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# Cockies and Blockies:

Cultural constructs in the analysis of rural change

*A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
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# ABSTRACT

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THIS STUDY of rural change takes an ethnographic approach to track the “downstream” social effects of the 1984 restructuring of the agricultural industry during the past two decades in a small Lower Northland farming district. It argues that the reforms marked the beginning of a period of change and uncertainty in farming that has resulted in many of the farmers of the district subdividing and selling land to clear debt or realise capital. Sale of smallholdings has attracted urban migrants from nearby Auckland, driving up land prices to the point where farm children can no longer afford to succeed to the family farm. At the same time, conflicting culturally-based understandings of rurality by farmers and smallholders manifests in behaviours that produce tension between the two groups. Each values the rural environment for different reasons and in different ways. The result is that farmers view smallholders as a challenge to their still-dominant culture. A minority of farmers welcome the diversity smallholders bring to the district.

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