



Reviews

Tāone Tupu Ora: Indigenous Knowledge and Sustainable Urban Design

K. Stuart and M. Thompson-Fawcett (eds), New Zealand Centre for Sustainable Cities, University of Otago, Wellington, New Zealand, 2010, 112 pp, ISBN 978 1 877577 13 0 (paperback), NZ\$29.99.

This modest volume asks a monumental question: how can traditional Māori knowledge, in all its complexity and wholeness, contribute to creating sustainable cities and urban environments into the 21st century? Editors Keriata Stuart and Michelle Thompson-Fawcett have assembled an interesting group of academic and practitioner writers to suggest some compelling answers. For both the New Zealand reader and those much further afield, there is a lot to gain from this manuscript, which showcases indigenous understandings of the intricate relationship between humans and the land they inhabit. This knowledge, passed down for generations, has been given scant attention by westerners in their over-privileging of 'intellectual' knowing within the prevailing economic neo-liberal framework of urban planning and design. Spirituality, patience, respect, careful listening and a deep and abiding love of the natural world have not been honoured in this model. This neglect is reaping a heavy toll. *Tāone Tupu Ora's* message is that the achievement of sustainable environments in the 21st century hinges on deep social, cultural and ecological understandings that can only be reached through respect for nature and sharing of diverse ways of knowing.

The impetus for the collection in *Tāone Tupu Ora* originated from symposia held by the New Zealand Centre for Sustainable Cities (the publisher of the book) exploring indigenous knowledge and sustainable development. The result is a practical work that makes an important contribution to our appreciation of the breadth and depth of indigenous knowledge and how it can inform effective sustainable design and planning policy. Urban planners and designers, researchers and students will find much to contemplate and apply in this collection.

Henare Walmsley (described as a registered architect) opens the book talking about diversity in the Māori way of life, likening this to the woven flax basket (*kete harakeke*) with its varied texture, patina and purpose. This is the perfect simile to remind readers (here, Walmsley addresses all New Zealanders, but the message is equally relevant much further afield) of the 'obligation to weave, protect and enhance the environment around us', working together as the only way forward in achieving a sustainable future (p. 7). The Māori values that acknowledge the 'preciousness of land' bring much to the achievement of sustainability, but it is critical to understand the origins of these values in order to fully appreciate their practical application in different scenarios.

Research on key principles is reported in the first part of the book. Shaun Awatere, Shadrach Rolleston and Craig Pauling present their set of Māori 'principles and values' for design to 'support the preservation of culturally significant resources and landscapes . . . to build community identity and participation' (p. 18). The principles are clearly laid out in a useful table that explains the nature, purpose and potential application of each one. The principles range from emotional connections with the environment that links people, to landscape protection and the life-force, health and wellbeing, and understanding historical identities and character.

In the following chapter, Amanda Yates opens her consideration of sustainability by positing how our use of land must become 'productive' rather than 'consumptive' (p. 23). The answers lie in a paradigm shift from the dualist western philosophy of separating culture (here, Yates includes the act of architecture) from the natural world to a more integrated practice. Sustainable urban design embodies both culture and nature, embracing an indigenous reverence for the environment, as well as contemporary design strategies that are holistic and integrative. Some inspiring examples of residential design are provided that show how built and green landscapes can flow seamlessly together in the creation of sustainable developments.

John Gray (retired academic in architecture) and Charlotte Hoare (practising architect) engage with some of the key debates about suburban intensification and sustainability. Of particular interest is their comparative consideration of traditional (Polynesian) and contemporary (European) values and what they mean in practical terms for site and housing design. Included here are concepts of family and community (issues such as extended and nuclear family structures, generational attitudes, child-rearing practices and the time that visitors typically stay), usage patterns within the dwelling (for example, single use rooms and multiple use of large spaces), location of food preparation and washing facilities, notions of privacy and communal activities such as gardening. This chapter is a timely reminder about the interweaving of socio-cultural practices and good design outcomes.

In concluding the collection, Keriata Stuart ties the book's different themes together, suggesting how indigenous knowledge can be used to bring about sustainable planning and design. There are several lessons here including an ongoing respect for indigenous knowledge, a commitment to understanding – via research – and how such knowledge can contribute to urban planning and design, as well as a practice which values sharing, listening and a reverence for the natural world and its deep social and cultural links.

The book is generally easy to read and navigate with headings and key statements of principles and ideas highlighted in most parts. It is illustrated with some excellent architectural drawings that help the reader visualise the translation of traditional Māori principles on the ground. A glossary of Māori terminology is included at the end of the book. This is essential for the non-Māori reader – I found I was constantly flipping to the glossary for an interpretation. Some might find this a little tiresome, but I think it is a good reminder of the power of language in describing an alternative world view and the near impossibility of English linguistic equivalents. A couple of chapters would have benefited from some tighter editing – chapter 5, for example, uses the first person initially without introducing the second author until well into the piece. Chapter 4 is an edited version of a presentation, which seems a little odd in the context of the rest of the collection. Nevertheless, *Tāone Tupu Ora* gives us an holistic appreciation of sustainable urban design that can only be achieved through committed and extensive dialogue, together with a willingness to share and

respect different knowledge. The book clearly shows many of the gaps between western cultural concepts and those of indigenous communities – reminding all readers of the importance of integration, connection, respect and the place of spiritual knowledge in understanding how humans have interacted with the land over many centuries. Without this understanding, global sustainability, which is at the heart of humanity's survival into and beyond the 21st century, will continue to be elusive.

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Sustainable Coastal Management and Climate Adaptation. Global Lessons from Regional Approaches in Australia

R. Kenchington, L. Stocker and D. Wood (eds), CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne, 2012, x +222, ISBN 978 0 6431 0027 5 (paperback) AU\$99.95

Firstly, I must start with a small conflict of interest declaration – this book and the authors of the book are associated with the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industry Research Organisation) Coastal Cluster group of which I am a peripheral member.

This book is a collection of chapters from across Australia about various aspects of the state of coastal management practices in that country at the current time – particularly as to how these practices might contribute to sustainable management.

As such, it is interesting how little mentioned is integrated coastal management (or integrated coastal zone management [ICZM] if you prefer). This makes me reflect on the role of 'fashion' in coastal management and other natural resources management and how the pursuit of research funds and projects depends too much on the use of new terminology and 'new' approaches. We all have to be very watchful that we do not move away from useful and practical concepts, such as ICZM, just so we appear that we are progressing when all we do is use a new term for the old.

Nevertheless, the emphasis in this new book on sustainable management is appropriate for two pressing reasons in the Australian and broader global context. With coastal systems