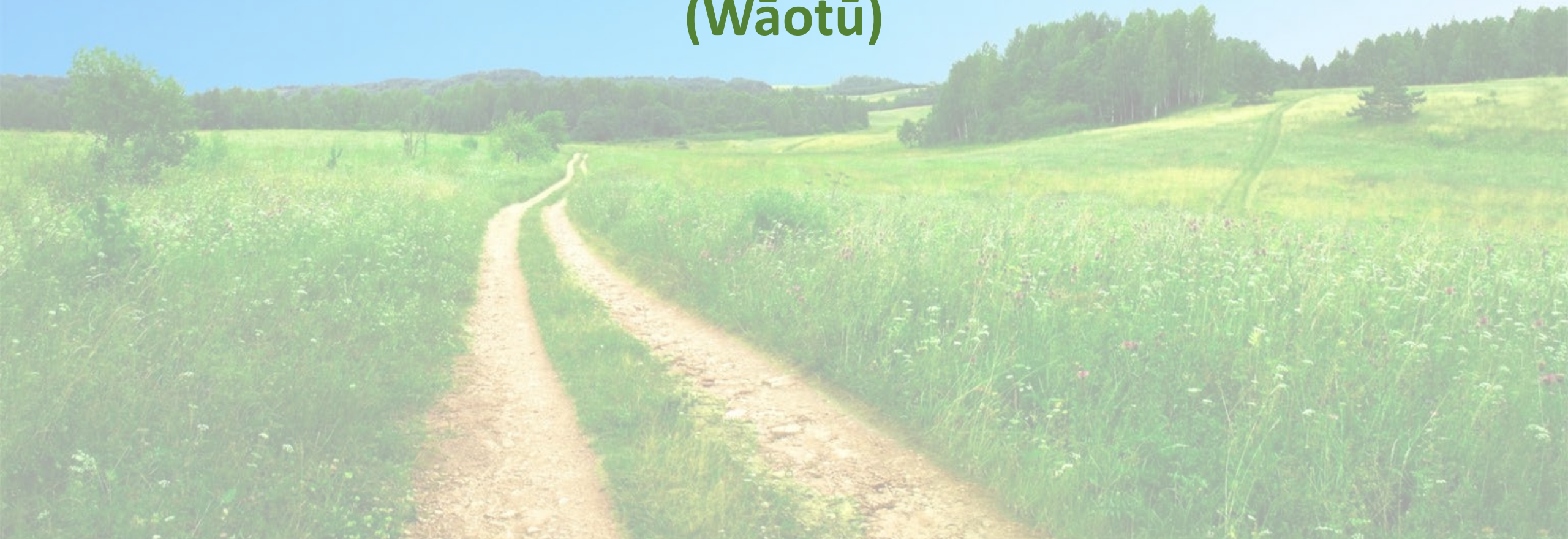




ECRN Network Seminar

Sharemilking with the Te Raparahi Lands Trust (Wāotū)



Sharemilking in NZ


- Contractual arrangement developed over time that shares the costs and benefits of operating a dairy farm
- 34% of NZ's dairy herds are in the Waikato, 28% of national total land
- Approximately 1,488 sharemilkers, 5.9 % of total regional employment, contributing 9.8 % regional GDP [NZIER, NZ Statistics 2014]
- The average operation milks 285 cows
- Moving Day – 1st June






Non-human rural studies approach

- The countryside is more-than human (Whatmore 2003) and complex 'Culture-nature' and hybridity of cows and farming questions sharp distinctions between social and non-social (natural/material)
- Yarwood and Evans (2000) a sharper focus on livestock can contribute to current thinking in rural studies and agricultural geographies
- Fluid notion of place
- Wolch and Emel (1995, 1998); Philo and Wolch (1998); Philo and Wibert (2000) 'Bringing animals into geography'

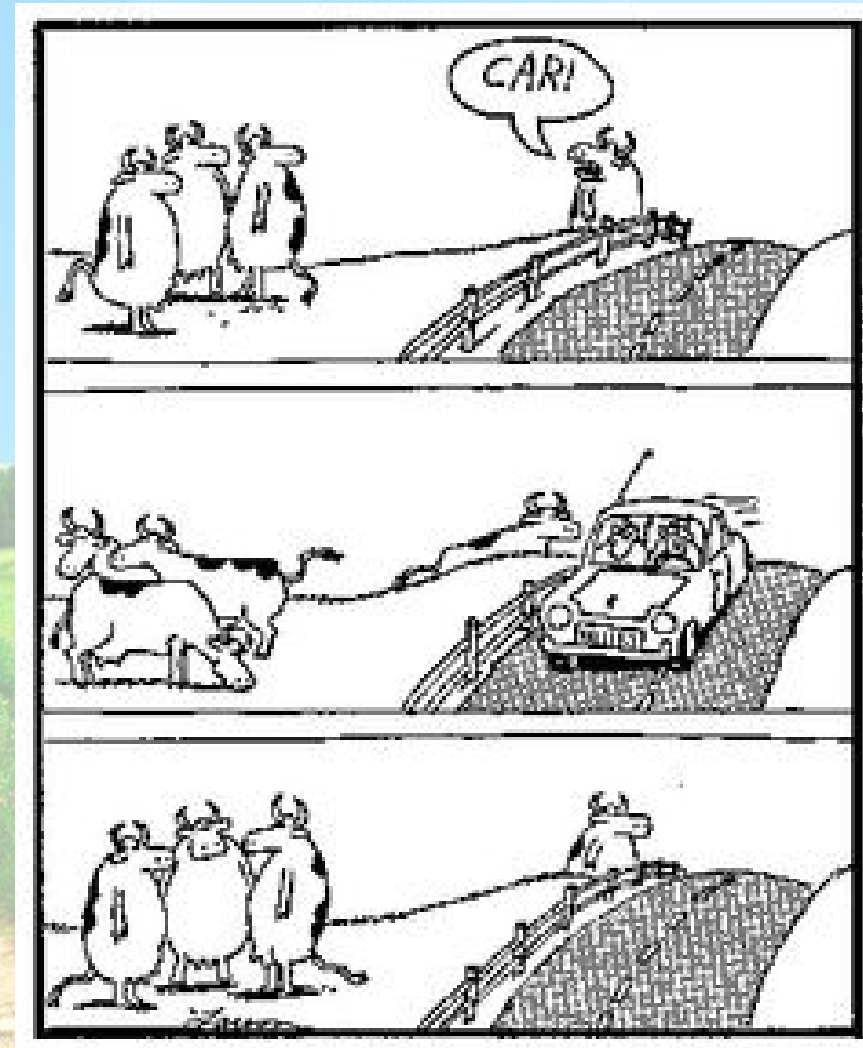


Distancing from animals as food: thinking about livestock and farming

- People eat 'meat' not animals – split between conceptual and material
 - Spatial, emotional and ethical dimensions of the relationship between landscape, livestock, farming and rural communities
 - Complexities of relationships with livestock as economic units and as intrinsic to farming identity along with genuine care for a sentient being (Philo 1992; Yarwood & Evans 1998)
- 

Methods

- Attention and commitment to a feminist methodology
- Traditional semi-structured interviews
- Farm interviews – *in situ* research, going-along with...
- Experiencing a 'Moving Day' (2016)
- Solicited dairies and self-directed photography

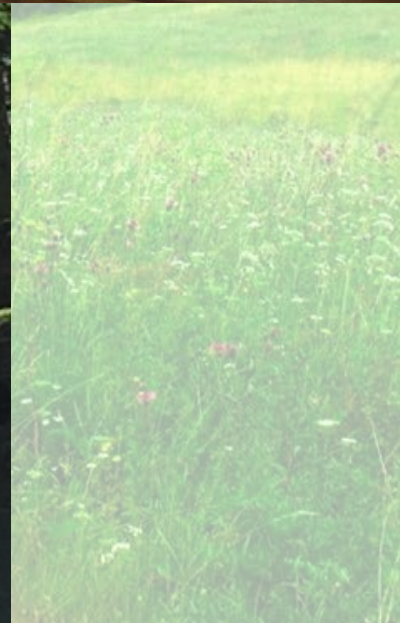




'Farming with' experiences



Moving Day 2016



Moving and vulnerability



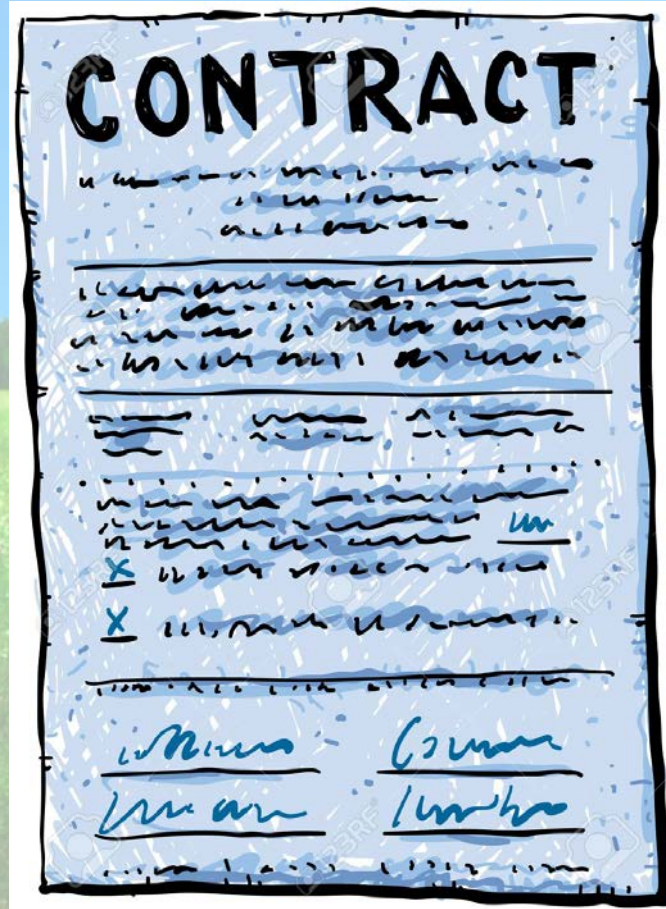
- Landowner has power to decide contract terms and negotiation
- Land = security
- Sharemilkers not only have to move house, business, equipment, machinery for farming but also a herd of cows
- Money (equity) in cows on a fluctuating global market = high risk

Sharemilkers in Waikato: dairying through a crisis

- 2016 a significant downturn in milk solid prices on the global market

“The farm was sold within a month and the sharemilker that was on the farm, he’s been on there 15 years – and just like that! 15 years work within one month was gone [clicks fingers], destroyed – because the people who bought the farm said, “We don’t need a sharemilker” – so that was it! That would be soul destroying//” [Interview December 2015]

Contract woes



- Contracts were individually tailored
- Debt ratio and contract negotiation directly affects farmer stress
- Knock-on effect to animal welfare and farming practice



Farmer identities and suicide/stress/anxiety

- Increasingly disproportionate rate of suicides of farming men in rural NZ and Australia “The fallen hero: masculinity, shame and farmer suicide in Australia” *Gender, Place and Culture* (2015)
- Wet season (winter) – “It’s the wettest season in 20 years, I’m tossing the turning in bed at night, knowing the cows are tight on their breaks ... I was right up against the edge at certain times, thinking, how can I actually carry on? I spoke to plenty of blokes who, you know, had a knot in their guts” [Interview 17 November 2016].
- Paper written on the impacts of the weather for *Social and Cultural Geography* “Research Tropospheres”

From economic crisis to social crisis??

- Farmers represented as profit-driven and uncaring polluters
- Past practices have been shortsighted in the extreme
- Little tolerance of 'dirty' practices
- Little acknowledgement of 'plunder' of environment
- Ethics and morals of dairying are increasingly scrutinised



Sharemilking with Te Raparahi Trust

- A more positive focus
- Taking the study beyond crisis, suicide and ethics
- Case-study on sharemilking with Te Raparahi
- Non-ownership of land enables sharemilkers in different ways

Miraka Milk Company

- North West Taupō
- Geothermal power
- Small carbon footprint



- <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/country-calendar/episodes/s2016-e32>

Te Raparahi Lands Trust

- *Te Harore a Kapu*
- Farming in perpetuity
- *Kaitiakitanga* (stewardship/guardianship)
- Educational grants for local community
- (Sharing wealth)
- Relationships





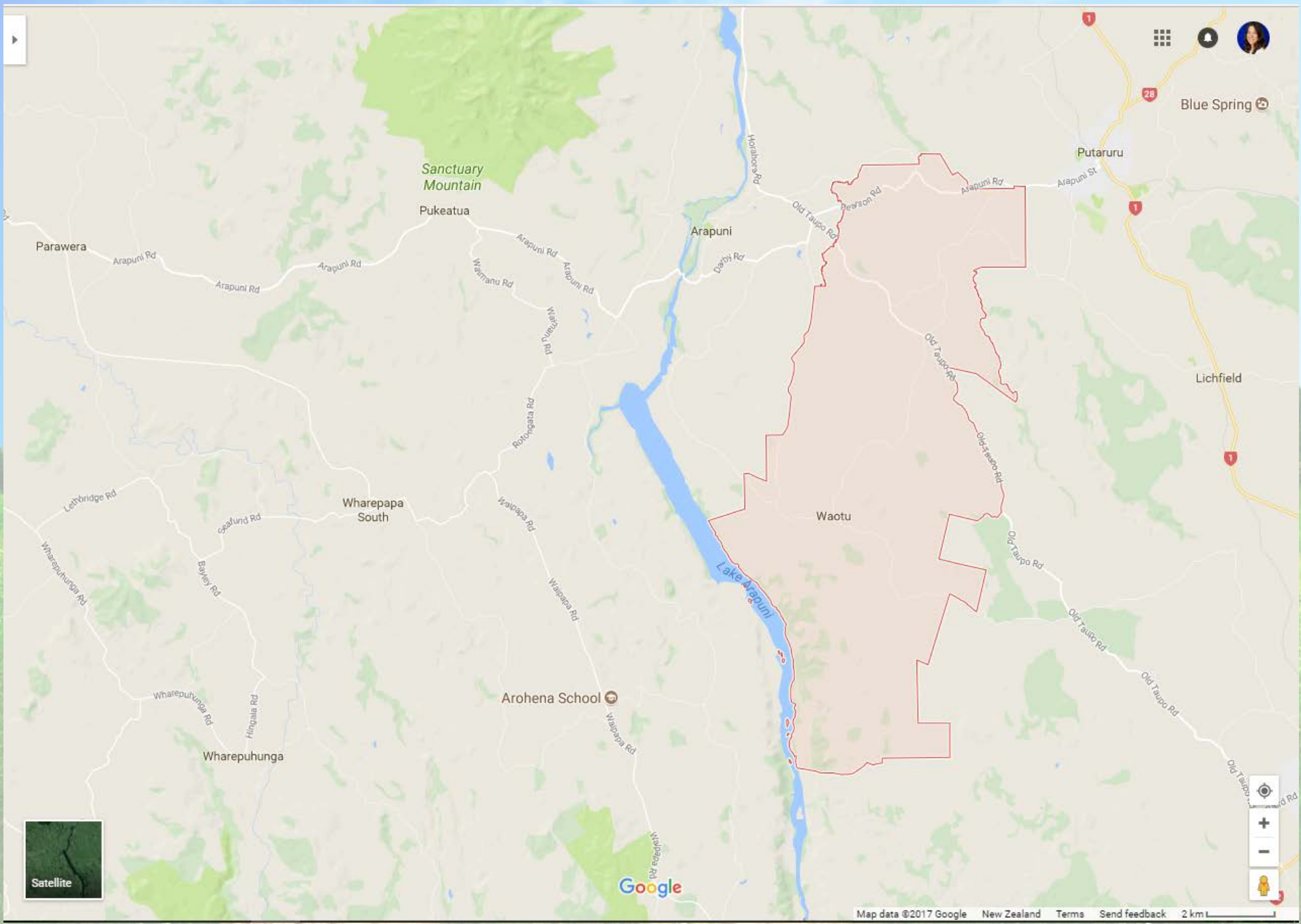
The long game – a positive focus

- “Being in Maori ownership it’s about perpetual ownership – setting the operation up for sustainability, the Trust is not so worried about production/profit in the short term, but you have to be successful, otherwise what’s the point? I mean successful across the board, as in success in finance, sustainable practice, environmental impact, cow health, soil health – it all ties in together – and we’re all in it together
[Interview 17 November 2016]

Wāotū as place: working with Naomi

- Wāotū as place
- Raukawa Iwi
- Stories of gardens and pathways (on land)
- *He wā tū tahi ngā rākau*
- *“the place of high trees standing by themselves”*
- Jim Barnett Reserve
- Pikitū Marae – Ngāti Huri





Google

Hopeful geographies?

- Focusing on Te Raparahi Trust model unfolds a lot of positives
- Cautionary steps that include full histories of place
- Narrations of place, landscape and relationships reveal complexity of approaches to farming
- Place and geography matters – relationships matter
- “Yeah I appreciate cows, they give you their life, I love them and being around them” [Interview 17 November 2016]