

**“We’re all in this together?”**  
**The Search for Collective Belonging in a Globalised Single Industry Town: A  
case study from New Zealand**

**Abstract**

**Purpose**

Communities of work are a phenomenon closely associated with government social and industrial policy, and can be tracked in contemporary examples globally. This research explores community identity within a town which was previously single industry, but has since experienced workforce reduction and to a large degree, industry withdrawal.

**Design/methodology/approach**

Using an inductive approach, the researchers interviewed 32 participants who had resided (past or present) within the instrumental case study town. A thematic analytical framework, drawing on the work of Boje (2007) was employed.

**Findings**

A significant theme to emerge from the participants was the public assertion of social cohesion and belonging. However, what was interesting, was that beneath this unified exterior, lay accounts of multiple forms of demarcation. Drawing on Benedict Anderson’s (1983) notion of the imagined community, and Bauman’s (2001) identity in globalization, this contradiction is conceptualised as boundary-making moments of identification and disidentification.

**Research limitations/implications**

This research is specific to the New Zealand context, although holds many points of interest for the wider international audience. The research provides a broad example of the layering of the collective and individual levels of identity.

**Social implications**

This research provides a voice to the wider individual, community and societal implications of managerial practices entwined with political decisions. This research encourages managers and educators in our business schools to seek to understand the relationship between the political, corporate, community and individual realms.

**Originality/value**

This research makes a significant contribution to understandings of the interconnectedness of social policy, industry, and the lived experiences of individuals. Moreover, it contributes to the broader single industry town literature, which previously has focused on stories of decline from a North American context.

Keywords: Industrial Towns, Identity, Globalisation

## Introduction

Employment, education and industrial policy are seen as key pillars in national social policy, and aim to help shape the nature, structure and location of work within a national context. The current context of globalisation and changes to work have impacted on where we live and work, and how we live and work, within and beyond national boundaries. The shift away from full employment policies through the deregulation of labour markets, the intensification of globalisation and the growth in the number and size of MNCs have been directly linked to significant changes to the structure, conditions and location of organisation and paid employment (Allvin, 2008; Capelli, 1999; Cappelli & Rogovsky, 1994; Fleming, Harley, & Sewell, 2004). Therefore, globalisation and changes to work have impacted on the way in which we see ourselves and our communities. The aim of this paper is to explore community and individual identity in a town which has experienced significant changes as a result of changes in the wider political and corporate context.

The change in national political agenda throughout the past 60 years has been closely associated with both the process of changing work practices, and the re-shaping of communities and individuals lives. A neoliberal social policy agenda has been linked to a breakdown in traditional notions of community and social cohesion, due in part to the intensified competition for jobs, and assumptions of mobility and individual responsibility (Bauman, 2001; Defilippis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2009; Rose, 2000). For Bauman (1998), the implicit entwining of state agenda and identity is a central characteristic of politics in modernity. He asserts that the goals of the modern state, amplified under neo-liberalism, are to 'free the individual from inherited identity'. However, this freedom from ascribed identity also transforms 'the matter of ascription into achievement, thus making it an individual task and the individual's responsibility' (p. 3).

For Gabriel (2005), identity in globalisation is based on notions of image, driven by increased consumerism and the neo-liberal assumptions of individualized meritocracy and consumer sovereignty. Gabriel posits that increased mobility, such as movements linked career and education prospects, has detached individuals from their traditional place-based identities, and led them to identify with the 'visible', material possessions and occupations. Similarly, Thomas and Davies (2005) suggest in globalisation individuals experience

heightened insecurity and vulnerability, conditions which are both caused, and fulfilled (to a degree) by the new context of work. Thus for these authors, feelings of insecurity, vulnerability and anxiety are to be relieved by a search for stability; a stability that can be found in the form of a coherent identity. Under these assumptions, locality becomes a central issue to identity, whether it is the changing use of the landscape, or the lack of attachment to locality; locality and a sense of belonging to place is central to identity within the context of globalisation.

Communities of work, such as single industry towns and resourced-based towns, are an example of a locality where the organisational realm is merged with the basis of individual and community life. Moreover, these towns have experienced significant change as a result of changes in industry, training, education and welfare policy in many countries, along with global trends of increased corporate globalisation and changes to work. These towns were associated in Britain and North America with the industrial revolution time period, and concerns regarding worker welfare and industrial paternalism. In New Zealand and Australia, these towns were entwined with post- World War II Keynesian macro-management goals of full employment and industry training (Allsop, 1973, Roche, 1990). Single Industry Towns were the result of state-level employment and social planning throughout the Keynesian macro-management period of the 1930s-1970s (Southcott, 2000). As a result, a number of towns were developed with a dual role of supporting industry, and aiding state employment and social goals. Many of these towns were, by definition, Single Industry Towns.

During the time when a Keynesian politico-economic ideology predominated in many developed countries, SIT's were characterised by high levels of population and employment growth, and were largely viewed as prosperous centres of economic growth and opportunity (Lucas, 1972). Globally, the mid 1970s saw the introduction of a range of neo-liberal economic and political policies at the state level, which intensified during the 1980s and 1990s. This change in state-level policy resulted in significant changes to the prevailing political, economic, social and corporate ideology, including the removal of state intervention in industry and, to a degree, social planning, and a competitive corporate environment (Birch and Mykhnenko, 2009, Kelsey, 1997). Eversole and Martin (2006)

describe the impacts on the community when regional resource-based industry is owned and controlled offshore, leading to higher levels of employment instability, and concurrent higher levels of unemployment and social issues for the surrounding community.

In more recent examples, the development of economic zones in China, professional service clusters in India, and the concentration of technological ventures in Silicon Valley are associated with theories of innovation development and national competitive advantage. Therefore, although the political and corporate motivation for the development of these towns has altered over time, it is clear that the pattern of organizing community life around work, oftentimes in conjunction with state policy, is an ongoing phenomenon. It is the lived experience of this entwining of the political and organisational with the individual and community that is explored in this research. More specifically, this paper focuses on exploring the way in which community members perceive themselves, and their communities against the backdrop of organisational and political changes at the national and international level.

### **Identity in Globalisation**

Social identity theorists suggest that collective attachment is at the very heart of identity, and that the positions or roles available for an individual to identify with are embedded in collective narratives and discourses (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). For Korschun (2015), social identification is a voluntary act, that of assessing ‘the overlap between his or her sense of self and his or her sense of the target group’ (p. 614). Similarly, Hoelscher and Alderman (2004) see individual memory and narrative as the manifestation and expression of collective group identity. Moreover, it is suggested that these collective narratives construct particular and dichotomous social roles and define the boundaries between these roles. Benwell and Stokoe (2006, p.78) label these social roles as “relational identities”. From this perspective, these relational identities are bound by interactions with others.

Collective identification is entwined with social cohesion and belonging. According to Stovring (2011), social cohesion is of primary concern to policy makers. However, although policy-makers may see the institutional frameworks (such as laws, regulations and religion) as playing an important role in the development of collective cohesion, it is argued that informal

norms are the primary source of social cohesion (Stovring, 2011). These informal norms 'are created when people live alongside each other over a long period of time in related communities' (Stovring, 2011, p. 142).

*Where* we are is closely entwined with *who* we are (Parkin, 1998). Lovell (1998) sees 'belonging and locality as markers of identity' (p. 15). Parkin (1998) also sees locality as central to identity, questioning whether an individual can identify with any group that does not have some 'territorial reference point' (p. ix). According to Lovell, locality impacts identity in both the territorial placement of the self, as well as significantly contributing to individual and collective memory of social relations. The importance of belonging has certainly been linked to identity formation (Lovell, 1998, Morley, 2001, Puddifoot, 1994). In this sense, belonging is not only linked to physical space, but also to the social spaces with which an individual may identify and feel a sense of belonging. Skey (2013) argues that not all forms of collective belonging are equal in their sense of attachment, and notes that those which are 'grounded in people's everyday lives' (p.84) are generally more meaningful and durable. The communities an individual interacts with in their daily life are a primary source of everyday belonging, which in turn is a factor in an individual's emotional and social wellbeing. Others link identity with locality through theorising the sense of 'home' and belonging (Morley, 2001, Cuba and Hummon, 1993, Hardwick and Mansfield, 2009), inherently tied to place. For Morley, home refers to both the physical spaces, as well as 'heimat' (p. 425), a German term with no direct English translation used widely to refer to emotional and social sense of 'home'.

Hoelscher and Alderman (2004) bring the importance of locality to identity into current context by stating that 'social memory and social space conjoin to produce much of the context for modern identities – and the often rigorous contestation of those identities' (p. 348) Bauman however, holds that identity is a fabrication which only holds relevance under conditions of the *movement* of peoples *away* from their original sites of identification. For Bauman (2004), within the context of globalisation, the notion of identity represents a paradox between the search for (unattainable) security, yet the desire to retain mobility. Bauman's conceptualisation is centered on an identity dialectic of the tourist/vagabond. For Bauman, under conditions of globalisation, individuals are reduced to either the highly mobile tourist, or the perpetually immobile vagabond.

Bauman's 'tourists' experience a relentless pursuit of identity based on what Gabriel (2005) describes as an image of happiness, and a dream. However, a fixed state of such an identity is elusive, for although the tourists have the appearance of freedom and material wealth, they no longer have a deep connection specific localities or wider communities.

Bauman's vagabonds are stigmatized for their immobility and geographic confinement and have a particular identity imposed on them. More so, Bauman argues that vagabonds are constrained and have limited agency in developing their own identity because of the constructed conditions imposed by of globalisation and changes to work. For the vagabonds, the local is the only frame of reference, although they remain disconnected from these local communities by their inability to participate in the mobility and freedom associated valued in a global frame of reference.

In agreement, Lovell (1998) points out that in the context of globalisation the common themes of 'displacement, dislocation and dispossession' prevail. Within this context, identity may not be linked to a singular place, but rather be 'deterritorialised' (p. 5), occurring between places, or impacted by movement in place, rather than attachment to a specific fixed location. The deterritorialisation can be related to the continuously mobile tourists, whose attachment becomes to their mobility, to their lack of fixed place and belonging. Further, Lovell (1998) sees a distinction between those with territory rights and those without and that '[i]dentity can crystallise around a sense of belonging predicated on hierarchically defined rights of access to territory, which then serve to stratify social groups according to perceived origin' (p. 6).

Therefore, deep collective connections are lost, or rendered an 'image', questioning the relevance of notions of community, or the local within the global. Morley (2001) sees the notion of home to be the antagonist to the type of globalised mobility discussed by Bauman. Anderson (1983) upholds the continued importance of notions of community, but concurs with the changing nature of these attachments, suggesting that in a context of mobility and migration, these communities become 'imagined'. For Anderson (1983), such communities are imagined 'because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (p. 6). According to Anderson, communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity or genuineness, but by the way in which they are remembered by those who identify with them. Indeed, Hoelscher and Alderman (2004) argue that the way in which landscapes

are appropriated by various groups is inherently a political process, and has a lasting impact on power relations associated with locality. Hoelscher and Alderman (2004) discuss the importance of 'places of memory' (p. 350), arguing that it is not only the landscape itself, but the way in which the history of such landscape is preserved in memory that is tied to political processes. Communities of work represent a heightened example of a place of memory where the political, industrial and social intersect.

### The Research Context

This research began as a case study of Tokoroa, a Single Industry Town, situated in a densely forested area of the central region of the north island of New Zealand. Despite being a seemingly small and distant landmass from the larger geographic regions of the world, New Zealand is an interesting location for research on identity in Globalisation. Its pertinence arises from its political leadership on a number of fronts. Leadership in technological field such a refrigeration for example enabled the world-wide export of meat as early as 1882. New Zealand was the first democracy to grant women the vote (Kelsey, 1999). In the sphere of social and economic policy New Zealand was a first-mover in interpreting social-democratic macro-level policy associated with Keynesianism and again in adopting neo-liberalism through a rapid and widespread programme of structural adjustment referred to as 'The New Zealand Experiment' (Kelsey 1997). Between the years 1984-1991, New Zealand was transformed from a comprehensive welfare state, to one of the most deregulated countries in the world.

The 'user pays' ideology was applied to the provision of state services including early childhood and tertiary education and health services (Scollay & St John, 1996). In line with policies emphasising individual responsibility, came large-scale social welfare cuts, and the introduction of 'work testing' to determine welfare eligibility.

New Zealand became among the most open and unregulated markets for goods and services (Kelsey, 1997). A concurrent decline in manufacturing-based jobs in New Zealand is closely linked to these free-market policies. The export assistance to the manufacturing sector fell from 37% in 1985/1986 to 19% in 1989/1990, with further reduction throughout the 1990s

and 2000s, with many segments having assistance reduced to zero by 1993. This reduction in government support led to a movement of manufacturing to overseas locations where higher levels of support, or lower costs, could be found. Government policy began to emphasise a required transformation in workforce training and education.

The Fredericks Report (Frederick, McIlroy & French, 1999) became the basis for education, training and economic development policy initiatives aimed at developing a 'knowledge economy' in New Zealand, and signalled the start of discourse of knowledge work in New Zealand government policy. Notably, this report advocated for a move away from the traditional base of New Zealand industry, agricultural and commodity production and manufacturing, and towards 'knowledge production' industries (Pritchard, 2006).

This rapid and wide-ranging commitment to the principles of neo-liberalism was temporarily modified in the early 2000s under a rhetoric of the Third Way but the incoming National (Conservative) Party of 2008 returned to a more rigorous application of neo-liberal ideals. Today New Zealand is again significantly committed to the free-trade agenda and to a limited view of state provision of social services as preferred by neo-liberal advocates.

### Tokoroa: A Single Industry Town

Tokoroa is a single industry rural town in central New Zealand, founded in 1947 on land owned by New Zealand Forest Products, New Zealand's largest privately owned company at the time (Healy, 1982). Tokoroa was once the fastest growing town in the country. Tokoroa is situated 3 hours south of NZ's biggest city (Auckland) and in close proximity to the large-scale central north island forests. The Kinleith Pulp and Paper Mill, built 8km south of the town is a dominant presence on the landscape and in the community. The company and government had a collaborative approach to town development, in a New Zealand first, and by the time Kinleith Mill opened in 1954, the company housing project was the largest private housing scheme in New Zealand. The town was largely made up of mill workers and their families, and as such had a large proportion of young people. Combined with increased national birth rates during this time, by 1970, Tokoroa had an average age of just 37 (Chapple, 1976). The Kinleith workforce in the early years represented something of a micro-society. The skill and demographic mix at the mill resembled a cross-section of the wider Tokoroa community, with higher than national average rates of Maori and Pacific



Island workers (Healy, 1982), many of whom were attracted to Tokoroa by work opportunities and government urbanisation programmes.

However, there was demarcation based on occupation and ethnicity. The managerial roles (Administration, Technical, Skilled Trades) were generally populated by Europeans (NZ, Australian, Dutch and British), and the semi-skilled staff positions tended to be a more broad mix of NZ European, Maori and Pacific Islanders (Chapple, 1976). The permanent residents in the town were largely migrant workers and their families, with the town having over 60% of families originating from outside of New Zealand, and having over 50 different nationalities represented during the boom period. However, as with many industry towns, the global shift to outsourcing aspects of production has seen activities once performed locally being exported off-shore. These include the processing of logs into pulp and the production of paper. Resultant large-scale redundancies have characterised the workforce. The town of Tokoroa has been in a state of population and socio-economic decline since the mid 1980's – the period also when neo-liberal political and economic ideals were being implemented in this country. At this time, the Mill workforce peaked at approximately 5500 (McCaw & Harbridge, 1990). Since the mid-1980's, the Kinleith workforce has been repeatedly downsized and by 2013 stood at approximately 300 workers. The impact of this downsizing was not only on the direct employees of The Mill, but across the many supporting occupations that enlivened the Town of Tokoroa. Growth and retraction of Tokoroa's population has mirrored the expansion and retraction of the Kinleith Pulp and Paper Mill work force. For example, the town's population grew from approximately 1100 in 1948 to a peak of over 19,000 in the 1980's (Campbell & Weerasinghe, 1986) and today stands at just over 13,000.

## **Methodology**

This research employed a narrative methodology, based on a methodological positioning of critical management research (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000, Duberley and Johnson, 2009), and drawing on Boje's (Boje, 2008, 2007, Boje and Jorgensen, 2008, Boje and Tyler, 2009) living story methodology.

Critical Management Studies is generally seen as a focus on management, drawing on the

broader critical theoretical research traditions developed from the Frankfurt School (Adorno, 2000; Marcuse, 1991), and incorporating broader critical work including that of Habermas (1985), Gramsci (1971), Foucault (1977, 1989), and more recently scholars such as Deetz (1992, 2000), Zizek (2000, 2008), Chomsky (1991, 1993), Alvesson and Willmott (1992a, b). Duberley and Johnson (2009) describe the agenda of critical theorists as one of working to expose the conditions and assumptions that construct individual's social worlds, in the process exposing the asymmetrical power relationships and structures, and resultant distorted communication. More recently, Critical Management Studies scholars have moved focus from the structural arguments of Marxist critique to a wider range of explorations into the manifestations of power structures at both the macro and micro level. Kincheloe and McLaren (2005, p. 321) describe the interconnectedness of the macro and micro when describing how a focus on whose interests are being served informs "where our own frames of reference come from". This highlights the centrality of self and identity, and in doing so connects these ideas to the wider macro socio-power structures.

Within this wider positioning, an inductive living story methodology was employed.

Jorgensen and Boje (2009, p. 32), draw on Derrida to argue that traditional use of narrative theory is "linked with an overall modern emphasis on truth, essence, unity and rationality". Although narrative inquirers would (generally) identify with interpretive paradigms, Jorgensen and Boje argue that the qualitative preoccupation with constructing narratives in this sense is reminiscent of a positivist preoccupation with notions of truth and 'fact'. In agreement, Yolles (2007) believes that the clear (stated or unstated) definitions, with embedded assumptions, and clear sequence of events suggests a sense of causality that may be suspect. According to Jorgensen and Boje (2009, p. 33), "narrative thus contains a moral and 'agreed' interpretation on something that is in reality fragmented, pluralistic, paradoxical and ambiguous". Researchers who adopt a living story methodology focus on the fragmented and collective nature of stories; the complex fragments which are continuously co-constructed by multiple participants into what becomes known as 'the narrative'. Rather than a focus on the tidy 'Beginning, Middle, End (BME)', living story researchers focus on the complexity of ante narratives which occur before, after, and simultaneously to the 'narrative'.

Although ante narrative is taken to mean 'before' narrative, this 'before' is not a set chronological construct, but rather a continuous process of emphasizing the historical conditions and circumstances in which stories "develop(ed), evolve(d) and change(d)" (Jorgensen & Boje, 2008, p. 4). These conditions and circumstances are not only chronologically 'before', but might also be seen as running under the more composed narrative. For Boje and Tyler (2009, p. 173), the living story "recognises the plurality of selves that constitute our identity, and our reflexivity that is out of time, more upon what lies below and above".

Within the framework of critical management research methodology, the living story method provided a number of tools which led to a significantly more robust process. In particular, the living story places focus on the importance of fragments of narrative as pertinent, rather than anticipating a complete or stable narrative. This focus is consistent with the identity lens, particularly within a social constructionist paradigm, which rejects notions of a fixed, stable notion of identity or context. Therefore, it would be inconsistent for the researchers to treat the participants narratives as 'fact', or as fixed, stable whole 'stories', but rather this approach requires the researchers to take fragments of themes, or narratives across a range of texts.

## **Research Design**

The research design used an instrumental case approach (Stake, 2000), drawing an indicative single context, which can be justified as bringing additional insight to support the aims of the research. For Stake, an instrumental case is useful if "a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue... the case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else" (p. 437).

The participant criteria of having permanently resided in Tokoroa for at least one year was applied to generating a mixed sample of 17 women and 15 men, aged between 30-85 years. This initial criteria was applied as part of a wider project exploring lived experiences of individuals and communities through global change. The final sample had resided in the town for a minimum of four years, with an average of 33 years residency. Participant details can be found in Table 1 below. The participants were recruited initially using a self-selected

sampling based on public notices and then through snowballing. Of the participants, three were currently living outside of Tokoroa, with the remaining 29 currently residing in the town. All had resided in the town for at least six years, with the longest period of residence being 66 years. The participants were from a broad range of ethnicities, with 10 identifying as New Zealand European. Of the remaining, six identified as New Zealand Maori, eight as Cook Island Maori, one as Fijian, one as Samoan, and seven as continental European. 16 participants had extended family living in Tokoroa.

Given that the case town is a single industry town, the spread of occupations and skill mix of the participants is of interest. Our aim was to have as broad a representation as possible. The resulting participants were from a wide variety of skill and employment backgrounds. Seven were retired, 12 employed full time, six employed part time, one was a full-time student, and two are currently unemployed. All had experience working within the local workforce, in a variety of occupations, including skilled trade's people, forestry workers, administration, management, education. Participants had a variety of experiences with work and their interaction with Kinleith Mill and parent companies. 28 of the participants had worked during their time in Tokoroa, with 15 being past or current employees of either New Zealand Forest Products or Carter Holt Harvey. Seven participants had experienced redundancy from either New Zealand Forest Products or Carter Holt Harvey. Moreover, 13 participants had at some stage been provided with company housing by New Zealand Forest Products.

**\*\*Insert Table 1 Here\*\***

Semi-structured conversational interviews were conducted with participants, resulting in 60 hours of recordings. These were then transcribed verbatim, and analysed using a 3-step analytical strategy. Broadly drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach. A fragmented thematic analysis was conducted, with coding carried out for key words, phrases, themes. This initial analysis resulted in the coding of 98 constructs. These constructs were then sorted using a Boje Emic/Etic framework, with the dominant themes initially determined via triangulation with secondary sources including company documents, national media sources and government policy documents. The Emic/Etic analysis involved a re-reading of

the transcripts for themes/stories emerging across the dominant (etic) themes, taking extracts and fragments of text from each theme, and also from the secondary material. These themes were embedded in the wider contextual case developed from secondary material to re-theme. As part of this process, each theme was dominant (etic) narrative or ante-narrative (emic) (Boje, 2008). Boje (2001) draws on grounded theory methodology to explain the distinction between the emic (outsider, deductive) and emic (insider or grounded situational) themes which emerge during the telling of a 'beginning-middle-end' (Boje, 2008) narrative. These distinctions are made based on whether the narrative is publicly upheld, contained in public documents (media, company publications), or in contrast, whether the theme is multi-layered and embedded amongst, and in contrast to, the etic (dominant). Each researcher conducted this phase of the analysis individually, before coming to agreement on these distinctions. These various layers of dominant and ante narrative are presented in the following sections, in narrative/ante narrative form.

## **Results**

### **'We're all in This Together'**

The overarching, dominant narrative expressed by all participants was a feeling of a strong community identity, and a sense of 'we're all in this together'. Participants noted this as a key facet of the early development of the town (as expressed above in relation to a sense of egalitarianism), but also related such sentiments to present day.

A perceived identity of togetherness seemed to be rooted in the early development of the town, where peoples from many different backgrounds and cultures were brought together with the shared goal of developing both the Mill and the town.

For example, one participant, born in Fiji, who arrived in Tokoroa in 1967 commented:

*But the people in Tokoroa were wonderful, a wonderful community spirit, wonderful people everyone gets on well together (Participant 17)*

Another participant, originally from the Netherlands, a resident since the year of the Mill opening stated:

*There are no strangers in Tokoroa you all work together. (Participant 5)*

Many participants commented on what they perceived to be a community cohesiveness that was unlike any other they had experienced in other small towns. The only two participants who made comments in opposition to this were the most recent arrivals to the town, having only resided in the town for a period of four years.

Participant 12, who was born in Tokoroa, and currently resides in Canada, commented:

*I tell you I have travelled all over the world and never managed to live in a more friendly place, kid's where raised by the village, as Oprah would say, everyone watched out for each other, and each other's kids. (Participant 12)*

One participant, who resided in the town for 13 years, but has since moved to another similar sized town, described how this sense of unity and cohesiveness was found in simple acts:

*The first day there, when I came home from work, she said to me 'this place is amazing' - and she didn't want to go there. She says 'this morning I went to the fruit shop and which is in Leith place, and they carried my stuff out to the car, and you never got that in Morrinsville. .... she went to the countdown store, which you know is a big multinational, and she went there and they had a promotion going on with the local radio station and she had to take some stuff to the radio station and the women said to her 'oh, do you know where it is?' and she said 'no, we've just shifted into town' so she took her outside the shop and down to the corner and pointed out down the road. You know, just simple little things but that's what Tokoroa is about that's the difference - whereas, you take those things were granted... so that's why it was quite a special place for us (Participant 1)*

#### Ante narrative: Demarcations

However, although there was a dominant narrative expressed of egalitarianism expressed by participants, and a sense of 'we're all in this together', there was also a dialectical narrative expressed, of explicit demarcations on a number of levels *within* the community, expressed spatially and socially. Examples of factors under which individuals were separated included ethnicity, position/seniority, employer (Mill/Non-Mill). The presence of demarcations is explicitly at odds with the perception of an egalitarian culture.

### *Demarcations Based on Occupation*

Representative of the planned nature of the town in line with industry, participants described how residents were spatially (and therefore socially) demarcated based on Tayloristic occupational characteristics. For example, all the labourers, the bush staff etc were housed together within the single men's camps. Additionally, different sections of the family staff housing were reserved for different occupations – for example, as one participant noted, all the Paper specialists were housed on one street, and the Pulp specialists on another. Another participant noted the separate housing for office and administration staff, separate from the production staff.

Beyond different functional demarcation, spatial demarcations were also based on seniority.

Participant 4, who came to the town in 1959 to work in the Mill as a labourer, but subsequently moved into the forest nurseries, and remains employed by the company, described how the living arrangements changed as workers changed jobs.

*We had shifted from Brayside [single men's camp] into another place which was for the office staff. (Participant 4)*

### *Demarcations based on Nationality*

In addition to Tayloristic occupational demarcations, Participants also described spatial demarcations based on nationality. Perhaps aimed at encouraging social cohesion and a sense of home during a time when new migrants arrived from many different countries, families were grouped together based on nationality (which often corresponded to occupation above). One participant, a Cook Islander born in Tokoroa, described the so-called 'rainbow valley' area of Tokoroa as:

*If you wanted to get a picture of what it was like then Rainbow Valley is it Cook Islanders in nearly every second house or a Samoan or a Maori living in a house trying to own it and every man worked at the Mill. (Participant 9)*

Another participant, a Maori New Zealander, could distinguish these demarcations down to individual streets:

*South of Maraetai was predominantly Polynesian the demography of the township and in the middle between Baird Road and Maraetai was a mix with the Pakeha. (Participant 8)*

Others commented on further demarcations amongst largely European migrant families:

*Further along that same road were, Delarney Road towards Baird Road where the English lot who were the Specialists at the Paper Mill. (Participant 4)*

*The odd one from Denmark and Sweden that were working in the Paper Mill – their fathers were big bosses. (Participant 5)*

The above spatial demarcations based on occupation and nationality also corresponded to perceptions of socio-economic demarcations. As one participant noted:

*Oh yes south of Maraetai Road was considered the hood ok? It was the Kelso Streets and the John Streets, north of Baird Road was considered the rich. The middle part in between they were the in between (Participant 8)*

#### Ante narrative: 'We're not all insiders'

Another ante narrative running through participants recollections that contradicts narratives of collective unity was that of a strong 'insider'/'outsider' dichotomy. The wording used by participants to describe those perceived to be outside the town included such terms as 'invaders' and 'troublemakers'. One participant, a resident of only 5 years, but subsequently commuting to the town for work, alluded to those outside the town as being 'strangers' in the following

*There are no strangers within Tokoroa you all work together. (Participant 18)*



In particular, participants described outsiders as being those who came to the town and then left (the ‘deserters’), those responsible for violence and crime (the ‘troublemakers’), and the new Mill management (the ‘invaders’).

### *The ‘Deserters’*

Many participants spoke of people coming to the town during the boom time, lured by high wages at the Mill, and then leaving the town. Participants spoke of these individuals in a negative light, as though they came to exploit the benefits of the prosperous times, yet failed in a perceived responsibility to give back to the town, and contribute to the community. Additionally, these individuals were not seen as ‘true’ residents, as they had failed to stay during the hard times, and therefore were seen to not have shown the perseverance and loyalty required of a ‘true’ resident.

One participant, a member of the farming community, who had lived in Tokoroa for over 50 years, commented:

*It really irks me in a way really, that they made their money, they made lots of money here in Tokoroa, and they’ve moved away (Participant 27)*

A sense that these individuals were not readily accepted into the category of ‘insider’ and were viewed with a sense of caution can be seen in the following comment, from a member of the Cook Island community, who arrived in Tokoroa from the Cook Islands at 4-yrs of age:

*The community’s good, when you’re in your community with your people there are other people out there that take advantage, you stay away from them. (Participant 11)*

### *The ‘Troublemakers’*

Participants felt that perceptions of Tokoroa from those outside the town were often centred on unemployment, poverty, violence and crime. However, for participants, the presence of these negative aspects of the town were largely attributed to outsiders who had either temporarily come to the town specifically to commit a crime, or who, in the case of beneficiaries, had come to the town to exploit affordable housing. These individuals were not perceived as ‘true’

residents, but rather as a group of ‘troublemakers’ who were responsible for creating negative perceptions of the town:

*Now you may have been told we had a murder here, I don’t know how long ago, but we will say 15 years ago, we were not here, happened on a Saturday night, and everybody was in total shock, complete stranger, didn’t belong in the town, he just arrived, he was here for a fortnight or something (Participant 23)*

#### *The ‘Invaders’*

One group who was viewed with caution was those individuals who held management positions at the Mill. Participants saw these people as unanimously being outsiders, mostly residing outside the town and commuting in for work. Participants spoke of the ‘new’ management firmly as outsiders, and expressed that this group of people did not understand the needs or values of the community.

*They come in from outside the Bosses, all these big Bosses about every three years they’d have a turnaround of Bosses. Three years one lot would go and another lot come in. And yet all these Bosses never ever lived in Tokoroa. They never lived in this town and it hurt quite a few of us. (Participant 15)*

One participant articulated this sense in the label ‘invaders’, which seemed to encompass the sentiments of other participants:

*We saw these manager’s coming in, these invader’s coming in outside of our town making all these changes but not having any form of any formal or professional dialogue or consultation, yeah it just made it hard to accept them and go along with it so. (Participant 13)*

#### Between Insider and Outsider

In addition to the above categories of clear ‘outsiders’, there was also a sense that some groups of residents fell in between insider and outsider. These individuals were clearly residents of the town, and accepted into some areas of community life, but were regarded with a degree of suspicion. Included in this grouping was ‘new’ residents and farmers.

#### *New Residents*

Participants made a clear distinction between ‘new’ residents and original residents. However, the time period determining ‘new’ was moveable – for some, it meant anyone who had not resided in the town since the 1960s. For others, it was those who had settled in the town in the past 5-10years. Interestingly, all participants had a sense of this dynamic – and even those participants who might be classed as ‘new’ by some older residents themselves talked of ‘new’ residents, meaning those who had arrived after themselves.

*To a point, for those who were here in the beginning in the early days but for the people who have come since, they bring a different feeling into the place. They bring their own feelings and impressions. (Participant 23)*

*There are a lot of people coming in but they don’t really understand the way Tokoroa. (Participant 16)*

#### *The Farmers*

Another group who were seen as crossing the boundary of ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ were the farmers. Although Tokoroa had been a farming settlement prior to the development of the Mill (described in Chapter 8), the farmers were seen as a separate category to the ‘community’

*The farmers were a different kettle of fish (Participant 14)*

*The farming area those were on the outskirts of town so as a community I think that Tokoroa might be a little bit hesitant to move in towards it but they will accept it, they will because they will realise that they need it because we can’t just rely on good on Radiata to get us through (Participant 8)*

Members of the farming community also saw themselves as separated from the Tokoroa community to a degree. One participant, who was a farmer himself, and came from a farming family in the area prior to the Mill development discussed the Tokoroa residents as being ‘them’

*Well I used to get very jealous of the money they [mill workers] were making (Participant 21)*

Another member of the farming community also mirrored these sentiments

*Those were the mill workers had lots of money.... But funnily enough I don't think, like even today, even now, I have still met people when I go out that have lived here for probably 30, 40, 50 years and we have never known them because we have always been in the farming side of things, always out in the country, and they've only been in town, and you have never known them, you have never, it is quite strange really. The two have never really mixed (Participant 26)*

## **Discussion**

Increased corporate globalisation, changes to work, and at a national level, changes in politico-economic agenda, have resulted in significant changes for communities of work. The shift away from Keynesian full employment has been directly related to changes in the nature and structure of work in New Zealand, holding significant implications for New Zealand communities of work. It has also been argued that under conditions of late modernity, characterised by globalisation, flexible work practices and the move towards forms of 'knowledge work', that unequal outcomes, mobility (or immobility) have posed a challenge to traditional notions of social cohesion and a collective identity. Our research uncovered insights which problematize a lack of connection to community and locality. In fact, for our participants, a sense of attachment to community was evident within the first comments made in relation to Tokoroa. However, the interplay between a strong dominant collective narrative of social cohesion, yet multiple ante narratives of demarcation and conflict, illustrated an interesting layering of the collective and individual identities.

The strong dominant narrative, interspersed with the ante narratives can be conceptualised as the public upholding of the dominant narrative relating to social cohesion, yet the contrasting private refusal of this narrative. However, the expression of these individual narratives also contributed to the collective identity. For most participants, comments relating to the community cohesion were among the first comments made in relation to the town. However, once the interviews progressed, participants' comments were often in sharp contradiction to this narrative, and themes which arose were those relating to the demarcations, based on ethnicity, occupation, and time spent in the town.

### **Processes of Identification/Disidentification**

One way of viewing the many and varied identities in Tokoroa is as processes of identification and disidentification. Each moment involves decisions about whether to identify with, or dis-identify with each narrative and/or ante narrative. Our participants' experiences show a complex range of these decisions, often appearing contradictory. For example, the strongly held identity of 'we're all in this together', one of community cohesiveness, was expressed unanimously by participants. However, all participants also mentioned aspects of divisiveness in the community. For each individual, this was based on different characteristics or events, at which time they individually had identified with a grouping or aspect which was in contrast with this community-level identification of cohesiveness. One example of this is that the non-mill worker participants voiced strong resentment towards Mill workers and union members. Others expressed negative views of other ethnic groups, individuals at other levels of the organisation or in positions of seniority. The identification with these division in the community was at odds with the strongly held identification with community cohesion.

#### Narrative as Boundary and Resistance

The public upholding of a narrative of belonging and community cohesiveness could be conceptualised as boundary and resistance. The dominant narrative of 'we're all in this together' is perhaps not so contradictory to the narratives of demarcation, if conceptualising both sets of narratives as defining 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. In this sense, in line with Benwell & Stokoe's (2006) assertion that collective narratives define dichotomous social roles, all narratives can be seen as efforts to create boundaries around who belongs 'here' and who does not. The explicit narrative of belonging and cohesiveness creates the assumption that those within are closely bound, and this group is difficult to infiltrate. In this sense, this grand narrative provides community members with protection from outside invaders.

According to Anderson (1983), communities are to be distinguished by the style in which they are imagined. The assertion of community belonging could therefore also be conceptualised as a form of identity resistance against globalisation/workplace change. In this sense, the unified community identity is an effort at collective resistance to the grand narratives of globalisation and changes to work. In particular, the strongly held identity of 'we're all in this together' was upheld at many levels, both by participants, and in the

secondary material. However, a closer view of the participants' experiences show that there are, in fact, many divisions and demarcations, negating the view of a singular, unified community. This observation could lead to the analysis that this collective appearance of unity actually serves to silence the many divisions and alternate groups within the community, in itself solidifying these divisions, making it difficult to voice and reconcile these often historic divisions. Anderson holds that such fragmented groups, which are imagined as unified communities, are constructed as such because, 'regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each', the community is imagined as a 'deep, horizontal comradeship' (p. 7).

Processes of globalisation and workplace change are espoused to create connectedness and homogenous culture. However, these same processes have been shown to produce many divisions, in society, and in the workplace. Outcomes of income inequality, flexible forms of work and the spatial relocation of work have resulted, meaning individuals are increasingly separated, isolated and re-categorised. Under these conditions, an overarching identification with community-level cohesiveness and belonging could be seen in direct contrast to this. The attachments formed to the town encourage individuals to remain, to return, and to stay connected. These attachments provide a tension between the mobility and fluidity of attachments under globalisation, and the desire to remain attached to the town. This process could be seen as a form of resistance to processes of globalisation.

## **Conclusion**

The findings illustrate that while there was universal acceptance of a set of dominant narratives of community identity, there were also a number of alternative narratives which problematised the notion of a unified community identity.

The overarching narratives regarding globalisation and changes to work generated from policymakers, business leaders and scholars alike, where this is achieved through a predominantly structural analysis, assume a universality of experience. This research illustrates that current analyses do not provide a satisfactory explanation of

the lived experience of policy and business decisions. Such grand narrating on both parts masks a multitude of complex individual experiences, and manifestations of localised politics. The uptake of these overarching structural narratives in scholarship and policy seem to provide a deflection from more nuanced analysis and thus avert attention from the implications of policy and business decisions on the lives of individuals and working communities. This research reminds us that despite assertions that notions of belongingness are no longer relevant in this fast paced and mobile world, that for many, this search for belonging and identification remains strong at the local level.

This research is significant for social policy researchers and policy makers, as it highlights the importance of context to understandings of social cohesion. Taking this context into consideration in formulating policies may lead to policy which is more respectful of different contexts and collective identities. Moreover, this research provides a useful account of the impact of corporate decision-making on individual and community identities, which is of interest to policy makers who are increasingly operating within a private/public partnership model.

The findings of this paper provide an overview of the different layers of identity at play in the community/individual identity space, within a community of work. Future work could focus on a nuanced analysis of groups within such communities, analysing aspects of ethnicity, class, gender intersectionality, within these results.

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