and more recently *Raetihi Promotions* highlighted that bridging between new and established members of a community was a successful combination in terms of development. The newcomers brought fresh enthusiasm based on a positive choice to move to the town, introduced new skills, had wider bridging networks, and less attachment to any history of internal politics that seem to be the bane of small towns. The more established members were able to access the existing networks into the community, had an understanding of local dynamics, knowledge of local resources and a passion based on a long association and connection with the town. It's suggested that this

“selected bridging” can serve a purpose in accessing specific resources and information that can assist with development. It’s also suggested that there may be some reluctance within certain groups with resources to develop bridging capital with other groups, for fear of loss of resources, or unwanted influence on their activities. The need for robust processes for open discussion of these interests and concerns is necessary for decisions to be made that consider the well-being of the community as a whole.

The recent improvements in bridging social capital between the towns are seen as significant due to a general lack of structured bridging opportunities. The course of the Ohakune Health Centre developments highlighted this gap in communication between the towns and also provided a demonstration of the stronger linking social capital that Ohakune has built up.

There was also a lack of adequate structures and processes within both towns for bringing different groups of people together to interact, share norms and values, and develop trust and bridging social capital. The projects focused community meetings, while providing the opportunity to hear different views, were infrequent, and needed to be better organised, facilitated and followed up. The *Ohakune Kaumatua Network* meetings, as a regular community forum, had the potential to fulfil such a role however there was a shortage of local groups being represented. Also the focus of the meetings was networking as opposed being agenda-based, and there tended to be an avoidance of controversial debate in the name of protecting civility and politeness (Edwards, 2004). It’s suggested that some of the reasons for the limited participation were: a shortage of locals employed in community work to provide leadership and support as many community services are centralised, the shortage of volunteers available in the town and the timing of the meetings on weekday mornings when many people are at work.

## **9.6 Analysis of Associational Life**

An increased difficulty in finding volunteers as one of the consequences of changes within the agricultural sector, is a recurrent theme in the literature on rural

communities in New Zealand (Taylor et al, 1999; Sampson & Goodrich, 2008; Scott et al, 2000; Gilling, 1997). With the limited pool of volunteers available in Raetihi and Ohakune, the experiences of struggle to support various community structures was evident, e.g. the budgeting service, the swimming pool fundraising, the theatre, the Carrot Carnival, the sports and service clubs. As the nature of the voluntary sector became more regulated, and the expectations on volunteers began to resemble those of paid positions, it seemed much of the enjoyment from participating in community life and thus the motivation had decreased.

### **9.7 Cultural Implications on Associational Life**

The researchers in Northland's Mangakahia Valley proposed that due to the high levels of interaction normally provided through Maori family and social life there wasn't a need to structure interactions through associations (Scott et al, 2000). It's suggested that there are similarities with the findings from Raetihi and Ohakune. Those who talked about the decrease in the sense of community were mainly Pakeha, as were those involved with running many of the general community voluntary associations, such as the lobby groups, swimming pool fundraising, community events, churches and budgeting service. Such findings implicate different cultural understandings of the concepts of family, community and voluntary work with the concepts and obligations of whanau and hapu encompassing all (Scott,et al 2000; Oliver et al,2007; Robinson and Williams, 2000).

Such ideas support Tocqueville's theory that associational life acts as compensation for the excessive individualism in modern society. The tendency for Maori associational life noted in Ohakune and Raetihi was for organisations that were focused on mahi aroha and the retention and survival of Maori cultural identity. It's noted that similar to other organisations, the demands on key people within Maori associational life were huge (Oliver et al 2007).

Organisations involved with sports and the arts were noted as sites of shared social capital between Maori and Pakeha (Robinson & Williams, 2000). The suggestion was that these areas offer the potential to push people out of their

comfort zones. Such actions could increase the radius of trust and build bridging social capital. Trust is a critical component in healthy risk taking (Cox, 1995). By building trust and encouraging people to step outside of their comfort zones, confidence could be developed in applying creative solutions to collective community problems.

## **9.8 Analysis of the Good Society**

The link made in Tocquevillian thinking that voluntary associations are the “gene-carriers” of the good society is challenged by Edwards (2004) in pointing out that different associations carry different norms and values and thus visions of the good society. This was evidenced in the discussion above on the tendency for Maori and Pakeha focussed voluntary organisations to serve different functions based on varying needs and values.

Different values between Maori and Pakeha, evidenced through the interviews, priorities in the *Community Outcomes* survey, patterns of associational life and literature, are seen to influence the developments in the towns. It was noted that there was a tendency by Europeans to focus on buildings and structures as an element of identity formation. This was evident as a theme emerging from the historical review as structures such as buildings, mills, railways and infrastructures such as institutions were emphasised. This was in contrast to the Maori emphasis on identity formation through tribal affiliations and spiritual connections to natural resources such as land, rivers and mountains.

These observations resonates with the findings of Scott et al’s (2001) research in Mangakahia Valley in Northland, where structures such as post offices and shops were valued by Europeans as sites for social interactions and expression of belonging and affiliation to a wider community.

It’s proposed that such values affect the form of associational life itself. The emphasis on the structural aspects of associational life, such as formal organisational structures with clear accounting and management structures, reflect predominantly European values. The requirement for such structures for funding purposes therefore benefits the European associations which tend to be more formal than Maori (Robinson & Williams, 2000).

There was also a cultural aspect to the contested visions discussed at the *Raetihi Promotions* AGM with Maori advocating for the town vision to focus on the youth rather than tourism.

Another example is the contesting views over the original purpose of lobby group *Ohakune 2000*. The view of the group as a watchdog over Council aligns with one of the main theoretical functions assigned to the role of civil society in holding states accountable for their actions (Edwards,2004). No doubt all of the members of the group identify with this role, but it is the values and vision that underlie the actions carried out in this role that are contested. For those in the community that don't share in the values and vision represented, the watchdog role of the group results in a limited extent of accountability.

The wider social environment in which communities interact is itself affected by differing world views when it comes to accepted structures, processes and rules. The work carried out by Robinson and colleagues with Maori in the health area indicates that society-wide "rules" are "determined by the dominant (European) culture which then imposes specific forms of structure... on everyone in New Zealand society" (Robinson, 2006).

As well as the structures being influenced by the dominant culture, so too are the creation and sustaining of norms for development. For example, an analysis of the world views expressed by representatives of Ruapehu District Council indicates the primacy of the value of tourism related to economic development.

Now when the values, culture and norms of groups like *Ohakune 2000* align with those of the governing body, the result is strong cooperative action along the same path. Hence the lobby group was able to access a disproportionate amount of resources for the town to further tourism development. It's proposed that this represents a public hegemony of values.

Before the value of tourism was adopted the dominant belief was that of the primacy of the role of agriculture to the economy. These changing dominant norms and values have affected the changing focus of the resource community cycles. It

has been and continues to be very difficult for groups from a minority culture to be heard when their beliefs and process don't align with those of the dominant culture and particularly when their values are perceived as a threat to dominant interests.

Some of these issues around contested values are seen to be contributing to the difficulties in the development of bridging social capital. From the discourse of farming families analysed across the research and literature (Gilling, 1997; Scott et al 2000), it's proposed that relationships between the once dominant Pakeha farmers and Maori could have been strained by a conflict in values as well as by residual resentment. Such resentment from Pakeha is suggested to stem from the perception that farming had been "marginalised", challenging the farmers' "fundamental assumption that government would always come through for them". Whereas from Maori, it's proposed the resentment stems from historical injustices that have resulted in disparities and are being addressed through the Treaty claim process. The farmers stressed economic values when they promoted themselves as the "backbone of the country" and the "engine-room of the Ruapehu economy". The attitude towards the land was in economic terms as a resource for production. A similar view was shared by those involved with the skifields towards the mountain and indeed the Council who listed the mountain and rivers as the district's assets. This is in contrast to Maori values where natural resources such as the land, mountains and rivers, were seen to have an intrinsic spiritual value. Nature had an inherent worth, being linked to the value of the iwi who connect their identity to the land and natural features in their area.

The view of nature as a resource for economic exploitation was the dominant view. It is proposed that such exploitation is easier when carried out by distant owners, as the local environment and community carry the costs. Hence the ongoing history of community resource cycles in which the lion's share of the economic benefits tend to be centralised or removed from the local economy, while the local resource communities bear the environmental and social costs (Taylor and McClintock, 1984). A need has been identified for alternative economic development that isn't dependent on natural resources and vulnerable to related cycles. A possible direction suggested is "information intensive development"

(Taylor et al, 1999). There is a need for such development to be environmentally and socially sustainable (Scott et al. 2000) as well as culturally compatible with the local population.

The strengthening of communities to develop local resources to meet local needs describes the process of community or local economic development. This bottom-up model has a goal of creating wealth and employment for the economic and social benefit of the community through equitable, sustainable and democratic processes (Crozier 1997).

### **9.9 Analysis of Public Sphere**

The success of groups such as *Ohakune 2000* in having their voices heard demonstrates how community groups can mobilise themselves and participate fully in the democratic process with the result of accessing significant resources and the achieving of visions. While their success is inspirational, it also raises questions around the inclusiveness of the deliberation processes in defining shared visions. Their success stands out amongst the findings which indicate widespread community disillusionment, high levels of mistrust and a resulting general complacency around civic participation. As Robinson (2006) points out, many citizens have lost the capacity to engage in meaningful ways in decision making processes that affect their lives. Cynical of what are viewed as superficial consultation processes and weary from increased demands on time and energy, many community members prefer not to participate than to utilise civil society as a “site for rebellion and change”. The current processes for public engagement appear to be working for some groups but not others.

Feedback reveals that the processes and values represented by both local and national government are either inaccessible to or at odds with many of groups in the community. This reflects both a lack of public spaces and adequate forms of community dialogue to develop both bridging and linking social capital. By not having such spaces and processes for inclusive, deliberative, sustained forms of dialogue a gap exists in the system that enables public opinions to be translated into collective knowledge (Robinson 2006).

It's proposed that as a result of this gap in community feedback there has been a noticeable lack of sustainable community development in the towns. Part of the difficulty, as mentioned in the discussion on social resource cycles, has been that the agencies involved with community development have been centralised and thus based in other locations. This has resulted in the agency staff not being able to afford the time to spend in the area, resulting in an incomplete knowledge of the communities.

### **9.10 Role Local Government**

Part of the problem has also been a lack of any agency taking a leading role with a holistic view of the towns' needs. While the local government's *Community Outcomes* process has the potential to fulfil this role, the lack of a council backed mandate for community development, plus an incongruity with the technocratic logic that council works from, prevents this.

Council's logic is based on a need for visible measurable outcomes rather than holistic outcomes. The process for identifying stakeholders to define the *Community Outcomes* was based on random selection, rather than integrating the views of a community group that has formed, with national government backing specifically for this purpose.

Actions are technically related to ratepayer demands and resources distributed in line with targeted contributions.

The problem with this logic, similar to neo-Tocquvillian logic on associational life, is the effect of pervasive inequalities on the democratic public sphere. The findings indicate that existing wider inequalities contribute to further alienation of disadvantaged groups through a lack of public voice resulting in increased disparities. Those who are demanding the resources and those with the ability to contribute the resources are often not the ones who most need them. And as discussed earlier, those in positions of power who make such decisions on resource distribution also often hold different values and practice different norms to those most in need of the resources.

The logic for the redistribution of resources necessary for greater efficiency in social capital networks and sustainable development is a logic that is understood

and traditionally practised through national government via taxes paid by all citizens.

Hucker (1997) cites the belief that redistributive activities are inappropriate at local body level, along with the continuing influence of the four Rs and a 'non-political' ethos to be traditions that limit the effectiveness of local government to serve the community. It is these legacies that explain the gap between the "language of community", spelled out in the Local Government Act 2002, and the implications of the proposed reforms.

It's noted there are many local councils, particularly urban based, that have a strong history in community development work. Haigh and Dale (2007) suggest that historical resistance from local authorities in depressed rural areas to take up community development roles could relate to their reliance on central governmental regional development policies. Discussions on the subject with local councillors explain their stance, that there simply isn't the generation of a sufficient income to carry out a holistic social development agenda due to the small number of ratepayers. The point was made that districts such as Ruapehu are characterised by a small population spread over a large area and relatively high rate charges. A disproportionate amount of the rate takings are spent on infrastructure costs such as the extensive roading systems required to service the rural areas. Due to the low average income there is considerable pressure to limit council spending. The attempt by council to eliminate locally based community boards illustrates pressure to produce cost efficiencies at the expense of community voice. It is noted however, that while community development isn't mandated, development for tourism is.

Hucker (1997) argues for local government to expand beyond restrictive traditions and acknowledge the local bonds amongst neighbours as an appropriate means of expressing a sense of collective communal responsibility. The findings from this research indicate that the local is indeed an appropriate level to address community development due to deeper understandings of local knowledge and vested interests in effective social, economic and environmental outcomes. Several examples in the research, such as the effects of the Auckland investor in Raetihi's main street; the decline of the sense of community in Ohakune with local families not able to afford rents in the town; and the lack of effectiveness of centrally based

social development agencies; indicate some of the difficulties with a lack of adequate local control.

There is a need for improved bridging social capital between local and national government to address ways to address the delegation of responsibilities, including the redistribution of resources income and power, from national to local government. There is also need to ensure there are adequate resources to carry out this task. As this research has indicated, the predominance of the view of a restricted role for local government has “provided a respectable cloak for the implementation of policies that favour some at the expense of others, with the benefits accruing to the well-off and powerful (Hucker 1997)”. And related to this, there is a need to address the issue of groups who have been historically disadvantaged with efforts that create the conditions in which engagement and civic participation “is the safe and rational thing to do“(Edwards, 2004).

In these ways it may be possible to heed Habermas’ warning and avoid the commodification of the public sphere by allowing citizens to play a role in shaping public policy rather than be manipulated by it. And as such preserve the legitimacy and integrity of both local and national democracy.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

Drawing from a variety of sources this study has built up rich descriptions of two small remote towns on the North Island of New Zealand's Central Plateau. The descriptions highlight disparities which paint Ohakune as a relatively prosperous community and Raetihi as a community of relative disadvantage. The story of these towns documents the changing natures of their communities and corresponding wider regional, national and global developments.

The resource community cycle model has provided a valuable means with which to conceptualise the course of development of the towns.

This model highlights the susceptibility of such communities to external factors, such as fluctuating commodity prices, changing government policies, the availability of natural resources, land productivity, weather conditions and even volcanic eruptions.

However it's the more internal factors such as their stocks of social capital and the nature of civil society that indicate the communities' resilience to change. Such theories of social capital and civil society have provided a useful framework for assessing the communities' ability to deal with change and effectively influence the direction of their future development.

The analysis of such internal community dynamics has developed understanding of some of the causes of disparities identified within and between the two towns and therefore possible directions for appropriate interventions.

Building on Woolcock's theories (1999), this research has contributed further insights into the concept of different combinations of the dimensions of social capital that change over time. Varying combinations of bonding, bridging and

linking social capital emphasise different aspects of social capital that are relevant depending upon the stage of development and needs of the communities involved. Such insights can be integrated with understandings of varying forms of deliberative dialogue deemed appropriate for the development of particular dimensions of social capital (Robinson, 2006). The integration of such concepts creates a useful framework from which to assess a community's social capital network and design appropriate interventions to support the relevant stage of development.

For the communities under study, there was a widespread need identified to develop bridging social capital in order to build shared understandings of different norms and values and levels of generalised trust. Building stocks of bridging social capital increases the likelihood of improvements in the equitable distribution of resources, enabling all communities to “get ahead” (Kozel and Parker 1998; Barr 1998; Narayan 1999).

There was also a need identified for capacity and confidence building within the Raetihi community to foster the effective processes of public engagement required for the development of strong bridging and linking social capital.

Suggested strategies to develop bridging social capital include promoting shared interests such as families, the arts, sports and shared celebrations. Shared creative endeavours are seen to have the potential to break down barriers and improve trust and communication.

The notion of associated regional development cycles is another contribution of this research in that it provides insights into how a range of development-focused initiatives have been experienced from the community's perspective. Being centrally based, the development agencies had less vested

interest and a limited understanding of the complexity of community dynamics, resulting in compromise on effectiveness. Also being centrally controlled, the emphasis has been on service delivery to a passive community, resulting in a tendency to maintain the status quo rather than achieving any sustainable social change. There is a need for improved processes of accountability for resources to local communities along with a conscientisation process as part of a wider strategy for improved local control and self determination.

In line with Gramsci's ideas, theories of civil society assist in understanding the roles that associational life, the public sphere and different norms, values and visions of the good society play, in maintaining the status quo, as well as offer potential paths for positive change.

Local government has the potential to be a key player in the necessary holistic approach, but lacks a community development mandate due to the effects of restrictive traditions (Hucker, 1997) and a reported lack of resources. There is however a mandate for tourism led economic development. Such a mandate, being promoted by local and national government and supported by the dominant groups in associational life in the towns, represents a hegemony of public values. In Ohakune, the dominance of tourism based economic development has generated wealth in the town, but has had the effect of exacerbating existing inequalities and decreasing the local sense of community cohesion. An effective community development approach has the potential to address inequalities and gaps within the social capital networks.

The struggles experienced by voluntary agencies in the towns indicate the need for strong supportive partnerships with national and local levels of

government to achieve effective community development that addresses existing inequities.

The comparative approach used between the two communities has generated a number of dichotomies that have offered several insights from their contrasting aspects. Community/economic development; growth/consolidation; contribution/distribution; localised/centralised; individual/collective; Maori/Pakeha; urban/rural; locals/tourists; new comers/established residents are several examples that provide such contrasts and contribute to the clarification of various approaches and their implications.

Such insights have contributed towards understandings of the underlying causes of existing disparities. They have indicated cultural differences in the forms, functions and norms and values of associational life. They have also highlighted hegemonic values that define the process of engagement and boundaries of the debate within the public sphere. Such issues, when combined with capacity problems affecting effective participation, limit the inclusiveness of the debate and as such compromise on integrity and effectiveness of the public sphere to contribute towards positive social change.

There are major concerns about the future of independent urban centres as they are predicted to face the greatest population losses with aging populations (Subnational Family and Household Projections: 2006(base)-2031 Report by Statistics New Zealand, 2009).

A need has been highlighted for a consolidated approach to improving the employment and education prospects in order that a future does exist for these communities. Associated to this is the need to address the inequalities inherent in existing social and economic relations of production (Allen and Sacks, 1992), which

tend to develop centre-periphery patterns of economic growth and be exploitative of people and natural resources rather than collaborative and sustainable (Freudenburg and Gramlin,1994).

Successful economic development in modern times is linked to strong and complete systems of social capital across diverse communities to maximise efficient flows of information. An unequal distribution of wealth and income affects the capacity, strength and efficiency of these social networks. Enhanced equality, strong and complete systems of social capital and a healthy civil society, can therefore provide a significant basis for a knowledge-processing, creative, inclusive economy of the future.

### **10.1 Limitations and Directions for Further Research**

As the aim of this research was quite broad, being an exploratory overview as well as exposure of the hidden dynamics involved in these two communities, the findings are limited by the time and resources available to carry out this task.

The emphasis was on authenticity at the risk of compromising reliability. The triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data aimed to remedy this limitation. The small population numbers involved meant the data was vulnerable to small deviations being seen as more significant than they in fact were.

The research was also limited by any affects of my gender, status and ethnicity as a Pakeha female and relative newcomer to the towns.

All of the participants in the research seemed quite willing to share their knowledge and experiences and it was felt the interviews were mutually enjoyable as a chance to share thoughts and experiences and for some of the older community members, a chance to reminisce about days gone by. There was a sense of grief expressed and possibly a risk of a nostalgia effect in the finding of a decline in the sense of community in Ohakune. However the dynamics of a transient population, the higher crime rate, the number of empty houses in the summer and shortage of accommodation for locals in the winter, reinforces the authenticity of this finding.

It was also noticed there was a sense of politeness and civility which may have toned down some of the discussions on topics such as race relations.

And finally my experiences of having worked for Ruapehu REAP may have contributed towards some bias against the organisation. The comments made however are the results of interviews and observations, and a number of years of experience in social work and community development in more urban environments. With the benefit of knowledge of both effective and dysfunctional practice and insights into some of the challenges faced by rural communities when compared to urban community development, this bias can also be viewed as a motivation for constructive change. As with any other possible bias related to my familiarity with some of the participants, it's believed the research results, in terms of the authenticity of information, were enhanced by the trusting nature of these relationships. It's seen that these benefits outweigh any effects of the bias that may occur.

Taking account of the limits and biases raised in this discussion, I trust the findings from this research and the conclusions and recommendations made.

Potential directions raised for future research include: 1) a comparison of community development mandates and activities across urban and rurally based local government bodies to determine patterns of difference; 2) further research into effective models of community economic development that have the potential to address social and economic inequities that exist in such communities; 3) further exploration of the beliefs and attitudes that create barriers that limit broad based participation and self determination, in order to inform approaches for community conscientisation ; and 4) research that contributes more depth to the concept of linking social capital and the relationship between civil society and the State. Putnam emphasised the horizontal connections of associational life that he saw as characterised by "reciprocity and cooperation", rather than the "vertical relations of authority and dependency" (1993, p15). However, vertical relations in a democracy also need to be based on reciprocity and cooperation to maximise trust and complete the flow of information, thus building stocks of linking social capital. Research that addresses these issues have the potential to create improvements in the equity and efficiencies of resource distribution.

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## 12. GLOSSARY OF MAORI TERMS

<i>Aroha</i>	love, sympathy
<i>Hapu</i>	clan, tribe, sub-tribe, - section of a larger tribe
<i>Hau ora</i>	health service
<i>Kaitiaki</i>	guardians over precious resources.
<i>Kapa haka</i>	Maori performing arts; cultural dance
<i>Kaumatua</i>	elder
<i>Kawa</i>	customary practices and protocols
<i>Kura</i>	school
<i>Iwi</i>	tribe, nation, people
<i>Mana</i>	dignity, authority, control, integrity, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma. Mana is a spiritual force in a person, place, or object. Mana gives a person the authority to lead, organise and regulate communal expeditions and activities and to make decisions regarding social and political matters. A person's or tribe's mana can increase from successful ventures or decrease through lack of success.
<i>Marae</i>	courtyard- the open area in front of the 'wharenuui' where formal greetings and discussions take place. Often used to include the complex of buildings around the marae.
<i>Pakeha</i>	New Zealander of European descent.
<i>Powhiri</i>	Opening ceremony; welcome
<i>Tangata whenua</i>	Indigenous people of the land
<i>Tangihanga/tangi</i>	funeral rites for the dead
<i>Te ao Maori</i>	Maori worldview
<i>Te reo Maori</i>	Maori language
<i>Tikanga</i>	fundamental customs, principles and values guiding correct or acceptable behaviour.

<i>Tupuna</i>	ancestors
<i>Turangawaewae</i>	original birthplace, ancestral home, place of connection.
<i>Whakapapa</i>	genealogy, lineage, descent.
<i>Whanau</i>	extended family, family group, a familiar term of address to a number of people
<i>Whanaungatanga</i>	relationship, kinship, process of maintaining and affirming family or group relationships
<i>Whenua</i>	ground, homeland

## **13. APPENDICES**

### **13.1 List of Associations represented in Research**

Waimarino Garden Club  
Waimarino Art Awards  
Raetihi Rugby Club  
Chills Off  
Theatre Royal Trust  
Phoenix Players  
Raetihi Sustainable Development Group  
Te Puke Marae Trust  
Ngati Rangi Claims  
Ohakune 2000  
Raetihi Promotions  
TASCI, (Turoa Alpine Ski Club Inc  
Raetihi Ripper Trust  
Raetihi Market  
Ohakune Primary and Raetihi Primary and Ruapehu College  
CURE  
Nancy Winter Early Childhood Centre  
Raetihi Squash Club  
Victim Support  
Carrot Carnival – Ohakune Events Charitable Trust  
Plunket  
Ohakune Kindergarten  
YMCA Wanganui  
Ruapehu REAP  
Waimarino Budgeting Service  
ICONZ  
Ngati Uenuku Youth Group  
Ohakune Swimming Club  
Raetihi Swimming Club  
A & P Show Committee  
Girl Guides  
Raetihi Baptist Church  
Waimarino Soccer Club  
Rotary  
Ruapehu District Council and community board  
Film Society  
Peace Group  
Historical society

## 13.2 PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF PROFILE OF TOWNS



**Ohakune library and Council Offices**



**Raetihi library and Council Offices**



**Inside Ohakune library**



**Inside Raetihi library**



**Ohakune Police Station**



**Raetihi Police Station**



**Mainstreet Ohakune**



**Mainstreet Raetihi**



**BNZ bank Ohakune**



**Old BNZ Raetihi- now Peak FM**



**Skihire & Accomodation, Junction, Ohakune**



**Old Farmers Building Mainstreet Raetihi**



Café Ohakune



Closed café and old council offices Raetihi



Shop Mainstreet Ohakune



Shop Mainstreet Raetihi



Shop Ohakune



Shop Raetihi



**Bank, Mainstreet Ohakune**



**Old shop, Mainstreet Raetihi**



**Visitor Information Centre, Ohakune**



**Visitor Information Centre Raetihi**



**Inside Visitor Information Centre, Ohakune**



**Inside Visitor Information Centre, Raetihi**