

# PROSPECTS FOR A NEW ZEALAND-AOTEAROA CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

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20 October, 1998

## **Abstract**

There is a reciprocal relationship between environment, ecology, history, culture and landscape. Social and political commitment to the sustainability of nature depends on its visibility in the landscape, both as a meaningful part of our everyday experience, and as an active presence in a nation's cultural activities and practices. Sustainability of nature therefore has ecological, emotional and cultural dimensions. The individual and collective landscape of the mind inevitably both reflects and influences the character of the biophysical landscape, and our ideals of landscape are consequently a vital force in the pursuit of environmental sustainability. New Zealand has a unique biogeographical history, which is expressed in its high degree of endemism, and a widespread failure of the indigenous biota to adapt to introduced biological agents and cultural practices derived from dramatically different settings. As awareness of the magnitude of the ecological impact of human settlement grows, so also does an obligation to consciously develop mitigating strategies. To date, with some notable exceptions, emphasis has been upon preservation of indigenous remnants, primarily within the conservation estate. However, long term sustainability also requires regenerative strategies for indigenous biodiversity within the productive landscape. We offer some landscape archetypes for achieving such regeneration. Ironically, and perhaps fittingly, some of the inspiration for the archetypes we propose derives from the homeland of the culture which has wrought such devastation in the past. Our search for ways of maximising ecological integrity in New Zealand/Aotearoa thus attempts to integrate indigenous biotic processes within increasingly global cultural practices, through the medium of shared landscape ideals.