

Are current impact assessment tools fit for Aotearoa New Zealand's bicultural forest-dependent communities?

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Abstract

This poster aims to stimulate discussion on how we evaluate and monitor the social impacts of climate policies. Of particular interest are Māori and small to medium size forest owners (SMFO) who comprise 94% of New Zealand's forest owners.

Forestry is a major export earner and central to New Zealand's climate change strategy. In 2019, forestry exports totalled \$6.32 million, of which \$3.45 million was from logs (Forest Owners Association [FOA], 2019). Forestry activities have also offset more than 20% of New Zealand's entire carbon emissions budget (509.8 Mt CO₂-e) between 2013-2020 and this figure is projected to increase (Ministry for the Environment, 2020).

However, the existing inflexible "one size fits all" policy approach to forestry remains a systemic issue across central and local government, especially for iwi/Māori communities (Pohatu et al., 2020). There is also growing concern around increased conversion of agricultural land to monocultural forestry (Rae, 2021), including impacts on soil and water pollution, declining biodiversity, employment (Harrison & Bruce, 2019), and fire risk (Upton in Gibson, 2019).

Despite New Zealand's multicultural society, few impact assessment tools exist that encompass Western and indigenous views. In this context, Belcher (2020) proposes the He Kete Hauora framework, adapted from a DPSIR framework (Figure 1). Ariā are perspectives used by Māori to assess environmental health and describe ecological concepts familiar to Māori and mainstream scientists (Belcher, 2020). As such, He Kete Hauora Taiao allows use of established scientific metrics to be used as indices for ariā (Belcher, 2020).

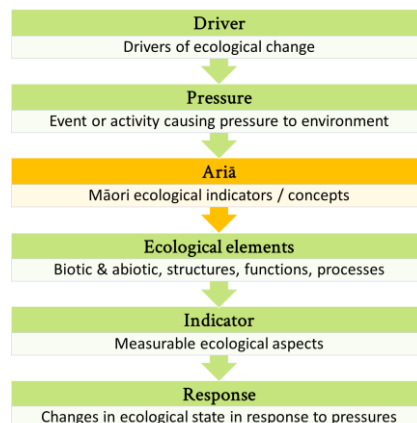


Figure 1: The He Kete Hauora Taiao ecological assessment framework incorporates the Māori concept of ariā into a DPSIR framework (Belcher, 2020).

Māori concepts like ariā can enhance the overall impact assessment process, providing an essential linkage between ecological and social impact assessments. Given the Climate Change Commission's (2021) call for "genuine, active and enduring partnership with Māori", development and uptake of more holistic social impact assessment frameworks is crucial.

Sources

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