

Pohangina Valley and Community Development

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Abstract

Pohangina Valley is a 35 kilometre river valley in the foothills of the Ruahine Ranges with about 370 families living in it. The Valley was cleared early last century by saw-millers and was then used for livestock farming. In recent years the Valley has become more popular with lifestyle homesteaders.

The increasing influx of new people to the valley brings with it new life-style expectations and values. Current residents in the Valley want to promote harmonious social development and ensure that there is an on-going respect for the Valley's unique natural environment. They are facilitating their own planning processes and working with Local Government agencies to learn more about their landscape and their social values so that they can use this information to develop a Pohangina Valley Community Development Plan.

The project which was launched in April 2005, involves holding community meetings, workshops, and forums to encourage full and open participation and collective decision-making. A community newsletter is used to promote project activities and circulate results and a community group is responsible for ensuring that the results are used and made available to the relevant authorities. The project will be completed in June 2007 and the continuing involvement of the research team will be reassessed at that time.

Keywords

Pohangina, resource community, adaptive management, local authority, rural

Introduction

The three authors of this paper live in quite different communities, over 400 kilometres apart in New Zealand's North Island. John Brock lives with his wife, daughter and grandson in a house that they built themselves on a 0.6 hectare property in the Pohangina Valley (Figure 1), the place providing the context for this paper. The Valley is about 30 minutes north of Palmerston North, a provincial capital city with a population of over 70,000 people (Statistics New Zealand 2001). Terry Parminter lives with his wife in a 50-year-old house in their provincial capital — Hamilton, a city of over 120,000 people (Statistics New Zealand 2001), as does Hein Roth with his family of five. What we have in common is that we all work for the same science company and we all have a passion for the Pohangina Valley that goes beyond

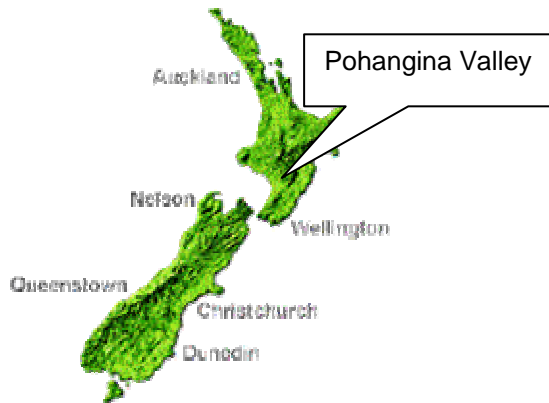


Figure 1. Map of New Zealand showing the Pohangina Valley

purely academic interest. In this paper we describe the Pohangina Valley and its community, how it is similar to other rural communities that we are familiar with, and how it is different. We describe the legislative environment for community development in New Zealand, and outline the project plan that has been used to obtain funding and is now being used to begin guiding the facilitation process over the next three years.

Pohangina history

Early Maori explored the Manawatu Region about six centuries ago when they arrived in the land they called Aotearoa (New Zealand). They named its outstanding features and gave them roles and significance in their myths and legends. The first missionaries and traders started establishing themselves along the West coast near to Pohangina in 1840 and over the next 40 years gradually made their way inland to the Pohangina Valley (Manawatu Our Region 2005). From being the dominant ethnic group in the Region, Maori now only make up 14 per cent of its population of 110,000 people (Manawatu Our Region 2005). Maori never densely settled the Pohangina Valley and today people with a European ethnicity are the highest proportion of the residents there (Statistics New Zealand 2001).



Figure 2. Views across the Pohangina Valley

Timber milling was probably the first significant industry in the Manawatu Region (Manawatu Our Region 2005). Woodmen felled large Rimu and Totara trees across the Manawatu Plains and through the Pohangina Valley from the mid 1800s until early in the 20th century. Timber harvesting was followed by clearing the land and introducing sheep and cattle farming and this has now become the dominant land use in the Valley.

Although fewer people work in agriculture in the Valley than used to ten or so years ago, there are still a high proportion of people working either part time or full time in agriculture and related servicing industries (Table 1). Amongst the newly establishing population in Pohangina there is a trend towards more city-based employment.

Pohangina Valley is situated just below the Tararua and Te Apiti Wind Farms established in 1996, the largest wind farms in the Southern Hemisphere, able to produce up to 70 megawatts from 100 wind turbines (Trust Power 2005).

Description of the Pohangina Valley

The Pohangina Valley is just north of Palmerston North and its entrance is through the small town of Ashhurst. From Ashhurst, the Pohangina Valley continues another 250 kilometres north into the Ruahine Ranges.

As visitors enter the valley of Pohangina from the south along a valley floor about 300 metres above sea level, the right-hand wall of the Valley is provided by the Ruahine Mountain range, 1200 metres above sea level and the left-hand wall is a set of high hills of up to 600 meters to the west. The Ranges are steep and narrow with high rainfall (1100–4000 mm/year) and sometimes snow (McEwan 1987, p. 51). This can lead to periodic flooding and landslips in the Valley, the last occurring in the autumn and winter of 2004.

The Pohangina River is a tributary of the Manawatu River, the most significant river in the Region. It is one of the few rivers in the world that arises on the eastern side of a mountain range through which it passes (via the Manawatu Gorge) before discharging its waters into the Tasman sea off the West coast of New Zealand (Encyclopaedia of New Zealand 1966).

The Pohangina River drains a catchment of over 520 kilometres square, and it joins the Manawatu River as it comes through the Manawatu Gorge. Along its length the Pohangina River descends 1000 meters from its headwaters in the Ruahine Mountains. This provides the potential to generate 10MW of hydro-electricity should that be required in its future (Ministry of Economic Development 2005).

Almost one-third of the Valley is still in native trees, mainly in the Ruahine State Forest Park managed by the Department of Conservation, and in the Totara Reserve, managed by the Manawatu District Council. In addition, on privately owned land there are many exotic trees planted such as *Pinus radiata* for forestry production, and poplars for erosion control.

Description of the Pohangina community

Pohangina has a population of nearly 1000 people (Statistics New Zealand 2001) living in 370 households (shown in Table 1). Although the population in the Valley has been decreasing until recently (Statistics New Zealand 2001), it has begun to increase again as new subdivisions are created. Pohangina Valley has a small village (with four commercial and public buildings) and a primary school (with almost 50 pupils) on opposite sides of the river valley. It has a high proportion of young people and a low proportion of older people.

The loss of schools in Pohangina has meant that a lot of children are now being educated outside the Valley. To assist with transport, a school bus from Ashhurst comes into the Valley each morning to pick up the children and it returns them again in the afternoon.

Table 1. Summary statistics for the Pohangina Valley based on the 2001 Census (Statistics New Zealand 2005)

	Pohangina Valley	Whole of New Zealand
Population (no.)	1000	4,000,000
Households (no.)	370	
Proportion of population less than 15 years (%)	27	23
Proportion of population over 64 years (%)	6	12
Proportion with post-school qualification (%)	39	32
Proportion of population with European ethnicity (%)	97	80
Median income (NZ\$)	\$23,000	\$19,000
Proportion of the population unemployed (%)	3	8
Proportion working in agriculture and related industries (%)	40	<10
Proportion of solo parent families (%)	9	20
Access to the Internet (%)	45	37
Households with at least one motor vehicle (%)	99	90

The adults in the Pohangina Valley are relatively well educated compared to elsewhere in the Region and the country. The median annual income for Pohangina residents in 2001 was 20 per cent higher than that for New Zealand as a whole, and it particularly had a higher proportion of people earning from \$50,000 to \$70,000.

Unemployment in the Valley is lower than expected from the national statistics. Families in Pohangina tend to be couples with children (50 per cent) and there are relatively few solo parents. Pohangina households tend to have good access to outside information via the internet and almost all households have access to at least one vehicle.

Description of rural community changes in New Zealand and the social and economic forces affecting them

Commonly, rural communities are described as resource dependent, implying that there is a strong linkage between the community and its use of natural resources. This interface is more than living within an environment; it includes having the environment itself as a primary source of income, employment and identity for the community (McClintok and Taylor 1999).

Pakeha (European) settlement of New Zealand in a network of rural communities initially meant that rural communities were an essential element of the farming industry (Blunden and Cocklin 1995). It is because of this history that many people assume rural communities in New Zealand and agriculture are mutually dependent upon each other (Panelli 2003). One common view of rural communities is that they provide quintessential examples of a community ideal by being socially supportive, environmentally attractive and closely tied to agrarian or arcadian ways of life. On other occasions rural communities may be viewed in a variety of negative ways such as being materially backward, impoverished, de-populated,



poorly serviced and generally inferior to urban communities (Panelli 2003). They are also generalised as having empty streets and few shops (Lidgard et al. 2000). Despite strong agricultural associations, which may be justified in history, rural communities in the 21st century are not always farming or farm-servicing related.

Figure 3. The Pohangina River

Communities very rarely collapse abruptly, but rather they fade away over a long period of time. They retain their role as the focus of social interaction, long after they lose importance as shopping and business centres, and remain providers of place identity and belonging for even longer after that (Siniales and Hugo 2003).

For example, Queenstown was a gold-mining town in the 1800s and a tourist town in the late 1900s. If the community is defined according to its geographical location, then Queenstown provides an example of a resilient community in that it has adjusted to the decline of the gold mining industry by developing new opportunities in adventure-tourism. If the community is defined from the points of view of a resident gold miner or mining equipment supplier, then the Queenstown gold-mining community was either not resilient (as it no longer exists) or it was resilient but moved on from Queenstown to the site of the next gold strike (Lovett 2004).

Resource dependent communities have experienced considerable change in New Zealand since the government's social reforms of the mid 1980s and the globalisation of international economies (Epps 2002). As economic support mechanisms were removed in New Zealand, the number of farming properties declined and larger farms were created as a means of reducing overhead costs and maintaining profitability (Joseph et al. 2001). This change has coincided with the availability of more industrial-like technologies and management practices adapted to farming systems to achieve increases in the scale and intensity of their production. Large scale farming units have had to adjust and cope with new sources of social pressure upon agriculture and its future direction (e.g. the environmental effects; Lidgard et al. 2000). Family farms have found it difficult to remain viable in industries dominated by much larger farms and some have needed to establish themselves as trading groups or corporations to achieve a sufficient degree of scale to remain competitive with the larger units (Lidgard et al. 2000).

To service the changed nature of farming, agricultural service industries have themselves adapted by becoming more centralised, specialised and even diversified (Lidgard et al. 2000). Family members on some family farms have been forced to seek off-farm employment in addition to their farm duties and this has changed traditional farming lifestyles. Although not all the changes in retrospect have been viewed unfavourably, they have reduced the ability of many farm families, especially their female members, to contribute to social organisations and community activities. The willingness of farm families to be involved in local community institutions may also depend on their feelings of 'ownership'; in some instances, institutions (or particular activities) may have become identified with other communities of interest (Joseph 1999). Furthermore, they may have lost amongst their members people who played strong roles in local community organisations. (McClintok and Taylor 1999).

The increasing dependence of rural communities upon urban employment and urban services, and their decreasing link to agriculture has contributed to a 'de-coupling' of rural communities and the agricultural economy (Joseph et al. 2001). A cumulative consequence of these layers of change in both agricultural industries and rural communities has been that they seem more economically and socially differentiated now than ever before, and at times the linkages between the two sectors have become obscured or even lost (Joseph et al. 2001; Blunden and Cocklin 1995).

As farms have restructured, they have tended to reduce their number of permanent employees and increase their use of contractors. This has particularly reduced employment opportunities for young and largely unskilled farm labourers. In turn, this has contributed towards a further decline in the permanent population living in country areas affecting school rolls and the reducing demand for goods and services in local centres (Lidgard et al. 2000; McClintok and Taylor 1999).

Traditionally, local schools in rural areas were the centre of the community and the site of many community events. In a number of regions the closure of rural schools has reduced community interactions as well as making access to education more difficult. Pohangina used to have five schools, each of them a horse ride apart. People from the community used to gather in the schools for a chat and to find out what was happening in their area. With only one school remaining in Pohangina, a number of the younger children daily travel outside the Valley for their education and some of the older children go to boarding school. Parents provide their own transport to the school bus stop; and as a result there is less contact with the school and a reduced sense of community “ownership” in schools that are situated outside the Valley.



Figure 4. Results of flooding in 2004

Pohangina is close enough to urban centres for seasonal farm workers to reside in the Valley and commute in the agricultural off-season to jobs, in nearby areas. These developments have a downside as more and more communities like Pohangina are being sustained by an urban economy. It means that these rural communities are not truly sustainable on their own but increasingly require external inputs to survive (Lidgard et al. 2000).

Some community members have found it more stressful than others to cope with change and the lack of local control over their own community survival. Rural stress may be made manifest by a range of situations and combinations of situations from droughts and floods; watching the market drop, empty freezing works, working long hours on bone-jarring equipment, squabbles at home, and any or all of these can build up irritation and fatigue (Elvidge 1987). Stress in such situations can lead to further pressures such as conflict, loss of control, and uncertain relationships with family and friends (Elvidge 1987). For most people, stress is not severe enough to seriously impair health but can lead to insomnia, habitual smoking, heavy drinking, irritability and restlessness. These symptoms in turn can vary in the types of problems they produce. Some interfere with judgement and work; others make relationships more tense and on-edge (Elvidge 1987).

If we look beyond the changes in agriculture, the possibility of commuting or working from home, and combining aspects of both rural and urban living has encouraged a number of people, without any experience in farming, to move from urban areas into the countryside as a lifestyle choice. The new people moving in, who maintain contacts outside the rural community, introduce existing rural residents to new industries and career opportunities in such things as social and personal services, insurance and financial services, tourism and

retailing. Although such industries benefit the community they may also change the very nature of that community further breaking its links to its past agricultural associations (Joseph 1999).

In order for rural communities to be attractive to new industries, and encourage them to move out from urban areas, they first need to be able to provide good infra-structure, including roads, education and communication services. The provision of such services by central and regional government though requires a minimum level of population even if that might be the very thing that these communities lack and are taking steps to try and grow.

Defining a rural community in spatial terms is now complicated by the fact that rural residents usually relate to a number of different locations for the satisfaction of their needs (Stayner 2003). They might go to a neighbouring town for certain goods or services or they might just prefer what is available in the other town. How well a community services the needs of those living and operating within it may be an indicator of its strength. On that basis, the large number of residents commuting from communities like Pohangina for jobs and recreation may be an indicator of community weakness?

Nevertheless, despite the attention of Valley residents being regularly diverted away from Pohangina Valley there is still a strong sense of parochialism and rivalry with other small communities in the Region (Sinailes and Hugo 2003). This rivalry creates a “them” and “us” mentality that when threatened can strengthen community solidarity (Tabart et al. 2001). Such feelings build social connectedness between individuals within the community and encourage acts of reciprocity (Shand and Loomis 2002). Individuals may define who is in or outside of their experience of community, and people in rural communities like Pohangina can hold a sense of “individual community” with its boundaries stretched as far as is needed to satisfy their own needs (Morris 1999). People in rural communities like Pohangina Valley define themselves according to their awareness about their locality, or belonging to a particular people group, or having a special lifestyle. These distinctions are only manifested as people feel they need to make them clear.

Any wide geo-political community definition will also include the many subgroups that people identify with. In some instances these “sub communities” such as social groups, sporting clubs and churches, may be the only community an individual feels part of, because they have a strong sense of shared social norms, identity and history. Other people, linked more widely across such networks may feel that their sense of identity transcends local relationships and so may be more conscious of district, or regional or nationally defined communities. Thus the critical factor in establishing a sense of community appears to be the extent to which a specific group of relationships and geographical locality is able to satisfy people’s needs. As soon as these needs are no longer fulfilled, then people may expand their

personal boundaries of community until it does meet their needs or else decide to relocate to another community that can.

Government policy and community development

The New Zealand government, primarily through the Department of Internal Affairs, has been involved in community development for more than 50 years. Beginning in the late 1970s, the Government undertook a fundamental statutory review of both legislative and administrative structures for environmental, natural resource and land use planning. A part of this was carrying out Local Government reform and that has proven to be one of the most contentious actions taken by the Labour Government at that time. For the past decade the theme of the Government's sustainable development activity in communities has been the "building [of] strong communities" (Shand and Loomis 2002). Whilst the means by which Government policy may influence community business activity and employment growth are multiple, the more significant and frequent mechanisms include government spending, the decentralisation of the regulatory framework, infrastructure development, environmental policies, education and training, and grants, concessions and other forms of direct support (Epps 2002).

One of the primary means to achieve the Government's goals for community development has been to forge new partnerships and relationships in the community and voluntary sector (Shand and Loomis 2002). A democratisation of decision-making authority and greater social equality are also a part of the strategy (Furuseth and Cocklin 1995). This includes changing the power relationships existing between Central Government, Local Government and regional communities (Furuseth and Cocklin 1995). Some people may not be willing or ready for such changes, yet in many cases there is little choice. The changes in Government administration have had a significant flow-on effect, requiring numerous adjustments by many institutions and organisations and the redistribution of wealth and resources, as well as changes in the patterns of human lifestyle (Furuseth and Cocklin 1995).

The emphasis in the Government's goals upon sustainable development includes constraints on environmental resources, changing patterns of consumption for non-renewable resources as well as many other changes and cutbacks.

Ultimately, the major obstacles to sustainable development can be reduced to three basic categories: willingness to change, understanding how to successfully change, and the adaptive capacity to make it happen (Gallopín 2002). New ideas and approaches to overcome these obstacles will be required to produce appropriate actions and changes (Gallopín 2002). In some cases there is little collaboration or communication among the groups and, as a result, a lack of strategic direction can occur to address all aspects of community development (Herbert-Cheshire and Lawrence 2003).

Such issues have been recognised in the European Union's approach to regional development, where particular priority is given to maintaining rural cultures and lifestyles and it is important that the same is now done within New Zealand and Australia (Duffs and Tonts 2000).

Community driven and community based research is now an important contributor to Government policy making and as a result of this, Governments are learning to operate in a hands-off approach (high trust, low intervention) as well as hands on approach (high mentoring, low management) when necessary. Communities playing an active partnership role with Government not only require improvements to existing participation and resourcing arrangements, but also want to explore innovative mechanisms for fostering sustainable community development (e.g. a social investment approach to building capabilities; Shand and Loomis 2002).



Figure 5. Vintage car parade to begin the Pohangina Valley Family Fun Festival

Not all communities have the necessary capabilities within them to manage their own futures. “Stressed” communities may feel that they are too fragmented to have the collective will, individual leadership and level of control necessary to plan, direct and manage change themselves. Sufficient knowledge, incentives, and learning capabilities need to be available to staff in institutions and organisations responsible for managing the capacity of local, regional

and global ecosystems to sustain human wellbeing in the face of complexity and change. Such management should involve diverse interest groups in new and imaginative roles. It should also be expected that policy would stimulate the development of indicators of gradual change and early warning signals for any loss of resilience (Environmental Advisory Council 2002).

Applying the concept of resilience developed in ecology to the context of community development, shifts the purpose of policy interventions away from those that are intended to control change by keeping things more or less the same, towards those that manage the capacity of social-ecological systems to cope with, adapt to, and shape change as it happens. Managing for resilience enhances the likelihood of sustaining development in changing environments where the future is unpredictable and surprise is likely (Environmental Advisory Council 2002).

The Local Government Act (New Zealand 2002) administered by the Department of Internal Affairs was introduced to New Zealand to direct the activities and responsibilities of Local Authorities (Regional and District Councils and Territorial Authorities) towards sustainable community development. The Local Government Act encourages Councils to focus on promoting the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of their communities. Working with local communities, Councils were given discretion to determine the type and nature of community services that they would provide. Councils are required under the Act to consult with communities about the types of outcomes they want for their communities in 10 or so year's time and the public goods and services that will be needed to support those outcomes. The outcomes are not Council outcomes, they are community outcomes and it is expected in the Act that most relevant institutions and organisations will be involved in the consultation process and the implementation of the results. The community outcomes also form the basis to the Council's vision contained in their Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) which sets out their strategy for achieving the community desired outcomes over the following 10 years.

The LTCCP covers all Council functions from financial planning and economic development initiatives, to environmental and biodiversity management, to social service provisions such as libraries, housing and community facilities. Councils are obliged under the *Local Government Act (2002)* to report to the community at a minimum every three years on the progress that is being made towards achieving their community outcomes.

Legislation such as the *Resource Management Act*, the *Local Government Act*, the *Biosecurity Act*, and the *Land Transport Act* are all implemented in part by local government and over time will be gradually brought into line with the LTCCP.

The section dealing with consultation in the *Local Government Act (2002)* is not very prescriptive about the procedure to be followed by Councils and instead provides a number of principles that they must follow. These include that:

- the community should be provided with access to all the information available to the Council and pertinent to the community.
- the process of consultation should be inclusive, so that no-one feels that they are being by-passed for whatever reason, and the decision-making should be open, so that everybody understands how the decisions important to them are being made and what the results are.
- consultation should be carried out in a manner that is determined by the stakeholders and the results treated with respect and value.
- special provisions should be made for ensuring that Maori participate in the consultation.

In order to determine the effectiveness of Councils' Long Term Community Council Plans, progress towards community outcomes are to be measured, monitored and reported on every three years.

Community development in the Pohangina Valley

Project purpose

The project has been funded to study development planning in one community for a period of three years from 2004. During that time it is intended to:

(i) Develop a framework for community development planning that encompasses all parts of the community, linking the community and their environment, and the past, present and future.

(ii) Develop a community planning method that can be organised, facilitated, and interpreted by community members themselves. Methods will be designed that enable project participants to combine subjective as well as objective information and local and external sources of knowledge.

- community groups will establish and set group goals, objectives, and priorities, especially overcoming any conflicting goals that may exist among individual group members
- community groups will be used to evaluate their own performance and the effectiveness of group interactions
- rural land owners will be assisted to monitor the effects of their land use activities upon the condition of natural resources and their interactions with others

(iii) The Pohangina Valley community will generate defined outcomes and contribute these towards the District's Long Term Council Community Plan.

The aim is to have 60 per cent of the intended community participating at the project launch and 40 per cent participating in one or more of the subsequent events.

Project methodology

In order to effectively determine the pressures that rural communities have faced, the effects and impacts that these pressures have had and how the communities have dealt with these, a number of methods can be used. To be effective, the methods required should leave it to the residents themselves to inform researchers about changes in their lives and how they attribute and interpret such changes relative to developments within their community (Lidgard et al. 2000). In order to understand the processes of change in a locality, it is necessary to discover what interpretive frameworks local people have been using (Morris 1999).

Community lifestyle is considered to be a complex web of relationships involving employment, recreation and household circumstances (Epps 2002). One of the key tasks of the community development practitioner is to find ways to increase people's options to pursue their goals and

quality of life (Eversole 2001). Managing the range in peoples' expectations, and their different perceptions of community, requires a common sense of purpose and a flexible planning process (Lidgard et al. 2000).

Applying adaptive management principles simultaneously enable different management policies to be tested and creates opportunities for learning as resources are used, managed and monitored. An adaptive management process also involves constantly adjusting the rules that shape human behaviour to match the dynamics and uncertainty that are inherent in the system. The challenge for project management is to implement research methods that achieve desired outcomes at different scales of human activity and institutional expectations.



Figure 6. Pohangina Valley project logo

The Pohangina project has brought together methodologies associated with Sociology (Atkins 2004), Practice Change (Paine 1999), Participatory Learning and Action (Mikkelsen 1995), Scenario Planning (Parminter et al. 2003), and Living Systems Theory (Miller and Miller 1995) to provide the

community with theoretically supported methods that will assist them apply adaptive management principles.

The methods proposed for the consultation were intended to encourage involvement from a wide range of people with varying degrees of social skills, personal confidence, literacy and numeracy. They were flexible enough to be conducted in a variety of formal or informal settings with small or large groups of people. In our experience (Parminter et al. 1999) the methods used during a consultation should produce results that are meaningful and have value for the participants at the time that they are collected as well as contributing to an overall strategic plan. If they didn't have immediate value, participants seem to quickly lose their enthusiasm and start looking for alternative ways to communicate their needs.

All the planned events have been designed to take place within a one to two hour time period. Only the launch event at the Family Fun Festival was centralised in Pohangina Village, the rest, involving people through their existing networks and organisations, were expected to be at a number of different locations and with a range of groups. The project been planned to minimise the number of extra meetings that community residents attend. It was hoped that

this would encourage a greater involvement of people in the Valley and a greater participation in decision-making.

The project was designed with ten stages, from forming a project management team, engaging the community to create a plan, and then involving external organisations and agencies in the plan's implementation.

Stage (1) A project team was formed from some members of the Pohangina Valley Community Committee, a non-statutory group that represents community interests to Local Authorities. They were joined by other community members interested in the future of the Valley. It was the purpose of the project team to guide the consultation process without determining its outcome. The project team had a number of personal priorities for the Valley, but these have been made subject to the purpose of the project. This has provided the community (and the researchers) with a "free hand" to explore any issues that might arise and prioritise those issues that have the most general significance to the Valley's future. The team obtained external funding from a government funding agency concerned with community development (Sustainable Farming Fund). They then contracted professional research consultants with experience in community planning and facilitation of participatory processes, to lead them through the project. The project team has met every six weeks in Pohangina Valley, or as often as was required, to guide the project, plan each series of events and manage the project's resources. One of the first things that the project team did was to develop a project logo and byline. They then began a series of articles in the Valley newsletter informing people about the project and the events to be held.

Stage (2) A project launch and Family Fun Festival with registration was held to establish the project within the community. It identified why the project existed, its purpose, who the community advocates were, who the project team were, what needed to be done and how people in the community might want to be involved.

Project information was provided at the Festival which was held at a central location in Pohangina Village and to which all the community was invited. About 200 people were estimated to have attended. The festival included music, clowns, vintage cars, local dignitaries and a media personality. At the festival, people were invited to sign themselves up to participate in future events and (106) received a free token for doing so.

Stage (3) The project has included gathering information about the Valley from publicly available sources. This will provide the community with information about how they have seen themselves over time and how they are known by external agencies. This stage has included interviews with local people to provide a context for the researchers doing the facilitation and

to begin building 'word pictures' that could be used to promote the intent of the project within the community. It included:

- a) *Sociographic Analysis*: Develop a complete description of the Pohangina Valley community from data held by external sources
- b) *Community Timeline*: A panorama of significant events in the lives of community members
- c) *Stakeholder Interviews*: Describing pressures for change on the community and expectations of the future
- d) *Description of Existing Community Dynamics*: Diagrams of significant roles and their interactions within the community.

The information from Stage 3 will be presented to the community in August 2005 and discussed at a family event that includes a quiz competition and fireworks.

Stage (4) After the launch (held recently) and the August community event there will be a series of public meetings to provide residents with technical information about some of the issues of concern to them in the community. These are intended to provide opportunities for an exchange of information between people in the community, policy agencies, researchers, environmental groups and land managers. They will provide Valley residents with information about the social and natural processes that are occurring in their area and how these are affected and altered by human behaviour. Some of the topics will include field days so that people can see and discuss actual examples and associated practical issues.

At the end of each meeting a technical sheet will be prepared on that topic and provided to the community for their further reference.

Stage (5) Early in 2006 a number of workshops will be held in the community where people will be invited to develop individual visions for Pohangina and then bring their ideas together into a community consensus on shared goals and objectives.

At the workshops people will be asked to draw a picture of their community as they desire it to be in the future. Based upon their picture, they will then be asked to identify what in the Valley is special to them, including both existing features and ideas for change. People will identify activities, or states of condition, or goals. Each idea will go onto a separate sticky paper note. These will then be arranged along a wall where people (the owners of the notes) can cluster together ideas that are similar before giving each cluster a label heading. In a similar way, headings that are related will then be clustered together and given labels for new super-headings. This will be repeated until there are fewer than ten headings, and a single overall outcome is decided. Any new headings important to achieving the outcome may be added at any stage through the process.

The results become a decision hierarchy with a goal, sub-goals and objectives for the community.

Stage (6) Once the community has suggested some goals that it wishes to move towards, people in the community will be invited to form committees around each goal area to develop and oversee the monitoring of suitable indicators to monitor changes in the state of that indicator. Each team will be able to invite technical specialists to join them to assist in their decision-making. It is intended that each set of indicators will be meaningful to Valley residents and useful for encouraging adaptive management by providing feedback about successful results (or otherwise) from changes at the farm, community and catchment scale.

Stage (7) If the community expects the future for them to include a high degree of uncertainty and a low level of community control then scenario workshops will be used to plan a community management process to assist them develop decision-making flexibility and confidence. In this approach, “stories” about scenarios of possible but equally unlikely futures will be created around the goals described in the earlier steps and used to assist people plan for a future that cannot be predicted with any reliability. A number of the external forces that are expected to put pressure upon the community will be included in the scenarios. At the workshops, the scenarios will be used for developing an adaptive management plan that can provide the community with flexibility to identify, monitor, and adapt to uncontrollable changes as they occur.

Stage (8) A community survey will be undertaken to enable the community to prioritise ideas generated during the consultation and provide external agencies with quantitative evidence about them. This may be necessary if external agencies are required to invest in projects or make legislative changes

Stage (9) In 2007 the project will begin working with Local Authorities to ensure that its priorities are recognised and incorporated into their Council strategies. At that stage, if parts of the project require any continuing role and authority for the project team within the community, a structure will be established to provide a democratic process for their election and to make them more accountable for their decisions.

Stage (10) Throughout the project a record will be kept of the decisions of the project team, the communication between its members and with the community, and the learning that has happened as the project has evolved. Interviews for summative evaluation will be held with selected people inside and outside the Valley community. This information will be used as a basis of a project evaluation. The evaluation will provide a final project report for funders, and be supplied to other researchers and agencies involved in community development.

Conclusions

In the 20th century the Pohangina area was cleared. Firstly, by harvesting its trees and then by property conversions to farming. Tree felling has exposed the steep slopes in the Valley to regular high intensity rainfalls and over the years, has led to a series of serious slips and floods. However, the extreme weather and topography does make the Valley and its surrounding mountains a suitable site for wind generation or hydro-power. The Valley still has a high proportion of its area in native bush, and exotic trees are being planted to help stabilise some slopes and provide additional income at harvest.

The agricultural downturn in the 1980s generally resulted in farms being intensified and some being amalgamated. Some family farms were left struggling financially and so family members took up jobs off-farm. This has reduced the number of people available for organising community activities and taking up voluntary responsibilities. To reduce their costs, farmers changed from employing permanent staff to using more contractors. Contractors have had to be prepared to work around the region to stay employed and some of them work in more than one industry to maintain their income.

Like Pohangina, other rural communities in New Zealand have been going through a period of rapid change since the 1980s. They are less dependent now than they used to be upon the agricultural economy for their survival. Communities like Pohangina have replaced their declining number of agricultural residents with new families living on lifestyle properties linked to nearby urban centres for their jobs and/or recreation. The increased proportion of residents in the Valley who travel by car each day to their work in nearby towns has put extra pressure upon its roads. The Pohangina Valley has a relatively young population with young families and high incomes. They have expectations that the infrastructure and services available in Pohangina should match those that they are used to in town. It is a common experience for them that what is actually available, maybe lacking in some areas.

The changes and increased diversity in the backgrounds of people living in rural communities has led to greater differences in their concepts about what would constitute an ideal community. People are now tending to have a more individualised understanding about what being community means, based upon where they feel that their needs will best be met and the social networks that they belong to.

The New Zealand Government has introduced the *Local Government Act (2002)* to devolve the provision of public services to Local Authorities. The Act encourages Local Authorities to work with their local communities, such as Pohangina, to determine the types and amounts of services that need to be provided. Communities can now contribute towards deciding upon the outcomes in a Long Term Council Community Plan with the expectation that both they and their Councils will then work towards fulfilling them.

In recognition of the changes occurring in the Pohangina Valley, and the new opportunities that might be opening for them, the residents of Pohangina have formed a project to work with the community and produce a plan for developing community life, protecting their landscape and maintaining their livelihoods. The project has received three years' funding (finishing in 2007) to employ facilitators experienced in community development and who can assist them through the process and evaluate the results at the end. The processes being used to create the community plan are designed to encourage a high degree of community representation, a high degree of participation and contribute towards open and collective decision-making.

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