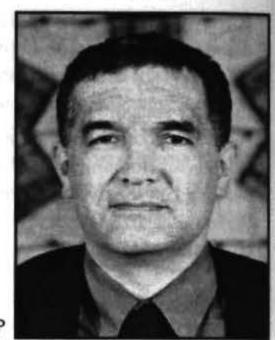


THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT CREATION: LESSONS AND CHALLENGES FOR A NEW ERA

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Abstract

This paper takes as its starting point the need for community level action as an immediate step toward 'Closing the Gaps'. The focus is on local employment initiatives underpinned by a broader approach to community development. New Zealand case studies are used to illustrate. The paper examines the development and refinement of an alternative framework - positive spirals of 'societal capital'. This is differentiated from the concept of social capital. The role of the Community Advisor is also discussed. Lessons are drawn for the future.

Keywords: Community, local employment, social capital, societal capital

The 'gaps' in the economic and social well-being of ethnic minority groups in New Zealand, is well known and documented (e.g. TPK 2000). Commitment to 'close the gaps' in health, education, employment and housing for Maori and Pacific people is a key government goal guiding policy and performance (New Zealand Government 2000). This paper discusses through case studies, the potential of the third economic sector and community driven-partnership initiatives for economic development and 'closing the gaps'.

A main aim of this paper is to work toward developing a conceptual framework and new paradigm, which can integrate community controlled, third sector/civil society initiatives within a wider strategic perspective of development. The purpose of the framework is also to provide a holistic model for the operation of the three sectors – market, state and third sectors, to yield an inclusive New Zealand society. The role of the Community Advisor is also conceived within this overall framework.

Case Study: CHAANZ and the Barefoot Builders Campaign

The housing problems of low income New Zealanders are serious, complex and extensive (see for e.g. Whale 2000) and require solutions from several fronts involving all sectors of the economy. The Co-operative Housing Association of Aotearoa (CHAANZ) is a not-for-profit, third sector organisation that believes that 'secure, affordable and good quality housing is the core requirement for all well being in our society!' and is working toward developing innovative solutions to housing and home ownership problems (CHAANZ 1998: 37). These housing related initiatives provide training and employment at the local level. The premise of the CHAANZ is that 'a financially robust Third Economic Housing Sector is the most rational base from which to grow employment schemes aimed at local development' (CHAANZ 1998: 3).

There are two critical components underlying the CHAANZ housing solution. One is the access to technology developed by Cabash Self-Build Homes Ltd.

CHAANZ has an agreement with Cabash under which CHAANZ licences the use of the technology. The second component is the methodology developed by CHAANZ to assist low income communities to construct their housing. Using appropriate technology, the Cabash building system centres on a patented interlocking panel system, which removes the building process as much as possible from the building site to a controlled factory situation. The panel system enables the construction of ready finished modules or pods, which are then easily transported to the house site for assembly. These low-cost re-locatable units can be sited on community owned land to become the first step toward home ownership. The quality standards and design of the house is such that they can be used as collateral for mortgage funds, independent of the land on which they are situated.

An integral part of the housing delivery system is the training component. An accelerated learning programme in housing construction is also conceptually innovative being based on the building of a 1/5th scale model off house plans with prepared-to scale building materials in 'Project Shelter' housing schools. The programme, through a team exercise in model building, familiarizes participants with terminology, technology and methodology of the building system. The technology itself assists training with for instance the safe, quick, yet accurate making of full-sized panels being ensured and enabled by the cutting jig and pattern jig.

The CHAANZ envisages a network of regional housing factories to serve the housing needs of each region, with education and training delivered to meet the needs of the local economy. To date, the CHAANZ housing delivery system, includes houses built in the Auckland region in Mangere, Manukau City and TeAtatu, Waitakere City, and in Dunedin in the operations of the Just Housing/Pax Christi Trust and the Just Housing Trust — Otepoti Dunedin, respectively; and housing constructed for CHAANZ partner, the North Hokianga Housing Trust, as part of the flood relief programme in Panguru as well as the Panguru Eco Village, North Hokianga.

The 'Barefoot Builders Campaign' is a CHAANZ project currently underway. It is designed to provide affordable housing in the rural sector through a Step-Equity Housing Delivery system.1 Under the scheme the regional group enters into a discussion process with the prospective occupants to determine an affordable level of payment and thereafter enters into a contract to fix that level of payment. A building site is then identified, which may either be provided by the whanau (access to a portion of Maori owned land) or by the regional group from their land bank. The local building group constructs the house for a low income family with family input and with consideration of family needs and preferences. The family pays no interest and the income related rent paid for the house goes into the regional revolving building fund. When the rent paid equals the cost to the community of building the house, ownership is transferred to the family. Fundamental to the project and indeed much of third sector activity is effective partnership at various levels with other civil society agencies and the government. Illustrative of the need for partnership is the project's funding proposal that involves the capitalisation of the government's accommodation supplement. A role for a NZ financial institution such as the planned 'Peoples Bank' is also foreseen. There are also low cost materials supply and pro-bono legal support partnerships, with the private sector. Underpinning all activity is the principle that work should be 'authentic work' i.e. 'that which enhances the human condition' (CHAANZ 2000: 17).

Positive Spirals of Societal Capital

Local development initiatives are given a powerful motivating force at the community level and receive credibility and legitimacy at the broader political economy level, if they can be shown to fit within a wider conceptual rationale. This section of the paper examines attempts to develop such a framework by the CHAANZ and the Centre for Third Economic Sector Development and Studies in Auckland.

The initial efforts of the CHAANZ to conceptualise the contribution of the third sector within 'a sustainable macro-economic development programme' (CHAANZ 1998, Devoy 1998), drew on the concept of social capital. The CHAANZ postulated that 'good quality affordable housing is the prime building block of social capital' (CHAANZ 1998: 38).

Often used as the bridge to link economic and social considerations, the term 'social capital' has recently received considerable attention, especially as a consequence of the writings of James Coleman and Robert Putnam. Putnam's visit to New Zealand in 1996 and the associated meetings under the auspices of the Institute of Policy Studies, helped popularise the usage of the concept in the country. Social capital is commonly and often loosely used to encompass all forms of networks and partnerships that are underpinned by trust and reciprocity. This is in line with the Putnam interpretation that trust in the community context draws energy from 'two related sources - norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement' (Putnam 1993: 171). It should be noted however, that the there is a growing critique of social capital formulations (e.g. Edwards and Foley 1998).

In the context of health promotion work, Eberhard Wenzel argues that "While social capital assumes that all of us sit in one boat aiming at the same objectives with the same strategies in mind, the Ottawa Charter clearly states that we live in a world of different cultures, interests, values, and beliefs, and that health promotion means struggle and dealing with conflicting interests." (Erben, Franzkowiak, Wenzel 2000). The essence of the critique being that social capital formulations do not adequately address the issue of socio economic disparities.

The CHAANZ and the Centre for Third Economic Sector Development and Studies have now moved beyond the social capital iteration to put forward 'a civil society development model' – 'the Societal Capital model'. This model is suggested as 'the most efficient pathway towards an inclusive Knowledge Economy' in New Zealand (CHAANZ 2000: 16).

Figure 1 at the end of this paper presents the draft illustration of this model. This diagrammatic representation delineates societal capital as the aggregate of tangible and intangible societal capital, i.e. the summation of infrastructure capital, human capital, intellectual capital, institutional capital and natural capital. It is asserted that societal capital in order 'to be genuine' must present to all 'opportunities to both comprehend and engage in Civil Society social and economic initiatives' (CHAANZ 2000: 16). It can be inferred that 'positive spirals' of societal capital ensue when the capital is harnessed and ethically invested to produce a positive return to society. Not surprisingly given the CHAANZ's civil society domain of operation, there is a value judgement that 'the ethical use of Societal Capital can be judged in the extent to which it is harnessed to bring about the empowerment of Civil Society institutions' (CHAANZ 2000: 16). This premise of ethical use 'societal capital' is however, debatable. Similarly, the use of 'capital' and its different forms to underpin the model could be judged problematic and conceptualisation of the contribution to the stock of capital that emanates from the third sector needs to be specified.

Choice of words is important. They carry with them common notions as to their meaning. Capital is a word of many meanings and one that is loaded toward preconceived notions. 'There is no consensus on a general definition and the characteristics of 'capital' since capital 'is not a homogenous globule'. It takes four main forms in political economy: ecological capital, social capital, human capital and private business capital (O'Hara 1999: 65). There are generally accepted ideas on what each of these forms comprise. To these four we might also add another form cultural capital, which can be used to widen the definition of human capital (see for e.g. de Bruin 1999a and 1999b). Additionally social capital, a term that defies definitional precision outside specific operational contexts, may also be viewed as in terms of the creation of human capital (Coleman 1988). The forms of capital can overlap and often involve definitional 'fuzziness'. To seek to give new interpretation to understandings on capital and its varieties, with the new concept of societal capital may not be advisable. Furthermore, capital brings with it connotations of depreciation of the capital stock and with human capital, skills atrophy. These are 'capital' related issues not satisfactorily dealt with in the current iteration of the model.

Towards an Integrative Framework

To assist with the refinement of the societal capital model, this section of the paper moves on to provide a perspective on the operation and contribution of the three sectors – market, state and third sectors, within an integrative framework conforming to the specified objective of development.

The concept of 'Responsible Well-Being' (Chambers 1997) is adopted, as the primary objective of development and is taken as the springboard for delineating this integrative framework. The 'well-being' component of the concept is essentially a locally defined understanding of what is good quality of life and necessarily involves a secure, sustainable livelihood, based on the capabilities of what people are capable of doing and being. When qualified by equity and sustainability, well-being becomes 'responsible' and the objective of development is 'responsible well-being by all and for all' (Chambers 1997: 1749). The personal dimension and personal action distinguishes responsible well-being.

The personal action agenda is not in conflict with activities of civil society. This is clear if we take an action and ends perspective in line with the work of Fernandez (1994: 5, cited in Swain & Overton 1998). Accordingly, the market involves 'private action for private ends', the state centres on 'public action for public ends' and civil society / the third sector is distinguished by 'private action for public ends' (Swain & Overton 1998: 20).

Instead of the societal capital terminology, we substitute the idea of "community energy" as the driving force of local well-being enhancing initiatives. Energy is non-reducible, whereas capital depreciates. Community energy is concentrated in civil society and when harnessed and built on, produces positive spirals of development and employment creation. We see the community energy approach as both supplementing and complementing thinking on an appropriate role of the market and the activities of the welfare state. How these perspectives should be integrated to provide a holistic framework to examine the cross-overs between the three sectors of activity is beyond the scope of this paper.

Community energy may be conceived as a combination of social energy and cultural energy. Using the terminology of development economist Hirschman (1984), civil society action can release 'social energy' to provide for bottomup development. Social energy is a renewable motivation, which induces participation in a group movement, or cooperative activities, which occur despite or on account of hardship, disadvantage and even in the face of failure (Hirschman 1984: 42-57, provides a discussion). Civil society and community action could also build upon cultural strengths and ethnic identity. Then, 'cultural expression, in all its richness and variety', will become 'a major means of generating and focusing a vital social force that can be called cultural energy. This force is a prime source of motivation that inspires people to confront problems, identify solutions, and participate in carrying them out' (Kleymeyer 1994: 4). Cultural energy also emanates from the recognition of identity. Fundamental to Maori identity, for example, is genealogy, including the tribal base of the traditional rohe. Identity with all its attendant social relationships and traditions provides a firm foundation in the face of changing local and global conditions.

The process by which community energy is harnessed, is one of empowerment. At this point it is useful to briefly elaborate on 'empowerment': There are varied definitions of empowerment (Rappaport et al. 1984), but common themes run through these definitions. These are that: empowerment is the goal and the means of community organisation and action (Minkler 1997); it relates to the enhancement of the individual and collective capacity to take and re-gain control over the conditions determining well-being (Henderson & Thomas 1987) and it involves the on-going enabling of individuals and groups of individuals to participate in collective action (Daly & Cobb 1994). These themes are evidenced in the work described in the next section.

The CEG Community Adviser: 'Empowerment Enabler'

It is asserted here that the Community Employment Group (CEG) Community Employment Adviser has a key role to play in empowerment. This section of the paper draws on the experience of one of the authors to show the impact of this process of empowerment. It describes the work undertaken by Shayne Toko (of Tainui and Ngati Whatua descent), chiefly in the Helensville district in Rodney in the period 1993 - 2000. This work involved Shayne establishing relationships with a variety of stakeholders including individuals in the community, private sector and public sector institutions. The primary focus of the work was to facilitate an improvement in the quality of life of the local people, with a particular emphasis on working with Maori. It brings to the fore the personal dimension of responsible well-being - the objective of development outlined in the earlier section.

Shayne Toko's initial experience at working with communities was gained in the South Island in the mid to late 1980's. One project of particular significance was the work undertaken with Ngai Tahu iwi. Lessons learned from this work were applied to the projects later undertaken in Helensville.

Coming back to Auckland, Shayne realised that it would not be appropriate to try and promote new ideas concerning the development opportunities for Ngati Whatua³ without first being able to demonstrate the capacity to generate positive outcomes for the tribe.

Project: Mai FM Radio

The first opportunity identified concerned an unused radio license. While the tribe held the licence, this was not seen as having significant development potential. Though the licence gave Ngati Whatua the right to broadcast on an FM frequency, by itself it represented only part of the total resource base necessary to realise the development opportunity. The next stage involved identifying tribal members with relevant industry related skills whom could provide the human resource component to the enterprise. Financial support, both internal and externally provided, and outside expertise was secured. The outcome from this development process was the establishment of Mai FM. This is now one of the most commercially successful radio stations in the country.

CEA (Community Employment Advisor) role:

- facilitated a funding programme to Ngati Whatua Runanga through which CEG provided funding support to the project over a three year period.
- worked closely with radio station management during the set up phase and assisted with advice concerning challenges to the utilisation of the licence by Brierley Investments Ltd. (BIL).

Outcomes:

- employment creation
- raising awareness of youth issues amongst Maori and other ethnic groups
- demonstrated that Ngati Whatua could manage a commercial enterprise and confirmed their capability to manage competitive issues raised by BIL (as owners of competing radio stations).
- the community energy harnessed led to the building of institutional and intellectual capital.

Importantly, this project also served to raise awareness amongst the wider iwi of the existence of CEG as an organisation providing practical community focused assistance. The first sign that this was happening was a series of inquiries from representatives of local Ngati Whatua marae concerning assistance that they could seek from the CEG.

Project: Reweti Marae

The first project was the development of kaumatua flats, to provide quality housing for kaumatua and kuia of the marae, at Reweti Marae in 1992. At the time the community was reacting to a number of economic 'shocks', including downturn in the fishing and forestry industries and the closure of dairy factory.

The CEA role:

- facilitated funding from CEG to support infrastructural development to improve access to the marae and utilisation of marae resources
- provided assistance to marae trustees to complete the strategic development plan for the collective of physical infrastructure which included, the marae meeting house (wharenui), dining room (wharekai), church and cemetary, swamp land between the marae and the local settlement, roading and forestry.
- assisted in linking marae representatives with private sector business people.

Outcomes:

- a reduction in and partial reversal of the process of urban drift as individual kaumatua returned to the area and, in many cases, brought their families with them.
- Subsidised employment was created through a Taskforce Green (TFG) project established to undertake the landscaping aspect of the housing project. A number of the people employed on the TFG project were employed on a subsequent project referred to in

- the following section the Railway Station restoration.
- Income generated by the marae from contracts negotiated with roading/construction companies requiring land to dump hard fill extracted as a by product of construction activities.

In 1993 – 1996 period, the focus shifted towards initiatives addressing infrastructure and economic development issues in and around the Helensville ward.

Project: Rodney Tourism and Community Development

This project was lead by the Rodney Tourism and Community Development Trust (RTCDT). This was also the first project supported by Shayne where the organisation was not Maori controlled. This was an outcome of experience gained in the South Island where Ngai Tahu had come to the view that Maori could also benefit from mainstream initiatives. The focus of the project was district wide because the tourist related benefits from the project would accrue to the region. The project can be described as consisting of a number of key stages and events:

- Physical restoration of the railway station;
- Inclusion of the station as a Heritage Trail site;
- Developing the old dairy factory site into a new venture work space
- Election of the Trust Chairman to the Rodney District Council in 1995 local body elections
- Establishment of River Valley New Horizons Society which took on the role of the Mainstreet Committee
- Formation of the Tourism Forum as a sub committee of the Rodney District Council, lead by the Trust chairman in his position as a district councillor
- Development of the Twin Coast Discovery strategy
- Agreement reached between the Council and local Maori to utilise the forest assets to secure finance from the Council to underwrite the cost of sealing Highway 16
- Increased traffic flows then precipitated an agreement with Transit NZ whereby the road became recognised as a State Highway. This provided Transit NZ with a mechanism under which the Council was reimbursed for the cost of the sealing work.

CEA role:

- Facilitated funding to support the activity of the RTCDT
- Linked the RTCDT with the receiver managing the disposal of the old dairy company facility and negotiated a lease agreement with the receiver prior to transfer of ownership to the Council
- Identified key people and assisted in the formation of River Valley New Horizons Society
- Facilitated discussions between local Maori and Council

Outcomes:

- Railway station completed
- Employment generated by the refit work on the station
- New businesses established and employment generated
- Employment generated through the sealing work on the highway and through ongoing maintenance work
- Increased tourist numbers into the district
- Improved relationship between local Maori and the Council

Also during this period and continuing currently, work was undertaken with the five marae of Ngati Whatua located south of Wellsford known as Te Taou Hapu.

Project: Developing competency in resource management activities

The basis of this initiative lay in the requirement under the RMA (Resource management Act) for local authorities to consult with tangata whenua (people of the land) in relation to development proposals. Extensive consultation took place with marae representatives over a period spanning 1992 to 1997. The objective was to develop hapu based organisations to represent marae in respect of the RMA. The goal being to ensure that Maori were aware at all times of development opportunities in their area, could exercise their right under the RMA as kaitiaki (guardians) and could also determine the degree of their commercial involvement in those projects.

CEA role:

- Facilitated discussions with marae representatives
- Facilitated the establishment of the first hapu based organisation in the Kaipara district to negotiate on RMA matters. This became the model for marae based in the Rodney district to follow.
- Assisted marae representatives to negotiate a contract for service with local authorities.
- Encouraged key tribal people to seek appropriate qualifications in resource management related fields.

Outcomes:

- Establishment of Te Rito O Ngati Whatua, which carries a mandate from the five marae in the Rodney District to deal with matters relating to the RMA;
- Contracts in place with Rodney District Council, North Shore City Council, Auckland Regional Council
- Commercial relationships with Department of Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Forestry, Transit NZ
- Commercial relationships with Carter Holt Harvey, Stevensons Construction, Green & McCahill and other commercial entities
- Income generated from services provided
- Employment opportunities for local people with the

- companies listed above
- The development of intellectual and human capital through the training undertaken by tribal members
- A change in political awareness and focus from an emphasis on pursuing grievances to one that placed the emphasis on developing opportunities.

In all the processes and projects delineated in this section, the CEA has been instrumental in the resultant positive outcomes.

Concluding Comments

The CHAANZ case study highlights an innovative third economic sector initiative that provides a broad and needs based approach to enhancing well-being at the local level, is an excellent foundation for growing community employment. In terms of the development framework put forward in the paper, closing the gaps must involve the harnessing of community energy.

Untapped economic resources (as for example with the Ngati Whatua radio license) can also be put to viable commercial use through a process of empowerment. The projects undertaken in Rodney/Helensville also illustrate the benefits of recognising and building on the linkages between different communities of interest. The CEA must play a critical role both in the harnessing of community energy and the facilitation of community empowerment.

Future Research

Innovative solutions to housing problems in New Zealand is deserving of more research. Progress that the CHAANZ makes with its Barefoot Builders Campaign is one such area.

There are many local initiatives currently underway about which little or nothing has been written. These micro level initiatives provide plenty of scope for study. Whether or not they operationalise the community energy approach outlined in this paper is an area that can be delved into. Further work on an integrative framework and the usefulness of this as a tool in raising the awareness of people in the community of all the relationships which affect their life, could also be an area of worthwhile research.

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Notes

- Just Housing (Auckland) is already operating a version of this scheme. CHAANZ (2000b) documents the social and economic impact of a family housed in 1996 who are now at the point of moving into to next phase of the scheme, when all rent goes to pay off the cost of building the house. Seven years maximum is the expected time frame when this family will cease to pay rent and eleven years is the maximum time for achieving rent-free status. This example is all the more pertinent because this family would not have qualified for a private sector mortgage.
- The concept of whanaungatanga and its practical implementation also influenced Toko's decision to leave Southland/Otago and transfer to Auckland. It became clear that to give effect whanaungatanga, he needed to come back to his rohe (traditional tribal geographic area).
- 3. At the same time as Ngai Tahu were developing their tribal infrastructure to respond to central government directives, Ngati Whatua ki Orakei, as the only statutory body representing Ngati Whatua, was attempting to formalise their influence over the balance of the tribe. The struggle of various marae to establish themselves as matua marae for Ngati

Whatua continues today. The Ngati Whatua Maori Trust Act 1952, acknowledged Ngati Whatua ki Orakei but did not recognise Maori from other iwi living in the Orakei district. This has perhaps lead to the misleading impression on the part of the wider public that Ngati Whatua are mana whenua for the Orakei district. This is a matter that could be and is disputed by other iwi.

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