



**Planning Under a Cooperative Mandate**  
A PGSF-FRST funded Programme on the  
Quality of Environmental Planning and  
Governance in New Zealand.

**REFLECTIONS ON RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING BETWEEN  
TANGATA WHENUA AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT:  
NOTES FROM RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

by

Beth Neill

**Māori Working Paper No. 3**

**KCSM Consultancy Solutions  
(Opotiki)**



**International Global Change Institute**  
*Te Wānanga o ngā rere Kētanga-a-Taiao*



**. I . G . C . I .**

**University of Waikato  
(Hamilton)**

## MIHI

Ngā mihi ki ngā atua e tiaki nei i a tātou katoa. Ki a Ranginui e tū nei, ki a Papatūānuku e takoto nei. Ko Papatūānuku te whaea o tātou te tangata, te pūtake hoki o ngā whirwhiringa kōrero i roto i ngā pepa nei.

Ngā mihi hoki ki a rātou mā kua huri ki tua o te ārai. Ko rātou hoki i poipoi, i ngaki, i tiaki hoki i te whenua, i mau hoki ki te mana o te whenua i nohoia e rātou. Heoi ano, ko rātou ki a rātou, ko tātou te hunga ora ki a tātou.

Kei te mihi atu mātou ki a koutou i āwhina mai nei i a mātou i roto i ngā rangahau, ngā kohikohi, ngā tātari i ngā take kei roto i ēnei pepa. Ahakoa ko wai te tangata nāna te pepa nei i tito, ko te tūmanako mā te whakatakoto me te whakapāhō o ēnei pūrongo kōrero ka kōkiritia ēnei kaupapa. Hei aha, hei painga mo te whenua, hei painga hoki mo te tangata - ōtira ngā uri o Papatūānuku – i roto i ngā nekenekehanga o tēnei ao hurihuri. Hei whakamāramatanga hoki ki te tangata e kimi nei i te mātauranga o te Ao Māori e pā ana ki te manaaki me te tiaki i te whenua.

Ko tōna mutunga, kia whai mana tonu ngā kaupapa Māori i roto i ngā tikanga a te Ao Pākehā.

Nā mātou iti nei,

Nā,

Richard Jefferies  
Director, KCSM Consultancy Solutions  
P.O. Box 64  
Opotiki

Neil Ericksen  
IGCI Director  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton

## CONTENTS

MIHI	i
PREFACE	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
Context	1
Building Constructive Relationships	3
What Impedes Relationship-Building?	3
What Facilitates Constructive Relationship-Building?	6
Talking About Capacity	8
Whose Knowledge Counts?	9
Implications of Not Thinking Strategically About Tangata Whenua-Council Relationships	11
Where to Now?	12
REFERENCES CITED	13

## PREFACE

The FRST-funded programme of research on *Planning Under a Co-operative Mandate* (PUCM) has been sequentially examining the quality of: policies and plans; plan implementation; and environmental outcomes under the RMA since mid-1995. A key component of this planning and governance research has focused on the interests of iwi as Government's Treaty partner.

In 2002, Kōkōmuka Consultancy Ltd (Opotiki) joined the PUCM team — which is based at the International Global Change Institute (IGCI), University of Waikato — with the goal of developing a kaupapa Māori research framework for examining environmental (and other) outcomes for Māori. On 1 April 2003, Kokomuka Consultancy Ltd was re-named KCSM Consultancy Solutions.

The IGCI and KCSM partnership sees merit in establishing a Māori Working Papers Series, as an alternate means for not only making results from the PUCM research on hapū/iwi interests in resource management available to interested parties, but also for critical comment on papers prior to publication. As well, others who wish to test their research ideas and results may submit to the Series, which will be posted on the PUCM Website. Feedback from readers on the series, and the papers posted to it, is welcomed.

The following Māori Working Paper titles will be posted on the PUCM Website over the next few months:

1. Iwi Interests and the RMA: Evaluation of the Quality of Council Plans
2. Iwi Interests and the RMA: Evaluation of Hapū and Iwi Participation in the Resource Consents Processes of Six District Councils
3. Reflections on Relationship-building between Tangata Whenua and Local Government: Notes from Research and Practice
4. Searching for Synergy: Māori/Indigenous and Scientific Conservatory Values – The Affinity Proposition
5. From Rhetoric to Reality: Achieving Māori Aspirations of Kaitiakitanga (RMA ss33 & 34) (in preparation)
6. Developing a Kaupapa Māori Framework for Assessing Environmental Outcomes for Māori from District Plans (in preparation)

Richard Jefferies  
Director, KCSM Consultancy Solutions  
P.O. Box 64  
Opotiki

Neil Ericksen  
IGCI Director  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was prepared by Beth Neill at the request of the IGCI and KCSM partnership, which appreciates very much the contribution it makes to the Māori Working Paper series.

Special thanks to planning professionals and others in private and public agencies, including hapū and iwi and councils, for generously giving time and knowledge about planning and organisational processes relevant to Planning Under Co-operative Mandates (PUCM).

This paper was printed at  
The International Global Change Institute (IGCI)  
*Te Wānanga o Ngā Rere Kētanga-a Taiao*  
University of Waikato  
193 London St  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton  
18 June 2003

## Context

The release of working papers from the *Planning Under a Co-operative Mandate* research programme has provided me with an opportunity to reflect<sup>1</sup> on my own research and practice, focussing especially on work as a community psychologist and doctoral candidate, which has explored (from a Pakeha perspective) the ways in which institutions and Māori work together.

Working in local government as it came to grips with its responsibilities to tangata whenua<sup>2</sup> under New Zealand's new environmental management legislation, the *Resource Management Act* (RMA) started my professional interest in institutional relationship-building with tangata whenua. As I began my doctoral research, I started thinking about the ways in which knowledge is socially constructed, drawing on Stanfield's (1985) work on social science and ethnocentricity, and later work by Scheurich and Young (1997) to help me examine how knowledge from a dominant cultural group becomes formalised into unquestionable ways of organising and carrying out life for everyone. I became interested in understanding more about the relationship between the production of western knowledge and institutional policies and practices, and the implications these have for Māori.

Although my exploration of tangata whenua-institutional relationships begins with the enactment of the RMA, the historical context of the relationship goes back to the Treaty of Waitangi (1840). As the founding document for New Zealand as a nation, the Treaty of Waitangi affirmed the collective authority of Māori and allowed for British governance.

In spite of the Treaty, the New Zealand government has had a history of engaging in actions (sometimes intentionally and sometimes inadvertently) that have resulted in the alienation of indigenous lands, undermined tribal authority and demeaned cultural values (see for example, Fleras and Spoonley, 1999) and established eurocentric values and institutions (Walker, 1999).

Over the last two decades or so, government has started to address past injustices and to re-build its relationship with Māori. Rather than incorporating the Treaty itself into legislation, government's approach has been to focus on the principles that have emerged from it through a decision of the Court of Appeal in 1987 (Crengle, 1993; McDowell and Webb, 1998; Williams, 1997). In resource management legislation, principles have included consultation, partnership and a shared

---

<sup>1</sup> My approach to reflection is guided by Alevesson and Sköldbberg's (2000) ideas on reflection and reflexivity, which encourage attention to how knowledge is produced, including how it is shaped by context and those involved in its production.

<sup>2</sup> Deciding how best to accurately describe the way Māori collectively work with institutions is a question I have not yet resolved. Since the RMA focuses on involvement of tangata whenua (rather than Māori) I have used that term when discussing relationships with local government in an environmental management context, and iwi and hapū when I want to make a distinction within that collective. The term Māori is used in a general way.

responsibility for decision-making (Jefferies et al, 2003a). Incorporation of Treaty principles into legislation may have resulted in some useful applications, but the separation between principles and the Treaty text has continued to dilute Māori - government partnerships (Taiepa, 1999). This is a situation Māori would like to change, as their submissions on the review of the *Local Government Act* (1974) clearly show (Department of Internal Affairs, 2001).

The RMA's inclusion of Treaty principles and associated obligations provided for increasing tangata whenua participation in environmental management, but it gave no clear guidance about how iwi and hapū aspirations could be integrated into formal decision-making processes or how their involvement would be resourced. This legislative requirement to include tangata whenua perspectives, along with the lack of clarity about implementation is the backdrop to my exploration of relationship-building processes - what results from them, and how that guides and informs what councils do.

In this paper, I take a reflective look at two areas of my work that have occupied me for the last five years: the preliminary discussions and fieldwork I undertook to set up a collaborative doctoral research project<sup>3</sup> exploring relationship-building between tangata whenua and local government (regional and district councils); and my practice as a community psychologist within local government, advising on social research and community participation in a number of environmental management projects. The work I draw on here has involved examination of documentation on four major environmental projects of special interest to tangata whenua; conversations with Māori practitioners, iwi and hapū representatives, council managers, staff and political representatives; field trips; participation in project teams; and observations at Council meetings and numerous meetings and hui.

I am interested in relationship-building processes and the nature of communications between tangata whenua and local government as a way of understanding whether those processes enable ideas and different world-views to be negotiated. What I have done so far though has been to focus on relationship-building processes and I have only started to explore ways in which ideas are debated and negotiated, or what the outcomes of relationships might be. In this way, my focus mirrors the local government context noted in Jefferies, et al. (2003) and Backhurst, et al. (2003), with the emphasis being on processes rather than outcomes.

I start with 'on-the-ground' reflections on the process of relationship-building; what seems to facilitate and impede constructive relationships. Thinking about relationship-building processes, I became interested in extending my thinking about three ideas that emerged: the ways capacity is talked about in local government circles; how councils receive and respond to Māori perspectives and knowledge; and the implications for council of not thinking strategically about its relationships with tangata whenua.

---

<sup>3</sup> I am currently discussing preliminary findings from my research with participating groups, so have not drawn directly on them in this paper. Nevertheless, they have of course informed my reflections.

## Building Constructive Relationships

### What impedes relationship-building?

*Gaps in communication, information processing and utilisation.* Looking back, I have realised that I started the preparatory fieldwork for my doctoral research with some unexamined assumptions. I assumed that if councils established processes for discussing issues with tangata whenua, it would follow that relationships would be strengthened. However, as I observed discussions, and tracked the subsequent use of information gathered from a comprehensive Council-led consultation process designed to inform an important policy decision, I was reminded of Hoppe's phrase that parties to such processes may be neither on 'speaking terms' nor within 'ear-shot' of each other (1993: 84), even if (as in this case) they are in the same room. Here, in spite of considerable effort by Council, meetings did not produce greater understanding of different perspectives, and the information gathered was organised in such a way that it could not be distinguished from the information gathered from a wider community consultation process. When it was considered as part of Council's decision-making processes, it was regarded as information to guide the political management of decisions, rather than inform the decision-making itself.

I found it useful to think about these observations in the context of findings from Backhurst, et al. (2003) which highlighted significant gaps between the environmental management options articulated in Council Plans, and those used in implementation. Disjuncture between gathering information through discussions with tangata whenua, and organising, analysing and utilising that information seems to be a widespread problem in local government. For example, ethnicity is seldom noted in council enquiry data-bases, which subsequently reduces the usefulness of this information for understanding Māori concerns and queries, and responding to them. More to the point here though, are the gaps between information explicitly gathered through purposeful discussions with tangata whenua, and the ways in which that information is utilised.

To help clarify my thinking about gaps between information-gathering and utilisation, I have compared the ways councils utilise information from other key stakeholders, take the agricultural sector in rural regions and districts, for example. First, I think councils usually clarify for themselves why the relationship is strategically important for them, and this provides the rationale for the way contact with the sector is managed. There is likely to be a comprehensive contacts database of sector and community leaders, and relationships will be maintained with them individually and with their organisations, where relevant. Goals of the relationship might be communicated explicitly through documents, or discussed within various projects. Joint projects between council and key sector organisations or community groups might be undertaken and these could be either plan or policy-based, operational or educational.

Councils seldom have such a well-developed analysis of the strategic position of Māori, an issue I return to later in this paper. As a consequence, the rationale for



allocating resources, or developing and maintaining structures, processes and people to facilitate the relationship and make effective use of the information that is gathered is unclear, and this becomes a real impediment to productive relationship-building.

*What is not on the table for discussion blocks progress on what is?* As Majone (1989) and others have noted, what is not on the agenda for discussion is as important as what is. I am interested in two issues in particular: different expectations of the relationship; and the place of the Treaty of Waitangi in local government-tangata whenua relationships.

In my work, clear differences in the expectations that iwi and hapū and councils have of their engagement with each other have emerged. In general, for local government, the momentum for involving tangata whenua is seen as a legislative requirement, or an imperative in relation to a particular environmental issue. Continuity of the relationship is not emphasised. Through my conversations with iwi and hapū representatives and Māori practitioners involved in relationship building with councils, I have come to understand that they value these relationships as an ongoing process, part of nurturing Māori self-determination, and asserting cultural preferences and processes, themes widely noted by others (see for example, Coates, 1998; and commentaries from Durie 1998; Maaka 1998), as well as a way to address environmental matters. I have noticed this interest in ongoing relationships sometimes resulted in puzzlement from Māori when council staff did not continue to engage in discussions after ongoing issues had been opened up through some 'set piece' consultation. Māori seem strikingly constant in the way they regard relationship-building with institutions, which could be a real asset for councils (but not one that is recognised at the moment).

A second theme from my discussions with Māori through the course of setting up my research, and other work as a practitioner, has been that relationships between councils and tangata whenua have always been in the context of the Treaty of Waitangi. It may be to the foreground or in the background, but it is always there, and whether it is referred to in the legislation that guides local government is not what makes it relevant. Equally striking has been the absence of reference to the Treaty in council discussions about their relationships with tangata whenua. I can not recall any conversation with Pakeha council staff where they have made an unprompted reference to the Treaty as part of the context of council-tangata whenua relationships. When councils refuse to recognise long and deeply held Māori views, they are denying the validity of those perspectives, which is a poor basis for relationship-building.

Differing views between council staff and tangata whenua were also found in the PUCM research. Backhurst, et al. (2003) refer to three research dimensions (understanding of the Treaty, council commitment to tangata whenua interests in plan provisions, and iwi and hapū involvement in monitoring resource consents) where council staff thought they were doing better than iwi and hapū representatives thought they were. It is hard to see how progress in relationship-building can be

made if different expectations of the relationship, or different perceptions of how well things are going, are not discussed.

***Agenda-setting: who is in the driver's seat?*** Iwi and hapū have their own environmental initiatives and interests. In my experience, councils have rarely looked for ways to align their interests with those of tangata whenua, or to support tangata whenua initiatives as a starting point for working together on other environmental issues.

Mostly, iwi and hapū are expected to respond to council initiatives, an expectation which is not surprising from a council perspective. What this means though, is an extra layer of work for iwi and hapū representatives. They have their agenda, and then on top of that, need to respond to the requirements of Councils' interests, which may not result in positive outcomes, from a tangata whenua point of view.

I wonder, too, if local government's (understandable) culture of getting things done and focusing on their accountabilities inhibits staff responses to past injustices and hurts that Māori have experienced in their relationships with local or central government. I have observed many times council staff showing impatience or bewilderment when Māori raise issues that are the responsibility of another agency. They may reiterate council's intention to make progress with the issue that has prompted the current meeting, little realising the impact their lack of recognition of the whole picture has on progressing the relationship. With councils taking an instrumental, project-by-project approach to relationships, and Māori seeing present relationships in the context of those in the past (with this or related authorities), it is not surprising that relationships founder.

***Who to talk with?*** Local government has had ongoing concerns about identifying who has authority to represent tangata whenua. Councils sometimes express a preference for working with iwi and hapū structures that have similar organisational structures and processes to local government agencies (characterised as being 'more business-like', more 'like us in their ways of doing business') and this has resulted in working mostly with individuals they know, or with high profile representatives and Trust boards, and a reluctance to engage more widely at a hapū level. This can be problematic when councils consider how they will respond to the RMA's requirement that they have particular regard to kaitiakitanga, the responsibility for which lies with particular hapū or whanau members.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (1998) describes the concept of kaitiakitanga as having deep spiritual and elemental significance, encompassing ideas of nurturing, protection, management and development. It is difficult for council to receive the guidance they need if they insist on addressing location-specific environmental issues through high level relationships with Trust Boards or Iwi organisations. While, as Maaka (1998) notes, the pressure to codify iwi and hapū into forms that fits western political organisations works for some, it does not work for others. In some situations, agencies' reluctance to take a more flexible approach to relationship-building with alternative iwi and hapū structures seems to

have been a real impediment to progressing local concerns, as well as reaching high level agreements.

It surprised me to discover that councils do not usually strengthen their understanding of diverse Māori social structures by facilitating more connections with professional networks of Māori practitioners, who would be able to help them develop a more effective web of relationships with Māori.

### **What facilitates constructive relationship-building?**

*Sincerity and a genuine interest in the other's concerns.* Māori practitioners have highlighted for me the importance of being available, attending to what matters to the people. I have been interested in watching relationships develop as tangata whenua and council staff get to know each other, and understand that each have genuine interests in working together to find solutions to environmental problems.

Relationships where councils demonstrated through their actions that they valued the involvement of tangata whenua were regarded positively by both parties, and there was more willingness to try new approaches to a range of problems.

*Strategically placed Māori practitioners in council.* One of the mechanisms used by local government to facilitate relations with tangata whenua has been the employment of Māori practitioners in strategic positions. My observations are that these positions can be critical in the relationship-building process. This is not to underestimate how challenging the work is for the position-holders. For example, there may be a lack of recognition about their dual positions (as local government staff members, and often, a member of the iwi or hapū that council may be working with); they may find themselves being part of processes that are disrespectful to highly respected Māori leaders; they can be challenged by tangata whenua about their commitment to Māori development; and from their employer there can be a lack of resources and support, unrealistic expectations, and lack of role clarity).

In spite of the difficulties, if trusting, supportive relationships develop between Māori practitioners in these positions and their councils, there is the potential to move council-tangata whenua relationships forward. I have been interested in how Māori practitioners 'awhi (assist) the process', carefully supporting the ways in which tangata whenua and council representatives come together, ensuring that the right people are there, so that for both parties, the commitment to and confidence in the relationship is strengthened.

*Getting the right mix of people.* One of the points often discussed in council-tangata whenua relationship-building is the importance of ensuring senior council staff and politicians are involved in meetings with Māori leaders (something also highlighted by Jefferies, et al, 2003).

Recognising the critical role of Māori practitioners who work for Council, has led me to reflect more on the role of those in local government who facilitate high level discussions between tangata whenua and local government leaders, and who work

on practical ‘on-the-ground’ projects with staff from iwi and/or hapū environmental agencies. An illustration of this has come from a project I have been working on for the last 18 months. Complex iwi and hapū relationships have been negotiated by senior management, with a Memorandum of Understanding as a backdrop. From my observations, key staff members in the project have been central in facilitating a process where a partnership between tangata whenua, central and local government has enabled constructive discussion about proposed land use changes to protect highly valued natural resources with all affected parties.

***Is the kete half full or half empty?*** Although councils I have worked with share the view that the reasons for relationship-building with tangata whenua comes from legislation, their conclusions about what actions are required to meet legislative obligations can be quite different. What I have noted so far is that where the relationship is passive, the legislation is interpreted in a constrained way (e.g. ‘the legislation only requires that...’). When a positive, dynamic relationship exists, the legislative requirements are interpreted in an expansive way (e.g. ‘if we are to meet our obligations...we must....’).

One example of this expansive approach to what was required by legislation has resulted in a partnership between local government and tangata whenua which enabled tangata whenua to gather information about their rohe and control access to that information, while at the same time providing guidance for Council’s resource management planning.

***Out of the ashes.*** Relationship-building is a dynamic process, and relationships that involve imbalances of power between the parties are even more likely to have their ups and downs. I am interested that some of the most engaging and fruitful relationships I have seen have been borne out of intense and seemingly irreconcilable, conflict. People recalled that those in leadership positions at the time of conflict (from both sides) seemed to come to a point of thinking ‘anything would be better than this’. Perhaps having seen the worst of each other, they moved more quickly through the early relationship phases of establishing their positions to what Mansfield describes as ‘...an acceptance and valuing of difference...’ (1998: 213).

I am reminded of observations from Jefferies, et al. (2003: 3) that the level of trust established between tangata whenua and council, and recognition from council staff of past relationships has been a major factor in the effectiveness of consultation. Relationships that emerge from past conflict have a shared history, and when both parties make a commitment to change the ways they relate to each other, opportunities to establish trust seem to present themselves quite readily. Council members who had such an experience spoke of the trust they had developed in a relationship with hapū members, where after a relatively short time of working together, they had reached an agreement about some complex development issues after each party moved significantly from their original position. When faced with initially hostile reactions from their respective constituent groups, they were able to hold to the decisions they had agreed on, with positive results – an experience that increased the confidence they had in each other and in their own ability to manage the political risks of their partnership.

*Seizing the moment – policy at the core and periphery.* Relationships can move ahead quickly when other structures are changing at the same time. When examining continuity and change in policy development, Majone (1989) described a process through which the balance between the stable part of policy (the core) and the flexible part (the peripheral) shifts to the extent that the core no longer addresses current issues. This point was illustrated for me through the emergence of an issue that resulted in closer relationships with the hapū most affected by it, at the same time as the overarching tribal structure (council's preferred partner) was less active in council relationships. Subsequently (and incrementally), the council's policy of building relationships solely with iwi changed to include relationships with hapū.

People who facilitate and support these incremental changes are also important. I have observed coalitions between staff in iwi and hapū organisations and local authorities, and between Māori and Pakeha within local authorities that have facilitated progress in relationship-building by working together behind the scenes – sharing information and resources and providing support to those leading relationship-building efforts. A practical outcome of internal and external coalitions was demonstrated when threats to one sensitive site emerged in a subdivision adjacent to another sensitive site in a highly used recreational area. Within a very short time, a council staff member (a member of the local hapū) was able to facilitate support amongst several government and local organisations, which resulted in a protective structure being built and procedures set up to protect other sites.

### **Talking About Capacity**

I have used the term capacity to organise my discussions and observations about the ability of council and tangata whenua to build and maintain constructive, purposeful relationships with each other, which is less specific than the way PUCM has defined capacity. (See for example, Ericksen, 2003; Ericksen, et al., 2001.) In my experience, talk about capacity has usually been framed as the capacity building needed for Māori to be able to participate constructively in local government – a need responded to in the new Local Government Act (2002), which requires that council must (amongst other requirements) consider ways to foster the development of Māori capacity to contribute to the decision-making processes of the local authority.

There is acknowledgement from Māori and local government that Māori with environmental knowledge and experience are hard pressed to meet requests for information and involvement in council processes. And as Backhurst, et al. (2003) have noted, most iwi and hapū do not receive any support from council to facilitate their participation in the resource consents process. From my observations, unless appropriate processes are set in place for iwi and hapū representatives to contribute to councils' work, their contributions are not always a good investment in terms of outcomes for tangata whenua.

Iwi and hapū representatives who work with local government may also lack knowledge about environmental science, environmental legislation and what agencies are relevant for particular environmental concerns. Questions have also been raised by Māori practitioners and local government staff about the status and quality of some iwi and hapū environmental management plans (IHEMPs), a concern noted too by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (2002).

Councils do not seem so reflective about their capacity to work constructively with Māori, and their capacity-building needs have not been widely discussed. I have identified three interdependent areas where councils could build capacity: process and relationship-building skills; familiarity with Māori worldviews and environmental knowledge; strategic analysis of the position of Māori in relation to environmental management. This section finishes with a brief look at the first two, and then in the section that follows, I move on from a familiarity with Māori worldviews to examine more generally how councils recognise Māori knowledge. In the final section, I consider some of the implications of not having a strategic understanding of Māori in relation to the environment.

A lack of relationship-building skills seems to be a barrier to getting relationships started, or keeping them moving when there are not pressing external factors to maintain them. Once a relationship is established, and both parties see good reasons for keeping going, then process and relationship skills seem less important. In my experience, councils can lack staff with bicultural skills, even when they have good capacity for community engagement in general.

Lack of familiarity with Māori perspectives and environmental knowledge is a significant gap in local government's decision-making and policy development (and probably in other institutions too). The directions of environmental management could be expanded if they were informed by a broader range of possibilities. Imagine for example, what solutions might now be available for waste management if Māori perspectives on waste disposal formed the basis of a search for waste management solutions.

### **Whose Knowledge Counts?**

Most of my attention has been on processes for building relationships, but the relationships themselves must be purposeful, and fruitful, for those involved. Seeking mutually beneficial outcomes for practical matters seems reasonably uncomplicated. It is not hard to see that there might be a shared view of what the problem is, and how best to address it (for example, fencing and planting along stream banks to enhance water quality). I am more interested in whether relationships enable Māori and councils to negotiate different worldviews (a theme central to Māori Working Paper No. 4 by Simon, 2003). Although I have yet to examine this directly, it has been helpful to think about the ways in which councils recognise and respond to Māori knowledge and perspectives when they are

presented to them. I started by identifying how Māori knowledge and environmental perspectives are communicated to Council. Common avenues are through political representation, the development of IHEMPs, Memoranda of Understanding, participation in environmental working parties or consultation processes, comment and submissions during the resource consents process, and submissions on plans and policies.

There is also a number of ways councils can recognise Māori perspectives and respond to them. From my observations, although there has been some integration of Māori perspectives into policies and plans, there has been little evidence of them during plan implementation. (Detailed examples are given in Ericksen, et al., in press.) There may be some use of historical knowledge, say during the resource consents process, but this is not an area about which I have direct knowledge. I am not aware of work (scientific investigations for example) being undertaken where councils have used Māori knowledge as part of their own knowledge building.

What I have observed most often are Māori being seen as recipients for council-generated knowledge or information. There has been little evidence of information or knowledge sharing. Iwi or hapū environmental management plans have the potential to be used as a source of information on tangata whenua perspectives, but that does not seem to happen very often, something also noted by Jefferies, et al. (2003).

Council staff seem to have great difficulty in receiving and processing knowledge from Māori about the environment – individually (as illustrated by responses to Māori meetings and discussions,) and organisationally (for example, responses to submissions from iwi and hapū, or the ways analysis and reporting from consultation with tangata whenua occurs). To use Stanfield's (1985) argument, drawing on knowledge from outside Western traditions for the production of institutional knowledge could be particularly difficult when there is no conceptual framework to integrate it into the other knowledge the institution produces.

Discussion with council staff about Māori knowledge usually highlights the protection of historically important values, which is critical. As one Māori practitioner noted, 'when you see the old people open up and share knowledge with professionals, you know there's a system that's working'.

It is important too that such knowledge-sharing is part of a more encompassing debate about all that is happening in Māori knowledge-building and the environment, otherwise there seems to be a risk that councils' understanding of Māori knowledge is frozen in time.

There are some important exceptions to the ways councils usually respond to Māori knowledge. When Māori practitioners talked about Council staff who incorporated Māori knowledge into their work, they most often drew on examples of field staff who had a passion for getting things done and sought Māori knowledge to help them. Staff in these positions often have a degree of autonomy in what they do and

how they do it, so they may be less affected by the organisational rigidity that can marginalise the way information Māori provide for councils is regarded.

### **Implications of Not Thinking Strategically About Tangata Whenua-Council Relationships**

I have found few examples of councils thinking strategically about the position of Māori in relation to environmental management. Little attention seems to be paid to Māori as influential resource users, and contributors to the economy (compared with the way relationships with other significant economic development parties are discussed). The potential to build relationships around the value Māori place on the natural environment is also left unexamined. As Jefferies, et al. (2003) have noted, a lack of analysis makes Councils vulnerable when non-Māori constituents express disquiet about perceived ‘special treatment’ for tangata whenua, which can result in staff with good intentions finding themselves without a rationale to support tangata whenua focused initiatives. Neither is council management sufficiently well informed for advising politicians about Māori-Council relationships – in the way most could about relationships with the agricultural sector for example – so making progress with the legitimate concerns and interests of Māori is thwarted. Similarly, councils without a sound strategic analysis of Māori and environmental management lack confidence in their relationships with iwi and hapū become risk averse and have difficulty in developing robust and effective relationships where difficult issues can be negotiated.

Lack of analysis about the implications the Treaty of Waitangi has for councils’ relationships with tangata whenua and for environmental management, has similar consequences because staff, management and councillors are not confident in the articulation of Treaty-based reasons for integrating Māori perspectives into councils’ programmes.

Just as important, without clearly defined values and well articulated principles to guide the management of relationships with Māori, there is likely to be a rigid approach and an unwillingness to explore alternatives (Majone, 1989:152). The effectiveness of relationship efforts are further diminished when the organisation does not have a strategic framework to integrate them into a purposeful programme. Not having a strategic approach is a vicious circle because staff who want to progress relationships in their own work areas avoid getting ‘tangled up’ in what they see as counter-productive organisational approaches, so relationship-gains at a project level might not lead to organisation-wide gains.

A further consequence of insufficient strategic analysis is that responding to Māori concerns and interests in environmental management remains the responsibility of those with particular positions (iwi liaison officers for example) and a smattering of other staff. It is therefore difficult to develop an organisation-wide response to Māori because the reasons for doing that are not widely understood.



Without a strategic understanding of Māori and the environment, it is hard to develop a sense of what the relationship between council and Māori could be and how that could transform environmental management. Councils seem out of touch with the vibrancy of Māori knowledge-building, and especially with the contributions up-and-coming Māori practitioners and academics make to that knowledge. Unless they find a way to respond and engage with the new generation of Māori leaders, there is a risk that local government will be seen as increasingly irrelevant by Māoridom.

### **Where to Now?**

I started this paper thinking that there were more factors impeding relationship-building efforts between Māori and local government than there were facilitating them. The process of reflecting and writing has clarified for me the ways in which key people can help others make a genuine commitment to building relations, and reminded me of the projects that succeed even when there is little structural support for the relationships that underpin them. I remain interested in developing a better understanding of how Māori knowledge and perspectives can be integrated into the production of knowledge in institutions like local government. Most pressing, though, seems to be looking for ways to contribute to strengthening councils' understanding of Māori as important and influential strategic partners in environmental management. This is important because it will help develop an organisational response to building constructive relationships with Māori — one that integrates Māori knowledge into the way councils understand and carry out their work.

## REFERENCES CITED

- Alvesson, M. & Sköldbberg, K. (2000): *Reflexive Methodology New Vistas for Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Backhurst, M., Day, M., Warren, T., Ericksen, N., Crawford, J., Chapman, S., Laurian, L., P. Berke and G. Mason (2003): *Iwi Interests and The RMA: An Evaluation of Iwi and Hapū Participation in the Resource Consents Processes of Six District Councils*. Hamilton and Opotiki: University of Waikato, International Global Change Institute (IGCI) and KCSM Consultancy Solutions, Māori Working Paper No. 2.
- Coates, K. S. (1998): *Living Relationships Kokiri Ngatahi: The Treaty of Waitangi in the New Millennium*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- Crengle, D. (1993): *Taking into Account the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi: Ideas for Implementation of Section 8 of the Resource Management Act, (1991)*. Wellington: Ministry for the Environment.
- Department of Internal Affairs (2001): *Review of the Local Government Act 1974: Synopsis of Submissions*. A report prepared for DIA by A.C. Nielson. Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs.
- Durie, M H (1998): *Living Relationships Kokiri Ngatahi: The Treaty of Waitangi in the New Millennium*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- Ericksen, N. J., 2003: *Planning Paradise with the Cheshire Cat: Governance Problems Under the RMA*. (Invited key-note address to the New Zealand Planning Institute Conference (NZPI) held in Hamilton May 2003). Hamilton: International Global Change Institute.
- Ericksen, N., Crawford, J., Berke, P., and Dixon, J., (2001): *Plan Quality, Resource Management and Governance* (The 1<sup>st</sup> PUCM Report to Government.). Hamilton: Hamilton: International Global Change Institute.
- Ericksen, N., Crawford, J., Berke, P., and Dixon, J., (in press): *Plan-Making for Sustainability: The New Zealand Experience*. Aldershot, England and Hamilton, New Zealand: Ashgate Publications and International Global Change Institute Publication.
- Fleras, A. and Spoonley, P. (1999): *Recalling Aotearoa: Indigenous Politics and Ethnic Relations in New Zealand*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.
- Hoppe, Robert (1993): Political judgement and the policy cycle: The case of ethnicity policy arguments in the Netherlands. In Frank Fischer and John Forester (Eds.), *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*. London: Duke University Press (77-100).

- Jefferies R, Warren, T., Berke, P. Chapman, S., Crawford, J., Ericksen, N. and Mason, G. (2003): *Iwi Interests and the RMA: An Evaluation of the Quality of Plans and Processes of Councils*. Hamilton and Opotiki: University of Waikato, International Global Change Institute (IGCI) and Kokomuka Consultancy Ltd, Māori Working Paper No.1.
- McDowell, M. and Webb, D. (1998): *The New Zealand Legal System: Structures, Processes and Legal Theory*, Second Edition, Butterworths, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Maaka, R. (1998): *Living Relationships Kokiri Ngatahi: The Treaty of Waitangi in the New Millennium*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- Majone, G. (1989): *Evidence, Argument and Persuasion in the Policy Process*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Mansfield, B. (1998): *Living Relationships, Kokiri Ngatahi: The Treaty of Waitangi in the New Millennium*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (1998): *Kaitiakitanga and Local Government: Tangata Whenua Participation in Environmental Management*. Wellington: Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment.
- Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (2002) *Exploring the Concept of a Treaty-Based Environmental Framework*. Wellington: Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment
- Scheurich, J.J. & Young, M. D. (1997): Colouring Epistemologies: Are our research epistemologies racially biased? *Educational Researcher* V26, 4, p 4-16
- Simon, K. H., 2003: *Searching for Synergy: Māori/Indigenous and Scientific Conservatory Values – The Affinity Proposition*. Hamilton and Opotiki: University of Waikato, International Global Change Institute (IGCI) and KCSM Consultancy Solutions, Māori Working Paper No.4.
- Stanfield, J. H. (1985): The ethnocentric basis of social science knowledge production, *Review of Research Education*, 12, 387- 415.
- Taiepa, T. (1999): Māori participation in environmental planning: institutional reform and collaborative management, *He Pukenga Korero* 5, 1 34-39.
- Walker, R. J. (1999): Māori Sovereignty, Colonial and Post-Colonial Discourses. In P Havemann (ed.), *Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Australia, Canada and NZ*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.
- Williams, J. (1997), *Legal, Technical and Mechanical Issues*, Paper presented at New Zealand Law Society seminar Treaty of Waitangi Issues: the Last Decade and the Next Century, April, New Zealand Law Society, Wellington

New Zealand Statutes:

*Local Government Act (2002)*

*Resource Management Act (1991)*