Responses to Small Town Change

A Case Study of Pātea

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Master of Arts in Geography

by

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Abstract

This thesis works to understand responses to small town change, and discuss these in the context of existing geographic literature. It approaches the New Zealand small town of Pātea and explores a variety of identities and perspectives from those who live there. During this research, I carried out a media analysis and semi-structured interviews with Pātea community leaders. Using this context of Pātea, I discussed existing small-town literature, as the case study provided insights into strengths and limitations therein. This thesis found that discourse around Pātea tends to focus on the economic environment, whereas the people of Pātea continue to define their town in broader terms, and towards more cultural and community-focussed ideals. Many view Pātea in relation to the closing of the freezing works in 1982, and subsequent decline in employment and local business – but such perspectives often impose deterministic views on growth and development on the town, ignoring the realities of pride and place attachment which thrive – including with the ongoing influence of Pātea Māori Club and their song *Poi E*. It was also found the town has a powerful sense of empowerment and activism, which will define future opportunities such as for offshore windfarming. Through these findings, it is proposed that the academic term 'left behind' might be replaced with 'left out', to encompass landscapes beyond models of linear economic progression. I also suggest the future of Pātea is optimistic, and that there are opportunities for Pātea to demonstrate 'more-than-capitalist' economies for the rest of New Zealand to see – but that researchers and media commentators have a responsibility to represent Pātea in more than just economic terms.

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1.0 Small Towns

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I pēhea tō tātou tae atu ki te taha tonga o Tāranaki?
He aha i tīmata ai i konei?
He aha tātou wehe ai, e hoki mai ai?
Ko te noho i konei te wāhi, me te wā kei reira ngā kōrero o nehe, ngākāinga, ō tātou tūmanako me ō tātou moemoeā

Being Here – A Sense of Place / Te Noho i Konei
Aotea Utanganui – Museum of South Taranaki,
taken 28th August 2023

Our personal and communal identities are tied to place – where we live, where we are from, where we know, where we are known. Our relationships to these places can change over time and are affected by things beyond our control. Small towns around New Zealand are no exception. Trends of urbanization, deindustrialization, globalization, and climate change continue to alter the context in which these smaller communities survive (Nel & Stevenson, 2019). Local impacts might include emigrating youth, a loss of industry and employment, and/or reduced investment in local infrastructure. Communities may submit to these processes or stagnate indefinitely – while others may reinvent themselves or simply prevail beyond theoretical expectations. It is important to consider why and how places follow one path or another – both to inform future responses to decline or uncertainty, but also to give insight into how these places exist, and what it means to live in them.

In New Zealand, 36% of rural settlements (200-1,000 people), and 29% of small centres (1,000 - 9,999 people) declined in population between 1996 and 2018, compared to 5%, 8%, and 0% of medium, large and major urban centres, respectively (Nel et al., 2019). Rural areas and small centres account for about 25% of the total NZ population: 3.0% in rural settlements, 10.5% in small centres, and 12.8% in rural other (Stats NZ, 2023). These are significant numbers of people, and places,

experiencing decline. The more exaggerated declines seen in New Zealand small towns have been labelled 'zombie towns' (NBR, 2014; Neville & Rowe, 2015), and elsewhere researchers use the rhetoric of 'left behind' places (Pike et al., 2023). But as much as these statistics might convey an idea of true decline in these places, they only explain part of the story – because a declining population does not necessarily denote a decline in other areas such as economy, prosperity, or community strength. Questions need asking: is it fair to label a town as 'declining'? Is decline experienced negatively by the people there? How does the label of 'declining', or 'zombie' towns impact the people still living there? In the envisioning of this research project, these questions underpinned my curiosity, as I felt there may be a disconnect between how these towns are represented by statistics and rhetoric, and how they are experienced by those in that space. Additionally, I suspected the discourse, particularly when it comes to 'zombie towns' could hurt those places in terms of public image and investment or funding opportunities.

Researching small towns and their communities offers us the chance to explore nuances in geographies, experiences, and narratives of place. These are important to consider as many people live in small towns, yet geographic research is often focussed on urban centres (Philo, 1992; Wenham, 2020). In some cases, this has led to feelings of abandonment and neglect, and have had political consequences in the form of populist politics (Neal, 2021). Small towns and larger cities are interconnected and each important in their own right; to study cities as isolated from orbiting towns is to ignore these connections and is a disservice to those who live there.

Both individuals and small towns exist with diverse economies of people, places, and ideas – each with linked layers of social, temporal, and spatial assemblages. This makes definitive understandings of a place difficult (I would say impossible), but there is always capacity for *better* understandings. In this context, small towns can be understood each as unique and nuanced places, rather than homogenised economies and landscapes. There may be similarities between places, but these are neither defining nor definitive. When I talk about a specific place, and make conclusions about it as a small town, those ideas and concepts may not correlate with any (certainly not all) small towns – they are expected to be localised and contextual. The things we do learn from such research, though, is the ways people and places (together) defy the norms, expectations, or stereotypes placed on them. In a world of modernization and globalization, where some even claim the 'death of geography' (Han et al., 2018; Bates, 1996), it is heartening, perhaps inspiring, to find that we, and the places we live in, *do* still matter.

This thesis will explore the responses of people to changes in their small town community, and apply these as commentary on current small town geographies literature. Knowledge will be taken from

diverse economies, assemblage theory, place attachment theory, and small-town geographies. The context of this study will be the small New Zealand town of Pātea.

1.1 Rationale and positionality

The topic of this thesis was influenced by my interest in the concept of 'zombie towns', and how such a title can have subsequent impacts on a community. There were also other terms that are used, such as 'ghost towns', 'left behind' places, and even the colonial term of 'backwards' places, all painting a varyingly negative picture of place, based (usually) on a decline in population and/or certain economic metrics. I was struck by this idea, as these labels not only have impacts on the future of these places, but they may not be entirely correct or appropriate.

Pātea a good choice for this study partly due to its proximity (I live in Taranaki), but also because I was aware that my own perceptions of Pātea had been entirely shaped by the discourse not just of the media, but of my friends and family. I had only ever driven through it, never stopped or stayed there, yet I still had preconceptions of the place as somehow stunted. Meanwhile, I knew this town *also* had a more upbeat reputation through the Pātea Māori Club and their 1983 song *Poi E.* These contrasting views of a single place piqued my geographic interest, especially with both narratives coming out of the same event: the closing of the Pātea Freezing Works in 1982. My understandings of Pātea as a place and a community evolved over the course of my research, but the initial question that kept coming to mind was "What has become of Pātea?"

1.2 What *has* become of Pātea?

Pātea is a town located in the South Taranaki province of New Zealand, between the larger centres of Hāwera and Whanganui, along State-Highway 3. As of the 2018 census, there are 1,191 people residing in the township (Stats NZ, 2018). As seen in Figures 1-3, the same census reported ethnic demographics of 60.5% European, 49.1% Māori, 5.3% Pacific, and 2.5% Asian[1], which indicates a high Māori population compared to the scales of Taranaki (19.6% Māori), and New Zealand

[1] These statistics are based on census data where people could identify with more than one ethnicity, hence percentages add to more than 100%. As such, Figures 1-3 also indicate proportion of the population, rather than percentage out of 100.

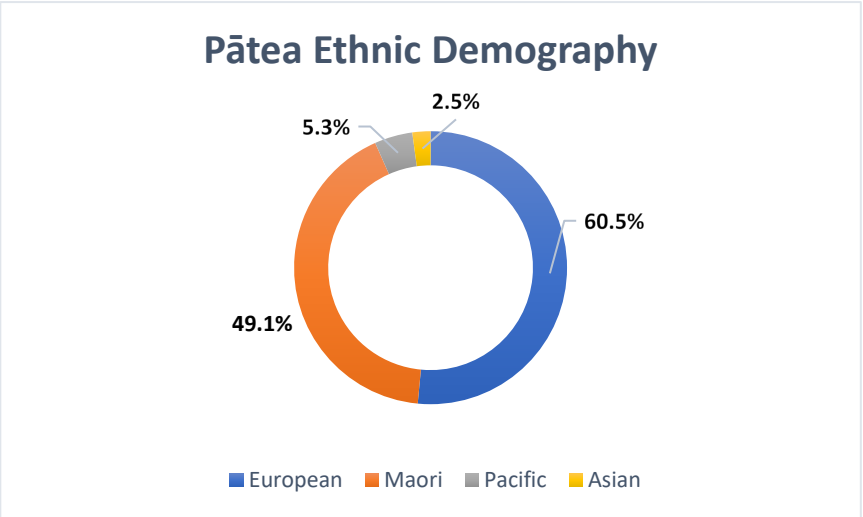


Figure 1: Pātea Ethnic Demography, 2018 Census Data (Stats NZ, 2018)

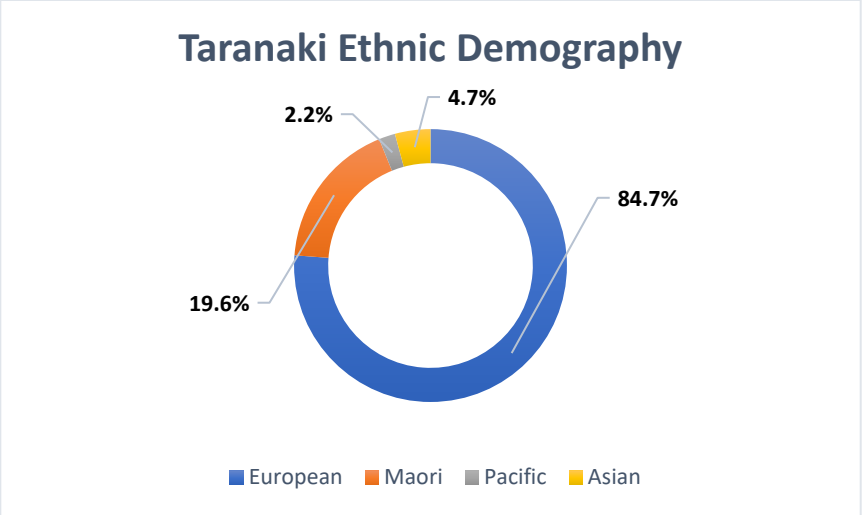
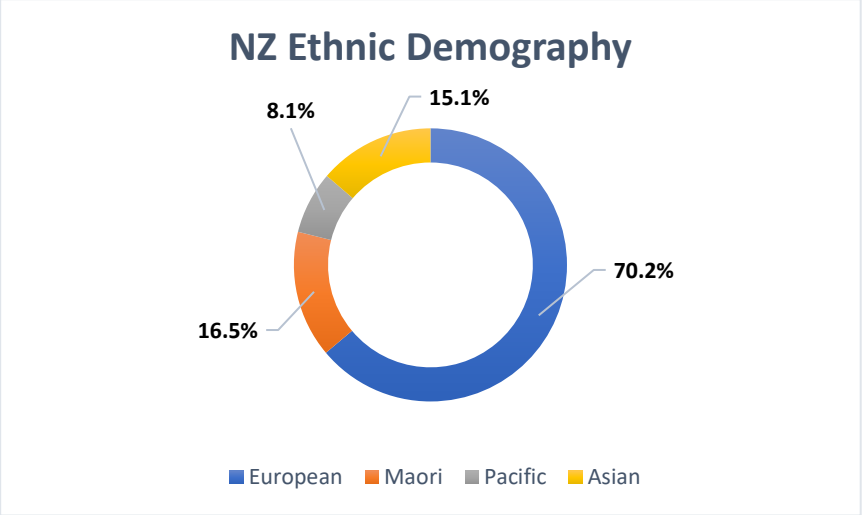


Figure 2: Taranaki Ethnic Demography, 2018 Census Data (Stats NZ, 2018)



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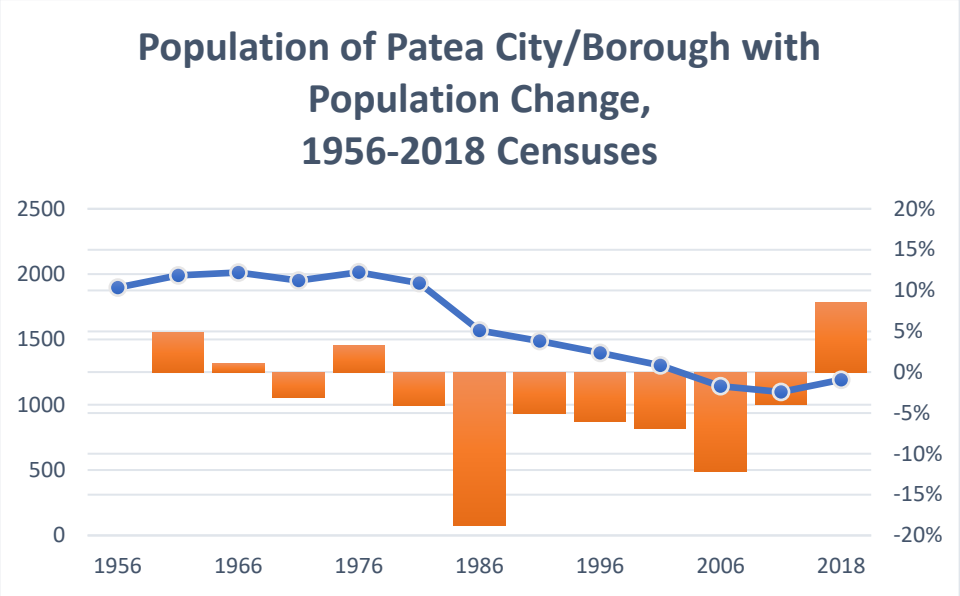

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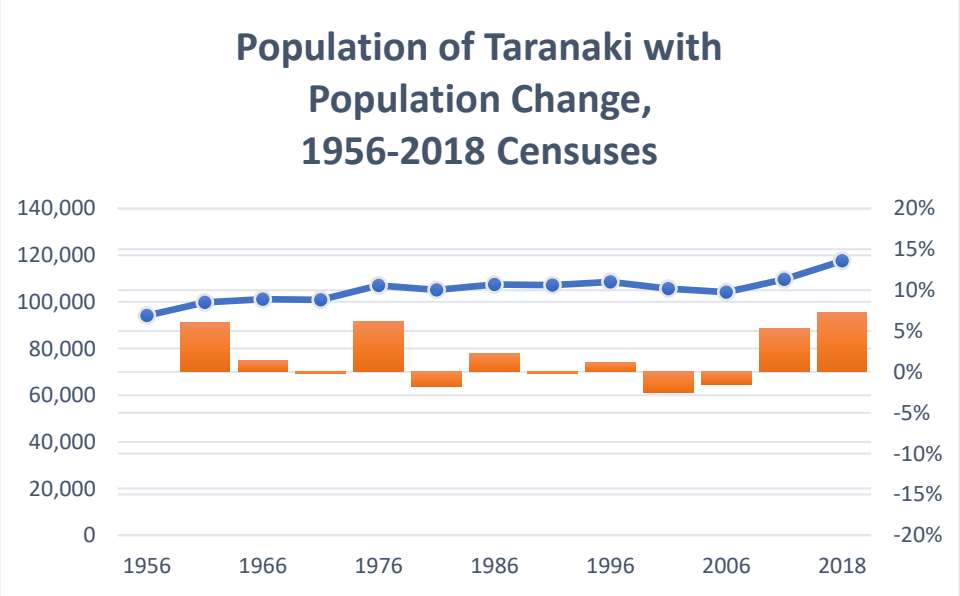

Figure 5: Taranaki Population (blue), with Population Change % (orange), 1956-2018 Census Data. (Stats NZ, 2001, 2023; NZ Yearbooks, 1956-1987)

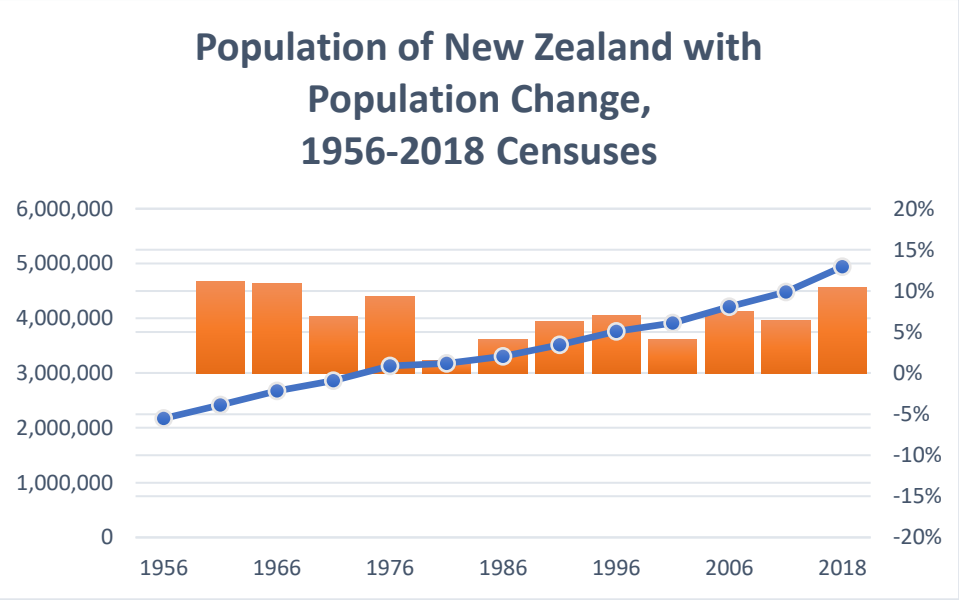

Figure 6: NZ Population (blue), with Population Change % (orange), 1956-2018 Census Data. (Stats NZ, 2001, 2023; NZ Yearbooks, 1956-1987).

(16.51% Māori). The local economy revolves largely around the farming community and provides services such as the local four square, bottle-store, café, dairies, library, and medical centre. It is also the site of Aotea Utanganui – Museum of South Taranaki, founded in 1974 and renovated in 2008-2011 (Aotea Utanganui, n.d.). The Mana Whenua of Pātea are Ngāti Ruanui, on the south side of the Pātea River (Pātea Awa), and Ngā Rauru on the northern side.

In Pātea's founding history (see Appendix A), while the surrounding area was already settled by Māori villages, Europeans founded Pātea's current site under the name of Carlyle in 1870 – changing it to Patea[2] (after the river and wider county) in 1881 (PHS, 2018a; Thomson, 1976). The local port supported the Patea Steam Shipping Company, later the South Taranaki Shipping Company, to export primarily cheese and butter. Indeed, it had become the world's largest cheese-exporting port by 1934, remaining so until the port's closure in 1959 (Aotea Utanganui, 2019). The local refrigeration industry developed over time into what became known as the Pātea Freezing Works – a company which employed up to 800 people - 720 around the time of its closing in 1982 – roughly half of these lived in the Pātea township (Melser et al., 1982; PHS, 2018b).

This closure occurred in the midst of wider restructuring and deindustrialization across New Zealand (Lewis & Moran, 1998; Conradson & Pawson, 1997; Pawson & Scott, 1992). Since the Freezing Works' closing, the population and economy of Pātea have fallen significantly, with the 1981 census

[2] The official name is Pātea, though until recent years, this macron was omitted, for the name 'Patea'. This thesis will include the macron for consistency and accuracy, *unless* historical sources or quotes have omitted it themselves. A notable example is 'Patea Freezing Works', where the macron was never included.

reporting a usually resident population of over 1,900, and in 2018 there were under 1,200 (NZ Yearbooks, 1982; Stats NZ, 2018). Figures 4-6 show the population changes of Pātea, compared to Taranaki and New Zealand statistics, as sourced from census data. The trends of decline in Pātea differ from the more stable and upward trends at regional and national scales. The closing of Pātea Freezing Works[3] caused a significant economic disruption to the town of Pātea, both immediately and longer-term. Proposals were made to keep the Works open under new ownership and management, or at least make use of the buildings, but were unsuccessful.

The closure also became the catalyst for the creation of the song *Poi E*, released in 1983 by Pātea Māori Club – with music by Dalvanius Prime (of Pātea), and lyrics by notable NZ waiata composer Ngoi Pewhairangi (Pātea Māori Club, 1984[4]; Kahi, 2016; Lyrics provided in Appendix B). *Poi E* quickly became popular, becoming the most-sold song in New Zealand in 1984, and hit the top of the New Zealand pop charts for four weeks – the first all-Māori song to even reach it (O'Connor, 2002). The song has been influential for Māori music (Perrott, 2023), and continues to be popular, even voted as "NZ's unofficial national anthem" (NZ Herald, 2017). *Poi E*, and Pātea Māori Club, became the topic of the 2016 documentary film *Poi E: The Story of Our Song* (Kahi, 2016), with creator Dalvanius Prime also interviewed for the documentary *Dalvanius* (O'Connor, 2002). The song has become a strong cultural reference to the Pātea township, with national news segments, for instance, referring to it with "Pātea: it's got the movie, the song, the Māori Club…" (ETV, 2016). Indeed, the Pātea Māori Club building is still used to this day (see Figure 7). Both the closing of the freezing works and the release of *Poi E* represent Pātea's past, but the question remains what impact they have on Pātea in the present and into the future.

1.3 Research questions

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how responses to small town change can inform understandings of small town geographies. To achieve this, the following questions were developed:

1. What relationship(s) do people have to the town of Pātea?
2. How have people responded to changes that have occurred/may occur in Pātea?
3. How do these responses relate to existing literature around small town geographies?

[3] This thesis uses Pātea Freezing Works, 'the freezing works', and 'the Works' interchangeably.
[4] The music video was released in 1984, after the initial song release in 1983.

Figure 7: Map of Pātea township, with notable landmarks coloured for food (red), services (green), and community/other (blue). Source: Created by this author using ArcGIS Software.

1.4 Thesis outline

This introductory Chapter 1 has explained the context of this research. I propose that small town geographies continue to be significant, and that all places are different and diverse – providing space for nuance in geographic literature. I contextualize my approach to this project by portraying my existing understandings of Pātea as to be subverted. I then outline the context of Pātea, and a brief history thereof, before defining the research questions.

Chapter 2: Small Town Geographies discusses the frameworks through which I have come to understand Pātea as a small town. I explore small town geographies, and the ways in which small town economies and communities operate – looking particularly at trends in urban vs rural settings. I then look at historic conceptions of places in apparent decline, with colonialist conceptions of 'backwards places', media portrayals of 'zombie towns', and modern literature around 'left behind'

places[5]. Finally, I provide critiques of these understandings from the diverse economies literature, where mainstream capitalist understandings of economy and growth are insufficient towards holistic understandings of changing places.

Chapter 3: Getting to Know Pātea will explain the methodologies used for this project. I provide the tabulated results of a media analysis across different points in Pātea's history. Next, I discuss how this informed the interviews, both in selecting interviewees and shaping interview questions. My own experiences from visiting Pātea is elaborated on, pointing out the importance of experiencing place in place-based research, before approaching the ethical considerations involved with this thesis.

Chapter 4: Representing Pātea answers the first two research questions by analysing the media analysis and interviews across the past, present, and future of Pātea. I explore different perspectives and themes which reoccurred throughout the research, including quotes from the data throughout for colour and context.

Chapter 5: Towards Inclusive Economies that Recognise Place Attachment discusses the analysis of Chapter 4 in the context of existing literature presented in Chapter 2, answering the third and final research question. Taking in turns the same sequence of past, present, and future, this section considers diverse ways of understanding the closure of the freezing works, the impact of different narratives for Pātea, and possible futures for the town. Subsequently, these topics are concluded in Chapter 6.

[5] Throughout this piece, I refer to 'left behind' places in quote marks for dual purpose. It reminds the reader that the term is fluid, lacking consistency across its academic use, and that the term can be derogative. These are explained in Chapter 2.

2 Small Town Geographies: Limits to Thinking of Places as 'Left Behind'

2.0 Introduction

Mainstream capitalist conceptions of place and growth often ignore altruistic and communal interests and actions (Gibson-Graham, 2006). This is exemplified by environmental problems, particularly the current climate crisis – solutions to which are burdened by the capitalist structures in which the world operates (McCright et al., 2016). In a world where cooperation is a solution, where do smaller communities fit? What does cooperation look like for them? How do they manage resources? Do they have the same interests and goals as larger cities? Geographers have a role to play in finding out the answers.

In what follows, I offer an investigation into contemporary literature on small town geographies – particularly those of New Zealand; I will first focus on impacts of deindustrialization, and community resilience. Next will investigate how changing, 'left behind', places have been conceived of over time, both in academia and popular media. As much as research might attempt an objective framework, the discourse we use may still unintentionally reinforce certain perspectives, stereotypes or assumptions about places, so it is important we reflect on this language, and use constructive terms in our understandings – as such, I provide 'left out' as an alternative term. Finally, I will explore diverse economies as a critique of the discussions on small town geographies and 'left behind' places.

2.1 Small town geographies in New Zealand and beyond

Rural areas, where agriculture dominates, form a high proportion of impoverished regions around the world (Lichter & Schafft, 2016). As prospects for employment in local industries drop, those finding jobs – particularly young adults – are more likely to find suitable employment elsewhere; more likely to also move out of their community and towards urban centres – contributing to this overall process of urbanisation (Ward & Brown, 2009). Lazzeroni (2019) discusses how local industry becomes redundant due to the export of production to cheaper economies, as well as technological advancements for reducing the labour required for production (Sheludkov et al., 2021; Foster & Rosenzweig, 2007).

As a country of significant rurality, NZ has many small towns with a definitive trend of depopulation (Bruce, 2014), and declining influence on the NZ economy (Brabyn, 2017). In the last 30 years, NZ has

seen its agricultural employment rate halve from around 11% to 6% (World Bank, 2021). Conradson & Pawson (1997) discuss how neoliberal restructuring in the 1980s undermined the provision of local infrastructures and amenities around New Zealand's smaller communities – looking at a South Island town, Reefton. Pawson & Scott (1992) had also looked at the job losses associated with this restructuring – as the likes of the railways, mines and post offices had their employment rates more than halved, significantly diminishing opportunities for work in smaller communities. The pair later explored (Scott & Pawson, 1999) how local initiatives for small businesses did little to replace these lost jobs – due to businesses often being owner-operated with few additional staff; these include farms, where in NZ more than 94% of them have fewer than 6 workers (Apatov et al., 2015). Thus, deindustrialisation in New Zealand, as produced through neoliberal policies, has contributed to economic decline in many small towns.

Single industry towns provide notable examples of deindustrialisation and its impacts on communities. Nel & Stevenson (2014) studied how neoliberal policies in New Zealand have had a negative impact on the wellbeing of resource-based and/or single-industry communities. Single industry towns are spread across New Zealand, and their local economies are (or have been) dominated by a single employer, such as in forestry, agriculture, or railways (Nyman & Turunen, 2011). Such industries have tended to either diminish or completely dissipate over the past several decades through urbanisation and globalisation (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012). McKirdy (2000) investigated how such processes have incurred a feedback loop in NZ small towns and their banks – they found that small communities are first affected by globalisation and restructuring, then the local bank branch closes, which in turn further diminishes the capacity and status of the community. This is an example of cumulative causation, which is when processes that may benefit or negatively affect a place or person(s) are not naturally equilibrated over time – the inequalities and such produced have potential to continue widening, until interventions or systematic shifts are made (Jackson, 2019).

In a cumulative causation framework, a community may not be growing or declining universally – but particular trends increase the likelihood that such trends are recreated across different socioeconomic avenues – with potential for accumulation in either a 'virtuous circle', or a 'vicious circle' as the case may be (Fujita, 2007). In this light, small towns may also be impacted by growth or decline around them (geographically) – though this regional context is by no means determinate (Atkinson, 2019). Martin (2016) suggests limitations of cumulative causation because growth and decline cannot continue indefinitely – either all resources are consumed at the top end of growth, or the community will dissolve at the bottom end of decline. It is still a useful concept for understanding the challenges of 'left behind' places: there may be a momentum of decline requiring resources and

energy to reverse. Fussell & Massey (2004) found that cumulative causation was a significant factor involved in migration out of smaller towns in Mexico, and that this impedes the capacities for deindustrialised communities, often rural, to survive or improve – whereas larger cities are much less affected by cumulative causation.

Single industry towns are vulnerable from their lack of economic diversity (Dissart, 2003; Hill & Diprose, 2019). An economy dominated (in terms of employment and/or GDP) by a single employer or industry is susceptible to internalising shocks in that industry and market – while a more diverse economy prevents shocks in any one industry from hindering the local economy beyond recovery (Schmid & Smith, 2021; Roelvink, 2020). Hurd (2015) investigated the single industry milling town of Tokoroa, finding that when their local mill downsized to less than 10% of its peak workforce, that has created and perpetuated inequalities that exist to this day. This was following an earlier work (Dyer & Hurd, 2004) where identities within Tokoroa were often conflicting – suggesting a loss of local industry can create a crisis of identity for those that live there – an idea developed further by the pair when looking at collective belonging (Hurd & Dyer, 2017). Additionally, Grimes & Young (2009) contend that loss of such industry has more permanent effects for towns geographically distanced from urban centres, offering Pātea, and the freezing works' closure, as an example of the more permanent economic impacts.

The literature is not conclusive on whether industrial towns in general are inclined towards decline. Bole et al. (2020) found no statistical evidence to suggest small-medium sized industrial towns performed worse socioeconomically than non-industrial. Their findings suggest that if communities need change to prevent being 'left behind', 'modernising' away from industry towards a service economy may not be the only option; more research is needed to clarify here. Pike (2022) points out political dangers of deindustrialization, as economic disruptions can lead to political disaffection and populist politics, such as the cases of Donald Trump in the US, and Brexit in the UK. Nel et al. (2019) offered that communities and community members who may feel themselves being left behind are the ones who need to make the moves to alter that trend – and that they first need to recognise their own leadership and resilience (not excluding a search for external financial support) if improvements for community wellbeing are to be made. Central government lacks the capacity to design and manage local development issues, though they have stronger ability to mobilise resources towards them (Kalogiannidis et al., 2022). Thus, it is not as clear that modernisation and deindustrialisation are solutions to economic downturns.

Small town economies and identities are often shaped around 'being local' and cooperation (Csurgó & Megyesi, 2016). Roundy (2017) applies the concept of entrepreneurial ecosystems to small towns

– which is a similar idea to diverse economies in that small towns each present nuance, but as an entrepreneurial ecosystem it is still based within the wider institution of capitalist competition (whereas diverse economies extend beyond that). Going forward, diverse economies will be the key literature applied, however this application of entrepreneurial ecosystems gives good insight into the realities of capitalist competition that small towns nevertheless face. Tolbert et al. (2002) found that small towns often have denser interpersonal networks than larger cities – and that both cooperation and civic engagement were stronger as a result. Feld (2012) added that companies in small towns are rewarded for cooperation – while on the other hand, "If you aren't sincere, constructive, and collaborative, the community behaves accordingly". Competition *within* small towns, then, may be distinct from many understandings of capitalism in larger populations – where it is seen as a zero-sum arena (Różycka-Tran et al., 2015). Small towns operate under an assumption of constructive cooperation, compared to cynical opportunism found more in competitive, larger cities – this cooperation is also conducive to innovation in small towns, which is often viewed as an attribute of large cities alone: see Meili & Shearmur (2019). Competition *between* small towns and other (both large and small) towns/cities is also distinct - as equalities and inclusions, which are higher in smaller towns, are often seen as competitive advantages (Kresl & Ietri, 2016).

Though growing, the literature on smaller communities around the world is often left aside in favour of larger metropolises and denser population areas (Steinführer et al., 2016; Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2016). As such, the literature described here is neither extensive nor conclusive. More research is needed for understanding small towns, such as the small-town impacts of cumulative causation, as well as the impacts of diverse approaches to modernization.

2.2 'Left behind' places

Discourses are not objective, nor passive. The terminology used to theorize places and peoples, across any discipline, has social and political implications (Barnes, 2001). There have been a range of terms and metaphors used to describe places of socioeconomic decline or stagnation. The early literature on regional or spatial decline, from the early 1900s, focusses mostly on rural population decline. Growth in urban centres was seen as a significant factor in this trend, with gradual increase of fewer, larger, cities in place of a conglomeration of villages (Dickinson, 1932); there was a recognition that these trends were due to technological and urban planning developments which came to improve the conditions of certain centres. Community engagement and active economies were recognised as important preventative measures for rural decline, not unlike contemporary wisdom (Clark, 1919; Bucke, 2016). Structural causes such as technology and reduced supply of jobs from landowners are also acknowledged (Rew, 1906). Regional geographies of declining areas also

began being researched. Foscue's (1934) analysis of Skagway, Alaska gave potential reasons for its decline in the early 1900s. They included economic factors (a gold rush across the state attracted many of the miners), infrastructure (a railroad and new pass reduced need for labourers; later railroads also diverted traffic away from the area), and sociocultural factors (WWI depleted populations of many such isolated areas, particularly young men). Toniolo (1937) pointed to religion and family solidarity as proponents of economic stability – reinforcing Western sociocultural ideals.

When researching places with worse socioeconomic outcomes, some geographers approached decline with a certain contempt of those most impoverished, such as referring to them and their communities as "backward" or "decadent" (Harris, 1917, p. 36). Most of these, it should be noted, were in reference to scenarios where the researcher did not identify themself with the group in question – and they are comfortable labelling others as backward (Aurousseau, 1920; James, 1927). 'Eurocentric' theories have historically tended to operate with binaries of 'good' and 'bad' in academia– with language providing biases of one term deemed 'positive', or 'superior' above its corresponding 'other' (Derrida, 1978, as cited in Gibson-Graham, 2020; Mansvelt & Berg, 2021). Both a sociological and geopolitical lens recognises this process of 'othering', and how the derogatory discourse impacts that place and its peoples (Tuathail & Agnew, 1992; Diez, 2004; Stenbacka, 2011; Guttormsen, 2018). Hoselitz (1955) went so far as to describe cities as either generative or 'parasitic', in reference to their impact on regional economic growth. These ideas continued in the literature through the 20th century, but shifted in line with the quantitative revolution of academic geography, during the 1950s and 60s. New statistical and spatial analyses of place were now possible, and geographic understandings of small towns were reduced to numerical generalisations, particularly in economic geography (Adelman, 1963; Berry et al., 1963; Alao, 1974; Barnes, 2011).

'Left behind places', as an academic term, started to be used in geography around the late 1960s, with a report published for the US president, The People Left Behind – looking particularly at rural decline and poverty (Breathitt, 1967). The term continued to be used by geographers, planners, and economists (Hansen, 1969; Singer, 1972), but gained significant academic popularity since the 2008 financial crisis for describing geographical inequalities – still particularly in reference to rural poverty (Pike et al., 2023; Lichter & Schafft, 2016). It also reflects the nature of marginalised and excluded peoples, who as individuals have been left behind by institutions, being disproportionately affected within, and by, 'left behind' places (Sýkora, 2020). 'Left behind' places, as I use the term, indicate a trend of economic decline or stagnation relative to comparable places – but the complexities and variety of experiences in a place remind us this is a subjective term to be used with caution. Local communities have the capacity to define their own values and goals aside from national statistics, and therefore may not feel 'left behind' as one might have thought; these views may also contradict

each other. MacKinnon et al. (2022) explains how current policies that address the issues faced by left behind places are insufficient – and need wider conceptions of development beyond simple economics. Meanwhile, others have pointed out that 'left behind' remains a relatively undefined term (Pike et al., 2023; Fiorentino et al., 2023), with vague and inconsistent application.

'Left behind' is a term I find useful from a geographical perspective because it covers both peoples and places and is applicable across scales – from urban neighbourhoods to nation states (Martin et al., 2021; Leyshon, 2021). However, there is still danger in applying such a term because it remains rooted in the earlier-mentioned colonial prejudices against 'different', 'backward' places and cultures. While I appreciate the term's implication that such places have probably been left or neglected by larger structures – and that the people therein are not to blame – application of the term still implies a preference for 'progress' and that to be 'left behind' is to be stationary or even regressive in the momentum of history and economic development (Massey, 2005; Anderson, 2008). Considering this, I propose an alternative term might be more appropriate, such as 'left out' places. 'Left out' could keep the same frameworks used with 'left behind' places, but it reorients the perspective to avoid assuming economies as unidirectional. To be 'left out', as I apply the term, implies it is from the perspective of the community being discussed – it is up to them to decide if they are being 'left out' or not – rather than more privileged communities being the ones to define other places as 'left behind', as in, behind themselves in some way. This puts power back into marginalised and/or impoverished communities for self-determination. This is important, as Willett & Lang (2018) explain how rural areas, as 'peripheries' to 'core' cities, are stigmatised through a colonial landscape of power – and denied autonomy in determining their own social, cultural, or economic possibilities.

Within NZ media, "zombie towns" has appeared describing these kinds of 'left behind' places (Alam & Nel, 2023). Like an established term "ghost towns" (a more exaggerating term, referring to towns that are more or less emptied; see Prideaux & Timothy, 2010), "zombie towns" was sparked in 2014 by economist Shamubeel Eaqub, and the term has since been used to describe small, shrinking, NZ towns – a label many find disparaging (NBR, 2014; Neville & Rowe, 2015). For this reason, the term is not used in academic literature, unless referring to its public recognition (Jackson & Brabyn, 2017). My perspective is that it homogenises diverse communities and stigmatises the place and peoples therein. In contrast, 'left behind', as used in academic literature, is a *more* neutral term (though still not perfect). Rather than othering these peoples and places as zombies/dead/dying, 'left behind' acknowledges the lack of those 'ahead' (places and people) to support these communities. However, as mentioned, 'left behind' has its own discursive issues, which I think 'left out' as an alternative term would be able to solve, while keeping these benefits that 'left behind' currently holds above

other more informal terms such as ‘zombie towns’. In Chapter 5, ‘left out’ will be considered as an alternative within the context of this research.

In similar fashion to ‘left behind’, the rhetoric of ‘development’ also needs critiquing, as it has historically been used to delegitimise non-capitalist, or more-than-capitalist models of local social development (Bargh, 2011; Gibson-Graham, 2017, 2020). Esteva (2010, 2023) explored this, explaining how conceiving of ‘others’ as underdeveloped is rooted in colonial prejudice, and leads to the idea that Indigenous, socialised, and community-oriented models of an economy are things to be eradicated and replaced by ‘development’. Indeed, I have attempted, in this thesis, to reframe the discourse I use to constructive and nuanced conventions of places and their economic changes or differences. I struggled because I found myself so used to understanding places through a lens of ‘developed’ and ‘less developed’, as if different economic models to mainstream capitalism and mass consumption are somehow illegitimate. Such a perspective has been pushed by particularly Western and neoliberal ideologies, including through implementation of the ‘Washington Consensus’, and it is important we make efforts to unlearn these assumptions (Liu et al., 2020), as will be explored with diverse economies. ‘Development’ suffers the same issues as ‘left behind’ places, that it is audacious in defining contemporary economic models as ‘in the past’, or in opposition to necessary progress – that they need to ‘catch up’, lest they be un- or underdeveloped.

As these terms, and their mainstream capitalist undertones, are linked to colonial understandings of peoples and places, it is of great importance in New Zealand to consider the implications of ‘development’ and ‘left behind’ places for Māori. New Zealand continues to face issues of inequality, with Māori and Pacific peoples experiencing worse socioeconomic outcomes compared to their Pākehā counterparts (Kennedy, 2017; Marriott & Alinaghi, 2021). It might not be a surprise, then, that Māori economies often utilize models beyond those of mainstream capitalism, considering these mainstream models have systemically ‘left out’ Māori from socioeconomic equality since its colonial introductions (Reid et al., 2019). Māori values have stood their ground against being ‘othered’ by exclusive capitalist ideologies. Boswell et al. (1994) gave a report on community development in rural New Zealand, saying Māori values cannot (and must not) be sacrificed in the name of economic development (Pomeroy, 2019). Geographers have a role in the endurance of Māori economies, as research of Indigenous communities has often been conducted under an imperialist lens (Stokes, 1987) – geographers are important in reshaping understandings of place beyond colonial understandings of progress and ‘development’, an idea developed further in the following section.

2.3 Diverse economies

Diverse economies literature, sparked by feminist economic geographers Gibson-Graham (1996, 2006), offers opportunities for us to escape the problems explored with terminology such as 'development', or 'left behind' places. Diverse economies scholarship recognises that existing economies involve *more* than just capitalist enterprises – and that the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism needs deconstructing both politically and socially (Radcliffe, 2020; Gibson-Graham, 1996). As Figure 8 shows, diverse economies include complex community initiatives, volunteering, care economies, and ultimately 'more-than-capitalist' realities – which are often invisible to people when they conceive of capitalist economies (Dombroski et al., 2022; Community Economies, n.d.-a). The nurturing and acknowledgement of such 'more-than-capitalist' practices can help work towards 'community economies', a project building on Gibson-Graham's work which aims to improve sustainability and equity in the political economy (Community Economies, n.d.-b). This literature not only aims to recognise the diversities *within* economies, but also *between* them. Such a lens offers us the chance to appreciate nuance and subjectivity when it comes to understanding small towns and economic diversity outside mainstream capitalist representations.

Work on diverse economies attempts to subvert prejudices against certain economic practices and theories –profitable capitalism is *not* inherently preferable to more cooperative and/or socialized economic activities. As earlier mentioned, conceptions of places have historically been made through colonial lenses, where places portrayed in decline or with different values are seen as 'backwards'. Gibson-Graham (1996) introduced the term *capitalocentrism* to describe this perspective, and the ways in which institutions reinforce capitalist preferences, to the subordination and exclusion of alternative economic models, through policy and language. In the context of New Zealand, this will be important to consider within the wider agenda of postcolonialism and recognition of Māori culture and economies – as mainstream economic models of development and communities may exclude certain ideals and ideas about what successful economies and communities look like. Also, 'economic development' is critiqued through diverse economies, where it deconstructs the idea that economies have a unidirectional path of 'capitalist progress'. Such deconstruction needs to occur both at the social level and at the policy/political level for effective change (Mosedale, 2013; Dhar & Case, 2023). It should be noted that deconstructing capitalism also means understanding capitalist practice as diverse in itself – capitalism is not a homogenous category, and Gibson-Graham (1996) explains that we ought to avoid an overdetermination of this concept if we want to develop more nuanced understandings of economy overall.

Figure 8: Diverse Economies Iceberg by Community Economies Collective is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. See Community Economies (n.d.-a).

One concept that shapes the diverse economies literature is the importance of the 'more-than-human' agents at work. Plants do the work of storing energy from the sun and soil, animals grow and reproduce. Rain irrigates plants, and trees provide habitats. Mainstream capitalist conceptions of economies completely ignore such processes – unless they are *directly* utilised or sold by humans for profit (Miller, 2020; Barron & Hess, 2020). This shapes how we understand economies and our place in the world (Fox, 2023). A separation of humans and environment is rooted in historical conceptions of 'man as dominator' – the anthropocentric notion that our planet exists exclusively to be subservient to humanities' needs. It is such ideologies which have shaped the environmental crises of climate change and pollution we find ourselves in (McShane, 2016; Chakrabarty, 2020). Diverse economies and an acknowledgement of the 'more-than-human' encourages us to incorporate our environment into economic decision-making – and thereby enable more sustainable environmental

outcomes (Robertson, 2018; Larsen & Johnson, 2016; Miller, 2020). Rather than taking such processes for granted, we can both quantitatively and qualitatively understand the practical importance of the environment within diverse economies, and thereby encourage environmental health to be a legislative priority (Yates, 2021). It should be noted this understanding of environment is not new, and has been advocated for particularly by many Indigenous communities (including Māori), but has often been ignored in Western cultures (Murton, 2012).

Commons are another important part of diverse economies, as they provide alternatives to typical conceptions of private landownership and management – as well as the sharing of other resources. Kruzynski (2020) explores how commons are not just created, they continue (like all places) to be remade and reshaped by the people who made and use them. As places of community and common access, they are often shaped around inclusion – in contrast to sites with exclusive and restrictive membership and/or payment requirements for who can enter or participate (Nightingale, 2019; Eidelman & Safransky, 2021). Crabtree (2020) also looks at Community Land Trusts (CLTs), and their rejection of typical capitalist models of property commodification – pointing out that each CLT is distinct in its own context, and therefore concepts such as ownership, affordability, access, and value become blurred in capitalist definitions, but no less effective or motivated towards their particular principles. Dombroski et al. (2019) explore the potentialities of temporary commons in the context of post-earthquake Christchurch, New Zealand – expanding understandings of diverse economies as fluid rather than permanent and fixed. Hicks (2020) also explores community-owned renewable energy, produced through community financing, as empowering seemingly powerless actors through participation and contribution to energy systems. Indigenous philosophies, including Māori, provide additional opportunities for understanding commons, such as perspectives of land-as-ancestor – which offers that land is genealogically connected to its peoples, and therefore it ought not to be cordoned off in privatised lots, nor commodified, but instead guarded (Stokes, 1987; Panelli & Tipa, 2007; Waitoa & Dombroski, 2020).

Māori language provides strong diverse economies compatibility, such as with manaakitanga (hospitality, generosity, and care), and kaitiakitanga (guardianship of natural resources) – which promote stronger environmental regard overall in Māori identities (Kawharu, 2000; McAllister et al., 2019; Lockhart et al., 2019). Me Tū ā-Uru (2023) offer a useful framework and action plan for developing healthy human/non-human relationships, incorporating other Māori concepts of Whanaungatanga (relationships and interconnectedness), Utu (balance and reciprocity), Mātauranga (knowledge and ways of seeing), and ‘Mana and Rangatiratanga’ (authority with care). Yates (2021) explores how Indigenous-Māori ontologies, with more-than-human understandings, provide opportunities holistic and ecological understandings of well-being, rather than anthropocentric (and

environmentally neglectful) perspectives. Even when Māori engage in business and the capitalist economy, their culture informs their practice as for more than just economic gains:

> … [Māori organisations] have to balance being financially viable with the social and cultural aspirations of the owners as their core purposes. Although the organisations may trade commercially and measure themselves against economic indicators, wealth creation is not seen as an end in itself. (TPK, 2022)

Māori economies incorporate Indigenous values and philosophies to build 'more-than-capitalist' understandings of economy and place (Bargh, 2012). Additionally, their understanding of place is linked to tino rangatiratanga (self-determination), as Māori economies offer opportunities for Māori to express and extend their right for autonomy in a New Zealand socioeconomic landscape that otherwise discriminates against them (Webb, 2023; Scobie et al., 2023).

Assemblage theory is a useful model for understanding these perspectives and potentialities – that human and non-human agents within an assemblage have dynamic connections and potentialities between each other that can be recognised and utilised for great productive benefit in local economic environments (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011; LeRon Shults, 2022). Woods (2015) discusses assemblage in a NZ context of Queenstown, and shows how assemblage theory not only illuminates the connections between social, cultural and environmental factors, but that a 'place' is not bounded by measurable areas – places are assembled by peoples' perceptions, and by physical geographies: each of these spread across different places and scales indicating that an assemblage is unbounded, while infinitely complex and of infinite potential (McGowran & Donovan, 2021). Lysgård (2019) and Woods et al. (2021) both explore how local policies are themselves assemblages of actively mobile global policy discourses, together with local cultural policies, ideas, and traditions – an example of how 'separate' localities are connected in a globalised world (Farrugia et al., 2014; McCarthy, 2008).

Jolibert et al. (2011) explain there are real benefits for both environmental and social outcomes when non-human connections are recognised by individuals and institutions (O'Hara & Baker, 2020; Argent, 2019). Environmental health is a key beneficiary when all life forms, ecosystems, and resources are factored into otherwise anthropocentric equations of economic or social success. New economic models for local sustainability include green economies (low carbon), circular economies (products and resources are recycled), and degrowth (reducing demand for economic accumulation and profit), which may be utilised separately or together (Schulz & Bailey, 2014; Hobson, 2016; Schmid, 2019).

To provide space for existing and new diverse economies to thrive, it is important to build towards more inclusive economies (Saad-Filho & Feil, 2024; Lekan & Rogers, 2020). Diverse economies, as explained, already exist everywhere, but the issue is that they are either excluded from acknowledgement and respect, or are discouraged in the name of capitalist 'development' (Gibson-Graham, 2000). This links back to the idea of 'left out' places, because diverse economies are often 'left out' in this same sense. Working towards more inclusive economies means addressing when different forms of economy (or place) are being 'left out', and constructing a landscape where diverse economies can thrive, rather than pointing to 'left behind' places or economies and trying to change them - to align with a homogenous and linear idea of development and economic growth. In the New Zealand context, this particularly means the inclusion and encouragement of Māori economies as a diverse and valid form of economy in itself – rather than something that needs to be reworked to align with mainstream capitalist (and Western) economic models.

New Zealand places offer unique understandings of diverse economies, *particularly* through the diversities of Māori and other cultures therein, which can inform nuanced understandings and ontologies of our planet and its peoples (Bargh, 2020). As Atkinson (2019) describes, it would be presumptuous to limit our understandings of small towns as a 'homogenous category', and policymaking would be benefited by contextualized understandings of place rather than 'objective standards' of economic success and progress. Increasing space for previously ignored Indigenous voices is an important part of decolonisation, and New Zealand geography will need to keep this a priority, going forward (Pomeroy, 2022; Clayton & Kumar, 2019; Barker & Pickerill, 2020).

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the academic literature on small towns, 'left behind' places, and diverse economies. The existing literature has provided a good background for understanding small towns in New Zealand, though there is more that needs expanding, such as around cumulative causation or productive discourse. Work on diverse economies is also growing, and that, together with place-based research, contributes to fuller and more holistic representations of place.

3 Getting to Know Pātea: Methods and Methodologies

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter laid the academic foundation in which the research of this thesis operates. I showed the ways small towns operate, particularly in contrast to larger cities, as well as the importance of discourse when discussing such places – negative language may reinforce certain (often colonial) perspectives of peoples, places, and their economies. The nature of small-town economies was also explored, as the diversity extends beyond mainstream capitalist conceptions. It was noted that the research on both small towns and diverse economies is underrepresented across geographic literature, and more research is needed for better holistic and contextual understandings.

Gaining ground towards such understandings requires qualitative methodologies, because if one limits research to simply quantitative, positivist, and statistical understandings, they fall into the same capitalist problem discussed by diverse economies: that this ignores diversities, nuance, and subjectivity, let alone social or political processes (Kitchin, 2015). Knowledge is found through more than just the scientific method – it can come from people, places, and objects (Schuurman & Pratt, 2002). Qualitative methods also help recognise the impact of our research and discourse, as academic representation of ideas and knowledge has real effects for the world around us (Mansvelt & Berg, 2021; Gibson-Graham, 2020). This thesis uses primarily qualitative data in the form of media analyses and semi-structured interviews and will use subjective narratives therein to better understand the complexities of Pātea, its experiences, and its responses - towards the aim of this thesis.

This chapter will explain the methods I have used to understand Pātea for this thesis. The first section will explain both the processes and results of a media analysis on Pātea – shining light on Pātea's past. My own experiences will then be noted, as a subjective understanding of Pātea's present that can influence both data collection and interpretation. I will clarify the methods of interviewing used for this project, which adds insight to understand both Pātea's past and present, as well as its future. Finally, ethical considerations will be considered – including limitations of this research.

3.1 Pātea in the media

As someone who does not come from Pātea, nor did I know anybody from there prior to engaging in this research, it was important to learn about Pātea, both contemporary and historical, before

preparing for interviews. To do so, I compared selections of news media on five key moments in Pātea's history: The 1959 Port closure, 1982 Freezing Works Closure, 1987 Poi E Song Release by Pātea Māori Club, the last 18 months up to June 2023, and available television media. These analyses used the Papers Past database for 20th century dates, and The Knowledge Basket for news items in the last few years. As I completed this media analysis before the interviews, insights gained here helped inform interview questions.

3.1.1 Present day

Using *The Knowledge Basket, Universities Newztext* database of media articles, only excluding *NZ Herald Classified Personals*, a simple search of "patea OR pātea", with additional criterion of "zealand OR aotearoa OR nz" was made for the period 1/01/2022-19/06/2023 (The Knowledge Basket, n.d.). Within the 494 results, 186 were deemed irrelevant (such as individuals' names containing Patea, talk of Doubtful Sound/Patea, or inconsequential mention of the town), and 121 were duplicates; this left 187 articles to be used for analysis. I tallied each article under one category and whether it considered Pātea in a positive/improving, neutral/mixed, or negative/worsening light. Table 1 shows the results.

Table 1: Media analysis: 1/01/2022-19/06/2023

	Māori/PMC	Infrastructure /Economy	Community	Environment	Coastal Issues	Tot.
Positive/Improving	11	11	52	5	9	88
Neutral/Mixed	7	14	24	3	12	60
Negative/Worsening	0	12	10	8	9	39
Total	18	37	86	16	30	187

I should note that these article categorizations are my own interpretations of each news item and, additionally, I would not consider a statistical analysis here to be necessarily relevant or meaningful – comparing the general numbers will only be in aid of the topics and trends I found within the media discourse itself, and the implications of the news media on Pātea and its reputation. Also, this analysis did not include articles from local community paper, the Pātea and Waverley Press (Te Karere o Pātea me Te Wairoaiti), which is distributed to around 2,700 households in the area for free each month, is funded by advertisers, and stories are contributed by the local community rather than found by reporters (Sheard, n.d.; PHS, 2018c). This publication was not included in the analysis

because the search engines I used did not include them in their range. A brief examination showed most inputs to be from local community groups such as schools, religious groups, and clubs. The paper gives advertising space for local businesses, as well as those from wider cities of Hāwera and Whanganui, and provides information on community services such as for health, Plunket, councillors, and Justices of the Peace. The paper has recently added a new website which provides access to PDF versions of recent publications (PWP, 2023).

3.1.2 Television/digital media

Media around Pātea includes televised news and documentaries – often primarily discussing Pātea Māori Club, but does include other stories about the town. There was a total of 8 YouTube videos, 3 news segments, 5 TV Episodes, 4 documentaries, as well as 2 performances by Pātea Māori Club. This digital selection had a mix of topics – yet all of them at least mentioned Pātea Māori Club. The documentaries also all had a focus on the PMC – whether looking at the music or focusing Dalvanius Prime. Most included messages about the local infrastructure and economy, but these were categorized behind their primary messages, often of the close-knit community. The mixed items were 2 documentaries, and 2 news segments, which indicated Pātea had experienced bad outcomes from the freezing works, but nevertheless there is a positive outlook that comes from the community.

Included in this media analysis is a series of videos created by AUT[6] typographer Dr David Sinfield, who explored a creative representation of Pātea since the closure of the Works, extending to considerations of places and spaces (Sinfield, 2021). He held four interviews of around 8 minutes each with people who had worked at the Works – which provide further insights into understanding Pātea's past, and even how this affects the present (Sinfield, 2019a; 2019b; 2019c; 2019d). His work focussed primarily on the freezing works, with little mention of Pātea Māori Club.

Table 2: Media analysis: Television and film

	Māori/PMC	Infrastructure /Economy	Community	Environment	Total
Positive/Improving	6	0	6	0	12
Neutral/Mixed	1	0	8	0	9
Negative/Worsening	0	0	1	0	1
Total	7	0	15	0	22

[6] Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

3.1.3 20th century

These analyses utilized the New Zealand printed news article database Papers Past. For each selected period, I used a simple search of "patea OR pātea", searching the available range of publications from around NZ. The period selected is approximately 9 months beforehand to 9 months following the event (18 months total).

Port closure, 1959 (1/09/1958-30/04/1960)

It became apparent when conducting this media analysis, compared to that of the 2022-2023 one within The Knowledge Basket, was the previously established categorization method was struggling to accommodate the range of articles and topics that arose. Of the 265 results, 239 (~90%) were excluded from numerical analysis due to a number of reasons: 80 were port shipping telegrams, 28 were advertisements for staff vacancies at the local hospital, 54 were results for regional sporting events – particularly horse racing and lawn bowls, 45 parliamentary reports mentioning Mr R.E. Jack (the member of parliament for Pātea), 23 inconsequential news items such as births, deaths and local accidents, and 7 irrelevant items with "patea" not referring to the township. While not topically important for this project, they nevertheless show Pātea was a notable community during this time - economically (with an active port), culturally (active involvement in regional sporting events), and politically. This may also reflect the change in databases used to source these items – newspaper articles are more often going to include local advertisements and ongoing reporting of events such as sporting results and port shipping information, when compared to modern online news media where such information is separated onto different digital sites.

Table 3: Media analysis: 1/09/1958-30/04/1960

	Māori/PMC	Infrastructure /Economy	Community	Environment	Total
Positive/Improving	0	1	4	0	5
Neutral/Mixed	1	7	5	0	13
Negative/Worsening	0	5	3	0	8
Total	1	13	12	0	26

Freezing works closure, 1982 (1/09/1981-30/04/1983)

Very quickly into this specific analysis, it was clear there was a massive shift in focus towards the closure of the freezing works, especially compared to the neglect of the 1958-1960 media to draw attention to the port's closure. For this period, 157 articles were found, of which only five were

excluded for irrelevance. 97 of the remaining 152 articles mention Pātea Freezing Works and its imminent or recent closure. These articles reported various issues faced by workers and their renumeration pay, the impacts being faced by the wider community, and government proposals to help deal with the situation. The other 55 items, which discussed topics around Pātea without mention of Pātea Freezing Works, included more positive articles about community members' achievements, community events, and the success of certain other businesses. Consistent with the 1958-60 trend, there were no articles talking about Māori or environmental issues.

Table 4: Media analysis: 1/09/1981-30/04/1983

	Māori/PMC	Infrastructure /Economy	Community	Environment	Total
Positive/Improving	0	8	7	0	15
Neutral/Mixed	0	42	15	0	57
Negative/Worsening	0	60	20	0	80
Total	0	110	42	0	152

Poi E (Pātea Māori Club) release, 1983 (30/04/1983-31/10/1984)

As Poi E was released in September 1983, about 12 months after the closing of the freezing works, this media analysis was selected for the 4 months before, and 14 months following (rather than 9 months either side), in order to avoid overlap of articles from the previous section. A search result of 82 articles was quickly downsized to 14, after 64 were deemed irrelevant and 5 were duplicates. It is immediately clear the significance of Pātea to wider NZ became, similar to the 1958-60 range, limited, after the closing of the freezing works – from 152 analysed articles during the 1981-3 selection, to just 14 in the 1983-4 selection (even taking into account irrelevant articles, it was 157 for the former, and 82 for the latter).

Reference to Pātea Māori Club, was limited and only incidental (6 neutral) – listing them in television and events' schedules. While this is distinct from the previous 18 months, Pātea Māori Club was not given significant representation or media coverage. There were no interviews, for instance, with the group – nor discussion of Pātea township outside the group's name.

Table 5: Media analysis: 30/04/1983-31/10/1984

	Māori/PMC	Infrastructure /Economy	Community	Environment	Total
Positive/Improving	1	1	0	0	2
Neutral/Mixed	6	2	0	0	8
Negative/Worsening	0	4	0	0	4
Total	7	7	0	0	14

3.2 Pātea in-person

It was important for me to visit Pātea to get a feel for the place, rather than just something to refer to through a computer screen and keyboard. I was fortunate in being able to visit three times – each to conduct interviews, but also to explore.

My first visit to Pātea was with my supervisor, which was useful for showing me the ways geographers move around and look at places and landscapes. One noticeable pattern in the township was that of closed shops along the main street. A rough count[7] found that of 37 premises along the main street (between the fire station and the Hunter Shaw building), only 23 appeared to be in use – four of which looked to have been turned into private residencies. The other 14 seemed to be abandoned, many appearing derelict. This presented an interesting factor in how Pātea might be perceived by visitors driving through it – fitting the rhetoric from the media analysis about the town as small and shrinking. On this visit I was able to meet Luana Paamu at Aotea Utanganui and have an interview with her after exploring the museum (interviews are explained in Section 3.3). Accompanied by my supervisor Kelly, this interview also improved my confidence and technique for further interviews. I visited Pātea Area School, where I was able to organise an online interview for the following day with the principal. An interesting anecdote was on visiting the local 'Café Fika', their menu items were named after local Pātea and Taranaki places, such as "Freezing Works Open", "Boat Ramp", and "The Canoe" (Figure 9). My second visit was brief, as I was only travelling to Hāwera, and on to Pātea, for interviews with Phil Nixon and Robert Northcott, before continuing southwards to Palmerston North.

[7] This was just by quick observation from the sidewalk; I neither entered the buildings nor talked with anybody to ensure I was tallying each correctly.

Figure 9: Cafe Fika Menu. Photo taken by this author, 28/08/23.

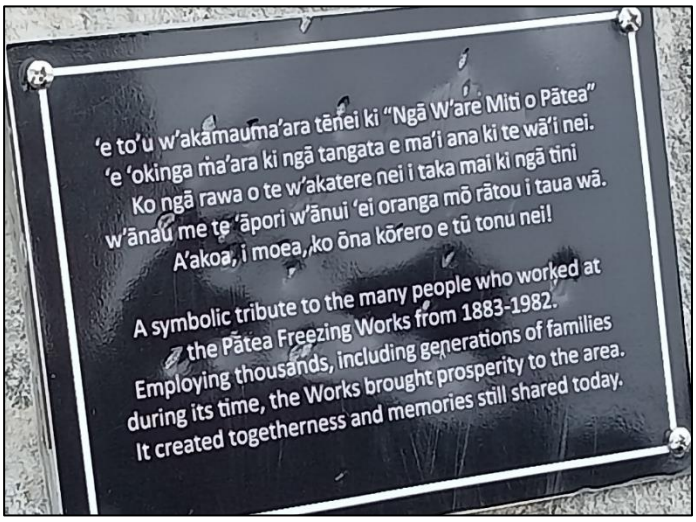

Figure 10: Commemorative plaque on a large stone at the Patea Freezing Works site entrance; unveiled in 2022 on the 40th anniversary of the Works closing. Photo taken by this author, 9/09.

Figure 11: Gates at Patea Freezing Company site.
Photo taken by this author, 9/09.

My third visit to Pātea was much more extensive, as with university funding, I was able to travel and stay in Pātea for 3 nights. My primary goal was to be able to interview a member of Pātea Māori Club, or of the local iwi – as I felt a need to complement Luana's discussions of these groups with another person's perspectives. Therefore, while I was in Pātea, I contacted Luana and asked if she knew of anyone who would suit for such an interview, and also if I could have access to some of the oral histories in the museum (which she had mentioned in our last meeting). She replied and was not only willing to grant me access to the museum and the oral histories, but she also organised for her colleague, Taiaroa, to come along for me to interview. I spent that day at the museum, and after accessing the oral histories and completing the interview, I bought both Taiaroa and Luana lunch at the local café, before returning to the museum where I assisted in moving museum pieces into their new building – which was a unique experience in itself. Walking around the town, I was also able to explore the local library, seeing various activities they host – particularly for young children.

On this visit I was also grateful to Jacq Dwyer for being willing to show me around Pātea and explain some landmarks – including, the Hunter Shaw Building and the adjacent Aotea canoe monument, the Patea Freezing Works Display Room (managed by Pātea Historical Society), and the Patea Freezing Works site (Figures 10 & 11). Visiting the freezing works' site, Jacq told me about a recent issue where a contracting company had dumped several piles of gravel there – and how angry this made the local community as it was an important commemorative site to which such a dumping was disrespectful. As another anecdote, we happened to be driving past a gathering for Te Pāti Māori (a NZ political party), who were campaigning for the imminent national elections. It was then I discovered the party leader, Debbie Ngārewa-Packer, was originally from Pātea – which further explained why I had seen so many billboards for their party in the town. It was a new experience when Jacq stopped to discuss some things with Debbie herself who was attending. Just standing in the group, I felt their sense of pride and community catch me off-guard. This is not autoethnographic research, but that moment was so unexpected and impactful to me, it would be negligent to ignore it. To experience the pride of Māori culture and identity here was not like anything I could have read or learned from interviews or media alone. It certainly was not something I could have prepared for, and I feel privileged even to have had this short experience.

Coming to Pātea was a vital part of this research. Having first-hand experience of any place is indispensable towards researching it. Without it, a researcher's analysis is limited to simply second-hand realities (Entrikin, 2018). Larsen & Johnson (2012) explored how experience is of particular importance to Indigenous research of place, while Pierce & Lawhon (2015) argue for 'walking' (a method of experiencing cities on foot, in-person), to be included across urban geography research methodologies. Particularly in my third visit, walking around the town took a significant amount of

my time – both for actively exploring and even just walking to the local supermarket or café; this has solidified and provided rigidity to my research, having experienced Pātea in-person. Although this thesis does not present autoethnographic methodologies, my firsthand experiences are relevant to the research process, and will not be ignored through analysis and discussion. Reading the landscape in this way helped me better understand how my own biases and experiences shape my understandings of Pātea (Wylie, 2007; Hostetter, 2016).

3.3 Pātea through the community: interviews

The previous section laid a groundwork of context and insight into Pātea, through which I was better able to plan and prepare for effective interviews. The interviews would be framed towards the first 2 of the three research questions for this thesis:

1. What relationship(s) do people have to Pātea?
2. How do individuals respond to changes that occurred/are occurring/may occur in Pātea?

Having perused the current media around Pātea, certain names and groups kept appearing in reference to community work and engagement – which convinced me towards interviews with community leaders, rather than an earlier idea of conducting surveys and interviewing the general population. Community leaders had the expected benefit of not only knowing more about their community (from active engagement), but also being more appropriate representatives for the township (as many are elected by the community). I expected community leaders would be more willing and comfortable being interviewed than the general population. Also, by interviewing community leaders, the imbalance between myself as a researcher and the interviewees were reduced, with interviewees each holding authority on behalf of their community. I accumulated names both from the media and other online sources for local community groups to find appropriate people to interview (Sheard, 2017). I arranged these along different strands of community engagement (i.e., political, education, charity), and reached out to people by email with an information sheet (Appendices C, D) in several ‘stages’ to maximise the range of community strands included. I aimed to interview between 4-6 people.

I conducted a total of six semi-structured interviews between August and October 2023, three of which were found through the email outreach, and the other three were found through in-person contacting when visiting Pātea. I conducted two online and the rest in-person. All participants signed the consent form attached to the information sheet, for consent to audio-record (Appendix E). Nobody opted for anonymity, and only one opted to review their transcript post-interview. Table 6 outlines the interviewees and their community positions. Interviews were each planned to be 30-60

minutes long and averaged around 42 minutes. Over the course of the interviews, I became more confident in the process, and more capable for asking unprepared questions that came to mind. Each interview I transcribed manually, to ensure I was familiar with the content before continuing to analysis and coding.

Table 6: Interviewees and their Community Positions

Name	Organisation(s)	Interview Date	Initial Contact	Where	Interview Length
Jacq Dwyer	Pātea Community Board (Chairperson) Pātea Historical Society (President)	22nd Aug	Email	Online	37:35s
Luana Paamu	Aotea Utanganui, Museum of South Taranaki (Museum Team Leader)	28th Aug	In-Person	In-Person	33:58s
James Davidson	Pātea Area School (Principal)	29th Aug	In-Person	Online	36:09s
Phil Nixon	South Taranaki District Council (Mayor)	8th Sep	Email	In-Person	43:49s
Robert Northcott	South Taranaki District Council (Deputy Mayor) Pātea Community Board (Appointed Councillor) Northcott Auto Services (Owner)	8th Sep	Email	In-Person	55:17s
Taiaroa Neho	Aotea Utanganui, Museum of South Taranaki (Employee)	10th Oct	In-Person	In-Person	50:53s

Interview questions were prepared to guide each interview, and were planned with insights from Dunn (2021). Particularly, I leaned into a more structured type of semi-structured interview - as a relatively new interviewer, it helped having a script I could read off while leaving room in the discussion to explore other topics I hadn't considered. The questions also evolved across all six interviews. One of the most significant topics I initially neglected was the future – but Luana (as my second interviewee) pointed out this was a particularly important topic to address. There were two questions I took out from later interviews. One was asking them to respond to a particularly negative media quote about Pātea (which will be further explained in Chapter 4), and the other asked to respond to statistics about both population data and the media analysis (this was found to be tedious and time-consuming). Apart from these, most of the questions approached comparable topics: their personal relationship with Pātea, their experience of *Poi E*, the nature of community and community groups in Pātea, their understandings of local change, and perspectives on offshore

windfarms and the environment. I encouraged interviewees to bring up topics they thought were important, and at the end, I would always ask “Is there anything else you’d like to add?” to allow for further open-ended discussions. A copy of my interview guide for Phil Nixon is included as an example in Appendix F.

After the six interviews were completed and transcribed, a process of coding was used to identify and categorise significant excerpts, quotes, and themes. I identified important segments in each interview as corresponding to one of nine codes:

- A: General History
- B: Lasting legacies and impacts of Freezing Works and/or Poi E/PMC
- C: History informing connection to land/place
- D: Volunteers/Important individuals shaping the community
- E: Urban vs Rural/Small town vs cities, local infrastructure and economy
- F: People Live in (and like living in?) Pātea
- G: Education/Young People
- H: Offshore windfarm and future prospects
- I: Other

Excerpts were then arranged by code, to analyse the themes separately. Many excerpts fell into multiple codes, for instance the following quote was categorised between three codes: B (Cyan), H (Red), and F (Green)

> ***…I think* [Poi E] *was a real catalyst that then just started for Patea to think 'Well hang on, you know, we certainly have still got a strong future.'*** *So yeah, I mean it's a,* ***it's a real passionate community, people there are, you know, very proud of their town and what they do.*** (Phil).

During Chapter 4, these codes, although fluid and intersectional, have been roughly applied to Pātea’s past (A, B, C), present (D, E, F), and future (G, H).

3.4 Ethics

3.4.1 Formal ethics

Before sending outreach emails to potential interviewees, the research proposal and methodologies were put through a peer-review process and were judged to be low risk within Massey University’s ethical standards. In forming this proposal, I familiarised myself with the NZEC Community Research Code of Practice (Community Research, 2023), noting the importance of the 5 factors in their model to my research specifically. These factors are[8] whanaungatanga (kinship and cultural awareness),

[8] These are rough translations of Māori words to English, and may differ between my interpretation and official definitions.

rangitiratanga (Māori rights and self-determination), manaakitanga (hospitality and respect), kotahitanga (solidarity and sustainability), and embedded social justice.

- Whanaungatanga: Relationships were developed with interviewees where possible through various modes of contact, informed consent was obtained *before* interviews were properly organised, and the rights, roles and responsibilities of both interviewer and interviewees were made clear.
- Rangitiratanga: This research was conducted with the ideals of fairness and cooperation as stated in *Te Tiriti,* and efforts were made in this thesis to represent local desire for self determination. Material produced out of this research will be made available to all interviewees in the interests of collective research ownership.
- Manaakitanga: Accountability was made clear and accessible for all interviewees – my own contact information was made available, as well as that of my supervisors and the Massey University Research Practice Advisor, to be used if they had any questions or concerns regarding research practice and ethical conduct. I also contacted interviewees after the first thesis draft was completed, providing them with the chance to adjust or remove any of their quotes I included from the interviews.
- Kotahitanga: The writing of this thesis was made in the interests of Pātea and its residents. Principles of unity and solidarity guided the questions and the writing up of the text to honour self-representation and contribute to community goals
- Embedded: This project was approached with the interests of equity and social justice outcomes. In particular, interviewing community leaders gave the best chance of achieving this – as community leaders are in better positions to provide appropriate, holistic, and diverse understandings of place on behalf of the people they represent.

3.4.2 Reflections and limitations

I will also note, for my own positionality, I have no personal connection to Pātea, and therefore have had little-to-no stakes in the interpretation of it. Whereas for the people I have interviewed, and the people and places in Pātea, how I discuss them may have real impacts on their lives. As an 'outsider', while there may be new perspectives I can apply to their landscapes, I approached my research as a visitor and a learner – with those from Pātea being my guides and teachers. Additionally, I am Pākehā, with limited upbringing around Māori culture and values – though I have been able to learn about some through my schooling in Waitara and through university coursework. I have no conflict of interests with any of the parties involved.

The limited scope of this research has led to limitations. I did not have scope to interview anybody from Taranaki Offshore Partnership about offshore windfarming, which would have been a useful insight towards the future of Pātea. Additionally, insights into local business (in the present) were limited across the interviews.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the methodologies utilised for this thesis project, to effectively understand change, and responses to change, in Pātea. I presented a media analysis, which (among other things) worked to understand how the media represents Pātea, and how it has been represented in the past. The freezing works, and its closure, had a significant impact on Pātea at the time – including the impact on Pātea's reputation and image, as seen in the relative negativity of articles during that period (53% negative) compared to present day (21% negative). The media in recent years has portrayed Pātea in a much more positive light than during the Works' closure – though focussing much more on Māori, environmental and, particularly, community news rather than economic and business news. Perhaps modern news media is more community-focussed in general, or maybe Pātea and media outlets are actively shaping the image of Pātea to be more positive, by focussing on certain topics and not others. The relationship with people of Pātea and the media will be a topic brought up during the interviews, and it will be interesting to discover whether, or in what ways, the people of Pātea are concerned about how their town is represented. I have explained how my understandings of Pātea have also been shaped by firsthand experiences – before elaborating on the methods used for interviewing community members.

4 Representing Pātea: Disparities Between Community Leaders and Media

4.0 Introduction

Having explained the processes I used for media analysis and interviews, this chapter will now analyse the data these produced. The data will be assorted into three parts: the past, the present and the future of Pātea. As I interpret each of these in turn, excerpts from interview transcripts and the media analysis will be provided for context and texture. This analysis is framed towards the first two research questions of this thesis:

1. What relationship(s) do people have to the town of Pātea?
2. How do people respond to changes that occurred/are occurring/may occur in Pātea?

The conclusions made from this analysis, particularly those in reference to the above questions, will be applied to the third research question in the Chapter 5:

3. How do these responses relate to existing literature around small town geographies?

4.1 The past

The people of Pātea have a complex relationship with their town's past, and the freezing works are a significant component of this. Further complexity arises due to the cultural and community strength in Pātea, particularly since the release of *Poi E.* Both these events continue to have real impacts for the town's identity and future.

4.1.1 Pātea Freezing Works

> *It was just like a family, it was an extended family, it was good… that's what I remember, the happy times…* ("John", Sinfield, 2019a)

Pātea Freezing Works was a significant part of Pātea's economy as well as culture. Indeed, there were numerous references to the Works as more of a family and community than of a workplace. One of the workers said, "I've had… twenty families who have three generations working at the Works – and one that had four [generations]." (Eric Weir Oral History; Aotea Utanganui, 2023). This added great emotional cost to the closure, not just economic. "Bruce", interviewed by David Sinfield, said "…the comradeship down there… to this day I miss it" (Sinfield, 2019b).

The significance of the Works as an employer at the time (up to 800 workers) prompted two studies from the Ministry of Works and Development, into the likely impacts of the Works' closure, and potential solutions for the dramatic economic impact on the local community. One of the reports likened the closure to a "terminal illness" (Melser et al., 1982, p. 82) for the town, predicting significant long-term impacts of the closure on both the economic and social landscape in Pātea. In our interview, Jacq talked about insecurity that arose for the town, saying "…it's sad but the reality was it was pretty dire in 1982… like I remember people having prayer groups to pray for everyone, you know… people just didn't know what was going to happen."

Both the 1982-83 and 1983-84 media analyses found the freezing works closure to be the dominant narrative for Pātea in its aftermath. One article discusses how many workers at the freezing works left not long after given 3 months' notice – and they were being blamed because their leaving solidified the closure beyond attempts at revival or restructuring of the Works. Others discussed attempts at revitalizing the Works – but these eventually fell through. It was an unstable time for Pātea, and it seems the outcome of closure had been set in stone against the will of the Pātea population. There was a hopelessness felt when the people saw they had no power to keep the Works open. The instability also led to disinvestment in local schools, particularly by Pākehā, with one local in 1994 describing her experience: "We decided we would send our children to the local school – I mean a lot of the white people don't, they go out of the area which is really sad because the Māori people – it must really hurt them…" (Morrison, 1994).

One interesting point came from an article discussing a political visit to Pātea, where media reporters were barred by the politician's press officer, as they were 'hated':

> *Mr Hill had been trying to portray the feeling of the workers at the site who were angry about past news media reports on Patea… The works manager told him 'no, we don't want the media in here. We don't want them poking around. We've been given a particularly rotten deal by the media.'* (Press, 30 June 1984)

Here we have an example of media representations affecting the people they portray. Negative portrayals of Pātea, as seen in the media analysis (Section 3.1.3: Table 4), had affected the people of Pātea, and this article suggests an anger and mistrust which arose out of that. After the closure, Pātea had become an example. People would refer to the town based on the freezing works closure, and the negative connotations of what followed: "…and [the company's public affairs officer] warned if Tasman lost its ability to export it could become 'another Patea or Westfield.'" (Press, 11 May 1983). They were referring to the town in a negative light and it had consequences for investment and innovation opportunities. Such opportunities were further hindered as many people had to leave Pātea to find work having been made redundant. Luana noted during our interview:

> *We used to have everything here in town, we didn't even have to go to Hāwera or, you know, outside of Pātea, you could buy everything here except for a car… but then once all the people left, and they took their money with them, those shops they progressively started closing.*

Phil added to this, saying:

> *…it was a real shock when it was closed and so everyone was like, 'Wow, what's going to happen? Patea is going to die.' And you know, 'that'll be the end.' And of course, people did have to look at employment elsewhere, a lot of it took them out of Patea to other places.*

These sentiments were shared across the interviews, sometimes with such a similarity in wording that I was shocked as an interviewer. These narratives retell how Pātea and its people were changed by the closure. The loss of employment and investment in Pātea particularly affected Māori – both economically and culturally:

> *So for many, the impacts of the closing of the freezing works has led to the disconnection between whanau. People leaving Pātea and never ever returning… that disconnection to their land, to their language, to their people, to their homes.* (Taiaroa).

A recurring theme in the interviews backed up what the media analysis showed, and what the Ministry of Works and Development reports predicted – the freezing works' closure had significant knock-on effects for the wider economy and population of Pātea. It wasn't just the workers who were affected, it was their families, their neighbours, their houses, and their shops.

4.1.2 Pātea Māori Club and *Poi E*

As a response to the closing of the Works, and the significant stress placed on the local community, *Poi E* was developed by Pātea Māori Club (Appendix B). Much of the impetus behind the song is accredited to Dalvanius Prime, and Luana told me how the financial support to get it recorded was from the Pātea community itself: "…[Dalvanius] actually went to all of our businesses that were still operating here, and asked them for money, and that's how they actually got it recorded. You know, it cost them something like two thousand dollars…"

Throughout the interviews there was a sense of pride in Poi E as not just a success for Dalvanius and Pātea Māori Club, it was a success for Pātea. It offered the chance to change their narrative. As Phil explained, "[Poi E] was a real catalyst that then just started for Patea to think 'Well hang on, you know, we certainly have still got a strong future'". Similar sentiments were shared across the interviews:

> *…it bought the town alive and it said, hey, don't forget us. And to have a number one hit around the country was absolutely fabulous… When you say 'I'm from*

> *Pātea', 'oh where's Pātea', 'You know Poi E?', 'oh Poi E, yeah I remember that'… [if] people say 'oh you used to have a freezing works', we'll say 'no? what freezing works' *laughing** (Robert).

This pride was particularly important for Māori as well. Not only was *Poi E* a great stride forward for Māori around the country, with the first all-Māori song hitting NZ charts (and topping them), but for the Māori of Pātea, *Poi E* was a reinvigorated purpose for their community and culture. The lyricist Ngoi Pewhairangi was a great advocate for Māori language and representation, and intended the song as a reminder to Māori youth to keep hold of their culture and heritage (Ngāpuhi):

> *…the whole make up of the club and what the club represents and what the club stands for means more than just that one song. It's about that whakawharaungatanga, it's about that connection. It is about the intergenerational passing of knowledge... Because if you take a look at the words and if you take a look at the reasons why the song was created, and how the Pātea Māori club was formed, it's really about ensuring that young people, although you may be disconnected, there's always that opportunity to come back.* (Taiaroa).

An episode of *Heartland*, airing in 1994, showed the preparations and performance of a musical about the closing of the freezing works: Poi E: The Musical (Morrison, 1994). This was the first I heard about the musical, and even after investigating, I could find few other references to the performance. From what the episode presented, the musical talked about the strife caused to Pātea by the closing of the freezing works while highlighting the community and resilience that remained – represented by the words "Pātea will overcome. Pātea will rise again". One local talked about what the town was like at the time, saying, "Poi E has given people pride… it's put Pātea on the map." (Morrison, 1994).

The cultural boom produced by *Poi E* was felt by the community – with Pātea's self-image being that of a strong and enduring community, while its image to other regions was becoming 'Poi E territory'. However, these shifts for Pātea did not improve demographic or economic spheres. The population was still much reduced, and those who remained were still disproportionately impoverished – furthered by racial inequalities that persist across New Zealand. *Poi E* provided hope and pride for the people of Pātea, which at times stood in stark contrast to the economic outlook many faced.

4.2 The present

These two, often competing, stories of Pātea's past - of the freezing works and *Poi E* - impact the present, and the relationship between past and present. The interviews in particular shed light on how Pātea's community continue being shaped by these histories. This section will explore the ways those past narratives have merged with the continued operation of Pātea as a town within modern New Zealand.

4.2.1 Relationships with the past

Several instances during the interviews illustrated that Pātea in the present is affected by the past. One included the physical structure of the freezing works that remained after the closure:

> *…you look over the river and there's a burnt-out freezing works that's been sitting there... and it's a past reminder of… past glories… but also tragedies and how things had been done to the community rather than with them. So the community certainly learned from that and thought 'we need to make sure that if anything's happening in our community, we're having our say'* (James).

Here, James pointed out the closure – represented by the remaining structure – led to a caution from the community towards outsiders. If a change is to happen in their community, they will demand to know about it and be involved. Because without involvement, there is a fear they will become victims of larger forces and players. Additionally, it is possible there were differences between individuals who saw the buildings and remembered the 'past glories', and those who remembered the 'tragedies'. Luana explained how some people, particularly Māori, have bad memories, leading many to never come back. The remaining derelict buildings made it difficult for the town to move on. Jiangbo (2009) explored these buildings as a site of memory through the lens of photography, "unearthing Pātea's unique and social histories lying just below the rubble of steel and asbestos". There were proposals to keep and tidy the chimney as a monument, but they were rejected and it was demolished in 2010 after much of the structure was destroyed by fire in 2008 (PHS, 2018b; demolition footage at Maruera, 2010).

> *I mean, [the freezing works] stood as an eyesore there for a long time and just slowly collapsed. And the best thing that ever happened was some kids went and lit it. And to be fair if they hadn't have done it, I'm pretty sure there was a few people in the community that were lining up and saying 'we need to get rid of that eyesore.'* (Robert).

Leaving derelict buildings does no favours for a town's image. This point was also explored in David Sinfield's interviews, with "Bruce" explaining the derelict buildings tainted their memories – and the only options to save their memories for the better were to remove the buildings, or fix and clean them (Sinfield, 2019b). Robert felt annoyed when things were left to decay because it was his community that was affected. It's his community that has to drive past it everyday and think 'that could be restored to something wonderful'. Robert added that some empty shop buildings on Pātea's main street are being used as private residencies – which made sense from my own tally of buildings in section 3.2. Such use of buildings – while providing private accommodation during a national housing crisis, does impact the town if prospective business owners attempt to bring new investment into the area. Additionally, as I walked down the main street, there would be some buildings that

looked open, warm, and popular – but these often stood next to one appearing boarded up and/or abandoned. Phil said "…once one person paints their house or their shop… next door… looks and thinks 'well, I look a bit shabby now, so I better do mine up…'". But for some of these buildings it appears there is nobody in them to feel this pride of place and look better. Looking back, I would have been interested in asking who owns some of the neglected buildings, whether they are locally-owned or owned by outside investors.

Phil talked about a different relationship with the past he had seen during the freezing works 40-year anniversary commemorations (40 years since the closure). People he talked to said they had to leave in the 80's – and yes, their life turned out okay, but they never wanted to leave Pātea in the first place. They had little choice and this was still their home: and that hurt them. The commemoration itself is also testament that people of Pātea are still affected by the closure.

In contrast to the negative relationship many have with the freezing works, Pātea Māori Club and *Poi E* continue to be a source of pride and national fame – far beyond the initial release of the song 40 years ago:

> *…we have a annual event here in Pātea every year on Waitangi Day, and it's called Paepae in the Park, and we often have… big bands come to Pātea. But I'll tell you what… people… don't come to see the big band... they actually come to Pātea to see Pātea Māori club perform in Pātea, in uniform and basically to sing Aotearoa's second, and unofficial, national anthem.* (Taiaroa).

The song itself (Appendix B) provides a message of pride for young Māori in particular for their home – and they always have the opportunity to return. This is explored further in section 4.3.2, discussing the next generation in Pātea. The continued popularity of the song validates Pātea Māori Club beyond the area of Pātea. The pride and position of *Poi E* in NZ's consciousness holds particular importance for Māori and their language:

> *We are hugely proud of Poi E achieving this milestone for the Pātea community and Te Reo Māori in Aotearoa… The loss of rural jobs in small town communities has to this day had devastating and longing effects for Māori. This anthem inspires our own to use Te Reo Māori, to be proud to be Māori…*
> (Waatea News, 2022)

4.2.2 Pātea's image

One notable moment from the interviews was during the first, when I asked Jacq to respond to some quotes from television media:

> **Ben**: *"…It said 'Pātea may have a hit song, and a hit movie about the song, but its also… its still poor'."*

Jacq: **disgruntled face*"Hmm, yeah, no that makes me angry *laughing*. I mean define poor, you know… God, you should see the kids down on the beach – and they don't care if they're from a family that earns, I don't know, 20,000 a year. There's a lot of other things you can do without money. Yeah, that makes me annoyed, because I feel like that's talking about someone in my family."*

This took me by surprise in the moment – there was a visceral reaction from Jacq at what was essentially an insult (which I had not realised until she said that). And the point she made, "I feel like that's talking about someone in my family" highlighted the sense of community she felt – when people talk about Pātea, they are also talking about the people there still living their lives. Hearing someone call Pātea poor led to a defensiveness from Jacq, as she felt such a label takes away from more important things in the community. As a community leader, she has an interest in the town's image, for people to come to visit or live in Pātea. But labels associating the town with poverty dissuade potential interest, while alternative narratives of community and happiness would be more attractive and beneficial for the town's image. This is comparable to the earlier Press (1984) quote describing Pātea having been given a 'rotten deal from the media'. A similar sentiment came from Robert:

I mean, we're still considered to be lower socioeconomic -and I hate that term, because we get tarred with that. All the time. And if you look around, there's a proportion that you would call lower socioeconomic, I suppose, who are reliant on the state. But there's a lot of people in this town who aren't. There's a lot of retired people. They're not socioeconomic, they just live off their pension, they're happy as, they've got nice homes. The people in here, the people you talked to today, they're not lower socioeconomic, you know, you could go around the streets and you could say well [pointing] they're not, they're not, they're not. But you still get tarred with that, you know? And like I say, I don't like it. I don't think it's a fair representation of what the town is -or any town for that matter.

Both Jacq and Robert were aggravated by negative stereotypes of Pātea – particularly those defining Pātea as 'poor', or 'lower socioeconomic'. In those interviews I got the sense this was something they deal with often – and this is supported by the media analysis. Modern news items about Pātea – particularly national rather than regional news - lean into this sense of Pātea being 'less' than it was in the past, with messages such as "What's it like since its Glory Days?" (ETV, 2016). Even more-positive quotes suggest a negative connotation, such as "These Pāteans refuse to think negatively", or "This town has taken some serious hits, but not only refuses to disappear, it doesn't even believe it ever will." My interpretation of these were they represent Pātea as 'down and not out', or 'fighting for survival', which may shine a light on the passion and strength of the people, but in terms of representation it still suggests the town is surviving rather than thriving. These quotes were deemed positive by the interviewees, so perhaps my own interpretations are flawed. I should note the earlier

quote saying Pātea is 'still poor', became a difficult one for me to ask after the interview with Jacq – because I found the quote might have been insulting. I only asked about that quote once more, but it felt uncomfortable relaying it, prompting me to exclude it from the rest of the interviews. Looking back, I suspect this may have come from my own middle-class upbringing, and sensibilities around poverty – as other interviews mentioned Pātea's economy more frankly, with Luana even saying "…we *are* a poor town…" This question would have offered opportunities to explore relationships with being 'lower socioeconomic', leading perhaps to a reframing of what it means to be labelled as such.

Local infrastructures were points of issue in the media analysis, some of which were mirrored in the interviews. Cell service was an issue I saw firsthand – even along the main street, one can struggle to find enough cell service to send a single text. On the other hand, internet access is rapidly becoming more accessible – with Pātea Area School having fibre, and increasingly people are able to afford satellite internet connections. Health services were adequate with the medical centre and pharmacy, though wait times for ambulances are extended due to ambulances being stationed mainly in key cities such as Hāwera. Electricity and water supplies infrastructure were found to be potentially outdated – as heavy rainfall and storm events have caused several outages, leading to potential contamination of wastewater into Pātea River. Taiaroa discussed how the freezing works' closure has sustained a lack of investment for Pātea:

> *…with the impacts of the closing of the freezing works and a low population meant that there was less investment into the infrastructure. Like Pātea only in the last 10 years has had their water pipes redone. And I mean the Works closed back in the bloody 80s. That's over 40 years! You know, that's 40 years ago of no investment… where the other major towns in Taranaki have seen that money pushed into.*

A lack of resources and rural landscape mean Pātea does not have the kinds of access many in urban lifestyles might take for granted. It also reinforces the sentiment of Pātea *needing* to fight for its interests through community volunteering and activism – because without it improvements won't be invested in. Individuals in wealthier communities have resources to invest in private and/or personal infrastructure and comforts – whereas those in a community with limited resources have little option than to fight for access through institutions such as local council.

While Pātea's local infrastructure had a mixed portrayal in the media, the local community was more positively captured. Articles spanned locals' achievements, including a Queen's Service Medal award, and a signing to an NRL team, reminiscences of "old Pātea", and the local rugby league club - including its return after 25 years to regional competition. Also included were a local art gallery and

artist, and information for fishing events and local walking tours with Pātea Historical Society. This positive light on community life may be the nature of local media in general – presenting local stories and aiding in performativity and reputation for the area.

4.2.3 How and why do people live in Pātea?

Knowing the people of Pātea are affected both by their town's past, and by media representations, we should explore the reasons people live in Pātea today. One theme common across all the interviews was investment of the people in their own community. Distinct from comments from the past about a disinvestment after the Works closed, it became clear those that remain – at least as represented through the community leaders I interviewed – are more invested than ever in improving their township:

> **James**: "*…there certainly has been a renewed sense of… yeah, maybe hopefulness in the town in terms of where its going, and its direction…"*
> **Ben**: *"…What do you think that 'hopefulness' comes from?"*
>
> **James:** "*Well it comes from the people I think, we've got some really great leaders in the community, we've got people doing some awesome things in different spaces."*

The people of Pātea have taken initiative into their own community. This was illustrated by Phil who said Community Board meetings in Pātea have consistently high turnouts of around 15 people, compared to maybe one person turning up in the main South Taranaki city of Hāwera. For some, they are motivated because they are often forgotten at the 'bottom' of South Taranaki:

> *I feel that we are the forgotten South when it comes to regional discussions… when they talk about Taranaki… they show a picture of Taranaki… we constantly get left off the bottom of the map: and that irks people.* (Robert).
>
> *…we don't have the flash gardens like Hāwera… so we have to really push for things because we don't get our verges mowed, we don't get the community gardens… in Hāwera, for example, their main community hall is pretty much run by the council. So the council provides for their community to have a place to be, whereas we have to do it as volunteers.* (Jacq).

For others, there is a sense of pride and ownership for their community – which is being passed onto new generations. The interviews indicated the pride of Pātea is linked to the empowerment and activism of the community – the more work and effort you put into something, the more invested, protective, and proud you are of it.

> *The pride that is instilled into you as a child growing up in Pātea, it never leaves you… that's why when there are issues facing Pātea, Pātea is noisy. We're noisy buggers… and we don't like to let anybody tell us what we should do in our town, because it belongs to us.* (Taiaroa).

This pride also prompts people to return after they've left – some leaving after finishing school and returning to care for elderly parents. This links back to Poi E, as it promotes the idea that one's home is always their home, and they can always return. Taiaroa went on to discuss how this pride extends to all cultures, including both Māori and Pākehā:

> *Our Pākehā in this area have their own sense of pride of place as well, and we can never take that away from them. This is their home as much as it is anybody else's. Regardless if you came on the Waka or if you came on the Endeavour, you know. That sense of pride and that sense of place, and it's really been that combination of the multiple cultures working together to keep what is ours uniquely ours.*

Figure 10 presents a series of excerpts from the interviews where they discuss the connections between people and the town of Pātea.

> **Ben**: "*What brings people back to Pātea?"*
> **Luana:** "*It's the family. It's the family, and it's trying to reconnect to their iwi/whanau/roots; they're just trying to, yeah just reconnect to feel as if they belong somewhere, because wherever they went, they might have felt that they belonged but they were missing something – and its usually here: where they started, and pretty much, yeah, that feeling of belonging. And their identity."*
>
> ---
>
> **Ben**: "*What kind of relationship do the kids at Pātea School have with the town of Pātea?"*
> **James:** "*Well I mean its [the students'] home, you know, its their Turangawaewae. Its their place to stand, so, you know, most of the students that come to this school, they're intergenerational, they've lived here -their whanau, their hapu, their iwi have lived here for, you know, hundreds of years. So they've got a real close tie – lots of love for the community.*
>
> ---
>
> *… people will always ask me 'Why do you stay there? Why do you live there? Bro there's nothing there, it's empty and dead. There's absolutely nothing.' And again, I will say it's not about wanting to be here, its about belonging, its that sense of belonging.* (Taiaroa).

Figure 12: Interview Excerpts: Connections to Place

This relationship to Pātea helps explain its survival beyond existential threats such as that posed by the closing of the freezing works – to say the industry is the *only* thing holding the town up and keeping people there is naïve. People live there because it is their home. Because they enjoy the

lifestyle. Because they are passionate about their community. There may have been initial shock about what would happen to the town – but the interviews made it clear the people who stayed in Pātea after the Works closed stayed because they like it there.

> *I mean there's no point that I ever thought this town would… shrivel up and die… it's just too nice a town. And there's too many resilient people here, you know. And you talk the iwi: this is their whenua. It's not going to die.* (Robert).

4.3 The future

The future of Pātea is uncertain for several reasons. The biggest of these currently is the prospects of an offshore windfarm. This section will elaborate on what the future looks like for Pātea, and how they might respond to changes therein.

4.3.1 Offshore windfarming

The Taranaki Offshore Partnership (TOP)[9] has begun planning for the development of an offshore windfarm off the coast of South Taranaki – which would include the rebuilding of a port in Pātea to be used for ongoing maintenance. The impression I got from the interviews was there is scepticism about these proposals, but overall Pātea is hopeful.

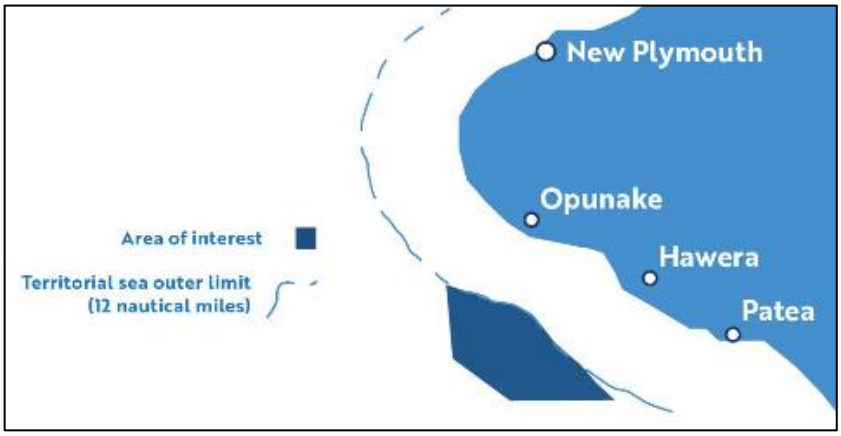

Figure 13: Area of Interest for a Wind Farm. (Taranaki Offshore Wind, n.d).

The first of two main concerns I encountered was getting a fair deal. Some worry that as a corporation, the interests of Pātea will come second to profits – and people are cautious about potential bribe offers that would leave Pātea deprived in the long-run. Such fears are heightened because of the shortage of resources available to Pātea – they don't want to be duped by

[9] A partnership between NZ Super Fund and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners, also referred to as Taranaki Offshore Wind

businesspeople waving cash in front of them. As such, the people want to have some level of ownership or influence in the operations, if the proposals were to go ahead. As James explained:

> *[People are] staunch and protective of the resources they have, and I guess wanting to have some sort of ownership over that and a say in how that actually happens, if it does at all."*

Another concern around an offshore windfarm is employment. There is uncertainty as to whether there would be windfarm jobs for the people of Pātea – or if they would be given to people from overseas or other regions.

> *[They're] giving us the old line of… 'there's going to be a lot of jobs' – yes, for their people that are overseas. Those jobs are for them because they're not going to hire the cuzzie down the road… because they still have to look after their own business and they're not going to spend money training people…* (Luana).

> *Are they [job opportunities] for skilled people? Who knows. Are they going to be… people being on massive 100K salaries to do a scientific job and then my cousin's on lollipops... What is the promise here? Who are you promising these jobs to?* (Taiaroa).

This concern around jobs extends to concerns around the profits themselves. Here Taiaroa went on to describe the local inland windfarm near Waverley:

> *What do you get out of it at the end of the day? I do know that the land owners will be taken care of for the… next 10 generations of their family... And that's… not even 0.1% of the community of this area that is going to benefit so much by that. In terms of iwi, where you've got 3000 uri, only 0.1% of that will feel the benefit from what iwi got out of that whole relationship and the whole deal with that.*

Cooperation between TOP and the people of Pātea would be essential for momentum to continue for this project. The interviews made it clear there would be conditions for Pātea to be used as a port – TOP would never be permitted to come in and do as they please without accountability; the people of Pātea would not allow it. But what would such a cooperation need to entail? Providing a secure and accessible range of employment opportunities for the people of Pātea seems to be the best place to start. Progress on this has been made by TOP, who have provided an offshore windfarm report, for mapping NZ's capability to host an offshore windfarm, and a jobs guide, indicating potential jobs being provided by the project and the qualifications needed for them (CCG, 2023a, 2023b). The jobs guide indicated most of the jobs require qualifications *and* experience. Some apprentice positions stand as exceptions, but technical skills will be required for many (if not most) of the direct jobs employed by TOP. They claim there is high potential for local employment for direct and most indirect categories of services, however it is unclear to what extent Pātea fits into their idea

of locality – or if they are referring to Taranaki as a region or even NZ as a whole. Additionally, I found little mention of TOP willing to invest in providing 'locals' with qualifications, other than those obtainable through on-site experience.

Figure 14: Offshore Windfarm Direct jobs and indicative qualifications. (CCG, 2023a, p. 39).

It may be employment benefits in Pātea are expected to come from indirect services such as for food and accommodation – which the report does hint at – but as these would not be employment opportunities provided by TOP themselves, there is little certainty provided. My interpretation of the report was they think if they come to the area with all their workers, then investments into the town's economy will naturally follow the increased demand for services. If this project had capacity for a wider scope of interviews, I would have liked to reach out to somebody from TOP to discuss their thoughts about Pātea and potential investments to the town and the port.

4.3.2 Next generations and new possibilities

As the people of Pātea seem to have expected a limited investment from TOP for the town itself, they have been working with TOP to create a more equitable and appropriate relationship between corporation and host-town. For Robert, this means pushing for investments in education.

> *So I'm saying to these wind farm people when they come, I said you need to talk to the educators, you need to get involved so that we can get our young people educated so that you don't need to get those skilled people from offshore, we've got them here. And they can live here, and work here, and have a career, yeah.*

As it stands, education in Pātea has experienced a resurgence. After the local primary school closed, and the High School merged to form Pātea Area School, they were still losing many students to larger city schools such as in Hāwera – but that seems to have shifted now:

> *So before I started, at one point the school was less than a hundred… and its gone up to where we're currently sitting [around the 180-170 mark]… at one point there was a couple of buses that used to drive out to Hāwera every day… to the schools there. Now those buses have pretty much -they've stopped. So for us, I guess we see that as a positive for the community.* (James).

James went on to discuss the further academic and qualification pathways available after students from Pātea complete school, and he was optimistic for the opportunities available to their students – he was passionate about ensuring his students have the same opportunities for their futures as those in cities.

> *…In the last… five years, we've had a pretty good percentage go to university… [for] most schools that's still a viable option and we still do pretty well in that area. We're seeing students get apprenticeships at local firms. Whether it be engineering, some working at the butchery, those sorts of options. We've also got students studying tertiary things at the local polytech, so up at WITT, so that's quite common.*

The next generations of Pātea are a source of hope for the town, which appears to have been why the town fought so hard to make sure they have a suitable school for their children.

> *So a few community people got together and really fought, really fought to keep the school here… So we're pleased to keep that. Because if our school had gone then things would've just deteriorated and gone even worse.* (Robert).

New generations of Pātea children are also a source of hope for Māori in the area, to which the very song *Poi E* is emblematic. Taiaroa helped explain the song to me, and very poetically (I think) told me about what Pātea as a place means to young people, and what it *can* mean for them in the future:

> *Although you may be sporadic, it's up to the older people of now to really bring them back and just to say, hey, calm down. This is actually who you are. Your Maunga knows who you are. Your Marae knows who you are. Your rivers know who you are. Although you may not know them. They will always know you and they will always be there for you to go home.*

Increasingly, Pātea's prospects are improving for keeping young people in the town – or bringing them back – as far as opportunities go. Recently the local rugby league club reopened, which several interviewees noted was a boost for the younger people in the community. Regarding sports, there are also plans to build a new combined sports facility for Pātea – which would combine sporting

codes currently isolated and struggling for membership. The optimism in what this would do for Pātea was palpable during the interviews:

> *… you get that positivity too when a community sees something new that is for them and that they are creating… every time there's something new there, it's just making the town better and better, and incrementally Pātea… is getting a better place to live.* (Phil).

Phil and Robert talked about another opportunity on the horizon, the possibility of a new 100-section housing development in Pātea. Though dependent on improving local infrastructures first, new housing opportunities offers the people of Pātea excitement for new investments. Some interviewees pointed to Pātea as a site for retirement or lifestyle living – where people from larger centres such as Auckland might choose to migrate there for cheaper housing and the calmer rural atmosphere. On this topic, Taiaroa pointed out a concern from some that this might lead to gentrification – if house prices rise, will the people in Pātea benefit? Or just the homeowners and outside investors? Such worries extend the caution of Pātea to 'outsiders' – especially those with power to alter the landscape of their community.

4.4 Conclusion: answering the research questions

This analysis broke down the findings from the interviews and media analysis for discussing the past, present, and future of Pātea. I found the closing of Patea Freezing Works, and the subsequent creation and success of *Poi E* each had significant, and contrasting, impacts on Pātea's population and image. Although Pātea holds a place in New Zealand's national consciousness because of that song, Pātea's social image was burdened by the loss of industry and subsequent economic and population losses. Consequences for the people of Pātea at the time included loss of employment, reduced investment into the town (including from community members), and a cultural disconnection after many were forced to leave in search of work.

While these consequences have lingered to varying degrees into the present, and are often discussed by media, the rhetoric coming *from* Pātea is much more positive. People in Pātea are attempting to escape prejudices against them, with regard to being labelled 'lower socioeconomic' since the closing of the Works, and are instead leaning towards the positivity and strength of their community. They continue to support and encourage Pātea Māori Club as both national and local treasures, with the added benefit of maintaining Pātea's cultural relevance. And yet, the town of Pātea extends beyond these narratives, as people continue to view Pātea as their home – both personally and intergenerationally. They admit the shortcomings of their town – particularly when it comes to infrastructure and resources – but this, if anything, has meant they are more empowered to keep improving their town.

With several new opportunities on the horizon – the most significant I know of being offshore windfarming and potential restoration of Pātea Port – it is difficult to predict what will become of Pātea. But whichever path the town takes, the people of Pātea are determined to *be* the ones taking their own future. The interviewees made it clear they are not going anywhere, and neither is Pātea; the people who stay will keep staying because that is their home. And it is people like these who continue to work for their town and are ensuring success and positive lifestyles for the next generations in Pātea.

4.4.1 What relationship(s) do people have to the town of Pātea?

There arose quickly in the analysis a distinction between two perspectives – people from Pātea, and people not from Pātea. These groups have different relationships with the town, and different connotations on what Pātea is. As seen in the media analysis, and in stories from the interviews, those not from Pātea often see the town as diminished – shrunk from its former size, and only partially relevant at the national scale because of the renowned Pātea Māori Club. Indeed in my own life, people have responded to my research saying "Pātea? But there's nothing there…". National news media presents Pātea as impoverished, though lessens the blow by presenting the community as nevertheless enthusiastic and empowered. Such media tends to frame Pātea's present in reference to its past. On the other hand, the people *from* Pātea see Pātea's present in relation to *both* its past and future[10]. Their relationship with their town is ongoing and not determined simply by those events in the 1980's – but more determined by the active work and commitment of the community to improve itself despite a lack of resources. Narratives discussing Pātea in the media do not match the narratives of those living there, and this affects them personally.

It is also important to underline the kinship people of Pātea have to their place. Many of Pātea's residents are intergenerational, with parents and grandparents who worked at the freezing works, and generations that lived there long before the closure. For them, Pātea is their home, their place, and a part of their personal and familial identities. Pātea is important to them because of its past – not necessarily of the Works' closure or *Poi E* – but history beyond, and their family heritage. Pātea means more to its people than just *Poi E*, and certainly much more than 'where there used to be a freezing works'.

4.4.2 How do people respond to changes that occurred/are occurring/may occur in Pātea?

My interpretation of this data suggests the responses of people in Pātea today are based around caution, a trend influenced by the changes that occurred with the closing of the freezing works. For

[10] This could be compared to the whakatauki, "Ka mua, ka muri" ("Walking backwards into the future"), which is the idea we should be using our experiences of the past to inform our future (RNZ, 2018).

many the closure remains a solid memory, and from the ongoing influence of the closure, Pātea is always reminded of the consequences they faced when a corporation was able to impact the township against the will and interests of the people. As such, they are cautious particularly to 'outsiders', or what Luana called 'smiling visitors', who may have big promises for the town but have their own interests of profit in mind. That's not to say the Pātea community is against change – indeed we have seen there are many projects being discussed. But all these projects are being pushed for *by* the people and *for* the people. Even the potential for an offshore windfarm in Pātea will only come about if Pātea can be assured their interests are well met and aren't liable to be abandoned or cheated by a corporation. When I say the responses from Pātea to changes have been cautious, I do not imply an irrational fear or paranoia – they are legitimately passionate about their community and have experienced first-hand (with the closing of the Works) the consequences of a lack of power and influence.

Additionally, both the initial release of *Poi E* and the ongoing influence of Pātea Māori Club represent a cultural response to change. This culture is one of community and pride. The people of Pātea respond to changes always with their people in mind. Above searching for capital. Above the interests of the few. Those in the community with the power to act and enact change (such as each of my interviewees) do so not only for themselves but also for their home. The very survival of Pātea has been an ongoing defiant response against economic changes – defiance for the purpose of protecting their cultural and natural environments. The local economy may fluctuate over time, but the strength of the community has been persistent.

5 Towards Inclusive Economies that Recognise Place Attachment

5.0 Introduction

Having explored the data from Pātea, it remains to be seen what this means for small town geographies. How should we consider their responses to small town change in the wider context of small town, and diverse economies, literature? The analysis in Chapter 4 was framed towards the first two research questions of this thesis:

1. What relationship(s) do people have to the town of Pātea?
2. How do people respond to changes that occurred/are occurring/may occur in Pātea?

This chapter will now apply the conclusions from Chapter 4 to the final research question of this thesis:

3. How do these responses relate to existing literature around small town geographies?

Working towards the aim of this thesis, this chapter will relate this research's analysis to existing small town literature through three lenses. For simplicity, these will coordinate with the consecutive headings of both Chapter 2 and Chapter 4. The first of these will discuss the closing of the freezing works in the academic context of deindustrialisation – commenting on the idea of cumulative causation and place attachment. The second lens will reexplore the rhetoric of 'left behind' places and development, now informed by experiences and perspectives from contemporary Pātea. The final lens will explore Pātea and future possibilities as broadening the diverse economies and place attachment literature.

5.1 How should we think about the closure?

The analysis made it clear Pātea and its people were significantly impacted by the closing of the freezing works in 1982. However, there are several elements which complicate this narrative, which I will explore in turn. To further develop this deindustrialization narrative, I will elaborate on vicious economic cycles. Then, the context of Pātea will be applied to literature on deindustrialisation in New Zealand and community identities. This will lead to the topic of place attachment, which I will present as an underappreciated factor in topics of deindustrialisation and migration.

5.1.1 Cumulative causation and vicious cycles

Drawing on the cumulative causation and vicious cycles literature outlined in Chapter 2, one story we could tell of Pātea's experience is it is emblematic of a vicious economic cycle, prompted by the initial change of the freezing works' closure. This general trend of depopulation and the stories from interviews about shops closing and people leaving seem to match existing literature on deindustrialisation of single-industry towns. This story tells us that as a single-industry town, Pātea did not have job opportunities available to support these newly redundant workers. As these people and their families left to find new work elsewhere, the town's economy suffered – with existing businesses losing significant numbers of local customers. Subsequently, both local and regional investments into the town were stunted. This was a local story of cumulative causation, where the initial economic shock had economic and social consequences for the wider community, with reduced investment and opportunities rippling outwards. The Pātea case study also shows how such 'accumulations' perpetuate over time, as Jackson (2019) pointed out. Intergenerational inequalities have persisted in Pātea since the closure, as new investments were limited for many years.

Looking deeper, though, the analysis found this cycle was more than just economic downturns. It was about sociocultural disconnection of people to their homes and families. It was about losing a common identity within the single-industry township. But from these, and from the very cycle described as negative, came a new common identity and inspiration through *Poi E*. To suggest Pātea's story *is* one of a vicious economic cycle is a mistake. This has certainly been a *part* of the town since the closure – those I interviewed didn't shy away from their town's economic situation – but from what I found this was an inconvenience more than an identifier. Section 5.2 will explore more about the narratives of local 'economic decline', but it is important to note here that places are complex, and therefore they are going to experience complex trends beyond the economic 'arena'.

New Zealand economists Grimes & Young (2009), authored the only academic article I could find specifically investigating contemporary Pātea geography. It is an example of how Pātea (together with most other places) is often seen exclusively through this economic lens, as they fail to mention Pātea Māori Club or cultural elements once. The article investigates the extent to which closure of industries affect town populations, housing, and migrations, based on the geographic distance between them and nearby cities. Their view of Pātea was limited to the freezing works alone, yet there is room to expand with more nuance and context, especially as their research was intended to inform regional policy. Similarly, the videos of David Sinfield focus solely on the Works and the impacts of the closure – framing local narratives around this negative event in the Pātea community, without exploring others such as with Pātea Māori Club. This is not a critique of such research in particular, but rather an illustration of how Pātea is often talked about as a victim of

deindustrialisation and economic processes – to the exclusion of other, equally real, narratives and trends. The narrative of cumulative causation, as I have come to understand it, often hinges on a single 'shock event' as the reason for ongoing trends. What they ignore are alternate 'cycles' also existing in place and effecting change. While it is true the freezing works' closure created a vicious economic cycle of sorts, it is *also* true that other cycles, within the wider assemblage of events and experiences, have also been at work, including that created by *Poi E,* and increased community engagement and cooperation. These other 'cycles' have been ignored due to them not being based in mainstream conceptions of the capitalist economy, as I would say is typical across the Western world both in academia and in popular media. This topic will be discussed further in section 5.3.

5.1.2 Deindustrialisation and community identities

Deindustrialisation has been occurring in many places across New Zealand. Hurd & Dyer (2021) found local industries often promote narratives of their paternalistic welfare – and how these are dismantled by conflicting narratives of redundancy when the industry leaves. In Pātea, these narratives were felt and emboldened by the people, who saw the freezing works as their family, a source of community strength and comradery (not just a place to earn a wage). This made it more painful when the Works closed, and the people of Pātea were abandoned by this 'paternalistic' industry. They weren't even provided access to purchase or reinvest in the Works. It became clear to them the Works were not for the people: they were simply another company operating under a capitalist system.

But after industry leaves, how does a community identify itself – if their identity has always been tied to the very 'paternalistic' figure that once supported but has now abandoned them? Hurd & Dyer (2017) explored the difficulties with this – as the general population often have perspectives in conflict with business leaders and policy-makers. Additionally, 'grand narratives' told of globalisation and modernization neglect local lived experiences and the diversities therein that might be contrary to wider trends. For Pātea, a new cultural identity was created around *Poi E.* Although I am sure this cultural movement was not universally supported, the results from my research repeatedly suggest *Poi E* was a unifying phenomenon. Pātea Māori Club is recognised across New Zealand, and the people of Pātea (represented within the media analysis and the interviews here) are happy and excited to have this group symbolising and representing their community. It provided a source of local pride and *collective* community empowerment: although it was Pātea Māori Club which created the song, the entire community was empowered and invested in it (symbolised by the original recording being funded by many local businesses). Their collective identities were reshaped towards *Poi E*, diminishing any remaining identities associated with the freezing works – and forming an

identity that continues to this day. One could say *Poi E* helped Pātea move on after what they experienced as a painful event.

The non-human also shapes local identities, as represented by the freezing works buildings and even the remaining site. When the buildings were left derelict, many people in Pātea were upset by this, feeling this tainted the memories they held of the Works – they either wanted the buildings restored or removed, not left to rot. The site was a reminder not just of the time many spent working there, but of how the closure was a result of wider political and economic forces. Artist Jiangbo (2009), who photographed the remaining site, said these forces influence our lives, changing how we behave and think (Ng, 2014). The people of Pātea have since taken action in shaping their own identities, in reference to the non-human and the freezing works site – with the buildings now removed, the town revealed a memorial plaque at the site entrance as a tribute to what good the Works did. They chose to celebrate the good memories and a positive legacy from the Works, but when the buildings stood derelict for years it made that difficult for many.

Place attachment indicates an "effective bond or link" that can build over time, and attaches a person or people to places either emotionally, spiritually, and/or socially (Chen et al., 2021). Place attachment is linked to identities, and they are often conflated (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001). This was a concept I kept coming back to when reviewing each interview, because each interviewee had their own (often poetic) way of describing what attaches them to Pātea – outside of me asking such a particular question. It was made clear to me those who stayed after the Works closed, had (and have) little that would make them leave. Their attachment to place is demonstrably stronger than an economic recession or widespread emigration of their friends and neighbours. Place attachment, as an extension of their identities, is shaped by an assemblage of the non-human (e.g. the freezing works site) as well as the human. Pātea is their home, their land, and their community – whether there are jobs available. While it is true for some, survival was dependent on finding a job elsewhere, for many they were determined to survive in Pātea because it is more than just where they feel comfortable – that is where they feel they belong. And this attachment to place long predated *Poi E*, though this certainly strengthened the attachment of many.

This reframes the narrative of deindustrialisation and migration because the people of Pātea are not just economic actors, moving in search of another job; they are individuals with their own identities. To judge the people who stayed or those who left after the closure as having made economic choices is limiting. For many who left, there was little choice in doing so because their physiological needs could no longer be met by the reduced financial opportunities in Pātea. To stay and to survive were not compatible options. For many of those who stayed, as well as many who have returned, it was

their attachment to place prompting them to do so – often despite a limited economic outlook. Those I interviewed seemed to feel judged by others on this fact – with people judging the town's worth (and even those who live there) based on economic conditions. They were tired of people talking about Pātea in comparison to its 'height' in the 80's, rather than seeing the value it has today. Such narratives are often fuelled by mainstream conceptions of development and progress – to stray from which indicates a flaw or inadequacy. Pātea has a complex assemblage of both human and non-human actors, as well as of events and experiences. Representing this assemblage ought to encompass a range of actors and influences, rather than sticking to one dominant narrative of decline.

5.2 Shifting the narrative

The narratives surrounding Pātea are often negative, and my interviews showed people in Pātea often resent that. This section will first clarify on the current negative narratives associated with the town and the consequences they have on the present, before offering examples of more productive and accurate representations of Pātea today that should be moved towards. Finally, I will offer suggestions for how this might be achieved, and what this would mean for the people of Pātea. Throughout, I will refer to existing 'left behind' places and development literature and point out how the context of this thesis reveals some flaws such concepts hold – flaws through which I believe an alternative term such as 'left out' places is more appropriate.

5.2.1 Is Pātea left behind?

As I explored 'left behind' places in section 2.2, I suggested this term was somewhat better than others, like 'backwards', or 'dead/dying'; however, 'left behind' was still potentially problematic as it continues to assume a linear progression of 'development'. It discriminates against those who don't follow that capitalist 'progression' yet may still be innovative and advanced in terms of community wellbeing, and reinforces a cultural, colonial bias (Vunibola & Scobie, 2022; Ratuva, 2014). The interviews in this thesis showed terms such as 'lower socioeconomic', though intended as neutral, may be interpreted otherwise, with Robert describing Pātea as having been 'tarred' with the label. This rhetoric and stigma could have influence on potential migration, new businesses or branches, and investment of infrastructure into these areas – what Willett & Lang (2018) refer to as the 'stigmatisation of peripheries'. Addressing inequality might require these kinds of terms, but caution is needed to not overextend them or apply them in ignorance of other, 'more-than-capitalist' factors.

In the immediate aftermath of the closing of the Works, many people of Pātea were upset by how their town was portrayed in the media – and this is a trend continuing today for some. Across some interviews, there was a sense of reservation when talking about Pātea's economy, while for others

this wasn't a concern in itself. In some cases, Pātea's economy is a reality that can be stated – as long as it isn't used to define the town and its people. The image of Pātea influences access to resources and the influx of tourism and/or migration. In a technical sense, they might acknowledge many would categorise Pātea as 'left behind', but they point out such a perspective is only a fraction of the realities of living in Pātea, and for some it is unhelpful and counterproductive. Working through this project, I have come to question these kinds of institutional labels – what benefit is there to labelling places as 'high', or 'low socioeconomic'? Economists and statisticians might see them as useful for delegating resources – but people in Pātea may not feel to be beneficiaries of such nomenclature, and some may even feel victimised.

This research argues 'left behind' is a counterproductive term. I suspect somebody more invested in this term would categorize Pātea as 'left behind', but I have come to realise how this is more presumptuous than it is truth. To limit one's understanding to simply economic terms is a flawed exercise, and although it is unsurprising in the wider context of capitalist policy, it is something to be moved against. As such, 'left out' is an opportunity to address these inequalities without limiting our understandings to linear economic models. Section 5.3 will work to understand this in the context of diverse economies, with a more-than-capitalist understanding of places and peoples. But before doing so, more appropriate, and productive narratives will be provided for understanding places like Pātea.

5.2.2 Narratives for belonging and the future

In my second interview, I had reached the end of my questions, asking if she had anything to add, and Luana replied frankly: "Um… Well we haven't talked about the future." Considering my pre-thesis understanding of Pātea was limited and fell in line with much of the negative rhetoric indicated from the media analysis, I was surprised with how future focussed the people of Pātea are. They understand past events form a significant part of their town's history and identity, but for many these were learning experiences which inform their decision-making going forward – rather than memories they cling to which hold them back. The interviewees were much more excited whenever talking about prospects and opportunities for Pātea – especially compared to talking about the freezing works. Indeed, I got the sense these leaders have been asked about the past often – with interviews focussing, as mine originally did, on the events of the freezing works and the creation of *Poi E,* rather than ongoing or future projects and possibilities. But Pātea is not living in the past - these questions of its history are not irrelevant, but they have tended to frame the narrative of Pātea around these mainstream capitalist and developmental understandings, comparing the present to the past, which can ignore more meaningful aspects of community and initiatives which would help improve the town's image and opportunities for the future.

A better focus both for media and the population of wider Aotearoa New Zealand would include discussions of future projects and possibilities for the town. If there is an insistence towards focussing on economic and capitalocentric metrics, positive coverage could include the possibility of an offshore windfarm, new businesses, new infrastructure, plans for a new sporting complex, or the proposals for a new housing development. A focus solely on population and GDP data would not only be unhelpful, it would also be dishonest considering the range of economic possibilities on the horizon for Pātea. There is great potential for media coverage on local events, individuals' successes, local activism, and cooperation between diverse groups. All of these were ongoing throughout Pātea, from what I learned during the interviews, and yet the media analysis covered relatively little of it – particularly national television media. It came across strongly during the interviews the people of Pātea often feel misrepresented, echoing the same sentiments since the closure of the freezing works. Those I spoke to have made continuing efforts to redirect representation to the more positive aspects of the community with mixed, though improving, outcomes over the years. Considering these efforts are dependent on volunteered time, I would say established media outlets hold the responsibility to make these discursive adjustments. They hold the power of representation that continues to influence the lives and community in Pātea, and there is a duty for them to put Pātea's interests first when constructing their version of 'truth' about the town.

There may be improvements to be made from local government about the rhetoric and subsequent funding systems in place which dictate many of the investments available for the community. The interviews indicated Pātea is often 'left off the map' in regional council discussions, with investments often directed to urban centres rather than spread around to smaller communities, suggesting 'left out' is a more appropriate description of local resource allocation than 'left behind'. I also found investments for the town typically comes from the efforts of the people themselves – either as volunteers or as activists for their community, rather than as paid workers or service providers. Towards creating an inclusive future, institutional powers directing investments may need to investigate whether their systems work for the interests of all people (including those in smaller communities). This may be a subject for further research inquiry – government policy was not approached in the scope of this thesis.

With these considerations, I do believe 'left out' is a more appropriate and apt description of Pātea's experience than 'left behind', and I suggest this term could be developed further in place of current 'left behind' rhetoric. Indeed, 'left out' mirrors Robert's comment on being 'left off' the map. 'Left out' is an open term which might refer to diverse social, economic, or political inequalities, whereas 'left behind' is often focussed on economic factors and assumes a linear progression of economy and 'development'. Additionally, 'left out' provides more room for self-determination with the term,

because the 'behind' in 'left behind' might suggest the term should be applied by those 'ahead', assuming a lack of power or capability in those 'behind'. I would be interested to see research on whether people in Pātea (or other towns that might be deemed 'left behind') would be more comfortable calling themselves (or being called) 'left behind' or 'left out'; I hypothesize the latter would feel less derogatory, but without having addressed either of these terms through my interviews I cannot say with any certainty.

5.3 What *will* become of Pātea?

The future is always uncertain, but it is useful to know the direction people see themselves heading in. The interviewees were consistent in their positivity and hopefulness for the future of Pātea. They saw their community strength to be powerful, possibilities from offshore windfarming to be exciting, and they see their young people as their future and the future of New Zealand. The goals of those I interviewed from Pātea are shaped around more than just material and financial needs –they work around collective belonging and the ability for individuals to flourish. This section doesn't hope to predict their future but will reexplore some of the factors that might influence Pātea going forward in the context of diverse economies and place attachment.

5.3.1 Pātea's diverse economies

Like many places, diverse economies play a significant role in the Pātea landscape. Moving forward, paying attention to this will be the key to Pātea's success – for the simple reason it has been the key for its survival since the closing of the freezing works. Such activities have included crowdfunding to produce Poi E, volunteering for community projects and activism, local care economies both for children in the local library and schools, and elderly in the local care home and old folks' hall. A flourishing of Māori culture here can also be attributed to diverse Māori economies with communal ownership of land, and the passing on of Māori knowledge both within iwi, and as I found in Aotea Utanganui with oral histories and the cooperation between the museum and local iwi. Pātea itself has developed a relatively inclusive economy, as the priority for many in Pātea is the thriving of their community, and they are willing to achieve these goals without clinging exclusively to a mainstream capitalist approach.

It is in the interest of Pātea to invest in their diverse economies whenever possible, and through these nurture 'community economies', for more sustainable and equitable outcomes (Community Economies, n.d.-b; Gibson-Graham, 2005). The diverse economies literature pointed out diverse economic practices help in local sustainability and stability – and I suspect many in Pātea are already aware of this, though not necessarily with this terminology. As the Pātea community has a strong sense of ownership and relationship with their place, diverse and inclusive economies provide

opportunities to support these ideals – as many forms of diverse economy stand in opposition to privatised corporate interests and capitalist modes of profit. This will be important when considering the possibilities of an offshore windfarm – as this is a concern the interviews illustrated. For TOP and the people of Pātea to come to an agreement, I think TOP will need to recognise the importance of local empowerment, and the town's historic relationship with big industry. TOP will also need to ensure, if their argument for coming to Pātea is economic support, that the town is supported beyond capitalist conceptions of economy: there will need to be discussions about what economy means for Pātea – and where TOP fits into this beyond their own stakeholder interests. This may include environmental, social and cultural investments, but the specifics would be for the people of Pātea to deliberate. Understanding Pātea as a place 'left out' may also be beneficial for TOP in ensuring the town and its people are not left out of *this* moment in Pātea's (or New Zealand's) story.

As Gibson-Graham & Dombroski (2020) explain, diverse economies aren't 'anti-capitalist', they are 'more-than-capitalist'. A diverse economies framework doesn't fight against offshore windfarming coming to Pātea just because it is owned by a corporation searching for profit. But diverse and inclusive economies show us these corporations are not the only way economies function, and they can also be reworked to be cooperative with the places hosting them rather than competitive and exploitative. Alternative models of ownership, or other modes of 'commoning' (such as Hicks (2020) explores in community-funded renewable energy) may be a particular option for TOP to investigate, as autonomy and self-determination are important in Pātea, including rights over resources.

5.3.2 New generations and place attachment

I have come to learn pride in Pātea is both an inherited and a learned experience. It is instilled through family, school, and environment particularly for the younger generations. As much of the pride I saw in the media was tied to Poi E, I was unsure whether this pride would be starting to diminish - as the number of people who remember when it came out has been shrinking. But not only does Pātea Māori Club continue to instil pride in newer generations, Pātea itself is able to reproduce this pride. Whether through their schools, through events like Paepae in the Park, or by example as the community is active in speaking up for their own interests. The landscape of Pātea, both human and non-human, acts to reinforce place attachment for the town. Taiaroa represented this well when he talked about how "…your Maunga… your Marae… [and] your rivers know who you are and will always be there for you to go home". Even in my own anecdote of meeting Pātea members of Te Pāti Māori, I found the level of pride for the town to be almost contagious.

This reinforces place attachment to be as much based on collective identity as it is on individual identity, and individuals' attachment to place can be informed by the collective identities operating

around them. Furthermore, place attachment, at least in the form I have found in Pātea, lacks external reference. This means peoples' attachment to Pātea is not informed by comparing Pātea to other places. They don't define Pātea by statistics or wealth. They are attached to their town for its own history and its own people. From a geographical perspective, this is important for our understandings of place and small towns, because place attachment shows the insignificance of many of the metrics and rhetoric explored around development and 'left behind' places. Referring to a place as 'left behind' defines a place in reference to other 'successful' places - ignoring diversities of economies as well as the ideas and ideals of those living there. Such representations can exacerbate vicious economic cycles (though, as explored above, these are also not the *only* cycles affecting a place). While 'left out' still holds its own binary of 'out' vs 'in', it does improve the narrative to include diverse understandings of economy, rather than mainstream capitalist understandings of progress and 'development'.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has answered the final research question of this thesis by exploring how the responses to small town change found in Chapter 4 relate to existing literature around small town geographies. I found cumulative causation, and the potential for vicious (or virtuous) economic cycles, are limited in their understanding of changing places, because a place is more than just their economy, and other sociocultural or political processes will always be active alongside these economic trends. An example of this was also found when economic processes such as deindustrialisation were not as significant for many people in Pātea as place attachment, and how new collective identities were formed outside of economic factors with *Poi E*. Thus, Pātea can be understood as a complex assemblage of different actors and experiences, and to limit one's understanding to a single narrative is limiting, if not unfair. The rhetoric of 'left behind' places was then revisited, finding the term might be improved by shifting it into 'left out' places. I elaborated on more productive ways to discuss small towns such as Pātea, focussing on positive economic possibilities, or moving towards sociocultural, rather than economic, indicators. Possibilities for Pātea's future were considered, highlighting the importance of diverse and inclusive economies moving forward for sustainability and stability. Finally, ongoing pride in younger generations of Pātea were used to illustrate how place attachment offers nuanced and productive representations of a place compared to the capitalocentric or statistical analyses often used.

6 Conclusion

Small towns form a significant part of the New Zealand landscape, and each one presents its own history and identity for the people who live there. Coming into this research, I thought small towns, often limited by size and resources, may lack the power to affect local change, or to alter the narrative of their place, as seen by the wider region (i.e., urban centres). I worked towards whether or not this was true and was surprised to find that at least in the context of Pātea, it's not.

This thesis has explored responses to small town change in Pātea, New Zealand, and applied the findings to existing literature around small towns. After first considering the existing small-town literature (and expanding on diverse economies), my research consisted of a media analysis, and semi-structured interviews, to understand the context of Pātea's recent history. These were analysed, taking in turn Pātea's past, present, and future, to find what relationships people have to the town, and the way they respond to changes there. This analysis was then discussed in the context of existing small-town literature, discovering new insights into limitations and validities therein.

The research found the people of Pātea have an attachment to their town, informed both by history and by kinship, and is represented through an assemblage of both human and non-human actors. However, this relationship is often ignored by media, who represent Pātea based on the economic or cultural shifts it experienced in the 80's with the closing of their freezing works and the subsequent release of *Poi E.* The depopulation of the town, and decrease in local economic activities, has been painted as a burden faced by the town – and in contrast to capitalist ideals of development and growth. Those I interviewed showed how connotations of Pātea as 'lower socioeconomic' have led, for some, to a dissatisfaction with how their town is represented by media – and that one narrative is being told to the exclusion of more positive perspectives. This seems to have influenced a cautionary distrust of 'outsiders' coming into the town, including recent corporate interests in sea-bed mining (which has been rejected by the town), and offshore windfarming (which is currently being proposed). It seems the people of Pātea want to protect themselves from corporate self-interests – remembering the impacts of the freezing works closure – and ensure the interests of the people come first.

Applying these concepts to existing literature, I found concepts of cumulative causation and vicious economic cycles may be limited in their application because of their single-facet approach to understanding a place and ignoring other sociocultural or political trends. Pātea is not just defined by the deindustrialisation and emigration which occurred in the closing of the freezing works. They are

also involved in the creation of *Poi E* and subsequent Māori empowerment. Additionally, moving forward in the present and future, Pātea continues to be a source of pride and identity for the people who live there – without reference to the town's economic or demographic particulars. Descriptions of places as 'left behind', and other such rhetoric of 'development', also ignore the realities of place beyond economic factors – an issue produced both by media and by government policy. In contrast, I propose 'left out' as an alternative term which is able to appreciate the inequalities indicated by 'left behind', while avoiding economic narratives of linear progression. Diverse economies offer opportunities to shift policy and business in the direction Pātea wants – away from capitalocentric interests of corporations, towards 'more-than-capitalist' futures. They are excited to collaborate with corporations such as with offshore windfarming – but they are unlikely to move forward without assurances of accountability and local empowerment.

In a world battling climate change, pollution, poverty, and overconsumption, it is important to understand the ways capitalist ideologies perpetuate such issues. In this case, capitalist modes of thinking attempt to define Pātea based on their economy – however Pātea's self-identity is instead shaped by local pride, empowerment, and community. These negative narratives imposed on Pātea are linked to colonial perspectives on development and 'progress', and there is much work to be done across New Zealand to reproduce more sustainable ideas of success and improvement.

There are several limitations of this research which need to be considered. First, I want to reiterate when I discuss the interests of Pātea, I have been describing the interests *as represented* by the community leaders I interviewed. I have conducted no widespread survey or questionnaire to find perspectives across the entire population there. Also, I do not come from Pātea, and therefore do not have the same vested interests there – I have attempted to represent the town accurately and positively, though I recognise as an 'outsider', I may have made misinterpretations of local sociocultural dynamics. Additionally, as I am Pākehā, I recognise I was more familiar with the Pākehā perspectives I found. In some cases I struggled to understand concepts I was presented with from Māori identities and culture. I did my best to represent these accurately and fairly, and through feedback from those I interviewed, I believe I have done so. Within the scope of this research, I was unable to interview anybody from the offshore windfarm corporation TOP – it would have been insightful to hear their perspectives as prospecting business interests. The information I have from them is limited to what I found on their website. Insights from existing local businesses was also limited. This research was not broad enough to include government policy as a series for analysis, and I suggest more research into NZ policy would be useful for understanding the ways capitalist ideologies stigmatise and disempower areas deemed 'lower socioeconomic'.

Final thoughts

Over the last year or so, my horizons have widened constantly with this project. Both in academic and localised understandings of places – particularly about a town I knew little about before. Indeed, I doubt I could have found a more engaged, positive, or insightful selection of people to interview anywhere else. It was a truly inspiring experience to understand Pātea as a place of strength and pride – where the people work to define their own narrative despite being subject to others' interpretations constantly. This project has demonstrated the importance of small town geographies, in promoting productive and equitable discourse, understanding 'more-than-capitalist' economies, and importance of place attachment and empowerment at the local level. I believe Pātea might be one of the best places to demonstrate diverse economies in the NZ context and be able to spread 'more-than-capitalist' perspectives into both the conscience and policy of our country. I would encourage any geographer to research small towns in New Zealand, as there is always more to understand, and more people who want to be understood.

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8 Appendices

Appendix A: Pātea Timeline

c. 1350: Turi and his followers arrive in Aotea Waka at Patea River mouth

1870s: Town site surveyed and named Carlyle

1878: Patea Steam Shipping Company formed

1881: Patea becomes official town name

1894: Patea Dairy Factory opened

1901: West Coast Refrigeration Company formed

1912: South Taranaki Shipping Company formed

1933: Aotea Waka statue unveiled

1982: Patea Freezing Works closed

1983: *Poi E* song released by Pātea Māori Club

1984: *Poi E* tops NZ singles charts

1990: Patea Hospital closes

2004-5: Patea Primary School closes, Patea High School becomes Patea Area School

2008: Large part of Freezing Works destroyed by fire

2016: *Poi E: The Story of Our Song* documentary premiers

2022: 40 year anniversary of Freezing Works' closure commemorated

Appendix B: *Poi E* (1983) Lyrics

by Pātea Māori Club

Original Lyrics:

E rere rā e, taku poi porotiti,
Tītahataha rā, whakararuraru e.
Porotakataka rā, poro hurihuri mai,
Rite tonu ki te tīwaiwaka e.

Ka parepare rā, pīoioi rā,
Whakahekeheke e, kia korikori e
Piki whakarunga rā, māminga mai rā
Taku poi porotiti, taku poi e!

Poi E, whakatata mai
Poi E, kaua e rere kē
Poi E, kia piri mai ki au
Poi E, awhi mai rā
Poi E, tāpekatia mai.

Poi E, ō tāua aroha -
- Poi E - paiheretia rā.
POI... TAKU POI, E!

English Translation:

Take flight, my sweet young fledgling,
To distant shores, which will challenge you.
And should you ever doubt yourself, look deep inside,
And dance with the joy of a fantail.

Bobbing and weaving, shaking and swaying,
Spinning and twirling, moving and frooving,
Moonwalking to the heavens, fanning out your tail to the world
My one and only, sweet, precious child

Stay close to me
Never lose your identity
Embrace your culture
It will see you through
Let it always be

Our love for each other
Which binds us together
My sweet child

New Translation from Poi E: The Story of Our Song (Kahi, 2016)

Appendix C: Outreach Email

Kia Ora, _____

My name is Ben Lilly and am currently a Master's student at Massey University. I am interested in researching Pātea for my thesis, and as _____, it would be great to have you involved. The Working project title is Responses to Small Town Change: A Case Study of Pātea, and will be conducting a combination of interviews and group workshops to understand how the people of Pātea have reacted and responded to changes in their community over the past 50 years. I have attached an information sheet which goes into more depth. The interviews and possible workshops would occur during the months of August and September of 2023, so if you could get in touch before the end of August that would be fantastic.

If you are interested in participating in a workshop and/or an interview, or if you would like to discuss further, please contact me at benalilly@outlook.com, and I can elaborate further before discussing your availability.

Kind Regards,

Ben Lilly

Responses to Small Town Change: A Case Study of Pātea

Information for participants

Please read this information before deciding whether to participate in this research.

Project Outline

Pātea has undergone significant changes structurally and in its reputation over the past 50 years, with notable events including the closure of Pātea Freezing Company (PFC), and the Pātea Māori Club's hit single *Poi E*. It is no secret the Pātea now is not as populous as it was in the 1970s-early 1980s, but statistical trends do not tell a town's whole story. This project will investigate peoples' responses to changing places in the context of Pātea.

Who is carrying out the research?

Ben Lilly is undertaking this research as a student at Massey University. Ben is producing a thesis in partial fulfilment of the degree Master of Arts (Geography). The supervisors for this research will be Associate Professor Kelly Dombroski (Massey University), and Associate Professor Russell Prince (Massey University). Contact information for both supervisors will be provided below.

How you can participate

The key component of this project will involve semi-structured interviews with 3-5 community members – specifically, community leaders. If you agree to participate, it will involve a single interview with you of around 30-60 minutes, in person or over Zoom (whichever you prefer), where we would discuss topics around Pātea. The interview will be recorded for subsequent transcription and analysis – you may select whether or not you wish to be anonymous when the thesis is written.

There is an additional option to participate in a workshop, together with other willing participants, where we will complete certain activities together to explore understandings and responses to change. A single workshop is expected to take approximately 90 minutes, and lunch will be provided. These workshops will be dependent on enough willing participants – please feel free to indicate your interest so workshops can be planned.

Your Rights/Responsibilities

- If you agree to this project, you will be asked to sign the attached agreement stating you are willing to be recorded. You will be allowed to change your mind at any point until the interview has taken place.
- You will be free to cancel the interview or its recording at any point - if you feel uncomfortable and/or wish to leave during the interview you will be free to do so.
- You will be provided contact details of my supervisors and the university, to whom you may turn if there are any issues.
- You will be asked to indicate whether you wish to be anonymous during thesis production.
- You may be provided with transcripts of your interview to review if you wish, and you can contact the researcher after the interview to alter or delete any statements made.
- After final production, you will be provided with a copy of the thesis, or a short report, if you so wish.
- You will have a say as to whether material produced during this project may be published outside of Massey University.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Research Ethics Office, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

If you would like to discuss this further before deciding whether to participate, I am keen to talk more, either by email, over Zoom, or at lunch. Please email me at benalilly@outlook.com, and I will be happy to discuss further and/or organise a meeting.

Contact Information

Ben Lilly (Student and Researcher), benalilly@outlook.com

Associate Professor Kelly Dombroski (Primary Supervisor), k.dombroski@massey.ac.nz

Associate Professor Russell Prince (Secondary Supervisor), r.j.prince@massey.ac.nz

Research Director Bill Fish (Research Practice Advisor), humanethics@massey.ac.nz

Consent Form

This consent form relates to your participation in the project 'Responses to Small Town Change: A Case Study of Pātea'.

I consent to participating in a 30-60 minute interview	Y / N
I consent to being audio-recorded	Y / N
I consent to participating in a group workshop	Y / N
I consent to my name and community position being included in publication.	Y / N
I would like to review any material written about me before publication	Y / N

Name: Signature: Date:

Appendix F: Interview Questions Guide Example

1. So first, would you mind telling me about your own experiences – for instance, how long have you lived in Taranaki?
    a. Have you lived in different towns in the region?
    b. How long have you been Mayor?
    c. What made you decide to become the mayor here?
    d. How much time do you spend in Pātea specifically?
2. Thinking about your time in Pātea, what were some of the major changes you've seen in the area, and in the community?
    a. How do those changes link in with the rest of the South Taranaki District/How does Pātea fit into the region?
    b. How do you see those changes playing out into the future?
3. Do you work with community groups in Pātea?
    a. Can you tell me something about the people involved in those organizations – what do you see them valuing.
    b. Are those sorts of values similar across the community, do you think, or does some of that vary?
4. Do you have any active proposals, plans or initiatives in place for Pātea that you can tell me about?
5. I do know there's a proposal for an offshore windfarm – it would mean potentially revamping the port there in Pātea, might even produce some jobs. What is your take on that proposal?
    a. I don't suppose you attended the information evening for it last Monday? I saw there was one, but was unable to come down, so I'm just curious how that went.
    b. How do you see the people of Pātea feeling about the proposal?
6. In the media analysis I did, particularly TV media, I found a lot of discussion about the Pātea Māori Club, and Poi E. (If he had been around at that time): How did you experience this phenomenon in the Pātea Community?
    a. That song was from around 40 years ago, how many people in Pātea would you say still identify with that song?
    b. One person around that time said "Poi E has given people pride… it's put Pātea on the map." How would you respond to that?
    c. Some other interesting quotes came out of the analysis, would you mind if I offer some to you, and you tell me how you would respond to someone saying this to you:
        i. "[Pātea] may have a hit song, and a hit movie about the song, but its also… its still poor."
        ii. "This town has taken some serious hits, but not only refuses to disappear, it doesn't even believe it ever will."
        iii. "Poi E has given people pride… it's put Pātea on the map."
        iv. "These Pāteans refuse to think negatively."