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Contested Environments

**A critical discourse analysis of applications for resource
consents in Northland**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
by Frances Margaret Nelson

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Abstract

This thesis reports on a study of disputed applications for environmental resource consent conducted in Northland. The study was placed against the backdrop of the Resource Management Act (1991) as a major social artefact that has the capacity to change the social fabric of Northland through its influence on environmental policy in the region. The purpose of the study was to analyse the discourses that are produced in cases of disputed application in order to show the ways that the environment is constituted in language and to contend that the material reality of the Northland environment increasingly results from the communication that occurs within the legislative framework of the Resource Management Act (1991).

Data for the study were collected through archival research augmented by semi-structured interviews and observations. The collected texts were assembled in case studies which told the stories of the cases for disputed applications for resource consent and analysed using the systems of critical discourse analysis developed by Fairclough (1992; 2003) and Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2000). The empirical work collects, considers and analyses three district plans, elements of a regional plan and two case studies. The first case study examines the multiple discourses in a case about noise in a quiet suburb, and the second deals with an application to abstract water for irrigation from a Northland river.

The heart of this study was the stories citizens tell as they deal with the impact of proposed environmental change on their lives. The study shows the discursive interaction between citizens and administrative organisations, and

the way that citizens constructed themselves and others in language in bids to influence policy and environmental decisions. In doing so, it examines the effect of the dialectic relationships between the moment of discourse and other moments in the social process (Harvey, 1996). Finally, the research shows the effect in the material world of discursive shifts from “nature” to “the environment”.

The research has contributed to knowledge by telling the stories of disputed applications for resource consent from the points of view of the citizens who were involved and showing the discourse resources available to them to position themselves against the discourse of the official position. It has also contributed to knowledge by showing that, despite the definitions of the environment contained in the discourse of the official position, each case is the site of citizens’ struggles for their concept of the environment and their experience of it. In this regard, the research has examined the impact of the specific discursive constructions used by citizens on the environment. Finally, the research has placed the citizens’ stories against the conjuncture of social practices (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) connected with applications for resource consent, and revealed instances of the working of the Resource Management Act (1991) in the lives of citizens.

Glossary

Aotearoa	The Māori name for New Zealand, sometimes translated as “the land of the long white cloud”.
Aroha	Love, compassion, understanding, empathy.
Hui	Meeting/s; gathering for discussion, which by custom take as long required to reach consensus. Consensus is not always possible these days.
Kaimoana	Food from the sea.
Kaitiakitanga	The exercise of guardianship; and, in relation to a resource, the ethic of stewardship based on the nature of the resource itself. From: <u>Resource Management Act (1991) s.2</u> .
Kaupapa	Principles, protocol, correct procedure.
Kaumātua	A teacher, a wise man, an elder.
Kauri	A massive, slow-growing tree logged extensively to provide straight masts for sailing ships.
Kia ora	A greeting commonly used for “hello”; also used as assent to or approval of a pronouncement.
Koru	The Māori name for the unfurling frond of a native tree fern.
Kuia	A Māori woman of standing and seniority
Mana	Honour
Mana whenua:	Both the honour <i>of</i> the land, in the sense that land needs to be honoured and protected from shame, and honour <i>from</i> the land, in the sense that Māori derive their essential being from the land, sense an immanent life-force in earth, and need to participate in shared <i>kaitiakitanga</i> (guardianship) of it. Māori feel deep physical and spiritual connections to particular localities associated with their birth and their <i>whakapapa</i> (lineage).

Manahiri	Guests; strangers.
Marae	The centre of a Māori community. It is a meeting place, a place of honesty, learning and sharing.
Mauri	Life force.
Mihi	A traditional greeting.
Papa-tua-nuku:	The earth mother in Māori mythology, wife of Rangi, the sky-father.
Ropu	Group.
Takiwa	Area, district.
Tangata whenua	The people of the land.
Taniwha	A powerful spirit, usually benign, looking, perhaps, something like the concept of the dragon in Eastern symbolism, often designated as a <i>kaitiaki</i> , a guardian, of a certain place.
Taonga	A treasure; a thing of rare value.
Tapu	A concept which makes places and people sacred and sets them aside from the <i>noa</i> , the common and secular.
Te Puna Kokiri	The government organisation charged specifically with administering Māori interests.
Te reo Māori	The language of the Māori people.
Tikanga	Practices, customs, protocols.
Tohunga	Priest.
Tuna	Eels.
Turangawaewae	A place to stand.
Waiata	Prayer; song, prayerful poem.
Wai māori	Literally “common water”; from springs and rivers, used for everyday purposes.
Waimate	Literally “death water” or “dead water”.
Waiora	Usually refers to rainwater caught before it touches the earth.
Wairua	Spirit.
Whakapapa	Genealogy, history, tradition, philosophy.

Whare hui

Meeting house

Whare kai

Eating house

Chapter 1

Overview of the Research

This research is a discourse analysis of the stories people tell about nature and the environment. Specifically, it identifies and analyses the multiple discourses in disputed applications for environmental resource consents in Northland. The purpose of the research is to show how the communication processes specified in the Resource Management Act (1991) construct the environment as a “natural social artifact” (Robison, 1994, p. 15).

Introduction

Chapter 1 falls into three sections. The first section presents the concept of the study recorded in this thesis, and the second explains how the research evolved from an organisational ethnography to a critical discourse analysis of environmental communication. The third section is a discussion of the rationale for the research and the research questions, and the fourth section concludes the chapter by showing how the thesis is organised, and how each chapter contributes to the achievement of the purpose of the research.

The Resource Management Act (1991) is New Zealand’s major legislation for controlling what happens to the country’s physical environment. Before 1991, planning legislation permitted or forbade development, but since the Resource Management Act (1991) has been law in New Zealand, the focus has been to regulate effects *on* the environment rather than activities *in* it. Such a

focus places responsibility on citizens to publicise their proposed developments and allow their neighbours and other concerned parties to assess the probable effects of projects like farming the sea or lowering river levels. Some planned projects cause disagreements among citizens, and end up in formal dispute under the multi-layered communication processes of the Resource Management Act (1991).

Scope exists in the social fabric of New Zealand, therefore, for Northland's environment to be decided through argument and discourse. The contention of this research is that the material reality of the Northland environment increasingly results from the communication that occurs within the legislative framework of the Resource Management Act (1991). Although the Act specifies the processes of interaction, citizens shape the cause, content and style of their messages according to the interwoven complexity of their social practices and their personal beliefs about the natural environment. The focus of the study, therefore, is the intricate exchanges of discourse that occur when an application for resource consent is disputed.

Disputed applications were chosen as the focus of the study because they reveal disfluencies in the environmental consent process. The disfluencies occur when tensions about the future of the environment emerge into public debate, stimulating argument and counter-argument among citizens and organisations. Objective scientific information is not ignored in the decision process, but the decisions are strongly influenced by the way that people represent themselves and the issue through their language (Schultz, 2001). These instances of discourse and their dialectical relationships to other "moments in the social process" (Harvey, 1996, p. 78) shape the material world of Northland.

The communication processes that engendered the discourse studied in this research derive from the overarching philosophy of sustainable development.

This philosophy, now well-established in the social and physical fabric of New Zealand, is itself understood as a discourse and subjected to critical analysis to show its discursive effects. The methodology is critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough & Chouliaraki, 1999), but the data are presented in case studies that use “multiple sources of evidence” (Yin, 1994, p. 90) to build rich pictures of the communication associated with disputed applications for environmental resource consents. Techniques used to gather data for the case studies include analysis of transcripts of meetings about resource consents, analysis of public documents, focus groups, observations and interviews. The participants in the research are the Northland organisations that administer the Resource Management Act (1991), and groups of private and corporate Northland citizens involved in applications for resource consents.

1.1 Evolution of the research

The second section of this chapter places the researcher in the study, as a “committed and opinionated investigator” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 5). The section also traces the development of the research from an ethnography of organisations to a critical discourse analysis of environmental stories. The decision to change methodologies was major. It entailed abandoning gathered data and even some written chapters. It also required the acquisition of a new body of knowledge about discourse. The reasons for the change were compelling, however, and so are recorded here in some detail.

Becoming familiar with the theory and data for a doctorate is a journey, and it is the nature of journeys to change receptive travellers. The journey recorded in this thesis began as a venture into the domain of organisational communication, examining interactions between organisations and the public

of Northland in connection with the administration of the Resource Management Act (1991). Part of my early research involved reading files that recorded day-to-day work: notes of meetings, letters in response to enquiries, and so on. A sense gradually grew on me that what I found scattered through the files were parts of stories that told the hopes and aspirations of citizens, and two years into my doctoral journey, my destination changed. I no longer wished to examine the cultures of the organisations that administer the Resource Management Act (1991). Instead, what I wanted to do was focus on the stories in the files of those organisations. The result was the change in the methodology from organisational ethnography to discourse analysis.

At the deepest level, the change was prompted by a growing sense of the importance of giving people their voice. Further, some recreational reading, of Christopher Fry's (1946) *The Firstborn*, by chance gave form to previously unconscious deliberations about nature and the environment. In the play, the character of the Pharaoh, Seti the Second, says:

Nature, you may remember,
Is lavish, and in return for being understood,
Not hoarded, gives us civilisation.
Would you have the earth never see purple
Because the murex dies? Blame, dear Moses,
The gods for their creative plan which is
Not to count the cost but enormously
To bring about.

And Moses replies:

And so they bring about
The enormity of Egypt. Is that the full
Ambition of your gods? Egypt is only
One golden eruption of time, one flying spark
Attempting the ultimate fire (Fry, 1946, pp. 42-43).

These two speeches crystallised a growing sense that "nature" and "the environment" are not the same thing, though the two words are often used

interchangeably in research and in speech. The speeches showed me that “nature” had begun to feature in my thinking as a disinterested primary force. The “environment”, on the other hand, came to figure as “nature altered”; something, as Seti said to Moses, that once harvested, endows the human race with the material trappings of civilisation. I found that some reading (Peterson, 1997; Chaloupka & Cawley, 1993; Nash, 1982) supported this distinction. From that point, “the environment” began to seem a fiction, a making composed of many stories that vividly revealed how citizens saw themselves in the world and how they wanted the world to be. The stories seemed inextricably bound to the storytellers. At the same time, on another, more abstract level, tying stories to the storytellers is not to deny that language can acquire a degree of seemingly independent power to control social outcomes. Harvey (1996) puts it this way:

Discourses can never be pure, isolated or insulated from other moments in social life, however abstract and seemingly transcendent they become. Nor can they be separated from those doing the discoursing. Human beings (both individually and collectively) are the bearers of discourses. On the other hand, discourses, though humanly produced, have the awkward habit of assuming a certain power over how individuals think and behave. (p. 83)

I came to see disputed applications for resource consent as an intricate intersection of perceptions about nature, the environment, and the personal aspirations of citizens. The language used in the applications was tied in my thinking to the social processes which change nature from itself into “the environment”. The focus of the research shifted to the stories, to the effects of those stories, and perhaps even more importantly, to the reasons why people tell *those* stories at *those* times and in *such* ways.

Many scholars (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995; Fairclough & Chouliaraki, 1999; Wodak, 1996; van Dijk, 1990) have discussed the production of the social world in language. Others (Dryzeck, 1997; Dryzeck & Schlosberg, 1998) have shown how language used in environmental metadiscourses plays a part in forming national environmental policy. In the cases in this thesis, the “ordinary” citizens of Northland, variously empowered or hindered by the Resource Management Act (1991), also engaged in the production of the physical world through their language.

During the research, I found that citizens tell stories everywhere, in parliament and at public meetings, in their homes and over their back fences, in hearing rooms and in letters to administrative organisations. The words they use are often imbued with passion and points of view that are idiosyncratic, vivid and not easy for “the system” to cope with. It seemed that the participants did not tell their stories frivolously, for the strictures of the Resource Management Act (1991) often imposed high financial and emotional costs. The first assumption on which the research is based is, therefore, that the stories were purposeful messages directed at specific audiences. The stories were seen as strategies in a game plan. A second assumption was that the storytellers would use language as powerfully as they could to achieve their ends.

The stories are also taken as expressions of the self, aspirations to particular social identities and forms of social relations (Fairclough, 1992) and expressive of some of the values prevailing in the micro-cultures of Northland – that is, the neighbourhoods, families and ethnic groups. A focus on stories led to discourse analysis as the key methodology for the research.

Each disputed application produced an archive of hundreds, and sometimes many thousands, of separate texts. Selected texts, put together as a corpus (Fairclough, 1992), arranged in timelines, and placed against the geographical

and cultural backdrop of each application, could be handled as case studies. The empirical work in the research, therefore, is a series of stories about stories, analysed using Chouliaraki and Fairclough's (1999) methodology.

Fairclough (1989, p. 5) wrote that "rather than affecting a spurious neutrality" in relation to his research, he wished to declare which influences had shaped his thinking and his choice of topic. He continued:

The scientific investigation of social matters is perfectly compatible with committed and "opinionated" investigators (there are no others!), and being committed does not excuse you from arguing rationally or producing evidence for your statements. (Fairclough, 1989, p. 5)

To declare my presence in this research, then, I am a Northlander whose ethnic inheritance is European, but whose family ties to the region precede the Treaty of Waitangi¹ by three generations. I do not wish to give an inflated impression of my familiarity with *te reo Māori*², but indeed, Northland is in every sense what I understand by *turangawaewae*³, my place to stand. My attitude towards environmental issues derives from a lifetime spent among practising engineers. They taught me, probably unconsciously, their professional ethos, which is to see whole systems and parts of systems constructing one another in symbiotic relationships, so that the failure or removal of one system leads inevitably to the failure of many. My instincts, therefore, are usually to conserve rather than develop.

¹ The Treaty of Waitangi was signed by the first Māori chiefs in 1840.

² *Te reo Māori* – the language of the Māori people, the first human inhabitants of New Zealand.

³ *Turangawaewae* – a Māori expression. Literally, "a place to stand"; also the name of a famous marae in the Waikato.

I take a critical view of society, in the sense that “critical” means uncovering false consensus, the gaps between espoused and actual corporate practices, and the hidden connections between language, power and ideology (Bullis, 1997; Deetz, 1982; Fairclough, 1989). I hold a critical view to be especially important when institutions are allocating benefits to one group and withholding them from another, as is the case in applications for environmental resource consents. For the rest, perhaps it is important to say that I am, by nature, a collector and teller of stories.

1.2 The rationale for the research and the research questions

The purpose of this research is to identify and analyse the multiple discourses that make up the processes of environmental resource consents in Northland and, ultimately, to show discursive elements in the process of influencing the construction of the environment. The research has significance in that it may contribute to greater social justice in Northland by revealing asymmetrical power relationships created by language habits. That revelation may serve as the basis of future amendment. The research has the capacity to provide information to comparatively disadvantaged groups, and thereby give them choices about ways to present their stories should further disputes occur. At the very least, the research tells their stories in a new way and in a new forum, and so may create wider awareness of the workings of the resource consent process.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, p. 93) remark that the orientation of critical discourse analysis to social problems leads to a constant concern with power and power struggles. Certainly, in disputed applications for resource consent, issues of power are present, though seldom articulated. The view in this thesis is that power is less overt domination than a series of disciplines

imposed by the “common sense” of accepted social practice. Such research is socially relevant because it peels away some of the practices showing that power at work. Part of the peeling will show the colonisation or appropriation (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) of one discourse by another, but more especially, the peeling will show the effects of the “technologisation of discourse” (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 221-223), and the use of specialised and sometimes privileged knowledge to manipulate the “discourse moment” (Harvey, 1996, p. 78) in the social process. Perhaps the most important theme of the research, however, is the nexus of identity and difference (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 96), and the way that people use discourse in their interactions to construct identity, or conversely, are positioned and represented as subjects by the multiple discourses of resource consent.

This research fused Fairclough’s (1992) and Chouliaraki and Fairclough’s (1999) versions of critical discourse analysis. When critical discourse analysis is the chosen methodology, it is probably more usual to frame the research around a problem rather than around discrete questions. However, though I began with a social problem – what happens to the environment and to citizens’ aspirations for it – I also structured my discussion around research questions. This approach aligns with the intent of critical discourse analysis, which is “emancipatory change” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 209) and brings specific aspects of the problem into a clearer focus. The questions also usefully inform and bring consistency to the discussion of each case study.

The central problem is whether the communication processes for resource consent have the attributes to allow the adequate participation, dialogue and consultation needed for effective communication about the environment. The problem relates to nature, the environment and what citizens want for Northland, and concerns those places and times in which citizens can interact

with administrative organisations in their attempts to influence policy and environmental decisions.

The problem breaks down into several smaller elements. One part of the social territory at stake is the cultural space-time construction of Northland. This, in turn, creates a dialectical tension with social identity and difference, especially (but not exclusively) for those citizens for whom the land is the body of the earth-mother, *Papa-tua-nuku*⁴, and whose collective sense of *self* derives very largely from *mana whenua*⁵. Another part of the problem emerges from time to time in the discourse of the local government organisations. Administrative discourse can extend procedural correctness into an assumption of moral rightness. The problematic aspect of discourse that presents everything an organisation does as correct procedure, is that opportunities for dialogue can become monologues, or can restrict the amount of space required for all parties to participate fairly in the consultation process. This problem is intensified through the communication processes specified by the Resource Management Act (1991). These processes, though well-meaning in their intention, cannot help but provide a one-size-fits-all solution to environmental consultation. If the communication processes of resource consent stall because of unequal distribution of power or differences in socio-economic resources among the parties, the exigencies of “the system” can override opportunities for the more democratic style of communication that can lead to social action and changes in policy (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2001).

⁴ *Papa-tua-nuku*: the earth mother in Māori mythology, wife of Rangi, the sky-father.

⁵ *Mana whenua*: both the honour of the land, in the sense that land needs to be honoured and protected from shame, and honour from the land, in the sense that Māori derive their essential being from the land, sense an immanent life-force in earth, and need to participate in shared *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship) of it. Māori feel deep physical and spiritual connections to particular localities associated with their birth and their *whakapapa* (lineage).

Research questions

The following three questions frame the research:

1. What are the controlling discourses in the environmental resource consent process under the Resource Management Act (1991)?
2. Why, and with what effect, do citizens and organisations use particular discourses in the resource consent process, and how do these discourses relate dialectically to other moments in the social process (Harvey, 1996)?
3. In what ways does the resource consent process in Northland shape discursive shifts away from “nature” and towards “the environment”, and does this make any material difference?

The questions follow a logical development in terms of examining the discourses of environmental consent processes in Northland. The first question develops discussion of the meta-discourses of the Resource Management Act (1991) and locates the research against the conjuncture of social practices (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) connected with the applications for resource consent. The second question brings the stories of organisations and citizens into focus, and relates their discourse to a range of elements that operate in social situations. The third question relates to the underpinning purpose of the research, which is to examine how specific discursive constructions impact on the environment.

1.3 The organisation of the thesis

The structure of the thesis is conventional, except, perhaps, for the handling of the first research question, which is dealt with in two places: chapter two and chapter six. This first chapter, which serves to ground the research in its own history and in the philosophy of the researcher, is followed by a chapter of

general background. Chapter two, which gives the geographical and legal background to the research, provides a snapshot of the region in which the research took place, a sketch of the framing of the Resource Management Act (1991) and the communication processes that ignited the idea for the research, and a review of the concepts of sustainable development, which is treated here as a distant, but nevertheless potent, controlling discourse in the resource consent process. Chapter two begins the answer to the first research question: "What are the controlling discourses in the environmental resource consent process under the Resource Management Act (1991)?" This first question was designed as an enabling question, to allow discussion of the meta-discourse of sustainable development, the Resource Management Act (1991), and the social structures associated with the Act. The material is largely literature-based, and leads into two chapters reviewing relevant literature.

The review of literature in chapters three and four deals with broader themes than chapter two. They focus, respectively, on the discursive construction of nature in society, and environmental justice. The two themes are organised in separate chapters because they are so different that no sense of natural progression and coherence was gained by combining them. The purpose of these chapters is to provide a platform for later discussion about environmental decisions, and to question whether due weight is given to the spiritual needs and customary rights of the citizens involved in resource consent applications.

Chapter five deals with the methodological foundations of the study, exploring ideas about discourse and, in some detail, Chouliaraki and Fairclough's (1999) system of discourse analysis. The chapter also records the process of the research, explaining the examination of each corpus of documents, the selection of texts for analysis, and the interviews for each case study.

Chapter six is the first chapter of empirical work. It completes the discussion that answers research question one by analysing the discourse of regional and district environmental plans. This analysis could have been scattered throughout the chapters of case studies, but was gathered into a single chapter to avoid probable repetition. The plans and policies affect resource consents, and when the applications are disputed, the official documents take on the status of characters in the stories citizens tell. The chapter develops key ideas about the controlling discourses of consent that originate from the official position. Chapter six analyses the discourse conjuncture, the “relatively durable assemblies of people, materials, technologies and therefore practices ... around specific social projects” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 22). In this research, the conjuncture is taken to be the practices associated with the regional and district plans.

Two chapters of case study follow, each dealing with a different environmental issue: the first, environmental noise, and the second, the abstraction of water from the Mangakahia river. The discourse analysis of texts in each case concentrates on the way that textual features develop the themes of identity, difference and power (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) that emerge in the discourse. The last two chapters of empirical work end with discussion of the two research questions:

1. Why, and with what effect, do citizens and organisations use particular discourses in the resource consent process, and how do these discourses relate dialectically to other moments in the social process (Harvey, 1996)?
2. In what ways does the resource consent process in Northland shape discursive shifts away from “nature” and towards “the environment”, and does this make any material difference?

Chapter 2

Geography, Law and Discourse

Introduction

The purpose of chapter two is to set the scene for the research by giving its geographical, legal, and discursive background. By giving a brief outline of the discourse of sustainable development, it also begins to address the first research question, "What are the multiple discourses in the environmental resource consent process under the Resource Management Act (1991)?"

The chapter is in three sections. The first section gives a sketch of Northland, filling in some of the historical and demographic details of the region. The second section draws heavily on Dryzeck's (1997) analysis of sustainable development to develop the specific discursive setting of the research. Sustainable development is the environmental meta-discourse behind the philosophy of the Resource Management Act (1991), the legislation which mandates the communication processes that materially influence the environment of Northland. The general description of sustainable development leads logically to the third section of the chapter, which deals with the New Zealand experience of sustainable development in particular. In line with its narrower focus, section three is lengthy, and ranges across the origins and communication processes of the Resource Management Act (1991) and the discourses of the environmental consent process.

The research recorded in this thesis deals with discourse and the tool of the research is discourse analysis. Both these concepts will be dealt with in



Figure 2.1: Map of Northland

greater depth in chapter five, “Methodology and Method”, but this chapter engages with sustainable development as a discourse and also establishes the concept of the “discourses of consent” that occur under the Resource Management Act (1991). At this point in the thesis, for purposes of the discussion that follows section one of this chapter, discourse is taken as exchanges of sustained oral and written language shaped by idiosyncratic points of view (Fairclough, 1992).

The shape of the chapter roughly follows Fairclough’s (1992) model of society, moving inwards from the widest to the most parochial focus. In other words, it begins with the social formation of Northland, closes in on the social institution of the Resource Management Act (1991), and finally focuses on the communication processes that create the environment of Northland as a making, a “natural social artifact” (Robison, 1994, p. 15).

2.1 Northland

Northland is long and thin, about 250 kilometres long and only 80 kilometres across at its widest point, mostly rolling hills and little flat land. It has a high proportion of coastline to land area (see the map facing this page). The two coasts of Northland have completely different characters. The east coast is broken, forming pretty little bays, which have attracted families to build baches⁶ and holiday homes. By contrast, the west coast consists of long unbroken stretches of wilder, bleaker beach, and deep, often dangerous harbours. Some people find the west coast less obviously picturesque than

⁶ The word ‘bach’ is North Island vernacular for the type of building that would be called a ‘crib’ in the South Island. It designates a simple dwelling, several cuts above a shanty, but still provided with only basic amenities.

the east, and although some baches have been built, the west coast has always been less popular and less populous.

The native forest that covered the region before the arrival of Europeans was nearly all clear-felled for farming in the nineteenth century, leaving depleted and unproductive soil in need of intensive treatment with trace elements and fertilisers. Silt from land erosion caused by the felling of the bush affects the rivers, streams and harbours of Northland today. Some areas are being heavily planted to bring erosion under control (Statistics New Zealand, 1999.)

The 1996 census figures (Statistics New Zealand, 1996) show that Northland is the least urbanised area in New Zealand. Of its approximately 143,000 people, only 52% live in urban areas, compared with 85% nationally. Although it is sparsely populated (10 people per square kilometre), it nevertheless suffers some significant environmental problems, which are being addressed by the Northland Regional Council and the Department of Conservation. One of the most serious problems is that of water quality. Statistics New Zealand (1999) reports that recreational boaters often inform authorities about small oil spills along the coast, but the most serious potential threat to the coast is a major spill from an oil tanker unloading crude oil at Marsden Point refinery in the Whangarei harbour.

Damage to the internal waterways occurs because of silting and contaminated run-off from farmland and cowsheds. River quality in the region is now constantly monitored because of demands for water abstraction for farm irrigation. Along with water quality problems, Northland also possesses its share of animal pests like possums, feral deer and goats, all of which damage native bush and horticultural crops. Weasels, stoats, ferrets, feral cats and other introduced pests endanger native bird populations.

The warm climate and seas rich in *kaimoana*⁷ have traditionally attracted Māori to Northland. Archaeological findings show that Māori settled the area extensively and over a long period, building the biggest pre-European population in New Zealand. At the end of the of the twentieth century, according to Statistics New Zealand (1999), 32% of the people of Northland identified themselves as Māori compared with the national average of 15%.

During the nineteenth century, the region was settled by Europeans who broke the land in for farming. From a 21st century perspective, their activities seem more remarkable for their energy rather than their wisdom. The settlers clear-felled the *kauri*⁸ and native bush to the point that scarcely any primary forest remains in the region. Even now, it is not uncommon to hear people say that they live in a house built from the timber of a single *kauri* tree, as I did myself as a child. The people responsible for turning Northland into arable land were mostly English-speaking settlers from the British Isles, but two other groups have left their distinctive mark on the region: Dalmatians, who made a hard living digging and trading *kauri* gum around Dargaville and Kaitaia, and five ship loads of Gaelic-speaking Highlanders who settled in Waipu in the early 1850s.

Destination Northland, one of the tourist organisations for the area, likes to promote the region as the “Birthplace of a Nation”, an appellation perhaps more romantic than accurate, for the north was too remote from the rest of the country to survive long as the centre of political or social movement. Except for the signing of the Treaty, the short spell of Russell as the capital city, and Hone Heke’s notable rebellion against the British flag, the processes

⁷ *Kaimoana* means “food from the sea.”

⁸ *Kauri* is a massive, slow-growing tree logged extensively to provide straight masts for sailing ships.

of nationhood have invariably occurred far south of Northland, where more land and higher populations enabled settlers to accumulate greater wealth and influence. However, as far as birthplaces go, the Hokianga harbour on the west coast of Northland was indeed the first landfall in New Zealand for colonising Māori making their way south through the Pacific some eleven hundred years ago.

One other small corroboration for Destination Northland's claim is that *Kororareka*, in the Bay of Islands, was the site of the first European settlement in the late eighteenth century. *Kororareka*, which later lost its Māori name and became Russell, was a whaling port with the reputation of being "the hell hole of the Pacific" (www.northland.org.nz, 1999, site visited August 23, 2000). The reputation of the town prompted the European churches to send missionaries to proselytise the Māori (and presumably the traders and sealers as well). On Christmas day 1814 in the Bay of Islands, Samuel Marsden preached the first Christian sermon in New Zealand in Paihia.

After the seat of government was moved to Auckland, the North became relatively cut off from the rest of New Zealand. To this day, it is not uncommon to hear Northlanders comment, "The rest of New Zealand thinks the country finishes at the [Auckland] harbour bridge." The region was, and remains, relatively undeveloped. One reason for this is that Northland lacked the gold that attracted huge numbers to Coromandel, the West Coast of the South Island and Otago in the nineteenth century and provided the impetus and wealth for creating a strong regional infra-structure of roading, hospitals and schools.

People talking about their lives in Northland are prone to use words like "relaxed" and "peaceful", and then to remark unfavourably on the pace of life in Auckland (personal observations). One new resident arriving from overseas commented, "The people here are so laid back they're almost

horizontal” (personal communication, 29 May 1999). Statistics New Zealand (1999) reports that more than 10,000 people moved to Northland from Auckland in the period between the 1991 and 1996 censuses. A reasonable speculation is that people are choosing to retire to a more leisurely area, or are moving their families away from the urban sprawl of Auckland to the simpler life of Northland.

2.2 The discourse of sustainable development

The sketch in the first section of chapter two cannot give much of a sense of the way people live in Northland, but it does place the research in its geographical location. In this second section, the focus of the chapter shifts to sustainable development, which is treated as part of the setting of the research. Certainly, the influence of sustainable development is extensive in New Zealand, underpinning national law, local policy and the charters of large organisations. Within this research, sustainable development is not seen as a scientifically-proven system for achieving desirable environmental outcomes, but rather, as a discourse. And as Dryzeck (1997, p. 123) says, sustainable development is not *just* a discourse. Since the report of World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) it has become “arguably the dominant global discourse of ecological concern”.

Ontologically, a discourse is a framework for telling different stories from the same angle. The main story in sustainable development appealingly combines present gratification with moral rectitude. The storyline is organised around three key ideas: first, that people should be permitted to

use natural resources to achieve necessary⁹ economic growth; second, that development and growth must be equitably spread among all the present peoples on earth; and third, that resources must not be consumed so completely in satisfying the needs and wants of the present generation that future generations are deprived of the opportunity to build wealth and health (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

Sustainable development, therefore, does not tell the environment as a horror story, though it acknowledges that horror stories are plentiful. Rather, in the comforting manner of a fairy story, it tells of present injustice, but better times to come. In the narrative of sustainable development, the ugly sisters will learn, by lessons hard or easy, not to be so greedy, and all the poor Cinderellas will go to the ball. Furthermore, not only will they go the ball, but they will get to be on the organising committee as well. The discourse promises growth as well as environmental health; continued wealth for the industrialised nations as well as environmental justice; consumption as well as a worthwhile environmental legacy for future generations. Sustainable development, in fact, is so reassuring it has become “a rhetorical talisman for our common present...The prospect of a non-sustainable society is on a par with that of a non-democratic society. It is simply not on” (Lafferty, 1998, p. 264).

Dryzeck (1997) has developed a simple method of analysing environmental discourses using four points in a checklist. Chapter five contains a fuller discussion of his system of discourse analysis, but in the meantime, his checklist, given below, provides a useful way of coming closer to the discourse of sustainable development.

⁹ It should be noted that ‘necessary’ is a standard very much in the eye of the beholder.

<p>Box 1.2. CHECKLIST OF ELEMENTS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSES</p> <hr/> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Basic entities recognized or constructed2. Assumptions about natural relationships3. Agents and their motives4. Key metaphors and other rhetorical devices

Figure 2.2: Dryzeck's (1997, p. 18) system of analysing environmental discourses

To begin at the first point, three entities emerge in the discourse: “nested social and ecological systems, capitalist economy and no limits [on growth]” (Dryzeck, 1997, p. 132). The broad focus of the discourse is global, but its immediate concern is regional. Attention is paid to the way that local issues fit around one another in the manner of Chinese boxes, expanding the implications of environmental and social activity from the most minutely parochial (NIMBY – “Not In My Back Yard”) to (eventually) the widest global interests (NOPE – “Not On Planet Earth”). In fact, the catchphrase, “Think globally, act locally”, coined originally by a more radical environmental movement, the green radicals, sums up the philosophy within the sustainable development and makes sense to its proponents.

“Think globally, act locally” implies the decentralisation of power. What is not clear in the meta-discourse of sustainable development is how existing political structures should handle the redistribution of power to enable problem solving at the local level. The report itself, long on suggestion and short on systems, simply says with bland encouragement, “Sustainable development must be supported by political resolution” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 29). Notwithstanding that the method of devolution is not specified, an assumption in the discourse is that power will devolve from national to local level, where consultation and co-operation will create opportunities to solve environmental problems through

the application of local knowledge. Local knowledge could and should encompass many sources, such as traditional science, local history and the knowledge of *taonga*¹⁰ or *kaitiakitanga*¹¹.

Dryzeck (1997) asserts that sustainable development uncritically accepts that capitalism is embedded in social systems. The discourse argues for the continuation and extension of the capitalist ethos, and it is, therefore, taken as a given that eco-systems and resources will ultimately serve the drive of humans to create wealth. The will to wealth requires growth, but although sustainable development acknowledges that there must be limits to growth, it does not define where those limits lie. Indeed, it would be a contradiction if the discourse contained stated limits, for one of the principles of sustainable development is that the carrying capacity of resources can be extended by increased knowledge and appropriate technology (Dryzeck, 1997).

Moving to Dryzeck's (1997) second point, "Assumptions about natural relationships", sustainable development constructs a demand-and-supply relationship between nature and humans. That is, the discourse is essentially anthropocentric. It resolves the conflict between environmental and economic values by placing the needs of humans above those of eco-systems. The sustainability and well-being of humans are the issues in sustainable development, and the well-being of nature is instrumental in achieving that. Nature, then, is subordinated in order to be responsibly managed. Enhanced by technology and development, the environment will provide everyone

¹⁰ *Taonga*: a treasure; a thing of rare value.

¹¹ *Kaitiakitanga*: the exercise of guardianship; and, in relation to a resource, the ethic of stewardship based on the nature of the resource itself. From: Resource Management Act (1991) s.2.

with a slice of the cake: perhaps not such a large slice, nor such a delicious cake as might have been hoped for, but cake nevertheless.

The human relationships envisaged in sustainable development are based on communication built around an image in the discourse of “an increasingly sensitive, caring and intelligent human being” (Dryzeck, 1997, p. 131) working in equally mature political, social and economic systems. It is difficult to argue against consultation and communication as desirable social and cultural values. However, it is also equally difficult to imagine many citizens willingly putting aside their own agenda to engage in sincerely disinterested consultation. The assumption in sustainable development is that the consultative relationships will be managed within institutional forms to achieve the normative values of economic growth, environmental protection and distributive justice.

Dryzeck’s (1997) third point in the checklist, “Agents and their motives” (p. 131), focuses on the interlocked social and biological systems that make up local communities. Sustainable development is a discourse for a civil society in which environmental activism is not part of the state’s political agenda. This implies that the agents of sustainable development are less likely to be experts working out of government organisations, but rather, are more likely to be citizens living locally, motivated by personal perceptions of the public good, contributing at many levels within “nested social and biological systems” (Dryzeck, 1997, p. 131). However, for all its concern for regional and local affairs, sustainable development recognises that environmental issues do not respect national borders. As already mentioned, the slogan “Think globally, act locally” appropriately summarises the attitude of actors in the discourse. The website for the International Institute for Sustainable Development (<http://www.iisd.ca/wssd/portal.html>, visited 14 September, 2003)

UN AGENCIES , NGOs and OTHER ORGS

[Stakeholder Forum's Earth Summit 2002](#)
[National Councils for SD and Rio+10](#)
[Sustainable Devt Issues Network](#)
[UN Development Programme's WSSD site](#)
[UNESCO's Man and Biosphere programme](#)
[UNESCO's World Water Assessment Prog](#)

ANPED - [Northern Alliance for Sustainability](#)
 BASD - [Business Action for SD](#)
 Civil Society - [Civil Society Secretariat](#)
 Daily Summit - [Instant News and Comment](#)
 Development Gateway - [WSSD gateway](#)
 Earth Charter Initiative - [Summit site](#)
 Friends of the Earth - [Rio plus ten site](#)
 Greenpeace - [Earth Summit 2002 site](#)
 Heinrich Böll Foundation [Summit Site](#)
 IIED - [Int'l Inst. for Environment and Devt](#)
 ICLEI - [Local Government and the WSSD](#)
 IUCN - [IUCN's WSSD site](#)
 LEAD - [WSSD site](#)
 RIO10 - [Strengthening Southern Involvement](#)
 Virtual Exhibit - [Virtual Exhibit Site](#)
[Site Portail en langue Francaise](#)
[Eco-Accord and Lead WSSD site \(Russian\)](#)

WSSD NEWS SITES

[The Daily Summit](#) - Instant news and comments from the WSSD
[EarthWire's WSSD news portal](#)

[Click here for all Links](#)

Figure 2.3: Excerpt from the website of the International Institute for Sustainable Development

illustrates the point. This website was chosen randomly from a Google search, and shows a high degree of connection and networking among non-government agencies. Other websites promoting sustainable development show similar networks of organisations.

The agents of sustainable development are not only citizens concerned about environmental issues. The discourse attracts agents in the business world too. Welford (1995) examined the sustainability of business and found that some aim for bare compliance with relevant laws, treating pollution control as an added cost. Others, however, see sustainability as a point of difference for their operations, and take responsibility for their products “from cradle to grave” (Welford, 1995, p. 21).

Coming to Dryzeck’s (1997) fourth and last point, “Key metaphors and other rhetorical devices” (p. 131), the language in the discourse of sustainable development abounds with images of natural growth: societies develop towards maturity through learning; individuals also grow through education until they are able to be effective citizens of societies that are balanced economically and environmentally. The discourse consistently uses rhetoric that is reassuring. Everything is possible with sustainable development: progress, wealth and endless environmental integrity:

It is in the hands of humanity to make development sustainable, that is to say, seek to meet the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. (The World Commission for the Environment and Development, 1987, p. 29)

The idea of limitless possibilities points to problems of credibility within the language of sustainable development. Some people take issue with the name itself. “Sustainable development” evokes progress, one of the most powerful images of the modern age (Dryzeck, 1997), but progress is not universally

admired. For instance, Peterson (1997) argues that the discourse around sustainable development has become self-legitimising, using the ecological overtones of “sustainable” to obscure the fact that “development” has become synonymous with “progress”. The term “sustainable development”, therefore, uses the ecological overtones contained in “sustainability” to sanitise and obscure the economic story of progress and its historical links with environmental degradation. Daly (1998) maintains that the very name “sustainable development” is misleading, and has become a synonym for the oxymoronic idea “sustainable growth” (p. 285).

There is reason for the wide-spread acceptance of sustainable development. It is a discourse of hope. A plethora of material reveals the ways that industrial development depletes resources, disturbs eco-systems, deprives indigenous peoples of traditional ways of life, and endangers and destroys species (Cairncross, 1991; Johnson, 1993; Hawken, 1993; Lemons and Brown, 1995; Bryant, 1995; Welford, 1997). These works all make dismal reading. Sustainable development promises to lighten the gloom. Dryzeck (1997) summarises the promises of sustainable development by saying it teaches that “We *can* have it all: economic growth, environmental conservation, social justice; and not just for the moment, but in perpetuity” (p. 132).

2.3 Sustainable development in New Zealand

The preceding section of this chapter was a largely uncritical examination of the main features of sustainable development as a discourse, using Dryzeck’s (1997) four-point checklist as a framework for the discussion. The appeal of having one’s cake and eating it is proverbial, and the section showed how sustainable development offers hope that it is possible to consume and preserve environmental resources simultaneously. The next section moves

the generalised discussion into a specific context, showing how sustainable development was incorporated into New Zealand law through the medium of the Resource Management Act (1991). The section contains a history of the Act, and then concentrates on the communication processes it specifies.

In *Once and Future King*, T. H. White's (1958) allegory of the human condition, the future King Arthur visits an ant colony, where he learns "EVERYTHING NOT FORBIDDEN IS COMPULSORY" (p. 120, capitals in the original). The Resource Management Act (1991) is not as despotic as White's eschatological vision, but it is true that it prohibits most uses¹² of land, air and water unless they are permitted by a resource consent. A resource consent is permission to do something that would otherwise be forbidden, and the starting point in understanding resource consents is to know that every use not specifically allowed is forbidden. For instance, a resource consent is necessary for any business development that affects the environment. Any plan for regional economic development can be implemented only through the consent process. A resource consent may be necessary before a landowner can fell trees on privately owned land. The consent measures follow the general intention of the Act to regulate effects *on* the environment rather than activities *in* it, and they also fit the concept of sustainable development that underpins the espoused purpose of the Act for New Zealand society.

In 1992, with some excitement and a sense of triumph, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) at Rio de Janeiro adopted sustainable development as the official objective for the future of the earth. By the time UNCED announced its official policy on the environment,

¹² The word "uses" here refers to development or alteration, such as subdivision, discharging industrial waste into the air or water, not recreational activities like fishing, swimming, and tramping in the environment.

however, New Zealand had already codified the concept in legislation (Palmer, 1995). As Minister for the Environment from 1987 until 1990, Geoffrey Palmer drove the necessary law reviews and reforms that produced the new legislation. The long process unified the provisions of more than 50 existing statutes and drafted comprehensive environmental legislation that finally passed into law as the Resource Management Act (1991). Palmer believed that New Zealand was the ideal country to test sustainable development, because the philosophy was being introduced into a (comparatively) clean and green environment, in a country that is under-populated and also, relatively un-industrialised. Palmer's (1995) image of New Zealand working with sustainable development was that of a canary in a mine: "If the canary dies, sustainable development as a practical international normative standard will not flourish" (p. 147).

During its Bill phase, the proposed new environmental law evoked a massive intellectual and emotional response from New Zealanders (see Palmer, 1995). Reaction was as diverse as it was intense. At one extreme, it was welcomed as fitting New Zealand's emerging public persona as a "clean green" country by providing a comprehensive framework for assessing, permitting and monitoring the impact of any use of the environment. At the other extreme, detractors opposed the Bill because they believed it would restrict customary freedoms, impose burdensome compliance costs, and fail to prevent rampant misuse of irreplaceable natural resources.

Section 5 of the Act sets out its purpose:

5. Purpose—

- (1) The purpose of this Act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.

- (2) In this Act, “sustainable management” means managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while—
- (a) Sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and
 - (b) Safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, soil and ecosystems; and
 - (c) Avoiding, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.

In accordance with the principles of sustainable development, which incorporate many points of view, the writers of the Resource Management Act (1991) tried to be richly inclusive of the traditional values and environmental knowledge of Māori. The writers wanted the Act to embody the view that the “people should live in harmony with nature and that the world should be seen as a whole” (Palmer, 1995, p. 31). The Act respects and incorporates the principles of *mana whenua*¹³, and *kaitiakitanga* and also provides for recognition of the *taonga* of the local people. A recent case in which the Act worked for the *tangata whenua* was the widening of State Highway One between Auckland and Hamilton. Local Māori reported that

¹³ *Mana whenua*: the customary authority exercised by an *iwi* or *hapu* in an identified area. From: Resource Management Act (1991) s.2. Also, the honour, dignity and standing that land rights bestow on the people, connected also with the honour of the land itself as an entity.

the new road would disturb a *taniwha*¹⁴ that guarded the area and cared for ailing souls. Although many New Zealanders scoffed at the thought of such a spirit, its existence was real and important to the local people, and after due consultation, compromise was reached that allowed the roading project to continue while preserving the habitat of the *taniwha*.

Not everyone values the inclusiveness and consultation opportunities the Resource Management Act (1991) provides. As Palmer (1995) retrospectively noted in a rather dispirited tone, "While it is one thing to write law, it is quite another to get people to change their behaviour" (p. 147). Five years after the Resource Management Act (1991) passed into law, Palmer (1996) perceived that some local authorities and judges did not administer the Act according to its spirit. Despite the over-arching philosophy established in s. 5 of the Act and its "open-textured" (Palmer, 1996, p. 146) communication processes, people often seem more comfortable with restrictions and prescriptions such as those in the old Town and Country Planning Act (1977).

As well as provision for recognising and using the traditional knowledge of New Zealand's indigenous people, the Resource Management Act (1991) incorporated all the features of the meta-discourse of sustainable development: local solving of environmental problems and community consultation. The interface of the people of New Zealand and the Act is most commonly at the point of an application for resource consent. If an application for resource consent is contested, the philosophy of the Act is to allow consultation among disputing parties so that sound environmental outcomes can be negotiated. The Act provides for pre-hearings (s. 99),

¹⁴ *Taniwha*: a powerful spirit, usually benign, looking, perhaps, something like the concept of the dragon in Eastern symbolism, often designated as a *kaitiaki*, a guardian, of a certain place.

conferences (s. 267), joint hearings and multiple consent processing (s. 102 and s. 103), and dispute resolution (s. 268).

The negative aspect of the elaborate communication process specified in the Act is the potential cost to applicants in time and money, and consequently, stress, in going about what they see as their lawful occasions. On the other hand, consultation and communication make any management system seem both reasonable and reasoning, and the intention of the Act is certainly to mitigate what Fairclough (1992) calls “inequalities and asymmetries in discursive rights” (p. 201) among groups of people.

The process of obtaining resource consents under the Resource Management Act (1991) entails some or all of the communication events listed in Table 2.1:

Steps in the consent process

Stage	Activity
1.	Applicant prepares resource consent proposal.
2.	The consent authority receives the proposal. Proposals for restricted coastal activities go to the Minister of Conservation and regional councils.
3.	The consent authority notifies all potentially interested parties.
4.	The Minister of the Environment may “call in” proposals of national significance, beginning a parallel but separate process.
5.	Interested parties may submit their views on the proposal.
6.	Parties may arrange pre-hearing consultations.
7.	Consent authorities hold hearings.
8.	The consent authorities determine and publish their decision.
9.	Any appeal takes place before the Planning Tribunal.
10.	The resource consent begins, with monitoring and reviews.

Table 2.1: Communication events in the resource consent process¹⁵

¹⁵ For further elaboration of each stage of the communication process, please turn to Appendix 1 on page 261.

Communication in General Public Disputes	Communication under the Resource Management Act (1991)
1. Open communication process settled by negotiation.	Controlled adversarial-style communication processes.
2. Complex web of interests, open to all organisations and citizens.	Submissions received; emphasis is on people "directly affected" by resource consent application.
3. Negotiations may uncover new issues and add new parties.	Date exists at which no further submissions may be made.
4. Motivation for involvement is strongly held values and beliefs.	Same.
5. <i>Ad hoc</i> negotiating group; often hostile communication.	Submissions rather than negotiations; controlled communication climate.
6. Internal differences in groups may create difficulties.	Processes within groups become immaterial in the hearing.
7. Unspecified delays caused by parties seeking commitment to decisions from their groups.	Controlled delays caused by due process of law.
8. Different forms of power obvious in the parties, especially in terms of resources such as money and information.	Same.
9. Lack of clarity about which official agency is responsible for dealing with particular issues.	Great clarity.
10. Lack of protocols for convening interested parties.	Resource Management Act (1991) specifies process.
11. Lack of protocols for enforcing the decision.	Clear lines of responsibility exist under the Act.

Table 2.2: Comparison of communication in general disputes and under the Resource Management Act (1991).

The Act's orderly procession of specified communication events creates opportunities at law that are nominally equal for all parties. Such open access means that any citizen can contest an application for resource consent. The consultation structure in the Resource Management Act (1991) allows layers of discourses to be built. These layers seep into one another so thoroughly that the experience of changing the material environment is inseparable from the communication processes. This means that any application could conceivably be tried and ultimately, validated by, a discourse of nature, a discourse of *mana whenua*¹⁶, a discourse of business, a discourse of "household gods", or a discourse of pure science (the list is notional, not exhaustive), or all of these.

The communication philosophy of the Resource Management Act (1991) is democratic: the whole point is to let every discourse have its day, and by doing so, to bestow at least a temporary equality and validity on every submission, regardless of its intrinsic merit. The environmental decisions, on the other hand, are not democratic. The decisions in disputed applications for resource consent are seldom reached by consensus in mediation, although that is the ideal of sustainable development. Ultimately, the Act compels the parties to accede to an expert decision, whether or not the tensions in the situation have been resolved, as the table facing page this page shows.

The communication process in the Resource Management Act (1991) interlaces the communication relationships of central with local government, local government with citizens, and citizens with one another. To use Dryzeck's (1997) word, the relationships are "nested" (p. 129). The communication rôle of central government has been to promulgate the Act,

¹⁶ See footnote on page 29.

along with its cascade of policies and procedures, and to set up the regional and local organisational structures for administration. The rôle of council staff is to guard and facilitate the local communication process. The rôle of citizens is to involve themselves and their specialised knowledge in the consent process, proposing change and critiquing proposals. For example, out of their personal passions and concerns, citizens cultivate their own mini discourses around a single feature such as a proposed building, a river, a tract of bush or a sacred site. The aggregate of the mini-discourses forms part of the discourse of consent. The other part is the discourse of the official position, determined at parliamentary level and promulgated as regional and district plans. Within the consent process, the discourse of the official position calls the other discourses into being and allows them their modes of expression.

The environment of Northland is the product of a discourse, or more accurately, of many discourses operating within the discourse of the environmental consent process, which has become a social institution in New Zealand. Environmental activity must now occur within the framework of the discourse of consent, and to that extent, the discourse makes action possible. However, it also restricts activity to the possibilities that exist within that framework. Fairclough (1995) is relevant on this point: "A social institution is (amongst other things) an apparatus of social interaction, or an 'order of discourse'....Each institution has its own set of speech events, its own differentiated settings and scenes, its cast of participants, and its own norms for their combination" (p. 38). The practice of the discourse of consent has generated, and will continue to generate, social norms of interaction that constitute a particular way of seeing the process of resource consent. There is a sense in which each of what I call citizens' "mini-discourses" is an attempt to affect the larger discourse of consent, a bid to influence and obtain a slice of the action. To use Fairclough

(1995) again, the institutional frame of the Act produces multiple sets of ideological representations, each of which has the potential to decide the outcome of an environmental dispute.

Fairclough (1995) speaks of social institutions as a pivot between the widest concept of society, “the social formation” (p. 37) and the most parochial experience of community, particular social events. In the terms of this discussion New Zealand (or more specifically, Northland) society at the beginning of the third millennium may be taken as a social formation. The social institution of the discourse of consent looks, Janus-like, towards the social formation that is the whole of New Zealand, and towards the small communication events that bring about the local environment. Robison’s (1994) concept of the “natural social artifact” (p. 15) is helpful in thinking about the outcome of the communication events.

A natural social artefact might best be described as the recognisable result of behaviour and decisions so seldom questioned that they become almost instinctive. The following anecdote (personal communication, 6th October, 1999) illustrates the idea of natural social artefacts. A retired farmer owned some land in an area that slowly moved from agricultural to horticultural use. The farmer retired and sold most of his land, but kept enough acres run four steers at a time “for the freezer”. The land included a few acres of primary native bush, which was unfenced. The cattle could wander through the bush to reach other grazing, and in the process trampled regenerating *nikau*, *kohekohe* and *rewarewa*,¹⁷. The farmer found that the cattle had effectively cleared a large area of bush floor which he and his family called “the cathedral” because of the height and beauty of the trees that surrounded

¹⁷ Nikau, kohekohe and rewarewa are native trees. The kohekohe is rare in Northland now.

the open space. The farmer's visiting grandchildren played in the cathedral, and the openness of the bush floor became one of the desirable features of the property to the owner (and, presumably, the grandchildren.) The cathedral was what Robison (1994, p. 15) would call a "natural social artifact", something that seemed the pleasing outcome of logical action.

However, the cathedral was not everyone's idea of perfection. The land was sold and the next owners declared that that they wanted "neither to grow nor graze". Trees were more important than stock or play spaces to the new owners. The cathedral floor disappeared as ferns and *nikau* took over the area, followed by the seedlings of bigger trees. At first the new owners spent time weeding out the more common and vigorous species like *taraire* and *karaka* so that the rarer *kohekohe* had living space, but soon this activity lost its appeal. The owners reverted to an essentially urban life style, and concentrated on their jobs, leaving the battle between *kohekohe* and *karaka* to the bush itself. The new bush is another "natural social artifact" (Robison, 1994, p. 15) in the same location as the cathedral, but of an entirely opposite kind. To an outsider, both the cathedral and the bush may seem reasonable uses of the land, yet both sets of owners criticised the decisions of the other owners.

Although the bush grows naturally, in the terms of Robison's (1994) argument it is also a "made" object produced by the actions and inactions of these two sets of owners. The essence of Robison's concept of natural social artefacts is that their formation emanates from almost pre-conscious processes in the human psyche. These processes embrace modes of thought and decision whose "rightness" makes any other system of thought or decision seems senseless. The reasons behind actions that spring from the pre-conscious may be not be transparent to the people who are involved in

making natural social artefacts. The ideological origins of the activities may be lost altogether (Fairclough, 1992).

Robison (1994) maintains that natural social artefacts stand out from other created items in two ways: "On the one hand, they bear no clear relation to any specific intention or set of intentions, and on the other there is a sense in which they must come into existence as a natural evolutionary response to certain natural needs" (p. 16). If the farmer in the anecdote above did not think sequentially through every possible effect of allowing stock into the bush, the creation of the "cathedral" was a serendipitous outcome bearing no relation to "any specific intention or set of intentions" (Robison, 1994, p. 16). However, in another sense, from the moment that the farmer decided both to keep cattle and not to fence the bush, the cathedral could do no other than come into existence as "a natural evolutionary response" (Robison, 1994, p. 16) to the needs of the cattle to eat the new growth on saplings and trample seedlings.

Perhaps the environment (as opposed to nature) may appear to exist in response to a specific set of intentions, but there is a sense in which the mini-discourses connected with proposing or opposing environmental change are pre-conscious. Robison's (1994) argument distinguishes between a single intentional action, such as logging a stretch of native bush, and the creation of the environment as a whole through innumerable "acts and omissions" (p. 17) whose collective outcomes may produce results altogether unrelated to the intention behind any of the isolated actions. An example of this last point is the action of a farmer who, in fertilising his land to improve grass growth, inadvertently pollutes a stream when rain washes the nitrates into the waterway. The act of using the fertiliser and the omission of protection for the stream, have, in this instance, resulted in a situation far removed from the original simple intention, which concerned the well-being

of the farmer's land. A critical approach to discourse analysis will "denaturalize" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 36) such unquestioning thought patterns, especially in the domain of the social institution where the multiple discourses of the resource consent process occur.

In beginning to answer the first research question, "What are the multiple discourses in the environmental resource consent process under the Resource Management Act (1991)?", I have not so much "nested" ideas - to use Dryzeck's (1997) term again - within the meta-discourse of sustainable development as unpacked ideas out of it. The focus of the chapter has been wide, capturing a sense of Northland, the global discourse of sustainable development, and New Zealand's use of the discourse in framing the Resource Management Act (1991). The next chapter begins the literature survey, examining ideas about the construction of nature in language.

Chapter 3

Influences on the Construction of Nature

Introduction

At no point in human history has the concept of nature ever been fixed and single. In all eras, it has been a complex aggregate of ideas drawn from science, myth, moral philosophy, economics and poetry (Harvey, 1996). The purpose of this chapter is to discuss a range of concepts that have enabled discursive shifts from “nature” to “the environment” in public discourse. The principle that underpins the discussion is that both “nature” and “the environment” are cultural constructions, not objective identifications of the material world. With this principle in mind, in this chapter of the literature review, I have traced some of the influences on the construction of “nature” in western thinking, and traced a discursive evolution of “nature” into “the environment”.

The question that guided the reading for this chapter was “What were the cultural influences that affected the construction of nature in Aotearoa New Zealand in the late twentieth century”? The answer to this question was found by readings that covered a range of ideas which are organised into six sections of discussion under the single main heading “The nature of nature”. The chapter opens by considering the attributes assigned to nature throughout western history. The following section locates the source of these attributes in human relationships with various deities. That discussion leads to a consideration of spirituality in different concepts of nature, followed by a section which deals with the post-Enlightenment western

alienation from nature, and the resultant loss of spirituality from nature. The second to last section is an examination of modern attempts to re-connect with nature. The last section of the chapter traces discursive shifts from “nature” to “the environment”.

I used the reading aggregated in this chapter to show me the stratifications of meaning in the word “nature”, which I believe enabled me to reach a greater identification with the participants in this research who struggled for their sense of “nature” in discourse that was largely “environmental”. This reading was carried out relatively early after the move to environmental discourse from organisational ethnography. The ideas that are contained in chapters three and four are the ideas that I took with me into the field work, and I decided to let them stand in the thesis without major alteration. The linear process of putting a thesis together may suggest that I did no further reading, but this is not so: rather, I read in different fields, paying particular attention to discourse in general and critical discourse analysis in particular.

3.1 The nature of nature

“Nature is . . . ” – what? Red in tooth and claw; a ruthlessly competitive struggle for existence; an extraordinary interlocking system of mutual advantage; a paradigm of interdependence and co-operation. (Williams, 1980, p. 70)

In western thinking, nature has simultaneously been all of the processes of co-operation and destruction described above, and the “truth” of a view of nature depends on where commentators stand and what they examine. The conflict, if it is one, resides much less in the material world than in the value-laden descriptions that people assign to the processes they examine.

Some people, for instance, see nature as a conscious energy that generates and sustains life. This view of the world promotes a vision of nature as a nurturing mother (Lovelock, 1979; Sheldrake, 1991). Other people perceive nature as a hostile entity separate from human activity. This view shows nature as the sometimes violent antagonist in a battle which humans must win in order to conduct a civilised life (Arnold, 1996). Still other people conceive of nature as a set of immutable universal laws. This outlook on nature concentrates on the regulatory phenomena that create and sustain life (Ruby, 1995).

Nature and the gods

Whatever the view that prevails, it seems that all concepts of nature begin in the human propensity to explain the material world in terms of the intervention and instrumentality of divine forces who, for unselfish but inscrutable reasons, brought the material world into being and set it in order. Creation stories help people find a purpose for life and a place for themselves in the immensity of the world (Glacken, 1967). Some early civilisations patterned their societies on the activities of the gods. For instance, the word “husbanding” has to be a valid image for the cosmology of the Sumerian civilisation (c. 3,700 – 1,600 BC). Sumerian history tells of stories of gods engaged in mundanely agricultural activities such as filling rivers with water and fish and creating plant foods, and then beginning programmes of neighbourhood improvement: building houses and public spaces and designing canal systems. The gods created nature, and then occupied their time in the same ways as their adherents (Glacken, 1967), all of which, one way or another, were transformations of nature.

Not all creation stories were so focused on agriculture and domestic life. In the harsher environment of the north, the Norse peoples saw the work of the gods quite differently. The Norse rather gruesomely believed that Óðin and his brothers built the earth from the remains of the slain giant Ýmir. The Norse gods possessed many realistically human characteristics: they lied, cheated, murdered, and fought fierce internecine battles. These gods of the frozen winters created a precarious world threatened by destructive forces which people had to struggle to keep at bay during their short lives.

These ways of explaining the origins of the material world eventually produced “rational speculation” (Glacken, 1967, p. 5) about its operation and evolved into various teleological theories, such as the version of the ancient Greeks. Epimetheus gave all the animals their own places in the earth: air to the birds, burrows to some, water to others, so that each would have an uncontested refuge; then he provided weapons against attack and protection against the elements; and finally, he fitted them into a world of finite resources by ensuring that each would eat different foods from its neighbour. After the successful design of the animal world, human beings were compensated for their lack of natural defences and habitats with the fire and tools that Prometheus stole from the gods.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the book of Job is one which interprets the complex relationship of the human race to nature. Essentially, Job learns that his inability to comprehend the entirety of creation does not alter its balance or significance, for his God has no obligation to reveal His rational purpose to humans. God is not part of His creation. He may have caused the various natural laws to operate, but He is outside the material world. The part of the human being in this divinely-ordered universe is to fit into it, along with the other created beings, each of which has its own place, power and purpose on the universe. The message from the suffering inflicted so

arbitrarily on Job was that God remains in charge of the design and running of the material world, and that Job (aka, all people) should remember it and be humble alongside the rest of creation.

Theories which rationalised data gathered from everyday observations, such as the Epimethean explanation of animal habits, or which speak with the voice of God, produced beliefs that the material world is organic, diverse and vital, and above all, an ordered sum of parts working in harmony. But they also rationalised the part the earth should play in human self-realisation. Prometheus, for instance, empowered people to build and burn, and indeed, his filching of fire and tools from the gods was significant for the human race, for it enabled the steady (and steadily accelerating) process of “humanizing” (Simmons, 1995, p. 64) the planet. And the humanising, to use Simmons’s (1995) word, of the planet is the heart of the issue: so much of what is a discussion of “nature” is really a discussion of people and their societies (Williams, 1980; Arnold, 1996). What is called “environmentalism”, and what I am struggling for in my distinction between “nature” and “the environment”, is the question of how human societies relate not only to the material world, but also to other human societies. It is, I think, “a relationship of actual or incipient power between one set of human beings and another”, (Arnold, 1996, p. 12). Even before nation states existed, an element of nationalism was always present in the politics of nature, for nationhood is partly formed by a feeling for the land, and a sense of the land is nearly always present in nationalistic imagery (Harvey, 1996). The politics of place, then, are not always as simple as who controls a hunting ground or where a border is set: they can also deal with conflicts centred on the conservation of the *concept* (Tuan, 1977) of a place.

The spiritual in nature

Contests for desirable territory in the material world are an obvious part of human history, but the territory of the material world is also, less obviously, contested in language. To understand the concept of nature is to grapple at some point with the dense layers of meaning in the word itself.

Fundamental ideologies are obscured in catchall words like “nature” and “the environment”:

The contemporary battleground over words like “nature” and “environment” is a leading edge of political conflict, precisely because of the “incompletely explicit *assumptions*, or more or less *unconscious mental habits*,” which surround them. (Harvey, 1996, p. 118)

The concept of nature once existed in western thought as *natura rerum*, the nature of *things* – a collection of understandings of what Williams (1980) calls “the inherent and essential quality of any particular thing” (p. 68). At some point, however, *natura rerum* became Nature, an entity containing not only *natura rerum*, but the whole of life. The fusion of the natures of many things into a single unifying principle was a process of synthesising, abstracting, and personifying that ultimately brought forth the goddess “Nature”, the universal mother (Williams, 1980).

One of the struggles over the meaning of the word “nature” has been its long association with femininity. The root of the word is “natura”, the Latin word for “birth”. In modern Italian, French, and Spanish, the word for “nature” still takes the feminine gender, and even a non-gendered language like English retains the feminine symbolism of nurturing in common phrases like “Mother Earth”, “Mother Nature” “nature’s bounty” (see Sheldrake, 1991). The linguistic connection may be part of the enduring feminine symbolism that attaches to nature, but nature was also one of the many faces of the

“Great Mother” in the cosmologies of ancient peoples. For instance, the ancient Greeks acknowledged Gaia as “mother earth”, who brought forth life from her eternal womb (Sheldrake, 1991) and in one version of the Viking pantheon, Jörð was also seen as a female, giving birth to land and gods (Magnusson, 1976). Although the Jewish and Christian faiths do not subscribe to the concept of a great mother, their creation story nevertheless presents the earth in a feminine aspect, “[bringing] forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind” (Genesis 1: 12).

Many cultures have envisaged the earth as the body of their mother. Māori believed (many still believe) that the goddess Papa-tua-nuku is the bountiful earth mother, whose body is spread out below the skies to nourish and support her human children (Metge, 1967; Orbell, 1995). The Wanapum tribe in North America resisted any change to their hunter-gatherer way of life because every agricultural activity would in some way defile the earth, their mother’s body (Sheldrake, 1991). In yet another variation on the theme of the earth as a maternal body, some cultures hold that caves are sacred because they are entrances to the mother’s body (Sheldrake, 1991), and in many cultures, such as those of the Māori and the ancient Judaic societies (Orbell, 1995; Ecclesiastes, 12:7), the dead must “return” to the earth in graves, which are simulacra of caves.

Although many pre-industrial societies conceived of nature as feminine, Suzuki and Knudtson (1992) show that in the traditional relationship of many indigenous peoples to nature, the most common world view is animism. That is to say, indigenous peoples have a sense of a spirit – soul, life – in all things, with a consequent respect for every part of the material

world, sentient or not. When a society believes that the material world has spirit, *wairua*¹⁸, or life force, then the people of that society are less likely, perhaps, to form an anthropocentric world view. The burden of Sheldrake's (1991) argument, the whole point of Suzuki and Knudtson's (1992) book, and the polemic of many eco-scholars (Lovelock, 1975; Nelson, 1993; Senanayake, 1993; Shengji, 1993; Levidow, 1996) appears to be that regardless of variations in local expressions of the theme, societies with an animistic vision of nature are neither anthropocentric nor ecocentric.

Awareness of the environment appears to be so embedded in the thinking of these societies that it seems to be natural for the people to express their spirituality as they go about the daily tasks that mean survival. However, their sense of connectedness to nature does not forbid them use it, for like fish or deer or brown bears or trees or water, the people too are part of nature and have a right to life. Their world view seems to be formed by a sense of fitness: an instinctive isomorphism that all things in life have a right place and a right form (Nelson, 1993; Suzuki & Knudtson, 1992; Sheldrake, 1991). Accordingly, they move through the world carefully, observing certain ceremonies that ensure their right to use the earth and the animals.

The mark of an individual's maturity in animistic societies, as well as the basis of much religious belief, seems to centre on acquiring the necessary understanding of the relationships between all living things (Welford, 1997). But no single value for nature exists in the religions of the world. Faiths like the Japanese and Chinese traditional religions teach that people must find their point of balance in the whole of life, of which nature is one part. In the second loose grouping, the dogma of Judaism, Christianity and Islam instruct that nature is the work of a creator God, whom people must love

¹⁸ *Wairua* refers to the Māori perception that spirit is immanent in all things.

and obey. A third group consisting of Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism, warns that nature could trap people in the illusion of the material world, and prevent them from attaining true spiritual insight (Davies, 1994).

Among the religions of the world, Christianity generally gets a bad press in terms of valuing nature. Some commentaries on religion and nature severely criticise Christianity (and by extension, Judaism) for teaching that humans have the right to control and consume nature (Sheldrake, 1991; Merchant, 1980). The critique of anthropocentric power tends to begin with that first exercise in taxonomy, Adam's naming of the animals in Genesis 2, verses 19 - 20, and continues with examples like Moses striking the rock for water, building up an argument that the early Judaic and later, the Christian scriptures, showed humans continually dominating nature. In a further example from the Judeo-Christian tradition, Psalm 8 is used to justify the changes that humans have wrought in the material world: "What is man that thou art mindful of him ... Yet thou hast made him a little less than God and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands ..." (Ps. 8: 5 - 6). A long tradition interprets this passage as the licence for the human race to behave without regard for environmental consequences, but another reading is possible. The alternative interpretation is that dominion over creation was an unearned gift, for the stewardship of which humans will have to account on the basis that "Everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required" (Luke 12: 48). Perhaps it is easier to criticise Psalm 8, however, than to remember the richly poetic celebration of the material world in Psalm 104, or to see the story of Noah as "the first Endangered Species Project" (Rolston, 1994, p. 43). Overall, the picture of nature that emerges from the Judaic and Christian writings is one of order under an omnipresent and omniscient mind: "Everything . . . created according to its own kind and . . . related to all other things in an orderly way" (Davies, 1994b, p. 31). The secularisation of

nature that marks the developed world today did not necessarily originate in the early Judeo-Christian teachings.

Taking the spiritual out of nature . . .

In mediaeval Europe, as in most civilisations, people experienced the material world “organically” (Capra, 1983, p. 37) as a place full of life and spiritual meaning. Thus, science found its purpose not in predicting and controlling natural phenomena, but rather in interpreting their significance and relating them to “God, the human soul and ethics” (Capra, 1983, p. 38). Until the Renaissance, orthodox thinking placed a personified, monotheistic Creator God alongside a personified, singular creative Nature in a cosmos that was a closed, organic system (Sheldrake, 1991). As much as God was ruler and redeemer of the world, Nature was His first minister (Williams, 1980). Society operated on the basis of religious certainty which was occasionally disrupted and changed by new convictions that began as heresies (Berger, 1980). This enduring orthodoxy began to break down in western thinking only when Copernicus blew apart the theory of an organic cosmos with the earth at its centre, replacing it with an infinite universe, a machine which obeyed immutable mathematical laws. The semi-divine status of “Nature” disappeared, absorbed into a more mundane “nature” which was a composition of measurable and observable matter. By the end of the seventeenth century, what had been mystical had become “inanimate matter in motion” (Sheldrake, 1991, p. 44). The new knowledge coming out of the Renaissance had wrought a detachment from nature that persists into the present day (Sheldrake, 1991).

A comparison of attitudes towards nature throughout many different cultures seems to reveal a great divide in philosophy, though not necessarily

in practice, which places “western” on one side, and all other views – usually the beliefs of peoples labelled “indigenous” – on the opposite side. Interestingly, while the other attitudes to nature always derive from a specific place (Suzuki and Knudtson, 1992), and are peculiar to it, “western” attitudes do not appear to be situated in any particular geographical location. That is, the adjective “western” appears to apply to a class of beliefs and practices rather than to a source of beliefs and practices. This use of the word “western” gives rise to the reflection that western culture is an impetus, not a place.

One feature that distinguishes western thought from other world views is that since the sixteenth century, western people have observed the natural world through a lens polished ever more finely by a scientific approach to ways of knowing. Western scientific method began with the “Enlightenment”, (White, 1967; Merchant, 1980; Capra, 1983; Sheldrake 1991), a period of revelation and revolution in mathematics and physics accompanied by the development of a rigorous methodology designed to capture the secrets of nature. A popular view of the Enlightenment suggests that western science grew independently in response to technological and medical needs of European cultures. However, it is equally likely that a period of vigorous European expansion and contact with other cultures in the New World and the Arab world (White, 1967) stimulated interest in the new sciences (Arnold, 1996).

The Enlightenment changed western outlooks forever by overwriting the root metaphor of the universe as a living organism with one of the universe as a machine (Merchant, 1980; Williams, 1980; Capra, 1983; Sheldrake, 1991.) Francis Bacon played a large part in the “mechanisation” of the material world by creating the method and the imagery that turned magic into science. History is ambivalent about what it thinks of Bacon’s achievement.

White (1967) inclines toward giving Bacon glory: “[A]cceptance [of the Baconian creed] as a normal pattern of action may mark the greatest event in human history since the invention of agriculture, and perhaps in nonhuman terrestrial history as well” (p. 1203). Others, like Sheldrake (1991), Merchant (1980) and Capra (1983) tend to a negative view of Bacon’s discourse. The essence of the argument against Bacon’s achievement lies in his use of images from torture and slavery to describe methods of inquiring into and altering nature, coupled with language that reduced “female nature to a resource for economic production” (Merchant, 1980, p. 165). In *Novum Organum*, Bacon clearly constructs scientific investigation as male and nature as the female subject of the investigation:

If any man there be, who, not content to rest in and use the knowledge that has already been discovered, aspires to penetrate further . . . to seek certain . . . and demonstrable knowledge, I invite all such to join themselves, as true sons of knowledge with me, that passing by the outer courts of nature . . . we may find a way at length into her inner chambers. (Bacon, 1620, p. 82)

For Bacon, nature existed in three states – at liberty, in error, or in bondage – and two of these were inferior to humans. The object of the educated person must be to use skill and strength to force nature into a shape in which it served and did not control human societies.

Sheldrake (1991) and Merchant (1980) believe that the vigour of Bacon’s writing, combined with his influential social position, significantly affected current western attitudes towards nature. Bacon wrote anthropocentric – perhaps a truer word, if it existed, would be anthrosupremist – prose, and he certainly drew the powerful metaphor for his methodology from the inquisition into witchcraft. Whatever his motives, the effect of his writing is

obvious. The scientific method that Bacon helped to establish concentrated on studying facets of nature in isolation from their environments.

According to Sheldrake (1991), that produced “a model universe that is soundless, colourless, tasteless, odourless, and of course lifeless. ... it is inaccessible to the senses and knowable only through mathematical reason” (p. 56). Scientific method deliberately promulgated a belief that the principles of the “real world” – that is, the world that science could measure, describe, analyse and ultimately alter – could be grasped in a purely intellectual exercise in contrast to the worlds of myth and magic (see Lévi-Strauss, 1978). The consequence of this belief is that western scientists approach nature, first to find causes for effects, and second, to find ways of altering the cause to produce different, more desirable effects. Compared with the holistic, spiritual and traditional ways that indigenous peoples know nature, the scientific approach is accurately described as unemotional (Sheldrake, 1991) fragmented and unspiritual.

Success in applying scientific method demystified nature for western people (Williams, 1980). The word “demystified” means two things here: first, it means that investigations into the functions of the material world created knowledge that replaced ignorance; second, and much more deeply, it means that knowledge gradually abraded the qualities of mystique that nature had previously owned by virtue of being mysterious. Science gradually secularised nature. In early western cultures, “To know nature was to know God” (Williams, 1980, p. 71). The most significant change wrought by the Enlightenment was a shift of focus from God as the lawgiver to the laws themselves (Williams, 1980).

Separating nature from God separated humans from the spiritual in nature as well. Nature became something that no longer included people, which allowed its division into unrelated component parts (Williams, 1980) so that

“gold country” is separated from “native bush country” and “coastal development” from “shore”. Perhaps as a result of this fragmentation and separation into parts, a sense of developed “nature” is held in expressions like “natural resources” and “products of nature”. These expressions suggest a series of disparate landscapes full of goods on which people operate in various ways – whether as industrialists or as landscape gardeners – to achieve benefits for themselves (Williams, 1980). This is not to say that altering the landscape, of course, is purely a post-Enlightenment phenomenon. Humankind has always (or very nearly always) burned and cleared and grazed and grown, thereby effecting major ecological changes.

The western scientific attitude has ill-prepared westerners to accept views of nature other than their own (Sheldrake, 1991; White, Jr., 1967; Arnold, 1996). After all, a westerner might say, natural laws exist and they function everywhere in the same ways and for the same reasons (Weinert, 1995): that is, scientists can demonstrate the universality of the second law of thermodynamics or Newton’s theory of gravity. Impelled, perhaps, by the way in which western scientific principles can be generalised over the whole planet, White (1967) claims, “Today, all around the globe, all significant science is western in style and method, whatever the pigmentation or language of the scientists” (p. 1204). White’s words “significant science” wipe out in one ethnocentric sweep all the ways of knowing – the science, in fact – that non-western peoples have evolved.

The discourses of western science have largely crumbled the mystique that once adhered to “mother Nature”, but a critical perspective on nature as feminine – whether as virgin or mother – still invites the social construction of a devalued nature awaiting subjugation to a masculine rationality. There is now much resistance to the “natural” woman-nature codings that occur in the difference cultures of the world. In the discourse of

eco-feminism, the “natural” presentation of “nature” as a feminine entity is unacceptable because it works as “the legitimation for the domestication of women and their confinement to the nurturing role” (Soper, 1996, p .29). The “natural order”, of which feminine nature is part, is an aspect of what Jagtenberg (1994, p. 23) calls “the patriarchal stock-in-trade”. The symbolic association of women with a nature continually exploited and altered by men may sustain the repressive normative values towards the ownership of land and the division of labour (Soper, 1996; Merchant, 1980).

... and putting the spiritual back again.

The discursive attack on the feminine nature of the material world may have been a major contributor to its secularisation and commodification in western thinking, but the spiritual nature of nature is again, in this age of scientific knowledge, an issue of serious political debate. Opposing post-Enlightenment secularised nature is the Nature of indigenous peoples, who know the material world differently. Academics and activists (Arnold, 1996; Suzuki & Knudtson, 1992; Sheldrake, 1991; Williams, 1980) are debating whether “nature” is more properly “Nature”, and whether it (or she) includes the human race within it, and, if it does not, whether it should.

The argument circles around the “new” knowledge that nature, in the form of inanimate matter, is only part of what may be known about the world, and that other ways of knowing nature, that are not privileged by scientific method, are equally valid (Lovelock, 1979; Sheldrake, 1991; Smith 1996).

Other opinions than those of western scientists are finding voice. It was, for instance, a very non-western knowledge of nature that gave rise to the first principle of environmental justice affirmed by the First People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit (Dryzeck & Schlosberg, 1998):

“Environmental justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction” (p. 291).

Many theorists have recorded the different ways in which indigenous peoples use nature and feel about it (Lovelock, 1979; Suzuki & Knudtson, 1992; Nabhan & St. Antoine, 1993; Nelson, 1993). The theme which emerges in the literature is that indigenous peoples seem to connect to nature in more ways than using it to obtain food and other resources, although that, of course, is an important part of the relationship. Another part of the relationship is a deep knowledge of the plants, animals, climate and environmental history of a relatively small territory, preserved in oral tradition to ensure the continuity of the group in its unique locality.

Anecdotes show that western scientists have “discovered” information that had long been known to the people of the area and accurately passed down in story, song and oral teaching (Suzuki & Knudtson, 1992; Nelson, 1993; Nabhan & St. Antoine, 1993). Traditional ways of learning are disappearing, however, because of the pervasive nature of western teaching methods and teaching technologies, and as traditional knowledge of the environment becomes increasingly irrelevant in the face of species loss and irreversible changes to the landscape (Nabhan & St. Antoine, 1993).

As the western world returns to nature, though, it becomes a culture that has begun to realise some of the negative effects of industrialisation and seeks the wilderness for relief (Soper, 1996). The psychological separation of humans from nature has been “a function of an increasing real interaction” (Williams, 1980, p. 83). Gerard Manley Hopkins, writing *God’s Grandeur* in 1877, (Hopkins, Gardner edition, 1953, p. 27) criticised the ruthless industrialisation of his time:

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

Hopkins' picture of the sullied earth depicts the effect of industrialisation, or, to use Simmons' (1995) word, the "humanization" (p. 64) of the natural world. The ugliness and pollution that Hopkins saw more than a hundred years ago is the latter-day impetus behind the search for nature as a sanctuary from the things people do to nature. The problem for the industrial world is that there is nowhere left that can accommodate the dream of a pure Nature, undefiled by – in fact, untouched by – human activity, waiting to succour the casualties of modern western lifestyle (Soper, 1996; Smith, 1996; Williams, 1980). What is left of nature is a commodity that can be used for recuperation and restoration:

The consumer wants only the intended product; all other products and by-products he must get away from, if he can. But get away – it can't really be overlooked – to treat leftover nature in much the same spirit: to consume it as scenery, landscape, image, fresh air. (Williams, 1980, p. 81)

Nature has become, to quote Smith (1996) "a social sanitarium" (p. 43). For instance, in the hands of the multi-national retail chain, The Nature Company, nature has become a commodity that promises recuperation to urbanised consumers. In Nature Company stores, nature is selected for good taste and shelf appeal:

to the extent that particular fauna are considered exotic, charismatic, dangerous or otherwise fascinating, The Nature Company sells cutified plastic replicas: snakes and spiders, smiling killer whales, furry five-inch tigers, crocodile eggs (faux of course). An audio series offers the

sounds of the 'The Last Places on Earth', while *Virtual Nature* – the video – takes to the limits this genre of nature as psychic soporific. With appropriate New Age instrumental accompaniment, cascading waterfalls in verdant forests and soaring vistas of crystal white snowfields wash over the pacified viewer. (Smith, 1996, p. 37)

Perhaps what western society forfeited by separating itself so resolutely from Nature, and what it is trying equally resolutely to recapture, is the biophilia response (Wilson, 1984; Kellert & Wilson, 1993). Wilson (1993) defines biophilia as “the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms” (p. 31). Unsubstantiated in pure science, the biophilia hypothesis widens the discussion of nature as part of human self-realisation by introducing a biological imperative into the source of human responses nature (Ulrich, 1979; Lockwood, 1983).

If its tenets were validated, biophilia would provide a biological explanation for the strong reaction evident around the world to over-industrialisation and consequent loss of bio-diversity. Biophilia, for instance, would rationalise the conservation movement “not just in terms of its material and commodity benefits but, far more significantly, for the increased likelihood of fulfilling a variety of emotional, cognitive, and spiritual needs in the human animal” (Kellert, 1993, p. 60).

The biophilia hypothesis appears to continue the tendency in western science to ignore or deprecate the ways that non-western societies experience nature (Nabhan & St. Antoine, 1993). If biophilia is a “phenotypic expression of gene/environment interaction” (Nabhan & St. Antoine, 1993, p. 246), then it is a universal human characteristic that expresses itself in social practice. In that case, non-western societies may have knowledge and resource management “that encode an ethic compatible with our genes for biophilia” (Nabhan & St. Antoine, 1993, p. 246).

Accounting for the human response to nature in terms of a genetic determinism takes the spiritual out of nature again. In the secularised culture of the western world (Schaeffer, 1968), modern people who might reject or devalue their positive reactions to nature if they suspected the source of those feelings was God or god/s, might be more able to accept and even valorise those reactions if they result from the inescapability of genetic hard-wiring. The biophilia hypothesis seems a self-conscious way to account, in the scientific discourses of nature, for what was once taken for granted in the mediaeval western world and still is in indigenous societies.

The discourses of nature v. the discourses of the environment

People express their opinions using metaphors to make their speech powerful and memorable. Because metaphor is a statement of one thing that requires understanding of another, it functions in discourse as the process by which meaning moves around, because the clues for interpreting the statement are given in the metaphor rather than any evidence offered (Harvey, 1996). In the discourses of nature, value-laden metaphors are frequently used to define their referents. Common expressions like “majestic mountains”, “laughing waters”, “lazy river” and “raging storm” may be relatively innocuous, but embedded values in the descriptions nevertheless guide readers towards particular points of view. Even in the writing of “pure” science, as Martin (1991) has shown, vivid metaphors attach to the reproductive systems of the human body, and present the egg as variously, a passive object at the mercy of the brave and adventurous sperm, or as a brazen *femme fatale* luring the hapless sperm into its clutches. Likewise Harvey (1996) shows that cell biology speaks in images that refer to “command and control systems” and “intelligence networks” p. 163).

The danger in routine use of metaphors is that they become so common in everyday language that their effects are unquestioned. Metaphors therefore warrant critical examination for their consequences in human experience, especially since their meaning is not unchanging either in time or culture (Simmons, 1993). The word “nature” is complex because it is a conductor of cultural meanings embedded in personal experiences of nature. The commonality of experiencing nature breeds brands of “particularist politics” (Harvey, 1996, p. 118), each with its own set of value-laden metaphors and no marked appreciation that all values in all metaphors reside in all users of metaphors, not in the subjects of the metaphors.

There is no single discourse of nature, but rather, intersections of sometimes contradictory and conflicting values. What constitutes “nature” at the beginning of the twenty-first century? Some of what is presented as “nature” in the western world is an urge to preserve what Soper (1996) calls “the encapsulation of a more harmonious order in time” (p. 24) and is a product of particular social, racial and gender relations. The various discourses of environmentalism (Dryzeck, 1997) are to some extent expressions of “the politics of apocalypticism” (Smith, 1996, p. 39) which, with their rallying cries about the death of nature, perpetuate feelings of the “otherness” of nature. Discourses that inherit their reasoning from a direct line back to Bacon encourage a view that a “mature and civilised” (Arnold, 1996, p. 10) society is one that has risen above the constraints imposed by its environment by modifications to the material world. In the discourses of deep ecology there is agreement (though for different reasons) that John Donne had it right: “No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe” (Donne, 1624, in Warnke, 1967, p. 339). In the same way that John Donne understood himself involved in mankind, human beings are involved in nature, because they are organisms, and to be an organism is necessarily to interact with surroundings and to be a nexus in an infinite network of relations.

The struggle in the discourses of nature is the struggle to construe the relationship of humans with that important but vaguely-defined concept we call "nature" (Harvey, 1996). What is at stake in these disparate discourses is an ethic of nature, but at the same time, there seems to have been a discursive shift away from the word "nature". Neither the business sector nor the conservation movement seem to argue and labour over "nature". Their attention, instead, is on "the environment", a word which once expressed the totality of the physical surroundings in a specified location, but in common speech and media reports, has acquired a latter-day function as a substitute, but not quite as a synonym, for "nature". The extended meaning of "the environment" is now oxymoronic: some people now think of "the environment" as everywhere except where they live (Jamieson, 1984). "The environment" has become a metonymic substitution for "nature" and at the same time, a slippage in discourse has lost its sense of the "environs" of a neighbourhood. The result of this discursive shift is that local changes in natural resources (so long as they do not incur perceptibly unpleasant consequences) do not count as environmental damage because "the environment", illogically, is somewhere far distant. This terminological disorientation presumably produces an effect exactly opposite to the one environmentalists desire.

The word "environment" has not so far acquired a personality in the sense that "nature" has one. "Environment" is genderless and emotionless: huge, because it is everywhere, yet fragmented into (for example) "coastal", "urban", "rural" sections. It has an overlay of non-specific eco-nuances that allow people to place the word at random on a long continuum of political thought. Reports show people abusing or protecting not "nature" but "the environment": it is a political word in a way that "nature" is not. This is not to say that there should be a single homogeneous discourse of nature, even if it were feasible. Such a discourse would have to encompass a worldview

that subordinated the requirements of nature and human self-realisation to some higher end-value (Goulet, 1993). That sounds very like a return to the orthodox pairing of God-Nature of mediaeval Europe.

Whether the physical world is called “nature” or “the environment”, the circling arguments boil down to how the world is used by human beings. At the furthest extreme, the arguments over environmental ethics oppose primarily anthropocentric and ecocentric viewpoints Dryzeck (1997). On the other hand, proponents of sustainable development aver that human progress can be built on the use of natural resources, and that an ethic of the environment can include the intrinsic value of every part of the physical world.

Environmental discourse grows up in, and out of the concerns of, industrialised societies, and is much influenced by comparisons between industrial and non-industrial societies. Environmental discourse is often pervaded by a romanticised image of the noble savage at one with nature. However, as Harvey (1996) says:

Indigenous or pre-capitalist practices are not, therefore, necessarily superior or inferior to our own just because such groups possess discourses that avow respect for nature rather than the modern “Promethean” attitude of domination or mastery. (p. 189)

Cultural values are sometimes more spoken of than acted on, and when they are offered as an environmental ideal, their “plausibility and power” (Robison, 1994, p. 3) are difficult to argue against. All societies, however, have their share of environmental problems (Harvey, 1996) even those with a traditional discourse of organic interrelationships with nature. For instance, despite the teachings of Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism, the historical

geography of China shows “deforestation, land degradation, river erosion, and flooding” (Harvey, 1996, p. 188).

The image of non-industrial communities that have achieved balance in their relationships with their local ecologies is widely promulgated in environmental discourses, “not least by non-industrial peoples themselves” (Milton, 1996, p. 31). In environmental discourse, this belief in the ecological wisdom of non-industrial societies is so powerful as to be a dogma that has no need of substantiating data, and one, moreover, which is not easily rebutted.

Environmental discourse perpetuates an idealised image of hunter-gatherer societies “as the archetypal primitive environmentalists” (Milton, 1996, p. 110), on the assumption that such societies leave the environment closer to its original state than any other societies do. Hunter-gatherers, however, often practise forms of environmental modification, like burning vegetation, that have profound effects¹⁹. Some environments have more discursive appeal than others in the making of environmental discourse. Rain forests receive much attention in environmental discourses. The lower profile of tropical grasslands means that the plight of human communities who use these eco-systems has been largely ignored (Milton, 1996).

Environmental arguments that couch issues in terms of the debasement of Mother Nature impose a single rationality based on “an intense moral rectitude” (Harvey, 1996, p. 389) that denies any discourses drawn from science, the law, or even economic rationality. Environmental discourses

¹⁹ For instance, Simmons (1996) says that burning in New Zealand between 1000 and 1400 AD destroyed most of the original podocarp forests of the eastern half of the south island, producing grassland and scrub. The same hunter-gatherer activity killed off “six genera containing twenty species of *moa* within 500 years of the arrival of the first people in New Zealand” (p. 78).

need to illuminate the “real deal”: the environmental justice that people are struggling for is often not just the survival of an eco-system, or unpolluted water, or air that does not carry a burden of chemicals from local industry. There is also an economic factor: they want customary rights of access to resources that allow them a livelihood. They want places to live, and reasonable health. Nature, then, is “intrinsically valuable to the same extent that the self is valuable” (Simmons 1993, p. 121). And this “leads straight back to the connection between environmental and social justice” (Harvey, 1996, p. 391), which brings the discussion conveniently round to the next chapter, an examination of environmental justice.

Chapter 4

Ethics and Environmental Justice

Introduction

The last chapter considered influences on the construction of nature as a culture artefact and the new role of the word “environment” as a substitute, but not a synonym, for “nature”. Any consideration of “environment” leads to debate about the ethical use of the material world, and connects directly to arguments about justice and injustice: justice for those whose living is affected; justice for people yet unborn, who are denied the resources now being consumed; and justice, under an ethic of the environment, even for the planet.

Chapter 4 reviews key ideas about the intercultural and inter-generational injustice that results from decisions made on the basis of what some commentators label broadly as “environmental racism” (Cooper & Palmer, 1995; Simmons, 1995; Westra & Wenz, 1995; Bryant, 1995). The first section begins with a broad definition of justice as a part of culture, and moves from there to some consideration of where to set the margins of community. The discussion continues by fitting environmental justice into the framework already established and closes with reference to the difficulty of just environmental action when the concept of community is unclear.

4.1 Concepts connected with environmental justice

Rachel Carson's book (1962) *The Silent Spring* probably marks the beginning of widespread awareness that the earth was sustaining serious, continuing environmental damage. Since then, campaigners and scholars (United Nations, 1972; Finnis, 1980; Gaylord & Bell, 1995; Greenpeace, 1992; Bryant, 1995; Goldtooth, 1995; Mahuta, 1991; Almond, 1995; Wenz, 1995) have included ethical use of the environment in definitions of social justice. The cause of the debates and campaigns is a growing sense of the injustice of the single, instrumental, financially-driven rationality that dominates decisions about the environment.

The broad concept of western justice is a complex mesh of ideas such as an embedded notion of fundamental personal rights, natural justice, due punishment, and the consent of the governed. The active expressions of these principles are the formalised procedures of law, which aim for equity and social harmony (Finnis, 1980). Formal justice is a potent indicator of the *mores* that a society finds acceptable at any time, setting limits on citizens' interaction with one another (Almond, 1995), in an attempt to align the concept of "the good man" with that of "the just man" (Parry, 1978, p. 38). The qualities that make a good person are conceived to be "universal and constant" (Parry, 1978, p. 38), but the qualities of the just person, or good citizen, depend on the requirements of particular societies.

Within the broad concept of justice, personal and professional ethics provide a coherent framework for assessing moral duty in many situations (Brown & Quiblier, 1994; Emmanuel, 1991). An environmental decision that is just (and that may be different from a legal one) needs to be based on a strong communication ethic, so that the decisions are an intersection of morality and the law. Whose voices are heard in the decision-making process is therefore an issue of ethics. Moreno (1995) found a bias frequently occurs

towards selecting “technical experts” (p. 66) whose technical command is expected, without logical support for the expectation, to elevate their morality. According to Harvey (1996), environmental justice also breeds a suspicion of experts and professional opinion, because of the frequency with which the “dominant discourse of political-economic power” (p. 386) has used them to reject, challenge or diminish community anxieties.

Communication ethics is one aspect of environmental justice that figures in the discourse of sustainable development (Dryzeck, 1997). Another is the focus on the degree of protection against environmental hazards offered to poor communities compared with richer communities (Peterson, 1997). Environmental justice focuses on safe, sustainable environments (Dann, 1988) and policies that support sustainable communities (Bryant, 1995). The achievement of environmental justice would require that communities are guaranteed environmental protection and the prevention of harm.

Associated with protection for communities is the idea that the burden of proof should lie with the organisations or individuals causing pollution rather than on the public purse (Bullard, 1995).

Just environmental decisions should be free of racial and class discrimination and redress inequitable situations that already exist (Bullard, 1995). The idea that the rich industrialised countries can dump their toxic waste on poorer countries is the sort of reasoning that leads to unjust environments. An example of “toxic colonialism” (Harvey, 1996, p. 367) is found in the economic reasoning behind a leaked internal memorandum from the World Bank, published in *The Economist* on September 8, 1992: “Just between you and me, shouldn’t the World Bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the LDC’s [less developed countries?]” (Lawrence Summers, chief economist at the World Bank, cited in Harvey, 1996, p. 367).

Specific instructions on environmental stewardship contained in the world's religions once ensured that environmental justice was the customary legacy from one generation to the next (Bryant, 1995; Goulet, 1993; Brown & Quiblier, 1994; Holm, 1994). The secularisation of society has left the human race without a sound ethic of environmental justice that regulates human activities in nature (Callicott, 1994). To replace what was lost with the decline of the world's religions, Callicott proposes for the twenty-first century an international environmental ethic that would be grounded in many scientific disciplines and yet would resonate with the traditional environmental ethics of local cultures.

The environmental ethic proposed by Callicott (1994) sounds rather like the concepts embodied in the Resource Management Act (1991) in New Zealand, which provided the "first glimmers of justice" (Blackford & Matunga, 1995, p. 187) for Māori. New Zealand law had never before recognised traditional Māori environmental practices as being of national importance, and the codification into law of *waahi tapu* and other concepts represented a tentative but real step toward justice.

Environmental justice and community

One of the qualities of good citizenship is acting out of knowledge of, and in accordance with, the needs of the community. In abstract, good citizens will accept majority decisions, subjugating personal interests to the greater good: in practice, dominant factions of good citizens, or good people, and sometimes both, assert their convictions and interests *as* the common good (Nash, 1989). An extensive depoliticisation of western populations has developed a "consensus through apathy" (Birnbaum, 1978, p. 173) that has replaced the traditional idea of consent. Public apathy tends to beget

“professionalised” elected representatives, which strengthens existing power structures (Birnbaum, 1978) and makes justice, as an output of a moral community, more problematic than theory suggests. The problem does not occur because of theoretical inadequacies in the conceptualisation of “justice”, but because of active differences in the conceptualisation of “community” (Cooper & Palmer, 1995; Simmons, 1996; Westra & Wenz, 1995; Bryant, 1995).

The idea of a moral community lies at the heart of arguments about environmental justice. Neighbourhood boundaries obviously cannot contain environmental issues, but for many people, community seems to be a short term, anthropocentric and parochial experience that breeds the “NIMBY” - “Not-In-My-Back-Yard” (Wenz, 1995, p. 62) phenomenon. For supporters of the ethic of the environment, NIMBYism is the antithesis of environmentally just communities (Simmons, 1993). It usually refers to the refusal of a rich community to accept a “LULU” (locally undesirable land use) in its neighbourhood (Wenz, 1995, p. 67; Sachs, 1995), but the principle does not apply only to the rejection of unpleasant consequences of consumerism such as refuse dumps or the toxic wastes from industrial development. The expression equally describes willingness to ignore environmental degradation if it is happening to other people and other species in other places with effects that time has yet to expose. NIMBYism raises the issues of where and when communities should begin and end, and by extrapolation, how to apply justice over peoples, time, species and territory.

Time is the new community boundary in the debate over environmental justice. Environmental justice depends on whether communities can re-align their concept of time to include the distant future (de-Shalit, 1995). While most people who operate on the western linear concept of time can conceive of trans-generational responsibility as far out as their grandchildren or even

great-grandchildren, in environmental ethics, there is no logical temporal stopping point. Linear time gives the western world a sense of progress, and a concomitant feeling of having “enough time for the perfectibility of the world” (Simmons, 1993, p. 11). Non-linear time, the feeling that all times are now, makes it much harder to justify the drive to improve the living standards of contemporaries at the cost of future people (de Shalit, 1995).

4.2 Multiple rationalities and environmental justice

Two major themes emerge from the literature defining environmental justice: the first, that community needs to be defined in broader terms than those of place; the second, that decision-makers seem to permit a disproportionate amount of potentially damaging development in and near the communities of the socially disempowered. Moving towards environmental justice for all communities means a communication process that can draw on multiple rationalities to ensure that decisions are based on broadly representative values (Goulet, 1993).

Three distinct rationalities inform decisions: “technological rationality”, “political rationality” and “ethical or humane rationality” (Goulet, 1993, pp. 20 - 21). Technological rationality is purely instrumental, and focuses on the most efficient way to modify the environment, or to obtain resources from it. Political rationality aims to maintain social institutions and power positions within those institutions. Ethical and humane rationality deals with human rights and “the defence of values considered precious for their own sake” (Goulet, 1993, p. 21). Bad decision-making occurs when proponents of these different rationalities approach the others in a “reductionist, triumphal” (Goulet, 1993, p. 24) way, assuming they alone have complete knowledge of an issue. The dominance of one of these

rationalities can lead to the paradoxical situation in which decisions based on incomplete information are made for environmental use, followed by demands for full information to prevent such use: "The paradigm that requires full information is only invoked after decisions about to use the earth's resources have been made on other grounds – such as the freedom of individuals to do what they wish with their own land" (Robison, 1994, p. 37).

The way to achieve ethical development of the environment is to create a "mutuality" (Goulet, 1993, p. 25) of discourse among the divergent and competing rationalities. Fractured rationality leads to unjust decisions. However, it seems that a single rationality dominates in many situations where environmental justice is decided. For instance, political rationality in action gives rise to the situations described in this reflection on the relationship between "big players" and "small voices" in environmental cases:

The Resource Management Bill will not prevent a developer, such as Electricorp, stacking the processes of decision-making so as to bankrupt the objectors (as in the Whanganui River Low Flow hearings), or deterring parties from the proceedings as in the Hawkes Bay Coastal Waters Classification case. (Mahuta, 1991, p. 168)

Ethical rationality is ignored when Native American struggle to have their voices and their environmental values heard in decisions affecting their lands (Gaylord & Bell, 1995, p. 30). Technological rationality is ignored when the New Zealand government does not provide the resources the Māori communities need to do the job asked of them in monitoring environmental decisions (Mahuta, 1991, p. 167). The entirely well-meaning *Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (in Suzuki & Knudtson, 1992, p. 253) describes a model of dignified and valued living for the indigenous peoples of the world, but offers no plan for achieving this

ideal, which is so different from the reality that most indigenes face. The *Declaration* registers a triumph of ethical rationality; it ignores political and technical rationalities.

Even when an environmental philosophy such as sustainable development advocates grass-roots consultation and finding local solutions to local problems, the discourse can be high-jacked and distorted by a political and technological rationalities. The “enthusiastic bureaucratic appropriation” (Smith, 1996, p. 41) of sustainable development means that it is not defined in environmental terms, but instead in such economic terms as will sustain profit and the private market. The effect of this is to vitiate environmentalism and perpetuate the view that the environment is a commodity:

Whereas the environmental consciousness that emerged out of the 1960s and 1970s has been selectively strained into the cultural economy of the *fin de siècle*, absorbed, upended, pulped and re-represented by the cultural and economic apparatuses of production and consumption - such that George Bush could promote himself as the “environmental” President and Dow Chemical could advertise themselves as the “environmental people” - the ruthless objectification of nature remains a central tenet of capitalist production, and one that will significantly circumscribe the intellectual and ideological reconnection of the social and natural worlds that is now afoot. (Smith, 1996, p. 41)

Goulet’s (1993) idea of genuine dialogue, in which all three rationalities are present and accorded equal rights in environmental decisions, seems rare indeed. But if genuine dialogue is the key to true environmental justice, the question remains: how is it to happen? An anecdote in Carpenter and Kennedy (1988) tells of a scientist who stood up and waved a thick document at citizens who had gathered for a meeting about monitoring

procedures at a nuclear power plant. "This is my master's thesis," the scientist said. "There is no way you can possibly understand all the complex issues associated with radiation monitoring in this book" (p. 6). The citizens resented the arrogance that produced such behaviour, but admitted the truth of the scientist's claim. The anecdote emphasises how disadvantaged private citizens can be in terms not only of having access to information, but of understanding it when they obtain it.

On the other hand, access to all relevant information appears to help in achieving genuine dialogue: "Information is power, and, in general terms, information is valued highly by those who control, or believe that they should control, or at least participate in the control of resources" (Livesey, 1988, p. 138). Information is the antidote to uncertainty, and the value of information lies in increased confidence that a decision is the correct one, or at least, is the best of the options available (Mosley, 1993). Sharing information means that policies affecting the environment are "comprehensive and integrated" (Bührs & Bartlett, 1993, p. 136). New problems are avoided, and so are temporary solutions created by moving problems from one part of the environment and its associated social system to another. Access to environmental information could also avoid situations in which badly planned ecological preservation projects impinge on the human rights of local people. One way to achieve justice would be to give "the vulnerable members of society" (Sachs, 1995, p. 55) access to environmental information and the chance to speak out, allowing the exploited to confront the exploiters. Wigley and Shrader-Frechette (1995) have suggested that environmental justice could benefit from the application of the doctrine of informed consent, which is fundamental to medical ethics. Damage done to the environment, however, can affect the body too, yet informed consent is not sought from citizens for environmental activities that can cause health problems.

This chapter has covered some key concepts relating to environmental justice. The next chapter deals with the design of the research.

Chapter 5

Methodology and Method

Introduction

The focus of the research recorded in this thesis is the stories that people tell as they assess and react to changes in the Northland environment. The overall aim of the research was not at any point to judge whether the proposed environmental changes were desirable or otherwise, but instead, to examine the stories as discourses that help shape the world. Chapter five explains how the research into the environmental discourses of Northland was carried out. There are two objectives for the chapter: the first, to explicate critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003) as the methodology underpinning the research; and the second, to set out the techniques of textually oriented discourse analysis used in the case studies.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section of the chapter covers the way the word “discourse”, so broad in its potential applications, is used in this study. The second section touches briefly on the research problem and the research questions. Both are discussed in relation to Fairclough (1992) and Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), whose work guided the methodology of the research. The third section explains how the archive and corpus of texts were established and enhanced. The fourth section deals with the preliminary investigations into the texts, and the fifth and last section outlines the method of close textual analysis.

5.1 Elements of Discourse

Discourse is a word with broad applications. Wodak notes (1996), "The term 'discourse' integrates a range of meanings in its everyday and philosophical uses which sometimes seem to contradict or exclude one another" (p. 12).

The simplest meaning of "discourse" designates any moderately sustained stretch of connected language, either spoken or written. In this first sense, participants in the research exchange messages and so, discourse together. Kipling (1960) uses the word this way in *Stalky & Co.*: "I repeat, Master Rattray, we will confer, and the matter of our discourse shall not be stinks, for that is a loathsome and obscene word" (p. 93). Kipling, with an eye on style, chose "discourse" as a grand word for "talk". The point though is not the imposing connotations of "discourse" as opposed to the simple word "talk", but rather, that the discourse is to be (nominally, at least) a dialogue.

This matches Macdonnell's (1986) assertion that discourse must involve social intercourse. Social exchanges are governed by rules that regulate who may speak to whom in what way, whose voice dominates and whose talk should be taken seriously (Fairclough, 1992; Harvey, 1996; Whorf, 1956). Discourse as social exchange is the foundation of this research. Before any other analysis was done, every letter, every story, every hearing or meeting was treated first as an instance of social exchange, and as the location, therefore, of citizens' struggle for self and the projection of their "imaginaries - representations of how things might or could or should be" (Chiapello & Fairclough, 2002, p. 195). The interactions in these exchanges are shown to be marked by an awareness of certain social rules, even if the rules are applied unsuccessfully or fitfully.

Discourse has acquired a secondary meaning that derives from the more basic idea of social exchanges and places the word in an intellectual tradition of moral debate (Moreno, 1995). "Discourse" in this sense can describe a

form of elevated conversation directed at making a moral society. It promotes the idea that people in discourse with one another are essentially reasoning beings, concerned to order life amenable to proper management through discussion and decision, rather than leaving it to chance. In part, the stories that people tell about the environment fit this sense of discourse. This is to say that in their stories, people not only connect with one another; they may also introduce an element of moral persuasion designed to shape the moral boundaries of the social world.

Discourse and the construction of society

Both nuances of this conversational meaning of “discourse” refer to it in a generalised sense, occurring as concrete exchanges of oral, written or visual language between participants. At a higher level of abstraction, “discourse” also contains the sense that it is an agent with the power to construct society according to perceptions of reality. Harvey’s (1996) succinct explanation is helpful here:

The words “discourse” and “language” are often used interchangeably. While there are evident overlaps, it is, I think, useful to treat language as in some sense more fundamental, as one of the key raw materials out of which specific discourses, understood as bounded (sometimes strictly so) ways of representing the world, get shaped. (p. 83)

Discourse inevitably shapes world views because the choice of language symbols to represent events and opinions presents one set of meanings while simultaneously excluding others which are, perhaps, equally valid (Foucault, 1977b). In other words, (to use much-quoted but still relevant examples), one person’s “eco-warrior” is another’s “illegal activist” and “tree-hugging” is variously complimentary or insulting, depending on context. The label

either sustains or challenges established orthodoxies in social attitudes. Language, therefore, operates as a form of social power by allowing the meaning of experiences to be codified (Bourdieu, 1977).

Discourses and privileged knowledge

Discourses gather power and consolidate ideas into enduring social institutions upheld by what seems to be unquestionable commonsense (Fairclough, 1992). Ultimately, ideas that are not articulated within the discourses become unthinkable to the discourse participants, outside the realms of common sense and reality. When this happens, attitudes embedded in the discourse can cause one form of knowledge to be privileged over another, and some knowledge is at best, marginalised, and at worst, lost for good (Macdonnell, 1986; Milton, 1996). This has happened in western medicine, which has long elevated the discourse of pure science and downplayed or excluded the discourses of alternative medicine like traditional folk cures. Science and religion provide another example (Milton, 1996). Participants in both scientific and religious discourses profess and promulgate positive knowledge of how the world began, yet neither discourse readily accommodates the other. In much of the world, including *pakeha*²⁰ New Zealand, the discourse of science has triumphed over the discourse of religions and their various creation stories to the point that creation stories are now “knowledge” only among the interpretative communities of the faithful.

²⁰ *Pakeha* is the Māori word used to denote European (that is, Caucasian) New Zealanders, and sometimes, Caucasians of any nationality. The word probably derives from the Māori adjective meaning “pale skinned”. Some people believe that the original use of the term may have been intended as an insult, but it is now widely applied in common speech by both non-Māori and Māori.

Peace (1993) writes of an example of privileged discourse rather closer to the theme of this research. He examined the efforts of a group of “highly organized, politically skilful” (Peace, 1993, p. 189) citizens in County Cork to influence *An Bord Pleanála*, the national planning review authority based in Dublin. The protest group was opposing Merrell Dow’s intention to build a chemical factory. Peace (1993) notes that the protesters achieved remarkable results, for they managed to have their case heard by the *Bord*, which happens with only a small percentages of appeals in Ireland. Despite this success, however, and despite the fluency and astuteness of the protest group, the *Bord* judged that Merrell Dow’s scientific discourse was the appropriate language for discussing a proposal for development. Peace’s (1993) detailed account of the hearing notes this:

In sum, the popular discourse of the ordinary people, as summarized in the slogan “No factory under any circumstances” had been unceremoniously dispatched from view, while the discourse of science had become unambiguously privileged; and this effectively ensured that An Bord Pleanála’s final ruling in early 1989 was in favour of Merrell Dow. (p. 202)

Peace’s (1993) description of the privileging of one discourse and the repression of the other, shows the working of social power. It is tempting, but erroneous, to attribute power to the discourses themselves, but in fact, both discourses developed in relation to, and were contingent on, the flows of power available to the different groups of discourse participants. However, discourse does appear to be an essential ingredient in the exercise of power. The Merrell Dow example confirms Foucault’s (1980) assertion that “relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of discourse” (p. 93).

The thesis follows Fairclough's (1992) contention that the linking of power and discourse leads logically to construing discourse as a tool that constructs society and people as subjects in society:

Discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct or "constitute" them; different discourses constitute key entities (be they "mental illness", "citizenship" or "literacy") in different ways, and position people in different ways as social subjects (e.g. as doctors or patients), and it is these social effects of discourse that are focused upon in discourse analysis. (p. 3)

Perhaps it is easier to see the action of discourse in building an abstract concept such as "mental illness" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 3) than it is to see it in the creation of an entity with physical substance. However, the Northland environment can also be construed as a construction of discourse. In the first place, the Resource Management Act (1991), which controls activities affecting the environment, is itself the product of the discourse of sustainable development. In the second place, the Act forces citizens to have recourse to certain forms of stylised language before (for instance) they use their chainsaws on native bush.

Furthermore, just as the discourses of mental illness or AIDS can fashion people into social subjects, so discourse leading to environmental decisions may also position people in their communities in certain ways. A decision to break stands of native bush into blocks of land for domestic building may create a new class of suburban residents. They are people who can afford to live at the fringe of a city, taking advantage of urban convenience while avoiding the crowding, the lack of privacy and the bustle that accompany city living. The social subject created is the "lifestyler", a social entity who is less than a farmer and more than an urban gardener.

Such an approach to discourse views not only ideas, but people also, as socially constructed in language. The discursive interaction that constructs people in social rôles occurs only on the basis that certain preceding discourses are in place. Before people accept the rôle of “patient”, for instance, they need a reasonable assurance that earlier discourses have acceptably created the social entity “doctor”. In the case of this research, applications for resource consents proceed on the basis that citizens accept the label “applicant”. Applicants for resource consent, by implication, put themselves in the position of having to accept a judgement or assessment by a second party about the use of their own land. In allowing this to happen, citizens implicitly accept that a genealogy of scientific discourses precedes and informs the advice they receive and the decisions that are handed down. Behaviour in the rôle of “applicant” is, thus, socially constructed and cemented in place by the language that the parties use. Their assent to the respective rôles in the relationship proceeds from naturalisation of power in the discourse (Fairclough, 1992; 1995).

Discourse and social change

Uncritical acceptance of the power of the discourse over thinking can make discourse appear to be almost without agency. Indeed, a constructivist theory seems to propose that the individual has little free will outside the socialising process of language use (Harvey, 1996). This points to an apparent danger in the constructivist view: an endless circularity in which discourse and society continually constitute and re-constitute one another, each a perpetual, unchanging fabricator and fabrication of the other. If this situation were to obtain generally in society, change would be all but impossible. Societies do change, of course, and never more rapidly, it seems, than at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Some human subjects who

are seemingly imprisoned in language systems can clearly alter the patterns of dominance that shape their lives.

There is some merit in the thought that change begins mainly at the edges of society, where those who are marginalised produce arguments and develop discourses about their situation. In the nature of things, some discourses of the marginalised will gradually gather momentum and move their ideas towards the centre. The resulting changes in social attitude occur as the wisdom in the discourse, or the new-found social and economic power of its promulgators, is received, then naturalised in thinking as unquestionable common sense. This is not to romanticise or idealise the margins:

sometimes, the change that is sought by marginalised people is simply to get a piece of the current action (Harvey, 1996). Some evidence for this idea exists in the reluctance of the so-called third world countries to limit their consumption of non-renewable resources (Sachs, 1995).

Change can begin not only at the margins of society, but in truth, anywhere in society when people become disaffected from the *status quo*. Harvey (1996) argues that the flashes of transcendence that transform discourse – that is, that ultimately produce social change – occur in everyone who lives, acts, and uses language. Yet, despite Harvey's view of the ubiquity of change agents, change can be slow to begin and slower to complete. Shifting social attitudes to pejorative labels can be shown in an exercise that traces the evolution in popular speech from "nigger" to "negro" to "people of colour" to "Black" to, finally, the dignified "African American". The label may have become less damaging, but sadly, racial prejudice still operates widely. And even the availability of acceptable terms does not always guarantee their use. In September 2003, Paul Holmes, one of the best known broadcasters in New Zealand, referred to the Secretary-General of the United Nations as a "cheeky darky" <http://www.nzherald.co.nz>, site visited 31 January, 2004).

Neither the swift public condemnation of many New Zealanders, nor Holmes' apology and offer to resign, could undo the harm that many people in the nation perceived had been done by the use of such a label.

It is not simplistic to think that altering the common metaphors in which a culture is grounded will effect the beginning of change. What would be simplistic is to think that the process ends in language. To read some research on environmental communication (Peterson, 1997; Botkin, 1990) is to gain an impression that fixing language will somehow also fix the planet and restore it to a state of nature. It is important to acknowledge that powerful though language is in shaping thinking and action, legislating for the discourse of sustainable development cannot guarantee its acceptance in the hearts and minds of citizens. What the codification of the discourse can clearly do is call upon forces in New Zealand society, such as institutionalised power in the form of due process, regulations and sanctions, to enforce the precepts in the discourse.

Critical discourse analysis

The style of textually-oriented critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 2003; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003) adopted to examine the stories that people tell about the environment of Northland is both methodology and method (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, pp. 16-17). Critical discourse analysis incorporates social theories that help make sense of such complex discursive structures as the resource consent processes of the Resource Management Act (1991). It also incorporates methods of linguistic analysis that allow close investigation of texts. The synthesis of social theory and linguistic method achieved in critical discourse analysis

produces explications of social practice in relation to its discourse “moment” (Harvey, 1996, p. 78).

A critical approach to discourse implies searching language for the reasoning behind it, and uncovering the hegemonic relationships embedded within language use. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, p. 4) express the aim of critical discourse analysis as creating “an awareness of what is, how it has come to be, and what it might become.” This statement of the way critical discourse analysis can be used for social research is encouragingly straightforward, but by contrast, discussion of the principles behind critical discourse analysis is difficult. It seems that no matter where the discussion begins, some earlier point of theory is always necessary if the starting point is to be clear. My impression that critical discourse analysis is like the endless circularity of a Möbius strip stems from the need to consider discourse dialectically in relation to all the elements of a seemingly seamless social process (Fairclough, 1992; Harvey, 1996; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Accordingly, the dialectic nature of discourse is, therefore, an appropriate place to begin the discussion of critical discourse analysis.

Harvey’s (1996) framework posits that discourse is one of several “moments” (p. 78) in the social process. The term “moments” is important in Harvey’s (1996) discussion. He uses the word to suggest that the social process is always in flux, a constant unfolding of relationships between the different elements of social life. Although Harvey (1996) argues that social life consists of process rather than entities, he nevertheless does allow that flows can “crystallize” (p. 81) into relatively permanent objects such as cities or environments, or social institutions such as the law. Discourses, too, can belong among these solidified moments: they can be “so widely accepted and reified, that they . . . become part of a landscape of knowledge seemingly

impermeable to change” (Harvey, 1996, p. 81). The box below sets out Harvey’s model of the resources brought to the social process:

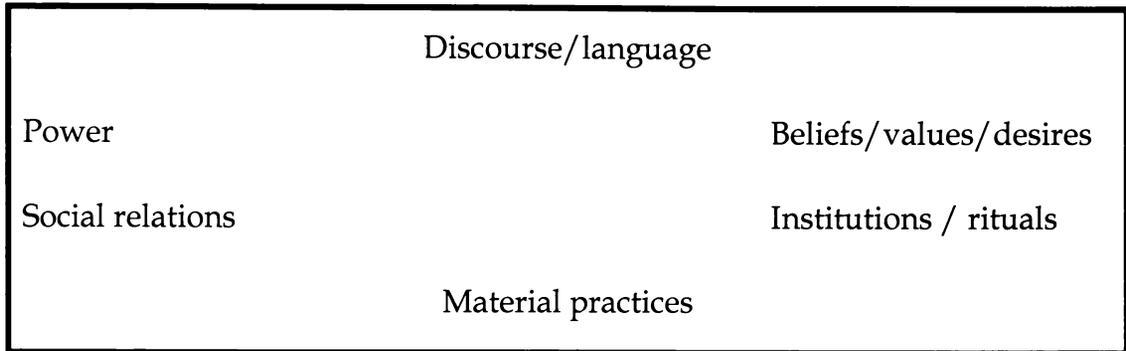


Figure 5.1: Six moments in the cognitive map of the social process, (Harvey, 1996, p. 78)

The elements of the social process are “different but not discrete” (Chiapelli & Fairclough, 2002, p. 195): all moments to some extent internalise all other moments. Internalisation refers to the operation of dialectic relationships among the moments. Bonds of influence may develop, between, for instance, the moment of beliefs/values/desires and the moment of discourse, but discourse does not become the moment of beliefs, nor do the beliefs become the discourse, although they inculcate the discourse. For critical discourse analysis, the significant aspect of the processes of internalisation may be less that they happen, and more the “how” of their happening and under what conditions they take place. It might be argued, in relation to this research, that processes of internalisation between the moment of discourse (in this case, the meta-discourse of sustainable development) and the moments of social institutions and material practices produced the qualitative changes in New Zealand society that replaced prescriptive planning legislation with a consultative system for resource consents. Put simply, social conditions brought together desired elements - public consultation, valuing Māori tradition - that were configured into the Resource Management Act (1991) by the people who framed the Act. Put in discourse terms, the circulation of the “new” discourse of sustainable development, popularised and widely promulgated through the Brundtland

Report (1989), generated knowledge in New Zealand that could be operationalised as the Act.

Harvey's (1996) depiction of the social process and its dialectically related moments sums up his view of society. The critical discourse analysis of Fairclough (1992) and Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1996) incorporates the dialectic argument, but rather than working exclusively with "moments in the social process" (Harvey, 1996, p. 78), focuses instead on well-established social activities which they refer to as "practices" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 24). Every social practice includes discourse (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Chiapelli & Fairclough, 2002). Discourse is part of what takes place within a practice; it is part of the way a practice is represented reflexively by the actors within the practice; and it is also part of the way that people build their social identities.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) depict society as "networks of practices" (p. 24): that is, as combinations of particular ways of acting associated with particular times and places. Different practices call together diverse social resources - people, language, experiences, and materials. In this context, "materials" means not only material objects but also beliefs and aspirations that are germane to the practices. One of the characteristics of a practice is that it influences, and is influenced by, other practices to which it is connected (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). All practices, to a greater or lesser degree, contain or, to use Harvey's word (1996) "internalize" (p. 80) all other practices.

Just as Harvey (1996) saw flows in the social process hardening into permanent objects that equate to Robison's (1994) "natural social artifact" (p. 15), so Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) place their flexible networks of practices against somewhat rigid "structures" (p. 22). To use a simple and rather obvious metaphor, I liken the elements of society in critical discourse

analysis to the background, mid-ground and fore-ground in a painting. I take “structures” to be background. They are the sorts of enduring social conditions that are amenable to change, but only slowly. In relation to the environment of Northland, I see the New Zealand parliamentary system as a structure; the existence of local government as a structure; and the physical development of the region as a structure.

If structures are the background, then the mid-ground is taken up by “conjunctures” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 22) which are usefully defined as “relatively durable assemblies of people, materials, technologies and therefore practices (in their aspect as relative permanencies) around specific projects in the widest sense of the term” (p. 22). In the context of this research, the Resource Management Act (1991) is a conjuncture. The Act cuts across and congregates elements of many social institutions with its multiple layers of communication processes. It reaches into many local organisations - district and regional councils, the Department of Conservation - and draws together many discourses; it allows citizens and professional communication technologists (Fairclough, 1992) to fight the same case. It is a stable social artefact, but it is open to amendment or even disestablishment.

The foreground is occupied by “events” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 22) which are the “immediate, individual happenings and occasions of social life” (p. 22). Events produce texts, and sometimes, *are* the texts - a letter is written, a Hearing takes place, submissions prepared and delivered. The events that produce texts consist of chains of practices held in place by shifting relationships that are based on power. Events are linked to other events: texts, similarly, are not isolated products, but are so related to other texts in “a complex web” (Foucault, 1972, p. 98) that the beginning and end of each is hard to find (Wodak, 1996). The intertextual “connectedness” of texts to other texts implies that every text must be interpreted and

understood on the basis of its “inherent historicity” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 102).

Intertextuality contributes to variety and change within texts. On the other hand, the grouping of texts around a certain style, or genre, leads discourses towards conservatism. Genres come into being to meet the needs of highly specific situations or specialised audiences (Bhatia, 1993). These audiences will appreciate the particular worldview expressed in and perpetuated by the genre (Milton, 1996; Macdonnell, 1986). All genres have a specificity of application, and tend to follow conventions in their modes of production, distribution and consumption (Fairclough, 1992). On the other hand, there can be variation in the stability of their language, and, in the case of written discourse, in document design. For example, job advertisements, once a relatively predictable and stable genre, are now quite variable in terms of design and lexical features (Fairclough, 2003).

Whereas social conditions are conducive to rapid change in some genres, others seem to self-regulate for orthodoxy to the point of being almost ritualised (Fairclough, 2003; Bhatia, 1993). Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) use the example of academic research papers. In this research, the process of applying for environmental resource consents has established the “consent genre”, a relatively settled style of discourse. The consent genre is based in business and legal writing, modified by a scientific overlay. It is formal, systematic, and driven by the needs of each organisation rather than those of citizens. It dictates the content, the style and the amount of information that citizens can submit to support their applications for resource consent: it imposes conformity on applicants.

Genres can occur in secondary and primary forms (Bakhtin, 1986). Secondary genres are works like books, plays, social commentary and research. They are usually more complex and developed than primary

genres, which occur as simple, everyday oral utterances and letters. The environmental stories that citizens tell in their letters, their conversations, and their *ex tempore* speeches at hearings are all examples of primary genres. When secondary and primary genres come together in a situation like a disputed application for resource consent, secondary genres may overwhelm primary genres. A printed and bound technical document produced by an acoustic engineer, for example, may seem more imposing, to have more status, and to come from a more “appropriate” (because more “professional”) genre than a citizen’s letter about the same occurrences of noise that the engineer has reported on. Furthermore, if secondary genres subsume texts produced in a primary genre, primary texts may lose their own nature and status as the “real utterances of others” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 62) and their direct connection to lived experience.

The concept of primary and secondary genres proved useful in isolating particular conventions within the broad social framework of the Resource Management Act (1991). By positioning discourse as secondary and primary genres, I was able to clarify aspects of the interaction between citizens and the organisations that administer the Resource Management Act (1991). It allowed the identification of situations in which the discourse of officialdom could swamp, sanitise or in other ways alter or reduce the narrative vigour of the storytellers. It also raised questions about the way that the specific discourses of consent were developed and used (Bakhtin, 1986) and the effect of the discourses on receivers of the messages.

A research focus on the stories that people tell might logically have led to narrative analysis as the principal methodology. However, one of the attractions of critical discourse analysis was its emphasis on hegemony as a form of power used, not as domination by force, but rather, as subjugation by consent (Fairclough, 1992, 2002; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999).

Hegemony achieves its forms of dominance by assimilating marginalized factions through concessions to their ideological positions, in order to gain their consent or, at the least, their acquiescence. Hegemony, which Fairclough (1992) calls a “contradictory and unstable equilibrium” (p. 93), operates through the construction of alliances between economically strong groups and other social forces. The mechanism that allows hegemony to flourish in a society is common sense, in which ideologies become “automatized” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 92), leading to assumptions that particular perspectives have common acceptance.

In discourse, hegemony is found in naturalised representations of action without agency. Commonly, it occurs in nominalisations that exercise power by inflicting implicit “shoulds” and “oughts” on the population (Fairclough, 2000). “Sustainable development” is such an agentless entity. The phrase is a metaphorical representation of environmental activity. It excludes those who do the developing, while implying that what they develop is desirable, because it is sustainable and will not consume non-renewable resources to the point of depredation. Those who experience the development, therefore, “ought” to consent to the development, and be acquiescent to its effects.

The relevance of the concept of hegemony to research on the processes of resource consent is in the area of consultation. When the Resource Management Act (1991) was passed into law in New Zealand, it compromised the philosophy of sustainable development concerning consensus and problem solving. It was logical to do so, for no administrative system could ever afford the time it would take citizens to reach consensus on hotly disputed issues. Territorial authorities and regional councils must, perforce, operate in the area of hegemony in order to assume the leadership created for them by the ideology of the Act, which extends beyond the

environment to the economic, political and cultural domains of New Zealand society.

Furthermore, both private and organisational citizens also may form alliances to achieve their purposes in changing the environment, or in resisting changes. An example might be an alliance that could form between a Māori group and a business venture. Such an alliance might be based on a promise of employment in return for access to traditional resources connected with the land. The alliance may offer and deliver much in terms of increased wealth, but it may also, perhaps, be said may take away from the Māori group the very thing they need to continue to be Māori. In this example, the discourse of *mana whenua* has been overlaid with the discourse of business and economics. The alliance that is mutually beneficial economically has been achieved by setting up social relations that discursively create equivalence and subvert difference (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999), perhaps to the ultimate damage of the Māori culture.

5.2 The research problem and research questions

The previous section covered the theoretical orientation of the research and examined some key ideas about discourse as they will apply in the thesis. Section 5.2 revisits the main problem addressed by the research, and the research questions that formed the structure of the case studies. The purpose of Chouliaraki and Fairclough's (1999) style of critical discourse is to investigate a social problem that has a semiotic aspect (Fairclough, 2000). The problem that is explored in this research has already been discussed in chapter one. In summary, it relates to the discursive construction of the environment, and the effect of the stories that citizens tell to influence environmental policy. It is, in other words, a problem of the public sphere

and the behaviour of people and organisations as citizens. The problem explored in the case studies recorded in this thesis exists both as a problem of social practice and also as a problem of citizens' "reflexive construction" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 60) of the resource consent process.

A critical approach to explaining a problem invariably raises issues of power. The opportunities that exist under the Resource Management Act (1991) to express a belief or desire about the environment are uses of power (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) by individual and organisational citizens. But, as Chouliaraki and Fairclough rightly observe (1999), "power is not simply exercised, it is fought over, and fought over in discourse" (p. 62). As well as being an expression of power, the stories in disputed applications for resource consent are also, therefore, sites of struggle for power over the environment. Although the power of the Resource Management Act (1991) is the power to mandate the "proper procedures" which daily construct the practices of environmental change in New Zealand, the exercise of power, and the struggle for it, can occur along the lines of any of the discourses of the resource consent process. The power has "migrated" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 60) from the social institution of the Act to the discourse it engenders.

The research was formulated around a discursive problem relating to the times and places in which citizens interact about environmental issues. Three research questions were also used, to lend the case studies internal consistency:

1. What are the controlling discourses in the environmental resource consent process under the Resource Management Act (1991)?
2. "Why, and with what effect, do citizens and organisations use particular discourses in the resource consent process, and how do

these discourses relate dialectically to other moments in the social process (Harvey, 1996)?”

3. In what ways does the resource consent process in Northland shape discursive shifts away from “nature” and towards “the environment”, and does this make any material difference?

The order of the research questions loosely follows the structure of Fairclough’s (1992) schematic diagram of the complex relationship between discourse and society. Fairclough begins with individual texts and moves outwards, through discourse practice to social practice. The first and second research questions relate to the innermost box, the texts. The examination of texts leads naturally to the examination of discursive practices. The third research question connects to the concept of social practice in the outer box. The questions are designed to achieve the purpose of the research, which is to show the interaction of citizens in the public arena (Habermas, 1989) of New Zealand life, and to see how citizens’ stories impact on the social formation of the Northland environment.

5.3 Examining the texts (1): The cases, the archives and the corpus

I cannot claim that I used a methodical or scientific system to find case studies for this doctorate. I had long been interested in different ways of conceptualising nature and the environment, and I began to develop cases when my interest in a situation was ignited by newspaper articles which showed that citizens were engaging with the Resource Management Act (1991) and policy to defend their own concepts of how the environment should be.

I made two false starts. One, a case about unpleasant smells from an abattoir, failed because people were reluctant to participate. Another, about the building of a coastal road right around the edge of Northland, faded out of existence with a change of mayor. My first case choice centred on noise, which is not commonly associated with environmental struggles, but I saw that for citizens in Maunu, noise had become a facet of daily life that partly defined the environment, and that became a fascination. The second case was chosen because it is impossible to grow up in Northland, to teach Māori students and to work alongside Māori friends and colleagues without becoming aware that Māori look at the world differently from the way I do. I wanted to find a case that would allow me to explore that difference in text, and found the rich story of the Mangakahia River in the files of the Northland Regional Council. The sea is a major feature of Northland life, and I hoped to include a study of some aspects of Northlanders' relationship with the ocean. My investigation of the struggle to prevent the development of an oyster farm in one of Northland's most beautiful harbours would have taken many years to complete, so I have reluctantly put it aside. What I am left with, however, deals with two concepts of the environment, noise and water, that capture part of the experience of Northland life in relation to the Resource Management Act (1991).

The problem that this research investigates is located in that part of social life where citizens engage with public policy. The purpose of enquiry into a social problem is to understand its origins in social life and to identify structural obstacles in its network of social practices that prevent its general recognition and amendment (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). The scope and nature of the problem can be assessed by selecting and examining a corpus of texts which are produced as elements of the events associated with social practices. Fairclough (1992) says that it is possible to make a "sensible decision" (p. 226) about the content of a corpus only if there is adequate

information on the archive, which he defines as the “totality of discursive practice . . . that falls within the domain of the research project” (p. 227). In practical terms, knowledge of the total archive gives the researcher an understanding of what texts are available for analysis, and how to gain access to them.

Even before the methodology for this research changed from organisational ethnography to critical discourse analysis, I had developed a strong mental model of the communication processes engendered by the Resource Management Act (1991). This helped me assemble comprehensive archives of texts. The assembly process required a painstaking sifting of organisational files and citizens’ own records, building the letters, submissions and notes into coherent timelines to obtain a clear sense of the development of each case. Often, participants entered the research relationship reluctant to share the letters, photographs and notes which they had preserved as a personal record of their struggle. They were sometimes not keen to see their lives transformed into data. Much time (never separately quantified – it took the time it took) was therefore devoted to building confidence and trust, sometimes in cafés, often in people’s homes, and frequently on marae, accompanied by gifts of food, and sometimes preceded by promises not to use my tape recorder. Altogether, something like fifteen hundred hours were spent locating, copying and organising the archives.

Once documents became available, they were photocopied and filed until the archive was complete, although “completion” is an ambiguous term. Given the breadth of resources available, completion of the archive had, necessarily, to be in the eye of the researcher, for no objective criterion existed to measure whether all the documents had been gathered. For instance, some of the cases began before the doctoral research did, and yet

are still at various stages of appeal. These archives may not be complete for many years. In other cases, the resource consent, disputed, granted and acted on when the research began, has since come up for review, creating a new round of submissions and hearings and the possibility of more crucial documents for future analysis. The archives were in no way uniform: one fitted neatly into a single two lever-arch file; others filled cartons. When the documents in the biggest archive were stacked up, they stood more than three feet high.

Although care was taken to spread the search for documents as wide as possible, in each case, there came a point when the search for documents had to close off so that the corpus could be selected for close analysis. As with the completion of the archive, the selection of the texts for the corpus was a matter of personal judgment. There was no established way of knowing that particular texts were the “right” ones to analyse. In proceeding this way, I took guidance from Fairclough (1992), who says:

The discourse analyst should depend upon people in relevant disciplines, and people working within the research site, for decisions about which samples are typical or representative of a certain practice; whether the corpus adequately reflects the diversity of practice and changes of practice across different types of situation, and both normative and innovative practice; and whether the corpus includes both cruces and moments of crisis. (p. 227)

Fairclough’s (1992) advice was directed at people setting up multi-disciplinary research projects, and the depth of consultation he recommends is not appropriate or possible for that sole operator, the doctoral student. However, the principles he outlined were easily applicable, and so selection of the corpus proceeded along the lines outlined above, with particular attention to normative practice in relation to the

discourse of the official position, and to finding “cruces” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 230). Fairclough (1992) describes cruces as “moments in the discourse where there is evidence that things are going wrong” (p. 230). Generally speaking, such moments stood out clearly in each archive. I took them to be significant because these were the points at which citizens were asserting themselves and pitching their own stories against the systems of the Resource Management Act (1991), hoping, it seemed to me, to make the environment in their own image.

Writing the analysis of the discourse of the official position was a more textually-oriented, “Faircloughian” task than writing the case studies containing citizens’ stories about the environment. Stories that unfold over time build into archives that contain many documents full of crucial content couched in language that was all but featureless for critical discourse analysis. I accepted that some “unanalysable” texts were a feature of building case studies out of discourse analysis, and included the pivotal “content” documents anyway, in order to be true to the stories that were told.

The corpus texts were scanned into my computer files, so that their true image, complete with pencilled notes or other embellishments, was represented in the thesis. Sometimes citizens had written impassioned or frustrated comments during hearings and meetings, and I treated these to be part of their story. As work progressed on the cases, the management of my chapters began to be difficult because the scanned documents made the files large and potentially unstable. Nevertheless, I persevered with incorporating scanned material. Part of the integrity of the research was to let people tell their own stories in their own voices, and a component of that was presenting the documents as they were produced, distributed and consumed (Fairclough, 1992).

Fairclough (1992) recommends “enhancing the corpus” (p. 227) with extra data to build a rich picture of the configuration of practices surrounding the problem and the discourse in focus. Although the texts themselves are the most significant elements of discourse analysis, nevertheless:

[O]ne wants to know what went on ‘behind’ the letters, how they came to be written, who was involved, what else was done on either side – the [Smith] example illustrates how difficult it can be sometimes to ‘reconstruct’ the practice some discourse is located within and to get a proper sense of how the discourse figures in the practice, if all one has is (in this case) the letters. (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 61)

Each case recorded in this thesis took place within a conjuncture of practices that was particular to the time, place and nature of the specific environmental issue of the disputed application for resource consent.

Because of the variation of localised micro-cultures, the network of practices in each conjuncture differed in complexity and concentration, and so required a range of analysis techniques. For example, observation and interview were sufficient to form a vivid picture of the complex interplay of social practices about a resource consent for a noisy workshop in a quiet semi-rural suburb.

By contrast, coming to grips with the conjuncture of social practices for the case study in chapter eight concerning the abstraction of water from the Mangakahia River required far more than interviews and observation, although understanding began with these techniques. To appreciate the drive behind the farmers’ application to abstract water I needed to carry out some historical and economic investigation into the commercial imperatives of the local dairy company. That, in itself, meant acquiring an understanding of the local farming culture. Finally, it was impossible to

understand this conjuncture without knowing the cultural practices of the Māori of the *rohe*²¹ in connection with their river.

Observations and interviews were important not only for establishing as vivid picture of each case, but also for objectivity. Critical discourse analysis has its own rationale, but it could attract an accusation of being a researcher-centric methodology, given to possible subjectivity and excessive researcher presence. Obviously, I began this research with considerable local knowledge of Northland, and it is fair to say that I therefore tended to approach each case with mental “working drawings” of how it might shape up. The special knowledge that comes from growing up in an area proved useful in finding my way both to and through the archive and perhaps equated to Gummesson’s (1991) concept of pre-understanding. However, the potential for researcher bias remained. For instance, one pivotal aspect of this research was establishing the dialectic relationship of the discourse of resource consent to other moments in the social process (Harvey, 1996; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Dealing with these matters, which appeared to depend solely on my sensitivity to the subject, provoked the vexing question, “But how can I know I’m right?” Interviews and participant observation intensified the richness of each case, but a further reason for borrowing research techniques from other areas of the social sciences, especially ethnography (Fairclough, 1992; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1996, Fairclough, 2003) was to strengthen the objectivity of the research. Semi-structured interviews and observations (Geertz, 1973; Hymes, 1974; Philipsen, 1989; Kauffman, 1992; Goodall, 1994; Wolcott, 1995; Denzin, 1997) substantiated or destroyed the impressions that developed during the early stages of each case study.

²¹ *Rohe*: geographical area

One of my interests in this research was to let people tell their own stories within the over-arching story of the legal case in which they had become involved. For this reason, transcriptions of the interviews were not recorded in the style typical of linguistics, showing pauses, hesitations and repetition. The words recorded are the words spoken, but the transcription style is more typical of ethnography (Geertz, 1973; Goodall, 1994) than linguistics. One participant, looking at the excerpts I had selected from her interview told me that it seemed more like a novel than a PhD. I am sure her remark was meant negatively, but I was pleased, because I wanted the “live quotes” to fit in with the unfolding of the case and illuminate the points made in the texts.

Many of the participants asked me to keep their names confidential. Reasons for that were diverse. In the Maunu case, residents who intended to stay in the area a long time did not want to be identified as speaking about their neighbours. The one person at the workshop who gave me any time was intensely reluctant for his workmates to know. Māori in the Mangakahia case were nervous in case their participation was interpreted as an attempt to speak on behalf of all Māori. Employees of the territorial authorities who spoke critically about the resources they were given to carry out their jobs were also disinclined to be named. In the end, so many people asked me not to use their names that I decided to use none in the case studies, and codenames in the study of the official discourse. Where I have quoted from interviews, the participants are identified by a number only or not at all.

Both interviews and observations, but interviews in particular, were also useful in exploring participants’ “unauthorised” version of the communication and events that took place. Participants were relaxed during interviews, which always took place in either their homes or offices (Kauffman, 1992), and they sometimes made unguarded comments about their emotional reactions to neighbours, the situation, or just the world in

general. For example, one participant remarked, "It's been a relief to let it all hang out with you" (personal communication, 28 June, 1999). The environmental story in this instance was inextricably entangled with strongly negative personal feelings about individuals on "the other side".

Comments along the lines of, "It's good to be able to talk to someone about this," can be personally reassuring for a researcher: they can reduce inhibitions about asking people to give their time for interviews. However, though the feeling of being reciprocally useful to participants was a bonus, research for a doctorate is not a therapy session for either party. From the standpoint of discourse analysis, such comments were reminders of the function of reflexivity in social practice. Data derived from any single interview, though it was always a rich and faithful account of the participant's internal world, had to be regarded as only a semi-reliable representation of the external world (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Indeed, it was necessary to reflect critically on the discursive practices of participants as much as on my own presence in the research, (Clifford, 1986) and on the shifting power relationship that develops in an interview situation (Kauffman, 1992).

5.4 Examining the texts (2): preliminary analysis

This research examines the consequences of discourse in the material world by studying language in relation to the creation of the Northland environment. Given the breadth of ideas associated with discourse (Fairclough, 1992; Wodak, 1996), it is important to acknowledge from the outset that there are many ways to approach discourse analysis and that all systems are right if they accommodate the aims of researchers and their theoretical orientations. Out of the wide range of systems available, the

methods developed by Dryzeck (1997), Fairclough (1992) and Harvey (1996) initially seemed to offer the most useful insights for this particular research project. All these systems had something to offer, but each was also limiting in some way.

One of the concerns of this research was to avoid textual analysis as an end in itself. The point of analysing citizens' stories was not to simply reveal forms of language, but to shine a light on the social contexts where the discourse took place to show the interaction of language with the material world. The rationale was that while social change can be achieved by the deterministic adoption of a meta-discourse such as sustainable development, it can also come about through the action of dissident and counter-hegemonic discourses (Harvey 1996) that spring up among citizens. In this research, the aspect of social change that is relevant is change in the environment occurring as a result of the stories that citizens tell. The centrality of citizens' stories to the research made it imperative to find a system of discourse analysis that came to grips with the language in the texts yet also followed the social processes behind the production of the stories.

The first reading of the texts was rather like examining an aerial photograph of a landscape: big features were immediately noticeable, but smaller ones were easily overlooked. Dryzeck's (1997) system of discourse analysis was especially useful in the preliminary examination, when the obvious textual landmarks needed a form of quick, systematic codification. Work on the corpus of documents usually began at point three of Dryzeck's (1997, p. 18) list, which deals with agents and their motives, because such knowledge had considerable utility in a study in which the principals may choose either to act for themselves or to hire "discourse technologists" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 215) to represent them. Fairclough defines discourse technologists as specialists who are appointed to present information persuasively and build

a particular “ethos” (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 166-167) to gain their clients some kind of strategic advantage. The Resource Management Act (1991) is specifically designed to allow citizens to speak informally, but their stories were sometimes overwhelmed by the suavely professional communication of lawyers and other “suits” (participant 1, personal communication, 12 April, 1999). Fairclough’s observations about discourse technology were particularly useful in showing how the presence of these discourse technologists affected the conduct of cases:

Discourse technologies establish a close connection between knowledge about language and discourse and power. They are designed and refined on the basis of the anticipated effects of even the finest details of linguistic choices in vocabulary, grammar, intonation, organization of dialogue, and so forth, as well as facial expression, gesture, bodily stance, and movements. (Fairclough, 1992, p. 216)

The Resource Management Act (1991) requires consultation, not competition, but inevitably, when an application for resource consent is disputed, communication involves combat. At the point of dispute, every citizen therefore needs a discourse technologist, or needs to become one. Point three of Dryzeck’s (1997) checklist, “Agents and their motives” (p. 18) was therefore a helpful place to start analysing the documents associated with each case study. It was important to see who spoke, and whose voice was speaking, which were not necessarily the same thing. Motivation, however, was a much more difficult matter. Motives in the cases were often multi-layered, and sometimes never became transparent at any stage of the research. Part of the reason for this may have been that this research deals with micro-discourses expressed in personal stories, and motivation was sometimes a deeply personal issue, not to be lightly articulated to any passing PhD student.

People who dispute resource consents want to win their case under the Resource Management Act (1991), but their reasons may be very different. Dryzeck (1997) deals with the macro-discourses of environmentalism, in which motivation is expressed as part of a governing philosophy. Citizens engaged in local struggles, on the other hand, tend to draw opportunistically on a complex and convoluted range of ideas involved with their personal “assumptions about natural relationships” (Dryzeck, 1997, p. 18). Without taking away from the justice or otherwise of an individual’s case, their arguments could sometimes be crudely condensed to a premise like: “What I want is just, and furthermore, the way I see the world is right.” The argument is straightforward, but the motive for it is not necessarily equally uncomplicated. Consequently, classifying motives in these micro-discourses was not so straightforward a proposition as it seemed for Dryzeck, and did not become a major feature of this research.

Taken together, points one and two of Dryzeck’s (1997) checklist, “Basic entities recognized or constructed” and “Assumptions about natural relationships” (p. 18), make up a simple, descriptive method of examining discourse. Familiarisation with the texts was enhanced by the systematic listing of the entities mentioned in the texts, and reflection on the assumptions that seemed to be made about them, but while the “entities” were always obvious, the assumptions were not. As with point three, it seems that the micro-discourses that emerge around localised environmental issues are not necessarily so susceptible to a single method of analysis as those at the macro level. As I remarked earlier, however, Dryzeck (1997) developed his system around the meta-discourses of environmentalism. He does comment that environmental issues can be as close to home and “as local as the dog droppings on the grass in front of my house” (Dryzeck, 1997, p. 21), but he himself nevertheless concentrates primarily on such discourses as survivalism and Prometheanism and the interplay of those over-arching

philosophies with government policies. Again, a global philosophical position may be easier to classify by checklist than personal stories.

In reading the texts for point four of the checklist, “key metaphors and other rhetorical devices” (Dryzeck, 1997, p. 18), was also useful, because if the tools of rhetoric were present in personal stories, they were nearly always significant. On the other hand, their absence was often significant too. Research participants who could be relaxed and colourful when they spoke, were often at pains to eliminate all the personality from their language when they wrote about the same topic. Again, Dryzeck’s system was helpful at the stage of becoming oriented in the corpus of texts for each case study, but the method did not go quite far enough to show the relationship between language and social change. What was needed was a way of coming closer to the full structure of texts, which for the purposes of this discussion can be thought of as vocabulary, grammar and organisation. For this reason, Fairclough’s (1992) “textually-oriented discourse analysis” (p. 37) was ultimately found to be more useful for close analysis, offering a way of dealing with all the aspects of language within texts, while treating them at the same time as instances of both discursive and social practice.

5.5 Examining the texts (3): Close analysis

When the preliminary analysis had familiarised me with the texts, I began working closely with the stories of organisational and private citizens. At this point of the research, one benefit of Fairclough’s (1992) three dimensions of discourse analysis was its emphasis on language and texts, the messages that, as Bantz (1993) said, contained “the tangible traces of the communicative process” (p. 33).

However, though Fairclough's model was useful for analysing the texts that originated in organisations, it presented a difficulty for the stories of the private citizens. The outer two dimensions were not always applicable to the highly personal stories of private citizens. The people who helped me with my research were not always coherent about or even willing to share their feelings about the hegemonic and ideological elements of the "social practice" dimension of Fairclough's model. In addition, because citizens were mostly limited in the resources they brought to the production of their texts, and mostly accepted the constraints the Resource Management Act (1991) placed on the distribution of their texts, much of the discussion that could occur about the dimension of "discursive practice" was so repetitive it really only deserved mention as a form of class action.

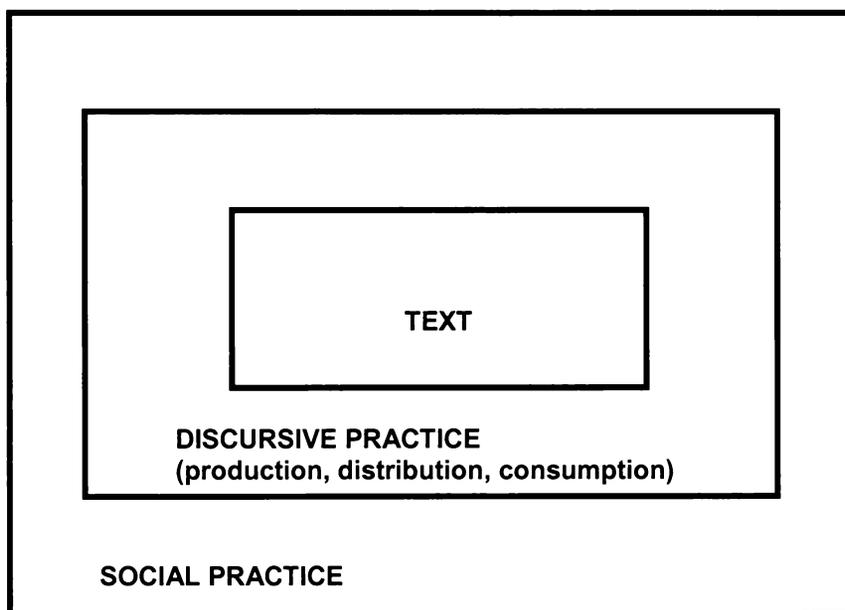


Figure 5.2: Three dimensional conception of discourse: (Fairclough, 1992, p. 73)

Another difficulty was handling the dialectic relations between discourses and other moments of the social process (Harvey, 1996). I wanted to understand what aspects of social life – power, ambition, beliefs and so on – had operated in the making of the texts and were still captured, vestigially, within them, and to gauge their influence on environmental

policy. Fairclough (1992) speaks of the need to see discourse dialectically, to avoid “the pitfalls of overemphasizing on the one hand the social determination of discourse, and on the other hand the construction of the social in discourse” (p. 65), but his model does not make a dialectical view easy. The rigidity of the model was troublesome in relation to trying to see the dimensions as a continuous flow of sundry influences working, to a greater or lesser extent, through any of the texts.

Harvey’s (1996) argument that discourse is one of six flows in a dialectic social process was appealing, but, from the perspective of this research, it lacked the strong textual focus needed for dealing with citizens’ stories. Combining Harvey (1996) and Fairclough (1992) appeared to offer a strong foundation for building the case studies. To some extent this combination was found in Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), which presents an evolved version of Fairclough’s (1992) three dimensions of discourse giving some weight to Harvey’s argument about the dialectical nature of discourse within the social process. In the end, the close textual analysis oscillated among the work of all three theorists, and points that provided most illumination on any given text were used from each as appropriate. There is enough of an overlap between the theories to make this approach workable without losing coherence.

Textual analysis involves searching selected texts for the linguistic signs that show both the construction of the self and the construction of social relations (Fairclough, 1992). The textual analysis that achieved this examination of social and interpersonal interaction was a matter of combing the words of the documents on multiple levels. Fairclough (1992) was most useful for this work. He outlines four components in text analysis, beginning with words (vocabulary) as the smallest element of the text, ascending to the next biggest element, clauses and sentences (grammar) and from there to the organisation

of clauses and sentences into larger units (cohesion). The last element is the biggest: the text as a whole (structure). Structure consists of “higher-level design features” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 77) such as layout, combinations of elements such as headlines and pictures, or the pattern of introduction, question and answer in an interview.

For this research, the focus of the vocabulary analysis was the special meanings extant in the texts, because different domains of social activity often establish idiosyncratic word use. My intention here was to understand the context in which words were selected so that I could interpret texts reliably. In dealing with analysis at the level of vocabulary, I was particularly conscious of words and phrases with a special New Zealand or Northland flavour, and paid attention to statements like, “Boy, will we have a *hooley*²² when all this is over”. The purpose of exploring grammar was to observe the ways in which people chose to build their social identities by making, for instance, declarative statements instead of asking questions, or implying doubt or uncertainty with a subjunctive form rather than expressing authority with a present indicative verb.

The next level, cohesion, was a consideration of the argumentation in the texts. The connection of clauses and sentences into bigger units revealed the emphasis that different components were given and their importance within an argument. Finally, structure, the overall organisation of the texts, showed levels of formality and degrees of conformity to the traditional forms within genres. These four points form an outline of textual analysis. Each level of the outline contains several subsidiary language features too numerous to

²² *Hooley*: a big dance or party, very informal, often extending over a few days.

list here. However, each feature was considered, and if it applied to the text in question, due weight was given it in the analysis.

In the practice of this research, no individual text was considered in isolation from the order of discourse that it belonged in. The reason for constantly shifting between the two levels of analysis was to see the influence of the orders of discourse on the production of the texts, which helped avoid any tendency to carry out textual analysis for its own sake, as Fairclough (1992) warns. In the critical discourse analysis propounded by Fairclough (1992; 2003) and Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), an order of discourse is different from the Foucauldian concept. It is understood as the function of explicit and implicit social rules that permit, shape and limit language exchanges among members of a community. An order of discourse, therefore, is a socially structured selection of genres, styles, and voices, a specific and sometimes strategically selected sub-set of all the possibilities that language offers.

Analysing the orders of discourse in the environmental consent processes was a matter of finding all the connections between genres, discourses, and voices (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) that were drawn upon and represented in the texts that constitute the case studies. Of course, to say “all the connections” may be an overstatement. There is no sure way of knowing that all the genres, discourses and voices have been recognised, for making these determinations was largely a matter of researcher awareness and perseverance, and no single right answer ever presented itself. All that was possible was an assumption that the determinations made were reasonable, logical, and backed up by linguistic evidence. There is always, in critical discourse analysis, the lurking awareness that another researcher, drawing on different cultural, intellectual and academic resources, will make different, but equally valid, connections that will lead to different

determinations. This aspect of the practice is not, however, necessarily a weakness of the methodology, but instead may be its strength, for the wider the range of opinions that a text or discourse can generate, the broader the information that can be brought to understanding and amending social issues.

The Resource Management Act (1991) did not pass into New Zealand law simply as a tool for regulating environmental matters: rather, it was intended to be part of the nation's public communicative life (Habermas, 1989). It is the means by which citizens address their environmental concerns with people in local government and with one another. The aim of the analysis of the resource consent discourse was therefore to determine whether any one "voice" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003) prevailed in the dialogues, and if so, whose voice it was, and why, and whether the effect of a dominant voice was to inhibit change in relation to the procedures which determine the environmental decisions made in Northland. To this end, the textual analysis took three directions: one line of investigation was the way citizens used language to first, establish the individual and collective "self" and to aim that self at a desired environmental target. The second path of the analysis was to show how citizens were positioned by the discourse within the network of social practices of the consent process. The third course was to show the dialectic relationship between the moments in the social process.

This chapter has set out the theoretical orientation of the thesis and described the main methodology used for the textual analysis. As well as explaining the principles of critical discourse analysis, it has also touched on the ways in which participant observation, interviews historical research, and participant

observation were used to enhance the corpus of texts and provide objectivity.

Chapter 6

The Discourse of the Official Position

Introduction

The discussion in this chapter originated in the realisation that every disputed application for resource consent sooner or later collides with an “official position” constructed and organised from rules and policies already in existence. This collision became evident as my archival searches led me to huge bulks of official documents (that is, documents produced by the councils) in which the matter differed, but the tone of control and instruction were similar. These official documents also revealed a contradiction between the theory of open communication espoused by the Act, with the actual practice in the organisations.

At the core of the contradiction is what this study identified as the “discourse of the official position”. The expression “the discourse of the official position” broadly refers to the language and ethos of district and regional plans, which have considerable power in shaping the way citizens see the material world of Northland. The term is extended in the discussion to cover the communication processes which lead to the production of the district and regional plans. The plans are important source documents in establishing relationships between corporate and private citizens, and also between private citizens and councils.

This chapter is an examination of the “discourse of the official position”. The chapter has two purposes. First, it analyses the discourse of the plans as

central to environmental change. Second, it establishes the discourse of the official position as the key site of struggle for social change and justice, and so lays down a foundation for the case studies that follow.

The chapter begins in section 6.1 with a brief background of the origins of the discourse of the official position. Section 6.2 examines the discourse of the official position as an instrument of social control. Section 6.3 deals with issues in the making of the discourse of the official position in consultation and hearings, drawing particularly on material from interviews with organisational members. Section 6.4 presents an argument for the environment as a text that is represented and interpreted in the discourse of the official position.

6.1 Background to the discourse of the official position

Following Fairclough (1992), I believe that critical discourse analysis needs to position the corpus of material under discussion against an illuminating backdrop of the social conditions that produced the discourse. In the case of the discourse of the official position, this involves sketching the legislative background of the district and regional plans that regulate change in the Northland environment.

The emerging environment of Northland results from sequences of decisions and practices which begin with proposed alterations to the status quo, may result in an application for resource consent, and will finish in either new activity or continuation of an existing practice. Central to these sequences is the generation of consent under the district plans of the region's three

territorial authorities²³ and the regional plan of the Northland Regional Council. The respective plans embody and enforce official (and therefore powerful) interpretations of the past that moulded the environment, of the way it should be currently, and of the possibilities that lie ahead for it.

As chapter two showed, the Resource Management Act (1991), founded on the discourse of sustainable development, was passed into law as New Zealand's answer to comprehensive and cohesive environmental legislation. The Act, however, does not operate as the single implementing device of the environment. Rather, it functions as an enabling instrument for central government to provide global thinking, and for regional and district authorities to supply local action (Bührs & Bartlett, 1993). The Act has done this by imposing a hierarchy of policies and plans which cascade from national environmental statements to the regional level and finally to the district level. Plans and rules at the lower level must be congruent with those at the higher levels.

Making policy is a political process, susceptible to colonisation by underlying ideologies that may conflict with a stated primary purpose. The Resource Management Act (1991) came into being during the dominance of New Right thinking in the fourth Labour government. The fourth Labour government was notable for abandoning traditional socialist Labour principles and introducing the philosophy of a market-led economy and the notion of "less government in business, more business in government". Bührs and Bartlett (1993) saw the results of this thinking in their review of the corporate plans and activities of the Ministry of the Environment. They saw an organisation in which "managerialist principles, derived from the

²³ The Whangarei District Council, the Far North District Council and the Kaipara District Council.

private sector” (Bührs & Bartlett, 1993, p. 102) produced outputs that were “rather meaningless and trivial” (p. 103) in environmental terms. Instead of information on the ways the ministry intended to contribute to the solving environmental problems, the outputs specified such things as the timeliness and acceptability of briefing papers and numbers of research projects. The ethos of accountability and productivity²⁴ evident in early publications from the Ministry also influenced the development of the policy structure in the Act (Bührs & Bartlett, 1993). In fact, probably as a result of the political climate of the times, there is an underlying sense that the Resource Management Act (1991) is as much a massive, and massively consistent, quality management system as it is environmental legislation.

Taken as a quality management system, the Act emerges as a framework for policy, consultation and planning in which central government delegates (but does not devolve) responsibility for the environment to local and regional authorities while reserving sundry powers for itself at the top of the hierarchy. For example, the Resource Management Act (1991) makes the Minister of Conservation responsible (s.28) for the statement of national coastal policy, and the Minister for the Environment responsible (ss. 24-27) for the formation of national policy statements. At the bottom of the hierarchical cascade, ss. 30 and 31 set out the respective duties for regional and district councils. The regional and district plans, therefore, function as the detailed implementation documents in the overall quality management system. In summary, although the Resource Management Act (1991) itself is one step removed from a “hands on” involvement in environmental

²⁴ Organisations change and focus shifts. A survey of the Ministry’s website www.mfe.govt.nz 15 August 2000 shows an organisation with a strong environmental vision.

management, it shapes the plans that constitute the discourse of the official position at the local level.

6.2: Positioning citizens in the discourse of the official position

I contend that at the local level, the discourse of the official position is based on an ideology of control that subordinates citizens to the organisations that compose the district plans. Environmental rules form a major part of the discourse of the official position, but environmental regulation is not the only purpose of the plans. Weick (1979) asserts that plans are not the “crucial component of effective actions” (p. 10) that they are often purported to be. Plans are static, while organisations, as Weick (1979) argues, are processes, and from the moment of their completion, plans become increasingly irrelevant in the flows of activity that constitute organisations and environments. On this basis, much of the importance of plans is not their content, but their potent symbolism for the possession of the future. Plans bear the imprint of the power of their makers. In the discourse of the official position, plans carry the weight of constitutional authority, due process, officialdom and by extension, the power to regulate and control citizen behaviour.

Social control

The district plans are instruments of control that manage the population (Fairclough, 1992) towards the particular ends deemed by the councils to be acceptable. Power relations of dominance are established by the very existence of the plans: they implicitly position councils as sources of specialised knowledge and citizens as seekers of knowledge. The plans

How To Use This Plan

The most usual question for those reading the Plan is, "How do I know whether I will need to apply for a resource consent?"

There are two types of resource consent that may arise out of the Plan's rules:

A Land Use Consent maybe required for certain land use activities (refer Chapter 4.1.1).

A subdivision Consent may be required for a subdivision proposal, including cross leases and unit titles (refer Chapter 4.1.2).

If you were already carrying out the activity before this plan was notified, you may have existing use rights, which are explained further later in this chapter.

To find out whether or not you will need to apply for a resource consent, you need to determine whether the activity you wish to carry out is a permitted activity. The following steps are recommended:

LAND USE ACTIVITIES

You will need to know what rules apply in respect of the zoning of your property and also in respect of the rules which apply throughout the district, as indicated below. If there are no rules which apply to you activity it is assumed to be permitted. A resource consent is not necessary for a permitted activity.

ZONING AND DESIGNATIONS

- (a) Find your property on the **Zone Maps**, which are contained in **Part 5 – District Plan Maps**. Identify:
 - what zone your property is in;
 - any adjacent zones;
 - any designations either on or adjacent to your property (refer also **Appendix 9**);
 - any notable trees or historic sites, buildings or objects either on or adjacent to your property (refer also **Appendices 3 and 4**).
- (b) Find the zone provisions for your property in the Plan. Read through **Part 2** entitled **Environment Provisions** and find the zone which applies to your property. Compare your proposal to the standards listed for permitted, controlled, and discretionary activities. Note whether any standards will, or may, be breached by your proposal.

Text 6.1 Extract from preliminary material from the district plan of the Far North District Council

employ a discourse of governance that re-contextualises nature as “the environment” through a series of disparate rules, so that what citizens experience in their lifeworlds as “a river” may be represented as “minimum and maximum flow” in a plan. By making a river, for instance, into an abstract scientific concept which can then be measured, analysed and ruled on, the plans have shifted nature into a document as a series of regulations. In this way, plans play a part in maintaining the institutional structure of social life in Northland.

Text 6.1, an extract from the district plan written by the Far North District Council, is an example of positioning citizens within the discourse of the official position. The structure and unspoken rationale of the text arises primarily from the bureaucratic need of staff to reduce the time they spend answering enquiries from the public. The “self help” instructions manage readers into managing themselves. In doing so, they push citizens back on to their own resources for understanding and interpreting documents heavily shaped by existing power structures. In consequence, citizens are positioned as perpetual outsiders in the daily business of the organisations whose daily business is, in part, to help citizens.

The discourse of sustainable development encourages a long-term view of environmental issues as part of its “Think globally, act locally” motto, but the *How To* section offers a view of organisational life that operates on a quite different time scale (Harvey, 1996). Organisations survive by measuring, pricing and charging out their time so that their efficiency produces a healthy bottom line. The *How To* section of the district plan implicitly places a market value on organisational time, and obtrudes market discourse into the relationship between the council and its public. Organisational time costs money, and *How To* sections that reduce the time organisational staff spend with citizens make that time available for other duties.

Reducing the time spent in their encounters with citizens is only one way in which council staff exercise control. The work that the councils claim to do – caring, providing, enabling, and so forth – is largely control hidden behind the rhetoric of service. That control is implicit in job titles, as citizens find when they want relief from a neighbour's incessant noise or a factory's unpleasant emissions. The council employees who help them are "Noise Control Officers" or "Environmental Control Officers", not "Citizen Service Clerks" or any variation on that theme. This is not to say that the workers in the organisations feel that their daily work practices are invested with an ideology of control. Indeed, interviews with staff members at the councils show that their professional commitment is to the well-being of their neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, all publicly-funded organisations face the inherently conflicting expectations of simultaneously serving and controlling the society whose taxes maintain them. The ineluctable logic now operating in such organisations is that of control through service. An interview with planning staff of the Whangarei District Council (23 August, 2000) elicited the following comment:

We're here to administer the plan. We interpret it and help the public understand. That's what we're here for, but people don't realise that our job is to administer the decisions already made. That's the service we ... this department offers.

Texts are open to diverse and sometimes unexpected interpretations, but some elements of document design limit the meanings and democratic possibilities available to users. In all respects, district plans are presented as formal and authoritative documents, even in draft form. Their covers feature pictures of the buildings belonging to the councils, pictures of work in progress, the logos or coats of arms of the organisations, and symbols and photographs evocative of pristine environments. These visual elements

Principles of the Resource Management Act

Sections 6, 7, and 8 [of the Act] contain several key principles which are to be recognised by all persons exercising functions and powers under the Act.

These principles were used by the Council to guide preparation of this plan and will be mandatory reference points for its ongoing administration.

Text 6.2 Extract from the introduction to the district plan of the Kaipara District

show the way public money is being spent, reinforce authority and promise a bright environmental future. The covers suggest that the organisations know what to do, are doing it, and can be trusted to do it properly. The heavy use of seriation and cross-referencing in the layouts of plans accentuates the intricacy of the interlacing rules and how much citizens do not know of the complex system with which they about to engage. Although it is difficult to envisage how else a district plan might be presented, given the way the plans break the environment into minute sections, this style of document design further defines those citizens who consult the plans as supplicants, seeking information they do not have.

The relationship which exists between the plan and the plan user is unambiguous: the plan functions as the “authoritor” of potential action and the plan user behaves as an “authoritee” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 115). Whose voice speaks to establish this unequivocal authority? Control begins when the writers saturate the plans with authority derived from the Resource Management Act (1991). Early in the documents, the writers of all three district plans borrow credibility from the legislation by mentioning the Act on the first text pages of the documents. The plans of the Kaipara District Council and the Whangarei District Council both quote from s.31 of the Act to authenticate the functions of the councils. The preamble of the Far North District Council, on the other hand, authorises the function of the plan itself. References to the Act are frequent in the sections which introduce the environmental rules, reinforcing an appearance of indisputable authority.

Text 6.2 is an example of the overt assumption of authority in a plan. The text is an extract from the introduction to the district plan of the Kaipara District Council. It directs attention to ss. 6, 7 and 8 of the Resource Management Act (1991), in which sustainable development is identified as the foundation of “Matters of national importance” in s.6. of the Resource



Figure 6.1: Image from the cover of the 1995 – 1996 Annual and Strategic Plans of the Northland Regional Council



Figure 6.2: Logo of the Whangarei District Council

Management Act (1991). Sustainable development deals with environmental issues as a series of problems that modern western science can define, contain and alleviate. Underlying this faith in scientific practice is a belief that human beings are rational enough to behave responsibly if they are confronted with a way of avoiding detrimental effects on the environment. Within the discourse of the official position, therefore, sustainable development could be a matter for education and proselytising, but it is used in Text 6.2 as a source of authority without any accompanying discussion or explanations. The resulting authoritative presentation of the text may militate against the consultative ethos of sustainable development which is, supposedly, embedded in district plans.

Organisations can choose to soften the authority with which they present themselves. Figure 6.1 is the logo of the Northland Regional Council. The logo features a stylised *koru*²⁵ emerging from the arrangement of the organisation's initials. A member of the organisation told me that the three colours of the logo were specifically chosen as "heritage colours", and the *koru* is meant to show an organisation that is unfolding and developing, as a *koru* does. The whole plan is printed on re-cycled paper. These elements in the presentation of the plan show an organisation self-consciously wanting to be seen to practise what it preaches. On the other hand, the organisation presents itself as perpetually "*Caring for Northland and its Environment*", while simultaneously performing a curious linguistic separation of "Northland" from "its environment".

Figure 6.2 is the logo of the Whangarei District Council. I was working for the council when the logo was adopted, and like all staff members, received a memorandum from the mayor explaining the rationale for the image. It

²⁵ *Koru* is the Māori name for the unfurling frond of a native tree fern.

represents the way the organisation is woven into the fabric of the district so that it can “provide services and facilities for the community in the most efficient, effective and transparent manner, enabling the district to prosper as a safe, healthy and attractive place” (mission statement of the Whangarei District Council).

No one would expect an organisation to present itself more negatively than it has to, but some citizens see the positive images in the logos and contrast them with the negative reality of their experiences of the council. One citizen said to me:

Have you ever been in there and asked for help? I rocked up there one day about my resource consent and I went spare. No one gave me an answer. I got sent here and there and if I hadn't met my neighbour's son-in-law by accident, I'd be none the wiser now. It was like Monty Python (personal communication, 12 April 1999).

Another citizen tells the story of feeling threatened by the power of the Whangarei District Council because the gully traps on her drains were twenty-five millimetres too low. She remembers feeling guilty that she did not raise the concrete rim on her drains, and spoke with some indignation of feeling frightened by the threatened “consequences” of non-compliance. She said:

They have a lot of power. Not necessarily physical power, but emotional power. I didn't know about the rule or the district plan or anything until I got the letter saying they'd be coming round to check them [the drains]. I see that logo and I suck air. You know straight away that it means money or correction (personal communication, 6 January, 2001).

Permitted	Discretionary	Discretion restricted to
<p>36.17 Vibration</p> <p>Any activity is permitted if:</p> <p>a) It does not exceed the vibration limits given in Appendix 11.</p>	<p>Any activity that does not comply with a condition for a permitted activity is a restricted discretionary activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ duration, time and type of vibration ▪ effects on health and safety ▪ effects on amenity values

Text 6.3: Extract from Countryside and Coastal Countryside Rules in the proposed district plan of the Whangarei District Council, p. 49.

The levels in Table A11.2 are satisfied where either:

- a) The peak particle velocity is less than the value in the appropriate combined axis, weighted curves of NZS/ISO 2631 – 2: 1989, Figure 5C (refer Figure A11.2).
- b) The rms acceleration is below the levels specified in the z axis and the x,y axis one third octave band graphs in NZS/ISO 2631 – 2: 1989 Figures 2a and 3a scaled using the values in Table A1. Alternatively the frequency weighted rms acceleration (refer NZS/ISO 2631 – 1 : 1997 E, Section 6) is below the base acceleration magnitude in the frequency band of greatest sensitivity, defined in NZS/ISO 2631 – 2: 1989, table 1.

Text 6.4: Extract from Appendix 11 - Vibration of the proposed district plan of the Whangarei District Council, paragraphs A11.2 b), a) and b), p. 229.

In the cases of both organisations, the logos are less obviously authoritative than a coat of arms which carries overtones of the British class system, the Civil Service and government departments. The organisations may have felt that they were doing away with such “overt power markers” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 203) as coats of arms. However, for interpreters of texts, mental and emotional associations may position the logos in ways that make them seem every bit as authoritative as other aspects of the discourse of the official position.

Valuing expertise

Control over citizens is also exercised through the asymmetrical power relations that develop between experts and non-experts. Environmental rules are founded on specialised scientific knowledge. A rule like “36.17 Vibration” in Text 6.3 seems straightforward enough, but behind the rule is “Appendix 11 – Vibration”, containing material of which text 6.4 is typical. Many citizens, turning to Appendix 11 to check vibration limits, would require translation services from experts before they could use the information, let alone be certain of complying with it. What Irwin (1995) says of planning enquiries could be equally true of written documents: “[C]itizens often feel alienated from the mixture of technical and legal procedure” (p. 29).

Expert language used in the discourse of the official position may exclude non-experts and place them below the organisations which generate and keep the knowledge. Social practice invariably places experts at the top of a hierarchy (Fischer, 1990), although a model based on a logic of service instead of a logic of superiority would place experts at the bottom, where their knowledge would be more accessible to their communities. As things

are, however, the need for abstruse technical information can force doctor-patient parallels into the relationship between citizens and organisations. These parallels begin with the comparative ignorance in which a layperson approaches any expert, and may extend to the compliance that occurs in consultations where greater knowledge means greater power (Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Wodak, 1996).

Specialised technocratic knowledge which reinforces the existence of a social class of experts (Fischer, 1990) also turns information into a saleable commodity that citizens have to buy from the councils or from environmental consultants. When people interact with public policy in the public arena, they act in their rôle as citizens. The transaction of buying specialised knowledge transforms citizens into customers of the organisations that their rates support. The planning department of the Whangarei District Council, for instance, operates on a 60 – 40 cost recovery system. The members of organisations may not like the situation, but they recognise it as an inevitable part of the “user pays” philosophy. An interview with a member of the consents staff at the Northland Regional Council reveals the presence of a market philosophy in the relationship between citizens and councils:

I come out and find out what Joe Public wants to do, and then I go, “Right, you’ve got half an hour, so go for it. After that, if you’re talking, we’re charging,” (personal communication, 19 November, 1997).

The colonisation of the processes of environmental communication by market discourse effects change in the environment, because the texts produced in the process become the elements of social action. The causality operating in the decision-making process is not “a simple mechanical

causality" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 8), but arises from the way that both organisations and natural resources are represented in discourse.

6.3 Making the discourse of the official position

The control that is implicit, and sometimes explicit, in council work extends into the consultation practices connected with district plans. The councils choreograph the making of the plans. Their right to do so is common sense. In fact, it is their purpose and their function, and establishing their authority to run the process is also an act of maintaining their identity. Consultation between councils and public is an important part of developing district plans, but a conceptual elision between social practice and discursive practice slides "purpose and function" into the "authority and control" that are evident in Texts 6.1. and 6.2.

Disputed applications for resource consent are specific struggles against hegemonic alliances that fashion the environment in Northland. In these struggles, citizens create diverse discourses to situate themselves favourably in relation to the discourse of the official position. The discourses are variously expressive of individual, group, professional and organisational beliefs about *what should be*. Citizens struggle for the truth of their ideas of what should be against "a form of (specifically cultural) hegemony" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 10).

The theory of hegemony on which Fairclough (1992) calls is less a concept of overt domination than one of shifting and unsteady alliances among powerful people. What ensues from these alliances is that the culture of one group is sometimes construed as the source of common will for a whole community (Mumby, 1988; Fairclough, 1992). The power of the alliances

derives from the ability to shape the ideological foundation of social practice in any community in such a way that what *is* seems like what *must be*. The continuation of hegemonic alliances depends on the degree to which subordinate groups understand the *status quo* as common sense and consent to the integration of their interests into the interests of the hegemony. Culture is therefore not only the site of social action, but also the site where such action is interpreted.

In a complex and diverse area like Northland, no such thing as a single and homogeneous culture exists, but the structure and behaviour of organisations suggests that it does. For example, although the population of Northland has the highest proportion of Māori citizens in New Zealand, pakeha culture dominates most aspects of regional life, and organisations in particular are built on pakeha concepts. Māori are often not clear about what constitutes a Māori organisation, but some Māori are clear that most organisations, even those like *Te Puna Kokiri*²⁶, are actually pakeha organisations with Māori accretions:

What's a Māori organisation? I don't know, except for a *marae*²⁷. I think that is. That's **pure** Māori. But the rest, when you go there, you might see the physical signs of Māori culture, and they might even *mihi*²⁸ to you and stuff ... use the *kaupapa*²⁹, but it's still going to work just like all pakeha places, because that's business. Business is pakeha, really (personal communication, 28 September, 2000).

²⁶ *Te Puna Kokiri* is the government organisation charged specifically with administering Māori interests.

²⁷ A *marae* is the centre of a Māori community. It is a meeting place, a place of honesty, learning and sharing.

²⁸ *Mihi* is a traditional greeting.

²⁹ *Kaupapa* means principles, protocol, correct procedure.

The feeling among some Māori that their culture is grafted on to organisational culture rather than part of the underlying assumptions (Schein, 1992) is shared by the organisations too. A staff member at the Whangarei District Council said that when it was necessary to consult over planning issues, contact with *iwi* was often non-existent:

We do what we can, but there's often no address, you don't know who to contact. We've got to keep going. Time isn't ... people want us to turn around resource applications as quickly as possible (personal communication, 16 August, 2000).

It is not a lack of goodwill that drives the organisations, but simply the need to keep moving forward on the work they perceive should take priority. The organisations are prepared to correct perceived deficiencies in their practice in the future:

There was no time to put in place the necessary building-blocks for real consultation. True consultation over the district plan will come in the next ten years, for the remaking of the plan. I think that changing the process from "we consulted" to "we undertook consultation" is the challenge for the future (personal communication, 20 September, 2000).

However, by using the allocation of resources to promote the value of one type of activity above the value of another, organisations fix limits for the discourse of the official position in "real" time (that is, in the organisations' time), and so reduce the range of the possible within it. What Mumby (1988) terms the "enrichment of organizational discourse" (p. 164) becomes, if not less likely, at least more difficult.

In social practice, power *in* organisations, which might produce any kind of discourse, becomes the power *of* organisations when the discourse becomes public. When district plans, for instance, become available to the

community, they are imbued with the power of the organisations they symbolise. Fights against rules in the plans, or against activities permitted by the rules, or simply against the way the plan is written and presented, are not just fights against neighbours but against the power of the invisible alliances that made the making of the discourse.

Citizens tell many stories to enmesh a powerful *other* in their realities (Pearce, 1989). Their discourses position them against the discourse of the official position in deeply personal ways as, for example, bold entrepreneurs or offended nature lovers; as mature, reasonable adults dealing patiently with intransigence; as sensible business people wanting the economic best for the region; or, in the case of Māori, as the keepers of spiritual values associated with the land. The stories respond to a form of rationality that measures all proposed action against itself (Mumby, 1988). In social practice, the point is not the discourses they choose, but the fact that they tell the stories at all. As Dryzeck (1997) rightly remarks, "Discourses are powerful, but they are not impenetrable" (p. 20) Citizens' discourses present possible sources of change in the order of official discourse about environmental matters.

Staff at the councils work under pressure, and as a result, they tend to take a pragmatic view of the lengthy process of submissions and hearings for making the plans. They hope the process will produce what they call a "90-5-5 plan" (personal communication, 20 September, 2000). What the council worker meant was that a satisfactory district plan would allow 90% of citizens to complete their applications for resource consent with minimum contact with the council. Staff would need to direct 5% to tweak their proposals and the remaining 5% "would be caught on a big hook" (personal communication, 20 September, 2000).

Typically the first stage of plan preparation is consultation with the community, central and local government, tangata whenua and other parties. This process should help the council to develop a plan that meets the needs and expectations of the community and will also promote the sustainable management of resources in the area. Some councils may decide to release a draft plan at this stage to stimulate discussion and receive feedback from the community. The council will develop and publicly release a proposed plan.

1. The formal public submission process begins after a proposed plan is publicly notified. This is your opportunity to have your say on issues in the plan.
2. Once all submissions have been received, the council will summarise the submissions into a document that is also publicly released. You now have the opportunity to make a further submission that supports or opposes another person's submission.
3. The council will then go through a process of hearing all submitters who indicated they wanted to make an oral submission.
4. The council will make a decision on a particular issue based on both the written and oral public submissions and the council officer's report. If you disagree with the council's decision, you then have the opportunity of appealing that decision to the Environment Court.
5. Once all appeals to the Environment Court have been resolved the Council will then make the plan operative.

Text 6.5: Extract from the website of the Ministry For the Environment, accessed 15 August 2000, showing the consultation process for district and regional plans.

A “90-5-5” plan is neither too permissive of environmental damage, nor too restrictive of property rights. Such a plan will reflect Goulet’s (1993) concept of employing multiple rationalities in making decisions about the environment. For these multiple rationalities to be captured in district plans, citizens must have access to the system so that they can be heard. In this context, “access” does not mean simply that the system exists and is hypothetically available. It means that citizens know about it, know how to use it, and use it aptly. Such access may not yet exist in all Northland communities. For example, although citizens often make unscientific but correct assessments of environmental circumstances (Irwin, 1995), they do not always avail themselves of opportunities to express their beliefs and experience. To the surprise of the policy staff at the Whangarei District Council, expressions of public opinion on the proposed plan numbered “in the hundreds, not in the thousands” (personal communication, 20 September, 2000). Staff could see several barriers to consultation that citizens may encounter. The systems used for public notification of consultation opportunities may be seen as unappealingly formal and may be overlooked in newspapers. Some factors in the communication process may be culturally unpalatable to Māori, and some people may be daunted by the technical language and complexity of the plans. In the far north, staff believe that many citizens live too far away from council offices to see participating as possible or the effort as worthwhile (personal communication, 15 September 2000).

Despite these barriers, however, a communication process does exist and is notionally available to citizens. The communication process is shown in Text 6.5, an extract from the website of the Ministry for the Environment (www.mfe.govt.nz, accessed 15 August, 2000). The process specified reads like best communication practice, and if it were not susceptible to distortions, perhaps it would be so. The forces of social practice, however,

can reduce potentially rich communication to a shallow enactment that is merely “politically correct”, in both the literal and figurative senses of that phrase. One staff member of a policy division found a personally compelling distinction between “consulting” and “consultation”. Speaking of the resources available in the organisation for preparing the district plan, this staff member said:

We consulted; we did not carry out consultation. We met people ... iwi, say ... once and gained their initial reaction to what we were going to do. Resources just weren't there ... they [the councillors] didn't care. They were completely for property rights. The Act³⁰ does not force a council to think environmentally (personal communication, 20 September, 2000).

Staff members feel that they did the best they could with the resources available, but they acknowledge that neither the process nor its outcome, the plan, were all they could have wished. It did not reflect community views as it might have done had staff been able to consult more. In the opinion of some staff, it did not afford the degree of environmental protection desirable for Northland.

This raises the issue of divided loyalties for council employees. Scientists who work for councils are aware that the policies in district plans are not always rigorous. Nevertheless, council employees must enact all the policies made by councillors, even if those policies seem to have been formed with more thought to councillors' re-election than to the good of the environment. One council worker believed that the district plan for his council was “a bit of a joke” from an environmental standpoint. He went on to say:

³⁰ The Resource Management Act (1991).

You get a bunch of red-necked pro-development councillors like the last council ... the plan under them was pretty permissive. We can give advice, but at the end of the day, we just had to accept it (personal communication, 20 September, 2000).

This district plan was more oriented to “development” than to “sustainability”, and the council worker, a trained environmental scientist, felt frustrated. Whistle-blowing is never an easy choice for employees (Stewart, 1980; Callahan & Collins, 1992): the participant saw his best hope as waiting for a change of council.

In a real way, the plans contain the Northland environment within their text. The rules and policies potently affect what happens in the material world. A “pretty permissive” plan, for instance, was expected to catch 5% of applications for resource consent. In reality, the business ethos that underpinned the plan allowed 99.97% of applications to go forward (personal communication, 17 August, 2000), and the detrimental effects on the environment, in some cases, “can never be undone” (personal communication, 21 August, 2000).

Consultation in the context of making the plans has parallels with Foucault’s (1981) theory of covert control in confession. Consultation, like confession, can be a subtly disenfranchising experience, drawing people into power relations that are not transparent. Both situations require that one party accepts the presence of an authority figure whose function is first, to elicit information according to a prescribed formula, and, second, to evaluate the information to determine correct (or corrective) action. In the discourse of the official position, citizens’ opinions do not move in a straightforward linear flow from expression to inclusion in a district plan. Rather, acknowledged experts evaluate input from the public against scientific

The council will then go through a process of hearing all submitters who indicated they wanted to make an oral submission.

The council will make a decision on a particular issue based on both the written and oral public submissions and the council officer's report. If you disagree with the council's decision, you then have the opportunity of appealing that decision to the Environment Court.

Text 6.6: Extract from the pamphlet "Guide to Making Submissions on the Proposed District Plan."

principles, and as Irwin (1995) has demonstrated, citizens struggle to have their own expertise recognised when it is set against the assumptions of certainty that accompany scientific discourse.

A pamphlet prepared by the Far North District Council specifies the right of the organisation to evaluate material, as Text 6.6 shows. The power that is reserved by the councils to evaluate and decide on the content of the plan enables the organisations to take possession of the environmental future of the region and its citizens. From the time the council sends its decisions out to the people who have expressed ideas about the plan, they have legal force: in the language of the by-law, it is "*deemed to be amended*". The organisation is not acting outside its power under the Resource Management Act (1991), but the consultation processes so vaunted under the Act appear to come to sudden halt at a point that implies, "You've had your say, but we know best, and now we'll decide what should happen." Figures were not available to show how many ideas from citizens are used by policy makers, but an employee of one council said:

No, not many ... people come back and say, "I've said this before, and now here I am, saying it again". No, we don't use much (personal communication, 20 September, 2000).

The voices of the organisations dominate the plans and the voices of citizens are largely excluded. If the organisations are resistant to citizens' ideas, then it is natural for them to be cynical about the communication process and to feel that their time could be spent on other pressing activities. In this light, hearings for plans consume resources that could be usefully employed elsewhere. A staff member of one council remarked with some asperity:

People just want a voice. They just want to talk about why something should or shouldn't happen in their opinion and someone to hear (personal communication, 23 August, 2000).

Given the almost unilateral power of the organisations to decide what goes into the plans, the comment above raises the question of whether consultation, like confession, is open to interpretation as a ritualistic discourse. A ritualistic discourse makes the subjects of power visible, but keeps power itself invisible (Fairclough, 1992), and may also encourage form over substance. Value does not inhere in ritual: rather, it is assigned by participants, and perceptions of value may vary considerably among those who participate in the same event. If the value of the hearings is simply to give people the opportunity to air their views, as the staff member seems to think it is, then consultation is a discourse that allows organisations to "bureaucratically 'handle' people like objects" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 54), and has little to do with the construction of a district plan.

Hearings are one of the communication processes available to citizens in making their opinions on the district plans known to the organisations and are particularly used when citizens dispute an application for resource consent. It is probably too strong to describe hearings as ritualistic, but it is fair to say that like most social events where rituals take place, hearings are formal affairs and proceed formulaically.

Elements of nonverbal communication at hearings emphasise the differences in status (Hall, 1976) assumed by the parties. For instance, the people who run the meeting often sit at elevated benches that conceal their papers and all but their upper bodies. Citizens attending the meeting sit at low tables that allow everyone in the room to see whether their papers are organised or muddled, and also any physical signs of nervousness. The public seats may be separated from the high benches by several metres in rooms big enough

If you wish to speak or provide supporting material at a hearing, you will only be able to expand on the points you have written, so think carefully how your submission is worded. Be specific and use examples where you can, especially if you are requesting that the Council draft new provisions. Use sketches, maps or photos if they help explain your points.

Your submission must be in the prescribed form. A standard form called “Form 3 – submission on the Proposed District Plan” is available free from Council Offices.

Text 6.7: Extract from the pamphlet “Guide to Making Submissions on the Proposed District Plan.”

to make a nervous speaker in the public area hard to hear. Interactions are in the sole control of the panel. The chair calls on speakers, initiates questions, probes for greater clarity, quells the few interjections that occur, and concludes each interaction.

Even before hearings take place, citizen participation in plan production is imbued with control. Text 6.7 interpolates citizens into the text as people being taught how to conduct themselves – “[T]hink carefully how your submission is worded”. Kern (1989) has remarked on the use of the personal pronouns “you” and “your” in mass communication to engage readers personally. On the other hand, Fairclough (1989) maintains it functions as an indirect pronoun when an unknown and unidentified writer addresses an unknown and unspecified audience. In Text 6.7, the use of the pronoun divides “us”, the writers, from “you”, the readers, and positions citizens as outsiders in the process. Effectively, the language says, “We, the councils, own the process, and give you, the citizen, opportunities that you may take advantage of.”

The words “submission” and “submitters” even more markedly draw a hierarchy and place citizens on it below the organisations. Those members of the public who express ideas about the contents of district plans are not constructed in the official language as people who “contribute” or “make a case” or “argue a point”. Instead, they are construed “submitters” who “make submissions” to organisations which then, as Text 6.6 shows, will “make a decision” about what the citizen’s ideas. The word “submission” becomes, in fact, a polite lexical disguise for something that can be assessed and rejected.

In a further example of lexical positioning, if citizens are aggrieved by the decisions of the councils, they do not “fight”, or “present their case”. Instead, they “appeal” to the environment court. The strength of the Latin

root, “pellere”, to drive, is somewhat diluted in modern English, where the meaning of “appeal” carries the connotative loading of a cry. As a communication event, an appeal may not lack power, but the word itself perhaps belittles the commitment required to sustain an argument and make a case at the Environment Court:

I didn’t “appeal”, I fought. I took my case to the environment court because I just had to keep going as far as I could. I lost, but so did [the opponent]. I fought. There wasn’t anything *appealing* about what I did (personal communication, 7 July, 2000).

The research participant who is quoted directly above realised the significance of the language, and made a vigorous distinction between “appealing” and “fighting”. This citizen is instinctively aware that the legal language of the official process can dilute the discursive power of citizens. In her personal communication with me, she drew a powerful distinction between her perceptions of her actions and this particular lexical feature of the discourse of the official position.

6.4 Positioning the environment in the text

Taking control of a concept (or a territory, as Julius Caesar realised) appears to work best when the colonising power can divide and rule. Foucault (1972) remarked that mental illness was made in all the statements that “named it, divided it up, described it and explained it” (p. 32). A parallel exists between Foucault’s model of madness and the discourse of the official position. The district and regional plans, for instance, do not deal with the environment as the holistic entity it is in the material world, but rather, as a series of arbitrary and fine-grained divisions. Fragmentation of the region

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Text 6.8: Extract from the first page Table of Contents of the proposed Far North District Plan, showing the environment divided into topics.

starts with its partition into three districts defined by political reasoning rather than by their geography and ecology. Finer slicing then separates the environment into “coast”, “rural”, “towns”, “air”, “water”, “land”, and so on, as Text 6.8 shows. In component parts like these, the environment is measured, tested, recorded, ruled on, and finally, packaged into densely informational technical texts.

The division of Northland into districts, and the further subdivision of the districts into manageable sections, may well promote legislative and administrative efficiency. Environmentally, however, the divisions are artificial, and the effect is to present the region as a series of abstractions. This impression is boosted by the absence in the plans of an overview of the whole region, and the lack of photographs or any visual material (apart from the covers of the documents) which show the real world realistically. Engineering diagrams and maps abound, but in the common adage, “The map is not the territory”. In short, the discourse of the official position may not help citizens to make the cognitive transition from rules to reality, and yet the district plans are reckoned to be the sharp local end of the “Think globally, act locally” campaign.

The tangible world is rendered intangible, and the effect is to remove all sense of “nature” from the environment. The abstract and fragmented form in which the environment is presented may make it seem less vulnerable than it would in a holistic and more concrete representation, because the impressionistic way of presenting nature in the discourse makes it possible to consider effects on one isolated item.

Thinking of Northland as a series of component parts is not a problem for the people who work with plans. I put my observations to one participant who exclaimed testily, “Well, what else did you expect? It’s a planning document, not a tourist brochure!” (personal communication, 2 October,

While the Far North District has a rich natural and cultural heritage that requires protection, it is also an area where economic development is needed in order to improve the well being of its people. Therefore it is important to ensure that the Plan avoids unnecessary regulatory intervention while requiring a satisfactory level of environmental protection.

Text 6.9: Extract from the introduction to the district plan of the Far North District Council, p.1

2000). Investigation showed that this remark came from deep within the participant's common sense about the "right" way to present a plan. As it turned out, this participant found that all four plans used in analysing the discourse of the official position were "right", although they are markedly different from one another. The same participant found nothing incongruous in adding, "Of course the plan isn't really about the *environment!*" The point of the conversation was precisely to register that the plan *is* about the environment.

Text 6.9 shows how language of the discourse of the official position can position the environment rather lower than other social issues such as poverty. The structure of the first sentence offsets a temporal adverbial clause: *While the Far North District has a rich natural and cultural heritage* against a statement which is presented as an indisputable fact using a declarative verb: *it is also an area where economic development is needed in order to improve the well being of its people*. The temporal adverb *while* is robustly concessive in this context. It deprecates the richness of the district's natural and cultural heritage, making the heritage a secondary consideration to the need for economic development. Similarly, the adjective "satisfactory" hedges (1992) about the ideal level of environmental protection required in the Far North. "Satisfactory" can mean "pleasing" and "up to standard", but it can also mean "medium". So, what is *satisfactory* in this context? Satisfactory in what way? And to whom? These remain as unasked questions in the consultation process.

One available interpretation is that the level of environmental protection is satisfactory as defined in the district plan. This connotation suggests that the level of environmental protection may be satisfactory *under the circumstances*, leaving readers to speculate that if the Far North were not poor, *satisfactory environmental protection* might be more stringent. As the area *is* poor,

1.4.3.1.2 INDIGENOUS FLORA AND FAUNA

(refer also to Section 11.2)

The Far North District contains some of the most distinctive ecological areas in New Zealand, and these have an exceptional biological diversity, offering habitat to a wide range of indigenous fauna.

Historically the region was dominated by forests, with many lakes, swamplands and an extremely long coastline with numerous and extensive estuaries. However, significant natural habitats now occupy only a fraction of the area originally covered. Particularly scarce or threatened habitats include dune systems, scrub and shrublands (including gum lands), and coastal forest remnants, swamp forests, fertile swamps and peat bogs.

Allied to the loss of habitat is the loss of species. The District has the distinction of having a higher number of threatened species than any other district in New Zealand, including the North Island brown kiwi, the kukupa (wood pigeon) the kauri snail and the Northland green gecko.

Text 6.10: Extract from the introduction to the proposed district plan of the Far North District Council, p. 5.

however, the level of environmental protection may be *medium*, and at least some of the district's cultural and natural richness may (unfortunately but acceptably, under the circumstances) need to be sacrificed to the exigencies of economic development. A level of environmental protection that is *satisfactory* may reveal a political and ideological positioning of the people and the environment of the Far North in relation to their present and potential economic well-being.

A random selection from a series of similar summaries in the introduction of the plan of the Far North District Council yielded Text 6.10, which describes the parlous state of the district's habitats for native animals. The extract undoubtedly reflects the state of the environment in the Far North without distortion, yet at the same time, it does so without reference to people and history. The discourse of the official position is unusual in taking this approach to presenting the environment, for a typical feature of environmental discourse is discussion that shows how ill-judged human activity has brought the world's environment to its present deplorable condition (Almond, 1995; Bullard, 1995; Dryzeck, 1997; Lemons & Brown, 1995; Peterson, 1997).

Diverse readings of the discourse of the official position

I was interested to see how other people read the texts when they had not been working with them in the same way that I had. I gave Text 6.10 to some students and colleagues and also provided copies of the whole district plan. To make it easy to distinguish the comments the participants made about the texts, and for that matter, about my line of questioning also, I asked the group to allow me to use their given names or else, to choose

pseudonyms. They all chose to be designated by pseudonyms, which are used in the following discussion.

McLean was inclined to be suspicious of the material. This participant said:

Yeah, well, I can see that things are pretty grim for greenies, is that what this [section 1.4.3.1.2 of the plan] is telling me? I can't see what this information is for. What'm I supposed to do? What do they want me to think? (Personal communication, 26 October, 2000).

McLean was not seeking a pre-digested opinion, but rather, wanted to see a purpose for the section in the overall plan. Perhaps discourse analysts become over-sensitised to a critical perspective, but the question "What's this telling me?" seems not without justice. Some feeling does prevail that the material may have a purpose other than description, and if that is so, that the purpose would be better stated. Does the section imply, for instance, that the state of the environment is so bad that citizens should prepare themselves for refusals on their applications for resource consent? McLean went on to say:

Is it meant to be a guilt thing? Am I supposed to see this [section 1.4.3.1.2] and go, "Oh, yeah, so I would have done so-and-so, but now I won't because I might kill a gecko." I actually wouldn't do anything like that but this just doesn't do it for me (personal communication, 26 October, 2000).

Digital, however, thought the information was: "Fine. I can see the background. It's all this scarce habitat stuff" (personal communication, 26 October, 2000). Digital found the lack of reference to human activity was a positive factor in his reading of the text:

That's got to be better from the point of view of the environment, surely. It's [section 1.4.3.1.2] very neutral, but it's all quite correct as far as it goes. It doesn't have to show blame to be convincing.

He was inclined to be critical of critical questions:

You're a bit tough, aren't you? Why does it [the section] have to have a purpose other than itself? It's just telling me what the environment is like at the moment. That's what it's for. I'd take it from there with my application [for resource consent]. And there is a philosophy there ... it's implied in all this about having more endangered species than anywhere else.

This literal and accepting interpretation of the verbal "snapshot" of the environment showed that readings differ widely. Digital could see none of the hooks that McLean suspected, and felt only that the material was useful. Neither of these participants expected or particularly wanted the plans to have a "nature" content. Another participant, Polly, commented:

... but you don't really look for nature in something like this [Section 1.4.3.1.2], do you? I mean, if you wanted nature, you'd be more inclined to go to one of those nature programmes (personal communication, 26 October, 2000).

On the other hand, Aroha, a Māori participant, felt "cheated" by the way the plans in general dealt with the environment:

This doesn't say how we see the world. It talks about the special importance of relationships with *tangata whenua*, but if they [not clear] really meant it, they wouldn't separate us from the land. It wouldn't be just one thing here and another over there. It's just lip service and

making themselves look good (personal communication, 25 November, 1999).

Aroha felt that the plans parcelled up Māori concerns and paid them special attention “like they are giving us a present” and that a measure of sincerity on the part of the organisations would be to undertake environmental planning solely from the Māori point of view. She specifically requested, however, that this record should state that her opinion was “totally personal – I’m not speaking for anyone other than myself. Definitely not.” She accepted that many Māori would follow the lead of *kaumatua*, many of whom might support the principles of the Resource Management Act (1991) for quite pragmatic reasons, and that her point of view was shared only by “a few younger ones”.

Another Māori participant, Jax, offered a different opinion, speaking enthusiastically of a newly-created job recording all the sacred sites and *taonga* in a particular area, and the importance of the work. Jax found great satisfaction in knowing that even a small fraction of an official document was dedicated to preserving Māori concepts of the environment, and believed that every item of tribal knowledge recorded now represented a battle that would not have to be fought later. She noted with pleasure that a council showed goodwill towards “just finding out what my people care about” (personal communication, 23 April, 1999).

As Fairclough (1992) indicates is the case with textual interpretation generally, the data show that readings of the environment vary with the sociocognitive resources that participants draw on. Aroha, for instance, acknowledged two strong influences in what she expects of textual representations of the environment: on the one hand, she had developed a

personal point of view born of strong political convictions, but on the other, she accepted cultural precepts about the seniority of *kuia*³¹ and *kaumatua*³². McLean interpreted the text at two levels, clearly seeing Section 1.4.3.1.2 as simply a snapshot of the environment in the Far North, but also questioning the underlying purpose of the information. McLean's suspicion began with general distrust: "Oh, just all bloody bureaucrats on principle. I always wonder what those buggers are really up to" (personal communication, 26 October, 2000).

Under ordinary conditions (that is, non-research conditions), participants' pre-formed sociocognitive resources would certainly operate at a "nonconscious and automatic" level, (Fairclough, 1992, p. 80). The interview process made participants examine their interpretive frameworks, and inevitably, some self-consciousness followed. Despite the artificiality of this interview situation, however, participants showed that they primarily interpreted the environment by choosing from relevant personal resources which they did not usually consciously think about. Participants also showed that they were not immune to embedded textual prompts which Fairclough (1992) calls "a set of 'cues' for the interpretation process" (p. 80), but generally, they reduced the "potential ambivalence" (p. 81) of the text by calling on their individual understandings of the total social practice that produces the environment. Participants, in other words, were reading much more than the written texts: they were simultaneously reading past experiences of councils, future needs to obtain resource consent, and social experiences of being, for example, young and Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand, and in Māoridom. Representation of the environment may have

³¹ *Kuia*: a Māori woman of standing and seniority.

³² *Kaumatua*: teacher, leader, keeper of cultural knowledge; literally "fatherless".

Text type	Transformations	May be contested in these textual forms:
Resource Management Act (1991)	regional and district plans	consultations submissions hearings
Regional and district plans	applications for resource consent and resource consents	consultations correspondence hearings
Applications for resource consent	resource consents	consultations correspondence hearings reports court cases
Resource consents	material world	

Table 6.1: Intertextual transformations in the discourse of the official position

been so objective as to be a form of verbal photograph, but interpretation was that and all these other unpredictable things as well.

6.4 Intertextuality and transformation

Distribution of a discourse throughout a community requires the routine transformation of one type of text into other types (Fairclough, 1992). Each transformation reveals a point at which a discourse may influence a particular segment of its audience, and may function as a significant marker of the assumptions which underlie a discourse. For example, the transformation of a medical consultation into a medical record is “relatively settled” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 132), because prevailing common sense dictates that doctors have exclusive rights of authorship over medical records, control of their readership, and responsibility for their maintenance. In other discourses, such as environmental discourse, the transformations may be intensely contested (Fairclough, 1992).

In general terms, the discourse of the official position produces few text types, as Table 6.1 shows. Each textual transformation, which typically occurs as the result of formal and public interactions, aims to effect a transformation in the material world. Earlier discussion has already shown how the environment is positioned in the texts of the discourse of the official position, but at another level of the discourse, the material world can be construed as the final transformation in the chain of intertextual transformations in the discourse, as it is presented in Table 6.1.

The definition of “text” is essential to this understanding of the material world. Fairclough’s (1992) definition may be too narrow for this discussion, because his primary focus is linguistic, although he does include “other symbolic forms such as visual images” (p. 4). The only reason that visual

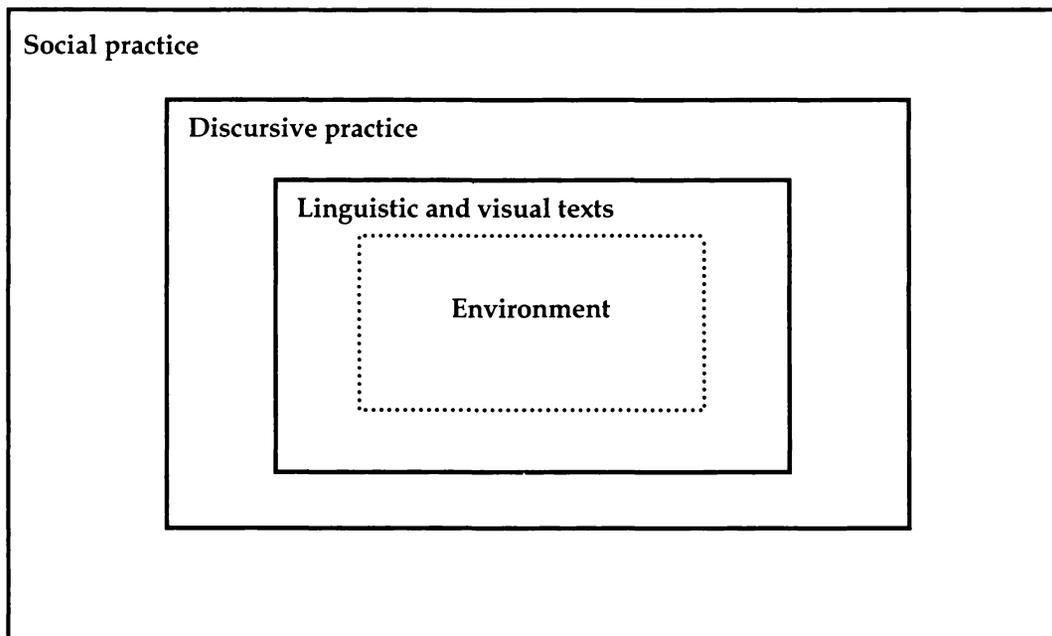


Figure 6.3 *The environment as a text within texts, using Fairclough's (1992) three dimensions of discourse analysis as a framework.*

material can be classified as text is that both text and images are perceived visually. If Fairclough can free “text” from meaning “words”, then no solid reason seems to exist for treating visual material as textual, but not, for example, auditory material. Discourse technologists incorporate music into persuasive discourses to achieve desired effects, and music may therefore warrant textual analysis along with linguistic and visual elements. The point here is not to argue a case for music as a text, but to show that finding the end of the intertextual chain depends on what a text is. What constitutes “text” could be re-defined as what discourse producers produce and what discourse interpreters interpret. If this is so, then manifestations of environmental change resulting from the action of the discourse in the material world are texts for which the citizens of Northland must continuously find coherent interpretations.

Figure 6.3 shows the environment as a text within the written texts of the discourse of the official position. To account for the application of council rules in the material world and for the transfer of information back again from the changing material world to updated plans, the boundary between language and environment is shown as permeable. The text into which the discourse of the official position transforms the material world is essentially scientific, abstract and aimed at allowing the consumption of resources. Although the nature of the transformation will probably be permanent, the details of it may change as the discourse “reads” different information from the material world. For instance, once a river is established as an irrigation source, its status may be unlikely to change:

Hundreds of thousands of dollars go into setting up irrigation schemes, you know. The council'd have a bloody fight on its hands if it tried to take the right [to abstract water] away now (personal communication, October 9, 2000).

What is possible, however, is that changes in the health of the river may reduce or increase the abstraction limit for irrigation.

Fairclough (1992) remarks that texts postulate interpreters who are “‘capable’ of using assumptions from their prior experience to make connections across the intertextually diverse elements of text, and to generate coherent interpretations” (p. 135). If the discourse of the official position has made the environment a primarily scientific text, it assumes an interpretive framework that is also primarily scientific. As Fairclough (1992) pointed out, interpreters process texts at many levels, recognising what producers want while comfortably maintaining their own, perhaps divergent, point of view as well. When citizens respond to the discourse of the official position, their personal values may well influence them to use a discourse that differs markedly from the official style. To do so, however, may militate against the success of their endeavours. When a text is powerfully positioned for a particular style of interpretation, as the environment is in the discourse of the official position, responses that are couched in a similar style may well be privileged, and those that do not “fit” may be passed over or given scant attention.

Fairclough (1992) treats interdiscursivity as a means of changing a discourse by altering the alignment of its ideological axis. Re-aligning ideology may attract new audiences to a text, or position the old audiences in new ways, so that they become aware of flaws in the common sense that made particular practices or thinking once seem inevitable. Interdiscursivity is, therefore, an influential phenomenon in changing social perceptions of what is possible and what is real.

As already noted, the discourse of the official position was developed with the intention of bedding sustainable development into New Zealand legislation. Perhaps more significant, therefore, than snatches of other

discourses within the discourse of the official position, is the interdiscursive status of the whole discourse in relation to sustainable development. The issue is whether the discourse of the official position is an interdiscursive element within the discourse of sustainable development, or vice versa. In other words, will the real sustainable development please stand up? The importance of this issue is the continuing utility of sustainable development as a means of ensuring environmental justice and economic stability for communities. As long as official environmental practice in Northland wears the “sustainable development” label, the global discourse “sustainable development” is susceptible to judgement as a success or failure by local experience alone. If examination were to show, however, that sustainable development had been subsumed into a quite different discourse, then judgement would need to be suspended, or based on different criteria.

The discourse of the official position appears to be shaped at least in part (though that part is large) by organisational and parochial social forces that have little to do with sustainable development. Those factors seem to be altering the global discourse of sustainable development to fit parochial conditions. Reversing the order of discourses makes the discourse of the official position an interdiscursive element in the discourse of sustainable development so that the local application of sustainable development would indeed be, to borrow Palmer’s (1995) image, a canary in a mine. If the environmental bird were found dead in Northland, then the proponents of the global discourse of sustainable development could treat the local application as a case study, assimilate the positive and discard the negative. In this situation, power is semantic (Bourdieu, 1977).

Interdiscursivity may occur unconsciously, as seems to be the case with the snatch of New Right philosophy implanted in Text 6.9. This sample of interdiscursivity shows the naturalising of an idea into an “everyone knows”

type of common sense which works like this: everyone knows that the Far North is beautiful and poor, just as everyone knows that it would be better for the area to be less poor, and likewise, that the way it will become less poor is through economic development without *unnecessary regulatory intervention*. Perhaps, in a district like the Far North, a highly regulated environment might prove more effective in achieving the well-intentioned objectives of the plan, but the official discourse does not, at least at the moment, encompass that possibility.

Fairclough (1992) classifies presuppositions as “propositions which are taken by the producer of the text as already established” (p. 120). The presupposition in Text 6.9 shows the discourse of Rogernomics and the market embedded in the discourse of the official position. The reason offered by the writers of the plan for avoiding unnecessary regulatory intervention – that the Far North is an area where economic development is needed – is no reason at all in its present state, unconnected to any argument. It is, in its present form, the voice of another philosophy speaking in the plan, whispering messages along the lines of “Less government in business, more business in government”. The argument that less regulatory intervention breeds economic development is not developed in the plan at all, but the writers may have supposed that readers in the Far North will be sufficiently familiar with the arguments of Rogernomics that explanation would be superfluous (Jesson, 1987). In essence, the meaning the writers of the plan have imparted, with the power of their official voice, is that the area may be beautiful and interesting, but (and this is far more important, so pay attention!) it is poor. At the level of the sentence, people, environment and solution are positioned ideologically in the discourse by the action of constitutive intertextuality.

“Whatungarongaro Te Tangata Toitu Te Whenua”

Ko te wehi a Ihowa te timatatanga o ngaa whakaaro nui
He maungaarongo ki te mata te whenua.
He whakaaro pai ngaa taangata katoa.
Kia noho ai te aroha a Ihowa
Ki runga ia taatou katoa.
Tihewa Mauri Ora.

“Man Will Pass, But the Earth Remains”

Greetings to all people of the Northland Region.

Firstly, we acknowledge those who have gone before us,
From whom we derive our heritage.
Farewell.

To us who remain,
Greetings.

We present here the Proposed Regional Water and Soil Plan for Northland
In setting it down we look to you, the people of Northland,
For the mandate to carry it out,
So that together we may achieve the wise management of the environment.

May we be blessed in doing so.
Greetings to you all.

Text 6.12 He Mihi Whakataua, Proposed Regional Water and Soil Plan for Northland, pp, ii – iii.

At the other extreme from unconscious inclusion, interdiscursivity may occur strategically because communication professionals intervene deliberately in a discourse to influence audience perceptions (Fairclough, 1995). A poetic form is a moderately unconventional way to open any formal document, but it is a singularly unconventional way to open what is a predominantly technical document. The decision to include such relatively innovative material as *He Mihi Whakatau* in Text 6.11 appears to be a strategic decision because, in an otherwise utilitarian document, the *mihi* is not utilitarian. Importantly, however, although the *mihi* is not utilitarian, it is nevertheless useful because it has an oratorical quality which give readers pause. One participant said, “It sounds gracious, like they’ve written down what some very gracious elder said” (personal communication, 5 October, 2000). The presence of the oratorical form of the *mihi* constructs the organisation as a genial host welcoming citizens to the process of making wise decisions about the soil and water of Northland. If a host can be said to control by setting the tone of an event, then the *mihi* could be construed as another way of controlling citizens.

Another reading of *He Mihi Whakatau*, however, is that the Northland Regional Council has made a more expansive gesture towards true cultural partnership than is typical of many documents prepared in the discourse of the official position. The Resource Management Act (1991) requires a bi-cultural approach to the environment, but the account given of it in the discourse of the official position is generally so slight as to appear grudging. Aroha said she felt as though officialdom were giving Māori a present (personal communication, 25 November, 1999), and her statement implies that incorporation of the views of *tangata whenua* is self-conscious and “special” in social thinking, rather than natural and automatic. People who share Aroha’s impression may be reacting to the generally sparse use of *te reo Māori* in the documents and the limited space given to Māori beliefs. This is

not to say that documents do not fulfil requirements of the Resource Management Act (1991), but that those minimum statutory requirements seem rather meagre in a partnership.

The presence of other discourses inside the discourse of the official position constructs both producers and audiences. For instance, the primary audience for the discourse of the official position consists of the citizens of Northland. However, most citizens, as already observed, might struggle to assimilate some of the technical material included in the district plans, which indicates that from the beginning, the discourse is distributed with the intention of involving experts. In this respect, a secondary audience of expert help givers, either inside or outside the councils, is addressed over the heads, as it were, of the primary audience. In effect, the discourse of the official position forms a genre of regulation within the discourse of law. The most obvious similarity to legal discourse is the intention to control behaviour, set standards and to fix penalties for non-compliance. The second instance of similarity is that, although the format of the plans from district to district is not standardised in the manner of parliamentary legislation, the documents are nevertheless highly formal. The overlay from legal discourse is evident in several textual features, such as the space given to defining terms, heavy cross-referencing between sections of the document, hiding the imperative mood behind passive constructions and, despite the Far North District Council's excursion into the second person, in general use of the third person if writers cannot avoid using pronouns. "Written oratory" and extended use of *te reo Māori* indicates that the Northland Regional Council wishes to define itself as a bi-cultural producer of the discourse of the official position, and one, moreover, prepared to put organisational resources into establishing the correct *kaupapa* for such an undertaking. The council's decision to produce the documents in this way shows how it wants consumers to interpret text *and* producer.

Conclusion

By examining social practice, discursive practice and textual characteristics, I have established the nature of the discourse of the official position as one of control and subordination. The chapter shows the discourse as the main site of struggle for environmental matters in Northland. The next chapter develops a case study about excessive noise in a quiet semi-rural area just outside Whangarei. The focus of the chapter is the discourses developed by the disputing parties as they tell their stories about *what should be*.

Chapter 7

Case One: Roar and Peace

Chapter 7, which deals specifically with the environmental issue of noise, introduces a game metaphor as an underpinning structure of the discussion. The chapter begins with an account of the way in which the game metaphor is used, developing a sustained image of the discourse participants in the case as players in an elaborate game of strategy, and it continues with a description of the setting of the case study as the field on which play takes place. Section 7.2 shows the origins of the case: the sudden introduction of industrial noise into an environment previously peaceful. It describes how this change of circumstances formed the discourse participants into teams that adopted win-lose outlooks from the beginning of play.

The sections that follow analyse the crucial moments in the discourse that the case created, incorporating the metaphor of the game with Fairclough's (1992) three dimensions of discourse analysis and Chouliaraki and Fairclough's (1999) framework. The purpose of using this structure is to show how the discourse participants employed language to situate themselves advantageously in relation to the discourse of the official position as they tried to win ground from opposing teams. In struggling to align the discourse of the official position with their lifeworld, the discourse participants became players in a game in which they had, first, to discover the rules, and then, second, to put together goal-scoring strategies. As they did so, they created moments in discourse in which they constructed self, social relations and social reality. Interpretation of the discourse cruce is

directed at showing the construction of self, social relations and social reality in language.

7.1 The metaphor of the game

In analysing the archive of documents associated with this disputed application for resource consent in Cemetery Road, I found that the case seems to move through a series of critical phases in which participants engage in “heterogeneous and contradictory” (Fairclough (1992, p. 73) discourse practices. Those discourse practices are not unlimited. Although they are constrained by social practice and social structures, they nevertheless have a sense of pushing personal interests and personal goals. In fact, the documents in the archive create an enduring impression that the case was treated by participants as a game of strategy, and that they used different discourses as tactics to win territory. This chapter, therefore, frames each phase in the discourse as a stage in the development of a game. Using the image of a game is not intended to be derogatory to the discourse participants; nor does it signal the introduction of game theory in the analysis of the cases. However, just as games “consist of structured situations where two players take turns making choices” (Littlejohn, 1992, p. 285), the communication processes set up by the Resource Management Act (1991) are also structured situations which both limit and order citizens’ choices.

The game image is flawed in that the “players” were not selected for combinations of skills and strengths, but rather, were grouped by happenstance. However, my analysis of crucial discursive moments in the archive will illustrate how the case involved opposing “teams”. The teams were as diverse, on one side, as a loose alliance of neighbours, and on the

other, as the employer and workers in the same business. The game image also provides a chronology with a beginning, a middle and an end, and in this respect the image is a satisfactory way of presenting data. However, a less desirable aspect of setting up the case as a game is the concomitant suggestion that disputes must be resolved by a win for one party and a loss for another. Such a suggestion inevitably implies that the aim of the Act, which is to achieve consensus among the parties through consultation and negotiation, could be considered that usually unsatisfactory outcome, a draw.

The game was complex and the rules not necessarily transparent for players. Overarching authority resides with the discourse of the official position, and the rules are such that no matter how many successful plays participants make, only one goal that counts is ever awarded. Though players perceive that the object is to defeat the other team, their contest is mainly shaped by the rules in the discourse of the official position. Indeed, the social practice developed under the Resource Management Act (1991) dictates that once invoked, the discourse of the official position functions as a player as well as a referee. In its rôle as a player, it produces discursive interactions with other players and in its rôle as referee, it produces and enforces rules about the environment. The councils, acting as the agents of the discourse of the official position, can assume multiple roles, acting variously as referee and player, and even, sometimes, as coach. Their ability to take many positions is given only to these particular participants, so that other players must first, discover and second, make sense of, the councils' activities as the official organisations move freely in and out of their different rôles.

As well as its usefulness as a means of presenting the data, the game metaphor also provides a context for viewing the selected texts within the social practice that produced them. This avoids what Fairclough (1992) sees

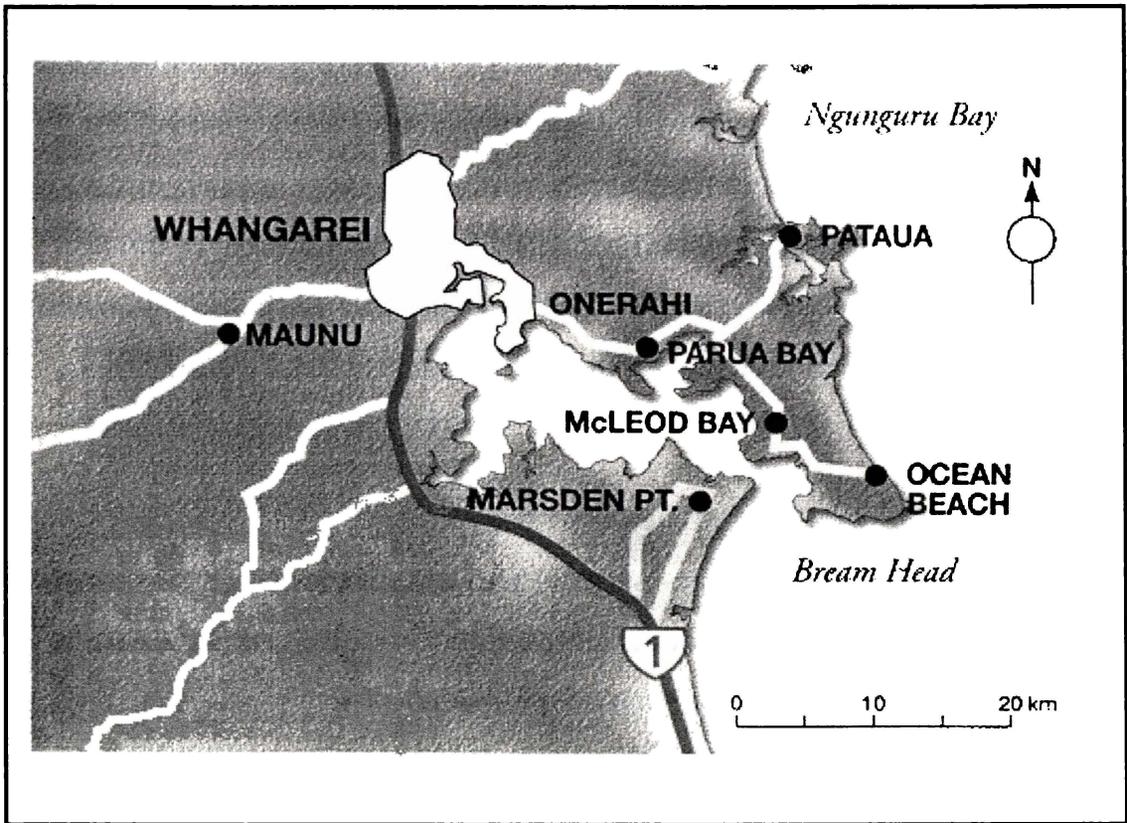


Figure 7.1: Map showing the location of Maunu in Whangarei.

as an error: that is, viewing text analysis as “a laudable end in itself” (p. 198). The image of a game provides a framework for analysing how the parties shape the cause, content and style of their communication according to the interwoven complexity of their social practice and beliefs, and in doing so, also mould the social reality (Fairclough, 1992) of the Northland environment. In other words, the metaphor enables insight into the connection between participants’ discursive practices and the social structures and relations of power that they are involved with. More importantly, because games implicitly require some degree of personal motivation, commitment and strategising, the metaphor allows some sense that discourse participants may ultimately influence those same social structures and relations of power.

7.2 The field of play: The setting of the case

The next section of the chapter sets the scene of the case study. I have given space to imparting a feeling for the place where the action occurs, because the ambiance of Cemetery Road is the macro level of the situational context in which the discourse occurs. In taking this route, I follow Fairclough (1992), who maintains that the situational context of a discourse “foregrounds certain elements, backgrounds others, and relates elements to each other in certain ways” (p. 83). To expand on his perception, I contend that the environment itself is one of the first clues to interpreting the texts in the archive and to determining which documents should be in the corpus of documents selected for analysis. Further, the perceptions which the citizens held of the field on which play took place were simultaneously the catalyst for the game and the prize played for. To see the environment at least in some measure as the residents understand it, is to begin to make sense of



Figure 7.2: Pumphouse, covered with rose Albertine in flower.

their complex reactions to sudden environmental change and their reasons for embedding those reactions in particular types of discourse.

The case which is the focus of this chapter is set in Whangarei, a city of about 46,000 residents, lying compactly and neatly along the floor and sides of a deep, narrow valley that runs just about due north-south from the inland end of the Whangarei harbour. The valley is roughly bisected lengthwise by State Highway One, and three arterial roads carry traffic to the farms and townships lying between the city and the east and west coasts. The arterial roads have also allowed residential suburbs to develop on the hills around the valley, above trapped summer heat and humidity.

The specific setting of the case is Maunu, a western suburb at the edge of the countryside and the city, about nine kilometres from the central business district. Maunu is made up partly of houses with numbers set along streets with lights and curbing, and partly of farms and farmlets along the roads of Rural Delivery route nine. It is a pretty place, full of comfortable rather than grand houses; a suburb, as the man in the corner dairy remarked in passing, with no bad streets. The semi-rural parts of Maunu where this case takes place look prosperous because paddocks are mown or grazed and are well fenced or edged with stone walls. Utilitarian outbuildings such as implement sheds are generally tidy, and often embellished with plantings. Rural Maunu, in fact, has a "gardened" look, as though aesthetics were as important as grazing as the photograph on the facing page shows. It is this general tidiness that seems to distinguish Maunu from "real" farmland which begins a few miles away up State Highway 14.

The Maunu countryside is picturesquely dotted with stands of native trees and orchards producing avocados, macadamia nuts and olives. Cemetery Road, which is the area of contestation in this case, exists in that limbo that most New Zealand countryside now occupies: it is clean and green and

growing, so it should be “nature”. On the other hand, over the last 150 years, it has undergone highly visible human intervention: bush has been felled, boundary walls have been constructed from surface volcanic rock, exotic grasses sown, multiple dwellings built, species destroyed and new species introduced. These environmental effects now need constant human input and maintenance, so “nature” is no longer “natural”. Maunu, in fact, is an example of the “humanization” (Simmons, 1995, p. 64) of nature, the attractive transformation of land into a source of wealth. It is no longer one of the “lonely places” (Williams, 1980, p. 77), but it is appealingly peaceful and entirely pleasing to the eye.

This is the general context of the case, which begins with the application for resource consent by Mr and Mrs Barfoote to operate an engineering workshop in Cemetery Road. Cemetery Road is the location of Whangarei’s crematorium and biggest non-denominational graveyard. It runs along the western edge of Maunu, taking a sharp left turn at the point at which Maunu Road becomes State Highway 14. It is a quiet stretch of road on which speed is limited to 70 kilometres per hour. Even the biggest funerals do not make the area seem busy, for, as one resident pointed out, “People who go to committals are hardly going to hoon about,” (personal communication, 12 July, 2000).

The properties along Cemetery Road are the sort that were once called “small holdings” but are now commonly referred to by estate agents as “lifestyle blocks”. In fact, though one resident said, “Lifestyle? Loathsome expression!” (personal communication, 12 July, 2000), “lifestyle” is nevertheless very much the issue of this case, for noise and disturbance from the workshop eventually caused the residents whose lifestyles were disturbed to form alliances to support and oppose the presence of Barfoote Engineering in their area. The residents had the usual range of “lifestyle”

reasons for moving out of the city: space for horses, room to develop a “real” (that is, a *large*) garden, the fancy to run a few sheep or grow a crop of some sort. Above all, however, the residents seemed to want peace at home. One resident felt that Cemetery Road is so quiet and private as to be “a haven” (personal communication, 28 May, 1999), and commented that she found unobtrusiveness as desirable in neighbours as friendliness: “I like to know that they are there if I need them, but I don’t want to see them, or hear them or mix with them, really, not after the weeks that I have at work.”

For all Cemetery Road residents, even those who did not oppose the application for resource consent by Barfoote Engineering, the significant feature of their neighbourhood is its prevailing quiet and its quality of being a place of retreat from a harsher external world. The quiet, the prettiness and, for at least some people, the homogeneity of the ethnic and socio-economic composition of the area also affected their perception of property values and their feeling that their homes were also good investments (personal communication, 4 July, 2000). Lifestyle has a clear economic dimension.

7.3 Noise and perturbation – the players team up

This section continues to paint in the background of the case, but moves from the broad environmental context, to the cause of the action: the establishment of an engineering workshop with the resultant intrusion of new and different noise into this previously quiet, rural residential area. The section also marks the first sustained use of the game metaphor, and shows how the participants split into teams fighting for a firmly-held position: that theirs was the right point of view and therefore should prevail.

Play in this case began with the arrival in Cemetery Road of one team captain. In 1995, Mr and Mrs Barfoote established an engineering workshop in a disused kiwifruit packhouse and made the space above it into their home. The Barfootes believed that their new business would not prosper if it had to pay rent for commercial premises, and that in any case, the “Home Occupation” regulations of the Whangarei District Council entitled them to use their property for business purposes. The workshop produces milking sheds and jobs. It also produces noise from delivery trucks, workers’ vehicles, grinders, cutters, hammers and welding machines, and metal banging on metal.

When a neighbourhood issue like environmental noise becomes impossible to solve over a beer at a barbecue (or some equally non-invasive behaviour), citizens inevitably begin to interact with district or regional plans and other local manifestations of the discourse of the official position. For instance, as a Cemetery Road resident said, “Well, you probably have a go yourself a few times, but if it doesn’t work, I suppose you have to bring in the heavies” (personal communication, 9 September, 2000). The players who set the game in motion by approaching the Whangarei District Council were the owners of eleven properties near the workshop. They opposed the activities of the workshop because they perceived that noise from construction disturbed the atmosphere of their neighbourhood. Their opening play positioned the ambience of Cemetery Road as central to the case by making the environmental matter at issue the amount of industrial noise that is acceptable in a rural residential area. A body of rules guides play in all games, and any effective game plan has to engage with its terms of reference if it is to have any chance of success. Even at this early stage, the players attempted to shape their game plan in relation to the discourse of the official position, although the rules they chose initially were not those on which the case was finally fought.

Noise is one of the principal factors which can adversely affect the appreciation of amenity. It can have an affect [sic] on people's health in a psychological and physiological sense. It may interfere with communication and disturb concentration. A high level of amenity in respect of noise is required to meet the objectives of the Living Environments. The adoption of the standards in this rule will achieve this. New Zealand Standards for Measurement and Assessment of Sound (NZS 6801 : 1991 and NZS 6802 : 1991) provide the technical basis and guidelines for the measurement of noise to comply with the standards.

Text 7.1: Extract from the proposed district plan for the Whangarei District Council, Living Environment 1, 2 & 3 Rules, p. 43.

Text 7.1 shows what the district plan of the Whangarei District Council has to say about noise. This rule is unremarkable within the discourse of the official position in that it articulates a scientific position as the unequivocal basis of environmental decisions. As the arbiter of the bearable limits of noise, the rule is not unsympathetic to human needs. Despite this, as an item of discourse that reaches into the lifeworld of citizens, its language is so distant from ordinary speech that one research participant responded: "Saying that noise can 'adversely affect the appreciation of amenity' is an odd way of saying it can drive you bloody nuts!" (personal communication, 28 May, 1999).

The district plan from which the rule comes is a form of cultural commodity, in the sense that it is part of New Zealand's cultural identity to see itself as "clean and green", and the district plans have been set up by the Resource Management Act (1991) as part of ensuring that its environment remains in an acceptable state. In Harvey's (1996) terms, the plan is the moment of institution building, when the thoughts and desires of citizens, as represented by the Whangarei District Council, are manifest as regulations, and internalises discourse in a particular style to support its authority. The plan was written for the public sphere, where citizens can deliberate about issues of social concern, yet its language - *appreciation of amenity* - and style could be inaccessible to its primary audience, the ratepayers of Whangarei. This raises the question of whether the ratepayers are perceived by the authors as the being, in fact, the primary audience. Not only is the language of the plan perhaps dauntingly formal, but also the knowledge to which the plan refers the reader is scientifically specialised and furthermore, has to be located in another document. The plan may unconsciously have been produced for an internal organisational audience, with the understood though unstated intention that council staff would always mediate it for the public, ensuring the continuing indispensability of the organisation.

The district plan belongs to an order of discourse that combines declarative statements - *Noise is one of the principal factors which can adversely affect the appreciation of amenity* - with a degree of self-justification for the plan - *A high level of amenity in respect of noise is required to meet the objectives of the Living Environments* - and regulation - *The adoption of the standards in this rule will achieve this*. The extract slips from statement to prescription, on the implicit assumption that all citizens will agree that the standard designated in the plan is, in fact, a “high level of amenity”. In part, the plan draws on science (*New Zealand Standards for Measurement and Assessment of Sound*) for its authority to set acceptable limits and rules, and reinforces its power to enforce the rules it states with an exceedingly, perhaps excessively, formal style.

From personal observation, noise from the workshop is audible on many of the adjoining properties, and in many places in the cemetery, which is straight across the road from the workshop. Observations showed that the cemetery itself is busy: at any time of day, there was always someone else there, visiting. Conversations in the cemetery – “interviews” would be an over-statement of the type of communication that took place – showed that the visitors are, understandably, in rather an elegiac frame of mind, and some of them found the construction noise distracting. Some people did not notice the noise at all, but then, those people scarcely noticed the researcher either.

Shortly after the business began its operations, disturbance around its premises was sufficient to cause the Hardings to ask the Barfootes to stop using the bottom loop of the Hardings’ right-of-way as an exit to Cemetery Road. This request was ignored, and in fact, an easement was discovered that allowed the Barfootes to use the right-of-way on the Harding property. For some people, that first encounter over the use of the driveway continues

to be the most significant marker in the events that unfolded in Cemetery Road. It seemed to lodge in many people's minds as the invitation to contest the game, and even after fighting the case on the grounds of noise, one of the people who employed at the workshop continued to see use of the right-of-way as the real issue in the case. He gave his opinion about the case as:

It wasn't about noise at all. They just said that. It was really because they didn't want us using the right-of-way, but we had a legal right, and they came unstuck. They just did what they did out of spite because they didn't like us winning over the right-of-way (personal communication, 8 August, 2000).

This speaker identified closely with the interests of the business, placed the livelihoods of the workers above any consideration of either the residents' comfort or the integrity of the environment, and was inclined to dismiss people with concerns about noise as "just a bunch of bloody snobs" (personal communication, 8 August, 2000). His remarks show the "us or them" confrontational thinking that emerged early and continued throughout the case, despite opportunities for consultation and reconciliation under the Resource Management Act (1991). A resident who supported the application for the workshop expressed a similar sentiment in a more restrained manner: "Some of the folk around here are just trying to get at a young couple who are just trying to get ahead, just wanting to make a go of it" (personal communication, 7 March, 2000).

If the citizens on both sides of this case can readily be construed as players, and the presence of "sides" is obvious, the rôle of noise is equally unequivocal. The players' differing perceptions of noise are easiest to conceptualise as a ball kicked backwards and forwards among the opposing teams and the council. For instance, according to people associated with the workshop, the noise was negligible, but according to the residents who

opposed the resource consent, the noise was constant and unreasonable in both its volume and its type. To elaborate on this point, the country is not necessarily a quiet place, but 'natural' noises like the weather, ostriches booming, and even "the [obscurity deleted] cicadas" (personal communication, 28 May, 1999) were all acceptable, because they seemed to merge into a form of silence. Even noisy seasonal activities like shelter trimming and crop spraying were not objectionable because, "You know when people use their chain saws or have the trimmer in, the noise will stop sooner or later; usually sooner" (personal communication, 4 July, 2000). Noise from the workshop, on the other hand, never assimilated into the "silence" the residents habitually observed, and consequently, they began to read their environment as a text disjoined from its proper context of tranquillity. Maunu, as I have already noted, is humanised nature (Simmons, 1995), and the residents actively contribute to its continuing humanisation. I found only one resident who was letting land revert to bush and leaving bush to re-generate without intervention to encourage the choicer species of native tree. The residents, however, appear to carry an image of what is acceptable in their version of humanised, constructed nature. For some, constant industrial noise was not an acceptable accretion, although the (sometimes) equally loud, but completely "natural" sounds of ostriches could be integrated into their reading of the environmental text.

7.4 The game begins: The case in time and discourse

At this point, the communication dimension of the game increases in complexity. The next section of the chapter begins the examination of texts taken from the total archive of documents in the case. Two factors guided the selection of the texts. The first factor is that a particular document might

WHANGAREI DISTRICT COUNCIL

FORUM NORTH • PRIVATE BAG 9023, WHANGAREI NEW ZEALAND. TELEPHONE: 09-438 4879. FAX: 09-438 7632



In reply please quote: 95/4/1

Or ask for: Ross Fitzpatrick

5 July 1996

Te Mai
WHANGAREI

Dear Sir

Please find attached a copy of the letter I sent to Mr Barfoote regarding the use of his property. I have since spoken to Mr Barfoote about the activities carried out on the property, and was informed that his operation involves building works on other sites, and the occasional construction of parts on his site.

The cars parked on the site are those of his workers/helpers who park there then leave together in a van to the work site

The Home Occupation criteria would only apply to work being carried out on the site.

Mr Barfoote is now aware of the criteria he has to meet for the Home Occupation criteria and I will be visiting the site again when I am out that way to ensure that the use of the site complies with Council regulations.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate in contacting me at the Council.

Yours faithfully

R V Fitzpatrick
PLANNING OFFICER

RVF:EHT

Encl

Kas
EHT:0271549

Application for conditional use consent been made

D. Adams

mark a point in the case at which, as Fairclough (1992) says, “[T]here is evidence that things are going wrong” (p. 230). The purpose of looking for these moments of misunderstanding is to show how naturalised discourse practices can cause disfluencies in communication. The second factor guiding selection is a sense that comes through in particular documents that in telling their own stories about the environment, citizens were beginning to assert their social identity and sense of self.

Opening moves

A resident who complained to the Whangarei District Council about noise in terms of the zoning of the area received the letter shown in Text 7.2. The primary purpose of the letter in Text 7.2 appears to be to reply informatively to an enquiry from a concerned citizen and to assure the citizen that the council had acted on a complaint. A secondary purpose, of course, must be to record both enquiry and response for the council’s files. Although it fulfils the requirements of both primary and secondary purposes, the letter is nevertheless the first of the “cruces” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 230) in the case. It is chosen for the corpus because it is an example of parties talking about the same subject, yet talking past each other. For instance, although the cause of the dispute was noise, the letter does not deal with noise directly, but rather, embeds it in the general subject of property use. This slippage between the crux of the matter and the subject of the letter accords with the need for citizens to play under the council’s rules and processes.

Fairclough (1992) suggests that examining the cohesion and sentence structure of a text shows the “standards of rationality that it presupposes” (p. 171), which subsequently offers clues to the social identities that are created within it and by it, and the ethos on which it operates. Exploring

Text 7.2 from this angle of analysis, I contend that part of the rationality behind the letter was to maintain social distance between the council and the enquiring citizen. An example of the way this is achieved in the language of the letter is found in the greeting. For instance, although the writer knew both the given and family names of the recipient, the letter opens with neither, but instead, uses a more socially distancing power marker, the honorific "*Dear Sir*". Another example of establishing social distance also emerges in the use of pronouns in the text. The writer refers to himself in the first person, but the first person pronoun is not used to establish a working relationship with the recipient. Rather, the first person connects the writer to authoritative activity on behalf of the council. The letter might have opened with some form of "scene setting" to establish common ground: instead, it begins with the standard business phrase, "*Please find attached...*" This phrase is so naturalised in business writing now that the fact of its imperative mood is lost in the convenience of the convention. The second person pronoun is used only in the final sentence within the conventional closure "*If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate in contacting me at the Council.*" The final sentence may be an explicit invitation to dialogue, but the overall style of the letter is monological.

In his analysis of a booklet on antenatal care, Fairclough (1992) notes that the producers of the text could have adopted any of a range of points of view, but chose to express the single perspective of the medical staff. Faced with a similar range of choices, the writer of Text 7.2 could have identified with the citizen, with the workshop, with the council, or conceivably, none of these. He or she could have chosen instead to consider the environment or the users of the cemetery. To coin an ugly but useful neologism, however, the style of the writing in Text 7.2 indicates an 'orgo-centric' ethos, in which reassurance is offered and control is assumed. Paragraph 4 shows this ethos most noticeably. The first clause — "*Mr Barfoote is now aware of the criteria he*

has to meet for the Home Occupation criteria” – contains an implicit expectation of compliance. The second part of the sentence – *“and I will be visiting the site again when I am out that way to ensure the use of the site complies with Council regulations”* – is explicit in its authoritative possession of the future. The closing paragraph, which invites further enquiries with stylised politeness, emphasises that ownership of the matter belongs to the council rather than to the citizen. The letter may not have been consciously designed to subordinate the citizen in relation to the council officer, but the effect of its style places the council in a super-ordinate position.

On one level, the text producer and the text recipient are taking part in dialogue: the letter is a standard business reply to a straightforward citizen enquiry. At another level, however, by engaging in this dialogue, the participants are also involved in the processes of defining the environment in Cemetery Road. As a result, the letter shapes social relations. The council’s assumption of control and stance of informative reassurance indicates that citizens may struggle, perhaps not to have their voices heard, but to have council listen actively to their voices. In fact, the letter evoked a strong reaction from one resident: “They *don’t* do ‘occasional construction’ at the workshop, they do ‘occasional assembly’ at other sites” (personal communication, 12 April, 1999). The point that angered this citizen was the “shallowness” (personal communication, 12 April, 1999) of the council’s assessment of the situation, and the council’s acceptance, or at least, its ostensible acceptance, of the workshop’s story.

The focus of this reaction was the declarative sentence “The cars parked on the site are those of his helpers/workers who park there then leave together in a van for the work site.” The writer expresses a strong degree of affinity with the workshop in this sentence, which is offered as a truth: “This is the case.” By contrast, the writer hedges in the following sentence with the

modal verb “would”: “The Home Occupation criteria would only apply to work being carried out on the site.” The truth of the statement, deriving as it does from the district plan, is more likely to be verifiable to a council worker than the fact offered in the previous sentence, but the sentence nevertheless falls between categorical assertion and categorical denial. Such epistemic modality is a useful ploy for an organisation: it leaves the way open for a change of position if the facts change with further investigation.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) remark on the “increased salience” (p. 10) of discourse in other moments in the social process (Harvey, 1996). In Text 7.2 discourse is internalised in the moments of power and institutions/rituals, but also in the moment of material practices. Material practices are the “sensuous and experiential nexus – the point of being bodily in the world” (Harvey, 1996, p. 79) and here the monological discourse of the official response, with its implicit assumptions of power and control, internalises a citizen’s experience of the environment. The social practices examined here relate to interaction over the environment, and constitute that moment in the social process when the beliefs/values/desires (Harvey, 1996, p. 79) of citizens traject the official position. The problem that is present in this network of practices is that the Whangarei District Council responds to a citizen suggestion by presenting a reflexive self-construction of the indispensable nature of local government. When citizens subsequently produced resistant readings to Text 7.2 (and others issuing from the discourse of the official position), the council assumed the right to police the agenda that citizens attempted to set. The power relationship was established in the texts partly through a recurrent pattern of “adjacency pairing” (Fairclough (1992, p. 154), when citizens proposed topics which the council subsequently assessed and dismissed. This proposal-dismissal pattern is more than simply experts offering knowledge to those less expert,

Whangarei

5 August 1996

Planning Officer
Whangarei District Council
Private Bag 9023
Whangarei

Dear Mr.

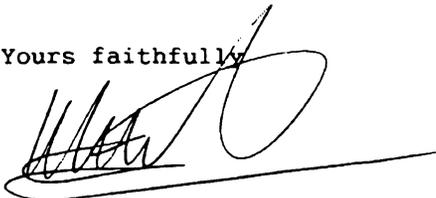
Yours 95/1/1 of the 5th July 1996 to hand. My apologies for not acknowledging sooner.

I have spoken with my solicitor regarding this matter and he is at a loss to understand how this activity qualifies as an agricultural activity. I enclose an advertisement from The Whangarei Leader of July 16 which begs the question "what next". Are we going to see machinery sales etc, as a follow on to digger hire?

The question was also raised as to whether an application for conditional use consent has been made. We clearly have a change of land use here - why were we not informed? Surely as specified departure procedure was required for the packhouse to be built, and neighbour agreement sought, the same applies now.

Because the property in question is no longer being used for the purpose applied for, when subdivision permission was sought, I would like to discuss the statement made at the top of page 15 - Rural H Zones. "Land uses permitted are generally those necessary to make best use of the natural resources for horticulture purposes" This is clearly now not the case and I would like the right of way through our property closed in order that we may expand our avocado orchard, in keeping with the district scheme.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'W. H. H.', with a long horizontal line underneath.

Text 7.3: Citizen response to the first letter from the Whangarei District Council.

The advertisement from the Whangarei Leader which was attached to your letter seems to relate to work done "off-site" and is therefore not subject to the Home Occupation criteria.

Text 7.4: Extract from Whangarei District Council response 95/1/1 of 9 August 1996 to the letter in Text 7.3.

although it is that as well: it also functions as the council's assertion of *self*, its expectation as an organisation that it will control activities.

Text 7.2 is the first example in the corpus of the power of the council to assess and dismiss a topic that a citizen proposed, but the same pattern is also present in Texts 7.3 and 7.4. Text 7.3 shows a citizen's attempt to interpret the home occupation criteria in such a way that the Barfoote workshop would be forced to move, and Text 7.4 shows the council's dismissal of the interpretation. Again, citizens and council are talking past each other in a proposal-dismissal pattern. The issue is noise, but the subject is "home occupation" criteria: the citizen proposes and the council responds dismissively. The rules for home occupation were the site of the first struggle over the nature of the environment, and the opening move in the game was effectively a play for their correct interpretation. As the game developed, however, the players moved beyond the "Home Occupation" rules and adopted different techniques in discourse to win environmental territory in Cemetery Road. In part, these shifts were shaped by the discourse of the official position, and yet, despite the shaping, they represented an attempt by citizens to regain an element of narrative control in the situation.

Complicating the play: Producing *selves* in environmental discourse

The stories people tell are only ever partly about the subject of the story: they are always, to some extent, partly about the self and how the teller wants the self to be seen in society. Fairclough (1992) remarks, "[R]elationships ... depend on a consistency and durability of patterns of speech within and around those relationships for their reproduction" (p. 65). At the same time, he makes the point that the transformations that occur in social relations

17 June 1997.

Whangarei District Council
Private Bag 9023
Whangarei

You will recall our telephone conversations regarding the industrial noise nuisance associated with the engineering business operating at 88 Cemetery Road.

As suggested, a note was taken for two five-day periods.

May 26 to 30: From as early as 7.10am on occasion, the operation of dropsaws, electric grinding, crashing of pipework on to concrete, hammering etc for part or all of the day, up to 5.50 pm

7, 9 to 12: As above.

While these are two specific times, this is fairly typical.

We accept that there is noise associated with engineering.

We believe that there are designated areas for such noise. It is not appropriate in Rural H areas. It is particularly inappropriate immediately opposite the cemetery and crematorium.

We are not objecting to the operation of the kiwifruit cool shed or other temporary noise associated with the zoning of the area, such as the operations of the hedgecutter. It is self evident that such noise is to be expected in this zone.

Text 7.5: Text of letter to Whangarei District Council, 17 June 1997, specifying environmental noise, 2nd page missing.

derive in part from discourse. I interpret Fairclough as saying that the assertion of *self* within the discourse of individuals may activate change in institutionalised social relations. *Self* is most immediately obvious in the stories individuals tell about themselves in a given situation. In the case in Cemetery Road, the opening play in the game was designed to surround and capture the rules on home occupation, but these tactics did not score the desired goal. The nature of the game changed as players began to assert their beliefs and tell their own stories about the environment in Cemetery Road.

The next text, 7.5, is significant in the corpus because the architecture of the text shows the linking of the specific environmental issue of noise with assertions of *self*. For instance, the writer opened with a litany of times and types of noise, and continued with a personal creed marked by reiterations of "We believe". In expressing personal beliefs such as those shown in Text 7.5, participants establish, and more importantly, publish the self. Certainly, the cohesion of the argument against the noise depended, not on rules in the district plan, but on the rationality of the creed published in juxtaposition to it. The *self* established in the discourse is thus offered as the reason for an environmental decision to be made one way rather than another. In terms of constructing social relations, the text producer established the personae of mature adults – the "we" who wrote the letter – approaching just such other mature adults – the council – to reason together about the behaviour of third parties. This strategy effectively made the Barfootes people talked about rather than people talked with. Despite the intention of the Resource Management Act (1991) to provide communication opportunities, this situation did not change.

The business responded by going to the press, and in turn, allowed a *self* to be established through the medium of short articles in the Northern

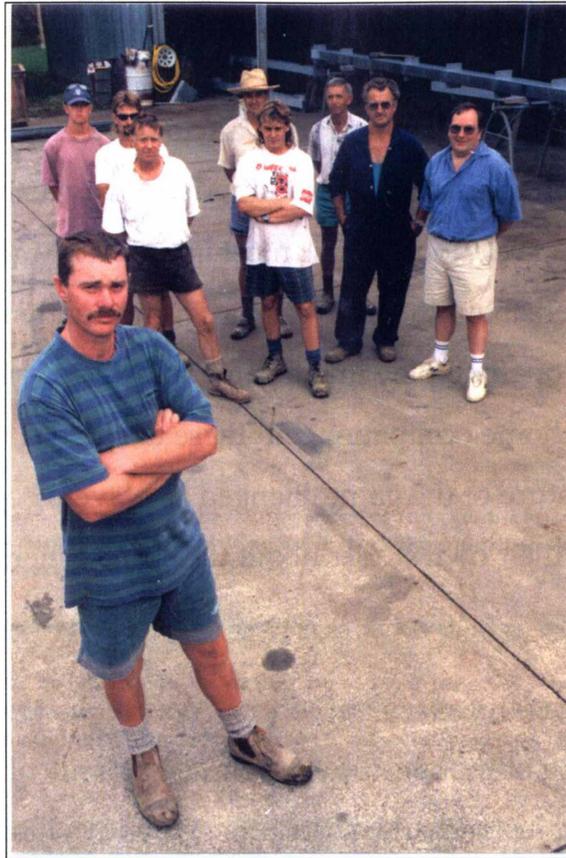


Figure 7.3: "Men behaving badly", a photograph from Northern Advocate, 11 February 1998, showing the staff of the workshop standing firm.

Maunu firm fights on and operates on

By Matt Johnson

A Whangarei cowshed manufacturer was continuing to operate his business today, despite legal papers ordering him to move or shut up shop by yesterday.

The Whangarei District Council says Barfoote Construction is operating illegally from its Maunu base and last week issued the company with an abatement notice requiring it to relocate or close by yesterday until it has the appropriate resource consents.

The company, owned by Trevor Barfoote, has been operating from a Rural H zone property in Cemetery Rd, set down for horticulture and related activities, for 2½ years.

The business had been operating — with council permission — as a home occupation activity. But in an about-face, the council told Mr Barfoote late last year the business did not meet the home occupation activity criteria. It ordered him to

close down or relocate by January 30 until resource consents had been applied for and heard.

But Mr Barfoote, who says he cannot afford to move or close, defied the January 30 deadline and the subsequent abatement notice (which he has appealed) served by the council.

He has applied to the Environment Court for a "stay" to allow his business to operate until the appeal can be heard. He had hoped to hear the result of the stay application yesterday but was still waiting — and operating the business — at edition time today.

WDC environmental services manager Graeme Drake could not be reached for comment today. However, he said yesterday if Mr Barfoote did not comply with the abatement notice, the council would apply to the Environment Court for the next step in the process — an enforcement order — to be served.

Text 7.6 Article from the Northern Advocate 11 February 1998.

Advocate under headlines like “Businessman defies council” and “Maunu firm fights on”. This response effectively moved the game beyond opening skirmishes and into serious territorial play. The newspaper presented the situation as a battle that was not an environmental dispute among residents, but rather, the principled fight of an established and slightly puzzled business against a draconian city hall. The parenthetical relational structure of the phrase “with council permission” emphasises the unreasonable nature of the subsequent “about face” performed by the council. At this point of the game, environmental discourse has become inaudible. The environmental issue is subsumed intertextually into the discourse of business (the workshop creates employment and wealth in hard times) and the discourse of the official position.

The war metaphor “fights” is somewhat mitigated by the addition of the preposition “on”. Fighting, in itself, might be considered a dissident thing to do, but “fighting on” implies a steadfast and admirable adherence to principle. This particular instance of fighting on, furthermore, is accompanied by operating on. Business, despite the exigencies and unpleasantness of a war zone, continues as usual, to the benefit of the workers and the presumed satisfaction of customers. As one reader put it later, in the light of the newspaper article, the position adopted by the business did not seem “unreasonable” (personal communication, 7 August, 2000).

The photograph that accompanied the article was composed to show a group of workers standing staunchly united behind their employer, who is defying the council and fighting to continue his business. However, another reader described the photograph as “Men behaving badly” (personal communication, 7 August, 2000) and another, rather more cynically, as “The pose of the ‘Little Kiwi Battler’ ” (personal communication, 18 August, 2000).

19/03/98

Mr. Dougal List
Whangarei District Council

Dear Mr. List

Please find attached a record which is typical of the activities of Barfoote Construction - Cemetery Road site.

I feel the following comments need to be read in conjunction.

- (1) When this property was on the market, another construction engineering company investigated purchase. They found, however that they could not meet the criteria of the zoning for this area, namely noise, staff numbers, and traffic.
- (2) The series of newspaper articles is full of mis-information. Trevor Barfoote has known since July 1997, and was reminded by council in July 1998 of the criteria, by which he must abide, that allows activity in rural H zones under the heading of Home Occupation. The business activities carried out from this site have never met the noise criterion and have often breached staff numbers and traffic regulations. Hence he has knowingly operated an illegal operation for at least the past 20 months.
- (3) On 07/11/97 Trevor informed Chris Parlane that there were 8 people in his employ. The newspaper article of 30/01/98 states there are 12 employees. This is a 50% increase in staff numbers in a little over 2 months. This sounds to me like a very healthy business that should have no trouble renting suitable premises in the appropriate industrial area of Whangarei.
- (4) We have expressions like "An about face" and "U-turn" in these articles as well. What nonsense. Trevor Barfoote has been properly informed of the regulations and has chosen to ignore them. I suggest that if Trevor has any grievance it should be with the real estate agent who sold him the property, or with himself and his solicitor for failing to research zoning regulations. The company referred to in (1) procured the correct information - why not Barfoote Construction??
- (5) The advertisement in the Northland Sharemilker of the Year 1998 on page 19 shows that this business does not serve this district, with projects in Rotorua, Kaikohe, Kaiwaka, Kaukapakapa etc. yet an unacceptable level of prefabrication noise is suffered by this community.
- (6) The siting of a business of this type in close proximity to the cemetery and crematorium has to be considered grossly inappropriate. People need to be alone with their thoughts in their hours of grief

We wish Trevor every success with his business venture, which is obviously doing very well indeed. But zoning regulations exist for good reasons, and this activity clearly belongs in an industrial zone - not rural H. And when the new district scheme is adopted, allowing further subdivision (hence greater population density) a noisy activity like this one will be even less appropriate.

2

We were mystified by a visit from a Malcolm Dunn from Marshall Day Associates an Auckland firm of acoustic consultants.

His brief was to take some readings of noise emanating from the engineering workshop of Barfoote Construction. It had apparently been arranged with someone on site to make some noise. The resulting "noise" was totally farcical. Compared to the noise that is usually heard, the noise on this day 10/03/98 was barely audible - there was no hammering of box section trusses or angle grinding.

One hopes no credence can be given to such a contrived situation, especially as the regulations state NO NOISE.

I hope you find the above constructive.

Yours faithfully



Text 7.7: Citizen letter to the Whangarei District Council about noise in Cemetery Road, 19 March 1998.

By March 1998, when the residents saw the business continuing to operate despite the ruling that “Home occupation” criteria did not apply, their communication to the council became more trenchant, as Text 7.7 shows. In Text 7.7, the residents’ discourse accumulated a story-line and a degree of drama and “attitude” – “*What nonsense!*” (paragraph 4) – which had not been obvious in the letter from a citizen nearly two years earlier. In that letter, the story was a single point about the criteria for Home Occupation. In the intervening months, the residents’ case had acquired a legend about “the one that went away” which was recited as proof that Barfoote Construction was misguided. The legend concerned another engineering business that had apparently considered the site and thought better of the site for precisely the reasons that the residents hoped would prevail against Barfoote Construction (paragraph 1). The discourse identified a villain, in the shape of the local newspaper, which had published articles “*full of misinformation*” (paragraphs 2, 3, and 4).

The game now seemed to have action on the sideline. The player who composed Text 7.7 used the published article to provide cohesion for his letter to the council by refuting the newspaper’s argument in an attack on the council’s application of the district plan. Paragraphs #3, 4 and 5 rail against the spin local publications put on the activities of the business, and remind the councillor that the owner of the business had been “*properly informed*” of regulations that he has chosen to ignore. Paragraph #5 points out that the workshop in Cemetery Road disrupts the local environment in the service of distant communities. In that it summarises the points of the argument in an enumerated form, the cohesion of the letter echoes that of a formal legal decision, in line with the claim Barfoote Construction’s “*illegal activities*”.

The belief that workshop noise intruded on committals and funerals intensified during the year from being a personal belief such as that

Dear Mr. List

As per your advice, please find an account of unacceptable noise emanating from the premises of Barfoote Construction, Cemetery Road site. Following advice from Sharon King, we began to record events as follows:

01/05/97 - drop saw noise, grinding, hammering, pipes dropping on to concrete floor. Noise continued until 5:50 pm - through our meal time.

08/05/97 - grinding, hammering, pipes crashing, 2:00 - 5:05 pm

09/05/97 - as per yesterday but all day long

13/05/97 - noise as above, all day, plainly heard on a neighbouring property half a Km away

14/05/97 and 15/05 97 - operating but noise level not of major concern

23/05/97 - 7:30 to 10:30 as per the 13th

26/05/97 - drop saw and grinding all morning

27/05/97 - as per yesterday, most of the day

28/05/97 - general engineering noise until 9:30

29/05/97 - drop saw operating at 7:10 am!!!

30/05/97 - grinders and hammering started up at 7:10 am

There were 22 working days this month. On ten of these days unacceptable noise levels were experienced - this represents 45% of working days

1

Text 7.8: Extract from citizen letter to Whangarei District Council, 19 March 1998.

expressed in Text 7.5, to being something all right-minded people should accept - "*It has to be considered grossly inappropriate*" (paragraph # 6) - with the implication of universal acceptance in the passive voice and the third person neuter pronoun - "*it has to be considered*". The assumption of authority to speak on behalf of the world is followed by another statement offered as a universal truth - "*People need to be alone with their thoughts in their hours of grief*". The writer also imputes the form a "normal" society should take. Though noise is not mentioned, its presence is implied as an agentless intrusion on moments when people should be permitted quietness in which to think. With an argument clearly established about noise and zoning, the letter moves to measured good wishes for the business, compliments for the council - "*zoning regulations exist for good reasons*" - and closes with a new point that also shows the writer to be knowledgeable about the causes of noise in his neighbourhood: he is able to deride the noise measurement as "*totally farcical*" because he understands "*box section trusses*" and "*angle grinding*".

The letter of 19 March 1998 was accompanied by an account of the noise nuisance over several months. The list contains 30 entries, of which the extract in Text 7.8 is typical. The list is evidence of the workshop's misdeeds. It also seems to be the residents' creed in their case for the re-establishment of the environmental *status quo* in Cemetery Road. Its juxtaposition to the scientific measurement of noise by acoustic consultants Marshall Day Associates shows the determination that citizens often have, as Irwin (1995) has pointed out, to maintain the validity of their experience in the face of expert opinion. The residents were able to reject the measurement of decibels because the conditions for measurement were contrived and atypical, and instead, held to their empirical evidence their learning that said, "*There were 22 working days this month. On ten of these days unacceptable noise levels were experienced*" and so on for each of the months for which

records were kept. This list was not only the mantra of the justice of their claim, but also a bid for referee intervention.

In fact, even if the citizens had not decided that the decibel measurements were suspect, they could still assert the truths of personal experience against expertise. The letter and the list are the voices of the *self*, expressed in the language of the lifeworld, asserting common sense against the expertise of the scientists and technocrats. One resident, for instance, said, "They talk about 'Ensuring a high level of amenity', or some load of [obscenity deleted] like that. They should live where I live and hear what I hear," (personal communication, 28 May, 1999). Another said, "Whatever they say about acceptable levels, we still heard the clanging and the angle grinder all through my grandson's committal," (personal communication, 28 May, 1999). A third said, "The noise is only part of it. The place is ugly. It's a shambles. You like to take a pride in your place, don't you?" (personal communication, 30 July, 2000). These are the opinions of everyday life, battered by technical expertise, but nevertheless holding firm.

In terms of the game metaphor, this story is offered as a counter-attack to the offensive published in the newspaper. The *self* that is created in this story is not one intimidated by the social forces lined up against it, but rather, is a *self* that does not hesitate to carry the game into the council's territory. The voice in the letter speaks knowledgably of zoning regulations and asserts its truth without hedging: "*The business activities carried out from this site have never met the noise criterion and have often breached staff numbers and traffic regulations*". The letter is also a strong statement of a *self* determined to present the writer as a reasonable and even kindly neighbour — "*We wish Trevor every success with his business venture*" — who owned and could exercise "superior emotional maturity" (personal communication, 4 July, 2000) in the situation.

Superior emotional maturity is intrinsically valuable, but at least some of its value is also extrinsic, and is realised only in demonstration.

In these circumstances, expression of the writer's "superior emotional maturity" has political and tactical value. It functions as a form of strategic politeness aimed at the council as the primary audience and at Barfoote Engineering as a possible secondary audience. In other words, in a situation in which pleasantness was not always evident between the neighbourhood teams (personal communication, 30 July, 2000), this writer was consciously displaying mastery of the politeness conventions both from a sense of *self* and also on behalf of other team members. The writer was therefore not only establishing *self* in this letter, but was also drawing on *self* as a major resource in achieving a favourable position in relation to the discourse of the official position.

Such communication affords an insight into the nature of relations between citizens and the institutions of the discourse of the official position, for in personal communications, residents would speak angrily and informally about the council, even accusing them of colluding with "the enemy", which meant the referee favoured the team on the other side. The public record, however, contains polite, reasoned and reasonable letters to the council. Fairclough (1992) says, "[P]articulate politeness conventions embody, and their use implicitly acknowledges, particular social and power relations and in so far as they are drawn upon they must contribute to reproducing those relations" (p. 163). The "superior emotional maturity" that was personally important to the writer of the letter could be construed as a tool for preserving the social *status quo* and the dominance of institutional power.

Construction of a very different *self* appeared in the discourse produced to support the workshop's application for resource consent. These fell into two distinct groups: the "Honest Working Bloke" discourse produced by the staff

WANGANEI TAKE OPERATION OF BARFOOTE CONST
AT 88 CEMETERY RD.

The reasons for making my submission are :

I AM EMPLOYED BY BARFOOTE CONSTRUCTION
AND DO NOT FEEL THAT ME OR MY FELLOW WORKERS
SHOULD BE LEFT TO A LIFE ON THE POLE AS THERE IS NO WORK
IN WANGANEI

I wish the Consent Authority to make the following decision :

TO ALLOW BARFOOTE CONSTRUCTION TO OPERATE
ON A PLOTT FROM THE SAME SITE AS IT

HAS FOR THE 3 YEARS THE SAME BUILDING WAS A
KIWI FRUIT PROCESSING PLANT
FOR THE PAST 10+ YEARS.

I do or do not wish to be heard in support of my submission :

Signature of person making submission

Date 7/7/98

The reasons for making my submission are : I SUB-CONTRACT TO BARFOOTE
CONSTRUCTION, AND IS 90% OF MY INCOME. WITHOUT THIS
WORK I AM DONE FOR; HAS 10 OTHER EMPLOYEES

I wish the Consent Authority to make the following decision :

TO ALLOW BARFOOTE CONSTRUCTION TO CONTINUE OPERATE
FROM THE EXISTING SCABSTORE BACKOUT. SHED, WHICH HAS
BEING OPERATING FOR THE LAST "EIGHTEEN YEARS" !!

I do or do not wish to be heard in support of my submission :

Signature of person making submission

Date 7.7.98

Address for service of person making submission :

"AS ABOVE"

Telephone No 4340173.

THIS WHOLE ARGUMENT STEMS FROM ONE NEIGHBOURS
RIGHT OF WAY, WHICH IS JOINTLY USED BARFOOTE CONSTRUCTION
WHICH THE NEIGHBOUR. HAS THREATEN TO STOP ACCESS.
NOW HE HAS, OR THEY HAVE RESORTED TO USE NOISE AS
THEIR ARGUMENT, TO SHUT TO THE WHOLE OPERATION DOWN.

Text 7.9: Samples of the "Honest Working Bloke" discourse.

of the workshop, and the “I’m not bothered” discourse that emanated from neighbours who did not object to the activities of the business. The “Honest Working Bloke” discourse is not about the environment at all, but as a strategy for allowing an application for resource consent, its naturalised commonsense is hard to gainsay.

The “honest working bloke” discourse works on an assumption of universal understanding: *everyone knows*, for instance, that Whangarei has high unemployment and *everyone knows*, therefore, that any company providing employment for ten people performs a worthwhile service in the community, quite apart from any utility in the commodities it produces. The voices telling the stories of the “honest working bloke” would be recognisable to the whole community, because they could belong to anybody’s neighbour or family. The discourse also aligns with the “need for business” in Whangarei, a theme to be expected from workers who perceive that their livelihoods are threatened.

Although the “honest working bloke” discourse found in the submissions of the workers is intended for multiple audiences (the employer, the council employees, the judicial hearing, the other side), it is not discourse that has been formed to accommodate anyone but its producers. In contrast to the texts gathered from the first group of residents, these texts do not show any particular effort to be polite either about, or to, the other side. The “honest working bloke” submissions are hand-written on the standard submission form pre-printed by the council, and the cohesion of the discourse is no greater than that of ordinary speech. The submissions are not organised for effect, nor are the relationships between clauses and sentences significant: thought is simply added to thought in a series of main clauses using the conjunction “and”.

78 Cemetery Rd.
R.D. 9. Maunu.
1-7-96.

To whom it may concern regarding
Mr. & Mrs. Trevor Barfoot's property.
We live next door & would be
their nearest neighbour & have
never had any cause to complain
of any noise. There was more
noise when the Kiwi Fruit packhouse
was in operation & that was very
little.

Yours faithfully
R. P. Edwards
C. P. Edwards

Judicial Committee
11 March 1999

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Text 7.10: Letter of support for the workshop's continued operation from a Cemetery Road resident.

These submissions read, in fact, like unconsidered, everyday speech transposed on to paper. The language is the type of artlessly emotional over-statement frequently made in conversation, and might be considered surprising in a document being submitted to a formal judicial hearing. The statements "*I'm done for*" and "*I do not feel that me or my fellow workers should be left to a life on the dole*" state worst-case scenarios for the workers, and leave little room for the interpreter of the text to develop an alternative point of view. A different perspective on this domain of experience might have led to alternative wording: a quest for a new job, perhaps, or a need for new contracts. These ways of signifying, "*done for*" in one case and "*left to a life on the dole*" on the other, show how the submitters were interpreting the need to apply for resource consent: it was a threat which put them at the edge of their concept of acceptable life. The declarative nature of the submissions shows, on the face of it, that the workers were expressing strong solidarity with Barfoote Engineering. Whether that was caused by a relative lack of power in the employment relationship or a genuinely high affinity with the position the workshop adopted is not something I could explore. All the appointments made for interviews with the workers at Barfoote Engineering were cancelled by the workshop supervisor before any data collection could take place.

The "*I'm not bothered*" theme revealed some division among the residents of Cemetery Road. The power of this discourse in the case for the workshop was that it showed how some residents could accept the activities of the business, implying that the residents who could not were fussing unnecessarily. Text 7.10 shows is typical of the "*I'm not bothered*" theme. The *selves* that were constructed in this discourse were those of good neighbours, living and letting live, getting along with one another and doing nicely. One neighbour, supportive of the workshop remarked, "You've got

Phone (09) 433 2200



Marae Flat 2
Pukehika Road
TANGITIROA

1 July 1998

File ref 53

Whangarei District Council
Private Bag 9023
WHANGAREI

RE: P06478.LU
LU 98/061

Tona Koo

File Ref:	P06478
Menu No:	1
Classification:	ES1
	1
	1

Vanessa G.L.

I, Mr Te Ihi Tito Resource Management Convenor for the Te Parawhau Trust Inc, have consulted with the Te Parawhau and Te Uriroroa Elders, pertaining to the Application for a Resource Consent by T.J & C.J Barfoot, to operate a business that comprises of a Dairy Shed Designing, Material design and Construction, from an existing Coolstore Workshop and Yard area, located at 88 Cemetery Road Maunu (Lot 1 DP 168441 BIK Purua, S.D. zoned Rural 1).

The Parawhau Resource Management is a unit of the Te Parawhau Trust Inc, which is a legal entity mandated by the Parawhau and Te Uriroroa Elders and Iwi, to manage Natural Resources and to safeguard areas of spiritual, sacred and cultural concerns within the ancient (rohe) boundaries of the Te Parawhau and Te Uriroroa, under the S.5,6,7 and 8 of the R.M.A. 1991.

We will give full support for the Application with the proviso that the Tapu be lifted off the area by our (Tohunga) Ministers. I wish the Consent Authority to give consent approval with the above proviso. If deemed necessary I will speak to my submission.

Enclosed in further history of the area concerned.

Naku noa

Te Ihi Tito Resource Manager

KA TUHUA TE TIRA MATI KI TE AO TUROA
KA HOHO TE TIRA O TE PARAWHAU
KA TE TE TIRA O TE PARAWHAU

Judicial Committee
11 March 1998

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THE MANA OF HINEHAU

Living at Maunu in the Whangarei District many years ago was Hinehau. She held an important and unusual position for a woman, for she was the Tribes Tohunga. As such she directed the fortunes of her people in battle with such success that her Mana stood high throughout the Whangarei District and beyond. As years went by she became weak with age but her mind was sharp as a patu. The only foe she could "outwit" was "death". She made one last decree, place my bones in our Whaitapu, in the cave at the foot of the hill and on the eve of any battle, the Chief must sleep the night beside them and my Mana will insure success, disobey my command and you will suffer defeat. Now this was almost asking the impossible of any warrior, no matter how brave he might be. Custom had taught the Maori that the bones of the dead were absolutely Tapu and must not be touched or even approached without the proper rites being performed by a Tohunga.

Nevertheless, some time later when the Tribe was planning a battle, the Chief remembered Hinehau's decree, "on the eve of battle you must sleep beside my bones". Just as dusk was darkening into night, the Chief set off along the track down to the cave. When he arrived at the cave his whole body was shaking with fear and he could not force himself to enter into the blackness of the cave, and fled away in fear.

The next day he led his warriors into battle and fierce fighting continued for several days. In spite of his clever strategy, many of his men were killed and eventually he was forced to admit "dismal defeat", just as Hinehau had prophesied, so he returned to Maunu under a cloud of shame.

Time went by and again he decided to go to war and with mixed feelings he remembered Hinehau's words and was torn between the fear of disobeying them and the dread of spending a night in the cave with her bones. Recalling his previous defeat, he felt he must obey her last decree. The Chief knew he could not spend the night in the cave and being an intelligent man he decided to use strategy to obtain the help of Hinehau's mana. Before setting out with his war party, he took a secret journey to the cave in daylight, when fears of the spirits of darkness would not unman him. Reciting incantations to remove the tapu, he carried Hinehau's bones and carefully placed them in a large Puriri tree near his whare. On the eve of the next battle, the Chief slept under the Puriri tree directly below Hinehau's bones. This time he was successful in battle, proving that the mana of Hinehau was as strong in death as it was in life.

The Paramount Chief of Maunu, Taurau Kukupa, told the legend to the first white settlers in that area, so that they would respect the sacred site. In latter years the legend was recounted in 1963 by Mr Richard Feaver, who said that the Puriri tree was still standing on his property in Maunu. Taurau Kukupa administered affairs on the Whangarei side of the Whatitiri boundary. The Whaitapu cave, where Hinehau's bones were placed, is in the vicinity of what is now called Cemetery road Maunu.

Text 7.11: Submission from Te Parawhau Trust Inc. granting operating permission to the workshop and telling the story of the mana of Hinehau.

to wonder about people who want to stop a decent young couple from getting ahead," (personal communication, 29 May, 1999).

The local *iwi* formed part of the "I'm not bothered" theme, although the permission of the *tangata whenua* for the workshop to operate was conditional on the lifting of a *tapu*³³. The arrival of Māori on the playing field was a surprise to some of the residents, one of whom remarked, "Yes, well, it's easy for them to agree to the workshop. They don't actually live here, do they? They just come and use the garage on the corner there," (personal communication, 29 May, 1999). In terms of the game, the Māori presence was like that of a player with specialist skills that no one else could understand or master.

The Māori *self* that was created in the submission from Te Parawhau Trust (Text 7.11, following) was the Māori of a community that functions in a manner that is at least semi-traditional. The letter begins by setting out the *mana* of the writer: "I, Mr Te Ihi Tito, Resource Management Convenor ..." but more importantly, goes immediately to process: "have consulted with the Te Parawhau and Te Uriroroi Elders". Consultation, consensus and respect for elders are hallmarks of the Māori culture, and these are established as standard procedure before the matter to hand is addressed. Balancing the weight of cultural process in paragraph 1, paragraph 2 sets out that part of the *iwi's* authority that derives from legal processes in the *pakeha* world: "A legal entity ... under the S. 5. 6. 7. and 8 of the R.M.A. (1991)." Here in the organisation of the letter is the presence of a *self* that walks in the two worlds of tradition and due cultural process which derives some of its operating authority from the Crown and its legal system. The Māori ethos is evident

³³ *Tapu*: a concept which makes places and people sacred and sets them aside from the *noa*, the common and secular.

also in the last sentence, “*If deemed necessary, I will speak to my submission.*” The wording does not make clear who will do the “deeming”: the communication processes of resource consent do not oblige citizens to speak to their submissions. It is likely that a cultural imperative required the oral presentation of the information, for traditional Māori culture was predominantly oral, and in this case as in others, it seemed that Māori preferred unmediated communication with their audience. A hand-written note on the submission in the council files records that Mr Tito “*Will speak; confirmed by phone.*”

The submission was not a personal communication, but a metadiscourse, which placed the participant outside the discourse, in a position to control it (Fairclough, 1992). Establishing an individual identity for the writer was not as important as the creation of social identity for the group initiating the submission. The letter was accompanied by part of a *whakapapa*³⁴. The story of Hinehau’s *mana* explains why the area around the workshop is sacred to the Māori of the area, and is more detailed than might have been expected. Māori sometimes claim *tapu* on the basis of similar histories, but are not always frank about the *whakapapa*, arguing that information about its existence is enough to satisfy the Resource Management Act (1991) (personal communication, 12 May, 2000). Offering the story of Hinehau and the *wahi tapu* was an act of trust that the *self* of the Māori would be received with dignity: the good intentions in the legislation do not guarantee a respectful reception in a social situation.

“Mythopoesis is legitimation conveyed through narrative,” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 98). In Māori discourse, the story of Hinehau’s *mana* is mythopoesis: it is both a cautionary tale (obey the *tupuna* or suffer the consequences) and

³⁴ *Whakapapa*: genealogy, history, tradition, philosophy.

a moral one (obey the *tupuna* and reap the reward). My own cultural perspective meant I could not help but notice (as some of the Cemetery Road residents also did) that the Māori submission had nothing to do with noise. An interview with Mr Tito was not possible because of his ill-health, but I later asked a Māori participant about the *Te Parawhau* submission. I must, at this point, stress that this participant was reluctant to speak on behalf of another Māori, especially a *kaumatua*³⁵ but finally, he said, “Frances, we say the things we have to say about the land. Noise or no noise do not add up. Now you know a little of what we know, and if you feel some *aroha*³⁶, that’s good. Perhaps some other people felt it too,” (personal communication, 16 September, 2000).

Perhaps the *Te Parawhau* submission was a version of the story composed to educate *pakeha* ears, for it specifies cultural knowledge that a Māori audience is likely to be familiar with: “*Custom had taught the Māori that the bones of the dead were absolutely Tapu and must not be touched or even approached without the proper rites being performed by a Tohunga*³⁷”. Nevertheless, the submission drew on a system of knowledge and belief that may have been unfamiliar and problematic to at least part of the audience. The Resource Management Act (1991) aims to make the consideration of such stories conventional and normative in environmental matters in New Zealand, but in the Cemetery Road case, the history of Hinehau was innovative, and adjusted to transforming expectations of the order of resource consent discourse.

The construction of the disparate *selves* in this case shows different orientations among the participants in terms of their social and personal identities. The first texts in section 7.3 show the participants working their

³⁵ *Kaumatua*: leader, keeper and teacher of the *tikanga*.

³⁶ *Aroha*: love, compassion, understanding, empathy.

³⁷ *Tohunga*: priest.

individual personalities as the public persona offered in the discourse, while others, in particular those of the *Te Parawhau* submission, but to a lesser extent those of the workshop staff as well, present a group identity in the discourse. Fairclough (2000) says “One’s capacity to truly act as a social agent intervening in and potentially changing social life, depends upon ‘social roles’ being personally invested and inflected, a fusion between social identity and personality” (p. 223). The *Te Parawhau* texts, however, belie this statement. For Māori, the potential to change social life is vested in the group.

Though the social identities examined here are partly effects of the discourses of resource consent, the texts also show practical engagement with the world. Citizens disputed with the council about its rulings on Home Occupation activities, and other citizens fought back with arguments about business survival. Still other citizens took the opportunity to educate and inform their compatriots about Māori beliefs and practice in Cemetery Road. As citizens constructed their social identities, they simultaneously defined the environment along various, sometimes incompatible, dimensions.

Coached offensives: Tactics from discourse technologists

A judicial hearing is the point at which one truth will be favoured above others as the basis of environmental action. It is therefore a likely time for the use of discourse technologies, which according to Fairclough (1992):

are designed and refined on the basis of anticipated effects of even the finest details of linguistic choices in vocabulary, grammar, intonation, organization of dialogue, and so forth, as well as facial expression, gesture, bodily stance, and movements. (p. 216)

At a very simple level, everyone who uses language, and presents the *self* in a desirable light may be an occasional discourse technologist, by Fairclough's (1992) definition. He says that discourse technologists simulate "interpersonal meanings and discursive practices" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 216) in order to produce desired effects on diverse publics. In the terms of this discussion, however, discourse technology acquired by experience, education and training, is seen as something distinctly beyond the ordinary interactions of individuals. It operates at a level of applied knowledge that reduces communication to instrumental purposes (Fairclough, 1992). The training that discourse technologists receive in the use of language and discourse tends to accord them considerable power to manipulate social situations to the advantage of clients. Accordingly, discourse technologies are the commodification of discourse and language as saleable items in a "user-pays" economy. As they take on an economic value, the styles and genres of one order of discourse may be extended, for their influential value, into other orders of discourse.

In the context of resource consents, professional discourse technologists assist the citizens who can afford to hire them. When the council withdrew permission for the workshop to Barfoote Engineering under the "Home Occupation" rules, the owners of the business decided to apply for a resource consent to continue their operation in Cemetery Road. To assist them in the process, they retained a well-known local barrister, an acoustic engineer and environmental consultants. These experts assumed the functions of professional discourse technologists.

On the day of the hearing, the whole workshop party was formally dressed, and the smartly suited professionals moved smoothly through the different stages of the hearing as a rehearsed, cohesive phalanx of experts. Their statements to the chair were formal depositions, read aloud. No deviations

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE BY ALLAN MAXWELL PARKER

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Allan Maxwell Parker. I am the Manager of Barfoote Construction Ltd. I have 30 years experience in corporate and Company management 3½ years of which I have managed Barfoote Construction Ltd. I have served on Boards of Directors, Boards of Trustees and Committees for various Clubs, Incorporated Societies and Schools and also being a Treasurer and Secretary for various organisations. I have also been Past President of the Whangarei Lions Club in 1988-89 in which we raised and presented over \$100,000.00 to the Northland Rescue Helicopter Trust.
- 1.2 In terms of qualifications I have studied through the NZ Institute of Management (Tertiary Studies) and obtained papers in Business Law, Marketing, Accounting, Finance, Economics, Human Resources and Labour Relations. I have also undertaken extension courses in "Care and Counselling". I am a Counsellor (along with my wife) for local Churches and Family Life NZ (Relationship, Budgeting and Personal Counselling).

Text 7.12: Credibility statement from the beginning of Mr Parker's deposition on behalf of the Barfoote Construction.

from the script were noted. Questions through the chair were fielded by the lawyer acting for the company, and were answered by referring the questioner to some part of the prepared documentation or to a speaker whose deposition had yet to be heard. The workshop case gave the impression, in fact, of being both orchestrated and choreographed in a pre-arranged play intended to overwhelm the opposition. At the judicial hearing, one observer commented that the party supporting the application for resource consent had mustered “a lot of suits” (personal communication, 12 April, 1999). This comment showed the sensitivity of the audience to “ethos” (Fairclough, 1992): the semiotic signal power of the dark business suits as a nonverbal artefact was not lost on the citizens who attended the hearing in jeans or similar clothing. Before the hearing, the Barfootes had contributed only two letters to the archive. After the application, however, the discourse technologists working on behalf of the Barfootes were prolific producers of “be-suited” documents. By “be-suited”, I mean that in contrast to the papers which individual citizens submitted, they produced paperwork that was visually impressive and uniform. It had clearly been prepared using standard formats developed in the discourses of law and environmental consultancy.

The discourse technologists working for Barfoote Engineering appeared, as a matter of course, to establish the social credibility of each employee who deposed on behalf of the workshop. This credibility had nothing to do with environmental expertise, but it created a “theme of respectability”, which was inlaid into the depositions. Text 7.12, a character reference for Mr Parker, the workshop manager, is part of this theme. The rest of Mr Parker’s deposition was an argument about the amount of noise he and an inaudible computer could be reckoned to make in the course of a working day, during which they were alone on the site 95% of the time. None of the material in Text 7.12 assists with an understanding of the environmental issue, but its

juxtaposition to his statement about noise generation positions interpreters to accept the testimony because of his civic-mindedness. According to Fairclough (1992), texts implicitly place their readers in positions which influence their interpretations. Readers, in fact, use “assumptions from their prior experience to make connections across the intertextually diverse elements of a text” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 135).

At law, the Resource Management Act (1991) is an example of the democratisation of legal process, in that the communication processes set up by the Act are an opportunity for any citizen to submit an opinion about an application for resource consent without recourse to professional help. Regional councils and territorial authorities, in fact, supply pre-printed forms that help citizens to provide the minimum information in their submissions. The primary aim of such forms is certainly to assist citizens to state their case, but a secondary purpose is to engender environmental communication that is direct, unadorned, and usually also un-technologised. In saying this, I am not adversely criticising the efforts of either the councils or the citizens, but rather, noting the contrast between the styles of discourse technologists and other participants. The Resource Management Act (1991), of course, allows the lawyers and other experts to put a case for any party without thought for the gap in impression management when some parties are represented by professionals and others depend on their own resources.

Provision of pre-printed forms by councils could be seen as an attempt by councils to render the discourse of resource consents homogeneous. Discourse technologists, however, expand its heterogeneity by calling on a diversity of the genres and styles. Text 7.12, for instance, is the genre of the law court and the character witness. A citizen whispered to me during the hearing, “I bet they [the “other side”] never thought of doing all this [establishing their credibility],” (personal communication, 12 April, 1999).

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE BY TREVOR JAMES BARFOOTE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 My name is Trevor James Barfoote. My wife Cheryl, and I, are both directors of Barfoote Construction Ltd. It was our intention when selecting a property in 1994-95 to find somewhere we could live and work from, for the following reasons:

- (a) lower overheads in a very competitive industry,
- (b) we could look after our children and be at work,
- (c) security,
- (d) country living,
- (e) reasonable amount of living space,
- (f) reasonable distance from residential activities, and,
- (g) uninterrupted rural ambience. - you have interrupted our
flow.

Text 7.13: Extract from the evidence presented to the judicial committee by Trevor Barfoote.

Of course, all the residents could have prepared similar statements on their own behalf. None did so. Questioned about this point later, a resident said, “No, and even if I had thought of it, I wouldn’t have done it. I’d feel bloody stupid,” (personal communication, 29 May, 1999).

The presence of discourse technologies in the resource consent process appears to militate against democratisation of the discourse. The very presence of discourse technologists, not to mention the approach they adopted, established the workshop as the elite participant in the case. The perception of asymmetries in power derived, in part, from inequalities in the financial resources of the residents and the company, but also from the fact that the workshop was an employer in a region of high unemployment and a surviving business in a time when many small businesses were failing.

The discourse created for Trevor Barfoote by the discourse technologist was unfettered by environmental science, as Texts 7.13 and 7.14 show, but it did show that among Mr Barfoote’s diverse reasons for living in Cemetery Road were some that were strikingly similar to those of the other residents in Cemetery Road. One of the small pleasures of searching an archive is finding the very human reactions that turn up in the texts. One resident at the hearing had noted the irony in Mr Barfoote’s desire for “uninterrupted rural ambiance”. On a copy of Mr Barfoote’s deposition, a scrawled note made alongside clause (g) said, “You have interrupted ours though”. This observation is a subjective comment outside the main game, however. Text 7.13 interpolates the reader to assume that this family man has exactly the same motivation in relation to the Cemetery Road environment as the opposing team. When this motivation is placed alongside the business argument sketched in the same list in Text 7.13, “*lower overheads in a very competitive industry*”, Mr Barfoote is constituted in the discourse as a rational business man with a strong family focus. His discursive practice juxtaposes

3.1 I have been in this business for 10 years which was started by myself and I have built up the business up to a peak of 22 staff in 1995-96. I believe we have a lot to offer to the Whangarei District, the region and the local community. We service the rural community both locally and afield bringing a considerable amount of money into the local economy. I understand that the Whangarei District Council seeks to promote industry and employment in the district and ask that the Council consider the benefits that our business provides to the district and region.

3.2 We are specialists in our field of work and if we were to be unsuccessful in our application the impact would result in the loss of 10 jobs, local expertise in this field, loss of work for local subcontractors and 10 years of my own personal work down the drain.

3.3 As my consultants will outline our operation on site has little if any adverse environment effects. I would not live on the site with my wife and young child is this were^{it} the case. All I ask is that Council take the time to weigh the expert opinions of my consultants and those neighbours who support my proposal against those aspersions cast by the submission in opposition and see them for what they are.

Trevor J Barfoote

Text 7.14: Extract from the evidence presented to the judicial committee by Trevor Barfoote.

business and family interests in such a way that the discourses of resource consent are contested as a site where these issues, and not the issues of noise, are the most significant matters.

Text 7.14 contains the rest of the argument formulated for Mr Barfoote by the discourse technologist. This text is marked by unexpected shifts between literary language, "*the aspersions cast by the submission in opposition*" and expressions that smack of the vernacular: "*ten years of my own personal work down the drain*". The effect of switching between registers is that two voices are speaking, the first, a more urbane and controlled version of the second. I cannot say whether it was a deliberate ploy of the discourse technologist to allow the voice of the "honest working bloke" to break through that of the employment-providing businessman, for an arranged interview with the lawyer employed by the company was cancelled. Subsequently he was always "in court" when I called to re-schedule.

Text 7.15, an extract from Marshal Day Associates' technical report on the noise levels in Cemetery Road, is a scientific statement of actual measurements compared with New Zealand Standards. Investigations showed that some residents found its technicality acceptable and lucid, while others found it impenetrable, and consequently gave it a resistant reading, concluding with reactions that could be summed up under the collective theme, "Ummm, could you explain, please?"

As a coached offensive, however, the untranslated technicality of the report worked as a virtue. This positivist science was precisely what the business had paid for: it had, according to some residents, an intimidation value (personal communications, 12 May 1999; 21 May, 1999; 15 August, 2000) because it could not be argued with. Despite the technicality which some of the audience found daunting, the submission employs many verbs conjugated with a modal auxiliary: "*The assessment procedure may be*

4.2 Limits of acceptability

4.2.1 General

As a guide to establishing limits of acceptability, L_{10} should not exceed the background sound level by 10dB or more. There are, however, definite limitations to this "background plus" approach.

C4.2.1

"Background plus" assessment

The assessment procedure may be inappropriate when the background sound level is very low, (eg less than about 30dB), or very high, (eg more than about 50dB). At these times other sound which might exceed the background level, eg by 10dB or more, may still be acceptable to the community. Reaction to the sound might depend more on any special audible characteristics than on the extent to which the background sound level is exceeded.

4.2.2

The following guideline is the desirable upper limit of exposure to environmental noise for the reasonable protection of community health and amenity. In some circumstances, taking into account community expectations and other local conditions, greater protection may be appropriate.

In the absence of any performance standards or defined limits for the noise under investigation, the desirable upper limit of sound exposure at or within the boundary of any residential and use is as follows:

Night-time 45dBA L_{10} ; and an L_{max} of the lower of 75dBA or the background sound level plus 30

Day-time 55dBA L_{10}

NOTE - Night-time and day-time hours are to be defined by the Territorial Authority.

C4.2.2

The desirable upper limit for night-time noise exposure is determined by criteria to protect from disturbance to the onset of sleep and awakening thresholds for the average person. The effects of intermittent noise can be minimized by limiting the maximum level of single noise events in relation to the background sound level at the time. The desirable upper limit for day-time noise exposure is determined according to section 4.5

inappropriate"; *"other sound which might exceed the background level"*; *"greater protection may be appropriate"*. Modal verbs indicate the degree of commitment which the text producer feels for particular statements (Fairclough, 1992; 2003). Although the opinions offered in Text 7.15 must be classed as "expert", the modal constructions effectively limit the truth of the propositions. The modality is the voice of academic caution in the world of consultancy, refusing to be fully committed to a position which might prove untenable or vulnerable to attack at a later date. For the residents whose reactions to the text fell into the "Ummm, could you explain, please?" theme, the modal hedging made no difference to their resistance. The acoustic report was "blinding with science" (personal communication, 21 May 1999). What this resident wanted was for someone to agree that an operating forklift (for example) made too much noise for ordinary conversation to take place around his barbecue.

Defensive formations: Themes from the residents' stories

Excessive noise was the issue defining the environment in the Cemetery Road case. The discourse technologists acting for Barfoote Construction designed a case that presented many faces to the hearing and went far beyond the matter of noise, but the residents' opposition to the workshop was not based exclusively on that environmental issue alone either. Their stories brought two themes into play: the theme of property values, and the theme of the "bad man". Both these themes centred the game as legitimations of the residents' position that the workshop was unacceptable in Cemetery Road. The extracts from submissions in Text 7.16 legitimate by reference to a value system assumed as universal for the people whose homes are on Cemetery Road. This value system is extended not only over the residents, but also over the council, whose district plan is expected to

Resident A:

Applicant's non-concern for future enhancement of property values for all present property owners under the present district scheme.

Resident B:

Downgrades an upmarket residential/horticultural street with this type of business.

Resident C:

If consent is granted, other residents may suffer a loss in the value of their real estate investment.

Text 7.16: Extracts from depositions to the judicial hearing made by citizens opposing the resource consent.

Resident A:

The lack of principles, integrity honesty and compliance of [sic] Rural H requirements in both intention and action. Distortion of facts and portrayal of neighbour as the villain in the dispute.

Resident B:

The workers at Barfoote Construction stare at me over the fence when I'm outside on my property and make me feel uncomfortable. The business has told lies about its activities.

Text 7.17: Extracts from residents' depositions to the judicial hearing.



Figure 7.4: Barfoote Construction, looking towards the pipe fabrication area.

reflect the importance of sustaining property values in Cemetery Road. The theme of property values may be one reason for Cemetery Road's generally homogeneous nature: I commented at the beginning of the case that the area was uniformly cared for and had a gardened air at odds with its "rurality". The residents who used property values as an argument against the workshop may have had in mind its road appearance, which is not typical of other properties in the area. Certainly, if one reads the environment as a text, the Barfoote operation is industrial rather than horticultural; utilitarian rather than embellished; and busy rather than peaceful. Generalised motives behind the "property value" theme might well have induced a mass loyalty to preserving the pretty tidiness of the area. Indeed, frequent references to property values in the interviews suggest that the value is deeply naturalised in the social discourse that residents share, for example, at their neighbourhood gatherings.

Mr Barfoote's deposition in Text 7. 14 hinted at scurrilous actions on the part of neighbours whose "aspersions" should be seen for what they were, but this tendency to an attack *ad hominem* threaded through the stories of the residents as well, as though the judicial hearing might decide the issue of noise by judging between the parties. Text 7.16 legitimated the participants' position by reference to a value that was submerged in common sense. Text 7.17 also aims to legitimate by using moral evaluation, but these comments refer to values in the ethical system of the wider community. The workshop is portrayed as lacking desirable ethical standards: according to the residents, it has "*told lies*", and furthermore, what may be even worse, the business has breached local standards of neighbourliness. Cemetery Road is a place where the residents value their privacy, but in Text 7.17, we hear that "*The workers at Barfoote Construction stare at me over the fence*".

Texts 7.16 and 7.17 are expressions of how the residents of Cemetery Road see their social order. The texts contain implicit guidelines to moral behaviour: residents “ought” to think about property values for the whole neighbourhood; people “ought” to tell the truth and not misrepresent their neighbours; people “ought” not to violate the notional privacy afforded by a boundary line. These “oughts” are the basis of the residents’ argumentation, part of the legitimacy of their desires for their environment, and their justification for how they believe things should be.

7.5 Defining the goal: Post game analysis

This case about environmental noise in Cemetery Road has shown that discourse is creative: it has the power to constitute and transform social relations (Fairclough, 1992). The case study has also captured the complexities of resolving which of two incompatible potentials for the Cemetery Road environment would eventually triumph. In fact, the issue of noise and the environment was decided in favour of the workshop. The focus of this research is not the environmental decision itself, but the way in which the processes leading to the decision were framed in discourse. This section of chapter seven relates the case in discourse to two of the three questions that frame this thesis.

Discursive shifts and potential environments

The first research question under discussion is, “In what ways does the resource consent process in Northland shape discursive shifts away from “nature” towards “the environment”, and does this make any material difference?” In Cemetery Road, the move from “nature” to “the

environment” was completed long before this case began. Cemetery Road is the realisation of Psalm 8 in the material world by people who believed they had been given “dominion over the works of [his] hands” (v.6). As I have already described in section 7.2 of this chapter, the native bush and fauna in Maunu were largely cleared by settlers in the nineteenth century to develop farms. A contested “nature” was therefore not applicable to this case study. But “nature” and “the environment” remained as discursive constructions that had the power to affect the lives of present and future residents of Cemetery Road.

Cemetery Road is not the “nature” of Smith’s (1996) “social sanitarium” (p. 43), in which the commodification of the earth’s more charismatic creatures offers recuperation to over-urbanised consumers. It is, rather, closer to Simmons’s (1995) concept of humanised nature: a nature proscribed and prescribed. However, altering nature in the way that Simmons (1995) describes seems to require masters, whereas maintaining nature in Cemetery Road seems to need servants. The residents erect harmonious out-buildings; they plant and prune and harvest; they beautify and restore; they design gardens and they mow the road verge. In return for the privilege of producing their interesting crops of olives, avocados and ostriches, the residents appeared, to my eye, at least, to work about as hard on their properties as slaves on the walls of Troy.

Yet, even though the humanised nature of Cemetery Road seems to spring from Goulet’s (1993) “technological rationality” (p. 20), which concentrates on bringing about concrete achievements in the material world, the interviews showed that the residents were nevertheless not disjoined from their space. They felt an undeniable connection to their land: they spoke of the noises of rural “silence”, cicadas, birds and so forth, with appreciative awareness; they referred with pleasure to getting their hands dirty; they

enjoyed the physicality of their lives on their lifestyle blocks; and, most of all, they soaked up the peace and privacy that Cemetery Road offers. These elements of social life in Cemetery Road may not constitute the deep spiritual connection perceived in the traditional relationship of indigenous peoples to nature (Suzuki & Knudtson, 1992). They do, nevertheless, show a bond that is valid for the reality and the culture that the citizens have constructed.

Alongside the residents' mental, and perhaps spiritual, feeling for their blocks, is a more readily identified sense of the sacredness of land, revealed by the story of Hinehau. Hinehau's story does not show the animism that is part of the cultural values of the Māori people, but it is nevertheless a story that can nevertheless resonate with anyone who feels that some places on the earth are set apart. Throughout the history of the human race, churches and temples have been built all over this blue planet to mark sacred sites, or, as Māori would say, *wahi tapu*. Local Māori know Cemetery Road as a sacred area because, for a time, it was the resting place of the bones of the *tupuna*. The story of Hinehau asserts the special attachment to the area felt by local Māori, and in doing so, constructs a case for "nature" in Cemetery Road by reaching into the spiritual dimension of people's relationship with land.

Here, then, are arguments for thinking of Cemetery Road as "nature". It is fair to note that these arguments are implicit, not explicit, for the discourse of the official position consistently refers to "the environment" and not to "nature". Indeed, none of the documents in the archive contained the word "nature". The difference this marked lexical feature makes to the case is to treat nature as a sub-text which is expressed as a series of environmental rules and standards. What might have been thought of as "nature" is confined in the expression "uninterrupted rural ambiance" in Text 7.13. If nature becomes so sanitised that it can be labelled "uninterrupted rural

ambiance”, it has lost its spiritual aspect and become a commodity that is easily brought to a judicial hearing or listed as an item to increase property values on a “For Sale” advertisement.

In chapter one, and again in chapter six, I opposed “Nature/nature” to “the environment” in order to distinguish two concepts: nature, on the one hand, as containing the entirety of the intellectual and spiritual beliefs vested in the material world, and the environment, on the other hand, as something that could be measured, divided up, and managed. This is not to say that “nature” is never altered: in fact, I have already designated Cemetery Road an area in which nature is humanised (Simmons, 1995). “The environment” however, appears to permit alteration at a new level through the discourse of the official position. I contend that whereas “nature” is a concept formed and held in personal philosophies, and perhaps not much discussed in public, “the environment” is the textual sum of “technological rationality” (Goulet, 1993, p. 20) that allows, to a far greater extent, the pursuit of instrumental goals.

Constructions and representations: Multiple discourses in Cemetery Road

The second research question discussed in relation to the case in Cemetery Road is “Why, and with what effect, do citizens and organisations use particular discourses in the resource consent process, and how do these discourses relate dialectically to other moments in the social process (Harvey, 1996)?” To deal with this question in relation to the Cemetery Road case, I will first return to a point I made in chapters four and six about public consultation. In rhetoric, consultation values multiple diverse voices: in practice, it favours technical expertise (Moreno, 1995). Citizens come to public consultation sure of what they know but lacking formal scientific

training and its associated credibility. The system which obliges them to pit their opinions against the authoritative voices of technical experts (Irwin, 1995) in the discourse of the official position, which measures nature up, then measures it out in district and regional plans.

This research question has two elements, of which the first is “Why?” To answer this first element of the question in relation to this case study, the unadorned truth is that I really am not able to say. It seems to me that after the discursive event, citizens usually find it difficult to isolate any compelling reason for writing or speaking as they did at any particular time. The most frequent response to that question at interviews was hesitation and hedging that can be collectively summarised as something like “Well, I, um, just wanted to kind of . . .” This is far from being a criticism of the people who were nice enough to be research participants, but it is a reflexive construction (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) of the research process. If I were not present when the discourse moment was hot, I could never be entirely sure of the motivation behind any given text in the corpus. The best I can do in answering this element of the question is to return to the words of a Māori participant, who said, “Frances, we say the things we have to say.” These words are apposite here, for it seems to me that citizens respond to the collected rationality of the discourse of the official position by calling on whatever discourse resources they have, which may range from particular representations of the *self* to professional discourse technology. In simple terms, they tell the story they have to tell.

The second element of the question is possible to answer by analysis. In the first place, the discourses in the case constructed social relations within the social practices of the resource consent process. As the case progressed, different discourses such as the “honest working bloke” and the “emotionally mature man”, which were originally expressions of the *self*,

shaped the way that residents reacted and related to each other. Important as these private relationships are, social relations with the council are, perhaps, even more important, for it is in their interactions with the discourse of the official position that residents take the rôle of citizens in the public life of the nation. The discourses used by the Whangarei District Council positioned the residents in a subordinate relationship to the organisation, a relationship that was contested with increasing vigour by some residents. The successful struggle of the citizens to have their point of view acknowledged and heard did not in any way amend the practice of the council: future cases will require the same struggle. This lack of change does not require the organisation to interrogate its “proper” procedures. It seems to be part of the nature of organisations to create such problematic self-constructions without self-reflection.

Analysis of the dialectical relations of discourse to the other moments in the social process suggests that the texts are representations of the inner worlds of the residents. This is what Harvey (1996) terms the “imaginary” (p. 79), which recognises how the world is and expresses how it might be. Evidence from the interviews recorded in the earlier parts of this chapter indicates that in Cemetery Road, the “imaginary” of the residents was very much matched by their material practices, those points of being bodily in the world. In other words, they envisioned a lifestyle based on peace, prettiness and privacy, and, in some cases, the convenience of working from home, and enacted that vision in their daily activities. The parties in the case internalised the moments of the imaginary and of material practices in the moment of discourse. I suggest that the texts show that the issue of noise separated the moments of the imaginary and material practices for the residents, no matter which team they played on.

The moment of institution and ritual also internalised the multiple discourses that emerged in Cemetery Road, in that all the citizens dealt with the situation through the institution of the law. The research did not explore whether anyone ever felt inclined to heave a rock through a workshop window or to resort to some other form of illegal expression. All the citizens accepted the processes of the district plan, and so contributed to the reification of the authority of the council. Referring environmental matters to the council may now indeed be said to have the status of a cultural ritual in New Zealand, such is the power of the Resource Management Act (1991) and its cascade of plans and policies.

Inasmuch as the moments of power, institutions, material practices and the imaginary internalised the moment of discourse, so the discourses also internalised each of these other moments. Each text was an attempt to exercise power, and each was also an instance when citizens' beliefs and desires were being formed in the world (Harvey, 1996). The relations between these moments were flows until the time at which the decision was made about Cemetery Road. Until then, either version of the environment was possible. When the case was decided, the environment of Cemetery Road, which had until then been part of the dialectical flux of the social process, crystallised into a new entity.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the issue of noise in a quiet neighbourhood, and using a game metaphor for structure, has shown the case, not at law, but in discourse. The corpus of texts was taken from documents that originated with the different teams. Although the discussion was based on Fairclough's (1992) three dimensions of critical discourse analysis, the textual analysis did

not follow a template, but was mandated by the significant features in each text. The chapter showed the construction of different *selves* in discourse and also the construction of social relations. Finally, it concluded by showing the emergence of the material world in Cemetery Road out of discourse and the other moments in the social process to which it is dialectically related.

Chapter 8

Case Two: Two Worlds and the River Between

A good eye must be good to see whatsoever is to be seen, and not green things only.

Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations*

Introduction

Chapter 8 deals with the discourses in a confrontation over an application to abstract water for land irrigation from the Mangakahia River, which is an important geographical feature of the Mangakahia Valley, a large, rich farming area in mid-Northland, northwest of Whangarei. This case was selected for the research because it offers opposing views of nature and the environment, and because the dispute took place between 1993 and 1995, soon after the Resource Management Act (1991) became law.

This chapter is not structured around the metaphor of the game, for so great is the dichotomy between the two points of view explored here that as I examined the archive, I had no sense that the citizens were meeting for a contest that both sides understood. Instead, the case seemed more a matter of seeing opponents set out rules of engagement that were so unrelated to one another that they might well apply to two different games. More seriously, they can apply to two different groups, each possessing a strong relationship with the same river.

Like the previous chapter, Chapter 8 contains a lengthy description of the area in which the case took place. As well as trying to capture the “feel” of the valley, with its rivers and mountains, I have put some effort into

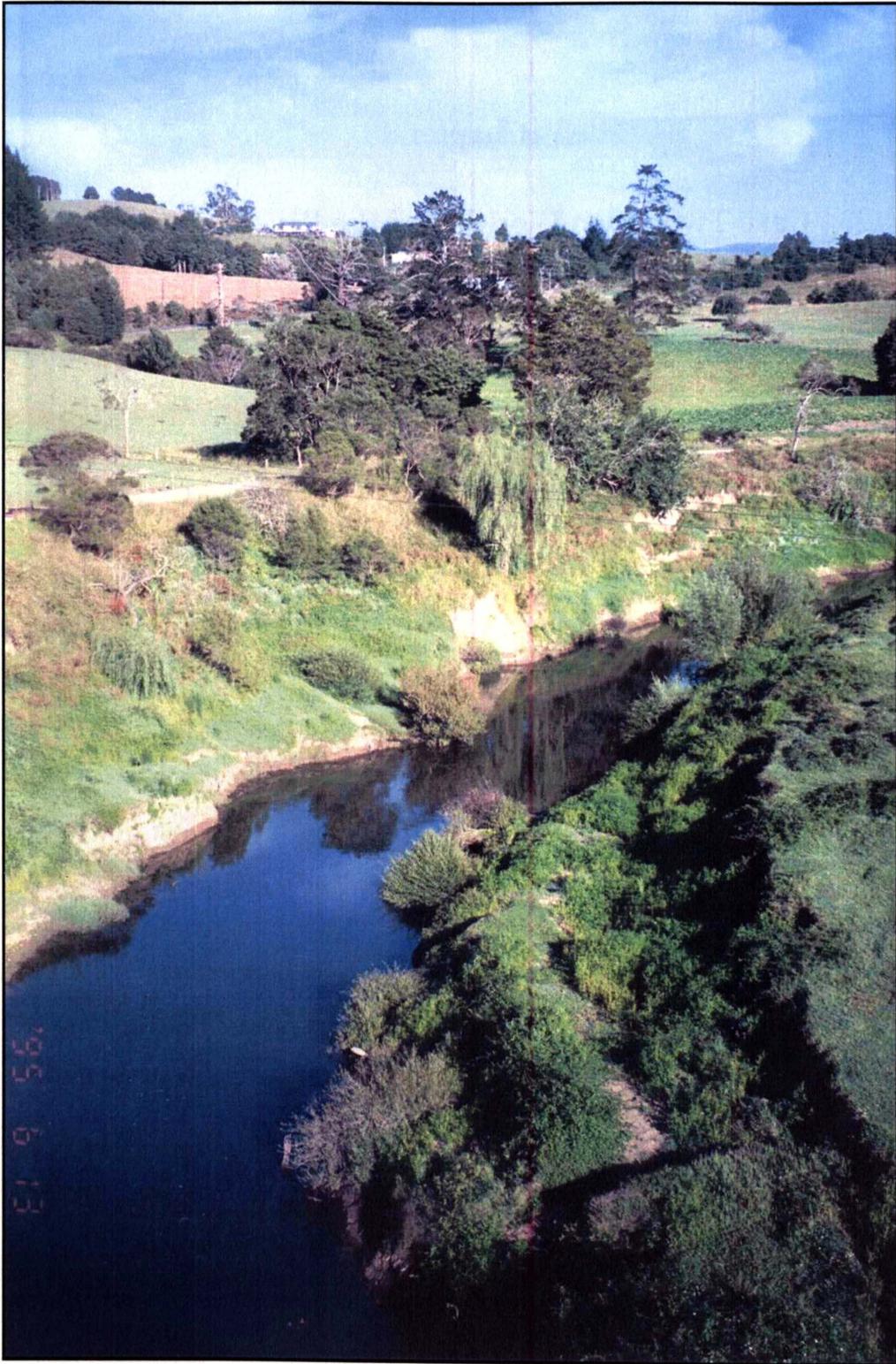


Figure 8.2: Mangakahia River from the Titoki Bridge

describing the way that the *tangata whenua*³⁸ see the valley and the river, for the Māori concept of nature is so important in this story as to be almost a protagonist in its own right. The three sections of analysis that follow the description of the setting are organised around the opposing points of view of Māori and pakeha. This is not, however, a story of attack and counter-attack in which chronological organisation is important to impart a sense of order. It is, rather, a story of two deeply held sets of values. The documents in the archive were somewhat repetitive in expressing these values, and so the body of texts selected for the corpus is not large, but it is representative of the differing concepts of the environment in the case, and the construction and re-construction of social relations. On the Māori side of the story, there is, increasingly, a self-aware and deliberate construction of *self* in the discourse associated with the Mangahahia River. On the pakeha side, there is a strong commitment to the welfare of the farms, and a sense of doing good for the economy of Northland.

The textual analysis is divided into three parts: first, the texts dealing with the themes at the instigation of the case; second, the Māori themes in the discourse; and third, themes typifying non-Māori reactions to the project. The last section of the chapter contains discussion of the textual analysis in relation to the research questions and to the relevant ideas from the literature review.

³⁸ *Tangata whenua*: The people of the land.

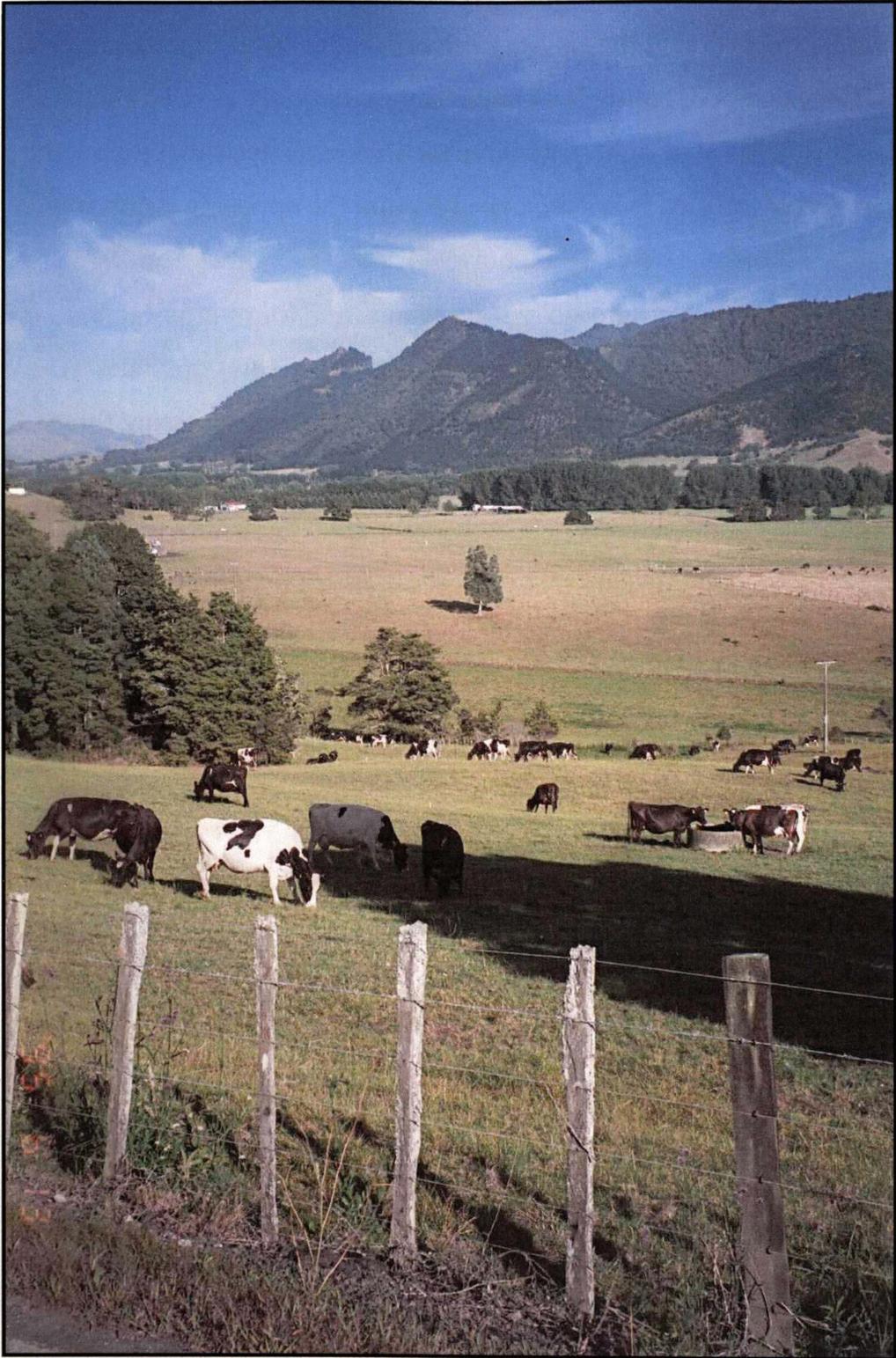


Figure 8.3: Dairy farm in front of Mt Kohatu

8.1 Seeing Mangakahia: Rivers, farms and mountains

The lasting image left by a first journey into the Mangakahia Valley is one of a quiet road passing through voluptuously rolling farmland. Mangakahia Road, some seventy kilometres in all from the Maungatapere turn-off on State Highway 14 to Kaikohe in the mid-North, winds down the valley in many long series of tight corners. In the irritating way of back roads in New Zealand, it is crossed here and there by herds of cattle coming in for milking. It is not unusual to take a corner and find a herd of Herefords making their leisurely way to or from the milking shed.

Many people who live at the southern end of the valley work in Whangarei, but the atmosphere in the valley is nevertheless predominantly “working rural”. The people of the valley are generally friendly, perhaps even curious about a stranger’s business, and though they were busy, many were open to giving time for interviews once credentials were produced and introductions made. The area feels like the kind of place that could have featured on Gary McCormack’s programme, *Heartland*³⁹. The local children still seem to play endlessly in the creeks and rivers the way children did elsewhere in New Zealand forty years ago.

To travel into the valley along Mangakahia Road is to be constantly aware of the mountains that form the valley walls. A non-geographer may see the mountains as astonishingly varied for a comparatively small geographical area, as though the volcanoes that formed the landscape had been at pains to produce completely different effects. To the local people, the six mountains have presence and strong personalities associated with their appearance. For instance, Tutamoe, called “the sleeping giant” in English, is a steep peak

³⁹ *Heartland* was a documentary series about the small towns and locally famous characters of rural New Zealand. Rural New Zealand is now frequently referred to affectionately as “the heartland”, especially by people in Northland.



Figure 8.4: Maungarongo Marae

separated from the other mountains; the Three Kings are high, but rounded in comparison to Tutamoe; and Mount Kohatu shows a sheer rock face to the west but, approached from the south, offers a sloping, grassy saddle for an easy walk to the summit. The mountains enclose the valley like walls, creating a sense of safety or claustrophobia, depending on individual perceptions. Not only do Māori see the mountains as keeping the valley safe, they are part of identity, and given in reply. When Māori name themselves, they first give the mountain where their river rises: “*Ko te Kohatumaunga*,” - I belong to the Mountain of the Rocks - and then “*Ko mangakahia te awa*” -I belong to the Mangakahia river.”

As in much farmland in New Zealand, the scenery in the valley is varied and pretty. Stands of native bush dot the paddocks; creeks meander through the fields; shelter belts provide shade for the animals and texture for the eye. The valley possesses a certain lushness resulting not just from Northland’s sub-tropical climate, but also from careful management of the soil. Despite the attractiveness of the landscape, however, this is not a semi-urban area where prettiness is paramount: the Mangakahia Valley is land-as-business. The valley is at work. The southern end of the valley is mostly in commercial kiwi-fruit blocks, but further north, the land is held in large dairy farms, which seem well developed: some have dams, all the fences are in good repair, and they carry a lot of stock. Not being an agriculturalist, but wanting to describe the area in a way that was true for me, I have been mentally describing the farms as “being in good heart”. The farmers I spoke to agreed with the description in principle.

The *marae* in the area are generally something of a contrast to the apparent prosperity of the farms. They are used, loved, and have basic amenities, but they seem rather shabby and the ones I visited were in need of basic maintenance: a leaking roof here; broken windows to fix there; peeling paint

everywhere, and some quite dubious-looking electrical wiring. One of the senior Māori spokespeople for the *marae* said to me, "I went to *Te Aroha marae* one day and found that some others had accepted a load of old stoves for the kitchen of the *whare kai*⁴⁰. I was furious that they would take any old rubbish and be grateful for it, and I made them dump them. I said, 'We're worth more than that.'" (personal communication, 2 April, 1999). I do not make this comparison between the state of the *marae* and the local farms in any sort of judgment of either group, but because economic issues were mentioned in the discourse that unfolded in the case. I am also constrained to say that in the most important sense - that is, in the sense of the people - *Te Aroha marae* has everything it needs, and might therefore be classed as wealthy. There are its people. There is the courtyard for the challenge and the greeting, there is the *whare tupuna*, the house of the ancestors, and the *whare kai*, the eating house, where the people share their food and offer hospitality to guests (personal communication, 2 April, 1999).

Apart from the mountains and the undulating paddocks, the other notable geographical feature of the area is the many creeks and small rivers that run into the two big rivers that traverse the valley. Water, in fact, dominates the valley and this case. The Mangakahia River drains only about 800 square kilometres, from the Tutamoe Range in the west to the beginning of the catchment for the Wairua River in the east, but despite its small catchment area, it floods fast and often (Northland Regional Council, 2003). To someone walking along the banks, the river looks clear, deep and, in places, fast-flowing. When the sun warms the water in the early morning, schools of thirty or more trout bask near the surface and sometimes it is possible to see large eels slide along the river bed.

⁴⁰ *Whare kai* - eating house.

The river provides stock and house water for bordering farms, and has always supplied food for the *tangata whenua*, but it has been much more than a source of physical sustenance to Māori, for whom the river is part of the connectedness of all animate and inanimate things. The Maori sense of the river is that it is the blood of Papatuanuku, the earth mother. Behind that feeling is an awareness of the most ancient and *tapu*⁴¹ state of pre-existence when “*He wai katoa*” -- all was water, and Io dwelt in darkness before he created the world. To Māori, the water of a river is not simply a useful concatenation of hydrogen and oxygen molecules, but is something that possesses both *mauri*⁴², the power to give life, and ⁴³*wairua*, its own being and spirit. If a river is contaminated, its *mauri* is reduced. The *tangata whenua* want to see rivers in a state as close as possible to *waiora*⁴⁴, water so pure that it can be used for ritual purposes. Water so pristine is hard to find. Most river water is *wai Māori*⁴⁵, suitable for drinking and washing. The worst state a river can be in is to become *waimate*, or *waikura*⁴⁶, stagnant, or so polluted it is no longer capable of sustaining life.

At the time the case began, some people felt the Mangakahia River was on its way to being close to *waimate*. One farmer in the area said he had a rain water system installed in his sharemilker’s house when tests showed the river water was unsafe for human consumption, and the pollutants were so bad that they could not be adequately filtered out. Several other residents remarked that so much water was drawn off upstream that there was not

⁴¹ *Tapu*: Sacred; set apart.

⁴² *Mauri*: Life force

⁴³ *Wairua*: spirit

⁴⁴ *Waiora* usually refers to rainwater caught before it touches the earth.

⁴⁵ *Wai māori*, literally “common water”; from springs and rivers, used for everyday purposes.

⁴⁶ *Waimate*, literally “death water” or “dead water”.

enough for their domestic needs downstream. Māori noted that the river was no longer able to supply the *tuna*⁴⁷ and watercress for big *hui*⁴⁸ as it had done in the past, to the great detriment of their *mana*⁴⁹. To summarise a whole litany of different observations, the river had become a dumping ground for household rubbish and dead animals, and was contaminated by the run-off from paddocks and milking sheds.

Because this case is essentially about the opposing points of view of Māori and pakeha, some description of the state of relations between the two parties before the case began would have been useful, but by the time this research started, the case had coloured feelings between the parties into dark shades. The best I can come to is that there was an uneasy acceptance on both sides and little understanding on either, although a *kaumatua*⁵⁰ who took me and my research under his wing denied strongly that Māori did not understand the pakeha. He said that Māori had spent two hundred years observing the ways of the white man, but the pakeha had never repaid the compliment (2 April, 1999). That remark did not, at first, appear germane to this case, but as I studied the discourse in the deposition of the same *kaumatua*, I came to see its relevance.

This section has described the setting of the story of the Mangakahia River. The next section outlines the immediate cause of the confrontation and begins the textual analysis.

⁴⁷ *Tuna* are eels.

⁴⁸ *Hui* are meetings, gatherings for discussion, which by custom take as long required to reach consensus. Consensus is not always possible these days.

⁴⁹ *Mana*: Honour.

⁵⁰ *Kaumatua*, a teacher, a wise man, an elder.

8.2 Theme 1: Clash of the cultures

In 1993, the company that was then the Northland Co-operative Dairy Company owned three dairy factories in Northland. The biggest and newest, located at Kauri, a little way north of Whangarei, had meant a massive capital outlay for the company, which needed to increase productivity to service its debt. At the same time, improvements in dairy technology meant the factories could handle peak production all year round, but the plants operated below capacity for ten months of the year because of the pattern of milking that prevailed on Northland dairy farms.

The dairy company responded to this situation by offering dairy farmers financial incentives to keep their cows milking longer, so that milk production would be more even throughout the year. To farmers, the equation was simple: more grass equalled more milk. More grass, however, required freedom from the pressures of Northland's long dry summers. Twenty-four farmers in the Mangakahia Valley decided to obtain that freedom by installing irrigation systems on their farms and abstracting water for the irrigation from the nearby Mangakahia River.

The study of the discourse in the case begins with Texts 8.1.1 and 8.1.2, extracts from a letter from the dairy company to the Northland Regional Council. The letter as a whole shows the economic argument behind the company's support of the farmers' proposed irrigation project. Although the farmers applied to the Northland Regional Council for resource consents in April 1993, and this document was written in July 1993, the content of the letter is the precursor of the whole story in the sense that it presents the organisational drive for increased milk production that began the case. The text has therefore been taken out of chronological order and used as the foundation of the case study.

(c) **Effects of Irrigation on Milk Production**

The effects of irrigation and changes to farm management techniques which it allows can be seen from the attached figure.

From the existing resource (i.e. same number of cows) peak milk production should increase approximately 15%. The major benefits of irrigation are gained from large increases on the shoulder of the curve (i.e. from December to April) and production throughout the winter months (April to August). Total increase in milk production should be approximately 250M litres per annum (33% increase).

(d) **Effects on Northland Economy**

The effect of this project on Northland's economy will be beneficial.

Over the next three to five years on farm expenditure through the construction of dams and installation of irrigation systems is estimated to be between \$120M to \$150M. The majority of the work can be sourced from within the Northland area. Increased production per cow will improve farmer income. More efficient use of dairy company plants in processing the increased milk flow will have additional benefits of approximately \$20M in shareholder payouts.

The ongoing benefit to Northland is estimated at \$120M annually.

Failure to improve milk production will have a negative effect on the economy.

We do not wish to be heard on this submission but request that your Regional Council carefully consider the economical benefits to the Northland community which will result from this project when considering this application.

Yours faithfully



T S Bartells
Milk Supply Manager
NORTHLAND CO-OPERATIVE DAIRY CO LIMITED

cc: Mr Murray Douglas, RD2, Whangarei

The letter which yielded Texts 8.1.1 and 8.1.2 was produced within one organisation for consumption by another. Although tone and layout stay within the conventions of a standard formal business style, the purpose of the letter is essentially persuasive, arguing for the proposed irrigation scheme by presenting its potential benefits for Northland. The persuasive voice is that of a corporate identity: "*Northland Co-Operative Dairy Company Ltd (NCDC) wish to register their support . . .*" and "*NCDC has three plants . . .*" for although the letter is signed off by the "Milk Supply Manager⁵¹", the animator of this text is clearly company interests, not the writer. The basis of the persuasion is that what is good for the company will necessarily be good for Northland. The text is so structured that each brief paragraph deals with one set of facts that lead towards the logic of the third paragraph: "*There is therefore a need to improve milk production. Failure to do so may have serious effects on the Northland Dairy industry and Northland economy.*" The strong business ideology in this text is juxtaposed with the threatening words "*Failure to do so . . .*" although the threat is mitigated somewhat by the possibilities implied in the modal verb "*may*". Modality here creates a soft landing for the reader, but it is, in fact, the caution of the expert who knows best, but who hedges to obviate potential loss of face in case the "*serious effects*" do not transpire.

An argument on the grounds of economic benefits in a region of high unemployment like Northland is hard to gainsay and leads to an assumption that economic improvement must be a universal goal of the people of Northland, and further, that all Northlanders will benefit. The reader is interpolated in this text as a reasonable person who would agree with that

⁵¹ It would be more usual for this sort of letter between organisations to have been signed off by the Chief Executive Officer of the company, but he was one of the applicants for resource consent, although his name did not appear on any company documents in the archive.

goal. Writers make choices to include or exclude material (Fairclough, 1992), and this text significantly excludes any mention of the environment. The discourse drawn upon in the letter is entirely economic, and the Mangakahia River does not figure except indirectly as “*WATER RIGHT NOS. 5010 – 5033*”. The waters of the river are treated as a commodity which can be used for economic gain as Text 8.1.2 shows.

In Text 8.1.2, section (c) sets out the estimated gains in milk production, leading to section (d), which is a discourse “sandwich” made of two declarative statements, one positive, filled with notions about large increases in money flowing into Northland, and one negative. The declarative statement on the top of the sandwich is substantiated by the argument in the filling, but the statement on the bottom is unsupported. Unmitigated by a modal verb, it reiterates the earlier threat: “*Failure to improve milk production will have a negative effect on the economy.*” Both statements are categorically authoritative. The filling uses declarative verbs in most sentences: “*expenditure . . . is estimated*”; “*increased production . . . will improve farmer income*”; “*more efficient use . . . will have additional benefits*”. The one exception is hedging over work for the Northland firms that could install the irrigation systems on the farms: “*The majority of the work can be sourced from within the Northland area*”. The hedging created by the modal verb creates uncertainty that the work that Northland firms are able to do will be, in the event, contracted to them. These points do not, however, weaken the conviction of the economic argument.

In the last paragraph of the letter, the writer introduces the possessive pronoun “*your*”, which addresses the general manager of the Northland Regional Council for the first time since the salutation. The second person suddenly assigns a personal responsibility to the general manager, whose council is charged with making a wise decision on behalf of Northland. The

The aim of this information document is to inform you of the intention of these farmers and to allow consultation to proceed so that we can ensure that the well being of the Mangakahia River is preserved. We wish to make efficient use of this resource for the benefit of all in the Mangakahia Valley.

Text 8.2.1 Extract of letter from Mangakahia Irrigation Committee to marae in the Mangakahia Valley

second person aligns with the first person plural, the “we” speaking on behalf of the company. But the commonality promoted by the personal pronouns is also an expression of power. One economically powerful organisation is assuming friendly relations with the general manager of another and requesting that “her” regional council “*will carefully consider the economic benefits to the Northland community*”. The text explicitly colonises environmental discourses with the ethos of business.

When the matter of changing calving and milking patterns in Northland was put to the farming community, a group of farmers went on a study tour in Tasmania, inspecting irrigation schemes there. The trip resulted in twenty-four applications to the Northland Regional Council for resource consents to abstract a total of 93,000 cubic metres of water from the Mangakahia River each day. According to a member of the consents staff at the council, the application was “naïve” (personal communication, 19 November, 1997) and the farmers were surprised and angered when they discovered that they could not abstract water from the river without consultation with *tangata whenua* and other interested parties.

In April 1993, the Mangakahia Irrigation Committee wrote to *marae* in the Mangakahia catchment area about the proposed irrigation project. Text 8.2.1 is an extract from this letter, which was the first communication between the farmers and the *tangata whenua*. The social relations constructed in the text place the farmers in a position of announcing their “*intention*” to the *tangata whenua*, which, taken with references to business throughout the letter, may reflect the farmers’ conscious awareness of their greater economic and social power in the relationship. The ambiguity of the personal pronoun “we” in the first sentence contributes to these relations of exclusion: the pronoun may include the *tangata whenua*, or it may refer to the farmers only, in which event the letter is notably patronising. In the second sentence, the use of

The projected requirements of these farms is a total daily requirement of 93275 cubic metres per day or 1.08 cubic metres per second.

Based on flow rate information gathered by the Northland Regional Council, the 5 year minimum average daily flow, as expressed in cubic metres per second, is 4.715. The requirement for proposed irrigation is 1.08 cubic metres per second, which is 23% of the average minimum daily flow of the river.

It is current Regional Council policy to base allocations on the best available estimate of lowest mean daily flow that has the probability of occurring once every five years. The flow at any give site on a river or stream should over many years, in theory, exceed the one in five year estimate 99.95% of the time.

Text 8.2.2 Extract from letter from the Mangakahia Irrigation Committee to marae in the Mangakahia Valley

“we” is less equivocal: the farmers have excluded the *tangata whenua* from the wish to make “efficient use of the resource” and have assumed distribution of the benefits of irrigation to the inhabitants of the Mangakahia Valley.

In terms of this case, the most salient word in Text 8.2.1 is “resource”. The Mangakahia River was shortly to become (in part, because of the letter from which this text is extracted) the site of a fierce cultural struggle. Even in English, the word “resource” is an abstract way to signify “river”. It takes the river out of nature and into the realm of the consumable commodities of business, and combined with “efficient use” it introduces the discourse of machine technology. Machines and resources alike are controlled and managed. This text makes the river a commodity that will be managed so that its “well being is preserved.”

Tangata whenua found the description of the river “hurtful” (personal communication, 26 April, 1998), but they were more annoyed by the choice of a letter for first contact. Māori are a people who prefer unmediated communication. “See, we are not people for letters or even the telephone,” a *kaumatua* told me. “Neighbours should come and talk about these things ... be upfront. The first we heard was that letter”, (personal communication, 23 April, 1998). Another participant said to me, “I chanced to call at my sister’s house, and there was this letter, the first thing we knew. I was so angry, I didn’t even think how much water, I just said to [my wife] ‘Put in an objection!’” (personal communication, 27 September, 1997).

The message itself was also fairly meaningless to the audience. Text 8.2.2 shows the amount of water the farmers intended to abstract, and gives the technical details of how that would affect the flow if the irrigation project were to go ahead. To the audience of the letter, details of flow rates were abstract and expressed in techno-scientific language that obscured the essence of what was being said. Ninety-three thousand cubic metres is a lot

of water, but one participant said it meant “about as much as hearing that the farmers wanted to make a cup of tea” (personal communication, 27 September, 1997). This participant worked for Telecom. He had supervised the digging of a lot of cable trenches and could form a mental picture of ninety thousand cubic metres of earth. He said to me, “My people were hearing that it was so much of the lowest flow in five years, and they were going, ‘Oh that’s not much, that’s OK.’ But I thought, ‘Hell, that’s a lot of water’, and I said to them, ‘Think how far it is to the Poroti pub. It’s nine kilometres. Now think of the road. It’s about ten metres wide. Now think of it a metre deep in water.’ Then they got moving, because they could see what was going on” (personal communication, 27 September, 1997).

The image of the road to the pub at Poroti a metre deep in water is vivid. This is the voice of the lifeworld, grounded in experience and speaking the language of the audience. The participant who drew the analogy took the rôle of the “citizen scientist” who knows something instinctively and will continue to believe it despite any amount of technical data to the contrary (Irwin, 1995). In fact, the road-and-water picture is an erroneous way to think about the flow of a river, but the error underlying the image did not affect the audience who interpreted it. I have commented in chapters six and seven on the readability of technical data for the general population, and to dwell on this text in detail for the same output would be repetitive. I did, however, ask the Northland Regional Council about the wording of plans, and a consents officer told me this: “We aim to write scientifically for a reading age of twelve” (personal communication, 19 November, 1997). Informal reading tests (a short comprehension exercise with no particular science behind it) that I carried out suggested that people with specialised knowledge (graduates with degrees in science) understood the text completely and easily; colleagues with post-graduate degrees but no graduate science “got the gist that the river would be OK” (personal

River Protection

The potential irrigation users suggest the following to ensure the river is protected.

1. A measuring staff under the Mangakahia Bridge at Titoki to allow monitoring of the river flow during dry periods. This will need to be followed by accurate measurements when minimum flows are reached.
2. Initially farmers would aim to pump at night to ensure that the most efficient use is made of the water and that the least expensive power could be used. When the river level drops towards the minimum level a roster system would come into place to ensure pumping would be over a 24 hour period.
3. When the river level reaches the minimum allowable over 24 hours, then a rationing system would come into force to prevent the river from dropping below the minimum allowable level. Under severe drought conditions, all pumping would eventually stop.
4. Negotiations are currently underway to get the night rate power extended over a longer period as this would allow the pumping times to be extended, resulting in a more even withdrawal from the river.
5. It is proposed to take water from the Mangakahia River by means of a screened pipe as opposed to a weir across the river.

Benefits of Irrigation

1. Weed Control: Because of improved pasture competition, weeds such as thistles, ragwort and blackberry will find it more difficult to become established.
2. Herbicide use will decrease on irrigated pasture due to reduction in weed numbers.
3. Pasture damage from insects such as crickets and black beetle will be reduced.
4. The reduction in herbicide and insecticide use will decrease the likelihood of these products reaching the river.
5. Better pasture will mean less over-grazing and erosion will be reduced. Leaching of fertilisers into the river will be decreased.
6. On farm productivity will increase which will allow further employment both on farms, and in supporting industries.
7. Employment opportunities will be increased in the manufacture and installation of the irrigation schemes.

Summary

The people interested in irrigation intend to file the water right applications with the Northland Regional Council towards the end of May 1993. The applicants will request a water right for 25 years. This is necessary due to the large capital cost of the scheme.

Text 8.2.3 Extract from letter from the Mangakahia Irrigation Committee to local marae.

communication, 7 March, 2000) and others (students in an adult Business Communication class) varied from “figuring it out” to saying, “Haven’t a clue; can’t be bothered; would wait for someone to tell me what it means” (personal communications, 9 March, 2000). All had estimated reading ages well above twelve, and all found ninety thousand cubic metres of anything hard to envisage.

The letter as a whole was structured around the farmers’ problem (drought, poor grass growth) and its solution (take ninety-three thousand cubic metres of water per day from the resource nearby). The lists in Text 8.2.3 sum up problem-solution logic in the letter. The list headed “*River Protection*” places the farmers in the text as social actors – “*farmers would aim to pump*” – but excludes the social actors who will carry out the specific tasks. The list, in fact, is the outline of a system, and it seems that “*the system*” will be agentless. The suggestions for protecting the river tend to be couched in the conditional mood, although the condition is implied: “*Farmers would aim to pump at night*”; “*A roster system would come into place*”. The conditional mood creates doubt and uncertainty, and like all modality, reflects the degree of commitment to the truth of a statement (Fairclough, 2003). This text makes it fair to question, therefore, at what point “the system” would decide that a drought had become sufficiently severe to stop pumping. By contrast, the list setting out the benefits of irrigation is declarative: “*Weeds . . . will find it more difficult to become established*”; “*Herbicide use will decrease*”. These benefits to farmland are offered as truths that will be accomplished by irrigation, which is understood as the agent behind such nominalisations as “*reduction in weed numbers*”; “*the reduction in herbicide use*”; “*On farm productivity*”; “*employment opportunities*”.

It is impossible to say that these three texts reveal the whole attitude of the farmers to the river, but it is certainly fair to assert that their public discourse

constructed a *self* that was engaged in the most pragmatic of ways with the river as a resource. On the one hand, their letter is full of intertextual references to business that remind the reader that by the 1990s, many farms had become limited companies. On the other hand, the text does not present the business *self* as the chief beneficiary of the proposed irrigation scheme. Rather, the farms, and to a lesser extent the Mangakahia River, are presented as the beneficiaries of irrigation: “*Better pasture will mean less over-grazing and erosion will be decreased. Leaching of fertilisers into the river will be decreased.*” The farmers’ connection to the land is expressed as a solution to problems like black beetle and crickets. As the case developed, this feeling for keeping the land in good heart emerged as a sub-text in the dominant discourses of science and business, and was embedded in the discourse of the case as a cultural value of equal importance in the social formation of New Zealand to the animism of the Māori.

8.3 Theme 2: **Whakarongo mai ra nga iwi
i nga tangi o te iwi
mo te taonga tuku iho eee⁵²**

From the *waiata*⁵³ of the *kaumatua*

The organisation of this case study has never been strongly chronological, and from this point, its progress is strictly thematic. I have already pointed out that the archive contained material from pakeha who opposed the application with reasons that were as pragmatic as those of the people who wanted to abstract the water from the river. The themes that emerged from the archive did not seem so much “for” and “against” the application

⁵² Listen all you people to the cries of us of Mangakahia for this treasure from our *tupuna*.

⁵³ *Waiata*: Prayer; song; prayerful poem.

(although they were certainly that as well) as completely Māori or completely pakeha. It was suggested to me by a participant that conceptualising the corpus in such simplistic themes could seem racially divisive. I considered this caution carefully, but the corpus obdurately refused to settle into any other shape. What follows in this section, therefore, is an examination of the discourse prepared by the *tangata whenua*.

The message in the body of Text 8.3, a request for an extension of the deadline for submissions, is not relevant in this research, but two features of the letter stand out. The first element is lexical: the use of *te reo Māori* in the salutation and close of the letter. The Māori greeting and farewell fall into the category of phatic communion (Malinowski, 1922/1960; 1923/1956). Phatic communion consists of those more or less untranslatable expressions (*tena koe* means something like, “There you are”), important to relationships because they acknowledge the presence of the other person, but not literally meaningful, and sometimes not even literally sensible. Like all phatic communion, the expressions are politeness markers, but more than that, they assert the Māori-ness of the writer because they are couched in *te reo*. Nearly all New Zealanders learn the greeting “*Kia Ora*⁵⁴”, but understanding that “*tena koe*” must be used to a singular audience requires teaching or insider knowledge. In this context, a standard business letter, “*Tena koe*” and “*Hei oi ano*” separate the writer from her audience, and establish a Māori ethos that is not only that of an individual administration officer of the *rōpu*⁵⁵ *takiwa*⁵⁶, but of a whole culture behind her.

⁵⁴ *Kia ora*: a greeting commonly used for “hello”; also used as assent to or approval of a pronouncement.

⁵⁵ *Ropu*: group

⁵⁶ *Takiwa*: area, district.

Paere Pou (translated by Wallace Pou): Thanks for the opportunity to speak. All here opposed to the irrigation scheme.

^{ēr}
Peta'Poa (translated by Wallace Pou): Recognises the farmers (the applicants). States he believes this meeting called as part of the consultation process. Feels Maori people have been treated with great insensitivity. Feels part of the consultation process is understanding each other and this part of that understanding has been walked over - feel insulted they hadn't been welcomed in to the meeting - all they ask, as partners in the land, is to be treated accordingly - same opinion as the two previous speakers.

Text 8.4.1 Extract from the minutes of meeting of concerned parties at the Portobello Motor Inn

However, the visual declaration of Māori-ness is even more immediately striking than the lexical features of the text. Logos combine lexical and visual elements to provide instant identification both of and with the company they represent. The logo in this text is powerfully Māori, but even another Māori would need to know Mangakahia well to understand the significance of the individual elements of the design. The mountain depicted is the Three Kings, with the Mangakahia River flowing in front of it, under the twin bridges north of Pakotai. Behind the mountain, Rangi the ancestor fills the sky with the rays of new life and the sign of Māori renaissance in Mangakahia. The road winds through the valley northwards, over the bridges towards Reinga and the meeting of the oceans, where Māori believe the souls of the dead leave Aotearoa New Zealand for Hawai-iki and eternal rest. The designer hoped that the logo would be a rallying-point for the *tangata whenua* of the Mangakahia Valley (personal communication, 13 April, 2000). This logo, not so much a brand as a banner, simultaneously attracts attention and excludes the outsider. It certainly creates a generic Māori identity, perhaps even a specific one, and in doing so positions pakeha as outsiders.

Assertion of a Māori *self* accentuates difference between the parties and marks the beginning of a struggle over communication norms and the meaning of protocol as much as over cultural values associated with the river. Text 8.4, the minutes of a meeting organised by the Northland Regional Council between the Mangakahia Irrigation Committee and representatives of the *iwi*, shows an attempt to assert a different authorised discourse and represents the gathering strength of the Māori presence in the case. The meeting took place in the conference room of a local hotel, and the representatives of the *iwi* arrived expecting that the meeting convenors

Peter Pou: I spoke so that we are of one frame of mind - don't go to battle running elsewhere, keep together. We talk for Maori. We totally withdraw from the meeting at this time.

The iwi delegation left at this point and the workshop meeting to discuss issues and options with Maori representatives did not really begin.

Text 8.4.2 Extract from the minutes of the meeting of concerned parties at the Portobello Motor Inn

would follow Māori protocols for welcoming *manahiri*⁵⁷ and lifting *tapu*.

When the protocols were not observed, the senior Māori present is recorded as speaking the following words in *te reo*: “*Feels Māori people have been treated with great insensitivity. Feels part of the consultation process is understanding each other and this part of that understanding has been walked over – feels insulted they hadn’t been welcomed in to the meeting – all they ask, as partners in the land, is to be treated accordingly.*”

Like most minutes, the texts in the 8.4 group deal with concrete actions, attributed rather than direct speech, and actions reported in the passive rather than the active voice. These minutes are difficult to analyse because the most pivotal speech recorded is notes from a translation, but perhaps it is worth remarking that the minutes move from active to passive and back to active again, depending on whose actions are noted. For instance, the emotions of the *kaumatua* are recorded in the active voice: he actively “*feels*” a number of things. The cause of his emotions is, however, presented in an agentless passive which excludes the people who have “walked over this part of the understanding”. The *kaumatua*, and by association, the other Māori, are actors in the event, but actors caught in a pervasively negative light, for extrapolation leads an interpreter to see that the meeting was adjourned because of what the *kaumatua* felt.

Many pakeha at the meeting interpreted the use of *te reo* as an exercise of power and insistence on correct *tikanga* as a ploy to buy time in the resource consent process (personal communication, 24 September, 1999). To work with that view alone, however, diminishes the practices of Māori culture to the level of being merely a political strategy. Perhaps they were that as well,

⁵⁷ *Manahiri*: guests; strangers.

but using the Māori language and pointing out breaches in Māori protocol were also lines drawn in the sand delineating identity and the future form of social relations in the partnership. Māori moved - "*The iwi delegation left at this point . . .*" - and spoke - "*We speak for Māori.*" - as a cohesive group under the leadership of the *kaumatua*.

The conjuncture of social practices around resource consents incorporates the Māori perspective of life and values the *reo* as another *taonga*, but what is established as law can be very different from the lived experience of citizens encountering the legal processes for the first time. The meeting developed "difficult" (personal communication, 27 September, 1997) social relations in the dispute over the Mangakahia River along certain lines, in that it provoked strong reaction from some pakeha. Prevailing social customs among pakeha prompted the reaction "It was so rude," which sometimes transmuted into "Let's face it, they are rude," (personal communication, 25 March, 2000). Generalisation from the particular to the universal developed an "us" and "them" perception of the forms of social relations possible in the future: both sides have judged the other as uncaring of important matters of social conventions.

Fairclough (2003, p. 152) says that "particular spatio-temporalities are interlinked with particular social relations and social identities." The minutes record the space and time at which the meeting took place: "*Meeting held on 15 December 1993 at Portobello Motor Inn commencing at 1.15PM*", but underlying these western concepts are spatial and temporal constructs from Māori culture. The space in which this event took place was the conference room of a local motel, but it was also, for the purposes of the meeting, a *whare hui*⁵⁸. The expectations of the Māori group meant that they carried

⁵⁸ *Whare hui*: meeting house.

Whakapapa is very important for this case in that it proves those people that are speaking against irrigation have years of direct experience of the river behind them, not them personally, but their ancestors before that, I will go right back to when my people first came into that area. Full 500 years or 25 generations I know through my Whakapapa, we have been in the valley. I can go back as far as my ancestor Kupe and come right down to where we are now in my Whakapapa. However, there are links there that I will not reveal in this brief which are outside that direct line of descent from Kupe and because they have a special and sacred significance. This is why a lot of us, especially the older generation, are very guarded about their Whakapapa. It is something we do not talk of quite easily but in this very important case I am quite willing to come forward with it with my knowledge of my Whakapapa. However, if there is anything I have to prove about my Whakapapa in that special respect I am willing to do so in private. My concern is the possible uses or exploitation of my special knowledge by outsiders if it becomes part of public record.

Text 8.5.1 Extract from the deposition of the kaumatua discussing his whakapapa

their traditional space with them into a meeting that was “neutral” to the other meeting participants. Two constructions of time operated as well. The simple present tense used – “recognises”, “believes”, “feels” - denotes continuous “undelimited” time, to use Fairclough’s word (2003, p. 152), in which the action specified continues indefinitely and everywhere. A relationship is built between the near-past, established in the perfect tense - “has been walked over”; “have been treated” - and the on-going present. With the words, “All they ask . . . is to be treated accordingly” the speaker uses the infinitive of the verb “to be” in a modal construction that implies a “should”: “Māori should be treated as partners and their *tikanga*⁵⁹ respected.”

As the Māori voice in the case strengthened, other texts were produced that expressed the Māori perspective on life, relationships and nature. One such document in the archive, the deposition of a *kaumatua* to the planning tribunal in Wellington, produced the texts in the 8.5 series. The whole of the deposition is a “fabula” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 82), a story which presents material for effect rather than logic, and builds the actors in the story into individuals with idiosyncratic points of view (Fairclough, 2003).

Text 8.5.1 comes from the beginning of the fabula, which opened with the *whakapapa* of the *kaumatua*. A *whakapapa* is a *taonga* in its own right, and not something, as the *kaumatua* points out, that is lightly shared: “My concern is the possible uses or exploitation of my special knowledge by outsiders if it becomes part of public record.” In terms of social practice, telling the *whakapapa* in the context of a legal brief puts the teller at risk in his own culture: in textual terms, it brings the traditions of the Māori into the courtroom. The internal conflict the *kaumatua* expresses about sharing the *whakapapa* is typical of the difficulties that Māori elders face in cases such as this in Northland (personal

⁵⁹ *Tikanga*: practices, customs, protocols.

provided, but on terms that we looked after it. We made sure it was not devastated. Historically, if we wanted to take from nature, we went through rituals to get that things. We asked nature before we could take anything. For example, if it was a tree we wanted, we took maybe two or three weeks of prayer and ritual before we were satisfied that nature had said yes to us. We never went out and just took something. Even if we wanted to clear a bit of land, there were rituals connected with it. It may have taken months until signs of nature showed us it was okay. We certainly would never have done things the way they are doing today in the Pakeha world. Today people just go and plant trees. People just go and cut scrub down. In the old days we would have seen that as a violation of nature's trust in our and our role as nature's vigilant guardians.

In my understanding, the Pakeha concept of land ownership is a very different thing. Most Pakeha see land as a thing, a resource with no value of its own, except as you farm it to make money out of it.

That is not the Maori concept. We make a living from our land, if we can, but as it provides for us, we care for it. We do not feel ourselves to own it in the Pakeha sense, rather, we belong to it in a spiritual sense. As my ancestors have lived on this land for many many generations, so I live on it now and so I fully expect that my children and my mokupaunas will live upon it in the future.

We do not own it and then sell it off or subdivide or what have you.

Of course, with the Pakeha coming here, we had to apply to the Courts to own some of it in Pakeha terms so we could hold on to it, but that did not change its significance for us, to this very day.

The river in maori terms, in spiritual terms, is a link between the physical and spiritual life of all humans, of all living things. It has not only a spiritual and economic aspect, but most importantly a spiritual impact and link to us.

The consequences of irrigation are ecological, spiritual, physical and economic. That sums up my feelings about the whole situation.

Text 8.5.2 Extract from the Kaumatua's deposition, discussing differences between Māori and pakeha attitudes to the land.

communication, 24 January, 2004). *Kaumātua* are simultaneously constrained by their culture to keep arcane knowledge sacred, yet are also compelled to share their knowledge to save the culture and its *taonga*.

Reciting the *whakapapa* establishes the *kaumātua* as a character in the fabula, one whose strong convictions about the river stir him to act when other elders would not, though he assigns no blame to others for following their beliefs: “*I understand the reluctance of our Kaumātua Maunga Tou and some of our other witnesses to put in writing and in English this highly sacred material. I had to do a lot of soul searching before I felt able to have this brief put into written form . . .*”. If the fabula needed a hero, it now has one. The hero has changed custom by enabling an oral tradition to be re-made and re-packaged to suit the pakeha way. The deposition, however, remains close to the oral form of its Māori original, and resonates here and there with a poetic quality. The rhythm and oratorical quality of phrases like “*Full 500 years*” fixes attention on the duration of his family’s association with the valley and the river.

The Resource Management Act (1991) consciously includes the beliefs of Māori culture in considerations of the environment, yet by its accommodation, places Māori concerns and beliefs outside the mainstream and marks them as different. The *kaumātua*’s discussion of his *whakapapa* in Text 8.5.1 draws the boundaries of the different ways in which Māori and pakeha relate to the material world to establish social relations as well. A *whakapapa* establishes a sense of order based on rights deriving from lineage. Although the deposition shares deeply sacred things, it also emphasises cultural difference, without necessarily being an invitation to dialogue in the richest sense of the term. Text 8.5.2, for instance, presents traditional Māori environmental practices positively and pakeha environmental practices negatively. Throughout the text, what “*we*” do is juxtaposed with what “*people*” do.

The river is also tapu because of its association with funeral ceremonies. In those days they washed the bodies in that river to give them a divine cloak. That is the reason there is this close relationship between the river and the cemetery. Parakao is where the cemetery is and the name of the cemetery is Aputahira and that name came from my Tupuna who lived 25 generations ago. She was the one who named that. In the particular area where that waahi tapu is the land is called Kawheru which is not on the maps today, and not used, but we all know though history handed down to us that particular area. It is named after a taniwha who inhabits or rests in that area. Kawheru was a taniwha in the form of a female bird (shag) and was only seen when people of that area died. I believe this particular bird that I referred to as the Kawheru was a beautiful bird, a much larger species than any other birds we have today resembling a shag. When there were people of my area living outside of the area she was the one that brought the news that a family member or a relation that had died. This is according to stories told to me and I believe them. My dad experienced it himself. He has told us from where we lived they would hear the roar like a wave coming up the river and at the top of this wave sat that bird. The wave would come all the way up the river and only start to peter out when it got to this cemetery. Then they knew a relation had died. They didn't know who it was but they knew someone had died elsewhere. Sometimes they would just hear the roar around just below the cemetery where another river runs into the Mangakahia River. This is where that bird lived, not so much lived but rested on her many journeys. On other occasions if they saw that bird flying around then land, they knew it was a death of a family member in that area. That was the tapu sign and that place was very tapu. Today through the misuse, part of it is under European ownership and they use it as though there was nothing there but we still revere the place.

I wouldn't say I was afraid of the place but every time I go there I remember the stories I have heard. Kawheru was the one that brought also tidings not only of death but of sickness unto death, prompting the people to go around and ask about who it was and in many cases they died.

So that is a significant part of that river that I know. Further up the river and further down the river there are many stories but they would have to be related by their kamatuas. In my particular area, these are facts and events that go to establish the close relationship between the river, the cemetery and the area where the people lived. Kawheru was the name of the area that people lived in. Aputahira was the name of

Text 8.5.3 Extract from the kaumatua's deposition

Text 8.5.3 is included in the corpus more because of its content than because of its textual features. It sets out special knowledge of the *tangata whenua*. For example: “*In those days they washed the bodies in that river to give them a divine cloak. . . . In the particular area where that waahi tapu is the land is called Kawheru which is not on the maps today, and not used, but we all know through history handed down to us that particular area . . . Kawheru was named after a taniwha who inhabits or rests in that area.*”

Belief systems like this underpin the values that provide structure in traditional Māori society and form enduring backgrounds to the practices of everyday life. Such value structures do change with the action of social life, but usually only slowly (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). The conjuncture of practices connected with resource consents caused the value structures of the Māori and farming cultures in the Mangakahia Valley to confront one another, so that citizens brought deeply-held beliefs into the public sphere as part of their attempts to influence policy. Whether social change has resulted is not clear. Attitudes to the river have not: one farmer, for instance, having heard the Māori story of the river, maintained that irrigation was, “Rain. It’s just rain from the river. I get tired of looking at skinny cows in the summer. We have to care for our stock properly.” The Māori response was: “When she [the farmer] said that, I said to her, ‘You care more for your cows than for our whole people.’ It went over the top of her head” (personal communication, 27 September, 1997).

Text 8.6 is an extract from a policy statement in an environmental plan and represents an important shift in the ethos of the Māori *self* that is being constructed in this case. It is difficult to characterise the style of this text as typical of the policy genre, but I must qualify that statement by adding the rider, “typical of the policy genre that is common in western organisations”. Discourse is not only produced, it is also consumed, and in this case, the

Environmental Concerns

Maori principles of holistic environmental management have evolved across time and space through a fusion of observation and experience over a thousand years. Their special relationship to the land - an elemental symbiosis crucial to their survival - is being threatened with increasing regularity by governmental policies driven by outright greed and the desire to seek control over the natural world. One reason they are on the frontlines of environmental degradation is that they own and inhabit almost all of this country's most valuable lands. The crucial issue of whether we continue to survive or die is the issue of whether or not the indigenous Maori people can begin to deepen their culture and recall their wisdom and genius into the world again. It is a question of Non-Maori learning from Maori culture if it is to survive and activate different levels of human genius and capacity.

Text 8.6 Extract from the Nga Hapu o Mangakahia Plan for the Whangarei District and Northland Regional Councils

intended consumers were two western organisations, the Whangarei District Council and the Northland Regional Council. The analysis is, therefore, more oriented towards possible interpretations than towards its production. In fact, verifying anything about the production of the plan was impossible, because the process by which the document came to be written was not disclosed, nor did the members of the Komiti to whom I spoke answer direct questions about the content. However, because the text is policy, I have assumed, in the analysis that follows, that any conflict regarding its content was negotiated before the document took its final form, and that what was published in the document as the basis of the action plans that follow is the consensual opinion of the authors, the Mangakahia Māori Komiti. Contrary to this consensus, some people in the valley darkly attributed the voice in the plan to unnamed “*radicals*” (personal communication, 24 September, 1999) who were thought to have joined the fight over the river for the sake of “*stirring*”.

Because the purpose of policy is to drive action, it could (some, operating from a western perspective, will say “should”) be accompanied by, or referenced to, rigorous analysis of relevant data that would validate the position it advocates. Text 8.6 operates at a high level of abstraction from concrete facts, in the sense that “concrete facts” might be considered verifiable by reference to research. It does, however, propose many ideas as facts. In a sentence picked at random, three facts are declared, the threat, the source of the threat, and the motive for the threat: “*Their special relationship to the land . . . is being threatened with increasing regularity by governmental policies driven by outright greed and the desire to seek control over the natural world.*” The facts are asserted boldly, with no hedging. In contrast to the strength of the declarative mood, the passive voice attributes blame in a general way through agents that are named, but somewhat nebulous: “*governmental policies*” and “*outright greed and the desire to control . . .*”. Some expressions

circulate in a ready-made formula (Fairclough, 2003), so embedded in everyday thinking that they are seldom questioned. Two such expressions may well be “government policies” and “outright greed”, both of which bear examination: *which* policies? *what* instances of outright greed?

The global organisation of the text is problem-solution: the first sentence introduces the main topic, then the problem is set out – “*Their special relationship to the land . . . is being threatened . . .*” The solution is provided in the last sentence – “*It is a question of Non-Māori learning from Māori culture if it is to survive and activate different levels of human genius and capacity.*” The solution, however, is given in a conditional form, from which it is possible to infer that if non-Māori fail to learn, then blame will continue to lie where it has been assigned. The text is based on the propositional assumption that Māori environmental management principles are good, and that by contrast, other forms of (non-Māori) environmental management are not.

Assumptions reduce the number of perspectives available in a text (Fairclough, 2003). The dualist nature of the assumptions in Text 8.6 opposes Māori to non-Māori with certainty, and directs the reader to accept an implicit ideology which reduces any possibility of dialogue over either the identified problem and or the proposed solution. The assumptions on which the text is based also limit the range of possibilities for specific environmental action to those that fit the “*Māori principles of holistic environmental management*”.

The relations of difference established in the text pivot on the issue of power. Behind the “*governmental policies*” is power that has been used to threaten the bond of Māori to the land. The difference created here is that of disempowered superiority in environmental understanding opposing empowered inferiority. The categorisation shapes and positions non-Māori in the discourse as environmental malefactors, and simultaneously creates a

Māori *self* who is in a right relationship with the land. On the one hand, the *self* that is confidently created in the text is claiming the right to power, but on the other hand, the text positions the same Māori self as a supplicant, dependent on the willingness of non-Māori to learn. The text can be interpreted as perpetuating victimhood by setting up conditions for failure even as it claims victory.

The texts in the 8.5 series, together with Text 8.6, are examples of the construction of a Māori identity, but the voices that speak have changed with the progress of the case. Text 8.5 is the voice of the *kaumatua*, telling and teaching, offering the story of the river as sufficient persuasion to convince the audience of its intrinsic worth, and simultaneously contrasting the wise environmental practices of the Māori to those of the pakeha. Text 8.6, on the other hand, promotes a specific racial ideology and implicitly exhorts its audience to act in particular ways: Māori, for instance, *should* “*deepen their culture*”, and non-Māori *should* learn from Māori.

This section of the chapter has shown the reaction of Māori to the proposal to abstract water from the Mangakahia River, concentrating mainly on the construction of a Māori identity in the discourse. The next section is a discussion of the non-Māori reaction to the project.

8.4 Theme 3: Dollars for the public good

As the case developed, reactions among non-Maori divided into a group who supported and a group who opposed the application for resource consent. In texts produced by supporters and detractors alike, the discourse of business was strongly present, and both groups argued, from opposite directions, for potential benefits to the economy. Overall, this corpus of texts



**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
and INDUSTRY OF NORTHLAND (INC)**

27 July 1993

Mr R Elliott
Northland Regional Council
Whangarei

Dear Mr Elliott

Northland Coop Dairy Co Ltd - Irrigation Scheme

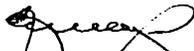
The Chamber of Commerce has followed with interest the Dairy Company's initiative to introduce irrigation to Northland dairy farms, to increase milk production in the dry summer months.

We acknowledge the effect the export income generated from Northlands 1800 dairy farms has on the Northland economy. During the last few years draughts have reduced potential milk production by 10% to 15%, which has reduced farmers income and the money available for injection into the Northland business environment.

The planned irrigation scheme, together with increased job opportunities, must therefore be encouraged to provide a much needed boost to the Northland economy.

We would therefore add our support to the irrigation concept and in particular to the schemes planned for the Mangakahia area.

Yours faithfully,



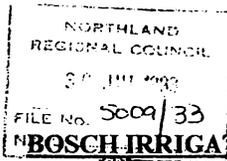
Graeme Martyn
Executive Officer

cc Chief Executive
Northland Cooperative Dairy Co Ltd

representing the non-Māori reaction is slight, because many of the documents in this part of the archive were similar in theme and not dissimilar in textual features. Accordingly, to avoid repetition, only four texts were selected for analysis.

The first two texts in this theme represent the opinions of those people who supported the project. Text 8.7, a letter from the Northland Chamber of Commerce to the Northland Regional Council, is organised to show the economy of Northland as a problem and the irrigation project as the solution. The premise of the argument for taking water from the Mangakahia River is the economic benefits to Northland of *“the export income generated from Northland’s 1800 dairy farms”*. The warrant for this line of reasoning is that *“During the last few years, draughts[sic] have reduced potential milk production by 10% to 15%, which has reduced farmers income and the money available for injection into the Northland business environment”* which leads to the claim that *“The planned irrigation scheme, together with increased job opportunities, must therefore be encouraged to provide a much needed boost to the Northland economy.”* Two propositional assumptions underpin this argument: first, that the irrigation scheme will allow the replacement of the lost income (an assumption by no means proven); and second, that focusing on the dairy industry is a useful way forward for curing with the problems in Northland’s economy. No ambivalence is permitted in this view of the irrigation project, for the modal form of the verb *“must . . . therefore be encouraged”* has the strength of an obligation.

This text is not the first example in this chapter of the colonisation of environmental issues by business and economic discourse, but it is one of the clearest. The instrumental logic driving the letter has replaced the environment as a whole with a commodity – irrigation – that can be produced from it and used to improve *“the Northland economy”* and *“the*



BOSCH IRRIGATION LIMITED

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2350

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MOBILE 023 985 343
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27/07/93

Northland Regional Council
WHANGAREI

RE APPLICATIONS FOR WATER RIGHTS FOR ABSTRACTIONS FROM THE MANGAKAHIA RIVER SYSTEM.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to express my support for the Mangakahia farmers' water right applications. In support I put forward the following points.

1. Of over 1000km of river and tributaries the abstractions will only occur in the last 90km of the rivers. Therefore over 90% of the rivers and streams of the catchment would remain absolutely unaffected by the draw-off.

2. There are 73kms of Mangakahia river from the first abstraction point at the Rika property to the last near the confluence with the Wairua. A conservative estimate of the the water stored in this length of river in the summer would be;

length x width x depth

73000 x 10 x 1.3 = 950,000 cubic metres

If 90,000 cubic metres of water was abstracted overnight, the effect on the river level would only be about 130mm.

3. The 90,000 cubic metres of water per day, when converted into milk would have a gross farm gate value in excess of \$2.7 million per year, which would flow directly into the local economy. This would inevitably lead to sustained increased employment, both on and off the farm.

4. I and my family have settled in Northland to set up a business to service the irrigation requirements of the Northland farmers. We envisage employing 12 full time staff and approximately 15 subcon tractors this year. I expect these numbers to double for 94-95. We have already injected over \$150,000 into the local economy, but the venture is entirely dependant on farmers obtaining access to water. The delays in granting water-rights, due to the enormous amount of red tape involved, have already caused us to shelve plans to set up a \$2.5M pipe extrusion plant that would have employed 14 local people.

I believe that the concept of irrigating dairy farms in Northland is one

Text 8.8 Letter from Bosch Irrigation supporting the irrigation scheme

Northland business environment” with no attention to the river. Some of the reason for the absence of the river from the text lies in the nominalisation of “*irrigation*”, which eliminates the processes of achieving irrigation (for example: placing a screened pipe, building a pumping station and abstracting the water) as well as the agents who will carry out the project and benefit from it. The material world of Northland has become abstract as a result of this nominalisation, and “*the Northland economy*”, which was already an abstraction, is transmuted into a concrete beneficiary which will get a “*boost*” as a result of planned irrigation schemes. The message of enhancing the economy created distrust and anger among the *tangata whenua*. The same participant who used the image of the road to the Poroti pub covered in water said, “Do they think we’re stupid? That project would never have done anything much for us; some casual labour for about a month, and that’d be it” (personal communication, 27 September, 1997).

Text 8.8, a letter from Bosch Irrigation Ltd, adds further weight to the argument in favour of the project. Like the previous text, paragraph 3 introduces the entity “*local economy*” an abstraction made concrete by the “\$2.7 million per year” that will flow into it. In an area like Northland, where unemployment and welfare are high and spending power is low, an argument that supports development in the economy is all but impossible to disagree with. Although the subordinate clause in the first sentence is marked with the temporal adverb “*when*”, it functions as a conditional clause: “*The 90,000 cubic metres of water per day, [if it were] converted to milk would have a gross farm gate value . . .*” followed by a clause in paratactic relation to the main clause: “*which would flow directly into the local economy.*” The flowing of the money, though dependent on converting water into milk, is represented as though the conversion is a given. Semantic relations between the first and second sentences are established by the demonstrative pronoun “*this*” in the second sentence, which allows elision of the



Introduction

Mangakahia Forests Limited was incorporated in 1983 to develop a Forest in the Western area of the Mid North, and to process the wood from this forest on maturity.

As Mangakahia Forests Limited was deemed to be a foreign company, the approval of the Ministers of Finance, and Lands was required for its incorporation, and subsequent operations.

The objectives of the Mangakahia Forests Limited, namely to establish a forest and processing plants to produce wood pulp, have some measure of approval from Central Government. The project as a whole was approved by the Minister of Finance, Lands and Forestry as Mangakahia was deemed to be a foreign company and required consents from these ministers to proceed with the project.

Comments on Consents

We are particularly concerned that the proposed draw off constitutes such a high proportion of the low summer flows, up to 60% of design drought flows, placing severe pressure on this water resource over a season when the resource is most sensitive to draw off.

The applications, if successful, would mean that no additional draw off could be taken against low summer flows. This would mean that any other water user would have to rely entirely on stored water from winter runoff. This is not practicable for many potential water uses.

In allocating a scarce resource such as water in Northland, we submit that the Northland Regional Council must consider not only existing consent holders, and the consent(s) under consideration, but also the potential future uses to which the resource may be put.

The consents in front of council seek to take all the allowable low summer river flows, and lock this up for a 25 year period, with no interim reviews of the consents.

The consents sought target the lowest cost option for water abstraction, with no regard for other potential users of the resource.

Text 8.9 Letter from Carter Holt Harvey opposing irrigation project.

conditional clause from the first sentence. These two conditional clauses function in the argument as propositional assumptions which foreground Northland's economy and legitimate the proposed irrigation project.

The thematic focus of Paragraph 4 changes from the Northland economy in general to the Northland economy in relation to writer of the letter. Themes emerge here about the businessman himself and what he could have offered the economy but for the "*enormous amount of red tape*" he encountered. The themes in the main clauses of the sentences show this businessman's agenda: he describes himself settling in Northland, employing twelve people, eventually doubling that number of employees, and injecting money into the economy: the themes could be summed up as "doing well by doing good". The last sentence, however, begins to develop a rather different theme: "sour grapes", because red tape made it all too difficult to continue with plans for the pipe extrusion factory. The themes show the commonsense assumptions about what is good for Northland: employment, money flowing into the economy. In developing the rationality of this argument, the writer of the letter has not referred to the environment. Like the author of the previous text, he has seen irrigation as a commodity that is produced and consumed and something that is unrelated (at least textually) to the Mangakahia River.

Among the non-Māori reactions, many of the parties who opposed the application for resource consent also used a business rationale to argue against the irrigation project. Text 8.9, part of a letter from a forestry division of Carter Holt Harvey, is among these. Its overall theme is actually one of "Hey, we're not ready yet, but what about us?" However, it is remarkable in that it introduces ideas of environmental justice, in the form of consideration for potential future users: "*In allocating a scarce resource such as water in Northland, we submit that the Northland Regional Council must consider not only existing consent holders, and the consent (s) under consideration, but also the*

potential future uses to which the research may be put." In a text composed in measured language, only this theme of time is associated with metaphor: the applicants wish to "*take . . . and lock up*" the resource. The metaphor implies a wish on the part of the applicants to capture and imprison this element of the environment: by contrast, the writers of the text wish to leave the resource free for many future users.

Another key theme in the text is the use of the river, which is detached both from its overall environment and also from its existence as a whole river. The fragmentation of the environment is achieved by the metonymic substitution of "*resource*" and "*water*" for "*river*". When the word "*river*" occurs, it is used as part of a nominalisation - "*low summer river flows*" - in which "*river*" has an adjectival function, qualifying "*flows*" and does not contribute to the concept of the river as an entity. The "*meanings of words and wording of meanings*" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 185) are significant here. Metonymy has removed the whole river from the text so that it can be conceptualised in small aspects of itself. These fractions of the river are commodified sub-sets of the river that do not require placement in the environment of the Mangakahia Valley: they can readily be dealt with in isolation in a text, or in a court room. In saying this, I admit to making a statement that could be taken as only tenuously grounded, because there is a sense in which water, and all other elements of the material world also, must be seen as a commodity: even Māori use the river for the well-being and sustenance of the people. Looked at in this way, any element of the environment is a commodity. In the context of this case, however, what is being contested in the discourse of resource consents is the very concept of what a river is or could be in *Aotearoa* New Zealand. Metonymic substitution allows the "*production*" and "*distribution*" of parts of the river for consumers.

2 Cobham Ave
Dargaville

1 August 1993

The General Manager,
Northland Regional Council,
Whangarei

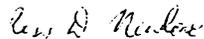
Dear Maclam

Re: Irrigation Water Rights

While not wishing to object to any individual application at present, I would like to make the following submissions:

1. That there should be no allocations of water, for irrigation of pasture, from major rivers and streams at times of minimum annual flow.
2. That storage of excess water flow for irrigation be encouraged wherever possible.
3. That your Council postpone any water allocations, at time of minimum flow, until an assessment has been made of the likely future demand for irrigation water, compared with the availability. In the future water is going to become an increasingly valuable and scarce resource. Any allocation of large percentages of the available flow in our rivers to a small number of individuals would be totally repugnant, grossly unfair, and a recipe for friction among landowners in the future.
4. That a study be done to determine whether it would be practical to build a weir at the mouth of major rivers to raise their levels at times of low flow.

Yours faithfully



Ross D Newlove

✓

Text 8.10 Letter from citizen opposing the irrigation project

Text 8.10 continues the theme of environmental justice, but this time, in terms of neighbourhood relations. This was the only document in the archive that considered such issues as: “*friction among landowners in the future.*” Like the previous text, the writer of this letter refers to the “*water*”, “*water allocation*”, “*excess water flow*”, and “*resource*”. The measured language that describes the attributes of the river is contrasted with the strong language with which the agentless action of allocation is described as “*totally repugnant*” and “*grossly unfair*”. In a second contrast, these extreme words are juxtaposed with the relatively mild “*recipe for friction*”: it would not be unreasonable to expect actions that were “*totally repugnant*” to engender the some form of fearful internecine fighting in the Mangakahia Valley rather than “*friction*”, which is quite civilised. The rhetorical contrast of hyperbole with litotes in this text is a function of politeness. The action of allocating water at low summer flow is couched in a nominalisation and with the conditional mood of the verb to be: “*Any allocation . . . would be.*” This construction turns the process of allocating into an entity with no directly associated agent, although, of course, the recipient of the letter is taken as being responsible for the decision. The “Dear Madam” of the greeting line, however, is far from the text, and is not directly accused of being on the brink of acting in a way that can be described as “*totally repugnant*”.

Following the overstatement of the accusation, the prediction that the allocation would be “*a recipe for friction*” is an understatement. Understating a potential neighbourhood disturbance is a politeness strategy in the presence of “real” people, the “*landowners*” and neighbours, whose “positive face” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 162) should not be compromised. Consideration for the face of the landowners shows an awareness of prevailing social conventions among the landowners and contributes to reproducing them. By contrast, the hyperbole directed at the council shows that citizens consider its behaviour invites strong criticism.

The texts above are a sample of the reactions of non-Māori to the proposed irrigation project, showing the focus on a business ethos and the tendency among non-Māori to divide the river up into component pieces and separate it from the environment. The next section relates the analysis of the texts to the research questions, with particular focus on the separation of nature and the environment.

8.5 Discussion: A river in two worlds

The applications for resource consent were decided in favour of the farmers. The *tangata whenua* said they knew from the beginning that that would be the case because the people deciding the destiny of the river were “...three middle-aged pakeha guys. They listened politely, but we could see what they thought” (personal communication, 13 April, 2000). The resource consent process provided a space in which differences could be voiced, sometimes polemically. The theme of racial tension that surfaced early in the case did not disperse during it, perhaps because the discourse stated the differences that existed, but seldom explored them. Dialogue does not have to produce consensus, but it does have to explore differences without suppressing them so that a voice in common can emerge (Fairclough, 1992). Māori felt there were racism and abuse of power. One reason for the production of discourse that did not embrace or explore difference may have been that the farming world had flourished in the Mangakahia Valley for over a century, without, perhaps, paying too much attention to the other world that existed alongside it. This situation might have continued indefinitely, but that the struggle for the river brought the two worlds in the valley close together.

Unlike the residents of Maunu in the previous case study, the participants in this case did not seek different things for the same environment: rather, they wanted different environments in the same space. The realities of social practice for the two parties are so diverse that seeing the river through the accumulated discourse in the archive was like watching someone move along a row of distorting mirrors at a sideshow: same person, different reflection; same river, different reality. With these ideas in the background, the discussion in this sub-section of the chapter is concentrated on the following two research questions:

Why, and with what effect, do citizens and organisations use particular discourses in the resource consent process, and how do these discourses relate dialectically to other moments in the social process (Harvey, 1996)?

In what ways does the resource consent process in Northland shape discursive shifts away from “nature” and towards “the environment”, and does this make any material difference?

Telling the story of the river: The emergence of the discourse:

In the previous case study, it was not possible to establish with absolute certainty why citizens used particular discourses at particular times, because to do so would have meant catching them at it, so to speak. In contrast, in this case, it is possible to be very certain why Māori, at least, told their story in the way that they did. A *kaumatua* said to me that he was more open with information than he would normally be, because he hoped that the seriousness and spiritual depth of his communication would convince and compel his audience to appreciate the Maori viewpoint. At one of my

interviews, I tentatively suggested that if Māori wanted to win a case, they might need to prepare arguments like those the pakeha are likely to offer. The participant said to me, “The *kaumatua* will never compromise on what they say. They can’t afford to. And if we are to trust the Act, then what the *kaumatua* say about *wairua* and *mauri* should be enough!”

Knowing, therefore, that their cultural discourse was not likely to win the case, the *tangata whenua* chose anyway to tell stories of spirituality and identity. They believed that, like the pakeha’s environmental consultant, they too had provided facts. In a socially constructed reality, however, “facts” are much in the eye of the beholder. It was not that winning the case was not important, for protecting the river was paramount to Māori. But the presentation of the Māori story was much more than an effort to win a case at law: the new Act gave them the opportunity to tell *this* story about *these* matters. Māori, it seems, chose this discourse because they could, and in doing so, expressed a profound belonging to *whanau*, to both *tupuna* and *mokopuna*, and to the *rohe*. In this light, it is possible to see the river in this case as a metonymy for the traditional Māori way of life, and the story about it as an echo of the voices of Maori in the nineteenth century who chose to use the records of the pakeha land courts as a place to lodge their stories, lest they be lost (King, 2003).

This case may have marked a change in the “forms of sociality” (Harvey, 1996, p. 79) in the Mangakahia Valley. The discourse of the Māori *self*, especially when presented in *te reo*, internalises the moment of power and in doing so, draws a boundary around some of the symbolic activities connected with applications for resource consent. For Māori, the moment of discourse also internalised their “material practices” (Harvey, 1996, p. 79) in connection with the river and the valley. The material practices of Māori give expression to their cultural beliefs in the environment of the

Mangakahia Valley, and in doing so, link strongly to the moment of the imaginary, which expresses their vision of the world that had been, and, ideally for Māori, should be again. The discourse in the case suggests that the point of being in the material world is a less severe dichotomy between mind and body for Māori than for pakeha, although the presence in Māori discourse of a radical politicisation may tend to intellectualise and open their cultural experience of nature to possible commodification.

The moments of the imaginary and material practices are both internalised in the moment of “institution building” (Harvey, 1996, p. 79). To expand on this thought, I see that the discourse resulting from the application for resource consent at Mangakahia captures the complex cultural world of Māori and presents it as part of the political and social organisation of the environment for the future, both in the Mangakahia Valley and also in the rest of Northland. Indeed, many applications for resource consent since have produced discourse that similarly created the Māori *self* in the context of resource consents. One such application was for consent to build a prison on a site at Ngawha that is the home of a *taniwha*⁶⁰. The *kaumatua* who translated *te reo* for both Mangakahia and Ngawha spoke of the great difficulty of capturing such “deeply sacred things” (personal communication, 18 January, 2004) in such a way that Māori were satisfied that their story had been told properly, and at the same time, that enabled pakeha to grasp the significance of what was placed before them.

Like Māori, pakeha could choose what discourse to use to represent the river in their applications for resource consents. One possible choice was to concentrate on the river’s recreational amenity, and some documents in the

⁶⁰ The location of the case is Ngawha, in the jurisdiction of the Far North District Council.

archive did include this perspective, but the dominant feature of the non-Māori discourse was, one way or another, the river's usefulness and its potential economic value to the business community. To analyse non-Māori reactions under the rubric of "general utility" is to deny a range of other attitudes that pakeha almost certainly entertain towards the river, but these other attitudes did not come across clearly in the public discourse. Whether the non-Māori discourse was for or against the irrigation project, however, the "moment of material practices" (Harvey, 1996, p. 79) was focused on the modification of the material world of the valley and what it could do either for the corporate *self*, or to the neighbourhood.

The texts showed also that the discourse internalised power in two ways. First, by excluding the environment and promoting business opportunities, the texts exerted overt pressure to place the Northland economy ahead of environmental issues. Second, the economic power argument saturated the discourse to the point that it blotted out "nature" almost entirely, to the point that the river was scarcely mentioned as an entity and figured mostly as "flow" or, perhaps, "water". Inducing fear is an exercise of power. As well as setting out a logical argument about benefits, it is possible that the use of economic discourse to support the applications to abstract water from the river may have been a subtle way to generate a degree of fear about the future of the fragile Northland region if this opportunity for development were not taken. Money is a form of power in society. One farmer said:

Of course I think about money. My farm is a business. It's a private company. My wife and I are directors. We employ other people and give them a livelihood. Irrigation makes business sense. The farms in the scheme all have business plans and they aren't doing this for their health (personal communication, 24 September, 1999).

In this case of the Mangakahia River, the flow of capital involved in modifying the river was intended to benefit the farmers and, ultimately, the businesses that supported the project. In fact, economic rationality turned out to have deep implications for Māori of the Mangakahia Valley and their public definition in discourse of the *self* of their people.

Like the Māori discourse, much of the non-Māori discourse internalised the moment of the “imaginary” (Harvey, 1996, p. 79) by expressing a desire to modify the world along instrumental lines that would not, scientifically, impinge on the river, but would materially improve farms as businesses. Even when the point of view in the non-Maori texts opposed irrigation, the perspective on the river was still essentially that it was a commodity. The difference between the moments of “beliefs/values/desires” (what Harvey, 1996, p. 78 calls “the imaginary”) for Māori and non-Māori was that one side perceived the river as something that could be applied to paddocks, while the other side saw the river as an entity with *wairua*.

Whether a non-Māori or Maori imaginary should prevail over the disputed Mangakahia River was more than simply a matter of whether water should flow uninterrupted into the Kaipara Harbour or be abstracted and sprayed over paddocks. The production of the river in one or other of these guises was also the production - some would say, the perpetuation - of racially-based class differences in Northland: the issue was the further marginalisation of Māori by the appropriation of the river for a purpose that denied their deepest beliefs and deprived them of a traditional source of *mana*. The first proposal to modify the river was an attempt to impose un-negotiated social values that would almost certainly have widened the socio-economic gap between *tangata whenua* and farmers.

Underlying the struggle over the river were opposing perspectives of time and space, one deriving from the relatively short-term view of the market,

and the other from a sense of continuity with the land and people yet unborn. The difference between the culturally constructed views of time was also evident in feelings about the communication among the parties. At the Northland Regional Council, consultation with *iwi* was described as protracted. Frustration was evident: “They would come to a *hui*,” said the council officer. “It might take all day, and you would think, ‘At last! We’re getting somewhere!’ But then they’d have to go away and consult with their people and reach consensus and get back to us” (personal communication, 19 November, 1997). On the other hand, Māori saw time as a resource that expanded to accommodate the importance of the task at hand: “They were giving us one month to get back to them or we’d be out of time. What’s ‘out of time’ mean anyway?” (personal communication, 25 September, 1997).

Disconnected nature

The section above covered issues connected with the dialectical relationship of discourse to the other moments in the social process (Harvey, 1996). This section continues the discussion of the case in relation to the following research question:

In what ways does the resource consent process in Northland shape discursive shifts away from “nature” and towards “the environment”, and does this make any material difference?

In the case study about Maunu, pristine “Nature” had been replaced with an altered form of nature that was treated as “the environment” by citizens and organisations. The same situation prevailed in the case about Mangakahia: long before the dispute about the river began, the valley had been taken from its state of “Nature” and modified into “nature”. As I have already said,

most of the valley has long been converted to pasture and crops, and even though stands of native bush dot the landscape, they are small and so isolated from one another that they could not provide a complete eco-system for native wildlife, even if they were not prone to invasion by predators.

It is not a surprise, therefore, that the texts in the archive of this case do not mention “nature” in either form. What is a little surprising, however, is that “the environment” is also absent from the texts. The resource consent process may be responsible for this: a document circulating in Whangarei at the end of 2003 advises citizens to avoid “*mention of beauty or recreation, or any other subject that can be derided as emotional or seen as unscientific*” if they are planning submissions on resource consents in a new case to do with aqua-culture. The citizens involved in the new case seem to believe that the resource consent process is best influenced by scientific data, and yet the Resource Management Act (1991) specifically allows interested parties to tell their stories, whatever those stories are. Beauty and recreation are legitimate concerns for citizens who are assessing their environment.

What gives rise to a perception that scientific data is the best way to win points in applications for resource consent? The answer might be in the wording of regional and district plans, which make space for aspects of Māori culture, but concentrate on scientific measures as a way of providing objective measures across many environmental situations. The plans break the environment up into component parts, which can then be dealt with in isolation from the whole. The effect of fragmenting the environment may be that it is easier to conceive of altering one thing within it than it is to alter the whole of “nature”.

The language of environmental planning deals with nature in “atomistic” (Harvey, 1996, p. 153) parts. Analysis of the texts in this case shows that a discursive shift away from “nature” and towards the language of

environmental planning is at least part of the reason that some citizens proposed major environmental modification such as abstracting 93,000 cubic metres of water a day from a river in summer when the river is most stressed. The language of “the environment” tends to occlude a view of the whole and to favour, instead, a view of nature as an arrangement of parts.

One of the features of the Mangakahia River case was the presence of business and economic discourse in the texts. When “nature”, or even “the environment” are broken into their constituents, it may be easier to assign a financial value to them. As Harvey (1996) says:

Money prices attach to particular things and presuppose exchangeable entities with respect to which private property rights can be established or inferred. This means that we conceive of *entities* as if they can be taken out of any ecosystem of which they are a part. We presume to value the fish, for example, independently of the water in which they swim. (p. 153)

Although money was not mentioned in the corpus texts as itself, it features in the references to the Northland economy, and underpinned the drive of both the dairy farmers and the dairy company to abstract water from the river. The monetary value of the Mangakahia River was non-existent until it was represented as “flow” and “flow” was construed as potential grass or as future forestry. Representing the river as “flow” perhaps made it easier to conceive of the proposed abstraction as something that could happen independently of the vastness of the organic systems of “nature”.

Conclusion

Analysis in this chapter covered germane texts relating to the proposal to abstract water for irrigation from the Mangakahia River, and has shown how the case provided an opportunity for *tangata whenua* to express their beliefs about the river, their social practices and cultural values and the holism of nature in the valley. It also showed an opposing perspective that derived from the discourse of business and economics.

Final discussion in the chapter dealt with the following research question:

Why, and with what effect, do citizens and organisations use particular discourses in the resource consent process, and how do these discourses relate dialectically to other moments in the social process (Harvey, 1996)?

The conclusion that was reached in relation to this question was that Māori citizens deliberately chose their discourse to position themselves in their deep culture in the resource consent process. Non-Māori citizens, whether they were in favour of the project or not, appeared to choose the discourses of business and science, perhaps believing the influence of a business ethos would be most advantageous in securing a favourable decision in a disadvantaged region like Northland. The discussion showed the dialectical relationships of the moment of discourse to other moments in the social process (Harvey, 1996).

The second research question discussed in this chapter was:

In what ways does the resource consent process in Northland shape discursive shifts away from “nature” and towards “the environment”, and does this make any material difference?

The conclusion reached was that fragmented descriptions that accord with the environmental science obscure the whole of “nature” and contribute to a sense of being able to place a financial value on parts in isolation from the whole. The valuation of parts separately from wholes may, in turn, lead to a general willingness to modify “the environment”. Changing “nature”, by contrast, might simply be too big to encompass.

Chapter 9

Conclusions and Discussion

Introduction

In the research recorded in this thesis, I have applied Fairclough's (1992) and Chouliaraki and Fairclough's (1999) methods of critical discourse analysis to selected applications for environmental resource consent. One of my purposes in doing so was to explore the stories that citizens tell in order to establish their identity in relation to their experience of the environment. Another purpose was to examine the effect of their different discourses on the formation of the material world of Northland. In order to discuss these objectives, I have organised the chapter into three sections. The first section is an overview of the findings of the case studies. The second section contains some ideas for further research that would work along similar lines to this project. The last, very brief section, is the overall conclusion.

The questions which framed this research were:

1. What are the controlling discourses in the environmental resource consent process under the Resource Management Act (1991)?
2. Why, and with what effect, do citizens and organisations use particular discourses in the resource consent process, and how do these discourses relate dialectically to other moments in the social process (Harvey, 1996)?

3. In what ways does the resource consent process in Northland shape discursive shifts away from “nature” and towards “the environment”, and does this make any material difference?

These questions have already been discussed at the end of the two preceding chapters with specific reference to the data in each case study, and I do not intend to re-visit those points in detail. Instead, I am going to address the questions together, to form the discussion into an holistic view of the contribution this research has made to original knowledge. This section of my concluding chapter, therefore, brings together and summarises the themes of the research.

9.1 Place, self and discourse

The heart of this research was citizens’ interactions with and about the environment of Northland through the medium of applications for resource consent. Archives of documents were sifted to establish a corpus of relevant texts that were then analysed to show relationships between text, discourse practice and social practice in the selected cases. The language of the texts was not transparent, and the use of critical discourse analysis enabled the peeling back of layers of meaning to show the “connections and causes which are hidden” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 9).

Maunu and Mangakahia, the areas in which the case studies are located, were, for a while, centres of intense activity in public discourse. The analysis of the corpus of texts in each case revealed the intricate network of beliefs that drove the discursive practices of the citizens whose sense of *place* (Glacken, 1967; Harvey, 1996; Arnold, 1996) was disrupted by proposed environmental change. The fraction of the material world caught in these

two case studies was tiny, but it showed nevertheless how people invest *place* with beliefs, hopes and values that are also an expression of *self*. The discourses in the cases became the sites of the struggle for the environment to take or retain a particular form.

The analyses showed that what is at stake for citizens in the stories that they tell is their sense of *place* as a reference point for their position in social relations. *Place* in the case studies was imbued with political and economic meaning for the citizens (Harvey, 1996). For example, for Māori in the Maunu case, but with far greater urgency in the case of the Mangakahia River, *place* relates to identity. That identity is a matter of standing as equals in the Treaty partnership by using their environmental discourses to return from the margins of their communities to the centre. The discourses Māori employed asserted their sense of *self*, reclaimed their culture, and placed rights of ownership on their sacred places. For the farmers, both livelihood and stewardship of the land were at issue. The presence of Barfoote Engineering in Cemetery Road challenged middle-class aspirations to a certain lifestyle. The residents' rejection of the workshop was a reaction to their perceptions that their standard of living was seriously impaired by the presence of an engineering business in their neighbourhood. Each of the case studies was therefore a struggle to define and establish environmental norms for the locales of Cemetery Road and the Mangakahia Valley. To this extent, the environment is a social construction, and the social struggle for it is also a struggle to define the communities of the future (de-Shalit, 1995).

Establishing environmental norms is also a matter of establishing norms for the function of the *self* in the community. The discourses of resource consent in these case studies are not "green" discourses, except in the sense that the discourse of the official position involved environmental science in the decision-making process. What is shown in the analysis is that they are,

rather, discourses of the *self*. In other words, in arguing the values that should prevail in the material world, the discourses produce the *selves* of the participants and their representations of acceptable social practice. The rendering of the Māori or “honest working bloke” *selves* in the discourses of resource consent, for example, is a dialectical connection to all the moments in the social process (Harvey, 1996). The *self* and the quest for the environment/Nature have passed effortlessly into one another in the discourses, which frame relationships between the *self* and others, including the relationship between the *self* and the other called “nature” or “the environment”.

Analysis of the texts in the case studies showed that the social relations being constructed through the production of the *self* in the resource consent process were usually attempts by neighbours to dominate neighbours. The texts and cases, in fact, resemble the “Ouch!” response to a stepped-on toe, and that is what the making of communities through local protest is usually about. However, inasmuch as the texts are personal responses to threats taken personally, they are also expressions of a complex dialectic about how to value Nature/the environment. Often, the position adopted by the corporate and individual citizens in the cases was based on money. For example, the dairy company built its encouragement of irrigation on increased production; some of the residents of Cemetery Road were concerned about their property values. This reasoning put a financial value on the environment, and made market discourse part of the arguments. In the cases in this research, the struggle to resolve the tension took place in locales which had ceased to be nature-as-wilderness for more than a hundred years, and had worn market prices for that length of time. Some of the very people who were concerned with property values, however, argued for a quite different value of Nature/the environment as well, based on a sense of nature being inherently valuable for itself.

Carrying a sense of nature into the discourse of the official position is difficult. The case studies showed that in the official discourses of resource consent, *place* is reduced to fractions of localities and to rules designed to regulate activities. The official discourses were often a source of frustration for citizens, who experienced district plans as dissociated from the rich experience of the material world that was so immediate in their lives. The discourses that citizens used to oppose those of the official position were therefore often “off the mark”: citizens might talk of noise or a river, for instance, when the discourses of the official position talked of “rules for home occupation” and “minimum flow”. The case studies show that the businesses (among which farms must be counted) employed “experts” and “professionals” to produce discourses that matched the scientific approach of district plans and other expressions of the discourse of the official position. The enlistment of expert discourse perpetuated the commodification of nature begun in the discourse of the official position, and in the powerful hegemonic alliance of businesses with official organisations concerned with the “greatest need” of Northland: that is, its economy.

The disparity in viewpoints led to tensions in the interactions, for citizens were sometimes frustrated and alienated by the technologised language they encountered. The stories citizens told, of history and sacred sites, or of good neighbours and honest working men, seemed to be attacks on the impervious “scientificity” of the official discourse.

Social relations among the citizens in Maunu and the Mangakahia Valley were constitutive of *place*, but they also occurred in specific locales that were already constituted in particular forms. In other words, in Maunu and Mangakahia there were recognisable physical features such as productive farmland, rivers, mountains, stone walls and even a general prettiness, that were agreed by residents to be objective markers of the character of their

home areas. This understanding of the nature of a *place*, or perhaps more truly, Nature in a *place*, is excluded from the discourse of the official position. Indeed, in the *obiter* of one case not included in the thesis, a judge remarked that landowners in an area had deposed “somewhat repetitively” about natural beauty and recreational amenity, as though those stories were not worth telling. Citizens found such stories worth telling repeatedly, however, and some sense of natural beauty or recreational amenity is implicit in most of their discourse. In the case of Māori, who spoke openly of their perception of *mauri* and *wairua* in their surroundings, even stronger connections to the material world are expressed. The stories of citizens are the sharp local end of a political battle for the meaning of “the environment” (Harvey, 1996), and an attempt to put “nature” back into that word. Whether or not the word “environment” in the discourse of the official position remains as reductionist of nature as it was at the time these cases occurred is important to the formation of the material world.

In areas like Maunu and the Mangakahia Valley, where “Nature” has long been turned into a resource for livelihood and living space, it is impossible to avoid the fact that there is a strong co-ordination of the land with money. On the other hand, Māori and the Cemetery Road residents, and even the farmers in their urge to improve their land, were negotiating an ethic of the environment based on the values that reside in nature: cultural identity, spirituality, aesthetics, rejuvenation (Wilson, 1993) and escape from the stress of busy lives. Some of these values seem incompatible with the economic value of Nature/the environment as a resource, and appear to devalue it in financial terms. However, in a contested social issue such as the form of the environment, devaluing something is as significant as valuing it. The effort of citizens to move beyond a purely financial value for the environment is therefore an important aspect of their discursive struggle in the public arena for the meaning of “the environment”.

The discourses of resource consent and social change

The methodological foundation of this thesis was a book called “Discourse and Social Change” (Fairclough, 1992), and one of the aspects of the research that I enjoyed grappling with was the way citizens’ stories worked toward social change at the level of their own communities. The participants in this research were not those people who would engage in dramatic “eco-warrior” activities of the sort that could occupy two minutes on the national news, but that did not, in my opinion, make their stories and arguments less important or less interesting.

My perception of the discourses that citizens employed was that they contested the meaning of the environment from within the established social order. The stories of citizens were attempts to take part in defining a “correct” environment, opposing the powerful discourses of business and employment. The discourses of citizens were therefore attacks on the hegemonic alliances that were intended to be the basis of the “common sense” shape of the environment. The attempts of citizens to have their voices heard and to effect social change represented their awareness of how relations of power and control are built into even the safe spaces of their homes.

In terms of the environment, the power and control that invade the home space derive from the discourse of the official position, which is expressed in the district plans. Organisations tend to present the plans as consensual representations of the communities, but any consensus contained in them is an uneasy one. The analysis of the discourse of the official position showed that the intention of the Resource Management Act (1991) was carried out by organisations to the limits of their resourcing: consultation over the formation of the district plans, in other words, was as good as the budget behind it. The plans depose complex scientific regulations on human

activities as a way of managing environmental resources, and as such are authoritarian documents designed for social control. Control over the environment, whether in the name of the economy or of sustainability, is still control: the social change that citizens strove for was to open up decisions to other voices and other ways of seeing.

Although the cases were both decided in favour of businesses, the voices of citizens were represented in the final decisions to the extent that neighbourhood noise and river health would both be monitored. New Zealand is fortunate that that Resource Management Act (1991) permits interested parties to speak their concerns: it prevents the nature of “nature” from being decided unilaterally and uncritically by the reductionist approach of the discourse of the official position. The tendency of official discourse is to settle nature/the environment into a single category of homogenised fragments, but the discourses of concerned citizens keeps the heterogeneity of the concept open. To produce many different environments in applications of resource consent is to stop a single, instrumental rationality (Goulet, 1993) from prevailing totally in environmental decisions.

This is not to say that any of the discourses of resource consent is anything other than anthropocentric, or to argue that any should be: that was not the function of this research. But it is clear that even the discourses of the Māori are not “green” in the sense of being eco-centric, for all their animistic awareness of the *mauri* that inheres and interconnects all elements of the biosphere. Even for Māori, the discourses of resource consent are about giving back nature/the environment to the Māori people. The intersection of the multiple discourses of resource consent is a debate about how to further “humanize” (Simmons, 1995, p. 64) Northland, not whether the humanising should have taken place at all.

The case studies showed the disputed applications for resource consent as social events that were productive of social change. The texts show that the beginning of a case of disputed application for resource consent was founded in the struggle for existence. The workshop in Cemetery Road, for instance, claimed it could not survive if it had to re-locate to the industrial area in the city. The farmers in the Mangakahia Valley focused on changing milking patterns so that slack resource in the operation of the local dairy company would be taken up. The resistance of citizens to the proposals produced diverse conceptualisations of the environment, and consequently, the potential for diverse solutions to what became environmental problems when the applications were opposed. The communication processes of resource consent generated forms of social practice that produced environmental transformation. The processes of social change described here as a result of disputed applications for resource consent are evolution in action, but not necessarily evolution in the Darwinian sense of survival of the fittest.

Critical research is intended to reveal hidden connections (Fairclough, 1992) and also to provide resources for remedial action for those people shown to be disadvantaged by social situations. This research showed, however, that citizens were not unsophisticated in their own choices of discourse, nor unaware of the effect of the discourse of the official position on situations. When I realised the deliberate choice of Mangakahia Māori to tell their own story in full knowledge that it might cost them the case, I could not be other than glad that they had that choice to make. Victory was measured differently in the *marae* of the Mangakahia Valley from the way it is measured in the pakeha world.

What does emerge as important, however, is that the choice of discourse is available. No amount of scientific information would have changed the story the *kaumatua* told about the Mangakahia Valley, but the same may not be true of the stories told by citizens who could not afford the “suits” employed by Barfoote Engineering. The councils, which are repositories and the natural sources of pertinent information for citizens, operate on a cost-recovery basis that places a financial price on advice and knowledge. In disputed applications for resource consent, information is power (Livesey, 1988) and withholding of information, or pricing it beyond the ability of citizens to pay for it, contributes to the dominance of a single rationality in decision-making. It is hard to imagine that organisations’ “user-pays” philosophy will change, yet access to information that gives citizens the choice of how to present their cases is a concern for social justice and for the shaping of the material world. This research has no answer to the problem of money, but it does, at the very least sound a caveat to citizens to assess what they would measure as success and to make their discourse choices accordingly.

9.2 Further research

The research reported in this thesis was about the discourse used in applications for research. It was retrospective and descriptive and did not aim to investigate the justice of the decisions that were made in each case. However, a researcher who wished to take the investigation of cases further could examine the substantive fairness of the decisions that change the material world of Northland, perhaps to record the number of decisions that favour business and organisational citizens and to assess the effectiveness of the discursive positioning that citizens adopt.

Another form of research in this area could focus on different ways of conceptualising the environment. The Mangakahia River case was an ordinary conceptualisation of the environment, but noise was a relatively unusual factor in concerns about a rural environment. Sights and smells are two other such areas that are intangible yet powerful presences in the way that residents interpret the locales in which they live. The stories that people might tell about the difficulty of living alongside an enterprise that does no harm except to look or smell unpleasant would provide new understandings of the social practices surrounding business and the environment.

This research concentrated on the cultural awareness of Māori in relation to the environment, and to a limited extent, included what might be called cultural attitudes towards the environment of a group of residents in a single area outside Whangarei. The population of Northland, however, contains many different ethnic groups, and there would be merit in tracing the discursive habits of these different groups in relation to proposed environmental change.

Finally, this research began as an organisational ethnography, and the material from the interviews conducted about the discourse of the official position suggests that the cultures of the organisations would be most interesting to study in greater depth in relation to environmental matters. The interactions of the organisations with citizens over the district plans and applications for resource consent could provide rich insights into the background of the formation of the environment.

9.3 Conclusion

The research has examined the multiple discourses of resource consent in order to see the relationship between language and the making of the material world. This research did not set out to generalise, and it is too much to conclude from two case studies that the discourses of business and the economy dominate the formation of the natural world of Northland. It is not too much, however, to say that those discourses are powerful in the decision-making processes. What can be said is that even these instrumental and materialistic discourses are like those of all the citizens who participated in making the environment in Cemetery Road and the Mangakahia Valley: they are statements about identity and the nature of *place* and belonging.

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Appendix: Detailed Breakdown of the Communication Processes of Resource Consent

Stage 1

The applicant consults published policies and plans and staff of the consent authority. An application is prepared and submitted according to s.88, including “identification of those persons interested in or affected by the proposal, the consultation undertaken, and any response to the views of those consulted.”

Notes

- Anybody may apply for a consent.
- The application must include an *assessment of environmental effects* (AEE) as specified in S.88(4),
- Applicants must use Form 5.

Stage 2

The appropriate consent authority receives the application and the AEE.

Notes

- The AEE stage is the first opportunity for interested parties other than applicants to express their views on an application.
- Applications for restricted coastal activities go to both the Minister of Conservation and the regional council (s.117).

Stage 3

The consent authority must publish the application and notify all parties likely to be affected within ten days if it is satisfied that it has sufficient information (ss. 93 & 95).

Notes

- The consent authority may ask for further information or commission a report on any matters raised in the application if it believes that significant adverse environmental effects may result from a proposed activity (s.92 (1) and (Keep the ampersand for joint authors. Otherwise it is not acceptable in formal writing.)(2)). If the consent authority requests further information, it will delay publication and notification of the application.
- If the consent authority believes it may receive other applications in relation to the same proposal, it may defer notification (s.91).
- Certain types of applications need not be notified (s.94).

Stage 4

Any person may make a submission about an application to the consent authority (ss 96, & 98). Twenty working days must be allowed between public notification and the closing date for submissions (s.97). If time to prepare submissions is insufficient, parties can press for an extension under s.37, which can double any time specified in the Act.

Notes

- Submissions should follow s.104.
- The Act does not provide a form for submissions.

Stage 5

Any person making a submission may ask for a pre-hearing meeting with either the applicant or another person making a submission (s.99). The meeting may be formal or informal and may include a member of the consent authority who will later be deciding on the application. Reports of the meeting may be circulated to all parties.

Note

- If the consent authority does not receive any submissions, it need not hold a hearing.

Stage 6

A hearing must be held if:

- (a) either the consent authority thinks it necessary; or
- (b) the applicant or a person who has made a submission wishes to be heard (s.100).

Notes

- Hearings must start within 25 days of closing date for submissions (s.101).
- If applicants have applied to more than consent authority for consents for the same proposal, the authorities must hear the applications jointly.

Stage 7

The consent may be granted or declined with conditions (ss. 105 -108).

Notes

- The authority must notify its decision to the applicant and every person who made a submission, and any other person it thinks necessary.(s.114).
- The notification must include a summary of the decision but must state where parties can inspect the full text.
- The authority must notify parties within 15 working days of a hearing or 20 working day if no hearing took place (s.115).

Stage 8

Appeals are heard by the Planning Tribunal (s.120).

Notes

- The applicant or any person who made a submission may appeal the decision.
- Appellants must compose their appeal on Form 7 or in a format similar to it, and must lodge it with the Planning Tribunal within 15 working days of receiving the notice of a hearing decision (s.121).
- Planning Tribunal procedures are dealt with in ss. 269 - 308.

Stage 9

Resource consent begins (s.116) with monitoring of consent conditions (s.35).

Note

- A review of the consent conditions may take place if the applicant provided inaccurate information, if a regional plan comes into operation and the consent authority wishes to bring consents into line with its standards, or if a consent states specifically that a review should take place at a particular time (s.128).