

Abstract Submission

The 2007 ANZSEE Conference " Re-inventing Sustainability: A climate for change"

Conference of the Australia and New Zealand Society for Ecological Economics (ANZSEE)

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Proposed Conference Theme: 3. "Social, physical and ecological accounting".

Abstract:

New Zealand: Trade and Environment of an antipodean settler's colony

This contribution explores the historical development of physical exchange between New Zealand and the wider world and its effects on land use and environment in New Zealand over a period of 160 years. The islands of New Zealand were caught in world trade since its colonisation by British settlers through its remote location, narrow economic base and lack of mineral resources. After initially strong connections with Australia, New Zealand became for a long time dependant on the British market for the sale of frozen meat, diary products and wool and there for was shaped by European resource needs. The fast development of the colony under British sovereignty reshaped the landscape of the islands and led to one of the most intensely modified environments in the world. European cultivation methods and animal husbandry were adopted on a large scale and allowed agricultural production to play a major role in New Zealand's economy. The changing quality and quantity of physical exchange during New Zealand's transition into a modern state and its consequences will be discussed over a 160 years period from 1840-2000 on a national level. This research employs the concept of social metabolism and is based on a Material Flow Analysis of selected aspects of New Zealand economy over a rather long period of time.