

Perceptions of liveability in the Kauri Coast and the East Coast of the Far North District

Nick Hutchinson

Why do people live in this part of the Far North District of Northland (Te Tai Tokerau), of New Zealand and what are their perceptions and the perceptions of others about the liveability of places in the Kauri Coast and the East Coast? What are the influences of environmental quality on the liveability of these places? These are pivotal ideas outlined in the 'Geographies of interconnections' Australian Curriculum: Geography, Year 9 content descriptions.

Palimpsest and possibilism in the Far North

The questions can be addressed, to some extent, through the notion of palimpsest and through the geographic philosophy of possibilism.

Two particular parts of the Far North are examined: a substantial part the Kauri Coast on the west, that includes Hokianga catchment and Waipoua Forest, and the urban centres of Kerikeri and Moerewa, close to the Bay of Islands on the East Coast.

[refer to <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/interactive/7509/northlands-topography> map Northland's topography – choose layers to show place names, highways, districts and land use]

[refer to <http://www.nrc.govt.nz/Download/?file=/upload/2032/NRC%20boundary%20map.pdf> for a map of the three districts under Northland Regional Council]

The palimpsest, a metaphor for the process of landscape change, seen through the lens of cultural geography, derives from the writing tablet used by medieval monks, a tablet that left inscriptions of prior scripts. It could never be wiped completely clean.

Kupe and Cook

The twin cultural impacts of Kupe and Cook are imprinted on the imaginations of people from this region where 'Te Kohanga o Te Tai Tokerau', the nest of the northern tribes, centred on Hokianga Harbour, trace their ancestry to the discovery and settlement of this place, rendering it the 'birthplace' of the Nation. There is a tangle of oral histories surrounding Kupe

but one of the strongest stories, recounted by Peter Buck, or Te Rangi Hiroa, in the early twentieth century, tells of Kupe leaving far off Hawaiki to chase an errant octopus down the east coast of North Island (Moon, 2013, 88). The creature was killed in the stretch of ocean later called Cook Strait and Kupe then circumnavigated North Island to settle in Hokianga from whence he later departed for Hawaiki. Kupe, according to Ngāpuhi¹ oral histories, vowed never to return and named his point of departure, Hokianga, Te Hokianga-a-Kupe (the great returning place of Kupe) (Taonui, 2012, 2).

And, the Georgian buildings such as Mangunu Mission House, which overlooks Hokianga Harbour and Kerikeri Mission House and the Stone Store at Kerikeri, bear witness to the influence of the pre-eminent scientific explorer, Cook. Cook was not the first European to navigate New Zealand waters but he certainly has been elevated in importance locally, particularly in the process of anglicising New Zealand. As, historian James Belich observes, 'Thousands of New Zealanders now live in Cook's place-names as contentedly as they live in Kupe's' (1996:122).

Possibilists believe that the biophysical environment holds inherent possibilities, which people may choose to develop while others, may choose to ignore them. The environment provides a backdrop to events, it provides certain biophysical limits but human ingenuity is a powerful countervailing force.

¹ Ngāpuhi now has the largest affiliation of any New Zealand iwi/people/nation/tribe, with 122,214 people registered (2006 census), and formed from 150 hapu/subtribes/clans.



Site of a kumera storage pit, One Tree Hill Auckland. Source: Wikimedia Commons

The possibilities of the potato

Kumara (*Ipomoea batatas*) is a quintessential Polynesian resource. Kumara remains have been dated back to the tenth century in the Cook Islands (Belich, 1996: 32) and these same islands are sometimes cited as legendary Hawaiki, the origin of Kupe's long canoe voyage. How an American plant was found to be so widespread throughout the Polynesian diaspora is another matter? One convincing line of argument that examines the DNA of the kumara traces its origin to Mexico, rather than Peru or Ecuador where supposedly Polynesians may have made contact with Amerindian people and returned with the tubers (Furey, 2006:10). According to an International Potato Centre report there is a significant sweet potato 'gene flow' from Mexico to Oceania but a weak genetic association with Peru and Ecuador. The scientists suggest that kumara may well have been transferred as botanical seeds by birds into Polynesia (Rossel, Kriegner & Zhang, 1999-2000).

Kumara, brought over with the founding canoes, were tended in carefully constructed gardens in the 900 hectares of volcanic loams at Kerikeri where gravel and sand was added to the soil to assist in drainage and heat retention and charcoal was dug in to increase fertility. Gravel is 'kerikeri' or 'kirikiri' in Māori, although 'kerikeri' also means 'to dig intensively' (Middleton, 2007, 33). Underground stores, called 'pits', were dug to keep precious kumara over winter. In Polynesia kumara could overwinter in the ground but the Maori 'pits', or cellars, were quite elaborate, 'some had raised rims, thatched roofs, drainage systems and little cupboards in the corners (Belich, 1996, 29).

When Europeans introduced the white potato, later called the Māori potato, to the district it was extensively grown as a trading crop, a commodity to be exchanged for axes, hatchets and more particularly muskets. In the early 1800s, enterprising chiefs, such as Ngāpuhi war leader Hongi Hika encouraged such trade with the

whaling ships and amassed so many muskets that the chiefs were able to mount successful armed raids down the west coast to Taranaki, to the Bay of Plenty, the East Coast, to the present site of Auckland and Tauranga, Mokoia Island in Lake Rotorua and Kaipara on the west coast of Northland. Captured slaves tended ever more extensive potato gardens in an expanding cycle of production, warfare and slavery.

Kumara growing expertise built up over generations was widespread and easily transferred to the production of Māori potatoes. The precarious nature of cultivating an essentially tropical crop, such as kumara, is illustrated by the fact that firstly, kumara plants do not flower or set seed in temperate New Zealand and, secondly, kumara gardens in marginal areas such as the Wairarapa Coast of southern North Island and Marlborough Sounds in the northeast of South Island had to be abandoned, possibly when a climate shift led to colder conditions during the early seventeenth century (Waitt et al, 2000, 164).

The possibilities of kauri

Ngati Hine² elder, Kevin Prime explained that the tallest and most magnificent trees in the forests, such as kauri, were awarded high status (mana). They could only be felled for an exalted purpose, such as building a war canoe. Similarly, Ngāpuhi elder, John Klaricich maintained that, 'In the Hokianga, kauri was seen as a timber of prestige and rarely used' (Orwin, 2004, 21). Prime also explains that kauri offered fewer possibilities than other trees because it was considered to be inferior as a resource. Totara, another forest giant, for example, provided good timber for building canoes, for house construction and for carving. Its berries provided food



for birds, thus facilitating hunting and its bark could be made into containers to carry cooked forest birds, preserved in their own fat. Klaricich remembered that his ancestors were more concerned when the miro was felled because the miro was the main food source for pigeons (kupuku), particularly through autumn and winter when the small plum-sized red berries provide so much food that the kupuku can barely fly. He also recalled that tanekaha saplings made better fishing rods than did kauri saplings and tanekaha could be also be used for canoe paddles and the bark used for medicine and red dyes (Orwin, 2004, 23).

2 Ngati Hine can be identified as an independent iwi rather than a hapu of Ngāpuhi.

Possibilities of the biophysical environment

The biophysical environment offers a number of possibilities for human endeavour. Just inside the bar on the southern shore of Hokianga Harbour lie boulders, cobbles and pebbles of both hard and fine-grained sandstone, and, a variety volcanic rock, such as andesite and basalt. The sand that fused these egg-shaped rocks together has been eroded from local conglomerate into fine beach sand strewn beneath the boulder beach. The great rivers that deposited these rocks 16–23 million years ago are part of the redeposited basement rocks of the Northland Region. Some 25 million years ago there was widespread over thrusting of rocks from the northeast effectively bulldozing pre-existing rocks away and rolling the volcanic and sedimentary rocks over into complex arrangements.

The straight western coastline follows a north westerly alignment that represents the angle of rifting when the Tasman Sea formed the micro-continent, New Zealand, as it drifted away from Australia and Antarctica between 60 and 80 million years ago (Orange, 2012). The western coastline is a drift dominated coastline with impressive rias, or drowned valleys, such as Hokianga Harbour (11 065 hectares, cf Sydney Harbour 5 500 hectares) while the eastern coastline is irregular, with rocky headlands, sandy bays and deep harbours. Here, and further inland towards the headwaters of Hokianga, there is evidence

of recent volcanic activity, that has taken place over the last 2000 years.

The climate of Hokianga could be described as mild, humid and rather windy (Conning et al, 2004, 18). Opononi, a low altitude coastal station on the southern shores of Hokianga Harbour receives 1467 mm of rainfall on average, with least falling December–March. Mean temperatures are 19°C in February 10°C in July. Hokianga and Kerikeri experience 2000 hours of sunshine on average per year. Kerikeri averages 1646 mm with least rain falling in summer. The February mean is 20°C and July 12°C. Both stations could be classified as temperate maritime climates.

The geological, climatic and biotic inheritance of the Hokianga is a series of heavily leached clays with few nutrients and a thin layer of topsoil. Kauri trees contribute leaf litter that is highly acidic resulting in these poor soils. The volcanic soils and patches of free draining alluvial soils are agriculturally productive but much of the region is much better suited to forestry.

‘Prior to human settlement, most of Hokianga was forested, apart from the huge dunes on the north side of the harbour entrance and extensive wetlands on the harbour margins.

Some of the earliest European visitors noted that kauri abounded “as far as my eye could reach” (Conning et al, 2004, 19).

Below: Hokianga Harbour entrance. Source: Wikimedia Commons



Hokianga was the centre of a saw milling industry from the mid 1820s through to the 1830s with up 4000 Māori and some 90 Pākehā³ living around the harbour bush felling the Kauri logs. Hokianga was then the point of origin of 50–60% of the timber exported from New Zealand, much of it, in the form of spars, baulks (squared logs) and sawn timber was destined for the Australian colonies.

‘Today few large tracts of forest remain, representing fragmented remnants of the former extensive woodlands. Freshwater wetlands are rare. Significant areas of mangrove forest, tidal flats and coastline have also been lost or modified through stop-banking [bunds], clearance and grazing. For example, approximately 27% of the Hokianga Harbour’s intertidal zone has been lost to reclamation, while the vegetated intertidal zone has been reduced by 45%’ (Conning et al, 2004, 20).

Kerikeri land use futures

By the 1930s Pākehā occupied the deep, friable volcanic soils, at Kerikeri, to develop a citrus farming industry. The North Auckland Land Development Company subdivided twenty-acre blocks, in order to grow oranges, lemons and grapefruits, fringed by windbreaks of Eucalyptus trees and Hakea shrubs. The properties, which were run down during World War II, also suffered from savage droughts during 1945 and 1946. But there were subsequent plantings of new varieties of tangelos, oranges and mandarins and the advent of successful tamarillo production. The 1970s saw the introduction of kiwifruit to the district. However, the 1980s presaged a change in fortune for growers when a virus affected tamarillo crops and kiwifruit were in oversupply. By the end of the decade the local authorities found it more expedient to allow subdivision for residential housing. Nevertheless, the region continues to grow citrus and subtropical fruit, bringing in about \$12 million annually to the region (Myhre, 2013). The New Zealand Yearbook 2012 indicating that Northland is a major producer of lemons, mandarins and avocados. Hedges of feijoas and passionfruit still fringe the productive orchards and groves.

One company, Kerifresh, employed 140 casual workers from Tonga in the summer season, 2013, under the Recognised Seasonal Employment program, as well providing work for 300 casual workers from the surrounding district (Myhre, 2013).

Some of the horticultural land will still be viable in years to come but an examination of land use using Google

Earth and the Far North Future Plan 2006/16 indicates that much of the horticultural area will be redeveloped into housing sections, or subdivisions, when the neighbouring centre of Waipapa is fully developed. The population of Kerikeri-Waipapa is expected to increase from 7,830 in 2001, to 14,975 in 2021, and, 16, 835 in 2026.

Possibilities in Waipora Forest

The singular fact that a significant reserve of Kauri forest should still remain in the Far North is an interesting story. Tragically, only 5 % of the old growth kauri forests are left standing in New Zealand following European occupation and most of the remnants survive in isolated patches on spurs, ridges and inaccessible plateaus. Waipoua kauri forest was initially purchased by the Crown in 1876 from two rival but related Māori chiefs, Tiopira Kinaki, (Te Roroa⁴), and, Parore Te Awha, (Ngāpuhi). Importantly, Parore had secured an agreement with Pākehā to protect the forest for the long-term benefit of both groups. In actual fact, Waipoua was inaccessible enough to prevent extensive kauri logging, although gum diggers and tappers exploited parts of the forest in the early 1900s. The area was eventually intended for clear felling to facilitate settlement, but was gazetted as a state forest in 1906. The department of Lands and Survey had finally accepted the kauri would soon be effectively milled out. Thus one representative section of forest should be preserved. In 1908, Leonard Cockayne, a notable ecologist, was the first to unsuccessfully recommend that Waipoua should be declared a national park.

In the 1930s Te Rorua, whose roha, (the territory of their tribal group), encompass the Waipoua catchment, explained that there was a rahui placed on the forest and that Waipoua forest should be protected for ever. A rahui is a form of tapu (sacred, restricted, or prohibited) that restricts access to a resource. It may be a means of conserving resources, or, imposed, for example, for the security of burial sites or the protection of native birds in the forest.

The wheels of government moved slowly but by the early 1930s there were further calls for the absolute and permanent protection of Waipoua kauri forest. The depression and World War II held up proceedings and the State Forestry Service, later the NZFS, continued to call for wise forest management, a euphemism for the sustainable logging of trees that take hundreds of years to regenerate. Although parts of the lower

4 Te Roroa are based in the Waimamaku valley, Waipoua Forest, Maunganui Bluff and Kaihū valley along the western coast of the Far North District. Refer to the map at <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/map/1195/ngati-whatua-tribal-area>

3 Collective noun for people of European descent or, more generally, any non Māori New Zealander.

Waipoua catchment were intensively logged in World War II, under the guise of a wartime emergency, some 75% of the catchment remained as indigenous forest, with some 16% under radiata pine and only 5% used as pasture land.

After the War scientists and the Waipoua Preservation Society unsuccessfully called once again for the establishment of a national park. Finally, in 1952 the Waipoua Forest was gazetted as a sanctuary under the jurisdiction of the NZFS, but, more importantly, as an area set aside for preservation. Geographer, Michael Roche (2013:218) explained, 'The Waipoua debate was an occasion when other scientists and members of the public challenged the governments foresters' professional judgement.'

A 2011 proposal from the Department of Conservation to declare the area a Kauri National Park listed the ecological values of the Waipoua Forest. The Forest together with contiguous parts of Waima and Mataraua Forests support the largest New Zealand population of the nationally threatened North Island brown kiwi, with possibly between 1000-2000 birds in the Waipoua Forest and the Waipoua/Mataraua plateau. It contains the most viable population of North Island kokako, a bird that cannot fly very well and prefers to flit from branch to branch. This ancient 'wattle' bird species is nationally endangered in Northland. Should the Park come to fruition it would house much distinctive northern flora and fauna in a transect that extends from the mountains to sea, which includes the kauri forest, and, covers an area of great cultural significance to Te Roroa.

A 2013 report on the Waipoua River explained that Te Roroa are recognised as kaitiaki⁵, or guardians, of the Waipoua Forest (Gray, 2013). Their ancestors have inhabited the forest for 27 generations, or about 1000 years, and, contemporary Te Roroa descendants engage with environmental management, such as the maintenance of the near pristine Waipoua river system, pest and weed control, biosecurity monitoring of kauri dieback disease and the spread of Argentine ants. According to the Department of Conservation (2011) the entire area, wider than just Waipoua Forest takes Te Tarehu (tarehu means 'mist' or 'shroud' – the mists that cover the Waipoua Forest or the shroud of mists that cloak the land). Te Tarehu is a wāhi tapu⁶, place sacred to Māori in the traditional, spiritual, religious,



Kauri tree, Waipoua Forest Source: Wikimedia Commons

ritual or mythological sense. Te Tarehu is of vital cultural importance to Te Roroa, and includes many specific wāhi tapu and wāhi taonga (treasured sites).

One such treasured site is Tāne Mahuta⁷, a gigantic kauri tree. Up to 200 000 people per year visit the Tāne Mahuta site. Department of Conservation recent surveys have shown that overseas tourists make up the majority (62%) of visitors to the forest, with people from Auckland making up the majority (38.5%) of domestic visitors. 'The Waipoua Visitor Centre, located in the heart of the forest, is owned and run by Te Roroa. It contains a small gallery, café and a retail/reception area with an adjacent campsite, cabin and house accommodation. Since 2000, an average of 80 000 people a year have visited' (DOC, 2011, 23).

Liveability in Hokianga

By the 1830s the Hokianga was the epicentre of New Zealand's timber industry, rivalled only by the Bay of Islands as the most important focal point for European settlement in the country (Goddard, 2010, 8). This industry, heavily reliant on the exploitation of kauri forests prior to the 1920s, had two major results: it provided a source of wealth, both locally and nationally,

5 Kaitiaki is a New Zealand term used for the Māori concept of guardianship, for the sky, the sea, and the land. A kaitiaki is a guardian, and the process and practices of protecting and looking after the environment are referred to as kaitiakitanga.

6 Tapu, an ancient Māori spiritual and social code that was central to traditional society, is about sanctity and respect for people, natural resources and the environment.

7 The 'lord of the forest' Tāne Mahuta stands victorious in Waipoua forest, with his shoulders still pushed hard against his 'mother earth' and his feet stretched high towards the heavens of his 'sky father'.

but 'it left Northland with a heritage of deforested land vulnerable to erosion and difficult to farm'. (Lloyd & Guild, 1976, 193).

Small dairy farms were established in the Hokianga, compatible with Ngāpuhi land tenure, and using the water to transport the cream cans to the dairy factory at Motukaraka, in the upper reaches of the Harbour. Restructuring of the dairy industry in the 1950s and early 1960s saw the closure of local dairy factories with the small dairy farms becoming unviable and an economic malaise setting in: 'an economic decline in Hokianga from which it has not yet recovered' (Hokianga Health Enterprise Trust, 2014). Many Māori left the district to seek employment opportunities elsewhere. The population continued to decline in the 1960s and 1970s but people began to return in the 1980s when industrial restructuring was taking place in urban New Zealand. At the same time, 'Alternative life-stylers (known then as hippies), mostly Pākehā, began to settle in Hokianga, attracted to the relatively cheap land and relaxed way of life' (Hokianga Health Enterprise Trust, 2014).

Geography teachers Mayhill and Bawden, essentially writing about 1960s New Zealand alluded to this change in lifestyle when local inhabitants began to return to Northland after seeking employment in the south. They '... returned what they consider is an idyllic way of life, a little fruit and vegetable farming, and a little fishing and casual work in development projects when they are short of cash' (Mayhill & Bawden, 1972: 224). In the 1990s Auckland still acted as a magnet for many local people but between 1991 and 1996 population increased as a consequence of high Māori birth rates and the desire of people to return to ancestral lands. Belich (2001, 484) maintains that during this time (1990-96) the Far North was the prime growing area for cannabis production, with a value of production that outranked other leading industries in Northland, such as dairying, tourism and beef farming. He sees this proliferation of petty crime as yet another manifestation of the informal economy in the Far North which can include, 'perfectly innocent practices, such as gardening, other forms of home production, fishing and gathering, the receipt of legitimate welfare benefits, the bartering of goods and services and the occasional sale of such things as fish or firewood' (484).

More recently the population has stabilised with most of the formal workforce engaged in the tertiary sector, construction, tourism, forestry and pastoral farming industries (Hokianga Health Enterprise Trust, 2014). More generally for the Far North District, agriculture, fishing and forestry was the largest industry in 2011

accounting for 19% of total GDP, followed by business and property services (11.1%) and wholesale and retail trade (10.2%) (Infometrics, 2011). Marijuana growing is still of major significance in the informal economy and methamphetamine labs have also become significant contributors to the cash economy (Wedde, 2014, 157).

For those that live or pine for Hokianga there are obvious attractions, as seen in this wistful sentiment from a webmaster in far off Belgium:

'... it is one of the most beautiful and relatively unspoilt parts of New Zealand: its low population means uncluttered beaches and room to move; the climate is mild at all times of the year and the gardens grow well. The people are an amalgam of Māori/ Pākehā, old and young, academic and practical, way-out and conservative, in which everyone generally respects each other's ways. A small piece of Paradise? Some think so' (Baker, 2013).

On the other hand, the legacy of economic and social problems continues in Hokianga. It is a relatively poor area by national standards, with pockets of substandard housing and high unemployment (Winder & Lewis, 2010, 100). Hokianga has even been described as a "landscape of deprivation" (Crampton et al, 2000) with census data indicating that the Hokianga community was one of the most socio economically deprived communities in New Zealand (Hokianga Health Enterprise Trust, 2014).

The Hokianga Health Enterprise Trust explained:

'The unemployment rate in Hokianga at the 2001 census was 21% compared with 12% for the Far North District and 7.5% for New Zealand. The annual average income for Hokianga people was only \$11,300 according to the 2001 Census, compared with \$14,100 for the Far North District and \$18,500 for all New Zealanders.

The 2001 census also reported that access to motor vehicles, telephones and the internet were significant lower than the Far North and New Zealand averages. 44% of the Hokianga population left school without a qualification compared to 37% for the Far North and 28% for New Zealand populations' (Hokianga Health Enterprise Trust, 2014).

Hokianga has a high proportion of Māori inhabitants many of whom are living on their ancestral land. This fact alone may help to explain the so-called landscape of deprivation but it also may presage improvements in livelihood and liveability. As the treaty of Waitangi

settlement process sifts through the claims of Northland Māori, and wealth accrues to iwi, the tribes will become important economic agents combining their investment strategies with visions of sustainability and well-being. External perceptions about the liveability of Hokianga typically conjure up social deprivation in its various forms. However this is tūrangawaewae⁸ for many. This is the literal 'standing place' for many Ngāpuhi and others.

[refer to <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/map/393/traditional-lands-of-ngapuhi> for a map of the traditional lands of Ngāpuhi]

This is the place where Ngāpuhi feel especially empowered and connected. Clearly, indices of social deprivation do not effectively measure well-being when these are expressed in terms of connection to marae, place and community. Moreover, the machination of the Waitangi Treaty settlement process may indeed change the nature of this place.

In the mid 1980s, New Zealand's highest courts found that the Crown had not done enough to protect Māori commercial fishing interests since the signing of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. The 1989 and 2004 Māori Fisheries Acts not only allowed fishing quota allocations to flow through to iwi but also cash allocations to Māori (Durie, 2005, 132–3). Iwi/Māori are said to own approximately 50% of fisheries quota through iwi,

8 'Tūrangawaewae is one of the most well-known and powerful Māori concepts. Literally tūranga (standing place), waewae (feet), it is often translated as 'a place to stand'. Tūrangawaewae are places where we feel especially empowered and connected. They are our foundation, our place in the world, our home' <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/papatuanuku-the-land/page-5>

Aoteroa Fisheries Limited, the largest Māori-owned fisheries company, and through other companies. Currently the New Zealand Government is negotiating Māori fishing rights under the Office of (Waitangi) Treaty Settlements. In 2005 Ngāpuhi received '\$67 million of fish quota, \$3 million in cash and \$45 million in shares in Aoteroa Fisheries Ltd., from the Government as settlement of its Waitangi Treaty claims' (Winder & Rees, 2010, 157). Ngāpuhi have developed a strategy of investing in commercial fishing businesses rather than selling off its Annual Catch Entitlement (ACE) for cash. For example, they chartered a Korean fishing vessel to catch their deep water ACE and sold their inshore ACE to Moana Pacific Fisheries, owned by Māori company Aoteroa Fisheries Ltd. Fisheries provide Ngāpuhi with the majority of their annual income. The Korean shipping venture alone delivered \$6.8 million to the iwi over two years (Field, 2011).

Comparisons with the East coast

There are many more affluent New Zealanders, and others, living in the surrounds of The Bay of Islands. Localities in the Bay of Islands generally enjoy average scores in the socio-economic indicators as a direct consequence of wealth generated from horticulture and tourism. Tourism has grown rapidly in New Zealand with the number of overseas tourist arrivals doubling since 1992. It is the second largest foreign exchange earner after the dairy industry nationally. Growth in tourism in Far North has averaged 2.2% pa over the last ten years, whereas tourism growth averaged 1.9% in the national economy over the same ten-year period (Far North Annual Economic Profile 2011).



The Bay of Islands NZ. Source: Wikimedia Commons

The essential economic differences between Kauri Coast and the Bay of Islands have been intensified by the influx of wealthy people from Auckland and the so-called 'swallows', the overseas people that flock in to the Bay of Islands during the austral summer. The area is also becoming increasingly rural over the last twenty years largely because of the propensity for people to build 'lifestyle' and holiday homes. Land use has changed along the East Coast from livestock farming to 'aesthetic production' or 'farming of real estate', where livestock 'exist to pay the rates, complete the 'idyll', and keep the place tidy, rather than provide substantive income (Blue & Blundon, 2010,119)

During the 2001–06 inter censal period the fastest population growth in the Far North tended to be in the more sought after pockets of real estate privilege in the Bay of Islands. Winder and Lewis are optimistic with regards to future livelihoods in the area, particularly when expressed in material terms, 'Located next to New Zealand's fast growing metropolitan centre, blessed with coastal attractions, high sunshine hours and relatively cheap land, we posit that it should be benefiting from economic growth and positioned to exploit the global impetus to sustainable development' (2010:101).

Nonetheless, there are pockets of deprivation in the East Coast. But there again the possibilities for improvement are apparent in a case study of the small town, Moerewa, a place with more than 80% of the population identifying as Māori.

Possibilities for a northern town

Moerewa is one of the many towns in New Zealand and elsewhere that have been decimated by industrial restructuring, 1975–1990. Situated in the central Far North of New Zealand on State Highway 1, it emerged as a thriving town in the 1940s built around a meat processing works and a dairy factory (FitzHerbert and Lewis, 2010, 138). Essentially a service town for the surrounding farming district, it has attracted Māori workers pushed off the land and drawn in from many parts Te Tai Tokerau⁹. In the 1960s, there were still opportunities for employment in the meat processing works, dairy factory, work on the railway at Otiria and the export port, Opua. The meat processing works was obviously still prospering in the 1970s, '... in the year to 30 June 1975, the works processed, mainly for export, 135 200 cattle and vealers, 146 000 bobby calves, 556 000 sheep and lambs, and 6000 pigs. These figures represent a 62% increase in production since 1961' (Lloyd and Guild, 1976,181).

⁹ Te Tai Tokerau encompasses the three districts: Far North, Whangarei and Kaipara.

Much changed in the intervening years with the meat processing works still operative but little else existing by way of employment opportunities. 2012 marked the end of a bitter dispute between the works and the Meat Workers' Union. Ngāpuhi elder Sonny Tau, who convened the successful dispute resolution process had even threatened to call on all Māori farmers to stop sending livestock to the nine Auckland Farmers Freezing Company plants across the country.

Notwithstanding these setbacks Moerewa is currently the focus of renewed civic optimism. Ngahau Davis, who is of local Ngāpuhi descent, explained, 'Here Here in Moerewa we want to develop a culture of doing things for our- selves' (FitzHerbert and Lewis, 2010,138). In 1994 Davis, and his partner, returned to live in Moerewa and were instrumental in reviving a community trust, He Iwi Kotahi Tatou¹⁰ Trust (HIKTT). He explained that only 5 out of 28 of the town's businesses remained operative, graffiti and gangs dominated the town and 85% of the townspeople were dependent on social welfare payments. Davis explained,

'We don't know who made the decisions, to close the dairy factory, take away the banks, downsize the freezing works, close down the rail link, cut back hospital services, we don't know who made those decisions, but it wasn't us, as long as we are controlled by people and forces outside our community we would be victims of those decisions' (Davis, ND)

HIKTT organised community meetings and challenged the people of Moerewa to imagine and take hold of their own future, a future based on a sense of place and kaupapa Māori¹¹. As a consequence several community owned enterprises have been established in the once derelict main street, including a hairdresser, café, craft shop, surf shop, ta moko (traditional tattoo) shop and body/massage shop. HIKTT has set up recording studios, film editing facilities and a radio production workshop, built new community facilities such as public toilets and a skateboard park and it supports a number of social welfare schemes in schools and the local community.

'For Ngahau Davis, it is a struggle to sustain an intergenerational geography of hope set within the principles of tino rangitiritanga¹² and tino Māoritanga¹³' (FitzHerbert and Lewis, 2010, 150).

¹⁰ The words "he iwi kotahi tatou: now we are one people" were spoken by Captain Hobson, who signed the Waitangi treaty on behalf of the British Crown and subsequently became the first Governor of New Zealand.

¹¹ Kaupapa Māori is the "conceptualisation of Māori knowledge" that has been developed through oral tradition - plans of action created by Māori that express Māori aspirations and express certain Māori values and principles

¹² Māori sovereignty

¹³ The traditions and ideals and culture of the Māori people

For other Māori in the Far North HIKTT offers a blueprint for alternative paths towards enhanced liveability.

Liveability in the Far North?

Why people choose to live in the Far North invites a variety of answers. Ancestral ties to land are paramount for many. For others environmental factors come to the fore. The Far North is scenically spectacular: the environmental quality is incomparable. Legions of cruise ships drop anchor in the Bay of Islands every year. The landscape is perpetually green, a humid, sunny and temperate New Zealand region; hardly a 'winterless north' but equable enough for almost continuous plant growth. The Department of Conservation has identified as much as 35% of the Far North District as being ecologically important, containing significant areas of natural vegetation and harbouring important and threatened native animals, with half this area in private ownership, much of which is Māori. The climate contributes to the great variety of native plants and animals and the ability of indigenous vegetation to rapidly regenerate.

Natural landscapes include:

- freshwater wetlands
- podzol kauri gumfields
- dunelands and dune lakes
- coastal broadleaf forest
- volcanic broadleaf forests
- podocarp forests
- kauri forests
- alluvial flood plain and riverine forests
- saltmarsh
- swamp forests and shrublands

On the other hand, some of these landscapes have been severely depleted since the start of European occupation, accounting for 70% of the native forest, 95% of the freshwater wetlands, 80% of the dunelands and 90% of the podzol kauri gumfields lost to agriculture and exotic forestry (Erickson et al, 2004 172).

And, the grandeur of the kauri forest has to be experienced to be fully appreciated. To hear karakia¹⁴ being sung to Tane Mahuta, the deity of Waipoua Forest, is an overwhelming spiritual experience. Historian, Paul Moon maintains that the naming of particular kauri embodies the way in which Pākehā have come to think of themselves as Kiwi. 'The kauri was tall, broad, hardy,



*A cluster of Kauri called the Four Sisters, Northland NZ.
Source: Wikimedia Commons*

silent, grand and somehow stoic' (2013: 153). Here becomes evident a New World heritage equivalent to often-revered European architecture. Artist, Charles Heaphy's, 1839 painting of pit sawyers in dense kauri forest on the Wairoa River, south of Waipoua Forest, attests to the awe inspiring majesty of the remaining trees as well as the considerable industry of the sawyers. The early days of the Waipoua Preservation Society, in the 1940s, employed the following purple prose:

'What we seek to preserve in Waipoua is a gem with many facets: a fragment of old New Zealand, untamed in all its pristine glory; a remnant of an incredibly ancient garden of Nature, in all its inspiring loveliness and set in the midst of a vast dim-aisled cathedral that entombs an eternal silence' (Halkett & Sale, 1986, cited in Orwin, 2004:167).

It is this sense of environmental optimism that entices the geographer to the Far North. Undergraduate Geography students from the University of Auckland visit Stephen King's property undertaking GEOG 207 'Field Studies in Environment and Community.' Stephen King is an inspiring personality, an eco-warrior and practical conservationist. In 1998 King and Alex Nathan (Chair of the Te Roroa) formed the Waipoua Forest Trust to give practical effect to Te Roroa kaitiaki, or traditional

¹⁴ Literally prayers or incantations, the more traditional karakia are poetic and full of beautiful imagery and metaphor. And there are not always appropriate English words that can fully reflect the essence of the Māori words.

guardianship of the forest. The Trust was granted \$1.4 million from the Lottery Grants Board to establish the Millennium Kauri Forest. The money was used to buy farmland on the southern boundary of the Waipoua catchment and then sow this with manuka¹⁵ seed to provide a protective cover to nurture kauri seedlings. Te Roroa people actively work on the project, as do backpackers weeding previously planted areas and eradicating pests such as rats and rodents. It is a project rendered even more remarkable by the reality that 'the people contributing to the work of the Trust will never see the end result of their labour. Kauri grows slowly and it will be centuries before the new forest will come to maturity' (Boswijk, 2010:134).

The Waipoua Forest Trust also rears kiwi chicks. It becomes evident that kiwi conservation permeates the psyche of residents of the Far North. In the high value coastal properties of the Bay of Islands the New Zealand Kiwi Foundation has targeted the affluent landowners to convince them that 'kiwi are a valuable commodity: a rare, natural oddity in a world of relatively undifferentiated luxury lodges and private hideaways' (Blue & Blunden, 2010:119). Perhaps it is the personified North Island brown kiwi that best expresses liveability in the Far North. The Council holds indicative maps of high and medium density kiwi habitat and makes this information freely available to all. They proudly proclaim that the Far North is fortunate to have one of the largest populations of North Island brown kiwi in the country.

Geographers by instinct?

For the Geographer the Far North is a fascinating New Zealand region to scrutinise. It is a complex landscape to read. Rather parochially, Professor Gregory's introductory statement in a 1911 text titled *The Geography of New Zealand: historical, physical, political and commercial*, opined

'The fortunate inhabitants of New Zealand should be geographers by instinct; for New Zealand consists of a collection of geographical models, from which true geographical ideas should be unconsciously absorbed. There is no other land area of equal size which is so varied and complete. It is unique from the combination of the variety of its landforms, the clearness of their development, and simplicity of their arrangement' (Gregory, 1911, cited in Morgan, 2014, 54).

The good professor, a geologist, writer and explorer, may well be correct in his assertions. However, over the past one hundred years the shape of geographical inquiry has changed substantially. The magisterial descriptions of regional geographers, where description was an art, are also long gone. Notwithstanding this, the essence of geography is an appreciation of place. Diverse layers of history and culture can be unearthed in the geographical palimpsest that is the Far North. And, there are infinite possibilities yet to be unfolded for people and environments in this part of New Zealand.

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Left: New Zealand road sign. Source: Wikimedia Commons

15 New Zealand tea tree.



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Call for presenters

Geography teachers and academics are invited to be a workshop presenter at the conference. Workshops will be conducted on Monday 12th and Thursday 15th January 2015.

The focus of workshops is on Geography Education and should be classroom focused. We particularly welcome:

- primary school teachers who would like to share how they might deal with some of the issues of implementation F-6 of the Australian Curriculum: Geography
- New Zealand and international geography teachers who wish to share their teaching experience with Australian colleagues.

Full details from AGTA – <http://agta.asn.au/Conferences/conf2015/presenters.php>



Geography Teachers Association of NSW ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Liveability – Geography comes alive

Tuesday, 5 August, 8.30am – 3.30pm, Rydges Hotel, World Square, Sydney

Conference Programme

8.30 – 9.00 Registration and view of textbook and resources

9.15 – 10.15 **SESSION 1: Keynote – Professor Phillip O'Neill, Director, Centre for Western Sydney (UWS)**
Liveability and urban growth; lessons for western Sydney
http://www.uws.edu.au/urban_research_centre/urc/key_people/professor_phillip_oneill

10.20 – 11.05 **SESSION 2: Presentation – Mick Law (Contour Education)**
Using ICT in geographical education <http://www.contoureducation.com/>

11.05 – 11.35 **MORNING TEA**

11.40 – 12.25 **SESSION 3: Presentation – Evelyn Ivinson (NSW Department of Planning and Environment)**
Urban Planning – decisions and strategies affecting urban planning decision and their effect on local communities <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/>

12.30 – 1.15 **SESSION 4: Presentation – David McCracken (Barangaroo Delivery Authority)**
<http://www.barangaroo.com/>

1.15 – 2.00 **LUNCH**

2.00 – 3.30 **FIELDWORK – Delegates choose one of the following options around the Sydney CBD**

Option 1: led by Professor Phillip O'Neill, UWS
Title: Urban establishment and growth
Location: Sydney Tower, Pitt Street, Sydney.

Option 3: led by Barangaroo Delivery Authority (BDA)
Title: Urban development – looking to the future
Location: BDA Offices, Kent Street, Sydney
Note: WHS requirements at Barrangaroo due to construction, only allow one session to be offered not the previously advertised three.

Option 2a: led by NSW Department of Planning and Environment
Title: Urban development – light network of Sydney CBD
Location: NSWDPPE office, Bridge St; then Wynyard & Town Hall.

Option 4: led by Mick Law, Contour Education
Title: Strategies for using ICT in the Geography classroom
Location: Rydges Hotel World Square and various Sydney CBD locations
Participants to BYO electronic device.

Option 2b: led by NSW Department of Planning and Environment
Title: Rezoning – an urban planning decision and strategy
Location: Carlton United Brewery site, Broadway

Option 5: led by Sharon McLean, GTA NSW Councillor
Title: Urban dynamics in Pyrmont-Ultimo
Location: Pyrmont-Ultimo

Option 2c: led by NSW Department of Planning and Environment
Title: Urban growth at Wentworth Point
Location: NSWDPPE office, Bridge Street, Sydney.
Participants to BYO electronic device.

Option 6: led by Milton Brown, GTA NSW Councillor
Title: Urban renewal in Green Square. Location: Green Square
Note: Return rail fare is included in conference fees.

Option 2d: led by NSW Department of Planning and Environment
Title: Urban planning and design – an education resource
Location: NSWDPPE office, Bridge Street, Sydney.

Option 7: led by Sydney Olympic Park Education Unit
Title: Urban change around the Olympic site – an education resource.
Location: Rydges Hotel, World Square, Sydney

Cost: GTA NSW Member \$210 and non-member \$240, Retired/unemployed \$75, Student \$50

Register now, see details over the page...



Geography Teachers' Association NSW, through the Professional Teachers' Council NSW – Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) (formerly the NSW Institute of Teachers) as the endorsed provider of Institute Registered professional development for the maintenance of accreditation at Proficient Teacher level.

Scope of Endorsement

- All Standards of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers at the level of Proficient and Highly Accomplished teacher
- Standards 1-6 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers at the level of Lead teacher

This course: GTANSW Annual Conference – Liveability: Geography Comes Alive – 05 August 2014 is registered with BOSTES for 4.75 hours of professional development at Proficient Teacher level. This course addresses the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers: 3.4.2; 6.2.2; 6.3.2; 7.4.2.