

Te Tangi a te Mānu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines

‘Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines’ was launched in Auckland on the 26th August 2022, and has since been presented at a series of TPO-NZILA branch workshops around the country. Emeritus Professor Simon Swaffield was an invited speaker at the launch. He considered five questions:

“What is the significance of this publication to landscape and landscape architecture in Aotearoa New Zealand (Aotearoa NZ), and to those with an interest in our landscapes? How did Tuia Pito Ora – New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (TPO-NZILA) reach this point in the 50th year of our journey as a profession? What are some of the key features of Te Tangi a te Manu? How are the guidelines special in Aotearoa NZ, and beyond? Finally, what opportunities and challenges does the new guidance present?”

“For the profession, the guidelines mark a major step towards a more culturally grounded practice in Aotearoa NZ that acknowledges the pivotal role of the Treaty of Waitangi in our lives and our landscapes, in the past, present and future. For all TPO-NZILA members, both Tāngata Whenua and Pākehā, it provides guidance to a creative landscape assessment practice that acknowledges and connects our cultural knowledge and value systems. For communities and clients, Te Tangi a te Manu points to how everyday lived-in landscapes might be reimagined and regenerated through the Treaty. For the Environment Court and other decision makers the guide is an authoritative statement of best practice in landscape assessment in Aotearoa NZ in 2022. Finally, the guide offers an example to the profession internationally of how different cultural understandings related to landscape can be connected through a mutual commitment to inclusion and collaboration.

Landscape Assessment has been a foundation of landscape architecture since the earliest days of the profession in Aotearoa NZ. Each decade of the profession’s fifty-year history has brought important developments in landscape assessment practice.

In the 1970’s there was particular focus on project-based landscape assessment, drawing on UK and US precedents in landscape aesthetics, environmental impact assessment, visual resource management, and landscape ecological design and planningⁱ. The second decade, the 1980s, generated a widening range of approaches, including landscape characterisationⁱⁱ; landscape pattern-based assessmentⁱⁱⁱ; systematic visual assessment^{iv}; public perception studies^v; and a proposal for an holistic landscape data base^{vi}.

In these early years there was limited recognition of Tāngata Whenua perspectives upon landscape assessment. But there were exceptions. In 1987 the TPO-NZILA Te Aute

conference ‘*E Rua Ngā Iwi, Kotahi Anō Te Whenua: Two Cultures, One Landscape*’^{vii} challenged the profession to recognize and embrace the bi-cultural foundations of Aotearoa NZ. That hui can be seen as a seed from which Te Tangi a te Manu has grown.

The following decade of the 1990s introduced the new imperatives of the Resource Management Act (RMA). These included the importance of outstanding natural landscapes and the criteria for their assessment^{viii}. Tāngata Whenua values also became more recognized in landscape assessment under the RMA, but primarily as a specialized topic.

Since 2000 there has been wider use of digital technologies, community engagement, and recognition of landscape dynamics^{ix}, with greater focus on telling a clear and compelling story, framing assessment as an expert narrative rather than a technical procedure. With that comes greater emphasis upon creative solutions, and integration of design with assessment^x.

The RMA reforms also enhanced the role of the Environment Court as a forum for testing the process of landscape assessment. One outcome of the growing diversity of approaches was that different consultants were each developing their own methodologies, which could lead to differences in emphasis in analysis, and different opinions. This prompted calls from the Court for greater consistency in approach between landscape experts.

In 1999 a TPO-NZILA conference resulted in publication of a ‘framework’ for landscape assessment^{xi}, and in 2010 the TPO-NZILA Landscape Foundation published a best practice note^{xii} based on members workshops. These two guides attempted to mediate between the different approaches but did not comprehensively address Te Ao Māori.

Te Tangi a te Manu is a further TPO-NZILA initiative. The project has been led by a committed trio of authors: Gavin Lister and Rachel de Lambert who undertook reviews of case law, of previous guidance, overseas examples, and the results of workshops and consultation with members, together with Alan Titchener who subsequently coordinated close collaboration with Te Tau-a-Nuku, the collective of landscape architects who are Tāngata Whenua. This crucial step is central to the kaupapa of the project.

What are the key features of the new guidelines? In an important shift from the procedural focus of previous guidelines, Te Tangi a te Manu is *principles* based:

- It is *inclusive* of both Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā, framed by the Treaty.
- The guidelines carefully examine the relationship of landscape with whenua in the Treaty context and argue that landscape assessment process must be *fit* for

the *particular landscape* being assessed. This respects mana whenua and associated tikanga of iwi, hapū, and whānau.

- The guidelines promote a *narrative* structure for assessment, with an open discourse between different perspectives.
- They encourage *transparency* in explanation, with explicitly justified arguments.
- The approach is *integrative*, drawing together diverse knowledge and values on biophysical, associative and perceptive dimensions of landscape into a coherent whole.
- The guideline is focused on the specific needs of statutory decision makers. While shaped by the RMA, Te Tangi a te Manu is *adaptive* and intended to evolve over time.

What makes this guideline so special and relevant today is its kaupapa, its intent. At the 1999 conference Environment Court Commissioner Roger Tasker observed that while decision makers expect landscape architects to be systematic in approach, what they really want is for us to explain to decision makers *why* they should *care* about landscape.

Te Tangi a te Manu proposes a pathway that reveals both *why* and *how* to care for our shared landscapes. By embracing and mediating between different value and knowledge systems, Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā, the guideline promotes engagement between mātauranga Māori and concepts drawn from the landscape, design, and planning disciplines. The *connections and bindings* between these perspectives are key to understanding landscape values and relationships. This in turn enables collaborative and effective local action on the defining landscape issues of our time.

Te Tangi a te Manu has adopted an ambitious and demanding kaupapa, which leads to both opportunities and challenges in the use of the guide. These include:

- What landscape-based practices can be developed to support informed and respectful bi-cultural dialogue and timely professional deliberation?
- What concepts, metaphors and analogies can resonate across the two worlds of Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā, stimulating and supporting collective action on critical landscape issues such as climate change and transition to a sustainable future?

- How can TPO-NZILA members be encouraged and enabled to develop the cultural and language competencies needed to work at the interface of these worlds? and
- Landscapes and landscape change evoke passion and strong opinions. How can landscape professionals nurture inclusion, care and respect for all involved in this collaborative journey, just as we seek to nurture care and respect for all landscapes?

These are exciting opportunities and good challenges to have. Tuia Pito Ora - New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects must be congratulated for the vision to publish this guide, and the authors deserve our profound thanks for their commitment to undertake the project in an inclusive way and to such an exemplary standard. It is an inspirational gift to us all.”

ⁱ Notably influenced by Ian McHarg, 1969 *Design with Nature*, Doubleday, NY. For an enduring example see Dennis Scott’s work on Waiheke Island. Scott, D., Bogunovich, D., & Bradbury, M. 2019 ‘Designing Aotearoa New Zealand with nature: landscape regeneration of Western Waiheke Island’. *Socio Ecol Pract Res* 1, 265–281.

ⁱⁱ See Allan Rackham & John Darby’s presentation to the 1981 conference *New Zealand Where Are You?* NZILA, Wellington.

ⁱⁱⁱ As illustrated in Clive Anstey et al 1982 *Creative Forestry*, New Zealand Forest Service, Wellington.

^{iv} eg Earl Bennett 1985 ‘A Practical Approach to Visual Assessment’ *The Landscape* 26: 5-8.

^v eg Stephen Brown 1984 *An Assessment of the Auckland Region’s Landscape*, Auckland Regional Authority, Planning Department, Auckland.

^{vi} Tony Jackman 1986 *Our National Landscapes: strategies for health, beauty and survival*. DSIR, Wellington.

^{vii} Convened by Alan Titchener and Emily Williams.

^{viii} see Boffa Miskell Partners & Lucas Associates 1993 *Canterbury Regional Landscape Study*, Christchurch.

^{ix} eg Boffa Miskell Ltd 2007 *Banks Peninsula Landscape Study*, Christchurch.

^x eg Isthmus Ltd 2016 *North Island Grid Upgrade*, Auckland.

^{xi} Simon Swaffield (ed) ‘Landscape Assessment: Means and Ends’ *Landscape Review* 1999 vol 5(1) 56pp.

^{xii} NZILA Landscape Foundation 2010 ‘*Best Practice Note 10.1 Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management*’.