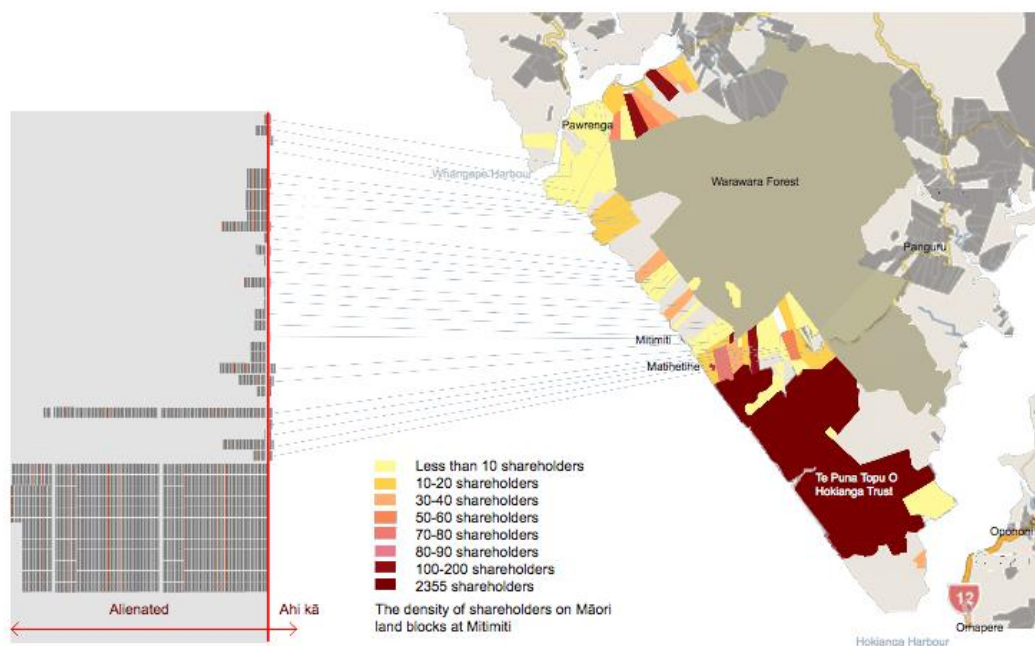


Maori and Affordable Housing Fleur Palmer

Affordable housing for Maori is directly linked to economic development. Very little Maori land is located in urban centres close to job opportunities. When our cities were developed Maori were excluded, left to subsist on uneconomical isolated pockets of rural land located in remote districts. Maori land is predominantly zoned rural. In most district plans, rural zoning allows for one house per 20 hectares, but the ratio of shareholders to land mass for Maori land in many cases is more than one person per hectare (see map below). This ratio is well in excess of any possible sustainable development, which means that Maori are always left with the difficult choice of deciding who gets the right to build on collectively owned land. If less than 1% of the total shareholders can build on Maori land, how is permission to build granted? What becomes of the other 99% who inevitably become alienated once other people have built? Given this difficult choice, a lot of Maori leave their land undeveloped and abstain from granting permits for people to occupy, as, aside from issues of affordability, the limited number of houses that can be built on each block means people in future will miss out. Given the isolation and densities involved with Maori owned rural land, there are also limited employment opportunities. It is tough trying to economically run a farm on 20 hectares in a remote area. But what else can you do? By only focusing on rural development with limited economic opportunities the government continues to institutionally discriminate against Maori.



This is a composite image of a region north of the Hokianga which shows densities of Māori ownership. Light yellow represents sites which are occupied by small numbers of owners less than 10. The darker orange to pink colours refer to areas that have increasing numbers of shareholders ranging from 40 - 200. The dark red block is Te Puna Topu O Hokianga the forestry trust representing over 2355 shareholders. White zones are no longer under Māori ownership. The image also shows a bar graph. The

bars to the left of the red line representing the number of shareholders who can never build houses in this area. The smaller bars to the right represent the number of houses which can be built according to the district plan.

Since the development of urban centres Maori have been excluded or limited by their access to land within or close to cities. With lack of opportunities in rural districts, Maori have moved into cities that were built on land that previously had been occupied by Maori for centuries. Today Maori occupy urban centers mainly as tenants. While Maori nostalgically yearn for a connection to the whenua that has remained in Maori ownership, this is unrealistic and economically unaffordable. Because Maori still retain pockets of land in rural districts, strategies to improve Maori housing has been mainly been focused on this area. But rural locations inevitably alienate the majority of shareholders and limits access to a wide range of job opportunities, trapping Maori in a viscous cycle of subsistence living and poverty. If we want to radically alter this situation, there has to be a shift in the distribution of power and approaches to how Maori occupy urban centers. Instead of concentrating on rural areas the focus should shift towards assisting Maori to recolonise urban centres not as tenants to the State but as land owners. This can be achieved through encouraging Maori to develop Housing New Zealand sites as intensive mixed use developments. This approach towards social justice has the following advantages:

- It supports economic development through Maori being able to access a wider range of job opportunities. Having a wider range of job options automatically makes the servicing of mortgages more affordable.
- It shifts Maori from being tenants to being landowners and being able to accumulate wealth through increasing equity over time.
- It acknowledges the fact that Maori were discriminated against when they were excluded from the economic benefits that were associated with the generation of urban centres by repositioning them at its centre.
- Maori in rural areas were prevented from accessing timber from state controlled forest to build their own houses leaving them little choice but to build shacks or Skyline Garages. By encouraging Maori to develop Housing New Zealand sites as mixed use developments, it compensates Maori for the fact that the government never paid for resources such as the native timbers that were extracted from state controlled forests to build state houses from the 1930s – 1970's. By returning the timber along with interest in built HNZ housing stock, this acknowledges and repays Maori for the injustices and inequitable practices that occurred.
- For centuries Maori settlements were located in places where cities and towns have since been built. Instead of returning surplus land to Maori which was not required for settlement, the Crown kept it. Treaty settlements have tended to avoid giving back land in urban centers, but State Housing land is a way of returning land to Maori in towns and cities.
- It supports the reciprocal relationship of tuku whenua between the Crown and Maori. 56.7% Maori rent houses, and many who live in state houses and have established long term tenancies in urban centres transactions in a sense establishing a right to occupy.

Tuku whenua was the term used to translate the sale of land in early land transactions. For Maori tuku whenua refers to a reciprocal relationship based around the gifting of land, and its

occupation. As Stokes writes “ The important elements of tuku whenua were, firstly, the ‘gift’ (tuku) of land and the circumstances surrounding the offer of land. Secondly actual occupation, confirmed by marriage was expected, and required to maintain any rights in the land. Thirdly, the rights and mana were maintained, occupation was shared, and if for any reason occupation ceased, the rights reverted to the donor.” Stokes p 630 -631 Various Treaty of Waitangi claimants have argued that Maori had no concept of European notions of individual title or permanent alienation or what this meant for the long term future. If the government adopted the Maori definition of the term tuku whenua through encouraging Maori to occupy and intensively develop Housing New Zealand sites in urban centers, this would shift the hegemony of the existing power structure and radically support Maori in a reciprocal relationship that would benefit Maori economically, socially and culturally as intended by our tipuna who originally ‘sold’ land.