

ARCADIA IN THE ANTIPODES:  
TOURISTS' REFLECTIONS ON NEW ZEALAND AS NATURE EXPERIENCE

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*This article directs attention to German tourists' fascination with New Zealand. I first scrutinise New Zealand's representation and reveal the ways it is invented and conceptualised by the tourist industry as a 'pure' nature paradise and island reserve. I point to the residual effect of representations and argue that Tourism New Zealand's advertising strategies, international perception and national identity are intertwined and mutually constructed. I then examine the subjectivity of a specific German tourist clientele which is mainly attracted by New Zealand's scenery and less interested in, or even rejects, outdoor adventure tourism activities. I situate their enthusiasm toward New Zealand in the wider frame of environmentalism and concepts of nature in Germany, which are informed by both the philosophical legacy of Romanticism and the political culture emerging in the aftermath of the Second World War. I argue that what the German visitors expect to find in New Zealand is their ideal interaction with the natural world, as both an inspirational force and political concept. In conclusion, I link my findings to imaginaries of island purity and stasis, which contrast positively with notions of globalisation, rapid change and instability.*

INTRODUCTION

When I mention to Germans that I live and work in New Zealand, being German myself, their reactions are predictable and repetitive. Whether or not they have ever been to New Zealand themselves, they mostly express great enthusiasm and admiration. Some tell me how fortunate and privileged I am, stating that I must be very happy, because I live in such a wonderful country. Some seem to be almost overwhelmed by this simple fact. Some declare that it always has been their dream to visit and assure me that one day they certainly will – but that they would rather wish to accompany me back immediately. I wonder about their fascination, and when I ask them why they are so keen to go to New Zealand, they refer to stereotypical representations of the country,

visualising stunning landscapes, untouched nature and an unpolluted island refuge. Their enthusiastic response is nurtured by New Zealand's pictorial representation in photographs and movies featuring an overwhelmingly beautiful, and predominantly empty landscape. This repetitive visual representation asserts realism and claims authenticity by suggesting that images display the true and real New Zealand. These visual representations are endorsed from friends' and acquaintances' reports of their holidays in New Zealand. These affirm the country's international reputation as a 'safe' place, where doors can remain unlocked and people are friendly and trustworthy. Critical comments on New Zealand are barely mentioned and cannot disrupt these idealised pictorial and discursive representations.

My personal observations are confirmed by statistical records which attest to Germans' sympathy toward New Zealand. Germany plays a significant role in New Zealand's expanding tourist economy and constitutes the country's second biggest European market.<sup>1</sup> In 2006, German visitor numbers were augmented by 2% and reached a total of 58,781. Expenditure has increased by 13.1% and reached \$239 million. By comparison, German tourists spend more money, stay longer and travel more extensively in New Zealand than any other tourist group.<sup>2</sup> Most importantly, as a study from the Department of Marketing at the University of Otago (2000) found out, most Germans enjoy their stay in New Zealand and claim to be 'highly satisfied', even though they are perceived as 'extremely critical'. This overwhelmingly positive resonance is intriguing, and I wonder why so many Germans firmly believe New Zealand to be such a wonderful place.

In this article,<sup>3</sup> I investigate New Zealand's attraction for German visitors from two angles. I will first examine New Zealand's representation and self-image and reveal the ways New Zealand is invented and conceptualised by the tourist industry. Particular emphasis is given to the island appeal and the '100% Pure' campaign as a successful strategy to promote New Zealand as an inimitable destination in an increasingly competitive global market. I argue that notions of clean, green – and in a more recent terminology – '100% Pure New Zealand' both are grounded in and impact on stereotypes and perceptions which shape New Zealand's national identity and international reputation. I will then shift the focus to the perception of New Zealand from a German tourist's point of view. I examine the subjectivity of a specific tourist clientele which is mainly attracted by New Zealand's scenery and less interested in, or even rejects, jet booting, skydiving or similar outdoor adventures. The article draws on interviews with fifteen tourists, each of whom had visited New Zealand for at least six weeks and travelled extensively either as a backpacker or in a campervan.

The interviews, which lasted from 60 to 100 minutes, covered topics relating to their experiences in New Zealand, but also to their social environment in Germany in order to situate their perceptions in the wider context of their life-worlds. All interviews were conducted in Germany in 2006 and transcribed verbatim. All quotations in this article were translated from German into English by E.D. Participant observation complemented the interviews and I took part in gatherings where the travellers showed their holiday pictures and talked about their stay in New Zealand. The participants belong to the middle class and were either intellectuals or professionals, aged between 27 and 58. Their names have been altered to ensure confidentiality.

Based on these in-depth, narrative interviews and observations, I analyse the tourists' individual views on New Zealand and I highlight the ways they ascribe meaning to their experience with New Zealand's natural environment. I place both New Zealand's representation and the German perception of New Zealand into perspective by carving out the underlying culturally specific notions of environmentalism and concepts of nature which are informed by historical, philosophical and political traditions. In conclusion, I link these findings to the residual effects of powerful representations and imaginaries of island purity and stasis, which contrast positively with notions of globalisation, rapid change and instability.

#### REPRESENTING NEW ZEALAND: A COMMERCIALISED CONCEPT

Tourist promotion in New Zealand dates back to the nineteenth century, when a few elite British visitors made their way to the luxury spa baths in Rotorua. They also toured the nearby pink and white terraces which were considered a wonder of the world until their complete destruction by a volcanic eruption in 1886 (Grayland and Grayland 1971; Ell 2006). Since 1901, when the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts was founded by Sir Joseph Ward as one of the first Tourist Departments in the world, the country has been marketed professionally. However, New Zealand's government found it difficult to develop the antiquities, architecture, artwork and other cultural symbols that most European destinations use as distinctive national features within a European framework of national identification and international attraction. National symbols such as sheep, kiwi<sup>4</sup> and kiwi fruit, and rugby are more intertwined with popular culture than so called high culture (Bell 1996: 38; Bell and Lyall 2002: 15). Initially New Zealand resorted to an American-style emphasis on natural wonders instead, but struggled with its identity construction as 'unique'. In order to be more successful in the profitable but competitive tourist market, New Zealand needed to create an attractive and inimitable international rep-

resentation, differentiating the country from other destinations.

In the context of globalisation, when claims to distinctiveness become even more important to national branding, New Zealand's geographical location needed to be turned into social capital and portrayed as a virtue (Bell 1996: 46; Bell and Lyall 2002: 15). Its remoteness, scenic beauty, and low population density contrast with overcrowded and urbanised continents. Nature represents the counterpart of cityscapes and human-made environments, promising an untouched and authentic alternative. Metaphors like the 'edge of the world' or 'down under' in the sense of being 'far away' may indicate marginality and unimportance, but allude also to the island imagery as a pristine and unspoiled space because of its seclusion. These kinds of representations have a long tradition and were spread by Thomas More's influential book *Utopia*, first published in 1516, which conceptualised islands as harmonic spaces without social and political constraints. The Polynesian myth which emerged from Bougainville's reporting on Tahiti, published in Paris in 1771, fuelled Dryden's notion of the 'noble savage'<sup>5</sup> and was further romanticised and eroticised in countless novels and artworks (Royle 2001: 13; Connell 2003: 556). It also had a strong impact on Romanticists and was elaborated in particular in Rousseau's philosophies. Ever since, the aesthetics of the South Pacific hold an exceptional appeal to Europeans and provide a stage for myriad projections of alternatives and desires. In addition to these island fantasies, New Zealand is also renowned for its high quality of life, recreational and sporting facilities and the hospitality of its inhabitants. Responding to the globalised tourist industry's demands, these characteristics were successfully emphasised to create an attractive destination, constructing '100% Pure' New Zealand in conjunction with insularity and remoteness.

Tourism New Zealand's ad agency, M&C Saatchi, designed New Zealand's global campaign '100% Pure', which was launched in 1999. Since then, the campaign has constantly evolved, and visitor numbers have increased by more than 50%.<sup>6</sup> According to Tourism New Zealand's website, 2.5 million international visitors spent NZ \$6.5 billion during their stay in New Zealand in 2005. Tourism is also New Zealand's highest export earner and has surpassed the dairy industry in terms of earnings. It has a strong potential for the future, and the Tourism Research Council anticipates over 3.1 million international visitors in 2012.<sup>7</sup>

The global campaign '100% Pure' combines advertising, internet, international media coverage, events, and trade training to market New Zealand as a destination. The main focus is on New Zealand's natural environment, stressing its

'primal beauty' and 'eighty million years of isolation in a time capsule' where it was 'untouched by the outside world', thus depicting empty and magnificent landscapes. These representations foster the assumption that New Zealand is a place where the perceived dichotomy between nature and human agency is mainly absent. In combination with the '100% Pure'-slogan, a state of 'pure nature' is suggested, meaning devoid of human presence, culture or civilisation. These notions build on the assumption that human interaction with nature results in a harmful modification of the natural environment and imply that nature is in an ideal, 'natural' state when left alone. If humans are included in these types of representations, they are portrayed as rather passive or harmoniously integrated into nature, for instance by enjoying the beach, walking or simply viewing. Their interference with nature is shown as minimal, gentle and modest, without harming, polluting or having any considerable impact on nature. These representations hold a strong appeal to travellers who understand 'the natural' as the absence of people, assuming that humans constitute a major threat to nature. This understanding is not only reflected in New Zealand's tourist representation, but is rife in many natural recreation and restoration areas. De-humanised nature serves as an indicator for quality and is achieved by minimal signs of human presence or activities (Hull 2000: 54). This ideal is based on the Romanticist belief that humans cannot improve nature or nature's creation, but rather cause harm to the 'natural balance' produced by nature itself. This view is challenged by notions of a reciprocal relationship and mutual dependency of nature and humans, as they find expression in environmental stewardship or in the assumption that human interference is vital for conserving species diversity and recovering from disturbances (Newton, Fairweather and Swaffield 2002: 21, 27; Isern 2002: 234).

Tourist promotions not only feature idyllic landscapes, but also 'adventure' outdoor activities like jet boating, rafting or paragliding. These activities promise a new and accelerated experience in a beautiful landscape for a specific segment of the tourist market.<sup>8</sup> Emphasis is given to a combination of fun, thrill and physical challenge as a new kind of quest, and to outdoor adventure in a safe and secure setting. A daring experience in nature also creates the sensation of a particular closeness to and connection with the natural environment. Although constituting a commercialised experience, it entails a colonial concept in terms of struggling against, and in the end dominating, nature. By using sophisticated technology, in combination with physical strength and endurance, nature is challenged and finally overcome. Tourists who are attracted by these activities might feel that the absence of exciting recreation facilities would result in a sense of boredom and idleness, because, aside from nature, 'nothing else' is available in New Zealand.<sup>9</sup> It is precisely this 'nothing

else' which constitutes the principal attraction and fascination for other visitors. They tend to ascribe an intrinsic value to the natural environment and feel rather disturbed by motorised entertainments, which they classify as a potentially harmful interference with nature. This is expressed by Peter, who travelled for three months in New Zealand and opposes adventure tourism or motorised outdoor activities for environmental reasons:

Being close to nature means being there without interference or with minimal possibilities to interfere as a traveller. However, if I want to do Bungee jumping, I need the appropriate infrastructure; this means I indirectly contribute to build such a thing. I reckon it exists in the South Island. But this is precisely what I don't want to do in order to get in touch with nature. When I go to New Zealand, I want precisely the possibility to plunge into nature and to harm nature as little as possible. This is my illusion and I think many people want this when they go there.

Apart from New Zealand's magnificent landscape, other features are included in the '100% Pure' marketing strategies as well.<sup>10</sup> Food and wine, designer accommodation, local arts and crafts, Maori hospitality and a Powhiri, a Maori ceremonial welcome, are advertised under the label 'pure'. In Western discourses, as critiqued by Appadurai (1988: 38, 39), the 'native' and the 'native mode of thought' are associated with a strong attachment to place, which is often conceived of as a particular flora, fauna or topography. This perception is particularly prominent with regard to North American Indians, who were hardly dissociated from 'nature' and even perceived as being part of nature or the landscape. Such perceptions may be mobilised by the '100% Pure' campaign. Notably, as Bell (1996: 13) has observed, New Zealand is primarily marketed in a way that suits the Pakeha<sup>11</sup> group, even though local towns and Maori groups are gradually increasing their participation in the tourist industry.

The '100% Pure New Zealand' catchphrase spread far beyond even the tourist market and is now attached to a large number of other products and brands. Just to mention a few, purveyors of New Zealand green-lipped mussel powder, honey, music, medicine for sexual enhancement and baby wool all use the '100% Pure' label in their advertisements. The Green Party politicised the '100% Pure' notion to oppose genetically engineered crops in New Zealand (Fitzsimons 2002). The business world extended the motto when it created the '100% New Zealand – Keeping it Kiwi' campaign to promote New Zealand-owned and -based companies as well as New Zealand products over foreign-owned businesses or imported goods. Thus, the notion of purity is applied to a

wide range of products, items and ideologies, and it always implies something characteristic of New Zealand. In this context, purity serves as a classificatory concept asserting authenticity and distinction in New Zealand and implying impurity and adulteration elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

Conducive to the power of representations is their residual effect and formative impact on imaginations (Appadurai 1996). Representations shape the understanding of 'self' and 'other'. As such, images, imaginations and their reflections become appropriated into identity formations, self-perceptions and constructions of alterity. In this vein, it is interesting to note that the tourist representation of New Zealand contrasts sharply with prevalent academic and popular discourses that emerged in the light of globalisation processes. A huge body of literature discusses deterritorialised identities, transnational linkages, flows, hybridity, *mélange*, liminal spaces, transgression and vague boundaries.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, New Zealand is primarily constructed as remote, disconnected, isolated, rooted, insular, static, and pure – as promoted by the '100% Pure' tourism campaign. These representations provide alternatives to expatiated notions of constantly shifting, hybrid and mixed formations, which constitute key identity markers in other parts of the world.<sup>14</sup>

However, with regard to New Zealand's environment, connotations of 'purity' are not new. Before the '100% Pure' campaign came into existence, New Zealand was already widely promoted for its 'green and clean' image which entailed wide ranging meanings reaching from moral integrity and political superiority to 'natural', 'organic' or 'unpolluted' (Bell 1996: 51). New Zealand's explicit anti-nuclear stance adds to this perception and became world famous in 1985, when, on its way to monitor atomic testing in French Polynesia, the Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior* was sunk in Auckland's harbour (King 1986). In this vein, the '100% Pure' campaign of Tourism New Zealand has reinforced stereotypes and representations which already shaped New Zealand's reputation. However, in contrast to widespread perceptions, 'clean and green' New Zealand in terms of sustainability, environmental awareness and pollution control is a myth. The greening of New Zealand's farming and forestry, for instance, is still modest and, critical voices had hardly any impact until the 1970s, when it was realised that agriculture was New Zealand's greatest national polluter, not manufacturing (Brooking, Hodge, and Wood 2002: 181). Apart from agriculture, other environmental standards, like drinking water quality, solid waste management, soil conservation and recycling are equally poor. New Zealand is also the only country in the OECD lacking vehicle emission and fuel efficiency controls.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to seductive advertisements, the media industry, in particular the film industry, contributed to the international commodification of New Zealand and its scenic landscape. This culminated in Peter Jackson's trilogy *Lord of the Rings* (2001–2003) and the subsequent construction of New Zealand's topography as 'Middle Earth'. This re-invention and virtualisation of New Zealand's landscape entangles it in the global economy (Jutel 2004: 54–65). Earlier movies like *The Piano* (1993) and *Whale Rider* (2003) had a similar impact and advertised New Zealand's landscape abroad. Even though these movies address a variety of topics, ranging from early settler experiences to tensions in contemporary Maori communities, they still cater to the representation of New Zealand as a location where humans interact closely with, are exposed to, or depend on nature. Thus, in most New Zealand movies, individuals are portrayed as engaging directly with the natural environment, either by colonising nature or by having a spiritual, semi-sacred connection with nature. The two topics are sometimes contrasted for dramatic and moral effects. Furthermore, many New Zealand movies use the natural world as a metaphor reflecting states of the soul and emotionality, echoing a Romanticist concept which is anchored in German cultural traditions. These film aesthetics provide a frame of identification and add to a positive reception in Germany and elsewhere (Jones 1999: 12).

Simultaneously, these representations reinforce and perpetuate existing self-images of New Zealanders' particular connection to the natural environment. Even though today 85% of the population in New Zealand lives in urban areas, and nearly 72% in the six largest cities,<sup>16</sup> the landscape and endemic flora and fauna form a powerful source of national pride. Closeness to nature and the outdoors is still perceived as an important aspect of 'national character' and is rooted in New Zealand's settlement history and early representation. Thus, the interaction with and relationship to nature play a significant role in understanding New Zealand's national identity and constitute a dynamic and ongoing process.

Idyllic portraits of New Zealand and other British colonies, intertwined with an Arcadian vision, spread in the United Kingdom as part of campaigns to attract settlers and investors in the nineteenth century (Fairburn 1989: 20). The Romanticist idea of Arcadia, an imaginary location set in the Greek Antiquities, was conceived of as a secluded place of harmonious and modest rurality, where individuals' lives were embedded within and reigned over by nature. This pastoral paradise was situated in a magnificent landscape, fertile and placid, unaffected by the troubles and conflicts that shaped the contemporary world. Arcadia was the ideal of beautiful landscape and the epitome of a good

life. It symbolised the desire for a living paradise, characterised by holism and integrated into the landscape (Körner 2002: 39). It is the projection of a good life into nature, where nature is loaded with meaning and stimulates positive emotions. The Arcadian themes impacted strongly on descriptions of geographers and discoverers who idealised landscape characteristics from their view as distant observers. This formed the basis for the later pipe dream of tourists seeking recovery and recreation in this type of landscape. In the ambit of this Romanticist idea, New Zealand's natural abundance and supposed fertility were combined with the Victorian belief in material improvement and moral superiority to frame an Arcadian tradition and idealised society (Fairburn 1989: 33). However, in New Zealand's Arcadian representation, humans still exercised agency in their relationship with nature and were not passive beneficiaries of 'natural' abundance, as the Arcadian ideal suggested (Fairburn 1989: 33). This is shown in the conquest of and struggles with 'nature' in the beginning of New Zealand's colonisation process, which finally resulted in the victory of humans over the indigenous landscape, a common feature of settler societies (Bell 1996: 28, 36; Bell and Lyell 2004: 173).

One example of New Zealand's romantic depictions rife in the nineteenth century is the artwork of photographer George D. Valentine, who accents New Zealand's spectacular, empty landscape and promotes its reputation in the English mother country as a scenic reserve. Furthermore, European genres, such as human figures gazing with delight into the landscape and contemplating nature were also prominent in the tradition of New Zealand landscape painting (Pound 1983). **Nature was represented as majestic, sublime and overwhelmingly beautiful, or alternatively as mystical and dangerous.** However, the Arcadian ideal was a tool of colonial appropriation of land. As in most settler societies, the early history of European settlement was not very romantic. Settler societies are described as fighting a dual war, one against 'natives' and one against nature (Bird 2003: 53). Tensions and unequal power relationships between settlers and indigenous groups tend to be constitutive of nationhood. The land was subject to contest not just to gaze. Maori and Pakeha farmers, foresters, and pastoralists had conflicting interests in the land and the pastoralists' economy contributed considerably to the deterioration of the native ecosystems (Holland, O'Connor and Wearing 2002: 69, 70).

In sum, New Zealand's contemporary tourist representation as 'untouched by the outside world' and 'pure' builds on earlier national framings, such as the Romanticist Arcadia or notions of 'green and clean', and has expanded far beyond the environmental realm. It has grown into a fundamental component of both the country's national identity and marketing strategy aimed at

the global tourist industry and national consumers. New Zealand's branding as 'pure' proved to be a successful slogan which is applied in a wide range of contexts, such as the natural environment, outdoor activities, arts and crafts, food and wine, moral integrity, political correctness, environmental awareness, and even to the business world. Despite the differences in meaning, purity is always used to express a typical national feature, which distinguishes New Zealand from unnamed 'others', who are lacking those idiosyncratic attributes. This underlines New Zealand's construction as unique, offering landscapes and natural experiences which cannot be found elsewhere. Both national identity and international reputation are intertwined, and constitute and reproduce each other. Therefore, the current '100% Pure' campaign as well as earlier representations which were designed to attract potent investors and settlers from the United Kingdom play a pivotal part in constructing New Zealand's identity at home just as it does abroad.

#### CONTEXTUALISING GERMAN TOURISTS'S PERCEPTION OF NEW ZEALAND

Tourism New Zealand has advertised intensively and successfully in Germany. German visitor numbers are gradually increasing, and New Zealand enjoys a reputation as an excellent tourist destination. The general target group of Tourism New Zealand's marketing strategy is described as 'interactive travelers' with characteristics like 'high use of technology, environmentally and culturally aware, liberal attitudes and a global mindset'.<sup>17</sup> The participants in this research were German visitors who fit Tourism New Zealand's category broadly. Aged between 27 and 58, they felt attracted by New Zealand's international reputation as a natural and pure reserve, but were less interested in thrilling outdoor activities such as high risk sports or adventure tourism. The prospect of encountering untouched nature in a safe and protected space was their major motivation for choosing New Zealand as a holiday destination. In order to get a deeper understanding of their conceptions and expectations of New Zealand as a nature paradise and the meaning 'nature' entails for them, it is first necessary to shed some light on culturally specific notions of environmentalism and concepts of nature in Germany.

German environmentalism and concepts of nature are deeply embedded in philosophy, cultural history and recent political discourses. In the aftermath of the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution in the seventeenth century, humans needed to redefine their relationship with the disenchanting world in order to recreate a meaningful existence. The Romanticist quest for revelation and epiphany found expression in emotional intensity, subjectivity and symbolism. The mysteries of the world should be sensed by humans

and adumbrated in the arts, in particular in poetry, music and landscape painting. Emphasis was given to the interaction between the state of soul and the natural world. Nature was viewed through an almost religious lens, as an expression of the divine, sacred and infinite, producing harmony among individuals and between individuals and society. Romanticist philosophies perceived nature as the perfect place for contemplation and understanding the deepest levels of human existence (Simon 1970: 20). These central ideas about nature, which were borne out of this philosophical and cultural context, resonated in the lifestyle reform movement, the youth movement and in the anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The aim was to live in harmony with nature, which was also expressed in physical and spiritual wellbeing and a healthy lifestyle, specific food habits and outdoor exercises. These movements and ideological concepts contributed to Germany's holistic and pantheistic approaches to environmental ethics and aesthetics (Goodbody 2002: 36). Their influence is still noticeable in current debates on environmental issues.

The trauma of the Second World War is a further strand of influence which is inextricably linked to the rise of environmentalism in Germany. For many intellectuals, the legacy of Germany's past was an incentive to create a new and 'clean' German national identity and political culture. They explained their engagement with environmental concerns by highlighting their antifascist struggle and resistance to the dark sides of modernity. Asserting that consumerism and materialism were responsible for environmental pollution was perceived as the intellectual's moral obligation and critical role in the society.<sup>18</sup> In the 1960s, the state's nuclear power programme was heavily contested and the implications of both new technologies and economic growth came under critical review. Green politics provided an alternative, and Greens amalgamated with other social movements, including the antiauthoritarian student movement, feminism and the peace movement (Goodbody 2002: 35). The relationship to nature in Germany became politicised and entangled with a critical social discourse. Even though this contrasts to some extent New Zealand's prevalent representation of nature in terms of leisure, enjoyment, life-style qualities, and as national asset, the New Zealand government's explicit anti-nuclear position constitutes a frame of identification in political terms, which can hardly be separated from post-war German environmentalism. This is also evident in the emergence of the Green Party as a significant force in both the New Zealand and the German political landscapes.

The successful emergence of Germany's Green Party in the 1970s is mainly the result of specific historical conditions and politics. Scientific reports, for

instance *Limits to Growth*, published by the Club of Rome in 1972, stoked fears of environmental disasters and contributed to the awareness of the negative consequences of modern life and its impact on the environment and humankind. Caring for the environment became both a moral obligation and cultural mission which also resonated in East-West tensions. In 1979, the NATO's Two Track decision to counter-balance the stationing of new SS 20 missiles in the European region of the Soviet Union triggered harsh criticism from the intermingled ecological and peace movements (Olsen 1999: 103). The emerging apocalyptic discourses were further fuelled by the criticism and pessimism of the former West German Left. This culminated in the 1980s, when acid rain and forest dieback (*Waldsterben*) threatened the forests. Trees, in particular the oak, are a national symbol associated with liberty, vitality and permanence, and have been important icons in German environmentalism and national identity (Olsen 1999; Goodbody 2002: 36).

Even though the left environmental agenda declined in the 1980s, environmental issues are still part of Germany's political rhetoric. Olsen (1999: 55) illustrates how these ideas were echoed in conservative discourses during the 1980s, particularly in relation to immigration, asylum restriction and *Heimat*-movements. These concepts are based on the Romanticist idea that humans belong to, or even are products of a particular territory, and nations are therefore naturally existing entities, and not, as Enlightenment philosophies suggest, part of a universal, non-naturalised humanity. This is also mirrored in the use of horticultural metaphors and language describing 'rooted' identities, spreading 'seeds' and designing family 'trees' and 'branches' (Nash 2003: 36; Ballinger 2004: 50). These metaphors reveal the entanglement of environmental and social purity, implying that identities and ideological legitimacy as members of a nation are defined in terms of blood purity and ancestry. Right-wing politics, whether in Germany or New Zealand,<sup>19</sup> tend to parallel discourses on ecological and cultural pollution. Immigrants are perceived as threatening and disturbing the natural order of belonging and rootedness. Ending immigration would also prevent overburdening the environment and ensure the preservation of 'the natural' in accord with the laws of ecology. In this vein, the politics of environmentalism became entangled with the politics of a national identity framed by social exclusion (Olsen 1999: 29). In contrast, left wing politics often target excessive consumption as main cause of environmental problems. This behaviour is judged to be morally unjust toward future generations.

The ways German tourists conceive of New Zealand as a unique nature paradise is informed by these historical, cultural and political developments. What is perceived as 'natural' or as a 'natural state' depends on their individual evalu-

ation of 'naturalness', which is nurtured by the Romanticist legacy of nature as the counterpart to industrial and urban societies. Nature provides relaxation of body and soul for the stressed individual living in a consumer-oriented world. It is also valued because it conjures an image of a simpler and saner lifestyle, which is juxtaposed against the artificiality and busyness of everyday life in urban settings. This confirms an established pattern of national identification with 'the natural' as something inherently German as opposed to the 'artificial' civilisation associated with France or the commercialised British Empire (Goodbody 2002: 35). Therefore, Romanticist tendencies and critical social discourses become intertwined and are rife in Germans' understandings of the 'natural' and 'pure'. New Zealand's representation as untouched, isolated and pristine suggests that nature is still in its 'pure' state, not spoiled by human interference, and that it can be experienced and sensed as such – and thus provides an ideal frame for their projections. Advertisements depicting New Zealand as empty and remote are also paralleled in representations of nature in Romantic art and powerfully echoed in New Zealand landscape painting (Johnstone 2006). Deep contemplation can best take place in an undisturbed, solitary, and immediate interaction with nature. It is interesting to note that these representations do not necessarily lose their attraction even when deconstructed by the visitors. Tourists may reflect critically on the 'authenticity' and 'realness' of the advertising and may be well aware of the tendency to embellish in such promotions, but they still hope to experience nature intensively, and they are willing to embrace this commercialised illusion.

#### GERMAN TOURISTS' NARRATIVES: MAKING SENSE OF NATURE

Peter has travelled with his girlfriend for three months in New Zealand. In his retrospective consideration of his stay in New Zealand, he stresses empty landscapes, gives emphasis to 'the absence of people', and is fascinated by the 'controlled exotic' and 'controlled wilderness.' He states that New Zealand combines almost perfectly desirable notions of the South Pacific idyll and a strong feeling of safety at the same time. He does not really believe in New Zealand's pristine nature, untouched wilderness, or alleged purity as promised in the advertisements, and this aspect does not seem to be very relevant to him. Instead, he emphasises the fact that there are less people than in Germany, which holds a strong appeal for him, because this promises an exceptional encounter with nature:

100 percent pure – no, this is certainly not correct. If they would say 70 or 80 percent, (...) but I know what they mean, they want to convey the idea that this country offers a lot of so-called 'pris-

tine' nature. But of course it is not pristine. (...) The hiking trails evoke wilderness but they are cultivated, well thought of, they lead to somewhere, that the hiker does not get lost and can walk easily. It is more the illusion of untouched nature, but I want to be fair, nature there is not as polluted as here, because of the lack of people (...) You get the pure country, your dreams or wishes exactly delivered. I mean this is positive and not negative. (...) Pure – I think that a lot of people feel attracted by this notion, people want controlled exotic. It has a bit of this South Pacific image, it has the image of wilderness, but controlled wilderness, controlled exotic, this has also something purist and at its extremes something sterile. But I think this appeals to people. And you can find this there. This pipe dream, this world of images, which you have in your head, you can find this really there, because you meet only a few people, a few hikers and nature acts upon us more urban Europeans overwhelmingly, in a way that you think: this is nature! I was very happy and satisfied with this.

He ascribes an invisible, spiritual power to nature which impacts positively on him and other individuals, offering a deep sense of satisfaction, meaning and aesthetic pleasure:

In nature, I feel close to myself and also close to the universe. I know that it sounds a bit strange, but it is like this: the contact to or closeness with the trees, also to these giant trees which they have there, or the fern trees, in general to all forms of nature, has a spiritual character for me. It creates holism (*Ganzheit*). It is the only form of spirituality. I also feel secure. It sounds a bit of a paradox, if you see the giant trees, but in general I feel secure in nature. Safe, it is safe and secure in life. It is difficult to describe, I feel like being in place, and this has a spiritual connotation for me. (...) Aesthetics is a big part of it. And this is the reason for me why I also support Greenpeace, the maintenance of tropical forests. Not just for ecological reasons, but first of all for aesthetic reasons.

This contrasts with Heidrun's view. Heidrun does not refer to aesthetics or supposed wilderness as central to her experience in New Zealand, nor does this apply to her understanding of New Zealand's purity. She rather idealises New Zealand's agricultural production, animal husbandry and land care practices which she perceives as 'pure' in terms of sustainable, environmentally friendly and predominately organic. Current practices in New Zealand, however, do not correspond with her perception. Although interest in organic farming has

grown since the 1920s, ideological barriers still complicate the acceptance of organic farming practices (Campbell and Fairweather 1998: 52). The underlying concept of nature still differs considerably between conventional farmers and adherents of organic farming, who perceive themselves as working in accord with nature rather than conquering it. This antagonism reinforces stereotypes of organic growers as idealist hippies, out of touch with reality. However, as new markets for organic products in Europe and elsewhere are steadily growing and relevance of environmental awareness is increasing, organic farming becomes a more profitable alternative, and the number of New Zealand's organic farmers is rising (Campbell and Fairweather 1998: 5, 28). This triggers a revised self-definition of former conventional farmers, which are now seen in a more positive light and labelled 'innovators' and 'risk takers' (Campbell and Fairweather 1998: 38). In spite of these realities, Heidrun conceives of New Zealand as an ideal 'green' country:

Oh yes, it is a pure country, in particular with regard to agricultural products or agriculture. I experienced that, also the interaction with animals. What endless pasture grounds they have and it was always important to them that milk and cream and cheese is produced locally, all super, from the best, because they don't use a lot of pesticides; and everything produced in New Zealand are top quality products, yes. (...) I also found that the animals could not be treated more appropriately and the air quality and really only little pollution because they don't have large scale industry.

Heidrun links environmental awareness to the upright moral character of individuals. Similar to Peter, Heidrun believes in nature as a positive and powerful source impacting on the individuals. She also stresses the inspirational quality of nature and the positive influence nature exercises on individuals in general, in contrast to the urban environment which she associates primarily with stress and negative effects on humans' health and well-being.

Only a human being who has emotions, a relationship to his/her environment – this means to nature and animals and creatures in the environment and treat them well – has strong backbone, I would think. Somebody who has a backbone and a little bit of intelligence and is conscious of what surrounds him, that human being does not pollute or harm nature or litter or so. And nature has an impact on human beings, because we know that green makes you feel relaxed and the good air and the birds and yes, it is different when you live in a big city with millions of people and you are surrounded by stress

factors, noise and emission and masses of people. I think of course you are a different individual then.

She also ascribes a semi-sacred power to nature as a masterpiece and as a perfect creator, more sophisticated and capable than human beings.

Nature is for me the most terrific thing that exists. And I think, this is a reason why I went there. And nature is divine for me. I am not very religious, but nature is for me 'the divine'. In each flower I see something divine. I mean completed, perfect, and perfect in a way that humans could have never achieved.

Heidrun's and Peter's views are complemented by Hugo, who travelled extensively in New Zealand and points to the overwhelming power of nature, producing happiness and a sense of satisfaction. He highlights the immediate, direct, and undisturbed contact with nature, which causes an emotional state of happiness beyond comparison:

Nature is like a drug, something gets spilled out, like endorphins, and you see the correlations or moods, at the end it's about moods. The New Zealand landscape, images which are almost a cliché, Mirror Lake, the West Coast, the glaciers are the whole world in a small format, from Tirmaru to Lake Tekapo and Queenstown and then over to the West Coast, all is in short distances and suddenly you stand in the rain forest and so on. And the climate and the vegetation change and this is fantastic to see and to experience and this triggers moments of happiness. (...) It is a very strong emotional feeling, certainly. (...) And this is also pure. Pure, I experienced this so strongly, this is nature pure, the immediacy to nature.

Daniel's view is strongly shaped by the ideals of Romanticism, which he expresses in almost ideal form. He perceives nature as the ultimate inspiration and as a secure place for revelation and contemplation. He conceptualises nature as static and as a counter-image of the hectic rhythm of everyday life:

Nature has something static, it does not move, it is quiet and I can deliberate and contemplate much better in this environment, I just can stay focussed. The hectic of every day life, the whole stress is gone and I can focus much better. I have much better thoughts or other thoughts or things suddenly become clear to me, which are not related to nature at all, but just by enjoying a great view you sud-

denly understand things much better. (...) It makes me feel peaceful and calm.

Conducive to New Zealand's construction as safe, pure, and natural is the country's geographical location and insular character. The fact that this imaginative world is far away, protected by the sea and reachable only by individuals who can afford to pay the price for the long flight – monetarily and physically – adds to a sense of exclusivity and particularity. Both Heidrun and Peter felt that 'bad things' cannot reach there, because it is so 'far away from everything'. In addition, they were convinced that insularity impacts positively on the islands' population and protects them from consumerism – an assumption which reflects both the Arcadian ideal and a political statement as expressed by Germany's critical environmentalists who emphasise the relationship between environmental awareness and lifestyle. Individuals in New Zealand are believed to be more modest than in other parts of the world because of the positive influence of nature, which works against consumer mentality and protects them from anti-social global forces. This shows a tendency to link nature also with the social structure, morality, and integrity of the population. New Zealand is seen as a blessed natural society with innately modest inhabitants. The individual's needs are all satisfied by natural abundance and no further 'artificial' desires exist (Fairburn 1989: 26). This finds expression in Peter's statement that intertwines the Arcadian satisfaction with New Zealand's remoteness and insularity.

People in New Zealand are much more relaxed, it is not so hectic there and they don't give so much emphasis to material things. This means it is not so important to have a chic car or a super equipped flat, most people are satisfied with little, and this was my impression. I have seen great satisfaction. (...) I had the impression they spend time with each other, to cook, to socialise, to care for the family, much more than we do here in Germany.(...) In one sense I feel that the New Zealanders are happy with what nature provided for them, they don't need so much lifestyle as here. They have a kind of lifestyle, which is living in a nice environment.

It becomes evident that a major attraction for German visitors to New Zealand constitutes their expectation of a deep experience with 'nature' – in their meaningful understanding of nature as a positive, aesthetic and strong inspirational power or life-force. What they hope to find in New Zealand is their ideal interaction with the natural world, as both an inspirational force and political concept. While New Zealand was successfully advertised as an ideal

society for European settlers in the nineteenth century (Fairburn 1989:19), it is now represented as an Arcadia for nature lovers who seek closeness and re-connection to the natural environment. Holidays in New Zealand equate to a temporary deferral of the everyday life's oblivious and unexciting routine, an escape from rationality and alienation from nature. As such, it configures their ideal relationship with nature and confirms what they conceive of as 'the natural'.

## CONCLUSION

Germans' enthusiasm toward New Zealand and their imaginary engagement with nature needs to be situated in a wider cultural and historical context, which is framed by both the philosophical legacy of Romanticism and the political culture emerging in the aftermath of the Second World War. In a Romanticist interpretation, nature has both a recreational and inspirational value, which impacts positively on individuals. Its aesthetics convert nature almost into an artwork constituting a unique source of enlightenment and contemplation. The relationship between nature and an individual's emotional state refer to a particularly German category of inwardness or intense inner vision or spiritual experience (*Innerlichkeit*) which is crucial in Romantic literature, and still a prominent characteristic in German cultural tradition. In addition to the fact that islands in the South Pacific are pervasively utopian places in Western perception, New Zealand provides an almost perfect stage of projection for German social and political ideologies, which reconceptualise nature and landscapes. New Zealand simultaneously represents European-ness and Otherness, which creates a balanced sense of familiarity, distance and exotic, embedded in a protected, but nevertheless unusual, natural environment endowed with scenic beauty. New Zealand's anti-nuclear attitude is conceived of as proof of its outspoken environmental awareness, political correctness and moral integrity. This combination stimulates further sympathy in Germany, in particular amongst adherents of Green philosophies and political concepts.

The success of the brand 'pure' is tied up in its allusion to and the desire for the existence of purity in a world of global interconnectedness and imagined standardisation. New Zealand's geographic location and insularity contribute to its distinctive construction as a pure island in a world of mixed and moving biographies. The notions of 'far away' and 'long distance' create that sense of exclusivity which makes the experience unique. The island, also in a metaphoric sense, implies a stable, static and solid location which complements constantly changing contemporary life worlds 'in the rest of the world' – as widely addressed in globalisation discourses. 'Pure' New Zealand was invented

to express particularism in a hybrid world and to allow for relaxation and recreation from an urbanised lifestyle, which is perceived as being separated from nature and therefore 'denaturalised'. The representation of New Zealand as a pure and insular space, which is protected by the sea and its remoteness from the impure and hybrid, does impact on visitors and residents alike. Both respond to these powerful images and incorporate notions of natural purity and uniqueness in their imagined identities. In this vein, these positive images are replicated by the mutual constitution of international reputation and national identity formation.

## NOTES

- 1 Statistics used in this section are available at Tourism New Zealand's website [http://www.tourismnewzealand.com/tourism\\_info//market-research/market-guides/germany/germany\\_home.cfm](http://www.tourismnewzealand.com/tourism_info//market-research/market-guides/germany/germany_home.cfm), retrieved 5 April 2007.
- 2 <http://www.otago.ac.nz/german/study.php>, retrieved 5 May 2007.
- 3 Earlier versions of this article were presented at the Centre for Communication Research, Discourse Research Group, AUT University, Auckland 2006; the conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists, Bristol 2006; and the conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa/New Zealand, Christchurch, 2006. I would like to acknowledge the most useful comments of Charles Johnston on this article which he saw as a working paper, prepared for the Institute of Culture, Discourse and Communication, AUT University, Auckland. I am also indebted to Gordon Winder for his knowledgeable advice.
- 4 The Kiwis (Apterygidae) are one of New Zealand's flightless birds and also the country's national icon.
- 5 This notion was coined in Dryden's play *The Conquest of Granada* in 1672.
- 6 See <http://www.tourismresearch.govt.nz/Support/News+Releases/2006-2012+Forecasts+Release+Aug+2006.htm>, retrieved 26 February 2008, see also Chan 2005.
- 7 See [http://www.tourismnewzealand.com/tourism\\_info/market-research/trends-forecasts/trends-forecasts\\_home.cfm](http://www.tourismnewzealand.com/tourism_info/market-research/trends-forecasts/trends-forecasts_home.cfm) and New Zealand Tourism Forecast 2006–2012, Ministry of Tourism, August 2006 at <http://www.tourismresearch.govt.nz>

govt.nz/Support/News+Releases/2006-2012+Forecasts+Release+Aug+2006.htm, retrieved 26 February 2008.

- 8 The development of this branch of the tourist industry is addressed by Bell and Lyall (2002). As mentioned earlier, this research focuses on visitors who were less or not interested in those kinds of activities.
- 9 See also Newton, Fairweather and Swaffield (2002: 25) and their research findings on public perceptions of nature in New Zealand.
- 10 See the 100% Pure Television commercial at [http://www.newzealand.com/travel/about-nz/features/features\\_home.cfm](http://www.newzealand.com/travel/about-nz/features/features_home.cfm), retrieved 5 April 2007. It should also be noted that as a registered brand, the 100% Pure logos, images, icons etc. cannot be used without approval to ensure that Tourism New Zealand's intentions are not undermined.
- 11 The term Pakeha is vague and there is no agreed upon definition of its meaning. Belich (2001) states that Pakeha is a Maori word originating from colonial times which today commonly refers to New Zealanders of European descent. This definition includes that Pakeha might be associated with the colour of (white) skin. According to Spoonley's (1993: 57) definition it is related to power relations and refers to the members of the dominant group of New Zealand's society. This definition includes individuals who might not apply the term Pakeha to themselves. The term is also used to imply a definition of not being Maori (Webster 2001: 15) or to refer to the colonisation process and the recognition of biculturalism (Spoonley 2005: 102).
- 12 Munasinghe (2002: 673) discusses this in detail with reference to nationalism and ideas of purity and impurity. I deploy his useful conceptual thoughts in this context to illuminate the underlying mechanisms of these classifications.
- 13 Literature on these issues is manifold, see for instance Appadurai (1996), Clifford (1997), Hannerz 1996), Inda and Rosaldo (2002), Glick Schiller (2004).
- 14 The Balkan and the US-Mexican borders are striking examples for powerful hybridity discourses and identity constructions. Ballinger (2004) stresses the mutual constitution of purity and hybridity in the Balkan region with regard to state and nation-building processes in Eastern Europe. Alonso (2004) discusses the concept of *mestizaje* in Mexico and deconstructs discourses of racial and cultural mixing deployed by state intellectuals in post-revolutionary Mexico. Charles Hale (1999) directs his focus on elite appropriations of discourses on hy-

- briduity and mestizaje in Guatemala. He situates these constructions in emergent forms of governance and a neo-liberal state model. In his view, the recognition of hybridity, diversity and cultural pluralism should reflect tolerance and modernity.
- 15 See [http://www.oecd.org/country/o,3021,en\\_33873108\\_33873658\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/country/o,3021,en_33873108_33873658_1_1_1_1_1,00.html), retrieved 15 October 2006.
  - 16 See Statistics New Zealand, *New Zealand in Profile 2005*.
  - 17 See <http://www.newzealand.com/travel/trade/about-us/tourism-new-zealands-role.cfm>, retrieved 15 November 2006.
  - 18 Author and Nobel prize-winner Günter Grass came under attack in August 2006 because of his late statement that he was a member of Hitler's Waffen SS when he was aged 17. He was Germany's leading intellectual figure, engaged in the peace movement, left wing politics and environmental issues. Like Wolfgang Hildesheimer or Peter Härtling (Goodbody 2002: 35), he always linked his critical voice and art works to the politics of the Second World War and had a strong moral judgement on Nazi Germany.
  - 19 In New Zealand, anti-Asian resentments were linked to environmental issues and used in political rhetoric during the 1996 election campaign. Representatives of the emerging Maori party, for instance, intertwined anti-immigration sentiments with fear of environmental degradation (Ip 2003: 249). Discourses on cultural and ecological pollution surfaced again in the light of increased immigration from Asian countries in the early 2000s (Dürr n.d.). Many other examples show that discourses on cultural or ethnic purity constitute key concepts in nation-building processes. See for example Malkki (1995), who investigates racially and blood-based narratives on purity between Hutu refugees living in camps in Tanzania in opposition to Tutsi and refugees in the town. Refer also to Ballinger (2004) who discusses concepts of purity and hybridity regarding identity formations in the Balkan region.

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