

'Charm Sells': The Role of a Community Action Group in Preserving a Place Image in Akaroa, New Zealand

Introduction

Akaroa District is situated on Banks Peninsula on the East Coast of the South Island of New Zealand, approximately ninety minutes drive from the city of Christchurch. In many ways Akaroa District is typical of other rural communities in New Zealand. Since the earliest days of European settlement, this district generated the majority of its wealth from the primary sector and in particular from various forms of farming. For most of its history the central role of Akaroa township, the major township in the district, has been as a rural support centre for the agricultural community and a port for a fishing fleet operating off Banks Peninsula. The decline in the primary sector coupled with growing competitive pressure being placed on local businesses and industries from their Christchurch counterparts has seen the district struggle financially for the best part of half a century. In this context the district, and particularly the township of Akaroa, has become increasingly reliant on the development and promotion of the tourism industry for its economic survival.

There are many qualities that appeal to visitors to Akaroa, but two aspects that have long attracted tourists are the atmosphere of the place – marked by a certain peaceful and tranquil quality – and the town's historical appeal, based on its unique history of French settlement and the quaint colonial buildings that act as reminders of the town's early colonial history. At two points in the past fifty years Akaroa has appeared on the verge of losing a significant proportion of these historic buildings. The first time this heritage was threatened was in the 1960s, while the second occasion was in the mid-1990s. The events and activities marking each of these periods represents a bifurcation point in the maintenance of Akaroa's touristic reputation as an historic town, and highlights the importance of past actions and choices in the characteristics, promotion and appeal of this tourist destination today. This chapter outlines the nature and context of these important moments in the town's development, focusing in particular on the events surrounding threats to Akaroa's built heritage in 1996 and the local response to these threats in the form of the emergence of a vocal community action group, the Akaroa National Treasure Network (ANTN). The following discussion examines the nexus of global forces and local contingencies that led to the emergence of the ANTN, the characteristics of the organisation that determined its level of success, and the influence of this organisation on the promotion of Akaroa District since this time.

The Tourism System in Akaroa

While most rural communities have become involved in the tourist industry relatively recently, Akaroa's role as a destination for visitors dates back to the 1850s. Since the late nineteenth century Akaroa township has been a very popular daytrip and holiday destination for domestic visitors, particularly those from the neighbouring city of Christchurch. Over the past twenty years, Akaroa has becoming increasingly popular with international tourists, particularly European backpackers. The significance of the tourism industry to the district has significantly grown since the 1960s, however, the task of estimating the exact size and impacts of the tourism industry in Akaroa District today is complicated by the lack of official statistics on visitor

numbers; a situation affecting many local authorities in New Zealand (Page and Thorn 1998).¹ It has been estimated that at peak times during the summer months, more than 10,000 people may be in Akaroa township on a fine day, vastly outnumbering the approximately 600 local residents (de Hamel, 1998:1). Despite the lack of adequate data, there is little doubt that the number of visitors to Akaroa is increasing. While not a perfect measure by any means, an indication of this growth may be garnered the record of visitors to the Akaroa Information Centre, which increased by 150% between 1994 and 1999 (Wenmakers, 2000:3).

There are many reasons why holidaymakers and tourists come to Akaroa District. Since the late 1980s, a growing number of visitors have been drawn by the district's natural attractions, including the opportunity to view the endangered Hector's dolphins and other marine life, and to undertake one of the many walks in the district, including the four-day Banks Peninsula Track. For the gastronomically inclined, there is a growing range of fine cafés and restaurants in the township and a winery located at the nearby bay of French Farm. The most enduring source of appeal of the district, however, is the restful atmosphere of the place. The town has a certain 'charm', which guidebooks and visitors' accounts have alluded to for more than a century (Fountain, 2002). The findings of the first marketing report prepared for the district in 1989 concluded that the 'tranquil and peaceful village atmosphere' remained the main motivating factor for visitors to Akaroa in the late twentieth century (Meldrum and Associates, 1989). An important contributing factor to this 'peaceful village atmosphere' is the charm of Akaroa's many historic buildings, which attract many visitors in their own right.

The preservation of Akaroa's historic streetscape owes much to the efforts of an organisation known as the Akaroa Civic Trust (ACT), which emerged at a time of great change in the district. The 1960s had been a decade of social and economic upheaval in Akaroa, marked by the decline in traditional industries and the growing reliance on the tourist trade. The economic and social changes affecting the district were reflected in the built appearance of Akaroa township. The arrival of increasing numbers of holidaymakers and second home-owners to Akaroa resulted in new subdivisions appearing in the hills and valleys on the outskirts of Akaroa. In the town centre, many older buildings were demolished to make way for new commercial and private properties. Some of these buildings had fallen into a state of disrepair, however, many others were demolished despite being perfectly sound and significant Akaroa landmarks. Some people in the town felt these changes were a good thing. The editor of the local newspaper, the *Akaroa Mail*, viewed these visible alterations as a pleasing indication of Akaroa's progress, stating proudly 'Akaroa's changing face certainly does not indicate her age' (*Akaroa Mail*, 23/2/1965:2); other residents felt this attitude was short-sighted. For example, a coffee shop owner argued that these new developments failed to recognise the touristic appeal of Akaroa's old buildings:

It is not just the harbour view [visitors] are enthralled with or the fresh fish they can take away (if they are in luck) but the houses with all the beauty of the past history surrounding them. The main comment is 'Why is nothing being done to preserve the old homes?' Soon there will be nothing to attract tourists here as

¹ Page and Thorn (1998:179) found that only 37% of local authorities could provide an estimate of the existing volume of domestic and international visitors in their region and a mere 12% could provide an estimate of tourism forecasts of visitor numbers for their region in the year 2000.

the harbour can be seen from the Hill Top and after seeing the Museum their comment could well be: 'What's left to see?' (*Akaroa Mail* 31/8/1965:1)

By 1969, members of the Akaroa County Council (ACC) were also expressing disquiet over new building developments in Akaroa and discussing ways in which Akaroa's distinctive built heritage might be preserved. The issue that faced the Council was how to maintain the fine balance between progress and preservation, or 'how to preserve as much as possible of the fabric of the old town whilst still pressing ahead with new work' (*Akaroa Mail* 7/3/1969:2). At this time the ACC was in the process of preparing a District Planning Scheme, which was required under the 1953 Town and County Planning Act. As they discussed their Scheme for Akaroa, Councillors contemplated how they might ensure appropriate growth in the future, particularly in light of Akaroa's growing popularity as a tourist destination. Publicity regarding the Akaroa County Council's concerns resulted in an offer of help from the Christchurch Civic Trust to develop an Environmental Plan for Akaroa which would heavily inform the new District Scheme; an offer which the ACC accepted. It was hoped that under this new Scheme, Akaroa's unique architectural and geographical characteristics could be acknowledged and protected in planning decisions. The groundswell of local support for the development of such a plan resulted in the formation of the Akaroa Civic Trust (ACT) early in 1970.

The ACT worked with the local Akaroa County Council to develop the District Scheme, which at the time of implementation was acclaimed as a forward-thinking recognition of the importance of preserving unique and attractive historic streetscapes (ACT, 1970, 1971). Supporting the District Scheme was a building advisory committee, comprised predominantly of ACT members and formed to instruct developers about appropriate designs for the town (ACT, c1972). These efforts ensured that Akaroa's historic buildings were afforded a high degree of protection against demolition or unsympathetic alterations during the 1970s and 1980s. Members of the ACT worked tirelessly to promote Akaroa's built heritage, through the establishment of an historic walkway and supporting brochure, and the acquisition of bronze plaques to mark historic homes in the district. Members were also at the forefront of a number of successful efforts to prevent the demolition of a number of historic buildings. The link between the preservation of these buildings and the town's tourist industry was emphasised, and any threat to the built heritage of the township was seen to threaten the tourist industry itself (Fountain, 2002).

Akaroa's reputation as 'An Historic Town' was reinforced in 1993 when the New Zealand Government awarded a \$100,000 Tourist Facility Development Grant to the Banks Peninsula District Council², enabling it to purchase the historic Post Office building. The availability of this government grant for Akaroa, the first in almost a century of appeals by local residents for funding, was due largely to the growing appeal of the town's built heritage to tourists, at a time when a number of towns and cities around New Zealand were looking to promote their built heritage (McGregor, 1996; Page, 1996; Fountain and Thorns, 1998). In announcing the grant, the Minister of Tourism acknowledged the increasing connection between heritage preservation and tourist promotion:

² The former Akaroa County Council had amalgamated with the other Banks Peninsula local authorities in 1989 (see below).

National tourism trends suggest that more visitors will be making their way to special areas like Akaroa. Historic preservation and tourism appeal increasingly go hand in hand. (*Akaroa Mail*, 12/3/1993:1)

In releasing the first Marketing Plan for Akaroa in 1989, Meldrum and Associates highlighted the fragile character of much of the district's appeal. They warned that almost all of Akaroa's strengths '*can be altered by future development and consequently cease to be a strength*' (Meldrum and Associates, 1989:14, emphasis in original). By 1996, it appeared that Akaroa's built heritage was being threatened by new development proposals and projects to an extent that had not been witnessed since the 1960s. The first indication of what was to come occurred in December 1995 when a bright paint job and extension to the local supermarket went ahead despite the opposition of the building advisory committee. Shortly thereafter, a new three-storeyed, pre-fabricated motel was erected across the road from the museum complex, dwarfing these historic buildings. Almost simultaneously it was announced that one of Akaroa's older commercial buildings, which housed a gemstone business known as 'Fire and Ice', was to be demolished to make way for five three storey residential units. That these developments were able to proceed was due largely to the apparent inability, or some residents felt unwillingness, of the Banks Peninsula District Council to turn down building applications; a situation which was exacerbated by the increasingly outdated and ineffectual District Scheme and building advisory committee. This situation was not helped by the fact that while the Akaroa Civic Trust still had 120 members, only sixteen members were described as 'middle-aged'; the remainder were elderly ('Save Our Town' minutes, 14/5/1996).

These new development proposals came as a shock to many local residents. In light of Akaroa's increasing reliance on tourism, and national and international interest in heritage tourism, these developments seemed to threaten the economic survival of the township. The following letter to the *Akaroa Mail* expressed this viewpoint, echoing the letter of the coffee shop owner three decades earlier:

Tourist and day trippers come 'over the hill' to visit Akaroa because it is different to other townships, and they will not continue to arrive in such numbers if this difference is not maintained.... One of the most important elements in this difference is the visual appear[ance] of historic buildings and their additions, constructed in harmony with the original shops and houses.... Why should our visitors continue to come 'over the hill' if Akaroa becomes a cheap copy of the uglier aspects of the city? (*Akaroa Mail*, 12/1/1996:2)

The question should be asked how this tourist town found itself on the brink of undermining the integrity of an historic streetscape that was such an important factor in its continuing appeal to visitors. A partial answer to this question may be found in the fact that despite the importance of tourism to Akaroa's economy, the town lacked a strong coordinated tourism lobby group or substantial local government support for the tourism industry at this time. Prior to 1980, the elected representatives of the Akaroa County Council (ACC), supported by an Akaroa Town Committee, were highly visible in discussions over Akaroa's promotional place image and actively involved in the development of some tourist attractions, such as the Akaroa Museum. As mentioned above, the ACC had a central role in the implementation of a District Scheme and building advisory committee which aimed to preserve the unique built heritage of the district. However, as with many local authorities in rural New Zealand, the ACC was dogged by its small

population base and continual fiscal strains. In 1989, Akaroa County Council merged with the other local authorities on Banks Peninsula to form the Banks Peninsula District Council (BPDC). With this amalgamation, most council services shifted to the urban port town of Lyttelton. In this new local authority, Akaroa ratepayers and Councillors were outnumbered by their Lyttelton counterparts at a ratio of almost three to one. While the BPDC maintained a service centre in Akaroa, the centralisation of their operations in Lyttelton, more than ninety minutes drive away, meant that the majority of staff and Banks Peninsula District Councillors had little contact with what was happening on a day-to-day basis in Akaroa. The existence of an Akaroa-Waiwera Community Board and the representation of local Councillors did little to allay the suspicion of many Akaroa people that they were being overlooked in the decision making process (*Akaroa Mail*, 2/5/1997:8).

When the BPDC was first formed in 1989, it had appeared that the new authority would play a significant role in the development and promotion of tourism in Akaroa District. The importance of tourism to the long-term wellbeing of Banks Peninsula was one of the key issues highlighted in a draft planning document prepared for the BPDC in 1992 (*Akaroa Mail*, 6/3/1992:7). However, while Lyttelton had a role as a tourist destination, its more significant function as a working port meant that the tourism focus of the BPDC was soon watered down. The Council did participate in tourism marketing for the district in 1994, when they commissioned Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu to prepare a marketing plan for the Peninsula at a cost of \$9,000. However, this marketing report contained little new, and many members of Akaroa's business community felt the report was irrelevant, due to the lack of adequate consultation with interested local parties in the preparation of the document (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu 1994a; Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, 1994b).³ Since this time, the BPDC has largely restricted itself to promoting Banks Peninsula as a whole, and has done little at the level of individual townships such as Akaroa. This role was summarised by the Mayor in 1995:

The aim of the tourism committee [within the BPDC] is to attract tourists to Banks Peninsula and council funds are allocated to that. However, once tourists are in the area it is the responsibility of private tourist operators to attract them to their business. This is not a ratepayer responsibility. (*Akaroa Mail*, 7/4/1995:4)

In light of the limited involvement of the BPDC in tourism marketing or promotion of Akaroa, the task of fostering and supporting the tourism industry in Akaroa District rested largely with Akaroa District Promotions (ADP) in the mid-1990s. The ADP was established in 1991, at a time when the general impression was that the district was drifting as a tourist destination. While the ADP established an information centre, produced promotional material, and organised trade displays, festivals and events for the town, as in many small towns the resources of the organisation – both financial and human – were relatively limited. The organisation gained most

³ Displeasure at the Council's marketing activities was exacerbated by the perception that the Council's very limited tourism funds were ill directed. Between 1991 and 1993, Akaroa received only \$3,300 for the operation of the Akaroa Information Centre, at a time when the Wanaka District was receiving \$165,000 each year for promotion from their local Council (*Akaroa Mail*, 13/8/1993:3).

of its funding through membership subscriptions and most of the ADP's work was carried out by volunteers and standing committees formed on an ad-hoc basis. There was little time or money to undertake any substantial marketing or planning for tourism in the town.

Given the above observations, it is not surprising that the source of opposition to the changes being wrought on Akaroa's built heritage, and by implication, the town's continuing appeal as a tourist destination, came not from the existing tourism organisation or the local Council, but from a network of residents, 'weekenders' and visitors to Akaroa in an action group formed specifically to fight these development proposals. The remainder of this chapter explores the emergence, organisation and success of this organisation.

The Akaroa Treasure Network

In May 1996 a 'Save our Town' meeting was organised as a response to the concerns raised by unsympathetic development proposals for Akaroa. This meeting, attended by sixty people, resulted in the formation of a new organisation known the Akaroa National Treasure Network (ANTN). The 'Treasure Network', as it was widely known, pledged to use a two pronged attack to achieve their goals of preserving the built appearance of Akaroa. In light of trends both overseas and nationally towards the preservation of historic towns, the ANTN decided to work towards obtaining a protection order for Akaroa that would see the town recognised as a National Treasure, similar to ones which existed for other historic towns in New Zealand such as Arrowtown and Napier.⁴ At the same time, the organisation agreed to mobilise the local community to take advantage of the submission process to oppose specific development proposals and make suggestions regarding alterations to the District Scheme, which was under review at the time ('Save Our Town' minutes, 14/5/1996).

At the first formal meeting of the Akaroa National Treasure Network it was agreed that the organisation should be an Emergency Action network; a short-term organisation formed to deal with immediate problems (ANTN minutes, 21/5/1996). By the middle of June 1996, there were an increasing number of 'immediate problems' to deal with. Members of the ANTN spent most of their time during the first months of operation 'firefighting' new development proposals. By this time it was increasingly apparent that developers were taking advantage of loopholes in the operating District Scheme before a new one could be implemented (Cunliffe, 1996:1). Further plans had been notified for five three-storeyed townhouses to be sited opposite the Gaiety Theatre – to be known as the 'La Place' development– and more town houses were being proposed for a site further along the same street. Plans submitted for a new motel development at the other end of town revealed that the quaint, if somewhat dilapidated, 'Mon Desir' apartments would need to be demolished to complete the project.

Members of the ANTN responded to these development proposals through submissions to the Council. In these submissions they opposed the plans on the basis that they breached the requirements of District Scheme, placed additional pressure on an already stretched water

⁴ Arrowtown is a preserved colonial township close to the tourist resort of Queenstown. Napier is known as the Art Deco capital of New Zealand, after being substantially rebuilt during the 1930s after a devastating earthquake (McGregor, 1996).

supply, and would threaten Akaroa's distinctive built heritage (ANTN minutes, 21/5/1996). The ANTN's first victory came when the proposal for townhouses on the site of the gemstone shop 'Fire and Ice' was turned down by the Council's Planning Committee. In announcing the decision, the spokesperson for the Committee stated that the 'reasons for the refusal had little to do with the case made out by objectors to the plan' (*Akaroa Mail*, 28/6/1996:1).⁵ Despite this, the Treasure Network saw the decision as a triumph. Buoyed by this success, members of the ANTN intensified their efforts to halt other unsympathetic development proposals through submissions to the Council and worked to get as many local residents involved in the planning process as possible by publicising their cause (ANTN minutes, 21/5/1996; Farrell, 1997).

The ANTN found plenty of support for their work amongst both permanent residents and holidaymakers in Akaroa. By the end of May 1996, membership of the organisation stood at one hundred – a highly significant number for a town with a permanent population of approximately 600 – and the organisation was said to represent more than twenty percent of the adult population of Akaroa (*Akaroa Mail*, 31/5/1996:3). The Treasure Network's submission opposing the 'La Place' town house proposal attracted 201 signatories and at its height it was estimated that three hundred people were in some way involved in the ANTN (*Akaroa Mail*, 28/6/1996:2; Farrell, 1997:12). The Treasure Network stayed true to its commitment to be a short-term organisation and amalgamated with the ACT at the latter's AGM in November 1996 (ANTN minutes, 29/10/1996). Many of the spokespeople of the ANTN were elected to the committee of the Akaroa Civic Trust and various new subcommittees were formed to address different issues in Akaroa, giving the organisation a much-needed lease on life in light of its aging membership.

From this time, the invigorated Akaroa Civic Trust continued to act as a watchdog on development issues. While the organisation had some setbacks – a number of the opposed townhouse proposals were approved in an altered form – there were significant victories also, and a renewed recognition amongst developers of the importance of considering Akaroa's unique streetscape when submitting development proposals. As an example of this, when the Akaroa Village Inn was substantially remodelled late in 1996 the architect of this project suggested that the recent activities of the Treasure Network had influenced the design of the units:

[R]ecent events published in the newspapers have not escaped our notice and we are conscious of our responsibility to make this development fit comfortably into the townscape. (*Akaroa Mail*, 27/12/1996:2)

The influence of the revitalised ACT was apparent again in 1999, when with the support of the building advisory committee, they were successful in getting the design for townhouses to be sited on a prominent position in the 'French' end of town substantially altered to reflect a more colonial style (Suky Thompson, *pers. com.*, 1999). Since this time, the organisation has extended the list of historic buildings in Akaroa and raised funds for their preservation. Arguably the

⁵ While the height of the buildings and the historical value of the building had been the main issues raised in submissions from the ANTN, the reason this building proposal was turned down was inadequate vehicle access and parking space (*Akaroa Mail*, 28/6/1996:1).

greatest success for the ACT came early in 1999, when their efforts resulted in the registration of the centre of Akaroa as a Historic Area by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. Akaroa joined approximately fifty other areas in New Zealand with this designation and thus had its national profile as 'An Historic Town' raised. The precinct includes the entire length of the main street and most of the town as it existed prior to the 1960s. The new designation means greater protection for not only individual heritage buildings but the general 'streetscape' of Akaroa. It ensures also that the Historic Places Trust becomes an 'affected party' under the Resource Management Act for any resource consent application in the area, which gives it the legal opportunity to comment or make suggestions regarding all future development in the district (*Akaroa Mail*, 12/2/1999:1).

It is important in this context to examine why this group emerged at this time, and how it was so successful in achieving its objectives in the face of developers, a removed local authority, and an under-resourced tourism organisation. Firstly, the emergence of the ANTN can be attributed largely to the efforts of the growing number of newcomer residents in the district. Examining the makeup of the Akaroa National Treasure Network, the six most outspoken members were all recent arrivals to the district, five of whom had lived in the district for less than five years. Since the 1960s, the declining trend in the permanent population of Akaroa District has been stemmed significantly by the arrival of new residents such as these who have been attracted to Akaroa by lifestyle rather than employment opportunities. Akaroa is a popular place for retirement, and retirees today make up over a third of the population. 'Alternative lifestylers', including artists, craftspeople and authors, have moved to the district in significant numbers during this period also, joined more recently by some new categories of lifestyle migrants, including a group referred to elsewhere as the 'stressed professionals' (Fountain and Hall, 2002). This latter group of newcomers are mostly individuals or couples in their late forties who have reassessed their lives once their children have left home and have sought early retirement or a complete change of occupation in Akaroa. The significance of this trend is reflected in the fact that the 45–49 and 65–69 age groups are the only ones to experience significant growth in the district during the early 1990s (Safer Banks Peninsula Council, 1998:8). Before the ANTN formed, many of the Network's leading figures had been involved already in the activities of another new local organisation in the district, the influential environmental lobby group Friends of Banks Peninsula, which had emerged in the early 1990s. In establishing the ANTN, they were continuing their efforts in their adopted role as guardians and defenders of their new home against changes that threatened the qualities which attracted them to the district in the first place. This observation supports research conducted elsewhere, and reflects a phenomenon which Urry has referred as the colonising of the tourist gaze (1995:191; see also Peck and Lepie, 1989; Fees, 1996; Page and Getz, 1997; Reed, 1997).

An important factor in the success of the Treasure Network's campaign was the way in which the spokespeople of the ANTN were able to ensure that their message was disseminated to the local community and nationally interested parties. As stated above, the active involvement of ANTN members in the Friends of Banks Peninsula, and in a number of other local groups such as the Akaroa Community Arts Council, meant that many of the people who became involved in the Akaroa National Treasure Network knew each other socially, and this aided in the dissemination of information regarding the work of the ANTN. The ANTN also ran a well organised letter writing campaign, which ensured that every issue of the *Akaroa Mail* during the height of their efforts in the winter of 1996 contained articulate and lengthy letters outlining

the Treasure Network's position. In the main, the organisation attempted to ensure that the ANTN presented a united front, with letter contributions avoiding personal attacks and each letter being clearly attributable to a spokesperson for the Treasure Network (Suky Thomson, *pers.com.*, 1999). This constant presence in a well-read local publication ensured that the issues remained at the forefront of the public consciousness. At the national level, the Akaroa National Treasure Network was able to ensure that their campaign received broader coverage through the involvement in their cause by nationally-renowned author Fiona Farrell. Farrell, a Banks Peninsula resident, brought a degree of celebrity to the debate, and was responsible for an extensive article published in *Historic Places*, the publication of the Historic Places Trust (Farrell, 1997).

Another important factor in the success of the organisation was the ability of members to make use of the tools of local governance to get their opposition heard. Members of the ANTN spent a great deal of time acquainting themselves with the existing requirements of the District Scheme and the submissions process. They ran workshops for interested local people to ensure that the submissions they made followed appropriate guidelines. In doing this, they ensured that the couple of ANTN members most familiar with the District Scheme were able to draft submissions, and draw up petitions for less knowledgeable members to sign. Farrell outlines the protagonists in the debate in terms of a boxing match:

In the red corner, we have the developers, the architect with a penchant for pale-pink concrete tilt slab, the expensive lawyers and the largely compliant council. In the blue corner, there are the residents who like old buildings, exuberant gardens and cautious changes and whose weapons are the submission, the petition and a rapidly acquired amateur familiarity with the Resource Management Act. (Farrell, 1997:13).

The motivation of the Akaroa National Treasure Network, and later the revitalised Akaroa Civic Trust, to see the built heritage of Akaroa preserved was not primarily tourist related. However, in the climate of the time, the rhetoric of tourism proved an important weapon in their fight for this cause. Acknowledgement of this link is clear in the article written by author and local resident, Fiona Farrell, who outlines the threat faced in Akaroa, but also the source of its potential deliverance:

Remove the old buildings, however undistinguished they may be individually, and bung in half a dozen barrack-block accommodation units, empty for large parts of the year and devoid of trees and gardens, overshadow major public buildings such as the Gaiety Theatre and deprive the neighbours of their peaceful privacy, and the effect of the whole is destroyed. Those immeasurable qualities— charm, a sense of the past, the style of a small-scale, viable human community set in an awe-inspiring landscape— all this disappears.... Such indifference to the impact of individual buildings is always irritating, but in Akaroa it makes no sense whatever, since the economy here is directly dependent on the marketing of that intangible: charm. *This is a tourist town and perhaps that will be its salvation.... Because, after all, charm sells* (Farrell 1997:13, emphasis added).

In line with this recognition, the ACT was keen to publicise the link between heritage preservation and the success of the tourism industry in the district. During their campaign to

get Akaroa designated as a Historic Precinct, and distributed newsletters to all householders in Akaroa supporting this claim:

Tourism is now our primary industry, and competing as we do with many other scenic resorts in the country, Akaroa's major differentiator [sic] is its charming historic character. (Thompson 1998:5–6)

The level of success of the ANTN/ACT belies the degree of opposition to their campaign amongst many residents of Akaroa. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore this opposition, which has been explored extensively elsewhere (see Fountain 2002, Fountain and Hall 2002), suffice to say that malicious gossip, strained friendships, and a bitter and accusatory undercurrent ran through Akaroa in the winter of 1996, largely as a result of the ANTN's activities (Cunliffe, 1996). However viewpoints opposing the ANTN were rarely heard in the public debate over this issue. The ability of the ANTN/ACT to succeed in the face of opposition reflects the fact that the cultural capital of their spokespeople equipped them admirably for the task at hand. Throughout this campaign, the spokespeople of these organisations demonstrated 'linguistic confidence' in their ability to express their opinions in both spoken and written form to the wider public, thereby garnering support and publicity. In this way, their linguistic confidence acted an important source of power in a cultural economy in which groups struggle to have their view of place prioritised over competing cultural understandings. The role of culture as a source of power has been most clearly developed by Bourdieu (1984), whose concept of 'habitus', 'taste', or class culture, refers to the means by which members of social classes distinguish themselves from one another on the basis of education, occupation, lifestyle choices, tastes and values. Furthermore, Bourdieu argues that those people who have the cultural capital acquired through a middle class education are equipped with the knowledge and skills to express their tastes and values more effectively than those without this form of education (1984:53–54).

Existing tourism research suggests that those people with this form of cultural capital are most likely to consume heritage tourism, or places high in heritage value (Merriman, 1991; Walsh, 1992; Richards, 1996), and are the group most often involved in heritage conservation and green lobby groups (Urry, 1990, 1995). The leading members of the ANTN clearly demonstrated an affinity to this 'middle class' form of cultural capital. Examination of the characteristics of ANTN members reveals that while all occupational groups were represented in the membership, those with professional occupations were disproportionately represented and there was a strong representation of artists, poets and authors. The six main spokespeople for the Treasure Network were consultants, writers and members of the 'artistic classes' as one opponent described them (*Akaroa Mail*, 26/1/1996:2).

While the organisation's central aims were not tourism-related, the activities and efforts of the Akaroa National Treasure Network and the revitalised Akaroa Civic Trust have ensured that Akaroa's built charm maintains a prominent position in the promotion of Akaroa as a tourist resort. An examination of the promotional material and images used to publicise Akaroa today draws heavily on the appeal of the built heritage of the district. This emphasis on the Historic element in Akaroa's promotional strategy is apparent on the centralised web site for Akaroa, which the ADP established early in 2000. The welcome page on this website invites visitors to 'Explore the village with its colonial architecture, craft stores, and cafés' (ADP, 2003a). This site utilises three themes to provide hyperlinks to the district's tourist facilities and attractions:

'Wild Akaroa', 'Romantic Akaroa', and 'Historic Akaroa'. The 'Historic' page invites the visitor to 'guide yourself along the Historic Walk' which takes in the 'narrow-gauge roads ... lined with colonial cottages, and the historic buildings of the main street ... still occupied by local businesses' (ADP, 2003b). A company offering holiday homes invites potential tourists to 'Come explore Akaroa's historic precinct and step back into Maori, French and British settlement history within Canterbury's first township' (N.H. McCrostie & Co, 2003). Best Western Tours (2002) alludes to the appeal of the streetscape, rather than just individual buildings: "Marvel at the beauty of the historic churches, buildings and cemeteries. Smell the lavenders and heritage roses and watch for walnuts and oaks planted by the early settlers'. The Akaroa Civic Trust has a website presence also in the form of an online version of the Akaroa Historic Area Database. This website includes a history of the Akaroa Civic Trust and the township, and contains a searchable database of all historic buildings in Akaroa's Historic Area (ACT, 2003). While this level of detail possibly would only appeal to the most dedicated heritage tourist, the work of the ACT has ensured that should still be possible for other tourism businesses and organisations to refer to Akaroa's 'timeless relaxed atmosphere' for some time to come (The New Zealand Health and Travel Information Network, 2003).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that to focus on explicit 'tourism policy' and the economic processes of destination image formation and promotion is flawed. In the case of Akaroa, the preservation and strengthening of the destination's historic appeal emerged out of a more general concern to preserve the built heritage and streetscape of the township. The insights presented here highlight the cultural and political nature of destination image formation and contestation and reveals that economic hegemony is not the only, or necessarily the most important, source of power in debates over the most appropriate destination image for a tourist destination (Jackson, 1991; Braithewaite 1992; Fountain, 2002). In the case of the ANT, the cultural capital and linguistic ability of the organisation's key spokespeople played a crucial role in the success of their campaign. It has highlighted also, however, the importance of the use of the rhetoric of tourism by the ANT to ensure that their goals could be achieved, at a time when the district's long term wellbeing was increasingly reliant on the visitor industry. While the motivation of the Akaroa National Treasure Network to see the built heritage of Akaroa preserved was not primarily tourist related, their activities and efforts have ensured that Akaroa's built charm maintains a prominent position in the promotion of Akaroa as a tourist resort into the twenty-first century.

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