

ABSTRACT

Boots on the Ground: Integration of Fieldwork in Coastal Governance Decision-Making Processes

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Our understanding of and engagement with landscape and site – as a physical, cultural, and spiritual location – have undergone radical changes in recent years. In an era of predicted increases in ecological and climatic challenges and the poly-crisis of the Anthropocene, it is inevitable to reframe how we think through and work with landscapes (Kahn & Burns, 2021). This paradigm shift requires novel frameworks, techniques, and tools for engaging with landscapes on a governance level. The coast of Aotearoa New Zealand exemplifies a particular landscape type, yet has eluded a holistic definition within coastal governance. Together with the Western bifurcation of land versus sea, this omission has caused a lack of communication across marine and terrestrial planning authorities (Peart, 2007) and systemic issues in our (built) environment. We must adopt more site-specific and site-sensitive methods to ground our thinking and practices on the multi-layered constructs of landscapes. Fieldwork counters the technical, apparent omniscient processes of outdated paradigms of controlling ‘nature’ and reveals serendipitous findings rooted within a specific site. Therefore, engaging human researchers deeply within the field and the multi-scalar and diverse ontological reality of the more-than-human and non-vital. This methodological approach critiques the prevalent positivistic framing of current landscape planning practices by adopting an interpretive perspective (Davoudi, 2012). In my research, I look at a coastal site in Tāmaki Makaurau, and explore methods of fieldwork to derive theory from practical activity. This approach enhances the learnings from canonical texts and counters the hardening of divides between theory and practice in landscape architecture and related fields of study (Kahn & Burns, 2021). By exploring site-specific methods, I am uncovering the synthetic qualities of fieldwork practices and address their benefits for integration into decision-making processes for coastal governance.

References

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