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THE GEOGRAPHY OF SMALL RURAL FARMLETS:
A CASE STUDY OF THE HAWKES BAY RURAL 'B' ZONE

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fulfilment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

A major problem confronting geographers and town planners today, is the outward expansion of urban areas onto good agricultural land. One factor emerging from the impact of urban expansion on rural land, is the development of a number of small size farmlets on the rural/urban interface. Most of the available literature on this topic is American and is based to some extent on von Thunen 'rings' of land-use around an urban area.

This study is based in the Hawkes Bay Rural 'B' Zone - an area surrounding the expanding urban centres of Napier and Hastings and refers to small rural farmlets between 0.8 and 10.0 hectares in area.

It was found that 1984 small rural farmlets exist on the 34 400 hectare study area. From this a 20 percent random sample amounting to 392 farmlets was made and a questionnaire relating to the geography of these farmlets drawn up and sent to the sample. The study looked at the social geography of the farmlets, their occupiers, as well as at land-use activities and patterns.

It was found that the smaller size properties were located nearer to the urban areas than their larger counterparts and that the majority of farmlets are located around the periphery of the urban areas. Analysis showed that those living on the farmlets enjoy the same day-to-day services and facilities of their urban counterparts but also enjoy the benefits associated with living in a rural environment even though they do incur higher transport costs than those living in urban areas.

Only 20 per cent of those living on their farmlets earned their living working their farmlets full-time. The majority of the others had occupations unrelated to their farmlets, in the urban centres and were classified as part-time farmers. Even so, it was noted that a wide variety of land-uses was undertaken on the farmlets. A table of intensity of land use was drawn up. From this it was found

that although the intensity of use was greater than other areas studied in New Zealand, (Manawatu - Chiu, 1975 and Taupo - Crawford, 1977) there was still a reduction in intensity for the rural 'B' zone. Intensity of use was found to be related to the size of farmlet and the occupation of the farmlet owner. From this a pattern of land-use was noted. Finally it was concluded that a new phenomenon in land ownership in the Hawkes Bay is occurring; one of 'rural-urbanization'.

INTRODUCTION

Man and land are the two essential elements of human geography. The way man uses land is a visible representation of the relationship between man as a cultural and economic being and his environment. Any changes in the way man uses his land are expressions of changes in that relationship.

Throughout the world the growth of cities and their spread into surrounding rural land is continuing and as such, problems raised by the conflict and co-operation between agriculture on rural land and urban growth are not unique to any one city or country. This phenomenon of urban accretion on rural land is of special significance to New Zealand, for rural land is the basic resource of this nation. On rural land is built the foundations of New Zealand's economy and our standard of living.

Surprisingly little is known about this finite and precious resource. Geographers and town planners have begun to study this phenomenon for it is a process which is both affecting and altering the characteristics of the environment. Problems resulting from the rural/urban fringe and rural subdivisions have provided the basis for a good deal of discussion, particularly amongst American writers.

It is of interest to see whether the patterns of land-use found around North American cities are to be found in New Zealand. To this end, the Hawkes Bay Rural 'B' Zone surrounding the expanding cities of Napier and Hastings provides an excellent setting to study an area where a wide variety of land uses are being carried out on small rural properties within a 16 km radius of Napier and Hastings. This study sets out to explore the geography of these small rural properties (0.8 - 10.0 hectares), to isolate any pattern of land use found and to relate this pattern to the literature available.