Resistance and change in a depleted community: personal, pragmatic and paradoxical.
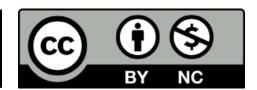
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Abstract

In this paper, we explore entrepreneurial change in Stanton, a rural small town in New Zealand. This once prosperous place has suffered economically and socially as its past core industries have vanished, and it can be considered now as a depleted community. Yet in recent years, the town has seen a rejuvenation, in part due to the endeavours of Sue, a high profile entrepreneur from outside the town who has set up several businesses in the town and indeed in other small towns in the region. Theoretically, we take an entrepreneurial identity perspective in examining how Sue's arrival has changed the town; we examine how was her entrepreneurship perceived as legitimate. We use a qualitative methodology based on semi-structured interviews. Our contribution is in demonstrating how an ascribed entrepreneurial identity can enable but also hinder change in this community, generating confidence and emotional contagion around entrepreneurship, but also uncertainty and resentment. In doing so, we challenge the universality of entrepreneurship benefits.

Keywords: Entrepreneur, identity, community, depleted, town

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is often presented as a means of improving depleted communities (McKeever, Jack and Anderson, 2015; Johnstone and Lionais, 2015). By their very nature, these are struggling places where infrastructural and social resource are diminished and the economic rationale for existence gone, or steeply declining. In their favour, they may retain high attachments and social relations relating to place (Anderson, 2000). Yet both these factors, paradoxically, make depleted communities a challenge for entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurs operate by challenging and changing the given rules of a particular context (Bureau and Zander, 2014; Brenkert, 2009; Warren and Smith, 2015). Anderson and Warren (2011) note that entrepreneurial identity offers a licence to effect change and challenge the established order, but they do have to be cautious about how they go about it, or they may find themselves become marginalised (Warren and Smith, 2015; Bureau and Fendt, 2007). Those currently in place may feel threatened by change; even if it is much needed, there may be resentment of interfering outsiders. Not surprisingly, entrepreneurs have an emotional impact that reaches beyond the business world and has effects on places. Doern and Goss (2012) caution us that we should not neglect emotion if entrepreneurial development is to be successful.

Thus in this paper, we explore entrepreneurial change in Stanton, a rural small town in New Zealand. This once prosperous place has suffered economically and socially as its past core industries have vanished, and it can be considered now as a depleted community. Yet in recent years, the town has seen a rejuvenation, in part due to the endeavours of Sue, a high profile entrepreneur from outside the town who has set up several businesses in the town and indeed in other small towns in the region. Theoretically, we take an identity perspective in examining how Sue's arrival has changed the town; this perspective is developed in the next section, the literature review. This is followed by the methodology for our study, outcomes, discussion and conclusions. Our contribution is in showing how being identified as an entrepreneur can enable (or hinder) change, but we challenge the universality of entrepreneurship benefits.

Literature review

The theoretical framing we use in this paper is that of entrepreneurial identity. There is growing recognition of entrepreneurship as a process that takes place in a social and cultural context, where the interests of the individual entrepreneur, the firm, and a wider range of societal stakeholders are intertwined (Steyaert, 2007; Baron and Shane, 2007; Kuratko, 2008; Welter, 2011). Notions of legitimacy, reputation and ethical behaviour have been argued by some as crucial for the overall success of a growing entrepreneurial endeavour (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; Downing, 2005). Aligned to that perspective, there is a persuasive strand in the literature on the usefulness of studying entrepreneurial identity in relation to new ventures and the surrounding social context. As Down (2006) puts it, identity is a mutable achievement in time, space through relationships with others. Williams (2015) notes that studies on identity are typically concerned with how entrepreneurs narratively construct and negotiate their identities (Warren, 2004), and in doing so present themselves as legitimate to important business stakeholders in order to access resources and market opportunities (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). Individuals legitimize their identity through a socially embedded process of positioning relative to rules,

norms and structures (De Clercq and Voronov, 2009), and as Gill and Larson (2014) point out, that can include those pertaining to a particular place.

Williams (2015) argues that legitimizing one's entrepreneurial identity is a substantial challenge facing first-time entrepreneurs. Studies suggest that entrepreneurial identity is shaped by various discourses and discursive resources, including the enterprise discourse (Watson, 2009). Of course, the enterprise discourse tends to offer stereotypical scripts of "the entrepreneur" (Down and Warren, 2008; Anderson and Warren, 2011). Down (2010: 70) defines the discourse of enterprise as "...*all the ways of talking about enterprise; the character of the entrepreneur and the moral expectations we have of enterprising acts...The discourse of enterprise will tend to prescribe what are legitimate acts and narratives for people who define themselves as entrepreneurs. We would want a very convincing narrative to be persuaded that an actuary, vicar or soldier was an entrepreneur: the discourse frames what is possible."* In such scripts, the individual has often been shaped as an heroic figure with marked characteristics (Anderson and Warren, 2011; Nicolson and Anderson, 2005).

Warren (2004) notes that the entrepreneurial identity, as distinct from a business identity can grate, as the notion of entrepreneurship can carry connotations of greed or selfishness, as distinct from other business behaviour that is not labelled as such. This might impact at the personal level and present a resistance to change, particularly if the change agent comes from outside the community. Warren and Smith (2015) note the perils for those who fail to artfully navigate 'the rules' of an entrepreneurial identity.   Hartz (2012), reminds us of the ambiguous linkage between the entrepreneur and outsiders who seek private gain from an area often by engaging in its business or politics especially as they be construed as uninvited participants. Pragmatism in a time of decline may override this view- somebody is doing something – and thus creating a temporary alignment between the aspirant entrepreneur and the benefits they bring. However, there may be question marks over long-term relationships and about both the economic and the social sustainability of entrepreneurial endeavour from incomers.

When considering identity as a potentially useful explanatory concept for our study, we need to take account of context (Welter, 2011). The New Zealand context is different, culturally, socially and economically, and several studies have pointed to the existence of the 'Tall Poppy' syndrome in New Zealand, a phenomenon of Australian origin referring to conspicuously successful people being subject to the enactment of envy, jealousy and hostility (Mouly and Sankaran, 2002). Kirkwood (2007) examines this phenomenon in relation to entrepreneurs in New Zealand, concluding that the notion is pervasive and can damage entrepreneurs who seek a high profile in getting off the ground. Kirkwood notes that research in this area is still sparse, for both New Zealand and entrepreneurship.   Taking an identity perspective may enable us to tease out whether what might be straightforward small town jealousy is related to a 'tall poppying' related to resentment over the enactment of an entrepreneurial identity which does imply difference *per se* - that might impinge on the inhabitants' sense of ownership of 'their' place. This might explain why there is ambiguity about incoming entrepreneurs, who may be respected in terms of their individual identity, yet how they approach their business as an entrepreneur may raise questions over the legitimacy of their actions.   Our contribution is therefore in demonstrating how being identified as an entrepreneur can enable and also hinder change in this community context, through the interplay of entrepreneurial identity with the evolving community, and questioning the universality of entrepreneurial benefit.

Research context

Stanton was established in 1887 around flax-milling and a railway. Since then it has been through several cycles of economic boom and bust. Perhaps the lowest ebb for Stanton was during the mid 90s when together with a neighbouring town, it became infiltrated by gangs. Currently 1239 people live in Stanton (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). This is a decrease of 132 people, or 9.6% from the 2006 Census. New Zealand's population overall grew by 5.3% since the 2006 Census. In the 2006 Census a decrease of 2.6% for Stanton was reported (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). Stanton has been allocated score of 10, in New Zealand's Index of SocioEconomic Deprivation (the highest score) http://www.otago.ac.nz/wellington/departments/publichealth/research/hirp/otago020194.html.   Despite the evident depletion, in 2007 one entrepreneur, Sue, saw opportunities for development in Stanton. Sue and her partner arrived in Stanton with nothing 13 years ago. She opened her first store in Stanton eight years ago and now they have retail stores, not only in Stanton, but also in three other centres. Sue started manufacturing her designs in one of those towns. They also have a warehouse and an online operation (in Stanton) and maintain a property investment portfolio. Six staff are employed in the manufacturing business and there are 38 employees in total across all of the retail stores.

Methodology

Resistance and change in a depleted community

A qualitative approach has been taken to explore these issues in the case study. We purposively selected principal respondents from the diverse interests and individuals from the community. This included the entrepreneur at the centre of change, Sue. From the town, we interviewed small business owners with both long and short durations of stay in the community and local hospitality establishment owners. We included interviewees with interests in the community, but not living there, for example, an estate agent with a long history of operating in the community and its surrounds, and an economic development manager from the regional council. We also interviewed two shop managers employed by Sue, based elsewhere in her chain of businesses (in slightly more prosperous communities).

We analysed the data by first building individual summaries, synthesizing and comparing the interview transcripts and our field notes collected after the interviews. Throughout this process the third author acted as a critical reviewer and interrogator of the first two authors to ensure the internal and external validity of the case and emerging findings (Salvato and Corbetta, 2013). We set out to explore the notion of the entrepreneur in terms of how Sue saw herself, how she constructed an account of herself as an entrepreneur in relation to her negotiated activities in the community. We also examined how Sue's entrepreneurial intervention in Stanton is perceived and received by Stanton residents, stakeholders from outside the town, and stakeholders employed elsewhere in Sue's wider chain of businesses. In doing so, we can examine how an entrepreneurial identity had emerged during Sue's engagement with Stanton, and how it enables, or hinders change. Table 1 describes the respondents' role in the community and outlines their length of time resident/in business in the area.

Insert Table 1 about here

Other participants who informed the study through discussions were: a regional economist with extensive expertise in depleted communities; a local photographer; a politician from a neighbouring region with many similarly depleted communities; a new food shop-owner from Stanton who arrived in the community towards the end of the study; council representatives from neighbouring towns with specific responsibilities for regional development; an independent consultant with considerable experience of regional development in the central North Island.

Outcomes

We develop the analysis by focussing on Sue's identity, as she sees herself; then, how she is cast as the town's saviour in the media and by other local business owners and significant stakeholders. We follow this with an exploration of two less positive counternarratives that concern Sue's entrepreneurship in the town.

Insert Table 2 about here

In Table 2 above, we show Sue's trajectory, from her own perspective, from where she started with nothing to become the owner of a chain of shops, and also a media figure. Sue's story shows the emergence of a stereotypical entrepreneurial identity, spotting an opportunity, effecting change through establishing and growing businesses, priding herself on intuition and gut-feel, learning how to do so as she goes along, working hard and moving on swiftly from failure. To help things along, she musters resources from local stakeholders and the media, thus embracing and being embraced by the discourse of enterprise, and in this context, the discourse of regional development. In doing so, an 'heroic identity' (Nicolson andAnderson, 2005; Down and

Resistance and change in a depleted community

Warren, 2008; Anderson and Warren, 2011) emerges: but one that is distinctive in its specific connection to the small town context, but very strongly to Stanton, as the birthplace of it all.

For Sue, starting in small towns was part of a strategic plan that she expresses as 'twenty towns in ten years'; one that gives her brand greater visibility than attempting to start off from scratch in one of New Zealand's bigger cities.   She wants to realise economic benefits from her businesses, and where the town is depleted, such as in Stanton's case, she works with the local council to refresh the appearance of the town, through better maintenance of public spaces such as parks and walkways. Thus civic benefits accrue, alongside economic benefits. Sue pursues a community-oriented self as part of overcoming both the infrastructural difficulties of a depleted town, and also the inevitable small-town politics, a powerful influence when social attachments, even to depleted places can be long-standing and very strong (Anderson, 2000). Stanton was her first town, and the rejuvenation of Stanton, with hanging baskets and attractive shops selling women's clothing, jewellery and gift items replacing the hard-edged town with a reputation for violence where no-one dared stop, makes for a great media story.

Sue the town saviour

There is an emotional appeal to Sue's engagement with Stanton, where she is cast as the 'saviour' of this plucky, but struggling place, expressed, for example, in a popular blog about women in work:

 "To those that don't know it, Stanton is a typical small New Zealand town. The sort of place you drive through unless you need fuel, a toilet or unfeasibly cheap real estate. Like many once-prosperous rural towns, the train stops twice a day for commuters and the impressive bank building on the main street is given over to Antiques. In recent years, Stanton has undergone an unlikely retail revival. Thanks in no small part to dynamic local woman, Sue. This entrepreneur, artist and mother of five saw the potential of all the through-traffic and put everything on the line to open a gallery/gift shop. Building on that success and opening more stores. Other retailers have joined her and the local council has spruced the place up with gardens, picnic areas and some lovely public loos. ….". Blog, "Works Wonders" http://www.workswonders.co.nz/career/success-and-the-fish-tray-from-[name replaced] July 9 2013, accessed 8 March 2016.

And from Regional Council's Economic Development representative, I, who sees the developmental potential of Sue's business more widely:

 "she's created the [Stanton] brand if you like in terms of that retail offering, which I think others are trading off, and I think one of the big opportunities in terms of entrepreneurialism is to actually connect those retailers up more closely and to start getting them operating and communicating and collaborating as a cluster."

and

"Yeah. And I mean, she's an anchor, and you know probably the key to Stanton's retail environment to be fair."

Stanton is now perceived by I as even having a potential place in the international retail markets through Sue, which is quite a journey for such a depleted community:

"retailers need to work together really closely to collaborate and cooperate, and they probably need to start finding mechanisms to sell their products far further afield than just Stanton, which is where I see UFB [Ultra Fast broadband] *kicking in for them; you know, could Stanton be a destination retail cluster, but also partner with an online portal together where they can all sell goods and services from Stanton itself to the world"*

The role of entrepreneurship in reviving depleted communities has played out in full, it seems (McKeever et al, 2015; Johnstone and Lionais, 2015).   Here, there is recognition that an heroic, high profile identity can energise a community. Sue seems to have drawn upon the discursive resources of enterprise, relating the heroic discourse (Anderson and Nicholsn, 2005) as it relates to regional development and changes in a particular place (Gill and Larson, 2014). As Goss (2005) argues there is an emotional contagion about entrepreneurship; some of Sue's original employees have gone on to start up new businesses in Stanton, and other established businesses have come into Stanton as the 'buzz' has grown. The identity of the high profile entrepreneur, has certainly played well to some audiences, including some of the longer-standing business owners in the town:

……."*I think that's positive for a town; if someone comes in and opens three shops, and markets the town, I'd say 'Great we'll take it, thanks very much'. If you're bringing people into Stanton, everyone's going to have a*

little bit of a spin-off from it." And *But she still put us on the map with all here advertising, media and god knows what, about Stanton. Everyone talks about the lady in town here so.* [H, café owner]

And E states that:

And I mean without a doubt, Suzie opening, she's put herself out there too. I mean there are people that are good at marketing. And she is good at marketing, and so she has attracted a following in Stanton, which other people have got on board with and taken advantage of. And when she first opened we were in every newspaper and that………. You know you just need a few events like that. Where somebody stands up and makes a scene, makes a splash, something new opening and gosh it's good for everybody.

Counternarratives: it's not just Sue and she's not one of us

An heroic identity indeed, but one where the heroism is connected to the survival of Stanton, as the enterprise discourse morphs into that of the small-town saviour. Not surprisingly however, the recent nationwide downturn in the retail trade has brought some muted notes – is all the success just a media driven flash in the pan? H, who has retail experience in the giftware trade suggests that the contagion has perhaps produced a negative effect in that:

But I think that too many people jumped on to the bandwagon without doing their homework. And all the same type of thing; you need variety. But compared to a lot of towns, I think we are thriving.

E's husband D states that the heart of a good business long term is really the service aspect, stating "*You can splash all you like into papers, journals and flight magazines, and all the rest of it. Boy you can waste a lot of money*", although Sue too prides herself on customer service and more widely, her championing of women's self-esteem. C notes that Sue has carried out extensive promotion, but the impact has begun to tail off as the downturn continues– in contrast to the long-standing strength of C's business, which was based on customers who liked antiques and the general throughput of State Highway traffic.

It is not surprising that there has been some resentment of the incomer too, as noted by Sue:

"When I first got here, no one knew who we were and they were like 'who's this girl changing everything, what the hell is she doing?' And I got absolute shit for that, basically. I was in tears probably every second day…cause no one wants change. Why would they? We've been perfectly good for 20 years, even though the shops are all boarded up, why? And who is this girl thinking she is all that and trying to change our town and she's not even from here."

This is perhaps not surprising – Sue herself notes the New Zealand tendency to 'tall poppy' successful people, that is the enactment of jealousy and envy against the successful, legitimised on the surface as a love of humility and a spirit of anti-elitism (Mouly et al, 2002). Kirkwood (2007) suggests that this is a hindrance to entrepreneurs, who may adopt strategies of going under the radar as they try to operate and grow. On the one hand, Sue seems to be acting antithetically to that strategy with her high media profile; yet in her interview, Sue uses the expression 'under the radar' four times, for example:

So that's a good thing, but I just find it easier to go under the radar to be honest, cause I don't get caught up in the politics and I just get done what I need to get done, and it's usually for the good of the community. It's not just about us.

Here she demonstrates how she is artfully navigating the small town rules, balancing media profile with covert action to ensure her entrepreneurial identity remains legitimate, and generally she has been successful in doing so. That there would be resentment of an incomer who becomes famous by altering their town is not really surprising. Those who have been working hard at making small businesses successful for years may feel piqued that the sheer ordinariness (Down and Warren, 2008) of their own not inconsiderable entrepreneurial acumen and resilience over the difficult years that Stanton experienced has been placed in the shade. But there is more to this than either small-town politics or tall-poppy syndrome. There is another entrepreneurial tradition in Stanton, founded not on economic gain, but on civic volunteering; a very local, rather than a national or international vision. As D states with pride,

"The people that were Council reps, say we can't do it. Very parochial as you can see, we are very parochial."

In regard to the redevelopment of Stanton's Visitor Centre, a tourist feature that is part of Stanton's revival, complementing the retail activity, E says:

Resistance and change in a depleted community

We helped restore it earlier. So I went to the people in charge of the Visitor Centres at Council and said 'If Stanton Progressive Association could potentially get enough volunteers to open it every day, would you let us do it?' And they said 'Yeah sure, we can't turn volunteers down.' But then in the background we were kind of going 'We'll never get volunteers to run this.' But that was about this time last year, when I first started having meetings, and the ladies that were doing it were doing a good job, but they were just doing a little bit, you know they were older …….you know it was too cold and they couldn't do it. So anyway we had some public meetings and I coordinated it and we have 15 volunteers that now open it from 10.00 till 3.00. So one does 10.00 till 12.30, and one does 12.30 till 3.00, so it's two and a half hours each. And since 1 December we've opened it every day as a Visitor Centre for the town and it's been officially recognised now. D volunteers for it. But just as a team of people working together, we've achieved that. And the same volunteers that started in December are still the ones that are doing it today. So the people who said 'Oh you'll never do that'. it's just amazing.

This vision is long-held and based very deeply in Stanton's history and local tradition. Of course, they are very willing to make a pragmatic accommodation around another form of entrepreneurial success, and calm any negative emotions while Sue's efforts bring so much success to the town. The interesting aspect of any simmering resentment, and perhaps that most dangerous for Sue in the future seems to be not so much that Sue has constructed a high profile identity, but that the 'town saviour' element that may in fact not be that deeply rooted in Stanton itself. H sums up this paradoxical set of feelings very well:

She's helped, but she's not the only one. She's done a lot of free advertising for Stanton, don't get me wrong. But she's got involved you know, Stanton was her little baby from the start of her empire. But now she's everywhere. So I rarely see her now. She used to be here quite a lot. I would wave out to her as they go past, her and [her husband]. But it's rare. She's overseas a lot. She's all over the country with her other things she does; speaking engagements. She's got a pile of kids. She just has her shops basically managed by staff now. It's very rare that you see her. She used to be in town every day. So I don't know how passionate she still is about Stanton. I think she's had to divide. But this is what started her off, so it must be close to her I believe.

And B:

My view is, my personal view is; I would rather have seen her just concentrate on Stanton. See what you have now is you've got people coming from [more northerly town]; she's got shops in [[nearby town], well they probably get there and there's no sense driving down to Stanton, cause they will be able to see what we've got there. That's just my view you know. But she's got a vision to have shops all over the place. What do you call it, entrepreneurship?"

Stanton's rejuvenation is still a fragile construct; As I notes:

"If she was to go the future of Stanton would look fairly bleak I would have thought in the short term"

Indeed Sue's roots in Stanton have a certain fluidity that is based on sound business reasoning (Table 3):

Insert Table 3 about here

Sue's choice of small towns was emotional, but also driven by business reasoning, in that the brand would be noticed and grow more quickly. However this brings with it the notion that the small town strategy could just be a 'stepping stone'. This suggests that the roots in Stanton may be rather shallow. Business realism causes her to question whether the small towns will be viable for her shops over time, and suggests that the starting point may be forgotten anyway. The buildings in Stanton had questionable value in themselves, as they required improvement due to earthquake legislation.

Sue's store managers see the business group as a family; they have full company meetings which involve all the different staff and refer to small rituals that reinforce that. One store manager said:

"I think a little piece of her will always be in Stanton because that's where it started for her, that's our mother ship, that's where it started."

There is almost a sense of premonition here, that puts us in mind of founder myths such as the Hewlett Packard garage start-up, where the humble origins of the giant company are preserved in a museum., although A states:

"Who remembers where Kilt or Ezibuy started up?"

Discussion

In this study then, we have shown the contribution of a charismatic entrepreneur to the rejuvenation of a depleted community. From the data we can see that an heroic identity (Nicholson and Anderson, 2005) has emerged where the discursive resources of depleted community and entrepreneurial hero have combined to render Sue as a small-town saviour for Stanton and indeed for other small towns in New Zealand, a thorny struggle f or those engaged in regional development. Of course there are challenges to that vision rooted in an alternate vision of sound, successful civic entrepreneurship, and also some small-town politics with an element of tall poppy syndrome underpinning some resentment of the incomer (Hartz, 2012). Overall, despite the entrepreneurial zeal on so many fronts, the fear is the recovery is fragile and that Sue can readily relocate her identity elsewhere. She is now an inspirational speaker, a champion for New Zealand brands and an adviser to regional councils. Her latest shops are in small towns, certainly, and while al small towns have suffered in New Zealand, the latest additions to the empire are nowhere near as depleted as Stanton.

Summarising then, an heroic entrepreneurial identity has value in the energising and rejuvenation of depleted communities. On an emotional level, it is exciting, though when attached to an incomer, it is received rather pragmatically. Through paradoxical practices around the generation of a high profile while simultaneously remaining under the radar, the challenges of poor infrastructure aligned with deeply embedded emotions about how the town should work can be overcome. However, it should be remembered from a regional development point of view that a small depleted community, however much it is enriched, can only support so much entrepreneurial growth; those with a heroic tendency may be drawn to acting a saviour. But having saved, the transition to then moving on needs to be managed. It is not a universal panacea.

Conclusion

The results show a fascinating mix of the personal, the pragmatic and the paradoxical, with pressures to stay and pressures to leave, a tension of temporariness, embeddedness and the pioneering spirit; finally, perhaps, a perception of 'two Stantons', where a new vision of heroic entrepreneurship clashes with older, more everyday entrepreneurship at least for a time. We contribute to theory by developing an entrepreneurial identity perspective on these social and economic processes, connecting Sue's identity to the emotional climate in the town. We add to entrepreneurship theory by explaining the importance of identity in regard to emotion and depleted community, further relating to the 'tall poppy' aspect.

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Resistance and change in a depleted community

Table 1 The respondents

Respondent	Business/Role	Length of time resident in Stanton	Background/experience/career
Sue	Entrepreneur Business owner Property Developer	13 years	High profile entrepreneur who led the revitalisation of Stanton.
A	Entrepreneur Business owner Property Developer	13 years	Sue's husband. Keeps a low public profile but noted by Sue to be her steadying influence, focussed on administrative systems.
B	Business owner	52 years	Local publican, owned pub for 18 years.
C	Business owner	17 years	Owner of antique store, 17 years, lives above store.
D	Business owner Local councillor	43 years	Co-owner (with wife E) of tourism business and elected Councillor for Stanton ward of Regional District Council.
E	Business owner	40 years	Co-owner (with husband E) of tourism business and Chair of Stanton Progressive Association.
F	Business owner	12 years	Owner of Design store for 7 years. Lives above the local pub.
G	Business owner	11 years	Owner of café in Stanton, 11 years
H	Realtor	30 years	Local real estate agent. Interviewed as key informant on regional trends
I	Economic Development Manager, local District Council	4 years	Responsible for economic development for region (Stanton one of three towns in the region).
J	Store manager		Store manager of store owned by Sue, not Stanton. Interviewed as key informant.
K	Store manager		Store manager of Cambridge store owned by Sue, not Stanton. Interviewed as key informant.

Resistance and change in a depleted community

Sue as she sees herself – Table 2

Identity	Example
Multifaceted	I'm a nurse by trade. And always been creative, always making stuff when I was a kid. I'm a mother of five, under 12 ½. I'm married to X and we've been together about 16 years. I am, I guess an entrepreneur, I've got shops. So we've got 11 shops. I've got a sewing factory in xxx as well. So we produce NZ made clothes. I do motivational speaking, so I do a lot of talks on stage about what to wear and not to wear. I was DJ'ing on xxxFM for three years and loved that. My mission is to get a TV show and I've written a book and sold about 4000 copies. I think now I've just got to help start changing policy at that [policy] level, now that I've got a voice, and people listen.
Recovers from failure, moves on, embraces change	We tried for a year and a half, and it just hasn't worked. So we closed it, and we've used all of the stuff out of there, all of our shop fit out and everything and literally took it to xxx, so it wouldn't be too much of a cost for the shop fit out. Cause if you sit and don't change you just get left behind.
Champions NZ	'xxx' is our imported stuff. But 'yyy' is our NZ made, and that is where our point of difference is.
Learns from others	I can do anything, but not everything, so I have to have what is it, stand on the shoulders of giants, so I can learn from them as well. So what you do, is you learn from your mistakes,
Builds network from nothing	I knew nobody, so when we moved here 13 years ago, I knew my sister-in-law and brother, and that's the only people I knew. So I've created this whole network from being here.
Big fish in small pond	In Auckland you wouldn't have been able to get on the radio. I just stalked them for a while here, and then they let me go on, and I had my Saturday show for three years. So that's what I like about being in this region.
Emotional, gut feel, intuitive	[on buying an unsuccessful pub business] that was an emotional vibe, because we'd heard about a good deal And I got absolute shit for that [instigating change], basically. I was in tears probably every second day.

Identity	Example

	I get a gut feeling, I trust my woman's intuition, it's been handed down over thousands of years.
Incoming change agent (town saviour)(role model)	And who is this girl thinking she is all that and trying to change our town and she's not even from here.
	Yeah, we started it seven and a half years ago.
	I was a big mouth about it all and I was out there really promoting it, networking and joining everything, from BNI, to talking at Rotary, to talking to our Treasurer, to talking to everyone. Because I had to change the whole reputation of the town, to be honest, when I started.
	Which is a shame because I think if we get all of our little towns going, that's how we will get out the recession. Because there will be local jobs and people don't have to pay heaps for childcare and everything. They will have people around that can help with the kids. They don't have to pay for parking. They can often walk to work, so petrol prices you know. So getting our little towns ….. I laughed, cause we got that community award, they said that we were the biggest employer in Stanton, which cracked me up, cause you don't even think of it like that eh?
	Yeah, because once we started our shops people sat back and watched us for a year and then they started filling the other shops up. But everyone watched to see if we would fall over cause when we first did the first shop, they said 'Oh that's not going to work. Gosh you're mad and you need an axe under your counter.' And now everyone goes 'I knew that town would go ahead.'
Youth, novelty	I was bringing in all new. They had like old books and old antiquey things in a couple of the shops, so they didn't enjoy this new way of coming in.
	The secondhand shop that we bought and turned it into 'For Frocks Sakes', it's funny it changes and then the old ones that don't like the change, they sell up and move on, or don't open the business again. So it makes room for us young ones to come up and change it and get our energy in there
Tough, tenacious, resilient	So definitely people see what you're doing; think 'Oh she's doing well'. Makes them think 'I can do that'. But they don't last for long though. Not because of me, but because they don't realise what goes on behind the scenes. There is all this paperwork you see to keep a business running. It's easy to open the doors and have people come in for a little while, but to keep the longevity of it is

	a mission, like a massive mission. That's the easy bit, painting it, opening the doors and putting the stuff in. So there has been negatives, but there have been a lot of positives as well, but it's tough. You do have to get ….. I see it totally when they say 'It's tough at the top'. Not saying I'm at the top, but you are kind of on your own a lot and there is about this many people that I trust now. In NZ there is this kind of 'tall poppy' thing and all those waiting for you to fall, to be honest.
Champion for larger women	it goes up to a 2XL, some are 3XL, so you can still look funky and be curvy. That's what I say 'I'm curvy but still think I'm hot'. So you know a lot of women, just because they're bigger, don't think they are as attractive.
Creative	Our gallery on the corner, so that's with my original art and jewellery and stuff we make
Passes on values at home	And then my girls too. I've got a 'busy hands' policy, so they are always making jewellery if they are not busy.
Passing on values in business	And this is the whole thing that I am talking about for an hour first; *the video of the story when we first started*, our mission statement, our vision, how we are going to achieve that, growing in a recession, empowering, and all that, fish theory, selling, fitting room etiquette and asking for customers names when you are getting them in the fitting room and getting a real personal thing going, interviewing the new staff, And then my girls too. I've got a 'busy hands' policy, so they are always making jewellery if they are not busy.
Works as individual	And I worked a hell of a lot behind the scenes, without joining a group or anything. They said to me 'Honestly Sue, you'll get way more done, than if you join a group'. But I don't get amongst it. Too much politics and they always worry about one thing, which is their [feature], which they want done, which has been going on for ten years, and it just pisses the Council off. So nothing gets done. So I just go under the radar with everything. So the way I do it, is just go in positively. I take cake and say 'Hey boys, I need your help.' and then they kind of ask me a lot of questions like what's going on in the town and all of that sort of thing. So it's just going under the radar to be honest. Cause there's two groups; there is one about the [feature] and there's the [Civic association]. So I didn't join any of them. and it's usually for the good of the community. It's not just about us.

Resistance and change in a depleted community

Resistance and change in a depleted community

Roots in the town? Table 3

The centrality of Stanton	**Example**
Why the small town context	But it was awesome starting in a little town, to start getting known. Because if I had just put my shop in the middle of XXX, I wouldn't have been noticed. Because we did it down there and it was different, it was like 'What's this girl doing?' And get know more and more. We were a big fish in a little sea and we got noticed, and that's what kind of carried the brand to be noticed straight away, to be known who we are when we go into other towns. *So it's a really good stepping stone to start.* (author italics)
Questions over importance of Stanton	And that's what we are looking at the moment, are we still viable in these little towns? Because the money we were making has dropped a lot, and so our cash flow is not as good. But also we've diluted our brand, because we've opened in lots of other places, whereas everyone used to make Stanton their mission…..To be honest, I'm not sure…..And I really hope that it does, but I hope I've put enough work into the town that it will be sustained with other people if I'm not there….everyone knows that where I started, but then in 20 years times when I've got 40 shops are people even going to remember that I started in Stanton? Do people remember, like where Kilt started or EziBuy started? So you've got to make sure that you still move with the times,
Business realism (in another town)	And we hung on to probably six months longer than we should have, and then we just made the decision, we've just got to cut it loose.
Fragility of buildings undermining capital gains and sunk costs	Well it's dropped all our capital gains now, hugely, cause they had tripled for us. Then they brought that in, so now it is going to cost us more to do earthquake proofing, than just to build new buildings. So we will just bowl them, if we decide that it is still viable to be down there.