

Accountability for risk in the deep sea petroleum exploration arena: a critical discourse analysis.

Date: Tuesday 15 September 2015

Time: 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Location: Room 208, Level 2, Te Ao Marama Building, UC Campus

Presenter: **Matthew Scobie**

Abstract:

This research aims to take an interdisciplinary approach to examine how two different strands of literature, sociology of risk and the Māori guardianship value of kaitiakitanga, can inform corporate, public and personal accountability in a conflict arena. This is not limited to economic accountability, but includes social, environmental and cultural impacts. Risk, accountability, and kaitiakitanga are deeply embedded in culture and socially constructed by actors within that culture. Furthermore, methods of managing accountability and risk are products of the prevailing culture within a society, including reporting, risk communication, and the precautionary principle.

The conflict arena in this study is the engagement around deep sea petroleum exploration in Aotearoa New Zealand. This was selected because it is a relatively new practice in New Zealand and has caused significant controversy. As an overarching methodology, a critical discourse analysis has been used. Within critical discourse analysis, Renn's (1992) arena framework has provided the investigative tool to examine communications among actors and how they relate to one another, and Beck's (1992) risk society has been used as a lens to understand why actors behave in this manner.

Conversations were held with vocal actors who are actively engaged in the deep sea petroleum exploration arena including industry and government agency representatives, activists, iwi members, city councillors, opposition MPs, local business owners and media in order to hear their stories and interpretations of the conflict. Additionally, documentary and media reviews were performed to contextualise and further develop findings.

This research has uncovered the discourse tool woven throughout accountability, risk and environmental politics, which is the use of powerful story-lines. "Risk refers to uncertainty about and severity of the events and consequences (or outcomes) of an activity with respect to something that humans value" (Aven & Renn, 2009, p. 6) - or what could happen. Accountability is providing a credible story about what is happening now, what could happen next, how one will respond, and why an activity should or should not go ahead.

The most significant contribution of this thesis is a broadly constructed interpretation of accountability for risk in a controversial, environmentally sensitive industry from a range of social and cultural perspectives. This research will also provide insights into how multi or transnational corporations and affected stakeholders engage with one another, and how this can be emulated or improved by all actors involved.

Biography:

Matthew Scobie (Ngāi Tahu) is a PhD candidate beginning study at the University of Sheffield in October 2015. He completed his Master of Commerce at the University of Canterbury in June 2015 under Professor Markus Milne and Dr Tyron Love in the Department of Accounting and Information Systems.

His research involves exploring ways to hold business and government to account for their wider social and environmental impacts. He believes a unique way to enhance this in Aotearoa New Zealand is through the guardianship value of kaitiakitanga. His research is therefore a way of exploring and connecting with his whakapapa in order to further his own knowledge as well as enhancing long term social, environmental and economic outcomes.
