# Stories from the Land: Revealing Plural Narratives within One Landscape

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Landscape narrative theory initiates new ways of understanding landscape. This paper explores the concept of landscape narrative within a case study site rich in the cultural history of Aotearoa New Zealand: Maungakiekie | *One Tree Hill* and Cornwall Park, in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. It discusses the complexity of narrative representation within historically significant public spaces and considers the research question first asked by Potteiger and Purinton (1998a) in *Landscape Narratives: Design Practices for Telling Stories:* 'how can pluralistic landscape narratives be revealed within shared public landscapes, responding to multiple histories, and relating to a diverse contemporary culture?' This paper concludes by proposing an 'open' narrative approach to revealing historical landscapes, as a method to elicit plural 'readings' that traverse conventional boundaries of governance, time and 'official' interpretation. In so doing, the approach promotes greater connection, across time, with people and place.

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In *Revealing Change in Cultural Landscapes,* Catherine Heatherington (2021) states, 'There is a tendency to romanticise the timelessness of landscapes but, in reality, they are all about change' (p 1). In addition to the 'physical' change revealed through natural and cultural processes over time, landscapes are keepers of the 'intangible' – of memories and of stories (Heatherington, 2021; Potteiger and Purinton, 1998a, 1998b). Landscapes are inherently full of 'stories', forming the backdrop, the context and the spaces where people interact with the land, with each other, with our ancestors, even with our generations to come by way of intergenerational planning. The term 'landscape narrative', according to Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton (1998b), designates the interplay and mutual relationship between story and place: 'We come to know places because we know their stories' (p 16).

Forty-six volcanoes are located within the landscape of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Of these, 14 are considered Tūpuna Maunga (ancestral mountains), which hold principal cultural significance for Ngā Whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau (the mana whenua tribes of Auckland). As the Tūpuna Maunga Authority (2019) describes them, 'The Tūpuna Maunga are among the most significant spiritual, cultural, historical and geological landscapes in the Auckland region. The Tūpuna Maunga are sacred to mana whenua as taonga tuku iho (treasures handed down the generations)' (p 4). Commanding primary status in the cultural identity of Ngā Whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau, the Tūpuna Maunga also contribute intrinsically to the contemporary landscape identity of Aotearoa New Zealand's largest city.

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> The Tūpuna Maunga … of Tāmaki Makaurau stand as the essence of Auckland. They are central to Auckland's identity and a point of difference around the world. Human occupation of the city spans around 1,000 years, and over that time the interaction of people with the Maunga has changed from monumental and defendable settlements, to strategic maritime locations and resources (rock and water) through to an unparalleled network of openspaces that all Aucklanders draw a sense of identity from. (Tūpuna Maunga Authority, 2019, p 1)

See figure 1 for the locations of these Tūpuna Maunga.

Maungakiekie | *One Tree Hill* (location 9 in figure 1) is one of the 14 Tūpuna Maunga. The scoria cone was created more than 67,000 years ago when Maungakiekie erupted. Following the 1600s, when Ngāti Awa made it into a defendable settlement, it became the most extensively developed Māori pā (fortified settlement) in Tāmaki Makaurau. In the early 1700s, the Waiohua people shifted on to the maunga and developed extensive productive gardens, making use of the fertile volcanic soils. Later the people of Ngāti Whātua settled the pā but by the late 1700s it had been vacated. Today, it is one of the largest pre-European archaeological site complexes in Aotearoa New Zealand (Tūpuna Maunga Authority, nd).

After colonial settlement of Aotearoa during the 1800s, John Logan Campbell and his business partner William Brown bought the land from Thomas Henry in 1853 (Cornwall Park, nd). It was a productive farm unit until, in 1903, Campbell (who then owned it outright) gifted the farm, setting it aside as a public park for the 'people of New Zealand'. The land now known as Cornwall Park, together with Maungakiekie, today forms Auckland's largest metropolitan greenspace. Until 2014, the Cornwall Park Trust leased Maungakiekie (spatially identified within the box shown in figure 2) from the Crown. In 2014, Maungakiekie, along with the 13 other Tūpuna Maunga, was returned to mana whenua (those with authority over the land) through Ngā Mana Whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau Collective Redress Deed established as part of their settlement under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi). From that point, management of the maunga returned to mana whenua by way of the Tūpuna Maunga o Tāmaki Makaurau Authority (Tūpuna Maunga Authority, 2016).

*Figure 1: The 14 Tūpuna Maunga of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland:*

1. *Takarunga | Mount Victoria*
2. *Maungauika | North Head*
3. *Ōwairaka/Te Ahi-kā-a-Rakataura | Mount Albert*
4. *Oukewīwī/Puketāpapa | Mount Roskill*
5. *Te Tātua-a-Riukiuta | Big King*
6. *Maungawhau | Mount Eden*
7. *Te Kōpuke/Tītīkōpuke | Mount St John*
8. *Ōhinerau | Mount Hobson*
9. *Maungakiekie | One Tree Hill*
10. *Rarotonga | Mount Smart*
11. *Maungarei | Mount Wellington*
12. *Ōhuiarangi | Pigeon Mountain*
13. *Te Pane-o-Mataoho/Te Ara Puere | Māngere Mountain*
14. *Matuku Tūruru | Wiri Mountain.*

*(Image: Adapted from Google, Maxar Technologies CNES / Airbus TerraMetrics; Data SIO, NOAA, US Navy, NGA, GEBCO.)*

## Landscape as narrative

Landscape narrative theory opens new ways of understanding landscapes. Potteiger and Purinton (1998a) explore narrative as a combination of both 'story' (content) and 'telling' (expression), stating, 'Stories do more than explain, which comes from the Latin "to flatten"' (p 4). They cite from the 1968 essay 'The Storyteller' by Walter Benjamin:

> The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new. It lives only at that moment; it has to surrender to it completely and explain itself to it without losing any time. A story is different. It does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time. (ibid)

In their 1998 paper 'Landscape Narratives: Crossing Realms', they continue their thinking on the concept:

> Narratives intersect with sites, accumulate as layers of history, organise sequences and inhere in the very materials and processes of the landscape … . The term 'landscape narrative' designates the interplay and mutual relationship between story and place. (Potteiger and Purinton, 1998b, p 16)

In her paper 'In Search of Landscape as a Medium for Integration', Sylvie Van Damme (2018) describes 'landscape as a changing and multi-interpretable phenomenon that engenders stories' (p 103). The term 'landscape narrative' can therefore be considered at the intersection of sites, people and stories, with the emerging 'narratives' playing a critical role in the creation of meaning and connection. 'We come to know a place because we know its stories' (Potteiger and Purinton, 1998a, p 6).

In *1,000 Years of Gardening in New Zealand,* Helen Leach (1984), a historian specialising in food anthropology, muses, 'You might wonder how it is possible to write a history of gardening covering … 1,000 years for a country like New Zealand, where there are no written records of any sort of the first eight centuries of human occupation' (p 1). The information needed is available, however, not only from an abundance of rich oral histories, but also through techniques for recovering evidence and stories from the land itself (ibid).

*Figure 2: Maungakiekie | One Tree Hill (indicated within the white box) is located at the south-west boundary of Cornwall Park. (Image: Adapted from Google.)*

The historical description and imagery of such photographers as Gordon Ell and Kevin Jones elucidate the 'silent' stories of the land. Ell (1985) observes, 'There are times of the day, as the sunlight falls low and harsh, when the history of New Zealand is revealed in shadows on the land' (p 5). Developing on this theme, Jones (2004) explains that the 'cultural dimension of the New Zealand landscape is as important as its coastal or mountain scenery' (p 9). Maungakiekie and Cornwall Park provide landscapes rich in cultural history, both through visible remnants on the surface and 'silent' stories revealed by the land (figure 3).

## Introducing Maungakiekie | *One Tree Hill* and Cornwall Park

The shadows visible today on the landscape of Maungakiekie tell us stories of its past – including significant narratives of settlement and civilisation, of food production and storage, dating back to the pre-colonisation period of Aotearoa. Illuminated by the light at different times of the day, the extensive terraces and landform that can be readily observed beneath the windswept grass show themselves as artifacts of the former Māori pā and associated living areas, gardens and storage pits for kūmara (*Ipomoea batatas*). These earthworks are the most extensive to be found on any of Auckland's 48 volcanic cones and are described as 'one of the great cultural monuments of Aotearoa' (Bulmer, 1999, cited in Kearns and Collins, 2000, p 177). The building of Māori pā like the one on Maungakiekie is generally believed to date from the time when people began to rely on kūmara gardens for an important staple food.

*Figure 3: Shadows of Maungakiekie revealing the history of the land. The Māori landscape of complex terracing and kūmara storage systems is evident during the late afternoon, 2020. (Photo: Author's own.)*

> The sweet potato needed to be cared for while it grew, so people lived beside the gardens. When the crop was gathered in the autumn, then it had to be defended from those who would steal it. Kumara were often stored in pits dug within the protective palisades of the pa. (Ell, 1998, p 89)

Such scenes can be imagined through evidences portrayed by the deep shadow cast across the terraced slopes of Maungakiekie. Because Aotearoa New Zealand has a much harsher climate than Polynesia, storage pits, which provided a constant temperature and dry environment, were essential if the harvested kūmara were to keep through the winter. As Ell (1985) describes it:

> The storage pit … is perhaps the easiest feature to recognise in the field. The terraces of Maori pa are pock-marked with them, particularly at the top, where they could be defended to the death. (p 35) … The kumara is fittingly the cause of some of the most distinctive shadows left upon the land. (p 33)

The pā landscape of Maungakiekie (figure 4), with extensive terracing for housing and food storage, supported by once sprawling productive gardens spilling out and over the land now known as Cornwall Park, housed and fed a population of 5,000 people living there.

Today, the land designated as Cornwall Park is located to the north and east of Maungakiekie (figure 2). After purchasing the land and farming it for several decades, in 1903 Sir John Logan Campbell gifted it to the people of Aotearoa and set about creating a public park. He commissioned landscape architect Austin Strong to design a park, modelled on the Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, that offered public amenity and recreational opportunity in a growing city.

The past 170 years have seen parts of Cornwall Park used for many purposes in addition to being a public park, including as farmland, market gardens (1892–1899), a stone quarry to mine the basalt scoria resource and a golf course. In addition, from 1942 to 1944 it housed the 39th General United States Army Hospital to care for injured World War Two soldiers, which after the war was transformed into a hospital for women's health and operated as such until 1973. Today Cornwall Park includes a large variety of public amenities and open space functions and is unique in its integration of a working sheep and beef farm into an urban greenspace. Along with fields for grazing animals, the park offers a variety of other facilities including sports grounds, walking/cycling tracks, recreational open space, a café, a restaurant, an arboretum and an education centre (figure 5).

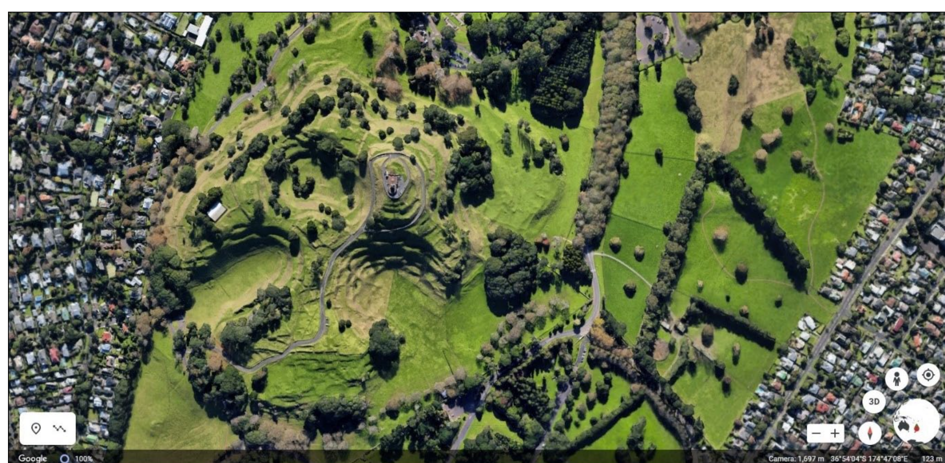

*Figure 4: Stories of past occupation elucidated in the shadows drawn by significant land terracing and kūmara pits on and around Maungakiekie and Cornwall Park as seen in 2021. Earthworks, land use and construction over the past 120 years have eliminated many of the pre-colonial land markings indicating garden and growing landscapes that once draped the land now known as Cornwall Park. (Image: Google.)*

## One landscape – plural narratives

The history and stories of the landscape of Maungakiekie and Cornwall Park are complex and detailed in their settings both before and following colonisation. What is 'revealed' by a landscape, what is exposed (or concealed), what is retained (or removed), what is added or substituted, and what is narrated affect the experience and understanding visitors have of a place. Recognising that 'open' and 'closed' narratives are a way to consider narrative representation within the landscape, this paper now looks at how 'opening' landscape narratives as a strategy to engage widely with our diverse contemporary culture can enable the complex and often multilayered narratives of landscape to converge and diverge naturally, weaving together and standing alone, securely within the same space and time, finding meaning with individuals or groups. Landscape narratives, as Potteiger and Purinton (1998b) express it, 'may not have a single author or narrator, but instead develop from multiple and often competing groups, becoming multi-layered "sets" of narratives' (p 16).

Identifying the distinction between landscape narratives and the more traditional notion of narratives as spoken or written texts is important in understanding the opportunities and constraints offered by exploring narratives within public space. Unlike verbal narratives that may differ and change over time, depending on who is communicating, the representation of narrative within the landscape can be 'open', engaging the 'visitor' as interpreter, traversing the narrative across conventional boundaries of space and time. Potteiger and Purinton (1998a) suggest that 'these conditions offer distinct opportunities for different forms of narratives such as the gathering of past and present into a synoptic view, parallel or intersecting story lines, collages that create nonlinear associations, [and] multiple layers of stories' (p 10).

The dual identity of the Maungakiekie and Cornwall Park landscape, both pre- and post-colonisation, is reflected explicitly in the alternative names of the maunga (mountain): Maungakiekie and One Tree Hill. Before the Europeans

*Figure 5: Cornwall Park, illustrating how walking paths, specimen tree plantings and recreational lawns are integrated with grazing fields for sheep, 2020. (Photo: Author's own.)*

arrived, the maunga was known as Te Tōtara-i-āhua ('the solitary tōtara'), named for the tree (*Podocarpus totara*) growing at the summit in the seventeenth century, and then became known as Maungakiekie, translating to 'mountain of the kiekie' (*Freycinetia banksii*) – a native epiphytic climber that once flourished there (Vennell, 2019, p 76). Today the Māori name 'Maungakiekie' is commonly used alongside the English name 'One Tree Hill', which was given to the maunga by John Logan Campbell and his business partner on purchasing the land. Again the name referred to a solitary tree – this time a pine – that grew at the summit. Campbell (1881/1987) wrote of his first visit to the land:

> An hour's walk brought us to the base of a volcanic mount, some five hundred feet high, rising suddenly from the plain, the name of which Waipeha told us was Maungakiekie, but as it had one solitary large tree on its crater summit, we christened it 'One-tree Hill'. (p 60)

The tihi (summit) became a potent political point within the landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand's recent past, which prompted a chainsaw attack on the Monterey pine in 1999, after which the tree was removed. In 2015 it was replaced with a small grove of native trees including pōhutukawa and tōtara.

Campbell bestowed the name Cornwall Park when transforming his farm into a public park in 1903. The renaming was to honour the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York to Aotearoa in the same year.

The contemporary landscapes of Maungakiekie and Cornwall Park are today understood largely by predetermined narratives directed through the visual and informational content communicated on site. Although they are separated spatially through governance boundaries, and in time by the dominant narrative each site conveys (for example, Maungakiekie as the pre-colonisation Māori pā and Cornwall Park as the post-colonisation farm and public park), it is undeniable that, through the stories and physical shadows of the land, the two landscapes are entwined in multilayer narratives that sit beneath the surface.

The narrative complexity of Maungakiekie and Cornwall Park raises questions about the effectiveness of expressing 'closed' or dominant narratives within the landscape, which Potteiger and Purinton (1998a) describe as being representative experiences, predetermined, commodified, private, separately framed, within selected time frames, and scripted with intended meanings that the author controls. In contrast, 'open' narratives attempt to engage multiple layers of history, entwined in space and across geological and generational time, resisting any attempt to narrow the potential of a landscape to engage and connect a wide variety of individuals and groups. 'Opening' narratives are characterised by lived experiences, non-scripted, indeterminate, participatory, public and integrated, layering time and 'reader interpreted'; they celebrate diversity and equity in interpretation. In this way they invite opportunity for deeper engagement, and therefore broaden the impact of connection of land and people who are part of a diverse contemporary culture.

> Opening is a strategy for denaturalizing ideology that appears natural, inherent, or closed to interpretation. Finding and negotiating the multiple and interrelated stories of place is a way of challenging privileged points of view and questioning what is taken for granted. (Potteiger and Purinton, 1998a, p 189)

Whether landscape in all its complexity is able to portray 'consistent', 'linear' or 'closed' narrative is challenged within the case study site. The land today designated as Cornwall Park wraps around the base of Maungakiekie and has been in the jurisdiction of the Cornwall Park Trust, with the maunga itself, since 2014, governed by the Tūpuna Maunga Authority. Before 2014, the Cornwall Park Trust leased the maunga from the Crown. The exception to this spatial governance arrangement is the tihi of the maunga, where the towering and monumental Egyptian obelisk stands, installed at the wishes of Sir John Logan Campbell and now with Campbell himself buried at its foot (figure 6). The obelisk dominates the visual identity of the maunga, revealing a different narrative to the volcanic geomorphology or the sophisticated pā landform. This area remains under the authority of the Cornwall Park Trust (Cornwall Park, nd). On closer inspection of the obelisk and its context, it is revealed that Campbell provided for the monument in his will (Stone, 2001) for the purpose of honouring the Māori people of Tāmaki Makaurau, 'bestowing on the people of the land (tangata whenua) the highest of praise' (Stone, 2004, p 132).

As historian Russell Stone (2004) explains, however, to understand the actual origin of the proposal to erect an obelisk on Maungakiekie, it is necessary to go back to 1906. In that year, at the public unveiling of his own statue (which is located at the entrance to Cornwall Park), Campbell, then blind and aged, announced his ambition to erect 'a towering obelisk … uprearing heavenward from the summit of One tree Hill in memoriam to the great Maori race' (Stone, 1987, pp 252–253). The intention was, therefore, less to recognise the Māori into the future than to memorialise them as a people of the past, a view that communications at the time suggest was widespread.

*Figure 6: The obelisk, designed by Auckland architect Atkinson Abbott. The bronze figure of a Māori chief, designed by sculptor Richard Gross, stands at the base of the obelisk, looking out over the city of Tāmaki Makaurau and over Campbell's grave (seen at the base of the photo within the iron surround), 2020. (Photo: Author's own.)*

This complex interpretation of landscape is also performed within the boundaries of Cornwall Park, where the display of the Rongo Stone *Te Toka-i-Tawhio* (figure 7) stands, in Graham's (1925) words, as 'a curious relic' (p 175). According to Graham, 'sacred stones' were often placed 'as shrines or abiding places, temporary or permanent, of spirit gods whose protective influence was considered desirable' (p 175). Dating back to the earliest settlements in Aotearoa, a Rongo Stone is said to embody the essence of Rongo – the Polynesian god of agriculture and peace – and to encompass the mauri (the energy that binds all things in the physical world).

Graham's 1925 paper, 'Te Toka-Tu-Whenua: A Relic of the Ancient Waiohua of Tamaki', records what little is known of the history of the stone, the meaning behind its name *Te Toka-i-Tawhio* and how it came to rest within Cornwall Park, based on the narrative offered by Eru Maihi, a Ngāti Whātua chief, in 1909. The narrative describes how the chief Tahuhu landed near Te Arai and set up this stone as a tūāhu (altar or ceremonial place), where he made ceremonial offerings to the spirits of the land to avoid offending them and to safeguard his people. The stone was thereafter known as *Te Toka-tu-whenua,* becoming a famous tūāhu and uruuruwhenua (a place where visitors make their offerings before entering the village of the local people). Graham (1925) states, 'Such was the nature of a tuahu, and every village of importance in former time had such a ceremonial place' (p 177).

The tūāhu was eventually taken from Te Arai to Tāmaki and set up in several places in turn, before eventually being placed on the ridge at Te One-kiri near Te Tatua around 1660. Because it had been carried from one place to another, it was renamed *Te Toka-i-Tawhio* (the stone that has travelled all around). In his recall of the chief's description, Graham explains that the hua (prestige) of the tūāhu was removed when the village at Te One-kiri was destroyed around 1790.

*Figure 7: Te Toka-i-Tawhio, 'the stone which has travelled all around' – the Rongo Stone – displayed in Cornwall Park within the vast park landscape, 2020. (Image: Author's own.)*

By 1840 and as the European settlement of Tāmaki Makaurau began, the stone still stood on the hill at Te One-kiri, on land then known as 'Cleghorns Farm'. About 1865 the stone was dislodged and rolled down the hill. After staying where it came to rest for some 40 years, it was moved to Cornwall Park and placed in its current position 'so that it might be preserved' (Graham, 1925, p 176).

Interrupting the dominant narrative of the Victorian-style park and western agricultural landscape, the inclusion and display of *Te Toka-i-Tawhio* illustrate how Campbell valued Māori heritage. He was, in Graham's (1925) words, 'interested in all matters appertaining to the Maori history of the district' (p 176). This important heritage feature interrupts the dominant narrative of the park and provides a prompt in the landscape to ask questions of layered history, culture and meaning.

Accompanied by on-site text explanations, both the obelisk and Rongo Stone sitting within the landscapes of Maungakiekie and Cornwall Park highlight the complexity of representation within landscape more generally. When 'closed' didactic information and explanations of what might be termed 'official history' are tied to landscapes, they limit the opportunity to support open reading and self-connection to the land. Yet in providing a 'disruption' to the dominant narrative of each 'place', the obelisk and stone create opportunities to 'open' the dominant narrative about each site, revealing the multiple layers of history and the complexity, intricacy and density of meaning held within the land.

## Conclusion

Once inseparable in their use and experience, the two landscapes were entwined, with the boundary between them non-existent. Today, however, sitting side by side in horizontal space, defined spatially through legal boundaries and operationally through governance, the dominant narratives of these landscapes are also divided. For Maungakiekie, the narrative tells of the long and significant history and connection of Māori to this land, communicated through the protection of landform – the terraces, dips, mounds and craters, speaking to the past Māori settlement and fortification of this Tūpuna Maunga. As Ell (1998) explains:

> The physical heritage of the Maori past is fragile. Most was never built to last; a fortress abandoned soon crumbled under the onslaught of storms, its banks eroded, its ditches filled with slippage. The timber posts in the defences outlasted the nikau houses but fire and rot tumbled most within a century. (p 12)

The landform of Maungakiekie, however, is undeniable. Terraces, irrigation ditches, stone walls and modified soils all provide lasting testimony to Māori heritage within this landscape (Dawson, 2010). For Cornwall Park, by contrast, the importance of Campbell's legacy in providing a public park for all New Zealanders directs the dominant narrative.

The monument at the tihi of Maungakiekie, along with Campbell's grave, introduces complexity to the dominant narratives of these landscapes, as does the Rongo Stone located within Cornwall Park. Through its visual presence as the dominating architectural form, the towering Egyptian-style obelisk at the summit of the former pā site demands a questioning of the dominant narrative of the maunga, and prompts enquiry into the history and multiple layers of this landscape. Likewise, the Rongo Stone reveals an important layer to the story of the land now known as Cornwall Park.

The reorientation of narrative into the vertical terrain provides an opportunity for plurality to exist. Here multiple narratives entwine through space and time – removing legal, administrative and temporal boundaries, and providing an environment to 'open' landscape narratives, and therefore to open interpretations, allowing multiple readings within the same place and within the same time. As Potteiger and Purinton (1998a) conclude, 'Opening shifts the production of meaning from the author to the readers so that the vitality of the work is created by the active and multiple engagement' (p 188).

An open narrative that considers this landscape as one, looking vertically through the multiple layers of geomorphological structure, of soil, settlement and cultural interaction, and of land-use change within an urbanising context, invites visitors to this landscape to engage, to enter the 'story' at differing points and from diverse angles, bringing their 'lived experiences' to the interpretation of the landscape. In doing so, it encourages individual engagement and connection with the land. Crafting a space where landscape narrative is participatory and undetermined creates the opportunity for a shared public realm across our diverse and pluralistic contemporary culture. Considering landscape narrative 'vertically' acknowledges the multiple layers that have shaped it and engaged with it through time, both physically and culturally.

Gordon Ell, in 1998, wrote, 'The story of human settlement in New Zealand is written in the landscape' (p 9). The subtle signs shown by the land reveal a heritage layer reaching back a thousand years to the Māori landscape narrative of Aotearoa that is written in the land. Allowing a landscape to reveal itself, to be 'open' to interpretation, and participants to be unhindered in their exploration of multiple narratives provides an opportunity for creating spaces that promote diversity, equality and belonging.

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