

**New research book released February 2017**

*Petroleum Development and Environmental Conflict in  
Aotearoa New Zealand*

Dr Terrence Loomis

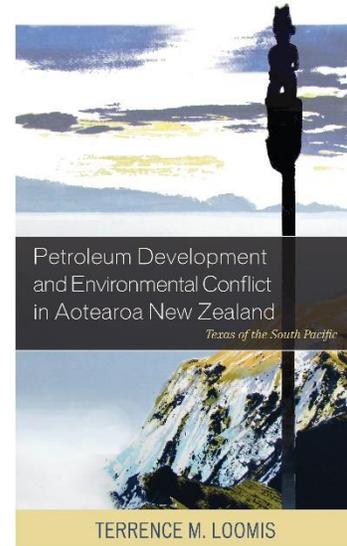
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Shortly after the National government came to power in 2008, it set out a policy framework called the *Business Growth Agenda* in response to the global financial crisis to boost economic growth. The Agenda included major expansion of the oil and gas industry in the hope of a ‘game changing’ discovery. In hindsight National may not have fully appreciated the challenges it was buying into.

States seeking to grow their economies through expansion of resource extraction face more complex dilemmas than a few short decades ago. Besides the increasing influence of transnational corporations on domestic politics and democratic institutions and the need to prevent or mitigate the environmental damage from increased extraction activities, there is mounting evidence that unconventional oil and gas technologies and riskier ‘frontier’ exploration activities are harming communities, local environments, and human health. In addition international accords and growing citizen concerns over climate change are compelling states to review their energy policies and plan how to transition to a low-carbon economy.

In the case of New Zealand, the government chose to undertake a number of orchestrated steps in collaboration with the petroleum industry to remove perceived impediments to industry expansion, promote the petroleum industry to ‘middle New Zealand,’ and defuse, co-opt or subvert environmental opposition. The petroleum industry developed its own set of strategies, or borrowed them from overseas, to help achieve their mutual aims.

Economic anthropologist Dr Loomis has researched these developments over the past several years. In this book he examines the government’s maneuvers and oil industry strategies more closely and how they have intensified as the petroleum showed signs of entering terminal decline. He reveals how opposition criticism and resistance activities by environmental activists, concerned citizens’ groups and even some local authorities not only disrupted government/industry efforts and highlighted National’s contradictory energy and climate policies, but had far-reaching effects on institutional relations and values between the state and civil society. NGOs, communities and local councils have less influence in policy-making, local planning, sustainable resource management and care for the environment than previously. *The concern is these developments may be early signs of what economists call ‘the Resource Curse’ just when, according to recent reports by the OECD and Vivid Economics, government, business and civil society need to be working closely together to progress the country’s transition to a clean-energy economy.* –Ends





**About the author:** Dr Terrence Loomis is an independent researcher and Visiting Research Scholar in the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies at Victoria University. He holds a BA from Hamline University in Minnesota, an MA (1<sup>st</sup> Hons) in Social Anthropology from Auckland University, a PhD in Economic Anthropology from the University of Adelaide, and certificate in Economic Development Finance Professional (EDFP) from the National Development Council of America. He has over 15 years research and development consulting experience in the US, Canada, Australia, the Pacific and New Zealand. He was also Director of Economic Development for the Mdewakanton Dakota tribe of Prairie Island, Minnesota for four years. Between 1997-2000 he was Foundation Professor of Development Studies in the School of Maori and Pacific Development at Waikato University, before becoming a senior policy advisor with the New Zealand government.

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