Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

More Than a Roof: How Can Community Development Help Public Housing Contribute to Wellbeing?

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Public Health

SHORE and Whariki Research Centre
at Massey University,
Auckland,
New Zealand.

Rosie Gallen

October 2025

More Than a Roof: How Can Community Development Help Public Housing Contribute to Wellbeing?.....i

Abstract vii

Acknowledgements ix

Declaration x

Explanation of Acronyms xi

List of Documents xiii

List of Figures xv

List of Tables xvi

Chapter One: Beyond Shelter—Housing Policy, Disadvantage, and Wellbeing 1

1.1 Introduction 1

1.2 The Housing Policy Context: A New Mandate 3
1.2.1 Defining the Housing Models of Aotearoa New Zealand 4
1.2.2 Te Tiriti and Public Housing 8

1.3 Public Policy Approaches to Wellbeing 11
1.3.1 The Living Standards Framework (LSF) 12
1.3.2 He Ara Waiora 14

1.4 Te Ao Māori and Wellbeing 17

1.5 Three Dimensions of Wellbeing in Public Housing 20

1.6 Research Approach 22
1.6.1 Research Questions 23
1.6.2 Research Paradigm 25
1.6.3 Scope of the Research 27
1.6.4 More than an Add-on 29

1.7 Structure and Outline 31

1.8 Contribution to Research 33

1.9 Conclusion to Chapter One 34

Chapter Two: The Legacy of Housing and Community Development—Failures and Spatial Disadvantage..... 36

2.1 Introduction 36

Part One: Public Housing in Aotearoa New Zealand 36

2.2 From Universalism to Exclusion: The Ambitions and Limits of a Socialised Housing Vision 39

2.3 Building without Belonging: Fragmentation and the Failure of Integrated Planning 40
2.3.1 Security to Scarcity: Public Housing as a Safety Net 41

2.4 Residualising Responsibility: Neoliberalism and the Redistribution of Housing Risk 43
2.4.1 Beyond Shelter: Spatial Disadvantage and the Logic of Residualisation 45
2.4.2 Social Exclusion: Participation without Power? 45

2.5 Housing as Triage: The Rise of the Ambulance Service Model 48

Part Two: Community Development in Aotearoa New Zealand 51

2.6 Community Development as a Patchwork of Practice 51
2.6.1 Māori Community Development, Indigenous practice, and Te Ao Māori 54
2.6.2 Institutional Pressures and the Contemporary Practice Landscape 56
2.6.3 Community Development in Public Housing: Between Policy Intent and Practice Constraints 57

2.7 Conclusion to Chapter Two 63

Chapter Three: Community and Community Development in the Social Housing Context: a Thematic Literature Review 65

3.1 Introduction 65

3.2 Defining Community 66
3.2.1 The Idealised Community 67
3.2.2 Community becomes the Third-Way 68

3.3 Defining Community Development 69

3.4 Theoretical Approaches to Community Development 73
3.4.1 Communitarianism-Inspired Community Development 75
3.4.2 Pluralist-Inspired Community Development 76
3.4.3 Radical-Inspired Community Development 78
3.4.4 A "Curiously Hybrid" Practice 79

3.5 Defining Wellbeing 81
3.5.1 Subjective Wellbeing 81
3.5.2 Relational Wellbeing 82
3.5.3 Community Wellbeing 84
3.5.4 Kaupapa Māori Wellbeing Frameworks 85
3.5.5 Pasifika Wellbeing Frameworks 87
3.5.6 Integrating Wellbeing Frameworks in Public Housing 88

3.6 Guiding Concepts in Community Development 90
3.6.1 Social Capital 91
3.6.2 Participation in Public Housing 104
3.6.3 Capacity-Building 111
3.6.4 Care in Community Development 113
3.6.5 Public Service and Community Development 118

3.7 Gaps in the Literature and Positioning of this Research 122
3.7.5 Public housing Authorities as Learning Organisations 124

3.8 Conclusion to Chapter Three 125

Chapter Four: Methodology and Methods 127

4.1 Research Aim 127

4.2 Research Questions and Focus of Inquiry 128

4.3 Research Paradigm: Interpretive and Social Constructionism 129
4.3.1 Analytical Framework: Four Intersecting Theory Clusters 129

4.4 Research Design 133
4.4.1 A Dual-Inquiry Approach 133
4.4.2 Rationale for a Qualitative and Interpretive Approach 134
4.4.3 Connecting Design with Analysis 135

4.5 Data Collection 136
4.5.1 Selection of Informants 137
4.5.2 Transcription and Data Management 141

4.6 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis 142
4.6.1 Inductive and Deductive Coding 143
4.6.2 Framing Devices: Structuring the Findings 151

4.7 Limitations 153
4.7.1 Contextual Boundaries 154
4.7.2 Sample and Confidentiality Constraints 154
4.7.3 Transferability and Scope 154
4.7.4 Insider Perspective and Interpretive Bias 155

4.8 Reflexivity and Relational Commitments 155
4.8.1 Reflexive Practices Employed 156
4.8.2 Indigenous Frameworks and Relational Practice 157

4.9 Delimitations 158

4.10 Ethical Considerations 159

4.11 Conclusion to Chapter Four 159

Chapter Five: More than a Roof—Community Development in Public Housing 161

5.1 Introduction 161
5.2.1 Analytical Lens and Researcher Positioning 162
5.2.2 Research Themes 163

Part One: Lessons from Practice—Relational Work in Legacy Public Housing Authorities (2000–2017) 164
5.2.3 Housing New Zealand Corporation's Community Renewal Programme (2000–2011) 164
5.2.4 Wellington City Council's Housing Upgrade and Community Action Programme (2008–2018). 167
5.2.5 Christchurch City Housing's Tenant Activity Programme (2007–2016) 169
5.2.6 Synthesis: Common Threads and Divergent Pathways 170

5.3 Theme One: Trust, Care, and Connection in Place 173
5.3.1 Trust and Tension: Navigating Power, Presence, and Perceptions 174
5.3.2 Whakawhanaungatanga as a Practice: Creating Connections and Developing Trust 184
5.3.3 Beyond Service Delivery: Caring as a Political and Relational Practice 189
5.3.4 More than a Place: Creating Opportunities for Connection and Change 194

5.4 Theme Two: Linking People, Power, and Possibilities 199
5.4.1 Creating Pathways and Building Bridges: Networks as Tools for Social Change 200
5.4.2 From Engagement to Empowerment: Facilitating Skills and Leadership 209

Part Two: Between Promise and Practice—Community Development in Kāinga Ora 217

5.6 From Past to Present: Tracing the Reform Trajectory 218
5.6.1 Making Sense of the Machinery 219
5.6.2 New Names, Old Frames 222

5.7 Theme Three: Built to Change, Resistant to Shift 223
5.7.1 Contrasting Commitments: Community Development in Practice 224

5.8 Theme Four: Participation on the Periphery 233

5.9 Conclusion to Chapter Five 238

Chapter Six: More than a Job—The Community Development Practitioner 241

6.1 Introduction 241

Part One: The Community Development Practitioner in Legacy Public Housing Authorities 245

6.2 Theme One: Practitioners as Strategic Actors in Relational Terrain 245
6.2.1 Integrity and Trust-Building 248
6.3.2 Empathy as a Practice 249

6.3 Theme Two: Betwixt and the Spaces Between 253
6.3.1 Strategic Agency in Contested Spaces 255
6.3.2 Fragility of Boundary-Spanning Roles 257
6.3.3 Emotional Labour as Invisible Infrastructure 258
6.3.4 Relational Work as Strategic, Political, and Precarious 259

6.4 Conclusion to Part One 259

Part Two: The Community Development Practitioner in Kāinga Ora 262

6.5 Theme Three: Navigating Ambiguity and Relational Change 263

6.5.1 Navigating the Grey Zone: Dual Membership and Ethical Labour....264
6.5.2 Relational Strategies amid Constraint: Adaptation and Tactical Framing....265
6.5.3 Fragility and Limits of Relational Work....268
6.5.4 Cultural Foundations of Relational Leadership: Whakawhanaungatanga and Teu le Vā....269
6.5.5 Synthesis and Critical Reflection: Toward Relational Infrastructure....271

6.6 Conclusion to Part Two....272

Chapter Seven: More than a Landlord—Public Housing as a Public Service....275

7.1 Introduction....275

Part One: Legacy Institutions and the Limits of Care....280

7.2 Theme One: Structural Disconnection—Duty without Mandate....281
7.2.1 Residualisation and the Endemic Narrowing of Purpose....281

7.3 Theme Two: Volatility as Structure—Policy Churn and the Fragility of Care....284

7.4 Theme Three: Care at the Margins—The Relational Paradox....289
7.4.1 Trust without Mandate: The Informality of Care....290
7.4.2 Ethical Strain and Moral Distress....291
7.4.3 Systemic Burnout and the Erosion of Trust....292
7.4.4 From Workarounds to Relational Infrastructure....294
7.4.5 Embedding Responsibility: Care, Culture, and Change....295

7.5 Theme Four: Help and Hindrances—Organisational Enablers and Constraints....296
7.5.1 Leadership and Management: Legitimising Practice or Reinforcing Ambiguity....297
7.5.2 Structure and Systems: Where You sit Shapes what You can Do....301
7.5.3 Organisational Culture: Between Policy and Practice....303
7.5.4 Funding: What gets Funded signals what Matters....306
7.5.5 Integration and Alignment: Moving from Silos to Shared Purpose....308

Part Two: Kāinga Ora—Mandate without Muscle....312

7.7 Theme Five: Interpreting the Act—Do we go Wide or keep it Inside?....313

7.8 Theme Six: Caught between Intent and Implementation....316
7.8.1 Mandate and Momentum: Leadership Challenges in Practice....317
7.8.2 Structure and Systems: Fragmented Foundations and Structural Drift....319
7.8.3 Organisational Culture: Disconnected Teams, Divergent Logics....321
7.8.4 Funding and Resources: Symbolic Support, Practical Barriers....323
7.8.5 Integration and Alignment: Systemic Gaps, Relational Fixes....326

7.9 Theme Seven: Delegated Care, Diminished Accountability....329

7.10 Conclusion to Chapter Seven....334

Chapter Eight: Discussion of Findings....338

8.1 Introduction....338

8.2 Addressing the Research Questions....339
8.2.1 Research Question One....340
8.2.2 Research Question Two....341
8.2.3 Research Question Three....341
8.2.4 Research Question Four....342

8.3 Discussion of Key Findings....343
8.3.1 Trust and Relational Practice: Foundations and Fragilities....343
8.3.2 Care as Ethical and Political Practice....345
8.3.3 The Politics of Participation: Navigating Power, Voice, and Space....347
8.3.4 Risk, Recognition and Relational Practice....350
8.3.5 Housing Policy as Context and Constraint....352

8.3.6 Organisational Enablers and Barriers to Community Development....354
8.3.7 From Ambiguity to Agency: Practitioners in the Gaps....360
8.3.8 From Marginality to Mandate....361

8.4 Propositions for Relational Governance: Reframing Community Development....362
8.4.1 The Practitioner as Relational Infrastructure....363
8.4.2 Creating and Holding Space....364
8.4.3 Reframing Care as Duty: From Discretionary Virtue to Systemic Responsibility....366
8.4.4 Trust as a Systemic Condition....367
8.4.5 Participation as Power and Practice....368
8.4.6 Pluralism, Communitarianism, and Cultural Logics of Practice....369
8.4.7 Relational Governance....371

8.5 Beyond the Frontline: Reimagining Public Housing as a Relational System....372

8.6 Strengths and Limitations....375

8.7 Contribution to Theory and Practice....376

8.7.1 Reframing Public Housing through Relational Governance....377

8.7.2 Policy and Practice Implications....378

8.8 Conclusion: More than a Roof....384

Chapter Nine: Postscript....386

9.1 Wellington City Council (WCC) and Christchurch City Council (CCC)....386

9.2 Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities....386
9.2.1 Legal Mandate and Policy Development....387
9.2.2 Political Expectations and Ministerial Direction....387
9.2.3 Organisational Restructuring and Workforce Reductions....387
9.2.4 Policy-practice Disconnect and the Limits of Endorsement....388

9.3 Looking Forward....389

References....390

Appendices....432

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms....432

Te Reo Words and Concepts....432

Appendix B: Ethics Committee Approval Letter....441

Appendix C: Key Informant Information Sheet....442

Appendix D: Key Informant Interview Guide....445

Appendix E: Transcription Release Authority....447

Appendix F: NVivo codebook....448

Abstract

Ko ngā kāinga me ngā hapori e noho nei mātau te tūāpapa o te oranga

The homes and communities we live in are the foundation of our wellbeing.[1]

This thesis explores how community development can enhance the contribution of public housing to resident and community wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand. Drawing on qualitative interviews with practitioners and housing professionals across central and local government, the study examines how community development is conceptualised, enacted, and constrained within public housing contexts.

Set against a backdrop of institutional transformation—particularly the establishment of Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities—the research adopts a social constructionist approach to interrogate how trust, care, participation, and organisational culture shape both the practice and potential of community development.

Findings reveal that practitioners serve as *relational infrastructure*: sustaining trust, cultural presence, and collective agency within systems marked by residualisation, policy volatility, and managerial logics. While community development is consistently affirmed at a strategic level, it remains structurally marginalised—underfunded, culturally undervalued, and reliant on the discretionary labour of Māori, Pacific, and women practitioners who bear the emotional and ethical burdens of institutional ambiguity.

Despite these constraints, practitioners actively create space for voice, connection, and inclusion—revealing the quiet architecture that holds public housing systems together. Their work is not formally mandated but enacted through presence, care, and cultural fluency.

This thesis introduces three conceptual lenses—*Creating and Holding Space, The Practitioner as Relational Infrastructure*, and *Reframing Care as Duty*—to propose a

[1] *Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development (2021)*

grounded model of relational governance. This framework reconceptualises care, trust, and participation not as discretionary virtues, but as core institutional responsibilities.

By integrating Indigenous and Pacific relational ontologies with Western theories of care, governance, and participation, the research contributes to an emerging paradigm of public service rooted in equity, accountability, and relational practice. Ultimately, the thesis argues that making public housing *more than a roof* requires investing not just in buildings, but in people, relationships, and the institutional conditions that allow communities to flourish.

Acknowledgements

This achievement would not have been possible without the unwavering support, encouragement, and generosity of many people who have walked alongside me. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to acknowledge and thank them here.

To the informants who shared their time, experiences, and reflections—thank you. You know who you are, and I hope I have honoured your words with care and integrity.

I am especially indebted to my supervisors, Professor Karen Witten and Dr. Penelope Carroll, for your rigorous feedback, steadfast guidance, and extraordinary patience. Your wisdom and encouragement carried me through.

To my husband Aaron—my fiercest advocate, thoughtful critic, late-night editor, and ever-reliable cook and bottlewasher—thank you. Your unwavering belief in me sustained me through the darkest hours. I could not have done this without you.

To my son Connor, thank you for your humour, your patience, and your readiness to dash out for essentials when I couldn't leave my desk.

Heartfelt thanks also to Michael and Matthew Kumove, our family doctors, for your enduring support.

I hold close the memory of those no longer with us, but whose influence continues to shape and guide me: Owen O'Connor, Dallas Crampton, Aaron Pauling, Jay Marston, Richard Tautolo, Aryeh and Shirley Kumove, and Pam Hughes. Your presence remains with me.

To my parents, Kath and Ted Gallen, thank you for your quiet, enthusiastic nods and unwavering faith. And to my extended *whānau*, my yayas, and beloved friends—thank you for lifting me when I stumbled and cheering me on without fail. I carry your encouragement in every word.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the community development practitioners of public housing—past, present, and future—whose stories have inspired and humbled me. This work is for you, and in loving memory of Lyn Hollands, whose courage, wisdom, and compassion continue to guide this work.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own original work and does not contain any material that has been submitted previously for any other academic degree.

Explanation of Acronyms

Acronym	Explanation
ABCD	Asset-Based Community Development
ADG	Acquisition and Development Group (HNZC)
AHP	Auckland Housing Programme (Homes Land and Communities)
AS	Accommodation Supplement
C & I	Construction and Innovation Unit (HNZC and Kāinga Ora)
CAP	Community Action Programme (WCC)
CCC	Christchurch City Council
CDP	Community Development Projects (UK)
CHP	Community Housing Provider
CLD	Community-led Development
CRP	Community Renewal Programme
HNZ	Housing New Zealand Ltd
HNZC	Housing New Zealand Corporation
HUP	Housing Upgrade Programme
IRRS	Income Related Rent Subsidy
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LSF	Living Standards Framework
LSP	Large-Scale Projects
MHUD	Ministry of Housing and Urban Development
MOH	Ministry of Health
MSD	Ministry for Social Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPM	New Public Management

NPS	New Public Service
PHA	Public Housing Authority
SWB	Subjective Wellbeing
UK	United Kingdom
WCC	Wellington City Council

List of Documents

Reference	Name of document
HNZC, 2000	*Strategic Policy Framework for Community Renewal 2000*, HNZC
HNZC, 2000a	*Statement of Corporate Intent 2000-2001*, HNZC
HNZC, 2003a	*Community development: What is it and what does it mean for Community Renewal? Discussion document, 2003,* HNZC
HNZC, 2003b	*Annual Report 2002-2003*, HNZC
HNZC, 2005	*Community Renewal Literature Review*, HNZC
HNZC, 2006	*Community Renewal Evaluation*, HNZC
HNZC, 2017a	*Community Development Framework*, HNZC
HNZC, 2017b	*Strategic Plan 2017-2021*, HNZC
MHUD, 2021	*Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development 2021*, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development
Kāinga Ora, 2019a	*Statement of Intent 2019–2023*. Kāinga Ora
Kāinga Ora, 2019b	*Statement of Performance Expectations 2019-2020*, Kāinga Ora
Kāinga Ora, 2020	*Briefing to the Incoming Minister 2020*, Kāinga Ora
Kāinga Ora, 2021a	*Statement of Performance Expectations 2020-2021*, Kāinga Ora
Kāinga Ora, 2021b	*Community Strategy 2021-2026*, Kāinga Ora
Kāinga Ora, 2021c	*He Toa Takitini – Partnership and Engagement Framework,* Kāinga Ora 2021
Kāinga Ora, 2022a	*Discovery Phase for Community Development and Placemaking Staff Survey 2022*, Kāinga Ora
Kāinga Ora, 2022b	*Annual Report 2021-2022*, Kāinga Ora
Kāinga Ora, 2022c	*Statement of Performance Expectations 2021-2022*, Kāinga Ora
Kāinga Ora, 2022d	*Statement of Intent 2022-2026*, Kāinga Ora
Kāinga Ora, 2022e	*Shaping our Future 2030,* Kāinga Ora
Kāinga Ora, 2023a	*Annual Report 2022-2023*, Kāinga Ora
Kāinga Ora, 2023b	*Briefing to the Incoming Minister 2023*, Kāinga Ora
OECD, 2011	*How's Life?* report (2011) The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OECD, 2020	*Better Life Index* (2020), The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,
New Zealand Treasury, 2019a	*The Wellbeing Budget 2019*, New Zealand Government
New Zealand Treasury, 2021	*The Living Standards Framework, 2021*, New Zealand Treasury
New Zealand Treasury, 2024	*He Ara Waiora*, 2024, New Zealand Treasury
Te Puni Kōkiri, 2017	*A Guide to Papakāinga Housing 2017*, Te Puni Kōriki (2017)
UNECE, 2021	#Housing2030, 2021 *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe [UNECE]*
WCC, 2009	*Community Action Framework and Action Plan 2009*, Wellington City Council
WCC, 2010	*City Housing Engagement Framework 2010*, Wellington City Council

List of Figures

Figure 1 The Living Standards Framework Dashboard (New Zealand Treasury, 2021).....13
Figure 2 He Ara Waiora (New Zealand Treasury, 2024) 16
Figure 3 *Evolving Roles of Social Rented Housing Provision in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Stephens, 2008) 38
Figure 4 *Chronology of Community Development practice* (Aimers & Walker, 2013, pp. 14–15) 53
Figure 5 The Power Cube (Gaventa, 2006, p. 20) 106
Figure 6 Three Purposes of Participation (Burton et al., 2004).....109
Figure 7 Layered Analytical and Theoretical Framework (Created by the author).....133
Figure 8 Methodological Research Design (Created by the author).....136
Figure 9 Thematic Analysis Model (Braun & Clarke, 2013) 143
Figure 10 Six Phases of the Thematic Analysis (adapted from Braun & Clark, 2013).....149
Figure 11 Themes identified to address Research Questions One and Two (Created by the author). 163
Figure 12 Community Development Activities identified by Informants (Created by the author) 172
Figure 13 Te Ara Hou playground (Wellington City Council, 2011) 205
Figure 14 The Kāinga Ora Community Strategy 2021-2026, (Kāinga Ora 2021b, p .5) 221
Figure 15 Themes identified to address Research Questions One and Two (Created by the author) 244
Figure 16 Themes identified to address Research Questions Three and Four (Created by the author).....279

List of Tables

Table 1 *He Ara Waiora Values and Principles of Mātauranga Māori* (New Zealand Treasury, 2024) 15
Table 2 *Community Development Programmes in Legacy Public Housing Authorities* (Created by the author) 29
Table 3 Community Development Theories, Concepts, and Strategies (Adapted from Gilchrist & Taylor, 2011 and Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002) 74
Table 4 Participation Model Comparison (Adapted from Burton et al., 2004) 111
Table 5 Profile of Key Informants (Created by the author) 140
Table 6 Profile of Kāinga Ora Informants (Created by the author) 141
Table 7 Initial Coding of the Raw Data (Created by the author) 144
Table 8 Coding methods based on Saldaña's typology (2016) (Adapted for this research by the author) 145
Table 9 Examples of the coding of raw data (Created by the author) 146
Table 10 Framing Devices and Corresponding Themes (Created by the author) 153
Table 11 HNZC Community Renewal sites by property count and % of HNZC ownership (HNZC, 2006, p. 6) 165
Table 12 *Levels of Community Development Practice* (adapted from Banks et al., 2003 and Banks & Orton, 2007) 225
Table 13 Strategic Intent vs. Organisational Reality in Kāinga Ora (Created by the author) 328
Table 14 Reframing Public Housing through Relational Governance (Created by the author) 374
Table 15 Logic Model for embedding Relational Governance in Public Housing (Created by the author) 383

Chapter One: Beyond Shelter—Housing Policy, Disadvantage, and Wellbeing

1.1 Introduction

This research emerges from two decades of experience as a community development practitioner working in public housing. During my third housing renewal initiative, I began to critically evaluate how housing authorities engage with community development—often treating it as a temporary add-on rather than a strategic, embedded function. These experiences prompted a deeper inquiry into the institutional challenges, persistent tensions, and overlooked potential of community development.

I approach the research from a practitioner perspective, drawing on insights, reflections, and observations accumulated over many years. While such experiential knowledge is foundational to community development, it is not treated as data in this study. Rather, it serves as a departure point for a critically engaged academic inquiry into the evolving role and meaning of community development within the public housing system.

Community development holds significant potential to support public housing authorities in enhancing resident and community wellbeing, particularly across three interrelated dimensions: subjective, relational, and community wellbeing. Embedding community development within public housing can help realise the broader social outcomes articulated in Aotearoa New Zealand's wellbeing frameworks. A holistic approach that integrates housing provision with community development can transform public housing into a catalyst for inclusion, connection, and collective wellbeing (Barker, 2019).

As Comstock et al. (2010) and Putnam (1995) highlight, shared spaces and participatory practices foster social capital, neighbourly ties, and community resilience. When residents are meaningfully involved in shaping their environment, they report greater empowerment, satisfaction, and agency (Arthurson, 2003; Kearns & Whitley, 2020). Housing authorities play

a pivotal role in realising this potential by fostering inclusive opportunities that enable diverse residents to participate, contribute, and belong.

Social cohesion and neighbourhood vitality are strengthened not just by social ties, but by whether people feel safe, valued, and in control (Atkinson et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2020). Integrating community development enhances wellbeing by reinforcing inclusion, agency, and trust—centred in relationships and social capital (Pitchford & Henderson, 2008; Thomas, 1983).

Rather than treating community development as a discretionary add-on, this research will position it as foundational infrastructure requiring systemic integration. Using a qualitative approach, I will explore the perspectives of practitioners and housing professionals engaged in community initiatives, including those tied to housing renewal. The inquiry is especially timely given the public debates about public housing density, residualisation, and ongoing policy uncertainty surrounding the social role of public housing.

Structured as a dual inquiry, the first line of investigation will explore how public housing authorities integrated community development into housing renewal programmes (2000–2017) as a response to social exclusion. The second will examine Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities—Aotearoa New Zealand's largest public housing provider—and its evolving community role in light of recent legislative mandates (2019–2023), including a stronger emphasis on social outcomes and intergenerational wellbeing.

In setting the scene, this chapter will define the purpose and contribution of the research while providing a structural overview of what follows. It will begin with the housing policy context, focusing on the Living Standards Framework (New Zealand Treasury, 2021) and the Wellbeing Budget 2019—both of which have shaped the government's evolving approach to wellbeing.

1.2 The Housing Policy Context: A New Mandate

Historically, public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand focused on property and tenancy management. However, the legislative reforms in 2019 granted Kāinga Ora a broader mandate—to deliver housing responses that contribute to positive social outcomes and intergenerational wellbeing.

The Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities Act 2019 recognises a role that extends beyond housing provision, mandating support for 'sustainable, inclusive, and thriving communities' that promote economic, social, environmental, and cultural wellbeing for current and future generations (s. 12). The Act marked a shift in the government's role in public housing and opened the space for Kāinga Ora to redefine its relationships with tenants, residents, Māori as the Crown's partner in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, and the wider community. In line with its broader mandate to foster community wellbeing, Kāinga Ora has adopted a place-based, community-responsive model. As outlined in its *Statement of Intent 2019–2023*:

> Great communities reflect what is special about a place and its people. We will take a place-based approach to create local solutions that meet the diverse needs and aspirations of each local community where we work. (Kāinga Ora, 2019a, p. 4)

The stated commitment by Kāinga Ora signalled a shift away from standardised, centralised approaches and positioned the organisation as a partner in community-led development. These institutional changes were supported by the Public Service Act 2020, which aimed to move beyond the consumerist logic of *New Public Management* (NPM) toward "a compassionate, unified public service that is motivated by a spirit of service to the community" (Hipkins, 2018).

The Kāinga Ora legislation raises essential questions about the state's responsibilities in public housing. Should housing authorities focus solely on tenant wellbeing or broader

community outcomes? Should they be seen solely as landlords, or as civic actors and neighbours committed to community wellbeing?

By exploring shifts in public housing and the evolving role of Kāinga Ora, the research will evaluate whether policy mandates enable genuinely community-responsive wellbeing approaches.

1.2.1 Defining the Housing Models of Aotearoa New Zealand

Aotearoa New Zealand's housing landscape is organised around the umbrella term social housing, which refers to publicly funded rental housing delivered either by the Crown or by registered community providers. Together, public and community housing form the social housing system, as defined in the *Public and Community Housing Management Act 1992* (as at 1 July 2023).

> Social housing means Kāinga Ora housing or community housing (s. 2).

This definitional framing is also consistent with contemporary research. Grimes et al. (2023) adopt the term *public housing* to describe housing owned or managed by Kāinga Ora and other state-linked providers, while acknowledging that these sit within the broader social housing system, which also includes registered community housing providers. Their inclusive wellbeing framework—developed in partnership with public and community housing organisations—reflects current policy and legislative usage of *social housing* as an umbrella term encompassing both Kāinga Ora housing and community housing.

Although social housing is now the overarching policy term, the language of public housing and state housing remains widely used across government, practice, and public discourse. Retaining these terms where appropriate reflects historical continuity and the everyday vernacular of tenants and practitioners alike.

Understanding the relationship between these models is critical for analysing how community development is positioned within the housing system. Both play complementary roles: public housing remains the principal vehicle through which the state enacts—and sometimes struggles to fulfil—its duty of care, while community housing often demonstrates how relational, place-based approaches can strengthen belonging and collective wellbeing.

1.2.1.1 Public Housing

Public housing, historically known as *state housing*, sits at the core of Aotearoa New Zealand's social housing system. It is owned or managed by Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities, and in some regions by local authorities. Public housing provides long-term, income-related rental homes for people on low incomes or facing housing insecurity, reflecting the Crown's enduring responsibility to ensure access to adequate and affordable shelter. Howden-Chapman (2015) explicitly framed public housing as a public good and as a core expression of state obligation.

The establishment of Kāinga Ora in 2019 brought together Housing New Zealand Corporation, HLC (Homes Land Community), and parts of KiwiBuild under one entity. Its creation signalled a shift from a narrow focus on property management to a broader role encompassing urban development, affordable housing, and community wellbeing. The *Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities Act 2019* formalised this shift, mandating the organisation to contribute to *"sustainable, inclusive, and thriving communities"* that promote social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing (s. 12).

Local councils continue to provide a smaller but significant share of public housing, primarily for older adults and people requiring additional social support. Although these portfolios are limited in scale and do not qualify for the central government's Income-Related Rent Subsidy (IRRS), they play an important role in providing locally responsive, relationship-based housing.

Despite its scale, public housing operates within structural constraints that reflect broader tensions in the welfare state. Residualisation, limited funding, and policy volatility have narrowed the social purpose of public housing, while the centralisation of decision-making has reduced local autonomy. At the same time, the community-focused mandate of Kāinga Ora opens new possibilities for integrating housing delivery with place-based community development. Realising this potential requires aligning the organisation's housing, urban development, and wellbeing goals, and recognising that public housing is not only a physical asset but also a platform for connection, stability, and collective flourishing.

1.2.1.2 Community Housing

Community housing forms the second strand of Aotearoa New Zealand's social housing system. Community housing, as defined in s. 2 of the *Public and Community Housing Management Act 1992* (as at 1 July, 2023), refers to dwellings let or to be let by or on behalf of a registered community housing provider for occupation as a place of residence.[2] In practice, these homes are delivered through registered Community Housing Providers (CHPs)—independent, not-for-profit, iwi, faith-based, and community organisations that own or manage housing for people on low incomes or with specific housing needs. This statutory framing situates CHPs as social housing providers alongside Kāinga Ora, each contributing to the shared goal of ensuring that all New Zealanders have access to safe, secure, and affordable homes.

CHPs operate under a diverse range of governance and funding models. Some manage a handful of homes within a local *rohe*; others oversee extensive portfolios across multiple regions. Many iwi and Māori-led providers integrate kaupapa Māori values and whānau-centred approaches, prioritising cultural connection, collective wellbeing, and

[2] *Public and Community Housing Management Act 1992* (as at 1 July 2023), s. 2. Retrieved from https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1992/0076/latest/whole.html

intergenerational security. Examples include papakāinga developments and co-housing models that embed care and reciprocity within design and tenure arrangements.

Carroll et al. (2019, p. 10) describes the CHP continuum as:

> …organisations providing pensioner housing; housing and wrap-around services for people with mental health or mobility needs; sustainable long-term rental housing for those on low incomes and on the public housing wait list (the Housing Register); those providing emergency housing; and others who provide rent-to buy and shared equity schemes to facilitate home ownership – to cater for what Saville-Smith describes as “the missing middle”.

This sector’s distinctive strength lies in its relational and place-based orientation. CHPs are often embedded within the neighbourhoods they serve, allowing them to tailor support to the aspirations of whānau and communities. They frequently deliver wraparound social services, financial mentoring, and community-building initiatives that extend beyond tenancy management to address the broader determinants of wellbeing.

Like Kāinga Ora tenants, many community housing tenants are eligible for the Income-Related Rent Subsidy (IRRS). However, not all receive it, as access depends on whether their provider holds IRRS places under a government contract. This uneven access can create affordability gaps within the social housing system. This partial coverage reflects the staged nature of IRRS contracting and the limited number of subsidised places available to community housing providers. Consequently, some tenants pay near-market rents within an otherwise subsidised housing system.

Despite its innovation and growth, the sector faces persistent challenges. Limited access to capital, complex regulatory requirements, and short-term contracting arrangements constrain its ability to scale or plan long-term. As several studies note, the funding environment remains fragmented and administratively demanding, requiring providers to navigate multiple

accountability systems while maintaining culturally grounded practice (Carroll et al., 2019; Community Finance, 2021; Fasoro et al., 2024).

The purpose and practice of social housing cannot be understood without reference to *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, which shapes the constitutional and moral landscape within which all housing policy operates. The next section examines how *Te Tiriti* has been interpreted within public housing, and how its principles of partnership, protection, and participation continue to influence the pursuit of equitable and culturally grounded housing outcomes.

1.2.2 Te Tiriti and Public Housing

Te Tiriti o Waitangi, signed in 1840, is widely regarded as the constitutional founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand, shaping the nation's legal and political landscape. Yet its interpretation remains contested due to fundamental differences between the te reo Māori and English texts. The te reo version, *Te Tiriti*, affirms *Tino Rangatiratanga* (self-determination), guaranteeing Māori authority over lands, resources, and governance. In contrast, the English version—commonly called the Treaty of Waitangi—has often been interpreted as ceding sovereignty to the Crown, leading to persistent discrepancies in understanding and implementation.

These divergent interpretations have had profound consequences, shaping governance, law, and policy while entrenching long-standing economic, legal, and social disparities. A central question remains: has the Crown's continued reliance on the English version permanently constrained Māori *Tino Rangatiratanga*?

Public housing has long shaped Māori housing experiences. While it has provided secure, subsidised homes for some *whānau*, it has also contributed to systemic disadvantage through exclusionary planning, forced relocations, and restricted tenancy rights (Walker, 1990). Aligning public housing with *Te Tiriti* requires more than symbolic gestures—it

demands active recognition of Māori housing rights, co-governance structures, and delivery models grounded in *kaupapa* Māori principles (Paul, 2021).

Despite the constitutional significance of *Te Tiriti*, successive governments have systematically undermined it—reinforcing Western legal dominance and marginalising Māori political authority. The English version's interpretation as a cession of sovereignty justified the imposition of British law and unilateral Crown control. This was formalised through legislation and case law, including the New Zealand Constitution Act 1852, which excluded most Māori from political participation, and the Native Lands Acts of 1862 and 1865, which dismantled communal tenure and enabled large-scale land alienation. The Wi Parata v Bishop of Wellington (1877) ruling went further, declaring *Te Tiriti* a "simple nullity" and embedding the legal fiction that Māori held no recognised sovereignty.

Although Treaty settlements and legal challenges have sought to address these injustices, the Crown's continued privileging of the English version signals an ongoing reluctance to fully honour Māori self-determination. Today, Crown obligations under *Te Tiriti* extend across all domains of governance, including housing. The legislative architecture of public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand reflects uneven engagement with *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, with some statutes remaining silent and others articulating explicit partnership obligations:

- *Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities Act 2019*: Explicitly requires the Crown to "uphold the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) and its principles" (s. 4) but does not mandate co-governance or prioritise Māori-led housing approaches. Its reference to "sustainable, inclusive, and thriving communities" lacks enforceable mechanisms to support Māori partnership.
- *Public Service Act 2020*: Requires agencies to uphold *Te Tiriti* principles but omits specific co-governance provisions for housing.

- *Urban Development Act 2020*: References both *Te Tiriti* and Treaty texts, implicitly recognising dual interpretations—but often results in inconsistent implementation resolved via ad hoc consultation or legal clarification.
- The *Public and Community Housing Management Act 1992* (as at 1 July 2023) defines social, public, and community housing but contains no reference to *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. Despite successive amendments, it remains a legacy of the market-oriented reforms of the 1990s—a period in which social housing was treated as a contractual instrument rather than a relational or constitutional responsibility. The Act's administrative focus on funding and regulatory mechanisms reflects this lineage, governing the delivery of housing without reference to the equity or partnership obligations implied by *Te Tiriti*. Its silence contrasts with the *Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities Act 2019*, which signals a modest turn toward partnership, wellbeing, and the state's broader duty of care.

These legislative frameworks emerged alongside a broader wellbeing agenda, marked by the *Living Standards Framework* (New Zealand Treasury, 2021) and the *Wellbeing Budget 2019*. Yet despite modest shifts, the mechanisms to uphold Māori wellbeing and *Tino Rangatiratanga* remain weak. References to *Te Tiriti* in policy are often symbolic—lacking structural depth or enforceable accountability.

A further challenge lies in how housing success is defined. Prevailing metrics such as tenancy turnover and economic self-sufficiency fail to capture relational, cultural, and intergenerational dimensions of wellbeing (Boulton et al., 2022; Greaves et al., 2021; Grimes et al., 2023). Alternative indicators—such as housing security, *whānau* resilience, and connection to *whenua*—offer more culturally grounded understandings of housing outcomes (Penny et al., 2024).

This research takes up that challenge by framing housing through a wellbeing lens influenced by Māori and Indigenous scholarship. It engages public housing policy and

practice by acknowledging *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* as a foundational context and by critiquing the marginalisation of relational, cultural, and collective dimensions of wellbeing.

Extending this framing further, the thesis draws on values-based approaches to governance, service delivery, and community development to consider how public housing might better support intergenerational and culturally grounded outcomes. Reframing housing as social infrastructure for wellbeing—rather than as a transactional asset—requires moving beyond technocratic models (Grimes et al., 2023; Penny et al., 2024). Māori and Indigenous frameworks offer alternative paradigms grounded in care, connection, and sovereignty, with the potential to reshape housing systems in more culturally resonant and sustainable ways (Boulton et al., 2022; Greaves et al., 2021).

The following section explores recent attempts to embed wellbeing in public policy and considers their implications for public housing and community development.

1.3 Public Policy Approaches to Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a contested concept with no universally accepted definition, encompassing multiple and often competing interpretations (McGillivray & Clarke, 2008). Traditionally, it was narrowly associated with health or economic security, measured in monetary terms such as income and assets (Eardley et al., 2009).

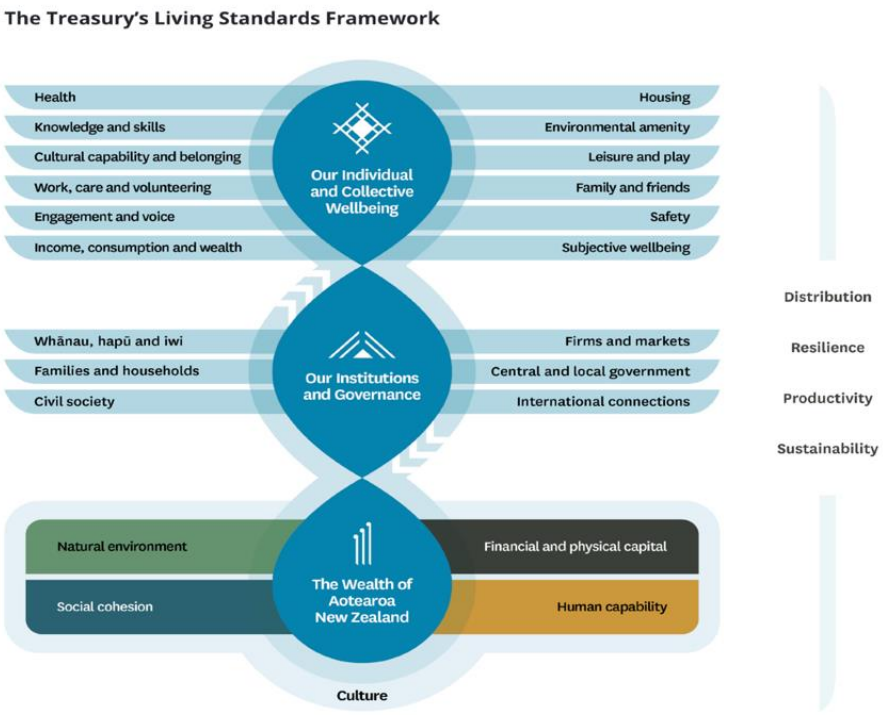
In recent decades, however, wellbeing has evolved towards a more multidimensional understanding, reflecting global shifts in how human progress is measured. International developments such as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (United Nations General Assembly, 2000), the OECD's *How's Life?* report (2011), and the *Better Life Index* (OECD, 2020) have all contributed to this shift. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the Treasury's development of the *Living Standards Framework* (LSF), drawing on OECD guidance, marked a move toward more holistic and equity-focused policymaking.

1.3.1 The Living Standards Framework (LSF)

Developed over two decades and first published in 2018 (with a revised version in 2021), the LSF promotes a more holistic, sustainable, and citizen-centred approach to governance—aimed at building public trust and improving long-term societal outcomes (Weijers & Morrison, 2018). The Labour-led government (2017-2020) embedded this orientation in the Wellbeing Budget 2019, framing wellbeing as “enabling people to have the capabilities they need to live lives of purpose, balance, and meaning,” and committing to “a public sector focused on current and future wellbeing” (New Zealand Treasury, 2019).

The LSF identifies 12 wellbeing domains—including health, housing, safety, cultural belonging, and subjective wellbeing—and incorporates four intergenerational ‘capitals’: human, social, natural, and economic. These capitals underpin future wellbeing and are linked to the domains through institutions and social connections (New Zealand Treasury, 2021). While the LSF broadens policy evaluation beyond economic metrics, it has also been critiqued for conceptual and operational limitations.

Figure 1 *The Living Standards Framework Dashboard* (New Zealand Treasury, 2021)



Smith (2018) argues that life satisfaction should function as a high-level summary indicator within wellbeing frameworks, reflecting how different domains combine to shape overall wellbeing. This approach has been endorsed by the Treasury, which promotes its use in evaluating non-market outcomes and informing cost–benefit analysis (New Zealand Treasury, 2021). However, the focus on life satisfaction has attracted critique. The OECD's *Better Life Index* (2020), for instance, has been challenged for overlooking how specific policy interventions—such as public housing—affect the relational and systemic dimensions of wellbeing (Grimes et al., 2023).

Penny et al. (2024) build on this critique, noting that mainstream wellbeing approaches tend to prioritise either subjective wellbeing (SWB) or the capabilities approach (Sen, 1999). While SWB focuses on happiness and life satisfaction (Marks et al., 2004), the capabilities approach emphasises people's freedom to fulfil potential and lead socially meaningful lives

(Nussbaum, 2011; Rowley & Ong, 2012). Forgeard et al. (2011) similarly warn that reducing wellbeing to life satisfaction risks overlooking deeper dimensions of human flourishing.

Recent contributions by Grimes et al. (2023), Penny et al. (2024), and Teariki and Leau (2023) advocate for approaches that centre relationships, cultural context, and systems thinking. While life satisfaction remains a useful metric, these scholars argue that it must be supported by broader measures—especially when evaluating complex social policies such as public housing. Their insights inform a relational, systemic, and culturally grounded critique of how wellbeing is framed and measured in housing policy.

Recognising these limitations, the New Zealand Treasury acknowledged the need to integrate mātauranga Māori into its frameworks. In response, Māori thought leaders developed *He Ara Waiora*—a *tikanga* Māori-informed model adopted by the Tax Working Group in 2018. The framework offers a culturally grounded paradigm for understanding wellbeing, emphasising intergenerational connection, collective responsibility, and spiritual balance (McMeeking et al., 2019).

1.3.2 He Ara Waiora

He Ara Waiora is grounded in *Te Ao Māori*, with *waiora* representing the spiritual foundation of a good life. Although based in *mātauranga Māori*, its principles offer broader guidance for communities across Aotearoa seeking holistic, values-based approaches to wellbeing.

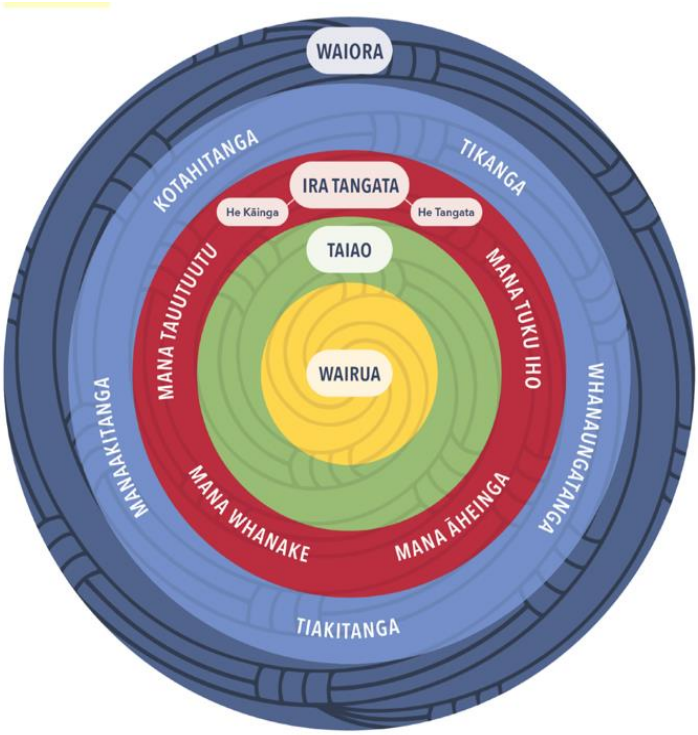
The framework helps public agencies assess whether policies enhance the capacity of individuals, *whānau*, *hapū*, *iwi*, and communities to achieve their aspirations. It foregrounds values such as *kotahitanga* and encourages collaborative relationships between government, Māori, and communities to support meaningful wellbeing outcomes. It also supports public servants to develop deeper understanding of Māori values and adopt a more reflective, long-term view of policy impacts.

He Ara Waiora distinguishes between the "ends"—core elements of Māori wellbeing—and the "means"—*tikanga*-based principles to achieve them. These are summarised in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 2.

Table 1 *He Ara Waiora Values and Principles of Mātauranga Māori* (New Zealand Treasury, 2024)

The Ends essential elements of wellbeing and living standards	*Wairua* (spirit) is at the centre to reflect that it is the foundation or source of wellbeing. Values, beliefs and practices related to *wairua* are essential to Māori conceptions of *waiora*.
	Te Taiao (the natural world – the environment) is paramount and inextricably linked with human wellbeing. Humans have responsibilities and obligations to sustain and maintain the wellbeing of *Te Taiao*.
	Te Ira Tangata (the human domain) encapsulates human activities and relationships, including generational relationships. The concept of *mana* (power, authority) is seen as key to wellbeing.
The Means or key principles	*Kotahitanga* is working in an aligned, coordinated way.
	Tikanga – making decisions in accordance with the right values and processes, including in partnership with the Treaty partner
	Whanaungatanga – fostering strong relationships through kinship and shared experience that provides a shared sense of wellbeing
	Manaakitanga – enhancing the mana of others through a process of showing proper care and respect
	Kaitiakitanga – guardianship and stewardship (e.g., of the environment, particular taonga, or other important processes and systems).

Figure 2 *He Ara Waiora* (New Zealand Treasury, 2024)



While the LSF marks a shift toward multidimensional wellbeing, it remains grounded in Western epistemologies that prioritise individual domains and measurable capital stocks. In contrast, *He Ara Waiora* offers a holistic, spiritual, and intergenerational vision of wellbeing, rooted in the interconnectedness of *wairua*, *whānau*, *whenua*, and *taiao*. These are not simply alternative models, but reflect fundamentally different worldviews about what constitutes a good life.

This distinction matters for public housing. Where the LSF may overlook cultural dynamics and collective resilience, *He Ara Waiora* offers a values-based, place-attuned approach that aligns more closely with Indigenous understandings of wellbeing. Embedding such perspectives is not just inclusive—it reimagines housing as a foundation for intergenerational flourishing.

The following section extends the foundation above by exploring how *Te Ao Māori* perspectives deepen this values-based orientation and inform the design of housing systems grounded in relationships, identity, and *whenua*.

1.4 *Te Ao Māori* and Wellbeing

Embedding *Te Ao Māori* perspectives in housing policy is vital to realising intergenerational, relational, and culturally grounded wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand. Māori scholars have long affirmed that wellbeing (*hauora*) is not an individualised state, but a dynamic condition of interconnectedness—encompassing people, land, ancestors, and the spiritual realm (Cram, 2014; Durie, 1998).[3]

Addressing the challenges of public housing requires a shift from supply-centric, compliance-driven models toward frameworks that centre relational, cultural, and intergenerational wellbeing. *Te Ao Māori* offers a comprehensive paradigm—positioning wellbeing as collective, embodied, and grounded in *whānau* (family), *whakapapa* (genealogy), and place.

Māori models such as *Te Whare Tapa Whā*, *Te Wheke*, *Te Pae Māhutonga*, and *Whānau Ora* articulate wellbeing as spiritual, ecological, and interdependent. Recent contributions (Boulton et al., 2022; Greaves et al., 2021; Waitoki & Nikora, 2015) highlight the need to dismantle policy silos and recognise wellbeing not as a by-product of housing, but as a condition for community resilience and long-term security.

Central to these frameworks are values including *whanaungatanga* (relationships), *manaakitanga* (care and hospitality), *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship), and *wairuatanga* (spiritual connection). These are not decorative concepts but structuring principles for how wellbeing is defined, enacted, and measured (Smith, 2012; Waitoki et al., 2014). Housing, from this viewpoint, is not a transactional asset but social infrastructure—a spiritual and relational anchor.

A key contribution is the *Whakawhanaungatanga Māori Wellbeing Model* (Penny et al., 2024), which positions *whakawhanaungatanga*—the practice of sustaining relationships—as

[3] See Glossary (Appendix A) for definitions and contextual explanations of Māori, Pasifika, and theoretical terms.

both a cultural ethic and a mechanism for wellbeing across social (*Te Ao Tāngata*), environmental (*Te Taiao*), and economic (*Te Ao Ōhanga*) spheres. Grounded in *Te Ūkaipō* and *wairuatanga*, the model centres identity, belonging, and spiritual nourishment.

Rather than retrofit Māori concepts into existing indicators, the model advances a relational approach that foregrounds values, lived experience, and interdependence. It applies across housing systems—not just Māori-led ones—and invites deeper reflection on the quality of relationships as core determinants of wellbeing. Such emphasis aligns with Boulton et al.'s (2022) finding that Māori define home not by material standards alone, but through spiritual connection, emotional security, and the ability to enact cultural identity.

Cram (2014) similarly critiques dominant evaluation paradigms for misaligning with Indigenous ontologies, arguing that Māori perspectives should inform evaluative systems from the outset, grounded in *kaupapa Māori* principles.

The research is guided by—but not situated within—Indigenous models. While *kaupapa* Māori and Pasifika frameworks have offered ethical and conceptual direction, they are embedded in specific ontologies, histories, and responsibilities. Rather than universalising these approaches, the analysis engages with them respectfully and relationally (Anae, 2010; Smith, 2012).

Bringing concepts such as *whakapapa* and *manaakitanga* into dialogue with public policy reveals both epistemic tensions and transformative potential. These are ontological commitments—inseparable from land, language, and spiritual continuity. Translating them into institutional frameworks risks conceptual flattening. As scholars caution, Indigenous relationality is often misread through Western paradigms of measurement, leading to ethical misalignment (Cram, 2014; Smith, 2012).

In response to these tensions, the analysis positions practice as a generative space for insight and adaptation. It engages Indigenous knowledge through dialogue with community

development practitioners and is informed by principles such as *whakawhanaungatanga*. The conceptual propositions offered are not fixed models, but situated tools—shaped by relational accountability, cultural humility, and a commitment to reflecting the ontologies of those most affected (Boulton & Brannelly, 2015).

Although guided by Indigenous frameworks, the research maintains a broader scope that includes—but is not limited to—Māori-led approaches. Instead, it explores how both Māori and non-Māori actors, institutions, and infrastructures engage with—or overlook—the relational, spiritual, and cultural dimensions of wellbeing. As Penny et al. (2024) argue, restoring housing in Aotearoa requires more than physical infrastructure; it involves revitalising the relational ecologies that sustain Māori life and support more equitable futures for all.

I recognise Māori wellbeing frameworks as *taonga*—treasured expressions of Indigenous knowledge, sovereignty, and scholarship. My engagement is intentionally cautious, relational, and reflexive. As a *Tangata Tiriti* researcher working in Aotearoa New Zealand, I acknowledge my position within a context shaped by *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* and the enduring legacies of colonisation. Although I do not hold *whakapapa Māori*, I approach this work with cultural humility and a commitment to grounded, ethical research. I do not seek to reinterpret or extract meaning from these frameworks outside their cultural foundations; rather, I aim to be guided by their principles in ways that enrich my analysis of housing and wellbeing systems.

Mātauranga Māori is not a neutral or universal system—it is rooted in *whakapapa*, *tikanga*, and collective responsibility. My engagement is therefore situated, partial, and ongoing—guided by the principle of *mana ōrite*, which affirms equitable relationships between Māori and non-Māori, and by an obligation to avoid reproducing extractive or tokenistic research practices. Such positioning aligns with calls for non-Māori researchers to work in solidarity—upholding Indigenous intellectual sovereignty while contributing to *Tiriti*-consistent systems

change. In this study, Māori frameworks are not employed to validate Western paradigms, but to reveal their limitations and highlight what becomes possible when Indigenous worldviews shape policy and system design.

1.5 Three Dimensions of Wellbeing in Public Housing

Wellbeing in public housing cannot be reduced to physical infrastructure or measured solely through individual outcomes. It must be understood as a system of interdependence—shaped by relationships, place, identity, and collective resilience.

More than half of those living in public housing are Māori or Pacific peoples, with Māori comprising around 37 per cent and Pacific peoples 27 per cent of Kāinga Ora tenants at the time of this research (Kāinga Ora, 2023b, p. 6). This demographic reality underscores the necessity of drawing on Māori and Pacific wellbeing models to guide analysis. Frameworks such as *Te Whare Tapa Whā*, *Whakawhanaungatanga*, and *Teu le Vā* offer culturally grounded understandings of wellbeing that are relational, collective, and intergenerational. Their inclusion is therefore not only theoretically relevant but also empirically justified, reflecting the lived realities of the majority of public housing tenants.

Drawing on Indigenous and community development scholarship, this study adopts a multidimensional view of wellbeing that reflects tenants' lived realities and the relational ethics embedded in *Te Ao Māori*.

The analysis will centre on three overlapping dimensions: subjective, relational, and community wellbeing. These are informed by values such as *whakawhanaungatanga*, *manaakitanga*, and *kaitiakitanga*, forming a relational framework for evaluating how public housing environments contribute to—or constrain—flourishing.

- *Subjective wellbeing* encompasses a person's life satisfaction, emotional stability, and sense of personal agency (Diener, 1984). It reflects how individuals evaluate

their own lives, both cognitively and affectively. Participatory community development can enhance subjective wellbeing by strengthening belonging**,** voice, and control within local environments. Research shows that when residents are actively involved in shaping their housing or neighbourhoods, they often report greater emotional connection**,** satisfaction**,** and psychological security (Arthurson, 2003; Kearns & Whitley, 2020).

- *Relational wellbeing* is grounded in the interpretivist tradition in social science, which emphasises understanding people as meaning-makers within their own social worlds (White, 2015). It refers to the quality of social connections and the strength of relationships that underpin community resilience, centring on trust**,** reciprocity**,** and social cohesion—the social fabric that enables collective thriving (Bond et al., 2012; Gilchrist, 2004). In *kaupapa* Māori terms, this aligns with *whakawhanaungatanga*—the practice of sustaining meaningful and culturally grounded connections (Penny et al., 2024).

- *Community wellbeing* extends beyond individual wellbeing to encompass collective quality of life**,** shared social experiences, and the overall functioning of a community as a cohesive social system. It considers how well a community functions and the degree to which it supports the wellbeing of its members (Atkinson et al., 2020; Grimes, 2023). Indigenous-led approaches, particularly those grounded in *kaupapa* Māori principles, enrich this understanding by centring *whānau* (extended family networks) and *whenua* (land, place) as foundational to community life and design. These frameworks foster inclusive, grounded, and future-focused communities that reflect cultural values and aspirations.

These dimensions function relationally. Relational wellbeing connects individual agency to collective flourishing. Analysing housing environments through this lens enables a deeper understanding of the values, relationships, and systems that underpin thriving communities.

This study will argue that wellbeing in public housing is relational, systemic, and culturally grounded. The following section outlines the research approach used to examine how these dimensions are enacted—or constrained—within institutional practice.

1.6 Research Approach

The inquiry has been informed by over two decades of practice within Aotearoa New Zealand's public housing system. My interest arises from lived experience—years of navigating the complexities, constraints, and quiet possibilities of community development. As a *Tangata Tiriti* researcher, I work within systems shaped by colonisation, structural inequity, and contested understandings of partnership. My stance is not neutral. It is informed by relational accountability, equity, and recognition of Māori and Pacific knowledge as foundational to public housing futures. Rather than seeking detachment, I aim for transparency—acknowledging that my positionality has shaped, shapes, and continues to shape what I notice, how I listen, and how I represent the voices of practitioners operating within complex institutional landscapes. This stance will be extended in Chapter Four, where reflexivity is framed not as a procedural step but as an ethical and epistemological commitment embedded throughout the research process.

Adopting a qualitative, social constructionist framework, this study will examine how community development practitioners have made sense of their roles and how these interpretations have shaped their approach to resident and community wellbeing. Semi-structured interviews will elicit lived experience and professional insight, balancing consistency across themes with scope for emergent, relational perspectives. Document analysis of policy texts, organisational reports, and strategic frameworks will situate practitioner narratives within the broader institutional context that shapes community development.

This approach will attend to both the discursive and relational aspects of practice—recognising that practitioners' accounts of their work are shaped not only by institutional structures, but also by their values, emotions, and connection to the communities and places in which they operate.

1.6.1 Research Questions

Focusing on housing renewal initiatives between 2000–2017, the study will examine how legacy public housing authorities used community development to address social exclusion. It will investigate how these agencies moved beyond transactional landlord models to adopt, albeit—temporarily—more community-centred approaches.

The research will also explore how community development and engagement were interpreted and enacted within Kāinga Ora between 2019–2023, in response to its legislative mandate to support thriving communities and broader wellbeing outcomes.

As Pratt (2015) and Savin-Baden and Howell-Major (2013) contend, research questions function as a compass—shaping research design, guiding data collection, and directing analysis. This study will investigate how community development is conceptualised, valued, and enacted within public housing. Particular attention will be given to the disjuncture between policy narratives and practitioner realities amid institutional ambiguity and reform.

Research Question One: How do community development practitioners define and describe their roles and practices within public housing?

This inquiry will focus on how practitioners interpret and enact their roles—how they define community development, what values shape their decisions, and how they manage tensions between institutional expectations and relational commitments to trust, reciprocity, and community. It will bring forward the often-unspoken knowledge and strategic work embedded in practice, while tracing how organisational culture and institutional histories shape practitioner identity.

Research Question Two: How do practitioners and public housing authorities perceive the contribution of community development to the wellbeing of residents and communities?

This inquiry will focus on how community development is valued—examining whether wellbeing is framed relationally, collectively, or instrumentally. It asks whether practices that promote connection, participation, stability, and place attachment are legitimised within housing institutions or continue to be sidelined by a delivery-focused culture.

Research Question Three: What factors facilitate the integration of community development practices into public housing?

Attention will centre on the institutional and cultural conditions that enable integration—exploring how leadership practices, organisational structures, and practitioner agency influence the role and visibility of community development within public housing systems.

Research Question Four: What are the obstacles to integrating community development into public housing?

Structural and institutional constraints will be brought into focus here—highlighting how policy logics, compliance cultures, and professional norms can marginalise community development. The question will also attend to how practitioners negotiate these tensions within fragmented and often contradictory systems.

Together, these research questions guide the thematic analysis presented in Chapters Five to Seven, which examine how practitioners operate as relational infrastructure within Aotearoa New Zealand's evolving public housing system.

By advancing a practice-based and relational understanding of community development, the study contributes to scholarship on housing, wellbeing, and governance—while offering a grounded framework for institutional change.

1.6.2 Research Paradigm

Grounded in an interpretive and social constructionist paradigm, the research will be guided by a commitment to understanding how meaning, identity, and practice are co-constructed through language, relationships, and institutional context. Rather than treating community development in public housing as a fixed model or technical intervention, the study will approach it as a dynamic, relational process shaped by practitioners' everyday navigation of systemic complexity.

Social constructionism**,** as articulated by Jacobs and Manzi (2000), recognises that roles**,** knowledge, and values are not merely inherited or imposed but actively produced through interaction and interpretation. This lens will support a nuanced inquiry into how practitioners interpret their roles, negotiate institutional expectations, and make sense of wellbeing in the communities they serve.

To guide this inquiry, the study will adopt a layered analytical framework comprising four intersecting theoretical clusters: *Relationality and Cultural Ontologies of Wellbeing*, *Institutional Navigation*, *Power and Participation*, and *Care Ethics and Emotional Labour*. These clusters are not hierarchical but overlapping—illuminating distinct yet interconnected dimensions of community development practice. Together, they will support a practitioner-centred analysis attuned to the ethical, political, and institutional terrain of public housing.

- *Relationality and Cultural Ontologies* of Wellbeing will explore how relational ethics, trust, spatial belonging, and Indigenous worldviews inform practice. Drawing on relational theorists (Atkinson et al., 2020; Keyes, 2002; Prilleltensky, 2012; White, 2010), social capital and trust scholars (Gittell & Vidal, 1998; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Woolcock, 2001), spatial theory (Massey, 2013; Mee, 2009), and Indigenous and Pasifika models (Anae, 2010; Boulton et al., 2022; Durie, 1985; Penny et al., 2024), this cluster will reposition wellbeing as collective, place-based, and relational—reshaping how connection, care, and resilience are conceptualised in public housing.

- *Institutional Navigation* will examine how practitioners exercise discretion and relational judgement within bureaucratic, risk-averse, and often ambiguous institutional settings. Drawing on theories of street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980), dilemmatic spaces (Hoggett et al., 2008), dual embeddedness (Eversole, 2012), dual membership (Wenger, 1999), and boundary-spanning (Williams, 2002, 2012), this cluster will highlight the everyday tensions practitioners must negotiate between institutional logic and values-based practice.

- *Power and Participation* will explore how voice, agency, and influence are structured, constrained, or contested in public housing systems. Central to this cluster will be Gaventa's (2006) Power Cube and Cornwall's (2002) typology of participatory spaces, complemented by Scott's (1990) concept of infrapolitics.
- *Care Ethics and Emotional Labour*: Building on foundational theories from ethics of care (Tronto, 1993, 2013; Sevenhuijsen, 2000; Held, 2006) and emotional labour (Hochschild, 2012), this cluster will emphasise the moral-emotional dimensions of community development work, especially as practitioners operate within procedurally driven and managerialist systems.

Theory will not be treated as abstract scaffolding but engaged dialogically with lived experience—foregrounding the interpretive, ethical, and political labour of community development. In doing so, the study will reposition wellbeing not merely as an outcome to be delivered but as a principle that can reshape public housing systems, governance practices, and institutional culture.

In sum, this research will be guided by an interpretive commitment to relational meaning-making, an ethical commitment to care and connection, and a political commitment to examining how public housing systems can either enable or erode community development practice—shaping the conditions for trust, participation, and wellbeing. These commitments

inform the research questions, shape the methodology, and underpin the conceptual bridges developed in the findings chapters that follow.

1.6.3 Scope of the Research

Through an inquiry into public housing and renewal initiatives, this study will foreground the strategies and insights of community development practitioners and housing professionals operating at the interface of policy, place, and community. It will explore the everyday practices through which these actors foster wellbeing, cohesion, and belonging—often in contexts shaped by systemic constraint and institutional ambiguity.

Rather than offering a policy-centric analysis of national frameworks, the research will foreground the lived realities of those responsible for designing, delivering, and sustaining community development initiatives on the ground. It will closely investigate how practitioners build trust, create space for engagement, and navigate the tension between technical mandates and the human labour required to support community wellbeing.

The study will contribute to both theoretical and practice-based understandings of how community development is shaped by—and helps shape—public housing systems. Particular attention will be paid to the relational, cultural, and institutional dimensions of practice, offering insights that deepen academic discourse and inform sector knowledge across Aotearoa New Zealand's public housing and community development landscape.

To this end, the study will focus on three legacy public housing authorities—Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC), Wellington City Council (WCC), and Christchurch City Council (CCC)—whose historically distinct mandates and organisational cultures provide important points of contrast with the centralised, post-merger structure of Kāinga Ora. While not uniformly decentralised or community-led, these entities often afforded greater local discretion and relationship-based practice than currently evident within the model operated

by Kāinga Ora. The term legacy public housing authorities will be used throughout to clarify the institutional contexts from which current practice has evolved.

The study will focus specifically on public housing—rental accommodation administered by central or local government—as the institutional context within which community development is examined. Community Housing Providers (CHPs) are excluded to maintain a clear focus on community development as a public responsibility embedded within state and council-led systems. While CHPs play an increasingly significant role in the housing sector, their distinct governance structures, funding arrangements, and cultural mandates introduce variation that would risk diluting this study's focus on public housing institutions.

Terminology for housing transformation varies internationally. Terms such as community renewal, urban regeneration, housing renewal, and neighbourhood revitalisation are used interchangeably in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom. To maintain consistency, *housing renewal* will be used throughout—unless referencing specific initiative titles.

In this context, *housing renewal* refers to a constellation of interrelated activities, including:

- Asset development, management, and infrastructure upgrades
- Place-based tenancy support and service coordination
- Community development strategies that strengthen neighbourhood connection, participation, and leadership

The inquiry will shift focus from material outcomes to the meanings and practices of community development—exploring how it is framed, legitimised, and operationalised within public housing contexts. It will explore how practitioners and other housing staff have interpreted and adapted this work within institutional and community settings. The emphasis will be on practice: on how people and systems interact to foster social connection, trust, and local agency within the context of housing transformation.

Table 2 outlines the public housing authorities and associated housing renewal initiatives included in this study.

Table 2 *Community Development Programmes in Legacy Public Housing Authorities* (Created by the author)

Period	Organisation	Programme	Intent	Scope	Relational Strategy
2000–2011	Housing New Zealand Corporation	Community Renewal Programme	Revitalise housing and improve tenant engagement in targeted areas	Selected neighbourhoods across NZ	Neighbourhood-level engagement and support
2008–2017	Wellington City Council	Housing Upgrade Project and Community Action Programme	Improve housing conditions and strengthen tenant participation	City-wide council housing portfolio	Place-based initiatives and tenant voice mechanisms
2010–2016	Christchurch City Housing	Activities Programme	Foster community connection through supported activities	Council-owned housing communities in Christchurch	Activities to build social cohesion and belonging
2019–2023	Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities	Large-scale redevelopment and new public housing	Embed community development in new urban developments	Urban regeneration in high-growth areas	Integrated development with community partnerships

1.6.4 More than an Add-on

Community development holds real potential to enhance wellbeing in public housing—yet, as this study will argue, that potential is shaped by persistent structural and institutional tensions. The relationship between community development and public housing is inherently fraught—shaped by conflicting institutional logics, historical policy assumptions, and competing definitions of public value. From a social constructionist perspective, these tensions arise through contested meanings assigned to housing authorities' roles and community development within state systems.

A core challenge lies in the constrained mandate and resourcing of housing authorities. Scholars have noted that these agencies are often tasked with delivering technical outcomes under conditions of scarcity, leaving limited capacity for sustained relational work (Hills, 2007; Manzi & Morrison, 2018). Within this context, community development risks being relegated to a peripheral “add-on”—a discretionary activity vulnerable to funding cuts, institutional turnover, and shifting political winds (Dinham, 2005; Nunn, 2020). Such framings undermine its potential as an embedded, strategic function within public housing systems.

There are also risks of unintended consequences. Initiatives intended to promote cohesion and participation may inadvertently reinforce power asymmetries or contribute to gentrification and displacement if not grounded in genuine engagement. Power in public housing is not static—it is continually produced and contested through everyday interactions between authorities, residents, and practitioners. Without critical reflexivity—and clarity about who benefits—community development risks.

Another persistent challenge is the lack of robust evaluative frameworks that recognise the relational and cultural dimensions of wellbeing. Conventional impact assessments often rely on abstract metrics such as social cohesion or quality of life, which can obscure the subjective, emotional, and collective dimensions that matter most to residents (Maloney & Gatfield, 2019). This calls for more participatory, context-sensitive, and relational approaches to evaluation—ones that reflect community values and lived experience (Gant, 2017).

Finally, the instability of political and institutional contexts complicates the sustainability of community development efforts. Shifts in leadership, policy focus, or organisational mandate can disrupt long-term relationship-building—particularly when housing institutions are framed primarily as transactional service providers rather than stewards of place and wellbeing. These challenges underscore the need to reconceptualise public housing not only as a

provider of shelter but also as an active participant in community life—responsible for creating the conditions in which trust, belonging, and collective wellbeing can take root.

1.7 Structure and Outline

Structured across nine chapters, the study traces an evolving analysis of community development in public housing, layering empirical insights with theoretical and policy critique:

- Chapter One will introduce the research problem, situate it within current policy and practice tensions, and outline the study's aims, research questions, theoretical framing, and original contribution.

- Chapter Two will trace the historical and policy development of public housing and community development in Aotearoa New Zealand. Part One will examine the evolution of spatial disadvantage and the residualisation of public housing, highlighting how policy reforms have reshaped tenure, concentrated poverty, and contributed to the fragmentation of community life. Part Two will explore how community development has been defined, enacted, and constrained across time—situating it within shifting state roles, policy logics, and institutional arrangements.

- Chapter Three will review literature across political theory, housing studies, social policy, and community psychology. It will critically engage with international and local debates informing this study and identify conceptual tensions in how community development is understood and operationalised within public housing systems.
- Chapter Four will set out the research design and philosophical foundations. Grounded in an interpretive and social constructionist paradigm, the study will employ a qualitative, dual-inquiry design to explore community development in both legacy housing authorities and Kāinga Ora. It will outline data collection and analysis methods, along with ethical and reflexive considerations.

- Chapter Five will explore how community development was conceptualised and enacted within both legacy public housing authorities and Kāinga Ora. Drawing on practitioner accounts and institutional practices, it will analyse how wellbeing, trust, and participation were interpreted, implemented, and at times constrained.

- Chapter Six will focus on practitioner roles across historical and contemporary contexts and examine how community development workers navigated systemic tension, ethical complexity, and institutional ambiguity.

- Chapter Seven will explore housing residualisation and policy volatility, and how community development is enabled or constrained across legacy public housing authorities and Kāinga Ora. It will examine how Kāinga Ora's legislative mandate and structure shape the role and visibility of community development within a delivery-focused system. It will also trace Kāinga Ora's growing reliance on outsourcing relational work to iwi, NGOs, and third-sector partners, raising questions about accountability and in-house capability.

- Chapter Eight will synthesise empirical findings through four analytical clusters. It will argue for reframing care as a collective, institutional responsibility and present a practice-informed framework for embedding relational approaches within public housing. The chapter will bring together Indigenous, ethical, and institutional perspectives to propose system-level shifts that support intergenerational wellbeing, community participation, and practitioner sustainability. It will conclude with reflections on limitations and directions for future research.

- Chapter Nine will reflect on key developments that unfolded after the research was completed. It will consider the changing organisational and political landscape. Rather than re-analysing the data, this chapter will offer a space to pause, acknowledge shifting contexts, and reflect on the continued relevance—and precarity—of the study's core insights.

1.8 Contribution to Research

Community development's role within public housing and urban renewal in Aotearoa New Zealand remains underexamined—both in scholarship and in practice. To address this gap, this research will critically explore the intersections of policy, practice, and place. Although community development is often framed as essential to tenant wellbeing and placemaking, limited empirical work has investigated how it is actually understood and enacted by those working within public housing systems. By foregrounding practitioner voices, this study will offer an in-depth analysis of how community, relational, and subjective dimensions of wellbeing are supported within constrained institutional environments.

First, community development will be framed as an essential public service—embedded within layered institutional, cultural, and policy systems, rather than treated as discretionary. It will provide a framework for understanding how community development can be integrated into the governance and delivery of public housing, moving beyond one-off projects or discretionary programming.

Second, the research will examine the organisational, structural, and political conditions that enable or obstruct community development in practice. Focusing on Kāinga Ora (2019–2023), it will explore how legislative mandates are operationalised, and how frontline practitioners have interpreted and navigated them through their work with communities.

Third, it will advance theoretical insight by weaving Indigenous concepts and relational ethics—such as *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā*—into broader critiques of public housing systems. It will reframe community development as a practice grounded in care, connection, cultural identity, and participation. Practitioners will be positioned not as passive policy implementers, but as strategic, emotionally literate as actors who can hold, build, and navigate contested terrain within fragmented systems.

In doing so, this study will offer a practice-based, culturally grounded, and politically attuned account of what community development means—and what it takes—in contemporary public housing. It will culminate in the articulation of relational governance as a paradigmatic alternative to transactional models of public housing delivery. Rather than treating trust, care, and cultural connection as discretionary, relational governance will reframe them as structural conditions—central to how public institutions assign responsibility, build legitimacy, and foster collective wellbeing. This reframing will offer both a critique of existing systems and a framework for institutional transformation, grounded in practice, ethics, and Indigenous relational worldviews.

1.9 Conclusion to Chapter One

Offering new insights into a field often sidelined in policy and scholarship, this research will critically examine how community development is integrated within Aotearoa New Zealand's public housing system. By focusing on practitioner experience, it will show how community development is both shaped by—and capable of reshaping—public housing systems. It will reveal community development not as a discretionary add-on, but as a potential site of institutional transformation.

Central to this thesis is the argument that community development must centre wellbeing as connection-based and collective. This requires more than participatory methods; it demands a deeper commitment to Indigenous and Pasifika worldviews, which understand wellbeing as intergenerational, cultural, and communal. This thesis will point to the need for further inquiry into alternative governance arrangements that support resident agency, and into methodologies that bridge state structures with lived, local knowledge.

The findings will demonstrate that community development rarely exists as a seamless or stable function within public housing authorities. It is enacted within institutional ambiguity, shaped by power asymmetries, and frequently undermined by short-term thinking and

fragmented delivery. Yet practitioners persist. Through everyday acts of care, presence, and people-centred leadership, they sustain the connective tissue of community—often with limited recognition and in the face of systemic inertia. Rather than viewing practitioners as mere implementers of state policy, this study will reframe them as adaptive actors engaged in quiet relational leadership, working in dilemmatic spaces to hold trust, foster belonging, and centre wellbeing.

Drawing on layered theoretical insights, the research will inform policy design, strengthens community practice, and supports systemic change. It will call on housing authorities to move beyond transactional models toward more responsive ways of working—approaches that honour culture, embrace complexity, and build with communities, not merely for them.

The following chapters trace how this potential has been enabled, constrained, and redefined across different policy and practice settings. They investigate what it means to move from aspirational language to embedded ways of working—and why that matters if public housing is to support not just homes, but thriving communities.

Chapter Two: The Legacy of Housing and Community Development—Failures and Spatial Disadvantage

2.1 Introduction

Chapter One argued that public housing must be reimagined not merely as shelter but as a platform for collective wellbeing, grounded in relational, cultural, and systemic dimensions. Building on that foundation, this chapter traces the ideological and policy shifts that have instead positioned public housing as a residualised, crisis-oriented system—undermining its capacity to support inclusion, belonging, and enduring community ties.

This chapter is structured in two parts. Part One traces the ideological and policy trajectory of public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand; Part Two examines the evolution and contestation of community development practice.

Part One: Public Housing in Aotearoa New Zealand

Spatial inequality in Aotearoa New Zealand is not incidental—it is the product of cumulative policy decisions that have entrenched patterns of advantage and exclusion across generations. Public housing policy and spatial inequality operate in a mutually reinforcing feedback loop: policy decisions shape where and how disadvantage is concentrated, while existing disparities influence where the state chooses to invest, disinvest, or redevelop. This dynamic creates a self-perpetuating cycle in which public housing functions not only as a response to inequality but also as a mechanism for reproducing it.

Over time, this cycle has deepened disadvantage in specific localities. The clustering of hardship in particular suburbs reflects both the geographic concentration of public housing and the ideological narrowing of its purpose. As public housing has become residualised, it has shifted toward a model of last resort—targeting only those with the most acute needs, often in ways that entrench rather than alleviate, marginalisation (Fergusson, 2013; Murphy, 2020; Pawson & Cheshire, 2015).

These patterns have historical roots. Housing policy in Aotearoa New Zealand has been shaped by shifting political ideologies since the first Labour Government (1935–1949), which introduced state housing as a response to the Depression and as a means of promoting social stability and economic security. While often framed as a public good, the early model also reflected assimilationist values and centralised control, falling short of a genuine commitment to equity—particularly for Māori (Murphy, 2003; Schrader, 2005). These tensions continue to echo in contemporary housing debates, where questions of public value, cultural legitimacy, and institutional design remain contested.

From the 1980s onward, neoliberal reforms reframed public housing as a residual safety net rather than a universal entitlement. Policy emphasis shifted toward market-based solutions, targeted provision, and individualised responsibility—transforming housing from a foundation for social citizenship into a tool of social sorting (Kemeny, 2017; Murphy, 2004). This reorientation not only scaled back the ambition of state provision but also contributed to the stigmatisation of tenants and eroded public support for social housing. The result was a system marked by scarcity, spatialised disadvantage, and lowered expectations of what housing should offer—materially, socially, and politically.

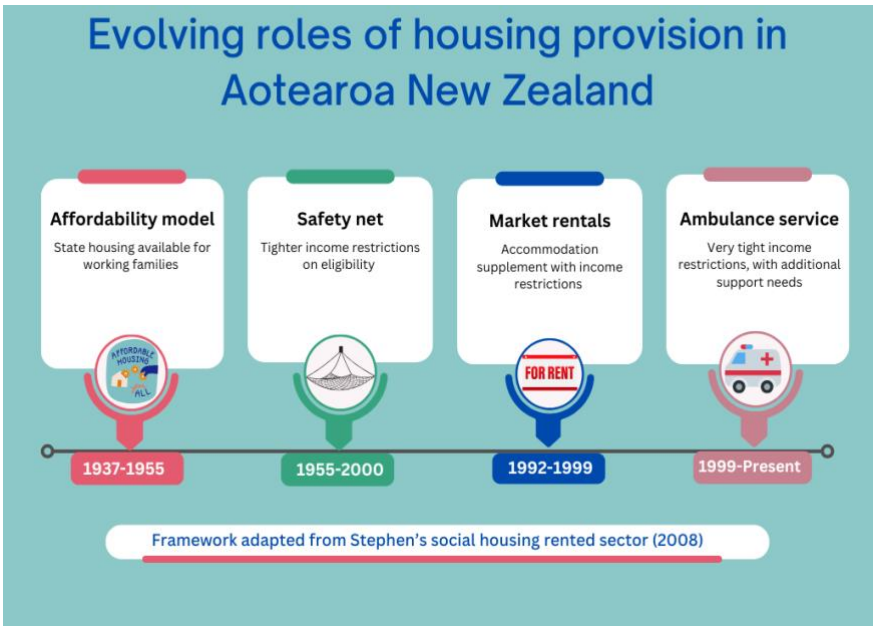
This research adopts a working distinction between public, social, and community housing. A fuller discussion of these definitions and their policy contexts appears in Chapter One. In brief, public housing refers to homes owned and managed by central or local government, while social and community housing is provided by third-sector organisations—community housing providers (CHPs)—whose governance and relationships often reflect stronger local orientation and flexibility.

Stephens (2008) provides a framework to describe the three core functions of state-subsidised housing, including social and public housing: an affordability role, offering broad eligibility and preventative stability; a safety net role, targeting those in need with ongoing

support; and an ambulance service role, restricting housing to short-term relief for those in acute crisis.

For this research, Stephens's model is adapted to include a fourth category—*market rentals*—to reflect policy shifts introduced by the National Government (1990–1993). Rather than subsidising public housing directly, the state subsidised tenants as consumers within a market-based model. Public housing tenants were charged market rents and received direct subsidies through the Accommodation Supplement (AS). Private renters were also eligible for the AS, provided they met income-based criteria. This marked a significant departure from earlier forms of provision, reframing housing need as a private concern addressed through market mechanisms rather than a public good. Figure 3 illustrates the phases of government intervention in rented housing by outlining the evolution of different rental models.

Figure 3 *Evolving Roles of Social Rented Housing Provision in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Stephens, 2008)



2.2 From Universalism to Exclusion: The Ambitions and Limits of a Socialised Housing Vision

The development of a “socialised housing stock” under Aotearoa New Zealand’s first Labour Government (1935–1949) remains one of the country’s most ambitious social policy experiments (John A. Lee, 1972, as cited in Ferguson, 1994). Conceived in response to post-Depression and post-war housing shortages, the initiative was more than a technical solution—it aimed to foster national stability and social cohesion through housing (Metge, 1972; Schrader, 2005). Public housing was framed as a civic entitlement—intended to serve a broad cross-section of the population and ease pressure on the private rental market (Davidson, 1994).

Yet despite its universalist rhetoric, the programme was shaped by narrow cultural and social assumptions. As McLeay (1984) and Ferguson (1994) argue, Labour’s housing policy prioritised nuclear families and Pākehā norms—marginalising Māori whānau structures, single parents, disabled people, and those living alone. Its failure to incorporate culturally appropriate design, accessible services, or wraparound support reflected a limited view of housing as shelter rather than a foundation for relational and community wellbeing. These exclusions undermined the programme’s transformative potential and reinforced existing structural inequities.

The scheme also faced mounting fiscal pressures. Although it aimed to balance cost-recovery rents with affordability and tenure security, rising construction costs exposed deeper contradictions. These financial strains eroded political support and paved the way for ideological retrenchment. Influenced by the Garden City movement and intended to build communities—not just dwellings—developments such as Naenae were curtailed by wartime and post-war austerity (McCallum, 1977; Schrader, 1996). By the late 1940s, the programme’s momentum had stalled, leaving a legacy of partially realised ideals.

Critically, the early state housing programme lacked investment in the social infrastructure necessary to support thriving, inclusive communities. As Ferguson (1994) argues, the scheme was not accompanied by coordinated provision of childcare, transport, health, or recreation—services essential to everyday wellbeing. McLeay (1984) similarly highlights the missed opportunity to align housing with health, employment, and social connection, while Schrader (1996) and Trlin (1977) point to the neglect of communal amenities and public services. This absence of coordinated investment weakened the social fabric and placed the burden of cohesion on residents—particularly women—who were expected to cultivate community without adequate institutional support. These gaps reveal the state's reluctance to treat community-building as a legitimate responsibility, ultimately limiting the programme's redistributive potential and contributing to the later fragmentation of public housing.

2.3 Building without Belonging: Fragmentation and the Failure of Integrated Planning

Although the first Labour Government's housing vision was socially progressive, its delivery mechanisms fell short of enabling integrated, community-centred development. Responsibility was dispersed across departments, creating bureaucratic silos that impeded coordinated planning (Keeble, 1976; Schrader, 2005). A centralised mandate for neighbourhood development never materialised—revealing both administrative dysfunction and a political reluctance to treat community-building as a legitimate domain of state responsibility.

The New Zealand Treasury's view was that the government should "create community interest instead of handing it to them on a platter" (McCallum, 1977, p. 25). The view encapsulated the prevailing logic that community was something to be self-generated, not structurally enabled—obscuring the very barriers that state policy had helped to create. Urban planning remained subordinate to asset delivery; social cohesion was treated as incidental rather than intentional (Boyd, 2011; Ferguson, 1994). Attempts at innovation were stymied by institutional conservatism. The suspicion directed at international architects such

as Ernst Plischke (Brand, 2017) and the prioritisation of engineering over social design (Gilson, 1968) illustrates institutional resistance to relational, people-centred design principles.

Developments such as Eastern Porirua—later deemed a “crashing failure” (Robb & Carr, 1969, p. 118)—were less the result of architectural inadequacy than of the absence of relational infrastructure: neighbourhood amenities, cultural anchors, and opportunities for community leadership. This uncoordinated system entrenched functional minimalism: the state would deliver houses, not communities. Social development, cultural planning, and long-term support were viewed as beyond the scope of housing delivery (Trlin, 1977).

2.3.1 Security to Scarcity: Public Housing as a Safety Net

The 1949 election marked a critical ideological pivot in the trajectory of public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand. While retaining the institutional framework of state housing, the incoming National Government decisively reoriented its purpose. Homeownership was reframed as a moral ideal and national aspiration—tied to narratives of individual responsibility, thrift, and citizenship. In contrast, public housing was increasingly positioned as a transitory and conditional form of welfare for those unable to meet this ideal (Murphy, 2004; Thorns, 2000). The *Housing Act 1955* reinforced this logic by prioritising cost efficiency and asset management, laying the groundwork for future shifts toward residualisation. These changes stripped housing policy of its earlier social ambitions and narrowed its scope to the provision of shelter.

This shift redefined the social contract—not just tenure preferences. The *Housing Act 1955* enabled higher-density developments and embedded a more limited, welfare-based conception of public housing into policy. Crucially, it entrenched a binary in which private ownership symbolised success, while public rental became a marker of failure. The state’s role narrowed from universal provider to targeted enabler, with increasingly restrictive

eligibility criteria introduced to ration access and contain cost. As Stephens's (2008) framework suggests, New Zealand transitioned from a model blending affordability and stability to a *safety net logic* in which public housing functioned as a stopgap for those in greatest need.

This ideological shift also manifested in a growing emphasis on cost-driven, functionalist delivery—models that privileged efficiency over social or community-oriented design. While multi-unit and duplex dwellings were cost-effective and structurally sound, they clashed with deeply held cultural ideals of the suburban quarter-acre section. Their rapid proliferation marked a shift toward standardised, utilitarian development and contributed to the growing stigmatisation of public housing communities (Schrader, 2005). During this period, public housing ceased to be a universal aspiration and became a spatially concentrated marker of marginalisation—both a product and driver of socio-spatial inequality. The roots of this shift lie in earlier decisions, such as the National Government's 1955 policy move to restrict state housing to poorer applicants. While the state houses built under the first Labour Government were of high quality and accompanied by selective tenanting to foster balanced communities, later policy cycles increasingly prioritised housing targets and cost reduction over neighbourhood cohesion.

As these spatial patterns hardened, so too did the erosion of social connection—severing tenants from extended *whānau*, cultural spaces, and the relational networks that sustain wellbeing over time. These policy shifts did not merely alter access or eligibility; they redefined the meaning of tenure itself. Critical scholars argue that tenure is not simply a legal category or housing type, but a relational, ideological, and place-based construct. In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, Ryland's (2023) doctoral thesis reconceptualises tenure as a dynamic and multiply determined outcome of cultural, legal, economic, and spatial forces. This framing holds significant implications for public housing, where state-defined tenures

often reinforce binary distinctions—such as public/private and renter/owner—that obscure lived realities and limit innovation.

Building on Ferguson's (1994) ideological critique and the work of Christophers (2021) and Hulse (2008), Ryland challenges these binaries and invites a reimagining of tenure as a practice shaped by governance systems, institutional design, and community relationships. His study traces how freehold ownership with individual titles became entrenched as the normative ideal—generating institutional inertia and narrowing the policy imagination. These constructions have shaped a policy environment in which public housing has become increasingly residualised, reinforcing the idea that tenure is not a neutral classification but a socio-political framework that structures access and constrains more transformative alternatives.

This normalisation of freehold ownership did not occur in isolation. It was reinforced by a series of market-oriented reforms from the late 1980s that redefined the state's role—from provider to enabler—and repositioned tenants as consumers within an increasingly deregulated housing market. These reforms did not simply scale back public provision; they restructured the policy logics themselves, embedding principles of efficiency, competition, and individual responsibility. As the next section explores, this market turn fundamentally reshaped public housing delivery, deepened spatial inequality, and further constrained the possibility of more equitable or collectively oriented tenure forms.

2.4 Residualising Responsibility: Neoliberalism and the Redistribution of Housing Risk

The 1992 housing reforms marked a sharp ideological turn in the state's approach to public housing. Neoliberal principles—such as market efficiency, individual responsibility, and fiscal restraint—were embedded at the core of housing policy (Murphy, 2003; Thorns, 2000). While framed as enhancing tenant autonomy and expanding housing choice, the reforms

instead redefined housing need as a private concern and narrowed the state's role to that of a last-resort provider (Murphy, 2004).

This ideological shift was codified in the *Housing Restructuring and Tenancy Matters Act 1992,* and was later retitled the *Public and Community Housing Management Act 1992* (as at 1 July 2023).[4] The legislation—framed at the height of the market reforms—remains administratively focused and silent on *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, illustrating how the contractual logic of the 1990s continues to shape the moral and structural boundaries of public housing today.

A key change was the introduction of market rents for public housing tenants, alongside the 'tenure-neutral' Accommodation Supplement. This approach treated tenants in public and private rentals equivalently, offering subsidies to individuals rather than investing directly in public housing (Morrison, 1995; Murphy, 2003). In doing so, the state shifted from providing affordable homes to positioning tenants as consumers in the broader rental market. Although framed as empowering, this shift ignored the structural constraints shaping tenant choices—particularly the shortage of affordable housing—and failed to address the uneven playing field faced by low-income households (Murphy, 2003).

The reforms of the 1990s did not simply reduce the scale of public housing—they redefined its very purpose. What had once functioned as a platform for social citizenship—offering security, belonging, and participation—was recast as a tightly rationed, residual system designed to manage crisis rather than support long-term wellbeing (Murphy, 2003, 2020; Thorns, 2000). At the heart of this reorientation was the belief that market mechanisms delivered superior efficiency. This logic justified the sell-off of thousands of state homes—often in high-value urban areas—displacing long-term tenants and reducing access to secure, affordable housing in well-serviced neighbourhoods (Murphy, 2004). These changes

[4] *Housing Restructuring and Tenancy Matters Act 1992* (No. 76). Now titled *Public and Community Housing Management Act 1992* (as at 1 July 2023). Retrieved from https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1992/0076/latest/whole.html

were not neutral. As Murphy (1999, p. 227) observed, the spatial effects were “startling and... likely to reinforce a ghettoisation of state tenants on the urban periphery.”

Māori and Pacific families were disproportionately affected, with socioeconomically marginalised groups increasingly concentrated in peripheral, lower-income suburbs—deepening segregation and compounding disadvantage (Gordon et al., 2017; Grbić et al., 2010). While policies were framed in the language of tenant choice, the policy reality was one of constraint: shrinking options, intensified competition, and reduced mobility.

Public housing was no longer conceived as a public good or a right of citizenship, but as a short-term intervention tethered to individual responsibility and crisis containment—what Murphy (2020) describes as “an ambulance service” that signalled not the retreat but the maturation of neoliberal housing reform.

2.4.1 Beyond Shelter: Spatial Disadvantage and the Logic of Residualisation

The period from 1999 onward marked a deepening of residualisation, even amid renewed rhetorical commitments to social inclusion. While Labour’s reintroduction of income-related rents signalled a partial reversal, its approach was shaped by *third-way* thinking—a political project aimed at balancing social protection with market logic (Murphy, 2003, 2009). This hybrid model retained the Accommodation Supplement (AS) and prioritised efficiency and targeting, ultimately reinforcing public housing’s marginalised status rather than reimagining it as a universal good.

2.4.2 Social Exclusion: Participation without Power?

Originating in European policy discourse, social exclusion gained traction in Aotearoa New Zealand in the late 1990s as a framework for understanding disadvantage. This section traces its evolution as a multidimensional policy idea and examines how it was selectively taken up, repurposed, and, at times, misaligned with local realities. While social exclusion

frameworks offered useful tools for analysing poverty and place, they often failed to reflect the colonial foundations of inequality in Aotearoa New Zealand—including the displacement of Māori, enduring spatial segregation, and the state's responsibilities under *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*.

Internationally, social exclusion was understood as more than material deprivation. Drawing on thinkers such as Amartya Sen (2000), the concept expanded to encompass people's capacity to participate fully in social and civic life. In the UK and EU, this multidimensional framing shaped policies targeting housing, employment, education, and neighbourhood renewal (Gordon et al., 2000; Room, 1995). Spatial targeting became central: areas of concentrated disadvantage were identified as requiring coordinated, place-based responses. These frequently involved cross-sector partnerships, local engagement, and social enterprise initiatives. Housing authorities assumed broader roles—ranging from youth development to community safety and environmental stewardship (Flint & Kearns, 2006; Manzi & Jacobs, 2013).

In theory, this marked a break from deficit-focused models like residualisation. It recognised the structural causes of exclusion—such as labour market restructuring, racialised disadvantage, and intergenerational poverty—and the need for coordinated, cross-sector responses. In practice, however, tensions emerged. First, the spatial lens risked reinforcing stigma, framing certain neighbourhoods as exclusion zones, often inviting surveillance rather than empowerment. Second, participation was often superficial. While community engagement was promoted, it often occurred within *invited spaces* defined by institutional priorities (Cornwall, 2004), limiting the scope for community-led solutions.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, these dynamics played out in complex ways. The adoption of social exclusion as a policy frame signalled a shift in rhetoric—from narrow economic definitions of poverty to a broader social lens. But its implementation was patchy and rarely transformative. Initiatives were often shaped by neoliberal norms and embedded in

institutional structures resistant to deeper change. Social exclusion, instead of driving redistribution, became a label pinned to low-income suburbs—used to justify interventions that failed to confront the deeper structures of marginalisation.

Critically, these frameworks lacked cultural fit. They were not designed with Indigenous realities in mind. Although some programmes involved iwi and Māori organisations, most were not grounded in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, nor did they uphold *Tino Rangatiratanga*. The dominant logic remained one of remediation and integration, not restitution nor power-sharing.

The social exclusion era in Aotearoa New Zealand offers a cautionary tale. While it introduced new language and policy focus on marginalised communities, it failed to shift power or meaningfully improve material conditions. Imported frameworks often sidelined Māori-led approaches and reduced participation in surface-level consultation. Meanwhile, the structural drivers of exclusion—residualisation, underinvestment, and colonial policy legacies—remained firmly in place.

During this period, community development was too often instrumentalised: a delivery mechanism for outcomes already defined by others. Community development became a vehicle for achieving institutionally defined outcomes—such as behaviour change or service uptake—under contractual governance, serving as a mechanism for implementing state objectives rather than fostering collective empowerment (Prestidge, 2010; Nowland-Foreman, 2018). The promise of inclusion masked the persistence of exclusion, with performative engagement standing in for shared decision-making or systemic change. The limitations of this approach became starkly visible as the discourse of inclusion gave way to the language of crisis.

What followed was not a structural reset but a policy pivot toward triage. Housing was reframed not as a foundation for collective life but as an emergency service for those in

acute need. This shift entrenched what Stephens (2008) terms the *Ambulance Service* Model—a form of housing provision defined by urgency and scarcity. While this model responded to real pressures, it also reinforced an instrumental view of public housing. Broader goals—such as tenant agency, cultural connection, and community wellbeing—were sidelined in favour of throughput, allocation, and risk management.

Rather than resolving the underlying drivers of exclusion, the crisis-driven model merely reshaped the state's response to them. And when the language of social exclusion faded from policy, the underlying conditions remained. The next section explores how these dynamics resurfaced through housing reforms and what they have meant for tenants, practitioners, and the wider role of the state.

2.5 Housing as Triage: The Rise of the Ambulance Service Model

The early 2000s witnessed a reframing of public housing as a conditional, crisis-oriented service—a continuation of neoliberal housing reform under a more socially conscious veneer. While the Labour-led government (1999–2002) reintroduced income-related rents and modestly expanded the housing stock, its third-way approach aimed to soften the harsher edges of market reform rather than fundamentally reorient housing policy around equity or universalism (Murphy, 2003, 2009). The hybrid model—retaining the Accommodation Supplement (AS) while reintroducing direct subsidies—marked a partial restoration of housing's social role, though its scope remained constrained. Public housing provision was tightly rationed, and despite some growth, demand continued to outstrip supply. Prioritising 'those most in need' institutionalised a triaging logic, rendering public housing a reactive intervention rather than a stable foundation for wellbeing.

This shift redefined not only the allocation of housing but also its social meaning. No longer seen as a basis for stability or a space where relationships and belonging could develop, housing became a short-term response to individual crisis. The loss of universalism eroded

housing's connective function: the long-term security, cultural affiliation, and everyday social interactions through which trust, responsibility, and mutual support are cultivated.

Subsequent National-led governments (2008–2017) intensified this trajectory by reducing Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) to an asset manager and transferring the tenancy allocation function to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). This operational realignment reinforced the crisis logic—what Murphy (2020) terms an 'ambulance service'—where the state's role narrowed to managing high-risk populations. Immediate need, not long-term stability, became the organising principle. The focus shifted from sustaining community to managing risk. The system was reorganised to meet immediate needs rather than to sustain enduring relationships or support neighbourhood resilience.

The ambulance service paradigm fundamentally altered the experience of tenancy. Renewable, time-limited leases replaced the security historically associated with public housing, constraining tenants' ability to establish neighbourhood ties or invest in local life. This short-termism disrupted not only individual routines but also the informal systems of support and care that had sustained communities over time. Policy instruments such as renewable tenancies and tightened eligibility criteria epitomised this shift. Tenancy was reframed not as a right grounded in need or citizenship, but as a conditional status subject to scrutiny and revocation. As the state withdrew from long-term commitments, housing insecurity was reframed as a matter of personal responsibility, embedding precarity into the design of public housing. These changes severed the link between housing and belonging, stripping public housing of its capacity to support continuity, connection, and place-based wellbeing. As Fitzpatrick and Watts (2017) argue, the erosion of secure tenure is not merely a technical recalibration but a normative repositioning of what housing is for.

The impacts were deeply felt. In places such as Glen Innes, Tāmaki, and Māngere, long-term tenants—many of whom had served as anchors of neighbourhood life—were displaced through redevelopment and stock transfers (Gordon et al., 2017). These upheavals fractured

networks of care, trust, and reciprocity—what Johnson (2017) calls the often-invisible infrastructure of community wellbeing.

Although reforms aimed to diversify provision through the introduction of Community Housing Providers (CHPs), they frequently prioritised tenant throughput and asset management over continuity and empowerment. Under this model, tenants face constant uncertainty. Frequent eligibility reviews and the threat of relocation eroded their sense of stability, weakening the everyday relationships that support social cohesion. A policy focus on eligibility and churn, rather than stability and connection, undermines not only individual wellbeing but also a community's ability to sustain collective identity and shared responsibility.

Ultimately, the ambulance service model represents not only a narrowing of public housing's function but a narrowing of political imagination. It treats the symptoms of housing insecurity while leaving its structural drivers intact. By prioritising crisis response over prevention and individual management over collective wellbeing, it reproduces the conditions it claims to address. In effect, the ambulance model narrows the role of public housing to emergency care while obscuring the upstream drivers of housing inequality. It reflects—and reinforces—a broader policy contradiction: public housing is simultaneously expected to mitigate the effects of structural disadvantage while being governed through mechanisms that reproduce it.

Conclusion to Part One

The trajectory traced in Part One reveals more than a sequence of policy changes—it surfaces the institutional logic that has reshaped public housing from a platform for social stability into a tightly governed system of crisis containment. These shifts have eroded tenants' access to secure, affordable housing and fundamentally transformed the conditions under which community development is expected to function. It is within this unsettled policy

terrain that the emergence of Kāinga Ora must be understood—not as a rupture with the past, but as a state-led attempt to recalibrate the Crown's role in housing, communities, and care under new legislative mandates.

What was once envisioned as a partner to universal provision and neighbourhood cohesion has been reconfigured. Community development is frequently tasked with stitching together the social fabric frayed by housing policies undermining stability, belonging, and connection. As public housing has become increasingly residualised, fragmented, and instrumentalised, so too has community development been reframed—from a practice rooted in empowerment and collective agency to a vehicle for targeted, often time-bound engagement.

Part One outlined the ideological shifts and policy failures that have shaped public housing in Aotearoa as a fragmented and residualised system. Part Two now turns to community development—tracing how it has evolved within this fragmented policy terrain. It examines how the field has been repurposed, contested, and enacted across diverse institutional and cultural settings. Together, these two parts trace the co-evolution of housing and community development, showing how systemic design shapes not only physical environments but also the relational possibilities for connection, care, and community life.

Part Two: Community Development in Aotearoa New Zealand

2.6 Community Development as a Patchwork of Practice

Community development in Aotearoa New Zealand has never followed a single trajectory. It has grown out of overlapping—and at times conflicting—traditions: Indigenous organising grounded in *whakapapa* and collective responsibility; settler approaches based on voluntarism and mutual aid; and government-led programmes designed to manage social risks, promote national unity or encourage civic participation (Nowland-Foreman, 2018). These roots reflect long-standing tensions about how much control the state should exercise, who defines participation, and how empowerment is practised and understood.

Governments have often turned to community development when grappling with complex social issues. Yet the field has been continuously reshaped by shifting political agendas, policy cycles, and the evolving influence of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* in public life. At different times, it has been used to strengthen government agendas, support local aspirations, or do both at once. Rather than a fixed model, it has been a site of ongoing negotiation—shaped by power, culture, and the politics of place.

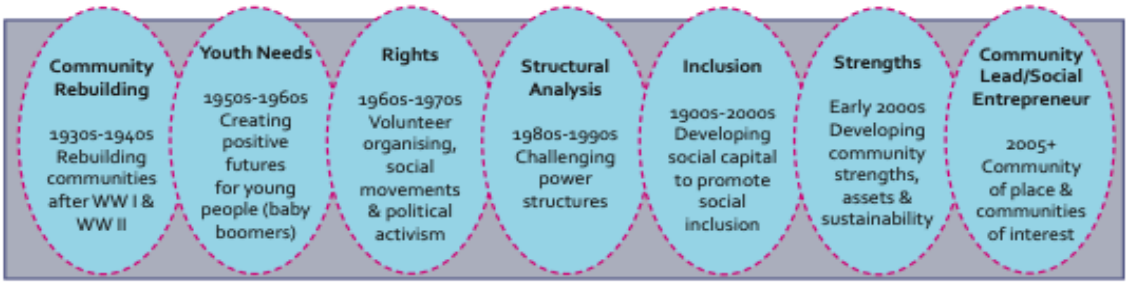
Since the 1980s, waves of public sector reform and outsourcing have created what Aimers and Walker (2013) call a “patchwork” of community development approaches. These range from grassroots organising to formal roles within local and central government. Each has been shaped by different structures, funding models, and levels of community control. The rise of neoliberalism and New Public Management (NPM) marked a critical juncture (Prestidge, 2010). Community development was reframed as a tool for behaviour modification and service efficiency. Stripped of its collective focus, it was increasingly used to meet institutional goals: improving compliance, reducing risk, and managing vulnerable populations (Nowland-Foreman, 2018).

Nonetheless, more grounded, place-based work persisted—particularly in local government and NGO contexts. Often under-resourced and under-recognised, this work prioritised relationship-building, local leadership, and strengthening informal networks of care. It demonstrates that community development has never merely been a policy tool but a relational practice rooted in people, place, and the everyday work of navigating power.

Today, public sector community development sits in a space of constant tension. Practitioners are expected to support local voice and connection but often work within systems that prioritise speed, certainty, and measurable results. The work itself involves balancing two very different demands: the time it takes to build trust and leadership and the pressure to deliver quick outcomes. It is less a linear process than an adaptive negotiation—responsive to shifting mandates, yet grounded in enduring values.

Figure 4 charts peak moments of social and political influence on community development in Aotearoa New Zealand. It highlights the multiple pathways through which practice has emerged—from post-war rebuilding efforts to contemporary community-led and social enterprise models.

Figure 4 *Chronology of Community Development practice* (Aimers & Walker, 2013, pp. 14–15)



2.6.1 Māori Community Development, Indigenous practice, and Te Ao Māori

Māori community development is not a policy trend or contemporary innovation. It is a continuation of deeply rooted, intergenerational practices grounded in *whānau, hapū,* and *iwi* systems of reciprocity, stewardship, and collective responsibility. These systems are inherently relational, underpinned by *whakapapa*, *manaakitanga*, and *whanaungatanga*—principles that embody not only social connection but enduring obligations to both *tangata* and *whenua*.[5] Eketone (2013) asserts that Māori development is holistic, grounded in spiritual, genealogical, and environmental relationships that cannot be disentangled from identity or place.

These practices have not evolved within neutral conditions. Rather, Māori community development has emerged through resistance to and negotiation with colonial institutions that have persistently marginalised Māori epistemologies, disrupted land-based systems, and imposed Western governance structures. As Tankersley (2004) argues, the colonising state deployed legislative tools—from land alienation to cultural suppression—to systematically erode Māori autonomy and spiritual authority. The cumulative impact of these interventions continues to be felt across all domains of Māori wellbeing.

Given this context, Western theoretical frames that universalise community development as apolitical or technical cannot adequately account for Māori community development. Instead, it must be grounded in *Te Ao Māori* and guided by *Tino Rangatiratanga* and *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. Indigenous and constructivist frameworks—such as *kaupapa* Māori and Native theory—centre Māori epistemologies and affirm development as a political, cultural, and spiritual assertion of self-determination (Eketone, 2006). These frameworks reject deficit-

[5] See Glossary (Appendix A) for definitions and contextual explanations of Māori, Pasifika, and theoretical terms.

based framings and instead uphold Indigenous *mana*, authority, and relationality as central to meaningful development.

While terms like “empowerment,” “participation,” and “partnership” echo community development discourse, they become hollow when used in state-led programmes that instrumentalise Māori identity while limiting autonomy. As Ball and Thornley (2015) caution, such efforts often collapse Māori aspirations into compliance-focused models that strip away the ontological foundations of relational practice. Chile and Simpson (2004) similarly argue that community development risks becoming extractive rather than transformative when spirituality and relational connectedness are subordinated to institutional imperatives.

Chile (2007) and Tankersley (2004) emphasise that genuinely bicultural community development must interrogate power asymmetries rather than merely accommodate Māori participation. Tankersley (2004) contends that *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* must be approached through its Articles, not just its Principles and that *Tino Rangatiratanga* must be understood as the foundational right to define and enact development according to Māori values, priorities, and authority. This approach demands more than symbolic gestures; it requires redistributing power and recognising that multiple *tikanga*—Māori and Pākehā—coexist, though not on equal footing.

Māori-led community development, therefore, is both an act of restoration and resistance. It restores *mana*, *whenua*, and *whakapapa* connections eroded by colonialism while resisting imposed norms that deny Māori the right to govern their own development. From urban *marae* and *kaupapa* Māori social services to iwi housing authorities and grassroots movements, Māori community development affirms that development is not a neutral process—it is an assertion of rights, belonging, and collective agency. These initiatives exemplify development as *whakahokia*—the return and revitalisation of Indigenous relational life.

As Tankersley (2004) reminds us, *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* is not merely a historical document but an enduring covenant. It locates responsibility not only with Māori communities reclaiming their sovereignty but with institutions and practitioners willing to challenge monocultural practices and uphold equity through structural transformation. In this light, community development grounded in *Te Ao Māori* is not an adjunct to state frameworks—it is a call to reimagine what community, governance, and wellbeing might look like in a truly bicultural nation.

While Māori community development asserts *Tino Rangatiratanga* through culturally grounded practices, state-led approaches remain shaped by managerial logics that often constrain such aspirations. The following section explores how public sector reforms and managerial paradigms have both enabled and constrained such aspirations, reshaping the institutional landscape in which community development takes place.

2.6.2 Institutional Pressures and the Contemporary Practice Landscape

Managerialism and New Public Management (NPM), which gained traction in the 1980s and 1990s, fundamentally redefined community development within the public sector (Nowland-Foreman, 2018).

Recast through a market logic, community development was no longer relational or oriented toward empowerment and structural critique. It was reframed as a service to be contracted, measured, and assessed against predetermined outputs (Aimers & Walker, 2016; Cribb, 2005). This reconfiguration shifted practitioners away from long-term, embedded relational work and toward short-term, performance-driven projects. The political roots of community development were deliberately muted, and participatory goals tightly constrained (Prestidge, 2010; Seddon et al., 2005). Williams (2014, p. 7) characterises this liminal zone as “the space between”—where practitioners mediate institutional imperatives and community realities, often without the authority or resources to challenge systemic inequities.

Despite these constraints, local government remains a vital—if often overlooked—site of community development (Loomis, 2002; McKinley, 2006). Unlike central government agencies that rely on standardised models, local councils are grounded in place. Many hold long-standing relationships and contextual knowledge that national programmes struggle to replicate. Even with limited budgets and narrowing mandates, councils often continue to support work rooted in presence, care, and connection. Yet such efforts remain invisible in national policy discourse, which tends to privilege quantifiable outputs over relational practice. Practitioners in local government occupy an uneasy space between top-down expectations and ground-level realities, navigating political pressure, shifting institutional structures, and community mistrust. As later chapters show, many operate as informal infrastructure—quietly holding communities together in systems increasingly designed for efficiency rather than connection.

The next section looks at how community development has taken shape within the housing system—showing how policy decisions, agency structures, and shifting mandates have shaped—and often constrained—its practice.

2.6.3 Community Development in Public Housing: Between Policy Intent and Practice Constraints

While community development features prominently in public housing discourse, its institutional roots in Aotearoa New Zealand remain superficial and contested. Historically, public housing authorities were established to deliver housing—not to foster neighbourhood cohesion or social infrastructure.

Understanding the policy trajectory of public housing also requires attention to what was *not* built: the social infrastructure, participatory mechanisms, and everyday supports that enable communities to function. While housing delivery remained central to most strategies, far less investment was directed toward the elements that sustain neighbourhood life—shared spaces, local leadership, and relational support. These features were often treated as

peripheral rather than integral. Yet for residents, they profoundly shape whether they feel safe, supported, and at home—not merely whether they have a roof over their heads.

The dominant focus remained on delivering dwellings, not cultivating neighbourhood belonging. This “bricks over belonging” approach reflected a technocratic view of housing as an individualised commodity, divorced from the relationships, cultural context, and support systems that shape people’s lives. Community development was seldom viewed as core business.

It was not until the 1990s and 2000s—amid shifts toward social capital, capacity building, and inclusion—that housing agencies began to incorporate community development principles into their work. These initiatives adopted the rhetoric of empowerment and local decision-making, promising to foster capacity and support resident-led solutions. In practice, however, many remained tethered to central government priorities (Ingamells, 2006; Nunn, 2020). Community development was often instrumentalised—to promote tenant responsibility, manage risk, or soften the social impacts of redevelopment—rather than to enable genuine community leadership or structural transformation (Dinham, 2007).

This reveals a recurring tension in public housing: participation framed to meet institutional goals rather than to transfer power. While some initiatives may have helped strengthen local relationships, they were often designed to support decisions that had already been made rather than give tenants real influence or leadership. These efforts also tended to overlook the time and continuity required to build trust and credibility—especially in places affected by uncertainty, relocation, and change. The social ties that support community development—*whanaungatanga*, mutual support, and local leadership—are often the first things to break down when renewal is done from the top down.

2.6.3.1 Tenant Participation in Aotearoa New Zealand: Voice without Power?

In contrast to jurisdictions such as the UK and Australia—where tenant participation is supported by legislation and public funding—Aotearoa New Zealand lacks a statutory framework that protects, promotes, or sustains collective tenant voice. The Residential Tenancies Act 1986 (RTA) governs individual rental agreements but does not recognise tenants as a collective with shared interests or governance rights. This legal framework was designed to regulate market relations, not to facilitate participatory democracy. As a result, tenants—whether in public, private, or social housing—are largely isolated from each other, with few avenues to influence the systems that shape their housing conditions.

This policy gap has had enduring consequences. It has contributed to the political invisibility of renters, limited the development of tenant organising, and reinforced the marginalisation of rental housing in social policy. In contrast, Australia has incorporated well-resourced tenant advocacy bodies into its tenancy frameworks—offering platforms for collective engagement and systemic influence (Cadman, 2014; Chisholm, 2016). In Aotearoa New Zealand, no such infrastructure exists. Where participation does occur, it is shaped by a consumerist typology (Cairncross et al., 1994), in which tenants are treated as customers rather than citizens—with feedback mechanisms such as surveys, panels, and mystery shoppers offering input but not influence.

This model of tenant participation mirrors broader neoliberal trends in housing governance. Grounded in market logic, it reframes tenants as consumers with choices, rather than rights-holders with a stake in shaping public services. While such mechanisms may enhance service quality in theory (Heinrich, 2002), they rarely lead to redistributive change. Having a voice does not guarantee that voice will be heard—or acted upon—unless institutional structures are committed to power-sharing (Andrews & Turner, 2006). Participation thus becomes a performance of inclusion rather than a mechanism for accountability or transformation.

Several structural barriers reinforce this dynamic. The emphasis on individual tenancies discourages collective advocacy. Many tenants are unaware of their rights, fearful of speaking out, or lack confidence in using formal legal processes (Chisholm, 2016). The moral discourse of homeownership as citizenship further marginalises renters, depicting them as transient and undermining their legitimacy as contributors to neighbourhood life (Cheshire et al., 2010; Gurney, 1999). These dynamics fracture solidarity and limit the potential for sustained tenant organising—particularly in public housing environments that promote reviewable tenancies and mixed-income developments, which dilute shared interest and proximity (Chisholm, 2016).

Within housing systems, frontline practitioners are often tasked with facilitating tenant engagement—but operate in institutional settings marked by limited discretion, compliance pressure, and resource constraints. Drawing on Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy, these conditions produce coping behaviours—such as routinised engagement or tightly bounded consultation processes—that meet organisational requirements without enabling systemic influence. Practitioners become intermediaries expected to promote participation within structures that actively constrain it.

Exceptions such as the Wellington Housing Association of Tenants (WHAT!), which operated between 2000–2014 with formal support from Wellington City Council, illustrate what more embedded tenant voice might look like. But even this initiative struggled with leadership succession and funding, ultimately dissolving despite its strong policy foundation. Its disappearance underscores how fragile tenant participation remains in the absence of structural investment.

From a policy and practice perspective, the issue is not only exclusion—it is the absence of meaningful investment in tenant voice. Participation mechanisms gather views without redistributing resources or decision-making power. Without shared governance, long-term commitment, and structural protection, tenant participation in Aotearoa New Zealand risks

remaining gestural: a mechanism for managing perception rather than enabling collective agency.

The next section examines how these dynamics play out through statutory planning frameworks, highlighting the disconnect between formal opportunity and lived influence.

2.6.3.2 Public Participation in Housing Projects

Public participation in housing projects in Aotearoa New Zealand New Zealand is formally governed by statutory frameworks such as the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and, earlier, the Town and Country Planning Act 1977. These frameworks provide mechanisms for public input—such as submissions, appeals, and judicial review—typically during planning and consent stages (Ross, 1996). While these processes are intended to uphold democratic participation and environmental accountability, their effectiveness is highly variable and often shaped by the discretion of implementing agencies, the timing of engagement, and the capacity of communities to respond.

Over time, participation has become increasingly proceduralised and technocratic. Engagement is frequently reduced to one-way information provision or formal submission processes that occur after key decisions have been made. As Ross (1996) observed, these mechanisms often fail to facilitate meaningful deliberation or shared decision-making. Participation tends to privilege technical expertise and formal voice—such as that of planners, consultants, or legal professionals—while marginalised groups, particularly renters and public housing tenants, face significant cultural, economic, and linguistic barriers to access. Although consultation is framed as inclusive, it frequently reinforces the very power imbalances it purports to address.

In redevelopment contexts—especially on public land or in areas targeted for intensification—residents often experience participation as tokenistic, adversarial, or inaccessible. While legal avenues such as Environment Court appeals exist under the RMA,

they are costly, complex, and rarely viable for low-income communities. Engagement is often structured not to redistribute power, but to manage opposition and facilitate project delivery.

These dynamics raise fundamental concerns about the legitimacy of participatory claims in housing governance. Participation mechanisms may exist on paper, but without shared governance, resourced involvement, or structural recognition, they risk offering visibility without influence. Communities may be invited to speak, but rarely see decisions shift as a result. In this context, participation becomes a performance of responsiveness rather than a platform for empowerment—gesturing toward inclusion while withholding actual authority.

This contradiction is particularly acute for renters, who are often positioned as transient "service users" rather than enduring citizens with a stake in place. Without investment in the social foundations that enable collective agency—trust, continuity, and power-sharing—community development risks being instrumentalised. Participation is then no longer a path to inclusion, but a tool for managing perception, controlling dissent, and reinforcing institutional control.

These patterns reveal not simply a failure of engagement, but a deeper misalignment between institutional participation frameworks and the relational foundations required for meaningful community development. Participation mechanisms may offer visibility, but rarely enable collective influence—raising urgent questions about what kind of system transformation is needed to move beyond tokenism.

Conclusion to Part Two

Part Two explored how community development emerged within—and was shaped by—this fragmented policy landscape. While often framed as a mechanism for participation, empowerment, or inclusion, community development has routinely been constrained by institutional logics that prioritise delivery over deliberation, and outputs over relationships. Whether through the Department of Internal Affairs as a constrained sponsor or local

government as a conditional enabler, support for community development has remained fragile, uneven, and politically contingent. Practitioners have been tasked with fostering community in environments that limit discretion, undervalue care, and reward procedural compliance over long-term connection.

Participation, meanwhile, has become increasingly proceduralised—offering visibility without influence. In both housing redevelopment and tenant engagement, mechanisms for consultation have proliferated, but without redistributing power or embedding shared governance. Renters and public housing tenants are routinely positioned as service users rather than citizens with a stake in shaping their communities. Indigenous and culturally grounded frameworks are often referenced, but stripped of their political, relational, and spiritual dimensions—leaving *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* principles acknowledged in policy but unfulfilled in practice.

2.7 Conclusion to Chapter Two

Chapter Two has traced the entwined trajectories of public housing and community development in Aotearoa New Zealand, revealing how both have been reshaped by shifting ideologies, institutional reforms, and evolving state responsibilities. Part One examined how housing policy moved from universalist ideals to a residualised system focused on crisis management and individual responsibility. As public housing was reframed as a "safety net" and later an "ambulance service," its broader social function narrowed—undermining security, severing relational ties, and spatially concentrating disadvantage. These policy shifts not only reproduced inequality; they transformed the conditions under which connection, belonging, and neighbourhood life can be sustained.

Part Two built on this context by tracing how community development has been repurposed, constrained, and enacted within this fragmented policy terrain. Although frequently framed as a mechanism for inclusion and empowerment, community development has been shaped

by institutional logics that prioritise delivery over deliberation, outputs over relationships, and compliance over care. Practitioners are often asked to foster community in environments that limit discretion, undervalue care work, and proceduralise participation. The result is a practice field marked by paradox: where values of trust and participation are upheld rhetorically but constrained operationally.

Together, these two parts highlight a central tension at the heart of public housing and community development: the mismatch between systems that fragment and practices that seek to connect. As institutional support has narrowed, community development has been asked to carry increasing responsibility without corresponding resourcing or authority. Understanding community development as civic infrastructure—not merely a technical intervention—requires attention to these structural contradictions. It also requires a shift in how institutions recognise and embed relational accountability into governance, leadership, and everyday practice.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is frequently acknowledged in policy, yet its principles remain inconsistently enacted—leaving community development efforts vulnerable to tokenism rather than grounded in *Tino Rangatiratanga* and genuine partnership.

Having established this historical and institutional context, the next chapter turns to theory. It introduces the conceptual frameworks that inform this study—drawing from Indigenous relational models, ethics of care, social capital theory, and participatory governance—to explore how community development can be reimagined as a transformative public function, even within constrained systems.

Chapter Three: Community and Community Development in the Social Housing Context: a Thematic Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Community development spans multiple disciplines—including political science, sociology, social work, housing studies, and urban governance. Given its focus on public housing authorities, the study also engages with public administration and policy literature. Its core sources are drawn from the UK, Australia, and Aotearoa New Zealand—contexts shaped by Westminster traditions, shared housing trajectories, and patterns of residualisation. Insights from Ireland, the United States, and the Netherlands offer comparative depth.

The review focuses on post-1970 scholarship, a period when community development re-emerged alongside housing renewal initiatives addressing spatial inequality and concentrated disadvantage (Hulse et al., 2011; Levin et al., 2014; Pawson et al., 2015). Much of this literature focuses on governance, placemaking, and tenant participation, but often overlooks the relational, emotional, and cultural dimensions of practice—particularly in public housing (Hoggett et al., 2008; Wannan, 2016).

Building on the previous chapter's analysis, this chapter reconceptualises community development as a lived, relational practice shaped by institutional structures and practitioner agency. It critically engages with existing scholarship to pursue four aims:

- To examine how conceptualisations of "community" shape both theory and practice;
- To explore the communitarian and pluralist frameworks that underpin state-led development initiatives;
- To analyse central but contested concepts such as social capital, participation, capacity-building, and care;

- To investigate the intersections of relational theory, ethics of care, and Indigenous and Pasifika wellbeing principles in shaping power, practice, and wellbeing.[6]

These aims establish the conceptual foundation for the empirical chapters that follow. The review opens by interrogating the concept of "community"—a term loaded with ideological meaning and policy implications. How community is defined shapes engagement strategies, determines who is included or excluded, and influences the forms of collective life that are made visible in development practice.

This foundation enables a deeper examination of how participation, care, capacity, and wellbeing are conceptualised and enacted in public housing.

3.2 Defining Community

Community is a shapeshifter—conceptually elusive, politically charged, and normatively loaded (DeFilippis & North, 2004; Mowbray, 2005). Williams (1983) called it "one of the most warmly persuasive words in English," while Bauman (2001, p. 1) described it as a word that "promises but seldom delivers." Its emotional pull often obscures the assumptions and tensions it carries.

Debates over proximity, identity, inclusion, and change make community a persistently contested idea. It evokes both nostalgia and aspiration: a yearning for connection amid fragmentation, and a tool for moral regulation (Bell & Newby, 2021; Newman & Clarke, 2016). Day (2006) notes its dualities—individualism and collectivism, tradition and progress, fact and ideal. Some see community as a taken-for-granted reality; others as a goal to be pursued. As Shaw (2011) argues, these tensions are not just semantic—they shape and complicate the practice of community development.

[6] See Glossary (Appendix A) for definitions and contextual explanations of Māori, Pasifika, and theoretical terms.

Ambiguity has not limited the term's appeal. On the contrary, community has become a preferred frame for addressing the social consequences of inequality, poverty, and spatial disadvantage (Taylor, 2011). In public housing, it is often idealised as both a missing ingredient and a potential remedy. Yet this framing raises crucial questions: Who defines the community? On what terms? And to what end?

3.2.1 The Idealised Community

Policy discourse often draws on nostalgic notions of community to address social fragmentation. This framing echoes Tönnies' distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*—traditional, cohesive bonds versus modern, impersonal relations (Waters, 2007). *Gemeinschaft* is idealised as morally grounded and emotionally rich, while *Gesellschaft* reflects individualism and contractual ties (Byrne, 2001).

Public housing policy frequently invokes *Gemeinschaft*-like ideals, framing community as something lost and needing restoration. Warburton (2009, p. 18) noted that "community had become an aspiration... to be discovered or returned to." This romanticised framing aligns with communitarianism, which sees shared values as the basis for social order. Etzioni (1995, p. 24) claims, "the restoration of community will bring back a sense of discipline and moral persuasion." In this view, community becomes regulatory—tasked with shaping behaviour and enforcing norms.

Empirical studies, however, complicate this view. Research by Young and Wilmott (2013), Gans (1962), and Jacobs (1961) illustrates how strong social ties persist in disadvantaged urban areas. Such findings suggest that solidarity can emerge through everyday urban life, not just tradition or proximity. Suttles (1972) and Hunter (1975) extend this argument, showing how neighbourhood networks provide informal governance and emotional support.

These relational accounts challenge approaches like Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), which, while promoting strengths-based engagement, often overlook structural

inequality. Though Mathie and Cunningham (2003, p. 480) caution against treating ABCD as a panacea, in practice such models frequently romanticise self-help while depoliticising poverty (DeFilippis et al., 2010; Ledwith, 2011).

Neighbourhood effects literature reinforces this critique. Theories of social disorganisation (Shaw & McKay, 1942) and studies by Wilson (1987), Ellen and Turner (1997), and Jivraj et al. (2019) highlight how systemic neglect erodes cohesion. Importantly, scholars such as Gans (1982) and Jargowsky (1997) reject deficit framings, attributing disadvantage to broader economic forces rather than dysfunctional communities.

These debates expose the limits of invoking “community” as a solution to housing issues. Frequently symbolic, such framings mask policy logics that prioritise control and behaviour modification over structural change. Under third-way politics, community became both a tool of cohesion and an instrument of governance—its idealisation serving to obscure the systemic conditions it claims to address.

3.2.2 Community becomes the Third-Way

The rise of *Third-Way* politics in the 1990s and 2000s redefined the role of community in public policy. Positioned as a middle ground between neoliberalism and state welfarism, Third-Way thinking—popularised by Giddens (1998)—cast community as both a source of social cohesion and a tool for managing risk. Rather than confronting structural inequality or redistributing resources, these policies emphasised personal responsibility, local initiative, and civic participation (Fairclough, 2000; Wallace, 2016).

Within this logic, community development was reframed as a delivery mechanism for public goals, particularly in housing and urban renewal. Outcomes such as behavioural change, order, and efficiency were prioritised over equity or empowerment (Adams & Hess, 2001; Taylor, 1998). In public housing, this translated into place-based strategies that promoted tenant responsibility and neighbourhood resilience while often masking structural causes of

disadvantage. Project-based initiatives became common, driven by performance metrics and short-term outputs (Arthurson, 2001; Gilchrist & Taylor, 2011).

Critics argue that this instrumental framing masked a deeper retreat of the state. Mowbray (2005) and Mayo (1994) describe Third-Way community discourse as a “spray-on solution”—rhetorically rich but materially thin. Community became a substitute for investment: a container into which responsibility and compliance were outsourced.

These dynamics reflect broader processes of governmentality (Rose, 1996), in which power operates through the responsibilisation of individuals and communities. Housing authorities were tasked not only with asset and tenancy management but with cultivating responsible citizenship and behavioural compliance (Crawford & Flint, 2015; Flint, 2002). Community development became entangled with surveillance, risk management, and tenancy review—less a practice of empowerment than a vehicle for regulating tenant conduct.

While framed as participatory, Third-Way approaches often reinforced inequality by shifting burdens onto already marginalised populations. Community was invoked to repair frayed social bonds, but without addressing the underlying structural conditions that fractured them in the first place.

Together, these narratives—of nostalgia, responsibilisation, and state withdrawal—underscore the importance of clarifying what is meant by community development. The next section traces its evolution from grassroots activism to policy tool, highlighting the persistent tension between empowerment and institutional constraint.

3.3 Defining Community Development

Community development is both a process and an outcome—concerned with building collective capacity to respond to challenges and improve quality of life. It connects local participation to broader social change across physical, social, and political dimensions.

Despite its widespread use, the term remains fluid and contested, shaped by shifting policy agendas and ideological commitments.

Foundational definitions emphasise collaboration and self-determination. Cavaye (2004) and Kaplan (1996) describe community development as a process through which local people define visions, mobilise resources, and act collectively. For Shaffer (1989), development goes beyond economic growth, encompassing social, relational, and cultural wealth. Kaplan (1996) distinguishes between growth—quantitative expansion—and development as qualitative, value-driven transformation.

Taylor (2000) highlights community development's bridging role, linking horizontal and vertical systems to foster dialogue between marginalised communities and institutional actors. When aligned with its core principles, it enables inclusion, voice, and adaptive governance.

Yet this potential is often constrained. Scholars such as McEwen-Short (2021), Ledwith (2005), and Hudson (2004) argue that neoliberal and managerial logics increasingly shape the field—emphasising behavioural compliance, short-term metrics, and output reporting over systemic reform. Practitioners face pressure to translate relational practice into quantifiable outcomes, narrowing the space for long-term transformation.

These dynamics lead some to describe community development as a practice, a profession, and a paradox (Banks, 2019; Purcell, 2012). Its location within public systems enables access and influence, but also exposes it to institutional co-option. As Emejulu (2015) and Gilchrist (2019) caution, when stripped of its justice-oriented foundations, community development can become extractive—advancing organisational interests while sidelining those of the communities it purports to support.

Critics also highlight the field's colonial and deficit-based legacies. Initiatives targeting marginalised communities have too often reinforced narratives of deficiency and

dependency, rather than fostering agency and voice (Ingamells, 2006). In response, scholars call for renewed focus on equity, power redistribution, and the everyday relationships that sustain collective life (Emejulu, 2015; Ledwith, 2005).

These conceptual tensions are particularly acute in urban settings, where community development must navigate dense institutional environments, economic pressures, and the dislocation produced by policy change. The following section examines how these dynamics unfold in cities, tracing the evolution of community development in public housing systems.

3.3.1 Community Development in Urban Settings

Urban environments have long served as both testing grounds and pressure points for community development. They expose tensions between state-led renewal and grassroots resistance, between physical redevelopment and social displacement, and between institutional goals and the relational work of practitioners (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2011; Imrie & Raco, 2003). While cities foster innovation and diversity, they also magnify structural inequality, making community development particularly susceptible to instrumentalisation.

In post-war Britain, community development emerged in response to the upheaval caused by slum clearance and mass rehousing. Local programmes sought to restore neighbourhood cohesion, while national strategies prioritised economic growth (Baldock, 1977; Goetschius, 1969). Yet as Warren (1970) noted, community initiatives often served to manage the very disruptions those policies had created.

Similar dynamics were evident in Aotearoa New Zealand, where community development was embedded within public housing policy to foster cohesion and reduce youth risk (Aimers & Walker, 2013; Haigh, 2014). Across contexts, it was routinely tasked with addressing surface symptoms—antisocial behaviour, disconnection—while leaving structural causes untouched (Darcy, 2002; Dinham, 2005).

By the 1970s, radical traditions pushed back. Freire's pedagogy of critical consciousness (1972) and Alinsky's model of grassroots organising (1971) reframed community not as a site of repair but of political agency. Practitioners mobilised for collective action, often in tension with the state. In the UK, the Community Development Projects (CDPs) were disbanded amid concerns they threatened government authority (Fawcett & Hanlon, 2009; London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, 2021).

From the 1980s onward, economic rationalism and managerialism reshaped the field. Community development was reframed through technocratic lenses: empowerment became quantifiable, participation procedural, and success defined by deliverables (Popple, 2015). As Shaw (2008) observes, the field was "managerialised," subordinating relational and political goals to institutional imperatives.

These contradictions persist. Community development is now used to promote behavioural change and civic pride in neighbourhoods marked by churn, displacement, and surveillance (Crawford & Flint, 2015; Imrie & Raco, 2003). Practitioners are expected to build trust in environments that actively erode it.

Critics argue these are not anomalies but systemic features. The rhetoric of "community" signals care and empowerment while masking underinvestment and control (Gilchrist, 2019; Rose, 1996). Community development becomes performative—symbolising inclusion while constrained by audit cultures and short-term targets (Banks et al., 2020; Shaw & Crowther, 2013).

In this context, urban community development occupies a paradoxical space: framed as a remedy for inequality, yet often complicit in its reproduction. The next section explores the normative traditions—communitarian, pluralist, and radical—that underpin these competing visions of practice.

3.4 Theoretical Approaches to Community Development

Community development does not occur in a vacuum. It is shaped by institutional structures, political ideologies, and normative assumptions about citizenship, responsibility, and the role of the state. These assumptions underpin the frameworks through which policy actors and practitioners define what community is, what it should do, and who it serves.

Table 3 draws together the key features of communitarian, pluralist, and radical traditions as identified by Gilchrist and Taylor (2011), highlighting their differing assumptions about power, participation, and equity—and how these shape community development practice in public housing.

Table 3 *Community Development Theories, Concepts, and Strategies* (Adapted from Gilchrist & Taylor, 2011 and Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002)

Normative Framework	Theoretical Roots	Key Concepts	Common Strategies	Implications for Public Housing
Communitarian	Communitarianism, Structural Functionalism	Social capital, civic responsibility, cohesion, capabilities approach	Community-led development (CLD), Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), volunteering, strengths-based models, civic engagement	Prominent in state programmes focused on behaviour change, neighbourhood revitalisation, and social cohesion. Risks moralising tenant behaviour and overlooking structural inequality. Relational infrastructure is often implied but under-resourced.
Pluralist	Democratic theory, Rational choice, Institutional theory	Participation, empowerment, redistribution, cultural diversity, capabilities approach	Social planning, Participatory Action Research (PAR), deliberative democracy, participatory budgeting, collaborative governance	Offers stronger potential for inclusive tenant voice and shared decision-making. However, it is constrained by the institutional logic of efficiency and risk aversion. Relational work is often sidelined by performative engagement.
Radical	Critical theory, Feminist theory, Critical race theory, Intersectionality, Freirean pedagogy	Conscientisation, collective action, transformative justice, liberation	Community organising, protest, advocacy, policy change, grassroots education, PAR	Less visible in formal housing systems. Challenges systemic inequality but often excluded from state-funded programmes. Emphasises deep relational work and power redistribution yet operates outside institutional constraints.

3.4.1 Communitarianism-Inspired Community Development

Communitarianism has strongly influenced community development thinking, particularly where social cohesion is framed as both a moral imperative and a tool of governance. Etzioni (1995) positions community as a space of shared values and mutual obligation—where individuals are expected to balance rights with responsibilities. Here, community is not only a source of belonging but also a mechanism for behavioural regulation.

These ideas gained policy traction in the 1990s, as liberal democracies responded to concerns about social fragmentation, civic disengagement, and the erosion of collective norms (Blunkett, 2001; Sandel, 1998). Thinkers such as Giddens (1998) and Putnam (2000) advocated renewing social bonds and civic trust. Giddens's Third-Way presented community as a site for social investment and personal responsibility, while Putnam's social capital offered a policy-friendly rationale for rebuilding civic engagement and neighbourhood resilience.

Policy initiatives inspired by these ideals promoted neighbourliness, volunteering, and behavioural responsibility—often alongside reduced investment in public services (DeFilippis et al., 2006). Levitas (1998) terms this the "moral underclass discourse," in which poverty and exclusion are reframed as individual failings rather than structural injustices. Community development thus becomes a vehicle for responsibilisation, rather than redistribution.

Critics argue this approach moralises poverty and reinforces conformity. Fine (2001) notes that communitarianism privileges already-cohesive communities, marginalising those whose lives fall outside normative expectations. Community becomes an ideal to which people must adapt, rather than a space for contestation or change.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, similar undertones can be found in public housing discourse. Policy rhetoric often emphasises tenant responsibility, neighbourhood resilience, and self-sufficiency—framing wellbeing in behavioural terms rather than structural ones (Chisholm,

2016; Johnson, 2017). This may obscure systemic issues such as residualisation, tenure insecurity, and housing market pressures (Murphy, 2020).

While communitarianism rightly highlights the relational dimensions of community life, its influence in public housing contexts has been critiqued for reinforcing deficit narratives and legitimising behavioural interventions at the expense of structural reform (DeFilippis et al., 2010; Rose, 2000). Without attending to power, resources, and cultural context, these approaches risk displacing more equitable models of community development.

These critiques open space for alternative frameworks—such as pluralism—which foreground diversity, contestation, and the negotiated nature of values, offering a more inclusive lens for public housing governance and resident participation.

3.4.2 Pluralist-Inspired Community Development

Pluralist approaches offer a contrasting logic to communitarianism. Rather than assuming cohesion, pluralist theorists view communities as diverse, fragmented, and shaped by overlapping identities and competing interests. Rooted in liberal democratic and institutional traditions, these frameworks position community development as a negotiated process within inclusive, participatory structures (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2011; Twelvetrees, 2008). Participation is central, with mechanisms such as co-design, collaborative planning, and participatory budgeting aiming to broaden access and redistribute influence.

Thomas (1983) identifies two interrelated goals of pluralist community development: the equitable distribution of resources and the cultivation of civic capacity. These aims closely align with public housing tenant engagement strategies. Yet a growing literature questions whether pluralism's democratic promise is realised in practice—particularly within systems marked by power asymmetries.

Fraser (2005) argues that meaningful participation requires not just formal access to deliberative spaces but structural transformation to address misrecognition and constrained influence. Without such shifts, participatory mechanisms may reproduce the exclusions they claim to remedy. Gaventa and Cornwall (2008) similarly observe that engagement is often pre-structured by institutional timelines and accountabilities, limiting critical voice and reinforcing proceduralism—consultation without power.

Young (2000) extends this critique, warning that deliberative models privileging consensus and rationality may marginalise cultural specificity, embodied experience, and dissent. Forums designed for neutrality can inadvertently suppress difference and reinforce dominant norms. Participation, in such cases, risks becoming performative—appearing inclusive while leaving power relations intact.

Building on these critiques, Mouffe (2009) advances an agonistic model of pluralism that positions conflict as a necessary and productive dimension of democratic practice. From this perspective, community development should not aim to smooth over disagreement but to hold space for contestation—where divergent claims and identities can confront one another within structured political arenas. Participation becomes meaningful only when it enables disruption and institutional challenge.

These critiques resonate in Aotearoa New Zealand's public housing sector, where participatory mechanisms remain limited, time-bound, and unevenly applied. Strategic documents often reference inclusion and tenant voice, yet enduring structures for co-governance are rare (Chisholm, 2016; Johnson, 2017). Participation frequently takes the form of consultation, bounded by organisational risk frameworks and policy imperatives. Pluralist aspirations persist in rhetoric but are often constrained in practice—exposing the gap between participatory discourse and redistributive reality.

Pluralist frameworks remain valuable for understanding how dialogue and diversity are pursued within public systems. Yet their transformative potential hinges on power: whether

participatory structures enable collective agency and challenge institutional hierarchies, or merely reproduce existing arrangements through symbolic engagement. As the literature warns, participation without redistribution risks becoming an empty signifier—sustaining legitimacy without shifting outcomes.

3.4.3 Radical-Inspired Community Development

Radical approaches to community development foreground power, justice, and systemic transformation. In contrast to procedural or technocratic models, they frame community work as political—rooted in collective struggle and structural critique (Emejulu, 2015; Ledwith, 2005; Mayo, 1994). Drawing on traditions of popular education, feminist thought, and anti-colonial resistance, these approaches emphasise redistribution over inclusion and transformation over participation as an end in itself.

Freire's (1972) concept of *conscientisation*—developing critical awareness through dialogue—remains foundational. Rather than casting communities as recipients or partners, radical frameworks centre lived experience and community-led analysis. Feminist and decolonial scholars (Smith, 2012) further illuminate how intersecting systems of power—patriarchy, racism, colonialism—shape both inequality and the development process itself.

This orientation frequently conflicts with institutional norms focused on order, accountability, and control. Strategies such as protest, organising, and direct action challenge dominant logics and resist co-option into depoliticised engagement frameworks (McArdle, 2020). In Aotearoa New Zealand, radical elements surface in tenant organising and Indigenous models grounded in *Tino Rangatiratanga* and collective responsibility (Came et al., 2016; Smith, 2012).

Yet these practices face systemic constraints. In risk-averse, performance-driven environments, dissent is often defunded, reframed, or absorbed. As Emejulu (2015) and

Shaw and Crowther (2013) argue, the threat lies not only in repression but in rhetorical capture—where the language of empowerment persists while its political edge is blunted.

Radical approaches reassert community development as a site of resistance—not just about voice, but about changing the conditions in which that voice is heard.

3.4.4 A "Curiously Hybrid" Practice

Community development often blends competing theoretical logics—drawing on communitarian ideals of cohesion and pluralist commitments to participation—while rarely embracing radical approaches (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2011). As Shaw (2008, p. 33) observes, the result is a "curiously hybrid" practice: combining the language of empowerment with institutional logics that prioritise control, risk management, and measurable outcomes.

This hybridity is particularly visible in public housing, where policies invoke tenant voice and resilience, yet practice frequently emphasises compliance and throughput. Participation is encouraged but constrained—bounded by institutional timelines, procedural requirements, and behavioural expectations (Chisholm, 2016). Both communitarian and pluralist models often presume the existence of trust and local capacity, yet these enabling conditions are frequently absent or under-resourced.

Hybrid approaches can serve to legitimise policy without redistributing power. Shaw (2008) warns that they may provide a participatory veneer while reinforcing institutional authority. Henderson and Versceg (2010) argue that when empowerment is embedded in technocratic systems, it risks reproducing inequality under the guise of inclusion. McEwen-Short (2021) frames the field as shaped by a "split inheritance"—liberal individualism and communitarian obligation co-existing uneasily, generating ambiguity over whether community is a site of autonomy or discipline.

These contradictions are visible in mechanisms such as tenant advisory groups, often framed as participatory yet constrained by pre-set agendas and institutional risk aversion. Chisholm (2016) notes that while these forums enable tenant input, they seldom challenge organisational priorities. Participation becomes invited, managed, and politically safe.

Yet hybrid practice is not inherently limiting. As Yeo and Yeo (1988, cited in Shaw, 2011, p. 828) observe, community is shaped at the intersection of imposed structures and lived relationships. From this perspective, hybridity can be a resource—enabling context-specific navigation between institutional demands and community priorities. Shaw (2008) suggests that embracing, rather than resolving, these contradictions may offer a more pragmatic path. However, flexibility alone is insufficient. Without explicit commitments to equity and redistribution, hybrid approaches risk reinforcing dominant norms under the guise of empowerment (Henderson & Versceg, 2010).

This tension extends to how wellbeing is framed in community development. Where hybrid models are shaped by managerial priorities, wellbeing is often reduced to behavioural outcomes or compliance. Though seemingly pragmatic, such framings risk obscuring broader understandings of wellbeing grounded in equity, cultural identity, and collective agency.

In public housing contexts marked by displacement and structural inequity, wellbeing cannot be separated from community development. While practice often emphasises participation and local agency, its alignment with wellbeing frameworks remains implicit. As the next section explores, dominant policy models frequently sit in tension with relational and collective worldviews that frame wellbeing as socially and culturally embedded. Without structural critique, community development risks reinforcing deficit framings or enabling paternalistic interventions in the name of wellbeing (Craig, 2007; Cram, 2014; Wallace, 2016).

3.5 Defining Wellbeing

This section reviews how wellbeing is conceptualised and enacted in public housing, focusing on how different frameworks shape practice and measurement. It draws on Western, Indigenous and Pasifika models to examine underlying assumptions—particularly the marginalisation of relational, cultural, and intergenerational dimensions central to collectivist worldviews. The literature includes proposals for more inclusive, *Tiriti*-informed approaches that may inform housing policy, governance, and service delivery.

Wellbeing is widely framed in public policy as a strategy for addressing inequality and improving quality of life (Diener, 1984; Durie, 1998). In public housing contexts—where residents may experience precarity, isolation, and systemic barriers—it is treated as both a policy goal and a contested concept (Kearns & Whitley, 2020). A growing body of research argues for multidimensional understandings that incorporate material, relational, cultural, and structural conditions.

3.5.1 Subjective Wellbeing

Subjective wellbeing (SWB) is one of the most established constructs in wellbeing research and policy. It typically refers to individuals' self-assessments of life satisfaction, emotional states, and psychological functioning. Diener's (1984) tripartite model conceptualises SWB as comprising three components: positive affect (experiencing pleasurable emotions), negative affect (the absence of distress), and cognitive evaluations of life satisfaction. Further distinctions have since developed, including hedonic wellbeing—centred on affective states and pleasure—and eudaimonic wellbeing, which relates to meaning, purpose, and self-realisation (Dolan & Metcalfe, 2011; Ryff & Singer, 2008).

Subjective wellbeing (SWB) frameworks have been used in public housing research to explore links between housing quality, tenure security, perceived safety, and mental health (Grimes et al., 2023; Kearns & Whitley, 2020). Psychosocial factors such as autonomy,

social support, and participation have also been shown to influence tenant wellbeing (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). SWB provides a useful lens for assessing how residents experience their housing and neighbourhood conditions.

However, several scholars critique the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning SWB. These frameworks often prioritise internal states and cognitive appraisal, reflecting a Western, individualist orientation. This may obscure the relational, cultural, and collective aspects of wellbeing that are central to many non-Western and community-based paradigms (Cram, 2014). Atkinson et al. (2020) argue that when wellbeing is measured solely at the individual level, it fails to account for the intersubjective and spatial dynamics shaping experiences in public housing.

In contexts marked by stigma, instability, and institutional mistrust, SWB measures can still offer insight into lived experience—surfacing perspectives on safety, connection, and belonging that might otherwise be overlooked (Dolan et al., 2011; Forgeard et al., 2011). Yet as noted, the framework's emphasis on individual perception limits its capacity to capture collective and culturally embedded dimensions of wellbeing. These limitations have led to growing interest in models that foreground interdependence, structural context, and ontological diversity—especially important in public housing, where the social fabric is both fragile and essential.

3.5.2 Relational Wellbeing

Relational wellbeing reframes human flourishing as contingent on the quality of people's relationships—with others, with place, and with the institutions that shape daily life. Rather than viewing wellbeing as an internal state, relational approaches emphasise the intersubjective, spatial, and institutional conditions through which people experience connection, recognition, and care.

This framing draws from care ethics, relational theory, and Indigenous worldviews, all of which centre relationships—not individual traits—as foundational to wellbeing (Durie, 1985; Gilligan, 1982; Held, 2006).

Care ethicists argue that moral reasoning emerges from attentiveness and contextual responsibility. Gilligan (1982) challenges abstract justice models by foregrounding moral development as rooted in care and connectedness, while Held (2006) positions care as a public ethic essential to equity. These insights are especially salient in public housing, where trust, presence, and emotional labour often matter more than procedural fairness.

Massey (2013), drawing from spatial theory, conceptualises space as socially constituted. Public housing, then, is not merely built infrastructure but a relational space where wellbeing is co-produced through everyday interactions and institutional arrangements. Practitioners become not just service providers but brokers of trust and safety.

Empirical studies affirm the significance of relational wellbeing in contexts marked by poverty or disinvestment. Bond et al. (2012) found that informal networks of trust helped mitigate mental health impacts in disadvantaged UK neighbourhoods. In Italy's residualised housing system, Costarelli (2022) observed how frontline staff sustained engagement through consistency, flexibility, and empathy. These findings highlight wellbeing as a social process enacted through mutual care—not simply an outcome of services or material conditions.

Relational wellbeing aligns with social capital theory, particularly in its emphasis on trust, reciprocity, and shared norms (Putnam, 2000). Yet unlike social capital's often abstract framing, relational wellbeing draws attention to the emotional labour and adaptive judgement required to sustain trust, especially in communities experiencing churn or institutional mistrust.

In practice, relational wellbeing is built through everyday acts: checking in with neighbours, chatting over the fence, sharing kai, or being present in shared spaces. In high-density

settings, these low-key interactions hold disproportionate weight, especially when formal supports are limited. Courtyards, community rooms, and gardens become relational infrastructures that foster place attachment and emotional safety (Jupp, 2008; Maton, 2008).

Yet dominant wellbeing metrics often overlook these dynamics, privileging individual indicators—resilience, self-sufficiency, employment—over relational or cultural foundations. This risks misdiagnosing what matters most, especially in public housing contexts where community resilience is underpinned by care and connection (Atkinson, 2013; White, 2010). A relational lens makes this work visible and offers a critical bridge between individual and collective wellbeing—one shaped not only by personal circumstances but also by housing policy, neighbourhood design, and frontline practice.

3.5.3 Community Wellbeing

Community wellbeing refers to the collective quality of life experienced within a shared social and geographic context. It encompasses relational, cultural, material, and participatory dimensions, including cohesion, belonging, safety, and shared purpose (Prilleltensky, 2006).

Despite increasing policy attention, dominant Western frameworks tend to prioritise quantifiable outcomes—such as programme uptake or satisfaction scores—while paying limited attention to the relational, cultural, and political dynamics shaping collective wellbeing (Atkinson, 2013; White, 2010). As White (2010) notes, while indicators can enhance accountability when co-developed with communities, abstract metrics risk reducing community to a delivery mechanism rather than recognising it as a site of participatory practice.

In contrast, relational and place-based approaches emphasise community wellbeing as emergent and dynamic—produced through everyday interactions, shared meaning, and social relationships (Prilleltensky, 2006; White, 2010). Wiseman and Brasher (2008) point to enabling social, cultural, economic, and environmental conditions, while Cox (1995) and Ife

(2013) stress inclusive governance, connectedness, and equitable access to resources. Empirical research reinforces this view: Abbott et al. (2019) found that transparent, two-way engagement during housing renewal reduced resident anxiety and supported wellbeing; Barrie et al. (2019) observed that older tenants' wellbeing was closely tied to feelings of safety, recognition, and contribution.

These findings underscore that in public housing—particularly in contexts of deprivation and unequal power—community wellbeing is not reducible to neighbourhood stability or service provision. It depends on residents' ability to participate in decisions, maintain relationships, and foster belonging (Atkinson et al., 2020). Tenant-led initiatives and place-based approaches are increasingly recognised as vital for building resilience and agency, especially within institutional settings that may otherwise constrain community voice (Arthurson et al., 2016).

Indigenous and Pasifika scholarship adds further depth, highlighting dimensions of community wellbeing often overlooked in mainstream frameworks. In *kaupapa* Māori and Pasifika models, wellbeing is not a policy output but a relational condition grounded in *whakapapa*, *vā*, and intergenerational reciprocity. Community is understood not as a setting for service delivery but as a site of cultural continuity, political identity, and collective responsibility.

3.5.4 Kaupapa Māori Wellbeing Frameworks

Māori models of wellbeing mark a fundamental shift in how wellbeing is understood and enacted. Rather than privileging individual outcomes, they emphasise collective, intergenerational relationships grounded in *whakapapa*, *whānau*, *whenua*, and *wairua* (Penny et al., 2024; Smith, 2012). Foundational frameworks such as *Te Whare Tapa Whā* (Durie, 1985), *Te Wheke* (Pere, 1984), and *Te Pae Māhutonga* (Durie, 1999) embed wellbeing in spiritual, ecological, familial, and political domains. More recent models—such as *Ngā Pou Mauriora* (Waa et al., 2017), *Te Ahua o te Kāinga* (Durie, 2019), and the *Te*

Aranga Design Principles (Paul & Kake, 2019)—extend these concepts into urban design and housing environments.

Across this literature, wellbeing is relationally constituted—shaped through responsibilities to people, place, ancestors, and future generations. This challenges fragmented policy logics that reduce wellbeing to outputs or behavioural indicators (Cram, 2014; Smith, 2012). While Māori models are increasingly referenced in policy, implementation often falters when confronted with institutional norms prioritising efficiency and market responsiveness. Cram and Smith caution that Māori frameworks risk being treated as cultural overlays rather than ontological systems—limiting their transformative potential.

The Whakawhanaungatanga Māori Wellbeing Model (Penny et al., 2024) offers a distinctive contribution. Developed within public housing and urban service delivery, it positions *whakawhanaungatanga*, *manaakitanga*, and *kaitiakitanga* as relational foundations of wellbeing. Tenant engagement is reframed not as compliance but as mutual recognition, continuity, and reciprocity. *Whakawhanaungatanga* is understood not merely as interpersonal connection but as an ongoing process of relationship-building with *te hunga ora*, *te hunga mate*, and the more-than-human world—including *atua*, animals, and the built and natural environment. This expansive worldview reframes housing as a site of ethical, ecological, and spiritual connection (Boulton & Brannelly, 2015).

Penny et al. (2024) caution that without institutional reform, *whakawhanaungatanga* risks being reduced to a legitimising gesture. These concerns are explored further in the next section.

3.5.5 Pasifika Wellbeing Frameworks[7]

Pasifika wellbeing frameworks challenge individualist, outcome-driven paradigms by grounding wellbeing in Indigenous Pacific knowledge systems. Central concepts such as *vā* (relational space), *kainga* (family), and *loto* (spirit) position human flourishing as relational, spiritual, and intergenerational (Teariki & Leau, 2023; Wendt, 1996). Wellbeing is not a personal state or service outcome but a practice of maintaining sacred, interconnected relationships—with people, land, ancestors, and the cosmos.

A unifying principle across many Pacific worldviews is *teu le vā*—the ethical practice of nurturing relationships. As Wendt (1996, p. 402) writes, "*la teu le vā*" reflects an ongoing responsibility to relational care. This contrasts sharply with policy frameworks that abstract wellbeing from cultural and spatial context, privileging metrics over collective ethics.

Pasifika models express these principles through culturally grounded metaphors. The *Fonofale* model (Pulotu-Endemann, 2007), widely cited in Aotearoa New Zealand's health and social policy, depicts a Samoan *fale* (house) with culture as the roof, family as the foundation, and posts representing spiritual, physical, mental, and social wellbeing. When imbalance occurs in any area, the wellbeing of the whole is affected. The *Tivaevae* model (Ma'ua-Hodges, 2000), inspired by Cook Islands quilting traditions, centres reciprocity, shared knowledge, and collaborative practice. *Te Vaka Atafaga* (Kupa, 2009) and *Fonua* (Tu'itahi, 2009) also position wellbeing within ecological, spiritual, and communal domains—linking health to ancestry and environmental stewardship.

[7] This section uses the term *Pacific* when referring to Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural concepts rooted in the wider Moana region, and *Pasifika* when referring to communities, policy contexts, or wellbeing frameworks as they are articulated and applied in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Pasifika wellbeing frameworks offer ontological commitments grounded in reciprocity, spirituality, and interdependence—reimagining care, space, and governance through relational ethics.

3.5.6 Integrating Wellbeing Frameworks in Public Housing

The literature on *kaupapa* Māori and Pasifika wellbeing frameworks presents a shared critique of dominant models that individualise wellbeing and abstract it from cultural, relational, and environmental contexts. Both traditions articulate ontological systems grounded in *whakapapa*, *vā*, and intergenerational responsibility—offering a paradigm shift rather than a cultural supplement to mainstream approaches. These frameworks position wellbeing not as a personal state or policy output, but as a condition enacted through sustained relationships between people, land, ancestors, and future generations.

Although Western frameworks of subjective, relational, and community wellbeing have evolved to include social connection and place-based dynamics, they are often operationalised through institutional systems that foreground efficiency, behavioural indicators, and standardised outcomes. In public housing, terms like “connection” or “trust” risk rhetorical use without systemic reform. Without corresponding shifts in governance, institutional design, and resourcing, Indigenous frameworks risk being symbolically referenced while dominant policy logics remain unchanged. Cram (2014), Smith (2012), Teariki and Leau (2023), and Rogers and McAuliffe (2023) caution that such selective appropriation can reinforce epistemic marginalisation under the guise of inclusion.

Applied analytically, Māori and Pasifika frameworks offer more than critique—they propose alternative orientations for public housing. They describe housing as a form of relational infrastructure that supports *whānau*, sustains *manaakitanga* and *whakawhanaungatanga*, and contributes to collective wellbeing. Models such as *Te Whare Tapa Whā* and *Fonofale* locate housing within spiritual, ecological, and communal dimensions, foregrounding relational balance over individual attainment. Similarly, the Whakawhanaungatanga Māori

Wellbeing Model and *teu le vā* invite a reimagining of tenant engagement, service delivery, and urban design as practices of reciprocal care and continuity. These perspectives challenge dominant assumptions—such as housing as commodity or wellbeing as output.

From a governance perspective, the literature calls for structural commitments that align with Indigenous and collectivist values. This includes *Tiriti*-based co-governance, Māori and Pasifika leadership, and resource allocation toward housing models that centre community-defined priorities. Examples include *papakāinga*, intergenerational housing, and place-based approaches rooted in cultural practice. In each case, the implementation of wellbeing frameworks requires more than policy referencing—it demands institutional reorientation.

Measurement is another site of tension. Common housing tools such as satisfaction surveys or compliance indicators are noted to inadequately capture collective or spiritual dimensions of wellbeing. The issue, as Atkinson (2013) and White (2010) suggest, lies not with measurement per se but with the assumptions that shape what is counted. Co-designed indicators grounded in *whānau ora*, *vā*, or *mana whakahaere* have been proposed as more culturally congruent alternatives—particularly in contexts of high-density or transitional housing where relational continuity is disrupted.

In sum, *kaupapa* Māori and Pasifika wellbeing frameworks extend existing critiques of technocratic housing policy by offering deeply rooted, relational ontologies. They reframe the purpose and practice of housing through collective identity, cultural continuity, and ethical responsibility. Within this literature, community development emerges as a critical site of enactment—where these values move from theory into practice. The following section explores how community development is conceptualised in the literature, focusing on themes of social capital, participation, capacity-building and care.

3.6 Guiding Concepts in Community Development

These insights provide a foundation for examining the core concepts that underpin community development in public housing. As outlined in the previous section, wellbeing is not a standalone objective but a relational, cultural, and political condition shaped by structural forces (Atkinson et al., 2020; White, 2010). Understanding how it is enacted in practice requires attention to the frameworks that guide tenant engagement—particularly in settings marked by inequality, institutional marginalisation, and historical exclusion (Came et al., 2016; Johnson, 2017).

The literature characterises community development in public housing as requiring a responsive, equity-oriented approach—one that reflects the diverse realities of tenants navigating poverty, social isolation, health inequities, and systemic barriers (Emejulu, 2015; Ledwith, 2005; Shaw, 2008). Generic engagement strategies are frequently critiqued for failing to address underlying power dynamics (Henderson & Vercseg, 2010). In contrast, effective practice is described as enabling tenant agency, fostering trust, and redistributing influence in institutional settings (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2011; McArdle, 2020).

At the centre of this practice are four interrelated concepts: social capital, participation, capacity-building, and care. These are not abstract ideals but applied frameworks that shape how practitioners build relationships, design interventions, and assess outcomes (Banks et al., 2023; Craig, 2007). Social capital refers to networks of trust, reciprocity, and mutual support that underpin collective resilience (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2001). Participation denotes a shift from consultation toward shared influence, aligning with demands for accountability and co-governance (Cornwall, 2008; Fraser, 2005). Capacity-building focuses on strengthening the capabilities and confidence of individuals and communities to define and pursue their own goals (Craig & Mayo, 1995; Thomas, 1983). Care—often sidelined in institutional discourse—is increasingly recognised as central to ethical and relational

practice, encompassing empathy, presence, and mutual responsibility (Barnes, 2012; Hochschild, 2012; Tronto, 1993).

Together, these concepts signal a move away from transactional, output-driven models of service delivery toward more relational, place-based, and justice-oriented approaches (Banks & Orton, 2007; Ife, 2013). Yet they also reveal enduring tensions: between empowerment and institutional control, the relational pace of trust-building and the urgency of political timelines, and grassroots priorities and bureaucratic constraints (Emejulu, 2015; Shaw & Crowther, 2013).

The following section examines how social capital is conceptualised in the literature on community development and public housing, with particular focus on bonding and bridging ties, the role of trust and reciprocity, and the risks of exclusion in contexts shaped by structural inequality.

3.6.1 Social Capital

Social capital refers to the networks, norms, and trust that facilitate collective action (Putnam, 1993), shaping resilience, civic engagement, and access to opportunity. It shapes how communities build resilience, engage civically, and access opportunities. The concept's modern prominence can be traced to Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and Putnam (1993, 2000), each offering a distinctive perspective. Bourdieu conceptualised social capital as a form of symbolic power embedded in social hierarchies, instrumental in reproducing inequality. Coleman, in contrast, emphasised shared norms and trust as the basis for social cohesion and effective cooperation. Putnam added a civic dimension, linking social capital to democratic engagement and community vitality.

Despite their differences, these theorists converge in positioning social capital as central to understanding community dynamics. In the context of public housing—where residents frequently face social isolation, economic marginalisation, and diminishing public services—

social capital has been championed as a means of fostering resilience, wellbeing, and active participation (Claridge, 2018; Kearns & Parkinson, 2001; Middleton et al., 2005).

3.6.1.1 Bonding, Bridging and Linking

To address critiques of theoretical ambiguity, scholars have refined the concept by differentiating between bonding, bridging, and linking social capital (Putnam, 2000; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Bonding social capital refers to strong, inward-looking ties among individuals within homogeneous groups—such as families, neighbours, or mutual aid networks. These dense relationships provide critical emotional and practical support, particularly in low-income communities facing service withdrawal and social stigma (Győri, 2024; Trubits, 2024; Zhu & Hu, 2023). Yet excessive reliance on bonding ties may foster insularity or reinforce disadvantage (Burt, 1999; Portes, 1998; Wacquant & Wilson, 1989). These concerns are echoed by Putnam (1993), who noted that under conditions of deprivation, expectations of mutual support can erode, and dominant community norms may foster exclusion or mask internal conflict.

Nevertheless, empirical research challenges deficit-based assumptions about deprived neighbourhoods. Studies consistently show that strong, localised networks—characterised by solidarity, caregiving, and collective struggle—form vital lifelines in disadvantaged communities (Kearns & Parkinson, 2001; Warr, 2005; Watt, 2006). These ties provide not only survival mechanisms but also contribute to a sense of belonging and place.

While bonding capital helps communities “get by”, bridging capital creates pathways for “getting ahead”. This form of social capital involves outward-looking ties between heterogeneous groups, often described as “weak ties” (Granovetter, 1983), which enable the flow of new information, resources, and opportunities. Putnam (2000) highlights that bridging ties can foster broader social identities and cooperation across divides, and are particularly vital in contexts of urban fragmentation. Gittell and Vidal (1998) prefer the term “building” to “bridging”, emphasising the active work required to forge connections across structural

barriers such as race, class, or tenure. These links are often missing where communities are segregated or economically marginalised—a phenomenon Burt (2004) describes as the presence of “structural holes”.

Research shows that bridging capital in housing renewal requires targeted support, resources, and deliberate inclusion (Chaskin & Joseph, 2010; Donoghue & Tranter, 2013). Bridging capital does not develop organically in all contexts; rather, it must often be cultivated through institutional support, resource provision, and deliberate inclusion efforts (Chaskin & Joseph, 2010; Humphrey, 2007).

However, even bridging capital may fall short without connections to institutions of power. This is where linking capital becomes crucial.

Linking capital refers to vertical ties with institutions, shaping access to influence and decision-making (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). In public housing contexts—where institutional trust is often low—linking capital can be pivotal in ensuring that local knowledge and needs are recognised by policymakers (Green et al., 2005). Woolcock (2001) and McIntyre and Ellaway (2003) stress that transformative community development depends not only on strong internal networks but also on institutional responsiveness and structural reform.

Despite its utility, the concept of social capital remains a subject of critical scrutiny. Scholars such as DeFilippis (2004) and Fine (1999, 2001) argue that its conceptual vagueness allows it to be used for widely varying purposes—sometimes obscuring structural inequalities by placing responsibility for resilience on communities themselves. Critics argue social capital can be co-opted under neoliberalism, deflecting attention from systemic failures and overstating the power of social ties alone (DeFilippis, 2004; Forrest & Kearns, 2001). In these contexts, it becomes a “technology of responsibilisation” that deflects attention from systemic failures while promoting community self-help.

DeFilippis (2004) further critiques the assumption that reinforcing social ties alone is sufficient for empowerment, arguing that access to economic capital and institutional power—not simply social connectedness—is what enables genuine community influence. While refinements in theory, such as the tripartite model of social capital, attempt to address this concern, they still risk underplaying the necessity of structural intervention unless integrated with broader social justice agendas.

The shortcomings of mainstream social capital theory become particularly pronounced in Indigenous contexts. Western framings often reduce relational practices to commodified networks, ignoring deeply rooted cultural values such as *whakapapa*, *manaakitanga*, and *wairuatanga*, which guide social conduct in Māori communities (Durie, 2003; Spiller et al., 2011). Scholars like Tompkins (2015) critique state policies that instrumentalise Māori social capital for government aims while ignoring colonial histories and undermining *Tino Rangatiratanga* (self-determination). Rather than treating social capital as an abstract or quantifiable good, Indigenous frameworks conceive it as a lived ethic grounded in stewardship, reciprocity, and place-based identity.

These critiques call for culturally grounded, historically aware models that challenge universalist assumptions and address power and colonial legacy (Came et al., 2016; Smith, 2012). They challenge the universalism of mainstream models, arguing that social capital must be understood in context—shaped by intersecting systems of power, culture, and colonial legacy.

In sum, while social capital remains one of the most influential concepts in community development discourse, it is neither neutral nor universally beneficial. Its impact depends on how it is conceptualised, deployed, and integrated with structural reform. When used critically, social capital illuminates how relationships shape resilience and access—but its use in public housing must reflect material conditions, power, and place. A more inclusive and reflexive approach requires that social capital be understood not only as a function of

community cohesion, but also as a structural mechanism shaped by policy, power, and culture.

Alongside networks and norms, trust is frequently identified as a core component of social capital—both as a precondition for cooperation and as an outcome of sustained social relationships. The following section examines how trust has been theorised within social capital literature and considers its relevance, complexity, and limitations in community development contexts.

Alongside networks and norms, trust is frequently identified as a core component of social capital—both as a precondition for cooperation and as an outcome of sustained social relationships. The following section examines how trust has been theorised within social capital literature and considers its relevance, complexity, and limitations in community development contexts.

3.6.1.2 Trust and Social Capital

Trust is central to the functioning of social capital. It enables people to connect, cooperate, and act collectively—an especially vital dynamic in community development (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993). However, trust is neither singular nor static. Scholars identify distinct types of trust that shape how relationships are initiated and sustained (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008): *affective trust* (anchored in emotional bonds), *cognitive trust* (rooted in perceptions of reliability and competence), and *systemic trust* (based on fairness, accountability, and meaningful institutional engagement). These dimensions of trust closely align with the forms of social capital: affective trust supports bonding ties, cognitive trust underpins bridging connections, and systemic trust facilitates linking relationships with institutions and power structures (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 1998).

To better understand how trust functions within the dynamics of social capital, the following sections explore the literature on affective, cognitive, and systemic trust in greater depth—

examining their distinct characteristics, how they are cultivated, and the roles they play in shaping community relationships and institutional engagement.

3.6.1.2.1 Affective Trust: Emotional Bonds and Social Cohesion

Affective trust—grounded in shared experience and emotional connection—sustains mutual care, reciprocity, and belonging in close-knit networks (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Putnam, 2000). Research confirms its positive impact on wellbeing and stability. For instance, Helliwell and Wang (2010) demonstrate a strong correlation between neighbourhood trust and subjective wellbeing.

In public housing—where residents face precarity and institutional neglect—affective trust is a vital resource. Emotionally embedded ties foster local resilience, individual wellbeing, and collective solidarity (Ayed & Clarke, 2024).

Affective trust often arises from routine, low-pressure interactions—like chatting, sharing meals, or communal events. Mee (2009) shows how shared gardens, barbecues, and teas build familiarity and emotional safety. Fukuyama (1996) similarly argues that *spontaneous sociability*—manifested through simple, relational acts rather than formal programmes—cultivates recognition, mutual confidence, and social trust.

These insights align with relational practice literature, which highlights the power of informal, consistent engagement in settings marked by mistrust (Gilchrist, 2004; Held, 2006; Williams, 2002, 2012). Everyday practices—being visibly present, greeting neighbours regularly, or maintaining welcoming, low-stakes communal spaces—are instrumental in building affective trust (anchored in emotional bonds) and, in many cases, cognitive trust (based on perceived reliability and competence) (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008). These findings underscore the value of everyday interpersonal labour that underpins cohesion and collective agency in vulnerable communities.

3.6.1.2.2 Cognitive Trust: Dependability and Predictability

Cognitive trust is confidence in others based on perceived competence, reliability, and consistency (Rousseau et al., 1998; Williams, 2002, 2012). Unlike affective trust, it is earned through follow-through, communication, and demonstrated competence—built incrementally through repeated, dependable interactions.

In public housing, cognitive trust grows through everyday exchanges with neighbours, community leaders, and frontline staff. When practitioners follow up, communicate clearly, and act on commitments, they foster trust grounded in realistic expectations. Seemingly minor actions—like attending tenant meetings or maintaining shared spaces—signal reliability (Donoghue & Tranter, 2012). Mee (2009) calls these trust anchors: observable behaviours that reinforce trustworthiness within community life.

These micro-level acts matter because trust is not innate or fixed; it is earned through repetition and continually tested. Dasgupta (1988) argues that trust stems from repeated reliable encounters. Community gardens, neighbourhood events, and tenant forums offer key trust-building spaces, where shared effort affirms commitment (Firth et al., 2011).

Cognitive trust built around individuals is fragile. Middleton et al. (2005) warn that the departure of trusted staff or sudden service changes can quickly erode trust, especially in already unstable settings. To ensure resilience, trust must be institutionalised—in roles, practices, and community structures. Peer-led initiatives, tenant leadership, and local organisations provide more durable frameworks.

Importantly, interpersonal trust does not equate to institutional trust. While cognitive trust stabilises local networks, it does not ensure trust in public institutions. Systemic trust requires accountability, fairness, and institutional responsiveness.

3.6.1.2.3 Systemic Trust: Institutions, Accountability, and Governance

Systemic trust refers to confidence in institutions—housing authorities, service providers, and local government—based on fairness, transparency, accountability, and meaningful engagement (Grunig, 2002). It grows when institutions respond to concerns, uphold shared values such as equity, and invite residents into genuine governance roles. Practitioners play an intermediary role, enabling participation and fostering tenant leadership (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008).

Yet systemic trust is often fragile—hard to build, easy to lose. Hardy et al. (1998) warn against simulated participation that creates a façade of trust. Prior and Barnes (2011) critique tokenistic engagement that promises voice but delivers little change. In such contexts, offering participation is not enough. Trust demands power-sharing—through tenant advisory boards, co-governance, or participatory budgeting. Without structural commitment, even strong relational work can be undone by organisational inertia or broken promises (Keene & Geronimus, 2011).

Systemic trust is not a by-product of good governance—it is a precondition for equity. It signals that tenant knowledge is respected, leadership valued, and change possible. In public housing, where relationships with institutions have often been shaped by exclusion and control, building trust is both a practical and political imperative (Donoghue & Tranter, 2012).

Recent work by Gerhard and Keller (2023) reinforces this view. Studying contested housing developments in Germany, they argue that institutional and procedural trust are not outcomes of good planning but essential conditions for justice. Their sociospatial lens shows how trust is undermined by technocratic rituals that exclude communities.

In Māori social policy, systemic trust reflects cultural safety, structural justice, and a commitment to *Tino Rangatiratanga* (Tompkins, 2015). Trust is built not just through formal

mechanisms but through sustained acts of recognition, respect, and redress*. Whakapapa, tikanga*, and intergenerational reciprocity ground trust within Māori communities—but extending it to the state requires transformation. In contexts marked by dispossession and institutional neglect, trust must be earned—through Māori-led design, power-sharing, and accountability to *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. Systemic trust becomes not just a sign of cohesion, but a barometer of whether state–Māori relationships are being restructured in just and culturally grounded ways.

3.6.1.2.4 Interweaving the Dimensions of Trust

Affective, cognitive, and systemic trust are conceptually distinct but deeply interconnected. While affective trust cultivates emotional safety, cognitive trust reinforces dependability, and systemic trust affirms institutional credibility. Together, they form a relational ecology underpinning cooperation, participation, and resilience—particularly in contexts marked by marginalisation and institutional neglect.

In public housing, trust-building is foundational to inclusive, community-led development. Practitioners foster emotional rapport, demonstrate follow-through, and facilitate meaningful tenant engagement with institutions. When residents feel supported, heard, and respected, they are more likely to participate in community life and contribute to collective wellbeing.

While not infrastructure in the literal sense, trust is a critical precondition for infrastructure to function in community settings (Gilchrist, 2004; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008). In its absence, community development risks devolving into tokenistic consultations or transactional bureaucracy. Trust provides the emotional and ethical foundation for relationships to take root and endure.

In this sense, trust is the invisible architecture of relationally accountable practice. It enables institutions and practitioners to move beyond transactional service delivery toward equitable, partnership-based approaches to community-building.

The following section turns to social capital and the role of social connections—exploring how interpersonal networks, shared norms, and community relationships shape access to support, opportunity, and collective capacity in public housing contexts.

3.6.1.2 Connections that Count: Relational Life in Public Housing Contexts

Social connections form the backbone of community resilience. In public housing—where poverty, isolation, and institutional withdrawal are common—these ties provide emotional, practical, and at times institutional support. They enable residents not only to cope but also to participate, flourish, and shape their environments.

Trust—whether affective, cognitive, or systemic—is fundamental to these ties. Without it, collaboration, mutual aid, and civic participation falter (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Prior & Barnes, 2011; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008).

Interpersonal bonds buffer structural disadvantage by fostering belonging and informal support systems. Conversely, disconnection fuels loneliness, distress, and adverse health outcomes. Social isolation is now recognised as a determinant of poor health—linked to increased mortality, inflammation, and psychological distress (Beller & Wagner, 2018; Cattan et al., 2011; Holt-Lunstad, 2017). In Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, Hawkins-Elder et al. (2018) report that social isolation contributes to higher morbidity and mortality among marginalised populations.

These findings underscore the need to invest in the social fabric of public and social housing, where relationships are often fragile or disrupted. Community-based initiatives demonstrate what works: programmes grounded in trust, cultural responsiveness, and local knowledge build relationships and expand social capital. Srivarathan et al. (2020) highlight the public health benefits of relational interventions. Keene and Geronimus (2011) show how community-led development fosters dense support networks. In Australia, Tually et al. (2020)

demonstrate that show that relationship-based approaches foster trust, improve service access, and strengthen communities in disadvantaged areas.

These interventions reject programme-centric models in favour of presence, emotional labour, and trust. As Kleinhans et al. (2007) and Mee (2009) argue, cohesion grows from consistent, low-stakes interaction—not grand initiatives. Yet, as Tually et al. (2020) caution that while relationship-building and community development have demonstrated clear value in building trust and community outcomes, these gains are neither automatic nor guaranteed—they require sustained investment and long-term commitment.

Efforts to foster bridging and linking capital are essential but must balance expanding networks with nurturing local bonds (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2011; Hulse & Stone, 2007). Overemphasising outward ties can stretch trust too thin. Humphreys (2007) warns that an excessive focus on connectivity may undermine relationships central to wellbeing.

As social capital theory has matured, distinctions between bonding, bridging, and linking have helped explain how different connections shape outcomes. Jacobs (1961) highlighted the role of informal interaction in urban vitality—a theme expanded across domains such as employment (Granovetter, 1983), health (Kawachi, 2008), safety (Sampson, 2012), and support access (Desmond, 2012).

Effective community development prioritises connection over compliance, presence over performance (Gilchrist, 2004; Wallace, 2016). Social ties are not incidental—they are central to trust, resilience, and collective wellbeing. Supporting them requires investment in not only programmes but also people, practices, and environments that enable informal interaction.

This recognition points to the spatial dimensions of community-building—especially the role of shared spaces as everyday sites of encounter, trust-building, and collective identity.

3.6.1.3 Shared Spaces: Everyday Places of Trust, Care, and Connection

Shared spaces—such as parks, gardens, and community rooms—are essential social infrastructure in community development. More than amenities, they support everyday encounters, informal networks, and a sense of collective identity (Gilchrist, 2004; Jupp, 2008). Putnam's (2000) social capital and Oldenburg's (1999) *third places* underscore how inclusive, informal spaces foster trust and cooperation. Community gardens, for instance, enable both bonding and bridging social capital (Firth et al., 2011), while Banwell and Kingham (2023) describe them as emotional anchors that stabilise social rhythms.

The benefits of such environments extend beyond cohesion. Research links well-designed, inclusive spaces to improved mental health, reduced stress, and increased physical activity (Cohen et al., 2008; Lund, 2003). In disadvantaged areas, they also promote informal social control and reduce violence (Peterson et al., 2000). Placemaking research further highlights how attachment to place is shaped through memory, routine, and participation (Chisholm et al., 2023).

In marginalised communities, shared spaces can buffer the effects of inequality, provided they are paired with investment in community capacity (Forrest & Kearns, 1999). When culturally aligned and community-led, these environments support resilience, wellbeing, and leadership (Emery & Flora, 2020; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). This is especially true in public housing, where overcrowding and stigma make communal areas vital for fostering visibility and solidarity (Banwell & Kingham, 2023). Yet they remain vulnerable to underinvestment, poor design, and managerial disconnection from resident realities (Donoghue & Tranter, 2013; Murphy, 2020).

Frameworks such as *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā* underscore that space is not neutral—it is socially produced and culturally charged (Anae, 2010; Cram, 2014; Massey, 2013; Penny et al., 2024; Tuan, 1977). Design becomes an act of cultural accountability, demanding grounded, relationally aware placemaking. When control is absent or cultural

alignment ignored, shared spaces can reinforce mistrust rather than connection (Chisholm et al., 2023; de Certeau, 1984; Purcell, 2012). Conversely, embedding community-led processes can turn such places into dynamic sites of co-creation (Humphreys, 2007; Lee et al., 2022).

3.6.1.4 Synthesis: Trust, Connection, and the Social Architecture of Community

Trust, social capital, connection, and shared space are deeply interwoven foundations of community life in public housing. Bonding, bridging, and linking ties shape access to support and opportunity, while affective, cognitive, and systemic trust animate these ties and enable cooperation (Putnam, 2000; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008). Everyday social connections—built through presence, reciprocity, and recognition—help residents navigate marginalisation and foster resilience (Gilchrist, 2004; Mee, 2009).

Shared spaces, from gardens to community rooms, function as social infrastructure that sustains interaction, belonging, and emotional safety (Banwell & Kingham, 2023; Firth et al., 2011). When aligned with local values and governed with care, they support trust-building and collective agency; when poorly designed or imposed, they risk reinforcing mistrust (Chisholm et al., 2023; Purcell, 2012).

Policy plays a pivotal role in shaping the potential of shared spaces. It can enable inclusive, culturally grounded placemaking or entrench marginalisation through disconnected design. When underpinned by resident leadership, long-term stewardship, and place-based strategies, shared spaces become more than amenities—they function as catalysts for trust, connection, and collective resilience (Donoghue & Tranter, 2013; Kearns & Whitley, 2020).

Taken together, these elements highlight that community development cannot be reduced to programmes or services. It is relational, spatial, and ethical—emerging through the interplay of connection, trust, and place.

3.6.2 Participation in Public Housing

If trust and space shape the conditions for community life, participation determines how power and agency are negotiated. Shared environments may invite presence, but it is participation that decides whose voices are heard, how decisions are made, and whether communities can shape their own futures. The next section explores participation not merely as a method, but as a political act—focusing on how inclusive processes, co-governance, and resident leadership can create more just and transformative approaches to community development.

While widely celebrated in community development, participation is a contested and political concept. It can serve as a pathway to empowerment—or as a mechanism of control, legitimising institutional authority without redistributing power (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Transformative participation must challenge hierarchies through shared decision-making, tenant-led governance, and sustained investment in capacity-building. Without these, participation risks becoming symbolic—amplifying voice without shifting power.

The term is often used interchangeably with engagement or involvement, yet these distinctions matter. Participation can be ideological, methodological, or relational (Lawrence, 2006). Cornwall's (2008) distinction between invited and claimed spaces clarifies how participation either empowers or contains, depending on who sets the terms.

Participation is also linked to wellbeing. Evidence shows that involvement in decision-making supports psychological empowerment, strengthens agency, and enhances collective identity (Christens, 2012; Rose & Thompson, 2012). A longitudinal study by Kearns and Whitley (2020) found that residents who engaged in regeneration processes reported improved mental health and greater neighbourhood satisfaction.

These findings are supported by empowerment theory, which reframes residents not as passive recipients, but as agents of change (Cernea, 1985; Zimmerman, 1995).

Empowerment, in this view, is not granted—it is developed through decision-making and action. Community development practitioners thus shift from delivering solutions to facilitating processes in which residents define and pursue their own priorities (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Toomey, 2011).

Participatory initiatives in housing renewal provide further evidence. Studies show that engagement builds civic confidence, strengthens networks, and supports leadership (Lawson & Kearns, 2014; Rawsthorne & Howard, 2011). Milton et al. (2012) found that place-based engagement increased residents' influence over services, while Arthurson (2013) linked tenant involvement to improved satisfaction and mental wellbeing.

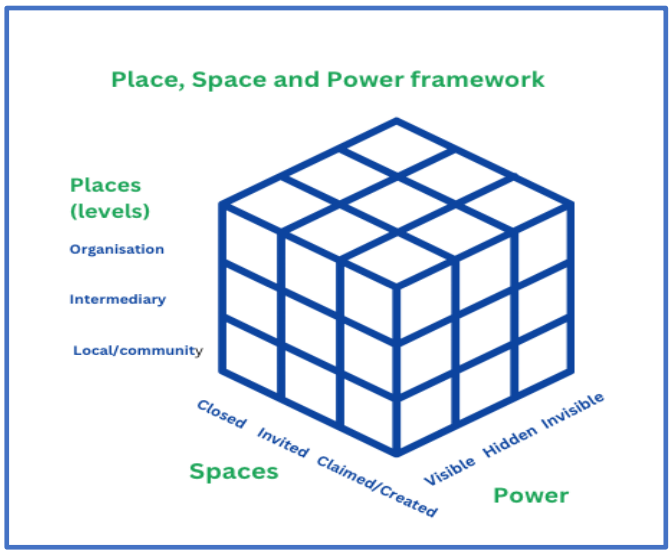
Yet participation is not inherently empowering. It is a contested and dynamic space where state and community negotiate control. As Adamson (2010a) argues, participation should be understood not as a binary of inclusion versus exclusion, but as ongoing negotiation and struggle. Without intentional design, it may replicate rather than disrupt power relations.

Many accounts highlight participation's potential to democratise governance and strengthen cohesion (Barnes et al., 2003), but as Gaventa (2004) warns, participation that ignores structural inequality risks reinforcing exclusion. Tokenism—voice without authority—can deepen mistrust. Practitioners must design explicitly for equity, addressing systemic barriers like discrimination, time poverty, and institutional distrust. This includes resourcing communities with the confidence and tools to engage meaningfully (Cornwall, 2008; Gaventa, 2004).

Gaventa's (2006) Power Cube offers a powerful framework for analysing participation in context. It maps power *to*, *within*, and *with* across visible, hidden, and invisible domains and across closed, invited, and claimed spaces. This framing shows how participation is shaped by history, context, and structure—and how communities resist, adapt, or reconfigure these constraints. It underpins the analysis of participatory practice in public housing, especially

how power is wielded, withheld, or reclaimed through everyday acts of engagement and refusal (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 *The Power Cube* (Gaventa, 2006, p. 20)



3.6.2.1 Tenant Participation in Public Housing

Tenant participation is widely regarded as a cornerstone of democratic housing governance and community development (Kearns & Whitley, 2020; Tunstall & Pleace, 2018). In the context of social housing reform, it has been positioned as a mechanism to enhance institutional accountability, improve housing outcomes, and address systemic inequalities (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe [UNECE], 2021). Defined broadly, participation refers to the active involvement of tenants in decisions affecting their lives and communities—reflecting longstanding principles of empowerment, collective agency, and responsiveness to local context (Cooper & Hawtin, 1997; Taylor, 2000).

A substantial body of empirical research affirms the benefits of tenant participation. These include enhanced wellbeing, improved tenant–provider relationships, and greater trust in public institutions (Arthurson, 2013, 2020; Preece, 2019). When designed and resourced meaningfully, participatory approaches can also support tenant satisfaction, skills development, and community cohesion—fostering leadership, advocacy, and communication capacity (Lawson & Kearns, 2014).

However, despite its normative appeal, tenant participation remains uneven and contested. Participatory models vary widely in depth and intent—from tokenistic consultations to co-governance structures with genuine decision-making authority (Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall, 2008). Scholars have increasingly scrutinised not just the presence of participation, but its quality and its effect on institutional power relations. While some initiatives enable authentic influence, others are constrained by top-down agendas and performative engagement (Bradley, 2013; Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Conceptual tools such as Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Participation and Cornwall's (2004) typology of invited and claimed spaces help distinguish between participatory forms that empower and those that placate—where voice may be granted without authority, and inclusion staged without transformation.

Somerville and Steele (1995) challenge the assumption that participation automatically leads to empowerment, arguing that without structural reform, it can entrench existing inequalities. They identify two central dilemmas: the *collective action dilemma*, where rational self-interest undermines collective engagement, and the *democratic dilemma*, where both representative and participatory models fail without institutional redesign. Their call for institutionalist solutions—systems that embed representativeness, accountability, and consent—shifts the focus from procedural fixes to structural transformation, reframing participation as a vehicle for redistributing power.

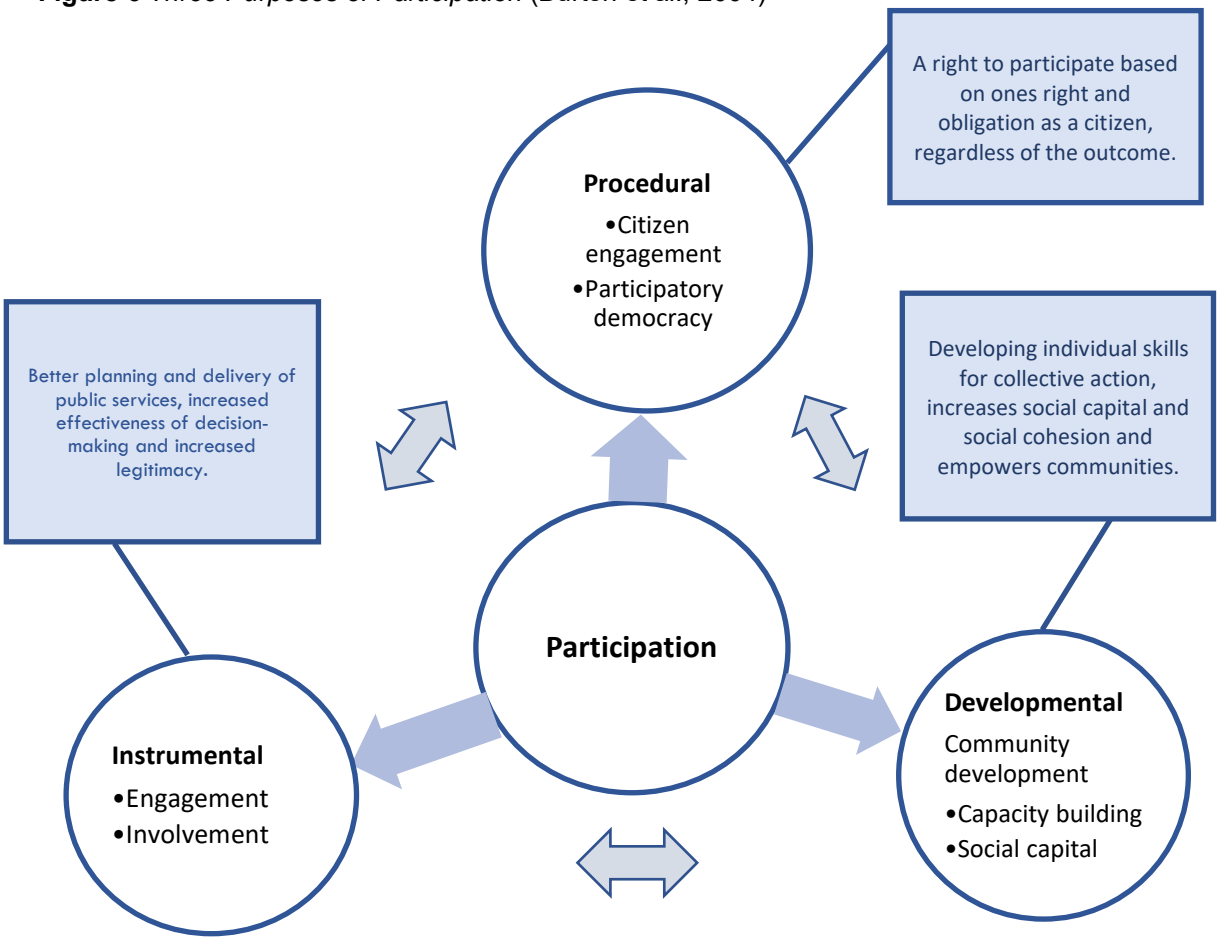
Structural barriers further complicate the promise of participation (Head, 2007). Centralised control by housing authorities often limits tenant agency, narrowing both the scope and depth of engagement (Bradley, 2013; Hickman, 2006). Marginalised tenants—including those experiencing poverty, disability, precarious migration status, or digital exclusion—face additional obstacles such as time scarcity, mistrust, and institutional inaccessibility (Bliss et al., 2015; Preece, 2019). As Shortall (2004) cautions, these dynamics result in "selective empowerment," where only those already equipped to navigate institutional systems can participate meaningfully.

The risks of symbolic participation are starkly illustrated by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (Moore-Bick et al., 2019), which documented how resident concerns about safety were repeatedly ignored. Although formal mechanisms for tenant voice existed, they held no real influence—echoing Cornwall's critique of managed spaces and affirming Cooke and Kothari's (2001) warning that participation, when hollow, risks becoming a "tyranny" that legitimises exclusion rather than challenging it.

3.6.2.2 Typologies of Participation: Instrumental, Procedural, and Developmental

In their review of 34 tenant engagement initiatives, Burton et al. (2004) identified key themes that shaped the nature and impact of participation, with outcomes varying according to how engagement was framed and embedded within institutional culture (see Figure 6). They highlight three dominant approaches—*instrumental, procedural, and developmental*—each reflecting different assumptions about the purpose of participation, the roles assigned to tenants, and the degree of institutional openness to power-sharing. While these approaches often overlap in practice, they surface important distinctions around control, legitimacy, and the potential for tenant agency. Understanding these thematic variations is essential for recognising when engagement is merely symbolic, and when it offers genuine opportunities for transformative, tenant-led change.

Figure 6 *Three Purposes of Participation* (Burton et al., 2004)



Instrumental participation is typically service-oriented, aimed at improving operational efficiency through mechanisms such as feedback forms, surveys, and satisfaction reviews. Aligned with managerialist logic, this model casts tenants as service users whose input helps fine-tune delivery and demonstrate responsiveness (Barnes et al., 2003; Burton et al., 2004). While attractive to providers seeking short-term gains, it is frequently critiqued for reducing participation to a technocratic exercise—procedurally inclusive but substantively marginal (Milton et al., 2012; Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Standardised formats often fail to account for cultural diversity, lived experience, or institutional distrust (Gilchrist, 2000; Smith et al., 2017). Where implemented inconsistently or driven by policy cycles, instrumental participation risks exacerbating disengagement and fatigue (Fordham et al., 2009).

Procedural participation refers to formalised governance mechanisms—statutory consultations, tenant panels, or complaints processes—that frame tenants as rights-bearing

citizens entitled to procedural fairness and representation (Arthurson, 2013). This model is often associated with democratic inclusion, transparency, and legitimacy (Elias & Alkadry, 2011; Wallace, 2016). Yet it can be constrained by top-down cultures, limited mandates, or bureaucratic routinisation (Darcy & Georgiou, 2004). Language barriers, digital exclusion, and cumulative disadvantage restrict access for marginalised tenants (Bliss et al., 2015). Even when inclusive in intent, such processes may reinforce institutional dominance unless explicitly designed to address structural inequality (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Hickey & Mohan, 2004).

Developmental participation, grounded in community development principles, is the most ambitious model. It treats tenants as co-creators rather than consultees, emphasising leadership, capability-building, and collective agency (Burton et al., 2004; Craig, 2007). Practices include tenant organising, co-design, peer support, and community-led initiatives. While offering pathways to transformative change, developmental models are demanding: they require time, trust, long-term investment, and institutional willingness to cede power (McKee & Cooper, 2011; Wallace, 2016). Without systemic alignment, capacity-building can inadvertently reinforce inequalities or remain confined to resourced participants (Craig, 2007; Taylor, 2011).

In practice, these models often coexist. Housing providers may simultaneously operate consultation surveys, convene tenant forums, and support local leadership initiatives (Burton et al., 2004). What matters is not the typology but how participation is resourced, received, and embedded within institutional structures (Clarke & Newman, 2009). Across all models, the tension between empowerment and control remains acute. Table 4 summarises the core distinctions and challenges.

Table 4 *Participation Model Comparison* (Adapted from Burton et al., 2004)

Model	Core Aim	Framing of Tenants	Typical Practices	Strengths	Limitations
Instrumental Participation	Improve service delivery and demonstrate responsiveness	Service users or consulted recipients	Surveys, service feedback tools, consultation on operational matters	Can deliver short-term efficiency gains	Often technocratic; risks tokenism; limited strategic influence
Due Process Participation	Uphold procedural fairness and institutional accountability	Rights-bearing citizens with formal voice	Statutory consultation, tenant panels, complaints procedures	Enhances legitimacy, transparency, and civic trust	May not redistribute power; access barriers persist
Developmental Participation	Strengthen tenant agency and support long-term empowerment	Co-creators, community leaders, active partners	Co-design, peer support, leadership training, community organising	Builds capacity and fosters systemic engagement	Resource-intensive; can falter without institutional support

3.6.3 Capacity-Building

Capacity-building is central to developmental participation. Rooted in concerns about social exclusion and capability deprivation (Sen, 2000), it reframes poverty not just as a lack of resources but as a constraint on agency and political voice (Ife, 2010). In public housing, capacity-building refers to equipping tenants with the knowledge, confidence, and relationships to navigate systems, shape policy, and influence decisions that affect their lives (Craig, 2007; Diamond & Liddle, 2013).

Core strategies include peer support, leadership development, and the cultivation of social capital through local organising (Carley & Kirk, 1998). These approaches aim to shift participation from consultation toward collaboration, enabling tenants to play more active roles in governance. When supported institutionally, they can reconfigure invited spaces into more open and responsive forms of decision-making (Cornwall, 2004).

Yet in practice, capacity-building often falls short. Many initiatives adopt a deficit lens—framing tenants as lacking rather than acknowledging structural barriers (O'Hare, 2010; Wallace, 2016). This risks individualising responsibility and obscuring institutional accountability (Humpage, 2005). Much remains focused on procedural literacy—training tenants to 'fit' institutional norms—rather than fostering critical agency or leadership (Beresford & Hoban, 2005; Blaxter et al., 2003).

Gaventa's (2006) Power Cube illustrates how power operates not only visibly in formal processes but also invisibly through norms and organisational cultures. Capacity-building that ignores these deeper exclusions may seat tenants at the table without giving them influence over the agenda (Cornwall, 2008).

Disparities in social capital compound these issues. Confident or well-resourced tenants often benefit most, while migrants, disabled tenants, and those facing digital exclusion remain marginalised (Bliss et al., 2015; Shortall, 2004; Shucksmith, 2000). Moreover, short-term funding and project-based models undermine sustainability. Craig and Taylor (2002) and Dinham (2007) link this to a wider policy logic of self-reliance, where institutional support retreats just as tenant engagement gains traction.

While instrumental and procedural models may improve delivery or fairness, they rarely shift structural relations. Developmental participation, grounded in community leadership and cultural responsiveness, offers greater potential—but only when supported by sustained resourcing, institutional commitment, and space for challenge.

Despite consensus on its importance, capacity-building remains under-theorised. It is often treated as a discrete output rather than a dynamic process embedded in everyday relationships, power structures, and institutional contexts (Craig, 2011). Although individual empowerment can contribute to wider initiatives (Baba, 2016; Rolfe & Garnham, 2020), evidence of collective empowerment remains limited (Kearns & Whitley, 2020). These gaps

are particularly salient where tenant ‘ownership’ is expected without the investment needed to support it.

Ultimately, capacity-building is both a foundation for and an outcome of participation. As a foundation, it enables confident, critical engagement—particularly among those historically excluded. As an outcome, it emerges through practice: when tenants lead, reflect, and grow their capabilities in context. This reciprocity underscores that participation and capacity-building are mutually reinforcing. Their effectiveness depends not only on intent but on whether institutions are willing to invest in trust-based, long-term approaches that sustain voice and enable inclusive governance.

The next section turns to care—as both an ethic and a practice—to examine how trust is built, how practitioners act as relational anchors, and how public housing might be reimagined through a more human, connected lens.

3.6.4 Care in Community Development

Care is often associated with empathy and moral warmth, but in community development—especially within public housing—it carries deeper ethical and political significance. It highlights not just practitioner behaviour, but the values, systems, and institutional responses that shape service delivery. Framing care in this way raises key questions: Who holds responsibility? Under what conditions does care occur? And how is it enabled—or constrained—by policy and organisational context?

While care is often present in practice, it remains marginal in policy discourse—typically framed as discretionary or emotional, rather than as a collective or institutional responsibility. Yet research shows care is central to trust-building, wellbeing, and participation (Penny et al., 2024; Tronto, 2013). In housing contexts marked by churn, spatial inequality, and fragmented services, care functions as a form of relational infrastructure that supports everyday resilience (Boulton et al., 2009; Wallace, 2016).

This section introduces key theoretical frameworks—including feminist ethics, relational theory, and Indigenous and Pasifika worldviews—before examining how care is enacted, and the tensions faced by practitioners within institutional settings.

3.6.4.1 Theoretical Foundations of Care

The ethics of care offers a relational approach to morality, rejecting models that prioritise autonomy or abstract justice. It emphasises interdependence, attentiveness, and context (Held, 2006; Sevenhuijsen, 2000). Gilligan (1982) challenged dominant moral paradigms by foregrounding relational responsibility; Held (2006) extended this, framing care as a legitimate, situated ethic grounded in lived relationships.

Tronto (1993, 2013) conceptualises care as both ethical orientation and political practice. Her five phases—caring about, caring for, caregiving, care receiving, and caring with—map care across personal, institutional, and societal dimensions. “Caring with” introduces a democratic principle, evaluating institutions by their ability to support equitable and competent care. Sevenhuijsen (2000) further positions care as a counterweight to neoliberal policy logic, reframing it as a political discourse rooted in moral imagination and social complexity.

This framing is particularly relevant in public housing, where practitioners are expected to deliver relational support within systems that may fail to recognise or resource that labour (Hoggett et al., 2008; Wallace, 2016). Tronto (2013) highlights the ethical strain such misalignment creates.

Indigenous and Pasifika worldviews offer alternative ontologies. The Whakawhanaungatanga Māori Wellbeing Model (Penny et al., 2024) views care as ethical rebalancing, grounded in *whakapapa*, *whenua*, and *wairua*. Pasifika models such as *teu le vā* frame care as the ethical maintenance of relationships across people, land, and ancestors (Teariki & Leau, 2023). These approaches emphasise care not as an act, but as a collective, intergenerational responsibility that shapes institutions and relationships.

Building on this, Boulton and Brannelly (2015) respond to Tronto by embedding care within Māori ontologies that reject Western binaries. They argue that Māori values like *whanaungatanga*, *manaakitanga*, and *kaitiakitanga* are not cultural traits but ontological commitments. Care, from this view, is inseparable from genealogical, spiritual, and territorial responsibilities. Its translation through Western service paradigms risks ethical distortion. Their work reframes care as a societal logic—collective, ancestral, and place-based.

3.6.4.2 Care as Institutional Labour

Although care is often associated with interpersonal connection, it is also deeply shaped by institutional structures. In public housing, practitioners are routinely expected to demonstrate empathy, cultural fluency, and relational attentiveness. Yet these relational responsibilities are frequently marginalised within systems of resourcing, supervision, and performance evaluation (Adamson, 2010a; Dinham, 2007; Hoggett et al., 2008).

Eversole's (2012) concept of dual embeddedness captures the tension practitioners navigate between organisational imperatives and community needs. This translation work requires ethical judgement, situated cultural knowledge, and emotional labour—but is often undertaken without protected time, systemic support, or formal recognition.

Hoggett et al. (2008) describe this dynamic as a dilemmatic space, where professional discretion, institutional demand, and moral responsibility collide. Practitioners are frequently asked to foster trust and engagement within environments that simultaneously restrict the conditions for doing so (Crawford & Flint, 2015; Imrie & Raco, 2003). Wallace (2016) notes that while care appears in policy rhetoric, it is rarely operationalised through relationally enabling conditions such as reflective supervision or time for relationship-building.

In response, practitioners often develop informal mechanisms of support—peer mentoring, relational supervision, or team-based reflection (Wenger, 1998). However, when care work

remains external to formal accountability structures, it risks being devalued and unsustained, generating ethical strain and a sense of institutional abandonment.

The distribution of this labour is also uneven. Hochschild (2012) shows how emotional labour tends to fall disproportionately on women and is undervalued by bureaucratic systems. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori and Pasifika practitioners often carry additional responsibilities for cultural translation and tenant advocacy—roles central to tenant wellbeing but rarely reflected in metrics or resourcing (Boulton et al., 2009; Came et al., 2019).

Framing care as institutional labour foregrounds the interdependence of governance structures and relational practice. It also calls for a re-evaluation of how care is valued, resourced, and embedded in public housing systems.

3.6.4.3 The Affective Impact of Care

Care in public housing is emotionally charged and ethically complex. Practitioners engage directly with grief, hardship, and institutional failure—not as passive witnesses, but as intermediaries who absorb and contain emotional distress (Banks, 2011; Wallace, 2016).

Hochschild's (2012) concept of emotional labour describes how practitioners manage their own feelings to meet professional expectations—projecting calm, de-escalating conflict, or absorbing frustration. Hatfield et al. (1993) extend this with the notion of *emotional contagion*, in which practitioners may involuntarily internalise the affective states of tenants, further intensifying emotional strain.

Wallace (2016) underscores that while care is valorised rhetorically, few systemic supports exist for emotional processing or reflective supervision. This disjuncture often leads to *moral distress*—a state of ethical dissonance where practitioners recognise the right course of action but are constrained by structural limitations (Banks, 2011; Hoggett, 2006).

The affective burden of care is not equally shared. Māori and Pasifika practitioners, for instance, frequently act as cultural navigators and relational anchors—central to building trust, yet these roles are rarely acknowledged in job descriptions or institutional support frameworks (Boulton et al., 2009; Ware et al., 2018).

These informal acts of care can be understood through Scott's (1990) concept of infrapolitics*:* subtle, often invisible forms of resistance—such as softening compliance language or delaying enforcement—that preserve dignity within rigid systems. Though not formally recognised as resistance, such actions reflect a grounded ethic of attentiveness, cultural safety, and care.

Attending to the emotional dimensions of care reveals the moral labour demanded of practitioners and underscores the urgency of institutional environments that both recognise and support this labour.

3.6.4.4 Cultural Frameworks of Care

Mainstream public service models tend to frame care in individualised and transactional terms—focusing on empathy, behavioural modification, or service delivery. In contrast, Māori and Pasifika frameworks position care as a collective, intergenerational, and spiritually grounded practice.

As discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Three, care is inseparable from *whakapapa*, *whenua*, and *wairuatanga*. Practices such as *manaakitanga* and *whakawhanaungatanga* encode ethical responsibility, with care understood as a continual, reciprocal process that maintains collective balance across generations (Penny et al., 2024).

Pasifika concepts also centre the *vā*—the relational space between people, land, and ancestors—maintained through *teu le vā*, a daily ethic of care (Teariki & Leau, 2023). Frameworks such as *Fonofale* (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001), *Tivaevae* (Ma'ua-Hodges, 2000),

and *Te Vaka Atafaga* (Kupa, 2009) further illustrate how care is embedded in collective identity, spirituality, and ecological responsibility.

While these frameworks have informed aspects of culturally responsive practice, institutional engagement often remains symbolic. Scholars caution that without meaningful structural uptake—such as embedding these values in funding, governance, or service design—their transformative potential is diminished (Cram, 2014; Smith, 2012).

Penny et al. (2024) and Gregory and Maynard (2019) argue that genuine engagement requires rethinking public service architecture—privileging relational accountability, place-based knowledge, and cultural safety as core institutional values, not optional enhancements.

This gap between relational intent and structural design signals a broader challenge: how public institutions can move from symbolic inclusion toward embedded, culturally grounded care. The following section explores how public service values, cultures, and architectures shape the practice and limits of community development in public housing.

3.6.5 Public Service and Community Development

The evolving relationship between the state and its citizens in public housing reveals how tensions between bureaucratic neutrality and civic responsiveness shape the scope of community development. These tensions raise normative questions about the role of government and public servants in advancing social change and wellbeing.

The philosophical roots of this debate stretch back to classical thought. Socrates and Plato argued that good government should foster civic virtue and collective flourishing, not merely protect rulers' interests (Plato, 380 BCE/2003). Titmuss (1970), writing in the context of welfare reform, similarly viewed social policy as a means of strengthening mutual obligation

and care. Rather than privileging technical efficiency, he framed social administration as a moral project—one grounded in reciprocity and relational wellbeing.

Public administration theory has long grappled with the balance between neutrality and discretion (Finer, 1941; Friedrich, 2000; Weber, 1970). In Aotearoa New Zealand, the public service operates under a Westminster tradition of impartiality, with civil servants implementing the will of elected officials (Norman, 2003). Yet this model is increasingly contested. As O'Flynn (2007) and Durose (2011) argue, contemporary challenges such as inequality, social fragmentation, and climate change demand more adaptive, participatory, and context-sensitive forms of governance.

Weberian bureaucracy—characterised by detachment, hierarchy, and procedural rationality—still underpins much of the public service culture in Aotearoa New Zealand (Gregory, 2017). This model often clashes with the relational and place-based approaches needed in public housing. Gregory and Maynard (2019) contend that proceduralism constrains the cultural, affective, and ethical dimensions of frontline work. Penny et al. (2024) further document the disconnect between institutional systems designed for control and the relational practice required to support community wellbeing.

In response, theorists have proposed alternative paradigms that emphasise co-production, collaborative governance, and civic participation (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Durose & Richardson, 2016). These models centre relationality, local knowledge, and power-sharing. However, they also present new challenges. Public servants are increasingly expected to act as brokers of trust and participation—negotiating competing interests, exercising discretion, and building relationships—often without systemic backing or clear mandates (Needham & Mangan, 2014).

This reframing positions public servants not merely as policy implementers, but as key mediators of public value in complex and contested spaces.

3.6.5.1 Adaptive Roles and Institutional Constraints

Community development practitioners operate at the frontline of public service, where relational commitments often clash with institutional logics structured around standardisation, compliance, and throughput (Adamson, 2010a; Banks & Orton, 2007; Dinham, 2007). These tensions are particularly pronounced in regeneration settings, where ethical judgement, cultural fluency, and local responsiveness are required but rarely resourced (Hoggett et al., 2008; Mayo & Craig, 1995).

The literature conceptualises these roles in multiple, overlapping ways. Prottas (1978) described public servants as boundary actors who translate policy into locally meaningful action. Williams (2002, 2012) developed this into the concept of boundary spanners—intermediaries who bridge organisational and community systems to facilitate trust, coordination, and resource flow. Others have described practitioners as adaptive agents (Considine, 2005), civic entrepreneurs (Box, 2015), and relational mediators who build collective capability across knowledge systems (Krane, 2014). Across these framings, relational judgement, ethical discretion, and strategic improvisation are cast as core public service capacities.

Lipsky's (1980) notion of street-level bureaucracy remains foundational for understanding the discretionary space in which frontline actors work. In the context of community development, these spaces are not simply sites of implementation but of moral and cultural negotiation. Wenger's (1998) dual membership and Eversole's (2012) dual embeddedness describe the identity and accountability tensions faced by practitioners navigating institutional systems and community relationships. Williams (2014, p. 7) refers to this as the "space in-between"—a liminal, constantly negotiated zone shaped by competing logics and values.

These environments are not only structurally complex but emotionally charged. Hoggett et al. (2008) describe them as dilemmatic spaces—where no single decision resolves the tension between professional responsibility, organisational rules, and moral integrity. Honig (2006)

characterises the work as principled improvisation: responsive, ethical action within procedurally ambiguous settings. Scott's (1990) notion of infrapolitics further highlights the subtle, everyday acts through which practitioners resist institutional rigidity—delaying compliance, softening enforcement, or nurturing care within constraining systems.

Despite the theoretical recognition of these roles, community development remains structurally marginalised. As Henderson and Glen (2006) note, practitioners are routinely asked to fill institutional gaps without corresponding authority or support. Relational work is often positioned as discretionary or informal—acknowledged rhetorically but excluded from formal performance frameworks (Banks & Orton, 2007; Miller, 2008). This marginalisation is compounded by fragmented accountability, insecure funding, and short-term policy cycles (Burton et al., 2004; Wallace, 2016).

Nevertheless, the work endures. Practitioners find ways to adapt, bend, and navigate institutional constraints in order to uphold relational and ethical commitments (Box et al., 2001; Durose, 2011). This adaptive professionalism is not simply reactive but grounded in attentiveness, cultural responsibility, and trust-building (Banks & Orton, 2007; Honig, 2006). However, as the literature cautions, such adaptation cannot substitute for systemic support. Without stable investment, reflective supervision, and leadership that values relational work, community development remains a residual function—relied on to repair harm it is not structurally enabled to prevent (Hoggett et al., 2008; Lipsky, 1980; Wallace, 2016).

While the literature does not propose a wholesale redefinition of the public service, it highlights how the practice of community development in public housing illustrates the need for more relational, values-based institutional frameworks. This is echoed in emerging literature that positions relational practice as central—not peripheral—to effective public service delivery.

3.7 Gaps in the Literature and Positioning of this Research

Despite increasing attention to public housing, the literature continues to overlook the relational, cultural, and institutional dimensions that shape community development in practice. Three interrelated gaps are particularly salient: the limited engagement with everyday practitioner experience, the under-theorisation of care as an institutional function, and the lack of sustained frameworks for participation and capacity-building. This study responds by centring practitioner perspectives, foregrounding culturally grounded models, and critically analysing the institutional architectures that influence both tenant outcomes and the scope of community development.

3.7.1 The Everyday Practice of Community Development in Public Housing

While community development is widely discussed in theory and policy, its day-to-day enactment in public housing remains underexplored. Much of the existing literature focuses on programme design, formal partnerships, or quantifiable outcomes, often neglecting the informal, relational, and situated labour that underpins sustained engagement (Shevellar & Barringham, 2019; Taylor, 2000; Turner, 2009). In Aotearoa New Zealand, research beyond the bounded timelines of urban renewal projects is especially limited (Johnson, 2017; Newman & Goetz, 2016). To address this gap, the research examines how practitioners build trust, foster safety, and amplify local voice through adaptive and ethical practice within constrained institutional settings.

3.7.2 Operationalising Care in Institutional Systems

Although care is increasingly recognised in community development scholarship, its institutional dimensions are insufficiently theorised—particularly in public housing contexts (Mee, 2009; Tunstall & Pleace, 2018). Tronto (2013) critiques how democratic institutions depoliticise care, treating it as personal morality rather than collective responsibility. Power and Willmot (2007) similarly argue that care work is routinely sidelined in social housing

systems. These dynamics reflect dominant institutional logics that prioritise risk, compliance, and efficiency over relational wellbeing (Fitzpatrick & Watts, 2017).

Indigenous and Pasifika models—including *wairuatanga*, *manaakitanga*, and *vā fealoaloa'i*—recast care as interdependent, spiritual, and reciprocal (Anae, 2010; Penny et al., 2024; Teariki & Leau, 2023). Yet institutional recognition of such frameworks remains limited, with care often treated as discretionary or affective labour (Banks & Orton, 2007; Wallace, 2016). Care is examined as both a frontline practice and a systemic concern—shaped by how emotional labour is distributed, under what conditions it occurs, and the extent of institutional recognition and support.

3.7.3 Beyond Instrumentalism: Sustaining Participation

Participation remains a normative cornerstone of community development, yet its practice in public housing is often procedural, episodic, and constrained by institutional imperatives. Short-term consultations, tenant forums, and compliance-focused initiatives frequently bypass the cultural and relational groundwork required for genuine engagement—particularly in communities marked by precarity, mistrust, or historical marginalisation (Cornwall, 2008; Adamson, 2010b; Wannan, 2016). Participation is shown to be cumulative and trust-based—built over time through presence, consistency, and relational attentiveness, rather than through formal mechanisms alone.

3.7.4 Reimagining Capacity-Building as Relational and Cultural

Dominant accounts of capacity-building tend to individualise and instrumentalise the concept, focusing on technical skills or procedural literacy. In doing so, they often overlook the relational, cultural, and systemic factors that condition people's ability to engage confidently and meaningfully. In public housing, tenants are expected to navigate complex governance systems without adequate support for leadership development, collective identity, or cultural alignment (Grimes et al., 2023; Rolfe & Garnham, 2020). Building on these insights,

capacity-building is understood not as a technical fix but as a dynamic, relational process grounded in trust, shared identity, and culturally resonant ways of knowing and doing (Craig, 2007; Penny et al., 2024).

3.7.5 Public housing Authorities as Learning Organisations

A final gap lies in the institutional character of public housing authorities. While some studies examine adaptive governance (Pitchford & Henderson, 2008), few critically investigate how housing providers cultivate practitioner learning, embed relational values, or function as learning organisations. Too often, these institutions are treated as delivery systems rather than cultural entities capable of reflection, adaptation, and transformation. To address this gap, the study explores how public housing organisations might move beyond transactional models toward values-based, reflexive, and relational practice.

Taken together, these gaps point to a deeper misalignment between institutional frameworks and the lived realities of community development in public housing. They underscore the need to centre relational, cultural, and ethical dimensions within public service design. By foregrounding practitioner experience and community knowledge, this study reimagines public housing not solely as a site of state intervention, but as a potential space of social connection, cultural expression, and collective transformation.

3.8 Conclusion to Chapter Three

This chapter has traced the conceptual and empirical terrain of community development in public housing, arguing that relational practice is not peripheral to governance but foundational to it. Drawing from ethics of care, public administration, and Indigenous and Pasifika frameworks, it has shown that the work of community development practitioners is adaptive, situated, and culturally grounded—yet often structurally marginalised.

The review has brought relational work, institutional care, and participatory practice into sharper theoretical focus. It has illuminated the dilemmas practitioners face when navigating institutional ambiguity, power asymmetries, and contested meanings of wellbeing and community. Rather than proposing a single explanatory model, the chapter has mapped a plural, intersecting body of scholarship that frames the tensions at the heart of community development in public housing.

These insights provide the interpretive foundation for the chapters that follow. By synthesising diverse literatures—from care ethics and public administration to Indigenous and relational worldviews—the review has highlighted the conceptual tensions, institutional constraints, and everyday practices that shape the field. It positions relational work not as ancillary, but as central to public value and institutional legitimacy.

The following chapter outlines the methodological approach used to examine how these dynamics are experienced in practice. It details how qualitative inquiry was designed to

surface practitioner experience, attending to the ethical, relational, and systemic dynamics identified here. In doing so, it treats practice not only as an object of study but as a site of generative knowledge.

Chapter Four: Methodology and Methods

Understanding the role of community development in public housing requires more than measuring outputs or tracing policy intent. It demands a methodology attuned to relational dynamics, institutional complexity, and lived experience. As outlined in Chapter One, public housing is more than shelter—it is part of the social infrastructure where wellbeing, equity, and participation are shaped and contested. Capturing this complexity calls for an approach that reveals how practitioners interpret their roles, navigate constraints, and adapt to shifting organisational and community contexts.

4.1 Research Aim

Public housing renewal is where government ambitions for transformation meet the lived realities of communities. It is also where practitioners must navigate—and adapt to—the contradictions and uncertainties of institutional systems. This chapter outlines the methodological approach used to explore how housing staff and practitioners define their roles, interact with housing authorities, and influence resident wellbeing. It details the research design, data collection, and analytical strategies used to examine how community development is enabled, constrained, or reshaped in practice.

This chapter outlines the philosophical, methodological, and analytical foundations of the study. It begins by clarifying key terms that provide conceptual and structural coherence throughout the research:

- *Paradigm:* The overarching epistemological stance. Grounded in interpretive and social constructionist paradigms, the research adopts an epistemological stance that emphasises meaning-making, context, and the socially constructed nature of reality.
- *Analytical and theoretical framework*: Integrates ethics of care, *kaupapa* Māori, *teu le vā*, and critical theories of power, participation, and relational wellbeing. These lenses illuminate the ethical, relational, political, and institutional forces shaping practice.

- *Methodological approach*: A qualitative, dual-inquiry design combining historical and contemporary analysis, using thematic analysis.
- *Framing devices*: Narrative tools developed through analysis to structure the findings chapters—*More than a roof*, *More than a job*, and *More than a landlord*—each reflecting a distinct layer of the research.

4.2 Research Questions and Focus of Inquiry

The following research questions are grounded in an interpretive and social constructionist paradigm and shaped by a qualitative, dual-inquiry design. Informed by the conceptual and methodological foundations outlined above, they reflect the study's dual focus on frontline practice and institutional context. These questions anchor the analysis in practitioners' lived realities and aim to deepen understanding of how community development is defined, enacted, supported—or constrained—within systems shaped by reform, ambiguity, and competing demands:

Research Question One: How do community development practitioners define and describe their roles and practices within public housing?

Research Question Two: How do practitioners and public housing authorities perceive the contribution of community development to the wellbeing of residents and communities?

Research Question Three: What factors facilitate the integration of community development practices into public housing?

Research Question Four: What are the obstacles to integrating community development into public housing?

These questions address gaps in the literature by centring practitioners' perspectives. While previous research has examined policy shifts and programme outcomes, less attention has been paid to how practitioners sustain relational work amid systemic ambiguity. This study

explores the interplay between practitioner agency and organisational constraint, contributing to debates on emotional labour, care ethics, and values-based practice. It also lays the groundwork for theorising community development as a mediating practice between institutions and lived experience—a theme expanded in the findings chapters.

Rather than treating community development as short-term engagement or service delivery, the following reframes it as a systemic, values-based practice that demands collective responsibility. The remainder of this section outlines the philosophical foundations underpinning this approach.

4.3 Research Paradigm: Interpretive and Social Constructionism

Building on the foundations outlined above, this section introduces the interpretive lens used to understand meaning, identity, and power in frontline community development practice.

This research is grounded in interpretive inquiry and social constructionism, which reject the notion of a single, objective reality. Instead, they emphasise that reality is co-constructed through language, interaction, and shared meaning (Krauss, 2005; Yanow, 2014). These perspectives illuminate how practitioners interpret their roles, navigate institutional norms, and engage with tenants and housing authorities.

4.3.1 Analytical Framework: Four Intersecting Theory Clusters

To engage with the layered complexity of community development in public housing, the analysis draws on four intersecting clusters of theory. Each offers a distinct but complementary lens on the relational, institutional, political, and ethical dimensions of practice. These clusters operate dynamically rather than hierarchically, supporting a multidimensional reading of how practitioners navigate complexity, hold space, and enact care within fragmented systems.

4.3.2.1 Relationality and Cultural Ontologies of Wellbeing

This cluster explores how relational ethics, trust, social capital, spatial theory, and Indigenous worldviews shape community development. Relational theorists (Atkinson, 2013; Keyes, 2002; Prilleltensky, 2005; White, 2010) emphasise connection, reciprocity, and belonging as foundations of wellbeing. Trust is understood as both affective and systemic (Lewis & Weigert, 1985), while Woolcock (2001) and Gittell and Vidal (1998) highlight the institutional conditions that shape social capital. Spatial theorists Massey (2013) and Mee (2009) conceptualise place as dynamic and relational. Indigenous and Pasifika perspectives deepen this lens: Penny et al. (2024) position *whakawhanaungatanga* as care rooted in *whakapapa* and *whenua*; Durie (1985, 1998) and Boulton et al. (2022) affirm Māori wellbeing as holistic and relational; and teu le vā (Anae, 2010) frames relationships as sacred. Together, these perspectives reframe community development as a culturally grounded practice of trust and connection.

4.3.2.2 Institutional Navigation

This cluster explores how practitioners navigate complex, often contradictory institutional environments shaped by policy ambiguity, managerial control, and competing mandates. Drawing on Lipsky's (1980) street-level bureaucracy, Hoggett et al.'s (2008) dilemmatic spaces, Eversole's (2012) dual embeddedness, Wenger's dual membership, and Williams's (2002, 2012) work on boundary-spanning, it examines the layered demands practitioners face as they mediate between institutional expectations and community needs.

Practitioners work in systems that are seldom cohesive or predictable. They interpret policy intent, negotiate shifting organisational priorities, and make frontline decisions amid uncertainty. Their role demands constant judgement—balancing discretion, risk, and relational ethics within environments that often privilege compliance over care. These are not passive roles. Practitioners actively reshape institutional boundaries, exercising what Honig (2006) calls principled improvisation: adapting practice while holding onto core values.

This cluster highlights the skill, adaptability, and ethical discernment needed to sustain relational work amid systemic instability. Practitioners act as institutional interpreters and relational anchors—working across silos, translating mandates, and holding space for trust and care even when structurally unsupported.

4.3.2.3 Power and Participation

This cluster examines how power is structured, expressed, and contested in community development. Drawing on Gaventa's (2006) Power Cube, Cornwall's (2004) invited and claimed spaces, Scott's (1990) infrapolitics, and Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Participation, it explores the formal and informal dynamics that shape participation. Participation is not neutral—it is a contested site where voice, agency, and influence are negotiated. Practitioners navigate invited, closed, and claimed spaces, often working quietly to foster genuine participation within constrained institutional contexts. Power is understood as relational, dynamic, and embedded in both visible structures and hidden assumptions.

4.3.2.4 Care Ethics and Emotional Labour

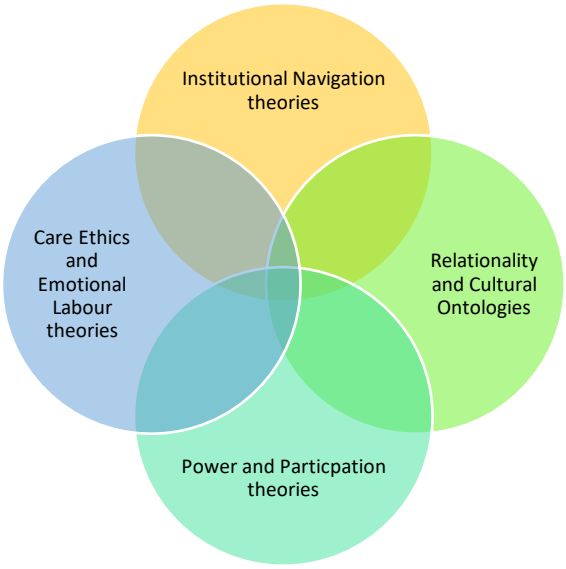
This cluster focuses on the ethical and emotional dimensions of practice. Drawing on Tronto's (1993, 2013) ethics of care, Held's (2006) political theory of care, and Hochschild's (2012) theory of emotional labour, it examines how practitioners sustain care and relational accountability in systems governed by efficiency, outputs, and compliance. Care is treated not as optional, but as a political, moral, and relational imperative—enacted within, across, and sometimes against institutional norms.

Together, these four clusters form a layered framework that supports an interpretive, socially constructed understanding of practice—foregrounding meaning, ethics, power, and lived complexity in public housing.

Figure 7 represents the four analytical and theoretical clusters used to interpret community development practice in public housing. Each layer builds on the others, offering a

multidimensional view of how practitioners navigate care, complexity, and constraint within shifting institutional environments.

Figure 7 *Layered Analytical and Theoretical Framework* (Created by the author)



The study's design reflects the complexity of its subject matter by combining historical and contemporary strands of inquiry. The next section explains how this dual-inquiry structure supports the research questions and aligns with the analytical framework.

4.4 Research Design

Knowledge is understood here as contextually constructed, relationally produced, and shaped by power, culture, and institutional structure. The research design attends not only to what housing practitioners do, but to how they interpret their roles, navigate constraints, and foster resident wellbeing within the shifting terrain of public housing.

4.4.1 A Dual-Inquiry Approach

The dual-inquiry design explores change across time and institutional contexts in Aotearoa New Zealand. It compares two distinct settings: legacy housing authorities (2000–2017) and Kāinga Ora (2019–2023). The historical strand examines how legacy authorities understood and practised community development during housing reform and renewal. The contemporary strand analyses how Kāinga Ora defines and delivers its social mandate,

focusing on the integration of community development into systems, roles, and organisational relationships.

Though explored in parallel, these strands are treated as analytically distinct. This design highlights patterns of continuity, disruption, and institutional drift, and provides a comparative lens for understanding practitioner strategies and structural enablers.

To support this analysis, three framing devices were developed during the synthesis phase. These structure the findings chapters, connect insights across both strands of inquiry, and are discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

4.4.2 Rationale for a Qualitative and Interpretive Approach

A qualitative approach grounded in interpretive and social constructionist paradigms was chosen for its ability to explore experience, meaning, and how roles and practices are shaped through interaction, discourse, and institutional structure. In public housing—where community development is contested, relational, and culturally embedded—this approach is not just appropriate but essential.

Qualitative inquiry enables close attention to lived experience, relational complexity, and everyday practice. It reveals the tensions, improvisations, and moral judgements that shape practice in ways standardised measures cannot (Taylor et al., 2015; Williams, 2014). While quantitative data can track trends and outputs, it often flattens the affective, ethical, and place-based dynamics this study seeks to illuminate.

Interpretive and social constructionist perspectives foreground how meaning is co-produced through language, interaction, and context (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Jacobs & Manzi, 2000). These frameworks support analysis of how practitioners make sense of their roles within shifting mandates, institutional hierarchies, and policy contradictions. They also

illuminate how dominant narratives—such as efficiency, risk, or care—are negotiated in everyday practice.

Importantly, this approach supports both critique and exploration. It positions community development not as a set of tasks, but as relational and political labour—mediating between policy discourse, community need, and institutional constraint. Applying qualitative methods within this lens ensures findings are grounded in how practice is shaped—and reshaped—by structures, narratives, and daily decisions. It aligns with the study's broader aim: to understand community development as situated, relational, and politically charged work.

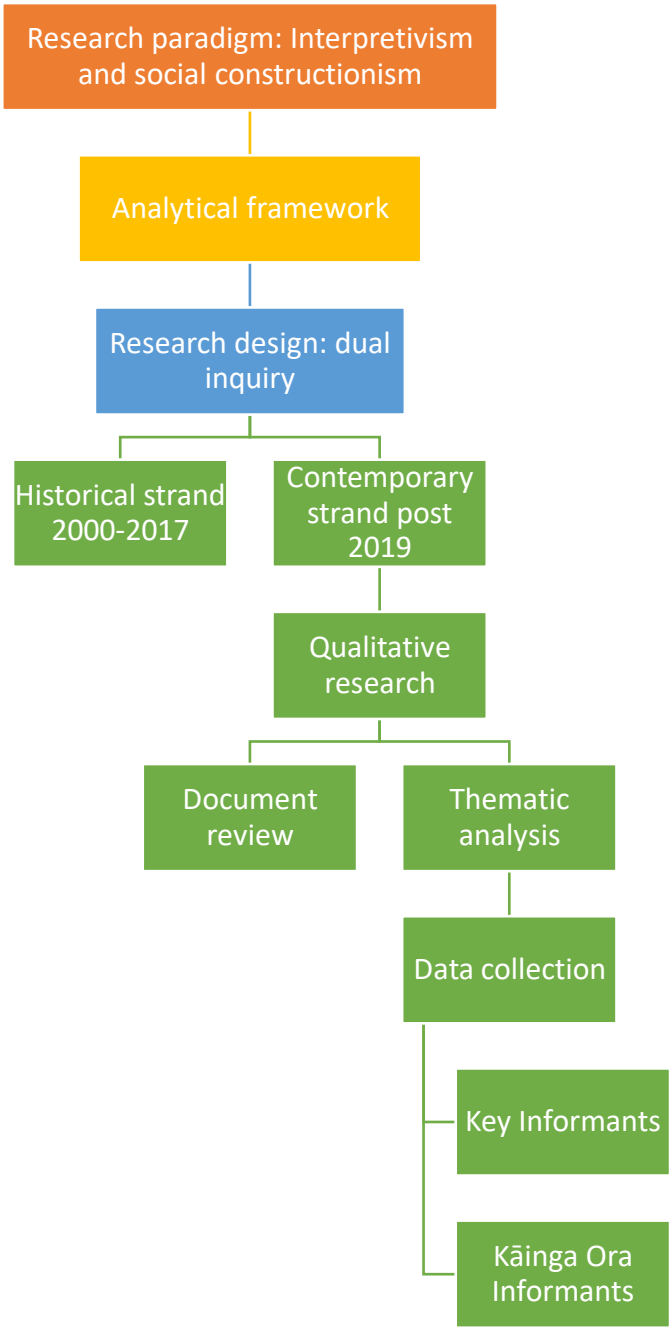
4.4.3 Connecting Design with Analysis

The dual-inquiry design was aligned with the analytical framework, with each strand engaging all four clusters—relational ethics, power, institutional tension, and normative values—allowing historical and contemporary narratives to be interpreted through a shared lens.

This design serves not only as a methodological scaffold but as a reflective tool, surfacing contrast and revealing how community development is shaped by both policy systems and place-based practice.

Figure 8 illustrates how these elements interconnect, mapping the layered architecture of the study's dual-inquiry design.

Figure 8 *Methodological Research Design* (Created by the author).



4.5 Data Collection

The data collection process was designed to generate rich, practice-based insights into community development within public housing. It combined document review and semi-structured interviews to support a grounded understanding of both historical and contemporary contexts. This dual-method approach aligns with the study's interpretive and social constructionist paradigm, emphasising contextual analysis and dialogic exchange.

Used in parallel, the methods served distinct but complementary purposes. Document review established a policy-level foundation, tracing how institutions have framed community development over time. These insights informed interview design, grounding prompts in both legacy and current discourse. Interviews then revealed how practitioners interpret, enact, and at times resist institutional narratives.

The review examined key texts produced between 2000–2023 by Housing New Zealand Corporation, Kāinga Ora, and selected local authorities. It explored shifting governmental approaches to housing renewal, tenant wellbeing, and place-based initiatives. Community development was variably positioned—as a tool for inclusion, a compliance mechanism, or a discretionary extra—highlighting tensions between participatory rhetoric and top-down delivery. This analysis shaped the study's focus on institutional contradictions, enabling deeper interpretation of practitioner perspectives and how policy logics enable or constrain practice.

4.5.1 Selection of Informants

Purposive sampling was used to recruit informants with extensive experience in community development, housing renewal, and public housing operations in Aotearoa New Zealand. The term *informants* is used to reflect their role as contributors of practice-based knowledge rather than subjects of study. Following Etikan et al. (2016), selection criteria included:

- Experience in public housing roles within central or local government
- Involvement in housing renewal or place-based initiatives
- Direct engagement with tenant communities or community-led development

Informants held roles such as Programme Directors, Community Development Advisors, Housing Operations staff, Governance leaders, and Project Managers. This diversity enabled a multi-scalar analysis of how community development is interpreted, institutionalised, and enacted. Many were directly or indirectly known to the researcher, reflecting the relationally

embedded nature of the field. These connections supported trust, openness, and reflexivity during interviews, with confidentiality protocols rigorously observed.

All participants received an *Informant Information Sheet* detailing the study's purpose, scope, voluntary nature, and confidentiality measures, as well as the right to withdraw at any time (see Appendix C).

4.5.1.1 Participant Engagement and Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols consistent with the study's interpretive paradigm were followed. All participants gave written informed consent and were assigned study codes to ensure anonymity. Interviews were held in private, comfortable settings—either in person or via secure video conferencing—to support thoughtful, reflective engagement. Sessions ranged from 60 to 100 minutes, enabling narrative depth.

Following Malterud et al.'s (2016) information power principle, emphasis was placed on data quality and relevance over quantity. Given the focused inquiry and the informants' expertise, the sample yielded rich, high-value insights aligned with the study's aims.

4.5.1.2 Interview Process

Semi-structured interviews, guided by a flexible *Interview Schedule* (Appendix D), explored professional roles, organisational contexts, and interpretations of community development. Questions addressed policy impacts, relational strategies, and the tensions between institutional mandates and community needs. This format allowed both macro-level critique and micro-level storytelling, grounding the analysis in structure and lived experience. A pilot interview helped refine the guide. Small-group interviews were also conducted, reflecting collaborative work norms—for example, KO 16 and KO 17; KO 18–20; and KO 23 and KO 24.

4.5.1.3 Participant Profiles

Tables 5 and 6 summarise the 25 informants: 14 from legacy public housing contexts and 11 from Kāinga Ora. Informants brought deep experience across practice, strategy, operations, evaluation, and governance, enabling comparative analysis across time and institutional settings.

Forty-four percent of informants identified as Māori or Pasifika, reflecting both the demographic profile of public housing communities and a deliberate commitment to centring Indigenous and Pacific perspectives. These informants offered critical insights into cultural wellbeing, collective values, and practices grounded in *whakapapa* and *vā*.

Together, these informants offered deep insight into the evolution of community development practice in Aotearoa New Zealand—spanning roles in community development practice, strategy, operations, evaluation, and governance.

Table 5 *Profile of Key Informants* (Created by the author)

Key informants	Role	No. of years employed in public housing
KI No 1	Community Development	20
KI No 2	Community Development	25
KI No 3	Community Development	16
KI No 4	Community Development	5
KI No 5	Housing Operations	35
KI No 6	Housing Operations/Community Development	30
KI No 7	Housing Renewal Project Manager /Community Development	40
KI No 8	Housing Renewal Project Manager /Community Development/	35
KI No 9	Housing Renewal Project Manager /Community Development	19
KI No 10	Housing Renewal Project Manager	7
KI No 11	Housing/Operational	20
KI No 12	Evaluator	15
KI No 13	Housing Management	25
KI No 14	Housing Governance	40

Table 6 *Profile of Kāinga Ora Informants* (Created by the author)

KO Informants	Role	Years employed in public housing
KO 15	Community development	8
KO 16	National Advisor/Community development	2
KO 17	National Advisor/Community development	6
KO 18	National Advisor/Community development	2
KO 19	National Advisor/Community Development	6
KO 20	National Advisor/Community Development	10
KO 21	National Senior Advisor	30
KO 22	Programme Director	8
KO 23	Community Development	15
KO 24	Community Development	4
KO 25	Community Development	24

4.5.2 *Transcription and Data Management*

All interviews were recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai, then manually edited following Bucholtz's (2000) naturalised approach, which prioritises clarity over strict verbatim accuracy. Fillers, false starts, and redundant phrasing were removed, and punctuation added to support narrative flow. As Ochs (1979) and Davidson (2009) suggest, selective transcription can better serve analytical clarity than exhaustive literalism.

Transcription was treated as an early stage of analysis, echoing Wolcott's (2002) assertion that "writing is thinking." Edits were guided by an interpretive logic: to illuminate meaning, not merely document sound.

Transcripts were returned to participants for review and amendment, with a three-week window for clarification. Participants signed a Transcription Release Authority (see Appendix E). This participant-checking process enhanced the ethical robustness and trustworthiness of the data.

4.6 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

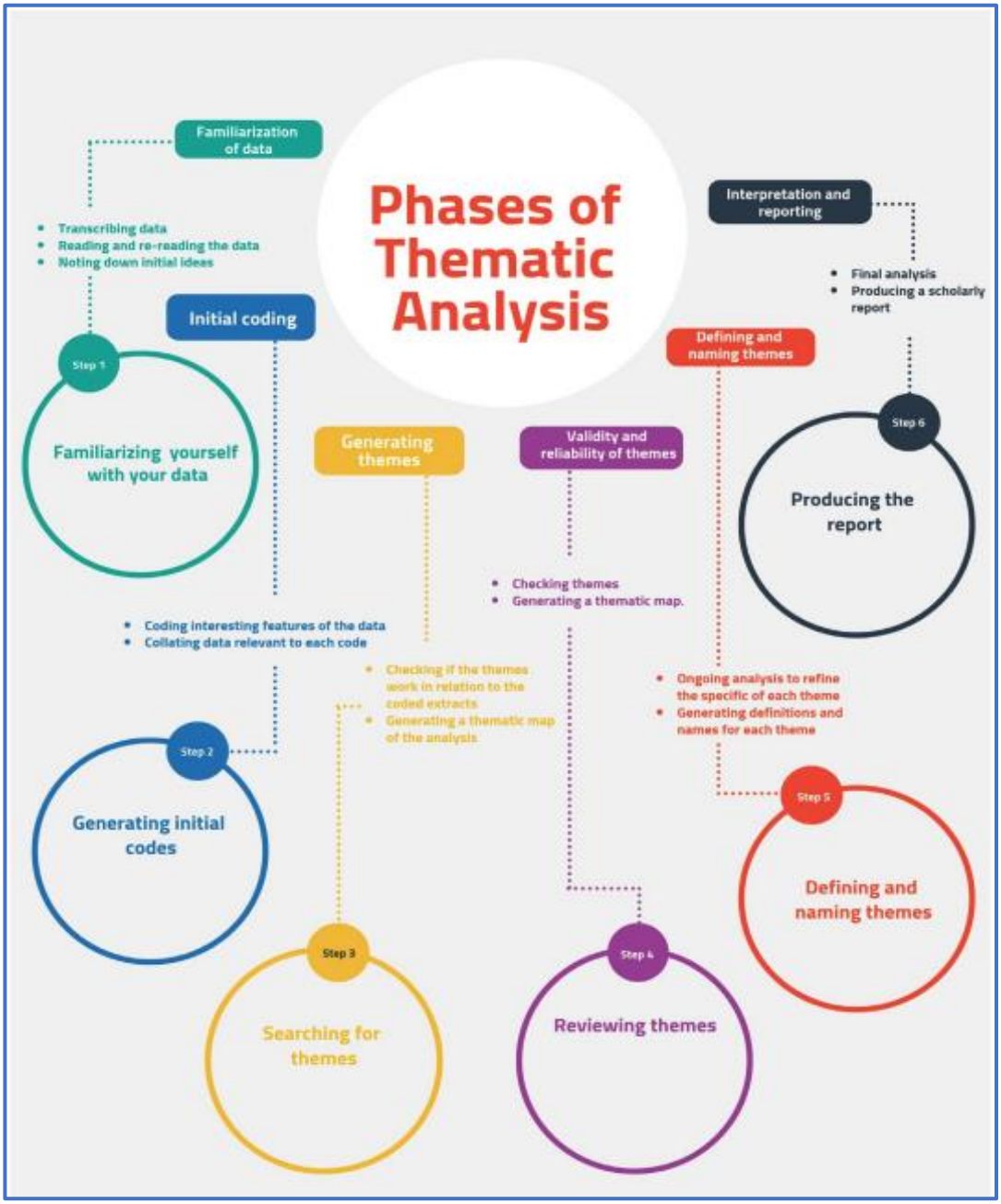
Thematic analysis was used to examine how the Informants define and enact their roles in complex institutional contexts. This approach, aligned with the study's interpretive and social constructionist paradigm, enabled both anticipated and emergent insights. A hybrid coding strategy—combining deductive and inductive methods—ensured the analysis was theoretically grounded and empirically responsive.

Following Braun and Clarke's (2013) six-phase model, (see Figure 9), the process included:

- Familiarising with the data through repeated reading and memo-writing;
- Applying theory-informed and emergent codes;
- Collating codes into candidate themes;
- Reviewing for coherence across the dataset;
- Defining and naming final themes;
- Writing a thematic narrative aligned with the research questions and conceptual framework.

This iterative process supported layered insights and enabled synthesis across key analytic categories, including relational practice, ethics of care, and institutional constraint. The next section outlines the analytic process in more depth and introduces the key themes.

Figure 9 *Thematic Analysis Model* (Braun & Clarke, 2013)



4.6.1 Inductive and Deductive Coding

A hybrid coding strategy was applied to analyse the interview data. Deductive codes, drawn from the literature and interview guide, reflected anticipated areas such as institutional dynamics, policy frameworks, and definitions of community development. As analysis progressed, inductive coding identified unanticipated patterns grounded in informant narratives. This combined approach ensured theoretical rigour while remaining responsive to

the data and the lived complexity of the practitioner experience. Table 7 presents the initial deductive codes that shaped the early stages of analysis.

Table 7 *Initial Coding of the Raw Data* (Created by the author)

Initial codes
Role of public housing within the public service
Purpose of renewal/regeneration project
Defining and describing community development
Organisational supports
Organisational pressures and challenges
Evaluation

4.6.1.1 Step 1: Familiarisation with the Data

The first phase of Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis involved deep immersion in the data through repeated listening to interviews, close transcript reading, and annotating early insights. As Creswell (2021) notes, familiarisation fosters conceptual intimacy with the data and helps surface latent tensions and patterns.

This phase developed iteratively, with early reflections during coding sharpening the analytic focus and laying the foundation for theme construction.

4.6.1.2 Step 2: Generating Codes

Initial coding was conducted manually on three transcripts to refine technique before transitioning to NVivo-14, a qualitative software tool supported by Massey University. NVivo-14 facilitated systematic organisation, data retrieval, and the development of thematic networks (Maher et al., 2018).

Coding combined a preliminary framework with inductive flexibility, allowing new subthemes and patterns to emerge. Techniques were adapted from Saldaña (2016) and included descriptive, values, in vivo, process, versus, causation, evaluation, and simultaneous coding. This multi-layered approach captured both the content and intent of informant narratives. Table 8 outlines the coding strategies used, based on Saldaña's typology.

Table 8 *Coding methods based on Saldaña's typology* (2016) *(Adapted for this research by the author)*

Type of code	Description
Causation	Identifies explicit or inferred causal relationships (e.g., "policy change led to reduced trust"). Useful for analysing perceived consequences, especially in systemic or policy-focused work.
Descriptive	This approach summarises the basic topic of a passage of data, describes the text, and derives the codes from the actual language of the text.
Evaluation	Captures judgements about value, effectiveness, or significance (e.g., "working well," "tokenistic"). Allows you to track participant assessments of people, processes, or policies.
Simultaneous	This coding method applies two or more different codes to a single data excerpt.
Structural	This method relates to a specific research question, which codes and categorises data.
Values	This code reflects the informants' values, attitudes and beliefs, representing their perspectives or worldviews. Daiute (2014, p. 69) describes a value as the principles, moral codes, and situational norms people live by.
Versus	Identifies binary or conflicting themes (e.g., "community vs. system," "care vs. control"). Helps surface tensions, dilemmas, or power dynamics in the data.
Process	Codes that communicate an action in the text. They are mostly doing words such as gerunds that end with 'ing.'
Saliency*	Stephen Buetow (2010) developed the saliency code that captures important key insights without appearing frequently.
In Vivo	In vivo captures text that is the informants' words rather than the researcher's interpretation.

A comprehensive Thematic codebook was maintained throughout (see Appendix F), ensuring consistency and supporting clear links between data excerpts, subcodes, and thematic categories. This iterative, reflexive process enabled codes to evolve alongside deepening theoretical insight, integrating both grounded and theory-informed categories. Table 9 illustrates how individual reflections were coded and sub-coded, showing how meaning was built from the ground up. Coding continued until no new insights emerged, ensuring analytical depth and saturation.

Table 9 *Examples of the coding of raw data* (Created by the author)

Raw data	Type of code	Code	Subcode	Theme
"The definition of community development for me is I support them in identifying and articulating the issues and their solutions, and I support them in achieving it." (KI 1)	Descriptive	Defining and describing community development	Building relationships and trust	Trust, care and connection in place
	Structural			
	Process			
"You should never do something for a community they can do for themselves." (KI 4)	Structural	The role of the community development practitioner	Relational skills as a strategic entry point	Strategic navigation: Balancing relational and technical skills in a fragmented system
	Saliency			
"The role of community development is political and should be about change and systemic change. But does the Crown want to change?" (KO 16)	Structural	Public housing as a public service	Interpreting the Act	Interpreting the Act
	Saliency			

4.6.1.3 Step 3: Searching for Themes

In this phase, codes generated through both deductive and inductive processes were reviewed to identify candidate themes—overarching patterns of meaning that aligned with both participant narratives and the study's analytical aims. Following Braun and Clarke's (2013) distinction between semantic (explicit) and latent (interpretive) themes, data segments were clustered to surface immediate accounts as well as underlying conceptual dynamics.

Theme development was iterative, involving constant comparison of codes, alignment with the research questions, and cross-checking for coherence across the dataset. As this process evolved, *housing renewal* emerged as a dominant and organising theme. Its frequency and conceptual significance warranted a shift from treating it as contextual background to recognising it as a structuring force in the analysis. This prompted a reorganisation of the coding hierarchy and a rebalancing of analytical focus.

To support this refinement, Maguire and Delahunt's (2017) review prompts were applied:

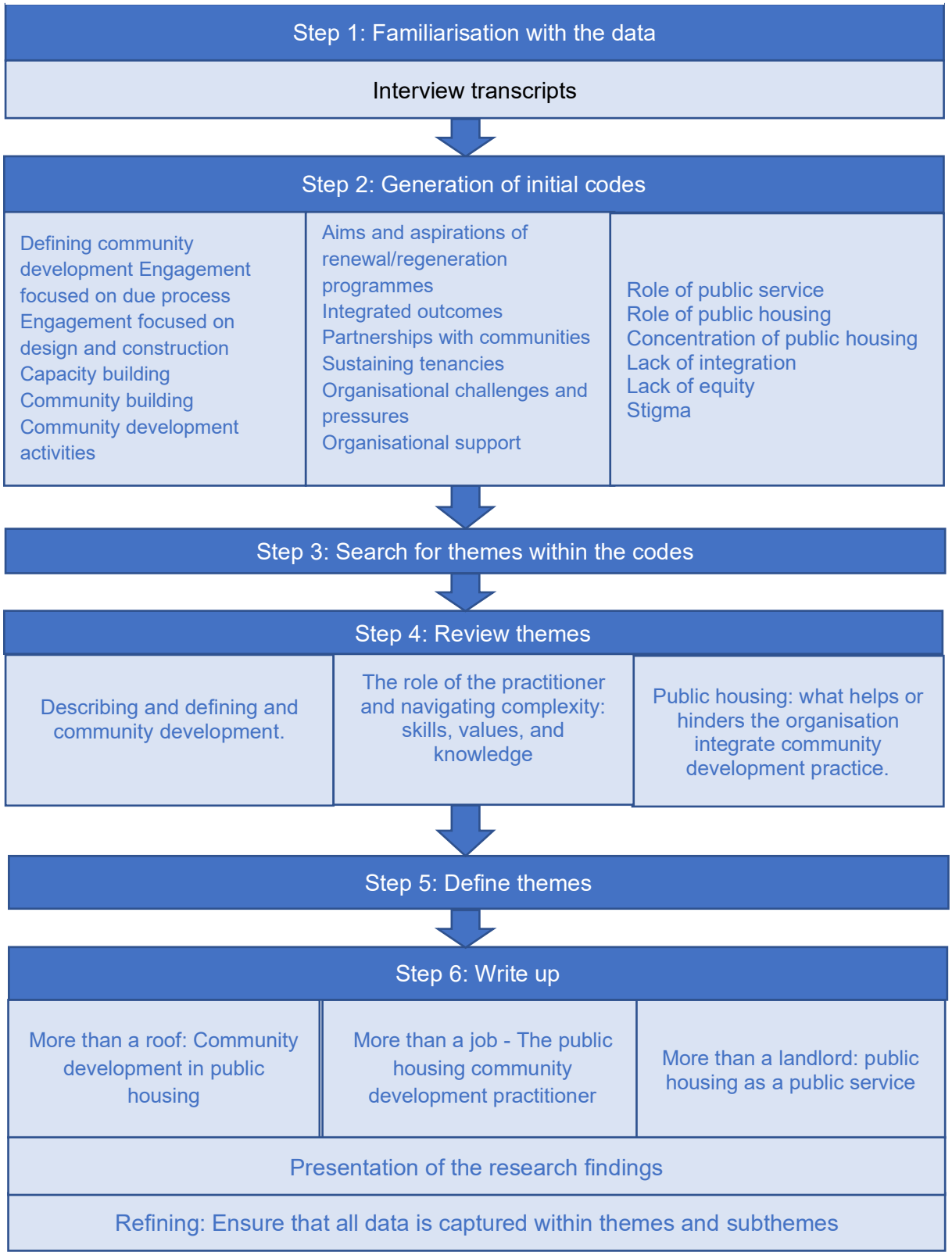
- Do the themes make sense?
- Does the data support the themes?
- Are overlapping themes conceptually distinct?
- Are there meaningful subthemes?
- Are there important silences or absences?

Some data initially coded under *housing renewal* was reclassified into more precise categories such as *relational work*, *practitioner agency*, or *institutional constraint*. This flexibility ensured that final themes were both grounded in the lived realities of informants and analytically attuned to broader structural dynamics.

4.6.1.4 Step 4: Reviewing Themes

Candidate themes were reviewed for coherence, clarity, and alignment with the research questions. This involved revisiting both coded excerpts and the full dataset to assess the distinctiveness and analytical value of each theme. Broad or overlapping categories were refined, and subthemes introduced to preserve nuance. The aim was to construct a coherent analytical structure that honoured informants' experiences while illuminating the institutional conditions shaping their work. Themes were developed to reflect both descriptive patterns and deeper interpretive insights, linking practitioner narratives to wider dynamics of policy, governance, and systemic constraint. A visual thematic map was created to support transparency, tracing the progression from initial codes to final themes. Figure 10 illustrates the six phases of thematic analysis adapted from Braun and Clarke (2013), mapping the analytical journey from raw data to thematic construction.

Figure 10 *Six Phases of the Thematic Analysis* (adapted from Braun & Clark, 2013)



4.6.1.5 Step 5: Defining Themes

The final themes and subthemes were shaped in direct response to the research questions: how community development is defined and enacted within public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand, and what conditions enable or constrain its integration. The thematic structure captured both convergence and divergence between legacy housing informants (KIs) and Kāinga Ora informants (KOs), offering a layered view of relational practice in policy-bound environments.

Themes were refined to reflect the micro-level experiences of practitioners and the macro-level dynamics of policy and organisational structure. This dual focus surfaced the tensions, adaptations, and possibilities that characterise community development in complex institutional settings.

4.6.1.6 Step 6: Write-Up

The final phase involved constructing a conceptually grounded narrative that integrated the themes into a coherent analytical account. This moved beyond description to theorise practice—connecting participant insights to the research questions and conceptual framework.

Care was taken to preserve informants' voices while interpreting their reflections through a critical and reflexive lens. The findings chapters are structured around the final themes, each presented as a layered account combining empirical depth with theoretical significance. Theme titles reflect the complexity of community development as it unfolds across both legacy housing authorities and Kāinga Ora.

Three overarching framing devices organise the findings—each aligned with a core research focus. These enable institutional comparison and illuminate how community development is defined, enacted, supported, and constrained in practice.

The write-up was itself a reflexive process: an act of interpretation that balanced complexity with clarity, and foregrounded practitioner agency while critically examining institutional constraint. The final analysis synthesised lived experience, conceptual scaffolds, and systemic critique to explore the relational and political realities of community development in public housing.

4.6.2 Framing Devices: Structuring the Findings

While the analytical framework provided interpretive depth, it was equally important to communicate findings in a way that honoured the layered nature of practitioner experience. To achieve this, three narrative framing devices were developed during the final phase of analysis: *More than a Roof*, *More than a Job*, and *More than a Landlord*. These are not theoretical categories or analytic codes but thematic containers that reflect the complexity of community development in public housing.

Where the analytical framework guided interpretation, these framing devices provided narrative structure—organising empirical material and surfacing patterns across time, context, and institutional form.

4.6.2.1 More than a Roof: Community Development in Public Housing

This framing device explores how community development has been defined and enacted across eras and agencies. It focuses on practice—how community work is understood, implemented, and adapted to institutional conditions. It highlights the meanings, methods, and tensions that shape what community development becomes in public housing.

4.6.2.2 More than a Job: The Community Development Practitioner

The second device focuses on practitioners—their roles, strategies, and the emotional and relational practice embedded in their work. It examines how they navigate institutional

ambiguity, uphold values of care and connection, and reconcile dual accountabilities to tenants and organisations.

4.6.2.3 More than a Landlord: Public Housing as a Public Service

The third framing device situates community development within broader organisational and policy systems. It examines how institutions conceptualise their responsibilities to communities, and how leadership, funding, integration, and other structural factors enable—or constrain—community practice. This framing engages with normative tensions (e.g., between pluralism and communitarianism) and institutional logics that shape how care and participation are positioned in public housing.

These framing devices were not imposed a priori but emerged through a dialogic process of coding, theme refinement, and interpretive synthesis. They offer a coherent structure for the findings chapters—supporting narrative clarity while attending to the complexity, contradiction, and contextual variation that characterise community development in Aotearoa New Zealand's public housing system.

Table 10 outlines the three framing devices and their associated themes, showing how the thematic analysis responds to the research questions and how insights were shaped across both key informant and Kāinga Ora interviews.

Table 10 *Framing Devices and Corresponding Themes* (Created by the author)

Research questions	Framing devices for findings	Themes: Public housing authorities	Themes: Kāinga Ora
How is community development in public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand defined and described?	More than a Roof: Community Development in Public Housing	Trust, Care and Connection in Place Linking People, Power and Possibilities	Built to Change, Resistant to Shift Participation on the periphery
How do practitioners and public housing authorities perceive the contribution of community development to the wellbeing of residents and communities?	More than a Job: The Community Development Practitioner in Public Housing	Practitioners as Strategic Actors in Relational Terrain Betwixt and the Spaces Between	Navigating Ambiguity and Relational Change
What factors facilitate the integration of community development practices into public housing? What are the obstacles to integrating community development into public housing?	More than a Landlord: Public Housing as a Public Service	From Public Good to Residual Function Volatility as Structure–Policy Churn and the Fragility of Care Care at the Margins: The Relational Paradox Help and Hindrances – Organisational Enablers and Constraints	Interpreting the Act–Do we go wide or keep it inside? Caught Between Intent and Implementation Delegated Care, Diminished Accountability

While the analytical process was designed to ensure rigour, depth, and responsiveness to practitioner experience, it is equally important to acknowledge the study's epistemological and practical boundaries. The following section outlines key limitations and reflexive considerations that shaped the scope, interpretation, and trustworthiness of the research.

4.7 Limitations

Like all research, this study is shaped by its design, scope, and positionality. While it sought to generate insights grounded in lived experience and conceptual depth, several limitations must be acknowledged—contextual and epistemological.

4.7.1 Contextual Boundaries

This research adopts a broad conceptualisation of *community*, encompassing:

- Geographic communities—defined by place and tenancy;
- Communities of interest—shaped by shared identity, experience, or engagement in public housing.

However, iwi Māori, as *tangata whenua*, bring a distinct relational worldview grounded in *whakapapa*, *whānau*, *hapū*, and *iwi*, anchored in *whenua*. These Indigenous logics shape collective wellbeing and decision-making in ways that may not align with policy framings of "community." While this study honours the significance of *kaupapa* Māori epistemologies, it does not claim to represent Māori-led community development. Rather, it acknowledges this limitation and signals its implications for future research and policy.

4.7.2 Sample and Confidentiality Constraints

The small, highly networked nature of Aotearoa New Zealand's public housing and community development workforce shaped both access and anonymity. Purposive sampling enabled inclusion of informants with deep practice expertise across institutions and time periods. While this enriched insight, it also raised confidentiality concerns. Some Kāinga Ora staff withdrew due to perceived professional risk, potentially narrowing the range of organisational perspectives.

4.7.3 Transferability and Scope

The research is contextually bounded, focusing on housing renewal and relational practice within specific institutional settings. While this may limit direct transferability, the identified tensions—between care and compliance, discretion and standardisation, participation and control—are likely to resonate across broader public service and housing systems.

4.7.4 Insider Perspective and Interpretive Bias

My professional commitment to systems change and community-led development shaped the values underpinning this research. As a long-time practitioner, I brought experiential knowledge that enhanced access, rapport, and contextual fluency. This insider status offered interpretive depth, particularly when navigating institutional environments. However, it also introduced potential for bias or over-identification. I remained critically aware of these risks throughout the research. By naming my commitments and using structured reflexivity, I aimed to hold the tension between advocacy and analysis—to remain close enough to honour practitioner realities, while retaining sufficient distance to interrogate them. Reflexivity was essential: not merely as method, but as ethical stance—supporting transparency, accountability, and care in both conduct and interpretation.

4.8 Reflexivity and Relational Commitments

Building on the positional commitments outlined in Chapter One, reflexivity was woven throughout the research as both an ethical and epistemological stance. As an experienced community development practitioner, my insider status brought advantages—trust, access, and contextual fluency—but also risks of assumption and over-identification. To navigate this dual role, I used structured reflexive strategies, including journalling, member checking, and regular supervisory dialogue. These practices helped examine my interpretive lens, surface tensions in the data, and test emerging insights with participants.

Within this interpretive, social constructionist paradigm, reflexivity was not a discrete phase but an ongoing process—central to understanding how power, perspective, and positionality shape knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Krauss, 2005; Mason, 2018). During interviews, I was attentive to how power shaped participant comfort and narrative flow. Reflexivity supported real-time adjustments in tone, pacing, and language—balancing attentiveness with humility, and curiosity with care. It was not merely a method, but a foundational aspect of the study's ethics, analysis, and meaning-making.

4.8.1 Reflexive Practices Employed

To maintain analytic integrity and mitigate bias, I used multiple reflexive strategies:

- *Reflexive interviewing*: Attuned to tone and body language, I paraphrased and rephrased to foster openness, reduce power imbalances, and create a dialogic rather than interrogative space.
- *Member checking*: Transcripts were returned to informants for review, clarification, or revision—reinforcing participant agency and interpretive accuracy.
- *Reflexive journalling*: I maintained a field journal to track assumptions, emotional responses, dilemmas, and evolving interpretations.
- *Reflexive coding*: I regularly asked whether emerging insights were grounded in participant experience or shaped by my own framing, and revisited raw data to test these boundaries.
- *Supervisory dialogue*: Ongoing conversations with supervisors served as a sounding board to surface blind spots, challenge assumptions, and strengthen analytic clarity.

Neutrality is neither possible nor desirable. By making my positionality explicit, I remained accountable to it. As *Tangata Tiriti*, I acknowledge the enduring impacts of colonisation and approach *mātauranga* Māori as *taonga*—engaging with humility, critique, and deep respect, without speaking on its behalf. This work is also guided by *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* as a living covenant that calls for honourable relationships, shared authority, and structural redress.

While the focus here is on public housing and community development, Māori approaches to housing and wellbeing are acknowledged as grounded in sovereign epistemologies—rooted in *whakapapa*, *whenua*, *tikanga*, and *mātauranga* Māori. These knowledge systems are not interpreted or spoken for, but engaged with as *taonga*: living cultural treasures that challenge and reframe dominant logics of community, wellbeing, and justice.

4.8.2 Indigenous Frameworks and Relational Practice

This research was ethically and conceptually shaped by Māori principles of connection, care, and continuity—particularly *whakawhanaungatanga*. These informed my understanding of place-based practice, intergenerational connection, and collective wellbeing. Their inclusion was approached with care, guided by Māori colleagues, and grounded in relationship, not extraction.

Though this study is not framed as *kaupapa Māori* research, it is informed by *kaupapa Māori* principles that shaped both process and interpretation:

- *Whakawhanaungatanga:* building and maintaining reciprocal, trust-based relationships
- *Manaakitanga:* enacting care, respect, and responsibility in all interactions
- *Kaitiakitanga*: stewarding knowledge with integrity and accountability

These principles guided my engagement with literature, especially work by Māori scholars, and shaped how I created space for Indigenous knowledge. I acknowledge that citing Māori frameworks is not in itself ethical practice. I aimed to remain alert to what should not be translated or recontextualised—and to listen as much as I write.

A similar relational approach shaped my engagement with Pasifika frameworks. Concepts such as *teu le vā* were not treated as extractable theories, but as holistic, relational philosophies rooted in culture, spirituality, and intergenerational ties. Guided by Teariki and Leau's (2023, p. 147) call to "always come back to the whole," I approached these frameworks as integrated ways of being, knowing, and relating.

This meant resisting simplification and staying contextually grounded. Where I draw on Pasifika knowledge, I do so with care, humility, and an awareness that some meanings remain beyond my standpoint. My intent is not to translate, but to reflect relationally—to

centre interdependence, hold space for multiple truths, and honour the relationships that sustain wellbeing across people, place, and time.

4.9 Delimitations

This study positions public housing as a critical site for advancing housing justice—not only for addressing housing insecurity, but also for its institutional potential to drive systemic change. As a state-administered service, public housing has long served as a policy lever for mitigating structural disadvantage and supporting low-income and marginalised communities (Johnson, 2017; Murphy, 2020). Its scale, public mandate, and integration within social infrastructure offer unique opportunities to embed community development into housing systems.

By contrast, the private rental sector—driven by profit and affordability pressures—has limited capacity to foster collective wellbeing or deliver place-based outcomes (Fitzpatrick & Pawson, 2014). While some social and community housing providers aim to incorporate community development, they are often constrained by scale, funding fragmentation, and policy instability. Public housing remains the most viable institutional context for exploring how housing systems can centre tenant wellbeing, foster participation, and redress spatial inequities.

This inquiry is especially timely amid policy shifts that frame public housing as a crisis response. Such framings risk deepening exclusion, displacement, and insecurity—particularly for communities already affected by systemic inequality (Fitzpatrick & Watts, 2017). By investigating how community development is interpreted and enacted within public housing renewal, this study contributes to wider debates on equity, agency, and the conditions needed to build inclusive, thriving neighbourhoods.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in line with high ethical standards. Approval was granted by the Human Ethics Northern Committee (see Appendix B: Approval No. NOR 20/66). Core ethical principles—including informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality—were upheld throughout.

Participants received detailed information sheets and consent forms outlining the purpose of the study, their rights (including the right to withdraw), and protocols for recording and managing data. Each participant was assigned a unique identifier to ensure anonymity, and identifying details or references to third parties were removed during transcription and analysis (Wolf et al., 2015).

In line with Massey University's guidance on the ethical use of Generative AI, this work was proofread for grammar, punctuation, and APA 7 compliance using Grammarly, in consultation with my supervisors. The use of Grammarly was limited to surface-level corrections (e.g., spelling, punctuation, formatting) and did not affect the intellectual content, analysis, or original contributions of the work.

4.11 Conclusion to Chapter Four

This chapter has outlined the qualitative methodology underpinning the study and demonstrated its alignment with the research questions and theoretical framework. Grounded in an interpretive paradigm and informed by social constructionism, the research explored how community development practitioners navigate and make meaning of their work within complex institutional landscapes.

A dual-inquiry design provided historical and contemporary insight, revealing patterns of continuity, adaptation, and constraint. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's

(2013) framework and supported by NVivo-14, enabled a structured yet flexible approach to identifying both anticipated and emergent themes.

The chapter also articulated the ethical and reflexive foundations of the research, shaped by my positioning as a *Tangata Tiriti* researcher and informed by *kaupapa* Māori principles. These commitments influenced not only data interpretation, but also how relationships, power, and cultural integrity were held throughout. Reflexivity anchored the process—supporting rigour, credibility, and care in navigating ethical and political complexities.

These findings respond directly to the research questions and, in Chapter Five, begin to illustrate how community development practice is shaped in place—by trust, care, constraint, and the quiet politics of relational work.

Chapter Five: More than a Roof—Community Development in Public Housing

5.1 Introduction

The title of this chapter is drawn from a practitioner's comment, reflects a common belief that public housing entails more than shelter—it should also foster social connection, belonging, and community wellbeing. This view aligns with literature positioning housing as a social determinant of health (Clapham et al., 2018) and informs calls to recognise and invest in the relational dimensions of tenant and neighbourhood life.

Earlier chapters outlined the conceptual and policy terrain of community development in public housing. This chapter grounds that analysis in qualitative interviews with practitioners[8] and housing professionals, addressing the study's core questions:

Research Question One: How do community development practitioners define and describe their roles and practices within public housing?

Research Question Two: How do practitioners and public housing authorities perceive the contribution of community development to the wellbeing of residents and communities?

Community development is often framed in aspirational terms—linked to empowerment, participation, and inclusion. Yet, as the findings reveal, these ideals are often at odds with institutional realities. Community development is frequently marginalised, rendered invisible, or treated as discretionary rather than essential. As Banks and Orton (2007) note, this marginality places practitioners between aspiration and constraint—responsible for vital relational work that remains structurally undervalued.

[8] For readability and space, the term *practitioner* is used throughout to refer to the *community development practitioner*.

This chapter foregrounds the relational dimensions of practice while exposing the institutional tensions practitioners navigate. It is structured in two parts:

- Part One examines community development from 2000–2017 across Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC), Wellington City Council (WCC), and Christchurch City Council (CCC). Drawing on interviews with staff from these programmes, it explores the enabling conditions and constraints that shaped practice during periods of housing renewal and asset management.
- Part Two shifts to Kāinga Ora (2019–2023), analysing how community development is currently understood and practised in the context of structural reform and shifting social policy expectations.

This structure highlights both continuities and ruptures, surfacing the relational, political, and institutional dynamics that shape community development—and the dilemmas practitioners must navigate in doing so.

5.2.1 Analytical Lens and Researcher Positioning

My professional experience in public housing and community development informs the analysis in this and the next two chapters. While this background brings contextual insight, it also demands reflexivity—especially given my role as a non-Māori researcher working in spaces shaped by *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* and Māori worldviews.

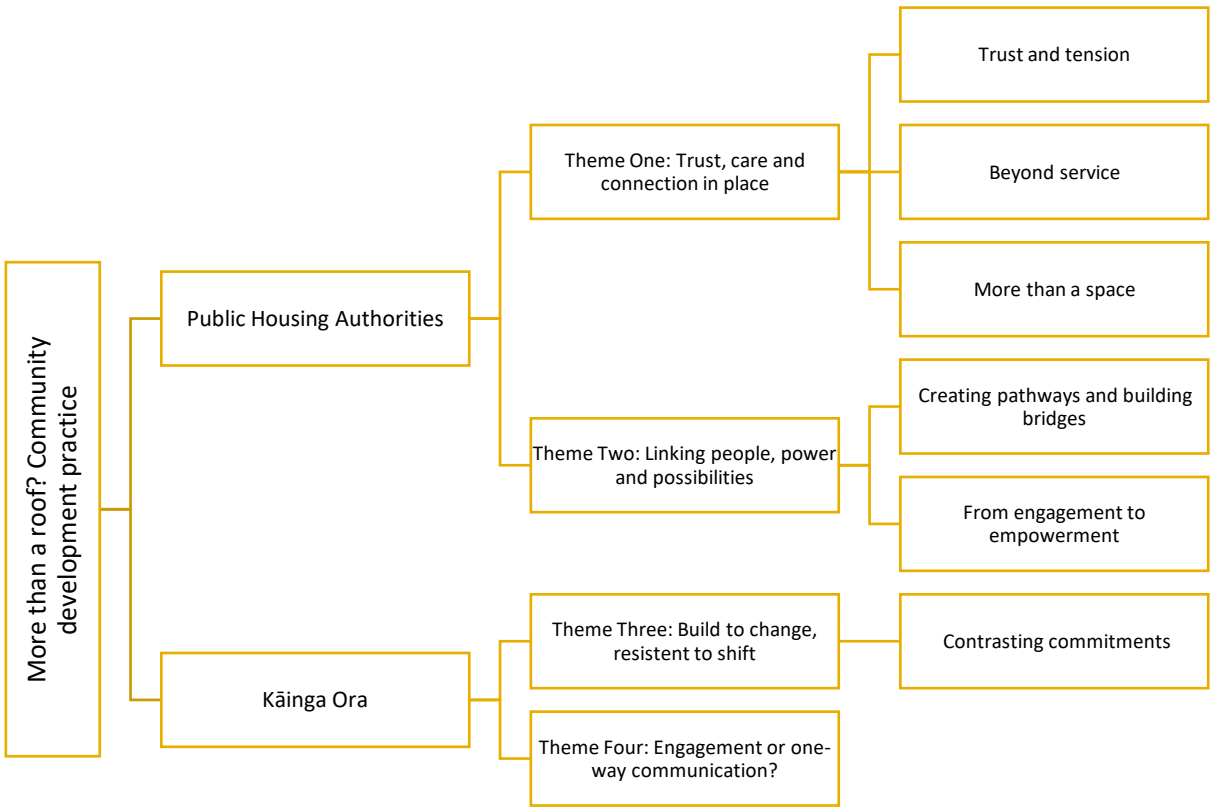
Aligned with *kaupapa* Māori principles, this study views knowledge as relational, contextual, and co-constructed. *Whakawhanaungatanga*—the practice of building trust and connection—underpins both the research approach and analytical lens. It shapes how relationships are formed, how voices are honoured, and how meaning is interpreted. I have aimed to uphold the mana of participants and ensure their insights are interpreted with care and fidelity. This positioning reflects a commitment to transformative research—aligned with practitioner calls for institutional recognition, resourcing, and support for community-led work.

5.2.2 Research Themes

The following analysis examines how community development is defined by practitioners and housing authorities in the context of public housing. It explores their views on its contribution to resident and community wellbeing, and considers whether—and how—it generates value within the organisations they work for. Their accounts surface the practical, relational, and political dimensions of community development—and the tensions that arise when these intersect with institutional logics.

Figure 11 outlines the core themes identified, showing how roles are defined and how practitioners perceive the impact of their work.

Figure 11 *Themes identified to address Research Questions One and Two* (Created by the author).



Part One: Lessons from Practice—Relational Work in Legacy Public Housing Authorities (2000–2017)

Between 2000–2017, three public housing authorities—HNZC, WCC, and CCC—integrated community development into their housing strategies. While differing in scope, mandate, and culture, each initiative shared a recognition: housing challenges could not be resolved by physical infrastructure alone.

Driven by diverse pressures—asset renewal, social exclusion, ageing stock, and post-disaster recovery—these programmes experimented with relational, place-based approaches. Community development was framed not merely as tenant support, but as a catalyst for cohesion, participation, and community-led change.

This section draws on interviews with practitioners and housing staff, supplemented by policy and archival analysis. It highlights the informal, trust-building strategies used to foster belonging, alongside the structural constraints that limited consistency, reach, and durability.

These historical programmes serve three analytical functions: they offer a textured pre–Kāinga Ora account of community development; provide a baseline for assessing institutional shifts; and surface persistent tensions—between care and control, proximity and professionalism, relational promise and bureaucratic delivery—that continue to shape public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand.

5.2.3 Housing New Zealand Corporation's Community Renewal Programme (2000–2011)

In 2000, HNZC launched the Community Renewal Programme (CRP), a place-based initiative linking housing provision with community wellbeing. Acknowledging that socio-spatial disadvantage could not be addressed through housing alone, the CRP aimed to strengthen community life in areas of concentrated public housing and high deprivation.

The programme marked a shift in institutional logic. HNZC explicitly recognised its historical role in spatial disadvantage and embraced a broader responsibility “to have regard for the interests of the communities in which it operates” (HNZC, 2000, p. 2). The CRP aimed both to build local community strength and to embed a socially responsible ethos across the organisation.

Crucially, the CRP was not a vehicle for stock reduction or tenure diversification. It emerged as a mitigation strategy in anticipation of increased disadvantage linked to Labour’s housing allocation reforms. Community development was positioned as a proactive response to the likely social consequences of policy change.

Six communities were selected from a shortlist of 50, based on: (1) high deprivation (index 9 or 10); (2) HNZC ownership of more than 150 properties; and (3) organisational control over at least 30% of local rental stock. These areas faced entrenched exclusion, poor services, and weak infrastructure—conditions the CRP sought to address through community-led development and capacity building. Table 11 outlines HNZC property volumes and portfolio shares in each area.

Table 11 *HNZC Community Renewal sites by property count and % of HNZC ownership* (HNZC, 2006, p. 6)

	Aranui	**Fordlands**	**Clendon**	**Talbot Park**	**Eastern Porirua**	**Northcote**
Properties in CR area	1,560	481	1,600	180	4,000	600
No. (and %) of HNZC properties	454 (29%)	159 (33%)	540 (34%)	167 (93%)	1,904 (48%)	320 (53%)

A core feature of the CRP was its decentralised, embedded delivery model. Rather than operating from the national office, CRP teams were based within communities. Each site had a small team—typically four to six staff, including a dedicated community development

practitioner—who worked closely with tenants, local groups, and partner agencies to build trust, foster participation, and support locally led change.

The programme's conceptual foundations were articulated in HNZC's 2003 discussion paper *Community Development: What is it and what does it mean for Community Renewal?* Community development was described as promoting community-led change, enhancing participation, building self-reliance, and increasing social capital (HNZC, 2003, p. 3). This framing drew on asset-based and empowerment traditions, and sought to reposition tenants as active contributors to neighbourhood wellbeing.

Importantly, the CRP was not intended as a tool for stock reduction or tenure diversification. It emerged in response to anticipated concentrations of disadvantage following changes to the housing allocation system. Community development was framed as a mitigation strategy—to counter the social effects of policy reform and support wellbeing in areas of high deprivation.

However, organisational ambiguity limited its potential. While HNZC acknowledged its role in addressing social exclusion, it remained cautious about overstepping its remit: "Housing New Zealand is a housing provider and has neither the ability nor a mandate to step beyond the role of a socially-focused housing provider" (HNZC, 2000a, p. 6). This tension—between aspirational community goals and constrained mandate—was evident in policy documents and practitioner accounts.

Despite these limits, the CRP reflected an early institutional commitment to participatory governance in public housing. It aligned with Cornwall's (2004) call for embedded practice and prefigured later models of neighbourhood renewal.

Yet the programme's dependence on a small, sometimes isolated cohort of practitioners highlighted the structural fragility of community development within housing systems. Informants described the persistent challenge of legitimising relational work in environments

driven by compliance and performance metrics. As one put it, “We were there to build trust. But trust doesn’t show up in a quarterly report” (KI 9).

While the CRP was not fully institutionalised, its legacy remains—in practitioner memory, in the capacities it developed, and in the lessons it offers for embedding relational practice into future housing renewal.

5.2.4 Wellington City Council’s Housing Upgrade and Community Action Programme (2008–2018)

In 2008, WCC’s City Housing unit launched a 20-year redevelopment initiative, the Housing Upgrade Programme (HUP). Enabled by a Deed of Grant and Memorandum of Understanding with the Crown, HUP responded to the urgent need to upgrade ageing stock and reimagine the role of council housing in supporting community wellbeing.

Recognising that infrastructure alone could not create thriving communities, WCC developed the Community Action Programme (CAP) to embed community development into the renewal process. CAP aimed to “increase social cohesion, community spirit and pride within City Housing tenant communities through a strength-based community development approach” (WCC, 2009, p. 1). This reflected a shift in thinking—from housing as shelter to housing as a platform for connection and resilience.

WCC’s 2,200-unit portfolio, concentrated in central Wellington, comprised mainly one-bedroom and studio units. This shaped both the renewal approach and the nature of social interventions. Over the first six years, more than 1,100 properties were redeveloped. The CAP team—ranging from three to ten practitioners—supported tenant participation, local capacity, and community ties throughout these transitions.

CAP adopted an explicitly strengths-based approach, amplifying tenant voice and building on existing social capital. Its Community Development Framework (WCC, 2009) embedded inclusion, participation, and collective wellbeing as strategic aims. Drawing on Asset-Based

Community Development (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) and participatory housing practices (Cornwall, 2008; Mullins et al., 2011), CAP prioritised agency, co-design, and local knowledge.

Unlike HNZC's CRP, which was cautiously framed, CAP was more fully embedded in WCC's strategic framework, giving community development greater visibility and resource. However, this also tethered the work to capital works timelines—making it harder to sustain once the upgrades were complete. Practitioners worked to reframe community development not as a temporary add-on but as vital to sustaining wellbeing, cohesion, and place-based connection.

CAP was notably responsive to place. Rather than standardised delivery, practitioners adapted their approach to each complex's dynamics. This allowed for nuanced engagement, especially in communities marked by transience, isolation, or distrust. Relational practices—shared meals, dispute mediation, leadership workshops—created low-stakes spaces where trust could grow.

Yet CAP's marginal position within an asset-focused system created structural tensions. Informants described limited understanding from colleagues, uneven leadership support, and an uncertain mandate. As KI 10 reflected, "There was a lot of lip service. I think the head of the project tolerated it but didn't buy into it."

Despite these constraints, CAP made a visible impact. Tenant participation increased. Local initiatives—gardens, murals, safety audits—reflected both individual empowerment and collective agency. CAP also mitigated the social impacts of relocations during building works, maintaining continuity amid disruption.

Together, HUP and CAP illustrate an effort to integrate physical renewal with relational, tenant-centred practice. WCC recognised that structural repairs alone were insufficient—that tenant voice, connection, and presence are essential to equitable regeneration.

5.2.5 Christchurch City Housing's Tenant Activity Programme (2007–2016)

In contrast to HNZC's CRP and WCC's CAP—both tied to housing renewal—CCC developed a community wellbeing initiative not embedded within a capital works programme. The Tenant Activity Programme responded to tenants' everyday needs, particularly older residents, and reflected an ethos of relational care and grassroots engagement. It ran from 2007 until 2016, when CCC's housing portfolio was transferred to the Ōtautahi Community Housing Trust.

At the time, CCC managed around 1,800 homes—mostly one-bedroom units for senior tenants. This shaped the programme's early emphasis on fostering social connection, reducing isolation, and supporting active ageing through low-barrier, inclusive activities. One to two dedicated staff coordinated a range of social, recreational, and educational events across housing complexes.

Activities included shared meals, creative workshops, bus tours, gardening days, and outings like ten-pin bowling. The programme was not merely event-based; it operated as a platform for building relationships and community belonging. Practitioners worked relationally—getting to know tenants, identifying shared interests, and creating opportunities for mutual support.

After the 2011 Christchurch earthquake, the programme expanded to include civil defence preparedness workshops in collaboration with Neighbourhood Support and local agencies. This pivot reflected the adaptability of the model and the importance of embedded relationships during crises. The programme became a conduit for emotional support and practical coordination amid disruption.

Though the initiative lacked structural integration with housing redevelopment, it demonstrated how community development could be woven into everyday tenancy practice. Practitioners, despite minimal formal mandate, built strong relational capital—acting as

connectors, listeners, and informal advocates. Their consistent presence enabled responsive, tailored support and affirmed the role of trust in public housing settings.

This every day, low-stakes model contrasted with more formalised frameworks, yet its contribution to wellbeing was widely acknowledged. Informants described increased participation, stronger interpersonal ties, and a deepened sense of shared identity. While difficult to quantify, these outcomes reflected core community development values: connection, empowerment, and collective agency.

The programme concluded in 2016 following the transfer of CCC's housing to the Ōtautahi Community Housing Trust. Despite this change, the programme's guiding principles—relational practice, responsiveness, and place-based engagement—continue to offer valuable insights into centring wellbeing in tenancy operations.

5.2.6 *Synthesis: Common Threads and Divergent Pathways*

The three legacy public housing authorities—HNZC, WCC, and CCC—each offer distinct models of community development between 2000 and 2017. While differing in scope, scale, and institutional positioning, all shared a core insight: housing provision alone cannot sustain tenant wellbeing, foster cohesion, or build neighbourhood resilience.

A unifying thread across these initiatives was the centrality of relational practice. Whether embedded within large-scale renewal (as in CRP and CAP) or enacted through everyday connection (as in CCC's Tenant Activity Programme), practitioners worked to build trust, strengthen ties, and foster belonging. Their approaches combined strategic intent with grassroots responsiveness—negotiating institutional mandates while anchoring care in place.

Yet persistent structural tensions emerged. Community development remained marginal to core housing operations—under-resourced, inconsistently integrated, and reliant on a small

cadre of practitioners working at the institutional periphery. Programmes were often time-bound and vulnerable to shifting policy priorities, limiting their durability and systemic impact.

Still, the legacy of these initiatives is significant. They reveal the importance of investing not just in infrastructure but in relationships, participation, and shared spaces of belonging. They demonstrate that public housing can be more than crisis response—it can be a site of connection, agency, and collective wellbeing.

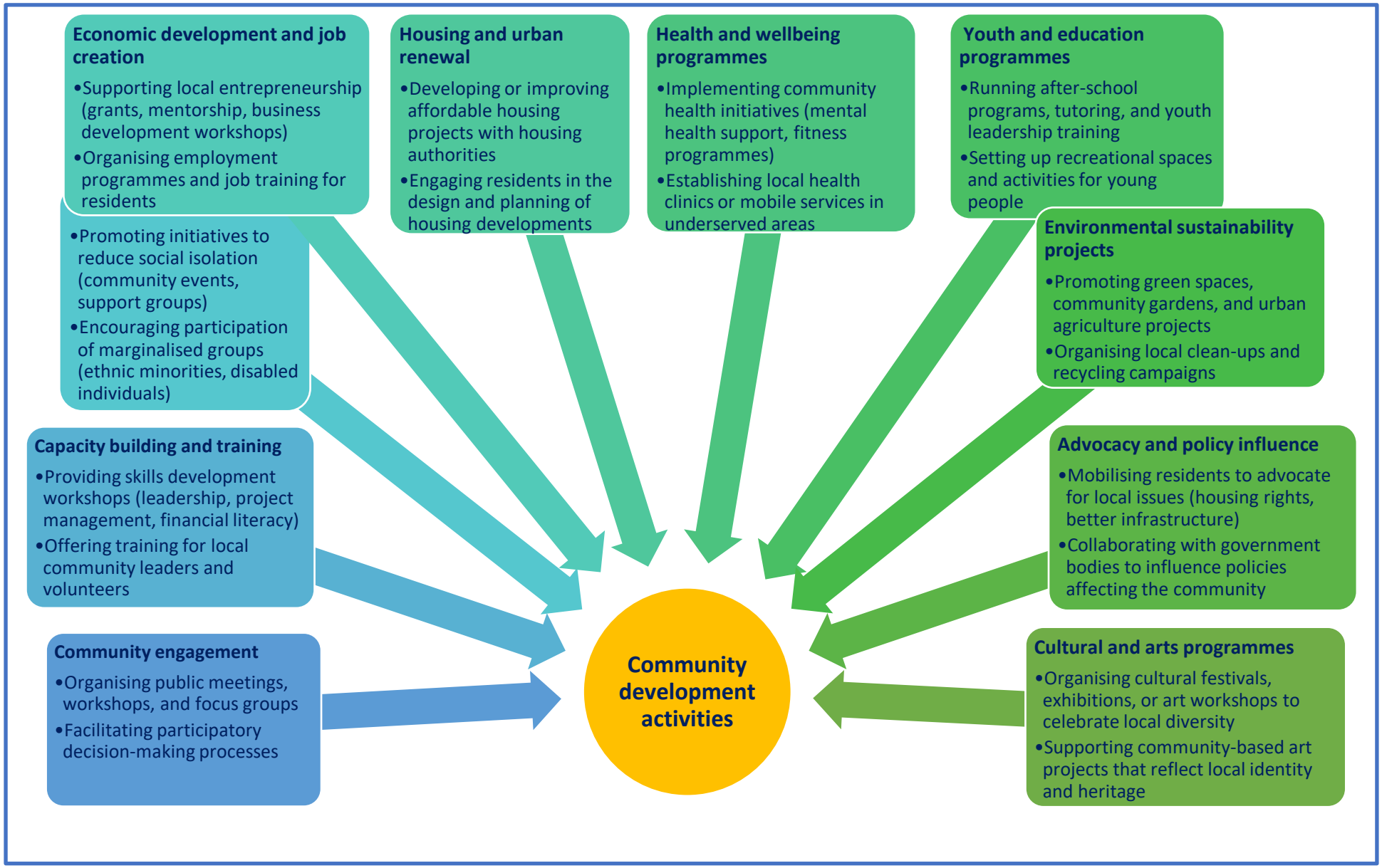
5.2.6.1 Community Development Activities: Scale and Context

Community development remains a marginalised function within public housing, with practitioners often working in isolation and positioned at the organisational edges—typically embedded in housing renewal or place-based teams. They are small in number and frequently surrounded by colleagues unfamiliar with community development goals or methods (Hoggett et al., 2008, p. 14).

Across the three housing authorities—HNZC, WCC, and CCC—community development initiatives numbered in the thousands over 17 years, spanning a wide range of housing complexes and renewal sites. These initiatives varied greatly in scope and duration, from one-off events to long-term programmes. Figure 12 illustrates the breadth of activity, revealing the diverse ways practitioners sought to enhance tenant wellbeing and strengthen social cohesion.

Despite this variation, a common thread ran through the work: successful initiatives were grounded in relationships. Trust, care, and connection formed the foundation of community development practice—shaping everyday interactions and influencing long-term outcomes. The next section explores how these relational dynamics informed practitioners' strategies and sustained their work in the face of institutional constraint.

Figure 12 *Community Development Activities identified by Informants* (Created by the author)



5.3 Theme One: Trust, Care, and Connection in Place

This theme explores how community development in public housing contexts creates and sustains environments where trust, care, and connection can flourish. These three dimensions—understood here as a triad of interdependent relational foundations—recur throughout the data as essential to effective practice. In communities often shaped by transience, marginalisation, and historical mistrust of institutions, the ability to foster authentic connection is both urgent and complex.

Drawing on interview narratives across legacy housing authorities, this theme illustrates how everyday encounters—often informal, relational, and deeply place-based—form the bedrock of effective practice. Small but consistent acts of presence—being known, being visible, and being trusted—create the conditions in which relationships can grow, even within institutional and spatial constraints. These interactions are not ancillary to formal programmes; they are the work of community development. Through sustained visibility, cultural fluency, and responsiveness to context, practitioners gradually reshape the social and institutional dynamics of public housing, enabling trust and participation to be cultivated over time.

While Chapter Three mapped the definitional ambiguities of community development, the accounts presented here offer a grounded articulation—shaped through everyday relational work, cultural practices, and place-based commitment. Community development was often expressed through visible activities such as tenant meetings, community events, and engagement strategies designed to foster participation. Yet, informants emphasised that beneath these structured efforts lies a quieter, often invisible layer of labour—work that is deeply affective, emotionally intelligent, and rarely captured by organisational metrics.

This invisible labour—what Banks and Orton (2007) describe as the understated, behind-the-scenes work of community development—is crucial to ensuring engagement is more than performative. It involves careful listening, sustained presence, and cultivating trust over

time. Informants described how confidence and leadership were nurtured not through grand interventions, but through consistent, relational work: showing up, following through, and making space.

These approaches draw explicitly on the ethics of care (Tronto, 1993, 2013), theories of social capital (Putnam, 2000), and cultural ontologies such as *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā* (Anae, 2010; Penny et al., 2024). These Indigenous frameworks extend the lens of care and connection beyond the interpersonal, embedding them within *whakapapa*, *vā*, and collective wellbeing. They also foreground values of reciprocity, cultural safety, and spiritual connection to place. The result is a multi-layered, hybridised model of practice that honours both Western relational theory and Indigenous worldviews.

The following sections examine how practitioners designed inclusive processes, removed barriers to participation, and cultivated environments of psychological safety. These findings also illuminate the emotional intensity and situated ethical judgement involved in navigating the tension between enabling and stepping back, between exercising authority and relinquishing it.

Ultimately, this theme invites us to consider what it means to move beyond transactional models of service provision and toward more human, relational approaches—where care is not an afterthought but an organising principle. These accounts position community development not only as a method of engagement, but as a practice that builds the relational foundation necessary for trust, care, and collective possibility.

5.3.1 Trust and Tension: Navigating Power, Presence, and Perceptions

Trust—or its absence—emerged as a defining concern in community development within public housing. In settings shaped by historical neglect, institutional harm, and enduring socio-economic precarity, trust is not an optional virtue—it is foundational to effective engagement. Yet trust is neither automatic nor static; it is constructed, negotiated, and, at

times, withheld. This section examines how trust is formed and fractured, asking: What does it mean for housing staff to be trusted? What are they trusted to do—or refrain from doing? And critically, what does it take to restore trust in contexts where it has been broken?

Policy framings offer early insight into how trust was institutionally conceived. The *Community Renewal Strategic Policy Framework* (HNZC, 2000, p. 31) stated:

> The amount and quality of trust and positive expectation within a community has, intuitively, a direct relationship not only to the wellbeing of the community but also to the improving cost-to-value ratio of the homes in that community.

This emphasis on community trust resonates with social capital theories that position generalised trust as vital to civic life (Putnam, 1995; Newton & Norris, 2000). Yet, as Rothstein and Stolle (2008) argue, the key determinant of trust lies not in interpersonal goodwill but in the performance of institutions themselves—their fairness, responsiveness, and inclusivity. Park et al. (2003) similarly stress that trust is not generated by messaging or intent, but earned through sustained integrity and redress.

This distinction is especially salient in public housing, where communities bear the weight of policy failure, structural disinvestment, and persistent power asymmetries. Informants in this study spoke to the fragility of trust and the intensive labour involved in rebuilding it—especially when institutional practices remained static. While dominant frameworks often treat trust as a diffuse or abstract good, informants grounded it in the granular details of practice: follow-through, consistency, and the ability to navigate the tension between professional role and personal integrity.

Aitken's (2012) typology offers analytical clarity by distinguishing between receptivity trust, ability trust, and representative trust. Critically, this framework troubles the assumption that trust is always empowering. High levels of representative trust, for instance, may reduce the perceived need for active participation, reinforcing hierarchical relationships. Receptivity

trust, by contrast, must be continually earned through relational engagement. These distinctions underscore that trust is not a singular good, but a context-bound, power-laden process—one that shapes and is shaped by, the conditions of engagement itself.

These tensions are not new. Questions of trust, power, and institutional role were already surfacing in policy frameworks, most notably in HNZC's *Community Renewal Strategic Policy Framework* (HNZC, 2000, p. 6), which underscored the importance of community engagement as the foundation of successful renewal: "At the heart and core of all successful community renewal is successful engagement with the community."

Yet what constitutes successful engagement—and on whose terms—was not fully articulated. Nor was the inherent contradiction addressed: how does a government agency act as a "community participant" when it is also a landlord, a regulator, and an arm of the state? The same document acknowledged:

> Housing New Zealand is generally regarded as an outsider […] Attaining the status of community participant or member will require a fundamental change in how we operate. (HNZC, 2000, p. 10)

This candid self-assessment reflects a degree of institutional humility—but also reveals a lack of clarity about what such change would entail. Would HNZC be willing to redistribute power, confront its complicity in social harm, or centre resident leadership in decision-making? For some informants, these unanswered questions became live tensions.

KI 13, a former Director, reflected on the profound disconnection and mistrust that characterised many public housing communities at the time:

> We saw communities where, fundamentally, the housing was broken, and the communities were struggling, incredibly struggling. To try and turn that around and to say as an organisation, "We actually are interested in you as people and your

> community, and we're now looking to invest in your community"—to then switch that took quite a deal of effort. (KI 13)

That "switch" was neither simple nor symbolic. Informants described the painstaking labour of re-engaging with communities after the market-driven reforms of the 1990s—particularly following the policy reset by the Labour-led government in 1999.

KI 14, a Senior Manager, described how mistrust continued to surface during the Housing Upgrade Project (HUP), with residents suspecting ulterior motives: "There wasn't a lot of trust in what we were doing. I don't think they believed that we were actually going to modernise and upgrade their properties and put them back in it."

In response, City Housing shifted its strategy, investing in community development, prioritising staff training, and concentrating on transparency. These were necessary steps but also exposed the limits of relational repair in the absence of structural change.

Practitioners like KI 7 and KI 8 reflected on the need to decouple their personal identities from their institutional affiliations in order to create space for new relationships. As KI 7 recalled: "That first portion is about getting some trust or rapport, and you've got to do that on a personal basis—not you there representing Housing New Zealand."

This approach—intentionally distinguishing oneself from the institution—echoes what Hardy et al. (1998) term a *façade of trust*: a tactical workaround that can foster relational traction even when institutional legitimacy is lacking. KI 8 described a similar strategy: "We tried to brand ourselves to the community as different and unique so we could create our own relationship and dynamic."

Such strategies walk a fine line. On one hand, they risk appearing performative—relational performances that gesture toward change without altering systemic conditions. On the other, they can function as trust catalysts: small but meaningful acts that signal difference, invite

reciprocity, and open pathways to deeper engagement. What distinguishes the two is not the gesture itself, but its consistency, reinforcement, and institutional backing. Trust-building, then, was experienced not as a singular act but as a layered, cumulative process—one in which even symbolic gestures could either amplify or erode credibility.

Yet these efforts carried a structural risk: they tended to individualise trust. When trust is tethered to particular practitioners rather than embedded in institutional reform, it becomes precarious—vulnerable to staff turnover, policy shifts, or moments of conflict. As Geller et al. (2014) argue, sustainable trust requires more than interpersonal skill; it depends on institutional accountability, transparency, and a demonstrable willingness to address past harm. Without this, even the most sincere relational work risks becoming a fragile substitute for the structural transformation it gestures toward.

KI 3, a Community Development Manager, underscored how trust-building was both slow and cumulative: “Those relationships took us a really long time to build, and we were at a place where we were trusted in that community. People believed what we said, which is fundamental to our work.”

KI 3’s reflection aligns with Lewis and Weigert’s (1985) concept of *cognitive trust*—trust built not on emotion, but on evidence: repeated interactions, fulfilled commitments, and visible consistency. Yet KI 3 also flagged a critical vulnerability discussed earlier: the precarious nature of trust when it is embodied in one staff member. If a practitioner leaves, that trust can dissolve, reactivating past wounds and reinforcing distrust. Middleton et al. (2005) similarly caution that staff turnover or inconsistent service delivery can rapidly erode trust, particularly in already unstable environments.

KI 4 raised an even deeper tension: the inescapable association of practitioners with institutional power. While they might aim to build trust, the residents’ experience of the

housing authority as landlord, enforcer, or potential evictor cannot be easily bracketed: “If they know that the organisation I work for could evict them, they won’t engage fully.”

This example highlights how perceived power shapes relational dynamics—regardless of a practitioner’s intent. Even well-meaning engagement can feel coercive when residents lack the security to speak freely. Here, Tronto’s (1993, 2013) ethics of care offers a useful lens: trust requires more than attentiveness—it requires structural conditions that make care possible and safe to receive.

In sum, efforts to (re)build trust unfolded within landscapes shaped by historical harm and deep-rooted institutional mistrust. While practitioners were central to these processes, their capacity to restore confidence was continually mediated by systemic constraints. The core question, then, is not simply whether residents trust individual staff members, but whether the institution itself is experienced as trustworthy in collective and enduring ways—a distinction that bears directly on legitimacy.

These trust-building practices reflected more than ethical intent; they also served as strategic interventions in contested governance spaces. As Gerhard and Keller (2023) contend, trust functions as critical infrastructure in housing development—facilitating cooperation, mitigating resistance, and linking institutional objectives with community realities. Their sociospatial perspective foregrounds the interdependence of institutional, procedural, and interpersonal dimensions of trust in shaping whether redevelopment is perceived as just and participatory.

These dimensions were evident in the practices described here: practitioners built trust through consistent presence, cultural fluency, and transparent engagement. Yet, as Gerhard and Keller caution, relational work alone is insufficient. Without structural accountability and institutional commitment, even the most sustained efforts risk being perceived as

ephemeral—vulnerable to disruption. Without systemic anchoring, even sustained relational efforts may falter under the weight of historical grievance.

In the next section, I explore how informants attempted to demonstrate trustworthiness through their actions, presence, and relationships—and the dilemmas this raised for their own sense of legitimacy and professional identity.

5.3.1.1 Demonstrating Trustworthiness in Practice

Informants consistently emphasised that trust is not just spoken into being—it is demonstrated. Trustworthiness must be made visible through sustained action, particularly in communities shaped by precarity and institutional betrayal. For many practitioners, this meant showing up, following through, and delivering tangible outcomes that signalled both intent and integrity.

KI 2 described the impact of immediate, visible improvements—such as installing barbecue areas or establishing gardens—as early, tangible demonstrations of intent that helped shift community perceptions: “You can also see change happen quickly […] creating barbecue areas and gardens quickly so tenants can see that we're serious and see a physical, visual change, so they get on board.”

While physical interventions can provide a sense of momentum, their trust-building power lies not in the objects themselves but in what they represent. Grunig (2002) argues that meaningful trust emerges from consistent demonstrations of dependability, competence, and integrity. A barbecue area alone does not establish trust—yet timely delivery, maintained spaces, and visible responsiveness can reinforce residents’ confidence that they are being listened to and that commitments will be honoured.

KI 9 echoed the importance of visibility: “It's really important to get that trust and credibility and be seen doing things.”

Yet, visibility, on its own, can be a double-edged sword. Without meaningful consultation or resident involvement, visible interventions risk being perceived as symbolic gestures or tokenistic efforts to buy goodwill. As Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Citizen Participation* reminds us, trust may erode rather than grow when communities are excluded from shaping interventions. For public housing residents—many of whom have experienced top-down decisions, broken promises, and extractive relationships—being "seen doing things" is only effective if those actions are anchored in reciprocal engagement.

KI 14 made this distinction clear, noting that while initial signals matter, trust is built through ongoing, accountable practice: "Building trust always takes time, and we were very clear about how important that was—that we did what we said we would do, and that we were accountable."

Here, KI 14 reinforces the principle that trust is incremental and procedural rather than performative. This emphasis on consistency and transparency aligns with Rothstein and Stolle's (2008) concept of *systemic trust*: the kind of trust that emerges not from personalities but from institutional behaviour over time. It also reflects Kay's (2005) argument that trust is cultivated through repeated acts of reliability—and can be quickly undermined when expectations are poorly managed or commitments go unmet. In this light, accountability is not simply a managerial requirement but a relational ethic that underpins legitimacy in community development.

Informants recognised that trust could not be accelerated, yet they also knew that even modest acts could be influential in contexts shaped by disappointment. The challenge was balancing "quick wins" and deeper, more deliberative processes that fostered inclusion and ownership. This balance is especially delicate in housing contexts where neglect of basic maintenance, lack of follow-through, or perceived indifference can rapidly undo goodwill (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Werner, 2021).

Ultimately, physical improvements may function as trust catalysts—visible signals of an intent to invest. But their significance lies not in the objects themselves, but in whether they are embedded within a broader architecture of authentic engagement. When paired with transparent communication, shared decision-making, and consistent follow-through, such actions can help lay the foundations of trust. Detached from these principles, however, they risk being dismissed as superficial or manipulative. As one informant noted, “Trust is slow, and it’s fragile.” Trust must be built with care—not merely through visible acts, but through sustained responsiveness, relational depth, and a meaningful invitation for residents to co-author the spaces they inhabit.

The following section explores how practitioners moved beyond demonstration and into connection—building deeper relational ties that supported long-term trust and collective resilience.

5.3.1.2 Relational Proximity and the Practice of Trust

While the previous section examined how trust is shaped by institutional legacies and systemic contradictions, this section turns to the everyday practices through which trust is cultivated on the ground. Informants repeatedly underscored that trust is not built from a distance—it emerges through presence. Being seen, known, and embedded in community life allows practitioners to bridge the social distance that often separates housing authorities from tenants. Unlike many government roles that remain office-based or transactional, community development in public housing is deeply situated. One practitioner recalled how being “on the street, in people’s homes, in their space” creates the proximity through which trust grows through everyday encounters. As KI 2 put it, “There's a privilege… and an opportunity with that.”

This grounded presence enabled practitioners to build ties through informal, low-stakes interactions—rather than relying on formal authority. Cups of tea, tool-sharing, shared

gardens, and chats over the fence became not just incidental moments but essential sites of connection. Fukuyama (1996) refers to this as “spontaneous sociability”—the kind of everyday rapport that slowly builds familiarity and mutual regard. KI 8 described how being woven into the fabric of local life enabled trust to emerge organically: “Not, ‘We come in, do stuff, and go out.’ It’s like, ‘Okay, they’re part of the fabric now.’” These repeated encounters became what Mee (2009) calls “trust anchors”: relational touchpoints that, over time, shift how institutions are perceived. Even modest exchanges, such as lending a lawn mower or checking in at the community house, became moments where residents could experience the housing authority not as a distant landlord, but as a relationally responsive presence.

This shift—from institution to relationship—was central to building both cognitive trust, based on reliability and follow-through and affective trust based on care and connection (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Gilchrist, 2004). But proximity alone was not sufficient. Informants emphasised that trust was only meaningful when grounded in deeper values of respect, humility, and cultural understanding. For Māori practitioners, this work was anchored in the practice of *whakawhanaungatanga*—a relational ethic rooted *in whakapapa*, mutual responsibility, and collective wellbeing (Boulton & Brannelly, 2015). Being in relationship was not only about showing up, but how one showed up—upholding connections with care, reciprocity, and *manaakitanga*.

The value of these relational practices became especially clear when contrasted with more formal or transactional settings. KI 9 observed that residents often associated official housing offices with punitive encounters, noting, “You’re usually in trouble”—typically due to rent arrears or property damage that required a face-to-face meeting with a Tenancy Manager. In contrast, the informality of community spaces provided a more open, less surveilled environment—one that enabled dialogue, built confidence, and allowed practitioners to hold relational and emotional space in which trust could develop.

These findings affirm Tronto's (1993) ethics of care, which highlights attentiveness, responsiveness, and presence as fundamental to relational work. They also echo scholarship that views trust not as a finite outcome, but as an ongoing practice—enacted through small, sustained gestures rather than grand interventions. In sum, relational proximity enabled community development practitioners to shift perceptions, foster belonging, and lay the groundwork for more enduring forms of engagement. It was not presence alone, but the quality of that presence—culturally grounded, emotionally attuned, and relationally intentional—that enabled trust to take hold within the contested terrain of public housing.

The following section explores how *whakawhanaungatanga* guided practitioner practice and offers insight into how relational trust was cultivated through culturally resonant, place-based engagement.

5.3.2 Whakawhanaungatanga as a Practice: Creating Connections and Developing Trust

Whakawhanaungatanga was not simply referenced in Māori wellbeing frameworks—it was actively embodied by several informants. KI 1, in particular, offered a vivid account of how *whakawhanaungatanga* shaped day-to-day community development. For them, it was not a preliminary engagement strategy or checklist item—it was the foundation of meaningful work. KI 1 explained: "Getting to know our people was very important and key to anything I did […] *Whanaungatanga* is the first thing: relationships, relationships, relationships—he tangata, he tangata, he tangata."

KI 1 enacted *whakawhanaungatanga* through openly sharing *whakapapa*, fostering mutual recognition and connection: "It would be sharing my *whakapapa*, who I am, and my identity in an open space. Immediately, we have a connection."

This reflects *whakawhanaungatanga* as both ethic and method—expressed through practices grounded in Māori relational ontologies, challenging institutional norms favouring

speed and transactional interaction. As Eketone (2021) puts it, it is “the process of identifying, maintaining, or forming past, present, and future relationships… to advance a *kaupapa* that involves reciprocal obligations” (p. 30).

This aligns with KI 1’s approach, where trust and connection are intentionally cultivated through presence, sharing, and relational consistency. It moved beyond strategic rapport-building, reflecting a cultural ethic grounded in respect and mutual obligation (Eketone, 2021). It also echoes Hibbert et al.’s (2001) observation that trust in marginalised communities is built through interpersonal bonds rather than institutional status.

KI 1’s practice wove together affective trust (empathy and emotional resonance) and cognitive trust (reliability and consistency)—essential in contexts marked by institutional neglect. This emphasis on relationship-building reflects relational theory (Gilligan, 1982; Held, 2006) and the ethics of care, which centre attentiveness, responsibility, and responsiveness (Tronto, 1993, 2013). Trust, in this context, was neither immediate nor assumed—it developed gradually through sustained engagement.

5.3.2.1 Trust Beyond Timelines

Building trust through *whakawhanaungatanga* required more than presence—it demanded time. Not time measured by outputs or deadlines. For informants like KI 1 and KI 3, trust emerged gradually, through sustained presence, deep listening, and respect for local rhythms. This temporal orientation conflicted with institutional logics that prioritised speed, compliance, and visible results. Their practice unfolded in whānau-time, not programme-time—an ethic of patience privileging connection over urgency.

KI 1 exemplified this ethic through consistent, respectful engagement. For them, trust was not assumed or extracted—it was earned: “The end game is about them trusting me first. I’m not going in there for anything else than to gain their trust.”

As a “trust anchor,” KI 1 built both cognitive and affective trust not through formal roles but through presence and humility. This required slowing down, letting go of institutional schedules, and embracing reciprocity: “Our communities don’t live on our schedule… you’re not going to get the results you’re looking for if you rush it through.”

Trust was cultivated through cultural resonance and authentic engagement: “I’m not there to get quick gains […] some have taken immediate embrace of my approach because they recognise it.”

Here, trust anchoring is not a tactic but a culturally grounded practice of *whakawhanaungatanga*—shaped by shared presence, mutual recognition, and relational care. It challenges institutional pace and reframes engagement as an intentionally slow, ethical process.

KI 3 reinforced this: “When I say it takes time… we can make really good progress. It’s just a matter of allowing that process to happen first.”

KI 3’s reflection reveals trust-building as the core of community development—not a precondition. But trust remains fragile without systemic support. Informants pointed to how quickly it can be undermined by leadership turnover or policy shifts (Eketone, 2021).

When embraced as a lived Indigenous practice, *whakawhanaungatanga* reorients engagement away from bureaucratic detachment toward relational ethics. Yet, this transformation demands more than individual effort. It requires institutional commitment to reciprocal, enduring relationships.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is not a cultural reference—it is a constitutional foundation. When relational practice aligns with the principles of *Te Tiriti* of partnership, participation, and protection, it becomes an institutional obligation rather than a personal choice.

While agencies often reference cultural values, *whakawhanaungatanga* resists assimilation. It is grounded in *whakapapa*, not metrics (Boulton & Brannelly, 2015; Penny et al., 2024). Real integration requires not just programme redesign but institutional reimagining—where structures are reoriented to prioritise time, presence, and connection (Cram, 2014; Smith, 2012; Kay, 2005; Pitchford & Henderson, 2008).

5.3.2.2 From Casual Contact to Community Ties: How Low-Key Connections Build Belonging

Residents' desire for social connection emerged as a consistent theme among informants. They highlighted how public and social housing can foster these connections and support broader networks of belonging. KI 12 reflected on the consequences of isolation:

> You see people just living alone, not knowing their neighbours, not having any connection with the people surrounding them and ending up in a situation where if they ever need someone, there's no one close to them that they can reach out to. (KI 12)

Community development served as a counter to this disconnection—not just offering support, but creating the conditions for meaningful connection. KI 12 described it as “purposeful activity” that combats isolation.

These activities took many forms—informal socialising, shared meals, creative expression, knowledge-sharing, and collaborative projects like gardening or choir singing. KI 1 described how tenants formed a choir to connect and create:

> The tenants found that this was something that they would make connections around, something that was good for their wellbeing, and something that they would enjoy. They're able to grow it and go from learning to sing to practising singing together to then performing singing as well. (KI 1)

This illustrates a social multiplier effect: one group activity catalysing both individual wellbeing and collective solidarity. KI recalled how the choir became an informal mutual aid network, “They started a tree of phone numbers like, ‘If anyone needs food, let us know.’ They *awhi’d*[9] one another. That was really special.”

Such networks reflect what Sampson et al. (1997) call *collective efficacy*—shared belief in residents’ ability to work together. Participation often led to empowerment, with members eventually taking ownership of initiatives.

Other informal practices—barbecues, drop-in sessions, shared meals—lowered barriers to participation. As Gilchrist (2000) notes, these relaxed settings foster engagement. KI 8 described the significance of hosting street-by-street barbecues: “We had barbecues on each little cul-de-sac… people were saying, ‘Just keep coming back,’ and ‘This is the first time I've met my neighbour in 15 years.’” (KI 8)

Acts such as cooking, tool-sharing, or checking in are not trivial—they are expressions of “neighbouring”(Perkins et al., 1996). For many residents, these practices are not incidental—they are transformational. KI 14 recalled the profound impact of a gardening project designed to bring residents together where a resident shared their experience: “This has saved my life. I now know my neighbour. I can go somewhere for help.”

This story reinforces the idea that community development in public housing is not just about service delivery—it’s about scaffolding social support systems. When these systems are weak or absent, the effects can be devastating. KI 11 recalled how, following a resident’s suicide, tenants requested a space to gather and connect: “This is how we can minimise isolation and get them to connect, and that's a catalyst for change.”

---

[9] *Awhi’d* is a colloquialism for a *te reo Māori* concept meaning to embrace, support, assist, or uplift. In relational practice, *awhi* conveys more than help—it signifies care expressed through presence, encouragement, and mutual respect, often embedded in *tikanga* Māori. See *Awhitanga* in the glossary (see Appendix A).

In response, a weekly drop-in café was established—a seemingly modest initiative that became foundational for building new relationships, reducing isolation, and fostering a renewed sense of community. While informal by design, such initiatives can function as *spaces of care* (Mee, 2009), where relational presence, consistency, and attentiveness create the conditions for connection and support. Their impact lies not in formal structures but in the everyday practices through which care is enacted, and community is nurtured.

Still, care must be exercised with caution. Informants acknowledged how efforts to foster unity could expose exclusion and conflict. KI 1 described a fractured attempt to use a shared room: “Everybody wanted to use that space, but gatekeepers turned it into no man’s land… we tried to be the glue, but didn’t understand the fractures.”

As Putzel (1997) and Perkins et al. (2002) caution, connection can empower or exclude. Practitioners must ask: who is included, and who is left out?

Ultimately, low-key interactions—conversations, shared meals—can shift how people see themselves and each other. These are not minor gestures—they are relational, political acts of justice. As Held (2006) reminds us, care is a public ethic, not just a private sentiment—essential for solidarity and trust in divided spaces.

The following section turns to care more explicitly, examining how it operates as both a relational ethic and a vehicle for social justice in community development practice.

5.3.3 Beyond Service Delivery: Caring as a Political and Relational Practice

The ethics of care (Tronto, 2013) offers a powerful analytical lens for understanding how trust, connection, and responsiveness are cultivated in public housing. Rather than remaining a private or discretionary concern, Tronto reframes care as a political act—one that resists exclusionary systems, fosters social change, and centres relational interdependence and mutual responsibility. Likewise, Sevenhuijsen (2003) argues that care

is not opposed to governance but a vital expression of democratic citizenship and social justice. In this view, care is not a soft policy add-on—it is a counter-narrative to technocratic models that reduce residents to passive recipients and practitioners to bureaucratic functionaries.

Informants consistently invoked care not as sentiment, but as a principle guiding their practice. They framed it as responsibility, a relational ethic, and a mode of resistance—especially within transactional, compliance-driven service systems. Within public housing, care was enacted through patience, attentiveness, empathy, and responsiveness—in everyday encounters that fostered trust and affirmed tenants' dignity.

Care enabled residents to feel seen, heard, and valued within systems that often erase their agency. It was through these grounded, relational acts that practitioners challenged institutional indifference and created space for more just, relational, and humanising forms of engagement.

5.3.3.1 Listening with Intent: Noticing what Matters

Informants emphasised that one of the most powerful expressions of care was simply listening—with presence, patience, and without agenda. KI 14 described how attentiveness, even amidst competing demands, was central to connection: "The ability to listen and notice and watch… You might be busy, but actually sitting down, having a cup of tea, and having a conversation is what you need to do."

This reflects Tronto's (1993, 2013) view that attentiveness is the first phase of care—the moral capacity to recognise that someone's needs matter. In public housing contexts, where residents may be wary of institutions, such presence can be profoundly reparative.

Listening with intent counters frameworks of assessment and "risk management," creating space where residents feel genuinely heard.

KI 4 echoed this, describing the unpredictability of housing environments: “On any given day, something could come up… Suddenly, you get thrown a curveball because there's a health crisis going on.”

This highlights the emotional volatility of practice. The capacity to respond with flexibility and compassion—rather than defaulting to defensiveness or bureaucratic rigidity—is a hallmark of relational care. Yet, as Miller (2004) observes, this emotional labour is rarely recognised in policy systems that value metrics over meaning. Absorbing distress, sitting with uncertainty, navigating unresolved harm are not peripheral tasks—they are central to the trust practitioners build with communities.

These dimensions rarely appear in outcome reporting, yet they constitute the unspoken infrastructure upon which effective community development rests. In attending to crisis, holding space for grief, and responding with care, practitioners earn credibility in ways formal systems alone cannot replicate. Their capacity to carry emotional weight — often without recognition — sustains the relationships on which community development depends.

5.3.3.2 Caring with Conviction: Knowing why it Matters

For many informants, care wasn’t just about doing their job—it stemmed from a deep belief in the dignity and worth of tenants. KI 8 expressed this sense of ethical responsibility: “We've put this family into this house, and we've got a responsibility to ensure their wellbeing… that these communities function well and contribute to society.”

Here, care expands beyond individual welfare to collective wellbeing, echoing Tronto’s (1993, 2013) view that democratic care demands institutions take responsibility for the broader conditions shaping people’s lives—housing, safety, services, and connection. KI 8 reframes care as civic, not just interpersonal: housing authorities carry obligations that go beyond tenancy management.

Other informants described care as an ethic of resistance—refusing to uphold policies that harmed residents. KI 11 noted: “You have to care even if nobody cares. You have to care, and you've got to know why you're doing it.”

This moral clarity led some to quietly bend policy to meet urgent needs—providing shelter to ineligible residents, offering food from their own budgets, or delaying punitive actions. These decisions reflected Tronto’s notion of responsibility: not abstract rule-following, but responding to the person in front of you.

Such choices came with costs. Informants spoke of emotional exhaustion, ethical tension, and institutional scrutiny. Yet for many, these acts of care were essential to maintaining their integrity in systems that often felt indifferent. Care wasn’t just what they did—it was why they chose this work.

5.3.3.3 Beyond the Cookie-Cutter: Care as a Responsive Practice

Care in community development is not a fixed template but an adaptive, situational practice. Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model, informants stressed the need to tailor care to residents’ diverse needs and contexts. This responsive approach challenges bureaucratic rigidity and affirms the complexity of people’s lived experiences. As KI 4 put it: “You're able to pivot… seeing what has worked in the past, what is working now, and what will work in the future won't always be the same.”

This echoes Kaplan’s (1996) concept of *disciplined flexibility*—the ability to stay intentional while shifting course as conditions evolve. In public housing, where policy and community dynamics are constantly changing, responsiveness is not just strategic—it’s ethical.

This flexibility reflects deeper relational intelligence. KI 4 described their approach as: “Going where the energy is, supporting that, helping it grow, and letting it run.”

Care here is not imposed—it's facilitated. It means noticing emergence, resourcing momentum, and stepping back. This aligns with the practice of *holding space* (Palmer, 2004; Plett, 2015), which centres humility, trust, and a willingness to resist over-direction.

Responsive care requires attentiveness to nuance: knowing when to lead, when to follow, and when to witness. KI 13 emphasised this need for depth:

> It is that care about growth and inclusion and about a sort of mindset, isn't it? It's not that cookie-cutter practice; it's having that depth of understanding about the community and about individuals because it's not some sort of nebulous community thing. It's actually people at the end of the day. (KI 13)

This insight reminds us that care is not about abstract communities—it's about real people with agency, histories, and aspirations. But when responsive care depends solely on individuals, it becomes fragile. Sustaining it requires systems that support—not just permit—adaptive practice.

An ethics of care lens moves practitioners beyond transactional service delivery toward relational and situated work. As KI 1, KI 4, and KI 13 illustrate, responsive care builds trust, inclusion, and collective agency. But for it to endure, housing authorities must embed it institutionally—not treat it as a "soft skill."

As Tronto (1993, 2013) warns, systems that prioritise efficiency over responsiveness risk reproducing harm. Thriving communities are built not only on plans and metrics—but on context, relationship, and everyday acts of care.

The following section explores how these values are carried into the design and use of shared spaces—physical environments that enable connection, participation, and belonging—as vital sites for enacting community care.

5.3.4 More than a Place: Creating Opportunities for Connection and Change

Community spaces in public housing are not passive backdrops for service delivery—they are relational infrastructures that support connection, participation, and transformation. As discussed in Chapter Three, informal settings like community rooms, gardens, and barbecue areas foster spontaneous, low-stakes interaction (Oldenburg, 1999). These spaces act as social thresholds where proximity becomes mutuality, and everyday encounters lay the groundwork for trust (Banwell & Kingham, 2023).

In contexts shaped by isolation, transient tenancies, and institutional mistrust, such environments offer culturally safe, accessible settings for building relationships and encouraging belonging. Rather than simply hosting programmes, they enable the slow, often invisible work of community development.

KI 2, a Community Development Manager, reflected on this transformative potential:

> There were a lot of very isolated and very vulnerable people. Through our programme, we were able to build a whole lot of community rooms and bumping spaces, gardens, playgrounds, and barbecue areas. We were getting people connected in socialising and wrapping around all these other programmes where people could learn new skills. (KI 2)

Here, physical design supported not only activity but affective connection—creating social infrastructure that catalysed regular, low-key interactions. As Jupp (2008) and Gilchrist (2004) argue, these modest exchanges are foundational to trust and cohesion.

As residents came into contact more regularly, something deeper emerged. KI 2 recalled: “They used to talk about who was there and who wasn't… if they hadn't seen someone in a while, they would go to check up on them.” (KI 2)

This signals a shift from housing as isolated tenancy toward emergent community. Such ties support mutual care and shared wellbeing (Putnam, 1995). While physical infrastructure enabled connection, it was residents who animated it through everyday concern.

But sustaining these spaces requires more than construction—it demands presence. KI 8 reflected: ""Even just the notion of practice that's a doing word. You're not practising it by sitting in a chair. It's like a sports analogy. You're out there on the field, practising. You're out there."

This insight powerfully underscores the active nature of relational work. Like a craft honed over time, community development in public housing is not a static profession but an embodied, iterative practice. Through casual conversations over tea, affirming a resident's confidence, or simply showing up consistently, practitioners create the enabling conditions for connection, participation, and, eventually, change.

These low-key interactions may seem inconsequential within formal reporting structures, but as earlier sections have shown, they are foundational to building belonging and community confidence. Without these sustained, intentional efforts, shared spaces risk becoming underutilised assets—devoid of the very relationships that give them meaning.

Ultimately, the value of these community spaces lies not in their architecture or programming alone but in their capacity to hold and cultivate human connection. They offer a glimpse into what public housing can be when designed not merely as a shelter but as a platform for social, emotional, and political wellbeing—a place where connection becomes the first step toward collective change.

5.3.4.1 From Places to Spaces: Transforming Shared Environments

Community spaces in public housing were never just venues—they became the heartbeat of connection, care, and informal leadership. What began as staff-led initiatives often evolved

into resident-owned environments. These shifts reflected more than programme maturity—they signalled a reorientation of space, power, and participation.

5.3.4.1.1 Claiming Space through Everyday Acts

It was the small things that laid the foundation: having a cup of tea, checking on neighbours, or casually stopping by. These everyday acts gave rise to something deeper.

KI 2 noted how residents moved from informal drop-ins to organising events: “Movie nights where tenants ran them themselves.”

Through consistent presence, residents developed autonomy and stewardship. What was once a managed facility became a lived-in space shaped by mutual regard. Belonging emerged not from programming but from shared rhythms and relationships.

These evolving practices redefined not only how space was used but how power was distributed. This shift aligns with Cornwall’s (2002) concept of claimed spaces—environments no longer granted or managed from above, but shaped and sustained by those who inhabit them. These spaces became relational infrastructure, built not through oversight, but through trust and participation.

In moments of crisis, their civic potential also surfaced. KI 6 described how community rooms became hubs after the Christchurch earthquakes: "We were trying to focus on educational stuff and community preparedness, working closely with Civil Defence… to try and get tenants to take more active participation in the community.”

These examples reveal the dual function of shared space—not only as sites of care and connection, but as platforms for civic resilience.

As Latham and Layton (2019) note, these are spaces for *interacting across difference*—where relationships form across cultures, generations, and life experiences. This bridging

function was not incidental—it was intrinsic, especially in communities marked by isolation and marginalisation.

5.3.4.1.2 Tensions of Empowerment and Control

Not all spaces flourished. In some cases, institutional risk-aversion limited resident leadership. KI 3 reflected on colleagues' reluctance to support tenant-led use of rooms: "We've got community rooms, and 'we need a resident's group to run those community rooms. We don't trust those residents to be able to utilise them.'"

This contradiction—between empowerment rhetoric and controlling practice—echoes Cornwall's (2002) critique of participatory spaces that reproduce hierarchy when residents lack real influence. It positions them as objects of programming rather than agents of change.

Even where leadership emerged, informants described the behind-the-scenes labour of holding space with care. KI 2 recalled: "There were always power moves and coups … Often, we would be the mediators or the arbitrators."

These tensions were not signs of failure, but of engagement. Conflict, when supported well, can be generative. But to build trust, spaces need clear processes, support mechanisms, and relationally skilled facilitators. Practitioners often had to step back—holding tensions without imposing control—while ensuring inclusion didn't collapse under its own weight.

As Massey (2013) reminds us, space is not a passive container but a dynamic set of relations. Similarly, Mee (2009) emphasises that spaces of care are animated through everyday acts of belonging—not design alone. This reframes space as relational infrastructure, requiring sustained attention and trust.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, these dynamics hold specific cultural significance. KI 1 shared: “Get rid of all the barriers of titles… and just become a part of that community. But also remembering that you’re a visitor there… that’s their community.”

This ethic aligns with *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā*—the intentional nurturing of relational space and sacred connection (Anae, 2010; Penny et al., 2024). In this view, leadership is not granted by title, but enacted through humility, reciprocity, and ongoing contribution.

The clearest expression of this transformation was the emergence of *kaitiaki*—residents who ensured the jug was on, the door open, the atmosphere safe. These informal guardians of trust and continuity weren’t appointed, but earned their place through consistency and care. In a context often marked by transience and mistrust, their quiet presence became a profound form of resistance and relational strength.

5.3.4.1.3 Sustaining Empowering Spaces

While transformation is possible, sustaining relational spaces requires more than good intentions. Informants stressed that these spaces are not self-sustaining—they depend on continued investment in people, relationships, and governance. Without support, even vibrant spaces risk becoming dormant or captured by gatekeepers.

As earlier examples demonstrated, when residents are trusted to shape communal environments, a deeper ethic of care can emerge. Yet stewardship remains fragile without institutional scaffolding. When relational practice is unrecognised or under-resourced, the burden often falls on a few, leaving the work precarious and exhausting.

Informants also underscored the importance of pacing**.** Trust cannot be rushed, and once broken, is difficult to rebuild. Institutional churn, shifting policies, or a single broken promise

can undo months of presence-based work. Discontinuity—whether in staffing, funding, or mandate—was seen as one of the greatest risks to sustaining empowering spaces.

Cultural frameworks such as *kaitiakitanga*, *whakawhanaungatanga*, and *teu le vā* offer not only ethical guidance but practical principles: protected time for building relationships, resourcing informal leadership, and governance models that honour both formal and informal contributions.

Sustaining these spaces is not about replicating programmes—it requires institutionalising values. This means shifting from transactional to relational accountability, from viewing community rooms as deliverables to recognising them as ecosystems. Where this shift occurs, residents are not service users but *kaitiaki*—not as guests, but as holders of place, shaping what it means to belong.

Community spaces anchored connection and care, but they also opened new possibilities. Informants described how everyday micro-politics—sharing kai, opening doors, holding space—evolved into leadership, advocacy, and civic participation. Yet this evolution wasn't automatic. It emerged through deliberate efforts to build confidence, broker relationships, and redistribute power.

Theme Two explores how practitioners linked people with opportunity—not through formal programming alone, but through relational strategies that enabled agency and influence. Community development, in this framing, is not a linear model—but a dynamic interplay of presence, politics, and potential.

5.4 Theme Two: Linking People, Power, and Possibilities

Theme Two shifts the focus to how practitioners create pathways that connect people to opportunity, influence, and collective agency. It explores how networks are built and sustained, how participation is facilitated, and how leadership is supported in ways that

amplify community voice. Social networks are not passive backdrops to community life—they are the connective tissue through which trust accumulates, relationships ripple outward, and influence circulates.

This theme also surfaces the limitations of institutional engagement frameworks that invite participation without redistributing power. The findings show that practitioners do more than run events or deliver programmes—they support leadership and connection through sustained, relational work that scaffolds participation. Capability-building is positioned not as a secondary task, but as a structural and ethical responsibility within public service.

As Frieling (2018) and Warr (2005) argue, social networks carry latent potential to transform social capital into material, economic, and political outcomes. When practitioners help residents build connections—both within neighbourhoods and across broader systems—they are not just fostering social ties; they are opening conduits to agency, mobility, and influence.

This theme examines how networks function as both mechanism and outcome in community development. It also considers how practitioners navigate institutional constraints to cultivate engagement that is not only relational but potentially transformational.

5.4.1 Creating Pathways and Building Bridges: Networks as Tools for Social Change

Strategic use of social networks can be a powerful lever for change—particularly when housing authorities intentionally connect residents with broader systems of opportunity. In this role, practitioners act as bridge-builders, linking communities to employment, education, and civic pathways. These efforts move beyond neighbourhood-level concerns and ripple into economic and political domains. KI 9 shared a compelling example:

> An essential requirement of all our building contracts was to have a social employment clause. They took 17- and 18-year-olds from families who either moved

> out or would come in; they had a career path they had never thought possible. You could see that you had really changed their lives forever. (KI 9)

These initiatives illustrate what de Souza Briggs (1998) and Jamili et al. (2011) describe as the catalytic potential of institutions to broker access to labour markets. However, their sustainability often depends on alignment with funding and policy—a balance practitioners must navigate.

Beyond employment, practitioners also facilitate learning opportunities. KI 9 described courses in literacy, budgeting, computer, and driving skills embedded in development efforts to support long-term confidence and autonomy.

KI 3 expanded on this: “We had Literacy Aotearoa helping us get funding… and *Te Whare Ahuru* across the way. That would become a link to the wider community.”

This form of social wayfinding (Tually et al., 2020) helps residents build outward-facing relationships, reducing isolation while expanding access to resources.

Some initiatives emerged in direct response to unmet needs. KI 8 recalled: “We’ve got a lot of teenage mothers, and they’re not connected in the community. How can we make this happen?”

What began as a question grew into a peer-led space for connection and emerging leadership. Over time, members took ownership—developing confidence, advocacy skills, and the capacity to navigate systems previously seen as out of reach.

In all these examples, networks operate at both instrumental and relational levels. They offer access to material resources and act as scaffolding for identity, belonging, and public participation.

The following section explores how practitioners translate these relational gains into participatory structures. While networks can open access, their transformative potential often encounters limits set by institutional models of engagement. Drawing on Gaventa (2006) and Cornwall (2002, 2008), the next section examines how practitioners contest and reshape these limits to foster more equitable participation.

5.4.1.1 From Closed to Controlled: Navigating Instrumental Participation

Instrumental participation—controlled engagement that limits resident influence—is a frequent strategy in public housing redevelopment. Burton et al. (2004) define it as structured to deliver predetermined outcomes while minimising disruption to existing power structures. Gaventa (2006) further describes how participation can operate in bounded spaces where input is restricted and controlled. As Nikkhah and Redzuan (2009) argue, this top-down model aims at specific objectives, offering visibility without authority. Participation becomes more about managing risk than shifting power.

In this study, housing authorities often relied on one-way tools—letters, fact sheets, newsletters—to inform rather than involve. While common, these methods reinforced transactional relationships and limited residents' agency.

Practitioners, however, worked to disrupt this pattern. Several sought more interactive forms of engagement. KI 1 described introducing design workshops—structured invited spaces (Cornwall, 2004)—that allowed dialogue between residents and project teams:

> We had to redevelop, upgrade, and move people about… I do not believe that could have ever been successful if it wasn't for those Activates. We had to teach project development managers how to communicate and participate with our audiences—they never thought it was their job. (KI 1)

Here, practitioners acted as translation agents (Eversole, 2012)—moving between policy and lived experience, making institutional goals legible to communities, and community concerns legible to officials. In doing so, they shifted organisational culture and enabled dialogue within rigid structures.

However, this relational brokering introduced vulnerability. When inclusive practice depends on individuals rather than systems, it becomes fragile—threatened by turnover, policy change, or managerial reprioritisation. What appears as community partnership may hinge more on a practitioner's presence than institutional will. Participation that seems embedded can be, in reality, contingent, conditional, and ephemeral.

Importantly, participatory mechanisms are only effective when trust exists. As previous themes noted, participation is built on relationships, not imposed by process. KI 9 described how trust enabled deeper conversations:

> It enabled us to get in front doors and talk to people about other things that would help them take their lives forward […] 'We're not here to talk about your rent… what would help you in your day-to-day life?' (KI 9)

Yet residents' initial reluctance revealed the legacy of exclusion. KI 9 recalled surprise when residents were asked to participate: "They had no idea why or what they could add. No one had ever said, 'What do you think of how your house works?' No one had ever asked them."

This insight highlights how design processes can socialise passivity—and how the act of being asked, genuinely, can shift both expectations and engagement.

These practices also transformed staff. KI 14 noted how participatory processes reshaped professional mindsets:

> It did it in capacity building of staff […] learning and realising that kind of relational versus transactional interaction—how beneficial that is. It enriched our work. It's very arrogant to think that we know best. We don't. (KI 14)

This shift underscores the tension between technocratic efficiency and relational ethics. Initially viewed as procedural, participatory practice began to foster humility, responsiveness, and relational accountability (Turner, 2009).

Still, motivations were often pragmatic. As KI 10 explained:

> "When you're relocating people out of their homes… if you don't have people's buy-in, you're in for a rough ride. It's pretty critical to understand how people use the buildings so you can incorporate that into design." (KI 10)

Here, participation functions as risk mitigation—ensuring compliance and smooth delivery (Wood, 2001)—rather than as a strategy for power-sharing.

Some practitioners adopted iterative models. KI 7 described a redevelopment project: "We would start by talking to the community. 'What do you think we should do to fix it?' Go back to Council, keep updating the community, keeping them informed. It's making them part of the team." (KI 7)

While this fostered inclusion, it risked positioning practitioners as the sole conduit between residents and decision-makers—a setup that can reinforce dependency (Cernea, 1985; Wood, 2002).

Occasionally, housing authorities supported co-creation. KI 2 shared a rare example: the co-design of a playground at Te Ara Hou, where children played a central role. Through animation, documentaries, and collaborative design, they developed a theme rooted in

Newtown's hills, harbour, zoo, and the pūrākau of Ngāke and Whātaitai. [10] Figure 13 is a photo of the completed playground.

Figure 13 *Te Ara Hou playground* (Wellington City Council, 2011)

This was more than symbolic inclusion. As KI 2 observed, engagement was embedded throughout the project: "There was just constant activity of design and construction and then weaving all our tenant involvement in to ensure genuine engagement and input into what happened." The children's contribution extended into the material environment—painting the playground's fencing—so that, as KI 2 reflected, "they could go out into the playground knowing they'd helped to design it and helped to make it as colourful and lovely as it is."

Yet KI 2 acknowledged it was exceptional, made possible by practitioner commitment rather than institutional design. Without structural support, such embedded approaches remain rare.

As Cornwall (2004) and Gaventa (2006) caution, even invited spaces can replicate power hierarchies if residents are included in form but excluded from influence. Without systemic

[10] Toi Māori Aotearoa. (n.d.). *Ngāke and Whātaitai – the taniwha of Wellington harbour*. Te Ara Puoro. Retrieved April 24, 2025, from https://teara.govt.nz/en/ngake-and-whataitai

investment in shared authority, participatory practice risks being celebrated in hindsight but rarely repeated.

Across these examples, participatory practice in public housing emerges as highly contingent—shaped by timelines, resourcing, institutional culture, and individual skill. While practitioners successfully expanded resident voice through invited spaces, these efforts were often bounded by bureaucratic priorities.

Instrumental participation may offer a step toward inclusion, but its limits are stark. Without deeper structural shifts, participatory methods risk becoming tools of control rather than platforms for transformation.

The final section explores what happens when residents move beyond invited spaces altogether—claiming power, shaping agendas, and exercising agency on their own terms.

5.4.1.2 Partial Power: Navigating the Boundaries of Citizen Engagement

Despite widespread rhetoric about resident empowerment, informants described few meaningful opportunities for residents to influence decisions that affected their lives. Although many housing initiatives were framed as “citizen-centred,” residents were often positioned as passive recipients of services rather than as rights-bearing citizens. This echoes longstanding critiques that reducing residents to customers depoliticises participation and reinforces institutional control (Atkinson & Cope, 1997; Cairncross et al., 1994).

As outlined in Chapter Two, this tension is especially pronounced in Aotearoa New Zealand, where no legal framework distinguishes the rights of public housing tenants from those in the private market. The Residential Tenancies Act 1986 applies uniformly, and there is no embedded right to tenant participation. As a result, engagement mechanisms are often ad hoc, limited in influence, and reliant on the discretion of individual staff or projects.

While informants affirmed the value of resident participation, many acknowledged the structural and institutional barriers to realising it. The absence of mediating structures—such as independent tenants' unions or statutory resident advisory groups—contributed to asymmetrical relationships, with limited avenues for residents to shape outcomes or contest decisions.

In the early 2000s, HNZC policy documents appeared to support participatory structures in principle, encouraging the formation of resident advisory groups to promote voice and ownership:

> Involving residents in decision-making will promote their ownership of the process and outcomes. Where no suitable structure exists, some form of community/tenant advisory group will need to be developed. (HNZC, 2000, p. 19)

Yet this guidance was vague. What constituted decision-making? What power would such groups hold? As Munt (2002) argues, ownership must be practical—not symbolic—and reflect the degree to which community priorities shape outcomes.

The gap between stated commitments and lived reality reflects what Kearns and Whitley (2020) describe as a persistent institutional reluctance to share power, even within initiatives framed around inclusion. While some practitioners pursued justice through participatory work, they did so in constrained settings. Few explicitly named this work as justice-oriented. One exception was KI 2: "It was very satisfying from a social justice perspective because you're ensuring that people who are often left out, who don't usually have a say, get to have a say."

Still, scholars such as Bhattacharyya (2004) and Shahid and Jha (2016) remind us that participation only becomes meaningful when it redistributes power. As Lawson and Kearns (2010) note, participation that does not challenge underlying dynamics can reinforce inequity

by giving the illusion of fairness. Gaventa (2016) similarly warns that participation alone cannot resolve inequality, but it can contest it—if intentionally structured to do so.

KI 9 illustrated these tensions. Their team supported a resident group during a housing renewal initiative, including funding and capacity-building:

> We set up a residents' group […] helped them make submissions. Most of these people had never written a formal letter […] their confidence grew. We never got to the point of having a community election process—these things take time. (KI 9)

Despite these efforts, the group remained advisory and lacked formal decision-making power. When the project lost funding in 2010, the group also lost institutional backing and could not sustain itself. This highlights a central challenge: without policy integration or governance mandates, participation efforts remain precarious and tethered to short-term programmes.

Practitioners were often caught in this contradiction—supporting community-led processes while accountable to agency performance targets. KI 8 articulated this dilemma: “We want to build people up but at the end of the day, we want these outcomes in our communities. [The agency] wants to see what they are getting for their dollars.”

This reflects what Cornwall (2004) terms the invited space dilemma: residents are welcome to participate, but only within institutional parameters. When community goals diverge from organisational imperatives—such as efficiency or risk minimisation—practitioners must often prioritise the latter.

Even promising partnerships proved fragile. KI 7 recalled the Aranui Community Renewal Project—a partnership between HNZC, Christchurch City Council, and residents’ group ACTIS, celebrated for its co-design approach (Karami Nejad, 2020). Yet following a change in government in 2010, HNZC withdrew from the agreement, terminating the project and

MOU. As Karami Nejad notes, the programme aligned with Labour policy and was sidelined under National. Without institutional embedding, local gains were unsustainable.

Some informants attempted to counteract formal exclusion by fostering civic participation informally—through voter registration, advocacy, and submission-writing. KI 1 described how residents initially felt disempowered: “They didn’t think it was their right even when it came for them to vote. They thought that only homeowners could have a say. They didn’t know they had that power.”

This initiative led to a voter registration campaign and a *Te Tiriti*-focused partnership with the Human Rights Commission. Such efforts align with Freire’s (1972) notion of *critical consciousness*—cultivating awareness of systemic power as a pathway to mobilisation. However, without structural support, these initiatives rely on practitioner commitment and remain vulnerable.

KI 8 offered a final, sobering reflection: “There is no tenants' union that represents all tenants. It's very paternalistic regarding how HNZC talks about its tenants. The tenants don't get to speak for themselves.”

This asymmetry is central. Without independent representation or legal protections for participation, residents remain structurally disempowered. Practitioners can create temporary participatory spaces and build community confidence—but lasting transformation requires sustained political will, statutory mandates, and institutional accountability.

5.4.2 From Engagement to Empowerment: Facilitating Skills and Leadership

Instrumental participation—shaped by time, funding, and regulatory constraints—often limits the depth of resident involvement in housing renewal. By contrast, participatory development offers greater potential for individual and collective agency, enabling residents to move beyond predefined roles and actively shape their futures (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). When

residents are supported to build skills, confidence, and leadership, new forms of influence and self-determination can emerge. This section explores how relational practice and capacity-building foster deeper empowerment, while also examining their limitations and sustainability.

5.4.2.1 From Support to Self-sufficiency: Capacity-Building in Practice

Capacity building in community development is often described as walking alongside residents—supporting their ideas, helping them plan, and stepping back to enable self-direction. KI 4 explained that empowerment begins by recognising what already exists within the community: “Finding out from the tenant’s perspective what they have within their community to grow and develop was the first step, then adding support where needed. We're talking about hand-holding, guiding people as they walk along the path.”

For some, a gentle nudge—like encouraging them to form a group—may be enough. Others require sustained support. KI 1 described this adaptive role: “We are guiding, we are coaching, but the real decision-making has to come from them.”

Striking the right balance is crucial. As Taylor (2007, p. 52) suggests, practitioners must be “on tap, but not on top.” Moving too fast risks undermining ownership; too slow, and momentum stalls (Ife, 2016). The challenge lies in adjusting support without diminishing autonomy.

While these efforts often catalyse local initiatives—such as community gardens, tenant-run groups, or social events—their broader sustainability remains uncertain. KI 1 and KI 4 noted that many residents still rely on practitioner involvement, raising questions about whether empowerment within small-scale projects can lead to durable structural change.

Nonetheless, such processes can generate meaningful shifts in wellbeing and civic participation. Christens (2012) describes this as *psychological empowerment*—marked by

growing confidence, stronger social ties, and increased capacity to assert rights. KI 2 described how participation evolved from connection to shared leadership: “We had this saying, which was 'each one, teach one'. It was not about us doing to. It was unleashing the opportunity, or skill that other tenants had—getting them to showcase their own talents, and teaching others.”

In this peer-to-peer model, residents transition from recipients to contributors. However, without clear pathways for leadership progression, activities may remain at surface level. KI 6 noted that while “rest home-style” events were popular, they engaged a narrow segment of residents and required significant resources. The shift toward education and disaster preparedness reflected an emerging recognition that deeper involvement demands more intentional, strategic programming.

This evolution echoes Freire’s (1972) concept of *praxis*—the interrelation of reflection and action that fuels empowerment. By creating environments where residents could teach, lead, and support one another, practitioners helped shift agency from professionals to the community. While social connection is foundational, it must be mobilised into participation, leadership, and collective agency to enable transformative and enduring change.

5.4.2.2 Beyond Skills: Cultivating Leadership

While capacity building lays the groundwork for empowerment, cultivating leadership is a slower, relational process. Even modest shifts—like residents beginning to raise concerns—can signal growing agency. As KI 9 observed: “They were prepared to come and complain, which we would expect in a normal suburb. That changed, and now they would complain if something wasn't right.”

Informants consistently emphasised the importance of not “doing to” communities, but enabling residents to develop their own responses. As KI 8 reflected: “Doing so might make

you feel good but if you can step back and always work with it, it's a longer-term and more sustainable thing."

Trust underpins this transformation. As KI 14 noted, over time, suspicion gave way to participation: "It shifted from weariness—'Is this really genuine?'—to taking steps, actually taking leadership roles, and becoming very active."

The story of Miriam, recounted by KI 8, exemplifies this shift. Initially hesitant—describing herself as "just a grandmother"—she was gently encouraged to assist with a minor project. Over time, affirming relationships helped her step into leadership. "The hardest battle initially was getting her to trust us. We just believed in her."

This illustrates that leadership development is not simply about skill transfer but about nurturing safe, affirming spaces where residents can recognise their value and grow in confidence.

From a *Te Ao Māori* perspective, leadership is not individual status but collective responsibility. KI 1 explained how *kaitiakitanga* reframes leadership as relational and emergent:

> The *tikanga* behind *kaitiakitanga* has nothing to do with the Western concept of leadership but more to do with the people, the community, and the value they place on their people in a place. They saw it as more an organic developmental position they could hold. (KI 1)

This view resists hierarchical and performative models. *Kaitiakitanga* centres leadership in connection, responsibility, and care—emerging through sustained relationships and grounded in culture. Rather than seeking authority, residents step into stewardship roles in response to collective needs.

Eketone (2021) similarly describes Māori leadership in social work as the fulfilment of *tikanga* and reciprocal obligation. Leadership, in this view, is ongoing and relational—not tied to project timelines. Practitioners support this through shared power, cultural fluency, and accountability to both organisational and *tikanga*-based values. Clarity of role, boundaries, and intention is essential.

This resonates with *teu le vā*, the Pacific ethic of honouring relational space (Anae, 2010). Leadership here is not defined by visibility but by care for the *vā*—the space between people. Massey (2013) reminds us that space is not inert but constituted by relationships. Through this lens, community leadership becomes a practice rooted in the everyday maintenance of connection and continuity.

Yet such models often sit uneasily within formal governance. Informal leadership may be rhetorically "invited" but not structurally enabled (Newman & Clarke, 2009). Performance metrics and audit culture constrain the fluidity and cultural grounding of *kaitiakitanga*. Without institutional mechanisms to connect informal leadership to formal decision-making, influence remains limited.

This tension is well documented. Cornwall (2008) and Tunstall and Pleace (2018) describe how community-led governance—though crucial—is frequently under-supported and under-recognised. Resident-leaders often practise "quiet governance," holding relational continuity through disruption. Their work may be informal, but it is strategic, embedded, and indispensable.

Despite growing recognition of civic agency, such leadership remains fragile—particularly when reliant on a handful of individuals or temporary funding. Ensuring its sustainability requires embedded support structures, inclusive governance pathways, and culturally grounded mandates that move beyond rhetoric to real institutional commitment.

As Theme Two illustrates, community development extends beyond support for individual tenants. It involves building collective capacity, cultivating leadership, and enabling communities to exert influence. Yet these efforts are frequently constrained by narrow interpretations of engagement, the bureaucratisation of participation, and institutional models that frame leadership as an outcome rather than a process. Within these limits, practitioners adopt relational and strategic approaches to stretch institutional boundaries. While this does not always lead to full empowerment, it opens partial spaces where residents begin to see themselves—and be seen—as agents of change.

Conclusion to Part One

A clear pattern emerges across Part One: practitioners are engaged in the deliberate, often understated work of creating and holding space—cultivating environments in which trust, agency, and belonging can take root, even in systems not designed to support them. This work reveals community development not as a time-bound intervention, but as an ongoing process grounded in presence, reciprocity, and place-based attunement.

Effective community development in public housing is not only about building relationships—it requires practitioners and institutions to challenge the constraints that limit what those relationships can achieve. Creating and holding space is not soft or incidental work. It is political, intentional, and deeply relational. Moving beyond transactional service delivery means embedding place-based and participatory approaches into the core of housing systems. Trust, care, and connection—too often treated as peripheral values—must instead be understood as essential infrastructure, sustained through policy, practice, and culture (Cornwall, 2004; Gaventa, 2006; Ife, 2016).

The analysis shows that trust is both foundational and fragile. In communities marked by institutional neglect, it must be continually earned. Rebuilding trust demands more than practitioner goodwill—it requires institutional responsiveness and accountability, alongside a

willingness to address past harms (Ledwith & Springett, 2010). Similarly, care must be reframed not as a discretionary act, but as a systemic responsibility. Drawing from the ethics of care (Held, 2006; Tronto, 1993, 2013) and Indigenous frameworks such as *whakawhanaungatanga* (Penny et al., 2024), this chapter has argued for institutionalising care as responsiveness, reciprocity, and collective accountability.

Connection—the third element in this triad—emerges not through grand interventions, but through everyday encounters: chats in corridors, shared gardens, barbecues, and acts of recognition. These are not peripheral moments. They are foundational to trust and wellbeing. Yet they are often undervalued by systems that prioritise quantifiable outputs over lived experience (Banks & Orton, 2007; Emejulu, 2011). Without sustained institutional investment, these connections are vulnerable to disruption from staff turnover, shifting priorities, or funding changes.

Theme Two builds on this foundation, showing that while relational work is essential, it is not enough. Community development becomes transformative when social ties mature into social networks that unlock opportunity and redistribute power. Practitioners in this study acted as bridges between communities and institutions—connecting people, power, and possibility. These networks function not only as systems of support, but as pathways to employment, learning, civic participation, and leadership. However, their potential remains constrained by instrumental participation models that contain dissent and limit resident influence (Cornwall, 2004; Gaventa, 2006).

While invited spaces can create openings for co-design or dialogue, they remain bounded by organisational imperatives. Initiatives to nurture tenant voice or foster leadership were often fragile—reliant on committed staff, temporary programmes, or favourable political conditions. Peer-led efforts and informal leadership demonstrated the latent capacity within communities, but structural asymmetries persisted. Without formal mechanisms to embed resident voice, participation risks becoming symbolic rather than substantive.

Together, the themes in Part One highlight both the promise and precarity of community development in public housing. Practitioners play a critical role in building trust, enabling connection, and opening space for agency—but do so in systems that often marginalise relational work and resist shared authority. Community development cannot rely solely on practitioner effort or resident goodwill. It must be resourced and institutionalised—recognised as core public infrastructure.

Only through such alignment—between relational intent and structural support—can public housing be reimagined as more than shelter. It can become a site of belonging, participation, and collective agency. These insights set the stage for Part Two, which explores how Kāinga Ora, since its formation in 2019, has begun to grapple with these challenges and the evolving nature of its relationship with the communities it serves.

Part Two: Between Promise and Practice—Community Development in Kāinga Ora

Part One examined how legacy housing authorities practised community development. Part Two turns to Kāinga Ora, a newly merged public housing entity that provides a live test case: a system in transition, mandated to deliver homes and contribute to "sustainable, inclusive, and thriving communities" (Kāinga Ora Act, 2019, s. 12).

The 2017 Labour-led Government promised 100,000 affordable homes over ten years and reinvested dividends to grow public housing. HNZC expanded its frontline workforce to sustain tenancies. Yet eligibility settings, construction capacity, and reviewable tenancies continued to limit secure access. In 2019, Kāinga Ora amalgamated HNZC, HLC (formerly Hobsonville Land Company, a subsidiary of HNZC, was rebranded as Homes, Land, Communities in 2018) and the KiwiBuild Unit, unifying delivery and tenancy support under a single Crown entity. What follows is a persistent tension: an organisation that speaks to thriving communities, while operating through delivery logics that marginalise relational work.

To interrogate this, Part Two uses Hudson's (2004) three filters—practitioner, organisational, environmental—supplemented by Gaventa's (2006) Power Cube (visible, hidden, invisible power) and Cornwall's (2004) invited and claimed spaces to distinguish meaningful participation from token consultation. These frameworks illuminate institutional dynamics, but are less sensitive to the relational and cultural labour that underpins community wellbeing. Accordingly, I also draw on Indigenous relational worldviews: *whakawhanaungatanga* as an ongoing ethical commitment to relationship (Penny et al., 2024) and *teu le vā* as the Pasifika ethic of nurturing the sacred relational space (Wendt, 1996).

Together, these analytical and relational lenses frame the chapter's core task: to trace how Kāinga Ora interprets its expanded mandate, how efficiency-driven delivery interacts with tenant wellbeing and participation, and how organisational structures enable—or constrain—community development in practice.

5.6 From Past to Present: Tracing the Reform Trajectory

Between 2011 and 2017, HNZC deprioritised community development, reflecting the National-led government's focus on core landlord and property functions. Engagement was largely limited to stakeholder management during housing developments—liaising with councils, schools, and other external actors. While some tenancy managers facilitated community activities, this fell outside their formal remit.

In 2014, HNZC's Asset Development Group introduced a Placemaking Manager to advise on amenities in large-scale projects. In parallel, HLC was tasked with delivering the Auckland Housing Programme (AHP)—a suite of major mixed-tenure redevelopments in Māngere, Mt Roskill, Oranga, Ōrākei, Northcote, Tāmaki, and later Porirua. Unlike HNZC, HLC employed dedicated placemaking and community development staff, supported by a central practice function.

Also in this period, HNZC released a Community Development Framework (2017a) for use in select sites. Framed as part of HNZC's *Strategic Plan 2017–2021* (HNZC, 2017b), the framework aimed to support tenant integration, enhance the organisation's public reputation, and promote wellbeing—though often in service of risk mitigation and public acceptance of redevelopment. These moves marked a modest shift toward more deliberate community building, even as the system remained focused on asset and tenancy delivery.

The Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities Act 2019 marked a major structural and conceptual shift. It merged HNZC, HLC, and the KiwiBuild Unit into a single Crown entity with a dual mandate: to act as public landlord and lead large-scale urban development. The name Kāinga Ora—gifted by Hon. Nanaia Mahuta—signalled this broader vision. As Mahuta explained:

> The term *kāinga* speaks to more than physical dwellings. In *Te Ao Māori*, it embodies people, place, and the wellbeing of communities and environments. It's not just about houses. It's about people, their community, their sense of place. [11]

The new system was anchored by two statutes: the Kāinga Ora Act 2019 and the Urban Development Act 2020. Both affirmed the Crown's obligations under *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* and placed wellbeing—not just housing supply—at the heart of the system.

Following its 2020 re-election, the Labour Government announced plans to deliver 18,000 additional public and transitional homes by 2024. Kāinga Ora was expected to lead this expansion while forging enduring partnerships across the housing continuum—from homelessness and social service delivery to homeownership and regeneration.

However, the merger of three distinct agencies—each with its own culture, logic, and practice—created significant institutional complexity. Integrating HNZC's tenancy systems, HLC's placemaking ethos, and KiwiBuild's delivery mechanisms required major structural and cultural transformation. Kāinga Ora launched an ambitious construction programme, restructured its customer services, and began reshaping its internal architecture.

The following sections examine how Kāinga Ora has approached community development in practice—what has been retained, reworked, or resisted—and the ongoing challenge of embedding relational, community-centred approaches within a system shaped by scale, delivery, and competing logics.

5.6.1 Making Sense of the Machinery

In 2021, Kāinga Ora introduced *He Toa Takitini*–The Partnership and Engagement Framework (Kāinga Ora, 2021c)—to operationalise the principles of the Kāinga Ora–Homes

[11] Interview with Hon Minister Nanaia Mahuta

and Communities Act 2019. According to the organisation's *Annual Report 2021–2022*, the framework serves as a foundation for relationship-building across all functions:

> *He Toa Takitini*—our partnership and engagement framework—underpins new ways of connecting and developing relationships with Māori, Pacific peoples, customers, stakeholders, and communities. It provides the core principles and a common language across the many functions of Kāinga Ora, weaving in *Ō Tātou Uara*—Our Values—and putting wellbeing at the centre (Kāinga Ora, 2022a, p. 98).

Alongside this, the Kāinga Community Strategy 2021–2026 (Kāinga Ora, 2021b) set out an ambitious vision for creating sustainable, inclusive, and thriving communities. The strategy names three core outcomes: *Access*, *Voice and Influence*, and *Connection and Participation*.

At face value, the strategy signals a shift toward holistic thinking. It recognises that thriving communities require more than housing and promotes ongoing engagement. Social cohesion, access to employment and education, and the importance of shared spaces are foregrounded as part of community wellbeing.

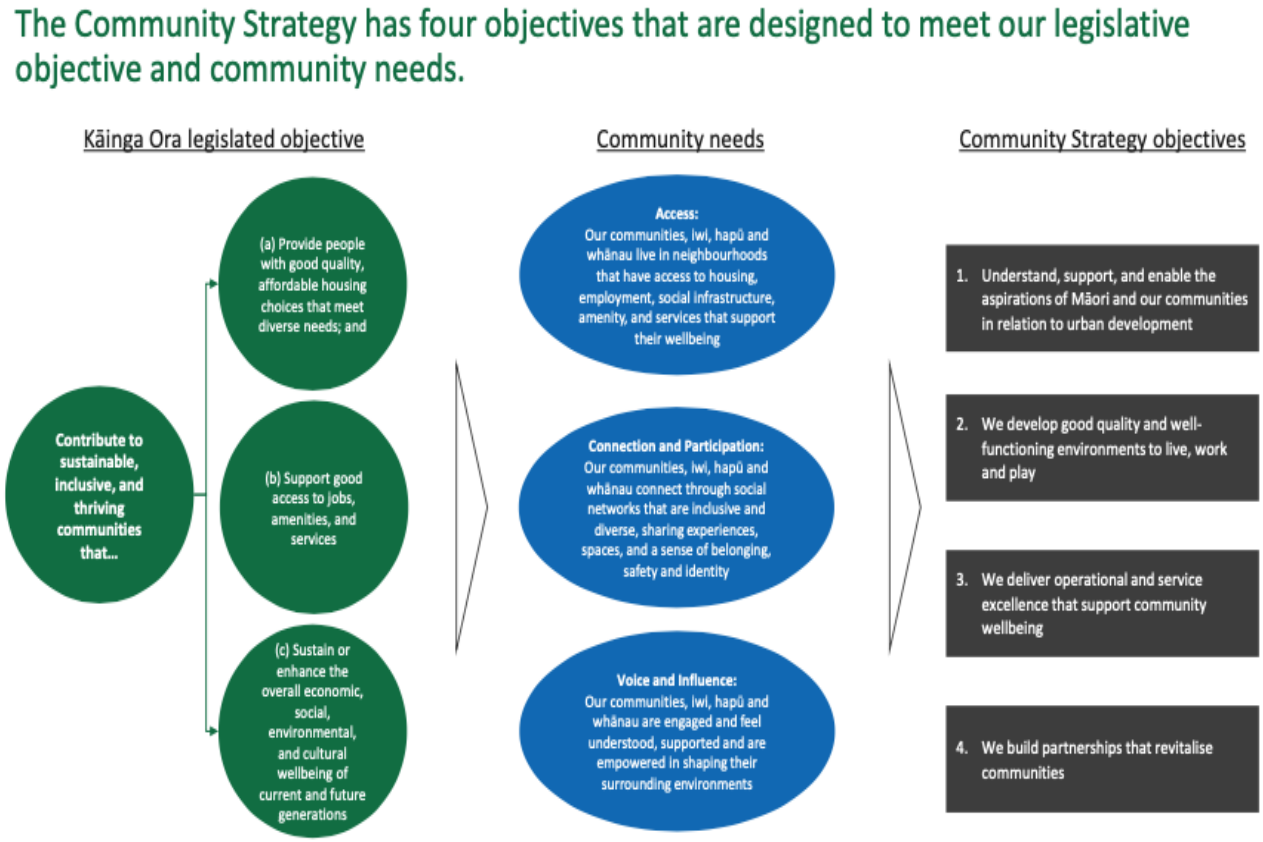
Yet a closer look reveals a gap between these aspirations and the practices required to fulfil them. Despite rhetorical alignment with Māori and community priorities, initiatives remain tethered to housing delivery. Cultural programming, leadership development, and resident-led initiatives are underdeveloped or absent.

The strategy's orientation toward improving service quality and tenancy management marks progress but stops short of positioning housing as a site of participatory governance or shared agency. This reflects a broader organisational tension: while the frameworks articulate relational and inclusive intent, operational focus continues to favour infrastructure and output delivery. Relational work—social ties, trust, and cultural capital—is acknowledged but not resourced.

Though partnerships are described as central to the strategy, mechanisms for shifting power or embedding community voice are unclear. Without structures for shared decision-making, these partnerships risk reinforcing rather than disrupting institutional hierarchies.

In sum, while *He Toa Takitini* and the *Community Strategy* signal an evolution in policy intent, their implementation risks defaulting to a technocratic model—prioritising delivery over dialogue and outputs over ownership (See Figure 14). Without stronger commitments to participatory practice and community leadership, the promise of relational governance remains aspirational rather than embedded.

Figure 14 *The Kāinga Ora Community Strategy 2021-2026*, (Kāinga Ora 2021b, p .5)



5.6.2 New Names, Old Frames

Kāinga Ora inherited distinct community development models from its predecessors: HNZC and HLC. While both engaged in community-focused work, their approaches diverged markedly in purpose, scope, and funding.

HLC embedded community development within neighbourhood-level placemaking. Its model spanned all residents in mixed-tenure developments, was geographically defined, and funded through project-specific urban regeneration budgets. In contrast, HNZC's model, located within the Construction and Innovation (C&I) Unit, was tenant-focused and formulaic—typically $1,000 per new public housing unit—with a primary aim of supporting new tenants' wellbeing and integration. This approach was narrower in scope and closely tied to asset delivery timelines.

Despite their differences, both models shared structural limitations. Community development was centrally managed, tethered to policy goals, and constrained by short delivery windows aligned with build programmes. Definitions of the "customer" were bounded by project parameters, leaving little space for responsiveness to emerging or longer-term community dynamics. Importantly, while HLC adopted a place-based view, HNZC focused primarily on tenants—highlighting a conceptual divide that persisted post-merger.

The 2019 formation of Kāinga Ora brought these divergent legacies together, but without a coherent integration strategy. Legacy teams were retained, yet no unified model for defining, funding, or governing community development was established. This ambiguity, coupled with the lack of a robust implementation plan for the Kāinga Ora Act 2019, left staff navigating an institutional vacuum.

The following section draws on interviews from the *Discovery Phase Community Development and Placemaking Staff Survey* (Kāinga Ora, 2022a), conducted by the National Services Team from March–May 2022. Participants included frontline, managerial, and

strategic staff, most of whom had previously worked at HNZC or HLC. Their reflections offer insight into organisational transitions, practice constraints, and evolving definitions of community development.

Between 2020–2023, Kāinga Ora had not formally defined community development as a core organisational function. This definitional absence generated uncertainty, reinforced legacy silos, and hindered the emergence of a shared practice language or integrated model. Practitioners were left working in liminal spaces—structurally, conceptually, and culturally.

Two central themes emerged: the unresolved tensions between the legacy approaches of HLC and HNZC, and the dominant influence of political and organisational imperatives—particularly the pressure to deliver housing at scale—on the shape, role, and visibility of community development within Kāinga Ora.

5.7 Theme Three: Built to Change, Resistant to Shift

This theme examines how structural reform has reshaped—but not resolved—competing models of community development within Kāinga Ora. These tensions echo Hudson's (2004) three filters. HLC's placemaking approach reflects the *organisational* filter, embedded in large-scale project timelines and funding. HNZC's model reflects the *practitioner* filter—rooted in tenant wellbeing, relational practice, and micro-level support.

Several informants described the merger as disorienting, particularly due to the absence of a clear vision for community development in the new entity. KO 20 reflected:

> There was that lack of clarity between our teams—the large-scale projects, or HLC's community development side of it—and what was Housing New Zealand's community development side. Those coming together, and then a new Housing

> Support Manager role came into it […] which again, has a community development component—or does it? That is still a very hazy space. (KO 20)

This ambiguity created confusion around roles, reporting lines, and funding. It also exposed a deeper issue: while Kāinga Ora adopted bold new language, the operational and conceptual infrastructure to realise that vision remained unclear.

5.7.1 Contrasting Commitments: Community Development in Practice

Kāinga Ora inherited two divergent models of community development. HNZC focused on micro-level, tenant-specific support—assisting residents to settle into redevelopments and engage in tenant-led activities. HLC worked at the meso-level, facilitating neighbourhood-wide placemaking and supporting Large Scale Projects (LSPs) alongside wider community stakeholders. These models reflect different assumptions about the purpose and scale of community development. Their coexistence continues to shape how the work is framed, resourced, and enacted within Kāinga Ora. Table 12 outlines the key distinctions between these approaches.

Table 12 *Levels of Community Development Practice* (adapted from Banks et al., 2003 and Banks & Orton, 2007)

Level of practice	Practice processes	Types of community development work
Individual/group	Micro-level processes include community development, leadership development, and capacity building.	Supporting individual tenants/tenant groups Facilitating tenants' participation in local groups. Capacity building, supporting tenants in leadership roles. Organising and attending tenant-specific events Community analysis as it pertains to HNZC tenants. Internal development work.
Community/ neighbourhood	Meso-level processes include service development and outreach, community liaison, area regeneration partnerships, engagement, and planning.	Participating in local neighbourhood groups. Facilitating placemaking activities Supporting LSPs with community engagement Supporting/developing existing and new community groups Capacity building, supporting residents in leadership roles. Initiating/supporting/developing local and strategic partnerships. Community analysis Representing organisation on relevant networks/groups. Internal development work
Organisational/ inter-organisational		

Both models are valid and contextually appropriate. Tenant-focused approaches suit highly vulnerable individuals needing personalised support, while neighbourhood-level models better serve mixed-tenure settings, where place-based strategies can reduce fragmentation.

Yet privileging one over the other poses risks. Overemphasising tenant-level work may reinforce public housing enclaves and stigma (Donoghue & Tranter, 2013), while a solely neighbourhood focus can overlook marginalised tenants, risking disengagement or tenancy breakdown (Norris et al., 2018). As KO 22 noted: "There's a bigger question […] about whether we put our effort into the broader community setting where we've catalysed massive change, or whether we just focus on our tenants […] in building that sense of community."

This highlights an unresolved tension: should community development prioritise individual tenants, neighbourhood cohesion, or both? If both, how should priorities be set, resources allocated, and practice aligned?

These questions call for an integrated approach—one that spans individual support and neighbourhood transformation, micro-level care and macro-level influence. Without this, Kāinga Ora risks perpetuating the fragmentation it seeks to address.

This contrast is evident in how community development is enacted across sites. Some projects interpret it broadly, while others reduce it to transactional service delivery. KO 18 offered a stark comparison:

> They had quite a sense of our tenants needing to be integrated into the community. They got the whole street together and said, “If this is an issue, it’s an issue for everyone, not just our tenants.” So they did barbecues and things like that—simple, good, solid, old-fashioned community development. And then other places think, “Well, we built a room, and it’s okay for our Tenancy Managers to go and sit in the room and see clients, and that’s good enough”. (KO 18)

These examples reflect divergent logics. In one, community development is relational, activating shared space and collective concern. In the other, it is contained—limited to institutional settings that serve more as client processing spaces than platforms for agency.

This echoes Massey’s (2013) view of space as a dynamic relational construct, not a passive backdrop. KO 18’s example aligns with Mee’s (2009) spaces of care—informal, low-pressure settings where trust grows through everyday interaction. In contrast, the room-based model represents a more bounded, institutionalised approach. These spaces may invite participation but ultimately contain it—what Cornwall (2004) and Gaventa (2006) frame as invited yet controlled spaces.

Without sustained relational infrastructure and a values-based mandate, community development risks becoming hollow—reduced to procedural compliance rather than a practice of meaningful engagement.

5.7.1.1 The Strategic Debate: Prioritising Models

A central tension in the evolving mandate of Kāinga Ora is the unresolved strategic question: should community development efforts concentrate on supporting existing communities marked by entrenched inequalities, or prioritise the creation of new, mixed-tenure neighbourhoods aimed at promoting integration and inclusion? This tension reflects deeper uncertainties about how the organisation interprets its legislative obligations under the Kāinga Ora Act 2019 and what it considers a meaningful investment in community wellbeing. As KO 21, a National Advisor, observed:

> If you think about community development, what's the point of that? It's to support community wellbeing really, right? It's so that people can live well across a range of metrics. And I think our contribution to that—or the biggest contribution we make—is in the delivery of public housing homes, and other homes. It's building homes for various people and looking after our public housing responsibilities. (KO 21)

While this interpretation rightly acknowledges secure housing as a foundation for wellbeing, it reflects a relatively narrow view of both public housing provision and community development. Framing community wellbeing primarily through the lens of shelter risks overshadowing broader forms of social investment. This reductive view sits uneasily alongside the intentions of the Kāinga Ora Act 2019, the *Community Strategy 2021–2026* (Kāinga Ora, 2021b), and the perspectives of many informants, who envision a more expansive role for community development—one that centres relationships, local leadership, and community-defined goals.

This strategic debate is not merely rhetorical; it directly impacts funding, staffing, and the scale at which community engagement is resourced. It also reveals the challenge of aligning policy intent with operational priorities in a rapidly evolving institutional context.

5.7.1.1 Current Practice: Bridging the Gap

Despite ongoing strategic ambiguity, community development continues to unfold in practice—shaped by relationships, cultural frameworks, and grounded site experience. Informants described their roles through principles such as *whakawhanaungatanga*, *mihi whakatau*, iwi collaboration, trust-building, partnership, and capacity-building. As KO 15 put it: “My role is around community and groups, those connections, building capacity, and helping.”

These accounts mirror those in Part One, with many describing a relational, place-based orientation grounded in long-term investment in people and neighbourhoods. Discovery Phase respondents echoed this ethos:

> “Long-term investment into people—we build capability, and then they build the capability of neighbour.”

> “We focus street by street. We say, ‘Over the fence–along the street.’”

> “Build local area, local connection, and independence.”

However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted these practices. Face-to-face engagement—often central to building trust—was severely constrained. As KO 15 reflected: “Just being in a place, literally just being and hanging around. I used to do that a lot [...] That’s how I would do quite a lot of stuff in our complexes.”

The absence of informal presence undermined trust, particularly for those with limited internet access or English proficiency, excluding them from formal channels like newsletters or online consultations.

Internal dynamics also posed challenges. Informants spoke of tensions with technical specialists—architects, engineers, project managers—unfamiliar with marginalised

communities. As KO 24 noted: “It’s hard to substantiate [relationship-building] for people who don’t have relationships.”

This underscores a common challenge: making relational work legible within systems that prioritise metrics, deadlines, and engineering logic. Community building is often perceived as secondary—despite its role in reducing conflict and improving outcomes.

Failure to engage meaningfully can lead to mistrust, delays, and superficial participation. As KO 23 observed: “Many people go in and influence change [...] unconsciously from their own value systems [...] But we haven’t understood the people we wanted to change.”

This insight highlights the dangers of top-down planning that imposes external values and suppresses local knowledge. Genuine engagement requires making space for disagreement and diverse aspirations. As Marcuse (2009) and Shaw (2017) argue, conflict is not a failure—it is evidence of democratic practice.

Such openness is difficult to sustain in risk-averse institutions. Yet incremental shifts are possible. Some informants described trust-building “over the fence and along the street,” working across neighbourhoods, not just with tenants. Others spoke of enabling capability-building over time.

While progress remains uneven, these small-scale, relational approaches matter. As KO 15 emphasised, trust often begins informally—“just being in a place, hanging around.” This low-key presence can lay the groundwork for deeper democratic engagement, even in delivery-driven settings. Grounded in relationships, complexity, and local wisdom, such work offers a foothold for institutional transformation.

5.2.1.3 Cultural Change and Integrating Practice

The organisational realignment under the Shaping Kāinga Ora programme (Kāinga Ora, 2021a) has blurred the boundaries and meaning of community development within the

agency. The introduction of Housing Support Managers (formerly Tenancy Managers), and the broader Customer Programme, absorbed community development into wider roles—creating significant uncertainty among practitioners. The Discovery Phase respondents (Kāinga Ora, 2022a) reflected this ambiguity:

> "The new Housing and Wellbeing Managers have community development in their roles—not sure what that means for place-based teams—are we supposed to step back and take a more strategic approach? We need clear roles and responsibilities."
> "We are waiting to see how we dovetail with the customer strategy. We never focus one-on-one—that's their space, not ours."

These changes aimed to strengthen tenant and community relationships, aligning with *manaakitanga*. Some practitioners embodied this by creating warm, relational spaces through informal support and shared moments, such as cups of tea. Yet without clear boundaries, the practical meaning of community development remained highly variable.

This points to the need for cultural as well as structural reform. Without recognising the specific expertise required for relational practice, community development remains at risk of being sidelined or misunderstood. Role confusion also blurred distinctions between different types of community-facing work. As KO 17 observed: "Community building is very valid [...] It's appropriate for the Housing Support Team. It's not community development. It's not about the aspirations of these people living here. It's about 'Let's just come together and have a sausage sizzle.'"

This distinction is critical. While community building fosters connection, community development focuses on empowerment, agency, and structural change. As Ife (2016) and Banks and Orton (2007) argue, community development is defined not only by activities but by the values that animate them—prioritising power *with*, not *power over*.

In short, not all barbecues are equal. Without an orientation toward community aspirations and equity, even well-intended engagement can become tokenistic—reinforcing institutional control rather than redistributing it.

5.7.1.2 Institutional Inertia and the Path Forward

The post-merger environment has made it difficult to deliver coherent, relational engagement. Informants expressed concern that leadership within Kāinga Ora lacked clarity—and perhaps conviction—regarding how community development fits within the agency's broader mandate. This uncertainty was compounded by unresolved tensions between HNZC's tenant-focused model and HLC's neighbourhood-scale approach.

Although the Kāinga Ora Act 2019 signalled a commitment to thriving, inclusive communities, the practical pathway remained ill-defined. Practitioners navigated institutional ambiguity without a shared framework or strategic direction. As KO 22 noted:

> We're grappling with the relationship of community development to our role within the housing system. Given that we are a delivery agency... we're very visible, we're very there. How do we find that balance, especially when it comes to other players? (KO 22)

In the absence of coordinated policy, staff defaulted to familiar legacy practices. KO 19 observed: "I think community development understanding is confined to those practising it, and they're going with the same values of connecting, partnering and empowering, whether or not they have a shared understanding of what those look like."

This reflects a common dilemma: employing practitioners before systems and structures are in place to support them (Banks & Orton, 2007). The result is a mismatch of expectations—practitioners are expected to lead change without institutional support, clarity, or evaluative tools.

HNZC's model, shaped by risk mitigation and customer satisfaction, reflected managerial reform. HLC's placemaking model prioritised design, perception, and commercial outcomes. These divergent logics persist. The continued use of the term "customer" [12]—a holdover from both predecessors—illustrates the endurance of consumerist logic in a public service context, where tenants may be framed as service users rather than as citizens with agency.

The result is institutional drift: community development is referenced in strategic documents but marginalised in practice, often reduced to events or aspirational language. Without a clear framework, community-facing staff remain under-resourced and conceptually adrift.

Still, informants pointed to a way forward. *Whakawhanaungatanga*—relational practice grounded in trust, reciprocity, and shared responsibility—emerged as a culturally grounded, values-based alternative. As Penny et al. (2024) argue, it provides a scaffold for context-specific engagement that resists instrumentalism and builds collective agency.

Adopting a relational model requires a cultural shift. As KO 22 put it:

> It's the shift from service provision to trusting and empowering... from 'We're here to save you' to 'We're here to do what works here, and we're at your service until we leave.' [...] I think we've got a long way to go to shift those things before we can actually look at sustainable, longer-term outcomes. (KO 22)

This shift also involves reorienting tenant expectations, which remain shaped by earlier models of state paternalism. As KO 15 recalled: "They're used to Housing New Zealand being the people that do stuff... We work differently, so I have tried to explain that."

[12] While both HNZC and HLC used "customer" language, the meanings diverged. For HNZC, it reflected a gradual shift towards managerialism layered onto a public service ethos. In contrast, HLC adopted the term from the outset as part of its market-facing operational model. This distinction reveals how differing institutional histories shaped the implications of "customer" framing across the legacy agencies of Kāinga Ora.

Here, community development becomes more than a technical function—it is an ongoing negotiation of values, trust, roles, and relationships.

Fulfilling the mandate set out for Kāinga Ora requires more than rhetorical commitment. Without institutional coherence, strategic clarity, and leadership grounded in values, relational work will remain fragile. Internal ambiguity is further constrained by external pressures: political scrutiny, delivery targets, and systemic inertia.

The next theme explores how these systemic dynamics shape the practice of engagement—highlighting the gap between formal commitments to participation and the constrained realities on the ground.

5.8 Theme Four: Participation on the Periphery

Theme Four examines the systemic conditions that define, limit, and structure participation within Kāinga Ora. Despite formal commitments to engagement, the political and institutional machinery often constrains meaningful influence. Drawing on practitioner reflections, this section explores how power is exercised through project timelines, performance cultures, and pre-scripted forums—crowding out the slow, relational work of trust and capacity-building. Participation is frequently staged: designed to inform, not empower.

Informants acknowledged the urgency of housing delivery but raised concern that this imperative often overrides community-building goals. KO 18 reflected:

> We were so focused, with the changes in the Board and the shift in government, on how many houses we could get built—because that's the political sweet potato [...] So this [community development] is just another task in their project plan [...] I think it devalues community development. (KO 18)

This insight captures a core dilemma: speed versus depth, delivery versus democracy. As political pressure intensifies, community development risks being proceduralised—reduced

to a project milestone rather than recognised as a foundational investment in social wellbeing. Beck and Purcell (2015) frame this as the cost of delivery-first governance: when outcomes are measured in housing units, not social ties, relational work is marginalised.

This logic also shapes how participation is practised. Rather than fostering early, co-creative involvement, engagement often occurs after key decisions are made. As KO 18 noted: “If we’re developing some houses on that super lot over there, we’ll go and engage about it. But we should be getting input from the people whose lives we’re going to affect at a higher level.”

Practitioners reflected how an institutional culture where development timelines dominate and engagement feels often performative. KO 20 explained: “Those development teams think they lead the community development... They want to instruct us: ‘You should have an event in [suburb]. I want to see some activations happening.’”

Discovery Phase respondents (Kāinga Ora, 2022a) similarly noted the constrained and tokenistic nature of current engagement practices:

> “Been shocked at the basic nature of our engagement—primarily centred around letter drops.”
>
> “When we do engage with communities and get their input, it has no influence on our decision-making.”
>
> “Get in early so we can truly engage instead of being locked into ‘inform’ only.”

These reflections position current engagement practices at the lowest rung of the IAP2 spectrum—*Inform*. Cornwall’s (2004) notion of invited spaces is instructive here: participation is permitted but bounded—timed, framed, and directed by the institution. Gaventa’s (2006) Power Cube offers a complementary lens, identifying these as contained spaces—where power relations remain unchallenged, and agendas are centrally controlled.

Together, these frameworks reveal more than institutional preference—they expose the mechanics through which participation is rendered safe, legible, and ultimately ineffective. In such spaces, community voice is present but peripheral, scripted rather than shared.

These limitations are not just procedural—they expose a deeper democratic deficit. Institutions that fail to redistribute power also fail to care in ways that are just, inclusive, and durable. While practitioners work relationally to build trust, these efforts remain precarious without institutional structures that enable shared authority.

Tronto's (2013) fifth phase of care—*caring with*—offers a vital lens. It frames care as a collective democratic act, not just an individual ethic. This aligns with both *He Toa Takitini* (Kāinga Ora, 2021c) and the Kāinga Ora Act 2019, which aspire to thriving, inclusive communities. Yet without mechanisms for co-governance, tenant representation, or shared decision-making, these aspirations remain rhetorical. Participation is invited but rarely influential. Without institutional recognition of caring with as an ethical and political commitment, community development remains peripheral—an individualised task in a system that has yet to structurally care.

Tronto reminds us that institutions should be judged not only by what they say, but by how they organise care. Massey (2013) and Mee (2009) deepen this critique by drawing attention to the spatial dynamics of participation. Space is not neutral—it is socially produced, infused with power, and often controlled by institutions that determine the who, when, and how of engagement. In contrast, spaces of care—as Mee describes—are relational, low-pressure environments that foster trust, reciprocity, and more grounded participation.

These spatial politics are not abstract. Practitioners encounter them daily. As KO 18 observed: "They're not seeing that actually, the community could give you the *whakapapa* of the space, which would then help you with the design."

Instead, institutional preference for technical expertise reproduces epistemic hierarchies and limits co-design. Investment disparities further entrench these dynamics. KO 16 noted: “I have a large-scale project, money for Africa, relative to all my other projects… and no holistic view of what we’re developing.”

The inequity was echoed by Discovery Phase respondents (Kāinga Ora, 2022a): “The large-scale placemaking approach currently equals inequity creation.”

Layered over these structural inconsistencies is a growing demand for measurable returns on engagement. As KO 22 explained: “We’re being asked constantly about the investment we’re making and why [...] whether we should be playing in the space at all.”

Such market-oriented scrutiny reduces relational work to a transaction, sidelining the less tangible but equally vital outcomes of trust, belonging, and social cohesion (Bevir, 2010; Nickels & Rivera, 2019).

What results is consultation theatre: the appearance of inclusion without a redistribution of power (Cornwall, 2008). Even where forums exist, influence is constrained. As KO 22 noted: “Community representatives are often just told what’s happening. They’re not genuinely involved in shaping it.”

This hesitancy to share power stands in tension with frameworks such as *He Toa Takitini*, which signal intent but lack operational traction. Without timelines, leadership buy-in, or accountability mechanisms, these frameworks risk becoming symbolic. Moving from rhetoric to reality requires more than strategy—it demands a cultural and structural shift.

KO 22 highlighted this tension: “We’ve got ministerial direction, which is pushing us away from community-oriented thinking… It’s very much: focus on our core functions—building houses, assets, maintenance, and communications.”

Despite inclusive rhetoric, community development remains marginal—positioned at the edges rather than integrated into the core functions envisioned for Kāinga Ora. This signals more than a misalignment; it reflects a systemic undervaluing of participatory practice.

The implications are not just procedural—they are emotional, social, and political. When participation is reduced to performance, communities experience disillusionment, scepticism, and withdrawal. Gaventa (2006) cautions that persistent exclusion breeds alienation, while Sugden (2019) links such patterns to intergenerational poverty and diminished mobility. When voices are repeatedly ignored, people may internalise the belief that they cannot influence change. This is the quiet work of invisible power—not through coercion, but through resignation. Over time, such dynamics erode collective agency and the foundations of democratic community development.

The findings in Theme Four expose a persistent gap between institutional commitments and everyday realities. While policy frameworks gesture toward empowerment, community voice remains peripheral—acknowledged, but rarely influential. Informants described how speed, control, and performance pressures crowd out the space for authentic co-creation, fuelling distrust and disconnect.

This is not simply a matter of technical misalignment. It is a problem of structural design. Building more participatory systems requires governance models that centre community expertise, invest in long-term relationships, and treat relational practice as core to public housing—not as an add-on. In their absence, community development remains vulnerable to fragmentation, institutional drift, and inconsistent reliance on individual practitioner judgement.

Theme Four calls for a fundamental reorientation: from participation as performance to participation as power. It demands embedding voice, care, and agency at the centre of how public housing institutions operate—and who they are accountable to.

Conclusion to Part Two

Part Two examined how community development within Kāinga Ora is shaped by structural tension—caught between an expanded mandate and legacy systems. While policy frameworks speak of thriving, inclusive communities, practitioner accounts reveal fragmentation, constrained roles, and procedural engagement that limits influence and innovation.

These findings do not reflect a lack of practitioner commitment. Rather, they expose institutional conditions that inhibit the potential for community development to flourish. Informants described how narrow delivery logics and reluctance to share power undermine long-term, values-based work. In this context, the wellbeing ambitions set out in policy remain largely aspirational, with limited structural backing to realise them.

Addressing these tensions requires more than rhetoric. It calls for a reorientation of governance—where community engagement shifts from a managed activity to a genuine partnership. Informants pointed to the need to treat community development as core infrastructure for place-based practice, not a discretionary add-on. Achieving this would mean embedding community expertise and relational practice within the organisation's decision-making systems—resourcing care, participation, and local insight as foundational to public housing delivery.

5.9 Conclusion to Chapter Five

This chapter has examined community development practice in public housing systems, comparing the legacy environments of former housing authorities with the post-merger context of Kāinga Ora. While both settings articulate commitments to trust, care, and connection, the ability of practitioners to realise these values is shaped by divergent institutional logics, cultures, and capacities.

At the centre of this analysis is the practice of creating and holding space—a relational approach grounded in trust and care, yet deeply political. Informants described the tension between residents' lived realities and the institutional systems they navigated, often adapting to constraints while remaining anchored in relational intent.

In legacy agencies, greater autonomy and clearer mandates enabled community development to flourish. *Whakawhanaungatanga* was not aspirational but enacted through everyday presence, reciprocity, and disciplined flexibility—the capacity to adapt while staying values-led. These practices were embedded in place and supported by local rhythms.

By contrast, post-merger centralisation under Kāinga Ora introduced new layers of complexity. Frameworks such as *He Toa Takitini* (Kāinga Ora, 2021c) and the *Community Strategy 2021–2026* (Kāinga Ora, 2021b) gesture toward inclusive, place-based practice, yet their enactment was frequently constrained by institutional fragmentation, limited capacity, and delivery pressures. Informants described community development as rhetorically invoked but inconsistently resourced—operating in what Gaventa (2006) calls closed spaces, where participation is permitted but power remains centralised.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed these tensions. While legacy agencies could draw on established trust networks, newer structures within Kāinga Ora and limited face-to-face engagement constrained deeper connection—particularly for digitally excluded communities.

Still, the findings reveal acts of quiet resistance and values-based leadership. Many informants drew on *whakawhanaungatanga* and culturally grounded ethics to resist transactional logics and sustain authentic, people-centred practice. These efforts signal that community development retains transformative potential—but only if institutionally supported.

Relying on practitioner discretion is not enough. Supporting community development as a core function of public housing requires system-wide alignment: values-based leadership,

shared governance, coherent frameworks, and sustained investment in the conditions that enable care, connection, and collective agency.

Creating and holding space may begin at the frontline, but its realisation depends on organisational design. A shift from transactional to transformative practice requires more than rhetorical commitment: it demands structural change—from compliance to co-governance, siloed delivery to integrated placemaking, and from short-term outputs to longer-term approaches to community wellbeing. Without such reform, relational practice risks being acknowledged but unsupported—spoken of, yet rarely sustained.

The next chapter deepens this analysis by exploring how practitioners position themselves as strategic actors—leveraging care, navigating constraints, and embedding community-led approaches within a fragmented public housing system.

Chapter Six: More than a Job—The Community Development Practitioner

6.1 Introduction

Research on public housing renewal has traditionally focused on institutions, governance arrangements, and participation processes—often overlooking the everyday work of those who occupy what Williams (2014) describes as “the spaces between” (p. 7). While the broader literature highlights policy shifts and engagement mechanisms (Fox, 2014; Wannan, 2016), the role of community development practitioners—particularly in Aotearoa New Zealand—remains under-examined.

This chapter addresses that gap by centring the lived experiences of community development practitioners in public housing. It positions them as critical intermediaries who build trust, foster resident wellbeing, and navigate institutional complexity.

Practitioners occupy liminal spaces—bridging policy and practice, connecting community needs with institutional goals. They help translate policies into everyday relationships and support, often working in uncertain environments with multiple expectations. Their work is not just about responding to tasks—it reflects a strong commitment to community, thoughtful decision-making, and emotional awareness. To investigate these dynamics, this chapter addresses two guiding research questions:

Research Question One: How do community development practitioners define and describe their roles and practices within public housing?

Research Question Two: How do practitioners and public housing authorities perceive the contribution of community development to the wellbeing of residents and communities?

These questions foreground the voices and experiences of practitioners, revealing how they understand, negotiate, and sustain their work in contexts shaped by both structural constraints and relational commitments.

Building on Chapter Five's exploration of how community development is defined and enacted, this chapter shifts focus to the practitioners themselves. It asks: What does it mean to do this work on the ground within institutions often ambivalent about its value? How do practitioners sustain relational commitments amid the procedural demands of compliance-oriented systems?

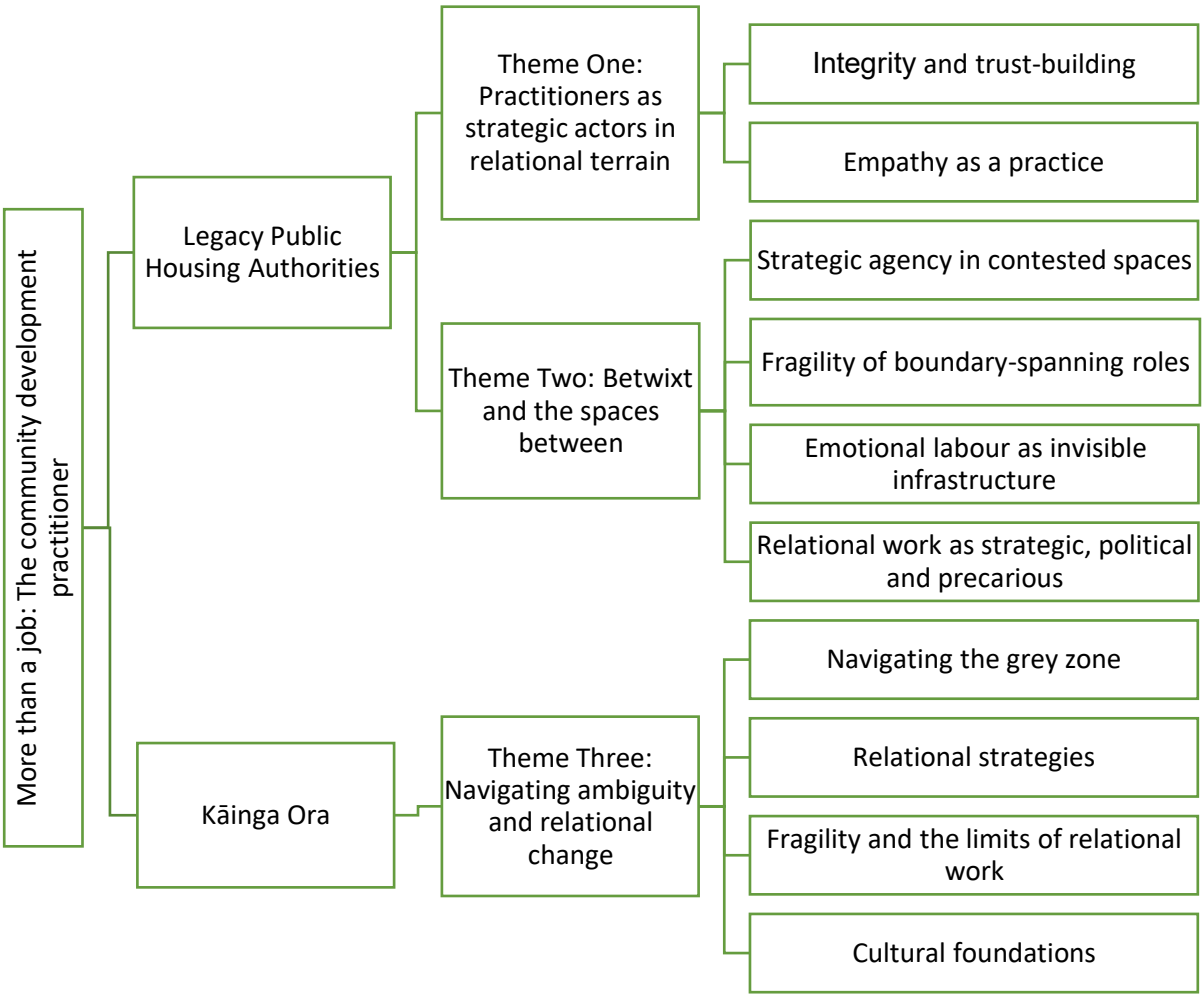
The analysis draws on a set of interwoven theoretical frameworks to illuminate the affective, strategic, and ethical dimensions of practice. Situated ethics (Banks, 2011), dilemmatic spaces (Hoggett et al., 2008), and dual embeddedness (Eversole, 2012) help explain the ethical complexity and identity-based tensions that shape daily decision-making. Theories of boundary-spanning (Williams, 2002, 2012), dual membership (Wenger, 1999), and emotional labour (Hochschild, 2012) shed light on how practitioners broker between institutional and community logics—often carrying the invisible weight of care. Lipsky's (1980) concept of street-level discretion highlights the political significance of everyday judgement, while Gaventa's (2006) Power Cube and Cornwall's (2004) framework of invited and managed spaces locate practitioner action within broader systems of power and participation.

These perspectives are further enriched by Indigenous and Pasifika relational frameworks—*whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā*—which position trust, care, and spiritual connection as foundational to ethical governance. As Anae (2010) and Penny et al. (2024) argue, these practices are not peripheral or discretionary; they constitute culturally embedded systems of accountability, reciprocity, and collective wellbeing.

The chapter is organised in two parts. Part One examines practitioner experiences within legacy public housing authorities from 2000 to 2017. Part Two turns to the post-merger environment of Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities.

Figure 15 introduces the thematic structure for both parts, illustrating key patterns that emerged from qualitative analysis. The analysis focuses on how community development practitioners navigated ambiguity, exercised relational and strategic judgement, and enacted values-based practice within legacy authorities. These interconnected themes provide a foundation for understanding the broader systemic conditions shaping community development in public housing.

Figure 15 *Themes identified to address Research Questions One and Two* (Created by the author)



Part One: The Community Development Practitioner in Legacy Public Housing Authorities

Part One explores how community development practitioners enacted relational and strategic work within legacy public housing authorities—Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC), Wellington City Council (WCC), and Christchurch City Council (CCC)—between 2000 and 2017. Practitioners operated within fragmented institutional structures and historically fraught relationships with tenants, often working against compliance-driven cultures that prioritised tenancy management over community wellbeing.

In these constrained environments, practitioners exercised discretion, strategic judgement, and values-based decision-making to uphold trust, relational ethics, and community voice. Amid competing accountabilities and institutional ambiguity, they drew on cultural knowledge, empathy, and ethical commitment to maintain presence and influence within systems often resistant to relational work.

Applying the conceptual frameworks outlined above, this section examines how practitioners leveraged personal histories, cultural values, and relational skills to practise community development in settings where such work was often peripheral or unsupported. It foregrounds the personal and affective foundations of practice and sets the stage for the institutional shifts explored in Part Two with the formation of Kāinga Ora.

6.2 Theme One: Practitioners as Strategic Actors in Relational Terrain

Across all interviews, a clear pattern emerged: practitioners did not enter community development through conventional pathways but through lived experiences of marginalisation, cultural values, and commitments to social justice. Their motivations were relational and identity-based, shaping how they navigated institutional complexity. In this sense, values were not abstract ideals, but embodied daily practices—echoing Hoggett et al.'s (2008) claim that community development is deeply entwined with practitioner identity.

Informants consistently described a values-based approach underpinned by empathy, cultural fluency, and a strong sense of responsibility. KI 11 reflected on how relational ethics shaped their everyday practice: “I treated tenants like *whānau* first, not problems. You can’t build trust any other way.”

Similarly, KI 1 grounded her approach in *Māori* wellbeing frameworks, describing them as guiding principles: “Everything I did in terms of my approach and my practice, these Māori models of mine are principles that guided me.”

Rather than operating in spite of institutional norms, KI 1 enacted an alternative logic grounded in reciprocity, care, and accountability. These values functioned as ethical anchors, enabling her to navigate systemic demands with quiet influence. This orientation reflects Māori conceptions of wellbeing as emerging from sustained relationships between people, place, and institutions (Penny et al., 2024). Such frameworks do not treat relationship-building as procedural but as infrastructural—central to *whānau* wellbeing, collective resilience, and system change.

Many informants linked their orientation to community work with formative life experiences, *whānau* teachings, and personal encounters with exclusion. KI 4, for instance, reflected on how being a first-generation New Zealander of Samoan and English descent shaped her worldview:

> Both my parents are immigrants. My mum moved to New Zealand from England in the ’70s, and my dad moved from Samoa. It gave me a little bit of insight into both cultures and into being a first-generation New Zealander with a mixed background, all of them combined give me a unique insight. (KI 4)

This intersectional positioning enabled KI 4 to connect across cultural differences, offering empathy and cultural literacy in settings where engagement had often been tokenistic. Drawing on Cornwall’s (2004) theory of invited spaces, practitioners like KI 4 used cultural

knowledge to move beyond narrow, institutional forms of participation—carving out more relationally grounded spaces for community voice.

KI 7 and KI 8 reinforced this pattern. Both described early experiences of poverty and exclusion that shaped their empathy and solidarity. KI 7 explained: “I had some empathy for the people in those areas and the situation they were in. Given my personal view, I think a sense of understanding and realisation that this was the right thing to do.”

Rather than framing community development solely as a profession, informants portrayed it as anchored in lived experience, cultural values, and relational responsibility. These narratives show how practitioners relied on non-traditional assets—life experience, ethical orientation, and cultural insight—to navigate institutional complexity and enable grounded forms of engagement.

Whereas Chapter Five traced trust as an emergent outcome of presence, care, and cultural connection, this chapter reconceptualises trust as a deliberate, situated practice—involving strategic judgement, moral discernment, and emotional attentiveness. In the institutional contexts described by informants, trust is neither assumed nor merely interpersonal. It must be deliberately built and actively sustained through practices that are both relational and tactical. Trust is not only cultivated with tenants but also brokered across institutional boundaries—sustained through boundary-spanning, discretionary judgement, and ethical negotiation.

This reframing foregrounds the politicised and precarious nature of trust-building within compliance-driven systems, where practitioners continually navigate tensions between care, control, and institutional legitimacy. As the next section explores, trust becomes both an ethical stance and a strategic endeavour—requiring cultural fluency, emotional resilience, and personal integrity, often in systems that do not fully recognise or support it.

6.2.1 Integrity and Trust-Building

While values and identity grounded practitioners' approach, trust was not assumed—it had to be intentionally and consistently built through relational work. Informants described rapport-building not simply as empathetic expression, but as a practical strategy for establishing credibility within communities often wary of housing authorities. Through informal presence, social events, and everyday conversations, practitioners listened to tenant concerns and gradually earned trust.

These relational efforts created the conditions for applying technical knowledge—such as tenancy law, planning processes, and funding systems—in ways that supported both community wellbeing and institutional aims. As KI 1 explained, success relied less on formal credentials than on the ability to connect: "When you go into your community, don't set up your office first and pull out all your books. You go around the room and connect. It's really about establishing relationships."

Across interviews, honesty, openness, and authenticity were consistently described as the bedrock of trust. For KI 9, transparency was key: "Always be honest when working with the community—honest with good and bad news."

These insights highlight the practitioner's role as a crucial but often overlooked link in public housing systems—individuals whose work extends beyond formal job descriptions to form an informal, adaptive scaffold that enables institutional responsiveness and community connection.

This scaffolding was sustained not only through technical skill, but through deeply held values—particularly empathy, which emerged across interviews as a relational ethic guiding how practitioners engaged, responded, and built trust over time.

6.3.2 Empathy as a Practice

Empathy emerged as a consistent thread in practitioner accounts—a way to connect, understand tenant realities, and respond with care. As KI 4 put it: “If you’re not coming at the work from a place of empathy, then you’re never going to be able to develop those relationships crucial to doing the work.”

This was not merely about feeling empathy, but acting on it. Banks (2010) emphasises that ethical practice involves translating insight into tangible support. KI 7 illustrated this by initiating a community project in response to observed need, while KI 8’s reflection aligns with Hoggett et al.’s (2008) notion of a reparative impulse—an ethical inclination to respond to institutional harm: “I thought the organisation owed it to its customers to do more than just put a roof over their heads.”

This comment signalled a desire not just to restore trust, but to rebuild the social fabric fractured by systemic neglect. It reflects an ethic of responsiveness that, while powerful, often placed the burden of repair on individuals rather than structures.

The demands of relational practice also placed a significant emotional burden on practitioners, who were expected to absorb system failures while sustaining care and connection in environments that rarely acknowledged—let alone resourced—this labour. KI 11, a former housing manager, reflected on the strain of being required to prioritise rent collection over tenant wellbeing:

> I’m quite values-driven . . . I just felt that there was a different way for us to be able to support people. My biggest challenge was driving around collecting rent, not finding out the reasons why people struggled, and finding out who they were. (KI 11)

This quote captures the dissonance practitioners faced between institutional expectations and relational values. Trust could be undermined by colleagues who prioritised compliance over care in their pursuit of arrears.

Similar tensions emerged for KI 4, who explained how their association with the housing authority sometimes compromised their relational work:

> Many of them see me as their landlord, so they won't necessarily be open and frank with me. The team was there to help develop the community, and we weren't there to talk to them about rent arrears or damage to the property. (KI 4)

KI 4's comment illustrates how practitioner roles were shaped by power dynamics that complicated efforts to build trust. Practitioners were often seen as institutional agents, which constrained their ability to connect. In response, many consciously repositioned themselves—emphasising that their role was not one of surveillance but relational engagement.

These examples demonstrate how empathy became both an ethical and political tool—mobilised to build belonging, strengthen capability, and foster connection. Yet this was not unbounded empathy. Practitioners exercised what Kaplan (1996) describes as *self-development as training*—a form of reflective restraint that avoids dependency. As KI 4 insisted: "You should never do something for the community that they can do for themselves."

This strategic restraint added another layer to ethical judgement: knowing when to step forward and when to step back. Yet while these relational capacities were widely valued, informants also highlighted the fragility of trust when it relied too heavily on individuals. KI 1 recalled tenants expressing this directly: "They said, 'It feels like everything we've shared and invested in them, leaves with them.'"

Here, it was tenants—rather than practitioners—who named the emotional toll of staff turnover. Rothstein and Stolle (2008) distinguish between *affective trust*, built through personal relationships, and *systemic trust*, which depends on institutions behaving reasonably, consistently, and competently. Without systemic support, relational trust becomes precarious—especially in environments marked by turnover, short-term contracts, and organisational churn. While practitioners often served as relational glue, their departure could rupture trust and, in some cases, re-traumatise already marginalised communities.

This reveals a core tension in community development: relational work is essential, but without institutional recognition and resourcing, trust cannot endure beyond individual relationships. These tensions echoed across the sector. Informants spoke candidly about the gap between their professional values and the operational realities of public housing institutions. The most acute tensions emerged in the disconnect between community-focused values and the compliance-driven structures dominating their work environments.

Several informants described persistent struggles to act in ways aligned with their values while navigating risk-averse, delivery-focused systems. As KI 3 reflected, community development was “pretty well non-existent” within their organisation, with tenancy management taking precedence. Attempts to adopt broader wellbeing approaches were repeatedly blocked by structural rigidity.

KI 3 described the decade-long shift towards compliance erased years of community-building: “When we went through a restructure, we went from communities and social into compliance. All the social outcomes that we had [...] probably took us since the inception of housing [...] all that work appeared to disappear.”

This erosion was experienced not just as a professional constraint but as a personal loss. Some, like KI 3, continued relational work unofficially: “It wasn’t sanctioned but I saw it as a commitment to the people and the work we’d started.”

Eketone (2021) reminds us that in *Māori* relational frameworks, obligations do not simply end when formal tasks are completed. Relationships are transformed, not severed—often marked by rituals such as *poroporoaki*, which honour both closure and continuity. From this perspective, leadership is reframed not as a fixed role but as a relational continuum sustained over time.

Other informants pointed to how narrow performance metrics undermined care-based work. KI 11 described the tension between being values-driven and operating within a system that prioritised procedural outputs: “It felt like a lot of that exercise was a check-the-box exercise. It was driven around collecting rent, not finding out why people struggled... I really struggled because it was quite process-driven.”

The need to “push the envelope without breaking the rules” became a recurring strategy. Some informants responded by informally expanding their roles—spending extra time with tenants, building partnerships, or interpreting policy flexibly. Despite systemic constraints, they remained committed to broader interpretations of care. As KI 11 explained: “I would spend more time asking questions, seeking to understand so that I could articulate that with how we operated within the model.”

These accounts reveal a deeper contradiction at the heart of community development in public housing: practitioners were expected to build trust in systems that were often indifferent—or even hostile—to relational practice. The result was a constant negotiation between care and compliance, between what institutions demanded and what communities needed.

This misalignment reveals a fundamental clash between relational ethics and managerial governance. Where *kaupapa Māori* practice values presence, reciprocity, and care, compliance systems reward visibility, efficiency, and standardisation. These are not simply

competing priorities—they are structured by opposing logics. What is meaningful in one is often unintelligible in the other.

Such enduring commitments rarely align with institutional norms. The ethic of “stepping aside” (KI 1), a hallmark of *kaitiakitanga*, has no place in systems structured around deliverables and time-limited interventions. Practitioners thus occupy liminal roles—enacting justice-oriented practices within bureaucracies shaped by performative accountability.

Practitioners emerge here as boundary spanners, navigating the contested space between care and control, empathy and enforcement. It is to this in-between terrain—where relational practice rubs against institutional constraint—that the next theme now turns. The following section explores how practitioners exercised discretion, negotiation, and culturally grounded judgement to stretch their roles and broker meaningful outcomes in an often indifferent system.

6.3 Theme Two: Betwixt and the Spaces Between

While the previous section explored the values and strategies shaping community development, this theme turns to the institutional positioning of practitioners—roles marked by ambiguity, ethical tension, and quiet negotiation. Practitioners in public housing operate within what Hoggett et al. (2008) term dilemmatic spaces: settings shaped by competing priorities and structural constraints, where discretion must be exercised with relational and cultural care.

This tension is not only structural but deeply relational. Practitioners hold dual accountabilities—to institutions and to the communities they serve—requiring navigation across divergent logics, norms, and expectations. Wenger’s (1999) concept of dual membership captures this ambiguity, while Williams’ (2002, 2012) notion of boundary work highlights the strategic labour involved in translating and brokering across institutional and cultural divides.

Yet these dynamics cannot be fully explained through organisational theory alone. Relational and spatial frameworks provide deeper insight into how power, place, and presence shape practice. Massey (2013) reminds us that space is constituted through social and institutional relations—not a neutral backdrop but a field of power. Informants' accounts reflect this: practitioners resisted being confined to procedural roles by holding space for care, dignity, and connection. Mee's (2009) critique of compliance-driven systems exposes the invisibility of relational work, while Anae's (2010) concept of *teu le vā* reframes institutional discomfort as a breach in relational ethics—an unmet obligation to nurture the spaces between people.

This ethical orientation is further enriched by Māori conceptualisations of wellbeing, which position *whakawhanaungatanga* not as discretionary care but as systemic responsibility (Penny et al., 2024). The distinction between *Te Ūkaipō*—a site of cultural anchoring—and *whakawhanaungatanga*—a negotiated, sometimes contested, relational space—mirrors the dual positioning practitioners must navigate. Concepts such as *tikanga*, *wairuatanga*, and *mauri* draw attention to the subtle, often unrecognised labour involved in maintaining integrity and restoring balance within institutional settings.

These everyday acts resonate with Scott's (1990) notion of infrapolitics: quiet, persistent practices that stretch institutional boundaries without overt confrontation. Rather than opposing bureaucracy through defiance, practitioners draw on cultural fluency and relational presence to hold space for community agency—challenging monocultural framings through care rather than conflict. As Penny et al. (2024) and Eketone (2021) argue, culturally grounded practices such as *whakawhanaungatanga* are not merely techniques of rapport but ethical frameworks anchored in obligation, mutual accountability, and spiritual continuity. While dominant systems construct professional relationships as bounded and time-limited, *Māori* relational ethics see relationships as evolving and enduring.

The capacity to operate *betwixt and between*, as Ryan and O'Malley (2016) describe, is not peripheral to public service—it is what enables practitioners to bridge, translate, and hold

space within systems not designed for relational work. Yet, as this chapter shows, these relational and translational skills are consistently undervalued within bureaucracies that prioritise compliance, efficiency, and risk aversion. Practitioners must navigate the tension between community empowerment and institutional control—what Gaventa (2006) frames as the interplay of visible, hidden, and invisible power. Their boundary-spanning labour constitutes a quiet form of relational leadership—one that sustains trust and collective agency even in the absence of structural support.

The next section explores how practitioners inhabit these in-between spaces—not as passive intermediaries, but as ethical actors navigating competing demands with relational, political, and affective acuity. Here, moving between institutional and community domains is not merely spatial—it is a practice of negotiating care, accountability, and constraint.

6.3.1 Strategic Agency in Contested Spaces

In this study, *strategic relational agency* refers to the ways practitioners draw on trust, cultural knowledge, and ethical judgement to navigate institutional pressures, exercise discretion, and sustain community engagement. This form of agency represents a quiet influence—relationally grounded, politically attuned, and often enacted without formal authority. Rather than relying solely on procedural compliance, practitioners responded to competing imperatives through culturally informed judgement, building credibility, negotiating outcomes, and holding relational space within constrained systems.

While this aligns with Lipsky's (1980) account of street-level discretion, in public housing it was relationally embedded—enacted through presence, trust, and adaptive negotiation across institutional boundaries. As KI 2 explained:

> We did a lot of navigating, brokering between tenants and tenancy managers regarding debt and arrears […] we had a different relationship with them, and that

> allowed us [to]—not so much advocate on their behalf but to open the dialogue between them." (KI 2)

Similarly, KI 3 reflected: "We were navigating between what the organisation would allow and what the tenants needed. We had to do it carefully, building trust both ways without getting shut down."

These accounts demonstrate that frontline discretion in community development is not only politically consequential, as Lipsky (1980) argues, but also emotionally and ethically charged. It reflects what Mee (2009) calls the invisible labour of sustaining relational space within risk-averse systems.

In these constrained contexts, practitioners relied on informal relational capital to broker outcomes that formal structures resisted. Internal networks became a strategy of quiet influence—leveraging trust-based relationships to navigate bureaucratic barriers. As KI 8 explained: "It just helped to have that prior relationship with various people in the organisation. It's just a management style where you can get things done."

KI 3 similarly described the need for informal workarounds: "Sometimes you had to go through the back door. The system wasn't built for flexibility, so you used your relationships to get what the tenants needed."

These reflections show how relational capital functions as hidden infrastructure—enabling practitioners to stretch institutional rules and create openings for participation. As Gaventa (2006) notes, hidden power often operates through relationships and informal influence rather than formal authority. Yet these spaces remain precarious—sustained by affective labour rather than secured by mandate (Massey, 2013).

6.3.2 Fragility of Boundary-Spanning Roles

While relational agency enables practitioners to open space for community influence, it also exposes them to institutional fragility. Practitioners are tasked with building trust and enabling voice within systems that remain ambivalent—or at times actively resistant—to relational change. As KI 2 observed:

> In the public sector, they're caught in the middle; they want to create social change for the communities they don't represent but work with, and they work for the organisation that has trusted them to facilitate that social change. Navigating that line is quite difficult. (KI 2)

This tension reflects how practitioners navigate dual allegiances—between institutional logics and community needs (Wenger, 1999)—often without full recognition from either. Their roles are structurally liminal, shaped by competing expectations and divergent cultural norms. Williams' (2002, 2012) concept of the boundary spanner sharpens this analysis, highlighting the strategic labour of brokering across organisational and cultural divides. Practitioners are not merely intermediaries; they are translators, risk-bearers, and relational brokers—operating in institutional blind spots where formal support is often absent.

KI 13 captured this divided allegiance: "It's like, 'We want you here because your skills are in that world, and you're part of that world, but we want you over here […] don't step across that line into that world.'"

Such dual positioning demanded not only strategic navigation but sustained emotional endurance. Practitioners constantly adjusted their language, presence, and tone—what one described as "walking the line"—to remain credible across institutional and community contexts. This affective labour was rarely visible but essential to maintaining trust and influence.

In response, practitioners engaged in quiet forms of relational resistance—protecting community voice while avoiding open confrontation. As KI 3 explained: “The organisation wanted us to facilitate change their way, but the community had their own ideas. We had to find ways to let those ideas through without making it look like we were challenging the system.”

Yet this quiet leadership came at a cost. The emotional and ethical labour required to sustain trust within compliance-driven systems remained largely invisible—essential to institutional functioning, yet unmeasured, unsupported, and often carried alone.

6.3.3 Emotional Labour as Invisible Infrastructure

Beyond strategic navigation, practitioners carried the emotional burden of sustaining relational work in systems that offered little institutional support. As KI 8 noted: “You couldn’t do it unless you genuinely cared. People know if you’re there for them or just ticking a box. That’s how you build the trust that opens doors the organisation can’t.”

Yet this labour was often borne alone. KI 3 reflected: “You are expected to build trust, but there’s no time, no training, no value placed on it. You carry that weight alone.”

Through affective commitment and moral presence, practitioners exercised quiet forms of influence that preserved dignity and connection within systems structured for control (Scott, 1990). Yet as Cornwall (2008) cautions, when participation is narrowly framed and structurally bounded, these relational openings remain fragile—held together by the unacknowledged relational labour of frontline staff.

These accounts reveal how relational work is essential to system functioning but remains marginalised—unrecognised in formal structures and unmeasured in performance frameworks. Penny et al. (2024) challenge this invisibility, arguing that relational wellbeing

must be institutionally upheld, not left to the discretion—or depletion—of individual practitioners.

6.3.4 Relational Work as Strategic, Political, and Precarious

The experiences shared by informants make clear that relational work in public housing is neither incidental nor secondary. It demands careful judgement, emotional effort, and sustained presence—often enacted within systems that prioritise compliance and risk management over connection and care. This labour sustains what Cornwall (2008) calls fragile spaces of participation: moments where community voice can surface, however briefly, within bureaucratic systems more attuned to control than collaboration.

These spaces are not held open by institutional frameworks, but by practitioner responsiveness, relationship-building, and moral presence—typically without structural backing. In doing so, practitioners ensure that tenants can participate, be heard, and feel supported, even when the system makes this difficult.

This is not an extension of service delivery—it is a quiet form of institutional influence. Practitioners stretch organisational boundaries, challenging the marginalisation of community voice through acts of translation, negotiation, and relational care. These efforts do not overtly confront institutional norms but reshape them from within, carving space for trust, dignity, and community agency.

Recognising this labour reframes public housing not simply as a site of tenancy management, but as a contested relational arena—where wellbeing and voice are held open through everyday acts of care, despite rather than because of institutional design.

6.4 Conclusion to Part One

Practitioners' ability to navigate fragmented, performance-oriented housing systems reflects a strategic blending of relational and technical skills. Many embedded

whakawhanaungatanga in practice, leveraging cultural knowledge and procedural fluency to create spaces of care and connection. Yet their influence, while grounded in values, was not achieved through empathy alone. It required institutional literacy, ethical judgement, and the tactical use of discretion within shifting systems.

These adaptive strategies enabled relational work to flourish in unlikely spaces—but also exposed its fragility. Without consistent organisational support—dedicated time, enabling leadership, structural alignment—community development remains vulnerable to erosion and burnout. Legacy public housing authorities permitted a degree of principled improvisation, but they also relied heavily on individual resourcefulness to compensate for systemic gaps. Practitioners often carried this burden alone, sustaining trust and cohesion through everyday labour that was essential, yet unrecognised.

This analysis underscores a central insight: community development in public housing is not held together by policy frameworks alone, but by practitioners who relationally reweave fractured systems. in systems structurally misaligned with such values.

These dynamics sharpen in the centralised, post-merger context of Kāinga Ora. While practitioner roles have expanded, structural support remains uneven, and organisational clarity around community development continues to lag. The merger did not resolve the tensions practitioners faced; it repositioned them, introducing new layers of ambiguity, complexity, and emotional strain.

Part Two extends the analysis into the contemporary context of Kāinga Ora, examining how whakawhanaungatanga and teu le vā operate not only as relational strategies, but as ethical and political frameworks that contest dominant institutional logics. These culturally grounded practices illuminate how community development is sustained—not through mandate, but through quiet, resilient acts of navigation, cultural leadership, and relational care. Within this new institutional landscape, the chapter explores both the continuity of practitioner strategies

and the fresh challenges introduced by organisational scale, accelerated pace, and persistent structural ambiguity.

Part Two: The Community Development Practitioner in Kāinga Ora

Established through the 2019 merger of Housing New Zealand Corporation, HLC, and the KiwiBuild Unit, Kāinga Ora represents a major structural reconfiguration of Aotearoa New Zealand's public housing system. As previously discussed, its expanded mandate brings housing provision, urban development, and community wellbeing under a single institutional umbrella. With this consolidation came new aspirations—but also fresh constraints, role ambiguity, and contested expectations around what community development should achieve and how it should be delivered.

Practitioners now operate in a centralised, evolving environment where their roles have broadened but remain unsettled. While legacy housing authorities afforded greater autonomy for trust-based and adaptive work, Kāinga Ora introduces new layers of complexity—combining scale and pace with increasing pressure to balance technical delivery and relational depth. Community development is being reinterpreted within this context, not through a shared strategic framework but through individual discretion, organisational flux, and inconsistent interpretations across regions.

Despite the Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities Act 2019 mandating contributions to sustainable, inclusive, and thriving communities, there is no coherent strategy to operationalise this goal. Practitioners consistently described working in a landscape marked by high expectations and low clarity—where the meaning, purpose, and resourcing of community development vary widely. Institutional support is uneven, strategic direction fragmented, and leadership guidance limited. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted face-to-face work, exposing the fragility of engagement practices that were never structurally embedded.

This environment has produced enduring contradictions: between aspirational rhetoric and operational realities; between local autonomy and centralised control; and between the ethic

of care and the imperative of performance. While some practitioners voiced bold visions for community development as a systemic and political endeavour, these ambitions frequently clashed with institutional cultures prioritising efficiency and risk minimisation. As Shaw (2011) observes, practitioners are often caught between amplifying community voice and upholding the authority of the state.

In the absence of a national strategy, many rely on personal values to guide their work. While this creates space for creativity and cultural responsiveness, it also produces fragmentation, inconsistency, and practitioner fatigue. Without organisational scaffolding, the emotional and ethical load of the work is borne individually—raising the risk of burnout and institutional detachment.

In response, practitioners have developed a suite of adaptive strategies to sustain their work amid institutional ambiguity. The following themes explore how community development is enacted within Kāinga Ora—not through mandate, but through cultural fluency, discretionary care, and quiet negotiation. Navigating these ambiguities requires more than technical skill; it demands strategic discretion, relational fluency, and a continual negotiation of practitioner identity.

The next theme—*Navigating Ambiguity and Relational Change*—examines how staff adaptively negotiate their roles in this unsettled environment. It focuses on how practitioners sustain relational influence and integrity in a system that has yet to fully recognise, resource, or structurally support their work.

6.5 Theme Three: Navigating Ambiguity and Relational Change

The post-merger landscape of Kāinga Ora represents not just structural consolidation but ongoing institutional flux. Practitioners operate in an unsettled environment where leadership structures, strategic priorities, and organisational identity remain in formation. Where legacy housing authorities allowed some local discretion, the national scale of Kāinga Ora

introduces new forms of instability—diffusing leadership across multiple tiers without providing a clear anchor for community development practice. In this grey zone, accountabilities are blurred, expectations are misaligned, and relational practice is often squeezed between competing imperatives. Practitioners are tasked with sustaining community trust and engagement within systems increasingly driven by delivery pressures, performance metrics, and risk management logics. As Hudson (2004) and Boulton et al. (2022) note, bureaucratic environments often marginalise relational work in favour of measurable outputs, leaving relational leadership structurally unsupported and emotionally precarious. In such conditions, practitioners must rely not on institutional scaffolding but on adaptive, relationally grounded strategies to maintain their effectiveness and ethical presence.

6.5.1 Navigating the Grey Zone: Dual Membership and Ethical Labour

Navigating institutional ambiguity within Kāinga Ora requires more than technical skill. Practitioners must constantly negotiate their position across competing expectations, shifting mandates, and contested terrains. As Wenger (1999) notes, practitioners operating within liminal institutional spaces experience dual membership—belonging simultaneously to formal organisational structures and to the communities they serve.

Within Kāinga Ora, this dual positioning became a site of emotional and ethical tension, where practitioners were expected to uphold organisational professionalism while sustaining relational credibility with tenants and communities. Practitioners recounted the constant work of having to shift tone, recalibrate language, and modulate presence to meet divergent expectations.

KO 20 captured this balancing act: “You’re always balancing—you’ve got to stay professional with the organisation but be relatable to tenants . . . you’re always walking that line.”

This delicate negotiation was emotionally demanding and relationally complex. KO 20 concluded, “Sometimes it feels like you’re too ‘community’ for management, and too ‘management’ for the community.”

These insights highlight that boundary work within Kāinga Ora is not only strategic but profoundly affective. Practitioners must constantly navigate perception across institutional and community settings—performing nuanced, often-unseen relational labour that is largely absent from formal accountability frameworks. This affective burden was further intensified by structural ambiguity surrounding community development itself. As KO 16 reflected: “The frontline roles are always high pressure... the organisation has not come to grips with the community parts of our legislation, engagement or comm dev.”

Despite the critical importance of sustaining relational trust and presence, practitioners’ efforts remained structurally precarious. The absence of clear institutional anchoring for community development work required practitioners to broker legitimacy, manage relational trust, and sustain ethical presence without reliable systemic support. In these grey spaces, relational credibility was hard-won but institutionally fragile, leaving practitioners to carry the relational load individually, often without recognition, protection, or resourcing. This dynamic of dual membership, demands not just strategic negotiation but emotional endurance—qualities practitioners must sustain without consistent institutional support (Wenger, 1999).

6.5.2 Relational Strategies amid Constraint: Adaptation and Tactical Framing

In the face of institutional ambiguity and systemic fragmentation, practitioners developed a range of relational strategies to sustain trust and maintain ethical presence. Relational connection was not ancillary—it was core to the work. As KO 15 explained, credibility was built through consistent, everyday engagement rather than formal interventions: “It shows you why we do what we do in terms of face-to-face. It really illustrates the need for that face-to-face conversation, just being there and hanging around.”

Face-to-face presence was more than service delivery—it was a deliberate relational practice to cultivate trust. This required more than physical availability; it demanded adaptive communication to engage diverse audiences. As KO 15 noted:

> You need to be able to negotiate, talk, be flexible and have communication skills. People were not always going to get what they wanted. And you have to be able to mould yourself around and talk to different people in different ways, depending on who you're talking to. (KO 15)

The incremental nature of trust-building was a recurring theme. As KO 15 reflected: "Building trust is a very slow process. Especially when people have been let down so many times. Even setting up a simple newsletter can take years before it's genuinely tenant-led."

Practitioners also reframed community aspirations into organisational language to gain internal support. As KO 19 explained, aligning tenant priorities with system-recognisable terms—such as "placemaking" or "community wellbeing"—helped gain traction: "We had to use language that the planners and project teams could hook into—talking about 'placemaking' or 'supporting transitions' worked better than just saying 'community engagement.'"

Similarly, KO 20 described the use of translation to bridge values:

> Sometimes I take the angle of what's important to them, that may not be important to me. In my head, they're interested in selling homes so I translate and share that it's more meaningful than just selling homes, that you're actually impacting people's lives and their sense of connection to the place and belonging by doing this. (KO 20)

While strategic framing was often necessary, it came with ethical risk. As Banks and Orton (2007) caution, such translation can dilute community voice, repackaging relational aspirations into system-friendly terms that mask their intent.

Despite these tensions, practitioners exercised quiet forms of leadership that extended beyond immediate tasks. This was not formal authority, but the ability to shape how care and connection were sustained in systems oriented toward delivery and control. Drawing on relational credibility, cultural fluency, and situational judgement, practitioners held space for community wellbeing amid institutional constraint.

Through steady presence and adaptive practice, they embedded relational values into daily routines—not by overt confrontation, but by quietly expanding space for care, trust, and participation. This quiet leadership was rarely recognised, but its effects were tangible. As KO 25 reflected:

> Patience, I suppose, and tenacity in a way. You continually have to go back or fight for change, and I think determination is necessary because you need to do that. You can't be afraid. You just have to do it. (KO 25)

Practitioners navigated institutional terrain carefully, translating community aspirations into recognisable frames while protecting relational integrity. As Williams (2002, 2012) notes, boundary-spanning is not neutral—it demands relational negotiation and strategic management of competing expectations. Practitioners enacted this role precisely: holding tensions without collapsing into either institutional or community agendas.

Their leadership operated relationally rather than procedurally—anchored in trust, care, emotional endurance, and quiet systemic repair. Through this work, practitioners built invisible infrastructures of connection and ethical accountability within systems that too often privilege technical delivery over relational wellbeing.

Yet, as the next section explores, this leadership came at a cost. Without formal recognition or structural support, relational credibility remained precarious, individually carried, and vulnerable to systemic erosion.

6.5.3 Fragility and Limits of Relational Work

While practitioners developed sophisticated strategies to sustain trust and engagement within Kāinga Ora, these efforts remained structurally precarious. As Hudson (2004) and Boulton et al. (2022) observe, bureaucratic systems often marginalise relational practice in favour of measurable outputs, rendering ethical and affective work largely invisible.

Practitioners spoke of the emotional, ethical, and structural toll of maintaining relational spaces in environments dominated by compliance and control. As KO 25 reflected: “You’re carrying people’s vulnerabilities as well as your own workload, and often with very little structural backing.”

This invisibility generated emotional exhaustion, role strain, and ethical dissonance. The fragility of trust was further intensified by the gap between aspirational rhetoric and operational reality. As KO 20 observed: “There’s all this talk about empowering tenants, but when it comes to decision-making, the system still holds all the power.”

Even seemingly insignificant institutional failures could undermine months of trust-building. As KO 15 put it: “It’s the small things that start to get ridiculous. Like waiting months to get a noticeboard up, or a key to a letterbox. It damages trust if you say you care but nothing happens.”

These accounts illustrate that while relational credibility is essential to legitimacy and trust, it is sustained through personal resilience rather than systemic support. Without deliberate institutional recognition and resourcing, the work remains fragile, inconsistent, and susceptible to erosion.

Yet even amid this precarity, practitioners drew on culturally grounded frameworks such as *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā*—embedding relational ethics that nurtured trust, resilience, and collective belonging within fragmented systems.

6.5.4 Cultural Foundations of Relational Leadership: Whakawhanaungatanga and Teu le Vā

The quiet relational leadership exercised by practitioners was not only adaptive—it was rooted in culturally grounded ethics. *Whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā* functioned not just as methods of engagement but as relational governance logics that uphold trust, dignity, and collective wellbeing in systems often blind to relational complexity.

As Penny et al. (2024) argue, *whakawhanaungatanga* is not a discretionary practice but a critical infrastructure of relational wellbeing, grounding community development in collective accountability and care. In the absence of formal scaffolding, it functioned as an everyday infrastructure—expressed through presence, reciprocity, and mutual responsibility.

Practitioners used *whakawhanaungatanga* to bridge institutional and community divides. KO 20 described how cultural principles and relational presence helped align community wellbeing with bureaucratic goals—enabling influence without compromising values. KO 23 illustrated this tension vividly:

> This organisation is great about telling us, “This is what it will look like. This is the great picture that we've got.” But what they haven't done is show us the colour palettes and the brushes to get us there. Before we start talking about the colour palettes and the brushes, what is it that's going to get us there? What is it that's describing that space? And that's where the whakawhānaungatanga comes in. It's how we hold the brushes. (KO 23)

This metaphor captured the persistent gap between strategic intent and relational practice: outcomes may be outlined, but the work of achieving them—through trust and presence—is informally sustained and rarely institutionally embedded.

Pasifika practitioners drew on *teu le vā*—a relational ethic that holds the space between people as sacred, requiring ongoing care and attentiveness. Even when not explicitly

named, its principles were evident in the way practitioners maintained balance, dignity, and trust within compliance-driven systems. KO 23 noted: “When you’re trying to change communities, and you haven’t understood the people or what change means to them, that’s when animosity happens.”

This reflects Anae’s (2010) reminder that *vā* must be nurtured. Imposing change without attending to relational space risks rupturing trust. In this way, *teu le vā* is not only an ethic of care but a model of governance grounded in spiritual and collective responsibility. Practitioners such as KO 23 and KO 24 tended this *vā* through relational attentiveness**,** ethical restraint, and culturally anchored presence. Their leadership was quiet but deliberate. As KO 24 explained:

> It’s hard to substantiate. For people that don’t have relationships... it’s hard for them to understand relationships, and the seeds or the importance of relationship. We’re all 20-year plus veterans in this industry, in this way of working—there’s some lessons that we’ve learned over the years. (KO 24)

Such reflections underscore why *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā* cannot be proceduralised or reduced to tools. They are embedded, ethical commitments that sustain collective wellbeing in systems geared toward control.

These frameworks offer alternative logics of governance—grounded not in performance metrics, but in reciprocity, accountability, and care. To treat them as cultural ‘add-ons’ is to miss their systemic significance. Embedding them requires not individual alignment alone, but structural transformation. As KO 22 put it: “You stop seeing communities as things to fix. You start seeing them as people you work alongside.”

Practitioners carried the emotional and ethical burden of this stewardship without systemic protection—enacting a quiet, persistent form of counter-governance. By embedding

whakawhanaungatanga and *teu le vā* into daily practice, they modelled a different kind of leadership—not based on control, but on care, presence, and collective accountability.

Recognising this requires more than rhetoric. It demands institutional change—across structures, leadership, and funding. Until then, the labour of sustaining trust, care, and community voice will remain individually carried, and systemically at risk.

6.5.5 Synthesis and Critical Reflection: Toward Relational Infrastructure

Practitioner experience within Kāinga Ora reveals that relational work is not incidental—it is the invisible infrastructure that sustains trust, care, and collective wellbeing within systems shaped by ambiguity, fragmentation, and compliance logics. Practitioners navigated a grey zone where institutional imperatives met community aspirations—requiring discretion, emotional discernment, and relational fluency.

Culturally grounded practices—*whakawhanaungatanga*, *teu le vā*—remained central. They enabled practitioners to engage in acts of translation and quiet leadership that held space for connection in systems more attuned to technical outputs than human relationships. This was not soft work. It was governance enacted relationally—through care, presence, and cultural accountability.

These frameworks did more than shape intent; they enacted a different logic of governance. By asserting collective care and ethical presence as organising principles, practitioners modelled *relational governance*—a model that restores balance and reorients institutional practice toward wellbeing.

Yet, as this theme has made clear, such work remains precarious. In the absence of structural recognition or institutional anchoring, relational practice relies on the discretionary labour of individuals—labour that is vital but vulnerable. As Tronto (1993) observes, care is often systemically relied upon while being simultaneously marginalised.

This contradiction reveals a deeper tension: public housing systems depend on relational work they neither formally recognise nor resource. Describing practitioners merely as brokers or implementers obscures their essential role. To frame them as *relational infrastructure* is to acknowledge their function in sustaining social connection, emotional safety, and cultural continuity—work that is foundational to system legitimacy.

What emerges from these findings is a sharpened claim: trust, participation, and wellbeing in public housing cannot rely solely on practitioner adaptability—they require institutional commitment. This means transforming systems by embedding relational accountability into governance, leadership, and operational frameworks. Shifting relational practice from the margins to the core of public service demands more than informal celebration; it requires formal resourcing and structural support.

6.6 Conclusion to Part Two

The synthesis of practitioner experience across both legacy housing authorities and Kāinga Ora reveals enduring themes and shifting tensions. In both contexts, community development practitioners acted as key intermediaries—translating between community realities and institutional imperatives. Their work was relational, adaptive, and grounded in values, yet persistently shaped by ambiguity, competing priorities, and cultures of performance that privilege outputs over connection.

Part One highlighted how practitioners navigated these dilemmatic spaces—building trust, brokering partnerships, and aligning community aspirations with system constraints. Part Two deepens the analysis within the post-merger context of Kāinga Ora, where centralisation intensified role ambiguity and heightened emotional strain. Practitioners continued to enact *whakawhanaungatanga*, broker relationships, and hold space for community voice—often without the structural support needed to sustain such labour.

Their efforts maintained relational space where formal systems faltered. Yet the subtle and often invisible nature of this work rendered it illegible within dominant frameworks, reinforcing a cycle where relational practice remains critical but unmeasured, relied upon but unsupported. Indigenous and Pasifika frameworks such as *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā* offer more than cultural grounding; they model alternative logics of governance based on collective wellbeing and relational accountability. Reframing practitioners as stewards of these frameworks shifts the emphasis from individual adaptability to institutional obligation.

This chapter argues that practitioners are not simply programme deliverers or community intermediaries—they function as relational infrastructure. They sustain the connective tissue of fragmented systems, humanise institutional processes, and create continuity amid disruption. This work spans emotional labour, cultural translation, and ethical discretion, yet is rarely recognised within conventional housing models.

The chapter advances the concept of the practitioner as *relational infrastructure*, drawing on Simone's (2014) notion of people as infrastructure and extending it through Hochschild's (2012) theory of emotional labour and Lipsky's (1980) street-level discretion. Practitioners are affective, cultural, and ethical actors—quietly holding fractured systems together.

This analysis raises a crucial question: does continued emphasis on practitioner adaptability obscure the institutional conditions that make such navigation necessary? Rebalancing this dynamic requires embedding community development into the strategic fabric of public housing authorities—through clear frameworks, reflective practice, and genuine recognition of emotional and cultural labour (Schön, 1983). This shift supports a *Tiriti*-honouring model that views connection not as ancillary, but as foundational social infrastructure—and positions practitioners not as flexible intermediaries, but as catalysts for *mauri ora*.

This insight leads directly into Chapter Seven, which reorients the focus from practitioner agency to institutional responsibility. Rather than asking how practitioners navigate systemic

incoherence, it interrogates the housing authority itself: as a system that can either enable or constrain community development. By examining leadership structures, governance cultures, funding mechanisms, and institutional logics, Chapter Seven asks what it would take to embed care, trust, and community agency—not as discretionary extras, but as essential components of public housing systems that promote wellbeing.

Chapter Seven: More than a Landlord—Public Housing as a Public Service

7.1 Introduction

Chapter Seven contends that public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand must be reimagined not merely as a response to housing need, but as a site of public service that embeds care, community, and collective wellbeing as institutional imperatives. It traces how residualisation and market logics have shaped the role and identity of public housing authorities and explores four interconnected themes: the erosion of public service purpose, the contested space of community-building, the normative potential of reframing care, and the organisational enablers and constraints that shape community development in practice.

Public housing authorities in Aotearoa New Zealand operate within a persistent tension: the drive for efficient delivery frequently competes with the responsibility to support tenant wellbeing and community development. While once imagined as a universal welfare service and contributor to collective wellbeing, this vision was never fully embedded in practice. Community development and tenant wellbeing were rarely formalised in policy, remaining secondary to tenancy management and asset delivery. Over time, political and policy shifts have further narrowed public housing's remit, eroding its social mission. Central to this transformation is the commodification of housing—where homes are increasingly treated as financial assets rather than social goods (Johnson, 2017; Murphy, 2020). Efficiency, return on investment, and risk management are now privileged over the place-based, relational work essential to community wellbeing.

This trajectory reflects a broader international pattern: a move from universal provision toward residual, needs-based models (Flint & Kearns, 2006; Grimes et al., 2023). In the UK, Jacobs and Manzi (2018) describe how housing authorities were restructured to prioritise tenancy enforcement and asset performance, sidelining moral and relational responsibilities. Tunstall and Pleace (2018) frame this as a loss of moral legitimacy, where housing staff become administrators rather than community stewards. Market logics and risk-based

governance displace care, institutional performance is prioritised, and proactive engagement is constrained. Community development becomes peripheral, contingent, and discretionary (Jacobs & Manzi, 2017).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, these global trends have been adapted to local policy and political conditions. Public housing has become increasingly aligned with commercial practices, narrowing the space for community development and recasting care as transactional or optional (Grimes et al., 2023; Johnson, 2017; Murphy, 2020). This shift raises critical questions about the scope and nature of the state's *duty of care*.

While the term duty of care is often invoked, its application has been inconsistent. Historically, care was framed in administrative terms—focused on eligibility processes rather than ongoing relational support (Johnson, 2013). With the introduction of income-related rents and social allocation policies in the early 2000s, Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) was formally required to consider mitigations and social support. Yet even then, care was tethered to risk mitigation rather than embedded as a systemic obligation. In the wake of residualisation, what little institutional commitment existed was further weakened, shifting relational responsibilities onto individual practitioners without structural support (Grimes et al., 2023; Manzi & Morrison, 2018; Penny et al., 2024).

This chapter takes up the challenge of moving beyond discretionary care toward a more robust institutional ethic of responsibility. Care ethics scholars—including Tronto (1993, 2013), Held (2006), and Sevenhuijsen (2003)—frame care not only as interpersonal, but as a political and democratic imperative that must be embedded in institutional design. Banks and Orton (2007) demonstrate how relational work is often marginalised within performance-driven systems. Alongside these frameworks, this chapter engages with Māori relational worldviews that centre *whakawhanaungatanga*, *tikanga*, and intergenerational balance (Penny et al., 2024), offering culturally grounded alternatives to individualised, transactional models of care.

In doing so, the chapter contributes to ongoing debates on residualisation, relational wellbeing, and public housing reform. It connects empirical insights, critical theory, and policy analysis to illuminate practical, evidence-informed pathways for realigning public housing with its foundational social purpose. While grounded in the institutional context shaped by the Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities Act 2019, the analysis focuses less on statutory design and more on enactment: how housing systems function in practice, and how they might be reshaped to support community.

Building on Chapter Six, which centred practitioner agency, this chapter reframes the lens to focus on institutional settings—the governance structures, policies, and cultures that shape how community development is enabled or constrained. Public housing is not a neutral platform but a contested institutional space where bureaucracy, relational work, and competing priorities intersect. Against this backdrop, the chapter asks: What would it take to embed community development not as a discretionary add-on, but as a core, strategic function?

To investigate this question, the chapter undertakes a dual inquiry**.** Part One examines the organisational conditions—both supportive and limiting—within legacy public housing authorities. Part Two explores how these dynamics have been reconfigured, reinforced, or challenged in the context of Kāinga Ora. This comparative approach reveals both points of change and ongoing structural continuities. This analysis is guided by two key research questions:

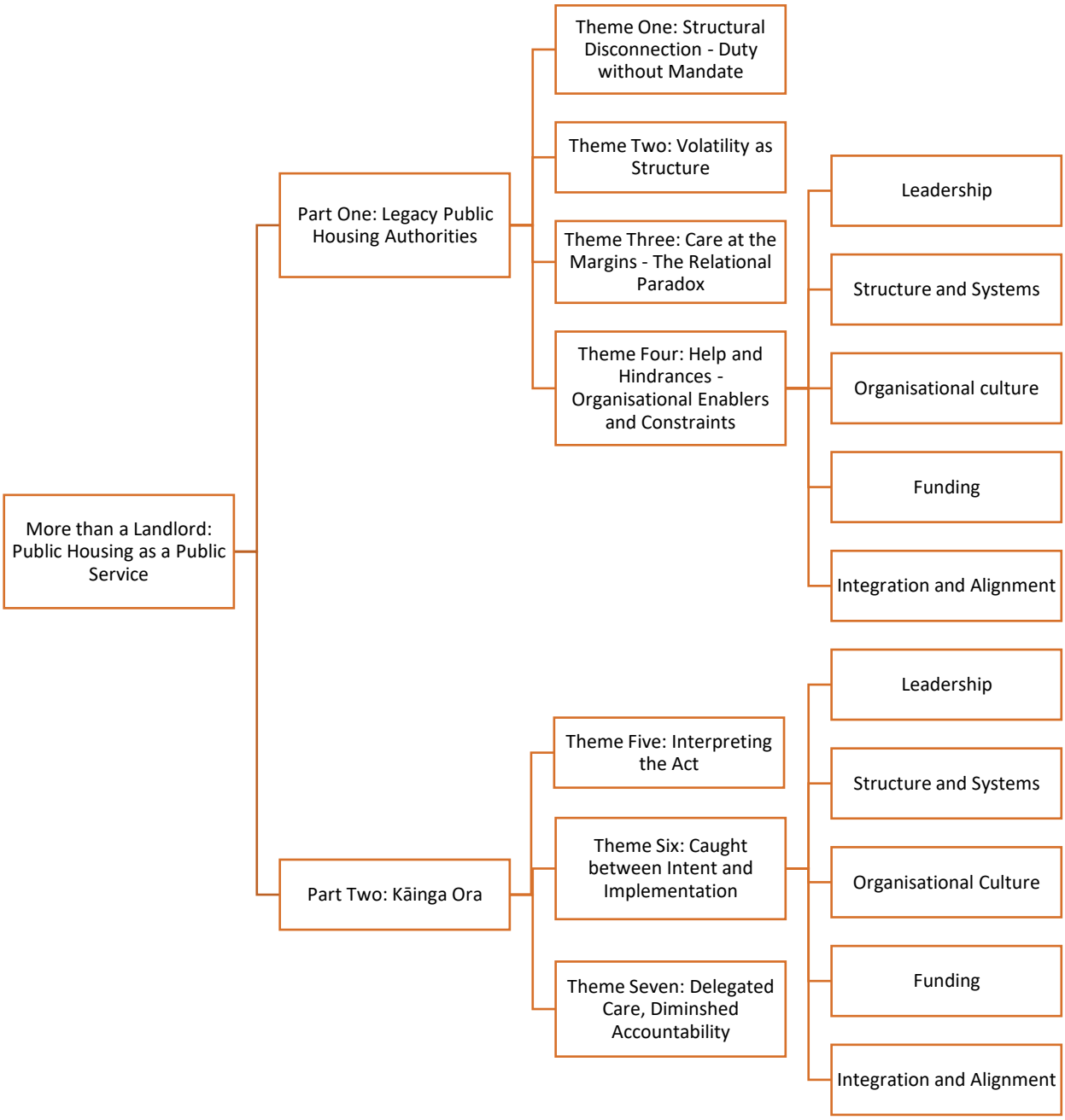
Research Question Three: What factors facilitate the integration of community development practices into public housing?

Research Question Four: What are the obstacles to integrating community development into public housing?

Together, these questions provide a framework for understanding how institutional settings shape the possibilities—and limitations—of embedding community development within public housing systems.

Figure 16 identifies the themes of Chapter Seven, and maps how community development is shaped by multiple institutional levels, illustrating the interplay of systemic enablers and constraints that have simultaneously marginalised and sustained relational practice across both legacy housing authorities and Kāinga Ora.

Figure 16 *Themes identified to address Research Questions Three and Four* (Created by the author)



Part One: Legacy Institutions and the Limits of Care

Public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand has long occupied a residual position—providing last-resort shelter while struggling to generate the policy and institutional conditions required to support tenant wellbeing and inclusion. Part One examines how that legacy shaped the efforts of public housing authorities to foster community development in high-need, low-income neighbourhoods. Drawing on findings from city council-led housing and HNZC, the analysis explores how organisational conditions influenced what was possible in practice. It considers how community development was understood, supported, and sustained—and the persistent barriers that undermined it.

The analysis is structured around four interconnected themes. First, it traces the evolution and consequences of residualisation, examining how public housing has been reshaped into a minimalist, targeted welfare service. This shift has narrowed the scope of housing provision, eroded broader social responsibilities, and introduced ambiguity into practitioner roles—displacing relational work with transactional imperatives. Second, the analysis explores the contested nature of the duty of care within housing practice. It reveals how practitioners, working within a residualised and compliance-driven environment are left to uphold relational ethics without systemic support, legitimacy, or formal recognition. Third, the analysis examines how policy volatility—manifested in abrupt ideological shifts, short-lived reforms, and a lack of bipartisan commitment—has become a structural feature of public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand. Far from episodic, institutional instability has become a defining feature of public housing governance. Finally, the analysis interrogates the organisational enablers and barriers to community development, illustrating how internal factors—such as purpose, structure, roles, resources, and relationships—shape the capacity for sustained, place-based engagement. It highlights the constraining effects of siloed systems, shifting leadership narratives, and chronic underinvestment.

Together, these themes expose the contradictions embedded in housing governance—between care and control, empowerment and compliance, and relational ethics and bureaucratic expectations. They also illuminate the institutional inheritance that Kāinga Ora must contend with: a persistent tension between transactional and relational models of housing, and between housing as infrastructure and housing as care.

7.2 Theme One: Structural Disconnection—Duty without Mandate

This theme examines how the institutional design of public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand has excluded care from its foundational structures. It traces the policy and institutional history of residualisation to reveal how public housing's scope and social purpose have been systematically narrowed—and how this has shaped practitioner experience.

A synthesis of policy paradigms, legal frameworks, and organisational reforms shows how the concept of a duty of care—though socially expected and frequently enacted by staff—remains institutionally absent. What emerges is not only a lack of support for relational practice but a system structurally misaligned with it. Residualisation, New Public Management (NPM), and tenancy legislation have collectively reshaped not only who public housing serves, but also how it is governed, delivered, and imagined.

7.2.1 Residualisation and the Endemic Narrowing of Purpose

Residualisation refers to the transformation of public housing from a universal entitlement into a safety net targeted only at those in greatest need (Flint & Kearns, 2006; Jacobs et al., 2003). In Aotearoa New Zealand, this shift accelerated in the 1990s through neoliberal reforms such as market rents, asset transfers, and the redefinition of housing agencies as commercially focused entities (Murphy, 2020). These changes marked a departure from public housing's earlier role in providing stable housing to working families, embedding a

more punitive and minimalist conception of the state's housing responsibilities. These changes reflected a wider transformation in public service.

Neoliberalism and NPM reimagined the state as a market facilitator, prioritising efficiency and compliance over care and universality. Public housing's mission narrowed from a universal social good to a selective safety net, reshaping practice around asset management and enforcement.

International research contextualises this trajectory. In Australia, Hall (2004) and Morris (2013) link residualisation to broader neoliberal shifts that eroded social cohesion. Public housing became less a pathway to opportunity and more a mechanism of containment for those excluded from the labour and private rental markets.

While these patterns resonate in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is important to note that public housing was residual from the outset. From the 1950s, provision was tightly targeted—framed around nuclear family norms and grounded in assumptions of moral deservingness, self-sufficiency, and narrowly defined need. Community development and tenant wellbeing were not institutional responsibilities but discretionary practices: sometimes present, often peripheral, rarely resourced.

What changed in the 1990s and 2000s was not the presence of a residual model, but its intensification. The persistence of the *Public and Community Housing Management Act 1992* (as at 1 July, 2023) illustrates how the contractual logic of the 1990s continues to shape the moral and structural boundaries of public housing today. Neoliberal reforms—including market rents, asset transfers, and commercial performance frameworks—redefined housing agencies as financially driven entities (Murphy, 2020). These measures hardened residualisation, embedding a technocratic, risk-oriented housing role.

Informants described this shift as a change in institutional identity. As KI 8 reflected, “I didn’t see them as like a government department, like a social service. They were more heading towards a private business type of thinking and mentality.”

Internationally, residualisation is associated with the erosion of social cohesion and the spatial concentration of disadvantage (Flint & Kearns, 2006; Hall, 2004). In Australia, Morris (2013, 2015) and Wacquant (2008) describe how public housing became a site of containment—governed by stigmatisation, institutional retreat, and minimal obligation. These logics also shape the Aotearoa New Zealand context, though with a distinct trajectory: here, tenant wellbeing was never structurally embedded. Care was not withdrawn—it was never guaranteed.

One legal mechanism reinforcing this marginalisation is the Residential Tenancies Act 1986. Applied equally to public and private landlords, it offers no recognition of the social or preventative functions unique to public housing providers. By flattening the legal distinction between public and private roles, the Act entrenches a framework in which care remains discretionary. Housing staff are expected to manage risk and complex needs without mandate, training, or protection. Informants described the Act as both a symbolic and practical constraint—used by agencies to justify non-engagement and by staff to navigate tensions between ethical intent and legal authority.

Residualisation narrowed not only access but also institutional imagination—curbing the state’s ability to envision public housing as a platform for social citizenship, rather than a mechanism of containment. This shift paved the way for deeper organisational realignments under NPM, explored in the next section.

This historical framing is critical. It challenges narratives of decline that imply a more holistic past. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the relational dimensions of tenancy work—support, trust-building, sustained presence—have always existed at the margins. They have depended on

individual ethics, political will, or short-term programmes. The argument that care should now be structurally embedded is not a call to return to an earlier model, but a call to build what was never institutionally secured.

7.3 Theme Two: Volatility as Structure—Policy Churn and the Fragility of Care

This theme explores how the cyclical instability of housing policy in Aotearoa New Zealand—what might be called *policy churn*—has undermined the institutionalisation of care. Rather than isolated disruption, volatility has become an enduring feature of the governance landscape, embedding precarity into both policy and practice. Over three decades, abrupt ideological shifts, funding reversals, and programmatic resets have eroded consistency, weakened community trust, and placed relational work on fragile ground. While discourses of a duty of care persist in rhetoric, they remain structurally unsupported. As a result, practitioners are frequently called upon to provide stability within systems that are themselves unstable. This theme traces how such volatility becomes a governing logic, shaping not just what is done, but how care is imagined, delivered, and ultimately constrained.

Such instability is not unique to Aotearoa New Zealand. Pawson et al. (2015) describe housing policy as caught in a “contradictory bind”—ethically obligated to prioritise those in greatest need while seeking to avoid spatial concentrations of poverty (p. 35). Informants’ reflections illustrate how these contradictions unfold in practice, undermining organisational coherence and trust.

KI 8 recalled the impact of disinvestment: “Housing New Zealand had a big responsibility by creating these areas of deprivation... and then just walking away.”

This incoherence is not episodic but structural. As discussed in Chapter Two, public housing has been shaped by a reactive and fragmented model—what Murphy (2020) terms an “ambulance service logic.” Rather than sustained investment in community infrastructure,

reforms have oscillated between expansion and retrenchment, often driven more by ideology than strategy.

The result has been a cycle of short-lived initiatives, inconsistent mandates, and disjointed policy directions—undermining organisational clarity and eroding community trust. As KI 9 noted: “It creates problems through policy where they don’t intend to.”

Such unintended harm stems not from isolated decisions but from a structurally reactive system, where policy incoherence is routine. Abrupt shifts in tenure policy, funding cuts, and the dismantling of community development teams have created a landscape where trust must be continually rebuilt, and instability becomes the norm.

This reactive mode has also influenced the spatial distribution of public housing—concentrating disadvantage and exacerbating social divides. As KI 7 reflected: “We needed to address the issues that arise when you concentrate low-income people with significant social issues in one place […] and that whole public housing ghetto issue.”

Although not always formally acknowledged in policy, these patterns mirror the neighbourhood effects discussed in Chapter Three, where spatial segregation exacerbates vulnerability. In contrast, KI 10 emphasised the potential of mixed-tenure developments, describing how integrated design can foster “eclectic and well-balanced” communities, instil pride, and expand opportunity. This perspective reflects Massey’s (2013) concept of *geographies of power*—the idea that spatial decisions about who is housed, and where, are inherently political, shaping social inclusion and exclusion through planning logics.

Together, these insights suggest a sectoral shift: from managing concentrated need to embracing more inclusive spatial strategies. As Massey argues, public housing must be reimagined not as marginal enclaves but as vital components of diverse, resilient communities.

Yet such visions often clash with the reactive logic of reform. Informants described a recurring cycle in which new policies attempt to fix the unintended consequences of earlier decisions. As KI 7 recalled: “We’d come from a government situation which was to reduce the number of public houses […] to ‘No, we’re not going to reduce, we’ve got to get them back.’”

This “expansionary type thing” captures the whiplash of political reversals—where frontline workers absorb the fallout of ideological pivots without adequate tools, time, or mandate. As governments alternate between opposing agendas, agencies are tasked with rapid implementation under uncertain conditions. Rather than fostering stability, such volatility embeds precarity into the governance structure itself.

This was further compounded by stark ideological divergences between successive governments. KI 9 recalled: “They sold about 10,000 [houses], then they stopped that overnight.”

Under the fifth National Government (2008–2017), Housing New Zealand Corporation’s role was explicitly narrowed. As KI 9 described: “We’re just a landlord. That’s all we do. We just rent houses.”

The Labour-led government sought to reverse this direction—reintroducing income-related rents, expanding public housing, and establishing Kāinga Ora. Yet these reforms were often poorly sequenced, inconsistently implemented, or vulnerable to reversal.

As KI 7 observed: “It’s fair to say those within the organisation really didn’t believe in it [the new direction of housing renewal]. They really had no option but to go with it.”

The destabilising effects of policy volatility were deeply felt by communities. KI 9 recounted the fallout from a cancelled initiative: “They had seen it before, ‘here we go again.’ They just knew National wasn’t going to look after them.”

This erosion of trust was not only cumulative—it was relational. For communities familiar with cycles of abandonment, new initiatives were often met with scepticism. As KI 9 noted, this scepticism became internalised, diminishing programme uptake and increasing the emotional toll on staff.

KI 8 offered a striking account of this toll. Describing a trust-building effort with a marginalised group, they recalled the devastation of having to withdraw support: “You’re facing a room full of gang members with full-face tattoos who have given you their support […] that was hard to say, ‘Look, the government’s changed their mind.’”

This example exemplifies the relational rupture political change can cause. Practitioners were placed in untenable positions—expected to uphold values of care and community while enforcing decisions that undermined them.

At its core, Aotearoa New Zealand’s housing policy lacks a bipartisan, enduring framework. KI 7 captured this fragility: “It lost a lot of its funding, it lost the commitment from the top […] no government wants to pick up a previous government’s idea.”

This quote illustrates how political ownership can override programme merit. As Peters (2010) notes, symbolic politics often trump evidence-based policy in visible domains like housing. The result is a cycle of abandonment and reinvention, where effective initiatives are discarded for political reasons.

KI 13 reflected on this cycle of withdrawal: “Where resources are withdrawn from communities, you’ve got to think about how we can make the best of it […] How and where do you exit?”

This ethical framing highlights that volatility is not just strategic—it is social and moral. Morris (2016) argues that when the state retreats, it fractures already fragile support systems, breeding mistrust and weakening community capacity. In this light, policy volatility is a

structural obstacle to relational practice: it fosters precarity, disrupts continuity, and renders care reactive. Without a consistent, bipartisan framework to support socially responsive housing, community development becomes the first casualty of political change.

The operational and relational impacts of this volatility are profound. Agencies must navigate shifting mandates with limited clarity, while frontline workers manage emotional fallout and systemic uncertainty. The result is a recurring cycle of crisis and correction, in which the core aims of housing—security, wellbeing, and belonging—remain persistently at risk.

A critical question follows: what is the role of public housing? Is it a transactional service focused on asset management, or a form of social infrastructure rooted in equity and trust? Without a stable, integrated vision, public housing risks remaining captive to electoral cycles—repeating patterns of investment and retreat that undermine the very communities it aims to support.

These dynamics of structural instability and ideological volatility do more than shift policy—they reshape how care is felt, delivered, and constrained at the front line. As Theme Two revealed, practitioners are often tasked with building trust and offering support within systems that provide neither stability nor institutional backing. The result is not just fragmented service delivery, but also growing ethical tension. Instability, in this sense, is not just a byproduct of reform—it is a structural condition that renders care fragile, relationships transient, and long-term transformation elusive.

Theme Three turns to this lived contradiction: the relational paradox at the heart of public housing, where staff are entrusted as key figures in tenants' lives yet constrained by mandates prioritising risk, compliance, and asset logic. It explores how these tensions generate moral distress and reveal the fragility of care when it depends on individual discretion rather than organisational commitment.

These dynamics of structural instability and ideological volatility do more than reshape policy—they redefine how care is experienced, constrained, and withdrawn on the ground. Practitioners are tasked with providing consistency and trust in systems that deliver neither. This tension is not merely abstract or procedural; it is lived daily in the fractured realities of frontline work.

7.4 Theme Three: Care at the Margins—The Relational Paradox

The relational paradox is not simply a gap between policy and practice. It is an entrenched contradiction: staff are both trusted allies and compliance agents, tasked with holding risk without the resources or mandates to meaningfully mitigate it. The term relational paradox draws on Lipsky's (1980) notion of street-level contradiction—where frontline discretion collides with bureaucratic inflexibility—and Durose's (2011) account of interpretive ambiguity in policy enactment.

Care is enacted not as an institutional obligation, but as an informal practice—reliant on the personal values and emotional labour of frontline workers (Hochschild, 1983). As this theme shows, such discretionary care, while vital, is ethically precarious and emotionally costly. Over time, it generates moral distress, institutional ambivalence, and ultimately, the erosion of trust—both between practitioners and tenants and between staff and the systems they represent.

Building on the previous theme's examination of structural and policy instability, this section situates the contemporary care paradox within a longer arc of institutional reform. As explored in Chapter Two, the residualisation of public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand—accelerated by the Housing Act 1955 and intensified in the 1990s—transformed housing from a universal social good into a narrowly targeted safety net. This shift was not just about narrowing eligibility; it embedded a system design that treats housing as emergency infrastructure rather than as a platform for wellbeing or social connection. As Murphy (2020)

argues, the state's role in housing was reframed under a crisis response logic—a model that removes care from institutional mandates and places it onto frontline discretion. This framing helps explain why the duty of care is neither embedded nor measured.

7.4.1 Trust without Mandate: The Informality of Care

Informants repeatedly emphasised the unique role that housing practitioners play in tenants' lives—not due to formal mandates, but through sustained presence. Many tenants viewed frontline housing staff as their primary, and sometimes only, contact with the state. This proximity fostered relationships grounded in trust, familiarity, and continuity. As KI 6 noted, "Tenants do, on the whole, trust us. We are the people they look to for support, and in many cases, we are one of the few people in their lives that they have contact with."

This presence enabled staff to notice distress, intervene early, and build social connection often unavailable through siloed systems. Yet this care work was informal—neither structurally recognised nor consistently supported. As KI 11 put it, "It was about finding that fine line of what's the right thing to do for a person but still fits in the box."

This care was not embedded in organisational policy, but emerged through practitioner discretion, improvisation, and moral judgement. It was deeply meaningful—but also deeply precarious. Without systemic backing, care was vulnerable to burnout, risk aversion, and bureaucratic limits.

Several practitioners described the work as emotionally demanding, ethically complex, and often invisible within performance metrics. KI 5 reflected, "Often, you're the last man standing... tenants see you as part of the family, you're their rock, you're their go-to person." While this language signals deep trust, it also reveals the emotional displacement of unmet institutional support.

KI 8 echoed this, describing housing staff as uniquely positioned to reach tenants:

> From where I stood, we're the only agency who can get through the door—and that's when we see what's going on. That's when we can have conversations with people who listen to us, that communication and dialogue, the dynamic was so different that we could do a lot, and other agencies just couldn't. (KI 8)

Housing staff navigate a dual identity: institutionally cast as landlords, yet relied upon as crisis responders, welfare actors, and emotional anchors. The trust placed in them is profound—but the structures to support it are absent. While these relationships often sustain tenants through adversity, their informal and unsupported nature places a heavy burden on practitioners. The next section explores how these conditions give rise to moral distress—when ethical commitments are constrained by institutional limits.

7.4.2 Ethical Strain and Moral Distress

The absence of formal structures to support care does not eliminate its practice—it intensifies its emotional cost. Informants spoke candidly about the ethical strain that emerges when their values as practitioners clash with institutional constraints. KI 11 captured this tension: "Navigating the organisation at times. That was a lot harder. The doing part—actually helping the people—that was easy."

This quote highlights an important tension: frontline workers often know exactly what tenants need, but rigid systems make it hard to respond. As informants shared, this creates emotional strain—leaving them to hold care through personal effort, quiet persistence, and unrecognised emotional work.

Banks and Orton (2007) define this experience as moral distress: the condition that arises when professionals are unable to act in line with their ethical commitments due to institutional constraints. In public housing, this occurs when practitioners must withhold

honesty, delay action, or disengage—not because they want to, but because the system fails to support them. KI 11 explained, “You’re dealing with people’s homes, their security, and you can’t even be honest with them because the system doesn’t back you up.”

KI 5 underscored the scale of responsibility placed on staff: “Public housing keeps people out of prison, away from the doctor, out of hospital, reduces anxiety and mental health within the home, and supports the sustainability of tenancies. So, we have a massive influence.”

Mastracci (2022) argues that governments must embed care as a governance principle—not treat it as a matter of personal goodwill. KI 2 agreed: “The KPIs needed to include wellbeing and sustaining tenancies and community development. And they didn’t.”

The absence of care in performance frameworks renders relational work invisible and unrewarded—amplifying moral distress and service fragmentation. These frameworks typically privilege measurable outputs such as tenancy turnover rates, arrears reduction, and compliance actions, while omitting indicators of relational continuity, tenant wellbeing, or community development—thus sidelining the very forms of care that sustain trust and stability.

7.4.3 Systemic Burnout and the Erosion of Trust

The cumulative weight of unrecognised emotional labour and moral distress takes a systemic toll. Informants described not only personal exhaustion but a broader sense of institutional disillusionment. Burnout here was not individualised or short-term—it became endemic, rooted in a persistent misalignment between practitioners’ values and organisational constraints.

KI 5 illustrated this clearly: “It wasn’t tenant-centred. It was, ‘This is how you do your job as a tenancy manager […] and if you don’t pay your rent, I’m going to take you to Tribunal.’”

Practitioners were expected to manage human vulnerability using risk frameworks and enforcement tools while maintaining empathy and care. This produced an impossible dual role: guardian and gatekeeper, ally and enforcer.

Over time, this role conflict corroded trust—not only between tenants and staff but between staff and their institutions. KI 13 explained: “People aren’t in this housing generally out of choices […] you are probably the most likely people in an agency/authority, a place of influence and power that have a relationship with that person, and you see them.”

Yet this visibility came without protection. Practitioners were often the only consistent presence in a tenant’s life but lacked the structural support to act on this trust. KI 6 noted, “The media expects us to have stopped that person dying alone in their home.”

KI 6 continued: “‘Where was Housing New Zealand? They should be going around there every day,’ but that wasn’t your role as a landlord.”

These moments exposed a core contradiction: care was socially expected but institutionally denied. Practitioners bore the emotional and reputational weight of outcomes they could not control. In this context, trust became fragile, burnout systemic, and the relational fabric of public housing strained.

Despite these tensions, many practitioners responded with quiet resistance. These practitioner responses are shaped not only by local institutional cultures, but by structural contradictions widely recognised in public administration and care governance. As Hill and Hupe (2009) and Tronto (1993) observe, when ethical intent is continually strained by misaligned systems, trust and accountability fragment—producing precisely the paradoxes practitioners face in public housing. The next section explores how care was sustained through creative workarounds—adaptive, values-driven practices that formed an unofficial infrastructure of support.

7.4.4 From Workarounds to Relational Infrastructure

Despite these constraints, practitioners developed creative workarounds—informal, adaptive practices that built trust and helped tenants navigate complex systems. These were not simply acts of goodwill; they constituted what Tronto (2013) and Held (2006) describe as *relational infrastructure*: the everyday labour that holds social systems together when formal structures fall short.

KI 11 described how relationships once seen as unworkable were transformed through consistent, respectful engagement: “We had a responsibility to support them to live well in this space and understand what their challenges are.”

Rather than imposing top-down solutions, KI 11 facilitated participatory processes shaped by tenant input. KI 6 similarly highlighted the impact of tenant voice: “The whole place erupted […] they were so excited they could have input.”

Such examples show how care can be systematised without being standardised. KI 5 described the “handy-person” model: “They identify hoarding, illness, or risk and refer to the wellbeing team.”

This low-barrier, trust-based approach operationalised proximity into early intervention—demonstrating how relational roles could serve as preventative supports, not discretionary extras. As referenced earlier, these practices resonate with *whakawhanaungatanga*, *kaitiakitanga*, and *manaakitanga* (Boulton et al., 2022; Greaves, 2021).

They also reflect the preventative and social functions of public housing—functions often obscured by transactional, compliance-driven models. As the Social Investment Agency (2019) found, placement in public housing improved life satisfaction and housing conditions. Such findings affirm that the value of public housing lies not only in shelter but in its broader social contributions—achieved despite, rather than because of, institutional design.

Embedding relational practice requires more than affirming practitioner values; it demands systemic change—redefining success, reshaping performance metrics, and resourcing care as a core obligation. Until then, care remains essential yet endangered—sustained by individual commitment rather than institutional design.

While these workarounds exemplify care in action, they are structurally fragile. For relational care to move from the margins to the centre of practice, it must become embedded as an organisational duty—not left to discretionary labour.

7.4.5 Embedding Responsibility: Care, Culture, and Change

This section concludes Theme Three by drawing together the ethical, cultural, and institutional implications of relational care, and sets the stage for Theme Four's focus on the structural conditions that constrain or enable its practice.

Relational care in public housing is often improvised and marginalised, yet its consistent presence across practitioner accounts points to both its necessity and transformative potential. The challenge is not only to protect this work, but to shift from discretionary practice to formal, systemic commitment—anchored in ethical responsiveness and cultural legitimacy.

As previously noted, Māori frameworks such as *whakawhanaungatanga*, *manaakitanga*, and *kaitiakitanga* offer powerful alternatives to transactional models. This is not only a decolonising imperative but a strategic one. Tronto (2013) argues that care must be recognised as a public value—central to how institutions organise and relate to those they serve. Penny et al. (2024) similarly contend that care should be treated as core infrastructure, not an add-on. Relational work is not an overhead; it is what holds systems together when services retreat, policies fail, or people fall through the cracks. In this view, public housing becomes more than shelter—it becomes a foundation for belonging, where

care and connection are embedded in everyday practice and contribute to fairness, dignity, and recognition.

Reframing care in this way does not require abandoning performance frameworks but expanding them. Relational indicators—such as continuity of contact, tenant voice, and community stability—could complement conventional metrics. Co-design, trust-based audits, and embedded roles like tenancy advocates and community connectors could institutionalise what has long depended on practitioner discretion.

The task ahead is not to safeguard discretionary care but to embed it—through policy, resources, and system design—as a core expression of ethical public service.

Theme Three has shown that the relational practice sustaining tenant trust is often improvised, undervalued, and unsustainable. Embedding care as an institutional responsibility demands a shift from values-led improvisation to structural commitment—a shift taken up in Theme Four's analysis of organisational culture, performance regimes, and paradigmatic assumptions.

Theme Four moves the lens from the interpersonal to the systemic. It explores how law, funding, and management frameworks shape what is possible at the frontline, and how the system's design limits or enables relational practice in public housing.

7.5 Theme Four: Help and Hindrances—Organisational Enablers and Constraints

Building on the previous themes—residualisation, policy volatility, and the tension between care and compliance—this section turns inward to examine how internal organisational dynamics shape the practice of community development. Drawing on Butcher's (2004) framework, it explores how leadership, structure, culture, funding, and operational integration enable or constrain community-centred roles in public housing.

Embedding care as a core organising principle requires more than practitioner commitment. It demands alignment across organisational systems. Yet, as informants described, these foundations remain fragmented and often resistant to relational practice.

Community development in public housing is not a linear or uniform process. It is shaped by the interplay of organisational values, capacities, and constraints. While informed by Butcher's "5Ps" framework (purposes, policies, programmes, processes, and practices), this analysis does not apply the model deductively. Instead, the five domains—leadership, structure, culture, funding, and integration—emerged through inductive thematic analysis of practitioner experience and institutional conditions. Together, they offer a lens for assessing organisational readiness to support relational practice.

Across two distinct reform eras, practitioner accounts reveal a pattern of systemic dissonance: strategic intent is often expressed rhetorically, while the systems to enact it remain inconsistent or absent. This disconnect reflects a broader contradiction—care is valorised in discourse, yet marginalised in structure.

By analysing how each domain supports or constrains practice, this theme shows how misalignment renders community development fragile, even when it is formally endorsed. Where coherence exists, relational work becomes sustainable; where it is lacking, care becomes discretionary and vulnerable.

Practitioners stressed that goodwill is not enough. For community development to be viable, it must be supported by strategic leadership, structural clarity, cultural alignment, sustained investment, and meaningful integration into core operations.

7.5.1 Leadership and Management: Legitimising Practice or Reinforcing Ambiguity

Leadership was pivotal in determining whether community development was enabled or marginalised. Across legacy agencies, senior leaders who legitimised practitioners' work

made a tangible difference—through resourcing, modelling values-based practice, and integrating relational roles into strategic agendas. Where leadership was siloed or disengaged, community development became peripheral or treated as discretionary. These differences reflected deeper tensions between professional authority, discretionary practice, and the ambiguous status of community work within housing systems.

Leadership shaped not only rhetoric but outcomes. One senior manager embedded community priorities into upgrade programmes by securing resourcing for relational work: “There was a determination to have a community development programme [...] dedicated towards tenant wellbeing” (KI 2). KI 14 reinforced the effort this required: “There was definitely pressure, but we stuck to our guns, saying we couldn’t have the upgrade without the community development component.” By linking relational work to fiscal and contractual structures, these leaders created institutional safeguards, resisting its relegation to goodwill or ‘add-on’ status. As Barnes et al. (2003) caution, relational initiatives are easily erased amid reforms or leadership turnover—what they term *institutional amnesia*.

Champions at senior levels helped buffer relational work from organisational resistance. KI 13 emphasised the need to build credibility with funders and decision-makers: “The whole point of doing that was to build credibility with the Crown, stakeholders and councillors… to give us the licence to continue.” Political backing was not only foundational but ongoing. As KI 13 added, “You probably can’t underplay how much impact that had... with the board, and the internal support for that to happen as well.”

Board-level leadership also supported cross-agency collaboration. KI 9 highlighted the role of a board chair who championed the work: “It was really important to have that.” As Darcy and Georgiou (2004) argue, leadership is crucial in shifting organisational culture, securing resources, and enabling innovation. Some local and central government leaders used their influence to unlock blockages or fast-track decisions.

Given community development's emergent status in housing authorities, learning was needed at all levels. KI 13, a senior manager, candidly reflected: "I didn't understand very well, certainly early on, around the community development stuff. I didn't really twig that capacity building needed to happen in order to participate in the community."

This admission signals not failure, but adaptive learning. As Pitchford and Henderson (2008) argue, leaders need not be experts in community development—they must be willing to enable and trust those who are.

Practitioners characterised effective managers as those who interpreted high-level intent, protected relational space, and shielded staff from interdepartmental resistance. KI 9 noted, "At first, I think he was really sceptical, but he enabled the day-to-day, and he would sign them [projects] off." These leaders helped reframe housing delivery—elevating social outcomes from peripheral values to operational necessities.

Embedding relational work in strategic plans, governance documents, and budget lines signalled a shift in institutional logic: from asset management to community wellbeing. As Butcher (2004) argues, the placement and resourcing of functions like community development affect their legitimacy, visibility, and continuity. In this context, leadership was enacted not only through advocacy but through structural embedding—anchoring relational work against the volatility of public sector reform.

However, many informants observed that support often depended on individuals rather than institutional norms. As KI 7 remarked on the influence of a particular senior manager: "While you had a voice like that there, we could say, 'This is what we're going to do.'"

However, when that voice left, so too did the protection it provided. As Pitchford and Henderson (2008) note, effective leadership requires more than top-down advocacy. It involves building relational capacity across the system. Without this, support remains contingent—reliant on individual champions rather than embedded in organisational culture.

In such conditions, relational work remains vulnerable to restructuring, resistance, or erasure.

7.5.1.1 The Role of Middle Management: Between Enablement and Control

Middle management played a critical role in shaping whether community development was supported, sidelined, or lost in translation. Informants described how team leaders and operational managers often prioritised KPIs and compliance metrics over relational or community-oriented goals. As KI 2 observed, “The team leaders were quite tricky to work with. They were so focused on their KPIs.” KI 4 echoed this: “The KPIs needed to include wellbeing, sustaining tenancies, and community development. And they didn’t.”

These comments reflect an enduring tension between bureaucratic governance and relational intent. Decision-making was frequently guided by logics of efficiency, deliverables, and risk minimisation—frameworks that offered administrative clarity but failed to accommodate the uncertainty, time sensitivity, and complexity of relational practice. In this context, practitioners were left navigating competing institutional priorities without consistent operational backing (Darcy & Georgiou, 2004).

In contrast, when managers had practical experience in community work, the effects were markedly different. KI 1 noted the grounding influence of a manager who “knew everything and could always centre us back to the vision.”

These accounts highlight the importance of adaptive middle management. Rather than acting solely as conduits for policy, effective middle managers translated strategic intent into operational flexibility. They supported learning, held space for complexity, and connected siloed functions. In doing so, they embodied what Pitchford and Henderson (2008) call adaptive middle leaders—those who broker coherence across fragmented systems.

Yet this support was often contingent—dependent on individual relationships and values rather than institutional norms. Even where senior leadership provided clear direction, the ability to realise community development on the ground frequently hinged on the disposition of middle managers. In the absence of alignment, relational work stalled.

These dynamics reinforce the importance of distributed leadership. Supporting community development requires more than senior-level advocacy; it demands relational literacy and enabling practice at every level. Leadership must be embedded in systems, not vested in personalities, if relational work is to move from the margins to the mainstream of public housing.

7.5.2 Structure and Systems: Where You sit Shapes what You can Do

Informants emphasised that organisational structure significantly shaped whether community development was embedded or marginalised. Where teams were strategically located—such as within asset divisions—they gained access to capital budgets, planning processes, and decision-making authority. As KI 8 noted, “It sat with someone powerful […] you could tap into asset budgets to get physical stuff done.”

While this positioning enabled early wins, such as visible upgrades that built community credibility, it also risked framing community development as a delivery tool rather than a relational practice. Often, functions remained structurally peripheral—excluded from strategic planning, siloed from tenancy and asset teams, or subject to frequent shifts in reporting lines (Williams, 2014). Yet, as KI 9 observed, such distance sometimes enabled tactical autonomy: “If we had worked in another area, they would have just carried on doing what they do without any knowledge.”

Visible improvements—lighting, signage, amenities—helped rebuild trust in communities with a legacy of broken commitments. However, practitioners also faced pressure to consult before relationships were established, diluting the integrity of their work. KI 7 remarked, “It’s

about getting them involved right at the start. Not being bullied into doing things before it was the right time."

This recurring tension—between relational pacing and technical imperatives—frequently strained practice. KI 8 affirmed, "Your mana in the community takes precedence. That's what gives you the credibility to do anything else."

Not all colleagues shared this view. Some technical staff saw engagement as a one-off task to inform design, rather than a continuous process. KI 10 reflected: "They got the engagement side of it upfront […] but later it was, 'why are we still spending all this money?'"

These comments reveal a deeper divide in how knowledge is valued—where relational work, siloed by design, is seen as optional rather than essential. Without shared tools or coordination systems, community development staff were left to carry this work informally, increasing emotional strain and reinforcing the sense that their roles were peripheral.

These dynamics highlight the need for system-wide coherence—in structure, strategy, and culture—if community development is to be recognised and sustained as core public work. They also illustrate what Gaventa (2006) terms closed institutional spaces: environments where decision-making is centralised and alternative input structurally constrained. Here, practitioners were not simply excluded—they were positioned downstream from influence.

Frequent restructures, vague mandates, and shifting reporting lines further eroded stability. KI 3 recalled: "One week we were in engagement, then we were in development, then back in social outcomes. You just never quite knew who you reported to or what you were measured on." Such churn undermined both internal clarity and external trust.

These experiences echo Hudson's (2004) critique of public sector reform, where accountability mechanisms often deepen fragmentation, disconnecting strategic intent from day-to-day practice.

In sum, structure is not neutral. It conveys what is valued and who counts. When community development is embedded within strategy, planning, and governance, it gains visibility and legitimacy. When siloed or fragmented, even skilled practitioners are left working at the margins.

7.5.3 Organisational Culture: Between Policy and Practice

Some of the most acute tensions in community development arose not from policy or resourcing, but from cultural norms embedded within housing authorities—particularly within tenancy management. Informants described conflicting expectations and objectives, especially around tenant behaviour, compliance, and enforcement. KI 1 explained, “There we are, building gardens and communities and on the other side, ‘You haven’t paid your rent, you’re gonna get a 10-day notice.’”

These contradictions are not merely interpersonal; they are rooted in deeper structural and cultural conditions. Tenancy management is governed by the Residential Tenancies Act 1986 and subject to judicial oversight through the Tenancy Tribunal and higher courts. This legal framework, combined with performance targets tied to financial KPIs, fosters a compliance-oriented organisational culture. In such a performance-based system, relational and developmental aspects of tenancy management are difficult to measure, let alone reward.

Performance frameworks in legacy housing authorities tended to privilege short-term, measurable outputs—such as tenancy turnover, rent arrears reduction, and vacancy rates—while omitting or undervaluing outcomes related to tenant wellbeing, relationship continuity, or collective capacity-building (Rees, 2018; Tunstall & Pleace, 2018). This skewed emphasis reinforced a compliance-first culture, sidelining relational efforts as inefficiencies rather than essential components of housing stability. Practitioners noted that while enforcement work

was clearly defined and consistently measured, care remained discretionary, under-theorised, and excluded from formal accountability.

While some housing and tenancy managers aspired to more developmental or holistic approaches, they were often unsupported and unprepared to navigate the contradictions between enforcement obligations and community-building goals. As KI 3 illustrated, the risk-averse logic of tenancy services could override participatory or volunteer-led initiatives: “Tenancy managers did not like the thought of volunteers running the project. This kind of thing is very alien to Tenancy Managers.” This comment reflects a broader cultural divide within housing organisations—between those focused on minimising risk through control, and those seeking to foster tenant capability through engagement.

Informal norms and internal politics further shaped organisational life. Several informants described the politics of housing authorities as the most difficult aspect of the work. As KI 2 reflected:

> One of the most challenging aspects of community development in public housing is the organisation's politics and conflicting objectives. Having the ability to navigate all of those things and then go out there and deliver a programme of quality that tenants have trust in. (KI 2)

These internal dynamics often operated beneath the surface—defining what is considered legitimate, what is viewed as risky, and what types of work are institutionally supported. KI 4 reflected: “To be able to continue doing the work, it always needs to be justified as to what the value of it is... it does often take a long time for the value to be shown.” This reflects a cultural environment of suspicion or undervaluation, where relational and community-based work must continually prove its worth against institutional metrics. In such contexts, even when community development succeeds, it is often invisible to the very systems that require justification.

These comments highlight the difficulty of sustaining cultural shifts in the absence of systemic reinforcement—particularly in organisations where short-term pressures and siloed structures dominate.

In this context, practitioners often carried the emotional and coordination load informally—negotiating timelines, translating across teams, and absorbing institutional friction. These experiences reflect what Adamson (2010a) and Barnes et al. (2003) describe as *institutionalised inertia*—where organisational change is stalled not by lack of intent, but by ingrained routines, cultural resistance, and tacit power hierarchies.

Even when community development was formally supported, its success remained contingent on cultural alignment, informal collaboration, and shared understanding of value. Efforts to integrate community development into public housing management were frequently undermined by inconsistent interpretations of its purpose and value across teams. While policy rhetoric called for holistic, tenant-centred approaches, informants described how fragmented systems, siloed roles, and clashing priorities continued to impede practice. Several recalled entering organisations that had made strategic commitments to community development but had failed to build the internal infrastructure required to sustain it. As KI 3 stated, “They just couldn’t support us in doing our job well, and the framework wasn’t there. No processes are there. And still not there at this moment.”

Miller (2008a) identifies the strategic embedding of community development within organisational planning and decision-making as essential to successful integration. This includes formalising roles, allocating resources, and aligning expectations across departments. When these foundations are in place, integration is possible. As KI 14 described in one long-term renewal programme: “It was woven through every part of the business because we had the time.”

Time was a critical factor. Where projects had longevity, staff had the space to build relationships, develop shared goals, and embed new ways of working. However, most efforts were undermined by short timeframes, shifting leadership, and inconsistent support. The absence of strategic frameworks also limited the perceived legitimacy of community development.

Organisational culture did more than signal how community development was valued—it shaped whether it could survive. Where relational values were genuinely supported, community development gained traction as shared practice. Where cultures privileged control, risk aversion, or technical siloing, it was marginalised—even when formally endorsed. Culture, in this sense, was not peripheral—it was the atmosphere that community development had to breathe. In this environment, relational work is not only undervalued—it is often quietly constrained.

7.5.4 Funding: What gets Funded signals what Matters

Funding emerged as a central concern—both as a practical enabler of community development and a symbolic indicator of institutional intent. Informants stressed that investment signalled legitimacy. Without it, relational work remained vulnerable, undervalued, and perceived as discretionary. As KI 2 noted: “If you're going to include community development... then it needs to be well-resourced and well-funded. Because it's not effective otherwise... from the tenant's side of things, it's just a tick-box exercise.”

This insight aligns with wider literature. Burton et al. (2004) identify adequate resourcing as a critical success factor in housing renewal—an unusually consistent finding across both policy and academic evaluations. Yet in legacy housing authorities, funding for community development was often fragmented, short-term, and opaque.

Some teams successfully redirected capital budgets toward staffing, recognising that trust and presence require investment in people, not just infrastructure. KI 2 recalled:

> The initial budget was weighted towards capital. But that's not what's needed in the community development area. We amended the budget towards staffing and less towards constructing things. This gave us longevity, greatly impacting what we could plan and commit to. (KI 2)

Others described how predictable budget cycles created operational stability. KI 1 explained: “We knew exactly how much we were getting and what we were doing for the year. It was easier to plan that way.” Clarity enabled practitioners to work confidently, align efforts to local priorities, and avoid the delays of reactive or uncertain funding.

Where such arrangements were absent, staff faced bureaucratic barriers and institutional scepticism. KI 3 recalled:

> We needed to have our own budget. Now, it goes through another pair of hands, and then that other pair who is not community development-minded would question it from their world lens and ask, ‘So why are you doing that?’ (KI 3)

These experiences echo Adamson’s (2010a) critique of public sector systems that render relational work invisible—demanding constant justification from practitioners, while privileging capital investments with quantifiable returns.

This value logic was further reinforced by policy frameworks seeking to justify community development through asset performance. For example, the *Strategic Policy Framework for Community Renewal* (HNZC, 2000) linked social outcomes to property values: “The amount and quality of trust and positive expectation has a direct relationship to the improving cost-to-value ratio of the homes in that community” (p. 6). While these arguments enabled investment in some cases, they also reinforced a narrow, capital-value lens that sidelined intangible and preventative outcomes.

Consequently, practitioners often reframed their work in transactional or reputational terms to secure funding. KI 8 noted that capital budgets allowed small, visible upgrades that helped build local trust. Yet this approach risked narrowing engagement to what was most fundable or aligned with asset goals.

Ultimately, the issue was not only the amount of funding, but the institutional logic determining what counted as legitimate expenditure. As Butcher (2004) and Adamson (2010a) argue, funding is never neutral—it expresses what is valued. Without dedicated investment, coherent systems, and financial autonomy, community development remained structurally precarious—sustained more by practitioner determination than institutional design.

7.5.5 Integration and Alignment: Moving from Silos to Shared Purpose

Integration emerged as both a stated aspiration and a structural challenge. While many organisations claimed to support community development, in practice it was often siloed—segregated from tenancy, asset, or delivery teams, or introduced too late to meaningfully influence decisions. Informants consistently argued that genuine integration—through shared outcomes, internal alignment, and collective accountability—was not just ideal, but essential to ethical and effective practice. This required more than cooperation or co-location; it demanded systemic coherence across leadership, structures, systems, and organisational culture.

Practitioners recounted working around fractured systems by relying on informal diplomacy, relational capital, and workaround strategies to navigate divergent metrics and priorities. KI 8 reflected, “People’s KPIs were different. Their drivers were different. You had to work around it—build relationships, try to find allies. But it took energy away from the real work.”

Several practitioners identified a reliance on informal forums and workarounds to align timelines and priorities, but these were typically short-term and personality-dependent. KI 2

remarked, “I’d try to resolve it one-on-one… but people’s processes, timelines, or worldviews often stand in the way.” KI 3 echoed this frustration: “We were never included in the big meetings. By the time we got brought in, things had already been decided—and we had to just make it work.” These experiences point to a broader dynamic of closed institutional spaces, where key decisions exclude those most affected, rendering community development peripheral and reactive.

Where integration did occur early and meaningfully, it transformed practice. In some sites, internal forums enabled cross-functional planning, creating space to surface tensions, align timelines, and share ownership of complex projects. As KI 2 explained, “We were trying to do a cross-business approach—make sure the whole organisation was on the waka, because when you’re dealing with vulnerable people, it’s our responsibility to get it right.” Here, integration became an ethical responsibility, not just a logistical process. KI 8 added, “You need that alignment from the beginning. Otherwise, you spend all your time negotiating whose job it is to do what.”

Yet such initiatives were rarely institutionalised. Integration often relied on the efforts of individual champions rather than being embedded in structure or strategy. As Pitchford and Henderson (2008) argue, integration is not merely procedural—it is cultural. It rests on shared language, mutual respect, and recognition of relational knowledge as both legitimate and essential within performance-driven systems. KI 2 captured this clearly: “It needs a permanent place in the strategy and the budget. It can’t just be a patch.”

These accounts highlight that integration is not a one-off achievement but an ongoing organisational practice. Where it was intentional and embedded, informants described momentum, trust, and coherence. Where it was absent, they reported duplication, frustration, and mounting relational strain.

Ultimately, integration was not only about operational alignment—it was about creating the internal coherence needed to sustain community development with integrity. It reaffirmed this chapter's central argument: relational work cannot survive in isolation. It requires systemic support across all domains—leadership, structure, culture, funding, and integration. Where these domains aligned, community development flourished. Where they did not, it remained discretionary, marginal, and vulnerable to institutional drift.

The following conclusion synthesises these cross-domain insights, advancing a vision of public housing grounded in care, connection, and shared accountability—not as aspirational rhetoric, but as the core business of ethical public service.

Conclusion to Part One

Sustaining community development in public housing requires more than intent—it demands the dynamic interplay of leadership, structure, culture, funding, and integration. Across these domains, a consistent tension emerges: while housing authorities often endorsed community-oriented values rhetorically, their internal systems frequently worked against them. Community development thrived not as a peripheral add-on, but when embedded as part of the organisation's relational infrastructure—resourced, legitimised, and collectively supported.

No single domain was sufficient in isolation. Leadership that championed the work, structures that ensured visibility and alignment, cultures that fostered trust, funding that signalled value, and integration that enabled coherence—each was necessary. But only when these elements aligned did community development become strategic and sustainable. Where misaligned, it remained fragile: discretionary, reactive, and marginalised.

These findings affirm that organisational conditions are not neutral. They shape how power operates, how practitioners are positioned, and whether relational work can withstand bureaucratic and performance-driven pressures. For community development to move

beyond aspiration, it must be structurally anchored—not dependent on individual commitment, but sustained through intentional design and institutional mandate.

Part One has examined how legacy housing authorities shaped the conditions for community development—often rhetorically supportive, yet operationally fragmented. Part Two now turns to Kāinga Ora, exploring whether Aotearoa New Zealand's largest public housing authority has translated its expanded mandate into systemic support for community-centred practice.

Part Two: Kāinga Ora—Mandate without Muscle

Part Two shifts focus to Kāinga Ora, established in 2019 through the merger of Housing New Zealand, HLC (formerly Hobsonville Land Company), and KiwiBuild. It examines how the agency's expanded mandate, legislative responsibilities, and organisational reforms have shaped the conditions for embedding community development and engagement within public housing practice. As outlined in Chapter Six, the merger brought together distinct legacy entities—each with its own engagement approach—into a single organisation with a broad and often conflicting remit. This institutional backdrop continues to shape how practitioners navigate competing priorities and ambiguous expectations.

The analysis is organised into three interconnected themes.

Theme Five: Interpreting the Act examines how the Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities Act 2019 has been understood and operationalised within the organisation.

Theme Six: Caught between intent and implementation explores the enablers and barriers to relational practice identified by informants, including the role of leadership, structure, and internal systems.

Theme Seven: Delegated care, diminished accountability interrogates the growing reliance on outsourcing within Kāinga Ora and asks whether this shift enhances outcomes or reflects a retreat from state-held relational responsibilities.

Together, these themes offer a critical lens on whether the institutional architecture of Kāinga Ora can shift from policy aspiration to practice reality—supporting not just housing delivery, but sustained, community-centred engagement.

The discussion begins with an analysis of how the agency's statutory purpose is interpreted and enacted internally.

7.7 Theme Five: Interpreting the Act—Do we go Wide or keep it Inside?

Examining how the mandate of Kāinga Ora plays out on the ground reveals tensions in how the organisation's role within communities is understood and enacted. Despite holding a broad statutory purpose to support "sustainable, inclusive, and thriving communities," the organisation remains constrained by internal logics shaped by managerialism, risk aversion, and delivery imperatives. The issue is not rhetorical intent but institutional translation: how are relational aspirations operationalised within siloed structures, performance metrics, and capital delivery norms?

Informants described how this interpretive tension shaped strategic direction, internal coherence, and frontline decision-making. Divergent readings of the role assigned to Kāinga Ora reflect a broader public service dilemma: whether to adopt a transactional posture—focused on efficient delivery and bounded responsibility—or a transformational one, anchored in long-term, place-based investment and interagency collaboration.

This dichotomy echoes Clarke and Newman's (2006) typology of public service rationalities: managerial, market, democratic, and therapeutic. Each implies a different vision of institutional purpose, accountability, and engagement—and their coexistence produces contradictions. In the case of Kāinga Ora, these contradictions are evident in the gap between aspirational strategy and everyday constraints.

The Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities Act 2019 reflects this tension. While Section 12 articulates a purpose to contribute to "sustainable, inclusive, and thriving communities," it offers limited guidance on how such outcomes should be pursued or resourced. There are no formal obligations for interagency coordination, engagement, or wellbeing delivery, leaving staff to navigate an ambiguous space between directive and discretion. As a result, relational work remains discretionary, lacking a robust operational framework.

Recent strategic documents—including *Strategy 2030* and the *Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development*—signal a shift towards wellbeing, resilience, and inclusion (Kāinga Ora, 2022e; MHUD, 2021). However, informants noted these commitments remain largely rhetorical. Organisational design and performance structures still prioritise housing delivery and tenancy management. As KO 22 put it, “We talk about thriving communities, but the scaffolding just isn’t there to hold that up.”

Such a disconnect between statutory intent and institutional architecture shapes—and often constrains—the possibilities for effective practice. In the absence of embedded care principles and structural mandates, Kāinga Ora risks reproducing earlier limitations: fragmented delivery, narrow accountability, and transactional community relationships. As KO 22 observed, “There’s an awareness at board level that we’re not meeting our expectations… but there’s caution.”

That caution reflects a wider dilemma: while community development is endorsed in principle, it lacks the mandate, funding, and clarity to be systematically embedded. Pressures to deliver at pace often clash with *Te Tiriti* obligations, local aspirations, and the slow, relational tempo of engagement.

Institutional ambivalence filters down into operational decisions, shaping how roles, resources, and priorities are enacted on the ground. KO 22 articulated the resulting fragmentation: “We don’t have a coherent definition across the organisation of these practices—why we do them, what kind of intensity, what the intervention is, or how we fund it.”

Funding emerged repeatedly as a key barrier. KO 21, a national advisor, was explicit: “We are not funded to do [community development] across the country. It’s just not a priority.” Despite the Act’s vision, there are no statutory or budgetary mechanisms to support it. KO 21 explained: “Everyone agrees we should be funded for building houses, selling land,

operating public housing. But that doesn't mean we're creating thriving communities. You can have shiny new homes, but people still feel unsafe or disconnected."

Silence on community development within the Act serves to reinforce the broader disconnect between statutory vision and operational reality. As KO 21 put it, "When you read the Act, it doesn't say we have to develop communities."

These reflections suggest that the organisation's community aspirations remain structurally unsupported. KO 21 added: "We got thrown this mandate and got quite excited at the potential… I think we're now realising we overstretched. We have to be more realistic about what we can do."

Realism is shaped as much by internal learning as by the limits imposed through funding constraints. Budget bids tied to tangible outputs—like builds—are more likely to succeed than those for process-based work. As KO 21 noted: "When I've put up budget bids, it's easier if you're building something. You can quantify it. You can justify it."

As Chapter Three noted, this reflects dominant public sector logics that privilege economic rationality over social value (Provan & Power, 2019; Ravi & Reinhardt, 2011). KO 21 described efforts to reframe community development under the language of "community wellbeing"—a more politically palatable, potentially measurable term. Yet without statutory or financial anchoring, this reframing risks becoming symbolic rather than substantive.

Several informants noted shifting internal narratives about mandate, often tied to leadership or political recalibration. KO 22 described the impact: "There was a season when we were encouraged to dream big. Then came new leadership and pressure to stay in our lane. That confusion affects our teams—and our partners."

Managerial caution often led to inaction. As KO 17 put it: "We can be quite paralysed by consensus decision-making because nobody wants to say, 'This is what we're doing.'"

Paralysis emerges not merely from weak executive direction but from strategic ambiguity, where vagueness in mandate enables institutional inertia. Practitioners recounted working within contradictory logics: tasked with empowerment but constrained by outdated systems. These dynamics illustrate policy layering (Howlett & Rayner, 2007)—the coexistence of new values with unreformed infrastructure. As a result, relational intent is not supported by relational systems.

The tension between “going wide” and “keeping it inside” captures the unresolved identity of Kāinga Ora: is it merely a landlord and developer, or a relational public actor committed to community wellbeing? Without statutory clarity, dedicated resourcing, and strategic coherence, the answer remains unclear.

These contradictions not only undermine practice but limit the legitimacy of Kāinga Ora as a place-based partner. Without alignment between vision, mandate, and funding, its community aspirations risk remaining rhetorical—contingent on discretionary leadership and vulnerable to institutional drift.

The next theme returns to questions of organisational readiness, exploring how internal systems within Kāinga Ora enable or constrain relational practice. While the focus is structural, the wider implications—particularly the need to reframe care as a public responsibility—are explored further in the concluding chapters.

7.8 Theme Six: Caught between Intent and Implementation

While Theme Five examined the interpretive ambiguities of the legislative mandate of Kāinga Ora, this theme focuses on the internal conditions that kept community development marginal—not through deliberate exclusion, but through systemic default. It explores how organisational dynamics have either enabled or constrained relational work in practice.

Despite the progressive aspirations of the Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities Act 2019—to support “thriving, inclusive communities”—practitioners identified institutional conditions that positioned community development at the structural periphery.

What enables or impedes the integration of community development within Kāinga Ora? This section investigates that question across five key domains: leadership, structure, culture, funding, and integration (Butcher, 2004). It affirms Darcy and Georgiou’s (2004) view that housing authorities are shaped by risk-averse logics that marginalise participatory practice, and echoes Banks and Orton’s (2007) concern that relational work, without systemic support, risks becoming ethically unsustainable.

Although the formal mandate of Kāinga Ora includes commitments to tenant wellbeing and thriving communities, the organisational environment within which practitioners operate remains complex and, at times, contradictory. The sections that follow examine how leadership gaps, structural silos, cultural inertia, unstable resourcing, and limited integration have collectively constrained the agency’s ability to enact its relational intent.

7.8.1 Mandate and Momentum: Leadership Challenges in Practice

Informants consistently identified leadership as the most critical factor shaping whether community development could take root at Kāinga Ora. Despite the agency’s legislative mandate and strategic emphasis on community wellbeing, many described a striking absence of organisational leadership to give that vision practical effect. As KO 16 stated, “There’s no organisational position on what community development is.”

Without a clear anchor, community development was experienced as structurally ambiguous and politically fragile—dependent on individual champions rather than embedded across the organisation. Leadership sets direction and enables functional alignment (Butcher, 2004; Webster, 2004); in its absence, practitioners were left to interpret intent, seek informal legitimacy, and defend their practice within systems that neither recognised nor resourced it.

Some were told their roles were unofficial or reassigned without warning. KO 25 recalled, “He said publicly that our jobs didn’t exist and then gave me other roles to do.”

Such dynamics echo Banks and Orton’s (2007) concept of organisational unreadiness—where institutions pursue the reputational benefits of values-based work without the leadership or systems to support it.

While senior leaders spoke favourably about community development, decision-making was inconsistent and often stalled. Strategic direction shifted frequently, and no one held sustained authority. As KO 19 explained, “Nobody would step up and make a decision. It changed direction every week depending on who was in the room.”

Newman’s (2001) analysis of reform contradictions helps explain these tensions—where bold ambitions are diluted by risk aversion and performative accountability. Where leadership did act, it often came too late or disconnected from operational realities. KO 16 recalled being placed in public-facing roles without internal backing: “We were put in front of the community with no tools, no systems. We just had to figure it out.”

These experiences echo Darcy and Georgiou’s (2004) critique of housing bureaucracies, where managerialism prioritises output, control, and risk minimisation, leaving relational work exposed. Attempts to promote distributed leadership through place-based or cross-regional groups were described as inconsistent and lacking system coherence. Symbolic alignment existed, but it rarely translated into real authority or change. As KO 17 observed, “The model’s there in theory, but not in practice. Nobody owns it.”

As Pitchford and Henderson (2008) argue, distributed leadership requires defined roles, learning infrastructure, and shared purpose. Its absence led to confusion, duplication, and a lack of follow-through.

The effects of incoherent leadership were not only strategic but emotional. As KO 22 reflected:

Leading in this space can often lead to a bit of self-questioning, because the skills are so undervalued... having your peers not see you either as an expert, but certainly not see your expertise, can be really undermining to your own self-confidence to push ahead with stuff. (KO 22)

Absent visible support or mandate, leadership inaction was not experienced as neutral, but as a gradual erosion of trust and morale. Practitioners became deauthorised—questioned by peers, sidelined in decisions, and left to carry legitimacy without institutional backing.

Collectively, these accounts reveal a leadership culture aspirational in language but equivocal in practice. Community development lacked a defined home, a strategic voice, and protected institutional space. Leadership is not just about articulating vision—it is about holding ambiguity, enabling alignment, and embedding values through structure and culture. At Kāinga Ora, the failure to do so left community development rhetorically endorsed but practically unauthorised.

7.8.2 Structure and Systems: Fragmented Foundations and Structural Drift

While leadership sets the tone for organisational intent, structure determines how that intent is realised. Informants described widespread structural ambiguity—marked by unclear reporting lines, inconsistent role placement, and the absence of a coherent organisational framework for community development. Although Kāinga Ora was established to centralise delivery and integrate community investment, its post-merger structures failed to support relational work. Practitioners found themselves dispersed across regions, siloed in different teams, and disconnected from strategic processes.

Structure determines role clarity, influence, and legitimacy (Hudson, 2004). At Kāinga Ora, many roles were shaped by legacy arrangements or operational convenience rather than strategic logic. As KO 15 noted, “They had me doing body corporate rules.” Others were placed with tenancy, development, or engagement teams—but without coordination or a consistent rationale. KO 17 described it as, “potluck where you end up. There’s no framework, no baseline.”

Hudson’s (2004) caution is borne out here: large-scale structural reforms often generate fragmentation rather than coherence. Rather than resolving legacy inconsistencies, the merger compounded them. Practitioners pointed to shifting reporting lines, ambiguous responsibilities, and exclusion from planning, design, and rollout processes. KO 18 observed, “We didn’t know what was coming until it was happening. There was no system to loop us in.”

Structural marginalisation also had a spatial dimension. As KO 23 explained, “They made it clear I could only give so much to [suburb] because I was based in [a different office].” Treating community roles as territorially bounded rather than relational undermined flexibility and responsiveness to local needs.

Crucially, the lack of structural clarity also weakened authority. Some informants described being removed from projects or reassigned without notice, despite holding deep community relationships. KO 17 recalled, “As soon as the project was handed over, I was gone. No one even told me.” Without formal frameworks, community development roles became precarious—subject to project timelines, leadership changes, or budget pressures.

Practitioners also pointed to the absence of enabling infrastructure: no national communities of practice, no capability frameworks, and no systems to connect community development with tenancy or asset teams. As KO 23 remarked, “We’ve widened the road, but we’re still

operating in the same lane." Structural change had occurred, but the internal model remained siloed, and relational practice struggled for traction.

These dynamics reflect what Pierson (2004) terms *structural drift*: the process by which institutional arrangements persist in form but diverge from their functional requirements as environments change. At Kāinga Ora, drift manifested in the persistence of fragmented legacy structures even as mandates expanded—leading to growing misalignment between organisational intent and institutional capacity. Rather than correcting past inconsistencies, the merger allowed them to sediment further, eroding coherence and reducing the strategic visibility of community development.

Ultimately, the structural arrangements of Kāinga Ora lacked the coherence needed to sustain community development. Where structures signal marginality, the work is treated as marginal (Banks & Orton, 2007; Butcher, 2004). Without deliberate integration—through clear mandates, resourcing pathways, and cross-functional accountability—community development remains peripheral, vulnerable to drift and disinvestment. Without structural embedding, relational practice stays contingent and politically exposed.

7.8.3 Organisational Culture: Disconnected Teams, Divergent Logics

Alongside structural and strategic barriers, informants identified organisational culture as a defining force shaping community development at Kāinga Ora. Despite rhetorical commitments to thriving communities and partnership, a clear dissonance existed between these aspirations and the informal norms that governed internal behaviour. These cultural dynamics influenced how community development was perceived, valued, and resourced—if at all.

Organisational culture operates through implicit rules—what is prioritised, who is heard, and which kinds of labour are legitimised (Butcher, 2004). Across interviews, informants reported that relational work was dismissed as soft, inefficient, or lacking rigour. KO 22 put it plainly:

“Everyone’s an expert in community, but no one knows what it is.” KO 19 was blunter: “They think building a room is community development.”

Such devaluation echoes Darcy and Georgiou’s (2004) account of rational-bureaucratic public housing systems, where compliance and delivery are prioritised over care, co-production, or presence. At Kāinga Ora, this translated into epistemic marginalisation: relational expertise was routinely second-guessed or ignored. KO 17 remarked, “You wouldn’t question a stormwater expert, but they question my engagement expertise every time.”

These cultural tensions had emotional effects. Several informants described the burnout of working in environments that praised community development rhetorically while undermining it in practice. As KO 22 explained, “You get your head bitten off. So eventually, you just stop speaking.”

Such accounts echo Barnes et al.’s (2003) idea of institutionalised mistrust—where risk aversion and hierarchy prevail over collaboration. Despite inclusive rhetoric, practitioners were often treated as outsiders, asked to deliver change in spaces resistant to it.

Tensions intensified when relational work was forced to justify itself through technical metrics. Long-term, trust-based engagement was crowded out by short-term deliverables. KO 19 commented, “We’re investing in community spaces—but can’t even fund the rents. They want barbecues and dashboards, but not the mahi behind it.”

Internal divides also shaped cultural fragmentation. Informants described tensions between legacy HNZC staff—who tended to view community development in event-based terms—and newer hires who brought systems thinking, participatory approaches, and power-conscious frameworks. As KO 17 observed, “Everybody who used to work at Housing New Zealand sees community development as a barbecue or a mural.”

In contrast, those “steeped in this thinking” found it difficult to push beyond tokenistic engagement: “Pushing through something that goes beyond funding a Neighbours Day or a barbecue is really challenging.”

These dynamics reveal the difficulty of moving from legacy models to more integrated, relational practice. As Pitchford and Henderson (2008) argue, without a shared theoretical base and language, community development risks absorption into institutional logics that dilute its intent. Capability-building must involve more than training—it requires redefining what counts as value and expertise in the organisation’s cultural core.

The result was not only professional frustration but emotional fatigue. As KO 22 reflected, “The lack of support organisationally and systemically... means that people can’t stay for the long haul. They just keep getting beaten down by these organisations.”

In short, while community development gained rhetorical prominence at Kāinga Ora, the cultural foundations to support it remained underdeveloped. A managerial ethos still dominated—favouring delivery, control, and risk management. Until relational knowledge is institutionally embedded and granted equal status with technical expertise, community development will remain symbolically endorsed but structurally marginal.

7.8.4 Funding and Resources: Symbolic Support, Practical Barriers

Informants widely emphasised that funding is both a symbolic and material expression of institutional priorities. While community development featured in the strategic rhetoric of Kāinga Ora, it was rarely backed by sustained or sufficient investment. Practitioners often had to “beg, borrow, or repurpose” budgets just to undertake basic engagement. This disconnect reinforced the perception that community development was aspirational in discourse but marginal in practice (Taylor, 2007).

Funding is never merely operational—it signals what is valued and enabled (Lipsky, 1980; Newman, 2001). At Kāinga Ora, community development was seldom funded as a strategic function. KO 15 noted: “They said to write a plan for every development […] that’s all I did.” Even when planning was mandated, delivery was often unfunded. One-off allocations were typical. “I got $40k once […] had to make it last forever,” KO 15 recalled.

A clear organisational asymmetry emerges: infrastructure attracts substantial investment, while relational work remains under-supported. As KO 21 put it, “They gave us $1.4 billion for infrastructure, but not $20 million for communities.”

Adamson’s (2010a) critique of institutional inertia is evident here. Structural reform advanced, but investment in the relational work needed to support it lagged. As a result, funding decisions redefined the work itself—practitioners were forced to frame community development in transactional terms to gain approval.

Budgets were more easily secured when tied to tangible outputs or reputational returns. KO 19 explained, “We invested three times more than we needed in the clubrooms because it made us look good.” In contrast, even minor costs were hard to justify: “We bought a $20 umbrella and we cringed, because it’s the only thing they’d pay for” (KO 18).

These examples align with Newman’s (2001) concept of performative governance, where symbolic gestures eclipse systemic investment. In this environment, community development risked being reduced to events or brand-building, detached from long-term engagement or capability-building.

Informants also highlighted uneven resourcing across the portfolio of Kāinga Ora. Large-scale projects (LSPs) attracted disproportionate funding and attention, while other sites lacked even minimal support. KO 16 noted: “I have a large-scale project—money for Africa—relative to all my other projects. It’s like, ‘We can fund that, we can fund that,’ with no holistic view of what we’re developing.”

The disparity underscores a deeper systemic failure to value community development across the breadth of the operations of Kāinga Ora. Practitioners tasked with delivering outcomes in under-resourced settings expressed frustration at the mismatch between expectations and means.

Informants also critiqued the undervaluing of reciprocal and community-led contributions—such as voluntary time, shared maintenance, or informal co-creation. KO 23 argued that a transactional funding model displaced grounded, culturally rooted practices: “Funding is one of the tools. But the main driver is work in kind—what I can do for you, how we can work together.”

For KO 23, *whakawhanaungatanga* was not about contracts but shared effort. Yet this ethic was undermined by increasing outsourcing: “We used to go out and do surveys. Now we’re contracting people […] I just wait for the results to come back.”

Outsourcing in this context illustrates what Barnes et al. (2003) describe as institutional scepticism toward local knowledge, and echoes Lipsky’s (1980) claim that funding decisions shape what is legitimised. When procurement replaces participation, performance substitutes for trust, and visibility displaces presence.

The result was not only professional constraint but intensified emotional and logistical labour. Practitioners were expected to deliver outcomes—trust, engagement, presence—without infrastructure to support them. As KO 15 described: “They want outcomes, but there’s no infrastructure. So you’re constantly trying to explain the work, justify the work, and do the work—all at once.”

In short, the funding practices of Kāinga Ora sent contradictory signals. Community development was praised in strategy but rarely resourced in implementation. This rendered the work precarious—reliant on discretionary funding, personal labour, and institutional goodwill. Following Butcher (2004) and Adamson (2010a), unless community development is

embedded in both operational and capital frameworks, it will remain marginal: politically exposed, structurally vulnerable, and systemically undervalued.

7.8.5 Integration and Alignment: Systemic Gaps, Relational Fixes

If funding signals what is valued, integration reveals whether those values are structurally supported. Informants consistently described a misalignment between the stated aspirations for thriving communities by Kāinga Ora, and the operational systems required to realise them. While community development featured in strategy, it was rarely embedded in project governance, cross-team planning, or performance frameworks. Some practitioners recounted the challenges of navigating siloes, negotiating access, and managing misaligned timelines between community needs and delivery imperatives.

Integration here is not administrative—it is a structural condition for relational work. Yet across interviews, community development was described as “tacked on” (KO 15), “brought in too late” (KO 18), or “used as an add-on to calm community concern” (KO 19). Practitioners were often excluded from early-stage design, only contacted once tensions had escalated. KO 19 summarised: “We get emailed when the Contact Centre hears the word community.”

A deeper ambiguity emerged around scope: should efforts focus solely on tenants, or extend to the wider communities affected by urban regeneration? KO 22 posed the dilemma: “It’s us who’s causing all of this disruption, so if we’re not going to take any responsibility beyond our customer cohorts, I don’t think that’s actually very fair.”

Ongoing restructuring and fiscal instability compounded the uncertainty, forcing practitioners to repeatedly justify the value and legitimacy of their roles. KO 22 noted: “What language are we going to use this time? How are we going to justify our existence?”

These accounts reflect Barnes et al.'s (2003) critique that relational roles are easily marginalised in metric-driven, risk-averse systems. Informants described the emotional toll of constantly defending the work, and the organisational amnesia that followed each reform cycle.

The absence of cross-functional integration systems was a persistent theme. Few mechanisms existed to align planning across development, tenancy, and community teams. As KO 22 stated: "There's no structured handover or sustainability plan. We create disruption, then disappear."

Such fragmentation reveals a more fundamental absence: the lack of infrastructure required to sustain relational commitments at scale. While Pitchford and Henderson (2008) argue that integration requires coordination, shared accountability, and a relational ethic, systems within Kāinga Ora often undermined these conditions. Practitioners recalled being called in to host events but excluded from design decisions. KO 16 observed: "They told us to run events, but we had no say in what the build included. The community didn't see us again."

Partial integration eroded trust, blurred accountability, and stifled learning. In its absence, practitioners relied on workarounds—personal networks, goodwill, and institutional memory. KO 15 recalled: "I had to influence from the side and negotiate everything."

While such strategies kept the work afloat, they entrenched its marginality. Influence was contingent on "being in the room at the right time"—a fragile foundation for systemic practice.

Ultimately, integration cannot remain ad hoc. Institutions must actively design for integration—embedding coherent leadership, resourced structures, aligned systems, and supportive culture. Without systemic coherence, community development remains precarious: central to the stated mission of Kāinga Ora but peripheral to its operations.

Table 13 synthesises this disconnection—contrasting the agency's strategic commitments with practitioners' lived realities across each organisational domain.

Table 13 *Strategic Intent vs. Organisational Reality in Kāinga Ora* (Created by the author)

Domain	Strategic Intent	Practitioner Reality
Leadership	Empower values-driven leadership to foster thriving communities.	No clear mandate or ownership; decisions often delayed, reversed, or dependent on personalities.
Structure	Establish integrated, place-based delivery systems.	Fragmented teams, shifting reporting lines, limited role clarity; physical location determines access and influence.
Culture	Promote partnership, inclusion, and relational trust.	Risk aversion and technical control dominate; relational work frequently devalued or sidelined.
Funding	Resource holistic, community-centred outcomes.	Investment is short-term or symbolic; relational work often the first to be deprioritised.
Integration	Embed community development across planning and delivery systems.	Engagement is siloed, reactive, and inconsistently applied; no shared frameworks or sustained coordination.

The disjuncture signals not isolated failings but a deeper systemic contradiction—one where public housing rhetorically champions community development while remaining structurally tethered to delivery logics that marginalise relational work. The final section draws these insights together to assess what such patterns reveal about institutional readiness for care-led reform.

In some cases, cross-team forums and place-based partnerships showed promise—fostering dialogue, building mutual understanding, and supporting local responsiveness. Yet these examples remained sporadic and rarely institutionalised. As KO 16 observed: "We have amazing practice stories, but no one tells them. There's no system to scale what works."

Without formal learning structures or an overarching strategy, integration remained patchy and anecdotal. This maintained familiar power asymmetries, with key decisions made upstream and those with local knowledge brought in too late to influence outcomes.

Practitioners spoke of being asked to retrofit engagement around pre-set timelines and budgets. As KO 21 put it: “We’re building rooms, but there’s no model for activating them.”

In sum, integration at Kāinga Ora was marked more by fragmentation and workaround than systemic alignment. Despite a stated commitment to community wellbeing, internal systems remained siloed, driven by short-term delivery pressures and lacking in cross-functional coordination. Following Butcher (2004) and Pitchford and Henderson (2008), these findings suggest that unless community development is embedded through shared systems, co-produced outcomes, and mutual accountability, it will remain peripheral to the very developments it is meant to support. Like funding, integration is a structural expression of value—and here, it reflects an organisation still ambivalent about its relational responsibilities.

Yet despite these constraints, Kāinga Ora has not relinquished its community development ambitions. Instead, it has increasingly looked outward—turning to iwi, Pacific providers, NGOs, and third-sector partners to help deliver on its mandate. While this shift offers potential for cultural responsiveness and local legitimacy, it also raises new questions about power, accountability, and the state’s enduring duty of care. Theme Seven explores this turn in greater depth, examining how outsourcing has become both a practical workaround and a revealing indicator of institutional ambivalence: a strategy that offsets internal limitations while reframing responsibility for relational practice and care.

7.9 Theme Seven: Delegated Care, Diminished Accountability

While earlier sections examined internal enablers and constraints, this theme shifts focus to a parallel dynamic: the increasing reliance within Kāinga Ora on external partners—iwi, Pacific providers, NGOs, and third-sector organisations—to deliver relational work. Although these partnerships aim to enhance cultural responsiveness and supplement in-house

capacity, they raise critical tensions around power, accountability, and the state's enduring duty of care.

This shift does not occur in a vacuum. As KO 22 noted, "There's varying opinions on this. Some think it's not our responsibility to create thriving communities. Others think we do have a massive part to play." Such strategic ambiguity at governance levels creates a vacuum in which relational responsibilities are devolved outward—without the internal reform required to embed community development as a core organisational function. In this context, outsourcing risks positioning community development as symbolically endorsed but structurally peripheral. As Cornwall (2002) and Banks and Orton (2007) caution, delegation without systemic change often reinforces, rather than disrupts, existing power asymmetries.

Several practitioners observed how outsourcing reduced community development to a deliverable: measurable, transactional, and limited in scope. KO 22 summarised this shift: "We contract an NGO. We hire locals. That's our community development bit done." This framing, which Craig (2002) critiques, reduces relational labour to quantifiable outputs—marginalising its long-term, emancipatory dimensions.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Aimers and Walker (2016) describe how the community sector has become an arm of the state—valued more for service delivery than for enabling collective agency. This pattern is mirrored in Kāinga Ora. While partnerships have enabled valuable projects, informants pointed to persistent challenges: insecure funding, shifting organisational priorities, restricted decision-making, and fragmented relationships. Cornwall's (2004) concept of invited spaces is instructive here—participation is permitted but bounded, defined on state terms.

Insights from legacy housing authority practitioners reinforce these risks. KI 13 recalled the confusion caused by fragmented, short-term contracting: "It must have been confusing for the community… you're not connected up. 'Who am I talking to? What am I doing?' Most

communities don't care—you're just Housing." KI 10 emphasised the importance of visibility: "If you weren't based with [City Housing], that buy-in would get worse. It would be easier to ignore you." KI 4 reflected on the need for continuity: "Being able to build connection with one person, and knowing it's not going to change—that was really crucial."

These observations underscore a core dilemma: outsourcing relational work without internal reform reproduces the very fragmentation, disconnection, and mistrust that community development aims to address.

Within Kāinga Ora, these risks are amplified by the absence of a clear statutory mandate. As KO 21 noted: "Community development is not seen as our core function. When you read the Act, it doesn't talk about us having to develop communities." Without legislative or structural backing, community development remains subordinate to capital delivery. Even promising pilots—such as *Te Mātāwai* in Grey's Avenue, Tāmaki Makaurau—struggled to secure support. As one informant recalled: "We are not funded to do it across the country. I tried to get MHUD to fund the Grey's Ave community development pilot—they wouldn't even do that."

In this environment, outsourcing becomes a mechanism through which the state can perform care without holding it. As Costarelli (2022) warns, frontline workers are increasingly expected to broker trust and contain risk without systemic backing, while the work itself is externalised, fragmented, and stripped of political force.

Moreover, outsourcing risks reinforcing existing power asymmetries. Community organisations—despite holding deep relational capital and cultural legitimacy—often remain constrained by top-down contractual frameworks. As Eversole (2012) and Aimers and Walker (2016) argue, co-production rhetoric can obscure hierarchical control, limiting genuine community agency. Without relational parity and internal structural embedding,

contracts risk casting partners as service providers rather than co-governors of place and wellbeing.

This delegation of care raises critical questions around *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. While partnerships with iwi and Pacific providers can enhance cultural responsiveness, outsourcing relational work without meaningful power-sharing risks instrumentalising Tiriti relationships. Delegation, in the absence of structural co-governance, undermines the Crown's duty to actively protect Māori *Tino Rangatiratanga*. As Durie (1998) and Jackson (2020) emphasise, *Te Tiriti* obligations are not fulfilled by contracting Māori entities—they require systemic transformation, including shared authority, enduring partnership, and institutional accountability.

In sum, while partnerships with iwi, Pacific, and third-sector organisations offer important avenues for cultural responsiveness and local innovation, they cannot substitute for institutional responsibility. Outsourcing relational work without systemic reform externalises care while maintaining bureaucratic control—a dynamic that perpetuates rather than redresses institutional asymmetries (Cornwall, 2002; Aimers & Walker, 2016). This reflects a wider public sector trend in which care is commissioned but not owned, and partnerships function more as rhetorical devices than as vehicles for redistributive change (Newman, 2001).

Ultimately, the outsourcing of community development reveals more than a resourcing strategy; it exposes a deeper institutional reluctance to internalise care as a core public obligation. While partnerships have enabled important work, they have also allowed Kāinga Ora to sidestep the internal reforms needed to embed community development meaningfully. Community development cannot be sustained as a transactional service. It must be understood—and structurally embedded—as a collective, relational, and enduring responsibility of the public housing system itself.

The next section draws together the findings from Themes Five to Seven to assess the structural readiness of Kāinga Ora—and to consider the structural conditions necessary to transform community development from a symbolic gesture into an embedded, enduring expression of public responsibility.

Conclusion to Part Two

Part Two has shown how community development within Kāinga Ora remains suspended between strategic intent and operational reality—bold in mandate, yet fragile in execution. Despite rhetorical commitments to thriving communities, systemic conditions continue to sideline relational work, rendering care an aspiration rather than a structural priority.

The Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities Act provides an expansive mandate—"thriving, inclusive, and sustainable communities"—but lacks enforceable mechanisms or dedicated resources to fulfil it. In its absence, staff are left navigating institutional ambiguity, interpretive drift, and the gap between public promise and operational capacity. Relational practice is burdened by epistemic marginality: undervalued as knowledge, sidelined within organisational cultures, and made precarious by systems that prioritise technical delivery over social infrastructure.

Leadership oscillates between symbolic endorsement and operational silence, offering no clear mandate or organisational home for community development. Structures remain incoherent, scattering practitioners across teams and stripping them of influence. Cultures of compliance dominate, leaving little space for trust-based, adaptive practice. Funding sends mixed signals—praising community outcomes in strategy while failing to invest meaningfully. Where integration occurs, it remains informal and person-dependent—more workaround than systemic design.

The landscape reveals that relational work is often sustained in defiance of institutional conditions rather than because of them. Practitioners act as de facto infrastructure—quietly

coordinating, translating, and holding trust across fractured systems. Yet relying on individuals to bridge structural gaps is neither equitable nor sustainable. Without deliberate organisational investment, the burden of care risks falling solely on frontline conviction.

Amid these internal constraints, Kāinga Ora has increasingly turned to outsourcing—contracting iwi, Pacific providers, and NGOs to deliver community development. While these partnerships can enhance cultural legitimacy and responsiveness, they also risk displacing internal responsibility. Delegating relational work—without structural integration, sustained funding, or internal reform—reproduces the very gaps it aims to fill. Providers operate under short-term contracts with limited voice, while Kāinga Ora retains the mandate but externalises the ethical labour.

These contradictions are not incidental; they are systemic. They reflect public sector logics that reward tangibility, control, and short-term performance, while disincentivising care, shared ownership, and enduring capability. Following Darcy and Georgiou's (2004) critique of technocratic inertia and Banks and Orton's (2007) concept of institutional unreadiness, the findings highlight a central paradox: the very systems designed to deliver transformation often obstruct it from within.

Together, Themes Five through to Seven reveal a core ambiguity in the institutional identity of Kāinga Ora: is community development an ethical commitment embedded in practice, or a strategic aspiration delegated to discretion? As long as it remains contingent—reliant on individuals, pilots, or political will—it will remain vulnerable. What is needed is not incremental adaptation but a structural repositioning of care and connection as central to public housing's purpose.

7.10 Conclusion to Chapter Seven

The analysis traced the evolving architecture of community development in public housing, beginning with legacy housing authorities and extending to the post-merger reforms of

Kāinga Ora. Together, Parts One and Two trace a persistent dilemma: community development is increasingly invoked in policy and rhetoric, yet remains structurally marginal within public housing delivery systems. While the language of thriving, inclusive communities is common, underlying systems continue to prioritise capital delivery, compliance, and technical control.

Drawing on Butcher's (2004) five domains and Hudson's (2004) public value filters, the chapter shows that intent alone is insufficient. Relational work flourished not where it was merely endorsed, but where it was structurally embedded—resourced, legitimised, and integrated across the organisation. No single domain—leadership, structure, culture, funding, or integration—was adequate in isolation. Only when aligned could they support coherent, sustained, and accountable practice. Where fragmented, relational work remained precarious: discretionary, reactive, and vulnerable to devaluation.

Part One revealed how, in legacy organisations, community development was expected but unsupported. Practitioners navigated drift, ethical tension, and structural inertia with few tools to sustain care beyond individual initiative. Policy volatility and managerial ambiguity compounded this fragility, positioning practitioners as moral intermediaries within systems not designed to uphold care as core business.

Part Two assessed whether institutional reform within Kāinga Ora enabled a shift. Despite the expansive statutory vision of the Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities Act, the findings reveal a gap between mandate and mechanism. There are no binding requirements, dedicated resources, or structural incentives to enact community wellbeing. In this vacuum, practitioners continue to shoulder institutional ambiguity. Community development is conceptually affirmed but structurally adrift: scattered across teams, inconsistently funded, and absent from core performance logic.

Compounding this, Kāinga Ora has increasingly outsourced community work to iwi, Pacific, and third-sector partners. While these partnerships offer cultural legitimacy and local responsiveness, they risk displacing responsibility. Delegating care without internal reform reproduces the very asymmetries it purports to address. Community development becomes both a symbol of inclusion and a mechanism of retreat—allowing care to be performed, but not institutionally owned.

These contradictions reflect broader tensions in public management—between inclusion and control, ambition and capacity. As Darcy and Georgiou (2004) note, the technical rationalities of housing systems often inhibit the very practices they espouse. And as Banks and Orton (2007) argue, institutions may value care in principle but remain structurally unprepared to enact it. In Kāinga Ora, this unreadiness manifests not through overt resistance, but through diffuse ambivalence: symbolic leadership, shifting priorities, and chronic underinvestment in relational work.

A core question remains: will community development remain an afterthought—or can it be reclaimed as a public responsibility, grounded not in rhetoric but in relational accountability and systemic reform? The answer lies in the redistribution of organisational attention, resourcing, and legitimacy.

Building on the findings presented, the discussion contributes to emerging scholarship on public housing reform, relational practice, and institutional care. It proposes that systemic care be understood as a form of public infrastructure—operational rather than symbolic. Relational practice, in turn, warrants recognition as a core element of democratic service, one that is supported through governance, funding, and leadership structures.

Chapter Eight takes up this challenge. It argues that the future of public housing lies not in balancing delivery and development, but in reimagining care, accountability, and trust as

foundational infrastructure. To become more than a landlord, Kāinga Ora must evolve into a relational public service—technically competent, ethically grounded, and socially responsive.

Chapter Eight: Discussion of Findings

8.1 Introduction

Drawing together the study's key findings, the following analysis examines how community development is conceptualised, practised, and constrained within Aotearoa New Zealand's public housing landscape. The discussion responds directly to the four research questions, positioning empirical insights within a broader theoretical reframing—one that challenges reductive policy narratives and highlights the relational, cultural, and systemic conditions shaping practice. Community development is not treated as an ancillary function but as a site of tension, adaptation, and potential institutional transformation.

Community development offers a critical pathway for strengthening public housing's contribution to resident and community wellbeing. This research explored the lived experience of practitioners across diverse contexts, focusing on how relational practice is enacted, sustained, or undermined within institutional settings shaped by residualisation, policy volatility, and competing mandates. These accounts illuminate not only the labour involved but the systemic architectures that support—or constrain—the possibility of care, trust, and participation.

At the heart of this investigation is a question of contribution: How might public housing meaningfully support resident and community wellbeing? Drawing on practitioner insights, the analysis examines how policy settings, organisational cultures, and leadership practices shape the capacity for relational ways of working.

Adopting the interpretive approach outlined in Chapter Four, this discussion applies a social constructionist lens to explore how meaning is made, contested, and enacted within public housing. The analytical framework—centred on ethics of care, emotional labour, institutional navigation, cultural and relational ontologies, and theories of power—guides the analysis. Rather than seeking causal generalisations, it traces recurring tensions across practice,

policy, and institutional structure, with attention to how relational work operates both as a navigational strategy and as a foundation for governance reform.

The chapter begins by revisiting the research questions and drawing together the findings, providing a foundation for the conceptual and policy analysis that follows. It then examines how trust, care, participation, and emotional labour operate as essential but marginalised forms of relational practice. This is followed by an exploration of the organisational and policy conditions that either constrain or enable such work, highlighting the tensions between institutional design and frontline experience.

The chapter then introduces three conceptual propositions—Creating and Holding Space, The Practitioner as Relational Infrastructure, and Reframing Care as Duty—which culminate in the notion of relational governance, a care-centred alternative for public housing. It concludes by reflecting on the broader implications for policy, institutional design, and public service reform.

Together, these elements argue that relational practices are foundational to effective public housing, yet remain structurally peripheral. When resourced, recognised, and embedded, community development can shift public housing from a transactional model to one grounded in care, trust, and cultural connection.

8.2 Addressing the Research Questions

The inquiry was guided by four research questions that aimed to illuminate both frontline practice and system architecture. Rather than viewing these as discrete categories, the findings chapters traced how core themes—such as trust, care, participation, and constraint—intersect across practitioner roles and institutional design.

Chapter Five examined how community development is grounded in connection and relational ethics. Chapter Six explored the tensions practitioners face as they navigate

shifting roles, institutional silos, and emotional labour. Chapter Seven extended the analysis, identifying structural barriers—fragmented systems, inconsistent leadership, and underinvestment—that render community development peripheral, despite rhetorical commitments to wellbeing and tenant voice.

The next section draws together these insights to respond directly to the four research questions.

Drawing together empirical insights and theoretical framing, the following section responds directly to the study's four research questions. In doing so, it reinforces the argument that community development constitutes essential public infrastructure within housing systems—not ancillary labour.

8.2.1 Research Question One

How do community development practitioners define and describe their roles and practices within public housing?

Practitioners consistently described their roles as relational, adaptive, and grounded in values. Rather than solely functioning as service providers, they enacted multiple roles—connectors, advocates, cultural translators, organisers, and space-holders. While formal responsibilities provided a foundation, their practice was animated by ethical commitments, cultural knowledge, and responsiveness to lived community contexts.

Participation was viewed not as a procedural exercise but a relational process. Practitioners built trust over time, created safe spaces for tenant voice, supported informal leaders, and challenged narrow definitions of legitimate participation. Their aim was not to lead but to walk alongside—strengthening the relational fabric from which local leadership could emerge.

This framing positions community development as a political and ethical practice, involving negotiation of ambiguity, creation of inclusive space, and support for collective agency in systems not always designed for participation.

8.2.2 Research Question Two

How do practitioners and public housing authorities perceive the contribution of community development to the wellbeing of residents and communities?

Both practitioners and housing authorities viewed community development as central to resident and neighbourhood wellbeing. Its value extended beyond services or programmes, encompassing the cultivation of trust, safety, belonging, and collective capability. Practitioners emphasised that wellbeing is relational—produced through sustained presence, cultural resonance, and everyday encounters, not delivered via technical interventions alone.

Community development was seen as connective tissue—linking tenants to systems, people to place, and communities to one another. It enabled responsive communication, early intervention, and culturally attuned support. In contexts of redevelopment or inequality, it was perceived as critical to mitigating social risk and enabling long-term cohesion.

Importantly, it was not seen as a supplementary function but an essential organisational capability—enhancing tenant wellbeing, neighbourhood resilience, and institutional legitimacy.

8.2.3 Research Question Three

What factors facilitate the integration of community development practices into public housing?

Integration was enabled when community development was embedded early in project planning, formally recognised within organisational structures, and aligned with leadership

priorities. Where leadership valued the work, practitioners gained legitimacy, strategic backing, and access to decision-making processes.

Sustained presence was also key. Practitioners embedded in communities over time were able to build trust, adapt to local dynamics, and respond to evolving needs. Cross-team collaboration further enabled integration—particularly when community, tenancy, and development teams shared purpose and planning.

Integration was strongest where roles were clearly defined, supported by consistent management, and backed by secure funding. Under these conditions, community development was not treated as discretionary but as a shared institutional responsibility that supported relational trust, wellbeing, and public value.

8.2.4 Research Question Four

What are the obstacles to integrating community development into public housing?

Integration was hindered by systemic and institutional barriers. Residualised policy frameworks positioned housing as a safety net rather than a site of wellbeing. Risk-averse cultures prioritised compliance over connection, while performance regimes rendered relational outcomes invisible. As a result, care and participation were often tolerated but undervalued—seen as inefficient or outside core business.

Practitioners operated in what Hoggett et al. (2008) term dilemmatic *spaces*: zones of ethical and structural tension where they were expected to uphold relational values without systemic support or mandate. Institutional ambiguity—especially within Kāinga Ora—exacerbated these tensions. With unclear expectations around community wellbeing versus delivery imperatives, practitioners were left to interpret their roles through personal judgement and relational instinct, absorbing the emotional and ethical burden of a structurally unsupported function.

This disjuncture was not merely inefficient; it imposed moral strain. Relational work was often informal, unevenly distributed, and practised at personal cost. Practitioners spoke of burnout, blurred boundaries, and emotional exhaustion. The persistent gap between strategic rhetoric and operational reality revealed not a failure of implementation, but a systemic reluctance to embed care as a core public responsibility. Until this misalignment is addressed, community development will remain precarious—sustained by individual resilience rather than institutional design.

8.3 Discussion of Key Findings

Far from a standalone intervention, community development emerges as a dynamic, relational practice—deeply embedded in and continuously shaped by institutional, political, and cultural systems. It connects practitioner experience with broader systemic forces, interpreting how trust, care, participation, and organisational design intersect in the everyday governance of public housing.

The discussion revisits key theoretical frameworks—ethics of care, social capital, participatory governance, communitarianism, and pluralism—to evaluate their relevance for contemporary reform. It begins by examining trust, care, and participation as forms of improvised infrastructure: relational practices that temporarily bridge gaps left by residualised policy settings and fragmented service design.

8.3.1 Trust and Relational Practice: Foundations and Fragilities

Trust emerged as both foundational to effective community development and acutely vulnerable. Practitioners framed it not as an assumed baseline, but as something earned through presence, consistency, and cultural resonance. In communities shaped by historical neglect and institutional churn, trust had to be carefully built and continually maintained through quiet, sustained acts of relational commitment.

These acts—checking in without agenda, remembering names, following through—were modest in form but symbolically powerful. They affirmed residents' dignity and countered institutional abandonment. Such practices align with Scott's (1990) notion of infrapolitics: the small, often invisible acts that resist dominant systems and uphold relational continuity where formal power is absent or unresponsive.

Yet trust, once established, was easily disrupted. Staff turnover, programme closures, policy shifts, and top-down decisions frequently undermined the relational groundwork practitioners had laid. These ruptures often occurred without consultation, deepening community disillusionment and reinforcing perceptions of the public housing system as unreliable or indifferent.

The distinction between interpersonal and institutional trust was a recurring theme. Practitioners could foster interpersonal trust, but institutional trust required deeper infrastructure: mandate clarity, personnel continuity, cultural accountability, and responsiveness to community priorities. When these were absent, practitioners bore the burden of institutional neglect—tasked with maintaining relationships within systems that failed to uphold them. Trust thus became both a professional obligation and a form of emotional labour, requiring resilience in the face of disappointment, disillusionment, and sometimes anger.

For Māori and Pasifika practitioners, these ethical stakes were heightened. Their ability to build trust drew on cultural practices such as *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā*—practices that honour relationship and uphold respect across time. Yet this fluency was often assumed rather than supported. The result, several participants noted, was a racialised and individualised trust economy—dependent on specific people in specific roles, rather than on systemic embedding of cultural legitimacy.

Trust was also shaped by power and positionality. Practitioners were often viewed as representatives of the housing authority, regardless of intention or community standing. This complicated engagement: even as they built rapport, they were seen as extensions of a system that had failed to deliver or acted without transparency. These dynamics echo Cornwall's (2004) distinction between invited spaces—institutionally defined forums for participation—and created spaces, which emerge through relational trust and mutual purpose. Without structural attention to such asymmetries, even well-intentioned efforts risk reinforcing institutional hierarchies.

These findings challenge any framing of trust as a soft skill or secondary concern. In public housing, trust-building is strategic, ethical, and political. It sustains participation, enables care, and underpins institutional legitimacy. But when left to individual discretion—dependent on the "right person in the role"—it remains precarious, emotionally taxing, and structurally invisible. Reframing trust as *relational infrastructure*—something deliberately resourced, protected, and embedded—offers a more durable foundation. This requires systems that enable continuity, reciprocity, and cultural legitimacy, not as aspirations but as operational norms. Without such shifts, trust will remain fragile—sustained by personal labour yet vulnerable to systemic incoherence.

8.3.2 Care as Ethical and Political Practice

Care emerged not as sentimentality but as a deliberate, ethical orientation—demanding attentiveness, responsiveness, and advocacy in contexts of structural neglect. Practitioners characterised care as both a relational practice and a moral-political framework, aligned with Tronto's (1993, 2013) conception of care as meeting needs, sustaining relationships, and redressing power imbalances. In public housing, care becomes political because it is enacted in systems that routinely marginalise the lived realities of vulnerable communities.

Practitioners expressed a care-based ethic of citizenship—emphasising interdependence, relational responsibility, and context-sensitive judgement (Sevenhuijsen, 2003). Acts such as being present, noticing who is missing, or following up after crisis were not discretionary but ethical obligations. These required emotional and cultural intelligence—forms of expertise often overlooked in policy or management. Care was thus not simply motivated by goodwill, but grounded in situated skill.

Care also functioned as prevention. By maintaining trust, mediating tensions, and supporting residents early, practitioners often mitigated harm and upheld the conditions upon which effective housing systems depend. In this sense, care was not only ethical but strategic.

However, this ethic was frequently misaligned with institutional logics. Practitioners navigated relational commitment within performance-driven settings that prioritised quantifiable outputs over qualitative impacts—echoing Mee's (2009) critique of housing systems that strip care of its political force. Relational practice—grieving with residents, mediating tensions, recognising isolation—was foundational but invisible, routinely unrecognised and unrewarded.

Tronto (1993) reminds us that care is systematically devalued due to its association with the feminised, emotional, and embodied—traits marginal to dominant bureaucratic paradigms. Across housing authorities, care was quietly expected of certain individuals and roles, but rarely legitimised or resourced.

This individualisation renders care precarious. Practitioners become "care-fixers" (Tronto, 2013), plugging systemic gaps without mandate or protection. While discretionary acts may uphold trust in the short term, they risk masking systemic failure and placing unsustainable emotional burdens on staff. The costs include burnout, ethical strain, and increased reliance on enforcement and crisis responses—measures that are more resource-intensive and less relational.

Care in this context is not culturally neutral. Māori and Pasifika practitioners drew on ontologies such as *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā*—not engagement tools but ways of being. *Whakawhanaungatanga*, grounded in *whakapapa* and expressed through *kanohi kitea*, affirms the primacy of relationality (Penny et al., 2024). *Teu le vā* similarly invokes the sacredness of relational space and the moral obligation to uphold it. Practitioners framed hosting, listening, and dignifying others not as extras but as core responsibilities. Yet these practices were often assumed rather than supported, rendering culturally grounded care invisible and unprotected.

This disconnect between aspirational rhetoric and operational reality signals a deeper incoherence. While inclusion and partnership feature prominently in strategy, Indigenous and Pasifika models of care remain marginal within dominant systems (Penny et al., 2024; Teariki & Leau, 2023). As Sevenhuijsen (2003) and Tronto (2013) argue, democratic institutions must not only recognise care but redistribute it—ensuring it is shared, resourced, and embedded.

Realising this vision demands institutional transformation: care must be embedded in job descriptions and performance frameworks; reflective supervision resourced; time for relationship-building protected; and leadership cultures developed that treat care not as optional, but as fundamental to public service. Reframed in this way, care becomes not a personal virtue but a systemic function—essential to restoring trust, sustaining relationships, and embedding dignity in both practice and structure.

8.3.3 The Politics of Participation: Navigating Power, Voice, and Space

Participation featured prominently across both policy and practitioner accounts, yet a clear disjuncture emerged between rhetorical commitments and residents' constrained influence. While engagement was often invited, it seldom translated into power. This section reframes

participation as a political practice—shaped by institutional design, relational work, and contested authority.

Informants described navigating three forms of space, drawing on Cornwall's (2004) typology of invited, claimed, and created spaces. Invited spaces—such as consultation forums or co-design sessions—were typically institutionally defined and controlled. While projecting legitimacy, they often occurred late in decision-making, with parameters already fixed. The result, echoing Arnstein's (1969) critique of tokenism, was often the performance of engagement without genuine influence.

Claimed spaces—those initiated by residents, such as protests or advocacy—asserted agency but were often met with resistance unless reinforced by insider advocacy. Created spaces were the most relational: drop-ins, social events, and informal hui that fostered open dialogue. These practitioner-led spaces built trust and cultural resonance, yet remained unrecognised by formal performance systems and were sustained through invisible labour.

Across all three, power remained asymmetrical. Even well-designed processes were shaped by historical distrust, redevelopment displacement, and consultation fatigue. Voice, in this context, meant more than speaking—it meant being heard, influencing outcomes, and being seen as a legitimate actor. Practitioners were acutely aware that participation did not equate to influence and often filtered through institutional logics of risk, feasibility, or compliance.

Many described navigating dual positionalities: seen as both allies and institutional representatives. This created ethical strain, especially when tasked with maintaining trust while managing disappointment. Practitioners bore the emotional toll of decisions they did not make, but had to deliver or justify.

Despite these constraints, practitioners used strategies to create more empowering conditions for voice: walking alongside residents, nurturing informal leaders, aligning engagement with cultural protocols, and investing in slow, relational work. Participation was

not about extracting input, but about fostering trust, emotional safety, and reciprocal accountability. Yet this approach often clashed with institutional expectations for speed, visibility, and standardised outputs.

Participation was also unevenly distributed. Structural barriers—language, trauma, digital exclusion, poverty—shaped who could engage and how. Practitioners countered these by creating alternative routes to voice: through community champions, storytelling, and culturally resonant dialogue. These practices affirmed that inclusion requires more than presence—it demands safety, power, and recognition.

Underlying these patterns was not just poor planning but structural ambiguity. Within Kāinga Ora, informants described confusion about what community development is for, and thus what participation should achieve. While high-level documents referenced thriving communities, operational systems often treated engagement as communications or risk mitigation—rather than shared governance.

Such dynamics illustrate what Howlett and Rayner (2007) describe as policy layering—where new mandates like wellbeing are imposed on unreformed delivery systems, resulting in mixed signals. The dual identity of Kāinga Ora—as housing developer and wellbeing agency—compounded this ambiguity. Practitioners were expected to enable voice without being empowered to influence outcomes. Participation became contingent: shaped by project timelines, leadership preferences, and shifting priorities.

The consequences were clear. Participation without structural clarity risks tokenism. Practitioners were left holding invited spaces—managed, bounded, and disconnected from real decision-making—while absorbing the ethical weight of symbolic engagement.

These findings underscore that participation is not a technical fix but a relational and political achievement. It requires more than invitation—it depends on the conditions that make voice meaningful: trust, cultural fluency, and institutional responsiveness. Without these,

participation remains symbolic; with them, it becomes a vehicle for co-governance, belonging, and public accountability.

To realise this, participation must be treated as core democratic infrastructure—not an add-on to delivery, but a foundation of legitimacy. This requires long-term investment in relational practice, culturally grounded methods, and systems that enable shared decision-making. Without such alignment, participation will remain fragile—carried by committed individuals, but constrained by the structures that surround them.

8.3.4 Risk, Recognition and Relational Practice

Effective community development in public housing depends not only on relational skill and cultural fluency, but also on the capacity to manage risk, persist in adversity, and seek recognition in systems that routinely undervalue this practice. These findings echo broader scholarship on frontline work: the exercise of moral agency under constraint (Lipsky, 1980), the emotional toll of unprotected care (Hochschild, 2012), and the blurred expectations around accountability and discretion (Banks & Orton, 2007).

Practitioners reflected on refining their approach through experience—especially in responding to complex needs or cultural dynamics. While adaptability was a strength, it also exposed them to risk. With limited structural guidance, they bore the weight of relational missteps—especially in communities already marked by institutional harm. In these settings, relational risk was effectively outsourced to those with the least protection.

Resilience was viewed as necessary, not because conditions were enabling, but because someone needed to stay. Informants did not claim power over systems, but described holding space between policy aspirations and practice realities—caught between institutional constraint and community expectation.

Analytically, practitioners functioned as the grit in the oyster—absorbing friction between risk-averse institutions and relationally intensive work (Banks & Orton, 2007). This role, while critical, was precarious. It masked dysfunction, locating systemic failure in personal resolve. The emotional toll was significant. As Hochschild (2012) and Lipsky (1980) argue, frontline workers often buffer institutional failure through discretionary effort—labouring beyond mandate, without protection.

Practitioners were expected to care but lacked authority. This disjunction—responsibility without power—is a recurring theme in care ethics and public service literature (Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Tronto, 1993, 2013). While community development was affirmed in strategy documents, it remained marginal to operations. Essential dimensions—emotional labour, cultural competence, informal support—were rarely embedded in performance frameworks, funding models, or team structures. The value was understood, but not institutionalised—visible in practice, absent from design.

This reflects a deeper epistemic injustice. Relational knowledge—how to build trust, when to intervene, how to hold space—is tacit and context-bound. It sits uneasily within rationalist, procedural governance systems (Fricker, 2017). Consequently, relational practitioners often operate in institutional blind spots—recognised in principle but unsupported in practice.

A more sustainable model would reframe risk, resilience, and recognition as systemic indicators, not personal traits. This requires shifting from discretionary practice to institutional responsibility (Banks & Orton, 2007). Embedding reflective supervision, protecting time for presence, enabling critical deliberation, and mandating relational accountability in leadership are essential components of this shift (Johnson, 2020).

Support must be structural, not symbolic—baked into role design, team culture, and organisational learning. Without this, systems remain extractive. Practitioners absorb risk without mandate; burnout is internalised; dysfunction is normalised. Reframing relational

work as infrastructure demands recognition of its strategic function. Practitioners are not discretionary extras—they are the connective tissue that holds trust, participation, and belonging in place. Supporting their work is not optional; it is a condition for just, effective, and humane public service.

8.3.5 Housing Policy as Context and Constraint

Despite rhetorical commitments to community wellbeing, housing policy in Aotearoa New Zealand continues to reflect deep ideological tensions. Practitioners recounted navigating volatile systems where programmes were launched and dismantled with little warning, and where relational work, though celebrated in principle, remained marginal in practice. Over the past three decades, governments have brought divergent ideological commitments to public housing, producing policy oscillations that undermine long-term strategy, institutional memory, and coherence. This section examines how such conditions shape the structural viability of community development, addressing Research Questions Three and Four.

Labour-led governments have typically framed housing as a site of social investment and wellbeing; National-led governments have leaned towards market logics focused on efficiency and asset management. These shifts reflect what Manzi and Morrison (2018) identify as a lack of consensus on the purpose of public housing—leaving both practitioners and tenants exposed to ideological churn, policy fragmentation, and structural instability.

These fluctuations are not abstract. They shape organisational design, resourcing, and accountability. Informants reported the abrupt dismantling of entire programmes, often without consultation or transition planning. Such disruptions corrode trust—not only between tenants and practitioners, but between communities and institutions. As Henderson and Thomas (2005) argue, continuity is essential to trust-based engagement, yet politicisation undermines the long-term conditions required for relational practice to take root.

One lasting consequence of this volatility is the residualisation of public housing. Policy choices concentrating disadvantage in specific neighbourhoods have reinforced exclusion and compounded stigma (Pawson et al., 2015). Informants described working in communities shaped less by internal deficit than by decades of underinvestment and service withdrawal. In these contexts, the demands on relational work intensify, even as the resources to support it diminish.

A volatile policy environment places considerable strain on practitioners, who are left to absorb the consequences of decisions made far above their level—abrupt funding cuts, service restructures, and programme closures. As earlier sections have shown, these burdens fall unevenly, with practitioners absorbing additional emotional labour to support communities marginalised by dominant policy frameworks.

Residualisation has also narrowed the scope of public housing institutions. Community development is often reframed as discretionary—an informal add-on to tenancy management, asset priorities, and compliance risk. Commercial logics such as cost recovery and asset optimisation displace relational work, particularly when its impacts are not easily quantified.

Rather than replacing outdated paradigms, new mandates like wellbeing have been layered onto unreformed structures—producing incoherence rather than integration (Howlett & Rayner, 2007). Practitioners are expected to deliver on wellbeing and partnership while operating in systems designed for tenancy throughput and capital delivery. Relational work is thus constrained not by lack of intent, but by institutional misalignment.

This ambiguity of mandate has profound implications. Relational practice must be continually justified against performance frameworks that fail to capture trust, connection, or belonging. Despite rhetorical shifts, values such as wellbeing remain weakly institutionalised without bipartisan policy support. Inconsistent mandates impede the accumulation of local

knowledge, cultural fluency, and practitioner continuity needed for relational work to be embedded at scale.

Evidence from the research underscores that community development withers under short-termism, technocratic control, and ideological volatility. If housing is to support wellbeing and belonging, a paradigmatic shift is needed—one that affirms housing as a public good and community development as a core function. This means more than funding programmes; it requires embedding relational principles into legislation, mandates, and system architecture.

These dynamics reveal a structural contradiction: as public housing becomes more residualised—serving increasingly complex needs while losing policy coherence—the system becomes less equipped to sustain the very conditions that support wellbeing. Narrow mandates, churn, and resource asymmetry erode trust and participation. In this context, relational governance is not aspirational—it is essential. This insight underpins the conceptual reframing developed in the next section.

8.3.6 Organisational Enablers and Barriers to Community Development

Community development does not occur on neutral ground. Its viability depends on how it is positioned, resourced, and valued within public housing institutions. As the findings in this study reveal, practitioners operate within organisational environments that can either enable or inhibit relational work—through their structures, leadership logics, cultures, funding models, and integration practices. Drawing on Butcher's (2004) framework of the "5 Ps," this section explores these institutional dynamics across both legacy housing authorities and Kāinga Ora, highlighting the systemic enablers and barriers that shape practice on the ground.

8.3.6.1 Structure: Marginal or Mandated?

Community development does not occur in a vacuum. Its viability depends on how it is positioned within housing institutions—both structurally and symbolically. Across agencies,

informants described persistent ambiguity regarding the role's scope, status, and organisational home. Where there was no formal mandate or clear structural placement, community development was often perceived as peripheral, optional, or misunderstood.

Practitioners were frequently located in community-facing roles but reported to tenancy or asset management leads. This created tensions between their relational focus and the transactional priorities of the wider organisation. Some described unclear reporting lines or conflicting expectations, reinforcing the sense that their work lacked a settled mandate.

Structural placement shaped both visibility and legitimacy. When community development sat under operational functions such as tenancy or asset management, housing was framed as a delivery function rather than a relational one. While some integration efforts helped foster collaboration, they also risked eroding the distinctiveness of community development practice. Elsewhere, the work was siloed within programme delivery, disconnected from strategy, and easily fragmented.

Frequent organisational shifts compounded the problem. Teams were moved across departments with little continuity, undermining cohesion and institutional memory. These movements reflected not only structural instability but also a deeper uncertainty about the function and value of community development.

At Kāinga Ora, these structural issues were amplified by the complexities of post-merger integration. The absorption of Housing New Zealand Corporation and HLC brought together divergent legacies and unresolved organisational logics. Without a coherent national framework, responsibility for community development remained diffuse, and practitioners were left to navigate ambiguity without clear system-wide support. Inconsistent structures signalled inconsistent value.

The result was a structural landscape where relational work remained vulnerable—to leadership turnover, funding cuts, or operational restructuring. In many cases, practitioners

had to carve out space for the work themselves—negotiating their place within the institution while simultaneously holding space in communities. Rather than being supported by structure, their practice often filled gaps created by its absence.

8.3.6.2 Leadership: Gatekeeper or Champion

Leadership was a critical determinant of whether community development was enabled or eroded. Where leaders understood its strategic value, practitioners gained the flexibility, time, and legitimacy to work relationally. These leaders often acted as buffers—protecting space for learning, trust-building, and adaptation.

Across agencies, leadership support was often dependent on individual champions rather than institutional norms. When champions departed, so too did protection for the work. This fragility limited organisational learning, as support was rarely formalised. Effective leadership requires more than advocacy—it depends on relational literacy embedded throughout the organisation (Pitchford & Henderson, 2008).

At Kāinga Ora, leadership was uneven. Some executives championed a wellbeing-centred vision; others focused on delivery targets, compliance, and risk. The *Ngā Pae Tātaki* model was introduced to promote collaboration, but in practice it was perceived as diffuse and unclear—resulting in inconsistent guidance and regional disparity.

Middle management often shaped whether community development was enabled or constrained. Some managers prioritised tenancy KPIs over relational goals; others translated high-level vision into space for engagement and protected relational practice. In volatile systems, middle leaders who valued trust and discretion created the conditions for the work to take root.

Leadership ambiguity carried both emotional and institutional consequences. In the absence of a clear strategic position, practitioners were left to navigate a liminal space—unrecognised

and unprotected. This aligns with Banks and Orton's (2007) notion of organisational unreadiness, where care is signalled rhetorically but lacks structural support.

These findings reveal a core contradiction: community development is endorsed rhetorically but unauthorised structurally. Leadership must do more than set vision—it must hold ambiguity, enable alignment, and embed values. Without this, the work remains peripheral, precarious, and disconnected from institutional power.

8.3.6.3 Culture: Procedural or Relational

Organisational culture profoundly shaped the viability of community development. In settings dominated by compliance, trust and care were often seen as peripheral. Practitioners were expected to reframe relational work in output-based terms to gain legitimacy. Managerialist cultures prioritised standardisation, metrics, and risk management over responsiveness or connection.

Within Kāinga Ora, cultural change was uneven. External messaging promoted inclusion and wellbeing, but internal practices retained legacy logics of control and efficiency. The result was a disconnect between values and expectations. Practitioners frequently found themselves defending their work in systems that did not recognise relational knowledge as specialist or rigorous. Relational work was often dismissed as soft, despite its strategic and emotional weight.

Tenancy services exemplified these tensions. KPIs prioritised arrears and turnover over trust and cohesion, creating a disconnect between wellbeing goals and enforcement responsibilities. Practitioners were left to reconcile this contradiction—often without support. This misalignment eroded confidence, depleted energy, and led to burnout.

Cultural divisions also existed among practitioners themselves. Understandings of community development ranged from event coordination to systemic change. Without a

shared conceptual base, the work risked being reduced to one-off outputs rather than sustained, strategic practice. The lack of capability-building further entrenched fragmentation.

Even when formally supported, community development depended on cultural alignment. In the absence of shared frameworks, initiatives had to be continually justified, making long-term traction difficult. These findings reflect Adamson (2010a), Barnes et al. (2003), and Darcy and Georgiou (2004): culture encodes power, shapes value, and determines what endures. Where relational values were embedded, community development could thrive. Where cultures prioritised performance and control, it remained marginal.

8.3.6.4 Funding: Investment or Afterthought

Funding was a persistent constraint. While community development featured in strategy documents, it relied on short-term, discretionary budgets with little continuity. In contrast, tenancy and capital delivery received stable investment—revealing institutional values as much as operational priorities. In performance-driven systems, what is funded signals what is valued.

Relational work—trust-building, cultural hosting, and community support—was often treated as ancillary. Its intangible nature made it vulnerable in metric-oriented settings. Practitioners faced procurement delays, limited resources, and uneven support. Capital projects occasionally included engagement budgets, but place-based wellbeing work was typically underfunded or ad hoc.

This produced a two-speed system. Relational efforts were funded not by need, but by geography, scale, or political visibility. Redevelopment zones received investment; high-need neighbourhoods seeking stability were often overlooked. Preventative work had to be retrofitted into systems geared toward outputs and project-based delivery.

The implications were both practical and symbolic. Inconsistent funding rendered relational work precarious, reliant on discretionary effort and informal workaround. Endorsement without investment reinforced its perceived expendability.

Underfunding relational work also compromised its preventative potential. Scarcity limited its capacity to build trust and social cohesion, while unequal allocation often reinforced structural injustice.

Resourcing is not neutral—it is a strategic and ethical act. To institutionalise relational practice, investment must shift from short-term projects to long-term, flexible funding tied to wellbeing outcomes. Without this shift, community development remains structurally marginal and vulnerable to erosion.

8.3.6.5 Integration: Add-on or Embedded

Integration was repeatedly undermined by weak structural alignment. Strategic commitments to community wellbeing were seldom embedded into roles, performance systems, or evaluation tools—leaving a gap between organisational intent and practice. Community development remained siloed: referenced in high-level strategy but marginalised in day-to-day delivery. Though framed as a shared responsibility, it was rarely integrated into core housing functions.

Tenancy, asset, and place-based teams operated under divergent logics. Engagement, placemaking, and social procurement functions were dispersed, leaving practitioners to navigate misalignment through informal brokering. This reliance on individual initiative made integration fragile—dependent on relationships rather than design. Where relationships broke down, so too did traction. In such conditions, relational practice became improvised and vulnerable, not systematised or secure.

These issues were not merely operational but reflected deeper misalignments across systems, cultures, and accountabilities. Cross-departmental coordination was hindered by incompatible systems and competing priorities. Tenancy teams prioritised risk and compliance, while community teams focused on trust and participation. Without integrative leadership, these logics pulled in different directions. As Pitchford and Henderson (2008) note, integration requires formal alignment across functions, not just goodwill.

Even where intent to collaborate existed, structural barriers limited progress. Information-sharing was inconsistent, planning fragmented, and evaluative learning weak. These patterns resembled what Hudson (2004) terms “institutional drift,” where the absence of strategic embedding leaves collaborative work unstable and unsustainable. Without alignment, trust is hard to sustain, continuity is fragile, and visibility of community development remains episodic.

Moving beyond ad hoc collaboration requires deliberate design. Integration must be strategically embedded—not aspirational, but operational. This entails alignment across roles, resources, and systems, as Butcher (2004) argues, ensuring coherence between purpose, policy, and practice. Integration is not a technical fix but a normative commitment to public value.

Leadership is central to this shift. It must ensure alignment across functions and legitimise relational work as core, not peripheral. Without coherence in leadership, structure, and resourcing, community development remains discretionary—affirmed rhetorically, but unsupported in practice. Informants were unequivocal: without institutional integration, the work cannot move from committed individuals to durable public function.

8.3.7 From Ambiguity to Agency: Practitioners in the Gaps

Organisational conditions determine whether community development is embedded or marginal. When relational work is integrated across structure, leadership, culture, funding,

and systems, it is more likely to be sustained. When fragmented or discretionary, it becomes precarious—relying on informal workarounds and individual resolve.

The findings show that alignment across these domains is essential. No single enabler is sufficient. Structure provides position; leadership offers protection; culture legitimises values; funding secures continuity; and integration links practice to system. Where this alignment existed, care, trust, and community wellbeing could take root.

Yet alignment was rare—particularly at Kāinga Ora. Structural and cultural contradictions undermined mandate and cohesion. Leadership was uneven, funding insecure, and integration left to informal relationships. Practitioners often carried the emotional burden of this ambiguity—navigating ethical tension in the absence of institutional clarity.

To shift from discretionary practice to public function, community development must be formally recognised, consistently resourced, and structurally embedded. Only then can the work move from aspiration to infrastructure.

These insights lay the groundwork for a reframing of community development—not as peripheral, but as central to the relational governance of public housing.

8.3.8 From Marginality to Mandate

Community development across legacy housing authorities—and especially within Kāinga Ora—has been rhetorically affirmed yet structurally constrained. It remains shaped by managerialism, fragmented leadership, and insecure funding. In this context, progress often depends on practitioner adaptability and informal alliances rather than institutional design.

To move beyond this marginalisation, I propose reframing community development as foundational to *relational governance*—requiring a reorientation of how legitimacy, care, and accountability are understood and enacted within public systems. The next section outlines

three conceptual propositions—developed from empirical insights and theoretical literature—that provide the scaffolding for this reframing.

8.4 Propositions for Relational Governance: Reframing Community Development

The findings reveal a practice that is both indispensable and institutionally undervalued—relational, ethically complex, and structurally constrained. Informants described work grounded in trust, care, and participation, but persistently negotiated through ambiguity and shifting organisational expectations. Despite broad recognition of its contribution to wellbeing and cohesion, community development remained precarious—sustained through discretionary labour rather than embedded in system design.

This exposes a core tension: relational practice is essential to public housing outcomes yet peripheral to institutional architecture. Addressing this requires not just reframing practitioner roles, but reimagining the governance systems that shape them.

To respond, this section advances three conceptual propositions that reframe community development as foundational to relational governance:

1. The practitioner as relational infrastructure
2. The creation and holding of space
3. The reframing of care as duty

These propositions challenge the notion that care, trust, and participation are optional. Instead, they position such practices as *system conditions*—essential to equity, cultural legitimacy, and public value.

Relational governance is proposed not as a blueprint or statutory model, but as a conceptual shift: a reorientation of how public institutions understand legitimacy, care, and accountability. It moves beyond transactional and compliance-focused paradigms toward those grounded in trust, reciprocity, and collective responsibility.

Drawing on care ethics (Tronto, 2013; Held, 2006), Indigenous relational frameworks such as *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā* (Penny et al., 2024), and participatory governance theory (Cornwall, 2008; Gaventa, 2006), this thesis reframes relational work as a form of civic infrastructure. The trust, presence, and emotional labour described in the findings are not ancillary—they are foundational to the legitimacy and responsiveness of public housing systems. The remainder of this chapter unpacks each proposition, concluding with their synthesis in Section 8.5.7.

8.4.1 The Practitioner as Relational Infrastructure

A recurring theme across this study is the role of practitioners as relational infrastructure—those who bridge institutional gaps, sustain community trust, and hold space for care within fragmented systems. In the absence of structural mandate, they become the connective tissue linking policy, service delivery, and community need—sustaining relationships that systems often neglect.

This work is defined by practice, not title: a lived expression of collective responsibility grounded in *whakapapa*, *manaakitanga*, and cultural obligation. Practitioners enact care and accountability through presence, trust, and consistency—deliberate, culturally anchored responses to institutional gaps.

Yet these practices often clash with systems built for control, risk aversion, and performance metrics. As Hoggett et al. (2008) argue, practitioners operate in dilemmatic spaces—enacting relational ethics in bureaucracies that neither recognise nor support them. They mediate conflict, hold grief, and respond beyond their remit—often without mandate or systemic protection.

This labour is deeply meaningful, but emotionally costly. Translating policy into connection without institutional support generates emotional labour (Hochschild, 2012), empathic strain

(Hatfield et al., 1993), and burnout—particularly under shifting directives or inconsistent leadership.

Relational infrastructure is not a metaphor but a system function. Practitioners maintain continuity, enable participation, and build trust where systems falter. Yet this work remains largely invisible—absent from KPIs, job descriptions, and funding models.

Leaving relational work to discretion has consequences. Eroded trust, practitioner burnout, and service discontinuity are not incidental—they stem from treating care as optional. When legitimised through mandate, resourcing, and systemic recognition, this labour forms the foundation of a more humane public housing system.

Recognising practitioners as relational infrastructure shifts the focus from personal capacity to institutional responsibility. This work must be embedded and governed with care. Only then can public housing move from transactional delivery to participatory, care-centred governance.

If *relational infrastructure* refers to the systemic function, *creating and holding space* captures the everyday practices through which it is enacted. Without formal recognition, this infrastructure remains fragile. To understand how it operates in practice, the next section explores the creation and holding of space.

8.4.2 Creating and Holding Space

If practitioners are relational infrastructure, one of their core functions is creating and holding space—making room for trust, connection, and collective agency within bureaucratic environments that often suppress such conditions. Drawing on Massey's (2013) framing of space as socially produced, this section examines how practitioners intervene relationally through spatial practice.

Informants cultivated informal, context-specific spaces where trust and dialogue could emerge outside formal process. These were not incidental gestures but infrastructural acts of care, developed in response to organisational withdrawal and community precarity. Space-making involved not procedural inclusion but relational presence—being there when institutions were not.

Creating space meant carving out room for voices and practices otherwise excluded. Practitioners convened informal hui, brokered cross-cultural dialogue, and championed authentic, not symbolic, participation. These acts stretched roles, navigated ambiguity, and expanded what was organisationally possible.

Holding space required continuity, emotional labour, and follow-through. Practitioners remained present in silence, honoured commitments, and sustained presence even as institutions faltered.

These practices were grounded in Indigenous worldviews such as *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā*, where relational space is sacred—demanding humility, consistency, and accountability. Yet despite their centrality, such practices remained structurally unsupported—upheld by practitioner conviction rather than organisational design.

Reframing practitioners as custodians of space redirects focus from outputs to relational conditions—trust, safety, presence. It frames housing not merely as assets but as living social environments sustained by human connection. Practitioners are not peripheral—they are stewards of these relational ecosystems.

Space-making is not neutral. It is shaped—and often constrained—by institutional design, such as risk-averse policies, time-bound funding, or prescriptive community engagement frameworks. Without system support, the burden falls on individuals. The next section explores whether care itself can be structurally embedded, or whether it too remains reliant on discretion.

8.4.3 Reframing Care as Duty: From Discretionary Virtue to Systemic Responsibility

The third proposition—reframing care as duty—builds on this foundation, positioning care not as sentiment or soft work but as public infrastructure. Across the study, care emerged as central to tenant wellbeing, practitioner trust, and institutional legitimacy. Informants described acts like checking in, holding grief, or mediating conflict not as extras, but as core to their roles. For many, care was a cultural obligation—grounded in *whakawhanaungatanga*, *manaakitanga*, and sustained through responsiveness and accountability.

Yet despite its significance, care was structurally unsupported—carried without mandate or protection, disproportionately by Māori, Pasifika, and women practitioners. This mirrors Tronto (2013) and Sevenhuijsen (2003), who argue that care is morally expected but politically devalued—treated as peripheral to governance.

When individualised, care becomes fragile—relying on emotional endurance and rendered invisible by systems prioritising efficiency. This fragility reinforces inequity and shifts the burden of systemic failure onto those least resourced to bear it.

Reframing care as infrastructure demands systemic redesign: embedding relational values in roles, recognising emotional labour as core work, and holding leadership accountable for relational care. Without such shifts, care remains discretionary—enacted but unprotected.

This reframing is not about procedural compliance, but about institutional legitimacy grounded in care. It affirms care as the connective tissue of ethical public service—enabling trust, participation, and dignity to take root. When structurally supported, care becomes a stabilising force of inclusion and accountability.

Framing care as duty marks a normative transition—from personal virtue to institutional responsibility. For this to endure, it must be operationalised through roles, systems, and cultures that sustain relational work.

The next sections explore two conditions underpinning all three propositions: trust and participation. While practitioners form the infrastructure and space-making enacts it, trust is the systemic condition they hold. These are not procedural tools—they are relational achievements, built through presence, continuity, and care.

8.4.4 Trust as a Systemic Condition

If relational infrastructure describes the role of practitioners and space-making captures their everyday methods, then trust is the systemic condition they cultivate. It is the product of sustained presence, cultural fluency, and ethical commitment—especially within environments shaped by instability and fragmentation. Informants described trust as foundational to community development—not incidental, but intentionally built through continuity, presence, and accountability. Small acts such as checking in regularly, remembering names, or staying visible during conflict were not merely gestures of care but deliberate strategies for sustaining connection and credibility in contexts shaped by churn and historical harm.

Trust was often cultivated through informal, culturally grounded practices aligned with *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā*. Yet despite its centrality, it remained precarious. Abrupt programme changes, staff turnover, and top-down decisions could swiftly unravel relationships and undo months or years of relational investment.

Trust must therefore be understood not as a soft outcome but as a strategic product of relational infrastructure—one that enables participation, buffers harm, and sustains institutional legitimacy. Where supported through stable roles, cultural competency, and consistent leadership, trust allowed community development to take root. Where these

conditions were absent, participation risked becoming tokenistic, and practitioner efforts were easily undermined.

Gerhard and Keller's (2023) framework of institutional, interpersonal, and procedural trust further clarifies why trust cannot be relegated to discretionary or relational practice alone. Their sociospatial analysis illustrates how trust must be built across systems—not only between people, but within institutions and through governance practices. As this thesis demonstrates, when formal structures do not safeguard participatory space, trust must be rebuilt continuously by frontline actors. Yet without institutional commitment, this work is persistently at risk of being eroded by managerial priorities and risk-aversion logics.

The analysis positions trust as a strategic asset rather than a by-product—one that requires sustained investment, structural support, and institutional responsibility. To sustain it, organisations must move beyond rhetorical endorsement and embed trust into role design, leadership practice, and policy architecture. When cultivated systemically, trust ceases to be discretionary—it becomes embedded in the very scaffolding that enables housing and community development to function.

8.4.5 Participation as Power and Practice

Participation, the fifth element in this reframing, is not simply a democratic ideal—it is a practice of power, trust, and relational accountability. Informants described participation not as a technical task but as a culturally grounded practice—enacted through trust, presence, and the creation of safe, respectful spaces. Many drew on Indigenous and Pasifika frameworks such as *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā*, framing participation as an expression of mutual recognition, accountability, and care.

Yet participation remained structurally fragile. Informants recounted engagements where residents were invited only after decisions had already been made, or where institutional timelines undermined the trust needed for authentic involvement. Participation, they

emphasised, is easily compromised when treated as a compliance exercise rather than a relational commitment.

In practice, participation meant holding space for voice and agency—particularly in communities shaped by displacement, exclusion, and cultural marginalisation. It involved identifying informal leaders, building confidence, and adapting organisational processes to reflect local realities. Though slow, subtle, and emotionally demanding, this work laid the groundwork for collective agency and shared governance—when properly resourced, it laid the groundwork for collective agency and shared governance.

Recognising participation as political and emotional labour reframes it as a practice requiring early integration into project design, leadership backing, and cultural responsiveness. Without these conditions, participation risks reinforcing inequity. With them, public housing becomes a site of democratic practice—where voice is cultivated, not extracted.

It is also important to acknowledge a deeper tension running through community development practice: while participation, care, and trust are often described in affirming terms, they unfold within environments marked by conflict, cultural complexity, and contested values. Practitioners are not merely facilitators of engagement—they are mediators of power asymmetries and custodians of spaces where multiple, sometimes incompatible, truths—about place, history, or authority—coexist. To fully understand relational governance, we must attend to how community development holds space between communitarian cohesion and pluralistic inclusion.

8.4.6 Pluralism, Communitarianism, and Cultural Logics of Practice

Practitioners work within a web of normative tensions—shaped not only by institutional constraints but by the diverse, and at times conflicting, political and cultural logics of the communities they serve.

Practices of care, trust, and connection often reflected a communitarian ethos—centred on cohesion, shared values, and place-based belonging. This was evident in efforts to strengthen local relationships, support informal networks, and uphold cultural continuity. These practices resonated with Māori and Pacific worldviews, where relational space is sacred and wellbeing is collective. From this perspective, community development acts as social repair—restoring ties between people and place.

Yet practitioners also engaged deeply with pluralism. Many neighbourhoods were shaped by histories of displacement, institutional mistrust, and divergent priorities—demanding an ability to mediate not just consensus but difference. Participation meant more than inclusion; it required reckoning with historical injustice, acknowledging risk, and actively navigating power. Informants highlighted the emotional and political labour required to create space for disagreement, dissent, and multiple expressions of identity.

This hybridity—between communitarian belonging and pluralist contestation—helps explain why community development resists tidy classification. As Shaw (2008) notes, its value lies in holding tensions: between care and conflict, shared values and competing claims, institutional frames and lived realities. Practitioners did not resolve these tensions but stayed present within them—exercising cultural, political, and emotional intelligence to sustain democratic engagement, even as institutions faltered.

Recognising this hybridity is critical. Relational governance is not about erasing difference or enforcing cohesion. Nor is participation neutral. Instead, it requires institutions to hold complexity—centred on trust, care, and cultural legitimacy rather than control.

Far from weakening the case for community development, these tensions deepen its relevance. They affirm its political relevance and its potential to reimagine public housing as a space where diverse voices, values, and worldviews can be ethically held.

Together, these insights advance relational governance as a new institutional paradigm—one that moves beyond the logic of cohesion to actively accommodate pluralism, disagreement, and contested values. Diversity is not just acknowledged; it is structurally enabled.

8.4.7 Relational Governance

Relational governance is offered here as a paradigmatic alternative—one that reframes how institutions conceive of trust, care, legitimacy, and accountability. Rather than treating relational work as soft or supplementary, this model positions it as foundational to the ethical and democratic function of public housing. It departs from transactional, compliance-oriented systems and instead centres governance on trust, reciprocity, cultural legitimacy, and shared responsibility.

This chapter has traced how relational work—when enacted through practice, space, care, trust, and participation—forms the basis of institutional credibility and social wellbeing. Yet these functions remain structurally peripheral. Relational governance reframes them not as discretionary or interpersonal, but as system conditions: essential to democratic practice, cultural legitimacy, and ethical service. This demands a shift in institutional imagination: from managing risk and delivering outputs, to cultivating trust, care, and pluralistic inclusion.

While relational governance aligns with the normative ethos of the New Public Service (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000, 2016), it goes further. It moves beyond service orientation to embed Indigenous relational ontologies and *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* responsibilities into governance design. In doing so, it contests the assumptions of Western public administration—treating relationality not as a personal trait but as a structural and constitutional principle. Relational governance, then, is not simply a shift in practice—it is a reimagining of institutional purpose. In public housing and beyond, it offers a framework for holding complexity, advancing equity, and restoring the legitimacy of public institutions.

8.5 Beyond the Frontline: Reimagining Public Housing as a Relational System

Participation—like care and trust—was not procedural or technical, but relational, reciprocal, and culturally grounded in *whakawhanaungatanga*, *teu le vā*, and collective accountability. It relied on emotional safety and cultural resonance rather than formal invitations. Yet without institutional mandate or support, participation remained fragile—dependent on practitioner discretion rather than system design.

In this thesis, governance is treated as a concrete analytical construct—not a generic ideal or proxy for values. Governance determines how institutions distribute power, assign responsibility, and shape relationships between state and community. It defines legitimacy, prioritises some voices over others, and institutionalises particular forms of labour. It is distinct from leadership or delivery; it is the deeper architecture that enables or obstructs both.

These insights call for institutional transformation—one that challenges transactional logics and affirms care, trust, and cultural legitimacy as core to public service. This model proposes a paradigmatic shift: a governance practice rooted in presence, reciprocity, and recognition, where trust is embedded in institutional life. While aligned with the New Public Service (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000, 2016), it moves further by embedding Indigenous ontologies and *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* obligations into system design. Relationality is reframed not as interpersonal nicety but as a structural principle.

In public housing, this distinction is critical. The findings chapters show that relational practices—vital to tenant wellbeing—remain structurally marginal. The gap between rhetorical commitment and operational support signals a governance failure to embed relational priorities—more than a policy shortfall. Relational practice must be seen not only as a frontline activity but as a diagnostic lens—revealing what current arrangements prioritise, ignore, or exclude.

This is not a nostalgic return to past values, but a forward-facing reimagining of governance grounded in equity, accountability, and care. Reframing connection, culture, and trust as institutional foundations is not symbolic—it is strategic: a move to rebuild legitimacy and enable long-term social repair. It centres the treatment of people—residents and practitioners—as fundamental to system function.

Framing care as a systemic responsibility, rather than an individual ethical burden, is essential to transforming public housing practice. Care must be systemically held—resourced, protected, and embedded through leadership, cultural capability, and accountability structures that reward connection. Public housing must be reimagined not as delivery, but as an ecology of relational responsibility—where care is a condition of equity and justice.

Community development is not a discretionary add-on—it is system-sustaining. Through trust-building, cultural presence, emotional labour, and space-holding, practitioners have enacted a model of public service rooted in care. Yet this labour remains structurally unsupported—shaped by cultural worldviews but largely absent from organisational design and leadership priorities.

Reframing care as duty requires shifting from individual responsibility to institutional accountability. It demands structural alignment with the values public housing professes to uphold: equity, dignity, cultural legitimacy, and trust. Practitioners—particularly those grounded in Indigenous and Pasifika knowledge—have already shown the way forward. The challenge now lies with the system.

Relational work is not optional—it is the connective tissue that holds public housing together. If housing is to be more than shelter—if it is to support belonging and wellbeing—then care must move from the margins to the centre of design, governance, and delivery. This is not a distant aspiration but a necessary response to existing systemic conditions. Relational

practice must be recognised not only as a frontline activity but as a diagnostic lens, revealing what current arrangements prioritise, ignore, or exclude. Updating the *Public and Community Housing Management Act 1992* (as at 1 July 2023) to recognise *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* would signal a substantive realignment of social housing with contemporary understandings of Crown partnership and wellbeing.

This reframing calls for a fundamental shift in how public housing is conceived, delivered, and evaluated in Aotearoa New Zealand. It moves beyond transactional metrics to centre how we relate, not just what we provide. In doing so, it positions connection, culture, and care as strategic imperatives—elevating community development from an optional function to essential infrastructure. Public housing, in this vision, becomes not just shelter but an infrastructure of belonging, where care is structurally held rather than personally carried.

To clarify the institutional implications of this shift, Table 14 contrasts the dominant public housing paradigm with a relational governance model. Drawing on the empirical and conceptual insights of this chapter, it outlines practical transformations across key domains of practice and design.

Table 14 *Reframing Public Housing through Relational Governance* (Created by the author)

Domain	Current Paradigm	Relational Governance Shift
Care	Discretionary, emotionally burdensome, individually carried	Embedded as institutional infrastructure: resourced, recognised, and protected
Trust and Continuity	Fragile, dependent on individuals, undermined by churn	Treated as a strategic asset: enabled by stable roles, cultural fluency, and sustained presence
Participation	Procedural, late-stage, tokenistic	Relational and culturally grounded: embedded early, practiced with reciprocity, built over time
Relational Role Design	Invisible labour, unclear mandates, emotional strain	Explicitly defined, structurally supported, and valued as core organisational work
Leadership and Culture	Fragmented, compliance-driven, risk-averse	Values-based, relationally literate, accountable for enabling care and connection
Funding and Resourcing	Project-based, short-term, output-focused	Long-term, flexible, designed to support relational timeframes and place-based practice
System Alignment	Siloed functions, unclear mandates, policy drift	Integrated across strategy, operations, tenant support, and community outcomes

8.6 Strengths and Limitations

This study contributes a nuanced analysis of how community development is practised, constrained, and sustained within Aotearoa New Zealand's public housing system. Its key strength lies in exposing the disjuncture between policy aspiration and institutional reality. While frameworks such as the Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities Act 2019 articulate ambitions for thriving communities and holistic wellbeing, implementation remains uneven—hindered by structural ambiguity, performance-driven frameworks, and underinvestment in relational work. By foregrounding practitioner experience, this research illuminates how systemic tensions manifest in everyday practice and highlights what might be done differently.

A further strength is its contextual and temporal depth. Spanning 2000–2023, the study captures shifting mandates, leadership transitions, and cultural change within public housing institutions. The recommendations offered are not theoretical ideals, but grounded in practitioner insight and organisational reality.

However, the study has limitations. Most notably, it centres practitioner and housing professional perspectives without incorporating direct resident voices. While practitioners are deeply embedded in communities, their accounts cannot substitute for residents' lived experience. Future research should centre tenant narratives to deepen understanding of how community development impacts wellbeing, belonging, and agency.

Second, the study focuses on large public housing providers—particularly Kāinga Ora—and may not fully reflect the realities of community housing providers, iwi-led models, or public–private partnerships. Expanding the scope would enable a more comprehensive understanding of how different institutional forms shape community development potential.

Finally, like all qualitative research, the study carries risks of selection and positionality bias. These were mitigated through reflexivity, methodological transparency, and triangulation,

though they cannot be entirely eliminated. The findings should therefore be understood as situated rather than universal.

Despite these limitations, this research offers a timely and practice-relevant contribution. It makes visible the relational practice that sustains community development—work often hidden, undervalued, or marginalised within policy and institutional discourse.

8.7 Contribution to Theory and Practice

This study offers a practice-informed contribution to the field of community development in public housing. It brings together theories of cultural relationality, institutional navigation, power and participation, and ethics of care and emotional labour to explore how practitioners support trust, belonging, and agency within complex and often fragmented institutional settings.

By drawing on Indigenous and Pasifika relational frameworks such as *whakawhanaungatanga* and *teu le vā*, and engaging with theorists such as Massey, Gaventa, and Mee, the thesis contributes to ongoing conversations about how space, power, and care are continually negotiated within place-based community development. It highlights how public housing is not only materially constructed but also relationally shaped through small, consistent acts that build connection and support wellbeing.

Rather than proposing a new model, the research develops three conceptual propositions—*Creating and Holding Space*, The *Practitioner as Relational Infrastructure*, and *Reframing Care as Duty*—to make sense of how practitioners navigate everyday tensions between care, control, and compliance. These propositions reflect practitioners' lived experience and are intended to support critical reflection on how relational work is understood and resourced within public systems.

Practically, the research highlights the cultural, emotional, and strategic labour involved in community development—much of which remains undervalued or invisible in transactional, performance-oriented systems. It documents the organisational conditions that help or hinder this work, including leadership, role design, culture, and resourcing. It also draws attention to how relational expectations are unevenly distributed, and whose cultural and emotional labour is disproportionately relied upon but insufficiently recognised.

While situated in Aotearoa New Zealand, the findings may also speak to international contexts grappling with how to embed care, cultural legitimacy, and trust within public systems, its insights may be relevant to wider public sector efforts to recognise and sustain relational practice. Rather than offering prescriptive solutions, the thesis provides grounded analysis of how community development is enacted, constrained, and sustained—and what this suggests for future policy and institutional design.

8.7.1 Reframing Public Housing through Relational Governance

Community development in Aotearoa New Zealand's public housing system is shaped less by formal policy or structural mandate than by the discretionary, relational work of frontline practitioners. Across diverse sites and organisational contexts, informants described how they created and held space for connection, enacted care as both an ethical and culturally grounded practice, and navigated the tensions between institutional expectations and community realities. These practices unfolded in environments often marked by staff turnover, fragmented systems, and limited resourcing—yet they played a significant role in fostering trust, enabling participation, and supporting tenant wellbeing.

The findings do more than critique existing arrangements—they begin to outline the contours of an alternative. They show that relationships are not secondary, but play a vital role in sustaining institutional responsiveness and cohesion—especially where systems are stretched or fragmented. Practitioners sustained trust, care, and cultural presence—

dimensions of practice that were central to tenant experience, even when they remained peripheral to organisational priorities. These patterns highlight the practical relevance—and urgent necessity—of a relational governance approach.

Relational governance reframes care as a shared institutional responsibility, to be embedded through policy, resourcing, and role design. It treats trust and cultural continuity not as discretionary attributes of individual staff, but as core assets of public systems. It positions practitioners as relational infrastructure—those who bear the weight of institutional ambiguity and community expectation, often without mandate, protection, or systemic backing. Most importantly, it foregrounds the relational and cultural foundations of participation, suggesting that legitimacy in public housing depends not only on what systems deliver, but on how they relate to communities.

Relational governance is not a theoretical ambition—it emerges from practice. Across multiple contexts, outcomes improved not through formal programmes or technical interventions, but through quiet, trust-based engagement led by committed practitioners. These patterns show that relational governance already exists. Its continued marginalisation is not just inefficient—it is ethically and strategically unsustainable.

8.7.2 Policy and Practice Implications

To operationalise relational governance, system-level change is required across multiple domains: from compliance-driven delivery to a system grounded in connection and accountability. In this vision:

- *Relational infrastructure*—the everyday work of building trust and holding space—is no longer invisible, incidental, or contingent.
- *Relational governance* becomes the system's organising logic—prioritising cultural legitimacy, emotional labour, and trust-building as foundational rather than peripheral.

8.7.2.1 Seven Imperatives for System Change

The following imperatives offer a values-based framework for transformative practice. Each outlines a key shift needed to embed equity, relationality, and long-term impact within complex public systems.

8.7.2.1.1 Reposition Care as Institutional Work

Informants routinely described acts of care—grieving with tenants, mediating conflict, offering kai or transport—as central to their roles, yet structurally invisible. Repositioning care as core public work requires embedding it in job descriptions, supervision frameworks, and performance systems. It calls for tenancy models that recognise relational support as legitimate service, and organisational cultures that invest in—rather than depend on—relational practice.

8.7.2.1.2 Treat Trust and Continuity as Systemic Conditions

Trust was described as hard-won and easily lost, especially in contexts of staff churn and shifting policy. Where sustained presence and cultural familiarity were enabled, trust became a catalyst for wellbeing, participation, and co mmunity cohesion. This finding supports investment in long-term, place-based roles, cultural competency, and continuity as design imperatives—not discretionary additions.

8.7.2.1.3 Rebuild Participation through Relationality and Cultural Legitimacy

While formal engagement processes were often tokenistic, practitioners enabled more meaningful participation through informal, culturally resonant methods—hui, kai catch-ups, and resident-led street makeovers. Embedding this approach requires resourcing trusted intermediaries, supporting relational readiness, and privileging shared decision-making over time-limited input.

8.7.2.1.4 Hold Leadership and Management Accountable for Relational and Cultural Outcomes

Relational work flourishes when leadership understands, values, and protects it. In its absence, practitioners face burnout, role ambiguity, and institutional dissonance. Embedding relational and cultural accountability into leadership expectations is essential for institutional coherence and integrity.

Leadership metrics should include:

- Longitudinal indicators of team trust, psychological safety, and cultural partnerships.
- Staff wellbeing, emotional sustainability, and reflective leadership practices as core criteria in performance appraisals.
- *Te Tiriti*-based accountability mechanisms, including partnerships with iwi, hapū, and Pasifika leaders embedded in governance and strategic decision-making.
- Regular assessments of relational culture within teams and across agencies, supported by feedback loops for staff and communities.

8.7.2.1.5 Redesign Roles to Reflect Relational Realities

Practitioners frequently “stretched their role” to meet community needs beyond what was formally sanctioned. This was especially true for Māori and Pasifika staff, whose emotional and cultural labour was often expected yet under-recognised. Sustainable practice requires role design that embeds relational capability, reduces caseload pressure, and provides reflective supervision.

Tenancy frameworks should:

- Centre wellbeing, continuity, and cultural safety in performance measures—not just throughput or compliance.
- Integrate relational check-ins alongside compliance checklists, guided by principles such as *awhitanga*, reciprocity, and *whanaungatanga*.

- Embed access to cultural advisors and trusted connectors as core supports, not external referrals.
- Make reflective supervision and emotional debriefing standard practice for frontline staff.

8.7.2.1.6 Shift from Crisis Response to Preventative, Place-Based Systems

Community development must be repositioned as a core organisational function rather than a discretionary add-on. Practitioners described navigating fragmented, reactive systems that often undermined prevention. Rebuilding a preventative, place-based infrastructure requires integration, long-term funding, and collaborative ecosystems across agencies, iwi, and communities.

Structural changes can:

- Reduce caseloads and resource time for proactive, informal engagement, recognising it as essential to community trust and prevention.
- Anchor roles in place and presence, not just contractual outputs or site-based compliance.
- Embed relational principles **(**e.g., *whakawhanaungatanga***,** *teu le vā***)** in job descriptions, induction, and accountability frameworks.
- Establish interagency protocols that support coordinated, locally grounded responses to community-identified priorities.

8.7.2.1.7 Fund Relational Work as Essential Infrastructure

Relational practice remains underfunded and insecure—reliant on practitioner goodwill rather than embedded design. Despite being low-cost and high-impact, it is often the first to be cut. Practitioners called for stable, flexible funding tied to place, culture, and wellbeing—not project timelines.

Funding frameworks need to:

- Establish dedicated, ring-fenced budgets for trust-building, cultural hosting, and community-led celebration—treating these as core components of engagement and public legitimacy, not peripheral events.
- Embed evaluation frameworks that track connection, inclusion, belonging, and cultural safety—shifting beyond output-based metrics to reflect the social infrastructure outcomes of community development.
- Secure protected funding for place-based roles, ensuring relational continuity beyond capital project cycles. Uncoupling these roles from short-term timelines enables stability, responsiveness, and sustained presence.

Together, these shifts mark a necessary reorientation: from short-term outputs to long-term relationships; from discretionary labour to institutional mandate; from fragmented roles to a coherent system of care. The everyday practices described by practitioners—honouring culture, showing up, listening deeply—are not marginal. They are the connective tissue through which public housing becomes a public good.

To realise this, relational practice must be embedded through operational mechanisms that sustain it over time. *Relational governance* must move from aspiration to institutional commitment—evident in how public agencies measure, fund, and uphold their responsibilities.

Table 15 illustrates the system conditions required to shift from discretionary, practitioner-led community development to a structurally embedded, relationship-centred public housing system. It outlines how long-term investment in culturally grounded roles, system alignment, and relational practice can produce short- and long-term outcomes—recasting community development as essential public infrastructure that upholds care, trust, equity, and cultural legitimacy.

Table 15 *Logic Model for embedding Relational Governance in Public Housing* (Created by the author)

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes (Short-Term to Intermediate)	Impacts (Long-Term / Systemic)
Dedicated, long-term funding for place-based relational roles (5–10 years); Institutional mandate for relational governance Partnership with iwi, hapū, Pasifika organisations, and tenant groups Cultural capability frameworks (e.g., *whakawhanaungatanga*, *teu le vā*), designed in partnership with Māori and Pasifika communities; System alignment tools (e.g. relational KPIs, policy levers, supervision structures)	Employ and retain skilled, culturally grounded practitioners; Establish reflective supervision and values-based leadership development Embed care, trust, and wellbeing into tenancy frameworks; Mandate co-design processes in all redevelopment and social housing projects, with resourcing for sustained engagement; Fund culturally safe, informal engagement (hui, kai, drop-ins, story circles) Create tenant–iwi–community governance structures at local and regional levels- Align leadership KPIs, funding, and performance with relational indicators	Community development roles are formally embedded in housing system Trusted relational presence in neighbourhoods Culturally grounded engagement spaces sustained Collaborative project design and shared decision-making System-wide guidance for relational practice implementation Cross-agency partnerships and practice coherence	Increased tenant trust in housing providers Reduced conflict, anti-social behaviour, and evictions Improved cultural safety and emotional wellbeing for tenants Strengthened place-based networks and informal leadership Enhanced practitioner retention, morale, and safety Shift from short-term consultation to ongoing, community-anchored relational governance	Housing system reoriented around trust, care, and cultural legitimacy Community development is recognised as strategic infrastructure Relational work resourced, protected, and measured Sustained intergenerational wellbeing and social cohesion Public housing becomes a platform for equity, dignity, and democratic accountability Māori and Pasifika worldviews are structurally embedded in housing governance

8.8 Conclusion: More than a Roof

This chapter has drawn together the thesis's core findings to examine how community development is positioned, enacted, and constrained within Aotearoa New Zealand's public housing system. Across legacy authorities and Kāinga Ora, practitioners occupied ethically charged, structurally ambiguous roles—working in the spaces between policy aspiration and operational reality. Their work was not supplementary. It was essential to sustaining community trust, connection, and wellbeing in environments shaped by fragmentation, instability, and historical harm.

At the heart of this analysis is a reframing of community development as a practice of care and responsibility—grounded in proximity, presence, and culturally rooted ethics. Practitioners served as boundary-spanners and adaptive actors, translating between institutional systems and community needs, while anchoring themselves in the everyday relational fabric of place. Yet this labour remained largely unrecognised within dominant performance regimes, leaving care to be carried informally and often unsustainably by individuals.

Rather than a clearly defined organisational function, community development emerged as a fragile but vital practice—misaligned with managerial structures and vulnerable to institutional drift. Enabling this work requires more than rhetorical commitment. It calls for structural and cultural shifts: embedding relational principles in leadership and policy, redefining accountability, and recognising community development as a strategic site of public value.

This research makes a simple but profound claim: relationships matter. They build trust, affirm dignity, and create the conditions for voice and belonging in communities shaped by structural disadvantage. Yet relationships cannot be sustained by rhetoric alone. They require time, presence, accountability, and systemic support. Without that support, care

remains invisible, participation becomes tokenistic, and wellbeing remains an aspiration rather than a lived reality.

The thesis repositions community development as a key mechanism through which the public service can honour its social and *Tiriti* obligations. It affirms the constitutional and strategic significance of relational practice and calls for a shift in how housing systems define value—not only in terms of what is delivered, but in how relationships are built and sustained. It proposes a public service not as a machine that delivers to communities, but as a partner that walks alongside them—listening, relating, and co-creating conditions for collective wellbeing.

Public housing has always been about more than shelter. It is about place, recognition, and belonging.

Community development practitioners help make housing more than a roof. They hold space for care, connection, and possibility.

But they cannot do it alone.

A future where public housing enables not only survival but flourishing depends on building systems that value relationships as much as results. That future depends not only on what we build, but on how we care, connect, and how we govern in the spaces between.

It means investing in more than homes.

It means investing in trust.

In time.

In people.

In more than a roof.

Chapter Nine: Postscript

Since this thesis was completed, Aotearoa New Zealand's public housing sector has undergone significant legal, structural, and political change. These changes have amplified the central tensions explored in earlier chapters, particularly the precarity of community development in systems increasingly oriented toward efficiency, compliance, and fiscal restraint. This postscript synthesises recent developments across public housing authorities and examines their implications for community development as a public function.

9.1 Wellington City Council (WCC) and Christchurch City Council (CCC)

The exclusion of local authorities from the Income Related Rent Subsidy (IRRS) made public housing provision financially unsustainable, contributing to unaffordable rents for tenants. In response, WCC and CCC transferred their housing portfolios to independent Community Housing Providers (CHPs) in 2023 and 2016, respectively.

The new organisations, Te Toi Mahana (Wellington) and Ōtautahi Housing Trust (Christchurch), have adopted distinct approaches to tenancy and community engagement. However, neither has retained the community development capacity described by informants in this study. Ōtautahi Housing Trust no longer employs dedicated community development staff, and Te Toi Mahana has significantly reduced its function. WCC's Community Action Programme was discontinued in 2018. These developments illustrate the vulnerability of community development roles when institutional mandates and resourcing are withdrawn.

9.2 Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities

Kāinga Ora has also experienced major organisational changes with far-reaching implications for community development. These changes have unfolded across five interlinked domains: legal mandate, policy development, political expectations, structural reorganisation, and frontline practice.

9.2.1 Legal Mandate and Policy Development

In 2023, the legal team in Kāinga Ora reviewed its community development function, confirming its alignment with the agency's statutory objectives under the Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities Act 2019. This legal endorsement enabled the development of a Community Development Policy, approved in March 2024, setting out how community development contributes to sustainable, inclusive, and thriving communities, identifying outcomes such as autonomy, cohesion, connection, ownership, participation, and quiet enjoyment.

While this policy milestone marked a positive development in formalising the role of community development within Kāinga Ora, its implementation is dependent on coherent strategy, operational integration, and sustained investment.

9.2.2 Political Expectations and Ministerial Direction

Following the election of a National-led coalition government in October 2023, Kāinga Ora has faced heightened scrutiny and shifting political expectations. While the Minister of Housing's Letter of Expectation (March 2024) emphasised stronger community engagement, and responsiveness to neighbourhood concerns, along with operational efficiency community development is valued insofar as it can mitigate conflict, increase transparency, and support efficient delivery—rather than as a democratic or relational practice in its own right.

9.2.3 Organisational Restructuring and Workforce Reductions

Between July 2024 and May 2025, Kāinga Ora announced three rounds of job cuts totalling over 1,170 roles, including:

- July 2024: Initial restructure saw 232 roles disestablished, framed as part of a shift toward streamlined operations and steady-state delivery.

- September 2024: A further 321 positions were cut, affecting urban planning, design, construction, innovation, and investment functions. This round included the disestablishment of the National Services Team, including senior community development and engagement roles.
- May 2025: An additional 620 roles were confirmed for disestablishment, 194 of which were already vacant. This round focused primarily on back-office and corporate functions but reinforced the agency's broader move toward cost containment and operational efficiency.

While community development roles in place-based teams and large-scale projects (LSPs) were not officially disestablished, future funding remains uncertain given the halt on new Kāinga Ora housing developments and the redirection of build funding to Community Housing Providers (CHPs).

Since the completion of this research, the Kāinga Ora Board has been replaced amid heightened political scrutiny. While the change may symbolise a recalibration of governance priorities, research findings caution against overestimating the impact of leadership turnover in the absence of structural reform. Practitioner accounts across Chapters Five to Seven reveal that relational work—care, trust-building, and community presence—remains undervalued within dominant institutional logics. Without shifts in culture, metrics, and operational mandates, governance changes risk being more cosmetic than transformative. Embedding care as a systemic responsibility requires more than new appointments; it demands institutional redesign that honours the relational, cultural, and ethical labour that sustains public housing as a social good.

9.2.4 Policy-practice Disconnect and the Limits of Endorsement

The co-existence of a formal Community Development Policy with significant workforce contraction exposes the limits of policy endorsement in the absence of structural support.

The disbanding of central advisory roles, rising eviction rates, and emphasis on corrective tenancy management reflect a shift toward compliance and risk containment.

As this research has shown, rhetorical support for community development is insufficient without institutional scaffolding. Relational work cannot be sustained by practitioner goodwill alone. The long-term viability of Kāinga Ora policy commitments will depend on whether community development is embedded as a core, resourced, and protected function.

9.3 Looking Forward

These developments represent a critical juncture for public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand. The financial pressures that led to the transfer of WCC and CCC portfolios, and the strategic realignment of Kāinga Ora, have reduced institutional capacity for community development. While policies and legal recognition provide a normative framework, their effectiveness hinges on implementation.

Community Housing Aotearoa, the peak body representing CHPs, continues to advocate for resident involvement, place-based approaches, and sector capacity building. Strategic initiatives such as their partnership with Westpac and the development of workforce tools signal ongoing efforts to embed community development within the CHP sector. However, these efforts are not currently matched by sustained government investment, policy alignment, and system-level support.

Ongoing research is essential to track the effects of these transitions and ensure that the voices and relationships central to public housing are not lost in pursuit of institutional efficiency.

References

Abbott, M. W., Brooker, R., & Reath, J. (2019). Managing the hope and worry of housing renewal: Supporting well-being in the emerging community. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia, 30(3),* 344–349. https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.205

Aber, M. S., & Nieto, M. (2000). Suggestions for the investigation of psychological wellness in the neighborhood context: Toward a pluralistic neighborhood theory. In D. Cicchetti, J. Rappaport, I. Sandler, & R. P. Weissberg (Eds.), *The promotion of wellness in children and adolescents* (pp. 185–219). Springer.

Adams, D., & Hess, M. (2001). Community in public policy: Fad or foundation? *Australian Journal of Public Administration, 60(2),* 13–23. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.00205

Adamson, D. (2010a). The impact of devolution: Area-based regeneration policies in the UK. Retrieved from https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1799338/the-impact-of-devolution/2530982/

Adamson, D. (2010b). Community empowerment: Identifying the barriers to "purposeful" citizen participation. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, *30*(3/4), 114–126. https://doi.org/10.1108/01443331011033319

Aimers, J., & Walker, P. (2013). Community development: Insights for practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. In L. M. Chile (Ed.), *Community development practice in New Zealand: Exploring good practice* (pp. 14-15). Dunmore Publishing.

Aimers, J., & Walker, P. (2016). Can community development practice survive neoliberalism in Aotearoa New Zealand? *Community Development Journal, 51(3),* 332–349. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsv042

Aitken, D. (2012). Trust and participation in urban regeneration. *People, Place and Policy, 6*(3), pp. 133-147. https://doi.org/10.3351/ppp.0006.0003.0003

Alinsky, S. D. (1971). *Rules for radicals: A pragmatic primer for realistic radicals*. Chicago: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

Anae, M. (2010). Teu le vā: Toward a native anthropology. *Pacific Studies, 33*, 19–36.

Andrews, R., & Turner, D. (2006). Modelling the impact of community engagement on local democracy. *Local Economy, 21*(4), 378-390. https://doi.org/10.1080/02690940600951956

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of planners*, *35*(4), 216-224. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225

Arthurson, K. (2001). *Social exclusion as a policy framework for the regeneration of Australian public housing estates* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Adelaide]. Department of Geographical and Environmental Studies.

Arthurson, K. (2003). Neighbourhood regeneration: Facilitating community involvement. *Urban Policy and Research, 21(4),* 357–371. https://doi.org/10.1080/0811114032000147413

Arthurson, K. (2013). Mixed tenure communities and the effects on neighbourhood reputation and stigma: Residents' experiences from within. *Cities*, *35*, 432-438. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2013.03.007

Arthurson, K., Levin, I., & Ziersch, A. (2016). Public housing renewal and social determinants of health. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, 44(4),* 233–246. https://doi.org/10.1080/10852352.2016.1197715

Atkinson, R., & Cope, S. (1997). Community participation and urban regeneration in Britain. In P. Hoggett (Ed.), *Contested communities* (pp. 201–221). Policy Press.

Atkinson, S. (2013). Beyond components of wellbeing: The effects of relational and situated assemblage. *Topoi, 32*(2), 137–144. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-013-9164-0

Atkinson, S., Bagnall, A.-M., Corcoran, R., South, J., & Curtis, S. (2020). Being well together: Individual subjective and community wellbeing. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 21*(5), 1903–1921. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-019-00146-2

Ayed, N., & Clarke, A. (2024). The importance of stable housing in social capital development and utilisation: how homelessness undermines reciprocity, recognition, and autonomy. *Housing Studies*, 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2024.2392696

Baba, C., Kearns, A., McIntosh, E., Tannahill, C., & Lewsey, J. (2017). Is empowerment a route to improving mental health and wellbeing in an urban regeneration (UR) context? *Urban Studies, 54*(7), 1619–1637. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098016632435

Baldock, P. (1977). Why community action? The historical origins of the radical trend in British community work. *Community Development Journal, 12*(2), 68–74. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/12.2.68-a

Ball, M., & Thornley, A. (2015). *Planning for regeneration: Making better decisions*. Routledge.

Banks, S. (2003). Conflicts of culture and accountability: Managing ethical dilemmas and problems in community practice. In S. Banks, H. L. Butcher, & P. Henderson (Eds.),

Managing community practice: Principles, policies and programmes (pp. 103–120). Policy Press.

Banks, S. (2010). Integrity in professional life: Issues of conduct, commitment and capacity. *The British Journal of Social Work, 40*(7), 2168–2184. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcp152

Banks, S. (2011). Re-gilding the ghetto: Community work and community development in 21st-century Britain. In *Radical social work today* (pp. 165-186). Policy Press.

Banks, S. (2019). Ethics, equity and community development: Mapping the terrain. In S. Banks (Ed.), *Ethics, equity and community development* (pp. 3–36). Policy Press. https://doi.org/10.46692/9781447345114.002

Banks, S., Butcher, H., Henderson, P., Robertson, J., Hills, J., & Robertson, J. (2003). ‘Management for community practice: 'An idea whose time has come''. In S. Banks, H. L. Butcher, & P. Henderson (Eds.), *Managing community practice: Principles, policies and programmes*, (pp. 1-5). Policy Press. https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781861343567.003.0001

Banks, S., & Orton, A. (2007). ‘The grit in the oyster’: Community development workers in a modernizing local authority. *Community Development Journal*, *42*(1), 97–113. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsi074

Banks, S., Shevellar, L., & Narayanan, P. (2023). Ethical issues in community development: setting the scene. *Community Development Journal, 58*(1), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsac043

Banks, S., Cai, T., De Jonge, E., Shears, J., Shum, M., Sobočan, A. M., ... & Weinberg, M. (2020). Practising ethically during COVID-19: Social work challenges and responses. *International social work, 63*(5), 569-583. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872820949614

Banwell, K., & Kingham, S. (2023). Living well in your local neighbourhood: The value of bumping and gathering places. *Wellbeing, Space and Society, 4*, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wss.2022.100124

Barker, A. (2019). *Improving well-being through better housing policy in New Zealand* (OECD Economics Department Working Papers, No. 1565). OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/content/paper/b82d856b-en

Barnes, M. (2012). Care in everyday life: An ethic of care in practice. Policy Press.

Barnes, M., Newman, J., Knops, A., & Sullivan, H. (2003). Constituting ‘the public’ in public participation. *Public Administration, 81*(2), 379–399. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9299.00352

Barnes, M., Newman, J., & Sullivan, H. (2007). *Power, participation and political renewal: Case studies in public participation*. Policy Press.

Barrie, K., Hallett, B., Hendry, A., Andrew, M., & Murdoch, H. (2019). Co-creating wellbeing and community connections: Understanding what matters to older housing residents. *International Journal of Integrated Care, 19*(S1), 246. https://doi.org/10.5334/ijic.s3246

Bauman, Z. (2001). *Community: Seeking safety in an insecure world*. Wiley.

Beck, D., & Purcell, R. (2015). Everyday experience and community development practice. *Radical Community Work Journal, 1*(1), 5–15. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315528618-13

Beierle, T. C. (2002). The quality of stakeholder-based decisions. *Risk Analysis: An International Journal, 22*(4), 739–749. https://doi.org/10.1111/0272-4332.00065

Bell, C., & Newby, H. (2021). *Community studies: An introduction to the sociology of the local community* (Original work published 1971). Routledge.

Beller, J., & Wagner, A. (2018). Disentangling loneliness: differential effects of subjective loneliness, network quality, network size, and living alone on physical, mental, and cognitive health. *Journal of Aging and Health, 30*(4), 521-539. https://doi.org/10.1177/0898264316685843

Beresford, P., & Hoban, M. (2005). *Participation in anti-poverty and regeneration work and research: Overcoming barriers and creating opportunities*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Penguin.

Bevir, M. (2010). *Democratic governance*. Princeton University Press.

Bhattacharyya, J. (2004). Theorizing community development. *Community Development, 34*(2), 5–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330409490110

Blaxter, L., Farnell, R., & Watts, J. (2003). Difference, ambiguity and the potential for learning: Local communities working in partnership with local government. *Community Development Journal, 38*(2), 130–139. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/38.2.130

Bliss, N., Lambert, B., Halfacre, C., Bell, T., & Mullins, D. (2015). *An investment not a cost: The business benefits of tenant involvement*. Tenants Leading Change. London: DCLG.

Blunkett, D. (2001, May 18). *Renewing democracy and civil society*. Lecture presented to CIVITAS, London, UK.

Bond, L., Kearns, A., Mason, P., Tannahill, C., Egan, M., & Whitely, E. (2012). Exploring the relationships between housing, neighbourhoods and mental wellbeing for residents of deprived areas. *BMC Public Health, 12*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-12-48

Boulton, A. F., Gifford, H. H., & Potaka-Osborne, M. (2009). Realising *whānau* ora through community action: the role of Māori community health workers. *Education for Health*, *22*(2), 188.

Boulton, A., & Brannelly, T. (2015). Care ethics and indigenous values: political, tribal and personal. In *Ethics of Care* (pp. 69-82). Policy Press.

Boulton, A., Tamehana, J., & Brannelly, T. (2013). *Whānau*-centred health and social service delivery in New Zealand: The challenges to, and opportunities for, innovation. *Mai Journal*, *2*(1), 18-32. https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180111007001

Boulton, A., Allport, T., Kaiwai, H., Harker, R., & Potaka Osborne, G. (2022). Māori perceptions of 'home': Māori housing needs, wellbeing and policy. *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online, 17*(1), 44-55. https://doi.org/10.1080/1177083x.2021.1920984

Bourdieu, P. (2018). The forms of capital. In M. Granovetter & R. Swedberg (Eds.), *The sociology of economic life* (3rd ed., pp. 83–95). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429494338-6

Bovaird, T., & Loeffler, E. (2012). From engagement to co-production: The contribution of users and communities to outcomes and public value. *Voluntas: international journal of voluntary and nonprofit organizations, 23*, 1119-1138. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-012-9309-6

Box, R. C. (2015). The public service practitioner as agent of social change. In R. C. Box (Ed.), *Democracy and public administration* (pp. 194–211). Routledge.

Box, R. C., Marshall, G. S., Reed, B. J., & Reed, C. M. (2001). New public management and substantive democracy. *Public Administration Review, 61*(5), 608-619. https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-3352.00131

Boyd, F. A. (2011). *The evolution of a state-funded subdivision: A case study of Aranui and Wainoni* [Master's thesis, Lincoln University]. Lincoln University Research Archive. https://researcharchive.lincoln.ac.nz

Bradley, Q. (2013). "Putting our mark on things": The identity work of user participation in public services. *Critical Social Policy, 33*(3), 384–403. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018312457873

Brand, A. L. (2017). The politics of defining and building equity in transit: The case of Atlanta. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice, 99*, 261–273.

Brannan, T., John, P., & Stoker, G. (2006). Active citizenship and effective public services and programmes: How can we know what really works? *Urban Studies, 43*(5–6), 993–1008. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980600676143

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. Sage.

Bucholtz, M. (2000). The politics of transcription. *Journal of Pragmatics, 32*(10), 1439–1465. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(99)00094-6

Burt, R. S. (1999). The social capital of opinion leaders. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 566*(1), 37-54. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716299566001004

Burt, R. S. (2004). Structural holes and good ideas. *American Journal of Sociology, 110*(2), 349–399. https://doi.org/10.1086/421787

Burton, P., Goodlad, R., Croft, J., Abbott, J., Hastings, A., Macdonald, G., & Slater, T. (2004). *What works in community involvement in area-based initiatives? A systematic review of the literature* (Online Report 53/04). Home Office.

Burton, P., Goodlad, R., & Croft, J. (2006). How would we know what works? Context and complexity in the evaluation of community involvement. *Evaluation, 12*(3), 294–312. https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389006069136

Butcher, H. (2004). Organisational management for community practice. In H. Butcher (Ed.), *Managing community service: Principles, policies and programmes* (pp. 57–81). Policy Press.

Butcher, J. (2015). New Zealand's relationship accord: A case study in the politics of cross-sector rapprochement. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 7*(2), 32–59. https://doi.org/10.5130/ccs.v7i2.4467

Byrne, D. (2001). Partnership–participation–power: The meaning of empowerment in post-industrial society. In *Partnership working* (pp. 243–260). Policy Press.

Cadman, A. (2014). *Unravelling housing: A report on a study tour supported by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust.* Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. https://communityhousing.org.nz/Downloads/Unravelling-Housing-report-to-WCMT-from-Alison-Cadman-2013-Fellow.pdf

Cairncross, L., Clapham, D., & Goodlad, R. (1994). Tenant participation and tenant power in British council housing. *Public Administration, 72(2),* 177–200. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.1994.tb01007.x

Came, H., O'Sullivan, D., & McCreanor, T. (2020). Introducing Critical Tiriti Policy Analysis: A new tool for anti-racism from Aotearoa New Zealand. *European Journal of Public Health, 30(Supplement_5)*, https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckaa165.674

Carley, M. (1998). *Towards a long-term strategic approach to urban regeneration*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Carley, M., & Kirk, K. (1998). *Sustainable by 2020? A strategic approach to urban regeneration for Britain's cities*. Policy Press.

Carroll, P., Kake, J., & Witten, K. (2019). *Community housing provision: A snapshot of changing opportunities. Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities National Science Challenge.* https://www.buildingbetter.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Carroll_et_al_2019_A_snapshot_of_changing_opportunities.pdf

Cattan, M., Kime, N., & Bagnall, A. M. (2011). The use of telephone befriending in low level support for socially isolated older people–an evaluation. *Health & Social Care in the Community, 19*(2), 198-206. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2524.2010.00967.x

Cavaye, J. M. (2004). Governance and community engagement: The Australian experience. In W. R. Lovan, M. Murray, & R. Shaffer (Eds.), *Participatory governance: Planning, conflict mediation and public decision making in civil society* (pp. 85–102). Ashgate.

Cernea, M. M. (1985). Sociological knowledge for development projects. In M. M. Cernea (Ed.), *Putting people first: Sociological variables in rural development* (pp. 3–21). Oxford University Press.

Chaskin, R. J., & Joseph, M. L. (2010). Building "community" in mixed-income developments: Assumptions, approaches, and early experiences. *Urban affairs review, 45*(3), 299-335. https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087409341544

Cheshire, L., Walters, P., & Rosenblatt, T. (2010). The politics of housing consumption: Renters as flawed consumers on a master-planned estate. *Urban Studies, 47*(12), 2597–2614. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098009359028

Chile, L. M. (2006). The historical context of community development in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Community Development Journal, 41*(4), 407–425. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsl024

Chile, L. (2007). *Community development practice in New Zealand: Exploring good practice*. Institute of Public Policy, AUT University.

Chile, L. M., & Simpson, G. (2004). Spirituality and community development: Exploring the link between the individual and the collective. *Community Development Journal, 39*(4), 318-331. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsh029

Chisholm, E. (2016). *Individual and collective action for healthy rental housing in New Zealand: An historical and contemporary study* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Otago].

Chisholm, E., Olin, C., Randal, E., Witten, K., & Howden-Chapman, P. (2023). Placemaking and public housing: The state of knowledge and research priorities. *Housing Studies, 1*(1), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2023.2206799

Creswell, J. W. (2021). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. Sage.

Christens, B. D. (2012). Targeting empowerment in community development: A community psychology approach to enhancing local power and well-being. *Community Development Journal, 47*(4), 538–554. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bss031

Christophers, B. (2021). A tale of two inequalities: Housing-wealth inequality and tenure inequality. *Environment and planning A: economy and space, 53*(3), 573-594. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518x19876946

Clapham, D., Foye, C., & Christian, J. (2018). The concept of subjective well-being in housing research. *Housing, Theory and Society, 35*(3), 261–280. https://doi.org/10.1080/14036096.2017.1348391

Claridge, T. (2018). *Dimensions of social capital: Structural, cognitive, and relational* [PDF]. Social Capital Research. https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Dimensions-of-Social-Capital.pdf

Clarke, J., & Newman, J. (2009). *The managerial state: Power, politics and ideology in the remaking of social welfare*. Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221747

Coatham, V., & Jones, T. (2008). Forgotten voices? The importance of longitudinal evaluation of urban regeneration projects. *Journal of Urban Regeneration & Renewal, 2(*1), 74–85. https://doi.org/10.69554/avhc3341

Cohen, J. M., & Uphoff, N. T. (1977). *Rural development participation: Concepts and measures for project design, implementation and evaluation* (Vol. 2). Cornell University Press.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology, 94*(Supplement), S95–S120. https://doi.org/10.1086/228943

Coleman, J. S. (1990). Commentary: Social institutions and social theory. *American sociological review, 55*(3), 333-339. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095759

Community Finance. (2024). Impact report 2024. https://communityfinance.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/CF-Impact-Report-2024-Final-1.pdf

Comstock, N., Dickinson, L. M., Marshall, J. A., Soobader, M.-J., Turbin, M. S., Buchenau, M., & Litt, J. S. (2010). Neighborhood attachment and its correlates: Exploring

neighborhood conditions, collective efficacy, and social participation. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 30*(4), 435–442. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2010.05.001

Considine, M. (2005). *Making public policy: Institutions, actors, strategies*. Polity Press.

Cooke, B., & Kothari, U. (Eds.). (2001). *Participation: The new tyranny?.* Zed books.

Cooper, C., & Hawtin, M. (Eds.). (1997). *Housing, Community, and Conflict: Understanding Resident Involvement*. Arena.

Cornwall, A. (2002). *Making spaces, changing places: Situating participation in development*. Institute of Development Studies.

Cornwall, A. (2004). Spaces for transformation? Reflections on issues of power and difference in participation in development. In S. Hickey & G. Mohan (Eds.), *Participation: From tyranny to transformation? Exploring new approaches to participation in development* (pp. 75–91). Zed Books.

Cornwall, A. (2008). Unpacking 'participation': Models, meanings and practices. *Community Development Journal, 43*(3), 269–283. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsn010

Cornwall, A., & Brock, K. (2005). What do buzzwords do for development policy? A critical look at 'participation,' 'empowerment,' and 'poverty reduction.' *Third World Quarterly, 26*(7), 1043–1060. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590500235603

Costarelli, I. (2022). 'The social managers are back in town': The challenges of housing management in a residualised public housing sector. *Critical Housing Analysis, 9*(2), 43–51. https://doi.org/10.13060/23362839.2022.9.2.623

Cox, F. M. (Ed.). (1979). *Strategies of community organization: A book of readings* (3rd ed.). F. E. Peacock Publishers.

Craig, G. (2002). Towards the measurement of empowerment: The evaluation of community development. *Community Development Journal, 33*(1), 124–146. https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330209490146

Craig, G., & Taylor, M. (2002). Dangerous liaisons: local government and the voluntary and community sectors. In *Partnerships, new labour and the governance of welfare* (pp. 131-148). Policy Press.

Craig, G. (2007). Community capacity-building: something old, something new...?. *Critical social policy, 27*(3), 335-359. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018307078846

Craig, G., & Mayo, M. (Eds.). (1995). *Community empowerment: A reader in participation and development.* Zed Books.

Cram, F. (2014). Measuring Māori wellbeing. *MAI Journal, 3*(1), 18–32.

Crawford, J., & Flint, J. (2015). Rational fictions and imaginary systems: Cynical ideology and the problem figuration and practise of public housing. *Housing Studies*, *30*(5), 792-807. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2015.1013092

Creswell, J. W. (2021). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. Sage.

Cribb, J. (2005). The accountability of voluntary organisations: Implications for government funders. *New Zealand Journal of Social Policy, 24*, 79–93. https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.16926703

Christens, B. D. (2012). Toward relational empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 50(1-2), 114–128. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-011-9483-5

Dale, A., & Newman, L. (2008). Social capital: A necessary and sufficient condition for sustainable community development? *Community Development Journal, 45*(1), 5–21. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsn028

Darcy, M. (2002). Community management: How management discourse killed participation. *Critical Quarterly, 44*(1), 51–62. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8705.00452

Darcy, M., & Georgiou, D. (2004). Purpose, professionalism and management culture: The challenges for housing providers and their staff in delivering community renewal. *Housing Works, 2*(1), 15–18.

Dasgupta, P. (1988). Trust as a commodity. In D. Gambetta (Ed.), *Trust: Making and breaking cooperative relations* (pp. 49–72). Blackwell.

Davidson, A. (1994). *A home of one's own: Housing policy in Sweden and New Zealand from the 1840s to the 1990s*. Almqvist & Wiksell International.

Davidson, C. (2009). Transcription: Imperatives for qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8*(2), 35–52. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800206

Davy, J. (2006). Assessing public participation strategies in low-income housing: The Mamre housing project (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch).

Day, G. (2006). *Community and everyday life*. Routledge.

De Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life* (S. Rendall, Trans.). University of California Press.

DeFilippis, J. (2001). The myth of social capital in community development. *Housing Policy Debate, 12(4),* 781–806. https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2001.9521429

DeFilippis, J. (2004). *Unmaking Goliath: Community control in the face of global capital*. Routledge.

DeFilippis, J., & North, P. (2004). The emancipatory community? Place, politics and collective action in cities. In L. Lees (Ed.), *The emancipatory city* (pp. 72–88). Sage.

DeFilippis, J., Fisher, R., & Shragge, E. (2006). Neither romance nor regulation: Re-evaluating community. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 30(3), 673-689. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2006.00680.x

DeFilippis, J., Fisher, R., & Shragge, E. (2010). *Contesting community: The limits and potential of local organizing*. Rutgers University Press.

Denhardt, R. B., & Denhardt, J. V. (2000). The new public service: Serving rather than steering. *Public Administration Review, 60*(6), 549–559. https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-3352.00117

Denhardt, J. V., & Denhardt, R. B. (2016). *The new public service: Serving, not steering* (Expanded ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315709765

Desmond, M. (2012). Disposable ties and the urban poor. *American Journal of Sociology, 117(5)*, 1295–1335. https://doi.org/10.1086/663506

de Souza Briggs, X. (1998). Brown kids in white suburbs: Housing mobility and the many faces of social capital. Housing Policy Debate, 9(1), 177–221. https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.1998.9521290

Diamond, J., & Liddle, J. (2013). *Management of regeneration: Choices, challenges and dilemmas.* Routledge.

Diener, E., Napa Scollon, C., & Lucas, R. E. (2009). The evolving concept of subjective well-being: The multifaceted nature of happiness. In E. Diener (Ed.), *Assessing well-being: The collected works of Ed Diener* (pp. 67–100). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2354-4_4

Dinham, A. (2005). Empowered or over-powered? The real experiences of local participation in the UK's New Deal for Communities. *Community Development Journal, 40*(3), 301-312. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsi019

Dinham, A. (2007). Raising expectations or dashing hopes? Well-being and participation in disadvantaged areas. *Community Development Journal, 42(2),* 181–193. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsl040

Dolan, P., & Metcalfe, R. (2011). Measuring subjective wellbeing for public policy: Recommendations on measures. *Journal of Social Policy, 41*(2), 409–427. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279411000849

Donoghue, J., & Tranter, B. (2012). Social capital, interpersonal trust, and public housing. *Australian Social Work, 65*(3), 413-430. https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407x.2011.635306

Donoghue, J., & Tranter, B. (2013). Public housing and social capital in Australia. LHI *Journal of Land, Housing, and Urban Affairs, 4(2),* 145–152. https://doi.org/10.5804/lhij.2013.4.2.145

Durie, M. (1985). A Māori perspective of health. *Social Science & Medicine, 20*(5), 483–486. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(85)90363-6

Durie, M. H. (1998). *Te Mana, Te Kāwanatanga: the politics of self-determination*. Auckland, Oxford University Press.

Durie, M. (1999). Te Pae Māhutonga: A model for Māori health promotion. *Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand Newsletter.* https://www.cph.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/TePaeMahutonga.pdf

Durie, M. (2003). *Ngā kāhui pou launching Māori futures*. Huia Publishers.

Durie, M. (2019). Te Ahua o te Kāinga: Shaping the house, part 1. *Parity, 32*(10), 54–56. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.092736316578513

Durie, M. (2019). Te Ahua o te Kāinga: Shaping the house, part 2. *Parity, 32*(10), 57–59. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.092773582521030

Durose, C. (2009). Front-line workers and 'local knowledge': Neighbourhood stories in contemporary UK local governance. *Public Administration, 87(1),* 35–49. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2008.01741.x

Durose, C. (2011). Revisiting Lipsky: Front-line work in UK local governance. *Political Studies, 59*(4), 978–995. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2011.00886.x

Durose, R., Richardson, L., & Richardson. (2016). *Designing public policy for co-production*. Bristol University Press.

Eardley, T., Bruce, J., & Goggin, G. (2009). *Telecommunications and community wellbeing: A review of the literature on access and affordability for low-income and disadvantaged groups.* Social Policy Research Centre.

Eketone, A. (2006). Tapuwae: A vehicle for community change. *Community Development Journal, 41*(4), 467–480. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsl028

Eketone, A. (2008). Theoretical underpinnings of *Kaupapa* Māori directed practice. *MAI Review LW, 1(1)*, 11. https://doi.org/10.26686/maiwp.v1i1.19

Eketone, A. (2013). Māori concepts for social and community work. *Scope: Kaupapa Kai Tahu, 2*, 35–43.

Eketone, A. D. (2021). Dual relationships and crossing boundaries in Māori social work practice. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development, 10*(1), 29–49. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.15406.72003

Elías, M. V., & Alkadry, M. G. (2011). Constructive conflict, participation, and shared governance. *Administration & Society, 43*(8), 869–895. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399711426136

Ellen, I. G., & Turner, M. A. (1997). Does neighbourhood matter? Assessing recent evidence. *Housing Policy Debate, 8*(4), 833–866. https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.1997.9521280

Emejulu, A. (2011). Re-theorizing feminist community development: Towards a radical democratic citizenship. *Community Development Journal, 46*(3), 378–390. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsq047

Emejulu, A. (2015). Community development as micropolitics: Comparing theories, policies and politics in America and Britain. In *Community Development as Micropolitics*. Policy Press.

Emery, M., & Flora, C. (2020). Spiraling-up: Mapping community transformation with community capitals framework. In *50 Years of Community Development Vol I* (pp. 163-179). Routledge.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5*(1), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Etzioni, A. (1995). *Rights and the common good: The communitarian perspective*. St. Martin's Press

Evans, P. (1996). Government action, social capital and development: Reviewing the evidence on synergy. *World Development, 24*(6), 1119–1132. https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(96)00021-6

Eversole, R. (2012). Remaking participation: Challenges for community development practice. *Community Development Journal, 47*(1), 29–41. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsq033

Fairclough, N. (2000). *New Labour, new language* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Fasoro, A., Yu, C., Bierema, S., Pehi, T., Fraser, B., Howden-Chapman, P., & Pierse, N. (2024). The impact of transitions from emergency housing to public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Discover Public Health, 21*(1), 189. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12982-024-00320-9

Fawcett, B., & Hanlon, M. (2009). The 'return to community': Challenges to human service professionals. *Journal of Sociology, 45*(4), 433–444. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783309346471

Ferguson, G. (1994). *Building the New Zealand dream*. Dunmore Press.

Fergusson, E. (2013). Interrogating authorship in Flaxmere's regeneration. *Urban Policy and Research, 31*(1), 75–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/08111146.2012.717509

Fine, B. (1999). The developmental state is dead—long live social capital? *Development and Change, 30*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00105

Fine, B. (2001). *Social Capital Versus Social Theory* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203470787

Finer, H. (1941). Administrative responsibility in democratic government. *Public Administration Review, 1*(4), 335–350. https://doi.org/10.2307/972907

Firth, C., Maye, D., & Pearson, D. (2011). Developing “community” in community gardens. *Local Environment, 16*(6), 555–568. https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2011.586025

Fitzpatrick, S., & Pawson, H. (2014**).** Ending security of tenure for social renters: Transitioning to 'ambulance service' social housing? *Housing Studies, 29*(5), 597–615. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2013.803043

Fitzpatrick, S., & Watts, B. (2017). Competing visions: Security of tenure and the welfarisation of English social housing. *Housing Studies, 32*(8), 1021–1038. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2017.1321815

Flint, J. (2002). Social housing agencies and the governance of anti-social behaviour. *Housing Studies, 17*(4), 619–637. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673030220144372

Flint, J., & Kearns, A. (2006). Housing, neighbourhood renewal and social capital: The case of registered social landlords in Scotland. *European Journal of Housing Policy, 6*(1), 31–54. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616710600585716

Fordham, G., Ardron, R., Batty, E., Clark, C., Cook, B., Fuller, C., Meegan, R., Pearson, S., & Turner, R. (2009). *Improving outcomes? Engaging residents in the New Deal for Communities programme: Some lessons from the New Deal for Communities programme.* Communities and Local Government.

Forgeard, M. J., Jayawickreme, E., Kern, M. L., & Seligman, M. E. (2011). Doing the right thing: Measuring wellbeing for public policy. *International Journal of Wellbeing, 1*(1), 79–106. https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v1i1.15

Forrest, R., & Kearns, A. (2001). Social cohesion, social capital and the neighbourhood. *Urban Studies, 38*(12), 2125–2143. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980120087081

Fox, R. (2014). *Transformative community engagement for sustainable regeneration* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Bolton). University of Bolton.

Fraser, H. (2005). Four different approaches to community participation. *Community Development Journal, 40*(3), 286-300. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsi037

Friedrich, C. J. (2000). Public policy and the nature of administrative responsibility. In P. E. Montjoy (Ed.), *The science of public policy* (pp. 231–250). Sage.

Freire, P. (1972). Education: Domestication or liberation? *Prospects, 2*(2), 173–181. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02195934

Fricker, M. (2017). Evolving concepts of epistemic injustice. In *The Routledge handbook of epistemic injustice* (pp. 53-60). Routledge.

Frieling, M. (2018). 'The start of a conversation on the value of New Zealand's social capital.' *Living Standards Discussion Papers*, New Zealand Treasury. Retrieved from http://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/researchpolicy/dp/2018/18-04

Fukuyama, F. (1996). *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity*. Simon and Schuster.

Gans, H. J. (1982). *Urban villagers*. Simon and Schuster.

Gant, L. M. (2017). Community development and place-based neighborhood change. In P. Allen-Meares, T. R. Shanks, L. M. Gant, & L. D. Hollingsworth (Eds.), *A twenty-first century approach to community change: Partnering to improve life outcomes for youth and families in under-served neighborhoods* (pp. 44–57). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190463311.003.0003

Gaventa, J. (2004). Towards participatory governance: Assessing the transformative possibilities. In Hickey, S., & Mohan, G. (Eds.). (2004). *Participation: From tyranny to transformation? Exploring new approaches to participation in development* (pp. 25–41). Zed Books.

Gaventa, J. (2006). Finding the spaces for change: A power analysis. *IDS Bulletin, 37*(6), 23–33. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2006.tb00320.x

Gaventa, J. (2016). *Can participation 'fix' inequality? Unpacking the relationship between economic and political citizenship.* Institute of Development Studies. https://doi.org/10.19088/IDS.2016.006

Gaventa, J., & Cornwall, A. (2008). Power and knowledge. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (2nd ed., pp. 172–189). Sage.

Geller, J. D., Doykos, B., Craven, K., Bess, K. D., & Nation, M. (2014). *Engaging residents in community change: The critical role of trust in the development of a Promise Neighborhood.* Teachers College Record, 116(4), 1–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811411600410

Gerhard, U., & Keller, J. (2023). No place for trust—The significance of trust in housing development. *Urban Geography, 44*(4), 618–639. https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2022.2092886

Giddens, A. (1998). *The third way: The renewal of social democracy*. Polity Press.

Gilchrist, A. (2000). The well-connected community: Networking to the edge of chaos. *Community Development Journal, 35(3),* 264–275. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/35.3.264

Gilchrist, A. (2004). Working with networks and organisations in the community. In *Principles and practice of informal education* (pp. 119-132). Routledge.

Gilchrist, A. (2006). Partnership and participation: Power in process. *Public Policy and Administration, 21(3*), 70–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/095207670602100307

Gilchrist, A. (2019). *The well-connected community: A networking approach to community development* (3rd ed.). Policy Press.

Gilchrist, A. (2019). 'Developing the well-connected community'. In A. Gilchrist (Ed.), *The well-connected community* (pp. 195–210). Policy Press.

Gilchrist, A., & Taylor, M. (2011). *The short guide to community development*. Policy Press.

Gilligan, C. (1982). New maps of development: New visions of maturity. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 52*(2), 199–212. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1982.tb01424.x

Gilson, C. (1968). The development of housing in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Public Administration, 31*(4), 48–61.

Gittell, R. and Vidal, A. (1998) *Community Organizing: Building Social Capital as a Development Strategy*. Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452220567

Goetschius, G. (1969). *Working with community groups: Using community development as a method of social work*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Gonzalez, L., Lima-Silva, F., & Pozzebon, M. (2021). Improving public housing policies that target low-income households: The value of adding proximity to discretion. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space, 39*(7), 1567-1585. https://doi.org/10.1177/23996544211041119

Gordon, D., Adelman, L., Ashworth, K., Bradshaw, J., Levitas, R., Middleton, S., Pantazis, C., Patsios, D., Payne, S., & Townsend, P. (2000). *Poverty and social exclusion in Britain*. York Publishing Services.

Gordon, R. C., Kearns, R., & Eger, R. J. (2017). It is the people that have made Glen Innes: State-led gentrification and the reconfiguration of urban life in Auckland.

International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 41(5), 767–788. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12567

Government of New Zealand. (2019). *The Wellbeing Budget 2019*. https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/wellbeing-budget/wellbeing-budget-2019

Granovetter, M. (1983). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. *Sociological Theory, 1*(1), 201–233. https://doi.org/10.2307/202051

Grbić, D., Ishizawa, H., & Crothers, C. (2010). Ethnic residential segregation in New Zealand, 1991–2006. *Social Science Research, 39*(1), 25–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2009.05.003

Greaves, L. M., Le Grice, J., Schwencke, A., Crengle, S., Lewycka, S., Hamley, L., & Clark, T. C. (2021). Measuring whanaungatanga and identity for well-being in rangatahi Māori. *MAI Journal, 10*(2), 93–105. https://doi.org/10.20507/MAIJournal.2021.10.2.2

Green, G., Grimsley, M., & Stafford, B. (2005). *The Dynamics of Neighbourhood Sustainability*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Gregory, R. (2017). New Public Management and the ghost of Max Weber: Exorcized or still haunting? In T. Christensen & P. Lægreid (Eds.), *Transcending New Public Management* (pp. 233–256). Routledge.

Gregory, R., & Maynard, K. (2019). Weber vs Wairua: Towards a more humane bureaucracy in Aotearoa New Zealand?. *Policy Quarterly*, *15*(4).

Grimes, A., Howden-Chapman, P., Riggs, L., & Smith, C. (2023). Public housing in an urban setting: An inclusive wellbeing framework. *Policy Quarterly, 19*(3), 36–46. https://doi.org/10.26686/pq.v19i3.8734

Grunig, J. E. (2002). Qualitative methods for assessing relationships: Between organizations and publics. In B. L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations* (pp. 91–104). Sage.

Gurney, C. M. (1999). Pride and prejudice: Discourses of normalisation in public and private accounts of home ownership. *Housing Studies, 14*(2), 163–183. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673039983000041

Győri, Á. (2024). Relationship between social networks, support patterns, and health problems among the general Hungarian population during the last phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Social Sciences, 13*(3), 161. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13030161

Haigh, D. I. (2014). Community development and New Zealand local authorities in the 1970s and 1980s. *New Zealand Sociology, 29*(1), 79-97.

Hall, J. (2004). Public housing: Residualisation or reinvigoration? *Parity, 17*(10), 13–16.

Hardy, C., Phillips, N., & Lawrence, T. (1998). Distinguishing trust and power in interorganizational relations: Forms and facades of trust. In C. Lane & R. Bachmann (Eds.), *Trust within and between organizations* (pp. 64–87). Oxford University Press.

Hatfield, E., Cacioppo, J. T., & Rapson, R. L. (1993). 'Emotional contagion'. *Current directions in psychological science*, *2*(3), 96-100. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.ep10770953

Hawkins-Elder, H., Milfont, T. L., Hammond, M. D., & Sibley, C. G. (2018). Who are the lonely? A typology of loneliness in New Zealand. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 52*(4), 357-364. https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867417718944

Head, B. W. (2007). Community engagement: Participation on whose terms? *Australian Journal of Political Science, 42*(3), 441–454. https://doi.org/10.1080/10361140701513570

Head, B. W., & Alford, J. (2015). Wicked problems: Implications for public policy and management. *Administration & society, 47*(6), 711-739. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399713481601

Hedman, L., Manley, D., van Ham, M., & Östh, J. (2013). Cumulative exposure to disadvantage and the intergenerational transmission of neighbourhood effects. *Journal of Economic Geography, 15*(1), 195–215. https://doi.org/10.1093/jeg/lbt042

Heinrich, C. J. (2002). Outcomes-based performance management in the public sector: Implications for government accountability and effectiveness. *Public Administration Review, 62*(6), 712–725. https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6210.00253

Held, V. (2006). *The ethics of care: Personal, political, and global*. Oxford University Press.

Helliwell, J. F., & Wang, S. (2010). Trust and well-being. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, *1*(1), 42–78. https://doi.org/10.3386/w15911

Henderson, P. (2005). *Including the excluded: From practice to policy in European community development.* Policy Press.

Henderson, P., & Glen, A. (2006). From recognition to support: Community development workers in the United Kingdom. *Community Development Journal, 41(3),* 277–292. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsi045

Henderson, P., & Thomas, D. N. (2005). *Skills in neighbourhood work* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Henderson, P., & Vercseg, I. (2010*). Community development and civil society: Making connections in the European context.* Policy Press.

Hibbitt, K., Jones, P., & Meegan, R. (2001). Tackling social exclusion: The role of social capital in urban regeneration on Merseyside—from mistrust to trust? *European Planning Studies, 9*(2), 141–161. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654310020027885

Hickey, S., & Mohan, G. (Eds.). (2004). *Participation: From tyranny to transformation? Exploring new approaches to participation in development.* Zed Books.

Hickman, P. (2006). Approaches to tenant participation in the English local authority sector. *Housing Studies, 21(2),* 209–225. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673030500484966

Hills, J. (2007). *Ends and means: The future roles of social housing in England*. LSE STICERD Research Paper No. CASEREPORT34. https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cr/CASEreport34.pdf

Hipkins, C. (2018, September 4). *Government reforms aim to strengthen public service values*. New Zealand Government. https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/public-service-reform https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/joined-more-convenient-services-reach-public-service-reform-plan

Hoatson, L., & Grace, M. (2002). Public housing redevelopment: Opportunity for community regeneration?. *Urban Policy and Research*, *20*(4), 429-441. https://doi.org/10.1080/0811114022000032627

Hochschild, A. R. (2012). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling* (3rd ed.). University of California Press.

Hoggett, P., Mayo, M., & Miller, C. (2008). *The dilemmas of development work: Ethical challenges in regeneration*. Policy Press. https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781861349729.001.0001

Holt-Lunstad, J. (2017). The potential public health relevance of social isolation and loneliness: Prevalence, epidemiology, and risk factors. *Public Policy & Aging Report, 27*(4), 127–130. https://doi.org/10.1093/ppar/prx030

Honig, B. (1994). Difference, dilemmas, and the politics of home. *Social Research, 61*(3), 563–597.

Housing New Zealand Corporation. (2000). *Strategic policy framework for community renewal.* Housing New Zealand Corporation.

Housing New Zealand Corporation. (2001). *Statement of corporate intent 2000-2001.* Housing New Zealand Corporation.

Housing New Zealand Corporation. (2003a). *Community development: What is it and what does it mean for community renewal? Discussion document.* Housing New Zealand Corporation.

Housing New Zealand Corporation. (2003b). *Annual report 2002-2003.* Housing New Zealand Corporation.

Housing New Zealand Corporation. (2005). *Community renewal literature review.* Housing New Zealand Corporation.

Housing New Zealand Corporation. (2006). *Community renewal evaluation.* Housing New Zealand Corporation.

Housing New Zealand Corporation. (2017a). *Community development framework.* Housing New Zealand Corporation.

Housing New Zealand Corporation. (2017b). *Strategic plan 2017-2021.* Housing New Zealand Corporation.

Howden-Chapman, P. (2015). *Home truths: Confronting New Zealand's housing crisis* (Vol. 37). Bridget Williams Books.

Howlett, M., & Rayner, J. (2007). Design principles for policy mixes: Cohesion and coherence in 'new governance arrangements'. *Policy and society*, *26*(4), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1016/s1449-4035(07)70118-2

Hudson, K. (2004). Behind the rhetoric of community development: How is it perceived and practiced? *Australian Journal of Social Issues, 39*(3), 249–265. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1839-4655.2004.tb01175.x

Hulse, K. (2008). Shaky foundations: moving beyond "housing tenure". *Housing, Theory and Society, 25*(3), 202-219. https://doi.org/10.1080/14036090802117572

Hulse, K., & Stone, W. (2007). Social cohesion, social capital and social exclusion: A cross-cultural comparison. *Policy Studies, 28(2),* 109–128. https://doi.org/10.1080/01442870701309049

Hulse, K., Milligan, V., & Easthope, H. (2011). *Secure occupancy in rental housing: Conceptual foundations and comparative perspectives*. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-010-9361-1

Humpage, L. (2005). Experimenting with a 'whole of government' approach: Indigenous capacity building in New Zealand and Australia. *Policy Studies, 26*(1), 47–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/01442870500041744

Humphreys, E. (2007). Social capital in disadvantaged neighbourhoods: a diversion from needs or a real contribution to the debate on area-based regeneration?. *Irish Journal of Sociology, 16*(2), 50-76. https://doi.org/10.1177/079160350701600204

Hunter, A. (1975). The loss of community: An empirical test through replication. *American Sociological Review, 40(5),* 537–552. https://doi.org/10.2307/2094415

Hustedde, R. J., & Ganowicz, J. (2002). The basics: What's essential about theory for community development practice? *Journal of the Community Development Society, 33(1),* 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330209490139

Ife, J. (2010). Capacity building and community development. In *Challenging capacity building: Comparative perspectives* (pp. 67–84). Springer.

Ife, J. (2013). *Community development in an uncertain world*. Cambridge University Press.

Ife, J. (2016). Postmodernism, critical theory and social work. In *Transforming social work practice (pp. 211–223).* Routledge.

Imrie, R., & Raco, M. (2003). *Urban renaissance? New Labour, community and urban policy.* Policy Press.

Ingamells, A. (2006). Community development and community renewal: Tracing the workings of power. *Community Development Journal, 42*(2), 237–250. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsi111

Jacobs, J. (1961). *The death and life of great American cities.* Random House.

Jacobs, K., & Manzi, T. (2000). Evaluating the social constructionist paradigm in housing research. *Housing, Theory and Society, 17*(1), 35–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/140360900750044764

Jacobs, J., & Manzi, T. (Eds.). (2017). *Social constructionism in housing research*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315607516

Jacobs, K., Kemeny, J., & Manzi, T. (2017). Introduction. In J. Kemeny, *Social constructionism in housing research* (pp. 1-13). Routledge.

Jamali, D., Yianni, M., & Abdallah, H. (2011). Strategic partnerships, social capital and innovation: Accounting for social alliance innovation. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, *20*(4), 375-391. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8608.2011.01621.x

Jargowsky, P. A. (1997). *Poverty and place: Ghettos, barrios, and the American city*. Russell Sage.

Jivraj, S., Murray, E. T., Norman, P., & Nicholas, O. (2019). The impact of life course exposures to neighbourhood deprivation on health and well-being: A review of the long-term neighbourhood effects literature. *European Journal of Public Health, 30(5),* 922–928. https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckz153

Johnson, A. (2013). *Give me shelter.* Salvation Army: Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit. https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/wp/content/uploads/2013/11/GiveMeShelter2013FinalWeb.pdf

Johnson, A. (2017). *State housing in Aotearoa New Zealand: What future after National?* The Salvation Army Social Policy & Parliamentary Unit. Retrieved from https://www.researchbank.ac.nz/server/api/core/bitstreams/021f8926-a0b0-4eaf-914d-d309050eb7fe/content

Johnson, O. (2020). Creating space to think: The what, why, and how of deliberate reflection for effective leadership. *Journal of Character and Leadership Development*, 7(1).

Jupp, E. (2008). The feeling of participation: Everyday spaces and urban change. *Geoforum, 39*(1*),* 331–343. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2007.07.007

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities Act 2019. Public Act 2019 No 50. New Zealand Legislation. https://www.legislation.govt.nz

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities. (2019). *Statement of intent 2019–2023.*

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities. (2019a). *Statement of performance expectations 2019–2020.*

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities. (2020). *Briefing to the incoming minister.*

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities. *Statement of performance expectations 2021–2022*.

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities. (2021b). *Kāinga Ora Community Strategy 2021–2026*.

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities. (2021c). *He Toa Takitini – Partnership and Engagement Framework*

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities. (2022a). *Annual report 2021–2022*. Kāinga Ora.

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities. (2022b). *Discovery phase for community development and placemaking staff survey.*

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities. (2022c). *Statement of performance expectations 2021–2022*.

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities. (2022d). *Statement of intent 2022–2026*.

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities. (2022e) Strategy 2030 - Shaping our future Kāinga Ora Strategy 2030

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities. (2023a). *Annual report 2022–2023*.

Kāinga Ora–Homes and Communities. (2023b). The *briefing to the incoming minister.*

Kaplan, A. (1996). *The development practitioners' handbook*. Pluto Press.

Karami Nejad, Z. (2020). *Collaborative governance and planning: An evaluation of two housing regeneration projects in New Zealand and Iran* (Doctoral dissertation, Lincoln University).

Karaminejad, Z., Vallance, S., & Montgomery, R. (2020). Building the foundations of collaboration: From housing development to community renewal. *Community Development Journal, 55*(3), *305–322.* https://doi.org/10.4236/cus.2020.84033

Kawachi, I., & Berkman, L. F. (2001). Social ties and mental health. *Journal of Urban Health, 78(3),* 458–467. https://doi.org/10.1093/jurban/78.3.458

Kay, A. (2006). Social capital, the social economy and community development. *Community Development Journal, 41*(2), 160-173**.** https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsi045

Kearns, A., & Parkinson, M. (2001). The significance of neighbourhood. *Urban studies, 38*(12), 2103-2110. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980120087063

Kearns, A., & Whitley, E. (2020). Are housing and neighbourhood empowerment beneficial for mental health and wellbeing? Evidence from disadvantaged communities experiencing regeneration. *SSM - Population Health, 12*, 100645. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2020.100645

Keeble, L. (1976). *Principles and practice of town and country planning* (4th ed.). Estate Gazette.

Keene, D. E., & Geronimus, A. T. (2011). Community-based support among African American public housing residents. *Journal of Urban Health, 88(S1),* 41–53. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-010-9483-1

Kemeny, J. (2017). *Social constructionism in housing research*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351968036

Keyes, C. M. (2002). The Mental Health Continuum: From Languishing to Flourishing in Life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *43*(2), 207–222. https://doi.org/10.2307/3090197

King, J. (2019). National's social policy legacy in social housing. *New Zealand Sociology, 34*(2*),* 227–252. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.901263891138801

Kleinhans, R., Priemus, H., & Engbersen, G. (2007). Understanding social capital in recently restructured urban neighbourhoods: Two case studies in Rotterdam. *Urban Studies, 44*(5–6), 1069–1091. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980701256064

Krane, D. (2014). Democracy, public administrators, and public policy. In D. Krane (Ed.), *Public administration and society* (pp. 153–166). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315661059

Krauss, S. E. (2005). Research paradigms and meaning making: A primer. *The Qualitative Report, 10*(4), 758–770. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2005.1831

Kretzmann, J. P., & McKnight, J. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out*. Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research.

Kupa, K. (2009). Te Vaka Atafaga: A Tokelau assessment model for supporting holistic mental health practice with Tokelau people in Aotearoa, New Zealand. *Pacific health dialog*,*15*(1), 156-163.

Latham, A., & Layton, J. (2019). Social infrastructure and the public life of cities: Studying urban sociality and public spaces. *Geography Compass, 13*(7), e12444. https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12444

Lawrence, A. (2006). 'No personal motive?' Volunteers, biodiversity, and the false dichotomies of participation. *Ethics, Place & Environment, 9*(3), 279–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/13668790600893319

Lawson, L., & Kearns, A. (2010). Community engagement in regeneration: Are we getting the point? *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment, 25*(1), 19–36. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10901-009-9168-7

Ledwith, M. (2005). Personal narratives/political lives: Personal reflection as a tool for collective change. *Reflective Practice, 6*(2), 255-262.

Ledwith, M. (2011). *Community development: A critical approach*. Policy Press.

Ledwith, M., & Springett, J. (2022). Participatory practice. In *Participatory Practice* (pp. 13-36). Policy Press.

Lee, S.-M., Jang, H.-J., Yun, H.-K., Jung, Y.-B., & Hong, I.-K. (2022). Effect of apartment community garden program on sense of community and stress. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19*(2), 708. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19020708

Levin, I., Arthurson, K., & Ziersch, A. (2014). Social mix and the role of design: Competing interests in the Carlton Public Housing Estate Redevelopment, Melbourne. *Cities, 40*, 23–31. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2014.04.002

Levitas, R. (1998). The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour. Palgrave Macmillan.

Lewis, J. D., & Weigert, A. (1985). Trust as a social reality. *Social Forces, 63*(4), 967–985. https://doi.org/10.2307/2578601

Lipsky, M. (1980). Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services. Russell Sage Foundation.

Loomis, T (2002) *A Framework for Developing Sustainable Communities*, Discussion paper, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington.

London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group. (2021). *In and against the state: Discussion notes for socialists* (S. Wheeler, Ed.; J. Holloway, Foreword). Pluto Press.

Lund, H. (2003). Testing the claims of new urbanism: Local access, pedestrian travel, and neighboring behaviors. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 69*(4), 414–429. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360308976328

Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success?. Psychological bulletin, 131(6), 803. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.131.6.803

Marcuse, P. (2009). From critical urban theory to the right to the city. *City, 13*(2-3), 185-197.

Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education, 9*(3), 3351–3364.

Maher, C., Hadfield, M., Hutchings, M., & De Eyto, A. (2018). Ensuring rigor in qualitative data analysis: A design research approach to coding combining NVivo with traditional material methods. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *17*(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918786362

Mälkki, K., & Green, L. (2014). Navigational aids: The phenomenology of transformative learning. *Journal of transformative education*, *12*(1), 5-24. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344614541171

Maloney, J., & Gatfield, R. L. (2019). Evaluating community development. *Social Justice, Practice and Theory Vol.2* Number 1.

Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1753–1760. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315617444

Manzi, T., & Morrison, N. (2018). Risk, commercialism and social purpose: Repositioning the English housing association sector. *Urban Studies, 55*(9), 1924–1942. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017729077

Manzo, L. C. (2011). Recognizing the lived experience of place. In S. E. Sutton & K. P. S. Kemp (Eds.), *The Paradox of Urban Space* (pp. 47–66). Palgrave Macmillan.

Marcuse, P. (2009). Spatial justice: Derivative but causal of social injustice. *Spatial Justice, 1*(4), 1–6.

Mason, J. (2018). *Qualitative researching* (3rd ed.). Sage. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732317697104

Massey, D. (2013). *Space, place and gender*. John Wiley & Sons.

Mastracci, S. H. (2022). Dirty work and emotional labor in public service: Why government employers should adopt an ethic of care. *Review of Public Personnel Administration, 42*(3), 537-552. https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X21997548

Mathie, A., & Cunningham, G. (2003). From clients to citizens: Asset-based community development as a strategy for community-driven development. *Development in Practice, 13*(5), 474–486. https://doi.org/10.1080/0961452032000125857

Maton, K. I. (2008). Empowering community settings: Agents of individual development, community betterment, and positive social change. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 41*(1), 4–21. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-007-9148-6

Ma'ua-Hodges, T. (2000). *Ako pai ki Aitutaki: Transporting or weaving cultures: Research report of field experiences to the Cook Islands*. Wellington College of Education.

Mayo, M. (1994). *Communities and caring: The mixed economy of welfare*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

McArdle, O. M. (2021). Rocking the boat while staying in it: connecting ends and means in radical community work. *Community Development Journal, 56*(4), 714-733.

McCallum, J. (1977). *The social organisation of Naenae: A study of a New Zealand suburb*. New Zealand Sociological Association Monograph Series.

McEwan-Short, J. (2021). *'It's aboot justice and journey': Community development practitioners' perspectives reveal insights on practice in Scotland* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Dundee).

McGillivray, D., & Clarke, J. (2008). A place to stand: Community and locality in the UK social policy. *European Societies, 10*(3), 403–421. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616690701835375

McIntyre, S., & Ellaway, A. (2003). Neighbourhoods and health: Overview. In I. Kawachi & L. Berkman (Eds.), *Neighbourhoods and health* (pp. 20–42). Oxford University Press.

McKee, K., & Cooper, V. (2008). The paradox of tenant empowerment: Regulatory and liberatory possibilities. *Housing, Theory and Society, 25*(2), 132–146. https://doi.org/10.1080/14036090701862687

McLeay, E. M. (1984). Housing as a political issue: A comparative study. *Comparative Politics, 17(1),* 85–105. https://www.jstor.org/stable/421739

McMeeking S, Kahi H, Kururangi G (2019). *He Ara Waiora*. New Zealand Treasury.

Mee, K. (2009). A space to care, a space of care: Public housing, belonging, and care in inner Newcastle, Australia. *Environment and Planning A, 41(4),* 842–858. https://doi.org/10.1068/a40146

Metge, R. T. (1972). *The house that Jack built: The origins of Labour state housing, 1935–8, with particular reference to the role of J.A. Lee* (Master's thesis, Massey University). https://mro.massey.ac.nz/handle/10179/5583

Middleton, A., Murie, A., & Groves, R. (2005). Social capital and neighbourhoods that work. *Urban Studies, 42(10),* 1711–1738. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980500231514

Miller, C. (2004). Community development as the pursuit of human rights: The new direction of travel? In *Community development, human rights and the grassroots: Conference proceedings* (pp. 141–158). Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights, Deakin University.

Milton, B., Attree, P., French, B., Povall, S., Whitehead, M., & Popay, J. (2012). The impact of community engagement on health and social outcomes: A systematic review. *Community Development Journal, 47(3),* 316–334. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsr032

Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. (2021) *Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development* https://www.hud.govt.nz/our-work/government-policy-statement-on-housing-and-urban-development

Moore-Bick, M., Nethercot, D., & Mothersole, J. (2019). *Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 report*. House of Commons. https://www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk/phase-1-report

Morris, A. (2013). Public housing in Australia: A case of advanced urban marginality? *The Economic and Labour Relations Review, 24*(1), 80–96. https://doi.org/10.1177/1035304613482177

Morris, A. (2015). The residualisation of public housing and its impact on older tenants in inner-city Sydney, Australia. *Journal of Sociology, 51*(2), 154–169. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783313507490

Morrison, P. S. (1995). The geography of rental housing and the restructuring of housing assistance in New Zealand. *Housing Studies, 10(1),* 39–56. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673039508720808

Mouffe, C. (2009). The importance of engaging the state. In J. Pugh (Ed.), *What is radical politics today?* (pp. 230–237). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230251144_27

Mowbray, M. (2005). Community capacity building or state opportunism? *Community Development Journal, 40(3),* 255–264. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsi039

Mullins, P. R. (2011). Practicing anthropology and the politics of engagement: 2010 year in review. *American Anthropologist, 113*(2), 235-245. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1433.2011.01327.x

Munt, R. (2002). 'Building community participation', *Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin*, *no 2*, pp. 3-5.

Murphy, L. (1999). Housing policy. In J. Boston, P. Dalziel, & S. St John (Eds.), *Redesigning the welfare state in New Zealand* (pp. 218–237). Oxford University Press.

Murphy, L. (2003). Reasserting the 'social' in social rented housing: Politics, housing policy and housing reforms in New Zealand. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 27*(1), 90–101. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00435

Murphy, L. (2004). To the market and back: Housing policy and state housing in New Zealand. *GeoJournal*, 59(2), 119–126. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:GEJO.0000019971.07603.4a

Murphy, L. (2009). Market rules: Neoliberal housing policy in New Zealand. In J. D. Hulchanski, P. Campsie, S. M. Hwang, E. Paradis, & R. Schipper (Eds.), *Where the other half lives: Lower income housing in a neoliberal world* (pp. 195–216). Routledge.

Murphy, L. (2020). Neoliberal social housing policies, market logics and social rented housing reforms in New Zealand. *International Journal of Housing Policy, 20(2),* 229–251. https://doi.org/10.1080/19491247.2019.1638134

Needham, C., & Mangan, C. (2014). *The 21st century public servant*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

New Zealand Treasury. (2019). *The Wellbeing Budget 2019: Budget at a glance* (Budget 2019 Publication). https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/wellbeing-budget/wellbeing-budget-2019

New Zealand Treasury. (2021). *The Living Standards Framework (LSF) 2021.* https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/tp/living-standards-framework-2021

New Zealand Treasury. (2024). *He Ara Waiora handbook.* https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/guide/he-ara-waiora-handbook

Newman, J. (2001). *Modernizing governance: New Labour, policy and society*. Sage.

Newman, J., & Clarke, J. (2016). The politics of deploying community. In *Politics, power and community development* (pp. 31–46). Policy Press.

Newman, K., & Goetz, E. (2016). Reclaiming neighbourhood from the inside out: Regionalism, globalization, and critical community development. *Urban Geography, 37(5),* 685–699. https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2016.1139419

Newton, K., & Norris, P. (2000). Confidence in public institutions: Faith, culture, or performance? In S. J. Pharr & R. D. Putnam (Eds.), *Disaffected democracies: What's troubling the trilateral countries?* (pp. 52–73). Princeton University Press.

Nickels, A. E., & Rivera, J. D. (2018). *Community development and public administration theory: Promoting democratic principles to improve communities*. Routledge.

Nikkhah, H. A., & Redzuan, M. (2009). Participation as a medium of empowerment in community development. *European Journal of Social Sciences, 11(1),* 170–176.

Norman, E. J. R. (2003). *Obedient Servants?: Management freedoms and accountabilities in the New Zealand public sector*. Victoria University Press.

Norris, M., Byrne, M., & Carnegie, A. (2019). Combatting stigmatisation of social housing neighbourhoods in Dublin, Ireland. *International Journal of Housing Policy, 19(2),* 254–266. https://doi.org/10.1080/19491247.2018.1536607

Nowland-Foreman, G. (2018). Did Public Policy Kill Community Development?. In *The Routledge Handbook of Community Development* (pp. 54-70). Routledge.

Nunn, A. (2020). Activating community workers in governing conduct: Tensions in the practices to empower others. *Community Development Journal, 55(4),* 570–587. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsz015

Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Harvard University Press.

Ochs, E. (1979). Planned and unplanned discourse. *Syntax and semantics*, *12*, 51-80. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004368897_004

OECD. (2011). *How's life? Measuring well-being* [Report]. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264121164-en

OECD. (2020). *Better life index* [Report]. OECD Publishing. https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/

O'Flynn, J. (2007). From new public management to public value: Paradigmatic change and managerial implications. *Australian Journal of Public Administration, 66*(3), 353-366. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8500.2007.00545.x

O'Hare, P. (2010). Capacity building for community-led regeneration: Facilitating or frustrating public engagement? *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, 30*(1–2), 32–47. https://doi:10.1108/01443331011017029.

Oldenburg, R. (1999). *The great good place: Cafés, coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons, and other hangouts at the heart of a community*. Marlowe & Company.

Olin, C. V., Berghan, J., Thompson-Fawcett, M., Ivory, V., Witten, K., Howden-Chapman, P., ... & Hinckson, E. (2022). Inclusive and collective urban home spaces: The future of housing in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Wellbeing, Space and Society, 3*, 100080. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wss.2022.100080

Palmer, P. J. (2004). *A hidden wholeness: The journey toward an undivided life*. Jossey-Bass.

Park, H. M., Lee, S. Y., & Kim, J. (2003). Trust, social capital, and the role of government in social policy. *Social Science & Medicine, 56*(7), 1469–1481. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536(02)00305-0

Paul, J. (2021, December). *Te Tiriti o Waitangi and housing in Aotearoa*. Paper presented at the State of Australasian Cities (SOAC) Conference, Melbourne, Australia.

Paul, J., & Kake, J. (2019). Integrating *Kaupapa* Māori and Te Aranga urban design principles into the development of policy to inform better design processes. *Historic Environment, 31*(3), 64-74.

Pawson, H., & Kintrea, K. (2002). Part of the problem or part of the solution? Social housing allocation policies and social exclusion in Britain. *Journal of Social Policy, 31*(4), 643–667. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279402006796

Pawson, H., & Gilmour, T. (2010). Transforming Australia's social housing: Pointers from the British stock transfer experience. *Urban Policy and Research, 28*(3), 241–260. https://doi.org/10.1080/08111146.2010.496204

Pawson, H., Hulse, K., & Cheshire, L. (2015). Addressing concentrations of disadvantage in urban Australia. *Urban Policy and Research, 33*(2), 109–128. https://doi.org/10.1080/08111146.2015.1024943

Penny, G., Logan, A., Olin, C. V., O'Sullivan, K. C., Robson, B., Pehi, T., Davies, C., Wall, T., & Howden-Chapman, P. (2024). A *Whakawhanaungatanga* Māori wellbeing model for housing and urban environments. *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, 19(2), 105–131. https://doi.org/10.1080/1177083X.2024.1898742

Pere, R. (1984). *Te oranga o te whānau: The health of the whānau*. Huiwhakaoranga Mäori Health planning workshop, (19–22 March). Hoani Waititi Marae, Auckland

Perkins, D. D., & Zimmerman, M. A. (1995). Empowerment theory, research, and application. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 23*(5), 569–579. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02506982

Perkins, D. D., Brown, B. B., & Taylor, R. B. (1996). The ecology of empowerment: Predicting participation in community organizations. *Journal of Social Issues, 52*(1), 85–110. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1996.tb01363.x

Perkins, D. D., & Long, D. A. (2002). Neighborhood sense of community and social capital. In A. Fisher, C. Sonn, & B. Bishop (Eds.), *Psychological sense of community* (pp. 291–318). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-0719-2_12

Perkins, D. D., Hughey, J., & Speer, P. W. (2002). Community psychology perspectives on social capital theory and community development practice. *Journal of Community Development, 33*(1), 33–52 https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330209490141

Peterson, N. A., Lowe, J. B., Aquilino, M. L., & Schneider, J. E. (2000). Enhancing the infrastructure for grassroots community-based prevention. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, 20*(1–2), 67–86.

Pierson, P. (2004). *Politics in time: History, institutions, and social analysis*. Princeton University Press.

Pitchford, M., & Henderson, P. (Eds.). (2008). *Making spaces for community development*. Policy Press.

Plato. (2004). *The Republic* (C. D. C. Reeve, Trans.). Hackett Publishing. (Original work published ca. 380 BCE)

Plett, H. (2015). *What it means to "hold space" for people, plus eight tips on how to do it well.* Heather Plett.

Poindexter, G. C. (1999). Who gets the final no? Tenant participation in public housing redevelopment. *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy, 9(*3), 659–698.

Popple, K. (2015). *Analysing community work: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24(1), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.1

Power, A., & Wilmot, H. (2007*). Social capital within the neighbourhood*, CASE Report 38. London: London School of Economics.

Pratt, M. G. (2015). Crafting and selecting research questions and contexts in qualitative research. In K. Elsbach & R. Kramer (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative organizational research* (pp. 177–185). Routledge.

Preece, J. (2019). *Understanding approaches to tenant participation in social housing: An evidence review.* Welsh Government Social Research. Merthyr Tydfil.

Prestidge, P. (2010). It's a partnership: Yeah, right! An analysis of discourses of partnership between government and community organisations in New Zealand (1999–2008) [Doctoral thesis, Auckland University of Technology]. Auckland University of Technology Open Repository. https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/server/api/core/bitstreams/0d4e874b-87b3-4905-8cd8-bbbc89128538/content

Prilleltensky, I. (2012). Wellness as fairness. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 49*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-011-9448-8

Prior, D., & Barnes, M. (2011). Subverting social policy on the front line: Agencies of resistance in the delivery of services. *Social Policy & Administration, 45*(3), 264-279. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9515.2011.00768.x

Prottas, J. M. (1978). The power of the street-level bureaucrat in public service bureaucracies. *Urban Affairs Quarterly, 13*(3), 285-312. https://doi.org/10.1177/107808747801300302

Public and Community Housing Management Act 1992 (as at 1 July 2023). https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1992/0076/latest/whole.html

Pulotu-Endemann, F. K. (2001). *Fonofale model of health*. https://whanauoraresearch.co.nz/wpcontent/uploads/formidable/Fonofalemodelexplanation1-Copy.pdf

Purcell, R. (2012). Community development and everyday life. *Community Development Journal, 47*(2), 266–281. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsr004

Putnam, R. D. (1993). The prosperous community: Social capital and public life. *The American Prospect, 13*(Spring), 35–42. https://prospect.org/culture/prosperous-community-social-capital-public-life/

Putnam, R. D. (1995). Tuning in, tuning out: The strange disappearance of social capital in America. PS: *Political Science & Politics, 28*(4), 664–683. https://doi.org/10.2307/420517

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community.* Simon & Schuster.

Putzel, J. (1997). Policy arena: Accounting for the 'dark side' of social capital: Reading Robert Putnam on democracy. *Journal of International Development, 9(7),* 939–949. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1328(199711)9:7

Randolph, B., & Judd, B. (2000). Community renewal and large public housing estates. *Urban Policy and Research, 18*(1), 91–104. https://doi.org/10.1080/08111140008727837

Randolph, B., & Judd, B. (2006). Qualitative methods and the evaluation of community renewal programs in Australia: Towards a national framework. *Urban Policy and Research, 24*(1), 97–114. https://doi.org/10.1080/08111140600591047

Rawsthorne, M., & Howard, A. (2011). *Working with communities: Critical perspectives*. Common Ground Publishing.

Reid, M. (2022). *The case for councils being community housing providers*. Local Government New Zealand. https://www.lgnz.co.nz/news/publications/the-case-for-councils-being-community-housing-providers/

Robb, J. H., & Carr, M. A. (1969). *The city of Porirua: The results of a social survey.* Department of Social Administration and Sociology, Victoria University of Wellington.

Rogers, D., & McAuliffe, C. (2023). Housing's values: Housing as an ethical urbanism. *Environment and Planning F, 1*(1), 12–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/26349825231178936

Rohe, W. M. (2004). Building social capital through community development. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 70*(2), 158–164. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360408976370

Rothstein, B., & Stolle, D. (2008). The state and social capital: An institutional theory of generalized trust. *Comparative Politics, 40*(4), 441-459. https://doi.org/10.5129/001041508x12911362383354

Room, G. (1995). Poverty and social exclusion: The new European agenda for policy and research. In G. Room (Ed.), *Beyond the threshold: The measurement and analysis of social exclusion* (pp. 1–17). Policy Press.

Rose, N. (1996). The death of the social? Re-figuring the territory of government. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 25*(3), 327-356. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085149600000018

Rose, N. (2000). Government and control. *British Journal of Criminology, 40*(2), 321-339. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/40.2.321

Rose, V. K., & Thompson, L. M. (2012). Space, place and people: a community development approach to mental health promotion in a disadvantaged community. *Community Development Journal, 47*(4), 604-611. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bss024

Ross, C. (1996). *Obstacles to public participation under the Resource Management Act 1991* (Unpublished master's thesis). Lincoln University, Centre for Resource Management.

Rousseau, D. M., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R. S., & Camerer, C. (1998). Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust. *Academy of Management Review, 23*(3), 393-404. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1998.926617

Rowley, S., & Ong, R. (2012). Housing affordability, housing stress and household wellbeing in. *Mental Health, 76*(69), 67.

Ryan, A., & O'Malley, L. (2016). The role of the boundary spanner in bringing about innovation in cross-sector partnerships. *Scandinavian Journal of Management, 32*(1), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2015.09.002

Ryland, D. B. (2023). *The social construction of housing tenure in Aotearoa New Zealand, 1900 to 1990: Crisis, place, and the path to a dual tenure regime* [Doctoral thesis, Massey University, Manawatū, Aotearoa New Zealand]. Massey Research Online.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Sampson, R. J. (2012). *Great American city: Chicago and the enduring neighborhood effect*. University of Chicago press.

Sampson, R. J., Raudenbush, S. W., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy. *Science*, *277*(5328), 918-924. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.277.5328.918

Sandel, M. J. (1998). *Democracy's discontent: America in search of a public philosophy.* Harvard University Press.

Sautkina, E., Bond, L., & Kearns, A. (2012). Mixed evidence on mixed tenure effects: Findings from a systematic review of UK studies, 1995–2009. *Housing Studies, 27*(6), 748–782. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2012.714461

Savin-Baden, M., & Howell-Major, C. (2013). *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice.* Routledge.

Schön, D. A. (2017). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Routledge.

Schrader, B. (1996). A brave new world? Ideal versus reality in postwar Naenae. *New Zealand Journal of History, 30*(2), 124–140.

Schrader, B. (2005). *We call it home: A history of state housing in New Zealand*. Reed Publishing.

Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts.* Yale University Press.

Sen, A. (1999). *Commodities and capabilities*. Oxford University Press.

Sen, A. (2000). *Social exclusion: Concept, application, and scrutiny* (Social Development Papers No. 1). Asian Development Bank. https://www.adb.org/publications/social-exclusion-concept-application-and-scrutiny

Sevenhuijsen, S. (2000). Caring in the third way: The relation between obligation, responsibility and care in Third Way discourse. *Critical Social Policy, 20*(1), 5–37. https://doi.org/10.1177/026101830002000101

Sevenhuijsen, S. (2003). The place of care: The relevance of the feminist ethic of care for social policy. *Feminist Theory, 4*(2), 179–197. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700103004002003

Shaffer, R. (1989). *Community economics: Economic structure and change in smaller communities.* Iowa State University Press.

Shahid, M., & Jha, M. K. (2016). Community development practice in India: Interrogating caste and common sense. In A. Ledwith & M. Williams (Eds.), *Class, inequality and*

community development (pp. 93–106). Policy Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1t89485.14

Shaw, M. (2008). Community development and the politics of community. *Community Development Journal, 43*(1), 24–36. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsl029

Shaw, M. (2011). Stuck in the middle? Community development, community engagement and the dangerous business of learning for democracy. *Community Development Journal, 46*(Suppl_2), ii128–ii146. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsr013

Shaw, M. (2017). Community development: reviving critical agency in times of crisis. In *The Routledge Handbook of Community Development* (pp. 26-39). Routledge.

Shaw, M., & Crowther, J. (2014). Adult education, community development and democracy: Renegotiating the terms of engagement. *Community Development Journal, 49*(3), 390–406. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsu015

Shaw, C. R., & McKay, H. D. (1942). *Juvenile delinquency and urban areas: A study of rates of delinquency in relation to differential characteristics of local communities in American cities.* University of Chicago Press.

Shevellar, L., & Barringham, N. (2019). Negotiating roles and boundaries: Ethical challenges in community work. In L. Shevellar & P. Westoby (Eds.), *Ethics, equity, and community development* (pp. 59–82). Policy Press.

Shortall, S. (2004). Social or economic goals, civic inclusion or exclusion? An analysis of rural development theory and practice. *Sociologia ruralis, 44*(1), 109-123. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9523.2004.00265.x

Shucksmith, M. (2000). Endogenous development, social capital and social inclusion: Perspectives from LEADER in the UK. *Sociologia Ruralis, 40*(2), 208–218. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9523.00143

Simone, A. (2014). People as infrastructure: Intersecting fragments in Johannesburg (2004). In *The people, place, and space reader* (pp. 241-246). Routledge.

Skerratt, S., & Steiner, A. (2013). Working with communities-of-place: Complexities of empowerment. *Local Economy, 28(3),* 320–338. https://doi.org/10.1177/0269094212472453

Small, M. L., Jacobs, E. M., & Massengill, R. P. (2008). Why organizational ties matter for neighborhood effects: Resource access through childcare centers. *Social Forces, 87*(1), 387–414. https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.0.0104

Smith, C. (2018). *Treasury living standards dashboard: Monitoring intergenerational wellbeing*. Kōtātā Insight. https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/commissioned-report/treasury-living-standards-dashboard-monitoring-intergenerational-wellbeing

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Smith, R. C., Bossen, C., & Kanstrup, A. M. (2017). Participatory design in an era of participation. *CoDesign, 13*(2), 65-69. https://doi.org/10.1080/15710882.2017.1316402

Social Investment Agency. (2019). *Measuring the impact of social housing placement on wellbeing*. Social Investment Agency.

Somerville, P. (2016). Governmental approaches to community. In *Understanding community* (pp. 91–120). Policy Press.

Somerville, P., & Steele, A. (1995). Making sense of tenant participation. *Netherlands Journal of Housing and the Built Environment, 10*(3), 259-281. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02496634

Spies-Butcher, B. (2002). Tracing the rational choice origins of social capital: is social capital a neo-liberal 'Trojan Horse'. *Australian Journal of Social Issues, The*, *37*(2), 173-192. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1839-4655.2002.tb01116.x

Spiller, C., Erakovic, L., Henare, M., & Pio, E. (2011). Relational well-being and wealth: Māori businesses and an ethic of care. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *98*, 153-169.

Srivarathan, A., Lund, R., Christensen, U., & Kristiansen, M. (2020). Social relations, community engagement and potentials: A qualitative study exploring resident engagement in a community-based health promotion intervention in a deprived social housing area. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(7),* 2341. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17072341

Stephens, M. (2008). Housing and the welfare state in the UK: Changing roles and responsibilities. *Housing Studies, 23*(4), 515–534. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673030802416619

Sugden, R. J. (2019). *Community organising or organising community? Exploring the rhetoric and reality of community participation in English urban regeneration policy 1997–2015* [Doctoral dissertation, Kingston University]. Kingston University Research Repository. https://eprints.kingston.ac.uk/id/eprint/46663/1/Sugden-R-46663.pdf

Suttles, G. D. (1976). Urban ethnography: Situational and normative accounts. *Annual Review of Sociology, 2*(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.02.080176.000245

Szreter, S., & Woolcock, M. (2004). Health by association? Social capital, social theory, and the political economy of public health. *International Journal of Epidemiology, 33*(4), 650-667. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315239927-30

Tankersley, M. L. (2004, November). *Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Community Development*. Paper presented at Big Day In: Community Development Conference, (pp. 1–12). Wellington, New Zealand.

Taylor, M. (1998). Combating the social exclusion of housing estates. *Housing Studies, 13(*6), 819–832. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673039883368

Taylor, M. (2000). Communities in the lead: Power, organisational capacity and social capital. *Urban Studies, 37*(5–6), 1019–1035. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980050011253

Taylor, M. (2007). Community participation in the real world: Opportunities and pitfalls in new governance spaces. *Urban Studies, 44*(2), 297–317. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980601074987

Taylor, M. (2011). *Public Policy in the Community* (2nd ed.). Bloomsbury Publishing.

Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. L. (2015). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Teariki, M., & Leau, E. (2023). Pacific worldviews for public housing and urban renewal. *Kōtuitui, 19*(2), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/1177083X.2023.123456

Te Puni Kōkiri. (2017). *A guide to Papakāinga housing*. Retrieved from: https://www.tpk.govt.nz/documents/download/3201/tpk-guide-papak%C4%81inga-housing-2017.pdf

Thomas, D. N. (1983). *The making of community work*. Allen & Unwin.

Thorns, D. C. (2000). Housing policy in the 1990s: New Zealand a decade of change. *Housing Studies, 15*(1), 129–138.

Thomsen, S., Tavita, J., & Levi-Teu, Z. (2018). *A Pacific perspective on the living standards framework and wellbeing* (No. 18/09). New Zealand Treasury Discussion Paper. https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/dp/dp-18-09

Titmuss, R. M. (1970). *The gift relationship: From human blood to social policy*. Allen & Unwin.

Tompkins, G. (2015). Social capital and its application to Māori social policy. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, *27*(4), 16-24. https://doi.org/10.11157/anzswj-vol27iss4id433

Toomey, A. H. (2011). Empowerment and disempowerment in community development practice: Eight roles practitioners play. *Community Development Journal, 46*(2), 181–195. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsq045

Trlin, A. (1977). State housing: Shelter and welfare in suburbia. In P. Koopman-Boyden (Ed.), *Social welfare and New Zealand society* (pp. 106–131). Methuen Publications.

Tronto, J. C. (1993). *Moral boundaries: A political argument for an ethic of care*. Routledge.

Tronto, J. C. (2013). Caring democracy: Markets, equality, and justice. In *Caring Democracy*. New York University Press.

Trubits, E. F. (2024). *It takes a village: An examination of social relationships and mental health* (Publication No. 6584) [Doctoral dissertation, Portland State University]. *Portland State University Library, Dissertations and Theses*. https://doi.org/10.15760/etd.3716

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, W. K. (2000). A multidisciplinary analysis of the nature, meaning, and measurement of trust. *Review of Educational Research, 70*(4), 547–593. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543070004547

Tually, S., Skinner, W., Faulkner, D., & Goodwin-Smith, I. (2020). (Re)building home and community in the social housing sector: Lessons from a South Australian approach. *Social Inclusion, 8*(3), 88–101. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v8i3.2854

Tuan, Y. F. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience.* University of Minnesota Press.

Tunstall, R. K., & Pleace, N. (2018). *Social housing: Evidence review*. University of York. https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/136236/

Turner, A. (2009). Bottom-up community development: Reality or rhetoric? The example of the Kingsmead Kabin in East London. *Community Development Journal, 44*(2), 230–247. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsn041

Tu'itahi, S. (2009). Fonofale: *An integrated model for Pacific health promotion*. Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand – Runanga Whakapiki Ake i te Hauora o Aotearoa.

Twelvetrees, A. (2008) *Community Work*, Palgrave MacMillan

United Nations General Assembly. (2000). United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55/2). https://undocs.org/A/RES/55/2

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. (2021). *#Housing2030*. United Nations.

Wacquant, L. (2008). Relocating gentrification: The working class, science and the state in recent urban research. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 32*(1), 198-205. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2008.00774.x

Wacquant, L. J., & Wilson, W. J. (1989). The cost of racial and class exclusion in the inner city. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 501*(1), 8–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716289501001001

Waitoki, W., Nikora, L. W., Harris, P. E. T. K., & Levy, M. P. (2014). *Māori experiences of bipolar disorder: Pathways to recovery*. Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui.

Waitoki, W., Nikora, L. W., Harris, P. E. T. K., & Levy, M. P. (2015). *Reconnecting whānau: Pathways to recovery for Māori with bipolar disorder*. Māori and Psychology Research Unit, University of Waikato.

Waldegrave, C., Thompson, A., & Love, C. (2013). *Research to identify the impacts and opportunities for Māori from recent changes to social housing provision*. Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit.

Walker, R. (1990). *Ka whaiwhai tonu matou - Struggle without end*. Penguin Books.

Wallace, A. (2016). *Remaking community? New Labour and the governance of poor neighbourhoods.* Routledge.

Wannan, A*. (2016*). *Everyday life and community renewal in public housing neighbourhoods in suburban Sydney* [*Doctoral dissertation*, UNSW Sydney]. UNSWorks. https://unsworks.unsw.edu.au/

Warburton, D. (2009). *Community and sustainability*. Policy Press.

Ware, F., Breheny, M., & Forster, M. (2018). *Kaupapa Kōrero*: A Māori cultural approach to narrative inquiry. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples, 14*(1), 45-53. https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180117744810

Warr, D. J. (2005). Social networks in a 'discredited' neighbourhood. *Journal of Sociology, 41*(3), 285–308. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783305057079

Warren, R. L. (1970). The good community—What would it be? *Journal of the Community Development Society, 1(*1), 14–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/00103829.1970.10877636

Waters, T. (2007). Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft societies. In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (pp. 1–4). Blackwell Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeosg073

Watt, P. (2006). Respectability, roughness and 'race': Neighbourhood place images and the making of working-class social distinctions in London. *International Journal of Urban*

and Regional Research, 30(4), 776–797. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2006.00688.x

Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of economic and social organization* (A. M. Henderson & T. Parsons, Trans.). Oxford University Press.

Weijers, D., & Morrison, P. S. (2018). Wellbeing and public policy: Can New Zealand be a leading light for the wellbeing approach? *Policy Quarterly, 14*(4), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.26686/pq.v14i4.5163

Wellington City Council. (2009). *Community Action Framework and Action Plan*. City Housing, Wellington City Council.

Wellington City Council. (2010). *City Housing Engagement Framework.* Wellington City Council.

Wendt, A. (1996). Tatauing the post-colonial body. *Span, 42–43*, 15–29.

Wenger, E. (1999). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.

Werner, D. (2021). Holding the public trust: Forms of trust in democratic countries and their determinants. *Res Publica: Journal of Undergraduate Research, 26*(1), Article 7.

White, S. C. (2010). Analysing wellbeing: A framework for development practice. *Development in practice*,*20*(2), 158-172. https://doi.org/10.1080/09614520903564199

White, S. C. (2015). *Relational wellbeing: A theoretical and operational approach* (Bath Papers in International Development and Wellbeing No. 43). University of Bath, Centre for Development Studies.

Wi Parata v Bishop of Wellington (1877) 3 NZ Jur (NS) SC 72.

Williams, P. (2002). The competent boundary spanner. *Public Administration, 80*(1), 103–124. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9299.00296

Williams, P. (2012). We are all boundary spanners now?. In *Collaboration in Public Policy and Practice* (pp. 95-118). Policy Press.

Williams, R. (1983). *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society* (Rev. ed.). Oxford University Press.

Williams, R. (2002). *The spaces between: A framework for community engagement*. Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham.

Williams, R. (2014). *'Fixing poor communities': Public housing tenants, front-line bureaucrats and community improvement programmes* [Doctoral dissertation, Swinburne University of Technology]. Swinburne Research Bank.

https://researchbank.swinburne.edu.au/items/9b752a87-c9a7-4500-872a-d51124e979d9

Williams, A. J., Maguire, K., Morrissey, K., Taylor, T., & Wyatt, K. (2020). Social cohesion, mental wellbeing and health-related quality of life among a cohort of social housing residents in Cornwall: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health, 20*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-09043-9

Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy*. University of Chicago Press.

Wiseman, J., & Brasher, K. (2008). Community wellbeing in an unwell world: Trends, challenges, and possibilities. *Journal of Public Health Policy, 29*, 353-366. https://doi.org/10.1057/jphp.2008.16

Wolcott, H. F. (2002). Writing up qualitative research... better. *Qualitative Health Research*, *12*(1), 91–103. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732302012001008

Wolf, J., Burnam, A., Koegel, P., Sullivan, G., Morton, S. C., & Wenzel, S. L. (2015). Changes in subjective quality of life among homeless adults who obtain housing: A prospective examination. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 50*(2), 231–241. https://doi.org/10.1007/s001270170029

Wood, M. (2002). *Resident participation, social cohesion and sustainability in community renewal*. Paper presented at the Housing, Crime and Stronger Communities Conference, Sheffield. University of Western Sydney, Urban Frontiers Program.

Wood, M., Randolph, B., & Judd, B. (2001, November). *Resident participation, social cohesion and sustainability in neighbourhood renewa*l: *Developing best practice models*. Paper presented at the National Housing Conference, Brisbane.

Woolcock, M. (2001). The place of social capital in understanding social and economic outcomes. *Canadian Journal of Policy Research, 2*(1), 11–17.

Yanow, D. (2014). Interpretive analysis and comparative research. In I. Engeli & C. R. Allison (Eds.), *Comparative policy studies: Conceptual and methodological challenges* (pp. 131–159). Palgrave Macmillan.

Young, I. M. (2000). *Inclusion and Democracy.* Oxford University Press.

Young, M., & Wilmott, P. (2013). *Family and Kinship in East London*. Routledge.

Zhu, R., & Hu, X. (2023). The public needs more: The informational and emotional support of public communication amidst COVID-19 in China. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, 84,* 103469. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2022.103469

Zimmerman, M. A. (1995). Psychological empowerment: Issues and illustrations. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 23*(5), 581–599. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02506983

Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

This glossary presents key terms and concepts used throughout the thesis. The definitions reflect academic, cultural, and community-based understandings relevant to housing, wellbeing, governance, and relational practice.

Te Reo Words and Concepts[13]	
Word or concept	Meaning
Awhi/Awhitanga	To embrace, hug, cuddle, cherish.
Hauora	An holistic approach to wellbeing
He tangata, He tangata, He tangata,	"It is people, it is people, it is people." This *whakataukī* (proverb) affirms that the wellbeing of people is at the heart of all things. It's a values anchor in Māori worldviews, reminding us to centre human relationships and humanity in all work.
He Toa Takitini	Literally, "a strength of many." This concept reflects the collective nature of achievement and resilience—emphasising that success is not individual but communal, built through shared effort and solidarity.
Kaitiaki/Kaitiakitanga	A guardian or protector; *kaitiakitanga* is the responsibility of stewardship, particularly over land, taonga, and people. It reflects a sacred duty to care for and sustain the environment, relationships, and knowledge for future generations.
Kaupapa Māori	*Kaupapa* Māori is both a theory and a methodological framework grounded in Māori values, principles, and worldviews. It centres Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing, and challenges dominant Western paradigms that have historically marginalised Indigenous knowledge.
Kōrero	*Kōrero* is to say, speak, discuss, and address. It is also a noun - speech, narrative, story, news, account, discussion, conversation, discourse, statement, information.
Manaakitanga	Hospitality, generosity, and care for others. This principle guides how people are welcomed, supported, and uplifted—affirming the mana (dignity, authority) of others through kindness and respectful action.
Mahi Tahi	Working together in unity. *Mahi tahi* describes collaborative action and shared purpose. It is a principle of cooperative practice rooted in trust and collective responsibility
Mana Motuhake	Autonomy, authority, and self-determination. In both personal and collective contexts, mana motuhake reflects the right to define one's identity, make decisions, and act independently, often in connection to Māori sovereignty and *Tino Rangatiratanga.*

[13] Te Ake – Māori Dictionary https://Māoridictionary.co.nz/

Mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge systems and ways of knowing, encompassing ancestral wisdom, practices, values, and worldviews. It includes both traditional and contemporary Māori knowledge and is integral to identity, wellbeing, and relational living.
Mana ōrite	Equal standing or shared authority. A principle recognising equitable partnerships, particularly between Māori and non-Māori. Often invoked in Treaty-based governance and *kaupapa* Māori research, *mana ōrite* affirms power-sharing, relational accountability, and the ethical obligation to uphold Māori authority and *Tino Rangatiratanga.*
Mana Whakahaere	*Mana whakahaere* is the authority to govern or manage. It emphasises local autonomy, relational accountability, and the right to shape priorities in accordance with cultural values and collective aspirations.
Mihi Whakatau	A formal yet flexible welcoming process. A *mihi whakatau* is used to open meetings or events with appropriate cultural acknowledgement, connection, and respect, especially when a full *pōwhiri* is not required.
Poroporoaki	*Poroporoaki* is a farewell and ending ritual.
Pūtea	Money, funding, or financial resources. In relational contexts, *pūtea* may also refer to collective contributions or financial support for communal purposes, e.g. tangihanga or hui.
Ō Tātou Uara	“Our values.” This phrase signals shared principles that underpin action and decision-making within organisations or communities, aligning with collective ethics and *kaupapa*.
Rohe	Boundary, district, region, territory, area, border (of land).
Taonga	Treasures—tangible or intangible. *Taonga* can include land, language, people, knowledge, practices, or relationships. What is treasured is contextual and culturally defined, and must be respected and protected.
Te Ao Māori	The Māori worldview. *Te Ao Māori* encompasses interconnectedness between people, *whenua* (land), atua (spiritual beings), and all living things. It reflects holistic, relational, and cyclical ways of understanding the world.
Te hunga ora, te hunga mate	Literally means the living and the dead. The phrase honours the continuity between ancestors and the current generation.
Te Pae Māhutonga	*Te Pae Māhutonga* The model integrates individual and collective wellbeing, cultural identity, environmental sustainability, and community agency into a coherent Māori vision of health and development.
Te Whare Tapa Whā	*Te Whare Tapa Whā* presents a holistic model of Māori wellbeing, likening a person’s health to the four walls of a wharenui (meeting house).
Waiora	A state of wellbeing—spiritual, emotional, physical, and collective. *Waiora* is a key goal in Māori health models, denoting not just wellness, but harmony with self, others, and the environment.
Whakapapa	Genealogy, layers of connection, and origin. *Whakapapa* is central to identity, relational understanding, and belonging. It links people to each other, to the land, and to the cosmos through ancestral lines**.**

Whanake	To grow, evolve, or progress. *Whanake* represents development over time—whether personal, collective, or organisational. It signals continuous improvement grounded in *whakapapa* and *kaupapa* Māori.
Whānau	Extended family or kin group. More than just nuclear family, *whānau* refers to collective relationships that include shared responsibility, care, and belonging. In practice, it underpins support systems and social cohesion.
Whakawhanaungatanga	The process of building and maintaining relationships. It involves establishing trust, shared understanding, and mutual respect. *Whakawhanaungatanga* is foundational in Māori social practice and community development.
Whanaungatanga	The outcome or state of connectedness and kinship. It refers to the bonds formed through *whakawhanaungatanga* and is a key source of collective strength, support, and accountability.
Note on style: In this thesis, *te reo* Māori terms—including *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* —are consistently italicised to acknowledge their cultural specificity and to distinguish the Māori text from its English counterpart. This differs from APA 7 guidelines, which recommend italicising non-English terms on first use only.	

Pasifika Words and Concepts[14]

Word or concept	Meaning
Fonofale Model	The *Fonofale* Model uses the metaphor of a traditional Samoan fale (house) to represent wellbeing
Fonua Model	The *Fonua* Model conceptualises wellbeing as a holistic, layered connection between people, place, and spirit**:**
Kainga	*Kainga* is not just a home—it is a relational and spiritual ecosystem**.** It encompasses people, place, history, and responsibility, grounded in values of reciprocity, care, and intergenerational wellbeing.
Loto	*Loto* reflects the seat of emotions, thought, and moral intention. It's not just emotional—it encompasses the ethical and spiritual core of a person.
Teu Le Vā	*Teu Le Vā* means to “nurture the space between,” referring to the relational space (vā) between people, communities, and environments
Te Vaka Atafaga model	*Te Vaka Atafaga* uses the metaphor of a voyaging canoe to represent the collective journey of health and wellbeing for Tokelauan people
Tivaevae Model	The *Tivaevae* model draws on the cultural practice of quilt-making, where each piece is sewn together in collaboration, care, and creativity
Vā fealoaloa'i	*Vā fealoaloa'i* conveys the idea of respectful, reciprocal relationships—where the relational space is actively cared for to maintain harmony, mutual dignity, and collective wellbeing**.**
Note on style: In this thesis, Pasifika terms are consistently italicised to acknowledge their cultural specificity. This differs from APA 7 guidelines, which recommend italicising non-English terms on first use only.	

[14] Teariki and Leau (2023) and Wendt (1996)

Concepts discussed throughout this thesis		
Concept	Definition	Theorist(s)
Advanced urban marginality	This describes the spatial concentration of extreme poverty, exclusion, and state neglect in urban areas. It reflects structural disinvestment, weakened institutions, and punitive governance, producing durable social and territorial stigmatisation.	Wacquant (2008)
Affective economies	The ways emotions circulate socially—attaching to people, ideas, or institutions—and influencing power and meaning in public life.	Ahmed (2004)
Affective trust	A form of trust grounded in emotional bonds, shared meaning, and relational experience.	Lewis and Weigert (1985)
Boundary spanning	The practice of navigating across organisational, sectoral, or cultural boundaries to build relationships, broker knowledge, and enable collaboration.	Williams (2002, 2012) Prottas (1978)
Capability deprivation	A condition in which individuals or communities lack the real freedoms or opportunities to lead lives they value. It reframes poverty not solely as income deficit but as a deprivation of agency, dignity, and the ability to participate fully in social and political life.	Sen (1999, 2000)
Citizen agents	This concept challenges the notion that frontline workers are simply implementers of top-down policy. Instead, it emphasises how these actors exercise discretion and judgment, interpreting rules through the lens of local knowledge, lived experience, and personal ethics.	Newman and Clarke (1997) Durose, 2009
Claimed spaces	Spaces that are created and occupied by less powerful or marginalised groups as a form of resistance or assertion of voice and autonomy	Cornwall (2002)
Cognitive trust	Trust that is based on rational assessment, role performance, and perceived competence. Cognitive trust is a belief that others can be relied upon to act consistently and predictably.	Lewis and Weigert (1985)
Co-governance	A shared decision-making model in which state institutions and communities—often including Indigenous groups—jointly exercise authority and responsibility. Co-governance shifts power from consultation to partnership, recognising community agency and *Tino Rangatiratanga* in public governance processes.	Berkes (2009)
Collective efficacy	Describes the shared belief in a community's ability to achieve desired outcomes through mutual trust and coordinated action	Sampson et al. (1997)

Community wellbeing	A multidimensional concept involving the collective health, safety, inclusion, and vibrancy of a neighbourhood or social group.	Wiseman and Brasher (2008)
Community of practice	Groups of people who share a concern, passion, or set of problems and deepen their expertise through ongoing interaction. A CoP is more than a learning space—it is a social system where knowledge, identity, and meaning are co-constructed through practice.	Wenger (1998)
Contained participation	A form of participation that occurs within predefined institutional boundaries where powerholders control the terms of engagement.	Gaventa (2006)
Critical consciousness	An awareness of systemic power that can lead to political mobilisation.	Speer (2008)
Dilemmatic spaces	Contexts where individuals or practitioners must navigate conflicting values, norms, or institutional logics, often requiring compromise or strategic ambiguity.	Hoggett et al. (2008) Honig (1994)
Disciplined flexibility	Describes a form of adaptive leadership that combines responsiveness with principled direction.	Kaplan (1996)
Discretionary care	Emotional and practical support provided by frontline practitioners beyond formal job descriptions or policy mandates, often reflecting ethical responsiveness and relational accountability.	Banks (2010)
Deep-acting	A form of *emotional labour* where individuals attempt to *genuinely feel* the emotion they are expected to display, not just to perform it outwardly.	Hochschild (1983)
Dual embeddedness	The condition of being simultaneously rooted in both institutional/professional systems and community or cultural networks, often creating tensions or synergies.	Eversole (2012) Evans & Syrett (2007).
Dual membership	The simultaneous positioning of practitioners within both institutional and community settings, requiring navigation of dual accountabilities, expectations, and cultural norms.	Wender (1999)
Duty of Care	A legal and ethical obligation to avoid causing harm and to act in ways that support the safety and wellbeing of others, particularly those in vulnerable or dependent positions. In public services, duty of care includes relational responsibilities such as cultural safety, dignity, and equity, not just compliance with rules or procedures.	Lewis-Smith (2013)
Emotional labour	The process by which workers manage their emotions to fulfil the emotional requirements of a job, often under conditions of institutional control.	Hochschild (2012)

Empathy-in-action	Describes a form of empathy that goes beyond feeling into action—supporting others through ethical responsiveness.	Banks (2010)
Emotional containment	The process by which individuals manage or suppress their emotional responses to remain composed or meet professional norms.	Hoggett et al. (2008)
Empathic strain	The emotional tension experienced by those in helping roles when empathetic connection is intense and sustained, leading to stress or emotional exhaustion.	Hatfield et al. (1993) Figley (1995).
Epistemic injustice	The systematic marginalisation or devaluation of certain groups' knowledge, perspectives, and credibility within institutional and societal discourses.	Fricker (2007)
Ethics of care	An ethical framework grounded in relational interdependence, empathy, and responsiveness to the needs of others.	Gilligan (1982) Tronto (1993, 2013).
Ethical relationality	A framework that recognises relationships as central to ethics, accountability, and care. Informed by Indigenous worldviews such as *whakawhanaungatanga*, it emphasises mutual respect, interdependence, and the obligations that arise through connection.	Wilson (2008) Mila-Schaaf (2010) Penny et al. (2024)
Hidden spaces	Informal or less visible arenas where marginalised actors can exercise influence, develop strategies, and build relationships outside formal decision-making structures.	Gaventa (2006)
Infrapolitics	Subtle, everyday forms of resistance carried out by marginalised groups that avoid direct confrontation but express dissent and agency under oppressive systems.	Scott (1990)
Institutional ambiguity	A condition in which organisational roles, mandates, or expectations are unclear or overlapping, creating dilemmas for practitioners. It often arises in transitional policy contexts or hybrid governance models, requiring navigation between conflicting logics or accountabilities.	Honig (1994); Hoggett et al. (2008) Lipsky (1980)
Institutional entrepreneur	An actor who drives change within and across organisations by adapting practices, norms, and relationships to suit shifting contexts. In local governance, this involves strategies like *sharing*, *borrowing*, and *remembering* to enable innovation from within.	Lowndes (2005)
Invited spaces	Spaces created or sanctioned by institutions where community members are invited to participate in decision-making processes, often with predefined boundaries.	Cornwall (2002)

Moral distress	Describes the psychological and ethical discomfort experienced when individuals cannot act in accordance with their values due to institutional constraints, role expectations, or power asymmetries	Hatfield et al. (1993)
Moral legitimacy (and loss of)	The perception that an organisation or institution is acting in alignment with ethical principles, public trust, and its stated values. It is compromised when actions are seen as unjust, self-serving, or disconnected from community expectations.	Tunstall and Pleace (2018) Fourie (2009)
Power cube	A framework that analyses power along three dimensions: spaces (closed, invited, claimed), forms (visible, hidden, invisible), and levels (local, national, global). It helps uncover how power operates and how it can be challenged or shifted through practice.	Gaventa (2006)
Participatory governance	A model of governance that actively involves citizens and communities in decision-making processes, enabling greater democratic engagement and shared authority across public, private, and civil sectors.	Fung and Wright (2003)
People as infrastructure	A concept describing how urban residents themselves become systems of support, exchange, and survival in under-resourced or informal settings.	Simone (2014)
New Public Service (NPS)	A governance philosophy prioritising citizen engagement, democratic participation, and community values over performance-based managerial models.	Denhardt and Denhardt (2000, 2016)
New Public Management (NPM)	A governance approach that applies private sector principles to public services, emphasising efficiency, performance metrics, managerial control, and market-style reforms.	Hood (1991) Newman and Clarke (1997).
Over-care	The tendency to overextend emotionally or take on too much responsibility for others' wellbeing, often leading to burnout or emotional exhaustion.	Tronto (1993, 2013)
Principled improvisation	The capacity to respond flexibly and creatively to complex or shifting situations while staying grounded in core values and ethical commitments. It is especially important in practice settings where rigid rules may be inadequate for addressing local realities, emergent needs, or cultural contexts.	Bateson (2011)
Quiet catalysts	Change agents who work relationally and discreetly, influencing systems through trust-building, presence, and behind-the-scenes leadership.	Banks and Orton (2007) Ledwith (2011)
Reflection-in-action	A form of learning where practitioners think critically *while* acting, adjusting their strategies in real time based on unfolding dynamics.	Schön (1983)

Reflexivity	The practice of critically examining one's own positionality, values, and assumptions in relation to the research or practice context.	Finlay (2002) Berger (2015) Krauss (2005)
Relational governance	A form of governance that prioritises trust-based relationships, mutual accountability, and ongoing dialogue over hierarchical or rules-based control.	Ansell and Gash, (2008)
Reparative impulse or repair	A motivating force to repair harm and restore relationships, often rooted in ethical practice and emotional responsibility.	Hoggett et al. (2008)
Relational wellbeing	A concept of wellbeing rooted in interdependence, collective responsibility, and the quality of relationships, rather than individual achievement or material conditions.	White (2010)
Residualisation	The policy-driven concentration of disadvantage within public housing, where housing becomes a safety net only for those most in need.	Jacobs et al. (2003)
Residual welfare model	A public policy approach that restricts welfare services to only those considered most in need, often resulting in stigmatisation, disinvestment, and structural disadvantage.	Jacobs et al. (2003)
Ring-fencing	A fiscal policy mechanism that protects specific funding or roles—such as for care, culture, or community—from cuts or diversion to other uses.	Davies and Pill (2012)
Situated ethics	Ethics that are context-dependent, emerging from the specific relationships, power dynamics, and cultural settings practitioners are embedded.	Banks (2011)
Spaces of care	Sites that emerge not through formal policy but through the mundane, everyday acts of kindness, solidarity, and mutual aid	Mee (2009)
Social exclusion	The process by which individuals or groups are systematically blocked from accessing rights, opportunities, and resources that are normally available to others.	Levitas et al. (2007)
Social wayfinding	Process of referring residents in the direction of necessary local social and other supports in order to build individual and community capacity for engagement, participation and wellbeing.	Tually et al. (2020)
Street-level bureaucrat	Frontline public service workers—such as housing officers, social workers, and case managers—whose daily discretionary decisions shape how policies are enacted.	Lipsky (1980)
Subjective wellbeing	An individual's self-assessment of life satisfaction, emotional experiences, and perceived quality of life, often used as a measure of personal wellbeing	Diener et al. (1999)
Systemic trust	Confidence in the fairness and responsiveness of institutions, built through consistent, just actions.	Rothstein and Stolle, (2008) Kay, 2005

	Unlike interpersonal trust, systemic trust reflects belief in the integrity of public systems.	
Third-way	A political and policy philosophy that seeks to reconcile right- and left-wing positions by advocating a synthesis of market-based economics with social justice goals	Giddens (1998)
Translation agents	Individuals or roles that mediate across cultural, organisational, or institutional boundaries, helping to "translate" values, needs, and knowledge between groups.	Eversole (2012) Newman and Clarke (1997)
Trust anchors	Predictable, observable behaviours that reinforce perceptions of trustworthiness within community life	Mee (2009)

Appendix B: Ethics Committee Approval Letter

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Date: 22 March 2021

Dear Rosie Gallen

Re: Ethics Notification - **NOR 20/66** - **More than a roof: can social housing promote inclusion and enhance wellbeing through community-based interventions?**

Thank you for the above application that was considered by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: **Human Ethics Northern Committee** at their meeting held on **Monday, 22 March, 2021**.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Professor Craig Johnson
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise
Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand **T** 06 350 5573; 06 350 5575 **F** 06 355 7973
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz **W** http://humanethics.massey.ac.nz

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

Appendix C: Key Informant Information Sheet

Project title: how can community development help public housing contribute to wellbeing?

Key Informant Information sheet
Individual interview

My name is Rosie Gallen and I am undertaking a PhD degree in Public Health through the SHORE/Te Roopu Whaariki Centre at Massey University.

The aim of the research is to understand:

1) how public housing agencies have employed community development within Aotearoa; and

2) how community development practice has changed and/or evolved over time and how it contributes to broader themes of community formation, inclusion and wellbeing

As part of an examination of the policy and practice of community development in public housing, practitioners and senior managers will be interviewed about their knowledge, experience and perspectives in the development and implementation of community development. Included is also community engagement, community empowerment, capacity building, regeneration, redevelopment and placemaking.

Participant involvement

You are invited to participate as a key informant in this research. The format will be a semi-structured interview. If you agree to participate you will be asked about your views and experiences of community development, community engagement, placemaking and other similar initiatives.

SHORE & Whariki Research Centre
Level 7, Massey University House, 90 Symonds St
P O Box 6137, Wellesley Street, Auckland, New Zealand. Tel: +64 9 366 6136.
Fax: +64 9 366 5149. Email: shore&whariki@massey.ac.nz Web:
www.shoreandwhariki.ac.nz

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND
COLLEGE OF HEALTH

The interviews should last approximately 90 minutes and will cover the following topics:

- Current policy context of public housing and the changes and impacts of policy over time;
- Community development within public housing – what problem did or was it trying to address?
- What worked and what didn't?
- The social and developmental processes undertaken by community development practitioners;
- Balancing and integrating diverse functions e.g. tenancy management, project management;
- Organisational support and challenges;
- Impacts on tenants and the wider community.

With your permission I would like to audiotape and transcribe the interview. A copy of the interview transcript (print or electronic) can be sent to you on request. If you want to make changes to the transcript you will have 3 weeks to make corrections and return it to me.

What will happen to the information

The information you provide, alongside the views of other interviewees, will contribute to my PhD thesis on the findings of this research. The information may also feature in journal articles and presentations.

Digital tapes and transcripts of interviews will be stored in password protected computer files at SHORE & Whariki's premises at 90 Symonds St, Auckland. Identifiable information will be kept so that transcripts and project summaries can be sent to you, but a de-identified copy of interview data will be used for analysis. Data will be kept for 5 years, after which it will be destroyed by the Director of the research centre.

Participant's rights

You are under no obligation to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study up to two weeks prior to publication;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher, or you can use your choice of a pseudonym if you prefer.

SHORE & Whariki Research Centre
Level 7, Massey University House, 90 Symonds St
P O Box 6137, Wellesley Street, Auckland, New Zealand. Tel: +64 9 366 6136.
Fax: +64 9 366 5149. Email: shore&whariki@massey.ac.nz Web:
www.shoreandwhariki.ac.nz

The interviews should last approximately 90 minutes and will cover the following topics:

- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- you will have the right to access your interview information and make corrections if you choose to.

I would like to thank you in advance for expressing an interest in taking part in this research

Should you wish to continue with participation, please read the Consent form, tick the appropriate boxes, and sign and return the consent form to: rosie.gallen.1@uni.massey.ac.nz

Project Contacts

Please contact me or my supervisors if they have any questions about the project at the contact details below:

Rosie Gallen at Massey University

Email: Rosie.Gallen.1@uni.massey.ac.nz Tel: 64 27 554 7099

Contact details of supervisors

Professor Karen Witten, SHORE/Te Roopu Whaariki Research Centre

Email: k.witten@massey.ac.nz

Dr Penelope Carroll, SHORE/Te Roopu Whaariki Research Centre

Email: p.a.carroll@massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 20/66. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Fiona Te Momo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800, x 43347, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz

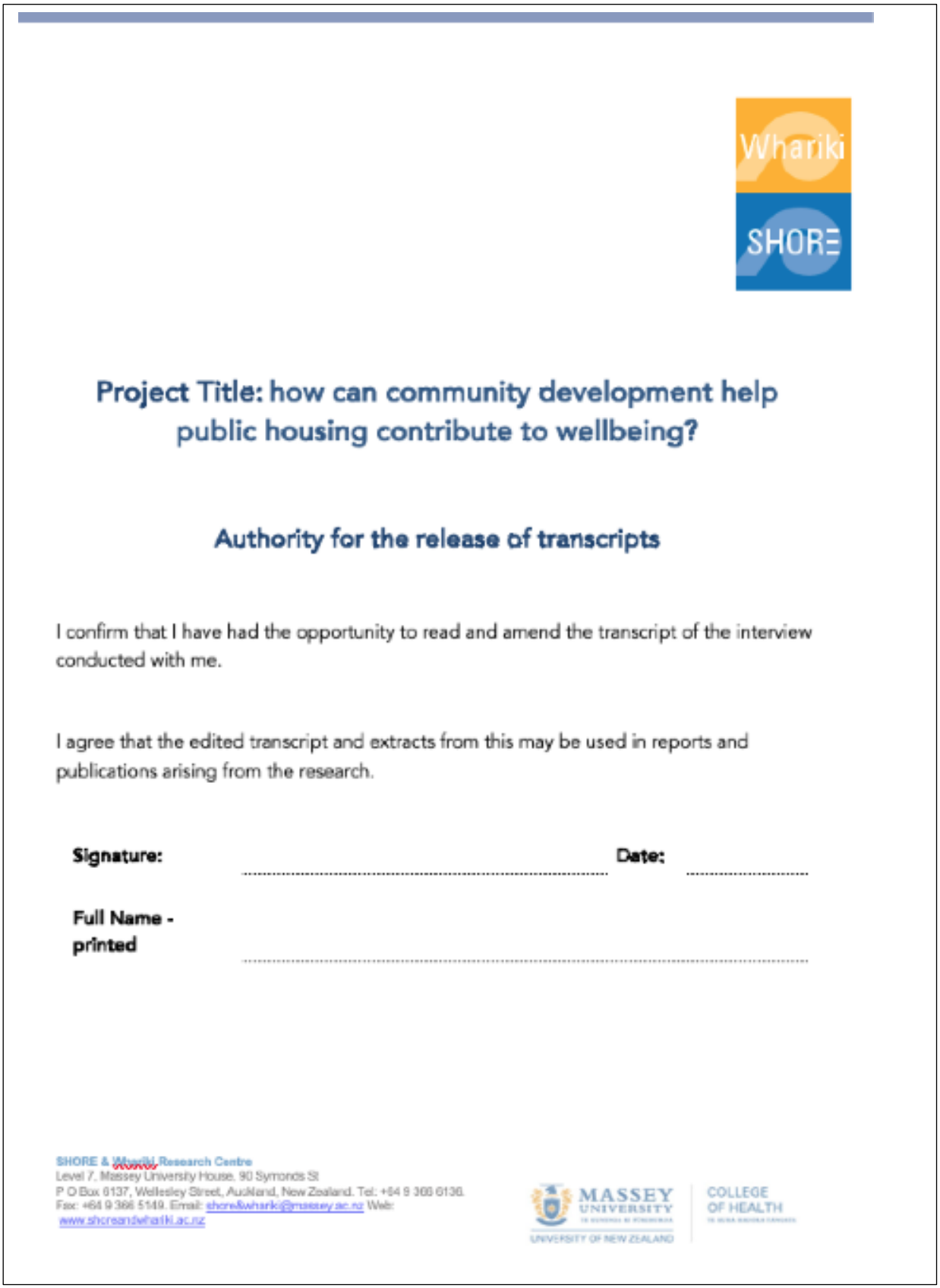
Appendix D: Key Informant Interview Guide

Interview checklist	
Explain the interview process and that I will be using a voice recorder	
Key informant information sheet	
Consent form	
Transcription release authority	

Introduction to the research topic and overall aim of the study		
Topic		Questions
General	1	Can you describe your role with the Community Renewal programme and how long did you have this role?
	2	Was there an awareness of the role of the public service within HNZC at the time when you joined? Did this change during the time you were there?
	3	How would you define community development?
Programme	4	Can you describe the aim of the CR programme?
	5	What issues was the programme trying to address?
	6	Did these issues change over the time you were at HNZC?
	7	Can you describe the organisational support for this approach?
	8	Did the way the programme was funded have any impact on the outcomes of the programme?
	9	How did the programme differ from other initiatives in HNZC?
Community development	10	Can you describe what the practice of community development contributed to the programme?
	11	What skills and qualities are the most important to be an effective community development practitioner within public housing?
	12	What was your most satisfying aspect of this programme? What was your least satisfying aspect?

	13	Can you describe how community development integrated with other public housing functions?
	14	Thinking about how you practiced community development, can you describe any competing objectives or priorities? If yes, what attempts were made to reconcile them?
	15	Can you describe what you saw as having the most impact on individual tenants? The wider community?
	16	How did the tenant community respond to the programme?
	17	On a scale of 1-10 how essential is CD practice to effective public housing?
	18	Do you think community development practice can be effective situated within a public housing organisation? Follow up question: Do you think it is more suited elsewhere?
Evaluation	19	Community Renewal was evaluated. What did results tell you about the programme? Did anything surprise you?
Reflection	20	Is there anything you would do differently?
	21	Are there any learnings you might want to share with others?
In conclusion	22	Is there anything that you would like to comment on or add before we finish?

Appendix E: Transcription Release Authority



Wharik SHORE

Project Title: how can community development help public housing contribute to wellbeing?

Authority for the release of transcripts

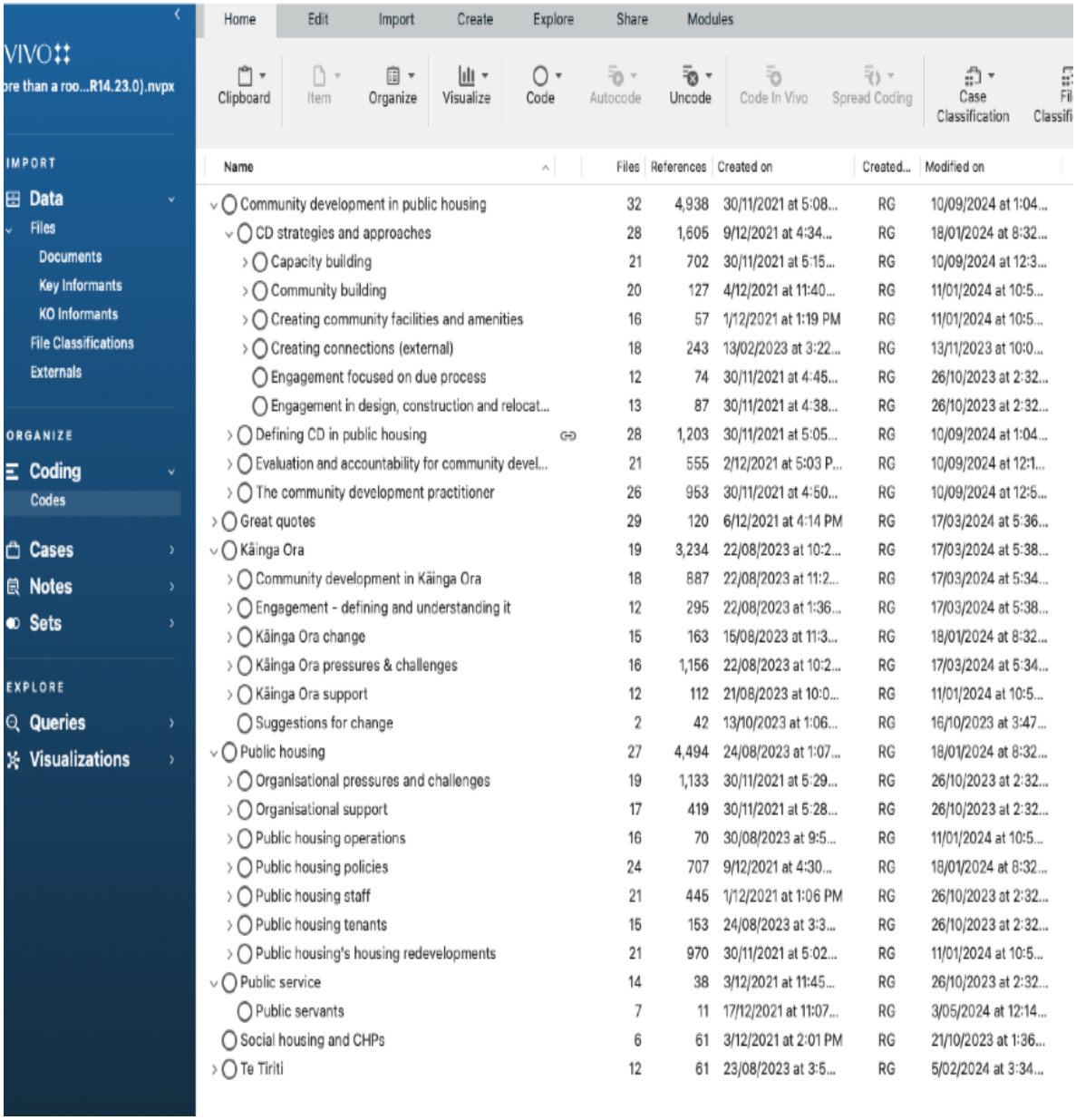
I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: ..... **Date:** .....

Full Name - printed .....

SHORE & Whariki Research Centre
Level 7, Massey University House, 90 Symonds St
P O Box 6137, Wellesley Street, Auckland, New Zealand. Tel: +64 9 369 6136.
Fax: +64 9 366 5149. Email: shore&whariki@massey.ac.nz Web:
www.shoreandwhariki.ac.nz

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND
COLLEGE OF HEALTH

Appendix F: NVivo codebook