

# He aha te Whenua?

What is Landscape?

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46. Both definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary.

47. David Gold published a paper exploring some 130 examples of words that have borrowed the landscape suffix 'scape'. David Gold, English Nouns and Verbs Ending in -scape, Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses 15 (2002): 79-94, [https://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/5254/1/RAEI\\_15\\_05.pdf](https://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/5254/1/RAEI_15_05.pdf), (retrieved 23 September 2021).

48. The common phrase 'landscape and visual effects', as included in the RMA Schedule 4, could be argued as covering both strands. However, the phrase more likely arose as a consequence of different methods, landscape character assessment (LCA) and visual resource management (VRM) respectively. This is discussed in the 'Review of Other Guidelines' NZILA Background Document 3, paragraphs 4.1-4.3.

49. For example, K. Olwig, The Meanings of Landscape, 2019. The book is a collection of essays including the seminal 'Recovering the Substantive Nature of Landscape', originally published in 'Annals of the Association of American Geographers.' 86(4): 630-653, 1996. Olwig has published widely on this topic.

50. The suffix 'scape' has common origins with 'shape' and 'ship'. In the context of landscape's etymological origins it conveys the meaning of an area shaped by people, and the standing and belonging of people with an area as in citizenship.

51. That is, the original, deeper, more essential meaning of the word 'landscape'.

52. Olwig, ibid page 22.

53. Olwig, ibid page 6. Olwig also notes the Swedish use of landskap to refer to a person's home region.

54. Simon Swaffield, pers. comm, 2020.

## The word 'landscape'

- 4.01 Our concept of 'landscape' is the foundation, explicitly or implicitly, of any assessment we carry out.
- 4.02 These Guidelines seek a concept of 'landscape' appropriate for Aotearoa New Zealand in the context of the bi-cultural partnership founded on the Treaty of Waitangi. This chapter looks at the concept of landscape from four directions. It looks at the origins and meaning of the word 'landscape' in English, at how its meaning is evolving in Aotearoa, at how the term is defined by professional landscape organisations, and how its meaning is revealed through professional practice.
- 4.03 English language meanings of 'landscape' have two strands that are relevant to landscape practice: one relating to the character of a territory, the other a view of an area (an overview).

*“a tract of land with its distinguishing characteristics and features, esp. considered as a product of modifying or shaping processes and agents (usually natural)”*

*“a view or prospect of natural inland scenery, such as can be taken in at a glance from one point of view; a piece of country scenery.”<sup>46</sup>*

- 4.04 The concepts of 'overview' and 'overall character' inherent in landscape (or scape<sup>47</sup>) are often co-opted to describe other fields (political landscape, intellectual landscape, mediascape, mindscape, landscape ecology).<sup>48</sup>
- 4.05 However, the historical roots of the word 'landscape' in North Europe meant a region and its people. Such etymological roots are explored in Kenneth Olwig's scholarship.<sup>49</sup> Olwig points out that earlier forms such as 'landschaft' (and related forms such as the Old English 'landscape') meant a region and its people. It meant a community associated with a place and its accompanying physical environment, customs, customary law and responsibilities, ways of life, and identity.<sup>50</sup> Olwig argues that contemporary concepts of landscape are not restricted to either territory or scenery but carry what he refers to as the "substantive meaning"<sup>51</sup> of a "nexus" between community and place.<sup>52</sup> He refers to the definition of landscape in the European Landscape Convention to demonstrate that older, enduring meaning'.<sup>53</sup>
- 4.06 Such foundational meanings of 'landscape' are perhaps closer to those of 'whenua' than more recent meanings limited to either 'territory' (e.g. physical landscape character) or 'scenery' (visual aspects).<sup>54</sup>

### ‘Landscape’ in an Aotearoa New Zealand context

- 4.07 ‘Landscape’ is a Western concept brought to New Zealand. It has evolved as a concept and will continue to evolve in an Aotearoa context.
- 4.08 There is no term for ‘landscape’ in Te Reo Māori. Whenua is the nearest term, although the words are not directly interchangeable because whenua derives specifically from Te Ao Māori perspectives and tikanga. Within Te Ao Māori, landscape is a non-Māori cultural construct that sits within the broader concept of whenua.
- 4.09 ‘Whenua’ means the land but also contains layers of meaning relating to peoples’ relationship with the land. ‘Tāngata whenua’ indicates people with a deep connection with a territory, with rights and obligations.
- 4.10 The current professional practice of conceptualising landscape as three overlapping dimensions provides a bridge between Te Ao Pākehā and Te Ao Māori meanings (Figure 4):
- physical: the physical environment—its collective natural and built components and processes
  - associative: the meanings and values we associate with places; and
  - perceptual: how we perceive and experience places.

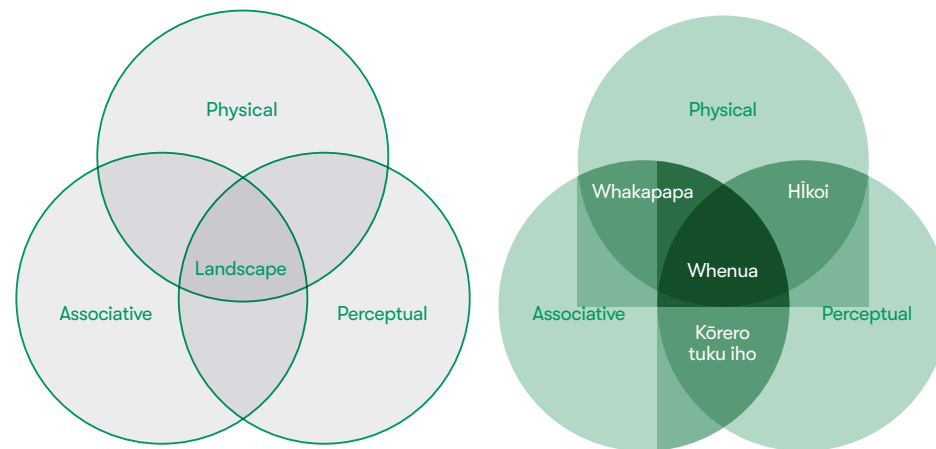


Figure 4. Landscape conceptualised as the intersection of three overlapping dimensions (left). Whenua conceptualised as the intersection of three overlapping dimensions and an overlay that integrates mātauranga (right).<sup>55</sup>

- 4.11 A bi-culturally inclusive landscape concept can be envisaged (Figure 4) as the three overlapping dimensions and an overlay integrating mātauranga comprising:
- Whakapapa: the genealogy and layers of landscape and people (reflective of an overlap between biophysical and associative dimensions).
  - Hīkoi: walking and talking with landscape and people—experiencing and perceiving the land in all its entirety (reflective of an overlap between the biophysical and perceptual dimensions).
  - Kōrero tuku iho: ancestral knowledge passed down through generations interconnected through time, place, and people—pūrākau (reflective of an overlap between perceptual and associative values).<sup>56</sup>
- 4.12 Such a concept accommodates both tāngata whenua and Western landscape approaches and allows for mutual influence of ideas and thinking. Whenua and landscape both emerge in the overlap between the dimensions. Mātauranga approaches are different from, but can resonate with, Pākehā approaches. The two concepts enrich each other.
- 4.13 Tāngata whenua perspectives have primacy in those landscape assessments carried out in a Te Ao Māori framework, such as cultural landscape assessments undertaken by a hapū or iwi.
- 4.14 However, while ‘landscape’ has Western origins, it is now a shared concept. Professional landscape assessment<sup>57</sup> should therefore also pay attention to tāngata whenua matters which enrich understanding and appreciation of the landscape. Such matters may include:
- tāngata whenua pūrākau, tikanga, and whakapapa associated with a landscape (including creation and origin narratives)
  - the significance and meaning of place names and landscape features
  - metaphysical concepts such as wairua and mauri
  - landscape stewardship concepts such as kaitiakitanga and mātauranga
  - customary activities associated with places
  - legal recognition of certain features as having the legal status of a person (Whanganui River, Te Urewera, Taranaki maunga).
- 4.15 Remember that tāngata whenua have a holistic relationship with whenua that integrates physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions. A potential pitfall is to limit consideration of tāngata whenua landscape values to the associative dimension only. To do so would not only be conceptually wrong but also contrary to the Treaty of Waitangi because:
- it would relegate tāngata whenua to a party with specialist interests rather than a true treaty partner
  - it would render tāngata whenua relationships with place as one dimensional
  - it would deprive all of us of the experience and knowledge accumulated by tāngata whenua with respect to place in Aotearoa.



When allowed to live on the land of others, utilise it and its products; but leave the land itself in the hands of its true owners

## **Kāinga te kiko, waiho te whenua ki te tangata nōna**





58. Including land, air, and water.

59. The Board of Inquiry into New Zealand King Salmon noted at paragraph 596 that “Landscape does not require precise definition. It is an aspect of the environment and includes natural and physical features and social and cultural attributes.”

60. Grammatically, it should be ‘an area, as perceived by people, the character of which is the result of etc...’ A suggested alternative is ‘an area as perceived by people, including how the area is understood, experienced, interpreted, and regarded’. This takes the core of the ELC definition, “an area as perceived by people”, and clarifies that ‘perceived’ has a broad meaning—more than visual perception.

61. New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, Best Practice Note, Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 10.1, 2010, page 5.

62. The draft NZILA Aotearoa/New Zealand Landscape Charter defines landscape as “the cumulative expression of natural and cultural elements, patterns and processes in a geographical area”. The 2010 Best Practice Guide took that definition and extended it to reference perceptions and associations.

63. This definition focuses on landscape as the relationship between people and place and describes the three dimensions (physical, associative, and perceptual) in ordinary terms.

## Definitions of ‘landscape’ by professional organisations

4.16 Definitions of ‘landscape’ by professional landscape organisations typically refer to both a physical area<sup>58</sup> (including the people belonging to an area and their relationship with it), and perceptions of the area—consistent with etymological threads of ‘landscape’ discussed above.<sup>59</sup>

4.17 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) defines ‘landscape’ as:

*...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.*<sup>60</sup>

4.18 The International Federation of Landscape Architects Asia Pacific Region Charter (of which Tuia Pito Ora/NZILA is a signatory) adopts the ELC definition and adds the following further description:

*...landscapes are the result of unique combinations of biophysical, cultural and social processes, evolving over time and interwoven with memory, perception and tradition.*

4.19 The 2010 NZILA best practice guide<sup>61</sup> defines landscape as:

*...the cumulative expression of natural and cultural features, patterns and processes in a geographical area, including human perceptions and associations.*<sup>62</sup>

4.20 NZILA Landscape Assessment Methodology workshops (November 2017) recommended fine-tuning the Best Practice Guide definition to put perceptual and associative dimensions at the heart of the definition rather than as an after-thought. These Guidelines recommend the following definition:

*Landscape embodies the relationship between people and place. It is the character of an area, how the area is experienced and perceived, and the meanings associated with it.*<sup>63</sup>

## Meaning of ‘landscape’ as revealed through professional practice

### *Landscape is an integrating concept*

4.21 While understanding a landscape draws on diverse sources (natural sciences, humanities, cultural perspectives), it is perceived and experienced as a unified phenomenon. It is an integrated whole. It is more than a summary of data—the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

—Kenneth Olwig (2019).  
‘The Meanings of Landscape’

“‘Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock’, the historian Simon Schama argues in his book, *Landscape and Memory* (Schama, 1995: 61). I don’t disagree, but landscape is more than a question of culture, imagination, and natural materials. It is also the substantive legal, political, and material practices through which polities shape urban and rural places within regions and countries. And the meanings of landscape are also a question of language, as expressed in word and image, as it evolves through history and from place to place.’

—J B Jackson (1986).  
‘The Word Itself’ from  
‘Discovering the Vernacular Landscape’

‘Landscape is a space on the surface of the earth; intuitively we know that it is a space with a degree of permanence, with its own distinct character, either topographical or cultural, and above all a space shared by a group of people; and when we go beyond the dictionary definition of landscape and examine the word itself we find that our intuition is correct.’





Above: Te Pane o Mataoho/  
Te Ara Pueru/Māngere Mountain  
Image: David Irvine

64. In other words, we think of people's relationships with place as having three frames of reference—physical, associative, and perceptual.

65. 'Mount Cass Wind Farm' [2011] NZEnvC 384, paragraph 300–301.

66. Some say that biophysical does include people and the built environment because they see the natural/human distinction as an artificial construct.

### *Landscapes have physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions*

4.22 As discussed at paragraph 4.10, current professional practice in New Zealand conceptualises landscape as having overlapping physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions.<sup>64</sup> This is reflected in the recommended definition at paragraph 4.20, and in recent 'case law' such as the Mount Cass decision.<sup>65</sup>

*Landscape means the natural and physical attributes of land together with air and water which change over time and which is made known by people's evolving perceptions and associations.*

*In keeping with the Act such a definition enables the development of landscape assessment which takes account of:*

- *natural and physical environment; and*
- *perceptual; and*
- *associative aspects (beliefs, uses, values and relationships) which may change over time.*

4.23 To elaborate on these dimensions:

- 'Physical' means both natural and human features, and the action (and interaction) of natural and human processes over time. Other terms sometimes used for this dimension include: 'natural and physical resources' (which echoes RMA phraseology); 'natural and built environment' (which echoes the Randerson Report phraseology); 'physical environment'; 'geographical'; and 'biophysical'. (The latter is potentially problematic if it is taken to mean only the natural aspects of landscape rather than both natural and human features/processes).<sup>66</sup>
- 'Associative' means intangible things that influence how places are perceived—such as history, identity, customs, laws, narratives, creation stories, and activities specifically associated with the qualities of a landscape. Such associations typically arise over time and out of the relationship between people and place. Tāngata whenua associations are therefore especially relevant because of primacy and duration. Pūrākau, tikanga, whakapapa, and mātauranga are key considerations of the associative dimension from a Te Ao Māori perspective, particularly important when considering matters such as mauri and wairua. Other terms sometimes used for this dimension include 'intangible', 'meanings', 'place-related', and 'sense of place'.
- 'Perceptual' means both direct sensory experience and broader interpretation through the senses. While sight is the sense most typically applied to landscape assessment, direct sensory perception importantly includes all the senses. Examples include the smell of the forest floor, sounds of a city, feel of the wind, sense of movement



67. While all sensory experience, such as sound and smell in addition to sight, is relevant to landscape, treat such senses in a way that is integral to landscape—part of landscape character and values (see paragraphs 4.37–4.38).

68. The Guidelines settled on 'physical, associative, and perceptual' while recognising that those terms are not perfect or definitive. They represent an abstraction of the variety and complexity of relationships between people and place.

69. Donald Meinig, *The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene*, in Meinig and John Brinckerhoff Jackson (ed), *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, 1979. Meinig's ten versions of the same scene comprised landscape as nature, habitat, artefact, system, problem, wealth, ideology, history, place, aesthetic.

in the tides and waterways, and taste of salt on the wind or of foods one associates with a place. Sensory perception typically occurs simultaneously with knowledge, memory, and interpretation. What we know, remember, and imagine influences how we perceive a place.<sup>67</sup> Other terms sometimes used for the perceptual dimension include: 'sensory' (which suggests only raw senses and not the cognitive/interpretative aspect that is implied in the term 'perceptual'), 'aesthetic' (which suggests a focus on only beauty rather than wider appreciation), and 'experiential' (which conveys active engagement and movement, but perhaps not the thinking and interpretative aspects implied in 'perceptual').<sup>68</sup>

#### ***Landscapes are perceived through cultural lenses***

4.24 Landscape is unavoidably cultural, including Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā perspectives—both worldviews being unique to Aotearoa/New Zealand. "Any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes, but what lies within our heads."<sup>69</sup> Each of the dimensions is understood through cultural concepts and values. Both Māori and Pākehā approaches bring powerful ideas to landscape assessment. Binding these approaches has the potential to significantly increase the depth of understanding and appreciation of Aotearoa's landscapes.

4.25 To put it another way, cultural ideas influence how we see and what we feel about a landscape. Even wilderness is a cultural concept: it has an objective physical reality that can be interpreted powerfully through scientific understanding but also derives its aesthetic qualities and metaphysical meanings from other cultural ideas.

4.26 Landscape involves understanding and appreciation. It entails an experiential response: what we sense (see, smell, feel, sound, taste, etc) and how we feel about it (including such feelings as reverence, attachment, identity, etc). But this immediate response is informed deeply by knowledge (what we see is what we know), memory (what we see is what we remember), and the values we associate with a place—including pūrākau, whakapapa, tikanga, and mauri.

#### ***Landscape is the interaction of its dimensions***

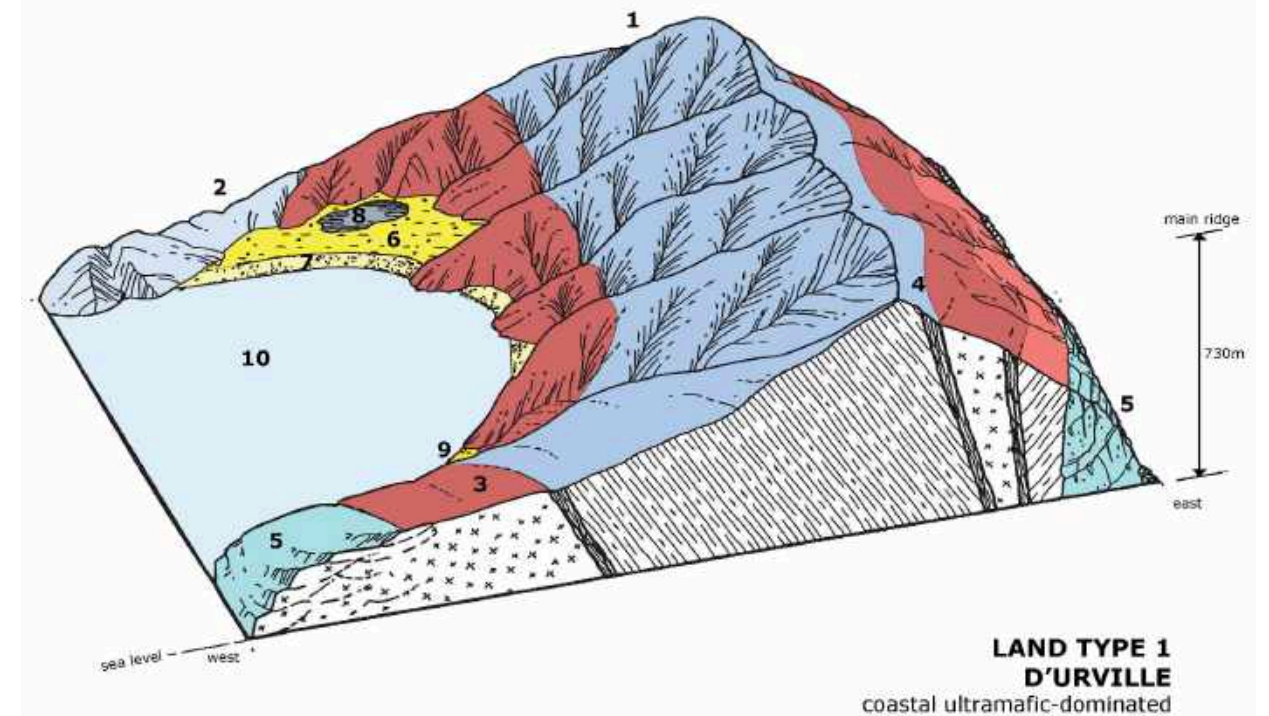
4.27 The physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions are not discrete categories. On the contrary, it is the interaction—or tuinga (binding)—of these dimensions that is key to a landscape's character and values—illustrated by the overlaps in the diagrams at paragraph 4.10 (Figure 4). Landscapes are the interaction of their parts, not the sum of them. It is a key reason why landscapes do not yield to rigid methods but require interpretation and reasoned explanation. It would be conceptually wrong, for instance, to 'score' a landscape by assigning ratings to each dimension.

70. Renata, A., *Seeking Cultural Polyvocality in Landscape Policy: Exploring Association and Knowledge Sharing Preferences*, PhD thesis, Queensland University of Technology, 2018.

71. As discussed above, different people and communities see the landscape differently and give different weight to certain dimensions and values associated with landscapes. Such differences in landscape interpretation and values are often at the heart of resource management issues. The role of landscape assessors is to provide a professional assessment that pays proper attention to each of the dimensions and seeks to interpret landscape in a balanced way, recognising that there are differences of perception. Such an assessment assists decision-makers compare and understand the input of different parties.

4.28 There is also no hierarchy or stipulated order to the dimensions. Practitioners analyse landscapes from different starting points that often reflect their own perspectives and interests.<sup>70</sup> Many begin with the physical dimension which, in one sense, anchors the others. Understanding a physical environment as landscape, though, requires simultaneous understanding of associations and perceptions. Others begin with associative or visual aspects. In a resource management context, the physical landscape attributes in which such aspects are embodied also need to be understood. But whatever the starting point, the key is paying attention to each of the dimensions and how they relate to each other.<sup>71</sup> As depicted on the diagrams at paragraph 4.10, the dimensions are interconnected and non-hierarchical:

- The interaction between the dimensions is key, not the dimensions by themselves. Landscapes emerge in the overlap.
- Although landscape can be described in a linear way, assessment in practice is typically non-linear—it seeks connections and patterns in an iterative manner.
- There is no necessary order to the process of analysing the dimensions, or in how the landscape is described. It depends on context.
- Proper attention should be given to each dimension. The weight given to matters, though, depends on context and interpretation.
- As with all interpretation, the essence is in the explanation.



Above: Lucas Associates 1997 Marlborough Sounds Land and Marine Ecosystems.





—Agnes Varda (2008).  
‘The Beaches of Agnes’

‘If we opened people up, we’d find landscapes.  
If we opened me up, we’d find beaches.’

72. Factors are intertwined. For example, high rainfall on the West Coast results in lush vegetation and very active erosion compared to the dry regimes east of the Southern Alps. Much of the topography of the Southern Alps is influenced by glaciation which is also strongly influenced by climate. Characteristic weather patterns are also part of a landscape’s identity, such as the Waikato River’s mists, Hauturu-o-Toi’s cloud puff, Canterbury’s Nor-west arch, and Greymouth’s ‘The Barber’ wind.

73. Such traditions often explain the appearance of features, the whakapapa connections between natural features, the whakapapa connections between the natural world and tāngata whenua, and patterns of occupation and use. Creation and origin traditions are associated with many landscape features – particularly notable examples include Aoraki, Mauao, Taranaki maunga, and Te Mata o Rongokako.

74. Tāngata whenua have a holistic relationship with landscape in each of its dimensions. The highlighting of certain factors in this list is not to be interpreted as restricting tāngata whenua landscape values to such factors (see paragraph 4.15), or indeed to restrict others.

### Typical factors

4.29 The following lists illustrate typical factors often considered under the three dimensions.

#### Physical (natural and human):

- geology and geomorphology
- topography and hydrology (including drainage patterns)
- climate and weather patterns<sup>72</sup>
- soil patterns
- vegetation patterns
- ecological (flora and fauna) and dynamic components
- patterns of settlements and occupation
- roads and circulation
- patterns of land use
- cadastral patterns expressed in patterns of land use, block and lot size (‘grain’)
- buildings
- archaeology and heritage features
- tāngata whenua features.

#### Associative:

- tāngata whenua creation and origin traditions manifest in landscape features<sup>73</sup>
- tāngata whenua associations and experience—(historic, contemporary, and future)<sup>74</sup> including pūrākau, whakapapa, tikanga, and mātauranga
- tāngata whenua metaphysical aspects such as wairua and mauri
- legal personification of landscape features
- shared and recognised values of a landscape derived from community life including associations with the community’s livelihood, its history and reason for being in that place, places of social life and gathering, places that hold metaphysical meanings such as retreat, contemplation, and commemoration
- sense of identity, embodied in attributes that are emblematic of an area, places that are central to a community (main street, wharf, park), features that are anthropomorphised (e.g. Te Mata o Rongokako)
- activities that take place in certain landscapes such as traditional food and resource gathering, recreational use, food and wine that reflect a locale, tourism based on landscape experience or appreciation of a landscape’s qualities.



Perceptual:

- geomorphic legibility (how obviously a landscape expresses the geomorphic processes)
- wayfinding and mental maps (legibility or visual clarity of landmarks, routes, nodes, edges, and areas of different character)
- memorability
- coherence (the extent to which patterns reinforce each other, for example between human patterns and underlying natural landscape)
- aesthetic qualities
- views.

Note that physical, associative, and perceptual factors are sometimes transient: they may be present occasionally or seasonally or in different weather conditions. An assessor should be awake to such transient or ephemeral attributes that may not be immediately apparent.

- 4.30 Visual matters are integral to landscape rather than a separate category or factor. Physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions are each experienced visually (as well as through other senses).

*We all have a 'watchful eye' that scans the view and takes in the bigger picture. What we 'see' depends on our needs and expectations, our intuition and experience. The view is a summary expression of infinitely complex relationships. We can be intimately embedded in such relationships, or we can be detached observers. What a landscape or a place means to us and how we value it depends on our relationship with it and with those who live in it.<sup>75</sup>*

- 4.31 To reiterate, while factor lists are useful reminders, they are not a formula:
- factors straddle dimensions (e.g. 'naturalness' results from the interplay of physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions)
  - not every factor is relevant everywhere
  - factors that are not listed may be relevant
  - the relative weight given to a factor depends on context
  - assessing and interpreting such factors (and the conclusions and recommendations that flow from them) is a matter of professional judgement—as with all matters of professional judgement, explanation and reasons are key.



—Paul Williams, 'New Zealand Landscape: Behind the Scene,' 2017

'Appreciation of what we see is enhanced by a capacity to look beyond the postcard beauty of the scene, and to piece together how it all evolved: to reconstruct its history and discern how and why it developed. ...to 'read' the landscape so that awareness and appreciation of what lies behind the scene can be enhanced...'



76. The factors set out in the Pigeon Bay criteria were originally developed in the Canterbury Regional Landscape Study, Boffa Miskell Limited and Lucas Associates, 1993. They were formalised in the 'Pigeon Bay' Decision No. C32/99, and slightly revised in the 'WESI' Decision C180/99 (and therefore sometimes referred to as the WESI factors). They were initially referred to as 'criteria' but several decisions (including the WESI decision) have made the point that they are 'factors' rather than evaluative criteria.

77. Also referred to as the 'Maniototo factors. Project Hayes' [2009] NZEnvC Decision C103, paragraph 202.

78. For instance, the Pigeon Bay factors are the basis of the assessment factors listed in Policy 15(c) of the NZCPS, and for outstanding natural features and landscape in the Auckland Unitary Plan and Horizons One Plan.

79. The Pigeon Bay factors are not well suited to urban landscapes for example.

### Pigeon Bay factors

4.32 The three overlapping dimensions (physical, associative, perceptual) embrace earlier factor lists such as the 'Pigeon Bay criteria'<sup>76</sup> and 'Lammermoor list'.<sup>77</sup> Those lists provide useful guidance on the range of things to consider. They are also important from an historical perspective. They are included in some statutory plans and policy statements.<sup>78</sup> For completeness, the Pigeon Bay factors are:

- (a) *the natural science factors—the geological, topographical, ecological and dynamic components of the landscape;*
- (b) *its aesthetic values including memorability and naturalness;*
- (c) *its expressiveness (legibility): how obviously the landscape demonstrates the formative processes leading to it;*
- (d) *transient values: occasional presence of wildlife; or its values at certain times of the day or of the year;*
- (e) *whether the values are shared and recognised;*
- (f) *its value to tāngata whenua;*
- (g) *its historical associations.*

4.33 The benefit of re-packing such factors as three overlapping dimensions (physical, associative, perceptual) include:

- accommodating both tāngata whenua and Western world views in a holistic manner
- linking the dimensions explicitly to the definition of 'landscape'
- providing flexibility to include other relevant factors and criteria depending on context<sup>79</sup>
- discouraging use of checklists as a kind of formula.

4.34 Landscape assessors will nevertheless need to work with lists of factors and criteria in different situations. Competent assessors will be aware that they are tools and not treat them as formulas.

— Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (1995), p.61

'...once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way... of making metaphors more real than their referents, of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery.'



Left: Te Mata o Rongokako (the Sleeping Giant)  
Illustration: Sophie Blokker  
Right: Te Mata o Rongokako  
Image: Duncan Brown, HB Today

Top: Te Mata Peak and Tukutuki River  
Painting: Philip Beadler





— Meinig (1979),  
‘The Interpretation of  
Ordinary Landscapes’  
p44.

‘All landscapes incorporate one aspect which  
is so pervasive as to be easily overlooked: the  
powerful fact that life must be lived amidst that  
which was made before’

80. The trajectory of a landscape is not inevitable of course. The point of assessment and design is to influence the future: be that to strengthen positive trends, reverse negative ones, or to set a new direction altogether. However, understanding and working consciously with history is key to that work and is elaborated in following chapters.

81. As discussed in paragraph 4.23, sensory experience, such as sound and smell, is integral to landscape in the same way as sight. However, treat such sensory experience in a way that is integral to landscape—part of integrated landscape character and values. Do not confuse with specialist disciplines such as acoustics, odour, and air quality nor with the assessment of noise or odour effects.

82. Refer to paragraph 4.04.

83. See ‘WESI’ [1999] NZEnvC Decision C180/99, paragraph 79. “It is wrong...to be overly concerned with ‘double-counting’. ...That is to adopt an over-schematic approach to sections 5 to 8 which is not justified. Those sections do not deal with issues once and once only, but raise issues in different forms or, more aptly in this context, from different perspectives, and in different combinations...”

### Temporal aspects (time and place)

- 4.35 Landscapes evolve. Each landscape contains its history—where it has come from and where it is going. For example, a town will reflect its origins (why it is where it is) and the patterns of its earlier development. It will also have a ‘trajectory’ (where it is going—for instance its changing function, whether it is growing or declining). Similarly, people’s relationships with places change. The town’s culture and what is valued about it will evolve over time. History is more than a landscape’s past and its ‘heritage’ features: It is the past/present /future story that helps to understand and interpret the landscape.<sup>80</sup>

### Transient aspects

- 4.36 Landscapes also vary with daily, seasonal, and annual patterns, and with weather. ‘Transient values’ arise from such variations. Each of a landscape’s dimensions contains transient aspects. Transient physical attributes include such things as tides, whitebait runs, wading bird migrations. Transient associative attributes include place-based festivals and commemorations such as Matariki, Anzac traditions, harvest festivals. Transient perceptual attributes include sunrise on the hills, bush in the rain, a starry clear winter’s night. The value is not transience per se but the attributes at different times and in different conditions.

### Double counting

- 4.37 Landscape assessments are sometimes criticised for double counting information from other disciplines, such as tāngata whenua perspectives, ecology, and historical heritage. That criticism could be valid if such input is merely collated as a catalogue of information. But it is not double counting if the input is woven into the assessment of landscape as part of an integrated whole. For example, cultural narratives, geomorphology, ecology, and aesthetics are typically experienced together as landscape. Landscapes are a whole. The parts typically resonate with each other. Integrating different types of information is central to landscape architecture expertise.<sup>81</sup>
- 4.38 Conversely, ‘landscape’ is sometimes adopted as a term by others: For example, ‘landscape ecology’, ‘heritage landscape’, and ‘cultural landscape’. In those contexts, the word ‘landscape’ is used because of its spatial scale and integrating nature. In each of those contexts the focus is also on the qualifying term such as ecology, heritage, or culture.<sup>82</sup> Such approaches are likewise not double counting, but simply looking at areas from different perspectives.<sup>83</sup>



84. Landscape values are ascribed by people. The term ‘intrinsic values’ means those values deemed to exist independently of human values, such as a landscape’s inherent natural characteristics, or values ascribed to features in their own right because such features are deemed to have the legal status of a person (e.g. Whanganui River, Taranaki maunga). Without taking anything from such important concepts, the ascribed values are unavoidably cultural constructs.

85. This is also how landscape is defined in the draft Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Charter: “...the cumulative expression of natural and cultural features, patterns and processes in a geographical area”. It is consistent with the influential cultural geographer Carl Sauer’s definition of cultural landscape: “The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result.”

86. Report of the Resource Management Review Panel (the ‘Randerson Report’), June 2020, page 99. The report comments that “Recognition of interconnections and that a cultural landscape can be ‘more than the sum of its parts’ will enable the multi-faceted relationships that mana whenua have with land and water to be adequately protected and restored”. The Guidelines are consistent with this recommendation. However, the Guidelines also promote the idea that landscapes are significant to all communities and that the term cultural landscape is capable of broad meaning depending on context.

87. ‘Bayswater Marina’ [2009] NZEnvC Decision A18/09, paragraphs 121–122. “[121] How we assess and address landscape issues depends on how landscape is defined. Although landscape used to be (and sometimes is still) regarded in visual or visibility terms only, the RMA and the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement make it clear landscape is more than that, although it specifically includes the visual aspect of landscape. Neither is it simply a total of bio-physical elements, patterns and processes occurring over time, even though these are regarded as formative landscape factors. And while the natural formative factors are

### ***Landscapes have generic and specific character***

4.39 Each landscape has a unique character. Landscapes also fall into types (or kinds) depending on shared characteristics. For example, ‘rural landscapes’ or ‘urban landscapes’ are landscape types based on certain general characteristics, but each rural or urban landscape also has its own specific character that is more than the type. Similarly, Banks Peninsula and the Canterbury Plains are contrasting landscape types—composite volcano and out-wash plain. Within Banks Peninsula, Lyttelton and Akaroa Harbours are a common type—flooded craters—but each has its own distinct character and attributes.

4.40 It is important not to conflate specific and generic character. Specific character conveys more than generic character. It is often more pertinent to managing a landscape’s values than generic character. Even where it is generic character that is relevant (such as in response to a policy to maintain rural character), it will occur in the context of specific character. A pitfall is to focus on generic attributes (such as ruralness or naturalness) and overlook the specific character.

### ***Cultural landscapes***

4.41 ‘Cultural landscape’ has different meanings depending on context:

- ‘Cultural construct’ is the idea that landscapes are seen through cultural lenses so that all landscapes, even wilderness, are ‘cultural landscapes’ as discussed above at paragraphs 4.24–4.26.<sup>84</sup>
- ‘Cultural landscape’ in international professional landscape usage means landscapes resulting from human processes, as reflected in the 1973 NZILA Statement of Philosophy: “the landscape reflects the cumulative effects of natural and cultural processes.”<sup>85</sup>
- In Aotearoa, ‘cultural landscape’ often means landscapes valued specifically by tāngata whenua for Te Ao Māori cultural reasons—including natural landscapes that are valued because of traditions, ancient stories, and historical associations. For instance, “A defined area or place with strong significance for mana whenua arising from cultural or historical associations and includes connected natural, physical or metaphysical markers or features.”<sup>86</sup> Specific methods have been developed for such cultural landscape assessment. Spatially, cultural landscapes may comprise a network of connected places that are understood as part of a whole.
- The term ‘cultural landscape’ is also considered the most appropriate term for landscapes valued for cultural reasons by Pākehā and other communities, for which similar principles would apply.<sup>87</sup>

relevant, the landscape is also more than the natural landscape. There are many definitions of landscape, and although the RMA does not specifically define landscape, it leads us to include both specific features of land and water, as physical objects which are to be qualitatively considered, and people’s values and perceptions of landscape. This in turn indicates a strong cultural basis to the definition of landscape. [122] Different cultures hold different values about landscape and values may change over time and according to context. A landscape may convey different memories or meanings to the same or different people. Considerations of economic and material aspects of landscape are significant values in the case of [Bayswater Marina Ltd]. So while landscape is a cultural construct (as is justice and language), it is a construct which in terms of the RMA is assigned with certain properties which must be considered. The landscape is not simply what is out there, the open space, reclamation, the coastline and harbour or the townscape. It is not simply what people see (although it includes this) but is what people perceive it to be and how they value the landscape. This in turn is influenced by people’s relationship with the landscape: be it owner, leaseholder, resident, recreational user, or visitor.”

88. Tongariro National Park, for example, is classified as a World Heritage Area for both its natural and cultural values. Such an approach to classification could be called a landscape approach.

4.42 The UNESCO World Heritage Committee identifies three types of cultural landscape:

- a landscape designed and created intentionally by man (sic)
- an organically evolved landscape
- an associative cultural landscape—(a landscape valued because of the religious, artistic, spiritual, historic, or cultural associations of the natural element).<sup>88</sup>

### ***Tāngata whenua cultural landscapes***

4.43 Cultural landscapes important to tāngata whenua warrant recognition both for landscape assessment in general and specifically as a matter of national importance under s6(e) RMA.

*... the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral landscape, water, sites, waahi tapu, and other taonga.*

4.44 Such cultural landscapes can comprise relatively small areas and features but are often landscapes comprising a network of places and connections in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. They comprise tangible and intangible aspects. They can comprise urban, coastal, rural, and natural landscapes. They can be conceived of in terms of the physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions.

4.45 When considering cultural landscapes:

- explain the precise meaning in which you use the term
- recognise that all cultures attach value to landscapes (natural and built) and see landscapes through cultural lenses
- acknowledge precedence to tāngata whenua cultural landscapes in Aotearoa
- recognise that cultural values change over time
- explain the specific values rather than relying on generic parameters
- as with all professional assessment, be transparent and provide reasons.

### ***Built environment landscapes (urban landscapes)***

4.46 ‘Urban landscapes’ are a type of landscape which fall within the same conceptual framework as all other landscapes. While ‘landscape’ is often associated with countryside, towns and cities are just as much a landscape type. ‘Townscape’ is an alternative term for ‘urban landscape’. For the avoidance of doubt, ‘urban landscapes’ do not just mean the natural or green parts of cities. Urban landscapes comprise the physical urban environment (its topography, streets, buildings, open spaces, and their related processes and activities), how people perceive it (its legibility, memorability, aesthetics), and what it means (its identity, history, sense of place).



89. The list is adapted and expanded from a list of factors in 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)', Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, Third Edition, 2013, section 5.5, Townscape Character Assessment.

90. It has been observed that the list in the following paragraph could also be applied to rural landscapes which reinforces the point that different types of landscape fall within the same physical, associative, and perceptual framework.

91. It was reported, for instance, that landscape architects and urban designers often reach different findings on visual effects in urban areas because urban designers tend towards immediate context and landscape architects towards broader context. Such professional bias could get in the way of properly assessing effects. Effects occur at different scales and do not tidily respond to profession. Focus on the effects themselves, on your own expertise, and on assisting decision makers, rather than distractions around professional boundaries. You will be of more assistance if you are outward looking than adopting overly narrow boundaries.

As discussed in Chapter 2, expertise is based on qualifications/training, relevant experience, and certain behaviours. Be confident of those things as the foundation for your assessment. Membership of a professional institute (such as Tuia Pito Ora) supports those attributes because the Institute accredits qualifications, requires compliance with a code of ethics, and maintains standards through such processes as professional registration and CPD.

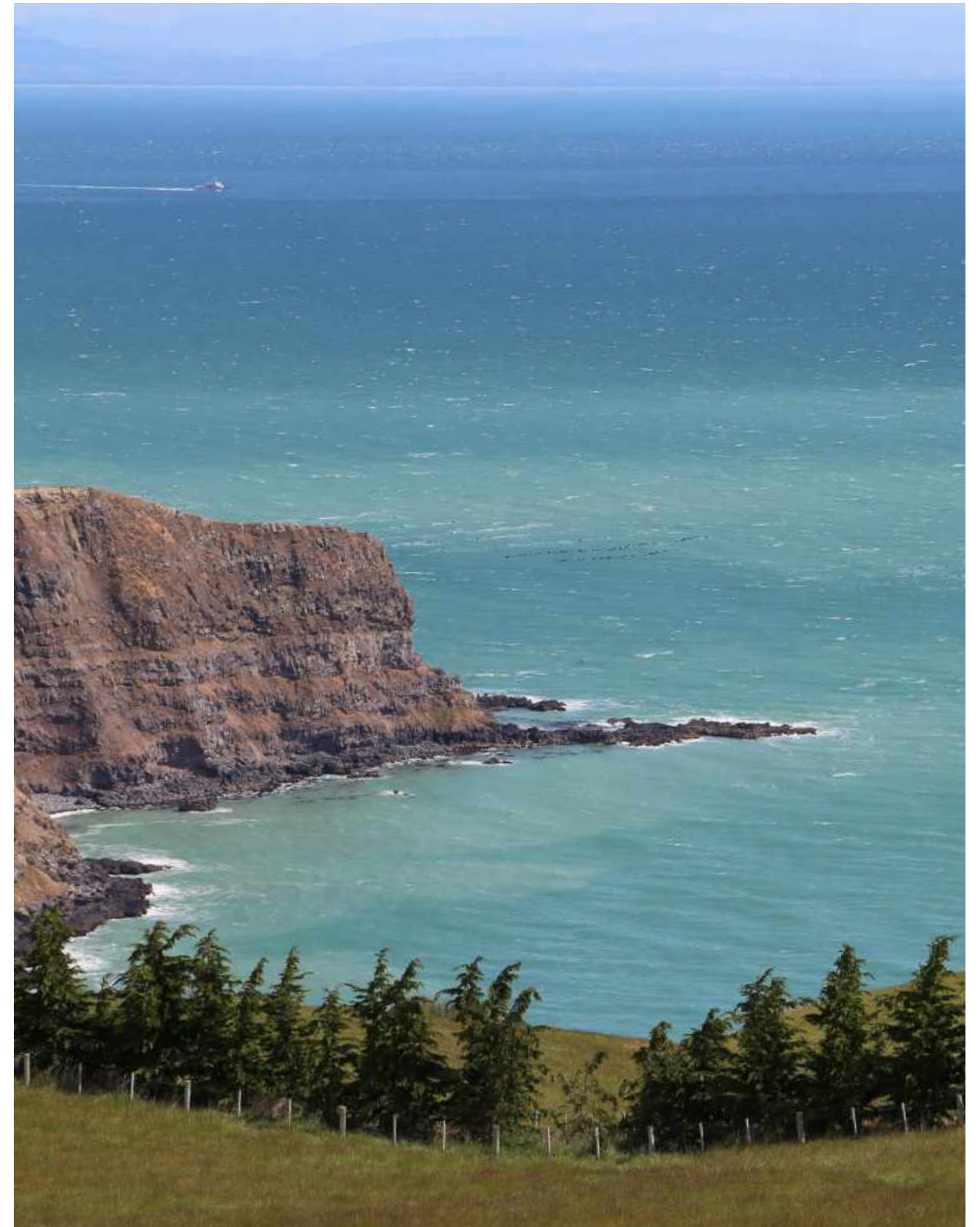
A helpful discussion on these topics was published by Lisa Mein and Ian Munro on the Urban Design Forum website: 'Reflections on the nature and extent of urban designers as expert witnesses and members of a profession'. (6 August 2021)\*

- 4.47 The following list<sup>89</sup> illustrates typical factors (amongst many others) that contribute to urban landscape character:<sup>90</sup>
- context or setting of the urban area and its relationship to the wider landscape
  - topography and response of urban form to topography
  - contribution of natural features such as coastlines, rivers, watercourses, maunga, hills, headlands, harbours
  - grain of the built form and its relationship to historic patterns
  - layout and scale of built form, density of development and building types, including architectural characteristics, period, and materials
  - patterns of activities (land use) past and present
  - nature and location of vegetation, including the different types of green space and tree cover and their relationships to buildings and streets and topography
  - types of open space and character and qualities of the public realm (public domain)
  - access and connectivity, including streets (street networks and patterns, pedestrian circulation)
  - places and values of significance to tāngata whenua, such as whakapapa, kōrero tuku iho, mana, and the observable mauri of a place
  - sense of place including historical associations, identity.

4.48 Many of the detail factors for urban landscapes fall under the banner of urban design. Urban design is sometimes conceived of as a specialist discipline and sometimes as the overlap between different disciplines (architecture, landscape architecture, planning, transport). Do not be overly concerned with such distinctions. The urban environment does not belong to a profession. The focus is the environment—not the profession. The important matter is that landscape assessors working in urban environments are knowledgeable and informed on matters relating to such environments—as for all other landscape types. The point is to assist decision-makers (and others) on matters within your expertise relating to the urban landscape.<sup>91</sup>

#### Coastal environment landscapes

- 4.49 The coastal environment has special relevance because it has its own national policy statement, the 'New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010' (NZCPS). It is relevant to the requirement of s6(a) RMA to preserve the natural character of the coastal environment. Natural character is covered under Chapter 9.
- 4.50 The coastal environment includes both land and sea. It is described in Policy 1 of the NZCPS as (amongst other things) “areas where coastal processes, influences or qualities are significant...” and as including the “coastal marine area” which comprises the extent of territorial waters (12 nautical miles from the mainland or islands). Landscapes in the coastal environment have the same spatial extent as the coastal





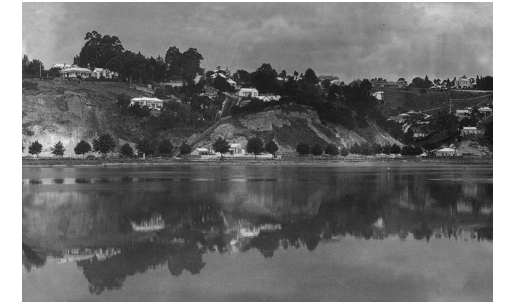
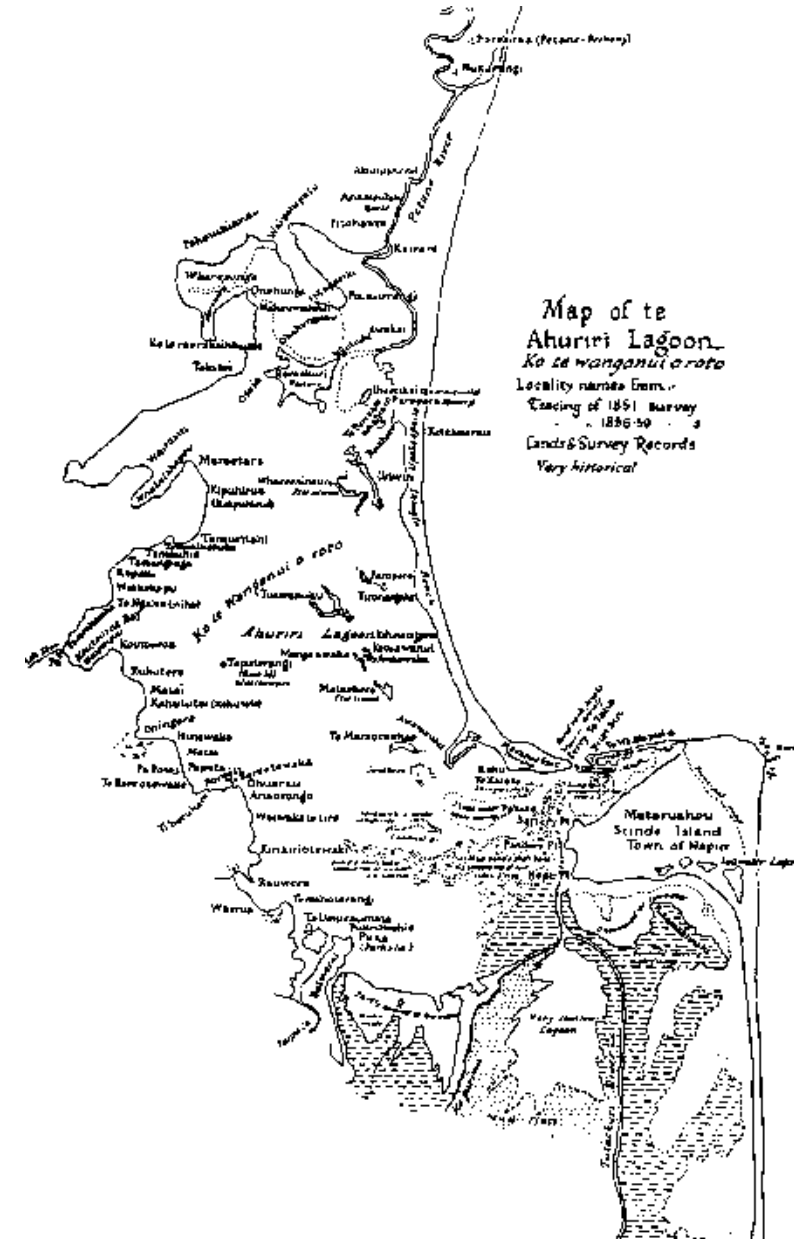
92. 'Seascape' has currency because it is referred to in NZCPS Policy 15. In the context of the NZCPS, seascapes are a sub-set of landscapes in the coastal environment. Perhaps the point intended in that policy is simply that landscapes include the sea. See, for example, 'Clearwater Mussels' [2016], NZEnvC 21, paragraph 64 "Within the Marlborough Sounds context the seascapes are an integral part of the landscape." It seems an unnecessary term that is more likely to confound than clarify (as the authors discovered). For completeness, it is noted that the UK GLVIA defines seascape as "landscapes with views of the coast or seas, and coasts and adjacent marine environments with cultural, historical and archaeological links with each other".

93. See also 'Clearwater Mussels' [2018] NZEnvC 88, paragraph 192. "There is a degree of artificiality in the methodologies of each of the landscape architects, in that they split the coastal environment into discrete terrestrial and water components. [...] In reality, there are no such divisions in how a person would typically perceive the natural character of the coastal environment. In terms of s6(a) RMA and related NZCPS, Sounds Plan and pEMP objectives and policies, 'the natural character of the coastal environment is more properly to be assessed holistically'..."

94. The Bay of Plenty Regional Coastal Environment Plan includes underwater ONFLs. For example, ONFL44 includes Astrolabe Reef, Okaparū Reef, and Brewis Shoal.

environment—extending to the extent of territorial waters.<sup>92</sup> The land and the sea are interconnected in such landscapes.

- 4.51 Landscapes in the coastal environment continue below the water—they do not stop at the shoreline or sea's surface.<sup>93</sup>
  - Underwater landscapes are connected physically and through processes with terrestrial landscapes—moana with whenua.
  - The connections can be observed in such instances as tidal harbours, or in surface expressions of underwater features, and can be perceived remotely through charts and other data. Shorelines fluctuate in tidal harbours so the delineation of such landscapes should not be based on visibility alone. Underwater features can be expressed indirectly on the surface, such as fish habitat associated with a reef, which attracts sea birds and boats fishing the reef.
  - Communities can have associations with underwater features (e.g. Pania Reef at Napier) and well-known river bars that have associated histories and folklore (e.g. the Manukau Bar). From a Te Ao Māori perspective Te Tai Moana is indivisible—the visible surface is integral with the underwater zone which is unseen but evident in other ways.
  - The RMA defines land as including land covered by water (RMA s2).
  - Underwater outstanding natural features and landscapes have been formally identified.<sup>94</sup>
- 4.52 There are, of course, differences between underwater and terrestrial landscapes that should be recognised where relevant.
- 4.53 Factors specific to landscapes in the coastal environment include, for example:
  - coastal and marine landforms (headlands, peninsulas, cliffs, dunes, reefs, spits, bays, seabed, underwater topography, sediments...)
  - coastal and marine biota and ecosystems (pōhutukawa, kelp, seabirds, fish, dune ecosystems, reef ecosystems...)
  - coastal processes (tides, waves, weather, erosion, deposition...)
  - coastal human features (quays, wharves, pontoons, lighthouses, ports, shipwrecks, shipping channels, infrastructure...)
  - land use patterns oriented to the sea (the location and form of coastal towns and settlements, orientation of transport...)
  - coastal activities (shipping, boating, swimming, surfing, fishing, kai moana gathering, beach combing, star gazing...)
  - coastal weather patterns (sea mist, on and offshore winds, wave patterns...)
  - views to and from the sea
  - other experiential aspects (the sound and smell of the sea, lap of the tides, reflected light on the sky, the taste of kai moana...).
- 4.54 While there are specific factors such as these to consider, landscapes in the coastal environment nevertheless fall within the same conceptual framework as all other landscapes.



Left: Map of Ahuriri Lagoon, 1851. Images top to bottom: Westshore Bridge c1910. Looking across South Pond towards Battery Road. Ahuriri Port pre-1931. Napier Hill 1877/78. Images: Hawke's Bay Museum



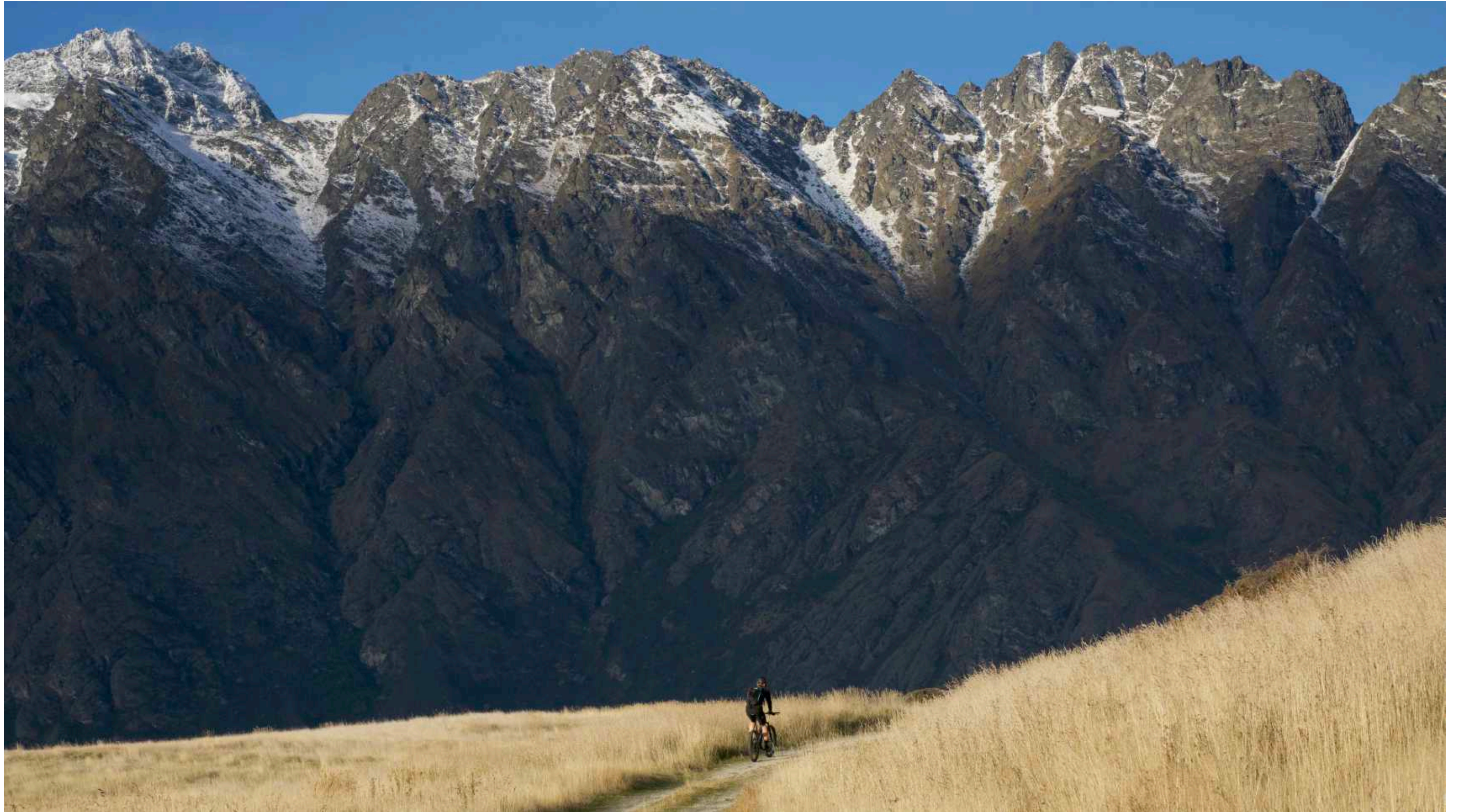


95. Excerpt from J.B. Mozley sermon, 1876, quoted under the 'landscape' entry in the Oxford English Dictionary.

**All landscapes share a common conceptual framework**

- 4.55 The suffix 'scape' often indicates a landscape type (townscape, seascape) or typical elements (streetscape, nightscape, skyscape). For example:
- 'Riverscape' has been coined to refer to the character and values of rivers. Rivers are central features of landscapes; their catchment boundaries often define the extent of a landscape, and they often connect a sequence of landscapes. Awa are key elements in terms of Māori cultural association, as evidenced for example in Te Awa Tupua Act (2017) that recognises the Whanganui River as a legal entity.
  - 'Skyscape' draws attention to an often-overlooked aspect of landscapes. For example, the sky has different hues toward the coast, greater presence in open 'big-sky' landscapes, and much of a landscape's transient qualities are due to changing sky conditions. "There are no two more different landscapes than the same under altered skies".<sup>95</sup>
  - The darkness of the night sky (nightscape) is a landscape value formally recognised in dark sky reserves and sanctuaries. It is listed in the NZCPS as an aspect of a coastal environment's natural character. Some organisations, such as Waka Kotahi and territorial authorities, are taking steps to reduce the effects of street lighting on the night sky.
  - Matters in urban areas are sometimes localised to 'streetscape'. That term covers the character of the street and its adjacent properties. It typically includes the physical patterns, aesthetic qualities, and activities.
- 4.56 Importantly, as discussed above, the different landscape types fall within the same conceptual framework as all other landscapes. While landscape types are a handy shorthand and can help focus the assessor on matters specific to the type, there are also pitfalls. Overly focusing on landscape types can unnecessarily distract from i) the whole landscape, ii) the specific landscape, and iii) the overarching concepts and principles that apply to all landscapes. In a Te Ao Māori approach, all such types are inter-connected.





Above: Kawarau/Remarkables—viewed from Jacks Point Otago/Otago  
Image: Richard Denney



## Waiho rā kia whakautua tāku whenua

## Whakarāpopototanga

### Summary

Landscape is a Western concept that is evolving a distinctive flavour in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Landscape embodies the relationship between people and place. It is the character of an area, how the area is experienced and perceived, and the meanings associated with it.

Whenua is the nearest Te Reo term for landscape, although the terms are not directly interchangeable. Whenua contains layers of meaning concerning people's relationship with the land.

Professional practice conceives of landscape as comprising three dimensions: the physical environment, peoples' perceptions of it, and the meanings and values associated with it. This concept, integrated with mātauranga, provides a potential bridge between whenua and landscape.

### Landscapes:

- are experienced as a whole—the interaction of their dimensions
- are interpreted as a combination of characteristics and qualities
- are seen through cultural lenses
- change with time, including how people understand, perceive, and attach meaning to them
- are each distinct and specific
- are natural, rural, urban, and maritime.