*Meaning in landscape architecture: negotiating identity
in a landscape of local and national significance*

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How can contemporary landscape architecture techniques re-engage nationally significant places with a dynamic urban environment?

by Marita Hunt

120 point thesis submitted to the School of Architecture and Design,
Victoria University of Wellington, in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Masters of Landscape Architecture

Victoria University of Wellington

09.02.2012

Mihi

Ko Manaia te maunga

Ko Hatea te awa

Ko Adelaide te waka

Ko Ngati Pākehā te iwi

Ko Hunt, ko Russell, ko Simmonds, ko Johnston, ko Darragh, ko Lamb ngā hapū

Ko Whangarei-tere-ngā-paraoa te moana

Ko Taranga te motu

No Kaione ahau

Ko Marita Hunt tōku ingoa

Nō reira,

He kura kāinga e hokia; he kura tangata e kore e hokia, tēna koutou, tēna koutou, tena koutou katoa.

The significance of the mihi is that it portrays the speaker in terms of a wider interconnected system of people and environment. Such a system can be used to describe and design the social and political landscape of the 21st Century city.

1.1. Abstract

This thesis develops a landscape architectural approach to the design of meaning in locally and nationally significant spaces. It begins with an emerging contemporary trend: nationally significant sites that are ignored and reduced in importance by the changing, fluid urban landscapes that surround them.

Adelaide Road, in Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, is the site of Government House, the National War Memorial and the Basin reserve. These three nationally significant colonial icons suffer from lack of connection to their urban context, and thus this site is used as design case study.

The thesis first develops a position on the expression of meaning through architectural form, particularly the meaning of national identity in capital cities. The expression of meaning in architecture is hindered by problems to do with the cultural context the sites are found within. Cultural shifts quickly move on from original designed meaning, leaving only culturally ingrained meaning. For nationally significant sites to remain relevant they need to become used, active parts of the urban landscape, so that layers of meaning and identity can accumulate within them.

To situate the thesis in the context of Aotearoa-New Zealand, cultural traditions to do with sense of belonging to the landscape are used to establish a base set of values on which to base a design methodology. Landscape, particularly the natural landscape, has become a cliché expression of New Zealand national identity, to the detriment of urban landscapes. The design methodology uses landscape architecture theory to draw together Māori and Pākehā landscape values and apply them to the complex problems of an urban site. The design outcome frames the re-connection of Government House, the War Memorial and the Basin Reserve to the urban landscape within the cultural context of Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank -

My supervisors, Warwick McLeod and Shenuka de Sylva. Warwick's personal interest in this site helped me to be ambitious in what I attempted, and Shenuka's astute feedback at crucial points helped me to refine and streamline the thesis.

Clive Anstey, who, in a chance encounter outside the design school, pointed me in the direction of the issues of 'local and national significance' within the site.

Kennedy and Jeremy Warne, for their editing and proofreading. Jeremy's help in clarifying the communication of my ideas has been invaluable.

My classmates in the landscape and architecture classes, whose friendships have made the last 5 years a huge amount of fun.

And last but definitely not least – Martin, Heather and Elsa Hunt, Erica Brouard, and Jeremy Warne for their love, friendship and support.

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Introduction

I.1. Introduction

This thesis investigates a landscape architectural approach to a contemporary cultural trend and attempts to develop a design solution suited to this changing situation within the city of Wellington.

I.1.1. Problem

The thesis problem is twofold: it involves firstly a broad research problem, which informed the choice of a site that embodied it, which in turn led to a set of related but more specific site problems. These site problems informed the way the research was tested through design, and consequently the thesis conclusions.

Broad research problem

Wellington's significant national sites exist in isolation within an urban fabric that ignores, and consequently, reduces them. This is symptomatic of an emerging contemporary trend wherein the decreasing cultural relevance of such sites has led to them becoming ignored by their urban contexts.

Capital cities are traditionally (and particularly in colonial nations such as New Zealand) seen as symbolic centers of the 'nation', and they can be read to represent the country's constitutional system of beliefs, values and identity. Unlike other colonial capital cities, Wellington's urban structure was not designed to be a spatial expression of this symbolic role. It is instead a result of both the layers of its particular history, and aspects of culture that have developed in New Zealand. Thus Wellington itself presents an opportunity to test how well the techniques of 21st century urban landscape design can find a way for the significant sites to remain relevant in a new cultural context.

The site used to test this is the Adelaide Road area, which is bounded by the iconic colonial sites of Government House, the National War Memorial, and the Basin Reserve. It is crucial to the thesis that these icons are viewed

within their urban context: as part of the urban landscape, rather than as isolated entities. The thesis addresses their lack of relationship to this urban landscape, and hypothesizes that increasing their accessibility and connection to the Adelaide Road context would create a place in which people's understanding of their relevance could be enhanced.

Specific site problems

Further site analysis demonstrates that the urban landscape these places sit within contains its own problems (urban and infrastructural) that must be solved for effective accessibility to occur. This leads to a developed hypothesis:

The creation of meaningful connections between icons of national significance can be used to drive improvements to the everyday, lived urban landscape. These improvements in turn ensure that the connections made are of a flexible and useful nature, and do not dictate the meaning of these icons, instead creating the opportunity for users to develop their own understanding of the meaning of a space, and the nature of its contribution to their identity.

As well as the three significant colonial places, the Adelaide Road Area also contains:

- A number of education institutions, including Massey University
- Key local and national infrastructure: State Highway 1 taking traffic to the Airport, and Adelaide Road, itself an important arterial link
- A residential population of mixed density¹
- Two major town belt edges, to the east and west.

These site conditions are expanded on in different ways in each chapter.

1.1.2. Motivations for research

The initial motivation comes from an interest in the role of landscape in

¹ The site covers two areas identified in the New Zealand Census: Adelaide, and Mt Cook – Wallace St. Their transient professional and student population is reflected in 2006 Census statistics about each area's population: Mt Cook has a population of 4,851, and this population has risen steeply (37.6 percent) in the 5 years since the 2001 Census, while Adelaide's population is much smaller, at 942 (with an increase of just 11.6 percent), because much of it is taken up by public-use land, such as the Town Belt, Government House, and Wellington College. Both areas follow a similar pattern for a number of other statistics: a lower than average number of residents under 15 years of age, less than 20% of families have children, median income several thousand dollars below the \$28,000 median for Wellington as a whole, about a third of residents born overseas, around 70% European/Pākehā, and the most common occupational group is 'professionals'. This paints a picture of an area where people live in the formative years of study and early career. (Census 2006)

New Zealanders' sense of identity or belonging. The natural landscape has played a well documented, often clichéd part in this, but the urban landscape has been relatively overlooked. In a country with one of the world's highest rates of urbanisation² achieved in merely 150 years, the urban landscape is layered, complex and interesting, and there exists the opportunity to use contemporary landscape architecture thinking to develop strong senses of identity and belonging in our everyday, lived urban landscapes.

1.1.3. Scope of research

Literature reviews focus on the following topics:

- Meaning, architecture and identity in the political spaces of colonial nations
- Landscape in New Zealand cultural histories and New Zealand identity studies
- Contemporary landscape architecture theory, in particular landscape urbanism and infrastructure.

Additional research includes site history and site mappings. The design component of the thesis is used to develop links between the rather broad theory bases. It is through the design that new ideas are developed, tested, and suggested.

1.1.4. Aim and objectives

- To identify the latent architectural meaning in the site through site studies and literature review
- To find alternative sets of meaning about identity and belonging from within dominant cultural traditions in Aotearoa-New Zealand
- To use methods from contemporary landscape architectural practice to make the site more accessible to the public, in order to enhance the meanings of significant colonial icons within the site

1.1.5. Outline of thesis

Chapter Two covers literature on meaning, architecture and identity, with case study evidence from a number of examples, particularly Ottawa, Canberra and the Scottish Parliament. The aim of this chapter is to analyse and critique typical spatial representations of nationality and identity. An

² 85.7% in 2002, compared with 85% in Australia, 90% in the UK, 77% in the USA and 75% in Europe in the same year. (Bayley & Goodyear, 2002)

initial site investigation concludes the chapter, focusing on the meaning implied by a spatial reading of the site.

Chapter Three begins from the criticisms formed in Chapter One, exploring alternative methods of generating meaning in a New Zealand landscape context. Taking cultural histories as a cue, the site analysis begun in the previous chapter is developed through research into major cultural-historical actors on it.

Led by the conclusions of Chapter Three, Chapter four identifies relevant aspects of landscape architecture theory to be used to drive a design methodology. The site is further explored using landscape architectural mapping techniques.

Chapter Five is a written and visual description of the design alongside an explanation of how it responds to the problems, theory and hypotheses.

1.1.6. Description of methodology

- Initial literature review informed the choice of site, which in turn informed selection of further literature topics
- Literature reviews were conducted in quite different topics, each with their own relevance to the site
- Landscape architectural methods of site analysis and layered design were used to integrate the broad literature with specific site problems and opportunities.

1.1.7. Role of design with respect to research

The design tests a number of arguments that have emerged through the development of the thesis. It also consciously situates itself within the context of Wellington City Council's plans for the development of the city over the next few decades, providing an alternative vision for the gradual production of lived urban landscapes. The design suggests that objectives similar to the council's (such as improved infrastructure, better public space, and higher residential density) can be achieved alongside a deeper, more meaningful consideration of how the spatial arrangement of the city is created for the benefit of the people living in and experiencing it, doing so through observation and understanding of current trends of natural/people-initiated/informal developments taking place within the city. It argues that this approach offers more longevity than that typically suggested by governing bodies, as it more deeply involves a wide set of contextual factors.

2.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the way architectural¹ forms are used to express or represent meaning in places of national significance. I begin with a discussion on meaning itself: how is meaning created and communicated through space, and what are the primary obstacles to the understanding of meaning in architecture? These typical methods of communication are explored in a review of key existing sites, which have struggled to be implemented and suggest limitations to directly representing meaning in design.

The next section focuses on architectural systems of expression in capital cities, and in particular those of British colonies, like New Zealand. The concept of ‘national identity’ is an essential idea in capital cities, and I critique the way it is reflected and shaped architecturally. Case studies of other colonial cities begin to suggest the basis of a design response: that it is landscape form, rather than built architectural or urban form, that has the most potential to develop a sense of a sense of belonging and identity in capital cities. A collection of ‘criticisms and applications’ pulls together findings from the first two sections.

Three colonial icons, Government House, the War Memorial and the Basin Reserve, provide a starting point for an analysis of New Zealand’s capital. Their role, relevance and meaning are discussed in the context of New Zealand’s constitution, which connects the nation to the Commonwealth and its colonial history. Then, theory is used to question how the three sites are read in the urban landscape, and whether the way they are perceived is appropriate given their role within New Zealand’s identity. First design hunches emerge from this study, which then frame the aim of Chapter Two.

¹ Note: for the purposes of the thesis, the term ‘architecture’ is used broadly. Unless used in reference to an already-specified space, it should be read to include architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, and garden design.

2.2. Meaning in architecture

Communicated meaning comes from an interaction between two viewpoints. There is the meaning that is proposed by the designer, and the meaning that is understood by the user. The result is that any person engaging with a space is both receiving meaning from it, and layering their own viewpoint on top. This inevitable, complex layering of meaning is something a designer must be aware of. If the design is too explicit and the designer's voice is too strong, the ways in which a user can engage with the design are limited. However, it is still possible to design a space with meaning; the key questions become 'how' and 'when' to do so.

Architecture has developed various ways of creating meaning through form and space. Goodman (1988) identifies four broad categories of meaning². These categories range from the literal denotation of meaning, by use of text somewhere on the architecture, to a tenuous network of connections, which can lead people from a metaphor in the architecture to a subtle, unstated conclusion. The idea that people might sense the metaphor in a space and let it spur them on to deeper philosophical conclusions is a tempting one for designers. However, any abstract communication is afflicted by the gap between what is said and what is understood. Different people will interpret the metaphor in the architecture differently; and further, it is arguable whether the 'physical particularities' (Vale 2008) of the architecture are capable of communicating an idea, or whether people are just culturally conditioned to know what to think. To use Goodman's example, consider

² Goodman's four 'categories of meaning' are an attempt to neatly explain the ways in which architecture is able to communicate meaning to an audience. Using the Lincoln Memorial as an example, the four categories are:

- Denotation: 'some part of a building's meaning may often be read literally or otherwise directly denoted.' For example, the Lincoln Memorial, Washington D.C. in which meaning is denoted by use of text directly from some of Lincoln's speeches. It is direct communication of images.
- Exemplification: the memorial draws attention to certain of its properties at the exclusion of others. The Memorial's placement itself stands out, being such a dramatic urban design gesture at the end of the Washington Mall, and the composition of solid and void on the Memorial's facade draws attention to the statue of Lincoln in the middle.
- Metaphoric expression: the Memorial can be compared to a temple, with Lincoln taking the place of the deity.
- Mediated reference: using a 'chain of reasoning' to lead people from the idea of Lincoln as saviour to 'broader consideration of the values of national unity and racial equality promoted by Lincoln's presidential acts.' The Memorial thus becomes associated with civil rights, an association which is reinforced by the many civil rights rallies held in front of it. Goodman, N. (1988). *How Buildings Mean. Reconceptions in philosophy and other arts and sciences*. C. Z. Elgin and N. Goodman. Indianapolis, Hackett Pub. Co.

a visitor forming a personal interpretation of the Lincoln Memorial. They stand in one of the world's most famous pieces of designed space, and have been equipped by reputation and expectation to understand its intent well before their arrival.

The conclusion to take from this is that any meaning created by 'architecture', or the form given to a space, must interact with many other sources of meaning. The history, use and program of a site remain constant irrespective of any design considerations, and these meanings play a part in the perceived meaning of the whole space. However, these constant sources of meaning can be turned to the designer's advantage by finding ways to draw such significant places into the urban fabric, rather than working around them. Government House, the War Memorial, and the Basin Reserve already contain numerous embedded meanings stemming from their history, the historic uses and natures of the sites they are set within, and the way they are used today. The thesis does not attempt to challenge their existing meaning; rather, it brings them into the everyday lived experience of the city, creating opportunities for more meaningful interactions.

2.2.1. Issues in the communication of meaning: 'audience' and 'time'

All forms of literature are re-interpreted by their audience in ways that depend upon the context that the audience is coming from. Designed spaces are a much less denotative vessel for meaning than literature, and are therefore more vulnerable to a wide range of interpretations (Hunt 2004). These interpretations vary greatly. Observers may have a great deal of design insight or none at all; the design may be from their time or may predate them by thousands of years; the design may be intimately familiar to their cultural context or utterly alien to it.

Audience

It is indeed interesting that there is no satisfactory word to describe those who receive gardens and landscape as opposed to those, landscape architects or garden designers, who make them.

(Hunt 2004, p. 32)

In this section we consider the different users of a space -- for want of a better word, the audience. An audience which is equipped with specialised architectural knowledge will look at a space differently (Vale 2008). Such an audience will be able to recognise specific formal and spatial moves that convey meaning. In a similar way, an audience with a deep understanding of the cultural/historical context of a space will recognise allusions which presuppose familiarity with that context.

However, it is important when designing public spaces to consider the scale of the various audiences involved. Specialised architectural knowledge is available to comparatively few people compared with cultural and historical knowledge. If the goal is communication of meaning to the broadest audience possible, it is important to strike a balance between privileged contexts and more general contexts.

Vale (2008) suggests that metaphor and Goodman's 'mediated reference' (which relies upon metaphor) are the most effective tools for communicating meaning of architecture, since they do not require specific existing knowledge. An average citizen, who may not intuitively sense classical architectural systems of proportion, will respond to metaphors in a design. And an outside observer from a different culture, for whom the cultural context of a building may not be accessible, can begin to understand that culture through the architectural representation. Linzey's description of the wharenuī³ is an example of the way architecture can represent, abstract, or amplify aspects of a culture. It is important to recognise that the architecture is not creating meaning, but is a vehicle for meaning that already exists.

Emphasis on the local context is especially important in the case of a capital city which is expected in some way to put forward the cultural and historical identity of a country. Precedents in Chapter Three demonstrate how landscape architects in New Zealand are using aspects of local historical and environmental knowledge to develop meaning in their designs.

3 For example, the Māori wharenuī is best understood from within the context of Māori culture. Linzey describes:

... a peculiar aspect of the New Zealand Māori dwelling experience: that Māori people directly address and include the carved house, the whare whakairo in the rhetoric of tribal occasions an public gatherings, thus showing that a world of architecture is a living presence in their hearts.

(1989, p. 318)

Similarly, in writing about the marae, Hiwi Tauroa speaks directly to it:

No, you are not just a house. You live; and because you live we can live.

(Tauroa & Tauroa, 1986, p. 26)

The cultural conditioning of Māori society teaches that the architecture of the wharenuī is the ancestor. As with the mihi with which the thesis was introduced, formal conversation in the wharenuī begins with a greeting to the interconnected system of land, house, and ancestors. It is possible for European architects to understand, academically, how this works once they learn how the structural elements of the house 'mean' the body of a significant ancestor. They have gained the 'specialist architectural knowledge' that Vale mentions as being important for understanding the architecture. However, true acceptance of this way of reading architecture requires the European to be, essentially, culturally indoctrinated in Māori society. This is one extreme example of how a person's cultural context and knowledge alters the way they read meaning of an architectural space.

Given that the users of a space approach it with their own sense of meaning already firmly in place, this thesis proposes that the objective of the design should be to create more and better opportunities for people's beliefs and feelings to be echoed in their environments, rather than purely communicating meaning as a foregone conclusion.

Time

Attitudes to meaning in architecture have changed greatly over time. From classical times to the 18th century, it was taken for granted that architecture would contain meaning. During this time, people focused instead on the ways in which various meanings were communicated and 'the morality or public responsibilities' of that communication (Hunt 2004, p. 14). This changed with the industrial revolution, when the prevailing attitude of scientific precision spilled over to architectural style. For some time, designers tried to ignore the effects of the industrial revolution, and styles like neo-gothic and neo-classical were used widely in an attempt to feed off the meaning that had been implicit in their earlier, original forms. Neo-gothic and neo-classical were typical of the beaux-arts tradition applied in colonial architecture all over the world. The beaux-arts tradition is the design context in which the town plan of Wellington, and the three key sites of the thesis, were created. An in-depth discussion of the implementation of the town plan, and the theory regarding New Zealand's cultural/historical context, follows in Chapter Two. It was only after World War I, with the advent of modernism, that the European ideal became purely descriptive, free from 'ethical, aesthetical, and religious connotations' (Linzey 1989).

The unique characteristics of a specific moment in time affect not only the designer, but also the audience. Reading the original meaning relies on the audience's understanding of the original historical context. Hunt's (2004) central theme was the nature of a garden's meaning well after the moments of design and creation, and he advocates for the study of people's reaction to gardens throughout their life span. He defined two different ways of looking at a space: one that looks intellectually at the garden's existing meaning, and another that simply reacts aesthetically to the various sensual elements of a space.

We will need to extend this distinction to one that separates, on the one hand, responses to a garden that seek to understand, judge or explain it from those that seek to articulate a visitor's interaction with it; even so, the distinction can be hard to make in practice

(Hunt 2004, p. 13).

The design aspect of this thesis seeks to provoke both types of response. Intellectual responses, which seek to uncover the intended meaning and the

ways in which it has been communicated; and instinctive responses, resulting from the unpredictable ways in which users interact with a space. It proposes that a successful space balances these responses, contributing to the quality of public interaction, and also to the academic discipline of architecture.

2.2.2. Architectural systems of expression

Users' perception of meaning will differ depending upon a number of factors, and the more complex the intended effect of the architecture is, the more room there will be for differing interpretations. Contemporary architecture encounters this issue when reacting to existing, better-understood systems of expression.

The architectural expression of meaning is usually fuelled by assumptions about what people are going to understand based on their existing cultural knowledge. However, post-modern architecture's search for meaning has been fraught. Simplistic design choices are frequently made in the hope that an audience will have an automatic reaction to them, but such choices often amount to little more than an intellectual exercise, and communication of meaning occurs only to other architects. While meaning can be a useful tool for designers, it doesn't necessarily follow that meaning creates effect in as direct or literal a way as, for instance, classical columns attached to an important civic building connote authority and order. In short, there is a difference between intention and communication.

Existing cultural understandings can be easily found in Western architecture. For example, classical allusions are favoured in the design of buildings which house institutions associated with stability and order. This is a heavily used association and one we have been taught to understand. As Stan Allen stated:

[...] there exists a strong historical connection between the precise rules of axiality, symmetry, and formal hierarchy that govern classical architecture and the traditional type-forms of Western institutions.'

(Allen 1999, p. 101)

Contemporary architecture has reacted against this, but in ways that are less easy to define; it is harder to break out of existing norms than to follow them. The allusions made within contemporary architecture are both less obvious and less established.

Politically significant spaces are fertile ground for the expression of meaning through architecture, as they are understood to have meaning that is relevant to a wide group of people, and potentially the entire nation. This means that while people expect to find meaning in these spaces, political leaders

also tend to try and control the meaning expressed through them (Pollock-Ellwand 2001; Vale 2008). This raises a question about whether people are seeing meaning because they expect it, given that it is a 'nationally' significant space, or because it has been placed there for them to see. In fact, this is a process that works both ways. Firstly, the audience will be primed to engage, interpret, and discuss whatever they find, rather than overlooking subtleties; secondly, this expectation creates pressure on designers to engage with the meaning of the space. Thus, a meaningful site creates an expectation that a conversation will take place.

However, the high stakes of a nationally significant space require careful treatment. Allen (1999) is suspicious of the sorts of spatial moves used in contemporary architecture. Moves such as constructing a transparent shell around an important civic building, or rearranging the seating in debating chambers so that they are less oppositional, are simply literal interpretations of the ideology of 20th century's liberal democracy. They are typical of new physical expressions that reacted against the traditional classical forms used by past political systems.

The simplicity of these examples is a barrier to the value of meaning in architecture, as they are little more than a shallow architectural one-liner. There may be other, more productive ways to interpret ideology through architecture. I propose that more active, practical moves have greater potential to improve lived spaces than formal expression of ideological intentions. In the case of Government House, the War Memorial and the Basin Reserve, site analysis at the end of this chapter demonstrates that engagement with them (and by extension, reading of their meaning as well) is hindered by their inaccessibility, a problem that is addressed in the design.

The recent construction of a new Scottish Parliament building (Designed by EMBT and RMJM, 1998 – 2002) further demonstrates the range of reactions to designs which take place in this atmosphere of pre-existing meaning vs. designed meaning. The Parliament was built at a time that was extremely politically meaningful: Scotland had just obtained independence from the British government system after 300 years within it. Therefore the statement that the building was expected to make was not only a general one to do with the seat of power and nature of the government, but also a commemoration of this moment in Scotland's history. The political shift also involved a symbolic shift from the homogenous British Empire's identity to a unique Scottish identity, and this shift raised the question of how the Parliament building's architecture should represent that identity. The competition and subsequent design process for the Parliament building became a figurehead for the creation of the new (or revived) Scottish nation (Jencks 2005).

The design is rich in intentional, idealistic metaphors, and is a thorough example of the role of meaning in driving design, and the role of design in

driving meaning. It is described as a response to the ideology of 21st century democracy, as characterised by ‘subtle power relations’, power that is layered and shared, with open, not closed, government, and a government of ‘lower-case, softly spoken, mixed messages’ (McCrone, Balfour et al. 2005, p. 16).

The designers stated that ‘[...] Scotland is a land, not a series of cities. It demands a construction that is not monumental in the classical sense’ (McCrone, Balfour et al. 2005, p. 8). The architecture that they created out of this statement can be teased apart to show a great amount of thought that has gone into its readability as a meaningful site:

- A fine-grained ‘campus’ of smaller buildings
- Visual connection with the culturally significant mountain adjacent
- Large amount of public landscape
- Proportions and material that match and blend into surrounding urban fabric
- Welcoming, un-intimidating entrance
- Intimate, personal spaces that respond to the small-scale intimacy of Scottish governance

It is dubious how clear any of these things would be to a lay visitor. However this project suggests that sometimes the intention is enough to inspire interesting design. The unusual architectural forms may motivate people to wonder about the reasons behind them, and a great deal of intellectual meaning may be generated for other architects.

Fig. 2-1. *Scottish Parliament fore-court and public space*

by Liam Somerville, 18.10.2007.
Source: www.flickr.com, [liam_somerville's photostream](#).

Fig. 2-2. *Scottish Parliament view from Arthur's Seat (nearby hill)*

by Andrew Brown, 29.03.2009.
Source: www.flickr.com, [AndrewRBrown's photostream](#).

Fig. 2-3. *Scottish Parliament public landscape*

by David Hunter, 18.02.2008.
Source: www.flickr.com, [davidx-hunter's photostream](#).

Fig. 2-4. *Scottish Parliament view from meadow*

by Eugene Windsor, 16.07.2008.
Source: www.flickr.com, EWin1's photostream.

Fig. 2-5. *Scottish Parliament debating chamber*

by Andrew Brown, 06.08.2008.
Source: www.flickr.com, AndrewRBrown's photostream.

2.3. Architectural meaning in capital cities

Capital cities and the parliament buildings constructed within them would seem ready purveyors of national identity, since they are ostensibly built to service and symbolize a nation-state as a whole.

(Vale 2008, p. 52)

Capital cities bear a dual expectation to convey not only the meaning of their local area, but also of the country they represent. This section looks at how architecture and planning have typically responded to this expectation. Case studies used are the capital cities of Canada (Ottawa) and Australia (Canberra). They are relevant to Wellington, both in terms of physical characteristics and the cultural contexts they come from. Neither of these cities were formed in the heat of a regime change, like many highly designed post-colonial capitals were, but their colonial character is more overtly designed than Wellington, so they become an instructive comparison to it.

2.3.1. 'National identity' as expressed through architecture

Identifying and expressing national identity is a common expectation in the design of any major civic building, space or site. However, an investigation into the way in which identity is used and interpreted by architecture reveals the difficulty of this task. A nation is:

... a cultural concept which is not predicated on political self-governance, but upon the sense of felt distinctiveness, the right, if not the practice, of self-determination. In short the nation is an 'imagined community', bounded by place, territory, as well as by time, by history.

(McCrone, Balfour et al. 2005, p. 10)

This definition sets the thematic tone for the discussion of national identity in the literature. Defining a nation has more to do with collective feelings and imaginings than any legal or political definitions. As well as geographical location, a sense of the nation is found in chronological location: knowledge of a common history one shares with a large group of others, and a sense that the present time is a result of collective past history. In all nations, and particularly young nations, nationhood is not something that emerges fully formed in the minds of people, but a process that must be cultivated, continually evolving over time (Vale 2008, p. 50).

However, national identity is a concept which is easily hijacked, and careful manipulation of the built environment is habitually used as a tool by political leaders to promote their regime. The way architecture can be manipulated to communicate a particular individual or group's chosen meaning

presents a dilemma for designers. There's a frustration evident in the literature about the tension between leaders 'intent on leaving a personal stamp' (Pollock-Ellwand 2001, p. 60), the personal style and beliefs of architects, and the ideal of space being an accurate expression of the character of a nation.

Vale identifies three frames of reference within which architectural expressions of national identity always take place:

The sub-national group allegiances and preferences of the regime

The priorities of the architect's long-term design agenda

The government's interest in pursuing international identity through modern architecture and planning, which may be tied to issues of economic development.

In other words, what is passed off as a quest for national identity is in reality a product of the search for sub-national, personal, and supranational identity.

(Vale 2008, p. 56)

Like meaning, national identity is a concept that depends upon individual interpretation. Any architectural expression of national identity will reflect the ideas of a collection of individuals, rather than an entire body of citizens; few characteristics of the 'nation' will hold true for every citizen.

2.3.2. Architectural expression in capital cities

The designs of political spaces are dominated by the beaux-arts style. Despite the criticism of architects and other academics (including anthropologists, sociologists, and cultural geographers), these continue to be the forms to which political leaders return when they have the opportunity to leave their mark on a place. It seems that in capital cities, even today, 'there is a need to symbolize the presence of the ruler to the ruled' (Geertz 1993). In Wellington, this is accomplished by the Beehive, Government Buildings, and Government House, both through their architecture and their relationships to the urban landscape, though all in different ways. These buildings are discussed in the following section.

The appeal of the beaux-arts can be seen in Ottawa. In 1893, political leadership first called for designs to make Ottawa 'the Washington of the North' (Pollock-Ellwand 2001). Since then, major beaux-arts style designs for Ottawa have been produced regularly throughout the 20th century; the most recent, also in a beaux-arts style, emerged in 1998. Jacques Gréber's

1950 beaux-arts vision, a grand collection of radiating avenues, unifying streetscapes, axial approaches, and monumental public spaces, has the most influential planning document for the city. Although it was never fully realised, it has continued to inform subsequent design schemes for the city (Pollock-Ellwand 2001). The beaux-arts, classical style of urban design found in Gréber's plan is an architectural system that is deeply ingrained in Western political consciousness.

The beaux-arts style of urban design that Ottawa managed to never quite achieve is ubiquitous to post-colonial capitals, and can be seen in cities as diverse in their location and political systems as New Delhi, Canberra and Moscow. Pollock-Ellwand (2001) criticizes the movement, relating it to a paternalistic attitude towards the public, Euro-centrism, and a focus on the physical. Its forms serve the power and control of a republican state, and its trademark classical formality has been used to express political power in dictatorships (Hall 1988). The ability of architecture to express some sense of national identity is hampered by the fact that decisions are made by the leadership, rather than the populace (Pollock-Ellwand 2001; Vale 2008). It questions once again the role of architecture in communicating grand ideas to the public.

2.3.3. Landscape and the idea of 'place' in colonial capitals: Ottawa and Canberra

Ottawa

The city of Ottawa has been subject to a number of grand urban design visions throughout its history, none of which were ever fully realised. It has instead developed in a more bottom-up manner around the planned aspects of its urban form, to become a city which successfully represents both national and local identity (Pollock-Ellwand 2001). The natural landscape has come to play an important role in this development, as has happened with Wellington's unavoidable topography and with Canberra's more deliberate use of natural features.

The first modern plan for the city was drawn up in 1903 by Frederick G. Todd, a landscape architect who trained in the firm of Olmstead, Olmstead and Eliot. His landscape architectural approach created a romantic, picturesque design, which used park systems, driveways and parkways to create networks and connections throughout the city. It broke with the conventions for capital cities, instead aiming to 'capture the picturesque essence of Ottawa and its region as a capital city'. The design was 'distinctive to Canada, with a forest reserve at its doorstep' (Pollock-Ellwand 2001, p. 48). Pollock-Ellwand believes that Todd's plan should have become the dominant model for future planning in Ottawa, because it understood the value of the natural landscape in providing an urban landscape with a sense of place and identity.

Fig. 2-6. Parliament Hill - La colline du Parlement

Fig. 2-7. Ottawa Cityscape - Panorama de la ville d'Ottawa

Fig. 2-8. Rideau Canal - Canal Rideau

Source: www.flickr.com.
Photostream: Canada's Capital - Capitale du Canada

Plan of Ottawa by Frederick G. Todd

Fig. 2-9. Parks and parkways proposed by Frederick G. Todd in 1903

From the Preliminary Report for the Ottawa Improvement Commission, 1903. Source: <https://qshare.queensu.ca/Users01/gordond/planningcanadascapital>

Aerial image of Ottawa, Hull and Environs today

Fig. 2-10. Aerial image of Ottawa, Hull and Environs today

Source: Google Earth.

Plan of Ottawa by Jacques Gréber

Fig. 2-11. Master Plan of Ottawa by Jacques Gréber, 1950

by Jacques Gréber, 1950.
Source: <https://qshare.queen-su.ca/Users01/gordond/planningcanadascapital>

Proposed open space in Gréber Plan

Fig. 2-12. Proposed open space in Ottawa, Hull and Environs by Jacques Gréber, 1950

by Jacques Gréber, 1950.
Source: <https://qshare.queen-su.ca/Users01/gordond/planningcanadascapital>

Todd's plan is markedly different from the parade of grand, beaux-arts plans that have been put forward for the Canadian capital. These plans have echoed similar grand statements of power and unity constructed in Canberra, Washington, New Delhi, Chandigarh, and Brasilia, and came from the same architectural language (Pollock-Ellwand 2001). A grand, beaux-arts plan published by Jacques Gréber in 1950 was well supported and has been referred to by many subsequent plans, but the city was never able to construct it in its entirety. The elements that were created were to do with landscape and infrastructure, rather than Gréber's grand radiating axes. The way the city has developed around them over time has not produced the 'Washington of the north' that Ottawa's leaders desired, but something more closely resembling Todd's vision.

Todd himself criticized the idea of mimicking Washington's plan in Ottawa, stating that:

[...] it would be a mistake to copy too closely, even if it were possible, the plans which have proved so successful there, for the location of the two cities is so absolutely different, that what has made the beauty of one, might mar the beauty of the other.

(Todd 1903, p. 2)

One way or another, Ottawa 'acquired a greenbelt, decentralized government buildings, satellite settlements, and open space planning' (Pollock-Ellwand 2001, p. 50). Gréber's legacy has unintentionally become more about the greenbelt and open space systems than the monumental spaces he also designed, forms that were 'in the grandest traditions of Napoleon III's Paris [...] from the French school of Urbanism' (Pollock-Ellwand 2001, p. 55). The site-appropriate and landscape based reality of Ottawa's urban form is deemed to be a more accurate expression of an 'innate conservatism' associated with Canadians (Pollock-Ellwand 2001, p. 59). In short, the landscape infrastructure features that evolved in Ottawa have created a better urban environment than the grand architectural statements its leaders attempted to make.

Canberra

Canberra, the capital of Australia, was one of the great planned cities of the 20th century. As a result it exemplifies a range of different 20th century town planning ideals, particularly city beautiful, garden city, and, like Ottawa, beaux-arts. The proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 led to the decision to create a new federal capital, a seat of government separate from the two major cities of Sydney and Melbourne (Johnson 1977). Canberra was the product of an optimistic, patriotic period in Australian history. The economy was strong and emancipist, and social reform ideals

Section through Canberra's water Axis

Fig. 2-14. Section A-B Northerly Side of Water Axis: Black Mountain to Lake Park

by Walter Burley Griffin, 1912.

Aerial image of Canberra today

Fig. 2-13. Aerial image of Canberra today

Source: Google Earth

Fig. 2-16. *Federal Capital Competition City and Environs plan*
by Walter Burley Griffin, 1912.

Fig. 2-15. *a-b. Canberra today: the water axis (above) and land axis (below)*

by John and Adrienne Kabos, 1988.

were widespread; there was a will for democracy and egalitarianism (Fischer 1989). Like New Zealand in the same period, its legislation was more progressive than in older countries.

Fischer wrote that ‘Cities are reflections of the power structure, the material situation and the culture of the societies that build them’ (Fischer 1989, p. 158). If this is the case, then what would the new capital city of Canberra look like? Australia’s ministers had grand visions for it. They wanted Canberra to be the best capital city in the world, and one of its roles was to be a symbolic place for Australians, uniting the populace and announcing Australia’s Commonwealth status to the world (Johnson 1977). The idea of expressing Australian identity as different from that of other countries was an issue that came up in discussion of the design of the new city. Sydney architect and town planning advocate John Sulman felt that Australians were neither similar to other dominions of the empire nor aligned with the ideas of other nations (Johnson 1977).

The competition for Canberra’s development and that for the Scottish Parliament, though almost a century apart, share similar rhetoric and design goals; and, as entrants did for that competition, Sulman thought it was important that competitors in the Canberra competition came to Australia to study the country. The Competition and post-competition development process also inspired the negative political elements typical of such nationally significant projects. People were upset that a minister (King O’Malley) would be the final judge of the competition. They felt that, being a politician, he was not only unqualified, but would probably also be politically motivated in his decision (Johnson 1977). Brown described the project having ‘a stormy passage in which politics and the ego of the minister responsible had leading roles’ (Brown 1952, p. 163).

Chicago-based landscape architect Walter Burley Griffin won the competition. Griffin’s plan is a mix of classical beaux-arts formalism in the arrangement of major axes and the governmental precinct, city beautiful avenues, and garden city residential areas. Underlying the mixture of styles is his response to the landscape of the site, which he used to position and arrange the city. While Brown (1952) critiques the plan for being too rigid for the topography, more contemporary writers celebrate the plan’s relationship with the landscape. Griffin had an interest in horticulture, and he applied this understanding to the buildings, landscapes, suburbs, and cities that he designed, attempting to find an ecological position for them. His method first considered the site, and then the functions to be superimposed and integrated with the site as a social organism (Johnson 1977).

2.4. Criticism and applications

Key criticisms found in the theory reveal the problems with attempting to design using ‘meaning’ and interpretations of ‘national identity’, while certain designers and theorists suggest solutions to these problems that help discern an alternative approach to their design.

- The flaw in designing with the intent of expressing national identity is that states are rarely homogenous, and contemporary state making involves mediation between different factions more than anything else (Vale 2008). So a space that is of ‘national significance’ must acknowledge a number of these different factions – from its past significance, to its role in the current culture and system, to the range of different interest groups and user groups that its design will affect.
- Pollak’s (2006) theory of multiple identities provides a possible solution to both of these problems. She argues that if people can have multiple identities, then so can spaces. While architecture has reacted to this idea in de-territorialized terms by removing connections to specific sites, such multiple identities are, in fact, grounded in space and time: they are site-specific and relate to the multiple identities found in the present and past of a site (Pollak 2006). In sites of national significance, layers of symbolic significance are built up over time as a result of the way the sites have been used and appropriated (Vale 2008).
- The work of Stan Allen facilitates these multiple identities within spaces. In a number of important civic built works, he focuses on the relationship between city, landscape and architecture rather than the representation of the functions or meaning of the architecture. The designs of projects like the Korean-American Museum of Art and the Japanese National Diet Library provide spaces that equip people to continue to improvise into the future (Allen 1999). This allows for the fluidity, development and accumulation of meaning and symbolism to develop over time, anticipating the multiple identities people give to space.

Fig. 2-17. a, b. Korean-American Museum of Art

Source: Allen, 1999.

Fig. 2-18. a, b. Japanese National Diet Library

Source: Allen, 1999.

Fig. 2-19. *Adelaide Road from Mt Victoria*

author's own image

Government House
Adelaide Road
War Memorial
Basin Reserve

Fig. 2-20. *Te Aro from Mt Victoria*

author's own image

Fig. 2-21. *Government House from Massey University*

author's own image

In urban design terms, powerful groups may claim key intersections or privileged high ground in the city to display their prestige.

(Vale, 2008, p. 62)

2.5. Meaning, architecture and identity in Adelaide Road, Wellington

The literature review, ranging over themes of ‘meaning, architecture and identity’, informs an initial study of the Adelaide Road site. The study criticises the relationship of the colonial spaces to one another, and also to their context in the Adelaide Road area as a user moves through it. The result is a set of tools to read the meaning of these sites from within the urban landscape. An historical analysis of the changes that have shaped the site builds upon this study in Chapter Two.

2.5.1. Initial site observations: Government House, the War Memorial and the Basin Reserve

Government House, the War Memorial and the Basin Reserve each take up a significant area of land within the confined urban-residential space of Mt Cook and Adelaide Road. They are characterised by dramatic changes in grain from the residential areas surrounding them, and these grain differences read as strongly on the ground as they do in plan.

The architecture of the buildings themselves subscribes to the classical style discussed above: a style often applied to political buildings for its ability to suggest stability and authority. In the case of Government House and the War Memorial, these qualities are amplified by their siting on high ground, which makes them visible from far away.

Fig. 2-22. *Site reading of
Government House from Mt Cook
and Adelaide Road*

author's own image

From Massey University

From Carrington Street.

From the intersection
of Adelaide Road and
Hospital Road.

From John Street.

Government House

Several side streets lead to Government House, terminating at a tall fence which surrounds the grounds of the site. The separation is reinforced by the century-old pine planting inside its boundaries.

- This planting has been retained, and increased, in order to screen views of planned high rise buildings in Adelaide Road (Beaumont 2009). This screening also hides the site from the parts of the city nearest to it. Consequently, Government House becomes more difficult to read as the user approaches it, and it is best read from a distance. The focus of the house and its grounds on wide scenic views has had the unintended consequence of rendering the House itself readable only as part of a similar wide scenic view.
- The town belt edges of its gardens, while still fenced, have been allowed to become similar in nature to the town belt itself, to the point where the two landscapes would merge seamlessly if the fence were not there.
- The formal entrance to the grounds is underplayed in the infrastructure knot around the Basin Reserve, and secondary entrances are tucked away on side streets of Adelaide Road, and in the fringes of the Hospital Grounds.

The combined effect of these features is to make Government House seem both ever-present and completely disengaged from the immediate context. Its grounds have a significant impact on both the town belt and Adelaide Road, but their impenetrability makes them seem aloof and disconnected.

Fig. 2-23. a-b. Government House fences at boundary with town belt

author's own image

Fig. 2-24. Screening trees from within Government House grounds

author's own image

Diagram of barriers around Government House

Fig. 2-25. Diagram of barriers around Government House

author's own image

Fig. 2-26. Site reading of the
*National War Memorial from Mt
Cook and Adelaide Road*

author's own image

From Brown Street

From Adelaide Road.

From Belfast Street

From John Street.

War Memorial

The National War Memorial is much more accessible than Government House, as a public monument free from security concerns.

It stands at the edge of a large block that comprises the Massey University and Wellington High School buildings, an area that is impermeable to cars but highly used by pedestrians and cyclists as a route into Te Aro.

The Memorial's prominent position on high ground gives it a strong presence throughout the CBD, as well as being visible from many of the hill suburbs that ring the central city. The original design of the War Memorial⁴ included an avenue leading up towards it from the harbour, but the economic impact of the great depression prevented its construction. This axial road would have dramatically increased its impact on the wider city, and may have become a line around which the centre city could be organised.

However, the architect's beaux-arts town planning vision was never achieved, and instead the War Memorial's site terminates abruptly where Buckle Street, the Inner-City Bypass, travels across it immediately to the north. The bypass part of State Highway 1, and it carries west-bound traffic from the airport and the eastern suburbs.⁵ One has to cross this busy arterial route to get to a new (and temporary) 'memorial park'. Before the bypass was opened in 2007, Buckle Street was a narrower part of the same traffic system. The monument has never been properly integrated into its urban context.

Like Government House, the War Memorial is most powerful from afar. The immediate experience of the site is diminished by infrastructure moves that disregard it completely, and there is a sense of unfinished business about it.

Diagram of barriers around the National War Memorial

Fig. 2-27. Diagram of barriers around the National War Memorial

author's own image

⁴ By Auckland Architects Gummer and Ford, who won a national competition to design a complex of buildings on the site, including the National Museum and the War Memorial.

⁵ See appendix for before and after maps of the bypass??

Fig. 2-28. Site reading of the Basin Reserve from Mt Cook and Adelaide Road

author's own image

From Adelaide Road

From Belfast Street

From Tasman Street

Basin Reserve

The Basin Reserve is bordered by the War Memorial and the formal entrance to Government House, but has no spatial relationship to either of them.

- The Basin Reserve is positioned at the junction of the Te Aro Grid and the Adelaide Grid, which are on slightly different angles as a response to the topography that encloses them.
- Adelaide road to the south and Kent and Cambridge Terrace to the north read, in plan, like two axes joined at a pivot point by the Basin Reserve.
- In reality, the Basin has become a glorified roundabout, creating cross traffic, which limits its accessibility and halts the axial nature of the north-south connection.

From high vantage points, such as the nearby Mt Victoria lookout, the position of the Basin Reserve as a pivot between two grids can be read. However, as with Government House and the War Memorial, the human-scale experience of this idea is lost, buried in constantly-circling three lane traffic.

Diagram of barriers around the Basin Reserve

Fig. 2-29. Diagram of barriers around the Basin Reserve.

author's own image.

2.5.2. Markers

Fig. 2-30. Diagram of a marker
Re-drawn from Unwin, 1997.

[A marker] identifies a place in the most basic way. It does so by occupying the spot and by standing out from the surroundings. It may be a standing stone or a statue, a tombstone or a flag on a golf course; it might be a church steeple or a multi storey office block.

(Unwin 1997, p. 30)

King's reading of architectural towers concludes that height, siting and aesthetic quality are what establish 'the aura and reputation of a building' (King 2004, p. 5), and he argues for the importance of the materiality and visibility of the building in representing city, nation and other distinctive worlds. The skyscraper and monumental building tend to be given a particular type of importance in the development of the identity of a nation or city that is disproportionate to the real value they can offer this process (King 2004).

The qualities King identifies are easily read in the architecture of Government House, the War Memorial, and the Basin Reserve's Grandstands, as well as the urban positioning of the Basin Reserve itself. Similarly, the architecture on the sites marks them out as being important and significant – a suggestion that is then contradicted by their unsatisfactory human-scale spatial experience. The result is that anyone attempting to understand the significance or role of these sites in our past is confused by mixed messages. The urban landscape makes no allowance for their accessibility and presence in their ever-changing context, and the sites become static islands of difference, colonial relics, while the city continues to shift around them.

This site study suggests that breaking down the barriers that surround each of these significant colonial spaces will drive the design solution. This will reveal the latent relationships between them that can be read in plan, but are not experienced within the urban landscape itself.

The Basin Reserve and the National War Memorial from Mt Victoria

Fig. 2-31. The Basin Reserve and the National War Memorial from Mt Victoria

author's own image

2.5.3. Cultural/historical meaning of Government House, the War Memorial, and the Basin Reserve

In spite of any meaning imparted by designed architecture, much of what people understand about a site's meaning will come from what they already know about its cultural and historical role. The meaning found in these three sites is connected to New Zealand's colonial past, and Wellington's function as a capital city.

Like Ottawa and Canberra, Wellington is the capital city of a British colony and a member of the Commonwealth. The Adelaide road site contains significant built symbols of this colonial heritage⁶. Government House symbolises the connection to the Monarch and Commonwealth. The National War Memorial stands in remembrance of the wars fought by New Zealand in its capacity as a member of the commonwealth, duty-bound to support Britain. The Basin Reserve, originally created for public recreation, has subsequently been set aside as a cricket ground, a sport played throughout the Commonwealth.

A conscious decision has been made to focus on this site, rather than the site of Parliament, because this less prominent site is more at risk of becoming strangled and forgotten in its urban context. Parliament is an active space, one where decisions are constantly being made that reflect the changing state of New Zealand nationality. As a space it is open and permeable, connected to its urban context and used by many. It already embodies the design goals for the Adelaide Road site: easy use, accessibility and integration with the space around it. Its publicness is its success. The three significant places of the Adelaide Road site, however, do not enjoy the same active everyday use, which limits their effect on the urban landscape around them. The design needs to create openness and accessibility, in order to instigate programmatic reasons for the sites to be used and become more relevant.

Diagram of Parliament site

Fig. 2-32. Diagram of Parliament site

author's own image.

2.5.4. Government House and the Constitution

Government House is a symbol of New Zealand's connection to the Commonwealth, as it is the official residence of the Governor General, who represents the Head of State, the reigning monarch of Great Britain. New Zealand is still constitutionally connected to Great Britain, but constitutional changes being discussed today call into question the role of the Governor General.

This Government House was built in 1910, shortly after New Zealand became a dominion in 1907. The timing is significant, as the Governor's residence had been located among the parliament buildings since 1865.⁷ The city and the collection of parliament buildings had grown rapidly in the second half of the 19th century; the new dominion may have felt that Government House was no longer a necessary part of the day-to-day running of the country, and was thus better suited to a ceremonial role in the space set aside for civic functions in the town belt in Newtown.

Although New Zealand inherited its constitution from Great Britain, and the current ruling monarch of England is the supreme ruler of New Zealand, the monarchy has little to do with the actual day-to-day governing of the country. The monarchy's most lasting legacy was to delegate its authority over New Zealand to the British Parliament, which then delegated it to the New Zealand Government (Mullholland and Tawhai 2010). The issue of whether or not New Zealand should become a republic is the focus of constitutional change in New Zealand today, which would remove the Monarch from Head of State and make the role of Governor General redundant. However, the present disengagement of the monarchy from New Zealand politics would suggest that the connection to Britain is simply a formality and hardly relevant to questions of constitutional change.

New Zealand currently does not have a single written constitution. Rather, its constitution is acknowledged to exist in a collection of documents and conventions, including the Treaty of Waitangi, various statutes, and the decisions of the courts. Mulholland and Tawhai (2010) are interested in the notion of a constitution based upon principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, which is generally recognised as being the most important founding document of New Zealand. The treaty partners are Māori and the New Zealand Government, which, as we have seen, had been delegated the authority of rule over New Zealand by the Monarchy and British Government. This suggests that whether New Zealand becomes a republic or not, the role of the

⁷ The Governor's residence had been in Colonel Wakefield's (of the New Zealand Company) house (from 1865-1871), then in a new building on the same site (from 1871-1910) Hodgson, T. E. R. (1990). *Colonial capital :Wellington, 1865-1910*. Auckland, N.Z., Random Century.

Governor General needs to be re-thought, and the way its physical representation (Government House, and by extension, the other colonial icons of the War Memorial and the Basin Reserve) exists within the city may need to change.

2.6. Conclusion

Capitals express the political balance of power. These are the spaces through which we express ideals like democracy, freedom, and identity, and as designers, we need to be aware of this. Designers are (often unwitting) agents of political agendas, and within the literature there was a recurring suggestion that ‘designers and architects tend to see design as being separate from social and political factors’ (Vale 2008, p. VIII), when, in reality, projects will always be subject to political forces, and their values will be encoded in the resultant designs.

Meaning can be a useful starting point for a designer, who may use the meaning they wish to express to generate form and space. However, the success of a space is twofold:

- There is its academic value for the discipline, which will be interested in finding out the designer’s meaning and method of expressing it, and in adding that to the body of work on meaning in architecture.
- There is the value for the user of the space. While the designer can’t control the way an individual user may understand a space, the space can still be interesting and useful in unpredictable ways.

The meaning of a space will change over time as its uses evolve, and as cultural contexts change around it. A space thus becomes layered with a myriad of different meanings given to it by the range of individuals and groups who use it.

The meaning frequently ascribed to capital cities is to do with the idea of ‘national identity’. However, expressions of this idea suffer from the same problems inherent in attempts to communicate meaning to an audience. Architectural statements in capital cities often come from the opinions of individuals or small groups, and, since capital cities are political spaces, there is a high risk that architecture will be used to further the agendas of particular powerful figures. Also, such statements often represent a particular point in time, and if they aren’t allowed to evolve alongside the more flexible aspects of the city, they may become nothing more than historic monuments to a past era. Use of landscape as a design driver seems to give a site less bias and more longevity. The implication is that landscape as an expression of identity is more universal and less susceptible to human fallacies.

If we try to read the current meaning of the Adelaide Road site – using, say Goodman’s (1988) ‘chain of reasoning’ – the relationships of Government House, the War Memorial and the Basin Reserve to the urban landscape could be seen as a suggestion that we are uncomfortable with the emblems of our colonial connections, and prefer to just ignore them rather than address

them. Such a reading is consistent with the capital's understated design language; there have been few grand statements of patriotism and identity in Wellington's history. This comparative freedom creates an opening to try designing these nationally significant spaces in such a way that a more bottom-up process of describing identity can occur.

To make nationally significant spaces relevant to a nation's citizens, and to draw attention to their role in the construction of collective identity, they need to be used. This means that these nationally significant spaces need to become locally significant as well, by being designed as part of the changing, flexible urban landscape that surrounds them. Spaces must be designed for the people who are able to view them as significant, rather than imposing messages about their significance upon people.

Chapter Three looks at how places have acquired significance throughout New Zealand's twin cultural histories, and how particular culturally ingrained attitudes towards the natural landscape can influence design moves to do with nationally significant spaces in the urban landscape.

Landscape and identity: the stuff of Kiwi mythology

3.1. Introduction

Chapter One found a number of problems with the expression of meaning and national identity through architectural form. The examples discussed in the chapter demonstrate that attempts at designing spaces loaded with meaning are frequently either too blunt, and consequently one-dimensional, or too subtle and complex for communication to successfully occur.

To solve the particular problems of the site, I suggest that the communication of meaning might not need to be the ultimate goal of the designer. Instead, design strategies for places of national significance should be focused on the way those places are used and experienced, and how they relate to the everyday, lived landscapes around them. To begin to develop an approach (or set of values) to do this with, I investigated the relationship New Zealanders have with the landscape. In New Zealand, the relationship between landscape and identity has become ‘the stuff of Kiwi mythology’ (Bell 1996, back cover blurb), which makes it a good starting point for understanding the national character; in addition, if the design is to harmonise with the existing ideals and realities of the New Zealand relationship to the landscape, its role in that relationship needs to be fully understood.

This chapter aims to investigate New Zealand cultural attitudes towards the natural and urban landscape, and to understand their historical (colonial/contemporary) and cultural (Māori/Pākehā) context. I begin with a survey of the ways in which a sense of belonging has been developed from within the two dominant cultural traditions in Aotearoa-New Zealand, Māori and European. Rather than present the two approaches as opposing each other, this overview seeks out their similarities and overlaps, using literature from the field of New Zealand cultural histories. For both cultures, this sense of belonging is the foundation of their relationship with the land.

I then examine the role of landscape in New Zealand identity today. The aim of this section is to identify the way public perception of landscape has changed since the colonial era, as well as the culturally embedded landscape

traditions that have remained, such as the depiction of our natural landscape as being empty, sublime and picturesque. This theory demonstrates how the developing role and meaning of landscape has kept pace with shifting cultural ideals – it is not a concrete concept. The fluidity of the meaning of landscape frames the argument that nationally significant urban landscapes can be equally useful to ideas of meaning and national identity.

The chapter finishes with a history of the early colonial occupation of Wellington, starting from the time when the design of the city was laid out. This period in Wellington's history provides an example of how colonial settlers created new places from a combination of post-enlightenment European values and an unfamiliar, already-occupied landscape. The historical information explains further the layers of meaning that exist in relation to significant colonial spaces and the urban landscape around them.

3.2. Belonging in the New Zealand landscape

In the areas of New Zealand identity studies, New Zealand cultural histories, Maori studies and even architecture, there is a preoccupation with explaining the different, sometimes conflicting, methods used by Māori and settlers to develop a sense of ‘belonging’ in the landscape.

3.2.1. Place-Identity

Identity, whether at the scale of the nation or the individual, is about having a sense of belonging. This idea comes from place-identity theory, a topic which is often addressed by cultural geographers, and which has had a significant influence on the landscape architecture profession. We have an emotional response to places when we occupy them that relates to our personal circumstances, the activity we are performing there, and the emotive and physical qualities of the space itself (Berleant 2003; Menin 2003).

Berleant defines place as ‘ultimately an experiential event’ (Berleant 2003, p. 49), and fundamental to this experience of place is memory. Memory can be present in a location in many different forms: from the personal memory of an individual that makes an otherwise undistinguished place special to them; to the collective memory of a large group of people who have knowledge of an event that affected them all; to the abstract, removed memory communicated through written histories (Berleant 2003).

Collective memory is an important factor in cultural meaning, and there is a strong correlation between cultural meaning and physical place: events, whether in the past or the present, happen at specific places, and the places thereby become vehicles for collective memory and associated meaning (Bell and Lyall 2001). This section explores how a connection of place is formed, in the hope of increasing such opportunities for connection in the design.

3.2.2. Naming: landscape as text to be read

The idea that landscape is a text that can be read is pervasive in landscape literature, and the names given to places within the landscape are the most explicit types of landscape text. Names are an example of what Goodman¹ calls ‘denotative meaning’, as they can provide information about a landscape and people’s relationship to it (Goodman 1988).

In New Zealand cultural history, Māori and colonial naming of the landscape are frequently placed in opposition to each other, although both cultures name places for similar reasons. For Māori, names are used to identify

¹ See section 1.1, and the elaboration of Goodman’s 4 categories in footnote # 2, section 1.1.

the landscape (O'Reagan 1988), In Māori culture a name is a description of the geology and biology of the place; or an association with an event that occurred there; or an acknowledgement of a particular ancestor who had a connection to the place. The relationship between whakapapa (genealogy) and landscape is discussed later in this section.

Naming was also integral to the colonisation process (Mullholland and Tawhai 2010). Colonial surveyors used names to identify the landscape, overlaying it with a new set of names that were familiar to settlers, with connotations of European places and important people (Byrnes 2001). Tyler states:

It is now recognized that the renaming of landscape [...] comes from the powerful and enduring need that people have to be able to relate to the land on which they live.

(Tyler 2010, p. 129)

Throughout New Zealand, colonisation heralded 'the erasure of Māori names for features as European settlement advanced' (Tyler 2010, p. 128). Imposition of new place names on the landscape went hand-in-hand with the 'stories of creation' and 'conceptions of space and place' that colonists brought with them from Europe (Ruru 2010). By applying European names to parts of New Zealand, settlers affirmed a connection to a past they still identified with, similar to the way Māori brought ancestral place names from islands in the Pacific (Clark 2004; Mullholland and Tawhai 2010). However, the consequence of settler re-naming of the landscape was the catastrophic loss of many histories of important Maori sites. Some histories, such as that of Pikirakatahi (Mount Earnslaw), have been lost altogether, as no-one alive remembers the meaning of the maunga's Māori name (Ruru 2010). An example of this near the Adelaide Road site is the renaming of the ridge Māori called Whataitai to Mt Victoria and Mt Albert. This replaced a Māori myth, about the formation of Wellington Harbour by two taniwha, with the colonial narrative of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Important figures of power in Māori identity were replaced with similar important, powerful figures of colonial identity.

Names are an essential way to reconnect people with the history of a place, and landscape architects frequently use historical knowledge to generate design ideas. The name of Waitangi Park, in Wellington, comes from a pre-colonial name for a stream that once flowed through the site, and is an example of how knowledge of a place's history through knowledge of its name can help people to connect and engage with it in new ways. In this case, knowledge embedded in the place name led to the design of a new waterway that references the historic stream.

Waitangi Park's reference to site history is an example a design strategy Mark Treib (2005) would describe as 'genius of the place':² it shows the landscape architect attempting to communicate meaning by referring to something in the site's history. However the application of this principle on site comes closer to Treib's description of the 'didactic' approach: a designed, abstracted expression of a natural process—in this case, a wetland system joining land and sea. The naming of Waitangi Park, with its reference to Waitangi Stream, provides a potential communication link between the designer's concept and the visitor's perception of that concept. In Waitangi Park's strategy we can see a landscape-driven solution to the problems discussed in Chapter One. The form of the design itself doesn't try to communicate meaning – design focus was on usability of the spaces within the park. However, the references the park makes to place and history play on people's existing relationships with the landscape of Wellington. Planting palettes are drawn from plants endemic to Wellington's beaches, and the arrangement of spaces affords powerful views of the harbour and hills. In small and subtle ways, the park triggers the emotional connections people already have with the landscape, thus enhancing the connections people form with it, and facilitating the development of meaning over time.

Fig. 3-1. Waitangi Park's graving dock and wetland system

author's own image

Waitangi Park from Mt Victoria

Fig. 3-2. Waitangi Park space blocking and active edges

author's own image

3.2.3. Creating the idealised image

The pastoral and picturesque aesthetic traditions were a formative influence on colonial artistic portrayals of the landscape, and the traces of those traditions can be seen in the way we view the landscape today. These traditions presented the New Zealand landscape as empty, full of potential, and ripe for conquest.

² Treib has based this phrase on the Latin term 'genius loci', which describes the spirit or essence of place. Following this strategy, a landscape architect tries to refer to a place's essential nature through their design.

European classical painting traditions, particularly the landscape painting genre, led New Zealand settlers to understand landscape as being like a picture or scene (Tyler 2010). This artistic style, so popular in European culture at the time, extended its influence to the new territory, 'aestheticizing the processes of colonialism' (Tyler 2010, p. 124). The settlers viewed the landscape through cultural notions of 'picturesque, sublime, and beautiful' (Pound 2009; Tyler 2010). A similar process occurred in other settler nations. The landscape was first seen as the 'other': separate from humans, of divine design. However, it had the potential to be conquered, which led to a revised version of the landscape paradigm, which showed a pastoral, beautifully cultivated natural environment. This interpretation succeeded in creating a new 'place' for the settlers to belong to that was a hybrid of the endemic landscape and the settlers' ideal visions of what the landscape could become (Bell and Lyall 2001).

Early landscape images used to promote and describe New Zealand were often dramatically empty, supporting Bell and Lyall's description of nature interpreted as 'other'. However, the emptiness of these images had an underlying political function. They reduced the problem of the appropriation of land from Māori, suggested that the landscape was merely awaiting occupation, and disregarded the hundreds of years of occupied history that the land had already had (Ruru 2010; Tyler 2010). Visible signs of Māori occupation, such as pā, kainga and cultivations, (as opposed to more intangible names and histories) inspired respect among Pākehā settlers (Waitangi Tribunal 2003), and needed to be removed from depictions of the landscape if settlers were to imagine themselves inhabiting it.

Empty images also helped the settlers to invest in the concept of the landscape as virgin territory perfectly adaptable to the needs of the new arrivals, which was integral to the Utopian idea being touted by the New Zealand Company (Lamb 1999). The systematic application of this concept to the actual landscape cemented it as the European culture's picture of the land, and led to the successful 'conquering' and reconstruction of the landscape.

Despite their influence on the destructive process of colonisation, the pastoral and the picturesque traditions have become embedded in New Zealand's culture. They significantly affected the types of spaces that were made and valued, and are part of our cultural history. Tyler is right in suggesting that 'the pastoral landscape has been an agent in the construction of New Zealand's national identity' (Tyler 2010, p. 122).

She then raises a question that strongly influenced the development of this thesis: what role can the urban landscape play in constructing our identity? Tyler's essay focuses on Auckland's urban landscape, but it provides some insights to New Zealand's national cultural landscape. Within the art world,

she notes a shift from paintings that were about the physical aspects of the city in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to contemporary works that are more about the lived experience of the place.

By choosing to work within an urban landscape, and in particular focusing on the use of that landscape, the landscape concept my thesis constructs is counter to the empty, sublime landscapes discussed above. Instead, it concerns itself with a landscape that is busy, permanently occupied, noisy, and lived, one in which meaning comes more from its use and function than its aesthetic value. The potential the urban landscape has to offer is developed further below in Section II.

3.2.4. Kaitiakitanga – landscape resource use

Responsibility to the land is a formalisation of Māori connection to the landscape, and begins to codify the way in which that relationship is used. The systems that have developed to manage the use of land resources and people's rights over them are strikingly different to colonial practices. Maori land-management systems have only recently begun to influence land management systems used in New Zealand today, and it is becoming clear that they have a lot to offer the way we treat our resources.

The systems in place to manage landscape developed, over centuries of landscape occupation, into customs that required people to prove their connection to a place in order to claim rights to it. The use of land resources could be communicated through physical signs of occupation,³ and were one layer of rights that a tribe would maintain over a place (Waitangi Tribunal 2003).

A strong tradition of resource management techniques came out of these systems. It was based on 'the principle that cultures depend on living natural resources' (Park 2006, p. 241). Māori resource management techniques involved conservation strategies designed to protect and distribute resources, and this way of looking at the landscape and environment remains an integral part of the Māori worldview today (Addis 1988).

The difference in land management practices and ownership concepts between Pākehā and Māori continues to be problematic (Hemingsen 2004), although some see a thought evolution occurring as a result of both globalization and the increasing involvement of Māori in land management (Morad and Jay 2003). This convergence has mainly helped bring about a redefinition of the language of conservation, with Māori meaning and concepts guiding the management of our national parks – our significant natural landscapes.

Given that an important aspect of landscape architecture practice is the

3 Such as pā (fortifications), kainga (villages), urupā (cemeteries), and cultivations.

sustainable management of natural resources, the fundamental traditions of Māori resource management can help to inform the values on which New Zealand landscape architects base their practice. Landscape architecture, with its roots in both aesthetic traditions and environmentalism, is able to bridge Māori and Pākehā conceptualisations of landscape. Landscape architecture can also help apply Māori concepts of place-management in the urban landscape, a context typically seen as being alien from Māori tradition.

3.2.5. Cultural-spiritual systems

Māori cultural-spiritual systems are based upon an understanding that people and place are deeply interconnected. The landscape is personified by gods, to whom prominent ancestors can be genealogically linked – in this way ‘the landscape becomes part of the family and is looked after as such’ (Addis 1988, p. 2). The concept of whakapapa (genealogy) connects people not only with their ancestors, but also with the land they live on. In the Māori oral tradition, history is recounted in terms of people and places. Stories of ancestors are told with reference to the places in which they occurred, and places are described with reference to events that happened there.

Whakapapa is connected to the concept of ahi-kā, which refers to a tribe’s occupation of a place over time. ahi-kā helps to reinforce a group’s right to occupy particular land, and whakapapa is used by a group to prove they have ahi-kā. These concepts are still used today by iwi and hapū groups in Waitangi Tribunal hearings to prove their rights to land.

The concepts of whakapapa and ahi-kā recur at all scales of traditional Māori interaction. They can be found in the structure of a typical mihi (formal introduction and greeting), which begins by naming important physical elements of the place one comes from, moves through a family tree, and ends in one’s own name.⁴ Similarly, Linzey (1989) observes that when speaking

⁴ A mihi is typically delivered in two parts. Part one, the pepeha, describes the place and group of people the speaker belongs to. The order in which elements are introduced reflects their scale and importance relative to one another. The speaker’s name comes last, and thus they are framed by a wider system of people, past and place. The structure of a mihi is as follows:

Ko ____ te maunga (____ is my mountain)

Ko ____ te awa (____ is my river)

Ko ____ te waka (____ is my ship – this references the seven waka that travelled to the islands of New Zealand around 1200 AD. Most Maori groups can trace their ancestry to a group that came on one of these waka)

Ko ____ te iwi (____ is my tribe)

Ko ____ te hapū (____ is my family group)

Ko ____ te moana (____ is my sea)

formally in a marae, the speaker typically greets the land, the house and the ancestors before greeting the listeners present. These customs implicitly give both the speaker and his or her audience a sense of being a small part of a much greater system of intertwined people and landscapes.

In contrast, the Christian cultural-spiritual system shaped Pākehā attitudes to the landscape to allow the separation of culture from nature. Challenger (1988) suggests that there is a link between the differences in Māori and Pākehā attitudes to landscape and the fact that for Māori the afterlife is in the earth, while for Pākehā, heaven has traditionally been skyward. Christianity is frequently blamed for European colonization and globalisation-led separation of cultures from the natural order (Challenger 1988; Park 2006). Challenger also states that this cultural-spiritual system allowed ideas about landscape as a picturesque scene to take precedence over knowledge of the landscape as living systems that people rely on.

The incompatibility between the two systems led to disastrous mistranslations of complex Māori concepts, for example, the translation of 'whenua' into simpler, less nuanced terms like 'land'. Land does not fully express the principles of connection between person and land that whenua refers to, and such translations caused many problems during the colonisation period that are only now being resolved through the Waitangi Tribunal process.

Māori and Pākehā culture both developed strong traditions to deepen their connection to the New Zealand landscape. These have become culturally embedded attitudes and concepts within both cultures, and there are still some striking contrasts today. However, values that have correlations to the values of landscape architecture can be found within each cultural system. These links suggest that a landscape architect can facilitate the creation of meaning by grounding their work in the traditions and strategies of belonging to place that are already embedded in New Zealand culture. A design then has the potential to deepen these connections and make more explicit the differences and similarities in the Māori and Pākehā systems.

Ko ____ te roto (____ is my lake)

Ko ____ te motu (____ is my island)

No ____ ahau (I am from ____)

Part two: whakakapa

(a whakapapa recounts various ancestors and relatives, and is often highly personal as regards the individuals whom the speaker chooses to mention)

Ko ____ tōku ingoa. (My name is ____)

3.3. Landscape and identity in contemporary Aotearoa-New Zealand

The landscape systems of Māori and settler colonial culture are important to understand because they have shaped the values and attitudes we have towards the landscape today, and they are the ideas we react against when we want to progress and change. As with most settler nations, the natural landscape became a fertile source of belonging and identity, and much cultural study has been directed towards uncovering the nature of its role in the construction of our identity. During the 19th century, this role was largely Eurocentric, but cultural shifts in the last few decades have begun to include Māori values in the accepted understanding of landscape.

3.3.1. National identity and the natural/urban landscape problem

This section discusses the continuing role the landscape plays in New Zealand national identity, with the intention of leading towards a critique of ideas of ‘natural’, ‘beautiful’ and ‘sublime’ landscapes within constructions of who we are. It suggests that urban landscapes can be just as productive and powerful as natural landscapes for this purpose.

The British Empire’s intention for its colonies was to move them towards nationhood, but each settler society encountered the same problem in the process of doing this: nationhood was based upon deep-rooted and timeless connections to the land, but the settlers were, themselves, newcomers (Clark 2004).

The perception of landscape as ‘beautiful’ or ‘sublime’ then became an essential part of the new conceptual frame work of ‘romantic nationalism’, and appreciation for the landscape became a tool for naturalising the new nation-state (Bell and Lyall 2001). Because they lacked a cultural history, settlers developed attachments to landscape instead. The result is that the landscape became mythologised in various ways. The conservation of beautiful and sublime landscapes facilitated the creation of landscape as a myth. Conservation was an egalitarian trend that was echoed in other settler nations across the world, and was an essential part of the development of a sense of national superiority and identity for the citizens of settler nations (Morton and Smith 1999; Park 1999; Bell and Lyall 2001). The same egalitarian trend shaped the design of Wellington, in particular features like the town belt in which Government House sits.

Nevertheless, the kind of conservation that arose from settlers’ attempts to attach their new, unique identity to the new, unique landscapes they had settled in was a movement inspired in colonialist notions of universalism. This

universalist conservation was anything but multicultural, and throughout the world it failed to accommodate the interests of indigenous people (Park 2006). Ruru (2010) believes that national parks – our pristine, protected landscapes – can be valid symbols of national identity as long as the legislation involved in managing them takes into account the cultural layering in their history. This view can be translated into an approach to nationally significant spaces in the urban landscape as well. If such spaces are to become active parts of an interconnected system of people and land, designers need to acknowledge their multiple historic layers.

However, the traditions of a beautiful, sublime landscape remain. For example, the 100% Pure NZ tourism campaign continues to depict areas of sublime scenery reminiscent of the early colonial depictions of New Zealand. The campaign is selling an idea of New Zealand not just to tourists, but also to New Zealanders (Clark 2004). In this process, landscape is abstracted to the point that it becomes extraordinary (albeit one-dimensional), and becomes, like architecture in capital cities, an emblem of the nation (Morton and Smith 1999; Bell and Lyall 2001).

National identity has become a worldwide preoccupation today, in reaction to the cultural hegemony of globalisation, and design is often seen as a way to facilitate a clear sense of identity and uniqueness (Egoz 2007). (The premise is that if designers can literally construct a unique identity, it will be clear to the citizens of a nation who they are and how they are different from others.) Anxiety about identity is particularly strong in former British colonies, where it has been invoked regularly since the earliest colonial nationalist movements in 1890s. As has been demonstrated above, it was important to colonists to be able to escape from the homogenising British empire culture (Neumann, Thomas et al. 1999). Neumann, Thomas and Erickson found that anxiety about national identity has become more intense in Australia and New Zealand recently, which may be due to the added pressure of resisting homogenisation due to globalisation as well as the colonial influence (Bell and Lyall 2001).

A nation is something perceived by its occupants, or, in Benedict Anderson's (2006) words, an 'imagined community'. Crucial to the strength of this imagined community is a sense of common, or shared, cultural elements such as language; social, cultural and economic traditions and institutions; artefacts; rituals; emblems; symbols; myths of origin; common sense of history; an imagined idea of community with fellow nationals; sense of distinction from other groups; pride and sorrow about past events; shared hopes for a shared future (Bell and Lyall 2001). The idea of shared concepts is the essential fact of a nation, which is why landscape, especially as enshrined in national parks, is so potent: it represents something that the nation can feel shared ownership of, something which the rest of the world has confirmed its appreciation of.

However, it is important to remember that nature and landscape are both nothing more than cultural constructions. As an example of their subjectivity, we need look no further than the different constructions of the environment offered by Maori and European culture: as ‘resource’ or as ‘landscape’ – two entirely different philosophies that lead to contrasting actions towards the environment. Another example would be the way New Zealand artists and writers have spent decades in pursuit of expression of the ‘true New Zealand landscape’ – when in actuality they are just participating in widespread cultural shifts (Pound 2009). Clark (2004) tells us that the problem with identifying nationhood with nature is that it is based on an understanding of nature as being somehow timeless, or bigger than we are. It denies the shifting, flowing nature of culture and our identities, and furthermore, of our understanding of nature and landscape itself. He states that:

Whenever a claim is made by a particular group of people to speak for nature and in speaking for nature to speak for a whole nation, our suspicions should be raised.

(Clark 2004, p. 3)

We cannot deny the vital role the natural environment, or the ‘landscape’, has played in the construction of New Zealand identity. But today, most New Zealanders live in urban landscapes, and we need to consider the role urban spaces of national significance play, as they have more to do with our collective identity than we give them credit for. To continually turn to myths and clichés of a pristine, sublime, 100% Pure environment is to deny the realities of New Zealand’s complex, shifting, postcolonial identity.

The built environment is both an expression and construction of national identity (Egoz 2007). New Zealand cities don’t seem to be an obvious influence on our identity, given that they have obvious links to globalisation, and are made up of utilitarian, everyday spaces. They aren’t able to draw the immediate emotional response a landscape can, and they lack the timelessness that colonial settlers were able to hitch their brand new identity to. However, the shifting nature of urban landscapes reflects the way our cultural values and meanings are constantly changing. The spaces of a city are constantly being imprinted with meaning by the people that use them everyday. This is a very different type of meaning to that which we apply to our precious natural landscapes. As we have seen in Chapter One, attempts to directly express meaning and national identity in significant urban spaces tend to fail. The much-referenced power of a natural landscape becomes overbearing and domineering when recreated in a building or urban space. Urban spaces require a more subtle and site-sensitive touch.

Cities also contain records of the colonial identity of our past (such as the Basin Reserve, Government House and the National War Memorial), and

records of subsequent shifts in identity in postcolonial times, which have often covered over traces of older, Māori identity that once existed within the same site. Few urban spaces in New Zealand have been mythologised to the extent that the natural landscape has. The natural, constant fluidity of cities does not lend itself to the creation of significant national identity myths. However, if meaning is fluid and subjective, as are the concepts of ‘identity’ and ‘landscape’, then cities would seem to be ideal venues for testing a type of collective, shared space that facilitates the bottom-up, flexible construction of identity.

Fig. 3-3. 100% Pure New Zealand
Source: www.newzealand.com

Fig. 3-4. 100% Pure New Zealand
advertising in New York
Source: www.newzealand.com

3.4. Landscape and identity in Wellington

The moving spirit of English colonization is that of absolute individuality. It is unwilling in its contact with foreign nations to acknowledge any other system but its own, and labours to enforce on all who are under its control its own peculiar principles.

(Ernst Dieffenbach, New Zealand Company naturalist, as cited in Waitangi Tribunal 2003).

The New Zealand Company settled Wellington according to a rigid set of principles and planning strategies decided on in drawing rooms in London. They applied their theory of colonisation with minimal regard to the rich history of Māori occupation that already existed within the site, and laid out an urban grid that almost completely ignored the landscape's topography and ecology.

The form of Wellington has been largely shaped by the actions of the New Zealand Company and the economic ideology behind their theory of colonisation. In building the city, the Company managed to obscure centuries of Māori occupation. Upon arrival in 1840, the New Zealand Company disrupted the process of shifting rights that was underway in the area, and as a result the issue of who has rights to the landscape is still in contention today.

Thus the cultural legacies explained above in this chapter are specifically present in Wellington, all played out within the ever-present landscape of the city. The hills and the New Zealand Company grid are some of the city's most defining features today, and there continues to be an uneasy relationship between these two infrastructure and landscape systems.

3.4.1. Iwi occupation

The area surrounding Te Whanganui-ā-Tara (The Māori name for Wellington Harbour) was changing hands when Colonel Wakefield of the New Zealand Company arrived. This shift in ownership has made the Waitangi claims process for Wellington unique and difficult, as the various iwi who could claim ahi-kā⁵ rights were no longer in occupation when the New Zealand Company arrived, having been driven out in the early 1820s by an iwi group that travelled south from Taranaki. By 1839 these iwi had not had enough time to establish ahi-kā rights in the landscape. Their claims to the area were still based in take rautapu⁶ rights. The company dealt only with members of the Taranaki iwi groups in their 1839 deed of purchase (Waitangi Tribunal 2003).

⁵ Rights to land due to long-term historical occupation

⁶ Rights to land due to conquest over another iwi group. These were short-term, and the conquering group needed to establish ahi-kā if they wanted to maintain rights over the land.

This history is valuable for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates the problems that occurred in European-Māori land sales. The settlers had no understanding of the complicated process of shifting rights that was underway at the time, and consequently dealt only with those iwi who seemed to have the most dominant presence. Secondly, it suggests that the Wellington landscape was just as sought-after by Māori as by Europeans. Pā, substantial kainga (villages), cultivation grounds, fishing areas and canoe landing areas were numerous throughout the area that Wellington City covers today. At the current site of Government House, there was a site called Kaipapa, where cultivations and conflicts occurred (Beaumont 2009), and the swampy, low-lying site of the Basin Reserve was once home to the Hauwai cultivation ground. Wellington had a rich history of occupation and land-resource use before the settlers, but the Wellington Town Plan erased all traces of it.

3.4.2. New Zealand Company settlement scheme and the-ory of colonisation

The New Zealand Company's settlement scheme was based in post-enlightenment ideals about economics and civilisation that have contributed to the ideals embedded in New Zealand culture. Wakefield's company spearheaded the settlements of Wellington, Nelson and New Plymouth, and the similarities of each city can be seen in their distinctively regular gridded plans. However, Wellington was the focus of the company, and the company and its settlers felt strongly that Wellington should become the capital of New Zealand due to its central location and good harbour (Petre 1842).

The theory of colonisation was an economic solution that aimed to create settlements that would pay for themselves and create profit for investors, while also being, as Erik Olssen (1997) argues, a post-enlightenment experiment aimed at creating an ideal civilisation. The defining spatial characteristic of the scheme as put into practice in Wellington was the systematic division of the landscape into allotments: 990 lots, each consisting of 1 urban acre and 100 rural acres, sold by lottery at £1 each. A tenth of these lots, scattered at random throughout the settlement due to the lottery process, were to be reserved for Māori. These lots became the famous 'Wellington Tenth's', a major component of Wellington claims in the Waitangi Tribunal.⁷ This allotment system did not engender itself to imaginative or site-responsive townscapes (Waitangi Tribunal 2003).

⁷ Wakefield's 'tenth's reserves' were a result of rising humanitarianism in Britain, which put pressure on the New Zealand Company to make sufficient provision for Maori. The company believed that it would only need to pay Maori a small sum from their land, as the tenth's land that they would retain would increase in value as the town emerged, and give Maori a significant stake in the developing township – not to mention the obvious benefit the company saw in the opportunity for Maori to become part of a new civilised society. The naivety in the scheme was in the assumption that Maori would happily move off their existing habitations and into the tenth's reserves.

Fig. 3-5. Sketch of the country districts in the vicinity of Port Nicholson, New Zealand

by R.H. Davies, 1843. Source:
Alexander Turnbull Library,
Timeframes: digitised Images

Olssen (1997) demonstrates that the economic and post-enlightenment experimental aspects of Wakefield's plan were inextricably linked. The New Zealand Company, while demonised in postcolonial histories of New Zealand (Olssen 1997), was operating at the forefront of modern sociological thinking of its time. Wakefield's aim with New Zealand was to 'ensure that the evils of English society would not be reproduced and to prevent the evils of frontier societies (such as the American West and Australia, which he studied) from taking root' (Olssen 1997, p. 198). The theme of creating civilisation anew appears to be a powerful one (Olssen 1997), and Wakefield's solution to do that was to sell land at a price that would ensure that only those who could afford it would become landowners (Waitangi Tribunal 2003). The focus was on creating wealth, which in turn would allow the citizens to pursue leisure and knowledge. Wakefield believed that these three elements—wealth, leisure and knowledge—led to civilisation.

Wakefield's scheme allowed the existing class structure of Britain to be replicated on New Zealand soil, while also allowing for a degree of upward mobility that was impossible in English society at the time. The plan offered stability of culture and governance to the new settlers (Waitangi Tribunal 2003). The society created by the New Zealand company was one entrenched in the values of the enlightenment: liberalism, rationalism, empiricism, and materialism. It used capitalism as the method with which to achieve those values (Olssen 1997). Olssen argues that ideas such as 'New Zealand as a sociological experiment', the 'most English of the colonies', and 'the anti-Australia', have persisted within New Zealand culture throughout our history. Those values are still part of New Zealand culture today, although they are now sifted together with other, newer values as well, and they have become ideas that are constantly in question. Because the site contains the colonial emblems of Government House, the National War Memorial, and the Basin Reserve, it also contains powerful references to these values that shaped Wellington and New Zealand's culture so strongly. Nevertheless, these colonial emblems are also uncomfortably set among the layers of new meaning and values that have developed in the city around them.

3.4.3. Initial settlement: surveying and planning the city of Wellington

The task of realising Wakefield's theory and system of land apportioning in Wellington fell largely to the company's surveyor, William Mein Smith. His plan of Wellington is one of the most visible lasting links to the original values of New Zealand's settlers, and one of the best arguments that the original context still persists in some way today. The plan is a collection of grids laid out at awkward angles on the flat land and hemmed in by the steep surrounding hillsides. The clumsiness of the grid may not be entirely Mein Smith's fault, as the surveying process was interrupted by a shift when the

Plan of the town of Wellington, Port Nicholson

Fig. 3-6. Plan of the town of Wellington, principal settlement of the New Zealand Company

by W.M. Smith, 1840. Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images

This first plan has few defining features. Those that stand out (and still exist in some form today) are the town belt and a bizarre inland harbour at the site of today’s Basin Reserve, accessed through a canal that would have run axially up the space between Kent and Cambridge Terraces. When the 1855 earthquake made this harbour impossible, the circular area of land was retained as a public recreation ground. A hierarchy of streets was planned, as was the Town Belt that separated the town acres from the rural acres, but none of the features within them were decided upon. The city was a gridded framework within which buildings would create a material history.

settlers moved from the original site at Pipitea to Pito-One, and then back again, making a hasty job necessary. He was also hindered by the rigidity of the New Zealand Company's systematic sale of one-acre lots, and the regular town grid this system required was, in turn, hindered by the hilly landscape. The government's surveyor-general, Felton Matthew, described Wellington in 1841 as 'a magnificent site completely destroyed . . . [by] the absurdity of laying out a plan on a sheet of paper, and restricting the size of the allotments to an acre' (Waitangi Tribunal 2003, p. 104). He considered the one-acre sections to be too large for their intended purpose, and that it would have been better to have had sections 'varying in extent from an eighth of an acre upwards' (Waitangi Tribunal 2003, p. 104). Matthew's report not only reiterates that the city's design was very clearly unsympathetic to its site, but also that it was making its mark on the landscape as early as 1841. The landscape that would become Wellington changed dramatically, and rapidly.

3.4.4. Shifting the centre of government to Wellington

When the settling of New Zealand began, the Bay of Islands had become the capital and centre of trade by default, mainly because of the missionary stations already established there. The capital was then shifted to Auckland in 1841. It was not until 1865 that Wellington became the capital⁸, as a result of its geographic centrality (Hodgson 1990), and it was after this significant change that Wellington began to grow. The people and infrastructure associated with bureaucracy had to be accommodated, and businesses began establishing head offices there (Hodgson 1990).

Because Wellington has been the Capital since 1865, both the presence and the effect of this sometimes august assembly of elected persons has had its effect upon the city. Indeed the Government has become not only the largest single employer in the city, but also caused its built form to change more dramatically than any other single factor.

(Fowler 1981, p. 47)

The shift of capital functions to Wellington brought the first major wave of change and development to the city. The installation of tramlines gradually connected Newtown to Te Aro via Adelaide Road, and by the 1880s Newtown was beginning to be well populated. Wellington had existed mostly on the flats of Te Aro, Pipitea and Thorndon until the late 19th century,

⁸ Even though the New Zealand Company settlers were frustrated at the Crown's reluctance to approve their settlement, such was their confidence in Port Nicholson becoming the capital that the company actually set aside a site to the north of Bowen Street to be 'government domain', where Colonel Wakefield built his house. This site was then used as the seat of provincial government until that concluded when central government took over in 1876.

Fig. 3-7. *Remaining features of the New Zealand Company plan for Wellington*

author's own image

Today, many of the original features of the New Zealand Company's plan remain: 'the generous town belt, major streets like Lambton Quay, the Terrace, Tinakori Road, Cuba Street, Oriental Parade, and 'the Adelaide Road' from Courtenay Place to Newtown [...] Indeed there is much in modern Wellington that has its roots in colonial times'. (Hodgson 1990, p. 49).

but rapidly became crowded. By the 1900s the city was densely populated, hemmed in by the Town Belt, and ready to outgrow the New Zealand Company's town grid. Electric tram connections to the outer suburbs in the 1920s would allow this to happen, and between 1900 and 1930 Wellington changed from 'a small city on coastal flats, reclamation and foothills to a spread-out metropolis reaching far into the surrounding steeplands, as well as out to the southern and eastern coastlines' (Humphris and Mew 2009, p. 12).

During this period the buildings that housed government functions were rebuilt and added onto several times (Kelly 1996). The house for the colony's governor was an important building within the parliamentary precinct, and was originally Colonel Wakefield's former house, which had been shipped to New Zealand in prefabricated sections. Hodgson (1990) implies that the public thought this was inadequate for the status of governor, and were often embarrassed by the low quality of additions to the government buildings. New sites were looked at for the governor's house in 1868, but in the end a new dwelling was built on the same site. This one was Italianate and served as Government House until 1910, when the new Government House in Newtown took over as official residence.

3.5. Conclusion

The cultural histories of New Zealand reveal layers of different methods of developing a sense of belonging to, and drawing identity from, the landscape. Māori tradition explicitly outlines and explains connections through various oral techniques, such as reciting histories, connections through people and ancestors, and storytelling. The occupation and use of the resources of land was what created and fed these connections. Pākehā cultural history is defined by the typical settler need to create a home in a new landscape. To do so, deep and powerful connections to landscape are developed. These were originally based in a tradition of viewing the landscape aesthetically and scenically, but as Ruru's dissection of conservation laws reveals, an alternative understanding of the landscape, one that has more to do with Māori values, is beginning to take root.

Even so, the mythological properties of our natural landscapes continue to be dominant in notions of our identity today. The tourism industry sells the idea of a beautiful, pristine landscape not just to international visitors, but to New Zealanders as well. The contribution of this landscape narrative to our national identity should be reduced, as it embodies all the hypocrisies of colonialist manufactured reality, and if it is maintained it will become a concept impossible for designers – and landscape architects in particular – to escape from.

The key problem with our reliance on pristine natural landscapes is that it

suggests that the landscape itself is something solid, something bigger than us that we can ground ideas of ourselves in. The meaning of landscape and nature is, in fact, culturally prescribed and is as fluid and changeable as our individual and collective identities, and as subjective as ‘meaning’ itself.

Our urban spaces do not provide us with the same sense of stability and timelessness as the culturally constructed natural landscape does. But, while the beautiful, pristine landscape of the tourism industry draws a veil of deceit over a history of ecological and cultural destruction, urban spaces much more openly represent the dramatically fast rapid change wrought on Aotearoa-New Zealand in the last 150 years, and continue to change visibly every day. I suggest that these urban landscapes, the spaces within which over 80% of the population lives, have more potential to contribute to the construction of our identity.

To deal with the flexible, changeable nature of the site, the thesis applies the principles of place identity as practised by both Māori and European settlers. What is evident in both is that time spent in a place develops people’s connection to that place. Māori land-management techniques in particular utilise the idea of understanding how systems interact over time.

These systems will be the subject of the next chapter, which develops a design methodology that responds to the criticisms in Chapter One and applies the values in Chapter Two. The design methodology provides a way to design the urban landscapes around nationally significant spaces that does not explicitly state meaning, but uses the inherent flexibility of the urban environment to create spaces that allow meaning and identity to be layered up within the site.

Fig. 3-8. Overlooking Wellington city, particularly the suburb of Mount Cook

[photographer unknown] 1930..
Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images

Fig. 3-9. Aerial view of Wellington by Whites Aviation, 1958.. Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images

Fig. 3-10. *Plan of the town and settlement of New Plymouth*

by F.A. Carrington, 1843. Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images

Fig. 3-11. *Plan of the town of Nelson*

by F.Tuckett & B.R.Davies 1842
Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images

4.1. Introduction

‘Meaning’ and ‘national identity’ are subjective concepts, constantly being re-invented through the process of cultural change. The design methodology is based upon the premise that nationally significant places should therefore be designed with regard to flexibility, change and longevity, and with due recognition of the array of actors upon the sites. This chapter demonstrates that an approach which uses the landscape architectural principles of site as system, interconnected scale and landscape as expression of place is the best way to respond to the demands of the site. The principles can be summed up in the following way:

- *site as system* – understanding a site as being made up of a range of interconnected natural and manmade systems. This is drawn from both landscape architecture theory and the ideas discussed in Chapter Two about Māori traditions which describe an interconnected system of people and places. This is a crucial influence on the thesis, as it suggests a link between the principles of contemporary landscape architecture and the deep embedded values implicit in the Aotearoa-New Zealand landscape.
- *interconnected scales* – recognising that these systems operate from the macro to the micro scale, which means changes at one scale can have a significant effect on the spaces and systems of another scale. A monumental scale is a common feature of spaces of national significance, and the scale of the infrastructure issues of the site itself seemed monumental at first. A strategy to deal with these scales without losing site of the human-scale experience of the site was drawn from relevant precedents.
- *landscape as expression of place* – relates to the way in which natural landscape, including topography and ecology, can be used by designers to emphasise a sense of local identity and belonging. This concept comes largely from the precedents of Ottawa and Canberra;

this chapter expands on those examples with New Zealand landscape architecture precedents. The principle of landscape as expression of place initially deals with the relationship of the natural landscape to New Zealand identity, but embedded within the other two principles in an urban site, it applies less to aesthetic landscape values and more to endemic ecological systems.

Selected precedents demonstrating how such techniques can be designed accompany each design methodology principle examined in this chapter. The precedents are used to interpret the theory itself, rather than being major influences on the final design, because ultimately the biggest influence on the design is the site itself.

The chapter then uses a series of mappings that identify patterns of interaction between the landscape of Wellington and various manmade and natural systems. These mappings describe the broad context of the site, and recognise that the area of Adelaide Road is more than the location of significant national places: it is also a place where people live, and have lived for centuries. It is part of the city-wide system of Wellington itself, and thus 'local identity' is as important as 'national identity'. The mappings lead towards a design solution, which is discussed in Chapter Four.

4.2. Three key principles

4.2.1. Site as system

Site as system draws on the use of ecological principles in urban space and the concept of ground as ‘field’, which treats urban space as fluid, interconnected, and boundary-less.

Understanding of ecology and natural processes can help designers to better understand the way cities and the infrastructure within them works (Mossop 2006, p. 170). With this understanding, designers are better able to make urban systems engage with both human and natural processes. Conceptualisation of urban systems in terms of ecological systems can be achieved by thinking of landscape as an infrastructure element that underlies urban systems, rather than equating it with nature or ecology (Mossop 2006).

The systems-based approach is characterised by an acceptance of disturbed and hybrid landscapes, such as spontaneous ecologies which emerge in an unused urban space. Rather than replicating pristine natural environments, this approach involves adapting those environments to a new context, ‘making functioning ecologically based systems that deal with human activity and natural processes in the urban environment’ (Mossop 2006, p. 170). Such projects will never be ‘complete’, but are instead designed to continually evolve and adapt over time, as would an ecological system.

In the context of this project, an evolving system is perfect. It has already been seen how meaning and identity change over time, and how the layering of history in the site builds up layers of meaning and identity, leaving traces of past shifts.

Ecological processes such as erosion, succession and water cycles are frequently used to create designed landscapes that are allowed to develop over time. Projects like Fresh Kills Park (Field operations, 2006, New York City) explore the relationship between natural processes and the city, and refer back to Frederick Law Olmstead’s Boston Emerald Necklace (1880s), an early example of this approach, Emerald Necklace intertwines transport infrastructure, flood and drainage engineering, scenic landscapes and urban planning, drawing on ideas from a diverse range of areas, including nature, infrastructure, health, recreation, and scenery (Mossop 2006).

Precedent: Brooklyn Bridge Park, MVVA.

Michael van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA) is a prominent New York landscape architecture firm that bases its designs in natural processes and ecological systems more than abstract patterns, shapes or forms (Berrizbeitia 2009; Goldberger 2009). The firm’s aim is to allow users of its parks to

Brooklyn Bridge Park plan

Fig. 4-1. Brooklyn Bridge Park plan

Source: Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy

Bridge between Squibb Park and Brooklyn Bridge Park

Fig. 4-2. Squibb Park Bridge - Brooklyn Bridge Park

Source: Urban by Design Online

Images of Brooklyn Bridge Park

Fig. 4-3. *Brooklyn Bridge Park*
Source: Urban by Design Online

Fig. 4-4. *Brooklyn Bridge Park*
by Elizabeth Felicella. Source: The New Yorker Online

Images of Brooklyn Bridge Park

Fig. 4-5. *a-b. Brooklyn Bridge Park in summer*

author's own images

Fig. 4-6. Design for the Souks of Beirut

Source: Allen, 1999.

feel the environment changing, and to sense the layers of time in a site (Goldberger 2009). MVVA treats natural history, built history, and the surrounding urban context as givens that its designers must always work with. The company's park designs pay a great deal of attention to the present and past forms of their sites. Materiality and detail are used to '...augment, sometimes even distort, those unique qualities of a site that lead to memorable experiences' (Berrizbeitia 2009).

Brooklyn Bridge Park is a waterfront park, and, like similar projects in New Zealand, seeks to heighten the connection between city and waterfront. Its distinct landscapes respond to existing urban conditions, and amenity clustered around edges and entranceways pulls people in. The park uses strategies similar to those found in Wellington's Waitangi Park.

The term 'field' is used to describe urban space as a surface on which multiple systems and programs occur. This view is quite different to the more traditional figure-ground drawings of urban space, which abstract the city down to buildings and open space. Rather, fields recognise the myriad of activity that flows across and through the topography, ecology, infrastructure and built form of any urban space. A field privileges this sense of flow and movement over the mere description of form. Lefebvre (1991) likens the city to 'a field in tension' which 'includes natural processes'. (p. 153). The terms 'ground' or 'surface' are often used alongside field, and they emphasise a depiction of landscape as a plane of sorts that can be shaped and rearranged to alter the flows of systems on top of it. Such terms allow landscape to be read as being without boundaries, non-hierarchical and involving interactions between many different forces and activities. The lack of hierarchy embedded in the field concept treats city, landscape and architecture equally.

One proponent of the field technique is Stan Allen, who describes a field condition as being:

[...] any formal or spatial matrix capable of unifying diverse elements while respecting the identity of each. Field configurations are loosely bound aggregates characterized by porosity and local interconnectivity. Overall shape and extent are highly fluid and less important than the internal relationship of parts, which determine the behaviour of the field.

(Allen 1999, p. 92)

Here, Allen is emphasising the unifying qualities of fields. Because a field does not have specific form, it allows the physical features within it to retain their own identity. The fluid, moving nature of a field allows features and spaces within it to undergo shifts in hierarchies and develop new relationships in response to the way people use them. A field condition is an urban

space that allows for change and does not prescribe particular types of uses.

A number of Allen's design projects illustrate the field approach, and he cites in particular the Souks of Beirut, the Barcelona Logistics Zone and an extension to the Museo del Prado. In each of these projects the aim was to retain the identity of architecture that existed on the site while creating explicit links between collections of diverse programs and enhancing the identity of public space in between the architecture.

The challenge of the Adelaide Road site, with its three architecturally significant icons surrounded by an incoherent urban context, is similar to the challenge Allen faced. His physical techniques for resolving the design challenge, however, only work at a small scale. For each of his projects a homogenous, flowing roof was applied to link the different buildings. The buildings in the Adelaide Road site are clearly too far apart for this approach to function; the desired integration affects so much area that a landscape response is needed.

Precedent: Esther Charlesworth's 'city as spine'

Esther Charlesworth proposed the 'city as spine' model for the reconstruction of war-torn Beirut. 'City as Spine' is a hypothetical project which was proposed as a response to the actual reconstruction development that has occurred in Beirut. Charlesworth is extremely critical of the development that has gone ahead. It is a 'city as heart' concept, which hinged on the assumption that development in a small pocket of Beirut would encourage development and growth beyond its boundaries. However, because little effort has been put into integrating this pocket with the rest of the city, the boundary of the 'city as heart' project has simply become a line of division between the wealthy and the rest of the population. (Charlesworth 2006).

Charlesworth's city as spine model, however, is markedly different. It has principles in common with the 'site as system' approach, as it recognises that small changes enacted at a wide scale throughout the city will have a gradual healing effect. It looks at the whole city holistically, from busy city centre, to small and quiet side-streets, to the outskirts and suburbs. The city as spine model:

[...] views the city as a dynamic and democratic entity. Reconstruction is therefore seen as a longer, sequential process based upon the gradual implementation of a number of small regeneration projects that, in time, repair and strengthen the social and physical backbone of both the city and its many communities.

(Charlesworth 2006, p. 54)

I was first drawn to the city-as-spine model because of the way it talks about

joining together torn urban fabric. The major traffic systems in Adelaide Road are barriers that need to be broken down; or, to use Charlesworth's terminology, the urban fabric on either side of the barriers needs to be stitched together. This model also aligns well with the site-as-system approach, as it involves design moves that happen throughout a large system that operate in small, subtle ways in specific sites. The interplay of scales at work in Charlesworth's concept is typical of systems-based designs.

4.2.2. Interlocking scales

The concept of interlocking scales is my major design driver. This principle is a direct consequence of the marriage of the site-as-system approach to the site itself. Once I identified that many of the site's problems came from systems that range far wider than the site itself, it became necessary to find ways for moves at different scales to work together. The theory behind this principle demonstrates that large moves can be integrated into a site if they are complemented by smaller, human-scale moves.

Lefebvre's (1991) diagram of nested scales demonstrates how systems and design moves can relate to one another across scales. It uses three scales, called transitional, private, and global, and rearranges them three times. In each rearrangement, a different scale is the dominant one in the system, and the others are nested within it. Lining up each arrangement next to the others suggests that different hierarchies will exist depending on the specific nature of the system described by the diagram. Therefore, while hierarchies exist, they are not fixed – there is room for a different hierarchy to emerge if circumstances change within a site. For the purposes of this thesis, this is a useful development of the non-hierarchical notion of the field condition, because there are inescapable hierarchies which exist in the site – even if they are currently confusing and difficult to read. Furthermore, different people using the site for different reason will read different hierarchies within it; this notion of viewing scales as nested within one another allows these different readings to happen.

Lefebvre's diagram of interlocking scales

Fig. 4-7. Lefebvre's diagram of interlocking scales

re-drawn from Pollak, 2006.

Pollak (2006) uses interlocking scales in her practice. She identifies three different types of scale, none of which is dominant over the others:

- *Architectural scales* traverse a field from the interior to the exterior of a building, from its smallest detail to its overall presence, rarely exceeding the distance from which a project is actually visible.
- *Urban scales* extend beyond what is visible from a particular site to scales at which planning has occurred that may have affected or produced that site.
- *Landscape scales* pertain to areas much larger than any specific site, encompassing multiple ecological systems. (Pollak 2006, p. 129)

The following two precedents demonstrate interlocking scales and display an intense, almost exaggerated overlapping of functions. They acknowledge the vastly different scales that exist on their sites and try to negotiate between them, rather than editing one or the other out. As a result, a number of different scales and systems are allowed to co-exist and establish mutually beneficial relationships. The contexts of these sites echo the range of different scales and functions that exist within the Adelaide Road area, and prove that it isn't necessary to eliminate some of those scales in order to achieve the design aim. In fact, negotiating across them will enhance the site's ability to evolve and adapt over time.

Precedent: OMA's Kunsthal in Rotterdam.

The Kunsthal is a museum that negotiates between an elevated freeway and a domain-like park that contains a collection of Rotterdam's most significant museums. It contains 'a simultaneity of scales' alongside shifts in identity. The main design feature is a ramp that runs from the park through the building and acts as a bridge to the freeway. The ramp's identity shifts 'to become architecture, city, and landscape' (Pollak 2006, p. 132) as it moves from the freeway and through different parts of the building.

At the architectural scale, the ramp is part of the museum's architecture, passing through a number of programmes and providing the organisational structure for the museum itself. At the urban scale, it functions as the main entry to the park from the city, and at the landscape scale it 'allows the building to respond three-dimensionally to the regional scale of the Dutch landscape, positioning the visitor to perceive the site's juxtaposition of busy motorway and green idyll' (Pollak 2006). It is effectively a built example of Lefebvre's diagram, with each scale nested within the others.

Precedent: Andreu Arriola's 'Place del Glories Catalanes'

The Place del Glories Catalanes is both a major interchange and a public landscape, including a parking structure and a playground. The project is an

Fig. 4-8. a-b. Interior views of the Kunsthal, Rotterdam

by Rory Hyde, 2003. Source: www.flickr.com/photos/roryrory/ photostream

Fig. 4-9. Place del Glories Catalanes public space

source: www.europaconcorsi.com

Kunsthal, by OMA

Fig. 4-10. a-b. Exterior views of the Kunsthal, Rotterdam

by Rory Hyde, 2003. Source: [www.flickr.com, roryrory's photostream](http://www.flickr.com/photos/roryrory/)

Place del Glories Catalanes, by Arriola & Fiol

Fig. 4-11. Place del Glories Catalanes wide view

source: www.europaconcorsi.com

Fig. 4-12. a-b. Place del Glories Catalanes sections

source: www.europaconcorsi.com

example of infrastructure being used as a generator of public space, which is characteristic of the principle of interlocking scales. The ‘inscription of vegetation and bodies onto this vehicular infrastructure re-appropriates it as everyday urban space at the scale of the neighbourhood’ (Pollak 2006, p. 133). The design celebrates the site’s spatial differences, instead of attempting to create something that is solely human-scale.

4.2.3. Landscape as expression of place

There is a connection between the notion that the natural landscape best expresses a ‘place’ and the suggestion above that the landscape itself be treated as the base layer of infrastructure. Evidence of this connection can be found in old and new projects, from Olmstead’s Boston Fens to Field Operation’s Fresh Kills Park, projects in which landscape is designed to work as a system and enhance the nature of the local place. The desire to tap into the nature of a ‘place’ is also a key preoccupation of New Zealand landscape architects practising today, albeit in a more aesthetic sense.

Precedents: recent New Zealand landscape architecture work

The following selection of recent New Zealand landscape architecture projects reinforces Di Menzies’ assertion that the natural landscape has had a strong influence on our landscape architecture, as well as our values and identity (Menzies 2002).

The designed intervention at Oriental Bay (Isthmus Group) responds to a brief that asked for a solution to the sand erosion occurring at the beach. Isthmus Group responded by proposing three small constructed groynes, rather than the single large one the original brief asked for. The design response creates opportunities for different programs, and engages with the dynamism of the natural environment. There is an element of minimalism to its manifestation on the site, adding amenity while reducing detail to the essentials (Haldane 2005).

The New Plymouth foreshore, also by Isthmus, was an early move towards the city’s long-term strategy to reconnect with its waterfront. The designers needed to create a waterfront that would activate the water’s edge and attract a range of different user groups. The design responds to the wild character of the West Coast through robust, simple material and structure (Johns 2007).

Waitangi Park (Wraight and Associates with Athfield Architecture) is constructed on reclaimed land and draws design cues from contextual aspects of the site, such as the plants found on beaches around Wellington, and the stream that would have once flowed through the site¹. The large, flat space is blocked out with different programmes, and the boundaries between them

Fig. 4-13. Detail images: a, Oriental Bay; b, c, New Plymouth Foreshore; d, e, Waitangi Park

author’s own images

¹ For further explanation of Waitangi Stream and its relevance to the meaning of the park, see section 2.1.2

Oriental Bay, by Isthmus

Fig. 4-14. a-b. *Oriental Bay intervention*

author's own images

New Plymouth Foreshore, by Isthmus

Fig. 4-16. a-c. *New Plymouth Foreshore*

author's own images

Waitangi Park, by Wraight + Associates with Athfield Architects

Fig. 4-15. a-b. *Waitangi Park*

author's own images

are activated and intensified (Blunt, McDonald et al. 2003).

Elements of the design reflect Wraight and Associates' interest in addressing the historical and ecological context of a site. The wetland system running around the site's boundary is a reference to Waitangi Stream, which would have once existed on the site, the graving dock recalls an old waka-landing area, and the planting beyond it is a description of plant groups found at seven major bays around the Wellington area.

These projects reflect the dominant trends at work in New Zealand landscape architecture today, particularly in Wellington. I have, however, avoided deriving a description of a 'New Zealand style' from them. Menzies (2002) attempted to do this, and believed that if there is such a thing as a New Zealand landscape architecture style then it is place-generated, based on history and bicultural values and expressed through physical elements such as native vegetation. She also believes that the Resource Management Act (1991) has encouraged development in the directions of environmental health, ecology, and sustainability.

However, Menzies too readily accepts shallow, overly symbolic gestures – such as the use of native plants as a reference to our identity. Her assertions could easily describe principles of landscape architecture in general, just as the projects described above are not necessarily more place-driven than similar projects set in other countries. To find an international comparison, one need look no further than MVVA's work, which expresses very similar values to the New Zealand projects discussed here, and is differentiated only because the characteristics of the sites they work with are different. In fact, the method of referencing the local place has become entrenched in landscape architecture practice, to the point where it is easy for its use to become trite and cliché. Richard Weller gives a strong criticism of such work:

Landscape architecture has, as everyone knows, tapped into a profitable trade in feigning intimacy with local contexts. Sometimes this business of symbolizing place might encapsulate the pride and resilience of local identity, but more often than not it smacks of insecurity, ideology and asphyxiated imagination.

(Richard Weller, quoted in Swaffield and Bowring 2001, p. 2)

It is important for a designer to avoid 'symbolizing place', as that is little more than a designer imposing their own idea of what is important about a place on the people who use it. Such work does not allow for the agency of the people who live in and around designed sites. Furthermore, there is a risk with the use of ecological aesthetics that the designer might respond more to the aesthetic nature of the landscape than its actual ecological systems, thereby simply engaging in a more contemporary form of picturesque

landscape veneration that still lingers on from New Zealand's colonial heritage. Oriental Bay and Waitangi Park have moved beyond this in some ways, instead using systems in the landscape to drive particular design moves.

Using the principles of site as system and interconnected scales helps avoid overly shallow expressions of landscape and place. Expression of place can be achieved by connection to natural systems, establishing a 'relationship between the underlying structures of topography and hydrology and the major structuring elements of urban form' (Mossop 2006, p. 172). Cities need not necessarily be viewed as lacking a sense of landscape place, because the 'most permanent and enduring elements of cities are often related to the underlying landscapes – the geology, the topography, the rivers and harbours, and the climate' (Mossop 2006, p. 172). The shaping of cities by the landscape they are sited within facilitates the development of networks of landscape infrastructure which deepen the connection between human and ecological systems.

The capital city precedents used in Chapter One, Canberra and Ottawa, have each been shaped by the natural landscape in ways that enhance their urban environments and contribute to ideas about the national identity they represent. In both Canberra and Ottawa the natural landscape has been described as expressing the identity of the place. In Ottawa the more substantial landscape infrastructure moves from Gréber's plan were applied, while the classical top layer has so far remained unbuilt. Pollock-Ellwand (2001) believes that this approach has allowed the place of Ottawa to be reinforced by its greenbelt, decentralised government buildings and open-space corridors. Walter Burley Griffin's 1911 Canberra design also used the natural environment as a driver – it 'played a key role in locating the city's major axes and key structures' (Mossop 2006, p. 166).

4.3. Mappings

The mapping process helps a designer understand the complex layers of a site in a spatial and visual way-- from the geographical and ecological to the social, cultural and political. This chapter discusses key ideas in the design methodology and how they have been addressed on the site:

- Viewing a site as a collection of integrated systems
- Different scales, and what they offer the designer
- Landscape as expressing fundamental characteristics of ‘place’

The main collection of mappings and site analyses looks at physical qualities of the site and their relationship within the landscape at a citywide scale. This scale enables the larger landscape-scale interaction of the city’s urban, infrastructural and natural systems to be more readily comprehended. Smaller-scale mappings help to define other spatial problems and opportunities on the site, setting up the design itself, as explained in Chapter Four.

4.3.1. Precedent

The work of Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha (from the University of Pennsylvania’s Department of Landscape Architecture), which I looked at in the early stages of the mapping process. Two of their three books deal with the water-soaked landscapes of the Mississippi and Mumbai (Mathur and da Cunha 2001; Mathur and da Cunha 2009), while the third book considers the postcolonial landscape of Bangalore, India (Mathur and da Cunha 2006). Their imperative is to view these massively altered landscapes as an interaction between the natural landscape and the human constructions layered over them. They are frequently critical of the way the traditional plan or map has become the most dominant tool used to view the world. In Mumbai the coastline drawn on maps, which ostensibly portrays the edge between land and sea, creates a false understanding of what is actually an estuarine, ‘soaked’ landscape. In *Deccan Traverses* (Mathur and da Cunha 2006), the authors have identified ‘another Bangalore’ that is less about the cartographers’ maps and municipal boundaries and more about the accumulation of things and materials that are a result of individuals’ actions within the city.

The mappings created for the thesis attempt to read Wellington in similar ways. As Mathur and da Cunha point out, it is understood that the landscape is not just the green layer settled on a city after the city has been built; it existed before the city, and thus dictates the first layer of settlement. The landscape has the power to ‘determine the nature of a place and the eye through which it is seen’ (Mathur and da Cunha 2006).

Fig. 4-17. a-c. Mappings of Bangalore, from *Deccan Traverses* by Mathur & da Cunha, 2006.

The large-scale model and sections begin to talk about this process in Wellington's landscape. They show how the lines laid down to form the city's infrastructure were from the beginning strongly affected by the nature of Wellington's topography.

Fig. 4-18. Site study - 1:10,000 topographical model of Wellington, contours at 10m intervals.

author's own image

Fig. 4-19. a-b. Detail images of 1:10,000 topographical model.

author's own image

1:10,000 topographical model of Wellington

Fig. 4-20. Site study - 1:10,000 sections accurate to 1m.

author's own image. Geodata sourced from koordinates.com/maps/wcc/

4.3.2. Geology and ecology

To understand and respond to the nature of Wellington it is important to know the nature of the landscape which is now obscured by built form. The invisible layers of ecology and geology are capable of influencing the lived experience of the site.

In pre-European times the wider Wellington area was mostly podocarp/broadleaf forest of rimu-northern rata and tawa-hinau on the ridges and slopes, kohekohe-dominated semi-coastal forest nearer the shoreline and swamp on the Te Aro flat. It appears that when the settlers arrived, the area that is now the town belt had already been deforested and consisted of patchy bush and manuka-kanuka stands (Beaumont 2009). The flat basin of the city was a water-soaked landscape, once crossed by many small streams, most of which now flow in pipes beneath the city (Humphris and Mew 2009).

On arrival in Wellington, the New Zealand Company's settlers noted the luxuriant vegetation and foliage and the unusually clear, bright atmosphere (Petre 1842). They were initially surprised at the hilliness of the landscape and disappointed in the lack of flat land in the valley, but the apparent richness and fertility of the soil made up for the site's perceived shortcomings (Petre 1842). The hilliness which the settlers found so displeasing has become a defining characteristic of Wellington's urban shape.

Folded and faulted topography: defining the landscape of Wellington

Fig. 4-21. a-b. Geology: Detail images of 1:10,000 topographical model.

author's own image

Fig. 4-22. Relationship between topography and geology

author's own image, re-drawn from Begg, J. G. & Mazengarb, C., 1996.

Key

- Reclamation + reuse landfill
- Alluvium, silt, peat and loess; rusty brown sand and rounded gravel
- Alluvium, swamp/peat
- Sandstone/argillite, basalt, limestone, chert, diamicite

Fig. 4-23. *Relationship between topography and major water catchments*

author's own image. Geodata sourced from koordinates.com/maps/wcc/

Fig. 4-24. Relationship between topography and endemic ecologies

author's own image, re-drawn from *Wellington Regional Native Plant Guide* (Wellington City Council 2010)

Key

- Nikau belt
- Duneland
- Rocky coastal zone
- Inland Wellington-Porirua

4.3.3. Grid and infrastructure

Infrastructure, as a fundamental structuring mechanism of the city, can benefit from being imagined as an ecological system. It has great potential to generate public space, as it is connected to almost all other systems within the city. In Wellington the infrastructure is a curious mix of the original 1841 gridded plan, the patterns created as development edged over the hills, and the major roading interventions created to cope with the growing population and increase of traffic between the city and its suburbs.

The mappings show how the original colonial grid was assigned to the lower 60 metres, the flatter areas of the topography. Its placement was the result of economic necessity, and, due to a poor survey made by the New Zealand Company, was not particularly sensitive to the landscape. Beyond that area are roads of a completely different form that were developed outside of the grid, and the motorway, which, like these later roads, was more sensitive to topography than the grid was.

The grid of the original city, within which Government House, the Basin Reserve and the War Memorial are located, is typical of urban thinking of its time. A grid was the most efficient way of apportioning space on flat land, but this approach encountered problems on slopes. It has been suggested that as well as being an efficient economic system for dividing up land, a city grid is a statement of equality, while the towers built on top of it are statements of power (King 2004). This idea has interesting implications for the role of landscape architecture in urban design.

The Basin Reserve can be viewed differently to Government House and the War Memorial. Its form was designed as a pivot point between two different grid alignments; thus its landscape form is its most significant feature. The other two spaces, by contrast, are significant for their architectural elements, which were placed into the grid after it was laid out on the landscape. This distinction suggests that the Basin Reserve has the most important role within the site itself. It reveals itself as the centre—the pivot—of the site's problems.

During the 20th century, infrastructure has become the key factor in the shaping of urban form, and occupies a growing amount of space in cities (Pollak 2006). Consequently, it has been a focus for landscape urbanism, seen by its supporters as being capable of generating public landscape. They critique the fact that infrastructure has come to be seen as a component of the city exempt from having to function socially, aesthetically or ecologically. All types of space are valuable, they argue, not just the privileged space of parks and squares, and therefore the spaces of infrastructure must be inhabitable in a meaningful way (Mossop 2006). Designers need to engage with this infrastructure landscape, and the mundane, leftover spaces that are

Roads and motorways, the main infrastructure element of this thesis, have provided landscape architects with plenty of opportunity for exploring urban space and systems. The multiple functions that roads are required to fulfil provide compelling design opportunities, and major roads can become 'an integrated part of the urban landscapes they traverse' and 'part of an integrated strategy for providing open space' (Mossop 2006, p. 173).

The map shows the Port of Hobart, Tasmania, with the city of Hobart at the center. The River Tamar flows through the city. The map is divided into several districts, each color-coded: red for the central city area, green for the northern and eastern areas, and yellow for the southern and western areas. The map includes the city of Hobart, and various bays and headlands. A scale bar at the bottom right indicates distances in miles and fathoms. The map is titled 'PORT OF HOBART' and 'TASMANIA'.

by R.H. Davies, 1843. Source:
Alexander Turnbull Library,
Timeframes: digitised Images

Fig. 4-26. *Relationship between infrastructure and topography*

author's own image. Geodata sourced from koordinates.com/maps/wcc/

Fig. 4-27. Relationship between State Highway I and topography

author's own image. Geodata sourced from koordinates.com/maps/wcc/

Since the middle of the 20th century [...] The motorway has eviscerated a ribbon of once domestic zoning, street widening has removed many narrow lanes and rights-of-way. The challenge of topography has produced a variety of intriguing results in the inner suburbs. Cuttings and gradients designed with trams in mind, steep, curved, dead-end and pedestrian-only streets

(Hodgson 1990, p. 49).

Fig. 4-28. Relationship between figure-ground and topography

author's own image. Geodata sourced from koordinates.com/maps/wcc/

Stan Allen tells us that 'all grids are fields, but not all fields are grids' (Allen 1999, p. 97). He also proposes a re-reading of the traditional figure-ground:

[...] if we think of the figure not as a demarcated object read against a stable field, but as an effect emerging from the field itself—as moments of intensity, as peaks or valleys within a continuous field—then it might be possible to imagine figure and field as more closely allied.

(Allen 1999, p. 97).

4.3.4. Town belt

The designation of the town belt was an egalitarian gesture on the part of the New Zealand Company. It emerged from a 19th century humanitarian urge, similar in some ways to museums and city galleries. It was a civic gesture for ‘the good of the people’. Included in the original 1841 plan, the town belt was designed to have multiple functions, including a number of public recreation purposes and the separation of the urban acres from the rural acres. As well as providing the green space that was becoming popular in plans of new cities at the time, it defined the edge of the city. From the earliest days of Wellington’s existence as a town, the settlers valued the town belt highly, and there is a long tradition of protesting proposed built development of any scale within its grounds, possibly to the detriment of the quality and usefulness of the belt itself.

The town belt expresses the landscape qualities of the shape of Wellington. It creates an alternative use for some of the steepest land, and it contributes to the visible presence of Wellington’s landscape. Ottawa’s greenbelt does something similar. It is the longest of its type in North America, and, as with Wellington, although it has been overtaken by urban development it continues to serve its original purpose as recreation space for the city. Pollock-Ellwand (2001) calls Ottawa’s town belt ‘a tremendous asset’, of a type which would not be possible to create today. In both cities the town belt is seen as an invaluable resource. Ottawa’s has been described as defining the ‘place’ of the city, and Wellington’s does the same.

Figure-ground, 1:10,000

Fig. 4-29. Detail image of topographical model showing east and west town belts

author's own image

Fig. 4-30. Relationship between town belt and topography.

author's own image. Geodata sourced from koordinates.com/maps/wcc/

Fig. 4-31. Detail image of topographical model showing Adelaide Road and eastern town belt

author's own image.

Fig. 4-32. Relationship between town belt track network and topography

author's own image. Geodata sourced from koordinates.com/maps/wcc/

Fig. 4-33. a-d. Typical town belt tracks

author's own images.

Design cues from the mappings:

- The valley shape of the site informs the way connections are made through pedestrian, vehicle and ecological infrastructures, while also creating a focus for activity at its base, where the Basin Reserve acts as a kind of reservoir on the lowest contour of the site.
- The plant palette is drawn from the ecology endemic to the site, although application of the planting is dependent upon program and the nature of the various spaces.
- Infrastructure is treated topographically as well, with sensitivity to the flow of contour, and the landscape is emphasised and exaggerated.

4.3.5. Further site studies

During the early colonial period the population of Wellington was small and slow-growing, with settlement centred on Te Aro flat and Thorndon, close to the waterfront. Mt Victoria and The Terrace were the next to grow, while Te Aro became very dense and complex as land plots were increasingly subdivided. The domestic character of the flat land gradually gave way to commercial influence, while Newtown became the first suburb, due largely to the construction of the hospital in the 1880s, acquiring its own shops and small industry during the 1890s.

War Memorial

Throughout its colonial and postcolonial history, the hillock of land where the War Memorial now stands has had a grain and programme that differed from the spaces around it. The site of military barracks and brickworks in the mid 19th century, it was chosen to be the site of a major prison. The Mt Cook prison was constructed on a plateau of land overlooking Te Aro flat, the site of the national War Memorial today. The prison scheme '[...] provoked unease among the citizens, and protests about putting such an institution on such a commanding site were quickly raised.' (Hodgson 1990, p. 24). However, the forceful protests were ignored and construction continued.

In the end, the fortress was never used as a prison, and in 1903 it officially became more military barracks. Moves had been made to make it a university site, and it was also suggested that it would be a good site for Parliament. The site's commanding, central and elevated nature suggested to early Wellingtonians that it would be appropriate for a grand and important civic programme. Civic programmes have defined the site ever since: the War Memorial was opened in 1932, and the New Zealand Dominion Museum

Dedication of the National War Memorial

Fig. 4-34. *The dedication of the National War Memorial Carillon, Wellington*

by William Hall Raine, 1932.
Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images

Toen belt track network, 1:10,000

Fig. 4-35. *Panoramic montage of War Memorial and the former Dominion Museum*

author's own image.

Fig. 4-36. *Panoramic montage of War Memorial and the inner-city bypass at Buckle Street*

author's own image.

Aerial view showing Basin Reserve, War Memorial, Government House, and Adelaide Rd

Fig. 4-37. *An aerial view of Wellington*

[photographer unknown], 1934. Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images

Government House on Bowen Street, Thorndon

Fig. 4-38. *The second Government House, Wellington*

[photographer unknown] 188-?. Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images

Historic images of Government House in Newtown

Fig. 4-39. *The present Government House, Wellington*

[photographer unknown, no date] Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images.
image code: 6050_pm_01

Fig. 4-40. *The present Government House, Wellington*

by S.C. Smith, 1912. Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images.

was opened shortly after in 1936. The Dominion Museum also contained a National Art Gallery, and the same firm designed the two buildings. When museum functions shifted to Te Papa Tongarewa on the city's waterfront, the Museum building was taken over by Massey University's school of design, fulfilling the wishes of the residents of a century ago.

The Dominion Museum was a large art deco structure that remains today, now as part of the Massey University campus. The museum building was designed to complement the War Memorial, and as a result they read as being two parts of one whole. They create a powerful design language that can be read for several blocks around the site. Unfortunately the close-scale experience of the War Memorial is hindered by the site's abrupt termination at Buckle Street.

The academic campuses (of Massey University and Wellington High school) behind the War Memorial allow for the free flow of pedestrian movement past the memorial itself. It is, more than either of the other two sites, a part of a field of local movement between the city and the suburbs. It acts as a pedestrian-friendly bridge from Mt Cook down into Te Aro, although at the moment, the traffic on Buckle Street breaks down the free flow of movement.

Government House

Government House was built on the former Mt View Asylum site. This site was set within a large portion of town belt land beside Adelaide Road and Riddiford Street in Newtown had been set aside for 'public utility uses' in the 1860s (Hodgson 1990). Wellington Hospital was also built on this land.

Today, Government House is a two-story timber construction set back into the rear of its site. It appears to be retreating, and its architecture is refined, but quiet and reserved. The white weatherboards on its façade give it a much more domestic nature than the powerful, monumental stone form of the War Memorial.

Government House's grounds are a listed heritage garden. They spread out from the house itself, becoming less refined and controlled, as they get closer to the edge the grounds share with the town belt. Government House can be viewed as sitting serenely within a garden-and-forest field, a space set aside for public use and recreation over a century ago. The House's position within the town belt has huge potential in terms of a re-use of the site – if the security fence is removed. Breaking down the boundaries on the town belt and urban edges of Government House will allow greater connections to occur, not only between Government House and the urban landscape, but also between the east and west parts of the town belt.

Historic images of the Basin Reserve

Fig. 4-41. *Cricket game at the Basin Reserve, Wellington*

by W. Williams, 1880s. Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images.

Fig. 4-42. *Cricket practice, Basin Reserve, Wellington*

by S.C. Smith, 1910. Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images.

Fig. 4-43. *View of the Basin Reserve, Wellington College, and Mount Alfred*

[photographer unknown] 1932. Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images.

Basin Reserve

On the original town map of Wellington the Basin Reserve was meant to be an inland harbour with access to sea by way of the strip between Kent and Cambridge Terraces. However the 1855 earthquake lifted the flats of Te Aro by several metres, and this plan was abandoned. The land was drained and levelled by prison labour, and became an official cricket ground in 1866.

The Basin Reserve has since become drowned in the traffic infrastructure that surrounds it. In plan, it is easy to see that it could be a pivot point between the primary city centre in Te Aro and the secondary centre in Newtown, with Adelaide Road – framed by Government House, two town belt edges, and the War Memorial – forming a route between the two. The basin could also be part of an improved pedestrian and cycling route, an opportunity for people to have a respite from the traffic. However, the roads around it act as barriers and instead the Basin is completely isolated from its contexts at the local scale.

These site analyses reinforce the conclusions reached during the initial site reading in chapter one. Again, we can see that each of these significant sites is disconnected from its urban context in different ways. The landscape principles of site as system, interconnected scales, and landscape as expression of place can be used to break down the barriers that surround them, and build up a new design framework that encourages relationships between them to flow through the urban context.

The infrastructure systems that shape the site and its problems will need to be re-thought, requiring application of all three principles: landscape as system, to understand how the system works and how to alter it; interconnected scales, to make links between large and small scale moves; and landscape as expression of place, to ensure moves are site-appropriate and sensitive. Once that is done, there will be space for design moves to occur throughout the site. As we have seen, the sites of Government House, the Basin Reserve and the War Memorial already have distinctive architectural and spatial identities. These identities should not be challenged, but accepted. The goal of the design is to allow them space to breathe and engage with the city around them.

4.4. Conclusion

My aim for this thesis is to negotiate identity in a site in which the relationships between nationally and locally significant spaces have been eroded. The site suffers from problems typical of a contemporary globalised city: infrastructure takes precedence to the detriment of a sense of identity and the human-scale experience of place. Kienast and Vogt (2000) suggest that the redefinition of the identity of place may be the main task for modern designers. My interpretation of this identity is influenced by Pollak's (2006) suggestion that spaces can contain multiple identities.

The landscape architectural principles of 'site as system', 'interconnected scales' and 'landscape as expression of place' allow a designer to respond to the complexities and changing aspects of meaning and identity that we have seen are problems when tackling the design of nationally significant places. These principles allow for the multiple identities layered over the site.

The key design goal is to get people to connect with and engage with nationally significant places. Rather than designing grand expressions or metaphors of identity, this methodology suggests the spaces should be designed to engage at all scales with the landscape (the place) itself, creatively and poetically. To allow these connections to happen, any large moves and grand visions need to be tempered by subtle, intimate visions. While the overall concept may be large-scale, it needs to be thought through down to the local scale.

'Place' implies local-ness, although the significant places within the site are as national as they are local. At the moment unfortunate boundaries exist where the local landscapes stop and the national ones begin. The design strategy is to remove these boundaries using the methodology outlined above. The methodology allows for large moves to occur if necessary, and provides ways to think about the design moves from the local to the national scale.

5.1. Design concept: introducing the over-all plan

The hypothesis underlying the design is that people can become more conscious of significant political places if those places are integrated into the everyday, lived urban landscape.

Key conclusions from the literature inform this hypothesis:

- Meaning is culturally ingrained, and thus designed meaning becomes less relevant over time as cultures change. Rather, meaning for the users of a space will come from their interactions with it over time, and the memories they acquire as part of the process of developing a sense of belonging to it. Therefore, a designer, rather than declaring the meaning of a site in the design, must allow users to develop their own understanding of a place's meaning, by facilitating their sense of belonging to it. This can be achieved through design that encourages users to engage with a place and allow it to become part of their day-to-day lives.
- The systems that shape a site are inextricably linked, no matter how different the scales at which they operate, or how tangible or intangible they are. To foster these connections a designer needs to consider the relationship of different systems to one another, and design with this interaction in mind. This consideration can lead to design moves that occur at vastly diverse scales, and well beyond the initial site.

These conclusions about the gradual development of meaning in built places and the wide interconnectedness of systems show the value of integrating symbolic places like Government House, the Basin Reserve, and the War Memorial into the lived urban experience. Their physical scale connotes importance, and their positioning in the Adelaide Road area hints at a relationship of some kind between them – but at present they are buried and ignored by the urban landscape. This project recognises the potential for

these significant places and the urban landscape to have a mutually beneficial relationship. Therefore, the goal of a connection between Government House, the War Memorial, and the Basin Reserve has become the framework and driver for a wide range of landscape changes at different scales, which are conceived of as a set of interlinked infrastructures:

Arterial/traffic infrastructure

Urban infrastructure

Pedestrian infrastructure

Ecological infrastructure

These four infrastructures are each created by a different set of design moves and spaces, and are characterised by their own distinct scale. The way they overlap and depend on one another embodies the systems concept outlined in the second conclusion.

Arterial infrastructure

Fig. 5-1. Traffic infrastructure

Urban infrastructure

Fig. 5-3. Urban infrastructure

Pedestrian infrastructure

Fig. 5-2. Pedestrian infrastructure

Landscape infrastructure

Fig. 5-4. Landscape infrastructure

Fig. 5-5. Full design proposal plan, 1:5000

5.1.1. Traffic infrastructure

The high-traffic barriers of Adelaide Road and the Basin Reserve roundabout needed to be addressed before any other design goals could be achieved. My first design tests tried to do this with the use of small, subtle interventions that made use of leftover spaces either side of the barriers, but it soon became apparent that such large-scale problems required equally large-scale solutions. The solution I eventually arrived at involves a new north-south arterial route and an alternative proposal for the extension of the inner city bypass along the northern edge of the Basin Reserve.

A new arterial route to carry north-south traffic from Hataitai and the Eastern suburbs:

This route is a parkway-like, landscape-esque road that winds through the edge of the town belt in a series of cuts and fills. Its design draws on the character of the early motorway and Wellington roads built after the grid. This move has several advantages:

- Removes traffic from North Adelaide Road, thereby reducing the barrier properties the traffic was creating in the middle of the street
- Creates a more public, formalized edge to the town belt, where the barrier qualities have a protective effect.
- Breaks down the space between Government House and the urban landscape centre, giving it a stronger public presence

A proposal for the inner-city bypass extension:

The design of this bypass extension is inevitably influenced by the current debate on the Basin Reserve's infrastructure issues, and the flyover proposed by NZTA¹. This response to the same issues draws more on the overall landscape impact of the move; and like the new arterial route, it generates important and useful public space. The existing bypass is shifted north and trenched in front of the War Memorial, then extended at roughly the same level over to the hillside west of the Mount Victoria tunnel. The flyover section of the bypass is not allowed to remain a bridge for much of its length. Instead, the earth grandstand around the Basin Reserve is extended up towards it, strengthening its connection to the landscape and enhancing the pedestrian use of space either side of it.

Designing such massive moves as a landscape architect required a firm position. I needed to keep my feet firmly grounded in my own discipline, while playing with lane widths, road steepness, intersections, and corner angles. I agree with Mossop (2006) when she discusses the contribution of landscape

¹ See appendix [1] for a summary of the basin reserve proposals put forward by NZTA and a counter proposal by the Architecture Centre.

Arterial route

Fig. 5-6. Traffic infrastructure: arterial route

Inner-city bypass

Fig. 5-7. Traffic infrastructure: inner-city bypass

Grading sections of arterial route, 1:2,000

Fig. 5-8. Grading sections [1-8] of Arterial route cut-and-fill

Fig. 5-9. Axonometric of new arterial road showing grading (1m contour). 1:5000

author's own image

to the design of major road systems; she stresses that the significance of the car has to be dealt with, and cannot be ignored in nostalgic urban design ideals – rather, the spaces it creates need to be addressed with design. Tunnelling the bypass has been a popular option among the community and local body politic of Wellington², but like Mossop I am apprehensive about this idea: ‘many solutions to urban conflict between cars, mass transit, and people involve banishing the vehicles to subterranean underworlds, by their nature dark and atmospherically toxic’ (Mossop 2006, p. 173). Instead of the ‘out of sight, out of mind’ approach, there should be an acknowledgment of the reality of private transport in the places we want to live in, and that the way it is experienced can be positive from both sides of the fence.

Roads tend to be categorised according to their relationship to what is around them – for example, a motorway has almost no relationship to its surroundings, while a small urban laneway has a highly intimate, small-scale, pedestrian one. Road types differ in their scale and in the speeds at which cars travel along them. To design roads requires an understanding of their operation at different scales (Mossop 2006).

The other three infrastructures – urban, pedestrian, and ecological – were key to mitigating the barrier effects of the newly created arterial route and bypass. The mitigation of those effects involved creation of new public spaces that helped to negotiate between the roads and their contexts.

Fig. 5-10. Axonometric of inner-city bypass extension showing grading (1m contour) and relationship to War Memorial and Basin Reserve. author's own image

2 See appendix II for a description of the Architecture Centre's cut-and-cover proposal.

Strategy for bypass extension

5.1.2. Urban infrastructure

With the bulk of the commuter traffic shifted east, there is space for some urban design changes to be made. Adelaide Road becomes narrower; the grid itself is extended, and in a sense ‘finished’; and the area is given a collection of pocket parks, an urban square, a domain-like planted space, and more recreational green spaces. These moves have in mind the long-term development of the Adelaide Road area, and its potential as a centre for Mount Cook.

The urban design moves are made in the shadow of Wellington City Council’s Adelaide Road Development Plan,³ which has similar objectives but achieves them in different ways. It focuses on improved public transport to reduce the traffic volume, suggests new building height zones, and introduces new streetscape elements (examples of which can be seen at the recent Hanson Street steps upgrade, a monumentally large and heavy alteration which is incongruous within the local vernacular of small laneways and shortcuts.

By contrast to the WCC plan, this proposal suggests that there are more fundamental aspects of the site which need to be altered to achieve the desired residential and commercial density. It also identifies the need for flexible public spaces that cater to the increase in population and street activity.

Over time, the site could also see an increase in civic programs, building on the presence of regionally and nationally significant civic places such as the Basin Reserve, Government House, the War Memorial, Massey University, and the high schools.

³ See appendix III for a description of this plan

Fig. 5-11. Section a-a through Adelaide Road, 1:200

Lanes

Fig. 5-12. Urban infrastructure: lanes

Adelaide Road

Fig. 5-13. Urban infrastructure: Adelaide Road

Pocket parks

Fig. 5-14. Urban infrastructure: pocket parks

Shared space

Fig. 5-15. Urban infrastructure: shared space

5.1.3. Pedestrian infrastructure

This infrastructure is made up of a network of pathways, shortcuts, crossings, tracks and bridges, which are laid over the arterial and urban infrastructures. They serve to mitigate the wall-like properties of the arterial routes, and help to connect through the urban fabric. The design focus has been on the primary pedestrian links between Government House, the Basin Reserve, and the War Memorial. These links traverse both green and urban spaces, involve several crossings of different natures (including a bridge), and help to construct new public spaces. The pedestrian infrastructures are designed to be as integral to the structure of the whole area as the more monumental road systems, and the relationship between these two systems is exaggerated and emphasised when they meet.

The emphasis with these moves is on the overlap of infrastructure and pedestrian scale moves; how one can benefit the other and create a pattern of space where the systems are working together.

Notes on the axial walkway (Fig. 5-16)

A pedestrian path between Government House and the War Memorial picks out the axis that is suggested by Government House's orientation and the memorial's position. The axis is then folded and rotated as it negotiates the grain of Adelaide Road, referencing the traditional axis in designed beaux-arts capitals, but in a more site-sensitive manifestation.

Notes on the bush tracks (Fig. 5-18)

Tracks, constructed in the style of the existing town belt tracks, are used to connect the urban path network to the town belt, and to traverse the new urban planted areas.

Crossings and bridges

Fig. 5-16. Pedestrian infrastructure: crossings and bridges

Pedestrian shortcuts

Fig. 5-18. Pedestrian infrastructure: pedestrian shortcuts

Axial walkway

Fig. 5-17. Pedestrian infrastructure: axial walkway

Bush tracks

Fig. 5-19. Pedestrian infrastructure: bush tracks

Trees

Shrubs

Climbers and scramblers

Ferns, sedges, rushes, and grasses

5.1.4. Landscape infrastructure

Potentially the longest-term infrastructure, this involves the most fundamental tools of landscape architecture: grading and planting. It builds on the ecological regeneration that has begun in the town belt, choosing a local plant palette that can be developed in a phased way to establish long term, sturdy ecologies. The work is applied within the other infrastructure systems in the design, for instance grading the cut-and-fill involved in building the new arterial routes, and planting to regenerate the cut banks. Planting and grading are applied and manipulated differently throughout the site; the interplay between controlled, structured use and loose, organic use helps to enhance the connections between urban and green spaces.

Plant palette: Wellington
rocky coastal zone

Trees

- Dodonaea viscosa
- Oleria paniculata
- G. littoralis and G. Lucida
- Cordylina australis
- Corynocarpus laevigatus
- Dysoxylum spectabile
- Sophora microphylla
- Carpodetus serratus
- Myoporum laetum
- Coprosma repens
- Meliocope ternata

Shrubs

- Coprosma crassifolia
- Coprosma propinqua
- Coprosma rhamniodes
- Discaria toumatou
- Helichrysum aggregatum
- Olearia solandri
- Hebe stricta
- Coprosma acerosa
- Pimelea villosa
- Muehlenbeckia astonii
- Melicytus crassifolius

Climbers/scramblers

- Clematis forsteri
- Rubus squarrosus
- Muehlenbeckia australis
- Calystegia soldanella
- Tetragonia implexicoma
- Fuchsia perscandens
- Clematis afoliata

Ferns, sedges, grasses and
rushes

- Asplenium flabellifolium
- Pteris comans
- Asplenium oblongifolium
- Microsorium pustulatum
- Leptocarpus similis
- Austroderia toetoe
- Poa cita
- ficinia nodosa

Source: Wellington Regional Native
Plant Guide (Wellington City
Council 2010)

Grading

Fig. 5-20. Landscape infrastructure: grading

Planting scheme

Fig. 5-22. Landscape infrastructure: planting scheme

Lawns

Fig. 5-21. Landscape infrastructure: lawns

Trees

Fig. 5-23. Landscape infrastructure: trees

5.1.5. Spaces

These infrastructures are made up of a recognisable set of public space and landscape features: roads, streets, cycle ways, bridges, paths, shortcuts, crossings, tracks, parks, squares, bush, and gardens. These spaces are the things that make a place liveable, enhance its quality, and encourage people to develop new and meaningful relationships with it. The quality, usability and relevance to site have been identified in precedent studies of successful public spaces. It was important to design at a moderate resolution, so that the four infrastructures truly worked well together.

5.1.6. Tools

The heavy reliance on grading and planting is supported by evidence from local precedents, in which there is an overwhelming appreciation for the natural environment, so prized in contemporary New Zealand culture. Artificial materials are used sparingly to enhance and complement the qualities of the environment, while providing users with space to enjoy it. The use of basic, fundamental landscape architecture tools is part of the hypothesis: projects with a degree of complexity in their use of large-scale systems should be complemented by a simplicity in their spatial design, an ‘artful efficiency of means’ (Swaffield 2002). The designed spaces all involve the interplay of grading and planting, with the goal of creating refined and pared-back spaces that have flexibility and usability built into them. Grading and planting are used to negotiate between different spaces from the macro to micro scale, both defining spaces and creating a sense of motion to draw users through them.

5.2. Focus spaces

5.2.1. Belfast Street Pocket Park

An example for other pocket parks that could be developed within the site, this park also acts as a mirror to the Oxford Street Square; moving through it is a shift from urban, hard-surface spaces to a bush planting-ecological pocket. This is achieved by allowing the sloped half of the park to gradually become garden planting, in line with the more private, back-lane nature of the park itself. A language of hard-and-soft surfaces encroaching on one another is employed, and the access path helps to contain and frame the space.

Plan: Belfast Street Pocket park, 1:500

Fig. 5-24. Plan: Belfast Street Pocket Park, 1:500

Fig. 5-25. Belfast Street pocket park, view 1

5.2.2. Oxford Street Square

This central square is intended to be an anchor within the site. It is here that the main pedestrian bridge to Government House lands. This site is currently open, occupied only by a petrol station, and is fairly central within the Adelaide Road area. It is flat with a steep 3m bank leading up to the Government House entrance path. The surfaces and grading of the plaza are manipulated to create a sense of transition from street edge to town belt edge. Within the plaza, planting is controlled and contained within the hard surface; low terraced steps provide seating and a controlled ascent towards the bank; a gently sloping lawn shaded with trees softens the dominant surfaces; a wide concrete path draws attention to the connection between government house and the war memorial; and the loosely planted bank marks a shift from the plaza to the bridge which leads over the arterial route to Government House grounds in the forested town belt.

The plaza utilises a space blocking technique similar to the one used in Waitangi Park. The simplicity of its structure makes it flexible, allowing for a variety of uses. The building facing onto its southern edge would suit active-edge commercial programs, and there is room for café seating to spill out into the plaza.

Fig. 5-26. Plan: Oxford Street Square, 1:500

Adelaide Road

Low planting edge

Axial pathway

Lawn (gradual slope)

Garden (steep slope)

Seating (terraced steps)

Hard surface - square area

Commercial edge

Crossing

Lane

Fig. 5-27. Diagram of Oxford Street
Square space blocking

Fig. 5-28. Oxford Street square, view 1

[illegible]

5.2.3. Basin Reserve to War Memorial ecological domain

The space between the Basin Reserve and War Memorial is changed significantly, from large-grain student housing buildings to a sloping, forested domain. It provides the inner city with a large green space, and a significant pocket of natural ecology to connect to the town belt at either side. The planting composition is structured around plant heights to create distinct spatial differences, which suits this urban site. Initially, a user moving through on foot will experience a series of transitions between spatially unique zones; over time this differentiation will disappear as ecological systems begin to assert themselves on the site. The geometric planting layout is used to continue bands of planting across streets to emphasise the free flow of movement from one side to the other, and assist the breaking down of the roundabout surrounding the Basin Reserve.

Fig. 5-31. Plan: Basin Reserve to War Memorial ecological domain, 1:2,000

Massey University and War Memorial shared grounds

Tasman Street

Grassed open space

Tall-forest planting

Fig. 5-32. Section b-b: Basin Reserve to War Memorial ecological domain, 1:500

5.2.4. Inner-city bypass extension and Basin Reserve public space

Where the bypass travels alongside the Northern end of the Basin Reserve, land is built up to re-establish the connection between the road and the ground. This extends the grass grandstand of the Basin Reserve, increasing its capacity. Where the new mound meets the motorway, great care has been taken to create a buffer between the public space and the motorway; there are layers of planting, a fence, and a cycle lane. In this way it becomes explicit that the public space created depends on the motorway itself, rather than the motorway creating a dead zone either side of it. The experience of the bypass for the driver is enhanced by elements such as strips of planting, views, and graphic composition of cladding and railing elements. The experience of drivers, cyclists and pedestrians has been considered equally in the design of these spaces.

Fig. 5-33. Plan: Basin Reserve and inner-city bypass extension public space, 1:500

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

c

c

Fig. 5-34. Sections [1-8]: Basin Reserve and inner-city bypass extension public space, 1:500

Fig. 5-35. Section c-c: Basin Reserve and inner-city bypass extension public space, 1:200

5.2.5. Town belt edges at arterial route

The edge between the new arterial road and the eastern extreme of the Adelaide Road urban area is a long, linear space divided into three parallel strips: the residential backyards of the buildings, the public access track down to the Basin Reserve, and a buffer for the new road. The buffer uses the same system as the bypass: dense planting layers, fence, and cycleway. The strips are not necessarily exclusive; there are opportunities for overlap between private backyard space and public walking space, and overlap between walking and cycling space. At times the three strips become pinched together, at other points there is space for them to become much more spread out.

Fig. 5-36. Plan: town belt edges at arterial route, 1:500

Narrow laneway

Residential apartments and houses

Backyard
spaces

Fig. 5-37. Section d-d: town belt edges at arterial route, 1:200

5.2.6. Town belt – Adelaide Road bridge connection

This long, formal bridge is the largest of the potential bridge connections (see bridge locations in pedestrian infrastructure scheme). It is designed to be experienced by drivers and cyclists passing beneath it, as well as for pedestrians walking along it: the elevational and sectional experience. It continues the partially axial nature of the pedestrian link between the Government House and the War Memorial, providing views between these and beyond into the wider urban landscape of Wellington.

Fig. 5-38. Plan: town belt – Adelaide Road bridge connection, 1:500

Fig. 5-39. Patterned concrete panels on Auckland's motorway

Source: http://cmi.transit.govt.nz/html/cmj/stage2_photos.htm

The panels used throughout the Auckland motorway system show how simple graphic moves can enhance the experience of drivers and pedestrians in infrastructure spaces. These influenced early bridge design tests, and reinforced the importance of its elevation for the experience of drivers on the new arterial route.

Fig. 5-40. Section e-e: Government House grounds - Adelaide Road bridge connection, 1:500

Fig. 5-41. Detail of section e-e:
bridge and Oxford Street Square

Fig. 5-42. Detail of section e-e:
bridge and residential edge

Fig. 5-43. *Detail of section e-e:
bridge and town belt edge*

Fig. 5-44. Detail of section e-e:
bridge and town belt edge

Conclusion

Hypothesis

The creation of meaningful connections between icons of national significance can be used to drive improvements to the everyday, lived urban landscape. These improvements in turn ensure that the connections made are of a flexible and useful nature, and do not dictate the meaning of these icons, instead creating the opportunity for users to develop their own understanding of the meaning of a space, and the nature of its contribution to their identity.

Design strategy

- Site as system drew on the Māori tradition of describing people, past and place as being intimately connected within one wide system.
- Interconnected scales was partially a criticism of the vast scales frequently used in spaces of national significance, and provided a way for me to negotiate the local- and national-scale site problems.
- Landscape as place referenced the dominant Pākehā tradition of finding a sense of identity in the natural landscape and the continued influence of this on landscape architecture practice in New Zealand today.

Conclusions and closing thoughts

New Zealand's identity is inextricably bound up with its natural landscape. The landscape was the first tool to which European settlers looked to establish a sense of difference from Europe, and from other colonial nations. Māori culture is deeply embedded in traditions that require intimate knowledge of the land and its systems. These two cultural strains run through New Zealand's history, and reinforce the dominance of the natural landscape in our notions of identity and collective belonging.

However the myth of a beautiful, pristine landscape denies the reality of the urban landscape in which most New Zealanders, Māori and Pākehā live.

These complex shifting, changing layered landscapes more accurately reflect the changing nature of our identity and cultural traditions. Such urban landscapes are completely counter to the perceived timelessness of natural landscapes.

The rapid development of these urban landscapes can have a detrimental effect on nationally significant sites within them. These places are all too often ignored and devalued by the globalised, fluid and dynamic environments around them. Sites such as Government House, the National War Memorial and the Basin Reserve have become static relics of the colonial period, while the urban environment continues to change and evolve around them, to the point where the city itself, in its insatiable infrastructural needs, cuts the sites off from their context.

These parameters shaped the thesis from the beginning. I was looking for a nationally significant urban landscape, which could benefit from a landscape architectural intervention; this search brought me to the site of Adelaide Road, with its disconnected monuments to a colonial past.

The role of design in sites of national significance is very different to what it was during New Zealand's colonial period. Changes in our cultural values have rendered grand architectural statements of identity inappropriate and inaccurate. Expression of a more contemporary national identity through design would require something similar to what has been attempted in the Scottish Parliament – something intimate, on a human scale, complex, and almost obscure.

However it is important to question the role of meaning itself within a design, and how much power the designer's voice truly has. Once again, the complexity and fluidity of our culture and identity means that it is nearly impossible for one design or a group of leaders to define a set of ideas that represent a nation. The designers' task then becomes a difficult balance of interpreting the immediate and wider cultures while also allowing them to speak for themselves within the site that they create. My goal with this thesis was to create the opportunity for meaning and identity to be generated, rather than deciding for myself what these sites mean to New Zealanders' identity. I do believe that they are important; as place constructed at key moments in our history, and also as representations of a troubled colonial past that post-colonial New Zealand would very much like to be able to move on from.

By re-engaging them with the city using a design method that is influenced by both Māori and Pākehā tradition, I hope to suggest how well designed spaces can also strengthen links and shared values between the two different cultural traditions.

Landscape architecture theory allowed me to make these connections happen, as it has strong links to both the aesthetic and systems values of landscapes. It also helped to make the large infrastructure decisions that were necessary to solve the accessibility problems of the site. These problems, and their scales were intimidating, but it became clear that they needed to be addressed at the same scale. The interconnected systems embedded in landscape architecture theory paved the way for mitigation of large scale moves down to the human scale, and this integration of different scales found its way back to the original problem of these nationally significant sites within a locally significant urban landscape.

The overlapping of large-scale and small-scale moves, and nationally significant and locally significant spaces, became a key concept and design driver. The meaning in my design evolved into an idea about the interconnection of these very different scales within the same place. Local/national and large/small moves are not isolated from one another, but instead are mutually beneficial. They influenced design right down to the stylistic form decisions in Oxford Street Square, where the concept of overlapping functions shaped the space into a hierarchy of different surfaces arranged and divided through overlapping grading and planting. The national and the local are both present in the park: the axial path between Government House and the War Memorial runs through the space and is its major structuring mechanism, while the square itself provides flexible amenity for residents of Adelaide Road.

In this way we can see how a set of larger, more idealistic ideas underpin a set of practical, useful ones. The actual moves made on the ground can be compared to NZTA's proposals for the Basin Reserve, the Architecture Centre's counter-proposal, and Wellington City Council's Adelaide Framework. However it differs from each of them in its careful consideration of the national and the local, the large and the small, which none of these proposals have attempted to do. NZTA's Basin Reserve schemes are focused on the bypass as part of a national transport route, and little regard has been given to its impact on the urban landscape immediately around it. The Architecture Centre's one is focused on this local landscape, but treats the infrastructure as something to be hidden, and ignores its national value. The Adelaide Road Framework provides a set of generic urban design moves that make no reference to the meaningful sites that border it.

The primary function of a public space is to be used by people. Given the fallibility of expression of meaning, it is tempting to design solely for this purpose. However, the risk, and the reason why meaning is important, is that designing simply for this primary function would lead to repeated, formulaic spaces that would never evolve beyond a simple palette of materials and moves. Designing with a deeper meaning in mind, whatever that may be, gives designers the creative license to poetically and inventively use the

history, culture, ecology or other relevant aspect of a site to continue to test new design ideas. The search for meaning in design helps to evolve and grow the discipline of landscape architecture, but as designers we should remember that the search doesn't end with the design process. A landscape space is constantly subject to processes of change over time, and layers of meaning accumulate through people's use and engagement with that place. It is through this process of use that people discover what a place means to them, and how it contributes to their identity.

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Appendices

I. NZTA proposals for the Basin Reserve upgrade

The New Zealand Transport Agency has proposed an upgrade to the traffic infrastructure around the Basin Reserve as part of a Wellington-wide transport plan called the Ngauranga to Airport Corridor Plan 2008. The Ngauranga Corridor Plan has outlined a transport corridor and corresponding growth spine that runs from Johnsonville in the north to the Wellington Airport in the south-east. The Corridor incorporates State Highway 1 as it becomes the first Wellington Motorway (the 'foothill motorway', built in the late 1960s), then the 2007 inner-city bypass from Ghuznee Street to the Basin Reserve, then the proposed bypass extension past the Basin Reserve and through the existing Mt Victoria Tunnel.

Johnsonville, Adelaide Road and Kilbirnie have been identified as key growth nodes along the corridor. Transport improvements are based upon projected population increases in each of these suburbs and the resulting increase in demands on infrastructure.

Fig. 7-1. Aerial view of Wellington Motorway under construction

Unknown Evening Post photographer, August 26, 1969. Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Timeframes: digitised Images

Fig. 7-2. Ngauranga to Wellington airport corridor plan

Source: Ngauranga to Wellington Airport Corridor Plan, by the Greater Wellington Regional Council, 2008, p. 7.

Fig. 7-3. NZTA's Basin Reserve Option A

source: <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/basin-reserve/gallery.html#>

Fig. 7-4. a-d. Artist's impressions of NZTA's Basin Reserve Option A

source: <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/basin-reserve/gallery.html#>

"a great snaking python of concrete slithering around the park" "the 'preferred' option, seeing as it is **simpler, cheaper, and straighter** than the second one" "narrowly skirts the hemline of the Basin Reserve, with the dull roar of traffic just drowning out the gentle thwack of willow on leather" "scraping gently against the concrete walls of the St Joseph's church" "I think once built this will all **fit in quite nicely with the undulating hills around that area**. There is quite a dip between the war memorial and Mt Vic tunnel." "The NZTA reps down at the basin reckon this 'improvement' would reduce traffic by 30% but that will only last a few years as the space gets filled up again. We will end up with **this concrete python choking the Basin area with traffic**." "The view up the **twinned terraces is a key one in Wellington** – I'm one that thinks an overpass here in any location needs rethinking. If it cannot go altogether then at least it should act as a decent termination to this vista." "I don't know why the NZTA types have taken so long to produce a design that is **so breathtakingly ordinary**. Given the constraints of topology, internal combustion and the terminal lack of imagination that characterizes traffic engineers, we arrived at exactly the same solution as Option 1 in about ten minutes some three years ago – and it only took an hour to design it in SketchUp. The only difference is that our design was meant as **a deliberately ugly post-modernist ironic riff on how bad a flyover could look**."

[Comments on Option A from <http://eyeofthefish.org/plans-for-the-basin/>. These comments from interested residents of Wellington helped me to develop my own position on the different proposals for the Basin Reserve transport infrastructure.]

I.I. Option A

Option A is NZTA's preferred design for the bypass extension. It responds to the infrastructure problems in the most cost-effective way possible. The NZTA points out the multiple functions the Basin Reserve area must perform: a state highway, a local road, a key public transport route, and pedestrians (including school students). The separation of the east-west traffic flows from the north-south flows has been identified as the key move in the project.

The method proposed in Option A is to put the westbound traffic on a bridge above the north-south and east traffic (although some would argue that the bridge is large enough to be called an overpass). The bridge could also include a pedestrian or cycle facility at an extra cost of \$8 million. However as cyclists can still use the streets below the bridge, it may be decided that this is unnecessary.

The buildings on the corner of Kent Terrace and Ellice Street (coloured orange) are an earthquake risk and will be demolished.

Key characteristics of Option A:

- The bridge is 20 metres away from the Basin Reserve
- Some parts of the bridge will be visible from within the Basin Reserve
- The historic former Home of Compassion crèche will need to be relocated
- This option is more consistent with the local street layout
- The NZTA would need to acquire land from two properties.

Fig. 7-5. NZTA's Basin Reserve Option B

source: <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/basin-reserve/gallery.html#>

Fig. 7-6. a-d. Artist's impressions of NZTA's Basin Reserve Option B

source: <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/basin-reserve/gallery.html#>

"completely **alien to Wellington's topography**" "the Overpass you vote against so that they get the Overpass they want to" "The other **choice that is not a choice at all**." "scraping gently against the concrete walls of the St Joseph's church" "There was originally options A-F., most seem to be padded out versions of the final two... one of which seems thrown in there to **ensure we pick the other.**"

[Comments on Option B from <http://eyeofthefish.org/plans-for-the-basin/>]

I.II. Option B

Option B is almost the same as Option A. The only significant change is a diversion of the motorway to the north in front of the Basin Reserve. Buckle Street remains at street level and is widened to 3 lanes in front of the War Memorial. The NZTA is reluctant to build a tunnel, as it would provide minimal transport benefits and they don't feel it would be worth the expense.

Vacant land to the north of Buckle Street will possibly be landscaped¹ and will remain in the possession of NZTA so there is the option of upgrading the inner city bypass into the future.

NZTA will work with Ministry for Culture and Heritage on the integration of SH1 with a memorial precinct to the south of Buckle Street. They are also working with WCC and MCH on landscape plans for both sides of Buckle Street. These could result in Buckle Street being relocated 10m to the north.

Key characteristics of Option B:

- The bridge is 65 metres away from the Basin Reserve
- The bridge is less visible from within the Basin Reserve than Option A
- This option is estimated to cost approximately \$15 million more than Option A
- The bridge will be closer to properties in Mt Victoria

(source <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/basin-reserve/index.html>)

¹ The Wraight + Associates-designed Memorial Park is shown in the north-west of the plan

Plan of Option X

Fig. 7-7. Plan of Option X

source: <http://architecture.org.nz/2011/07/17/the-public-needs-a-real-choice-option-x-2/>

Sections of Option X: relationship to the War Memorial and Basin Reserve

Fig. 7-8. a-c. Sections and diagram of Option X.

source: <http://architecture.org.nz/2011/07/17/the-public-needs-a-real-choice-option-x-2/>

Wide-view diagram of Option X: Basin Reserve and bridges

II. Architecture Centre proposal for the Basin Reserve Upgrade: Option X

The Architecture Centre presented their own solution for the Basin Reserve in response to the Options A and B published by NZTA. The Centre's key criticism of what NZTA showed was that both options were very similar, and Option B was so consistently worse than Option A that it seemed like it was presented merely to put the first in a more positive light.

The centre's position is that '...grade separation is critical to ensure better safety to all road users, and to help achieve speed consistency of motor vehicles, which will reduce emissions and noise pollution.' They recognise that the scale of such infrastructure is problematic whether what is being proposed is a tunnel or a flyover. The designers of Option X focused on the local scale experience of the site to a far greater degree than the NZTA.

My proposal has similar motives to Option X, but its design is quite different. It has similarities to both Options A and B as well, but is wider and more ambitious in scope than any of them.

Key characteristics of Option X:

- Cut-and-cover tunnel from Taranaki st to Sussex St, with minimal intersections.
- Emphasis on meaningful green connections from Memorial Park, to the Basin Reserve, to Government House.
- Improved access to the schools and Government House
- Respective space for the National War Memorial
- Extension of Memorial Park to the Basin and the commerce of Tory St: activate the space with commerce.
- Populating the space with a range of activities
- Uninterrupted public transport corridor

(<http://architecture.org.nz/2011/07/17/the-public-needs-a-real-choice-option-x-2/>)

Adelaide Road upgrade: short-term solution

Fig. 7-9. Adelaide Road upgrade: short term solution

source: <http://www.wellington.govt.nz/plans/policies/adelaiderd/pdfs/03part2.pdf>

Adelaide Road upgrade: long-term solution

Fig. 7-10. Adelaide Road upgrade: long-term solution

source: <http://www.wellington.govt.nz/plans/policies/adelaiderd/pdfs/03part2.pdf>

Drummond Street Steps upgrade

Fig. 7-11. a-b. Drummond Street Steps upgrade.

author's own image.

III. Wellington City Council Adelaide Road Upgrade plan

The Adelaide Road Framework looks at how the Adelaide Road area can be developed and enhanced into the future. As a key growth node identified by the Council, the proposed changes aim to facilitate a 50% increase in population.

The framework proposes (in no great detail):

- increase in height zones
- open space networks
- social and community networks
- movement networks
- heritage and character networks
- mixed-use development

However since being published in 2008, the plan hasn't been developed to any greater degree of resolution. The suggested spaces involve little more than generic application of standard urban design concepts, and the plan makes no moves towards a more visionary development strategy.

Furthermore, the Drummond Street steps upgrade, the first (and so far, only) part of the plan to be constructed, is as uninteresting in reality as the sketch images of the plan itself are.

(Adelaide road - planning for the future.
By the Wellington City Council,
November 2008. <http://www.wellington.govt.nz/plans/policies/adelaiderd/pdfs/03part2.pdf>)

Fig. 7-12. Adelaide Road Framework proposed height zones

<http://www.wellington.govt.nz/plans/policies/adelaiderd/pdfs/03part2.pdf>