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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic's impact is predicted to be long-lasting with intergenerational impacts for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples offer untapped potential for understanding how we are shaping resilient solutions to COVID-19 and similar threats in the future. In New Zealand, the Māori people occupy diverse leadership and occupational roles throughout society. As a result of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi (*Te Tiriti o Waitangi*) they are recognised, through Acts of Parliament, as government partners who work in governance and planning processes, including the COVID-19 response. Such recognition can result in the inclusion of Māori values such as *whanaungatanga* (kinship and belonging), *kaitiakitanga* (environmental guardianship and responsibility) and *manaakitanga* (respect, care, and hospitality) within policy and Acts of Parliament. Māori leaders and spokespeople are stressing that environmental and social welfare needs of all communities should be prioritised as part of the COVID-19 solution and that tourism responses cannot be separated from social needs. Government responses and planning efforts that incorporate diverse cultural values ensure more equitable futures and positive experiences for tourism providers, travellers and the hosts. In this way Indigenous-informed approaches would positively contribute to transforming business, health and education for a more positive global society.

摘要

根据预测, 新型冠状病毒肺炎（COVID-19）疫情的影响是长期的, 将对原住民和非原住民都产生代际影响。在如何制定弹性解决方案以应对新冠疫情和今后类似威胁方面, 原住民提供了尚未开发的潜力。在新西兰, 毛利人在全社会中发挥着不同的领导和职业作用。根据1840年《威坦哲条约》（Te Tiriti）, 通过《议会法案》, 他们被确认为政府的合作伙伴而参与治理和规划进程, 包括应对新冠疫情。这种认可将使得毛利人的价值观被纳入议会的政策和法案之中, 如whanaungatanga（亲属关系与归属感）、kaitiaki-tanga（环境监护与责任）和manaakitanga（尊重, 关怀及好客）等。毛利人的领导者和发言人强调, 作为新冠疫情应对方案的一部分, 需优先考虑所有社区的环境和社会福利需求, 旅游业的应对措施也不能脱离社会需要。在政府的应对措施和规划工作中应纳入多元文化价值观, 以确保旅游供应商、游客和东道主有更加公平的未来和积极的体验。由此, 通过原住民知情方法, 可以积极促进商业、卫生和教育的转型, 以建立一个更加积极的国际社会。

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Introduction

COVID-19 has negatively democratized health risks and the financial wellbeing of people worldwide - not just the oppressed, the Indigenous nor the poverty stricken are affected by the inequity of COVID-19 which does not recognize how powerful or wealthy or poor a person is. When future historians look back on this significant pandemic event, lessons could be learnt from focussing on the experiences of Indigenous peoples during this time. Contemporary Indigenous peoples are diverse; many are westernised having been colonised, others live on or close to their ancestral lands according to traditional practices. There will need to be many flexible, nimble and socially responsive approaches to the COVID-19 recovery. Balancing the future industry so that tourism activities directly enhance the health and education of Indigenous peoples and communities is essential. Slow Tourism or degrowth that is locally focussed and grass roots driven are compatible ways forward for Indigenous Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises (ISMTEs), Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

New Zealand (NZ) provides the cultural context for this commentary. International tourism markets disappeared overnight resulting in many tourism businesses ceasing operations. When tourism activities that revitalised Māori economies ceased during the COVID-19 pandemic some alternative economic and social activities arose. New Zealand government interventions have included offering stimulus packages and wage supplements for staff so businesses would survive the financial strain of 'Lockdown'. Māori tourism operators' responses to COVID-19 have varied. Some have redeployed staff, others have diversified into alternative income sources whilst others have had no choice but to make staff redundant, either temporarily or permanently closing their tourism businesses.

As an Indigenous researcher the author presents an Indigenous Māori voice and most of the examples informing the commentary are from Māori tourism ventures. This commentary adopts a reflexive approach, underpinned by critical thinking, to ascertain positive responses to the pandemic and opportunities for Indigenous tourism. Academic literature, media accounts, field work, industry observations and insider knowledge arising from the researcher's conversations and interactions with Indigenous tourism practitioners globally enable further reflections to be drawn from an 'entanglement' of experiences (Ateljevic et al., 2005; Reissner, 2018). The paper will explore the negative realities and then positive responses of Indigenous tourism operators reacting to the loss of tourism activities and income.

Before COVID-19 many Indigenous peoples were struggling – even those within successful tourism ventures often have recurrent financial, marketing or visitor management challenges. Being isolated in rural areas peripheral to key tourism destinations or urban areas is common. In December 2019 I undertook field work in Murupara, visiting local tourism operators Karl and Nadine Toe Toe from Kohutapu Lodge and Tribal Tours. They have a sobering lack of domestic visitor demand owing to negative perceptions of a region associated with unemployment and poverty. In contrast their business was popular with inbound operators and international visitors (Carson, 2019). Karl and Nadine are positive about their future - Murupara has a strong community that values positive outcomes for youth – and are committed to mentoring and training Māori *rangatahi* (youth) in interpretation and hospitality skills, thus

using tourism as a vehicle for change. They were the 2019 National Tourism Award recipients of the Community Engagement award (Rotorua Daily Post, 2019). Losing their international market overnight, as a result of NZ borders closing to stop the spread of COVID-19, Karl and Nadine continue to work but instead of tourism they are providing meals for community members and offering accommodation for those in need. Such community-based approaches by Māori tourism operators, their employees and/or local *marae* (meeting places) are strongly rooted in cultural values enabling hopeful and positive solutions to the detrimental impacts of climate change, natural disasters, ecological degradation and now the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 'new normal'?

As many academics and media commentators have noted, the scale of COVID-19 has shocked the global tourism industry with a force similar to the Great Depression or World Wars I and II (Bisby, 2020; Hall et al., 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Hollingsworth, 2020). Academic, journalistand social media commentators propose a 'new normal' (Ateljevic, 2020; Berentson-Shaw, 2020; Degarege, 2020), whilst the pandemic continues to evolve.

For many Indigenous communities worldwide the pandemic is a historical turning point as many are small scale, remotely located (so isolated from the virus unless outsiders arrive) and without health support needed to manage the pandemic should the virus reach their communities. Those with tourism ventures are experiencing business down-turns and many owner-operator or family businesses are unable to relocate or retrain easily without leaving their homelands. Undoubtedly there will be no singular Indigenous experience of the COVID-19 pandemic – instead the many experiences will be diverse and unsettling depending on each countries' government response to the health and socioeconomic needs arising from the pandemic. As Bisby (2020) noted, even in Canada with its strong economy, 'By June, ITAC estimates that a quarter of the country's 1,900 Indigenous tourism businesses will close, with more than a quarter of the subsector's employees – 12,000 people – losing their jobs'.

COVID-19, the new coloniser

The globalisation of travel which enabled access to Indigenous tourism experiences in remote regions of the world has spread the transmission of the virus. As racism has inhibited Indigenous tourism development (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2018), so has the pandemic brought a halt to Indigenous tourism with impacts similar to neo-colonialism (Spillane, 2005). COVID-19 disrupts livelihoods, accentuating the cumulative impacts from mass tourism, overtourism, and colonialism on Indigenous peoples. Considering the lack of pre-pandemic baseline data within health systems and Indigenous tourism sectors at national levels worldwide it may be difficult to estimate the true cost of the pandemic for many Indigenous peoples.

Ferrante and Fearnside (2020) plea for reduced visitor interactions with remote Indigenous communities globally as it is a viral form of colonialism – the new smallpox or measles in areas where health care systems have been non-existent or strain to

deliver necessary medical care. Even communities with flourishing tourism developments often failed to deliver primary health care for local peoples before COVID-19, particularly in tropical or developing countries (Navarro et al., 2020). The virus, like colonialism, extends a legacy beyond this generation to future generations. Control measures such as self-isolation or social distancing affect the social fabric of Indigenous families and communities worldwide preventing emotional connections at funerals, births and other significant life events. Many Indigenous cultures, for instance Pasifika, expect employed persons to support extended family members. Employers' decisions to temporarily suspend employment, or make staff redundant, have a social ripple-effect that devastates such families.

The pandemic has strained Māori tourism businesses leaders and corporations. Internationally renowned, Ngāi Tahu Tourism (NTT) is an *iwi* (tribe) business corporation that is collectively owned by over 63,000 tribal members. NTT downsized their staff numbers from 348 to 39 people, including the Chief Executive Officer, and temporarily ceased or 'hibernated' operations at ten of the eleven tourism businesses nationwide as a result of the pandemic (https://ngaitahu.iwi.nz/ngai-tahu-tourism-update/). The action could be viewed as a westernised, corporate-style approach to the crisis that fundamentally detracts from core narratives of the Māori value of *manaakitanga* (caring for people respectfully and hospitably). For every unemployed staff member the consequences mean families have diminished finances for food, health, household power, sports and arts attendances. Thus the impact of unemployment for one can lowerstandards of living for many. Media reports about the NTT closures provided limited insights into the process behind the decision but suggested financial priorities, raising the question of whether businesses based on Indigenous (Māori) values differ from non-Indigenous businesses when faced with a crisis? The expectation of Ngāi Tahu Tourism decision-making would be that it was guided by *tikanga Māori* (ways of doing things), informed by *matauranga Māori* (knowledge) and values of *kaitiakitanga* (environmental care or stewardship) and *manaakitanga* to protect the welfare of staff and local communities where the NTT businesses are located. Small and large scale, *iwi* and non-*iwi* owned businesses have made similar decisions with redundancies at Air New Zealand, Skyline Enterprises, Whakarewarewa Living Māori Village and Te Puia in Rotorua (Cropp, 2020). Alternatively there are pockets of hope as small scale, *whanau* (family) businesses pause, take a breath, "sit tight" as a family and wait the COVID-19 crisis out, for example Horizon Tours (https://www.horizontours.co.nz/) and Kapiti Island Nature Tours (https://www.kapitiisland.com/).

With COVID-19 the ongoing common aspirations for the 'new normal' will include empowerment and improvement of Indigenous peoples and their livelihoods – a state that does not differ greatly from the observations made in early tourism studies publications by academics such as De Kadt (1979), Macnaught (1982) and Hall et al. (1993). Publications pre-2020 continually reveal similar themes and issues reflecting the ongoing realities of Indigenous peoples worldwide seeking improved living, health and education standards. The challenge for many is that COVID-19's impact is cumulative alongside downward spiralling environmental conditions arising from global climate change, inequality arising from neoliberal business policies and the exploitation of natural resources. Indigenous communities and peoples provide a magnified

example of the negative impact of COVID-19 on humanity. Yet the human drive to improve lifestyles may enable a hopeful response and solutions to the crisis by embracing indigenous values.

Informing positive futures

In New Zealand all landscapes and marinescapes have significance for Māori *iwi* (tribes), *hapu* (subtribes) and *whanau*. Indigenous values have increasingly been included in tourism planning practices, for example *manaakitanga* and *kaitiakitanga* are expressed within national tourism strategies (https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/5482-2019-new-zealand-aotearoa-government-tourism-strategy-pdf).

In 2018 the Tiaki Promise was launched. Informed by Māori values and developed in consultation with Māori Tourism NZ it encourages commitment to caring for the environment for present and future generations (https://tiakinewzealand.com/). Similar pledges exist elsewhere, i.e. the *Island of Hawaii Pono Pledge* which is expressed in the Hawaiian language and translated into English to encourage visitors and locals to behave in a way that is 'pono' (righteous) (https://www.ponopledge.com/).

Thus, just as Indigenous cultures can be revitalised by tourism (Idang, 2014; Lynch et al., 2010; Prasetyo et al., 2020; Whitney-Gould et al., 2018) there is the reverse potential for Indigenous cultures and individuals to revitalise communities and new ways of thinking or doing (pledges) that challenge and re-imagine the norms of western planning. The focus is no longer one of growth at all costs. Rather than reactionary management approaches to the negative impacts from tourism on nature and communities, positive change would be achieved by proactively incorporating indigenous values in post-COVID management approaches.

Involving Indigenous communities in planning processes, or enabling self-governance, can enhance resilience in health, recreation, leisure, education and business settings. New Zealand Māori are at an advantage to other Indigenous groups worldwide as a result of the strong *Te Tiriti* relationship with the government. *Iwi* are involved in planning processes throughout the country and do not hesitate to voice their concerns about environmental threats (e.g. Littlewood, 2010). As with any group in society, Indigenous peoples are not perfect and have been scrutinised for poor environmental practices, nevertheless indigenous values can lead to thoughtful, nature-centric solutions.

Reconnecting with nature

Indigenous values systems have influenced western environmental movements that counter neoliberal business, for instance permaculture or Brown's (2001) call for an Eco-Economy (Botezat, 2016; Brown, 2001; Holmgren, 2002; Kitchen & Marsden, 2009). Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess drew on Sami environmental values about the need for natural balance when he developed his philosophy of Deep Ecology, hoping to transform wider society and prevent ecological collapse. Naess and Rothenberg (1989, p. 129) observed '*humans' gross interference in nature mirrors our economic*

activity. Protection of what is left of free nature depends largely on the way humans are willing and able to change their ways of production and consumption'.

Globally, Indigenous peoples are active as environmentalists, business people, policy makers, legislators and parliamentarians influencing the management of natural resources and protected areas. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic New Zealand recognised indigenous place names and values, for instance the Whanganui River is a legal entity with the same rights as a human being. The former Urewera National Park was also recognised as a legal entity by the Te Urewera Act 2014, returning the ancestral landscape to the *Tuhoe* people as *kaitiaki* (guardians) represented by Te Urewera Board (https://www.ngaituhoe.iwi.nz/te-urewera). *Iwi* representatives serve on conservation boards (appointed by the Minister of Conservation) or as representatives on international organisations such as the PIPC (Permanent Indigenous Peoples' Committee of the Forest Stewardship Council).

Overseas the recognition of cultural values for natural areas can be contentious, for instance the ban on climbing Uluru/Ayers Rock to respect the cultural landscape of the Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara people (Altman & Finlayson, 2018). Normally, planners and managers realise the need to consider Indigenous values and this parallels an increased public desire to reconnect with nature, including Indigenous '*spiritual and material relationships with the lands'* (United Nations, 2020). Worldwide there is growing support for employing Indigenous protected area staff or integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) principles in conservation (Berkes, 1993; Paudel, 2016; Rotarangi & Russell, 2009).

National parks and protected natural resources can consequently be inseparable from broader societal issues such as food sovereignty and food security for Indigenous peoples (Degarege, 2019). Recreational activities including hunting and fishing have been positive sources of income but also, at times, a source of conflict within local Indigenous communities particularly when commercialised (Berkes, 1993; Boulé & Mason, 2019). Indigenous communities could further develop ecocultural interpretation for post-COVID visitor markets seeking reconnection with nature through foraging, permaculture, community gardening and similar cultural landscape experiences, when international and domestic travel networks return (Carr, 2004; Sidali et al., 2016; Thompson-Carr, 2016). Tourism operators have already successfully diversified into food production, for example the Barrett family of Kapiti Island Nature Tours developed a second business producing Manuka honey products from hives located on family owned lands, thus improving financial security from a second income stream not reliant on tourism during the pandemic (https://www.kapitiislandhoney.co.nz/).

Indigenous entrepreneurial responses

Kapiti Island's honey is an excellent example of an Indigenous family planning not just for a five or ten-year timeframe, but instead considering the resilience and welfare of descendants spanning decades or centuries into the future. Just as indigenous values have informed environmental management, so have western technologies furthered their indigenous business and enabled diversification and access (using the internet) to market their businesses online and via social media platforms such as Instagram.

Hybridisation of indigenous and non-indigenous approaches to managing the environment and businesses is an entrepreneurial way forward. Tretiakov et al. (2020, p.1) commented that 'Family is the source of Indigenous culture, while the mainstream culture is centered on global Western business culture … Indigenous entrepreneurs integrate the values of the two cultures in managing their enterprises, thus acting as n-Cultural … integrating the values of Indigenous culture and the mainstream culture'.

The future for successful economies within Indigenous spaces therefore necessitates access to western technologies, especially the digital world with internet connectivity, technological capability and affordable hardware and software (Henry et al., 2017). Government agencies and the NZ Māori Tourism Council advocated for broadband, internet and telecommunications connectivity in many regions where such connectivity is weak - noting of course that many Māori and Pacifica households have limited or no access to internet or hardware. Multiple government and NGO agencies have coordinated together to develop a Māori Business Support Line "COVID-19 Support: Need expert business advice? Call 0800 4 POUTAMA".

Secure internet services and broadband coverage were essential for Māori communities to communicate with other 'bubbles', access health advice and participate in online learning during the NZ COVID-19 Alert Level 4. Strategically, tourism businesses connected over webinars and share advice. Digital spaces provided social support, information exchange and planning. ISMTEs rely on internet connectivity, affirming the observations of Henry et al. (2017) about the vital role that the digital economy plays in enhancing the power of Indigenous entrepreneurs. Those online were the adaptable, tech-savvy "n-Culturals" identified by Tretiakov et al. (2020) who continued to have a voice regarding how resources were managed. From the perspective of tourism, internet connectivity is essential for marketing to and informing domestic or international travel markets (virtual tourism experiences anyone?), vital for businesses to thrive, participate and possibly diversify into other digital economies.

Indigenous values re-configuring the tourist 'bubble'

Indigenous communities have histories where preceding populations have suffered depopulations from introduced viruses and diseases the most notorious being measles, mumps, smallpox, polio, tuberculosis and Spanish Influenza. Academic theories have cast the tourist bubble in a negative light. The pandemic has changed travel behaviours and until a vaccine is found countries' or communities' management responses include isolation, quarantine, social distancing, transmission tracing and tracking. The 'tourist bubble' has transformed into community or household bubbles. The tourist 'bubble' may work to a community's advantage as they separate from visitors or ensure interactions are controlled. Māori communities have instigated road blocks to keep non-locals away during the New Zealand lockdown – a move that was controversial but often assisted by Police (De Graaf, 2020). 'Keep away from our community is the strong message from Indigenous peoples to outsiders who may convey the virus, triggered by memories of the diseases of colonisation (Borges & Branford, 2020).

The recent phenomena of visitor or tourism pledges are perhaps a more hospitable way of creating a behavioural version of the 'tourist bubble' (Sampson, 2019). Pledges are a timely move towards implementing culturally and environmentally appropriate behaviour guidelines at national levels. As regions and countries become COVID-free there is discussion of forming regional or national bubbles. Trade or tourism bubbles may merge countries, i.e. an ANZAC-inspired 'Trans-Tasman bubble' between the New Zealand and Australia (Hollingsworth, 2020). Such 'bubbles' would revitalise the travel trade, for instance the potential for collaborations between Indigenous tourism operators envisaging a post-COVID future through marketing alliances with networks such as WINTA (the World Indigenous Tourism Alliance).

How academia can contribute

Academic theories may not make a difference to businesses and communities in times of crisis – theory does not pay the bills and feed hungry mouths. However academics researching indigenous tourism development alongside or with Indigenous communities and researchers do have a role to play alongside all of the diverse actors in global tourism by contributing the research informed skills and reflections necessary for critical thinking. Informed, socially-centred tourism policies and business/destination planning that work alongside and in communication with health, education and IT providers will enable all of us to enhance the long-term social and environmental well-being of our communities.

Decolonising Methodologies proposed that indigenous tourism research should ideally be indigenous-driven, i.e. with Indigenous peoples managing and critiquing the entire research process (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). This aspiration can be extended to a call for more indigenous tourism educators and planners with insider knowledge critiquing indigenous tourism planning and development.

Tourism academics have been reviewing their roles as decades of academic publications arising from research and visitors' studies appear meaningless with COVID-19 bringing a halt to international travel. Papers that have posited planning approaches and critical theories about Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities provide insights that should be revisited and re-explored in the face of such a pandemic. Indigenous researchers tackling significant issues are emerging for instance Degarege's (2019) dissertation on food security in Ethiopia. Approaches such as participatory action research, mentoring young Indigenous students or scholars, supporting indigenous educational establishments, such as *Whare Wananga* in NZ, developing Indigenous journals or recommending Indigenous publications within course readings are all approaches that academia might adopt to benefit indigenous scholarship and education in a post-COVID world.

Conclusion

Justin Francis, the founder of travel firm Responsible Travel, echoed the thoughts of many when he stated ' … *the democratisation of travel will take an uncomfortable backward step … If we are to rebuild tourism better than before, and parts of the industry*

were well on the way to being pariahs in the eyes of both local residents and environ-mentalists, then I believe we must act and behave like we are "all in this together".' (Francis, 2020).

Indigenous tourism operators can contribute to adaptations and planning for the future welfare of their businesses, local environment and affected communities. Government support and resourcing is needed at local, regional and national levels to ensure legislative and policy allow such interactions with Indigenous communities in their transition to a post-COVID future. The tourism future can be one encapsulating the indigenous social, environmental and cultural values that underpin ways of being and undertaking business – opposite to neoliberal, corporate models pre-COVID-19. Indigenous cultural landscapes are evocative of wellbeing, health, environmental guardianship, traditional ecological knowledge. Such landscapes are the future of cultural sustainability and their wise management should be of equal importance to economic development.

Finally, academics, tourism operators, planners and managers all have a role in re-visioning (or reimagining) how society 'does' business, through embracing indigenous environmental values and Indigenous ways of thinking to enable solutions for the way forward. This commentary calls for government agencies at national and local levels to advocate for and resource community and environment-centred tourism planning approaches that incorporate local or indigenous values; thus resilient and involved communities can directly influence the post-COVID response. Indigenous values and aspirations would underpin a renewed, resilient and caring global tourism industry for future generations and ecosystems world-wide.

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Notes on contributor

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