

Social capital, participation and sustainable development: recent examples of inclusive consultation in New Zealand

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Abstract

In recent years, the concept of “social capital” has attracted increased attention from economists, sociologists, and theorists in many other social sciences. Social capital has been linked with such fundamental policy goals as social cohesion, resource management, and increased public participation in the political process. There has been particular interest from policy makers who see social capital as a tool for environmentally, socially and economically sustainable development. Related to this, there has been an upsurge of interest in New Zealand in the past several years, by local bodies and other groups, in more participatory forms of public decision-making. This has led to the use of more creative forms of “inclusive consultation”. This paper describes the background and processes involved in several recent consultations in New Zealand, and draws out a number of key practical lessons which have been learnt from these experiences.

Over the past decade in particular, the concept of “social capital” has attracted increasing attention from academics and policy makers internationally. It has been hailed as a critical link between the fields of economics, sociology and political science, signifying a re-acceptance that economic activity does not occur in a vacuum, but rather within a broader social and institutional environment.

Social capital is associated with a range of public policy goals, including social cohesion, reduced violence, increased sense of mutual obligation, and increased participation in democratic processes (Blakeley and Suggate, 1997). In the past decade, there has been particular interest from policy makers who see social capital as a tool for poverty reduction and economic development. According to the World Bank social capital website (1999), “Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion – social capital – is critical for poverty alleviation and sustainable human and economic development”. Strategic advice to the incoming New Zealand Government in November 1999 noted that

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a “cohesive society” is one of six key elements that should be at the heart of national economic policy (Treasury, 1999).

This paper has three main aims: (1) to present an overview of the concept of social capital, including an operational definition; (2) to discuss the relationship between social capital, participatory decision-making and sustainable development; (3) to present the background, processes and practical lessons learnt from recent consultation exercises undertaken in the North Island of New Zealand. Readers may find the paper quite “academic” initially, but it becomes more accessible as it develops.

Section 1 presents a brief review of the social capital literature, with a particular emphasis on the definition and underlying causes of social capital. The operational definition utilised in this paper includes both a “civic” component and an “institutional” component. Together, these incorporate an array of concepts that include generalised trust, norms of cooperation, civic engagement, the rule of law, political stability, and other indicators of institutional effectiveness. Section 2 examines the link between social capital and sustainable development, and discusses how participation can help align individual incentives within a given collective. Section 3 discusses the increased interest by New Zealand local bodies in participatory decision-making and inclusive consultation. Following a brief review of best-practice guidelines, a series of four recent consultation exercises are presented. The first two projects (based in Whangamata and Ngongotaha) used Participatory Appraisal processes. The third (Rotorua youth consultation) used a combination of focus groups and surveys. The fourth is an ongoing consultation project for the entire Northland region, which uses a broad range of methods. Specific aspects of the four projects are compared and contrasted in Section 4 to draw out practical lessons for community consultation in New Zealand. Section 5 concludes.

1. Social capital

The term social capital can be traced at least as far back as 1920, with the publication of Lyda Judson Hanifan’s *The Community Centre* (cited in Feldman and Assaf, 1999). The definition of social capital has since evolved through a series of conceptual frameworks. A sizeable literature has sprung up around social capital and related issues following the popularisation of the term by sociologist James Coleman in 1988, and the study of voluntary associations in Italy by Robert Putnam in the early 1990’s.

There are a variety of different ways to approach the definition of social capital. For instance, Coleman (1988) defines social capital as (1) obligations and expectations (eg, of trustworthiness), (2) social norms (eg, of cooperation and reciprocity) and (3) information channels (including communication during casual interaction). Another way of examining social capital is by considering parallels between the *cognitive* and *structural* dimensions of social capital (refer Table 1).

Table 1: The structural and cognitive dimensions of social capital

| | <i>Structural</i> | <i>Cognitive</i> |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Sources and manifestations | Roles and rules Networks and other interpersonal relationships Procedures and precedents | Norms Values Attitudes Beliefs |
| Domains | Social organisation | Civic culture |
| Dynamic factors | Horizontal linkages Vertical linkages | Trust, solidarity, cooperation, generosity |
| Common elements | Expectations that lead to cooperative behaviour, which produces mutual benefits | |

Source: Uphoff, 2000, p 221

Social capital is embodied in such complex and often unobservable phenomena as generalised trust, shared values, cooperative norms, formal and informal networks, stable and effective institutions, and social cohesion.¹ Early attempts at interpreting the concept of social capital revolved around levels of “civic engagement” (Putnam, 1993), resulting from a cultural proclivity for “spontaneous sociability” (Fukuyama, 1995). A central insight from Putnam’s vision of social capital was that generalised trust and civic engagement are highly correlated – trust is built through association, and increased association leads to communication and greater levels of trust.² This type of relationship may be examined empirically using cross-country data. The most widely used empirical measure of generalised trust is the percentage of respondents per country who agree to a question in the World Values Survey (Inglehart *et al*, 2000) about whether “most people can be trusted.” The trust variable ranges from less than 10 percent in some South American countries, to more than 50 percent in Scandinavian countries. Using this and other data, a number of competing explanations can be tested to gain a better understanding of what causes the variation in social capital between countries.

In more recent years the definition of social capital has been extended to incorporate aspects of governance and institutional effectiveness (eg, Woolcock 1998; Knack, 1999; Spellerberg, 2000). Collier (1998) makes a clear distinction between “civil” social capital and “governmental” social capital, which is a useful way of approaching an operational definition.³ In two subsequent reviews of the economic growth literature, Knack (1999) and Ahn and Hemming (2000) make use of this distinction. Civil social capital is the level of generalised trust, norms of cooperation and civic engagement in society (or within a specific community or region). Governmental social capital is the effectiveness of institutions (eg, governance structures) in facilitating collective action. This is indicated by such features of society as the rule of law, political stability, and the effective protection of property and contract rights. What unifies both types of social capital is that they each play a part in overcoming collective action problems.

¹ The distinction between the concepts of social capital and social cohesion is not clear, both being related to overall social “connectedness”. Some authors use the term interchangeably, or prefer one to the other. For instance, Ritzen *et al* (2001, p 5) prefer the term social cohesion for a number of practical reasons, but define it in the same way that social capital is defined in this paper.

² Another key result from Putnam’s research was evidence of the link between civic engagement and institutional effectiveness.

³ Serageldin and Grootaert (1999) use the terms micro- and macrolevel social capital to describe the same distinction.

The link between civil society (eg, community networks) and the institutional environment (eg, local government) is critical to our understanding of social capital and the role of increased participation. There is evidence that high levels of civil social capital facilitate the establishment of more effective institutions (eg, Fukuyama, 1995; Aron, 1998, pp 4-5). In turn, the political environment may encourage or discourage local organisation and participation (eg, Grootaert, 1998), and provide a better or worse environment for civil social capital to develop.⁴ In the absence of strong formal institutions, pre-existing civil social capital may lead to greater reliance on informal structures.⁵ Thus, civil social capital and governmental social capital are both complements and substitutes (Collier, 1998, p 15).

If we accept for the moment that there is a link between social capital and sustainable development (in the broadest sense of the term), then critical questions for public policy makers are (1) what causes levels of social capital to vary between different groups of people (including different countries), and (2) what can be done to increase social capital? The second of these questions will be addressed later in this paper.

In terms of the first question, a review of the cross-country research to date shows that civil social capital tends to be highest in societies whose populations are relatively homogeneous, particularly in terms of income and ethnicity (eg, Zak and Knack, 1998; Glaeser, Laibson, Scheinkman and Soutter, 2000; Alesina and Ferrara, 2000). According to Zak and Knack (p 22): “Social distance can be measured along various dimensions, such as blood and ethnic ties; differences in language, culture, education, income, wealth, occupation, social status, or political and economic rights; or geographic distance”⁶. The greater the degree of social divergence within a given collective, the greater the barriers to communication, exchange and cooperation (Grafton *et al*, pending). Shared values based on such things as religion, concepts of justice and professional standards have also been postulated to increase civil social capital (Svendsen, 1998). In addition, there is evidence that the stability of a community (often proxied by the level of home ownership) is related to civil social capital.⁷

⁴ For an example of empirical evidence, refer to Knack and Keefer (1995).

⁵ For instance, Rose (2000) provides evidence that in the “hourglass societies” of the former Soviet states, a strong civil society may be compensating for a dysfunctional state sector. The link between civil society and the state is characterised by a low level of interaction and a general distrust of the elite.

⁶ A common measure of “ethnolinguistic fractionalisation” is the probability of two randomly selected individuals in a country being of a different ethnicity or not speaking the same language. We have good reason to believe that the relationship between ethnolinguistic fractionalisation and social capital will be non-linear (holding all other factors constant). Countries with either very homogeneous or very fractionalised populations would theoretically have higher levels of social capital than countries in which two or more major ethnolinguistic groups were in competition for the same set of resources, each of sufficient size to form effective lobby groups (as, for instance, in Fiji). In highly fractionalised countries we might expect a greater “tolerance for diversity”. By the same reasoning, we may suspect such things as income/wealth inequality and religious fractionalisation to have a non-linear relationship with social capital. It is relatively easy to think of cases where conflict is present due to the presence of 2-3 major interest groups, be they related to the distribution of wealth (eg, Zimbabwe), religion (eg, Northern Ireland), or a combination of cultural factors (eg, the former Yugoslavia). Esteban and Ray (1994) show that social polarisation is theoretically greatest when there are exactly 2 similarly sized groups.

⁷ For instance, DiPasquale and Glaeser (1998) find that high levels of home ownership in an area (a blunt measure of “connectedness”) may create incentives for greater investment in social capital, as measured through civic engagement. Glaeser, Laibson and Secerdote (2000) find evidence, using a model of

There is some evidence pointing to the causes of governmental social capital, although these factors are more difficult to isolate and classify than in the case of civil social capital. La Porta *et al* (1999) investigated the determinants of government performance (using measures of government efficiency, the size of the public sector, interference with the private sector, output of public goods and political freedom), by way of underlying (ie, exogenous) factors such as ethnolinguistic fractionalisation, legal origin, predominant religion and level of economic development. One of the key findings from La Porta *et al* is that ethnolinguistic fractionalisation has a “very consistent adverse effect on government performance” (p 245). Keefer and Knack (2000) argue that “social polarisation” (eg, ethnic tensions, and/or inequality in incomes and land) make it less likely that a society will arrive at a stable and predictable set of rules governing property rights. According to Perotti (1996) and others, highly polarised societies tend to have greater political instability because of the incentives for different groups to try and appropriate the resources of other groups through non-market activities. This is analogous to Olson’s (1982) argument that long-established organisations tend to encourage rent-seeking behaviours.

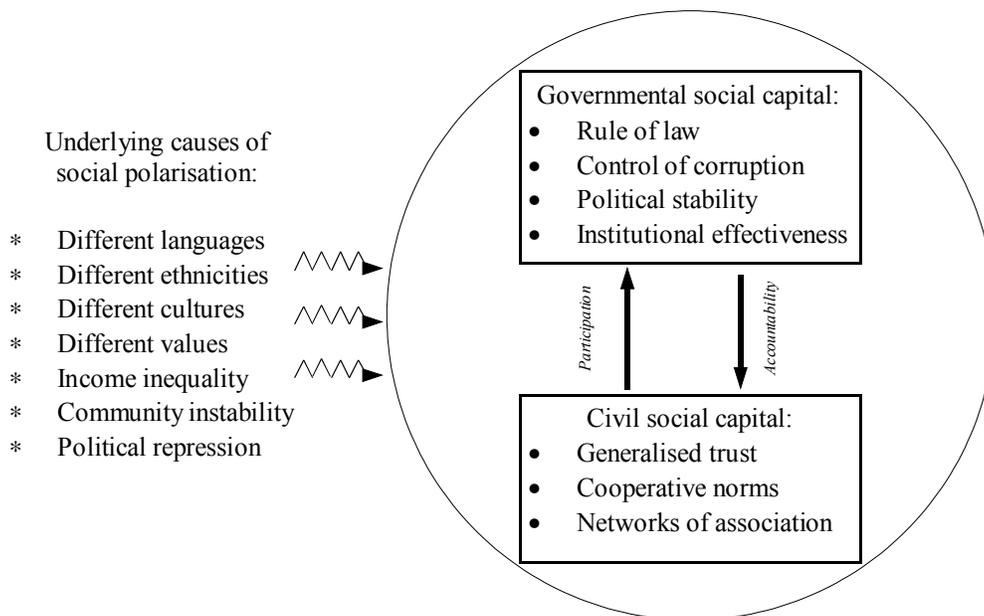
Treisman (2000) presents additional evidence on the underlying causes of governmental social capital, through a cross-national investigation of the causes of corruption. Treisman finds that countries with a relatively high level of economic development and an open economy (amongst other factors) tend to have less corrupt governments. Other potential factors influencing governmental social capital include the levels of civil and political freedom in a country.⁸ The relationship between civil rights, political freedom and governmental social capital is analogous to the relationship between income equality and civil social capital. Income equality, civil rights and political freedoms are all aspects of what might be called egalitarianism – the relative homogeneity of resources and opportunities throughout the population, which helps mitigate social polarisation.

The sample of evidence presented above illustrates how statistical analyses have enabled us to isolate, at least with some degree of confidence, the historical and cultural roots of observed variations in social capital between different countries (refer Figure 1). However, this does little to help policy makers understand how they can increase social capital at the local level to improve development outcomes. Unlike the physical sciences, there is a dearth of “experimental” data with which to evaluate different approaches to social capital “investment”. In the words of Uphoff (2000, p 227): “Much of the creation of social organisation – roles, rules, procedures, precedents, relationships – is unplanned and purposive only in small ways. Its role as social capital is mostly a by-product”. However, it should be clear from the discussion so far that a social capital investment strategy for a specific community of interest must include the development of meaningful, dependable, long-term relationships between members of that group, and between civil society and the institutions of governance.

individual-based social capital formation, that social capital is higher among homeowners and declines with expected mobility.

⁸ There has been considerable investigation of the impacts of democracy, civil liberties and political rights on economic performance (eg, Kormendi and Meguire, 1985; Scully, 1988; Helliwell, 1994; Barro, 1996).

Figure 1: Causes and indicators of social capital



Source: Author

2. Social capital, participation and sustainable development

Although much of the research cited in this paper is focused on the link between social capital and various aspects of economic performance (such as economic growth and poverty alleviation),⁹ there also appears to be a strong link between social capital and both environmental protection (eg, managing in-shore fisheries) and social outcomes (eg, community crime prevention). This is because of the fundamental role that social capital plays in aligning incentives to overcome a broad range of collective action problems. The existence of adequate levels of social capital within a particular collective (eg, a neighbourhood, community or society) enables people within that group to coordinate their activities for mutual benefit, mitigating opportunistic behaviour.

The role of participation in public activities and decision-making is illustrated by Ostrom’s (2000) study of Nepalese irrigation systems. Farmers throughout the world often face collective action problems when determining the allocation of costs and benefits associated with irrigation systems. Ostrom reports evidence from a study of 150 irrigation systems, which shows that many of the “primitive” stone-trees-and-mud headworks constructed by farmers significantly outperformed systems that had been improved through the construction of modern concrete and steel headworks (eg, in terms

⁹ Refer for instance to <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/topic/pov1.htm>.

of maintenance, equity of water delivery, and agricultural production). This appears to be largely because the “modern” irrigation systems were mostly funded from outside the local area and constructed by professional engineers, with no regard for pre-existing local management systems. A key finding was that “farmer-governed irrigation systems are able to achieve better and more equitable outcomes than those managed by a national agency” (p 192). One of Ostrom’s key policy conclusions was that: “Instead of presuming that local users face an impossible social dilemma or collective-action problem, we are better advised that it is *possible*, even though difficult, for those facing severe collective-action problems to overcome them. The greater the level and salience of the potential joint benefit and the existence of a supportive political system, the higher the probability that collective action will be undertaken” (p 199).

Narayan and Pritchett (2000) provide another illustration of the link between social capital and sustainable development. Using household survey results from Tanzanian villages, Narayan and Pritchett find that their social capital index is associated with higher reported levels of parental participation in schools, and higher levels of school quality. Villages with more social capital were also more likely to have undertaken community road building activities, and to have adopted more modern agricultural practices.

Given that theory and evidence suggest a link between social capital and sustainable development, we return now to the question of how to invest in social capital. Activities that build social capital must necessarily foster cooperation rather than conflict. Thus, they must reflect community norms, have a mandate from the community of interest, use a form of organisation that is appropriate, and enable the community’s expectations and obligations to be met (pers. comm., David Robinson, November 1999). From the perspective of policy makers, this means a commitment to community development principles, including the active involvement of communities in defining issues and problems, and in designing and implementing decisions. Such an approach is advocated by New Zealand’s Department of Internal Affairs (1999), because it facilitates the transfer of skills between people, develops self reliance in the community, builds organisational capacity and networks, ensures local ownership of projects and decisions, and utilises local resources to solve local problems.

The community development approach involves a decentralising of control away from the “experts” and towards the community. Arnstein's (1969) seminal article on citizen participation in planning activities presents this idea succinctly by way of a ladder metaphor, with citizen “empowerment” moving from non-participation (manipulation, therapy), to degrees of tokenism (informing, consultation, placation), to degrees of citizen power (partnership, delegated power, citizen control). It should be emphasised that more participatory forms of decision-making are not only likely to foster social capital (eg, through a greater level of political participation, and improved accountability of governing institutions), but are also likely to improve the quality of decisions through the utilisation of local knowledge.¹⁰

¹⁰ In the words of Cheyne (1999, p 218), “deliberative procedures can more adequately encompass the diverse perspectives and experiences in contemporary communities”.

3. Inclusive and deliberative methods of consultation in New Zealand

A number of social commentators in New Zealand believe that “community governance” should be a legitimate and important function of local authorities, beyond their traditional agenda of roads, rates and rubbish (see, for example, Hutchinson, 1999; McKinlay, 1999; Richardson, 1999).¹¹ Enhancement of the transparency and accountability of local government was one of the major objectives of legislative reforms in New Zealand over the past 12 years.¹²

A key aspect of community governance is the opening up of communication channels, and the active and meaningful involvement of communities in decisions that affect them.¹³ For this reason, there has been an increased interest in recent years by local bodies and other groups in New Zealand in relation to more inclusive public consultation strategies. Inclusive consultation processes may include “traditional” forms of communication and feedback, such as public meetings, surveys and submissions, but are increasingly also including more meaningful face-to-face interactions (eg, charettes).¹⁴

MacLennan (2000) recently undertook an extensive survey of efforts by local authorities in New Zealand to involve citizens in “deliberative processes” – that is, processes which “emphasise the importance of face-to-face discussion and debate among citizens as a feature of decision-making” (p 1). Examples of deliberative processes in the survey questionnaire included focus groups, citizens’ juries and participatory appraisal processes. Of the forty-two local bodies who responded, 74 percent had made use of stakeholder/key interest forums in the previous 12-month period, and 65 percent had used mediation/negotiation. In terms of less “traditional” forms of consultation, 48 percent of the respondent local bodies had used a citizen advisory group in the previous 12-month period, 48 percent had used focus groups, and 45 percent had used community planning tools (eg, charettes).

Following analysis of survey results and a series of in-depth case studies, MacLennan identified a number of best practice guidelines for using deliberative processes, including the need to:

- be clear about the status of consultation outcomes with respect to the decision-making process;
- make all relevant information available;
- take a flexible approach to the process;

¹¹ There is an increasing interest in new forms of governance world-wide, due in part to a pervasive trend towards declining confidence in the institutions of government. For a good review of the evidence and tests of various possible causes, refer to Pharr and Putnam (2000).

¹² Refer to Cousins (1999) for a discussion of legislative changes relating to minimum standards for local body consultation, and examples of councils which have gone further than these minimum standards.

¹³ The results of recent Communitrak Surveys show that, on average, more than half of New Zealand’s citizens wish their local bodies to undertake public consultation on major issues (Cousins, 1999, p 233).

¹⁴ A charette is a deliberative process in which workshops are held in the community of interest and members of the public may engage with “experts” to jointly design solutions (eg, in relation to urban planning).

- consider the most appropriate times and places to ensure the widest possible participation by members of the community;
- be inclusive in inviting participants, taking care to involve all interested parties (including critics);
- ensure participants are broadly representative of the socio-demographic make-up of the community of interest;
- be mindful of language as a potential barrier (including literacy issues);
- train and support internal agency staff (and politicians) in the principles, processes and skills of facilitation and consultation;
- ensure that sufficient time is taken to develop a common understanding of the issues and priorities emerging from the consultation;
- take heed of the outcomes (eg, actively incorporate the results into policies and decisions).

The remainder of this section looks at the background and processes followed in four recent major consultations, along with some evaluative comments. The projects are: Forward Whangamata (funded by Environment Waikato); Ngongotaha community planning (Rotorua District Council); Rotorua youth consultation (Rotorua District Council and other funding partners); and Northland Forward Together (Northland Regional Community Trust and Industry New Zealand). The first two consultations were in similarly sized communities and used similar methods, but had widely differing backgrounds and intended outcomes. The third involved soliciting ideas and opinions from an interest group that was not just defined geographically, but also in terms of an age range. The fourth case study (ongoing) covers a much larger population base and uses a wider range of approaches to consultation.

Case Study 1: Forward Whangamata

In October 1999, Environment Waikato (EW)¹⁵ conducted an innovative consultation exercise in the coastal community of Whangamata, on the eastern shore of the Coromandel Peninsula (refer Appendix 1). The purpose of the consultation was to assist in the development of a Local Area Management Strategy for Whangamata Harbour and its catchment, addressing such issues as water quality and the encroachment of mangroves. Other key stakeholders identified prior to the consultation included the Thames Coromandel District Council (responsible, amongst other things, for management of the urban environment), the Department of Conservation, and the Hauraki Maori Trust Board.

Around six months prior to EW's decision to consult with the Whangamata community, it had been a major supporter of a workshop on "Participatory Appraisal" (PA) techniques, which included elements of both training and fieldwork (Inglis, 1999). For a number of reasons, including the potentially contentious nature of the water quality issues to be consulted on, as well as the previously poor record of relations between the

¹⁵ Environment Waikato (otherwise known as the Waikato Regional Council) is a regulatory authority responsible for managing regional air, land and water resources (for instance, by monitoring contaminated sites and promoting soil conservation).

community, EW and other agencies, EW decided that a PA approach would be appropriate for this consultation. Participatory Appraisal uses a range of visual techniques (eg, mapping) and semi-structured face-to-face interviews which can be undertaken in both workshop settings and public areas (eg, supermarkets, schools, shopping malls). The process used in Whangamata involved asking a series of open-ended questions (ie, “what do you like about living in Whangamata”; “what do you not like about living in Whangamata”; and “what would you like to change about Whangamata”) and then probing beyond these to gain a deeper understanding of specific issues raised. The principles and techniques behind PA have been developed over a number of years and in a wide range of settings to explicitly account for and mitigate the shortfalls of traditional consultation processes (such as public meetings and submissions). The emphasis of PA is on ensuring equal opportunity for any member of the community to record their knowledge, ideas and opinions in a non-confrontational environment, to ensure input is gained from interested parties who may typically be excluded by other consultation processes.¹⁶

The Whangamata PA was held over a seven-day period, including a national public holiday (Labour Weekend). The tight time-frame helped to create an intensive period of “public excitement” in the project.¹⁷ The choice of a long weekend was vital to ensuring that absentee rate-payers and visitors could have adequate input.¹⁸ Initial information was disseminated via local newspapers prior to the consultation, including a background information pamphlet. Professional facilitators were contracted for the project from the group who had attended the earlier PA training workshop. Although the team was brought together on short notice, the fact that they were all experienced and shared “the common language of PA” meant that this was not a major challenge. The consultation was launched with a public meeting, followed by a period of extensive “outreach” in the Whangamata community. A drop-in centre in the main shopping area was also staffed over the period, where people could read the ideas of others and add their own. This was a successful aspect of the project, enabling people to see the community vision as it developed. During the consultation period, socio-demographic details were tracked to ensure the sample was broadly representative, and to enable specific groups to be targeted where there was an obvious short-fall. In total, around 650 respondents contributed their ideas and opinions over the seven-day period.

The resulting information was compiled into document form and made available through key agencies.¹⁹ EW then used the information to develop draft vision statements for the

¹⁶ The PA methodology may be thought of as a “deliberative opinion poll”, in which the “emphasis is on what the public would think if it had greater opportunity to think about the issues.... The objective of the deliberative opinion poll is to provide a context in which a representative microcosm of the mass public engages in deliberative decision-making” (Cheyne, 1999, pp 221-222).

¹⁷ A tight time-frame for implementation was also chosen for logistical and financial reasons, although in retrospect it may have been possible to extend the time-frame by better leveraging the consultation budget (refer to suggestions in Section 4 below).

¹⁸ Whangamata has a local population catchment of less than 4,000, but this increases to more than 24,000 during the summer period and on public holidays. This in itself has the potential to create a degree of “social polarisation” within the community, and the contrasting views of local people and visitors were to some extent discernible in the consultation results.

¹⁹ The task of summarising qualitative data into a meaningful format without losing its “texture” is by no means straightforward, and is beyond the scope of this paper. Major “themes” emerging from the

management of Whangamata Harbour and its catchment, which were conveyed to the public through newspapers and a public workshop. The final outcome of this and further work is the development of a strategy which identifies specific issues, actions, responsibilities, time-frames and costs. Another key output from the project has been the development of a closer relationship between EW, the Whangamata Community Board and the Thames Coromandel District Council, which may eventuate into a community plan for the Whangamata township.

Further information on the specific techniques and methodology used in Whangamata, and the detailed consultation outcomes, may be found in reports available from EW (1999a, b). A full evaluation of the project may be found in Local Government New Zealand (pending). The remainder of this sub-section focuses on some of the general lessons learnt from subsequent evaluation of the Whangamata consultation project.

Prior to the implementation stage of the consultation, but after the PA approach had been decided upon, EW hosted a workshop of key stakeholder agencies to demonstrate PA techniques in action, and to help identify the scope of the project. The involvement of other key stakeholders was vital because, for instance, a large number of complex and interrelated factors which affect the harbour and catchment were beyond the control of EW. Although EW recognised this importance and invited other key stakeholders to take part, in retrospect the project manager felt that these stakeholders should have been involved at an earlier stage (for instance, in designing aspects of the consultation strategy). There was subsequently found to be a lack of support amongst the potential partners due to funding considerations and other commitments (for instance, the Hauraki Maori Trust was already committed to preparing its own regional environmental plan).

Because of the “blank slate” approach to the questioning process during the PA, the consultation results related to a far greater range of issues than had been originally anticipated. When asked, for instance, about what they would like to change in their local area, respondents were not mindful of the “arbitrary” divisions of responsibility associated with the various agencies involved. In particular, while EW received a vast amount of information about perceived water quality issues, a far greater frequency of responses related to issues under the auspices of the District Council (eg, urban amenity issues).

Following the consultation, EW held a feedback workshop for the participating agencies. At this and subsequent meetings it was discovered that iwi²⁰ felt they had not been adequately or appropriately consulted during the process, and that a parallel process may have been more suitable. This was of particular significance to EW given the cultural and legislative connection of Maori to the geographic area.²¹ Difficulty in finding appropriate

Whangamata consultation related to water quality issues, concern about the urban development (eg, high rises and infill housing), and conflicts for space in the harbour (eg, moorings, skiers, mangroves, marina, jet skis) (pers. comm., Alan Campbell, March 2001).

²⁰ The term iwi relates in a literal sense to tribal affiliation. A related term is tangata whenua (“people of the land”). In common parlance the term iwi is sometimes used loosely to refer to Maori in general (including urban Maori who have been disenfranchised from their tribal affiliation).

²¹ For instance, the Resource Management Act 1991 gives Maori a political status and formal stakeholder interest in natural resources which cannot be ignored by local government. In addition, consultation has

methods for consultation with Maori has been an ongoing issue for local bodies, central government and other agencies for many years (refer, for instance to Hayward, 1999, pp 186-187 and pp 192-193). EW remains committed to ongoing consultation with local Maori, and recognises in retrospect that Maori should have been involved at a much earlier stage of the project.

Overall, the outcomes of the Whangamata consultation have been well received by most parties, with continued communication still under way resulting in stronger relationships between key agencies and interest groups. The process raised the awareness of key stakeholders in the need for a more integrated, holistic approach to planning and decision-making. There has also reportedly been a change in “mind-set” since the Whangamata consultation, with a greater appreciation of participatory approaches by the various agencies involved. There has been recognition that “the outreach process was critical – ‘meeting people on their own turf’. If the people don’t come to you, you need to go out to where they live and work and encourage them to become involved” (Local Government New Zealand, pending). In addition, community members are now more accustomed to working collaboratively, and progress towards final strategy development and implementation is accelerating. All of these outcomes reflect a higher level of social capital.

However, according to the project manager, the “anger in the community” due to previous poor relations with EW and other agencies is still present to some extent. Overcoming this requires a long-term approach of commitment and follow-up by both EW and other agencies: “Any minor slip in follow-up produces a major setback to the building of trust. Those who were angriest took a long time to get it off their chest. They had to state their anger over and over, and it had to be done very publicly. Agency staff needed to be able to receive this without getting defensive (a major challenge)” (pers. comm., Alan Campbell, March 2001).

been tentatively identified by case law as a principle of the Treaty of Waitangi (Hayward, 1999).

Case Study 2: Ngongotaha community planning

In September 2000, Rotorua District Council conducted a consultation exercise in the lakeside village of Ngongotaha, located several kilometres to the northwest of Rotorua city.²² The purpose of the consultation was to solicit local ideas and opinions to assist in upgrading and modernising the village's main shopping area.²³ It was felt that in order to advance these plans in an integrated manner, a long-term strategic vision was needed. Key motivations driving this need included a projected major increase in traffic flow through the main street due to increased lifestyle developments in the rural area to the north of Ngongotaha, as well as an impending upgrade of the Tauranga-Rotorua Direct Road.²⁴ Other key stakeholders included Progress/Kokiri Ngongotaha²⁵, Ngongotaha Primary School, Ngongotaha community police, and local hapu (sub-tribes). Prior to the consultation, a comprehensive background report was compiled (Rotorua District Council, 2000a), the consultation was advertised through a local community newsletter, and stakeholder meetings were held to isolate key issues and demonstrate the consultation methods to be used. In addition to the physical upgrade issues, it was resolved that objectives for the consultation would address the need for sportsfields and reserves, security and safety, and issues to do with young people.

The consultation methodology used in the Ngongotaha exercise was based on the Whangamata experience. A number of the facilitators from the Whangamata PA were contracted in to train and lead a small team of local (ie, Rotorua) facilitators. Members of the facilitation team were invited by the project organisers through pre-existing networks of association. Rather than offering an hourly rate, Council contracted members of the facilitation team on the basis of a flat-rate koha (gift), which in some cases was paid to an agency rather than an individual. A key aspect of the training process was that Council staff (eg, from the Planning department) were also involved, in order to generate additional commitment and understanding of the process, and to build capacity within Council for subsequent consultations. The timeframes, methods and other aspects of the Whangamata PA carried over relatively well to the Ngongotaha project, with the possible

²² Ngongotaha (population approximately 4000) acts as a local service centre for urban residents and the surrounding rural community. Although it might be possible to describe Ngongotaha as a suburb of Rotorua, local residents value their physical separation from the main urban area of Rotorua. The term "Ngongotaha village" is used consistently by both local residents and Rotorua city residents, and is reflected in local signage (including the names of shops).

²³ Expected "social tensions" within the community included "village" versus "development" proponents. There was also expected to be some degree of scepticism from residents who felt that the redevelopment of Ngongotaha had been "neglected" by Council while upgrades in the main Rotorua urban area were being completed.

²⁴ The shortest direct route between the cities of Rotorua and Tauranga involves driving through Ngongotaha. However, a 7-kilometre stretch of the Tauranga-Rotorua Direct Road is currently unsealed, so the majority of people prefer to take the less direct eastern route through Te Puke. Also of significance to traffic volumes and related safety issues is the presence of heavy traffic in the area due to (for instance) logging activities.

²⁵ The consultation was timely in that the Ngongotaha Community Association and the Ngongotaha Businessman's Association had recently been dissolved in order to form a unified group (Progress/Kokiri Ngongotaha) representing the interests of the whole Ngongotaha community.

exception of the siting of the drop-in centre.²⁶ The final response rate was around 600, which was similar to that of the Whangamata consultation.

Suitably qualified individuals were engaged from within Council to assist with Maori liaison. It was intended that local marae²⁷ representatives would be involved in stakeholder meetings prior to the consultation, but unexpected events occurred which made this difficult within the planned timeframes. Despite continued efforts, only one marae-based meeting was held during the main implementation stage, and this was not entirely successful. Confounding factors included the fact that individual marae committees met on a fixed (eg, monthly) schedule, and the committee structure itself was not conducive to the use of “prescriptive” consultation processes. However, a public feedback meeting conducted at the end of the main consultation period was attended by a number of local Maori leaders who subsequently held a formal hui (meeting) with invitations to all local marae.

Overall, the outcomes of the consultation fulfilled the objectives of the project. A diverse range of ideas was solicited, relating to such things as urban amenity, social issues, economic strategies, enhancement of the natural environment, and traffic management options. Further information on the specific techniques and methodology used in Ngongotaha, and the detailed consultation outcomes, may be found in reports available from Rotorua District Council (2000b, c).

Following the PA, Council prepared a list of nineteen small projects that could quickly be acted upon in response to frequently stated issues. Included were items such as more seats in reserves, litter management, signs about dog walking, improved cleaning regimes of public toilets, and the removal of unsightly car bodies. Most of these projects have now been completed or are well progressed. An internal Council project team (including Community Services, Environmental Services, and Works management and staff) is co-ordinating the preparation of strategic options and recommendations within the context of the PA outcomes. Further work has included field research to develop a practical understanding of perceived issues (eg, parking problems), and investigation of the experiences of other townships faced with similar traffic challenges. A full survey of the township centre is currently underway to provide additional land ownership and usage information on which specific options will be developed.

Although continued pressure has been kept on Council departments by Ngongotaha residents and elected local councillors, the development of an overall upgrade plan for the main shopping area is taking longer than projected. Nevertheless, Ngongotaha residents are kept updated on progress via a communication strategy between Council and the Ngongotaha community (pers. comm., Barbara MacLennan, March 2001). This ongoing

²⁶ Specifically, the drop-in centre in Ngongotaha (the Ngongotaha community hall) was not in an area with high volumes of pedestrian traffic. Safety of vehicles was also an issue for the public meetings held in the hall at the beginning and end of the consultation period, but this was mitigated through the efforts of a community-based security service.

²⁷ Marae, or meeting places, are a focal point for tribal relations. Five marae were identified in Ngongotaha and surrounding areas.

communication represents the most obvious evidence that the consultation has resulted in increased social capital.

Case Study 3: Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring): Rotorua youth consultation

Over the period October 1998 to March 1999, Rotorua District Council undertook a consultation with local youth aged 10-25 years. This case study serves as a contrast to the previous examples, in that the community of interest was not just defined in terms of geographic area, but also in terms of age. This presented a number of issues and challenges requiring specific attention. The project originated from a commitment by Council to take a much closer look at local youth issues, and to ultimately develop a Youth Policy. Recognising that local authority input was only one part of the overall picture, Council collaborated with other youth-focused organisations²⁸ to join in a strategic approach to learning more about local young people and their needs (Rotorua District Council, 1999a). It was intended that the results of the project would be publicly available to enable more strategic planning and resource allocation decisions for a range of interested local organisations and funding bodies.

Prior to the consultation, Council commissioned a research report on comparative methodologies for local youth needs analysis, and also commissioned a demographic profile of Rotorua young people.²⁹ The comparative analysis identified that a combination of focus groups and questionnaires would be an appropriate methodology for the consultation: "... firstly focus groups to determine the issues to include in the questionnaire. Secondly a questionnaire administered to a large sample to obtain a cross section of the community..." (Rotorua District Council, 1997, p 14). The demographic profile proved invaluable for ensuring samples were broadly representative at each stage of the consultation. For instance: "Special features of Rotorua's young population include the high and growing proportion of Maori in our District. While our overall District population is around 34 per cent Maori, in the younger age groupings we now have almost equal proportions of Maori and non-Maori. Due to differing birth rates, this trend is likely to continue. Another feature of our young population is the high rate of parenting. Nearly half of our 20-24 year olds have at least one child, in comparison to a national average of around 30 per cent" (Rotorua District Council, 1998, p i).

Several months prior to the implementation stage of the consultation, a Steering Group and a Youth Advisory Group (Te Pukenga Rangatahi) were formed to guide the project. These groups worked relatively closely together (with the invaluable assistance of a group facilitator) over the subsequent course of the project. The six-member Steering Group was made up of people from Council and other youth-focused organisations. The Youth Advisory Group comprised 13 young people aged 10-25 years, of mixed gender and ethnicity, and from different parts of the Rotorua District. Invitations were made through pre-existing networks of the Steering Group members.

²⁸ Specifically, the Rotorua Energy Charitable Trust, Rotorua Safer Community Council, Work and Income NZ – Community Employment, and Toi Te Ora – Public Health (the public health arm of Pacific Health).

²⁹ A set of ethical guidelines was also developed for the project prior to implementation.

Overall, the consultation involved 32 focus groups of young people followed by a written survey of almost 2,700 young people.³⁰ The focus groups were largely conducted by experienced professional youth facilitators, supplemented by a small number of focus groups facilitated by interested parties (including young people). Many of the focus groups were held in schools, with young people in specific age ranges (eg, 12-15 years). Other focus groups included unemployed young people, young people with children, Pacific Islands young people, bilingual Maori young people, and returning tertiary students. Outputs from the project included a series of reports, summary reports, and sub-reports on specific topics.³¹ Further information on the methodology and consultation outcomes may be found in reports available from Rotorua District Council (1999a, b, c). A full evaluation of the project may be found in Local Government New Zealand (pending).

A relatively high level of media awareness was generated throughout the consultation by way of regular stakeholder newsletters to more than 100 organisations and individuals, articles in local and national newspapers, and a series of short targeted advertisements on local radio stations. Iwi contact was maintained via Te Arawa Maori Trust Board.

The success of the project relied strongly on the input and guidance of the Youth Advisory Group. This group developed a working name and logo for the project, helped plan the wording of questions and other logistical matters for the focus groups, helped design survey questionnaires, and helped guide the media strategy. The group was also involved in the initial analysis stage of the focus group outcomes, and two members accepted an invitation to be survey fieldworkers during February 1999. Near the end of the project, the Youth Advisory Group helped transform the focus group results into a highly effective video, and a sub-group helped develop a youth-friendly report of the overall project outcomes. The video is shown in the social studies classes of some Rotorua schools.

The success of the Rotorua youth consultation, in terms of both scale and quality of results, was due to excellent collaboration among a wide range of local agencies and organisations. Throughout the process, much was learnt about the issues, ideas and opinions of local young people. Respondents clearly indicated their desire and ability to be involved in decision-making, and in planning and running more local youth-oriented events, venues and programmes (Rotorua District Council, 1999a). As part of an ongoing evaluation of the process, post-consultation outcomes have been tracked and recorded (Rotorua District Council, pending). Outcomes of the project have included Council's Youth Policy and Action Plans (1999/2000 and 2000/2001), the provision of planning information for a recently opened "school for young parents", new youth entries in local events, and an increased focus on positive aspects of youth in Rotorua. The inclusion of young people in public decision-making and policy implementation is a positive sign in

³⁰ Altogether, almost one in five young people in Rotorua aged 10-25 contributed responses.

³¹ Sub-reports were produced both proactively and in response to specific requests, and were based around common themes within the data, including health and wellbeing; transport and road safety; education, training and work; crime and safety; Maori issues; District Council facilities and services; sports and games; music, culture and youth talent; tourism and business development; the natural environment; ethnicity, race and culture; reputation and self-image; young womens' issues; and legal rights and issues.

terms of fostering inter-generational social capital and sustainable development in the Rotorua District.

Case Study 4: Northland Forward Together / Kokiri Ngatahi Taitokerau

The implementation stage of a major consultation process in the Northland Region began in February 2001, and continues through to May/June. Given that this is an ongoing project, it is neither appropriate nor possible to comment on a number of aspects of the consultation, or to evaluate its success. However, by describing the background and methodology being followed, and comparing and contrasting this project with the previous examples, new insights may be gained.

The purpose of the Northland consultation is to gain community input into the development of a 20-year sustainable economic strategy for the entire region, including small local communities and Maori.³² The project is funded by the Northland Regional Community Trust and Industry New Zealand, and the end result is intended to be a strategy for all Northlanders. In July 2000 a Steering Group was appointed to guide the project, comprising nominations from the Northland Regional Council and each of Northland's three district councils, as well as Work and Income NZ, business leaders, and Maori nominations. In December 2000 a professional consulting firm was engaged to work alongside the Steering Group, to perform the "operational" aspects of the consultation.³³ With the help of Te Puni Kokiri/Ministry of Maori Development, a Maori Advisory Group was subsequently formed to work alongside the Steering Group to ensure Maori are fully involved in the process.³⁴

The Northland consultation differs from the first two case studies in a number of significant ways, not least of which is the scale of the exercise. With a population of more than 100,000 to be consulted, spread over a considerable geographic area, the application of a series of community-based PA processes would not be optimal in the available timeframe. In addition, the aim of the Northland project is simultaneously more abstract and more specific than that of any of the previous examples. Rather than asking people to consider what they like, dislike and wish to change about their local community (or in the case of the Rotorua youth consultation, likes, dislikes and issues for young

³² The Northland Region has a population of approximately 144,000, and comprises three separate local authorities – Kaipara, Whangarei and the Far North. It was one of the earliest parts of New Zealand to be settled, by both Maori and Europeans. The pattern of settlement and development in the region has led to a strong potential for conflict, socially, economically and environmentally. For instance, the eastern part of the region includes the thriving (European-focused) tourism area of the Bay of Islands, while residents in the western part of the region have a relatively low average socio-economic status. The region retains a large Maori population, particular in the north and west. For further information refer to the Background Information report commissioned by the Northland Strategy Steering Group (2001).

³³ The professional firm was contracted on the basis of a written proposal that included the major elements of the methodology described here.

³⁴ Following an initial meeting of local Maori leaders, the terms of reference (kaupapa) for the Advisory Group were written out and agreed upon. These specifically state that the Advisory Group is not intended to be representative of Northland Maori, but rather was formed specifically for the purpose of accessing networks and facilitating hui so that Maori are appropriately and adequately consulted. It should be noted that the formation of this Advisory Group was the result of deliberation by local Maori leaders, and was not a prescribed method for ensuring adequate and appropriate Maori involvement in the consultation.

people), the Northland project requires asking about issues and options for sustainable economic development – something relatively unfamiliar to many people, and requiring considerably more reflection. Moreover, the outcome of the project (ie, the economic strategy) requires both regional action plans and, to the extent possible, community-level action plans.

The Northland community consultation utilises a greater range of tools for soliciting public feedback than was used in the previous case studies.³⁵ These include a questionnaire (for both individuals and businesses/organisations) distributed through all local newspapers (approximately 60,000 households), a school essay competition with prizes for different age groups, e-mail and written submissions, personal interviews with identified key people and organisations, hui, group workshops, and outreach in communities throughout Northland.³⁶ The outreach component attempts to use a combination of questionnaires and PA tools, although the questions being asked are not particularly conducive to soliciting answers “on the spot”.³⁷ Alongside these consultation channels is an extensive media strategy involving the use of a website (www.northlandstrategy.org.nz), newspaper coverage, e-mail updates,³⁸ speaking opportunities with groups (eg, Rotary), and other means of both raising awareness and soliciting responses.

The initial period of consultation is to be followed by the formation of 16 or more “Think Tank” groups based on industries or sectors.³⁹ The task of these groups will be to read and synthesise all the public submissions and other information available, and subsequently (in a focus group setting) recommend specific action plans for the strategy document. A key aspect of these action plans, in terms of aligning the objectives of a diverse range of interests, is that projected timeframes and lines of responsibility will be deliberated and agreed upon. By the end of June 2001, a draft strategy document should be ready for public feedback.

4. Practical lessons learnt

³⁵ As with the Ngongotaha consultation, a comprehensive background report was compiled prior to the consultation stage. This was disseminated to libraries, councils and other agencies to facilitate public access to all available information. It was also used by key decision-makers in subsequent stages of the project. The report was structured in a way that attempted to present a holistic approach to economic development in the region, including a profile of local environmental, social and cultural issues, and relevant global and local trends.

³⁶ The return of submissions and other feedback (as well as general enquiries) is facilitated by a freepost mailing address and freephone number which have been widely advertised.

³⁷ Nevertheless, the use of a small team of facilitators for face-to-face interaction in local communities is serving to raise awareness of the project, and is assisting in the wider dissemination of questionnaires.

³⁸ A database of more than 1,400 individuals, businesses, schools and other organisations was compiled specifically for the purpose of this consultation. Sources included the Northland Chamber of Commerce, the Northland GROW Trust and the Ministry of Education website.

³⁹ At this stage the groups are planned to include the following sectors: creative industries (eg, crafts, performing arts); education and training; fishing, aquaculture and associated industry; forestry and associated industry; health and wellbeing; horticulture/floriculture/viticulture and associated industry; innovation and entrepreneurial; knowledge economy and information technology; manufacturing, engineering; Maori business development; maritime and associated industries; pastoral farming and associated industry; property development/investment; retail and wholesale; small business development; and tourism industry development and promotion.

This section draws out a number of practical lessons which have been learnt through involvement in the case studies described, relating to (1) pre-consultation planning, (2) information and communication, (3) the use of participatory methods, (4) consultation with Maori, and (5) post-consultation issues. These lessons are of particular relevance to local bodies and other organisations planning a community consultation exercise.

Pre-consultation planning

The status of consultation outcomes with respect to the decision-making process needs to be clear in the minds of all key stakeholders at the outset, so as not to raise unrealistic expectations. Therefore (from a local body perspective) before any other planning can be undertaken there needs to be broad political commitment, clear objectives, and the involvement of other stakeholders. The role of “change leaders” within the agency cannot be over-emphasised. For instance, in the case of the Ngongotaha consultation (whose purpose was to assist in planning a physical upgrade of the village), the project was managed by Council’s Community Policy department rather than, say, Planning or Engineering. This was largely because of the prior consultation experience of staff in this department, coupled with the commitment of the department manager to the principle of inclusive consultation. Had this commitment been absent, a less participatory form of planning may have eventuated.

Although it is important to involve stakeholders early in the planning process, the nature and extent of this involvement must be clear. The use of stakeholder planning committees proved crucial to the success of the Rotorua youth consultation, and is proving equally important in the case of the Northland strategy development.⁴⁰ Similarly, the use of pre-consultation stakeholder meetings proved valuable in the Whangamata and Ngongotaha projects. However, it should be made clear at the outset that (1) the purpose of the stakeholder group is to help guide the consultation; (2) the group is not necessarily intended to represent the views of the community of interest, and (3) the group’s role will cease at a particular point (eg, once the implementation stage is complete). There is scope for confusion if these terms of reference are not clear, which could potentially damage the success of the project. The roles played by local councillors, agency staff and others involved in the project should also be defined clearly. Agency staff were involved in the implementation stages of both the Whangamata and Ngongotaha consultations, but in the capacity of liaison and information providers rather than facilitators.

The specific objectives of the consultation should be clarified and agreed upon before any other planning takes place. As a rule of thumb, six to ten specific objectives is an optimal range. The objectives will define the outcomes, which will have effects on a specific group of people, so key stakeholders should be involved in establishing the final

⁴⁰ In the case of the Northland project, the Strategy Steering Group meets on a regular monthly basis. However, all members of the Steering Group are also accessible by e-mail, and protocols were established early in the project to facilitate decision-making on a day-to-day basis. For instance, drafts of written material (eg, media releases, questionnaires) are e-mailed to the group, with feedback and/or approval required by a set date. It was agreed that if no feedback had been received from a specific member by the due date, this would be taken as tacit approval. It was also agreed that the Chair of the Steering Group would act as a central point of liaison with the professional consultants for these day-to-day requirements.

objectives. The success of the project, as well as the mandate for the outcomes, will come from a combination of well-defined objectives and an appropriate inclusive consultation process. In the words of professional PA trainer Andy Inglis, you have to “trust the process”.

It should be self-evident that planning a major community consultation is an exercise in logistics. The organisers should ensure they have the necessary organising skills, and that all resource requirements, projected timeframes and budget issues are written down.⁴¹ Things to think about include what resources to have available (eg, a camera to visually record the process and outcomes), and what local events might be occurring within the timeframe (eg, field days or social events). The budget for a major community consultation may range from \$20,000 to \$100,000 or more, and proponents of less inclusive (ie, top-down) forms of decision-making may claim that the expense cannot be justified. Different levels of commitment to inclusive democracy are evident between the “activist” and “minimalist” councils in New Zealand.⁴² In the words of former Chief Ombudsman Sir John Robertson (cited in Cheyne, 1999, p 218): “Democracy was never meant to be efficient. Democracy is supposed to be for the people, by the people, and encompasses the right of people to express views and have them fairly evaluated”. Face-to-face interaction can be a particularly inefficient (albeit effective) way of soliciting knowledge and ideas from the public, but there are ways to creatively leverage the consultation budget. For instance, in the Ngongotaha project most of the facilitators were paid a koha rather than an hourly rate. In addition, there was a pre-consultation training component that included agency staff, which represented an additional benefit for no additional cost. As another example, the budget for the Rotorua youth consultation included a small allowance to fund interested parties wishing to run “supplementary” focus groups.

Information and communication

Information and communication are at the foundation of consultation, and the channel of communication needs to be open in both directions. In all of the case studies discussed, sufficient time was allowed before the consultation to ensure background information would be publicly available. This background research can also help guide certain aspects of the consultation, as was the case in Rotorua with the preparation of a demographic profile of young people. In both the Ngongotaha and Northland projects, a full background report was prepared, which remained in draft form while the consultation was under way so that local people could add information and make amendments. In all written materials, thought should be given to what the community would most like to know about the project. Key questions might be: Who planned this project and why? What are some of the issues? How can I have a say? What will happen to my ideas?

⁴¹ Some thought should be given to the timeframes for actual implementation. Awareness can be raised and enthusiasm built best over a relatively short timeframe, but this leaves less “margin for error” and can be physically and logistically demanding.

⁴² McDermott and Forgie (1999) present evidence that average local body expenditure on “democracy” increased over the period 1993/94-1997, with significant increases for particular councils. For instance, figures presented for Ruapehu District Council show an increase from \$33,000 to \$92,000 per annum on community publications, and an increase from \$42,000 to \$283,000 on consultation.

If members of the community are to be adequately consulted, they need to be aware that the process is taking place and clear about the ways in which they can contribute. A comprehensive media strategy is an important aspect of the consultation planning, and an area in which key stakeholder involvement is vital. In the case of both the Rotorua youth consultation and the Northland economic strategy, awareness was also raised through the development of a brand (ie, a distinctive name and logo). When undertaking a project which has its own logo, agreement should be reached at the outset that this logo will be emphasised in all written materials, with the effect that funders' logos may not be emphasised. The use of face-to-face interviewers can also serve to raise awareness in the community.

The use of participatory methods

Participatory methods are a useful way of soliciting deliberative information. We might think of a spectrum from less deliberative but more inclusive processes (eg, surveys) to more deliberative but less inclusive processes (eg, focus groups). To some extent, the consultation budget can define a trade-off between feasible levels of inclusiveness and deliberation. The PA exercises in Whangamata and Ngongotaha were both inclusive and deliberative, but could have been more inclusive through the use of additional methods (eg, surveys) outside the timeframes of the PA exercise. The Northland project has a strong commitment to inclusiveness and deliberation in its initial stage, with further deliberation occurring at a later stage through "Think Tank" focus groups. In the youth consultation these stages were reversed, with focus groups used initially to draw out qualitative information and surveys used subsequently to allow issues to be clarified and prioritised. One of the key benefits of a representative sample survey is that inferences may be made about the opinions of the entire community. While respondents' demographic details were tracked throughout each of the PA's discussed, this information was only useful in terms of targeting specific groups to ensure a broad cross-section of the community was included. The objective of a PA is not to develop broad inferences, but rather to solicit a diversity of ideas.

The visual methods used in Participatory Appraisal allow a wide range of possibilities in terms of deliberative feedback. Having a centrally-located drop-in centre is an important part of this, because as ideas are collected they can be used as "wallpaper". People can then easily access the ideas of other members of their community, resulting in a transparent process that stimulates deliberation.

All of the PA case studies discussed involved the formation of a team of trained facilitators. In each case, care was taken to ensure the team members could be seen as impartial. For instance, none of the facilitators of the Ngongotaha consultation were Ngongotaha residents.⁴³ The "team" aspect was found to be important, with higher levels of success possible through group dynamics. Also, members of each team had specific attributes that supplemented and complemented those of other members (eg, the ability to speak Te Reo Maori).

⁴³ Although impartiality is seen as a vital attribute for a consultation facilitator, it should not be taken for granted that everybody who is consulted will share this view. For some, the fact that you are an "outsider" means that you have no vested interest and should therefore not be involved.

Consultation with Maori

As previously discussed, Maori consultation has a special status for local bodies and other agencies. In the Rotorua youth consultation, the ideas and opinions of rangatahi (young Maori) were targeted through bilingual focus groups in the first stage of the project, and through the use of both English and Te Reo versions of the survey questionnaire in the second stage (distributed through Kura Kaupapa and other schools). From the experiences of the Whangamata and Ngongotaha projects, it seems that a combination of targeting Maori respondents and conducting a parallel process of Iwi consultation is advisable.⁴⁴

It is vital that local Maori leaders are identified and involved in the planning of the project from the earliest time possible, so they have an appropriate level of control over the process they wish to follow. It is also vital that the timeframe for completing the overall project is based around the timeframe for consultation with Maori, and not the other way around. McDonald (1991) suggests that consultation should occur in the first instance with “acknowledged spokespersons”, and that the project managers should not make unilateral assumptions about the specific issues that Maori may wish to consider with regard to the consultation. Hayward (1999) refers to a number of reports on guidelines for consulting with Maori, including minimum standards.

Post-consultation issues

The end of the planned timeframe for a consultation project represents the beginning of a new process. No matter how successfully the consultation meets its objectives, the outcomes still depend crucially on events in the post-consultation period. Consideration should be given to an ongoing communication strategy and immediate actions so that results can be seen. In the Ngongotaha case, several small projects were targeted for immediate action while the overall plan for the physical upgrade was being developed. Also of importance is the need to put in place systems to ensure that collaborative relationships which may have formed during the consultation (eg, between the agency and community organisations) are fostered on an ongoing basis. For instance, there may be post-consultation meetings to discuss community involvement in implementing the outcomes of the consultation. Finally, the results of the consultation should be made available publicly in a form which is appropriate (eg, pamphlets, reports, video).

5. Conclusions

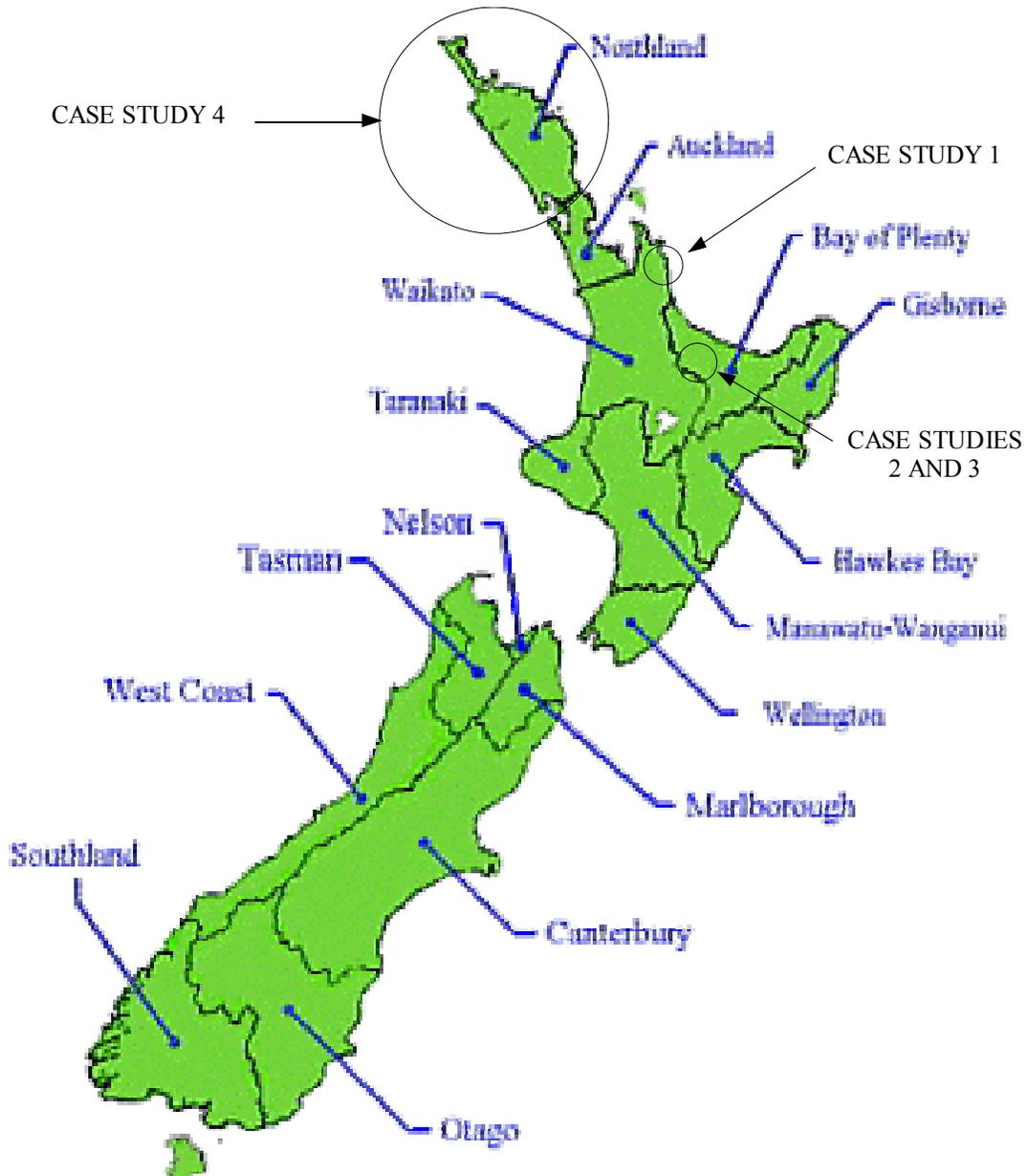
Consultation is an important part of the democratic process at the local body level in New Zealand. Legislation and case law have helped establish minimum standards for consultation (Cheyne, 1999, p 214), but a number of local bodies and other organisations are proactively seeking more creative, inclusive and deliberative processes. The

⁴⁴ An effective technique for involving urban Maori in the Ngongotaha project (apart from the post-consultation hui) was “snowballing” from house to house, whereby the facilitator finished an interview at one house and was then introduced to a neighbour, conducted this interview, was introduced to another neighbour, etc.

development of strategies and action plans based on the reconciliation of diverse ideas has the potential to resolve areas of conflict – in other words, the potential to reduce polarisation. Examples of potential conflicts from the case studies included visitors vs residents; urban vs rural; and competing recreational water users in the Whangamata Harbour. A well-designed consultation process should also solicit ideas from young people, disabled people and other groups who may not usually have the opportunity to participate in public decision-making. A well-planned consultation, coupled with adequate commitment to post-consultation issues, has the potential to foster social capital. This occurs through the process itself (ie, relationship-building) and through the outcomes (eg, the collaborative implementation of action plans).

Collective decision-making is a necessary condition for the provision of public goods and the management of externalities (Serageldin and Grootaert, 2000, p 49). Participatory processes enhance social capital and lead to sustainable development outcomes (Narayan and Pritchett, 2000, p 285). Community consultation has the potential to align the incentives of individuals within a community of interest, and between the public and institutions. This paper has presented a range of practical lessons on how such an outcome might succeed. The trend in New Zealand local government towards a more participatory style of governance holds promise for sustainable development at the community, city and district levels.

Appendix 1: Locality map of case studies



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