

SERIOUSLY ASIA REVISITED

INNOVATION AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
BETWEEN AOTEAROA
NEW ZEALAND AND ASIA



By Kenneth Leong and
Hone McGregor

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ABOUT SERIOUSLY ASIA REVISITED

In 2003, at the request of the then Prime Minister Helen Clark, the Asia New Zealand Foundation — at the time known as Asia 2000 — ran the Seriously Asia initiative. It was a project designed to inject new ideas and energy into New Zealand's connections with Asia. The initiative canvassed views from across the country and in Asia; helped to grow New Zealanders' understanding of the region; and developed a set of recommendations to guide New Zealand's engagement with Asia in the years that followed.

In recognition of the far-reaching changes that had taken place in New Zealand and Asia over two decades, in 2022 the Asia New Zealand Foundation launched Seriously Asia Revisited. This project brought together a cross-section of informed voices to discuss how to best position New Zealand for success in Asia in the coming decades.

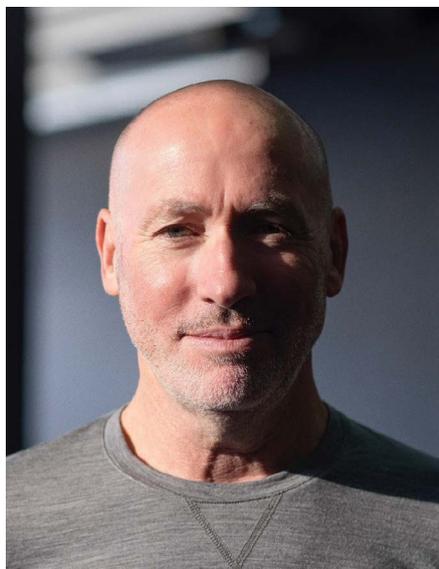
Seriously Asia Revisited is structured around the themes of the original Seriously Asia project. They are:

- Society and Culture
- Politics and Security
- Trade, Tourism and Investment
- Innovation and Sustainable Development

ABOUT THIS PAPER

The Asia New Zealand Foundation Te Whītau Tūhono commissioned this paper as one of four thematic reports that revisit the outcomes and recommendations of the 2003 Seriously Asia initiative. The papers reflect on how the context of New Zealand-Asia relationships have changed since 2003, what has been achieved and what could be done differently going forward. These papers informed a series of four hui held over the course of 2022. Hui participants shared their perspectives on the themes and contributed to recommendations on how New Zealand could best engage with Asia in the years ahead.

EDITOR-IN- CHIEF



Finlay Macdonald

Finlay Macdonald is an award-winning journalist, editor, publisher and broadcaster with 30 years' experience in the New Zealand media. He is senior editor at The Conversation NZ., and has been editor of the *NZ Listener* magazine, a publisher at Penguin Books and HarperCollins, a weekly columnist for the *Sunday Star-Times*, and has written and presented for television and radio.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Kenneth Leong

Kenneth has over 20 years' experience in corporate finance and international business, completing multiple merger, acquisition and divestment assignments. He started his career as a corporate finance advisor at Deloitte before embarking on more entrepreneurial pursuits. He currently serves on the boards of several private businesses, and advises senior businesspeople and investors. Kenneth is a member of Hon Damien O'Connor's Trade for All Ministerial Advisory Group. He was previously director of EDENZ, a large private export education provider, and chairman of the ASEAN New Zealand Business Council. Kenneth was inducted by Kea as a World Class New Zealander in 2015. He has a long history of involvement with the not-for-profit sector, and is a trustee of the Auckland Foundation.

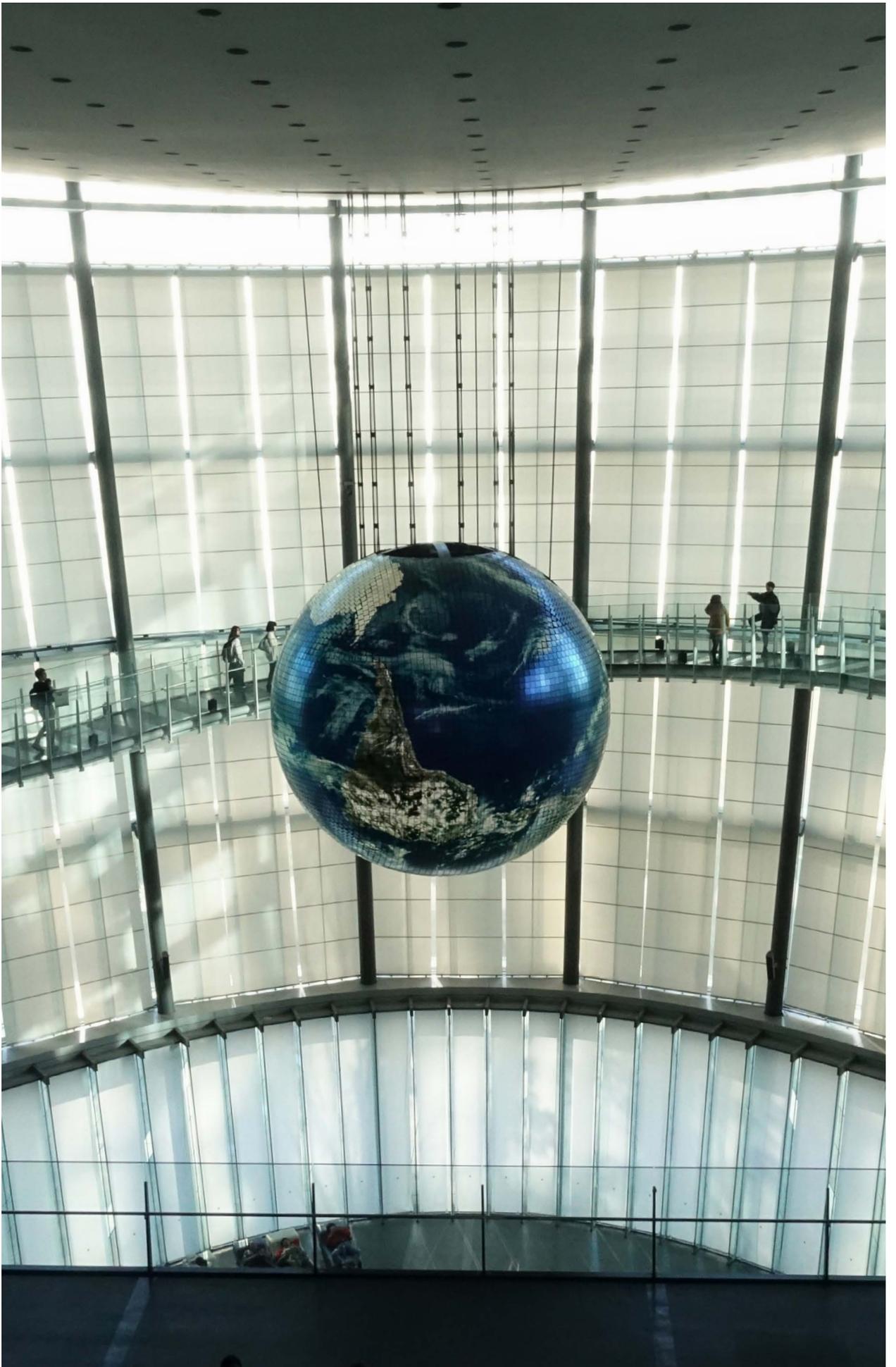


Hone McGregor

Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Te Ātiawa, Te Atihau-nui-a-Pāpārangi, Ngāti Kahungunu/ Ngāti Kere, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, Rārua, Rangitāne, Ngāti Kuia.

Hone is a long-serving board member of the whānau's (family) business Wakatū Incorporation, an indigenously-owned company of land and sea. Wakatū is one of the leading Māori incorporations and is based at the top of the South Island - Te Tau Ihu. Wakatū (and its food and beverage company Kono and its health and wellness functional foods company AuOra) has embarked on a transformation programme, 'Whenua Ora', that has te taiao (the environment) at its heart, is predicated on sustainable development and is transforming all the Incorporation's business operations from horticulture, viticulture and land development, aquaculture to processing and manufacturing.

This paper is in two parts. The first, led by Kenneth Leong, examines the pace of innovation in Asia over the past two decades and examines whether New Zealand has kept up. The paper draws on his own experiences in the entrepreneurship space, giving an insider's account of New Zealand's innovation ecosystem. The second part, led by Hone McGregor, discusses how sustainable development has evolved since the first Seriously Asia project was undertaken in 2003, and highlights the value of taking a Te Ao Māori perspective to sustainability. Drawing on his experiences through Wakatū Incorporation, Hone argues that Aotearoa New Zealand could partner with Asia to develop a national agenda on sustainability, with the aim of Aotearoa becoming a world leader in intergenerational wellbeing.





PART 1: INNOVATION

by Kenneth Leong

INTRODUCTION

It's widely accepted that the key to economic success is innovation. This requires not only fresh thinking but also investment. In this regard, New Zealand has been lagging behind its international peers for some time.

In the past 20 years, New Zealand's spend on research and development (R&D) as a percentage of GDP has consistently been in the bottom half of the OECD, at 1.4 percent. By comparison, Australia spends 1.8 percent. China began spending a similar percentage of GDP to New Zealand 20 years ago but has since powered ahead, now spending 2.2 percent. Korea's R&D spend is more than three times New Zealand's at 4.6 percent.

A common question asked by budding New Zealand exporters and inventors is how can they protect their intellectual property (IP) when venturing into Asian markets, particularly China? But this is not a concern unique to New Zealand. As they invest in more R&D, Asian countries are becoming increasingly concerned about IP protection, also.

Once again, the data paints a clear picture. Asia accounted for 78 percent of total patent filings worldwide in 2021, with China representing the lion's share - 77 percent - of all patent filings in Asia. Large companies in Asia led the charge, with Samsung alone filing 33,000 patents in 2021.

This significant investment in R&D by Asia has resulted in Asia producing hundreds of tech 'unicorns'. Fuelled by huge sums going into tech, companies are taking less time to hit the United States (US) billion-dollar valuation mark, with India's Mensa Brands taking just six months from launch to achieve this milestone.

Despite the best efforts of successive governments, New Zealand seems to be falling behind when it comes to R&D investment and innovation outputs. When I first came to New Zealand as an international student in the mid-1990s, many of my peers were impressed with how creative and innovative Kiwis were. The education system was perceived to be among the best in the world. But the nation's scores on globally recognised benchmark tests, as well as its ranking on academic league tables, have been in decline, while many Asian nations have climbed up the ranks.

The reasons for these declining metrics in New Zealand are debated constantly, with arguments ranging from unfavourable employment conditions to unhelpful educational approaches. We read headlines about New Zealand teachers being underpaid or leaving for better opportunities offshore. Asian-style 'rote learning' is often derided as an inferior system to New Zealand's student-centred learning ideology. But while the debate grinds on, the country continues to underperform.

In 2003, New Zealand ranked 21st on the global innovation index, with only two Asian countries ranking ahead: Japan in fourth place and South Korea 18th. In 2021, New Zealand ranked 26th, with five Asian countries ahead: Korea fifth, Singapore eighth, China 12th, Japan 13th and Hong Kong 14th. Once again, the data speaks for itself.

DIASPORA MATTERS

It was projected 20 years ago that New Zealand's Asian population would double to 15 percent of the total population principally due to immigration. It was 15.1 percent at the 2018 census. Clearly, New Zealand understood and correctly forecast the growth trajectory – but the jury is still out as to whether New Zealand has harnessed the skills, knowledge and connections of its Asia diaspora in order to support New Zealand's innovation drive.

Today there are not as many cross-cultural business partnerships as one might expect, particularly in Auckland, where people of Asian heritage make up close to 30 percent of the population.

Further, it's widely accepted that there are cultural similarities between Māori New Zealanders and certain Asian populations. These similarities provide a pathway to deepening connections and improving innovation and development outcomes. Perhaps Māori could lead the way in building some of the bridges we need?

MASKS AND MANDARIN: A TALE OF TWO COMPANIES

As New Zealand seeks to innovate, the knowledge Asian migrants possess of their home cultures can be immensely useful. They can draw on their cultural and linguistic skills, coupled with deep market knowledge, to excel.

By amending product packaging to suit the local market, altering taste profiles for food items, and using the right opinion leaders to run tailored marketing campaigns, many businesses owned by New Zealand Asian migrants have done well. Even simple decisions like choosing the colour of packaging can make a material difference.

In 2016, I co-founded MEO, a face mask manufacturer. The impetus came from MEO's main founder-shareholder, who had first-hand experience coping with air pollution in China. Pre-pandemic, face mask use was already widespread throughout Asian countries. But, having experimented with a variety of masks, the MEO team found that while they provided protection, they were typically not very breathable – and certainly not fashionable.

Seeing there was a gap in the market, the idea was to create a face mask that combined the best of protection, beauty and comfort. The MEO team was comprised of Asian New Zealanders who set out to design a superior face mask for the export market, bringing together market knowledge, Kiwi engineers and brand designers, and using natural materials from New Zealand.

The MEO business focused on being global from day one, seeing almost no local demand for this product (in a pre-pandemic era). MEO's understanding of Asian consumer psychology allowed the company to expand into offshore markets quickly, innovating and creating products that the market desired along the way.

From the outset, many people in New Zealand lacked understanding of the market for MEO. If not for the first-hand experience and market knowledge of the founders, the business wouldn't have taken off. This illustrates the risk of missed opportunities when New Zealand fails to take advantage of the collective networks, knowledge and unique perspectives of migrants.

Another example: who would have thought you could build a global business teaching Mandarin from Auckland? But this is what the team from Wukong Education has done. Within a few years of start-up, they are now a global online learning platform with about 300,000 students aged three to 18. Wukong employs 3,000 highly trained and selected teachers working across four continents and 118 countries, including its core markets of the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Founded and funded by migrant Chinese New Zealanders who understand the market, Wukong also has first-hand experience of the challenges of teaching Chinese to children growing up in an English-speaking country. The company is now growing rapidly, venturing into related areas such as mathematics tuition.

CHANGING HOW WE VIEW ASIA

Many local entrepreneurs set out to create a product they like, which they assume customers will like also. This approach is OK – but we could do so much better with a collaborative approach to innovation. By bringing together Kiwi ingenuity with the rich perspectives of migrants who grew up in our overseas markets, New Zealand has an opportunity to optimise product-market fit. Customer-centred innovation is enhanced; and we increase our chances of success. So, why has New Zealand not seen more collaboration between cultures? Insufficient familiarity, knowledge and trust are all contributing factors.

The strategic priorities identified by Seriously Asia in 2003 focused on the importance of strengthening our knowledge of Asia, deepening connections with Asia and committing to Asians in New Zealand. And while there has been some progress, these areas are just as relevant today as they were then.

Progress takes time, and New Zealand did start from a very low base. The Asia New Zealand Foundation's surveys, which have been carried out since 1997, have found that general knowledge of Asia today is far better than it was 20 years ago. Equally, research has also shown that New Zealand school children are entering school multilingual and exiting monolingual. Partly this is a story of migrants wanting to integrate, but it is also a perception issue: Asian languages are still not widely learnt or valued, possibly due to a perception they are more difficult than other foreign languages. That must change if we are serious about innovating and collaborating with Asia.

Other obstacles persist. The differences between Asian countries and cultures are still not widely understood. Asian participation in the arts, cultural and business sectors has increased but it's still difficult to find Asian people in more prominent or senior positions. We typically trust Asian brands or businesses less than American ones. These unconscious biases are preventing New Zealand from realising its full potential; from attracting investment and engaging in meaningful collaboration.

While New Zealand lags, Asia leaps ahead. In much the same way Japanese brands are now widely accepted as high quality, other Asian brands will increasingly gain acceptance, particularly in tech. Chinese companies are already world leaders in many facets of industrial technology, including batteries, drones, telecommunications and solar power. This is translating into consumer products, and in the near future high-end Chinese brands will be widely accepted. Asian cultural exports such as Japanese anime, Korean K-pop and Indian Bollywood will become even more mainstream.

All of this means attitudes need to shift. New Zealand has traditionally seen Asia as a region to export to or a source of cheaper goods. The desire to connect with the region has commonly been framed through the lens of riding the economic growth wave, and selling New Zealand goods as consumerism took hold in Asia. We had products Asian customers wanted.

To secure New Zealand's position in a changed world with an ascendant Asia, we need to shift the focus towards Asian business partners as collaborators, deepening ties so we can also learn from them, not just supply the goods they need.

This must extend to understanding other drivers within Asian societies and economies, such as sustainable development. As nations become wealthier, citizens become more concerned about their environment and the wellbeing of the next generation. It's a misconception that Asian countries do not care about the environment.

We have already seen moves to promote sustainability by shutting down polluting factories, shifting to solar power, encouraging the use of electric cars, and using technology to reduce and recycle waste. Across Asia, these trends will accelerate as the need to embrace sustainability grows. This will give rise to significant investment-led innovation opportunities – or equally, developments that could lead to New Zealand being left further behind unless we act smartly and look at ways to collaborate.

The agribusiness, food and beverage sectors provide a salutary lesson. In these sectors, New Zealand has a clear comparative advantage: these are two sectors with genuine scale. But New Zealand is highly dependent on Asia as an export destination, with Asian

countries willing to pay premium prices. This has meant we're mainly acting as a supplier of commodities to global brands. Most of the value is transferred overseas.

Infant formula is a good example of this situation. While Fonterra owns several brands, it is predominantly a bulk formula supplier and contract manufacturer to other brands. Conversely, Nestlé and Danone capture most of the value from a tin of infant formula in the same way Apple captures most of the margin from an iPhone. Without significant investment in R&D and in sales and marketing, it's difficult to see how we can capture more value within New Zealand alone. Innovation costs money. This is where New Zealand could benefit from Asian investment to make a meaningful difference.

CAN NEW ZEALAND DO BETTER?

The innovation trajectory of Asian countries has been expedited by their focus on various factors: highly educating their population (Singapore), investing heavily in chosen technological sectors (Taiwan, Korea, Japan) and attracting high-tech foreign direct investment (FDI) (China).

Further, a defining factor for most of Asia is the fast pace of change. This can catch out many New Zealand exporters who are perhaps used to a more relaxed way of life. But New Zealanders have to appreciate that their way of life comes at a cost. A willingness to adapt and learn to better engage with Asian neighbours, as well as its own Asia diaspora, will help New Zealand become more successful and arguably more innovative.

By accelerating domestic cultural integration, more cross-border partnerships are likely. New Zealand should also promote more short-term and long-term exchanges in Asia, so that New Zealand entrepreneurs can gain an insight into the latest thinking and technologies arising there.

The Asia New Zealand Foundation's ASEAN Young Business Leaders Initiative (YBLI) is a good example of a programme bringing together young entrepreneurs from ASEAN and New Zealand to facilitate deeper understanding and exchange of ideas. This programme should be rolled out across Asia; scaled up to allow for greater cross-fertilisation of ideas; and should bring together related parts of the wider ecosystem: venture capital, Callaghan Innovation, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise Te Taurapa Tuhono (NZTE), universities and so on.

The Edmund Hillary Fellowship has brought talented people from overseas as well with fellows contributing in New Zealand effectively.

These programmes accelerate transfer of information, networks and know-how. Immigration initiatives have been successful over the past 20 years in attracting high-calibre skilled migrants and investors to New Zealand. However, we have not been very good at harnessing their skills and networks. Many Asian New Zealanders continue to face discrimination and do not have equitable access to opportunities. In turn, this means New Zealand is not fully drawing on their deep networks and expertise when it comes to understanding Asian societies, cultures, markets and preferences.

Current policy settings encourage migrant investors to place their money in bonds and low-risk investments, with minimal incentive or assistance to transition investors into higher-risk investments that create jobs and generate export income. While the Government has started working on changing the status quo, we nevertheless now have a large pool of migrant investors whose investments have matured but are still invested in largely low-risk, low-return assets.

There's a missed opportunity to graduate these investors towards more value-creating investments: ones that will create jobs, grow innovation and add to New Zealand's wealth. We need to incentivise migrants to invest in businesses, for instance by relaxing visa conditions and actively assisting them on a path to higher-risk, higher-return investments.

Cross-cultural partnerships remain uncommon, despite a genuine desire among immigrants to better integrate and invest in New Zealand. Why is this? How do we build bridges? There's a role for the Government here, working alongside the private sector,

to create and promote multiple platforms for connecting Asian migrant investors and businesspeople with local ecosystems.

Cultural integration could be championed by NZTE or Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment Hīkina Whakatutuki (MBIE), together with local business chambers and with support from large corporates who can take responsibility for hosting events. Banks are well-placed as a platform for such initiatives; every business and individual will have a bank account, and banks have demographic data and the incentives through which to facilitate such connections.

Harnessing the power of the network of Asian graduates of New Zealand universities is another missed opportunity. Universities run alumni gatherings, but the market approach is largely uncoordinated. Alumni throughout Asia are still very fond of New Zealand and would like to make a difference. There is no excuse for universities not to collaborate.

We need to incentivise universities to jointly host offshore alumni meetings and initiatives and promote greater information sharing. The next step is to actively connect alumni with New Zealand businesses, perhaps through Kea, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Manatū Aorere (MFAT) and NZTE. Government could consider placing government alumni officers in major cities throughout Asia, tasked with facilitating these connections.

SUMMARY

A lack of cross-cultural partnership and collaboration, too few opportunities for learning and connection, and the pace of change in Asia outstripping New Zealand's understanding or ability to keep up are all obstacles to greater innovation. Change will require significant financial investment, such as better resourcing our education system and increasing the R&D budgets of Crown Research Institutes (CRIs) and universities. Other investments require focus and leadership. This includes valuing Asian peoples and providing equitable access to opportunities, harnessing existing networks and skills to propel innovation and business success. Of course, the inevitable outcome is greater social cohesion, making Aotearoa New Zealand a better and more sustainable place to live.







PART 2: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND TE AO MĀORI

by Hone McGregor

INTRODUCTION

The 2003 Seriously Asia report addressed sustainable development using predominantly Western conceptions and stories. This approach reflected the legislative framework at the time; in particular, the then-new Local Government Act 2002, which defined the purpose of local government as being to “promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of communities, in the present and for the future”.

The connection and mutual reinforcement of innovation and wellbeing/sustainable development then was less deliberate than it is today. By 2015, the United Nations’ sustainable development goals (SDGs) offered a more coherent macro-strategy, but these still lacked real consideration of individual cultures’ and countries’ differences.

Te Ao Māori’s perspective on sustainable development was not acknowledged in the 2003 framing, but the succeeding two decades have seen Aotearoa New Zealand evolve as a nation, with new cultural frameworks and narratives forming around sustainability as expressed through Māori cultural values. This is perhaps best captured in the ancient kaupapa (principal) of ora (health and vitality) – tangata ora (health of people), te taiao (the environment/natural world), mauri ora (lifeforce alive) – and a holistic world view based on intergenerational wellbeing.

These values resonate both in Aotearoa and throughout Asia, where strong holistic philosophies also embrace the balance between human activity and living environments. But while these developments are positive, time is running out for the Asia-Pacific region to achieve any of its sustainable development goals by 2030.

Two years of pandemic have only made the problem worse. This relative lack of progress, however, may be the catalyst to invest in new sustainable development initiatives at scale and pace.

There are already changes happening at scale. Many governments in Asia are now advocating for a more sustainable approach to economic growth and a shift away from resource-intensive production. China is continually innovating around renewable energy and has become a leading manufacturer in green-tech. India is significantly upscaling its investment in solar. Other counties are doing their bit, also.

The challenge for political and business leaders now is how to best support sustainability initiatives at a community, regional and national level. For business, the crises in climate, biodiversity and inequality require sharper focus on ideas around a circular economy, weightless exports, net-zero carbon sectors, and low carbon industry. Furthermore, as an export-oriented economy, Aotearoa must ask what Asian consumers most care about in these areas.

We already know some of this. A Kantar 2021 survey across nine Asian countries, based on the UN's key SDGs, showed that consumers had the following priorities:

1. Eradicating poverty and hunger
2. Good health and wellbeing
3. Clean water and sanitation
4. Environmental issues around climate, land and water.

More than half of those surveyed (58 percent) said they were personally affected by environmental problems. A similar number (53 percent) had stopped buying products and services that have a negative impact on the environment and society. In other words, sustainability of environment and societal wellbeing are key drivers of Asian consumer choice.

In future, then, we will need to see the New Zealand Treasury's Living Standards Framework, and a sustainable development ethic in general, embedded in policy. Just as importantly, Te Ao Māori will have a seat at the policy table. We are moving beyond the superficial 'sprinkling of Māori dust' over policy work, towards a more holistic approach in all areas: economic, trade, innovation, environmental and cultural.

Actively and deliberately applying the Living Standards Framework will involve a Tūpuna Pono (being good ancestors) kaupapa in future economic transformation and innovation. And it will mean our trade and engagement with Asian partners, and our international trade architecture overall, will be more culturally framed than in the past.



ORIGIN STORIES AND SHARED VALUES

Two decades ago, Te Ao Māori sat on the periphery of Aotearoa's Asian engagement strategies, with no real political influence around a Māori agenda. Nor was there any real political cohesion – the Treaty settlement process had really only begun, there was no Te Paati Māori, and no He Puapua report (a report commissioned by the New Zealand Government in 2019 to outline how New Zealand could give effect to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). Things are very different now.

Māori are coming to conversations around international engagement and trade with Asia with more agency. Te Taumata, the trade connection point between Māori and the Government, is a great example of the transformation happening in this sector, based on a deliberate policy of Te Tiriti partnership and inclusion. We are reaching back into our whakapapa, acknowledging our origin stories more, and seeing how they place Aotearoa in the wider world.

More than a quarter of Aotearoa New Zealand's population was born overseas; that's rising rapidly, with most coming from Asia. The Māori population is rising too, and Māori are becoming more integral to the emerging new national identity. At the same time, we're looking more to our Asian near neighbours for political and business collaboration. Māori are looking for business partners with common values and interests when it comes to sustainability, international trade, investment and exchange.

Sealord is a good example. Having begun with a \$170 million Treaty settlement for commercial fisheries in 1992, the company now has annual revenues of over \$350 million. This collaboration between a Māori enterprise and a Japanese fishing giant (Nissui) included culturally framed sustainability initiatives, which have been integral to this success.

Māori and Asian business partnerships can thrive on shared cultural norms and values – whānau, hapū, iwi, tikanga and whakapapa – as well as familiar origin stories. We've seen this already in the Minister of Foreign Affairs' recognition of ancient ancestral connections between Asia and Polynesia, and the metaphorical meeting of the taniwha and the dragon: "He Taniwha He Tipua, He Tipua He Taniwha".

Forms of collectivism – a strong element of Asian political agendas – will become increasingly relevant. But these also give Asian governments the power to effect change at far greater pace and scale than Aotearoa can, and we will need to stay connected to keep up. Shared narratives of more prosperous and sustainable futures, and the wellbeing for our societies are one way to do this.

But to work with the taniwha and dragon you must get to know them in the first place. What we are seeing today are the beginnings of a cultural approach to transforming international engagement. And while this involves a necessary break with past practice, for Māori it is also about offering an alternative to Western cultural constructs that are diametrically opposite those of Te Ao Māori (individualism versus collectivism and whānau), but which perhaps fit well alongside cultural concepts at play in Asia, such as communal capitalism.

Aotearoa has traditionally looked west when setting its political and economic agendas, and east primarily for trade and trade partnerships. But Asia has now matched or even surpassed the country's traditional partners in many areas of research, science and innovation. This country can learn from and leverage these advances, shifting from a transactional approach to one based more on reciprocity between Aotearoa and Asia. In Te Ao Māori this would be expressed as tau utuutu (reciprocity). In another two decades' time, it would be pleasing to see agencies like MFAT not only adopting tau utuutu as an organisational value, but also to have translated that into their operating model in a practical sense – one that is authentic and mutually culturally reinforcing.

INTER- GENERATIONAL WELLBEING

The 100% Pure New Zealand tourism campaign, launched three years before the 2003 Seriously Asia report, sought to express a new philosophy and international image for the country. Its depiction of a clean and green Aotearoa was undoubtedly a good global marketing strategy, one that resonated strongly with Asian tourists and students in particular.

Since then, of course, reality has caught up with that messaging and Aotearoa's environmental and sustainability credentials have been questioned here and abroad. The country is yet to articulate a sustainable development imperative that can be supported by everyone. Could there be a new national identity and agenda which combines innovation that is good for the individual and the planet, leverages the almost 200 years of success as a primary product exporter, and bases it on green values that are more than just aspirational?

Increasingly, Māori businesses are showing a way forward. Take Wakatū Incorporation, a diverse company operating from Te Taihū region at the top of the South Island. It's a business of land and sea with intergenerational wellbeing and sustainability at its heart.

Central to Wakatū's holistic and cultural approach is Te Pae Tawhiti, a 500-year plan that aims to achieve its goals "through the sustainable use and development of our land and resources and by creating a community that our people (our families, staff, customers and associates) are proud of". This includes international links and trade with Wakatū's most significant customers and partners across Asia.

In this sense, we see Māori businesses transforming from traditional primary sector exporters to what we might call 'wellbeing companies'. Wakatū's AuOra subsidiary is an example of a Māori-owned health solutions export company that acknowledges ancient values shared by both Māori and Asian cultures. It adopts a low-carbon, regenerative, culturally rich and higher value-added model aligned with Asian values around a good life, good fortune and taking care of future generations.

It's estimated that by 2050 a quarter of all people in Asia and the Pacific will be over 60 years old. We have shared values around cultural obligations to take care of our elders as well as the environment. Couple this with the previously mentioned ethical consumption priorities in Asia, and the possibilities for collaboration with and investment from Asia are clear to see.

Wakatū's wellbeing agenda is now expanding across the top of the South Island region, from Blenheim to Golden Bay, as part of the Te Taihū Intergenerational Strategy. This regional strategy expresses a key kaupapa and concept – Tūpuna Pono – being good ancestors to future generations. It's an idea shared with Asian cultures, coupling sustainable development with the kaupapa of cultural, environmental, social and economic wellbeing.

Is this Aotearoa New Zealand's new narrative – an international call to action based on being good ancestors, with intergenerational wellbeing based on a holistic view of economic, cultural and environmental sustainability at its heart?

In fact, this is already part of the transformative 'value to values' agenda now permeating trade and economic development and incorporated in the Government's Trade for All agenda. This is seeing Aotearoa's primary industry companies seeking to innovate, using values-based business models around sustainability for people, place and profit. The principles of manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga can and should be central to companies being able to live their values and therefore authentic to their stakeholders and customers.

TOWARDS A NATIONAL SENSE OF PURPOSE

It is projected that Asia's urban population will reach 3.3 billion by 2050. Aside from the obvious potential as a market for products and services, this also offers an opportunity for Aotearoa New Zealand to stake its claim to being the global intergenerational wellbeing innovator, aligned with similar Asian values, based on a kaupapa of Tūpuna Pono.

More than that, even; by creating an Aotearoa wellbeing innovation agenda, we can reframe our purpose as a nation. From being a country known for good primary products, Aotearoa can be viewed as a country which produces foods that promote greater personal wellbeing, while ensuring the wellbeing of our environment and future generations.

Some of this work is beginning already, as we can see from an initiative like Our Land and Water National Science Challenge, aimed at transforming our primary industries through research and innovation, with a greater focus on cultural and environmental values. Expanding on this, Aotearoa can aim to be at the front of the queue with trading partners because the products and services we're selling are good for the planet, people and future generations.

Miriana Stephens, General Manager of AuOra, asked earlier this year (after visiting Singapore on the then-Prime Minister's trade mission and witnessing the focus there on the nation's '30 by 30' goal of 30 percent food self-sufficiency by 2030): "What is the well-known and committed ambition and aspiration that will unify us, and accelerate our collaboration in Aotearoa, and with our Asian partners?"

Moving towards a low-chemical, carbon-neutral, regenerative agricultural model is part of the answer. So, too, we argue, is aiming for time when Māori are equal partners with the Crown, helping to determine priorities and outcomes for innovation and sustainability with culture as one of the fundamental elements.



SUMMARY

Wellbeing, tau utuutu and a genuine Trade for All agenda are kaupapa that must become fundamental platforms around our future Asia engagement for powerful, intergenerational, cultural, economic and political relationships. Sharing whakapapa around origin stories will bring lasting relationships of value and shared values. Powerful cultural paradigms such as Tūpuna Pono and the centrality of whānau should be developed to ensure Aotearoa keeps pace with Asian initiatives around intergenerational wellbeing. Trade and international engagement must be based on sharing cultural values, around the pursuit of positive escalating exchange or tau utuutu for shared intergenerational wellbeing. Finally, Aotearoa should develop a national agenda to be a world leader in intergenerational wellbeing, one that sets the national direction and with which Asia can be a partner in achieving.



ABOUT THE SERIOUSLY ASIA REVISITED THEMATIC PAPERS AND HUI

Society and Culture

In this paper, authors Professor Sekhar Bandyopadhyay and Dr Andrew Butcher discuss how New Zealand's demographic profile has changed in the past two decades and how this has impacted relationships with Asian countries and New Zealand's cultural landscape. It provides a summary of developments in immigration, international education, education initiatives and the media. The hui for this theme was held on Friday 29 July 2022 in Auckland.

Politics and Security

Authors Professor David Capie and Professor Bethan K Greener examine how the political and security situation in Asia has changed since 2003, and the implications for New Zealand's engagement with the region. The hui for this theme was held on Friday 19 August 2022 in Wellington.

Trade, Tourism and Investment

Authors Professor Natasha Hamilton-Hart and Shamubeel Eaqub assess how New Zealand's trade, tourism and investment relationships with Asia have performed since 2003, and discuss the opportunities and challenges in the decades ahead. This hui was held on Friday 9 September 2022 in Christchurch.

Innovation and Sustainable Development

Authors Kenneth Leong and Hone McGregor examine the growth of innovation in Asia, the opportunities for New Zealand, and how Te Ao Māori perspectives on sustainable development are shaping relationships with Asia. This hui was held on Thursday 29 September 2022 in Queenstown.



ABOUT THE ASIA NEW ZEALAND FOUNDATION

The Asia New Zealand Foundation Te Whītau Tūhono is New Zealand's leading non-partisan, non-profit authority on Asia. We were set up in 1994 to build New Zealanders' knowledge and understanding of Asia. We provide experiences and resources to help New Zealanders build their knowledge, skills, connections and confidence to thrive in Asia.

We work in partnership with influential individuals and organisations in New Zealand and Asia to provide high-level forums, cultural events, international collaborations, school programmes and professional development opportunities. Our activities cover more than 20 countries in Asia and are delivered through programmes with a focus on arts, leadership, entrepreneurship, sports, business, media, education, research and informal diplomacy (Track II).

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