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A Good Tree: The Articulation of Nature within a Built Environment Discourse

Christopher Dempsey

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a Masters of Philosophy

University of Auckland 2013
Acknowledgements

Undoubtedly writing a thesis is an amazing journey, one filled with a wonderful mix of investigations, readings, thinking, pondering, writing and instances of surprise. I have thoroughly enjoyed the journey, even though at times I have cursed it. However, even if any journey is an intensely singular one, there are many who have helped along the way.

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Planning and built environment practices deal with construction of the built environment within a natural environment context. The outcomes of such practices can be traced back to a particular discursive practices that establish and organise the ways and means such outcomes can be achieved. It could be suggested that our built environments in the wider sense are our discourses made real. However what is less well understood is the way in which nature is ‘constructed’ in the process of achieving built form outcomes.

Discourse Analysis focuses on investigating the different kinds of meta-discourses that create meaning for different kinds of objects and groups of people in the world. Aspects of Discourse Analysis are used as a basis for investigation into how nature is constructed within a built environment / planning discourse. Six individuals having particular roles associated with two areas of green-field development resulted in six cases for analysis. Interviews were carried out with the individuals. Qualitative methods were employed to analyse the transcribed interviews.

The results confirm that nature, like the built environment, is discursively constructed, and that there are three outcomes. The first outcome places nature within different regimes that enables the achievement of built environment / planning outcomes. The second construction sees nature having an experiential effect on individuals, who seek to recreate their experiences within such built form outcomes. The third sees nature being constructed as an independent agent.

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**List of Acronyms**

BE – built environment

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

DCS – Discourse Cognition Society (triangle)

EN – experiential nature

GT – Grounded Theory

N – nature

NE – natural environment (nature)

NI – nature independent

NS – nature serves

RMA – Resource Management Act
Chapter One

Introduction

The thesis began with Anne Whiston Spirn’s book *The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design* (Spirn 1984), which I bought in a Seattle second-hand bookstore in the early 1990s. It examined the interface between the built environment and natural systems such as air, water and soil. Her book established an essential link between the built environment and its natural surroundings; the built environment affects the natural environment. The realisation that the built environment has effects (both positive and negative) on the natural environment brought to the fore the place of the natural environment within our built environments. No longer was it a mute backdrop against which the built was created. Since that time, there have been a multiplicity of interests and influences that have shaped this thesis.

Spirn’s book was a precursor to the interests that are to the forefront of public consciousness today; the built environment and ecology. Particular attention to the built environment, expressed variously as Urban Design or the Green Building movement \(^1\), has in recent times undergone a renaissance of sorts, while the prospect of climate change raised the sensitive ecological dimensions of our planet into view for the public at large.

In the wider New Zealand community, there is a concern, not so well defined or articulated, about the level of poor quality urban design evident within the built environment in some urban areas. This prompted a number of related initiatives.

The continual rise the built form as an issue to be ‘solved’ is demonstrated by the increasing attention paid to it. We see increasing popular commentary about it, and note

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the development of Urban Design for example, as an educational offering within universities in NZ (The School of Architecture and Planning at the University of Auckland for example, offers a Masters degree in Urban Design). Central government committed funding to the Ministry for the Environment to develop a specific ‘Urban’ team in response to such criticism, which pursued the implementation of an Urban Design Protocol, and associated initiatives. Local governments on the other hand, have developed various Urban Design initiatives. For example, in Auckland, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor had jointly in 2004/5 created a task force on urban design and introduced district plan changes which include design controls for large areas of heritage housing stock. For the central city area, the Council also established an independent Urban Design Panel to provide urban design advice on development applications. The panels’ brief was later widened to include medium and large-scale development both within the central city, and beyond. All of these initiatives are representative of a focus on and discussion about the built environment, and its impact on how people perceive and use that environment.

Meanwhile, in 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a report, the fourth in a series of reports, which stated simply “Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice and rising global average sea level” (Pachauri & Reisinger 2007). The report brought climate change to the forefront of public consciousness, and established that climate, once a series of weather events that occurred independently and either beneficially or negatively affected humans, is now an interconnected system that is directly affected by human activity through the emission of greenhouse gases.

The report coincided with the release of Al Gore’s movie “An Inconvenient Truth”, in 2006. This popularised a particular scientific observation; that as the proportion of carbon dioxide rises within the atmosphere, the ambient air temperature rises as well due to the effect of global warming. Greater carbon dioxide traps more of the heat rising

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2 It is noted that Australia has acknowledged the role of urban design far sooner with university education in the subject dating from the late 1990s.
from the planet’s surface; previously the heat would be re-radiated out into space (Gore 2006).

Furthermore, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climatic Change (IPCC) released, and continues to release, a series of reports that documents this observation and the results of the change in amount of CO2 and air temperature. What is clear is that science is observing a link between concentrations of CO2, global temperature and effects on different regions worldwide; the long-term drought in Australia or abnormal rain patterns in the UK are linked to global warming. This reflects the murky and complex nature of system dynamics; the gross scale of global changes are relatively easy to observe and document while the effects that these changes have on sub-systems operating at different scales and at different regions is proportionally more difficult to discern and document.

Documented environmental and weather changes are the visible symptoms of a classic cause and effect relationship. We create built environments that rely on extraction of oil to power our lifestyles, yet in the use of such resource, we emit CO2, which accumulates in the atmosphere. The accumulation causes biophysical changes to the climate, amplifying local weather events or trends to a degree beyond ‘normal’, and beyond human systems constructed for ‘normal’ weather, affecting the built environment in a ‘feedback loop’.

**Thesis motivation**

There are two parts to the motivation for this thesis. First the built environment is of interest to me, in terms of the conceptualisation, physical design, development of planning rules and the end-use of such environments. It is of great interest to me because the built environment is somewhat ubiquitous, dominates planning discourses, forms a basis for the highest expression of aesthetics within an urban environment and has effects on the natural environment.

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Questions about links between the built environment and planning rules was presaged by my Masters of Planning thesis that examined the specific link between planning rules and the development and performance of public plazas built over a period from 1970s through to early 1990s within the CBD built environment (Dempsey 2003). Investigations revealed a critical lack of linkage between ongoing planning rule development seen in four iterations of land use planning schemes during this time, and observations about how the built environment, enacted by an existing set of planning rules, responded to public plaza user needs. The existing rules specified the location of plazas constructed in private sector buildings within the Auckland Central Business District. Observations revealed that these kinds of plazas tended to be less well used than comparable plazas that were located on public land, indicating that possibly little attention was paid by the Council to the eventual end use of the plaza. If the research observations were typical of plaza use over time, then it is reasonable to suppose that the levels of plaza use seemed not to have influenced, over a period of 15 years and four iterations of plan changes, the rules that specified the plaza dimensions.

Secondly, ecology and nature interests me. Not the scientific ecological concerns that focus on specific aspects of our natural world such as the number and range of species within a particular patch of forest, but rather the wider implications of ecology; what does collective knowledge about a particular patch of forest mean for ourselves? How does our knowledge about the role native vegetation planted alongside streams play in enhancing stream environments, for example, affect us?

Subsequent to the completion of my Masters degree, I participated in a study that partially studied these kind of questions, investigating the link between District Plan rules and the natural environment in an area of urban development bordering a stream that leads onto an upper Waitemata harbour (Auckland) catchment. The evidence demonstrated that as the level of benthic zinc in harbour sediments increased over time, so did the level of regulatory detail about the materials used in building developments (in contrast to the findings of my Masters study). However, there was a lag between developments in scientific knowledge (about the state of benthic zinc) and subsequent changes in regulations (Dixon & Van Roon 2005). I observed a change in
reported zinc levels and noted how this material rate of change is affected by the physical developments that occurred in the catchment. It was also noted that until research reveals this relationship between changes in physical built form and changes in natural environments, it remains hidden.

**Research Problem**

Given the research above, some salient features of the relationship between discourses, as represented by planning rules, and the physical environment become clearer. The seen or material is simply that which is literally seen with our eyes; we see trees, a park bench on the street, a plaza, changes in levels of benthic zinc, or water that runs down gutter during a rain storm. The unseen is a mixture of various discourses that combine to produce the seen built environment (the building you live in) and secondly, give meaning to it: a home, the computer, or the book. The unseen also gives meanings to the natural environment – a tree, a stream, clouds, or fish.

It is unseen or immaterial because ‘talk’, between people, about a variety of subjects, has no actual manifestation, except for the outcomes of such talk. The building in which you are reading this thesis is, for example, the seen outcome of unseen processes. The built form discourse remains immaterial, largely overshadowed by the physicality of the material outcome. The materiality of the building constantly hides the immateriality of the discursive practices that produced it.

The building where you are reading this thesis did not arise out of its own accord. Someone had an idea, a thought about the building, considering its location, other factors such as occupants, the kind of building functions needed and location of nearby infrastructural services such as public transport, motorways or power supplies. This idea was managed through particular frameworks that govern the creation of the built form. Negotiation with various parties is undertaken to secure financial and other resources (labour, materials) to physically build the structure. This process is repeated by other individuals and the accretion of such processes results in the wider physical built environment.
This dichotomy of built environments formed as a result of an intangible (rules, regulations, protocols, and the like) context, pointed the way to a deeper interest in the discursive linkages between the built and natural environments and the processes that lead to the formation of such environments. While this consideration produces two areas of interest, the built environment, and nature, there is a third area of interest; discourse.

A Ministry of Research Science and Technology project influenced the ‘discursive’ idea. Better stormwater management was the focus of a joint multi-disciplinary research program between the University of Auckland (School of Architecture and Planning), and Landcare Research, a scientific institute researching land management techniques. The Low Impact Urban Design and Development (LIUDD) project encompassed five research ‘tracks’ that focussed on different aspects of the overall goal of increasing uptake in statutory planning and in physical works the use of alternative methods of stormwater disposal. I undertook minor research work in this program, and was involved in supporting the research for a short period.

Recognising that successful uptake of new methods of stormwater disposal depends as much as on the development of good rules and regulations backed by good science as of creating awareness of different ways of handling stormwater, one research track targeted planners, responsible for writing statutory rules about stormwater disposal from land use development, and engineers, responsible for the physical disposal from public land such as streets. This track created and shaped a discourse within professional planning and engineering fields (to which most planners and civil engineers working for councils belonged) that incorporated models of alternative methods of stormwater disposal to the usual piped network. Using the ‘hard’ scientific research outputs on the use of LIUDD from other research tracks, a particular discourse was formed about the way in which LIUDD techniques could assist in not only disposing of stormwater more effectively, but do so at a cheaper overall cost to councils.

This discourse was also ‘sold’ to other organisations and persons responsible for stormwater disposal. This was done through a variety of means, such as newsletters, presentations at conferences, site visits to demonstration projects, and a series of
workshops across the country over several months where invitations were made to "to come to their safari and seminar sessions to network, enjoy audience participation, and even to steal ideas" (Landcare Research n.d.). Interestingly ‘steal[ing] ideas’ from the LIUDD researchers is seen as a way of encouraging the take up of LIUDD principles.

Although I was not aware of it at the time, it is noted how the LIUDD program implicitly understood the discursive nature of the built environment, and applied this idea to the uptake of LIUDD where it is presented as a mixed discourse; as presentation of ‘implementation strategies’ (rather than findings from a research program) and workshops and field tours of demonstration sites.4 Using this method, the program hoped to influence LIUDD take-up within local government. Later my awareness of the ‘discourse of change’ lead to a realisation arising from the LIUDD program that in order to effect change within the built form, one should attempt as much to effect change to particular discourses as much as undertake traditional forms of ‘show and tell’ that attempt to demonstrate the superior efficacy of alternative means via ‘hard evidence’.

Against the backdrop of local environmental management (represented by the LIUDD program) and global ecological issues (represented by the IPCC reports), I returned to think about the nature of the interaction between the built environment and local environmental changes. Although there is an independent quantifiable phenomenon that we can observed and generally call ‘nature’ (e.g. a stream running through a residential area, the rain that falls during the winter months, the collection of trees and animals in an urban park), these observations are mediated through a discursive framework that specifies how ‘nature’ is to be interpreted and managed. A similar discourse also relates to how the ‘built environment’ is to be constructed.

Of general interest is the way in which the built environment is constructed within discourse. What caused the built environment to come into being, to be built? I realised that no building or built structure ever comes into being of its own accord – that all built

4 A number of papers were written during the period of the research, and can be accessed at the following website address: http://www.landcarereresearch.co.nz/research/built/liudd/publications.asp
environments are the result of a particular discourses. As noted above, a person has to talk about a building, as well as having a conceptualisation of the building, which is then mediated through a process that results in the physical building.

This urbanisation process occurs within the wider framework of a capitalist society that engages in dialectical relations; between people, and between the hard, built, urban environments and soft, unbuilt, natural environments, each held within a capitalist system: “Perpetual change and an ever-shifting mosaic of environmentally and socio-culturally distinct urban ecologies … shape the process of a capitalist urbanization” (Kaika 2005, p. 22).

My particular interest however is the way in which ‘nature’, within a process of capitalist urbanisation, comes into being. This raises a number of questions; how is nature viewed within the same discourse that produces the built environment? Is ‘construction’ of natural environments similar to the construction of built environments? How does the conceptualisation of ‘nature’ compare with a conceptualisation of the built environment? In light of these questions and looking at the local benthic study I participated in, I wondered if a different built form discursive construction was entered into, would it affect the choice of building materials, development construction methods, and the employment of additional or alternative land use tools that would affect the level of benthic zinc in the nearby harbour?

**Research Aim**

These questions centre on the role of nature within a built environment discourse. In some manner, nature is linked to the built beyond the placement and construction of the built form within nature. One common factor is a discourse that creates the physical built environment, but must also at the same time, name ‘nature’. Understanding the specific discursive context of nature during the process of creating the built environment can assist in understanding the impact of discursively producing ‘nature’ in such processes will have on nature. The key outcome of the research is to establish that the production of the discursive built environment contains within it a discursively constructed nature.
**Literature Review**

These questions lead to consideration of the field within which to situate the research. Concern with the discursive built environment suggests urban planning, as planning deals with future built environments conceived by means of particular and situated discourses. The focus on nature suggests a focus on the environmental field. An overarching concern is with discourses about both the built environment and natural environment. This suggests that the appropriate field to locate the research is within a field that concerns itself with aspects of discourse. These three influences meet in Communicative Planning.

Nature is the ‘container’ within which the built environment is placed, and is assumed to form a backdrop to built environment discourses. If it can be discursively constructed, other equally important objects within the planning field can also be constructed (and by implication, reconstructed) such as housing or access to particular resources. Communicative Planning theory can be utilised as a means of understanding the contexts in which a discursive construction of nature takes place, while Discourse Analysis can provide a method by which we can examine such constructions.

Habermas’s Communicative Action framework, influencing the theoretical field, sees actions, towards or about the world around us, embedded within communication practices between individuals or groups of people, where such practices establish shared understandings and meanings about the world (Healey 1992; Healey 1996; Hammersley 1997). This framework forms the basis for recent theoretical understandings about planning, shifting attention from an emphasis on developing rational-technocratic planning towards the ways in which planning can be broadened out beyond such narrow technical confines, into the diverse communicative acts within planning.

Planning is about the creation of future worlds – principally the built world, but also nature – that have particular states, for example, more buildings here, less there, or more trees in this street. To understand how people decide to create the best future world it is necessary to understand the discursive practices that occur between them, figured as the process of ‘inter-subjective becoming’ (Healey 1992), where groups of
people discursively enact worlds to come. Fischler notes that this attention to communicative practices is nothing new: “Designers or managers have always talked, argued, and debated. But they have done so in different ways over time” (Fischler 2000). The grounds upon which argument and discussion have taken place may have changed, but the essential observation remains; decision makers have always engaged in discourses about built environments.

How we understand the practice of planning is part of the academic debate surrounding this field. Part of Communicative Planning’s theoretical contribution to the wider debate about planning is the identification of two assumptions; the first is that planning discourses are the best way to look into planning practice, and the second takes discursive interaction as the most important element of planning practice (Fischler 2000). The latter refers to the way that planning goals are created and agreed between various stakeholders through discussion and ‘talk’.

Use of communicative action practices have been labelled as an ‘emerging paradigm’ by Innes (1995). This emerges from broader debates within the planning field about how best to theoretically understand planning practices, and secondly, how best to carry out planning practice. Such understandings in the past have been based on viewing planning, and its practices, through ‘rational’ lenses, where practice was understood to be process orientated, underpinned by rationalism, and applied through the application of systemic analysis and logical argument in technical settings.

An emergent paradigm is identified by Innes that brings forward the analysis and argumentation, extending rational practice through interactive, communicative activities, into forums involving a wide range of affected persons who are actors in the events that follow. The ways these actors (planners, the general public and other specialists) debate and talk about the issues concerning the future states of the built environment is the essence of what he is calling “the new paradigm” (1995). The emphasis is on communication within planning, and not the ‘systemic analysis and logical argumentation’ method of planning. This ensures that attention is paid to the ways that communicative practices shape future outcomes, and how changes in communication will change future outcomes. This means that the rational-technocratic
planning framework is viewed as a *tool* that assists in planning, rather than a framework that holds the origin of planning initiatives (Healey 1992).

One way of understanding communicative practices is to treat actors as authors, who generate stories about the future (Throgmorton 2008). These stories are not simply for the purpose of persuading others of a particular desirable future. The way in which planners, and others involved in the process of planning, write and talk, influences the shape of the place within the ‘story’; Throgmorton identifies this as “community, character and culture” (ibid, p. 104). The latter positions Communicative Planning theory as both persuasive and constitutive (White 1984; 1985). It is not just that ‘stories’ are told about how future built environments will be, but how they will *come* to be, and the expression of these through active and conscious specification of methodologies and tools required necessary to achieve such futures.

Throgmorton sees Communicative Planning theory as a sharp departure from a value-free rational and technocratic theoretical approach which views the world through objective and value-free lenses; however, he raises issues of ethics in such views. This is because this persuasive and constitutive storytelling fora sees actors discussing the *kinds of communities, characters and cultures* they want to help create. And this is a fundamental ethical question. Why so? Constituting a future-world embeds within it particular ethical views about that world and the role of stakeholders within that world. For instance, choices are made, by actors, in the creation of a particular ‘storyline’, about allocation of built environment resources to benefit only a few actors, or multiple actors.

Healey (1997) suggests that collaborative Communicative Planning processes can address ‘fragmentation’ seen in planning issues, where multiple actors intersect across multiple spheres of activity in pursuit of particular planning outcomes, such as a new housing development, or the expansion of a mall. Collaboration, Healey suggests will result in outcomes that are more effective. This is not just because of the greater involvement of persons affected by planning decisions; it is their active search for change in their own ‘culture’ that engenders commitment to a particular outcome. Healey explains this is specifically about “how to share spaces and make places, that is,
transformative work” (Healey 1997, p. 247). People envisage new outcomes while contributing to creating new built futures, but at the same time, are shaped by these new outcomes. For example, a new community centre will change the dynamics of the community it is located in, and in turn influence the ‘culture’ of that community that will involve use of the centre.

The advocacy (rather than the theory) of Communicative Planning can be summarised as enabling free and open communication about various planning issues between multiple actors. The communication should recognise the diversity of views held by the actors, and work to engage in practices of critique about the process of sharing views. It is argued this results in planning outcomes that are more responsive to communities and societies, and both environmentally and socially just.

One strand of critique takes issue with the ‘utopian’ bias implicitly held within Communicative Planning (Huxley & Yiftachel 2000; McGuirk 2001). This bias assumes that all participants in a planning exercise based on communicative action theory arrive at the table with a willingness to contribute openly, and will have their contribution equally valued and incorporated in the final outcome. It also ignores a key aspect of Habermas’s argument, which is that the actors subscribe to a common ‘world view’ of values (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 1998). This is a common set of ethical values around communication practices and around moral concerns about the world around us, equally shared by actors (Habermas 1987). These are ‘brought to the table’ in a discourse, where the force of such norms, and not the force of a assumed willingness of participants to ‘share’ talk during discussion, ensures that the outcomes from communicative action are socially acceptable and ‘right’ for the outcome sought.

However, this is a pre-condition that may well not be met in all situations. Values regarding outcomes may be different, for example, a person wants to demolish a heritage building to operate a car park, or ethical norms regarding communication practices may be different, for example, a politician engages in consultation after having made an unpopular decision that adversely affects a neighbourhood (Olsson 2009). It is important here to distinguish between common shared values, and individual values.
within a communicative planning context. Individual values should not be highlighted at the expense of communal values that seek to shape communal planning outcomes.

Furthermore, applying Communicative Planning theory can risk focusing exclusively on the arena of communicative acts between individuals without taking into account the wider values and assumptions held by each person, such as different configurations of power, or the influence of the political economy (Yiftachel and Huxley 2000; Mannberg & Wihlborg 2008). These values may be withheld, or misrepresented, or disguised so that the actor engaged in such practice may achieve outcomes that are particular, rather than shared outcomes.

Pragmatism is an alternative view to Communicative Planning. “It incorporates ideas of a practical conception of reason, in terms of communication and negotiation between and among parties, the recognition of difference and different interpretations and representations and the complex relationships between different communities” (J. Hillier 1998). In this, the Pragmatic planner underscores the ethics involved in recognition of differences, which moves the planner away from planning as a ‘value-free, objective’ exercise.

Pragmatic planning is seen as a means of overcoming deficiencies in a planning system that places nature as the ‘other’: “Planning, like many other agencies, has created its own discursive space. However, the discursive space of planning separates/purifies the natural and human environments into different domains” (Hillier 1998) denying nature standing as a party, and enabling nature to be used without limit. In response, Hillier advocates for a reflexive understanding of the responsibilities planners have towards nature (and others, such as those on whose behalf they plan). Such reflection incorporates understandings of ‘power’ – power over and power to decide by planners.

However, which ‘nature’ is the planner to be responsive to? An ontology is proposed of different discursive constructions of nature; ‘scientific, colonial, romantic, national, ecological, ecology, conservation, commodity, Aboriginal’ (Sources: Frawley (1992); Whatmore and Boucher (1993); Wolch (1996), in Hillier 1998), all of which are found
within various discourses. This ontology points to the particular contexts of a discursive nature; not included are built environment discourses.

Hillier in conclusion believes that the:

theoretical frameworks set out above enable investigation of what are these ethical spaces, who and what are included in the moral community, what rights and responsibilities are assigned to nature as compared to humans. Is there any evidence that Enlightenment-inspired modernist conceptions of 'man' versus 'nature' might be giving way to a postmodern expansion of social relations to include the nonhuman and cyborg [i.e. mix of nature and human]? Are planners still clinging to a liberalist/utilitarian praxis for fear of the vulnerability to uncertainty that pragmatic planning would entail?

Her arguments provide a useful view on the research question, and in particular, for understanding the results. It calls into question reliance on existing ‘utilitarian’ methods of planning, and sees pragmatic planning as a means to breaking past the perceived shortcomings of technical planning.

Hillier’s clarion call offers possibilities for ongoing development of planning theory and changes in practice. Being ethically pragmatic however requires still engagement with communicative practices in discussion about those ethics, and which ‘nature’ is represented. Communicative Planning offers an arena within with to situate this research, and to extend the bounds of such field through a focus on the discourse-producing self and its relation with nature.

The second area of literature review is methodological, examining the use of discourse analysis as a means to understanding planning problems, particularly within the broad area of human-nature relationships.

Planning benefits some, disadvantages others and nature can be seen as a means by which gains from planning can be achieved. Whatmore & Boucher (1993) note “the role of planning discourses and practices in the social construction of nature through the example of recent debates about the use of planning gain mechanisms to generate environmental ‘benefits’.” A focus here is on the ‘social construction’ of nature, which they argue has ‘power as an idea, rather than as practice’. In this sense, nature figures within discourses as a means to an end. The rise of nature as a tool within the British
planning system is a recent development according to Whatmore and Boucher. Nature was figured as a container against which the built was placed, before being constructed as an object to protect, changing again to ‘marketable assets’ (Healey & Shaw 1994). This indicates changing conceptions of nature within a cultural framework.

Within New Zealand, Discourse Analysis as a tool has been used in a number of different research contexts: examination of the rise of the Urban Design paradigm, noting that “not only do urbanist discourses have a concern with fashioning physical environments, but they also attempt to procure specific social outcomes through the built form” (Thompson-Fawcett 2003); examination of the neo-liberal project at work in reshaping the agricultural sector (Liepins & Bradshaw 1999); and how rural communities maintain ‘rural-ness’ within Australia and NZ (Liepins 2000). Discourse analysis has also been deployed in assessing the (recent) debate about using Genetically Modified Organisms (Davenport & Leitch 2009).

This range of methodological discourse analysis research on issues between various objects or spaces and nature, indicate that nature is either discursively constructed in a number of ways in service of particular cultural systems, or is dealt with tangentially. The New Zealand context of the proposed research will confirm the role of discourse in production of particular environments, and contribute towards greater understanding of the means by which such production occurs.

This review of literature reveals the theoretical contexts within which the thesis stands. What emerged is the way Communicative Planning provides theoretical lenses within which to locate the discourses subject to this enquiry, while Discourse Analysis can permit study of those discourses.

**Thesis Question**

Following identification of the research aim, and considering the literature research, I narrowed my questioning down. The built environment is the deliberate result of discourse. This conception can be juxtaposed with the fact that built environment is placed into a ‘container’ that is nature. A discursively created physical object (a building) is placed within an already physical natural environment. This narrows the
study to a tension between the unseen discursive environments and physical material environments.

As indicated above, the research problem and consequently, the research aim, stands on the proposition that people’s perception is limited to the seen, that is, the physical built and natural environments. The wider issue is how the community can shift its thinking from only recognizing the seen built and natural environments towards additionally recognising the existence of the unseen that is, the discourses surrounding the built environment and nature. Investigating the discursive construction of the seen, particularly nature, is a crucial first step.

Knowing that discourse produces the built environments enables recognition of the discursive outcomes. Recognition implies ability to change the specifics of production. Consequently, the primary research question raised therefore from this issue is ‘Is there a discursive construction of nature within a built environment discourse?’

Discourses about built environments produces these environments; therefore discourse about nature within a built environment discourse will equally ‘produce’ nature in some manner even though nature is already physical (that is, it is not created in the same way as a building is and not needed to be ‘built’).

The thesis question serves two functions; it pays attention on a possible critical aspect of the connection between our built environments and nature, and secondly, it focuses the research on the necessary activity needed to answer the question.

**Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is in two parts, a theoretical part that establishes the grounds for researching the question, and an investigative part that follows on from the theory. Firstly, we examine theoretical perspectives informed by the thesis question. In Chapter Two, Foucault forms a basis for the thesis question, where he explicated a method of discursive construction. However, if we accept that there is a discursive ‘reality’ as the outcome of that method, then we must consider the origin of that reality; the discourse-producing self.
Foucault does not examine the self in his writings, preferring to focus on structures (institutions, social relations) produced by the self, necessitating a turn to three writers that offer different perspectives on the self. But these perspectives are not simply about the self, although they are written that way. They offer, in a different view, a model for relationships with nature that could both exist both within the physical (seen) dimensions of our world, and within the (unseen) discursive worlds we create. We need to understand how the self could discursively relate to nature, as this relationship will have implications for how we construct our built environments within nature.

The first of these writers, May (2005) introduces the idea of transcendence, where there are two objects, beings, ideas, or things, and one is superior to the other in some manner. This relationship describes our current relationship with nature, where it is physically shaped to receive the built environment.

Deleuze (May 2005) offers the idea of immanence, where all things arise from plane of possibilities, expressing particular attributes as they do so. In this oppositional viewpoint everything within our sight arises from this plane, including ourselves. We share a common originating point as everything, so in this sense, nature is equal to self.

Naess (1973) offers Deep Ecology as a way of addressing the relationship between the self and nature describing a process of self-realisation as means to cultivate a deep and broad relationship with nature. This can be seen as a way of ‘grounding’ immanence.

These three writers give us three distinct perspectives about how the self could relate to nature. If we understand, following Foucault that discourse constitutes reality, then could these relationships be found in built environment discourses?

To answer this, we turn to a second step in the thesis, data generation, with a re-focus on the thesis question. Development of cases and a methodology using a computer program that enables coding of the text is found in Chapter Three. The cases focus on interviews with selected representative stakeholders who participate in the planning system. The resulting data is then interrogated both within Chapters Four and Five.

Chapter Four engages in discourse analysis, while the data is then further interrogated within a Critical Discourse Analysis framework against the three perspectives of the self.
and nature in Chapter Five. The analysis and discussion are concurrent within Chapters Four and Five, and form the basis to answer the thesis question in the following concluding chapter. The result also holds implications for the planning profession, which are discussed in this chapter.

**Definition of ‘discourse’, ‘nature’ and ‘self’**

The terms ‘discourse’, ‘nature’ and ‘self’ cover wide practical and theoretical territories. At this stage is it helpful to give brief definitions for each. Discourse is defined as a complex and integrated system of signifiers and signified based on cognitive beliefs, derived from standing ‘sentences’, held by various actors and stakeholders, that then influence behaviour. While this will be further explained in Chapter Two, the essential point of the definition is that discourse is a complex and integrated system of components that work to ‘create’ particular outcomes.

Nature is defined as the physical nature that one sees surrounding us i.e. trees, water, rocks, clouds, soil, plants or fishes. That is, everything that is not man-made. This definition is again further extended and explained in Chapter Two.

While it is relatively easy to define discourse and nature, on the matter of the self, definitions become more problematic. Reference to the Oxford English Dictionary indicates that the Self is a person’s essential being that is distinct from other’s essential beings ([http://www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)). But that leaves open the question; what is this essential being?

There are four ways to define the self, referred to as the ‘subject’ in psychological studies. The first three refer to particular contexts that frame the subject; as the grammatical subject embodied in the pronoun I; as a political and legal subject framed by politics and law; a philosophical subject, a substance for reaching philosophical understandings about the self i.e. who am I? The fourth view sees the self as an interior state with “…an intense focus of rich and immediate experience that defies system, logic, and order and that goes out into the world in a complex, inconsistent, and highly charged way.” It is the fourth sense of the self that is “…generally under[stood] as our selfhood or personality” (Mansfield 2000, p. 2-4).
The second definition, a political-legal self, is the one adopted here. That is to say, there is a wider NZ specific planning framework that situates the research interviewees within the planning arena, performing particular roles. This framework creates a particular self that performs within the framework to achieve particular outcomes. This self will be evident in the discussion on case selection in Chapter Three, and in subsequent discussions arising from the research in Chapters Four and Five.

However, a planning arena contextually defined self does not necessarily perform according to context consistently; this self, like all contextually constructed selves (the family self, the work self, the legal self for example), is subject to the internally experiential self that functions within the holistic world on a continual basis. That is, the internal ‘rich and immediate exper[iential]’ self both forms a basis upon which other external contextual selves are constructed, and influences those constructions. Our internalised experiences colour our professional selves. This particular internal experiential self is the one referred in the consideration of the relationship between self and nature.

**Theoretical Frame**

A micro-level view of the discursive production of the built environment indicates that the production is undertaken by a discourse producing self. At this level, we are not interested in the relationship between the self and the (consequential) built environment, but in the relationship between the self and nature, which lies outside the discursive built environment.

Nature in this view literally surrounds the discourse producing self, and is the ‘container’ that receives a discursively produced built environment. Therefore the character of this relationship between the self and nature as indicated by discourses is of interest. This brief theoretical outline helps shape the body of the thesis.

**Contribution of proposed research**

Attention within the Communicative Planning theory is to relations between stakeholders in the planning field, and how shared communication practices shapes future planning outcomes (built environments or community networks for example).
This focuses attention on the wider inter-subjective arena, and the subjects of debate (Healey 1992).

A critical knowledge gap in the theory is a lack of consideration to the discourse producing self, and its relations with nature. While this gap brings the view within theory down to a micro-level (in contrast to the macro view of planning seen here), the cumulative and collaborative nature of planning means that the impact of this gap could potentially become one of significance in planning outcomes.

Given that we ‘inhabit our speech’, a change in planning discourses as a result of greater understanding about the relationship between the self and nature as expressed through discourse could result in improved environmental outcomes. Potentially, the built environment would be more sensitive to nature, leading to better results for both environments, and in particular, for humans who inhabit both environments.

Additionally, the interrogation and explication the discursive construction of nature as found within the built environment discourse can in turn inform discursive constructions of a wide range of subjects found within the wider planning field, for example, transportation planning or the role of the urban forest in the Environmental Management and Planning field.

**Summary**

From observations, readings, prior research and thoughts about how the built environment comes into being, and the role of nature within that process, my interests developed and focussed on the critical role that discourse plays in such processes.

This gave rise to the formulation of a thesis problem for investigation, guided by a research question that seeks to investigate if there is a discursive production of nature within a built environment discourse. Consideration of the question lead into investigation of literature, particularly within the field of Communicative Planning, as the underlying focus of the thesis is a discursive view of planning.

The literature review indicated a gap in the field; in particular the relationship that discourse producing self has with nature, while participating in communicative arenas,
is not clear, and the discursive outcomes of that relationship. Communicative Planning looks to the discursive relationships between various stakeholders within a planning arena; critically, what the relationship between such stakeholders and nature is, and how that is expressed discursively in the planning arena is of interest here.

A theoretical framework was developed that addresses that particular space within the Communicative Planning field, and provides an overall perspective on the thesis research. This perspective indicates the way in which the research can contribute to knowledge within the wider theoretical field.

These introductory discussions provide a foundation for the next five chapters. To open up the research, it is necessary to investigate and establish the theoretical foundations that go on to shape the unfolding research process. This is the intent of the following chapter.
Chapter Two

Theoretical Considerations

Introduction
There is an embarrassment of theoretical riches and insights that one could use to frame the arguments within this thesis, including the oppositional basis of ontologically discursive and Naessian epistemological perspectives, the *a priori* Foucauldian historical insights, the Deleuzian depths of immanence in contrast to transcendence and the value seeking Naessian perspectives. Each of the theoretical perspectives identified contributes to an overarching framework for not only explaining various aspects of the thesis question, but also influencing the analyses used in the research to investigate evidential problems within the field of human-nature relationships.

This chapter provides the basis for understanding discursive constructions, investigates a working definition of ‘nature’ and ‘discourse’, and outlines three theoretical perspectives that are a critical response to the central questions of study. Two levels of discourse analysis are discussed in the final part of the chapter. These actions establish the foundations for critical study in later chapters.

Chapter Two has three related parts that form an overarching framework. Foucault working with the insightful observations that our various realities are discursively produced is the focus of Part A, which also looks at discourse and defines discourse and nature. This provides a foundation for the thesis.

A relationship between the self and nature can be based on three different theoretical perspectives. This is explained in Part B (Three models of self in relation to nature). The first of these, transcendent relationships (May 2005), forms one kind of relationship whereby the qualities of transcendental relationships are considered as a starting point for understanding the link between the natural and built environments. In contrast, Deleuze (in May 2005) outlines the second kind of relationship, immanence, while
Naess (1973) provides critical insight from a deep ecological perspective on human relationships with the natural world.

Part C examines the methodologies used to operationalize the theoretical perspectives seen in the previous parts. Discourse analysis problems are reviewed before discussion about the chosen method of critical discourse analysis.

Each of these parts provides a basis for Chapters Four and Five that discuss the results of data analysis. Identifying the chapters where the different perspectives are applied is a reminder that there is no single theoretical thread running through the thesis. Rather, the theory is called upon to understand different areas of discussion in the thesis.

**Part A – Discourse and Definition of Discourse and Nature**

In exploring the discursive construction of nature, we need to understand what is meant by discourse creating an object or subject. Understanding this forms the foundation for subsequent theoretical and research discussions.

**Foucault: Construction of the object or subject**

While discursive production of the built environment may seem intuitively obvious, the process by which this occurs needs explanation. Summarising the work of Foucault, Feindt and Oels explain that:

> For Foucault, a discourse is constitutive of ‘reality’ in that it physically shapes reality. A discourse constitutes specific ways of being engaged with the world and of being related to it (Feindt & Oels 2005, p. 164).

Here we see two things: firstly, a link between discourse and physical realities; and, secondly, discourses shaping particular relationships ‘with the world’. The idea of a discursively produced reality evolved from Foucault’s work investigating minorities, such as the mentally ill and those of different sexualities from a dominant heterosexuality. He was interested in how discourse frames and constructs these minorities in certain ways at different times in history, as examples in his work.5

Viewing the mentally ill through medical ‘frames’ or lenses links medical discourse with

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5 A good example of this work can be seen in his book looking at sexuality. *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge. (original Histoire de la sexualite: La volonte de savoir. 1984, Gallimard, Paris.)*

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the physical subject. Ways of relating to those of different sexualities is shaped by particular discourses about how to do so. The discursive frames and ways of relating are not static as Foucault indicated in his studies.

Oksala explains how objects are subject to changes in discourse:

To say that homosexuality did not exist before certain scientific practices and historical developments made it possible is not to say that certain actions and sensations that we now associate with it did not exist: it means that they were formed as an object of scientific analysis – objectified – in different ways in different historical practices. At one time certain actions and sensations were objectified as mental illness, at another ... as mortal sin for example (Oksala 2007, p. 13).

Changes in regimes of practices shapes changes in the subject that is being discursively constructed, but at the same, defines the boundaries by which that subject is constructed. Scientific analysis, or other kinds of discourse such as social or economic analysis, “defines and produces the objects of our knowledge” (Hall 2003, p.72) within its analytical field for certain reasons. Firstly, to achieve an outcome; a medical cure or a means of enabling production of goods and services for example. The process of definition and production then governs the way a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. Secondly, it also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others (ibid). In other words, meanings are associated with the structures and rules that tell people how to ‘see’ and consequently treat the subject. If the structure or meaning governing the discursive production of the subject changes then the subject itself changes. This is not to say that the subject physically or otherwise changes; it is the meaning and consequent perception of the subject that changes:

Just as a discourse ‘rules in’ certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write or conduct oneself, so also, by definition, it ‘rules out’, limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about (Hall 2003, p. 72).

The idea of using discourse to produce certain human subjects and physical objects can be applied to other domains, such as the built environment. To give an example of the reality described, the building in which you are reading this did not, as indicated in Chapter One, arise spontaneously, nor is it a product of something mysterious,
operating behind the scenes. It came into being because someone talked about it, perceived the need and conceived of the idea for such a building and its functions. Shaping the idea leads to the creation of a specific discourse. That idea was mediated within a dialogue between different stakeholders (e.g. building’s proponent, financiers, architects, local government officials, and end users).

The building end user (or its surrogate, the developer) specifies the buildings functionality while the architect, within a framework given by the client, specifies building materials to be used. The physical realisation of the idea resulted from the combination of the efforts of a range of stakeholders, sustained by discourse. The resulting product, the building you are currently in, points to the link between discourse and ‘reality’ as posited by Foucault. It is important to note that Foucault did not consider the role or status of particular individuals or actors within discourse; his focus was on the wider macro-scale of discourse.

Nonetheless, what is shown in this example is that there is an actor, who engages in discourse. That discourse contains meanings about a physical or non-physical subject or object in our world. Others hear and receive this discourse, and participate in it, contributing also their discourses with attached meanings. This process gives the subject or object cognitive form and the meanings are then attached to the subject, independent from speakers. This introduction to discursively produced built realities will be further explored in the thesis.

As a backdrop to this argument, Foucault explores a change in world-view that occurred between the 16th and 17th centuries where a ternary descriptive system explaining the world was abandoned in favour of a binary system (Foucault 2007, p. 60). There was a shift in world-view and language, according to Foucault. Previously, language had a ternary structure – a signifier, a signified and a conjuncture. The signifier is the representational sign that is placed upon objects and things. The signified is the object or thing receiving the signifier (man for example). The conjuncture bound the two together in comparison; things were analogous, similar, had a resemblance (Foucault 2007). The conjecture stitched the signifier and signified together by means of reference to proof. The signifier in the sentence, man is like a daisy, for example, is the word ‘man’,
being placed upon that object that bears all the qualities of what is known as a man. The signified here is that object upon which the signifier ‘man’ is bestowed. The conjecture is *daisy*, given as an example of how the signifier ‘man’, representing the object ‘man’ has similar qualities (faces to the sun, roots/feet to the earth) to another object bearing the signifier ‘daisy’, establishing proof by comparison on the basis of things having resemblances, or was similar to or analogous to another object.

Foucault noted that, often, nature was used as a reference point for comparison and used as conjectures as a means of organising and cataloguing reality. In this way, everything was connected to everything else in a vast web, “... the world is linked together like a chain. At each point of contact there begins and ends a link that resembles the one before it and the one after it ...” (Foucault 2007, p. 21). This web was altered through the abandonment of the conjecture, leaving only the signifier and signified, operating within a binary system.

When the conjecture is lost, the signifier and signified is all that remains. The signifier is then given by comparison to a list of attributes that are rationally compared to another list of similar attributes other signifiers have (Foucault, 2007). This method of rational analysis has a fixed nature. Once a thing is given a particular signifier, the concept associated with the signifier is fixed, based on the observed attributes of the object under consideration. The presumption is that the object receiving the signifier does not change its attributes. That is, until a new rationalism comes into being that recasts the thing so signified with new signifiers based on a new assessment.

A broad cultural trajectory of rationalism arose alongside this elemental shift in language. This involved the development of a rational, economic framework, reflective of changes in language and of a meta-discourse of rationalism. It also establishes the primacy of the signifier and the signified relationship.

If we accept a power exists permitting one to engage in a process of signification (placing signs that have meanings), then, indeed, Foucault would argue that discourse produces a ‘reality’, one that is congruent with our agreed set of ‘facts’ and made up of signifiers. We talk our world into being by anointing it with signifiers that represent
qualities, attributes, facts, meanings of things and concepts. We bring into ‘being’ our built environment and, in a similar fashion, we bring into ‘being’ nature. The physical built form and discursive natural and built worlds are social constructions. We live therefore inside a reality based on the power to bestow signifiers and a power based on a binary language system that forms the basis for a ‘rational’ signified world.

This leads us into two considerations: firstly an understanding of how objects, for example, a tree, obtain their meaning (that is, what does ‘tree’ mean?), and secondly, the nature of power within discourse.

**Meaning making**

Having established that a discourse of signifiers and signified within a complex societal structure creates our world, we need to investigate how signifiers gain meaning about what it is referring to. Meaning can be seen as a secondary and critical layer beneath discourse. It gives shape to the discourses, and consequently, our worlds.

Meaning (that which is indicated or expressed by a symbol) embedded within a signifier, ‘nature’ for example, stems from beliefs we have about the natural world around us. Reference here is made to Hahn (1973), to further explain belief statements. His anthropological essay dealt with the investigation of beliefs held by members of a foreign society. Beliefs are “... defined as “general propositions about the world (consciously) held to be true” (Quine 1960, in Hahn 1973, p. 208).

Hahn (ibid) proposes that beliefs held by people are “... explicated as exhibiting a disposition to a behaviour symbolic of that belief.” He refines the nexus between beliefs held and behaviour to “... description and analysis of ‘phenomenal worlds’, where a phenomenal world is a consciously held representation of the world. Thus, “belief” is defined as a part or aspect of the individual's awareness [of the phenomenal world], but in behavioural terms” (1973, original emphasis, p. 208). That is, people create a cognitive world, becoming actors driven by beliefs to undertake certain actions in accordance with those beliefs. Hahn’s analysis, therefore, is of consciously held representation and behaviour but the difficulty of examining unconscious beliefs is outlined in his work.
Further, there are, after Quine, two kinds of beliefs: firstly, 'standing sentences' where the truth of the belief is a 'standing matter' as a generally accepted explanation for something within (a particular) society. Secondly, in contrast are 'occasional matters' that are beliefs related to a temporal and situational aspect; for example, that it is raining, or the baby cried (Hahn 1973). Only the first kind of belief applies within the research.

Standing matters refer to societal beliefs which are generally held. Such beliefs are held with reference to an assumed societal agreement about the issue at the heart of the belief. A current example is agreement societal agreement about the issue at the heart of the belief. A current example is agreement about vehicle transport modes which could include a belief about the efficacy of a particular kind of transport mode; that is, the private motor vehicle is the most efficient way of transporting people. Standing sentences that express this view draw on a meta-social discourse about the efficacy of different kinds of transport options.

Hahn believes a conscious awareness coupled with behaviour demonstrating belief is temporal in nature: “‘Belief’ and ‘belief system’ are concepts generally held applicable to individuals at given instances of time” (Hahn 1973, p. 209, original emphasis). The duration of these ‘instances’ is not stated by Hahn, but if we follow a cognitive actor driven by a particular belief, we can see that the action will have a temporal dimension, which may last for a matter of moments, or for a matter of years.

In essence, beliefs give substance to meanings. For example, in terms of the built environment, we can say that the signifier ‘house’, represented by the object resembling what is culturally known as a house, has meaning informed by beliefs about the object known as a ‘house’. These are formed by standing matters about what we agree and understand about built structures that functions as a house. The functions of the house are determined by the need for such a structure held by actors and stakeholders. These beliefs about such structures inform a discourse about the construction of a house as it is mediated between various stakeholders.

Adopting Hahn's definitions about beliefs means there are three implications for this thesis. Firstly, the results of the data analysis are general and temporal in nature, rather
than specific. The temporal nature of beliefs and the extent to which a belief system can be discerned reflects the interviewee’s role, where they are interviewed, the kinds of questions asked or discussions entered into at the time of the interview. These conditions would elicit some beliefs, but not all beliefs, unless they were asked to detail them.

Secondly, Hahn proposes that belief and behaviour are linked. Since this thesis research intends to understand the dimensions of a discursively constructed nature, it does not follow how a discursively constructed nature was put into place through the behaviour of interviewees. Therefore future longitudinal research could be undertaken to understand the link between beliefs about nature, behaviour based on those beliefs and any outcome arising as a result of those beliefs.

Finally, beliefs are expressed verbally, and it is assumed that “Verbal utterances ... are the principal form of symbolic behaviour.” Such behaviour is “... symbolic for a given individual only if it is recognised by the individual to be a device of reference ...” (Hahn 1973, original emphasis). When a speaker expresses the belief that, for example, motorways contribute to economic growth, the speaker is expressing symbolic behaviour based on this belief and may go on, depending on his or her position in society, to detail the ways in which this belief may be put into action.

Returning to Foucault, and in developing his line of thought, May (2005), thinking about the distinction between a material, tangible world that is ‘physical, spatially limited [and] inert’, and suggestive of the built environment, in contrast to one based in the mind, which is ‘less limited [than the physical world] (although more limited than God), active and constituting of the material world’ reflects that:

This does not mean that the mental world actually creates the material world. Constitution does not imply creation. It is not as though there were only mental substance and then, by some miracle, physical substance was created from it. What is created is not the material but the world. The what it is of the material world, its character, is constituted by the mental world, woven from the material world’s inert threads into a meaningful complex. It is only a mind that can make a world. Without it there is simply silence (May 2005, p. 20, original emphasis).
This quote brings out an important distinction: “What is created is not the material, but the world”. This implies that the materiality of things matters less within a discourse than meaning. It is not so important that a chair is produced, or a motorway (outside of practical considerations), but the meaning of such objects is important; without meanings, the world would be a collection of objects, “spatially limited, inert”, as May suggests. More precisely, we cannot produce a world without meaning. We either must have meaning first, in order to produce the object, or, alternatively, meaning is created while the object is brought into being. Meanings can also be attached to objects already formed, such as a tree. In such attachments, the meanings need to be given life. This happens within a framework of power relations.

**Discursive power**

To signify something is to engage in power. While power, in a classical ‘power over’ sense, is not of prime consideration in the thesis question, it does form a wider backdrop to it. Discursive construction of an object inevitably involves an exercise of power. That is, to create signifiers or endow the construction with particular properties, allowing the actor to influence the shape of the discourse. It is important to note that there are two aspects being seen here. Firstly, there is the character of the power being displayed or used and, secondly, there is the effect of that power within the discourse.

Regarding the issue of the character of power, it is important to appreciate that notions of power are embedded within discourse (Foucault 2007; Mumby 2004; Sharp & Richardson 2001, Hardy & Phillips 2004), and related to power, the status of the person engaging in such discourse (van Dijk 1993a). Power, along with ideology, works to privilege certain meanings; embedding these within discourse serves to achieve outcomes sought by those exercising such meanings. Power is reserved to the person(s) creating signifiers, who endow them with particular meanings (based on beliefs), and in turn these are given to the multitude of things in the world, thereby enabling him or her to structure the world as they see fit. This is a character of power.

Once an object or thing is ‘signified’ then the conditions of that object become relatively immutable and unchanging, because they are subject to a rationalism based on objectively observed ‘facts’. This web of signifiers requires maintenance; otherwise the
risk is that the content of the signifier may change to create new realities. Persons exercising the power to name things also exercise power to resist changes to those names and consequently to how that thing is viewed, by relying on a fixed and immobile power residing within the binary signifier/signified relationship.

From this perspective, signifiers are neutral and hold no value until the signifier is placed on the object, creating an effect of power. For instance, we use the word ‘house’ to mean a functional building, while ‘home’ is used to signify the extension of that functional building into a particular meaning for a group of individuals. A house has four walls, a roof, doors, windows, and rooms devoted to specific functions (e.g. sleeping, eating or entertaining). A home has shared memories where people eat together, play together and engage with each other.

But the house/home as a physical structure has a meaning of itself – the physical elements of the building signify the nature of the building to be a home/house. This example demonstrates the effects of (discursive) power. It serves to create the frameworks within which society operates (‘Ministry of the Environment’, ‘affordable housing’) and also physical arrangements (a paddock, a marina, a house). It is noted also that the neutrality of the sign vanishes under the influence of power.

The effects of power seen here reflect the interior cognitive world of the speaker. A house is designed and constructed along the lines of how the speaker cognitively understands and believes a house should be, the particular arrangement of rooms, or materials used. Consequently, a house, or other parts of the built environment, can be seen as reflections of and physical extensions of the cognitive mind.

A person or groups of people who have the strongest ‘talk’ or discourse get to see their building built. Another power relation is seen in the way that the building is built over nature, rather than adjacent to or within nature, that is, nature is moulded, via landscape construction to the building, rather than the building moulded to nature. However,

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6 A good example is the word ‘gay’. Formerly it meant having a ‘happy’ attitude, now it means a person of homosexual orientation. The content of the signifier ‘gay’ changed, and the word was reassigned from an ‘attitude’ to a physical person holding a particular sexual orientation.
power is not exclusively power over something. There are two kinds of power effects observed here. The first, a traditional cultural view, occurs between humans and the second, a not immediately apparent view, between humans and nature.

**Human to human power effects**

Foucault argued that power was omnipresent within social interactions between groups of people: “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault 1998, in Feindt & Oels 2005). Such omnipresent power is here conceived as arising from within interactions between humans (contrasted with a view of unidirectional source of power between humans).

Such omnipresent power is illustrated by considering that one person’s power is another person’s victimhood, in the sense they receive the action of the powerful. For power to be power, however, it needs an object (Foucault). Equally, the status of victimhood holds power in relation to the status of powerful in that without a victim (the object), the powerful have no power to exercise. The effect of power here is to create two persons; one with power, the other receiving the effects of power. Critical to this understanding is that power exists only in relation to another person, and that sites and plays of resistance validate, through implicit recognition of power, exercises of power. If resistance is absent, power becomes force and domination over a subject, rather than Foucauldian power (Gunder & Mouat 2002).

Noted here is the fact that this conception of power is constitutive of human relationships and is a property of those relationships. The power can be discursive, or physical, though physical power between humans is exercised in a controlled fashion (through particular rituals or contexts), as misuse of such power can violate ethical norms.

**Human to nature power effects**

Of more interest is the power within situated built environment discourses that both facilitates its material construction and causes effects on nature. This discursive power rests on a language system reserving to itself the power to name objects, things, and concepts (Foucault), and therefore reserves meaning-making power, to humans.
Omnipresent power can be extended to power relations between humans and nature. Nature is seen as powerless in the face of human agency, to construct a building, for example, but nature in other respects holds power over humans: for example the awe engendered at the sight of a mountain range backdrop to an urban form, or the raging storm-waters that re-shapes land, ignoring human construction.

Our current western capitalist society both constructs and embeds within it relationships between the built environment and nature. Nature both absorbs and reflects the power by humans to bestow signifiers, and simultaneously reflects a power of its own. By this simultaneous operation, a relationship is formed between humans and nature. For example, a stream is redirected into concrete channels to permit development of land for urban use as part of the process of urbanisation. The stream receives the concept of urbanisation, and consequently the streambed is physically forced into a different flow pattern from its original sinuous pattern, to a flow pattern that is more linear (see Figure 2.1 below) in order to create land for urban use. In other words, the signifier ‘stream’ bears the concept not only of the attributes of a stream itself, but also the concept of powerlessness – it cannot resist human intervention that sees the stream relocated for urbanisation purposes. Nature in this way bears the idea of inferiority, and the ways in which it is subject to power.

In another viewpoint, developers say there is ‘land’. The developer occupies a particular role within the hegemonic superstructure that privileges his or her viewpoint, and speaks this word. This role imbues the word ‘land’ with a particular conceptual view that represents land as empty, a geographical space ready to be used in a particular way and, consequently, land is transformed, via discourse, into a product for capital gain. The meaning exhibits power to pare the essential characteristics of the land; for example, topography or watercourses, in order to render it ‘empty’ for development purposes.
Figure 2.1: Indicative location of previous Oakley Creek / Te Aunganga Stream Bed, near Valonia Street, Owairaka, Auckland. Source: Google Earth. (This area is a natural (i.e. not man-made) storm-water floodplain. Historical linear channelization of the streambed (seen as different grass colouring) enabled transformation of the land for development purposes but forces faster energy dissipation of stormwater to the detriment of downstream aquatic environments.

Nature, however, exhibits its own power; though this rarely is considered, being obscured by 'power over', within the physical and discursive built form. Seasonal rainstorms, for example, bring otherwise parched and dry landscapes back to life. The power of water, and other elements to bring to life a whole ecosystem is remarkable and awe-inspiring but weather ‘bombs’ cause havoc, and are problem for the insurance companies.

The power between humans and nature is constitutive of the relationship humans have with nature, but not of the relationship nature has with humans. It is noted that even though this power is not a property of a discourse between humans and nature, it is a kind of power in that it produces actions on an object (nature).

The discourses to be examined, obtained from interviews, will be a product of the signifier and signified relationship and will embody a particular set of ideas and practices, and power, that gives meanings to elements within the discourse, including nature. In a similar manner to how the building or space in which you are reading this thesis did not appear from the ethos, meanings attached to signifiers did not appear
from the air mysteriously whole and fully formed but are a product of beliefs stemming from social standing matters.

**Definitions of Discourse and Nature**

As indicated in Chapter One, definitions of discourse and nature are needed as the terms make reference to a wide territory, particularly in the case of discourse, where there is a multiplicity of discursive forms beyond verbal discourses.

For discourse, I adopt the definition: *discourse is an expression of complex and integrated system of signifiers and signified based on cognitive beliefs, derived from standing ‘sentences’, held by various actors and stakeholders, that then influence behaviour.* This definition develops and sharpens the view of discourse and refines it to focus on actors and stakeholders, and the beliefs held by them.

Nature within this thesis is simply defined as a *separate metaphysical reality external to humans.* It is defined thus because the thesis research objective is research into an epistemological creation of nature utilising discursive means. This assumes that a particular kind of nature exists outside of discourse, about which we signify with various concepts.

The following discussion explains the way definitions of discourse and nature is handled in the literature, and explains the adopted definitions.

**Definition of ‘discourse’: Literature discussion**

Discourse, as a term, refers to a wide variety of methods used to communicate ideas in a variety of formats, for particular purposes. As such it covers a range of elements such as scale, format, purpose, and kind. An instruction an uncle may give to his niece for example, or a statement made by a community leader at a public meeting, or a book examining particular scientific research are part of discourses that are particular to that time, place and scale.

Defining a key concept used extensively within this thesis is important in narrowing down the research field to a manageable size. Discourse at this point is composed of
signifiers and signified arising from beliefs about the world around us, which, in turn, shape meanings that are attached to signifiers. This can be understood as paying attention to words as shapers of discourse. It is also various actors expressing ideas (meanings) held by that person holds about the world. For example, how it should be socially organised, or physically shaped for certain purposes. In contrast, this can be understood as paying attention to people as shapers of discourse.

Theoretical definitions of discourse have ranged over a wide field. Mills in her introduction to *Discourse* notes that “Within the theoretical range of meanings, it is difficult to know where or how to track down the meaning of the term discourse” (Mills 2007, p. 2), and that “… discourse, as it will be readily observed, cannot be pinned down to one meaning, since it has had a complex history and it is used in a range of different ways by different theorists, and sometimes by even the same theorist” (ibid, p. 6).

For example, discourse is practice orientated for Hajer & Versteeg (following Sharp & Richardson 2001):

> [Discourse is]... defined here as an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices (Hajer & Versteeg 2005, p. 175).

One way for Mills to narrow the definition is to examine the boundaries of the different meanings of discourse according to academic fields:

It is largely the constraints created by academic disciplinary boundaries, which demarcate the various meanings of the term: when linguists talk of a ‘discourse of advertising’, they are clearly referring to something quite different to a social psychologist who talks of a ‘discourse of racism’ (ibid, p. 3).

How language shapes and creates the conditions for the use of particular linguistic mechanisms enabling companies to sell products would feature in examination of advertising discourses. Examination of racist discourses, in contrast (stepping back from fine grained language details), examines how certain ethnic groups are portrayed in various media and how discourse, through the use of various discursive forms and methods (words, expressions of belief, cultural norms, strategic use of media by
different groups, denial of media access for other groups (van Dijk 1993b) serves to shape various power relations within such discourse.

Other theorists note ideological dimensions of discourse, following a macro-Foucauldian view of discourse that sees social discourses shaping identities. Beliefs form a basis for both viewing the world and producing forms of discourse such as writing or speech. Given the role of beliefs, ideology is formed (Fowler n.d., cited in Hawthorn 1992, cited in Mills 2007, p. 5). These perspectives follow Foucault in not considering the individual or self that generates discourse. As indicated, Foucault was concerned to focus on the product of discourses, adopting an institutional perspective but not concerned with the role of the self in the production of discourse.

In the definitions indicated above, discourse is also defined and viewed as a process of production. In contrast, moving from a general view of discourse being an ensemble of ideas and concepts that is produced and reproduced, towards an actual construction, I adopt a definition as indicated at the beginning of the chapter where: discourse is a complex and integrated system of signifiers and signified based on cognitive beliefs, derived from standing 'sentences', held by various actors and stakeholders, that then influence behaviour. This definition develops and sharpens the view of definition of discourse and refines it to a focus on actors and stakeholders, and the beliefs held by them.

Discourse is complex because of the different kinds of discourse, the multiple influences on discourse, and the roles of actors in generating discourse and in analysing it. Each of these areas and combinations of these areas produces complexities in what is said, how it is said, and the outcomes produced.

This is why signifiers, as explained above, are important. Signifiers in two ways integrate discourse. Firstly, there is the connection between the signifier and signified, the object that the signifier refers to. The signifier contains meanings (generated by beliefs), and has no value as a signifier. For instance, the signifier 'chair' has no meaning in of itself. It is simply a group of letters put together in a way that is pleasing to the ear in terms of pronunciation. The signified object is either physical or non-physical and, as 50
with signifier, has no value other than itself. To continue the example, an object that resembles what is known as a chair (i.e. four legs, a seat, and a seat back), in of itself, has no value. But the integration of both the meanings contained within the signifier and the physical object produces a ‘chair’. In this way, the world is ‘produced’.

Secondly, discourse is integrated by the manner in which each unit of signified and signifier combines with other units to produce ideas and concepts that, again, work to produce the world around us. A group of chairs implies a group of people, so chairs around a dining or other table produces ideas about the social life of the home, while rows of chairs in a theatre produce different ideas about the role of story-telling in culture. Signifiers gain common currency, and influence how the world is seen.

Finally beliefs, (those that underpin a person’s discourse about a subject), influence (as Hahn theorises) behaviour about the subject of that belief. Our beliefs about a chair influence our use of that chair. Only certain people should sit in that chair, or that the chair is used at certain times. The beliefs provide for the operationalisation of the object or concept – how the object is to be used, or in what manner for instance.

We now move onto examining the literature for a discussion about the definition of nature.

**Definition of ‘nature’: Literature discussion**

A number of theorists have tackled the idea of nature which, while it contains an apparently stable meaning (a general reference to that which is not man-made) over time, a Foucauldian inspired ‘genealogical’ investigation of the idea will reveal contestations about the meaning as social changes occur over time (Williams 1972). The following explores the current challenges of defining nature.

We can discern two kinds of nature in the literature. Firstly, there is a physical nature, which is to say, rocks, water, vegetation, fauna, and the sun, in short everything within

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This refers to a particular methodological practice whereby the ‘lineage’ of a particular discursively produced situation, the mentally ill in Foucault’s example, is traced back through history to uncover changes in the discourse, thereby producing ‘changes’ in the view of the subject.
our comprehensive environments that is natural. The second kind is a representational nature, where we discursively construct our view of this physical nature.

As a starting point for this discussion, Naess included humans as part of nature by stating in his first principle of Deep Ecology: “1. Rejection of man-in-environment image in favour [of] the relational total-field image” (Naess 1973, no page). Rejection of humans living in (separate to and apart from) an environment in favour of the idea of humans in relationship with the natural environment marks development in a concept of ‘natural environment’. Nature according to Naess means the relationship between all of the components within the world, including humans. Being in a relational-web presumes ties of relationship and reciprocity of some description. Nature here is not a representational other, mute and awaiting anointment with appropriate words, but a defined object within a ‘total-field’, in much the same way as humans are part of the same field.

This position takes as its definition the physicality of nature. We are physical beings in relationship with other physical elements of nature. From this base, we can then start to engage in cognitive self-realisation, which would include acknowledgement of the physical attributes of nature, and incorporation of these into the cognitive constructs about nature. A physical nature that includes humans becomes a source for the idea of a cognitive nature.

However, Naess’ relational-web position is still a radical one, evinced by a current societal meta-discourse that asks, ‘What are we going to do about the environment?’ in the face of current ecological crises.\textsuperscript{8} Here, the environment is an other, an object outside of the human body and distinct from it. Environment (or nature) remains both a discursively constructed other about a physical reality and an actual physical reality. A Naessian re-working of the question would see it phrased as “What are we going to do

\textsuperscript{8} A glance at newspaper headlines that demands, in general, for a given environmental problem, we humans do something: cut carbon emissions by 10% for example, or recycle glass, or stop eating fish. In other words, we undertake to do something to effect a change in the environment. The environment is still the other. A Naessian definition of environment would see us both doing something for the environment and for ourselves, as we are part of the environment. The environment is a part of us.

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about *us*?" This would be in line with a view of nature that physically includes humans, rather than a nature that is exclusive of humans.

Swyngedouw, representing the representational viewpoint of nature, ponders the substance of nature using Morton’s tripartite definition of nature (Morton 2007, in Swyngedouw 2009). Firstly, it is an empty floating signifier (as hinted by Williams, above), a place to put meanings about it from whatever context in which nature is abstractedly discussed: "...the ‘content’ of Nature is expressed through a range of diverse terms that all collapse in the Name of Nature: olive tree, parrot fish, CO₂, money, competition..." (Swyngedouw 2009, p. 300).

This definition points to a discursive semiotic device, of signification, where one bestows words upon a physical externality to represent the idea of the object or concept, the material object itself (if appropriate) and to point to the idea of *nature*. In Swyndegouw’s ontological list, an olive tree is categorised as both as a tree, part of a physical reality, and as a pointer to the general idea of *nature*. Money is both a physical object and a participant in nature; we buy land, olive trees, and make olive oil from the fruits of the tree.

Secondly, Morton (in Swyngedouw) defines nature as a force of (normative) law against which deviation is measured. Nature is rendered as universal standard beyond our world, its quiet and unassuming constancy providing...

... a solid foundational (or ontological) basis from which we act and that can be invoked to provide an anchor for ethical or normative judgements of ecological, social, cultural, political or economic procedures and practices (Swyngedouw 2009, p. 300).

Swyngedouw uses the historical concept of homosexuality as an example; heterosexuality is the normative ‘nature’, a multi-purpose foundational ‘measurement standard’, alongside which the alternative sexualities are deviant. Efforts are made to manage those that are deviant from a discursively constructed and normatively defined nature. Phelan also similarly points out the use of nature as a normative force, suggesting that "... nature as order is also a mainstay of antifeminist and antigay argument. ... Sexuality may not be in fact limited to heterosexual desire, but nature [as constructed by antifeminist and antigay movements] would have it so" (Phelan 1992,
Nature is used as a normative force in other fields, such as economics (a Darwinian ‘Survival of the fittest’), or proverbs (‘There’s a silver lining to every cloud’).

Morton’s second point follows on from his first point of nature as an empty signifier. This gives those with discursive power the ability to use and utilise an ‘empty’ physical reality bearing no significations and apparently willing to accept whatever signifiers are placed upon it. Signifying nature with norms, in this manner, turns nature into a tool to influence and arrange desired states of behaviour in the self and within others. Echoing May’s (2005) distinction of material and mental worlds, we discursively place a layer of meaning (the mental world) about nature on nature (the material world) and endow it with the force of an ontological law.

Thirdly, if we burden nature with normative law, we also, as Morton (2007, in Swyngedouw 2009) suggests, burden nature as a fantastical other that performs in fantasies or stories that we create. For example, a warm beach, a summer's day, the raging winter storm, the charming puriri tree, or the cold hard snow on the mountain. We place our fears, longings and desires onto nature and transform it into a character upon which we can perform our fantasies. Swyngedouw indicates that this definition of nature carries shades of Lacanian thought that, although interesting, is not of concern to this thesis. All of these ‘natures’, the reflective one, the normative one, the empty one, are discursively given meaning in different ways – by giving it a signifier, by invoking it as a norm, by making it stand for our fears/desires – and in doing so, gain some kind of signified concept appropriate to the context within which the signifier is given.

Swyngedouw recounts theoretical abandonments of nature for example, by Latour (1983, in Swyngedouw 2009, p. 300), as alternative ways of seeing nature. Latour rejects all concepts of nature in favour of a fluid and continual assemblages of objects, both human and non-human, into ‘nature-culture hybrids’. Attempts to define nature should be abandoned, suggests Latour and efforts made to understand the continuous process of assemblage and dis-assemblage. What are the conditions by which hybrids appear and disappear? What do they contribute to either nature or culture? If we examine a ubiquitous tool of the modern age, the motor vehicle, we can say that a majority, if not all, of the components in it originated from nature. The steel, plastics,
leather seats, and rubber tyres all draw on materials from nature. The car is a hybrid, which in turn participates in hybrid assemblages in transporting people to a stream clean-up event. Similarly the built environment is an assemblage, which again draws a majority of its components from nature; wood, steel, plaster, clay, and in turn, plays other roles in assemblages within the urban fabric (e.g. as a place of refuge, or imprisonment).

Given the continuous struggle over the nature of nature, Swyngedouw concludes that it is a slippery and beguiling concept (echoing Williams, 1972) – meaning whatever it means to whomever suggests its meaning. He concludes that nature is an empty concept into which we pour contingent meanings. Nature in the wider sense has no particular meaning that can be discerned, and obtains meaning only by the use of ‘metonymic lists’, things that are signified about nature which, by their naming power, stand in contrast to other names. By this method, nature gains meaning, but still “Nature is an ‘empty’ or ‘floating’ signifier” (ibid, p.305), and given the contingent dynamic way in which nature is described the essential definition remains ‘empty’; “‘Empty’ signifiers gain a certain, yet unstable, contingent and contestable, temporary coherence or content (but in the process, they are simultaneously emptied out of a determinate meaning – they are rendered ‘floating’)” (ibid, p.305) and, therefore, a place to scribe any number of definitions by any number of actors.

In this sense, the wider definition of nature rests within humans and their experience of nature. Experience of physical nature is often shared amongst people as they relate their lives. Recalls of a wet summer camping by the sea, or of tramping in a national park is shared with others, and in this way, a representational nature is created, defined according to the situation and context, rather than by means of concrete understandings about physical (Naessian) nature.

Demeritt (2002) noting the ongoing discussion within the fields of geography and related fields about the ‘construction’ of a ‘nature’ seeks to provide some clarification in regards to some of the terminology used in theoretical arguments. Drawing on the work of Raymond Williams (1921-1988, and quoted at the beginning of this section) and his notable work in defining what nature is (among other cultural objects),
Demeritt quotes Williams (and explicates further) that nature is one or more of three kinds: “(i) The essential quality or character of something ...(ii) the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both [and]...(iii) The external material world itself” (Williams 1983, in Demeritt 2002, p. 777).

Demeritt seeks clarification so that the philosophical bases for various arguments about the ‘social construction of nature’ are made clear. [The Roman numerals (i), (ii), and (iii) in the following quote refer to the definitions quoted in the previous paragraph immediately above]

First, scientific knowledge is sometimes defined as the explanation of what is natural, in the sense of either (i) or (ii) [definitions of nature]. ... what human and physical geographers share in common is a search for the essentially necessary, intransitive and therefore scientifically predictable properties or laws governing their respective objects of study. But other senses of nature have been used to distinguish the social sciences, concerned with meaningful human affairs, from the natural sciences which study brute physical nature in the sense of (ii) or (iii) or both. This ontological difference between nature and society then forms the basis for distinguishing epistemologically between human geographers’ subjective understanding of the social world and physical geographers’ objective scientific knowledge of the natural. (Demeritt 2002, p. 778)

Distinguishing the different basis upon which ‘nature’ is investigated will assist in ensuring clarity in subsequent discussion and argument. The different substantive and physical qualities of each party in the relationship between the self and nature forms a basis for subjective knowledge about world, whether it is obtained from investigations into subjective perceptions of that relationship or objective study of the same relationship. This shapes one avenue of discussion. Alternatively the way in which nature is ‘defined’, or given meaning, holds implications for the views held about nature, and focuses discussion in a different area.

Demeritt points out “Parsing these various meanings of ‘nature’ suggests two broad ways to understand their social construction”. Firstly, the meanings of nature have a discursive basis, and, secondly:

“Since the cultural references against which nature is defined change over time and space, so too must ideas of what nature is. Thus a first very
The general way in which ‘nature’ might said to be a social construction is as a culturally and historically specific concept” (p.778).

The location of nature within a changing culture points to a conclusion that nature, as a sign, is empty (Swyngedouw) save for the various shades of cultural determination in place at the time one defines nature, which remains a ‘brute physicality’ regardless.

Nature within this thesis is defined as the third sense of Williams’ definition (i.e. an external material world), a separate epistemological reality external to humans. It is defined thus because the thesis research objective is research into an epistemological creation of nature utilising discursive means. This assumes that a particular kind of nature exists outside of discourse, about which we signify with various concepts.

The intent of this research is, given this physical reality, to uncover its discursive construction within the built environment discourse. Accordingly, those ‘natural’ things are generally taken as being everything that is not created via human means or methods. Rocks, water, vegetation, fauna, the sun: in short everything within our comprehensive environments that is natural, while the discursive nature stems from whatever discourses about nature is being engaged in but which references physical nature.

This position is different from the positions undertaken by Latour, Swyngedouw and Morton in that it focuses on an actual physical reality. This reality provides the basis for endless analysis of how to interpret it, as Williams (1972) suggests, but it is one that cannot be escaped. This is not to suggest that these theorists are incorrect or wrong in some manner. Rather, I suggest that all such understandings are correct according to the particular worldview of such theorists. What is epistemologically important is the fact that the underlying material nature remains changeable in form and attributes, but immutable. The definition also hews close to a Naessian definition, which calls for a ‘relational total-field image’, where relations are with other elements within that field, including physical elements.

This definition assists as it provides a basis for answering the thesis question. A discursive construction of the built environment focuses on the built to come, while the
construction of nature within such discourse is about an already existing physical nature, which receives the built environment.

There are three observations to make at this point, considering the discussion thus far. Foucault’s contribution to the subject of discourse was to point out that discourse is a means by which society constructs an object. Based on a binary system of signifiers and signified, it shapes perception of the world around us and shapes how we structure our societies. Secondly, Foucault indicated the ways in which language, previously influenced by, became divorced or separated from nature, and, thirdly, that there is a power based on beliefs, controlling how we see the world around us.

The loss of the influence of nature on discourse could, from the viewpoint of a built environment discourse, render those discourses devoid of any consideration or reference to nature. It is assumed that such discourses would reflect this loss of influence and reflects the power that sees a particular discourse privilege built form concepts, rather than nature.

What is missing in Foucault’s discussion is the self. The grand history of ideas was of interest to Foucault, rather than the subject seen in such history – the self:

He tried to move away from the notion of the Cartesian subject, the subject whose existence depends on its ability to see itself as unique and self-contained, distinct from others, because it can think and reason. ... he tried to formulate a way of examining historical processes without relying on the notion of the subject (Mills 2007, p. 30).

Foucault was concerned to examine the institutions and objects of particular discourses, for example such as those around mental illness. The discursively constructed ‘patient’ and the equally discursively constructed institutions that were responsible for the ‘patient’ became the objects of study, rather than the people or groups engaging in such discourses. His interest lay more in the ways in which discourses ‘shaped’ realities, and how such discourses represented the exercises of power by various groups and people.

To move beyond this limitation, it is necessary to move towards an analysis of the self that produces discourses. While such examination can focus on the discrete self, as a site of discursive production, the research question poses a limitation with its concern about construction of particular objects, in this case, nature, by the self.

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Construction of any object, tangible or intangible necessarily implies a relationship between the self and the constructed object. What that relationship is, and the dimensions of such relationship, are not of concern at this point. However, it is necessary to assume that a relationship does exist in order for the object to be constructed. If no such relationship exists, then the act of discursive construction could not take place, as a necessary requirement is the means to assess through that relationship attributes or characteristics of the object, in order to place signifiers on it. Therefore models need to be developed that situate the self in relation to nature.

Part B – Three models of self in relation to nature

Here we start to narrow the field of research with attention to the discourse producing self. This self forms the basis for both defining the world around him or her, and defining the relationships between the self and those objects thus defined. We recall the definitions of self in the previous chapter, an external contextual self, and an internal experiential self. The discussion following refers to the internal experiential self in relation to a holistic surrounding nature.

It is the self that discursively constructs objects within the world utilising the signification process and attaching meanings. This results in particular outcomes, for example, defining oil as an energy source, but not as source of CO2 that contributes to global warming, therefore it is critical that examination of the relationship between nature and the discourse producing self occurs. Furthermore, given that production of the built environment (via discourses) have contributed towards adverse effects on nature such as altered watercourses causing downstream flooding or scouring of the stream bed decreasing biodiversity or increased vehicular traffic flows causing air pollution, it is necessary to examine the place of nature within a built environment discourse. The self lies at the nexus of the interface between the built environment and nature where the built is found. As such, it is critical that we form an understanding of the relationship with nature, the epistemological other.

Given the assumption that there exists a relationship between a self and nature, we consider three different ways in which the self could relate to nature. The first two writers (May, Deleuze) position the self in a relationship with a generic ‘outside-of-self’
world; that is, the relationship is the same for all objects. The third writer, Arne Naess positions the self, intentionally and deliberately in his arguments, in a particular relationship with nature.

Three relationship models are discussed in the following sections. These reference the concepts of Transcendence, Immanence and Deep Ecology.

**Transcendentalism**

Moving from a structuralist viewpoint, exemplified by Foucault, to post-structuralism, we encounter Deleuze. He argued against rationalism, in a general sense, suggesting instead, a situation of nothing in the world beyond a process of ‘becoming’, arising from a conceptual ‘plane of immanence’, which gives rise to ourselves and the world that we see around us (May 2005, p. 60). This plane contains a set of creative possibilities that combine and endlessly re-combine to form new tangible and intangible objects, which then arise or manifest themselves from this dynamic field.

However, before we reflect on Deleuze’s immanence later in the chapter, it is fruitful to consider an existing state of relations that precedes immanence, namely transcendence. May (2005), in explaining Deleuze’s conception of a plane of immanence, lays out this transcendent relationship: “A philosophy of transcendence, whether of Forms or of God or of the human subject, requires two commitments ... The first commitment is to the existence of two ontological substances, two types of being” (May 2005, p. 28).

May outlines the second commitment: “It [transcendence] also requires that one of those substances be superior to the other. Superior in power, and superior in value as well” (ibid, p.28). Transcendentalism is at work in a variety of relationships and May’s use of transcendence frames its particular conceptualisation, though not explicitly mentioned, to an adaptation of the Nietzschean concept of the death of God (Honderich 2005, p. 656). If we consider the rise of human abilities to master nature, examining and investigating mysteries such as viral infections (seen as being within the province of God or mysterious forces), by using a Descartian rationality and method, we find explanations for how such viral infections happen and how they can be eliminated or managed. By this process, we can see that humans can replace God in the world.
We inevitably, according to a Descartian process (explained previously), assume the role God plays in certain jurisdictions, that of creator, sustaining creation. God held forth over his/her dominion, a large part of which is the natural world. Now man supplants God over the same dominion, though not exclusively, as some things still remain within the province of God. Notably, this process recalls Foucault’s historical analysis discussed previously, where language underwent a change that enabled the isolation of concepts that could be applied independently to objects, supported by a rationalism that denies any connection with the surrounding world and abandoning the mysteries previously seen in a language of resemblances. Here we see how patiently, mysteries in the world are subjected to the Descartian method, and resolved, removed from the domain of mystery. In the process, we become master of many domains, including that of nature.

It is important to note that this kind of power ‘over’ within discourse retains the relational and normalising elements of Foucauldian power to signify things and to create. But at the same time it rejects the Foucauldian omnipresent and fluid nature of such power in favour of a fixed, structural relationship that positions one entity as a superior being to the other. The relationship privileges one entity permitting it to have abilities to affect the qualities of the other; the superior affects the qualities of the inferior.

Superiority relates to some attribute, condition, or aspect of being that one entity has. Why is this attribute, condition or aspect superior? Does it relate to power – that is, a power to create something, to have something emanate from oneself, as May (2005) suggests? The power to create something means that the creator always has a (hidden) power to un-create something or to re-create it in another form or manner, or to destroy, modify, or re-assemble something already created.

May also suggested superiority is related to qualities, distinguishing between the qualities of things. For example, it can be argued that God is superior to humans because of qualities unknown and unknowable to humans (2005). The concrete footpath is superior to the muddy path as concrete holds a physical quality of (temporary) strength.
and solidity. Humans are superior to plants, not only because God gave us ‘dominion over’ plants but because we can think, create, move, do things with the given attributes of our bodies. Conversely, plants are superior to humans because of their ability to photosynthesise.

We can see gradients of power between the built and nature at play in the world. Within the urban environment, it is clearly the built object that is dominant, not only because it forms a significant quantity of material within wider environment but also because in its construction, it displaces the landscape; the earth is moved and moulded to the hard flat surfaces of the constructed object; water courses are moved to provide a building platform; the physical height of buildings over-shadow surrounding vegetation.

The built environment still dominates a less urban environment, but more in unseen ways even though the surrounding landscape may ‘over-shadow’ the buildings. Earth may have been moved and trucked away to form driveways and building platforms, while energy, from a distant energy generating source (typically hydro-electricity generated in the southern lakes region of the South Island) is brought into the building to enable it operate. Landscaping may include plants not native to the region, or even to the country.

An individual built object still dominates in a more rural environment. Its hard straight lines of the built form, no matter how carefully architecturally softened through the use of curvilinear forms, contrast with curved and irregular lines in the surrounding natural environment. The form of the object (as a built form) emphasises a difference to other forms found (hills, plains, lakes, mountains, seashore) and the nature of the built form emphasises the functional and, if designed to do so, aesthetic aspects of the object. It is a machine for use. However this power is less obvious or effective than the combined aesthetic, place shaping and operational power of the urbanised built environment, overcome as it is by the natural environment surrounding it.

Inversely, nature, as an object, is inferior to the built environment. Earth is moved to create building platforms, trees are chopped down for building material, and minerals are mined for various products used in buildings (for example, concrete, paints or
plastics). Animal populations are disturbed, destroyed or moved to make way for the built object, while watercourses are stopped, diverted, or altered by the use of materials such as concrete on the banks of the watercourse. Air is a repository for pollutants arising from the construction and operation of the built environment at different scales, for example, volatile organic compounds found in wall paints in a room, to neighbourhood pollution from industrial uses to city or region wide smog arising from transport use.

The human goal is to shape a perceived and signified inert physical ‘nature’ to our needs and wants. Nature, at a gross scale is shaped to enable housing, or industrial development, or to enable the development of a product that enables the use of colour paints to decorate our built forms. It is ‘inert’, a mute ensemble without power, except the power to suffer the superior force of plans, designs, goals generated by discourses.

By these observations we can suggest that of the two entities, it is the built environment discourse that is superior to a natural environment discourse. Nature is rendered inferior, within this transcendent relationship. Under this transcendentalist relationship, nature, lying outside of discourse, suffers because it cannot ‘talk’ back.

**Immanence**

We recall that transcendence figures in May’s (2005) discussion as foreground to Deleuze’s idea of immanence. Deleuze provides one avenue for a different view of self-nature relationship, utilising his argument that the world that surrounds us springs or emanates from a plane of immanence.

This is conceived as a conceptual plane, a field that contains all possibilities and choices, such that each object that emanates from the field is the result of a particular set of circumstances, driven by unknown forces that combine to produce a laptop, an idea about a tree or a business model, a hearing aid, or a building. Such forces are conceived as independent and free from any pre-determined model, yet, however, they produce the (temporary) stable and fixed material objects within the world. All of these objects, along with their actions, collectively, combine to be a plane of immanence; nothing (object or action) is outside this plane.
Each of these objects has particular attributes, which is not a product of choice by the object, and expresses these attributes in the object’s form and behaviour. This contrasts with transcendence, where the superior chooses and creates the inferior and endows it with particular attributes. Critically, the idea of immanence permits a re-siting of both the built environment and nature within the same plane. Neither object is transcendent to the other by virtue of the nature of immanent creation, being products of forces that are both at the same time independent from each other, as well as inter-dependent on each other within the plane.

Arising from this plane, Deleuze sees the state of being variously represented by a tree being a tree, the computer being an assemblage of plastics and metals being a collective called computer, a chair being a chair made up of various materials (fabric, steel, wood), a PhD student, being made up of reading, writing, tensions, frustrations, joyful feelings and relationships with supervisors for example – all are subject to a constant fluid dynamic process of expressing attributes and ‘becoming’ a tree, a chair, a computer and so on. Each part of the assemblage changes over time during the process of ‘becoming’, prompting shifts within the assemblage. Accordingly the fixity or permanence inherent in a rational discourse of the world is false. Rationality is only, and could only ever be, a point in time; the object under scrutiny is in a process of constant becoming.

As humans we do not know how we arose to be the person we are. We can understand that genetics plays a part, where we have green/grey eye colour rather than blue, and a certain level of skin pigmentation that makes us ‘black’ rather than ‘white’. But beyond these attributes, we do not understand why it is this particular combination of attributes rather than others. From all possibilities, and lying outside our understanding of evolution, genes to express curly hair rather than straight for example, is given privilege, rather than straight hair genes. We also do not know how other elements within nature came to be, other than a strict understanding of evolutionary and ecological processes. The forces directing a tree to be a tree, or a tui (a native bird) to express song, are unknown. What we do know are the attributes of these beings, and can enjoy these attributes.
The immanence-based model of self-nature relationship sees, in contrast with a transcendent model, firstly, no hierarchy of two objects, one superior to the other. As each object expresses attributes according to forces operating within the plane of immanence, the objects are subject to the plane, which contains all possibilities equally that each object is a product of the plane but not of any other product, eliminating hierarchy within the world. Secondly, there is no ability to have power ‘over’ another object as seen in transcendence, with the absence of a hierarchy. No object can exercise a power that directs and shapes another object according to its desires. Thirdly and relatedly, the direction of forces and actions is both towards another object and equally from another object; each receives and generates actions on the other. That is to say power is found between objects.

Humans-as-God (McKibben 2000; Ellis 2011) could not fully assume all that God has province over. The result of ‘power between’ rather than ‘power over’ means that there is always more (May 2005). Given this incomplete grasp, immanence holds the promise of release from constant straining to know and understand more, to control nature to an nth degree.

Practically, the world would not be one of an array of objects expressing attributes mute and silent, not interacting with each other. Rather the model of self-nature under immanence suggests that nature is recognised as an integral and fully formed other. It is recognised as such because it equally originates in the plane of immanence as the self, and equally has the same ‘presence’ and claim within the world as the self. This ‘presence’ is what the next writer sought to incorporate within the self in his explicit self-nature model.

Deep Ecology

The starting point for any deep ecological perspectives lies in an article, The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary, originally published in Inquiry Journal by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (Naess 1973). Naess outlined succinctly what he believed to be the basis for what he termed a deep ecological viewpoint, as opposed to a ‘shallow’ ecological viewpoint that paid nominal attention to environmental issues.
Naess elaborates Deep Ecology in seven principles. These are:

1) Rejection of man-in-environment image in favour of a relational-total-field image,

2) Biospherical egalitarianism,

3) Principles of diversity and symbiosis,

4) An anti-class posture,

5) Fight against pollution and resource depletion,

6) Complexity, not complication and

7) Local autonomy and decentralisation (Naess 1973).

The first two principles are of interest to the self-nature model, and are discussed below.

The article generated much discussion and argument in subsequent decades. For example, Katz pointed out an ambiguity within Naess’ views on Deep Ecology in his original 1973 declarations; the principles suggest that humans ultimately determine what is egalitarianism and how to fight against pollution, which works against the idea of relations in the total-field image. Katz suggests that no particular easily discernible outline of Deep Ecology philosophy exists as a result. This opens the way for various critical perspectives on human relationships with the natural environment (Katz et al. 2000). While Naess did not go into much detail about the Deep Ecology world-view, the principles he developed rested on a strongly individual sense of the world. It would be correct to suggest, as Katz (2000) did, that Naess offered his insights as a ‘call to action’, rather than any kind of philosophical statement. Despite this, Naess offers valuable avenues for thinking about human-nature relationships.

This ‘call to action’ involves an extension of the concept of self\(^9\) to include others (selves, animals, inanimate objects) within a relational-web (Naess 2005), where it is

\(^9\) Self or self? This thesis uses small letter ‘s’ self for ease of readability.
recognised that the self has relational and conceptual relations with everything surrounding itself. The self enlarges to include an understanding how other elements, such as trees for example, are trees, or rivers, rivers, understanding their attributes as trees or rivers, or the ways in which trees, rivers, in response to such recognition of the link with others in the web. In recognising the relational-web, Naess argues that the self achieves self-realization.

As the self enlarges, it is also suggested that each person will come to understand that actions performed by him or herself not only affect others within the relational-web (now included in the enlarged concept of self), but themselves. Naess labels these actions ‘Beautiful Actions’. The essential idea is that actions performed by humans are beautiful if the two-fold impact of the action is acknowledged, that is, the other (object or subject) receives the action, but the self also receives the action in some manner. By choosing to compost for example, we carry out an action on the fruit and vegetables used in using them for nourishment, but we in turn receive a benefit from the compost (used in the vegetable garden) that is generated from our actions in using the fruit and vegetables. While these actions are significant in a relational-web viewpoint, they are not considered further here, as the thesis focuses on the self-nature relationship that forms the basis for such actions.

Within Deep Ecology, Naess argues that the concept of Self-realization!10 lies at the heart of any deep ecological viewpoint. In a sense, self-realization takes as its starting point modern humans that are ‘insulated’ from the surrounding world; remote energy systems provide power, food is grown elsewhere and brought to supermarkets via national and international transportation systems and homes provide shelter from the weather. Naess’ conceptualisation of the growth of the self sees a person ‘growing’ from such insulation, that enables ignorance of natural environments that provide means of sustenance for living, towards a realisation about the ways in which the self is

10 The exclamation mark was used by Naess to emphasise the imperative nature of the concept. However, for the remainder of this thesis, the term will be used without the exclamation mark to minimise distraction.
integrated with nature, that is, receiving benefits from nature to enable the self to function.

It is clear from Naess’ later writings (see, for example *The Ecology of Wisdom* (Naess 2008)) that this self is not unique in the world. He extends the conception of the self (by virtue of the relational-web) to the mountains where he spent his summer months in Norway, for example, or the flowers and grazing sheep in upland meadows. These elements are seen as having selves. In short everything, surrounding us, animate and inanimate, has a self of its own.

Naess justifies this on several grounds. Firstly, he states the principle that we are part of a ‘bio-spherical egalitarianism’. We are, like other elements in the relational-web, equally constitutive of the biosphere. We are not independent from nature; we are, like other elements in nature, are constitutive of nature. Each element in the web is a product of, and produces other elements in the web. Accordingly, a principle of egalitarianism amongst elements in the web acknowledges the interconnectedness of each within the web.

Secondly, this principle implies that others within the web must have similar qualities of self as us; that is, essential selves finding expression in their actions, achieving self-realisation. There are bee-selves for instance expressing qualities of being a bee over its short lifespan, within the hive nursing other younger bees, and then shifting to tasks outside the hive, harvesting nectar and pollen as a food source, or defending it from marauding wasps. Each bee-self, consciously or not, actively participates in a relational web with other elements, primarily, flowers, where the action of the bee benefits the plant’s sexual reproduction processes (achieving self-realisation), and in return the bee gains pollen as food.

This principle (everything has a ‘self’) is similar to Deleuze’s attribute expressing objects arising from a plane of immanence. Each object within this plane similarly finds expression in their attributes but under a Deep Ecology model, the selves are found within a relational network by virtue of the process of self-realisation.
**Discussion of models: Comparison along three axes**

The comparison is along three critical axes of power, discourse and self. It is these three components that enable the creation of a particular reality, built or otherwise. The self generates the discourse that shapes that reality, while power gives life to that discursive reality.

**Power**

The self, compared across all three models, has different kinds of power relationships. Under transcendence, the power is from the self, and directed outwards through the use of a Foucauldian binary signifier-signified rationalist view, in which we construct our ‘natural’ world by naming things and by identifying the constituent parts of it, which are then transcendentally used for our enjoyment and purpose. Nature is seen as mute, without power. Within immanence, power is diffuse, opaque, and groundless. A univocity is proposed, where nature and ourselves are conceptually one and the other, and in a sense, power is distributed equally between the two subjects. No subject is ‘over’ another, and power effects are felt both by the subject receiving the force, and the subject generating the action. This is transformed within Deep Ecology to a notion of recognition of power between each part of the holistic web, and shared power between each part of the web. The action of recognition places consideration on acts of power, and their consequential impacts on both parties to the relationship. Careful consideration of these impacts would lead to actions that either enhance both parties, or at least cause minimal harm.

**Discourse**

Transcendence gives primacy to the signification process, reserving the ability to engage in discourse to those that exercise transcendence. However, that same process of signification is transformed via Deep Ecological self-realisation into a process of understanding that in placing signifiers on others within the relational-web, we also signify ourselves. If such is the case, then there is a possibility that other entities within the web also place signifiers on others, and themselves.
The bi-directional action of signifying the other and the self at the same time is also present within Immanence, but lacking the action orientation of Deep Ecology, such knowledge is not used to consider a self-nature relationship. Under a Deep Ecology approach, Immanence is given grounding; we see that we are not separate from the natural environment – we are part of it.

**Self**

Taking the experiential self as defined in Chapter One, we see that this self displays different perspectives in each of the models. Naess, in his relatively short statement about the nature of Deep Ecology in his original journal article, did not elucidate what the ‘self’ was. But it is clear that the self here referred to is a unique and internal person with complex cognition (e.g. abilities to conceptualise an extension of the cognitive self to a surrounding relational-web) experiencing the surrounding world, and based on those experiences, cognitively shaping the resulting relationships it has with that world.

A transcendent, Descartian influenced self, where the self is completely and utterly independent from the world surrounding it, stopping at the skin of a body, and different to a cognitive Naessian self. This independence leads to a model of transcendence, a dual I-am-here / everything-is-over-there model, where ‘everything-over-there’ is operated on according to the powers and abilities of the self. Ignored is the essential nature of the relationships between humans and nature (e.g. the Naessian integrated self), leading to actions undertaken by the self that have adverse outcomes – CO₂ emissions leading to climatic instability, for example, or destruction of tropical rainforests for toilet paper, or construction of highways on unstable soils.

Naess’ self in contrast is not a fixed and unchanging item but develops in different ways according to the outside influences from the web it receives. For instance, seeing photos of dead albatross chicks with stomachs full of plastic\(^\text{11}\) leads to an awareness of how the action of disposing everyday objects made from plastic can adversely affects the lives of

animals. This prompts changes in consumption of plastic objects, and disposal patterns of such objects. It is this self to which Naess refers.

Within Immanence, the self becomes responsive to other objects within the plane, and their expression of attributes, but there is no relationship between the selves, save for the effects of attributes. If everything originates from a formless and unbound-less plane, and everything falls back to the same plane, then the essential relationship of the self with others is through the plane, rather than through identity as independent objects, as under Deep Ecology.

Having developed and established three models of self-nature relationships, we move onto a methodological discussion that will develop how these models can be seen within the research.

**PART C - Methodological discussion**

There are two kinds of discourse analysis employed in the thesis. Firstly, simple Discourse Analysis, which engages in analyses of discourse, in this instance, transcribed interviews that are coded, where units of text are assigned to particular themes. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) underpins the second level of analysis, where criticality is employed in interrogating the fruits of Discourse Analysis. Each of these approaches is discussed in turn.

**Discourse Analysis**

Discourse Analysis plays an important methodological part in the thesis, once each case and its accompanying transcript has been produced and coded. Discourse, surrounding us in a variety of contexts, can be broken into units of analysis, from individual words or sounds, through to concepts communicated through arguments. The range of methods to analyse discourse range from linguistic analysis and observations (Mühlhäusler & Peace 2006) that examines linguistic features of discourses, to methods that focus on meta-discourses, such as Foucauldian derived analysis (Sharp & Richardson 2001). The diversity and range of methods reflects the extensive breadth of discourse, as Hammersley (1997) notes:
At one extreme there are approaches focusing on 'language above the level of the sentence', which rule 'non-linguistic' action out of account and rely on some established form of linguistic analysis as a model. At the other end of the spectrum, ethnomethodologists, structuralists and others see language as constituting social reality, albeit in different ways. For them, the study of discourse is a way of studying society, and the analytic techniques they use reflect this (Hammersley 1997, p. 237).

Two extremes can be seen here; one at the micro ‘sentence’ level, the other at the macro social level. In the middle one finds analysis based on units of spoken discourse made up of concepts, ideas, and beliefs. Analysis of speech in that unit (for example, by analysing voice recordings of speech) reveals the different patterns and sounds in speech that contribute towards meaning making. Various speech ‘units’ are combined to give meaning to the spoken word, such as silences, use of ‘ummm’, and ‘errrs’, micro-pauses, or other linguistic structures. Analysis of the text in contrast (for example, by analysing a transcription of a recorded interview or by analysing a document) permits a wider view of how the text (a collection of signifiers) reveals different social constructions of the subject. In general, linguistic analysis methods focus on speech, while Discourse Analysis methods focuses on text (Meyer & Wodak 2009).

To investigate a discursive construction of nature, samples of discourse would need to be taken from people engaged in discourse about the built environment. The interview would need to be subsequently transcribed for analysis. Accordingly, methodology needs to engage with transcribed interviews. The focus within the thesis is on the structure and construction of nature by the self, expressed through interview. This places the analysis above linguistic analysis, and below structural analysis.

In understanding the discourses produced by the (contextually defined) self, there should be consideration of two distinct selves; the self in generating discourse and of the self in analysis of discourse (Fairclough 2003). The process of analytically interpreting text varies in effort depending on a set of factors including implicit assumptions within the text. Such implicit assumptions may be clear and straightforward, opaque and difficult, or may require time for reflection on why something is written or said in such a way, or what is meant by it (Fairclough 2003). We can already note, given the discussion of beliefs and meaning making (see above),
that the assumptions held within text arise from beliefs held by the person or group engaging in the textual discourse.

Fairclough goes on to suggest that textual analysis is a sequential and experimental process. One cannot assume that ideas, categories and meanings are fixed a priori to the analysis. The analysis informs the categories and meanings seen in the analysis and vice versa. Text is produced socially, with a multitude of factors and actors and influences, so text has to be ‘read’ within context of the macro scene of ‘power relations’ across networks, in contrast to a narrow linguistic analysis of the text that focuses on the words used. Although Fairclough here focuses on the written text as generated by someone (a political tract for example), the analysis equally applies to text that is a transcription of a verbal interview (Chapter Four examines and applies Discourse Analysis to the data generated by the Data Preparation stage).

**Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodologies**

While discourse is the means by which our ‘world’ is constructed, methods need to be developed that permit a critical understanding how discourse operates; by what means does it construct the subject? The following section examines these methods.

Within the planning field, Sharp and Richardson, following Foucault’s focus on a discursive construction of objects independent of the self, outline a ‘stepped’ perspective of methodological Foucauldian Discourse Analysis principles that can be used for planning and environmental research purposes. Habermas’s communicative theory (the basis for the Communicative Planning as outlined in the previous chapter) is used to compare some principles. Habermas’s theory when adapted for the Planning discipline, establishes a field of discourse between stakeholders where planning goals are agreed and attained through discursive power struggles and contestation. Sharp and Richardson examine this field closely and suggest a set of seven interlinked principles of CDA.

As a starting point, CDA rests on a basis of temporal changes (‘changes in communication’ or ‘changes in practices’) and building towards the next principle, so that communication, practices, and competitive power shapes (and is shaped by) social
change through conflict between those exercising such power. However, due to the complexity of communications, practices and competition and the interaction between each of these elements, desired ‘good’ social changes cannot be theoretically pre-specified or be ‘manufactured’, suggesting openness by those engaging in the discourse to the complexity of discourses that may result in one kind of state, versus another. To account for lack of a possible theoretical outcome, analysis of power, as represented by different discourses (‘ensemble of ideas and concepts’), should be engaged in. Power notably shapes social change, which is in turn influenced by relations between different kinds of power. Finally, a broad Foucauldian analysis (elucidated by these principles) can descriptively reveal and challenge such changes and power relations (Sharp & Richardson 2001, p. 198).

This CDA method developed by Sharp and Richardson is an example of such analysis, based on insights about discourses drawn from Foucault, paying attention to the way in which power relations (between humans) underscore discourses, in particular how changes in discursive methods and practices influence social change.

It is suitable for investigation into the ways in which the natural environment, as defined by various social actors, changes over time within a particular urban or cultural development. For example, Hajer & Versteeg (2005) offer an analysis of such discourse analysis over a decade, noting examples of a shift towards the use of discourse analysis from social theory to explain ‘nature’ as it is seen in culture (Bennett & Chaloupka 1993 in Hajer & Versteeg 2005), or how discourses about different aspects of nature have been conflated, giving the example of Luke (1999), who analysed the conflation of concern at environmental decline being channelled into a rhetoric of “… resources, recreation and risk” (Luke 1999, in Hajer & Versteeg 2005). Myerson and Rydin (1996, in Hajer & Versteeg 2005) note that the plurality of discourses about issues within environmental debates hinder resolution of environmental problems (echoing the problems noted by Williams (1972) about the definition of nature), while Dryzek (1997, in Hajer & Versteeg 2005) notes that the underlying “… assumptions, judgements and contentions …” provide the basic frameworks for subsequent analysis and debate.
The principles are problematic, though. While it is intellectually important to traverse the ideas about the different kinds of CDA principles, in the final analysis they are of little relevance for this thesis. The intent of the thesis is to discover if nature is discursively constructed within a built environment discourse, implying a focus on the self generating such discourse, rather than a focus on interaction between selves that serve to co-create social realities through practices, collaboration and conflict.

What is important for this thesis despite this problem, is Sharp and Richardson’s definition of discourse as:

... a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts and categorizations that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices, through which meaning is given to physical and social realities (Sharp & Richardson 2001, p. 198)

Of interest are the ontological implications of discourse: ‘ideas, concepts and categorizations’. What are these ideas and concepts about nature? How is nature categorised? These questions point to the role an individual may play in creating such ideas and concepts.

The complexity of understanding the production and re-production of ideas and concepts is also pointed out by van Dijk, stating that “[Discourse studies are] a complex, multidisciplinary and as yet underdeveloped domain of study, which one may call sociopolitical discourse analysis ...” (van Dijk 1993b, p. 249, added emphasis). He goes on to list analyses he feels are necessary to address within discourse studies, to further develop the domain of study; analysis of power and dominance, the ways in which people access discourse, how social cognition influences discourse, and the need to understand the discursive structures by which discourses are shaped.

Another methodological approach stems from meaning making. Discourses play a part in forming, shaping, reshaping and reforming ideologies, in creating meta-narratives that give meaning to the world and drives social behaviours (Sharp & Richardson 2001). Though discourses have social effects through ideologies, Fairclough warns we should be careful not to assume causality (i.e. that texts [discourses] will, or have, direct impacts on social changes). Rather social effects are mediated through meaning making (Fairclough 2003, p. 8).
Fairclough, using text as an example of discourse, goes on to argue that meaning making depends not only what is explicit (on the surface of the text) but also on the assumptions that lie beneath the text, or in other words, beliefs. Rather than the actuality of the text being not revealed wholly, and completely, as a discrete object through discourse analysis, actuality is restricted by the ‘many eyes’ doctrine. This refers to the multiple objective perspectives required needed to build up a picture of the actual. Here objects hold different meanings for people and are ‘constructed’ via these meanings.

The built environment, for example, reflects several discourses rather than a definitive discourse. It can represent a particular function for some, or hold historical memory for others, while for others still it represents a particular architectural period. The ability to create meaning, and assign the meaning to words means that over time, a way of being is created where individuals collaboratively participate in society, creating institutions that provide a framework for ways of ‘being’ in that society. Analytically, then, the standing matter of (belief about) a subject can be built up through analysis of several discourses.

CDA can be extended to critiques of the analyst’s position in the research, making Discourse Analysis critical argues van Dijk. He suggests that analysts, whose research outcomes helps shapes various discourses about the subject they investigate, should

... take an explicit sociopolitical stance: they spell out their point of view, perspective, principles and aims, both within their discipline and within society at large. Although not in each stage of theory formation and analysis, their work is admittedly and ultimately political (ibid, 1993a, p 252).

Here, such forms of analysis leads to the viewpoint that, to use a well-known cliché, the personal is the political, which supports the critical perspective of the role of a self in discourse analysis, as generator of discourses and analysts of the discourse. More importantly, the behaviour engaged in the role of researching and answering questions about discourse and discursive constructions leads to socio-political outcomes. This is because analysis lays bare the power structures the lie behind particular discursive constructions.
The fractional view of discourse in terms of different kinds of discourse, the multiple influences on discourse, and the roles of actors in generating discourse and in analysing it, leads to a view that “CDA does not constitute a well-defined empirical methodology but rather a bulk of approaches with theoretical similarities and research questions of a specific kind” (Meyer & Wodak 2009, p. 27, added emphasis). Nevertheless, from within these approaches, a choice can be made, while acknowledging the constraints of such choice. We go on to investigate a particular approach.

**Critical Discourse Analysis method**

Critical Discourse Analysis permits a focus on the ways in which meaning, at a broad level, is constructed, and reproduced. It is an approach to discourse that investigates the creation of meaning, the investigation of power relations, their outcomes and the ways in which these are reproduced.

Within CDA, there are several approaches that have been developed. Each focuses on specific aspects of discourse; actors within a discourse, a history of a discourse or its linguistic specificity for example. Six are named and outlined by Meyer & Wodak (2009). The following titles of the approaches give some clue to the broad approach taken, and an explanation of the approach follows:

- Dispositive Analysis
- Socio-cognitive Approach
- Discourse-Historical Approach
- Corpus Linguistics Approach
- Social Actors Approach
- Dialectical-Relational Approach

Briefly speaking, Dispositive Analysis examines the roles of social actors, texts (discourses), and non-discursive practices, in forming the subject (‘materializations’), while a Socio-cognitive approach would examine the cognitive basis of discursive subject formation by social actors. The Discourse-Historical approach looks to ‘fields of actions’ that operate within a historical context to explain discursive constructions, a Corpus Linguistic approach studies the quantitative linguistic features of particular
body of discourses, and the Social Actors methodology looks to ‘what people do’ to produce particular social constructions (Meyer & Wodak 2009, pp. 25-27). Each of these approaches utilises different aspects of discourse for analysis.

**Preferred approach**

From this range of approaches, it can be seen that the socio-cognitive approach holds promise as a method here. This approach, developed by van Dijk, is defined as:

... the study of mental representations and the processes of language users when they produce and comprehend discourse and participate in verbal interaction, as well as in the knowledge, ideologies and other beliefs share by social groups. At the same time, such an approach examines the ways in which such cognitive phenomena are related to the structures of discourse, verbal interaction, communicative events and situations, as well as societal structures ...(van Dijk, in Wodak & Meyer 2009, p. 64).

The operation of the research question sees Actors interviewed about the built environment and nature within the context of a large peri-urban rural area that is targeted for urban development. The built environment within the area is yet to be built, and the area itself could stand as a proxy for nature, as indicated, in the sense that rural land uses are more ‘natural’ than built environment uses. Accordingly, what will be expressed are cognitive or mental models about the built environment and nature, in relation to the reference area. The expression of these models is via a discourse that seeks to ‘construct’ the built environment and nature, in accordance with the cognitive models held by the speaker.

Van Dijk conceptualises the discourses that express these models as a ‘discourse-cognitive-society triangle’ (ibid, p. 64): that is, as a representational view of the complex and integrated whole. Each point of the triangle contributes to the other points, and in turn is formed from contributions from the other points. Figure 2.2 sketches the triangle for ease of comprehension. The advantage of this method is that cognition belongs to the self; therefore this model can be usefully employed as an analytical tool within the three self-nature relationship models.
Van Dijk stresses:

... that the use of the triangle is merely an analytical metaphor representing the major dimensions of critical analysis. It should not be interpreted as suggesting that cognition and discourse are outside society. On the contrary, human beings as language users and as members of groups and communities, as well as their mental representations and discourses, are obviously an inherent part of society (ibid, p. 66).

Cognition is defined by van Dijk amongst other things as “the set of functions of the mind, such as thought, perception and representation [and] ... production and comprehension of discourse/interaction on the basis of specific mental models, controlled by context models, and based on knowledge and ideologies” (ibid, p. 64). Cognition stems from the life of the mind, a subject that van Dijk (or anybody) cannot pretend to know the “... complexities of a theory of the social mind ...” (van Dijk, 1993a), however, van Dijk uses the idea of ‘mental representations’ (derived from psychology) to develop an understanding of the role of cognition within discourse.

Society forms another side to the triangle. Analysis of discourse within such viewpoint “focus[es] on the more general ways specific discourses may be instances of more general discourse properties and how such discourse may contribute to social inequality, for instance by the formation [of] biased models and ultimately by the formation or confirmation of ideologies” (ibid p. 80, original emphasis). The focus here is on understanding how discourses contributes to or structures social inequality, or
other aspects of society. Structuration is done via “action and actors” (ibid p. 80), where actors, playing particular roles, undertake ‘social acts’ regarding a specific discursive subject or object.

Discourse finally is defined here as the range of discourses available to be analysed; speech, text, pictures, dance for example, and the multitude of actors that engage in discourse. The breadth of the different ways ideas are transmitted across society are open for study.

Critically, van Dijk develops the idea of a ‘context model’, a “subjective mental representation, a dynamic online model” that “controls the adequate adaptation of discourse production and comprehension to their social environment”. The mental or cognitive representation “mediates between discourse structures and social structures at all levels of analysis” (ibid, p. 66). In other words, there is no direct link between discourse and society, and all discursive constructions pass through a cognitive context model (van Dijk 1993a). This model structures the discursive construction through the understanding and employment of particular frames of reference regarding a subject. For example, discourses about the built form pass through cognitive contextual models that inform the discourse about the form and function of the built form; a library is discursively constructed via context models that specify the form and function of a library.

The context model serves as a way of ordering and understanding the contexts of various discourses within society (each other kind of discourse expressed by actors also having underlying triangles of society, cognition and discourse). In this sense, context models become shared context models. Each person shares particular contextual models (containing beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, values, norms and ideologies for example) that frame particular aspects of society, for example, the role of service providers such as firemen, police, teachers and nurses. This context model then underpins common discourses about those service providers. Van Dijk explains:

... context models are organized by a relatively simple schema consisting of fundamental categories such as:

- A spatiotemporal setting
• Participants
• Identities, roles, relationships
• Goals
• Knowledge
• Ideologies
• The ongoing social action (ibid, p. 73).

Context models then are unique to the individual, forming a basis for that individual’s discourse, but at the same time, common to society, forming a basis for generating discourses. To account for the temporal nature of discourse, van Dijk goes on to develops event models to account for the dynamic and episodic nature of cognitive expression:

... a discourse is coherent if language users are able to construct a mental model for it. We may call these models event models in order to account for the fact that they subjectively represent the events the discourse refers to. Whereas context models... are pragmatic, event models are semantic [i.e. words or discourse represent the event] (ibid, p.76).

The context model provides the long-term underlying (common) cognitive model by which multiple actors can understand a situation, while the event model is responsive to the immediate demands made on actor regarding that particular situation. The context model is of interest to the thesis, as the interest lies in underlying cognitive constructions of nature, rather than responsive constructions of nature within an interview.

A caution: context models that rest in cognition cannot be pointed to as a definitive object or examinable as a discrete item of interest. For that reason, uncovering context models rests on finding evidence that points to the theoretical existence of such cognitive models. An analogy would be similar to looking at the night sky; oftentimes, seeing faint stars or moving satellites is achieved by focusing to the edge of the object, rather than at the object itself. By this method, one sees the faint star or moving satellite. This is a function of optics. For instance, when astronomers are looking for black hole, the existence of black holes is inferred by observable waves of light that are
distorted by the presence of a black hole. Whatever is around the black hole gives the black hole its form. We can conceptually apply this method of analysis to context models. Common aspects of discourse about a subject could point to a context model, and give it form. This is discussed further in Chapter Five.

In summary, the socio-cognitive approach focuses on a tripartite idea of discourse, cognition (defined in part as cognitive models that provide underlying understanding of contexts or provide responses to events) and society (where actors perform social actions within roles). The relationships between these three elements can account for observed social problems.

However, the conceptualisation of nature within this view is problematic, as indicated previously. In general, CDA, and the various methods within CDA, assumes two things. Firstly, that there are two identified actors that are engaged in discourse with each other. The discourses structure the actors, as well as the various social subjects that relate to either party. Secondly, there is one actor that discursively constructs social objects and subjects (e.g. the status of women) for particular purposes. The constructed social object also can engage in discourse, either in reaction to the way in which they have been framed (resistance), or accept such discursive construction.

We can identify those Actors engaged in field of built environment development and identify their discourses that structure the built environments. We can also identify any discursive construction of nature that may be engaged in, but there is, plainly, no answering response from a mute nature. Hypothetically, if nature were to engage with identified actors that create the built environment, the discourses possibly would change in response to nature’s discourse. If this situation were possible, then the use of SCA analysis may be fruitful.

While this flaw may hamper the research analysis, it is not critical because interviews with identified Actors will still draw out contextual models regarding nature by analysis of discursive constructions of nature. The results of the socio-cognitive approach analysis can point to the degree in which any of the three self-nature models discussed previously (transcendence, immanence, Deep Ecological) play a part in the functioning
of a cognitive model that includes nature. If there is a seen social problem in the relation between humans and nature, then the critical position is to argue for a moral standard in addressing the problem. This is addressed in Chapter Six.

While keeping features of such an approach in mind, it could be useful to remind ourselves of the overarching CDA framework that views field analysis as including elements of criticism and critical reflection as to the structure and operation of the fields under study. We now turn to a critical reflection of the foregoing discussion.

**Critical stance adopted**

An underlying basis of CDA is the *critical* analysis of discourse. This is not so much as a methodological method as:

- a particular conception of society, and its adoption of a thoroughgoing 'critical' attitude towards that society" (Hammersley 1997, p. 237).

A goal of CDA is to critically examine and understand the discursive constructions that give rise to institutions, meta-structural frameworks and ideologies that structure our society. By exposing the various features that contribute to how people function within that society, for example, how disabled people are structured, and consequently, treated in terms of access to resources such as jobs or mobile and information accessibility, it is hoped that critical attention will prompt changes in discourse, and thereby changes in institutions, structural frameworks or ideologies. Hammersley explicates 'criticality', within Discourse Analysis as:

(1) That we can only understand society as a totality, that any particular phenomenon must be analysed against the background of its wider social context;

(2) That in producing knowledge of society critical research reveals what is obscured by ideology, such ideology being seen as pervasive and as playing an essential role in preserving the status quo;

(3) That a critical approach not only produces knowledge which enables us to understand how society *is* but also how it *can* and *ought to be*;

(4) That by acting on the basis of critical theory we can change the world for the better;
(5) That the change produced will be fundamental in character, such as to eradicate oppression and emancipate all human beings (Hammersley 1997, p. 238).

In the production of such knowledge and understanding of society with the goal of changing society, "what is rarely reflected ... is the analyst's position itself" (Meyer & Wodak 2009, p. 7). The researcher undertaking CDA brings to the research a body of experience, influences and particular views about the field of study. This will undoubtedly influence the choices and methods a researcher uses in his or her analysis. Van Dijk (1993b) explains:

> Unlike other discourse analysts, critical discourse analysts (should) take an explicitly socio-political stance: they spell out their point of view, perspective, principles and aims, both within their discipline and within society at large. Although not in each stage of theory formation and analysis, their work is admittedly and ultimately political (p. 252).

Being political means adopting particular perspectives. That is, investigations into the political structures of society through discursive lenses exposes the ways in which various disadvantaged members of society are consciously marginalised by the powerful. To declare one's 'socio-political' perspectives regarding the subject is to transform the research from the merely descriptive to the political and something that has the potential itself to effect changes to the situation (van Dijk 1993b).

The critical and 'socio-political' stance brought to the thesis research is as follows: nature has power, both seen and unseen, which affects our lives in many different ways. For example, the energy contained in a cloud that moves over the city is significantly different to the material energy contained in the urban form below the cloud. This energy affects our surroundings in ways that are both beneficial, and negative. Given this observation, nature has a particular kind of 'discourse' is enacted in the landscapes around us. Like human discourse, this discourse is unseen, yet the effects of such discourse are written (in much the same way as built environment discourses are 'written', that is, constructed) upon natural and built environments, for example, the movement of stream banks over periods of time and the flourishing of street trees when cars are prevented from parking over their root system.
Observing how natural environments respond to various conditions, one could theorise that nature engages in a discourse of its own. Accordingly, the stance adopted in the research, particularly during the coding, is from a perspective of thinking or recognising the way in which nature ‘speaks’ in various situations. In part, this stance was provoked by the sight of development earth works at a site on the fringes of Auckland city, as shown in the following sequential photos (Figures 2.3 and 2.4) of a construction and development site, taken during the summer of 2005/06.

![Figure 2.3: Photo of development earthworks in Auckland region (Author photo).](image-url)
Figure 2.4: Photo taken to the right of photo in Figure 2.3, that shows development earthworks and protected remnant bush area on development site, seen in middle right of the photo (Author photo).

The photos show contouring of the slope by heavy machinery, and removal of the clay-based topsoil to create building platforms for houses, while remnant second growth bush (the original bush having been most likely cleared by early settlers for farming purposes) is protected in the gully below the development site, probably through conditions in the consent given by the local authority for the earthworks to happen.

Although this sight of contouring and heavy earthworks is relatively common in development areas in many urban fringe areas in New Zealand, the sight of nature both being ‘protected’ (the bush remnant seen in Figure 2.4) and moulded for development purposes (in Figures 2.3 and 2.4) poses questions about the role nature plays in the discourses which led to the development being consented to by the Council; where was nature in the discourse surrounding this development site?
Summary

At this point, we understand, along Foucauldian lines, the theoretical basis for what discourse is and how it contributes to ‘realities’. Definitions of nature, and discourse which permits a narrowed research focus, further refine theoretical discussions, while knowledge of how meaning, which gives life to discourses, and power, which animates discourses enables appreciation of discourse dynamics.

The chapter then focused on development of three self-nature models that give the research grounding for applying the understandings generated in Part A, before concluding with a review of discourse analysis issues, and an understanding of what analytical methods will be used in the research.

The effect of this work is to provide a solid framework for Chapters Four, Five and Six. However before we move onto theoretically informed analysis, we must engage in an operationalization of the research question. We now turn to such engagement in the following chapter.
Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction
The methodology for generating the data needed for investigation, and the first-level interrogation of the data, is discussed in this chapter. Within the overall methodology in this chapter there are three parts that apply to separate research stages.

The first part discusses the use of the case study approach along with insights about small N case study samples. In particular, Comparative Method research (CM) was used as way of understanding case studies as it deals with small-scale qualitative research. With this understanding, cases are constructed from two sources, actors/role, and a reference area.

The theoretical bases discussed in Chapter Two provide a basis for the interview questions in the second stage, which generates the raw data needed for analysis. The NVivo software package used to process the raw data arising from the interviews is described before going on to discuss the interview process.

In stage three, the raw data (transcribed interviews) is entered into NVivo, a computer-coding program, which transforms the data into units of analysis. Qualitative Discourse Analysis is performed on these units of analysis, drawing on insights from Chapter Two. These three stages are the first-level methodology and analysis, which ends with the results of the qualitative Discourse Analysis undertaken in stage three. The results of this analysis are subject to second-level Critical Discourse Analysis, described in Chapter Five.

The following schematic diagram (Figure 3.1) indicates the broad outlines of the methodology and the structure of the chapter. The advantages and limitations of the methodology and analysis are discussed before the chapter concludes.
Figure 3.1: Schematic diagram of three stage methodology used in Chapter Three.
Explanation: Stage one is preparatory, and sets up the cases. Stage two gathers data from the cases, and carries out initial treatment of the data, ready for analysis. Stage three applies various analytical methods to the data and summarizes the process overall.
Legal framework – RMA context

At this point, it is worthwhile to undertake a brief explanation of the process for creating a District Plan, which results in governance of land use development within a local area. Each Territorial Local Authority (TLA) in New Zealand must have a District Plan (DP) in place. This process forms the wider context against which the data gathering (interviews) take place. While not of direct interest, it does underpin to a large extent built environment discourses in New Zealand. Consequently, built environment discourses within NZ occur within the context of a District Plan.

Process

The Resource Management Act (RMA) requires TLAs to have a DP. The Plans (in aggregate, across NZ) overall are designed to fulfil the objectives of the RMA, that aims to balance the need for development to accommodate societal needs, such as housing, with, as section 5 of the Act which states the purpose of the Act to "promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources" (New Zealand Government 1991).

Management of District Plan creation is devolved to local Councils: the Manukau City Council in the case of Flat Bush and Whangarei District Council in the case of Ruakaka Marsden Point. The process is initiated by a TLA instructing a planning officer to write a Plan regarding a certain area, or the whole district under its jurisdiction. Sometimes a sole planning officer, if a Council does not have sufficient financial resources, but usually a team of planners will write the Plan, along with traffic or stormwater engineers that provide specialist input.

This draft Plan is released by the TLA to the general public and specific stakeholders for comment. Anyone from the wider community can submit on either specific parts of the Plan, or on the whole Plan. Officers consider these submissions, accepting a submission (e.g. dealing with errors of fact), and subsequently modifying the draft Plan, or reject the submission.

Once this process is done, a further ‘refinement’ is undertaken by placing the Plan within the confines of a Hearing, where submitters have the opportunity, before commissioners, appointed by Council, to verbally outline their submission, and in the case of rejected
submissions, argue before the commissioners why their submission should be accepted. Commissioners are usually selected councillors (as a Plan is theoretically a reflection of community desire in terms of built form development), supplemented by independent experts (e.g. heritage architects). Commissioners deliberate at the conclusion of the hearing, making a decision about the final content of the Plan and which submissions should be accepted and which rejected. The Commissioners’ report and recommendations are subject to a full Council meeting that, after accepting the report, will ratify the District Plan.

The Ministry for the Environment illustrates this process in the following diagram.

![Outline of District Plan Process](image.png)

**Figure 3.2: Outline of District Plan Process (Ministry of the Environment 2011, Copyright permission granted August 2011).**

The District Plan is seen here as the product of a linear process, involving multiple stakeholders along the way. The outcome theoretically is a Plan that guides built environment development while ensuring sustainable management of natural and physical resources.
It is noted here that while the process described generates a District Plan for an area, the same processes are used for any Variation to that District Plan. Variations deal with changes to plan provisions, if a particular area within the Plan’s jurisdiction needs different provisions to accommodate changing needs.

Discussion

Within this process, two forms of discourse are engaged in. The written aspect occurs when the draft Plan is created, when submissions are made on a draft Plan, and when the Commissioners report back to Council. The verbal discourse occurs at both an informal and formal level throughout the plan-making process that typically happens over a period of years. Formal discussions (consultations) are held during the process of writing the draft Plan. Informal discussions are held throughout between officers and Councillors and other experts as well. Verbal discourse also occurs during the submission hearing stage, and at the point where Council discusses and votes on the ratification of the District Plan. The now Operative District Plan (having the status of legal force in respect of planning considerations) is, at heart, the creation of a dominant informal and formal verbal process although the final output is written.

Unpacking this process in terms of power is relatively unproblematic. A Council initiates the DP process, establishing its position within the power structure: as initiator; as creator and as manager of the process. These responsibilities are granted to Council by the RMA that assigns responsibility to Council. This is because Council is a representative body, made up of people elected from within the Council territory, and consequently, are seen as the best people to make decisions about future development, as they are assumed to know local conditions and constraints.

Other parties are invited by Council to consider the plan and to present their views. Council engages in a dialogue with these parties and, depending on the nature of that dialogue, may choose to change plan provisions. Once this period of negotiation is finished, Council ratifies the District Plan, giving it the force of bylaw and, consequently, the ability to be enforced. Council and its representatives dominate the process and have power over the content of a District Plan.
This description of District Plan creation forms the backdrop and contexts for built environment discourses to be studied. While this process generates documents that guide built form development, and helps explain the wider context for the actors, the focus is on the actors in the thesis. It is acknowledged that the frame of reference for these actors includes documents, in particular the RMA and District Plans. However since the questions relate to the actors and not the documents, the latter are not taken further in this method.

Case study

Setting out the backdrop to plan making, our focus is turned to generating the cases needed for examination. Before doing so, the argument for and role of the case study in this research requires attention and discussion.

Construction of Cases

Case studies provide the researcher with the ability to isolate elements of the case for study to investigate connections, influences present in the case and the ways in which elements of discourse contribute towards the overall constitution and being of the subject or object being studied. The examination can be of a qualitative or quantitative nature. Our interest here is in the qualitative nature of the inquiry, because the area of interest is in discourse, which is expressed by a person inhabiting a particular role, about a subject. Such interest does not preclude any quantitative study of the discourse: for instance, the number of times reference is made to a feature that is the subject of the discourse.

The definition of a case study, used in the thesis, is an intensive analysis of an individual unit that could be proposed as an exemplar of general principles relating to the issue under study. This is developed with reference to Flyvbjerg, who defines it thus “Case study. An intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to the environment” (Merriam-Webster 2009, in Flyvbjerg 2011).

The case study can select specific aspects of the subject for analysis, such as influence of particular speakers or social structures, or particular themes underlying aspects of discourse. In the research, discourses concern themselves with the construction of a subject (after Foucault), and this happens within a particular context, discussed above, at a range of scales. The individual contexts that display and actively use embedded planning
discourses, along with the discourse itself can form a case for study. These notions of context and embeddedness are discussed further below.

Although the dictionary definition above refers to an individual case, a number of case studies within a field of study can reveal things of interest that possibly could not be seen within an individual case. For instance, examination of rugby and netball within a New Zealand context could reveal why, for example, the games of rugby and netball, traditionally perceived as an object of interest and construction along gender lines (i.e. rugby for men, netball for women) but now currently are played by either gender, blurring traditional gender roles and creating new discursive constructions.

A small number of cases drawn from the rugby field and netball court can potentially reveal additional insights into the field of gender and sport. Following analysis of the cases, the results could be used as an ‘exemplar of a general principle’ across the field, giving confidence (depending on the kind of analysis used) in establishing broad indications of any particular principle relating to the reasons; for example, why, traditionally, sport was gender segregated.

A greater number of cases, however, have the advantage of defining more tightly the underlying principles that can be seen in the field of study. Each additional case can provide confirmation, or not, of particular concepts or ideas. This gives confidence to the researcher that because a particular concept is seen across a number of cases then it can be seen as definitive principle across a larger population.

The question facing a researcher is whether the research is aimed at either exemplifying broad principles, or definitive principles. The literature suggests that the number of cases needed to answer the thesis questions depends on a number of factors. These include the investigative question, or the number of people involved in the field of study, or the political context for the case.

Certainly context is a key issue for this research into the construction of nature within a built environment discourse. A single case may demonstrate the proof or not of such question, at least at a prima facie level. However as indicated by Swyengedouw, where nature is ‘an essentially empty’ subject and, therefore, open to multiple meanings according to the contexts by which the subject is placed, there remains the possibility of
multiple case studies, as there may be multiple contexts by which nature could be constructed; that is, nature may be constructed but it has multiple meanings, according to the different contexts within which nature is discussed. For instance, nature within a conservation discourse will be constructed differently than within a built environment discourse. Context is also identified below in the reference to Flyvbjerg on small N cases.

The single case/prima facie situation means it is fruitful to examine the theoretical discussions of the use of case studies, and in particular, extensions to the individual case study, such as small N case study research.

First, there is the Comparative Method (CM) research process with the following features (Ragin 2003, no page):

- Case-orientated, small-$N$ technique
- Cases are seen as meaningful but complex configurations of events and structure and are typically macro-level in terms of scope
- They are very often defined by its focus on phenomena that are of interest because they are rare – that is precisely because the $N$ of cases is small
- Typically these phenomena are large scale and historically delimited
- Researchers focus on a small number of cases (as a result of their rarity)\(^{12}\) and may spend many years learning about them, increasing their depth of knowledge
- Theory has a very strong inductive component
- The outcome is to understand the workings of historically or culturally significant phenomena, and to identify the causal forces behind each case
- A common finding in comparative research is that different combination of causes may produce the same outcome

Ragin explains that cases are ‘intentionally selected’ for having similar outcomes across all cases. This permits examination of the causal factors within cases that produced the outcome, rather than “using variation in one variable to explain variation in another”

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\(^{12}\) In this thesis, it is the fact that each case can be seen as part of an overall supra-case.
Identification of variability across cases can miss deeper underlying factors that work to produce outcomes, regardless of particular variables.

The CM criteria outlined stands in contrast to typical social science research that aims to uncover variables – independent and dependent. Independent variables are those that cause change in dependent variables, while dependent variables are affected by the independent variable but cannot affect it. It is noted that linear time is a determinant of what is the independent variable and the dependent. Such research examines a large number of cases, selected from within a population of potential cases, to assess for patterns of variables pertinent to the field of inquiry that then can be generalised back to the whole population. The patterns can be described as ‘typical’ or likely within a population and can be used to explain social structures within society.

Secondly, reference is made to the situation of a small number of research cases by Eisenhardt (1989), where cases studies are defined as “… a research strategy, which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings” (p. 535). In her discussion of the use of case studies as means to support the development of theory, Eisenhardt specifies that case studies to be useful in such development need to be selected from theoretical sampling, rather than random sampling, and that the cases are representative of “neither theory nor hypotheses” (ibid).

She points out that one means of reaching closure in the process of case study research is when a certain point is reached. This could be seen as ‘theoretical saturation’, which is “… simply the point at which incremental learning is minimal because the researchers are observing phenomena seen before, Glaser and Strauss, 1967…”(Eisenhardt 1989, p. 545, original author references). Saturation is analogous to the rarity of cases as indicated by Ragin.

Thirdly, Flyvbjerg argues that the case study has much to offer precisely because of its unique qualities: single or small N sample sizes; close examination of either specific aspects of the reality within the cases; or larger overall qualities; the way it enables development of research expertise by permitting greater understanding of the case; and the fact that a ‘good’ case study offers a rich seam of beneficial inquiry. 
He also casts a critical eye on the case study and examines the use of case studies against broader criticism and marginalisation of the case study methodology by social scientists and researchers. He outlines five 'misunderstandings' that lie at the heart of such criticism (2011):

1 – General, theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete case knowledge.

2 – One cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development.

3 – The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses; that is, in the first stage of a total research process, while other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building.

4 – The case study contains a bias towards verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher’s preconceived notions.

5 – It is often difficult to summarize and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies (p. 302).

Alongside the issue of small N cases, it is worth noting that the fourth and fifth misunderstanding here has particular implications for the research. Critics of case study point to, in no. 4., the ease by which a researcher with pre-conceived ideas about the issue under study could have bias or have greater likelihood of confirmation of his/her ideas. Noting that verification is a general problem common to all researchers regardless of method, Flyvbjerg instead suggests that the small and relatively intense analysis of cases can prevent such verification as the process and findings of the research may run counter to what was expected. Consequently he suggests that the ‘proximity to reality’ character of small N case studies leads to more insights, and consequent questioning of initial starting points, than larger sample sizes in qualitative research where critical insights may be missed or overlooked in favour of larger or more substantive themes. (This point was discussed in the previous chapter, where the problem of a ‘critical stance’ is noted.)

The fifth misunderstanding is answered by considering the results of the case study as a product of a reality seen within the case itself and, therefore, should be seen as part of the wider context of the case study within the ‘narrative’ of a case. Narratives, as a ‘story’ of the case study, provide meaningful insights into the research questions and, inter alia,
about the field of study. Such narrative insights, because they derive from the reality found within the case, can be applied to the larger context from which the case originates (Flyvbjerg 2011).

This summary of the literature on using a small number of cases supports the way the case study is used in this research. Firstly, while CM clearly is aimed at research involving large-scale historical research along the lines of understanding, for instance, changes in the role of women in politics, it can be suggested that the features of CM listed above, by Ragin will be of use within this research, especially the small number of cases. Secondly, the frequent reference to context as a significant factor when working with a small number of cases provides support for this part of the methodology. Finally, if we also take note of Flyvbjerg’s arguments, particularly focusing on the problems of bias, and generalizability of results, it can be seen that a small N case study approach has much to offer in terms of answering the thesis question. I now go on to discuss the possible cases that could be the subject of research.

**Discussion of case selection in context of thesis research**

The definition presented above refers to “intensive analysis of an individual unit”. In this research the intensive analysis focuses on the ‘actors’ who present discourses through interviews. They constitute the ‘individual units’ and as such are the core of the case. Each case also has a context or reference area. To limit the complexity of the cases the number of reference areas is limited to two: Flat Bush and Ruakaka Marsden Point.

The reason for adopting six actors and a context of two reference areas can be found principally in the built and natural environments. Since the subjects of the discourses being analysed, the built and natural environments, can be broadly defined we need to limit the focus in some manner. Furthermore, each of these environments is complex in their nature and there is an ongoing underlying discourse about these two environments. This may offer a large number and wide range of actors from homeowners to professionals, leading to potentially large number of interviews. In addition, while the research question investigates whether there is construction of nature within a built environment discourse, such construction takes place within particular areas of the natural environment that establishes a physical context for each discourse. By placing a
boundary around the physical context, and associating an actor with one of the contexts, the case studies are defined, both in terms of numbers of actors, and numbers of associated natural environments.

**Stage One: Actors and reference areas**

**Actor/Role Selection Process**

Once the reference areas were identified (explained below), research was undertaken in order to match up familiarisation with one of the reference areas to identification of suitable persons to be approached for interviews. This is done through examination of newspaper reports, press releases by Councils, official documents listing submissions to plans or projects about the site, or by asking other researchers who had worked in the same study area. A ‘snowball’ approach was taken in selecting the prospective population of suitable persons and, in one instance, a prospect was discovered through small talk while waiting at Council offices. The conversation suggested the person would be suitable. Table 3.1 indicates the sources used to locate prospective interviewees. Two main sources were used initially: council documents such as committee reports or copies of submissions. Two further sources were used: recommendation by other Actors and informal chance. These two sources yielded further prospects.

**Population**

There is a technical limitation, within the context of the reference areas, on the number of interviewee prospects. At the professional level, there will be a Councillor (usually a committee chair) in charge of the overall process of District Plan creation (as discussed below), and a council officer at management level in charge of writing the Plan and managing the process of its creation. There may be a consultant who is responsible for particular aspects of a Plan employed by a council. More typically, a developer, owning land within the reference area, employs the consultant, to undertake professional work in making applications to Council for land use consent. There may be several developers owning land within the reference areas. Outside of the professional sphere, one or two Chairpersons or committee members of residential associations in the area may be available. Potentially, the number of prospects for each reference area could be eight or
nine, with a potential total across the two (subsequently chosen, see below) reference areas of 18-20 prospects across the two reference areas.

**Sample**

In order to address the issue of representation, the sampling sought to select from the population discussed above. Fifteen prospects were identified from all sources (four property developers, three council officers, two councillors, four members of the public representing community associations, a consultant, and a CEO of a council owned development company). Finally, only six were available to be interviewed. Each interviewee was initially contacted by phone and, if agreeable to the idea of being interviewed, was given a short précis of the interview subject on the phone. Subsequently, the interviewee was emailed a copy of an ethics form and a brief written statement of the topic of the thesis. Email conversations followed to set up an agreeable time and place for the interview. It was sought to meet with the interviewees at a time and place that was suitable for them.

Disappointingly, no property developer was willing to be interviewed. This may be due to the fact that the research occurred in a period of high development activity, and shortly before the global financial crisis unfolded (2007-2008), which may have meant that property developers were under severe financial and other stress at the time. Two developers contacted several times did not return calls or emails. In the event, the two property developers contacted for interviews in 2007 and a further two considered for interviewing (but not contacted) were adjudged bankrupt in 2010-11, as a result of the adverse financial effects of the events of Global Financial Crisis of 2007-08. While their names are public knowledge, they cannot be reported here for ethical reasons.

With a recommendation from one council officer, attempts were made to contact a Councillor (considered as part of the initial 15) who had been involved in the process of developing a statutory planning document for one reference area. Unfortunately, despite several emails and several phone messages, the Councillor did not respond. This may have to do with the fact that the Councillor was facing re-election during local body elections at the time of the interviews. This was taken as a ‘decline to be interviewed’. Another council
officer (a manager) declined to be interviewed, but recommended a planning consultant and a Councillor in one reference area (subsequently interviewed).

The following table sets out the sample interviewee group, and notes the source that generated the Actor; mentioned in a Council document or report; mentioned or author of a submission to a Council document or report; named in a press release; recommended by other interviewee prospects; met by informal chance. The actors are associated with Flat Bush, Ruakaka Marsden Point (shortened to Ruakaka in the table) or an alternative reference site (not specifically identified) in the table.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Council Documents e.g. reports / submissions</th>
<th>Press releases</th>
<th>Recommended by Actors</th>
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Table 3.1: (this page and previous) Table demonstrating the source of potential interviewees. Eventual interviewees are underlined.

The Specific Actors – Flat Bush

The Planner (a mid-level council officer) had worked for a number of years on one of the reference areas. The role included mediating between community concerns, and the wider development pressures, as well as working to drive particular development guidelines that used natural aspects of the site as ‘lungs’ of the development.

The CEO was responsible for developing, on behalf of the Council who owned the land, a large central part of one reference area. A number of years were spent working in the private sector in the development industry (this is worth noting, as the Actor could be a

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<th>Press releases</th>
<th>Recommended by other Actors</th>
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<td>Flat Bush</td>
<td>Ruakaka</td>
<td>Other sites</td>
<td>Flat Bush</td>
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<td>Community Activist H</td>
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<td>Councillor 1</td>
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<td>CEO</td>
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<td>Flat Bush</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Planning) Consultant</td>
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proxy for the lack of any property developer in the study). The CEO lived in a nearby suburb, quite near to a harbour beach.

**The Specific Actors – Ruakaka Marsden Point**

The Councillor had grown up in the area and still lived in the area, where the family ran a dairy farm. At the time of the interview, the Councillor was Chair of the committee responsible for oversight of District Plan creation. The Councillor role involved oversight of the creation of a Structure Plan and the eventual Variation to the District Plan that outlined the future development of one reference area.

The Planning Consultant (hereafter referred to as Consultant) developed the Structure Plan for a reference area for a client engaged in property development. This plan was subsequently lodged with the Council. The Structure Plan then underwent a consultative process with the local community. Following this, the Council then employed the Consultant, and the Consultant subsequently wrote the Variation to the District Plan, in effect working for both the client at one point then subsequently for the Council. The variation to the District Plan, “Northgate – Port Marsden Industrial Area”, was released by Council for submissions by the general public in the second half of 2010.

Community Activist H (CAH) is a retired scientist who lived in one reference area and volunteered time helping local iwi with reviewing planning applications, helping local environmental groups to restore beach nesting sites for native birds, and is a member of a local residents’ group that was opposing the Structure Plan for the area. In the role, the Actor made a submission on the Structure Plan, requesting Council to decline the adoption of the Structure Plan.

Community Activist L (CAL) lived some 20 minutes south of a reference area, and was secretary of the same local residents’ group that Community Activist H was involved in, and volunteered time assisting with the re-vegetation of the dune system nearby. Similarly, the Actor made a submission on the Structure Plan, requesting Council not to accept the Structure Plan.
**Role contribution to planning discourse**

A multiplicity of roles participates in the creation of a District Plan that codifies guidelines for built form development. A role within this context refers to the actions and responsibilities held by the person with that role. For example, the Councillor has political oversight of the development of a District Plan. While these roles are not responsible for directly writing the Plan, they are responsible for the overall content and direction of the Plan.

Observation of the roles involved in creating District Plan reveals two things; the different roles that contribute towards a District Plan's creation and the ‘distance’ that role has in relation to the District Plan. The further the ‘distance’ from the District Plan, the less influence that role has over the creation of the District Plan.

**Figure 3.3: Schematic diagram of Role influence on District Plan process.**

Figure 3.3 outlines a simple schematic outline of where various roles involved in the creation of a District Plan ‘sit’ in relation to that plan. Members of the public are furthest from the District Plan’s initial drafting and, consequently, have relatively little influence on its creation. Planners, in contrast, sit closely to the plan during its drafting and writing, by virtue of their professional background and training, and are responsible for its technical content. Planners within a New Zealand context typically have a university qualification, either a Planning degree (e.g. Bachelor of Planning or Masters of Planning Practice,
University of Auckland) or an associated degree that is recognised by the professional association, the NZ Planning Institute.

Between these two roles sit other professional advisors (‘Other professionals’ in Figure 3.3), who provide technical information about various plan matters such as air quality, or soil quality, which are incorporated into the Plan by the Planner as matters of fact. Councillors who have political oversight of the plan in terms of the philosophical basis of the plan (i.e. a strong development orientation or a greater focus on preserving environmental features) sit further back, while Developers (typically employing professional consultants) who have a natural interest in any Plan creation as it affects development potential of an area sit a little further back.

Consideration of the different roles involved in plan creation indicates that Planner, Councillors, Developers and members of the public would be useful roles to consider for investigation. Professional advisors are not of interest as their role is purely a technical role, providing information about the specific management aspects of the natural environment such as air or water quality standards. Reference will be made in further chapters to this diagram to illustrate the point that these actors contribute to a document that guides built form development. However our focus remains on the actors within this discursive arena, and not on the eventual document to which these roles contribute.

Figure 3.3 can also be a representation of the Habermasian Communicative Action arena as discussed in Chapter One. Each of the actors participate in an overall meta-discussion about how to best guide future development for a particular area, and through a variety of media, communicate their particular view to others, who in turn respond. The resulting document, a District Plan, can be viewed as representative of a number of arguments engaged in throughout the process. The document also binds parties; it governs the behaviour of those that want to develop land while at the same time governing the process by which those that oppose such development can exercise their opposition.

Reference areas

As mentioned above, the actors are associated with a reference area. This effectively places a boundary around the role in order to provide a context for the discourse. In this case the context is a geographical area.
The starting point for a reference area could theoretically be anywhere built environments could be created. These can range from single sites found in cities and towns, through to individual sites found within rural developments such as life-style block sub-divisions. This wide range could be limited to sites, for example, where there is a distinct concentration of the built form such as urban areas. This allows for a distinct and concentrated stream of built environment discourses that would occur during the process of creating such environments available for study.

For this research, existing areas of built environment however are not suitable as the investigation is into a construction of nature within a built environment discourse (i.e. there is talk about a particular built environment to come). Previous developments in essence have already decided any particular construction of nature, if there was one. This is because the built environment is already created within a natural environment that is now modified. The best reference areas would be those, in contrast, where there is a large peri-urban area that lies outside of an already established urban area, and facing development pressures which implies a potential built environment discourse. A large-scale rural area would ensure distinction between an already existing nature (albeit typically modified within the New Zealand context into farming or small scale rural uses) and the future possibility of suburban or urban development that is envisaged by planning processes affecting the site. A distinction between two particular states (a pre-existing ‘nature’ state and future built environment state envisaged in the planning discourse) would allow interviewees a choice between these two states, which could underscore the relative importance of nature in their discourses if they choose one state or another.

**Reference Area selection**

May, as noted in Chapter One, informs the selection of reference areas. He argued that discourse produces not only a material (built) world (i.e. a metaphysical world) but also a world that has meaning, that makes sense and enables us to undertake certain actions within it. May is careful to distinguish two worlds; a material one, and a cognitive or mental one.
The material and cognitive worlds bear a strong relationship but remain separate. The material world contains all the physical and intangible objects that give our worlds structure and form. Each part of the material world has a corresponding part in the cognitive world that contains the meanings about that part of the material world.

This two-world model given by May forms the basis for area selection. The natural world, as defined by the thesis, is a metaphysical world, which will have corresponding cognitive meanings about it in discourses. This metaphysical natural world surrounds us wherever we are, may live, or work. It provides us with the materials we need to survive and grow both as human beings, and as a civilisation. We have an intimate relationship with it. It consists of a myriad of objects (species, features, processes) for which we create concepts, and meanings.

Because nature surrounds us and we participate in an intimate relationship with it on a daily basis, the selection of reference areas relies on the inherent qualities of the area itself; that is, the potential it offers uncovering meaning making about nature. The best area for testing the thesis questions against would be one that contained relatively significant amount of unmodified, original natural environments, and is available to be developed for urbanisation, in terms of reference area criterion. At the time of writing no such sites exist. The range of land conversion from bush to farming uses is extensive across much of New Zealand, and remaining areas of unmodified land is protected at either a national level (i.e. national parks), or regional level (i.e. regional parks).

The locations selected for examination therefore should enable two purposes. Firstly, those interviewees should have a reference point when talking about either a future, conceptual built environment or the actual physical natural environment. This will provide a cognitive ‘blank sheet’ of sorts, upon which interviewees could discursively ‘construct’ objects or subjects, following van Dijk’s DCS model (see previous chapter). Secondly, the scale of the area should provide a reasonably clear cognitive picture for interviewees of a site’s natural environment characteristics (e.g. streams, bush, or geological features) alongside a proposed, that is, conceptual, significantly large-scale built environment. In this way, a choice is enabled between two kinds of environments within the area, an already physical natural environment or a conceptual future built environment.
Following these criteria, two areas were chosen: Flat Bush and Ruakaka Marsden Point (Figure 3.4, the names both refer to the geographical area, as well as the name of the proposed development site.) These locations have two characteristics in common; they are substantive geographical locations (both are around 1700 – 1800 hectares in size) and are the subject of study by the local council to assess the potential for future suburban style residential, commercial, retail and industrial development. Both of these locations are within the wider Auckland region; Ruakaka Marsden Point being approximately 90 minutes drive north from central Auckland, and Flat Bush about 30 minutes south. Each has particular natural and geographical features.

Three other areas were considered but rejected: Waimukau and Anselmi, housing developments in the Auckland area. This is because the size of the developments was relatively small; that is, the proposed development would only be several hundred homes. Additionally, for Waimukau, the process of land-use planning changes to the District Plan had been halted in the Environment Court for reasons of the unsuitability of the proposed urbanisation of the site. This meant that the tensions between proposed development and nature were removed in favour of continuation of the rural use of the site. Pegasus Bay in the Christchurch region was rejected, as the site was not easily accessible to the researcher.
Figure 3.4: Location of Ruakaka Marsden Point and Flat Bush relative to Auckland region (Land Information NZ, north to top of figure).
Land

Both of these areas are modified natural environments (i.e. modified from original natural bush vegetation to pastureland for dairying). In such modification, aspects of the natural environment may have been lost, as landforms may have been modified or vegetation removed for productive purposes. A history of such modifications for farming purposes in NZ up until the early 1960s is found in An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand (New Zealand Government 1966). The Northland Regional Council indicates that pastoral farming is a dominant land use in the region earning “... around $1 billion a year for the region, with dairying contributing around $630 million, beef farming $230 million and sheep farming $140 million” (Regional Policy Statement, Northland Regional Council 1999). This economic driver likely accounts for the current pastoral use of the Ruakaka Marsden Point reference area. Similar land modifications trajectories are likely for Flat Bush but unfortunately there is little information available about this.

However, the present rural pastoral use in Ruakaka Marsden Point, and the small scale farming patterns in Flat Bush, along with the relatively flat and relatively featureless aspects of these two areas (notwithstanding natural features such as streams or remnant patches of bush) allows for the remote, yet real and theoretical, possibility that the area could be transformed back into areas of significant natural environments, notwithstanding the significant pressures for urban development.

Following an understanding of transcendental relationships as explained in Chapter Two, and how such relationships have aspects of duality – two objects and two grades of value, we can see that such model could be applied to the reference areas. It is theoretically possible that retaining rural uses, or even returning parts of the reference area back into significant natural features such as bush, could exist in the minds of the interviewees, sharpening the choices between two objects in their minds, between rural or urban forms of development, influencing their answers. If an interviewee, for example, held strong environmental beliefs, then possibly he or she would give answers that tend to favour a more environmentally focussed outcome for the area and hence form a discursive construction of the area to reflect these beliefs, following Hahn. The large scale of the area is a factor in possibly supporting such a choice.
A large-scale reference area makes it possible for a stark gross difference between the existing (modified) natural environment and the future proposed urban development to be entertained cognitively or discursively. The physical difference, cognitively thought of, would lie in the actual physical construction of the built form, and its very visible imposition on an area, if chosen by the interviewee. This would represent a transcendent relationship between the built form and a surrounding nature.

**Planning Governance - Whangarei**

The Whangarei District Council has jurisdiction over Ruakaka Marsden Point. The District is one of three Councils in the Northland region and currently is the only district with a substantial mixed population and industrial, manufacturing, horticultural and agricultural base. Whangarei District encompasses mostly rolling gentle to steep country to the north, west and south, with small pockets of flat land in coastal bays.

The Whangarei District Council states the introduction to its District Plan that:

> The District Plan is an enabling document, designed to minimise rules and regulations, and encourage innovation and diversity in the use of the Whangarei District’s resources. It does not seek to direct development, but does have a role in ensuring that development and associated activities have regard to the practicalities of a particular piece of land (Whangarei District Council 2007).

As indicated, a Structure Plan for the reference area was prepared to guide development. At the time of writing, a variation (that follows a Structure Plan) required to change the District Plan to take into account recommended changes in land use guidelines for the reference area, has not been prepared (however, by late 2010 this was released). The Structure Plan forms the basis for some parts of analysis.
Figure 3.5: Ruakaka Marsden Point reference area (Marsden Point-Ruakaka Structure Plan 2008, Whangarei District Council 2008, north to top of figure). Ruakaka River to the southwest of the reference area. Takahiwai hills, stream and wetland to the northeast of the reference area. Blacksmiths wetland to north, adjacent to port.
Planning Governance - Manukau

Manukau City Council had jurisdiction over Flat Bush. It does not explicitly state any kind of stance towards the development of its area, but notes that its District Plan (discussed below) supports and is integrated within a Regional Plan:

It should be noted that the primary responsibility for achieving integrated management of the natural and physical resources of the region lies with the Auckland Regional Council. The ARC is directly responsible for the control of discharges of contaminants into or onto land, air or water, and such matters as the maintenance and enhancement of water quality, soil conservation etc.

Nevertheless, territorial authorities such as Manukau City have a significant role at the local level, as they are required to establish objectives, policies and methods to achieve "integrated management of the effects of the use, development or protection of land and associated natural and physical resources of the district" (S31 Resource Management Act 1991) (Manukau City Council 2002, original emphasis).

The Council has been engaged in planning exercises for the reference area since the late 1990s, starting with the “Development East Tamaki Concept Plan” in 1999, East Tamaki being the previous name for Flat Bush (Harland 2007). Shifts in the statutory Metropolitan Urban Limits (i.e. the limit of urban development in the region) by the Auckland Regional Council (Hill 2008) during the late 1990s brought Flat Bush land within the limits, thereby enabling urban development (Harland 2007). This spurred the development of Variation 13 to the Manukau District Plan in 2001 that developed statutory rules guiding development in Flat Bush. The Council finally adopted this in 2005.
Figure 3.6: Copy of Flat Bush Structure Plan (Manukau City Council 2005) with stream network shown in blue, urban development areas in mustard, and parks in green.
Discussion of selected reference areas

Land Use Governance

There are three underlying aspects to the Whangarei Council’s land use planning ethos. Firstly, there is an emphasis on minimal rule and regulations. Secondly, ‘practicality’ is the basis for consideration of what to do and, thirdly, nature is figured as a ‘particular piece of land’.

Framing nature as simply a ‘piece of land’ explicitly places nature in a subservient position within the planning framework for the District. This is confirmed by breaking it into pieces that are reduced to a catchall descriptor, ‘land’. This land is then endowed with ‘practicalities’ that both constrain and afford development. A ‘cut’ down nature emerges from these actions, which loses its dynamic, and multi-dimensional character in favour of a practical character. This scaled-down nature is then subject to minimal rules and regulations, as a neo-liberal ethos sees landowners as best able to respond to the opportunities and constraints of their ‘piece of land’. The wider contexts and interests of other landowners or other pieces of land nearby are not considered (beyond normal rules of law that secures the ability to enjoy land without interference from adjoining landowner use), as there is no room in the neo-liberal individualistic construct for such considerations. But the individual landowner is subject to land ‘practicalities’ which could be extended to include nearby aspects (e.g. streams or rivers, hillsides) if necessary.

The contrast is with the Manukau City Council, where the concern is, as Council notes, to adhere exactly to the goal of the Resource Management Act and “… achieve integrated management of the effects of the use, development or protection of land and associated natural and physical resources of the district.” Nature is figured here as not only land but also associated natural and physical objects. This ensures that the holism of nature is considered in making decisions about land use; however, this combination is reduced, in a similar though less dramatic reductionist move as the Whangarei District Council, to being resources that are subject to ‘use, development or protection’. Furthermore, such reduced nature is placed into an integrated management regime that controls the effects of the use, development or protection of land. Integration of various effects points to, if necessary, a consideration of the wider scale of effects arising from use, which addresses in some
manner the integral character of nature. In this respect, there is an attempt (following the Resource Management Act, as indicated above) at striking a balance between a holistic nature on the one hand, and managing the effects from the use of it for development purposes on the other.

The two different approaches to nature seen here within the respective District Plans indicates the flexibility found within the RMA that enables Councils to interpret provisions of the Act as they wish and, in particular, how to frame nature. This highlights the importance of discourse during a Plan’s creation; clearly different conceptualisations of nature are seen within each Plan. These approaches to land use planning may find expression in interviewees, given the relationship indicated in Figure 3.3 between a District Plan and the various Actors who have an interest in the Plan.

**Cases selected**

By matching the reference areas and the Actors and their roles, it is possible to set up six cases for analysis, namely:

- Flat Bush – Planner
- Flat Bush – CEO
- Ruakaka – Councillor
- Ruakaka – Community Activist H
- Ruakaka - Community Activist L
- Ruakaka – Consultant

These cases were selected from the 15 Actors initially approached, and outlined in the Table 3.1, and the two reference areas as discussed. Of the 15 Actors approached, as discussed, only six were available to be interviewed.

**Case and case study discussion**

Each case contains one of the two reference areas selected for study, and one role associated with that reference area. While on the surface the cases appear to be similar in the sense that they relate to similar reference areas, and the Actors are found within the
planning field, each case is subject to complexities. For instance, the District Plan governs the development of built form, as explained above, and this arrangement is within wider socio-economic contexts that frame the built environment as a product for sale. This framing may be apparent in the discourse of the Planner or the CEO for example.

Additional complexities will relate to differences in local culture: differences in the relative size of the constituent Councils (Manukau is a larger organisation and has more staff, while Whangarei is smaller and fewer staff than Manukau); differences in relative surrounding population size where the reference areas are located; differences in economic drivers and differences in underlying District Plan ethos, as explained above.

There is also complexity arising from the intersection between role and reference area. For example, in the choice between two states of development, does a planner choose between recognition of nature within these areas (and subsequently construct nature in a certain way), or is nature placed in a transcendent relationship to the built form, and constructed accordingly? The influences on the choices arise from the beliefs, worldviews, experiences and values found in the self and how it perceives the world around the self. Additionally, pressures from existing urban areas can influence how the area is seen within local planning and development discourses, and in turn how nature is constructed within a discourse about the area’s potential development, adding to the complexity of the cases. As discussion about nature in Chapter Two indicates, there is a complexity inherent in discourses about nature that reflects a person’s beliefs and worldviews.

In assessing reference areas for study, large scale contiguous developments are not common within a New Zealand context, in contrast to countries such as the United States (e.g. Levittown) or Australia, simply because the extensive hilly and moderate to steep landscapes, remnant forest vegetation and small population base limits such developments. However, there are sites currently that are of reasonable size of tens to several hundred hectares that are peri-urban and are facing development pressures. These number in the handful only, leading to a small number of potential cases for research.

As discussed above, the small number of complex cases fits the framework of Comparative Research (CM) and offers opportunities, according to Flyvbjerg (2011), that can provide a rich understanding of discursive constructions. A single case can answer the thesis question, but Swyngedouw (discussed in Chapter Two) points to the ‘emptiness’ of Nature,
as something that accepts and reflects back whatever label is applied to it by the person concerned. There may be agreement amongst many about that particular label, or others may contest the label. This suggests that there could be a range of cases, within the small sample, that would illuminate the single case answer to the question.

Notwithstanding that these cases are not the ‘large scale historical’ cases the CM method refers to, the principles of CM are of assistance to the research. CM looks for causes as to the commonality of the outcomes, that is, across a small number of cases, there are common features present within the case. While urban developments are obvious common features of the transformation of rural sites to urban areas, there could be other common features, less obvious, across the selected cases. In particular, the underlying notion of transcendentalism, or the role of the self in discursive constructions, as discussed in Chapter Two, could point to commonalities across the selected reference areas.

CM offers a broad framework for considering the kinds of cases that should be studied. As Flyvbjerg suggested, small N case studies offer the ability to investigate phenomena to a degree that permits greater appreciation of the complexity of the cases. Having established our cases, we now turn to focus on obtaining the data required for analysis.

**Stage Two: Obtaining the data and preparation for analysis**

**The Interview questions**

The initial starting point for the process of coding is with the interview questions. The questions frame the whole interview, probe for answers to specific questions, and goes on to provide nodes. The following questions were used in the interviews and are split into four groups:

**Group One**

1) My first question relates to your role in the [community group] OR [organization] – can you describe your position and what you do?

2) What is your relationship with the study area?\(^{13}\)

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\(^{13}\) The question referred to a study area, but as the thesis progressed, it was realized that a better descriptor was reference area.
2a) [if necessary] What is your relationship to the statutory document that provided for the development of the area? [Explain if necessary]

Group Two

3) Turning to another subject area, I’d like to ask you about your ideas of the built environment. What are your ideas about the built environment?
4) What ideas do you have about the construction of the built environment?
5) The ideas you have about the built environment and about the construction of the built environment – what do you think the implications are for the [Flat Bush] OR [Ruakaka Marsden Point] study area?

Group Three

6) Turning now to nature, if I define it as everything that is not person-made – I’d like to focus on what your ideas are about nature – what ideas do you have about nature?
7) Looking at how the built environment interacts with nature or alternatively, how nature interacts with the built environment - [REFRESH THEIR IDEAS OF BUILT ENVIRONMENT] - what are your ideas of how nature exists within the built environment?
8) How do these ideas about nature, and how it interacts with the built environment – how do these apply within the [Flat Bush] OR [Ruakaka Marsden Point] study area?

Group Four

9) Turning to yourself now – how do you see yourself within nature [REFRESH IDEAS OF NATURE]?

Broadly speaking, there are four groups of questions. The first group (questions 1 and 2) investigated the role that the interviewee played within their organisation or community. The interview is with an Actor playing a particular role, and assumptions (held by the researcher) about the performance of that role formed the basis for the approach with a
request to interview the Actor (e.g. that the role had clearly defined responsibilities, and outcomes). To remove those assumptions, Question 1 sought to offer interviewees the opportunity to explain the role.

The second group (Questions 3, 4, and 5) investigated the ways in which the interviewee considered or thought about the built environment both as an ‘independent’ concept, and as an object having a relationship with the relevant study area. The third group (Questions 6, 7 and 8) probed how the interviewee thought of nature and how that concept interacted with a proposed built environment within the reference area. The fourth group, Question 9, examined how interviewees saw themselves within nature.

**Relationship of Interview Questions to Theory**

The aim of the questions was to elicit *discourses* about the built environment and views about nature from professional or other perspectives. Foucauldian explanations of discourse, ideas about meaning making, power, and transcendental, immanent and Deep Ecology models of the self-nature relationship as explained in Chapter Two underlie these questions.

Each interviewee had a relationship with a reference area that was undergoing theoretical transformation from pastoral rural land to a proposed built environment use. Testing for a relationship between the Actor’s role and influences towards the built environment or nature was the reason for asking questions about the role that the Actor performed in relation to the reference area. This would indicate the kind of relationship between role and nature. The characteristics of the role and degree of influence stemming from the role would be expected to influence their discursive construction of nature.

Asking about aspects of the built environment, both material and proposed, aimed to stimulate the following: discourses about built environments, that is, what kinds of built environment are described; links between concept of built environment and hegemonic socio-legal-economic structure that enables the built environment to occur; how the built environment transforms or affects the landscape and what the status of nature is within the built environment. Foucault indicated that discourse creates a subject, through a process of signification and signified. Responses to built environment questions would indicate such a process. Stimulating discussion about the built environment also creates
the conditions for examining the production of a discursive nature within a built
environment discourse.

The third set of questions focused on the natural environment, stimulating interviewee
thoughts about the natural environment. In turn, these questions investigated the
following: the discourse about nature; the discourse surrounding the nature of the
relationship between nature and the built environment and specifically how the
relationship applied in the study area.

The final question was somewhat provocative, focusing on an unusual state of being – how
the interviewees saw themselves within nature. The aim was to see how the interviewees
spoke of themselves within nature, which would reveal a particular self-nature
relationship. For example, indication of the presence of self-realisation in the answer
would indicate a particular relationship with nature along Deep Ecological perspectives.

**Interview process**

The interviews were held at a time and place of the interviewees’ choosing. As noted
above, they had previously received the explanatory documentation and consent form
required by The University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee. All the
interviews took place at their place of work, or at their home in the case of the two
community activists. Each lasted around 75 to 90 minutes and was recorded on a digital
voice recorder.

Telling the interviewees that they were free at any time to stop the interview and that they
were not obliged to answer any question prefaced each interview. I went on to tell the
interviewee that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was interested in
whatever answer they gave. The interviews were deliberately open-ended; asked for
clarification by the interviewee during the interview of what was meant by built
environment or nature, the general response was “However you define it.”

Interview times and locations were arranged at the time of contact with the interviewee,
which were usually held a week to ten days later. I used the same set of questions for each
interview, and the same order of questions, which provided consistency in interviewing,
and provided structure to the transcribed interviews. I did not attempt to paraphrase
answers, or to suggest answers, and instead encouraged a free form and flow to the interview through the use of supportive words and nods of the head or murmured agreements. Being mindful of the transcriber I usually asked clarification questions (e.g. repeating the name of a landmark feature) to enable good transcriptions.

The open-ended nature of the interview questions helped avoid one distinctive disadvantage to the interview method as highlighted by Flyvbjerg; questions about nature and the built environment can place a particular ‘slant’ or bias on the question if the question is phrased in a certain way, importing the interviewer’s particular view on the question and possibly influencing the kind of answer given. Use of questions that focussed on the interviewee’s ideas about nature and the built environment and, by encouraging open-ended answers, which by their length in reply (depending on the question asked) minimised any taint of bias, as interviewees could ‘warm up’ to the subject, moving away from any implied taint and towards what the interviewee wanted to say.

At some point during the multiple interview process, it became clear that the interview answers being given by the different interviewees were quite similar. That is, each Actor could talk about the built environment easily, found it harder to discuss nature, tended to frame the built environment in a transcendent relationship with nature, and each particularly found it difficult to answer the last question that asked about how the Actor saw himself or herself in nature. This indicated the point at which inductively it was realised that there were commonalities to each Actor. Eisenhardt’s observation (1989) highlights this point in the research, in her observation about ‘theoretical saturation’, where a researcher has observed phenomena before.

It was adjudged at that point that theoretical saturation had occurred. Two outcomes arose from this. Firstly, the number of cases was limited to six, enabling small N case study to occur. Secondly, analysis would be conclusive due to the commonality of answers across these six cases.

**Preparation for Discourse Analysis**

Having obtained the data, we turn to examine the computer-based tool used to prepare the data for discourse analysis and Critical Discourse analysis. These methods were explained in the previous chapter.
Software Tool– NVivo

NVivo8\(^{14}\) is a computer program tool used to code text (e.g. transcripts of interviews, statutory documents, or portions of videos or other media), uncovering the different expressed thematic ideas and concepts embedded within the coded text quickly (Version 8 of NVivo was used in this thesis and all references to NVivo refer to this version). The coded text can be stored for retrieval, and can be further critically interrogated and analysed, exploring relationships between concepts, for example, and how these are represented within the text (which, if we accept that discourse constructs the social world implies, by extension, that the social world reflects such relationships seen in the studied text).

Coding is a process of assigning selected text to thematic ideas, known as nodes. NVivo is capable of coding for different kinds of text, alongside traditional written forms, thereby expanding the definition of ‘text’. However, for this thesis, the text will be written records of interviews.

**NVivo terminology**

There are two parts to NVivo analysis, coding and nodes. These two terms need to be explained. Coding is defined as the method or process by which a user assigns a selected piece of analysed text to a particular node. Nodes are defined as short descriptors or representations of the selected text. They can represent objects or concepts (Bazeley 2007), and nodes “… range from being purely descriptive - this event occurred in the playground, through labels for topics or themes – this is about violence between children, to more interpretive or analytical concepts – it is a reflection of cultural stereotyping (Richards, 2005)” (Bazeley 2007, p. 66, original emphasis, original citation). The italics seen in the quote would be examples of nodes. It is important to note in the quote that nodes represent themes that are seen in the text. While coding is simply a process of highlighting text to be assigned to a node, it is the node that is of interest here.

\(^{14}\) http://www.qsrinternational.com/#tab_you
Generation of Nodes and theoretical approaches

Nodes can be generated in two principal ways: from either within the text itself; following grounded theory (GT) principles; or generated prior to the text being studied, from literature and theoretical understandings. GT is a method that emphasizes generation of theory from examination of the data itself (Charmaz 2002). The viewpoint could be described as an ‘inside-out’ view. Alternatively, nodes can be generated from prior readings and development of theoretical models about a subject; and then applied to the data itself, as a kind of ‘outside-in’ lens view of the text, a theoretical position that seems not to have a general name.

In Bazeley’s examples, the ‘playground’ and ‘violence between children’ nodes would be examples of GT because the nodes arise from the text as the action described occurs within the text. The third node, ‘cultural stereotyping’ could be either an example of an idea arising from within a text, or alternatively be a theoretical construct arising from outside the text and applied to the text.

If the idea arose from prior theoretical or other readings about the interpretation of children’s play within text, then this would be an example of outside readings influencing interpretation of the text. These readings may lead to the development of a theoretical model that is then applied to the text, or may simply be concepts that offer ways of structuring the text for analysis. If the idea arose from within the text, as a result of the researcher identifying the place of cultural stereotyping within children’s play, then it would be a case of the text itself influencing the kind of concepts that could be ‘harvested’ from inside the text, an example of GT. In this way it is the interview participants who ‘generate’ theoretical insights.

The use of either method depends on the research outcome sought. GT offers the possibility of uncovering new ways of seeing the different concepts within text and, ultimately a particular view of a discourse. This can provoke new discursive constructions, for instance, enabling different ways in which contentious and other societal problems can

15 http://www.groundedtheory.com/what-is-gt.aspx
be viewed, and constructed by different protagonists. There may be a commonly held view, for example, about how undergraduate university students view themselves in relation to their studies, and to their lecturers, and how lecturers view their students. By analysing nodes (containing selected text) seen within the interviews of students and lecturers a new view of such relationship could be uncovered.

The ‘outside-in’ method, in contrast, offers ways for theoretical conceptual views, developed outside of the interviews, about a particular discourse, or about the subject of it (e.g. university students), to be tested through the text itself. The text becomes a means of validating conceptual models, or confirming categories that are applied to the text. Regardless of the approach, the heart of either approach lies in the use of nodes.

The node is represented as a literal node within NVivo (called ‘free nodes’ within the program), against which all other instances of similarly coded text, regardless of source, is stored. This means that a node within NVivo has two functions: it represents a concept, arising from either the text or from outside of the text (depending on the theoretical approach used); and it contains text that has been coded against that node. Concepts and ideas are detached from the text and placed against a node. This enables analysis and interrogation of the coded text found against any particular node and probing for linkages between concepts found within different coded text. Any linkages will stem from the sources of the studied text, in this case, answers to interview questions. These are outlined in the next section.

**Preparation of data**

The recorded interviews were professionally transcribed. No request was made for any ‘linguistic’ transcription, where pauses, the employment of ‘ummm’, ‘errrr’, use of repeated words (‘that is, that is to say’) and other characteristics of conversation are noted. Such characteristics would be of interest to those undertaking a linguistic study, where these features represent certain meanings within the text but are not required here as the focus of the research is on broader analysis.

The transcribed interviews were formatted in Microsoft Word, and imported into the NVivo program as a unit of analysis. Once imported, the document could be opened, and the process of coding undertaken.


**Coding method and application of NVivo**

Coding, as with the generation of nodes, can be done in two principal ways: through a GT approach where theoretical insights are developed from the text itself through categories that arise from the text itself; and through a ‘top-down’ or ‘outside-in’ approach where the data is coded to fit already generated theoretical models (Bazeley 2007). Equally, a mix of ways can be adopted.

A grounded analysis approach is critical for this thesis, where meanings arise from the text itself rather than being imposed from outside the text. Such an approach avoids suggestion of bias (following Flyvbjerg’s discussion of small N case study research) where pre-conceived ideas about what should be seen in the text (beyond an obvious discourse about role, built environments, nature and self) may influence what is coded/not coded, and hence what nodes are developed (and later analysed). The independence of the approach also ensures the integrity of the text, that is, any extracted meaning from the text is ‘true’ to the text, by virtue of arising from the text, lending validity to subsequent analysis.

Equally, use of the top-down approach may assist in elucidating the general structural outlines within which the subsequent analysis of GT coded text can occur. For instance, the thesis question drives the kinds of questions asked in the interview, so the questions themselves organise and structure general categories of responses. The use of questions to structure and categorise responses for coding can assist in narrowing down the field of enquiry and analysis. This approach does not suggest a bias that may affect results, as the top-down focus is on ensuring that data is appropriately categorised for analysis. Once data is categorised, the use of a GT approach will help avoid bias, as explained, in the analytical results. Overall, a combination of both methods will be of assistance in the initial coding stage.

Therefore, the process of coding firstly looks for sentences or groups of sentences that used any one or more of these key categorical, top-down words, *nature or natural environment, built environment, self or role*, which refer back to the thesis question. This question implies or suggests the key words as outlined. Nature or natural environment, built environment and self were obvious choices. Role is less obvious, but the role that the interviewee played is indicative of the power that role had within the built environment.
discourse that subsequently influences the creation of a discursive nature and embodies notions of Foucauldian power relations.

Following this initial categorisation, the process then applies GT to examine what the text suggests in terms of concepts, for example, *built environment – guidelines for development*. The idea of ‘guidelines for development’ would arise from the text itself, while the built environment idea is the categorical ‘handle’ that sorts the text into an appropriate node.

The limitation to GT analysis coding, however, is the subjectivity of the coder in his/her perception of the material to be coded that may introduce bias. This is avoided by focusing on key structural words or ideas within the text as determined. Despite this measure, coding is a process of uncovering themes or ideas within the text therefore *how* the person doing the coding views those key words or ideas introduces subjectivity into the process.

This may introduce an unintended meaning to the text, or one that does not correspond with the intended meanings expressed by the text (and by extension, the interviewee). There is no easy answer to this constraint except to recognise this as a limitation to the exercise and to interpret results in light of it. Indeed, Beazley discusses this problem, citing Kelle who suggests:

> Qualitative researchers who investigate a different form of social life always bring with them their own lenses and conceptual networks. They cannot drop them, for in this case they would not be able to perceive, observe and describe meaningful events any longer – confronted with chaotic meaningless and fragmented phenomena they would have to give up their scientific endeavour. (Kelle 1997, in Beazley 2007, p. 23)

Given this, Beazley counsels “Thus rather than deny their existence, recognize them, record them, and become aware of how they might be influencing the way you are thinking about your data …” (Beazley 2007, p. 23). This is addressed in a critique in Chapter Five.

NVivo, widely used in social sciences as a means to code text and other forms of discourse such as images for analysis, enables, as Bazeley (2007) suggests, a basis for ongoing investigation and a critical reflection of the way in which nodes are developed (how to approach the data) and the outcomes of the coded material (how to interpret the results). The use of this tool to investigate concepts within the discourses (transcribed interviews) will be of critical importance to the thesis.
Coding process

As explained, coding is a task of manually highlighting selected text by the researcher, ranging from one sentence to parts of sentences, or whole groups of sentences. The highlighted text is then manually ‘assigned’ to one or more nodes. In this sense, the text is sorted into a tree-like hierarchal structure in the phases that follow. This process is a Data Preparation stage, carried out in the 1st phase of the analysis, and the results of the coding forms the data for subsequent analytical phases, produced in the following Chapters.

Using the following text, which is a transcribed response to an interview question from one interviewee, as an example, I describe the process of coding:

Well if you’re talking about establishing a built environment first of all you have to ask yourself the question is it really needed in the first place and that’s something later on in our interview, I don’t want to touch on that now but I’m going to touch on the point that we have decided that there is going to be a built, that we are seriously considering the need for a built environment and I say one of the first things you have to do is identify the physical attributes and limitations of the chosen site in order to determine whether in fact it is suited to the sort of development you have in mind (added emphasis, Community Activist H).

The steps taken in the process are:

1) Look for key words while reading. In this instance, **built environment** [use of top-down categorical coding];
2) Once located, scan the text around the key word(s). The default action is to code (highlight) this text, unless the meaning is unclear or insignificant. If the meaning is unclear or insignificant, the action is not to code;
3) Deduce or infer the meaning of selected text (i.e. what is the sentence or groups of sentences saying?) In the example above, focusing on specific parts of the statement made by the interviewee and thinking through what it meant arrived at an inferred meaning being expressed. In this case, that there is a link between the natural and built environments. More specific meaning could be gained (e.g. that **physical attributes and limitations** influence the location of developments) but such meaning was not utilized as I was interested in variety of **links** or relationships between
nature, here represented as “physical attributes and limitations” and the built environment [use of GT];

4) Once meaning is determined, code at two ‘levels’. Firstly, at the broad overall categorisation level of built environment, for example, then secondly at a ‘subsidiary’ or grounded theoretical level that expresses a particular aspect of the selected text, and adds more complexity to the node. In this example, the interviewee suggests identification of “… physical attributes and limitations of the chosen site …” is necessary to determine suitability for built environment development. This would be coded as firstly at the built environment (BE) node and also secondly at link between built environment and natural environment (NE) node. In this instance, the text selected to be coded is “… we have decided that there is going to be a built, that we are seriously considering the need for a built environment and I say one of the first things you have to do is identify the physical attributes and limitations of the chosen site in order to determine whether in fact it is suited to the sort of development you have in mind.” The coded text is given a BE broad overall node indicator because the primary subject of the selected text is the built environment, not the natural environment.

The two identified nodes (BE and link between BE and NE) are combined into one free node and given the title ‘BE – link between BE and NE’ because it reflects the combined coding approaches of ‘top-down’ and GT, enabling both representation of a broad idea, the built environment, and a specific aspect of that idea, a link between the built and natural environments.

The specific kind of link would not be lost as the coded text includes the words “…physical attributes and limitations of the chosen site…” and can be seen on review of the node. The node is ‘free’ (previously explained) as all nodes are within the NVivo program; it exists independently of any other node. In this way the coded text attached to the node becomes independent from the transcribed text and other coded text.

Coded text could be coded to one or more nodes. For example, a person may make reference to their role while discussing management of the natural environment. In this case, the selected text would be coded to role, as well as natural environments –
management of. Multiple coding of the same text occurred frequently reflecting the fact that the interviewees commonly made references to several different concepts in their responses. The process of coding separated out the different concepts that could be expressed in one sentence, or phrase.

Figure 3.7 below represents the process of coding for just one interview, and the eventual results of coding for two ‘free nodes’. The nodes (containing coded text) to the right of the process stand independently from the transcribed interview to the left of the process. This sketch would be the same for each of the six transcribed interviews. Categorisation of the transcribed interview into a nodal structure of nodes and coded text produces discrete units of analysis attached to each node.

**Figure 3.7: Representation of coding process for three ‘free’ nodes.**

**Coding results**

The coding is neither fine-grained nor gross in scale. It did not go down to a level that technically looked at how a person generated meaning about nature within their discourse, nor did it take whole paragraphs of text as the basis for further analysis. The coding typically focused on several sentences or groups of sentences concerned with a particular theme within the text, which was reflective of the ‘question and answer’ interview process.
The fact that responses were given in ‘chunks’ (transcribed as several or more paragraphs) and, within those chunks, the speaker could cover several themes, influenced the particular scale of coding. This reflected the nature of the interviews that were relatively loose in style, with minimal questioning of the interviewee apart from clarification questions or supportive, encouraging phrases during their responses. This meant that responses were extensive. The implications for coding is that different ways of expressing similar concepts could be seen within a response.

In the coding example above, rather than examining for strict linguistic mechanical details (as linguistic discourse analysis would demand) that gives meaning, or particular linguistic structures that contained the meaning of, for example, the node *built environment-link between BE and NE*, each interviewee would utilize different words and constructions for generating meanings about these ideas. This meant that analysis had to be at a level that captured a particular part of the overall meaning generated by each person, without going too ‘large’ or ‘small’.

These two steps, broad brush categorical top-down coding and subsidiary GT coding, were done together at the same time, as outlined above, so that in selecting the text the first consideration was what broad idea was reflected in the text, and secondly what aspect of that idea did the text reveal? The decision for the first consideration was relatively easy, guided by overall pre-determined categories (stemming from the thesis question). The second decision about the meaning of the coded text was more difficult and analytical. By engaging in a two-step decision process, time was saved as two critical aspects of the text were captured at the same time.

Ninety-three nodes were generated during the coding process. These were later rationalised and cleaned up where duplicate nodes were merged, or similar content in two nodes were combined (See List 3.1). Where necessary in the study, the node ‘title’ will be explained further. The number of nodes also indicates the degree to which the texts were ‘broken’ down into constituent conceptual parts (nodes) by the process of coding.

The nodes, at the end of the coding process, contained a number of items of coded text, or units of analysis, from the six interviews. This number can range from one in the case of
the nodes *Framing – general*, *Framing – objectives*, and *Framing – policies*\(^{16}\) to 90 for the node *Socio-economic – process*\(^{17}\). It is important to note that the number of coded textual items is not a sign of how important a node is (i.e. the more coded items, the more significant the node). The fact that the node was created as a part of the process of coding simply reflects that the conceptual idea or theme represented by the node was seen and noted for further reflection.

At the conclusion of these steps, NVivo contained a list of selected coded text from all text studied, grouped under generally one (or more) of the three key nodes (natural environment, built environment or role), and a subsidiary node (‘management of’ for example). This concludes the Data Preparation stage.

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\(^{16}\) These nodes were generated from reading Manukau District Plan Variation 13 and the Ruakaka Marsden Point Structure Plan, and refer to the ways in which the documents discursively ‘frame’ either the built or natural environments by placing them within a policy or objectives framework. Although these documents were coded, they were not further analysed within the thesis as explained above.

\(^{17}\) This refers to an aspect of socio-economic process being used in a discourse about the built or natural environments.
List 3.1: Final and rationalized list of nodes arising from coding process.
Summary
The contexts of and framework for generating the data needed to answer the thesis question are the central subjects of this chapter.

The chapter started with an explanation of the way the RMA, an overarching framework, forms a quiet and constant backdrop to the roles interviewed, and discourses generated. While this backdrop is not central to the thesis, it does enable understanding of the context of built environment discourses within a New Zealand context.

Discussion of case study, and the choice between large and small N case study, reached the conclusion that small N case study is appropriate to this thesis. Resolving this issue allowed the setting up of the selection of actors to interview, alongside the associated reference areas, which provide a 'blank page' upon which actors can discursively construct their conceptions of the built and nature (this blank page concept is discussed further in Chapter Five).

The methodology to generate the data is then outlined by first discussing the interview questions, and their relationship to theory in Chapter Two, before leading into a discussion of the analytical method to examine the transcribed interviews. NVivo 8 is the computer tool used to analyse and code the transcribed interview responses to the questions, and there was discussion about the ways in which that analysis was carried out. Problems were identified in the way that bias may be present in the analysis and coding, which can be countered by attention to the application of GT to the data.

This analysis (preparation of data), based on a mixture of GT and a top-down categorisation approach, generated a number of nodes that are then available for further qualitative analysis. These nodes reflected the import of the questions, and contain coded text from across six cases, and enables further analysis within a particular discourse analysis and CDA framework.

However, analysis is not necessarily a straightforward linear process of applying a single analytical method to the generated data. Within the context of qualitative analysis, D'Cruz (2001) outlines a ‘fractured lenses’ methodological approach to
data, where the use of different qualitative methods can reveal different and important complexities about a particular research issue. Higgs (2001) lays out a ‘chart’ of standpoints in qualitative research, where each standpoint focuses on different aspects of qualitative research, for example, the use of ontological lenses, or a social constructionist view. Thompson (2006) provided useful discussion of different methodological approaches in a variety of contexts other than discourse analysis and confirmation of the ‘organic’ nature of the analytical process. Each of these writers point to the complexity of investigating and understanding data and advocate for the use of multiple methods to reveal such complexity. The insights gained from this brief literature review of analysis were useful to inform and confirm the thinking about the research approach that was subsequently undertaken (explained in the following two chapters), and provided the basis for critical analysis of the results generated. The data produced as a result of case generation in this chapter is now subjected to Discourse Analysis.
Chapter Four

First-level Discourse Analysis and Results

Introduction

Following on from the previous chapter, the data produced by coding of the transcribed interviews is subjected to qualitative Discourse Analysis. The methodology for this part of the research process was developed as a series of stages. This process is outlined below. Various units of coded text were the subjects of analysis at each stage and the results are recorded and presented in this chapter.

The three models (transcendence, immanence, Deep Ecology) presented in Chapter Two describing relationships between the self and nature form an overall arching framework through which the various aspects of the relationship are brought to light through the research. Each of the results described below reflect in some manner the particular and diverse aspects of a relationship between the self and nature, as mediated through discourse. In a sense, the analysis illuminates the models, fleshing them out. Reference is made to the models where appropriate.

As foreshadowed in the previous chapter with warnings by van Dijk and Fairclough about the need to be flexible in discursive analytical methodological approaches, the approach used within the thesis analysis is an incrementally staged one, based on experiences within the research. Discussion of the limitations of the method concludes the chapter.

Stages of analysis

After a Data Preparation stage that prepared the data from the transcribed text, the analysis proceeded in four stages (Table 4.1). It was found that while one form of analysis yielded one set of results, there was a sense that the data could be seen in a different light if a different approach was adopted and informed
insights generated from reading and observation of the results were incorporated into subsequent analyses.

Consequently, the methods used at each stage were gradually refined, with the focus narrowing at each stage. Simple observation of the data was engaged initially in Stage 1, and then further detailed analyses at subsequent stages were then done to examine specific aspects of the data (e.g. processes of decomposition and recombination).

In Table 4.1, the columns indicate the stages. The first column (Data Preparation) covers the initial NVivo coding. This is explained in Chapter Three because it forms part of the description of the methodology overall. The second column (1st Stage) is the quantitative phase that served to help identify main points for further analysis. The remaining three Stages are the qualitative phase, focusing on particular aspects such as particular theoretical perspectives (e.g. Foucault or Naess), and/or methods (e.g. the use of NVivo to generate data).

The rows indicate the analytical approach and methods used at each stage and the data output resulting from the approach and method. The first row indicates the kinds of methodological work that was engaged in at each stage, while the second indicates influences from methodological perspectives. The third row explains the method used to support the methodological process. The fourth and fifth rows indicate the kind of data generated from the use of the specific method and process, and the end use of the data respectively.

Where particular nodes are discussed in the analysis, if necessary an explanation of the content of the node is given at that point. As indicated in Chapter Three, 93 nodes were generated in the course of preparing the texts for analysis. For the majority of nodes, the content is indicated by the title of the node (generated as explained in the previous chapter).

This methodological approach helped uncover, overall, an answer to the thesis question while permitting a variety of approaches that could shed light on different aspects to that answer. The latter is of particular importance as a contribution to knowledge.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analytical process</strong></td>
<td>NVivo coding of transcribed interviews</td>
<td>Preliminary – simple i.e. initial reading of results and identification of main points for further work</td>
<td>Process of decomposition / recombinaton leading to development of narrative for each interviewee</td>
<td>Re-engagement with nodes</td>
<td>Intensive interrogatio n of text to understand discursive method of constructing ‘nature’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influences from methodologic al perspectives</strong></td>
<td>Discourse Analysis i.e. what are the ideas found in the text?</td>
<td>Discourse Analysis – are the linkages? The commonalities?</td>
<td>Discourse Analysis – can we interrogate the coded text? DCS approach.</td>
<td>Discourse Analysis – what relationships can we see amongst the different concepts (nodes)?</td>
<td>Beliefs displayed? (Hahn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods</strong></td>
<td>Use of NVivo</td>
<td>Observation and reflection, use of NVivo</td>
<td>Observation, analysis of extracts of interviews, reflection</td>
<td>Observatio n, use of NVivo</td>
<td>Observation, reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Output</strong></td>
<td>- 85 (rationalised) nodes - Extract of key ideas and concepts from interviews</td>
<td>Preliminary and quantitative observations</td>
<td>A qualitative Natural Environment focused narrative for each Actor Grouping of Actors into two groups</td>
<td>Development of conceptual linkages between the themes</td>
<td>Understandi ng and exposition of beliefs found in the interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of data output</strong></td>
<td>Forms basis for following four Stages</td>
<td>Reflection on the themes arising from the interviews</td>
<td>Recorded for analysis</td>
<td>Informs conceptual thinking about the construction of nature</td>
<td>Recorded for analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Explanation of the different analytical stages and their aspects.
1st Stage: Preliminary analysis

The Data Preparation/coding process provided the data needed for Stage One; that is, a list of nodes, and their associated text, coded from the transcribed interviews (refer to Chapter Three for a definition of nodes).

One of the analyses of the nodes produced figures on the percentage of text coded, across all cases, for Built Environment (BE) and Natural Environment (NE). Of more interest is the percentage of text coded BE or NE for each case. This is presented in Table 4.2. The figure in bold is the highest percentage in the row for either built or natural environment node. For comparative purposes, the percentages of text coded for either BE or NE for two supporting planning documents is given.

The numbers do not add up to 100%, because the numbers indicate what percentage, of the total amount of text coded for each document, was coded to either the built or natural environment node.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source – Cases and Documents</th>
<th>% of text coded for Built Environment (BE)</th>
<th>% of text coded for Natural Environment (NE)</th>
<th>% of text coded for Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planner (Closest to writing Flat Bush Variation)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO (Submits on the Flat Bush Variation)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant (Closest to RMP Structure Plan)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor (Political oversight of RMP Structure Plan)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Activist H (Submits on RMP Structure Plan)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Activist L (Submits on RMP Structure Plan)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Percentage of text coded for built / natural environments and role, with bold figures the highest percentage for each Actor.

The first noticeable split is between the BE and NE columns. Two cases had their highest percentages in the BE column while for the remaining three the highest percentages are in the NE column. One case had an even split between the two columns. That is, of the six cases there was an uneven split between the two columns. A perusal of this result suggests a relationship with the role of particular Actors. That is, the BE group consists of the CEO and the Consultant, both professional roles. The NE group is the Councillor and the two Community Activists. The Planner belongs to both groups.
The second noteworthy split is the result that showed the amount of time spent on Role in the discourse was minimal (4-8%), with the exception of the Councillor/RMP case, who, at 14 percent, spent considerable time in talking about the role. The data covers a wide range: from 2 to 14 percent. Both of the Flat Bush cases showed low proportions at 2 percent, while the RMP cases ranged from 4 to 14 percent.

The likely explanation lies in the approach made to the Actor requesting an interview. For the professionals (the Planner, Consultant and CEO), the approach was made on the basis that they were playing a particular role in relation to the reference area. Thus the interview was conducted on that basis and, therefore, there was little need to clarify the role beyond confirming the role’s dimensions. For the Councillor and two Community Activists, however, the role is less defined (that is, less professional). The interview consequently required more time to clarify and establish the role being performed. For the Councillor, more time was needed to establish the distinction between role of Councillor as an elected representative for constituents and the role of Councillor as a member of Council, responsible for steering District Plan creation.

Given how the proximity of Actors/Roles to the task of plan writing varied by Actor (Fig. 3.3), it is possible to question the significance of this proximity variable for any explanation of the results. For example, the relationship may explain the split in the BE and NE columns because each of the Actors with the highest percentages in the BE column have closer proximity than those in the NE column.

While the proximity to plan writing data in Chapter Three is only indicative and needs to be more precisely determined, there does seem to be the basis for a hypothesis. This could be subject to further study but this is not pursued here. Nevertheless, working with this Proximity/Percentage hypothesis a tentative finding in that the closer the Actor/Role is to plan writing then the more likely the discourse will be about BE rather than NE. That is, Role has an important influence on discourse content. This finding about Roles provides a basis for a further step in the analysis.
Since roles perform particular functions within society, each role can, therefore, be seen as a part of society. For instance, the role of a Councillor is a social role that performs the function of governance. The relationship between Roles and society may give clues as to the way role (and by extension at a broad level, society) constructs nature. This will be further explored in Chapter Five.

**Construction of nature by Role/Actors as identified by nodes**

These results return the analysis to a further consideration of nodes. That is, the node is cross-referenced with the number of coded references for each node. This provides the number of instances of coded text assigned to that node for each source text (e.g. Consultant/RMP case). At a simple level, this indicates what particular node was used most often for each case, what the second most used node was and so on.

The previous chapter outlined the process of generating the 93 nodes and a rationalised list was given at that point. It is noted here that the choice of node name is subject to the critical stance held by the researcher, explained in Chapter Three, namely that nature itself has a discourse of its own. List 4.1, following, is the raw list of generated nodes (note that BE stands for Built Environment, while N stands for nature, NE stands for Natural Environment and Doc stands for Document).

1: District Plan Assessment - BE - mgmt. of
2: District Plan Assessment - BE - subject to rules
3: BE - artificial construct
4: BE - concept of
5: BE - construction of
6: BE - engineering of NE for development
7: BE - fluid
8: BE - hidden cost of
9: BE - is a set of values not physicality
10: BE - managed, growth of
11: BE - misc.
12: BE - mismatch between core needs and BE
BE - model of
BE - responsive to user demands
BE - subject to a debate or conversation - discourse
BE - a 'product'
BE - affecting feeling
BE - created by rules
BE - effect on nature
BE - justification
BE - nestled within nature
BE - process of creating
BE - view of
BE - capitalism - nature links
Community - agreed outcome
Community - desire for nature
Community - social infrastructure - link to BE
Doc - legal aspects
Doc - link to other docs
Doc - process of creation
Document - purpose
Document - view of relationship between BE & N
DP Assessment - NE - criteria
DP Policy - BE - fluidity
Ethics
Framing - general
Framing - objectives
Framing - policies
Framing exercise - nature
influence
Iwi
link between built environment and 'nature'
misc.
Nature
Nature - a particular view of nature - include concepts
46: Nature - affected by rules
47: Nature - affecting feelings
48: Nature - examination of for development purposes
49: nature - exclusivity
50: Nature - Gaia
51: Nature - influence on built environment
52: Nature - influence on rules
53: Nature - metaphor
54: Nature - mgmt. of
55: Nature - observation of
56: Nature - self within nature
57: Nature - to support or not detract from
58: Nature - value of
59: nature as a 'product'
60: NE - affected by BE
61: NE - affected by rules
62: NE - defence of
63: NE - fluid
64: NE - influence on structure plan
65: NE - work with or against it
66: Persons education affects perception of environment
67: perspectives on capitalism - council officer
68: Policy - BE - mgmt. of
69: Policy - BE - mgmt. of effect on NE
70: Policy - BE - mixed use - mgmt. of BE
71: Policy - BE - rules to manage BE development
72: Power - organisational
73: Power - related to role
74: Power - rules
75: Power - socio-economic
76: Role - dimensions of role played
77: Role - individual
78: Role - links
There are three broad groups of nodes that hold interest for analysis; firstly nos. 3 – 24 (various aspects of BE), and secondly nos. 44 – 65 (various aspects of nature). The third group looked at various aspects of role in nos. 76 – 82.

These nodes show a range of conceptual ideas observed within the six cases. The ideas were generated by the researcher, underpinned by particular perspectives on the discursive construction of nature, as explained in Chapter Two. Other researchers examining the same texts may come up with similar, overlapping or different sets of conceptual ideas. While on the face of it this could suggest an interpretive difficulty, this is not so since it is the content embedded within the nodes which is analysed, rather than the 'higher level' ideas captured here. As an initial starting point, it is interesting to note the range of concepts within two broad areas; the built environment and nature. These concepts inform further research in the following stages.

If we narrow our focus on the nodes most frequently used and look at the way they are used, we can see features that makes analysis more interesting. Table

List 4.1: List of nodes generated at initial coding stages.
4.3 (below), when read in descending order, shows the top three nodes for each case. Three top nodes were considered to be sufficient for this analysis, although the results can show as many nodes as wanted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruakaka Marsden Point</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Top three nodes for each case with numbers of coded references after in parentheses.

These results confirm the observation that the Community Activists were concerned with diverse aspects of the natural environment, and that the CEO and Consultant were equally concerned with diverse aspects of the built environment. However it is interesting to note that for all cases except one, the *socio-economic system – process* node was common to each case, and in the top
three coded nodes. Socio-economics is a way of ordering our world, framing things for economic use. Such consideration is political in nature as it benefits some, disadvantages others. For this reason it is discussed further in Chapter Five as part of Critical Discourse Analysis.

When interpreting Tables 4.2 and 4.3, it is important to note the differences between the tables. The percentage results in Table 4.2 represent an aggregation of all coded text beginning with the node BE, or NE, or Role, that is, a count of total coded text under each broad node against all coded text. This returns a percentage amount by node.

By contrast, the results in Table 4.3 represent a simple count of the instances of coded texts for each node, which are then ranked in descending order from 1, indicating the highest amount of instances of coded text. Some nodes only had one or two instances (a low rank), while others had 10 or more instances (a high rank) of coded text from across the transcribed interview. Comparison of the two tables can give an understanding of both of broad patterns seen overall in the transcribed interviews, and the finer patterns discerned in the actual amount of text coded for each node.

The use of aggregated numbers seen in Table 4.2 and discrete numbers of coded text seen in Table 4.3 creates a distinction between the two tables. Consideration of this distinction highlighted the significance of the fact that each case, except for one, specifically mentioned instances of the socio-economic system process. A relatively high count for the node Socio-economic system – process indicates that the socio-economic ideas represented by this node are of importance to the case and shared with other cases. If the analysis had stopped at Table 4.2, this fact would have remained hidden. Examining the percentage of text coded for BE and NE reveals the importance of the socio-economic node when attention was paid to the nominal counts of instances of coded text that lie behind the aggregated nodes reported in Table 4.2.

The results of this stage indicate that there is, at a broad scale, an emphasis on natural environments in discourses by the Councillor and Community Activists the Planner is equally emphasises both natural and built environments while the
Consultant and the CEO both emphasise the built environment in their discourses. In examining the details of that broad scale reveals that in general, there is a confirmation of the different emphasises, but five of the six cases shared one node in particular, socio-economic system – process.

However, given a simple recording of quantitative results at this stage, a full answer to the thesis questions is not achieved. Further qualitative work to flesh out these results is needed, hence the further stages.

2nd Stage: Text breakdown and recombination

This stage developed a qualitative test that interrogated the coded text to a greater degree. This test effectively utilized one primary output of NVivo, already briefly explained in Chapter Three under ‘Coding Process’, which saw text being ‘broken’ down into units of analysis, as a result of the coding process. This allowed for analysis of each separate part of the overall interview (represented by the units of analysis) and the meaning expressed within the part. From this analysis, a narrative that outlined the position of the interviewee in relation to nature could be created.

The coding process initially creates ‘free nodes’, where a number of pieces of selected text from across a single document are assigned to a node, effectively ‘breaking apart’ the text to form the basis for further analysis. The basic unit of analysis is the discrete statement copied directly from the text to an assigned node. There are two possible views of the node; one can see all coded text from all sources against that node or, alternatively, all coded text from one source within that node.

Consequently, one can see all automatically grouped instances of text coded for the categorical natural environment node (or subsidiaries of that node e.g. Nature – observation of), originating from one original transcribed interview document. Table 4.4 shows, for example, that seven instances of text from the transcribed interview with the Planner were coded for Nature – mgmt. [management] of. There will be other groupings of text under various nodes related to the overall Nature node.
It is noted that this output of coding as shown in Table 4.4, somewhat ‘isolates’ the text. Another way of viewing this effect of coding is to say it ‘takes it out of context’; the transcribed interview is now broken down into isolated pieces of text, coded against one or more nodes. On reflection it can be seen that each of these discrete units of analysis can also be viewed as discrete conceptual items as each statement expressed a particular meaning related to the title of the node (e.g. *Nature – mgmt. of*).

By printing out all units of analysis (coded text) under various nodes related to the overall category *Nature*, an analysis can be undertaken of each instance of coded text in relation to the node that the text is coded against (e.g. *Nature – mgmt. of*) to discern what the general ‘thrust’ or meaning of the coded text was suggesting. By this analysis, one can build up a series of short statements that reflected textual meanings for each node studied, within each source case. The meaning uncovered from each piece of coded text in this process emerged from a wider contextual background, for example the role of the Actor in terms of the reference area.

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**Free Nodes
*Nature - mgmt. of***

- the green finger networks that is something in the order of 45 kilometres of gullies, streams that will be protected. As part of that, when you add up all those green finger corridors including the Barry Curtis Park there’s something in the order of 27% of the catchment will never be built on which is a significant part and what we’re trying to do with that is restore native bush back into those corridors as well.

- There’s quite a bit of random native bush around so we’re quite fortunate there and we’ve looking to build on that in terms of ultimately these green finger corridors will have continuous bush corridors and enhancement of eco systems

- They said this is a, there are some special characteristics to this environment and we need to be sensitive to how those develop so that came out very early on in the first workshop with the wider community and stakeholders so that has been locked in
- yes we can restore native vegetation back into those. They have a storm water management, flood management role. They have a recreational amenity role, there’s open space, we have walk ways and cycle ways running down the edges of them so yeah they have a lot of functions that bring the built in environment and the natural environment together and in a way people can live in Flat Bush, no matter where you are you’re no more than a five minute walk to get to the nearest green finger corridor and so you have that ability to connect and contact with nature more so than most places and also these corridors, just about every single one of them all come down the catchment and meet at the town centre and that is something that is really powerful so again we’re looking to put walk ways/cycle ways in to bring people into the centre so that we can start to promote alternative transport and just a higher quality living to have that on your doorstep.

- This is just north of Stancombe Road and the Buddhist Temple and then here’s that same area, this corridor there you can see how significant that is. That follows that creek down through there. Now that was identified in the structure plan. Its one of those green finger networks, its this one up there um that basically when the development happens they have to set that aside, they’re required to vest that with council. It will be offset against their reserve contribution and they also will pay a storm water contribution for the area so we create back for that as well. Basically the development process pays for the protection and the enhancement, restoration of these green corridors so ultimately we ill actually have a lot more biodiversity of the catchment than was there in a rural state which is, and the water quality will improve um as well

- I think we also acknowledge that its not realistic to try to recreate pristine nature in a natural untouched sense so you know, so in one sense I guess you acknowledge it as an urban, its an urban environment but having said that its very much how can we bring nature into that urban environment and protect nature and enhance it so the two sort of co-exist almost in this case

- A lot of it is blue because it’s a combination of a hundred year flood plan and what we need for storm water management, you know the revegetation areas and some propagated space to go with it so it identifies how that will be funded.

Table 4.4: Text coded for "Nature – mgmt. [management] of" from the Planner’s transcribed interview.

Having established a series of short statements reflective of the meaning seen in each piece of coded text, the next step essentially wove these results into a narrative about nature, which explains in succinct manner what is being expressed about the nature by that interviewee (seen below). This narrative about nature is located in the context of a built environment discourse, which formed the bulk of the interview questions and answers. ‘Narrative’ in this context refers to a series of statements that explain something, rather than a
temporal based story with actions (Polkinghorne 1995). Here, the narratives explain the meanings about nature found within each Actor’s interview.

The consequence of this stage is a method that looks at the de-contextualised transcribed interviews, assesses the coded text at the scale of each unit of analysis to understand the meaning expressed by that text, and combines the meanings in a way that reflects efforts to engage with the text at a micro level (i.e. the instances of coded text). It is noted that meanings are contingent, rather than discrete, where other parts of text exist, in a mutually supportive contextual relationship, across all coded text within the node. The meta-narrative (that is, the overall narrative summarised from a number of observations about the meanings seen within each part of the isolated text) is only possible through the contextual process of weaving together texts and their specific associated micro meanings.

**Reconstructed narratives by Role and reference area**

The results of this step giving natural environment narratives for each role (by Actor and grouped according to reference area) are as follows:

**Flat Bush**

**Planner**

*Nature was 100% pristine, but now corrupted. We have abilities to bring not 100% back, but something close. In order to bring something back, we ‘build upon’, utilise the ‘lungs’ of the remnant natural environment in [the reference area] via tools and management methods. We are bringing back nature to experience nature.*  
*My role is to shape future form (planning), so I use nature as a building block in that shaping.*

**CEO**

*Strong experiences of nature by self drives shaping of built environment to capture the natural, within-nature world experience both from and inside the built environment product – views to nature from the built environment, kinds of nature (golf green to bush) found inside the built environment, while acknowledging the tension between the built and natural environments. We can inadvertently or*
deliberately block experience of natural environment by use of the built environment. It is also seen that the built is shaped by natural environment.

Ruakaka Marsden Point

Consultant

Nature is a philosophical realm from which we identify two main areas or fields; the parts of nature to which we have a relationship based on our spiritual or similar needs, and secondly, ‘the rest’. The identification of the two areas are characterized as ‘touch / no touch’ areas.

The natural environment is rendered suitable for built environment development in a number of ways. The principle way is to divide the realm into two kinds of nature. It is also referred to conceptually (the mountain top, the ‘empty’ paddock). It is valued, however the value is tied to physical attributes; a stream, trees, bush, rather than to any kind of intrinsic value.

Following this process, these conceptual ‘blocks’ are then manipulated within a spatial field to produce the appropriate outcome that satisfies the needs of the built environment, which is an extension of the needs of a socio-economic system. The other outcome sees ‘no touch’ areas preserved to satisfy spiritual needs.

Councillor

To use a saying expressed by this interviewee, nature is good nature if it is in the right place and it is the right kind of nature. Nature is static, pristine. It provides people with psychological benefits, and can be seen as the essence of a place (turangawaewae18). Despite this, nature is reduced to manipulated, manageable, discrete elements that are actively managed and protected (‘shoring up beach side cliffs’, ‘removing mangrove vegetation’) to support/protect economic benefits

18 Maori term that means a home place where a person comes from. Place is not limited to a geographical marker, but has a more encompassing aspect including physical, emotional and cultural landscapes.
(views, access to harbour facilities). To do this, nature is minimized (‘just pampas grass’, ‘only mangroves’).

Community Activist H

Nature is a separate entity with its own powers (‘shrug us off’), but through use of scientific methods (observation, specificity, measurement), understanding of natural processes and use of tools (Resource Management Act, economic Cost Benefit Analysis), we can learn to live with nature for mutual benefit, and because we are in a relational web with nature. Disagreement with transcendent argument (“arrogant to think we are superior to natural forces”) underpins view of relationship with nature.

Community Activist L

Nature is an entity, separate from humans, but we have an intimate connection with nature (‘Well if you kill the mother you kill the foetus... we’re behaving like cannibalistic foetuses really’). Nature can provide, within its system constraints resourcing for socio-economic processes, as well as providing for non-capitalist benefits. Our actions towards nature must reflect the value of nature – we should care for it as we care for ourselves. We are organisms alongside nature. We can use locally developed and long-term knowledge of natural systems, constraints and opportunities to assist in working towards respecting nature.

Analysis and grouping of Actors based on narratives

A review of these narratives sees two views emerging. In this part of the analysis, the roles/actors are considered without their reference area. One view takes the position that nature serves the development of the built environment through being minimized, or conceptually manipulated, or placed into management regimes or other similar methods. This viewpoint can be summarised, for the Councillor, as Nature is good nature if it is in the right place and the right kind of nature (an adaptation of a popular saying). Here, nature is categorised as either good or bad, and criteria are associated with being ‘good’ nature (that is, the right place and being the right kind).
Nature being in the right place, and the right kind implies that actions would be undertaken to ensure the outcome of a ‘good’ nature, as ‘good’ is preferable to ‘bad’ nature. The goodness of nature, achieved by being in the right place and being the right kind, is assumed to be desired more than ‘bad’ nature, as the societal expectation is that goodness is preferred over ‘badness’. A similar categorisation, or manipulation, of nature is also seen in the narratives of the Planner, the CEO, Councillor and Consultant. This view places these actors within the transcendent self-nature relationship model, as outlined in Chapter Two. This model is one that displays elements of a hierarchy, and where there are characteristics of superiority. We can see this here with implicit distinction of humans to have the ability to place signifiers upon different aspects of nature label nature such as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ nature, thereby placing nature subject to meanings found within the terms good or bad.

An alternative position sees nature as a separate entity with its own inherent qualities. It can ‘shrug us off’ (Community Activist H), and it acts like a ‘mother’ (Community Activist L). Humans are a separate entity from nature in this view, and in a strongly symbiotic relationship with it. The two Community Activists share this viewpoint. Despite the fact that Community Activist H exhibits a scientific background in a scientific and ontological rendering of nature, the desire to undertake such rendering is not to dominate nature, but to live with nature within the systems frameworks exhibited (as discovered through scientific understanding and observations) by nature. The self-nature relationship displayed here is one where the self is seen in a form of equal relationship with nature and where nature is accorded some kind of status (in contrast to a transcendent self-nature relationship). This places the relationship within the Deep Ecology model, but not fully. A full Deep Ecological relationship with nature would see an incorporation of the ‘other within one’s sense of being for example, stating that “The environment suffers from our actions and we suffer alongside as well”19. Here, the relationship is one of recognition of the

19 For example, a recent study found a correlation between mass tree deaths from beetle infestation, caused by climate change, and increased human mortality nearby (Donovan et al. 2013).
other, and more importantly, that the other has ability to affect oneself. This is a starting point for a Deep Ecological relationship.

Holding different views about nature for each case has implications, as can be seen in later discussion. For ease of analysis, each group is labelled. The first group (Planner, Consultant, Councillor, CEO) is called ‘Nature Serves’ group (NS) and the second group (the two Community Activists) ‘Nature Independent’ group (NI). These two names will be used herewith.

3rd Stage: Re-engagement with the nodes

Given the 93 nodes generated by the coding process, NVivo provides further analysis by grouping the nodes into larger conceptual nodes, called ‘tree nodes’ (not to be confused with free nodes). This is a feature of the NVivo program that focuses on the ability of named ‘free nodes’, generated as a result of the coding process, to be combined into groups of nodes under one common tree node (e.g. Discourse). For example, the node Built environment – justification contained all instances of text making some reference to justification about the built environment. This code was assigned to the Discourse tree node because justifying the built environment is engaging in discourse in some manner.

A tree node functions just as a trunk of a tree does, becoming a meta-node from which groups of related nodes (branches to continue the tree analogy) are connected to the main tree node. As discussed previously, the name of the node reflects the general meanings of the text assigned to that node and, therefore, represents a conceptual idea. Similarly ideas can be grouped together under an overall tree node or a sub-tree node, and the name of the tree node will reflect the overall content of the node (being groups of related free nodes).

In assigning nodes to tree nodes, an overall conceptual view of all coded text can be developed and, more importantly, discovery of the relationships between different concepts represented by the nodes grouped together under one tree node (Bazley 2007). The overall view represents concepts across all texts, rather than across a single transcribed interview. Examination of the nodes generated in the Data Preparation stage (see Chapter Three) suggested three broad
conceptual tree nodes arising from the free nodes: Discourse, Relationship and Self.

These tree nodes, and sub-nodes, are discussed in the following sections.

**Tree Node: Discourse**

Nodes for the Tree Node: Discourse indicated instances where the speaker brought into 'being' either the built or natural environments while engaging in discourse. For example, under the node Nature – metaphor, seen in the Table 4.5 below, Community Activist L stated:

"It's like, um, it's like you know it's like a foetus in a womb you know.

*Interviewer:*

Foetus in a womb? Meaning?

*Response:*

Well if you kill the mother you kill the foetus you know and the way that we’re behaving we’re behaving like cannibalistic foetuses really and um we just can’t go on doing that…"

The use of a ‘Nature as a nurturing mother’ metaphor in this instance forms part of a discourse about nature for this interviewee. In this way, nature is constructed for this particular Actor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nodes for tree node: Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Framing - general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framing – objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framing - policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framing exercise - nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE - subject to a debate or conversation - discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE – model of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built environment – justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE – is a set of values not physicality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built environment – view of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature – metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature – to support or not detract from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE – fluid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The nodes in Table 4.5 point to the discrete parts of discourse that gives stability and coherence to a particular discourse seen within the interviews. The Framing node is used to generate particular ways of viewing a subject. Debates and conversation, creating verbal models of the built environment (e.g. this building is here, this road is over here) and justifying such construction by reference to economic demands (and thereby legitimising such construction) enables the discursive production of the built environment. The production process espouses the values held by actors that support the built environment, or expresses a view of such environments. This is represented by the BE – subject to a debate or conversation – discourse / model of / justification / is a set of values not physicality / view of set of nodes.

For example, when asked about her ideas of the built environment (Question 3 - What’s your ideas of the built environment?), the Councillor replied (coded under Built Environment – view of):

I’m not entirely sure what you mean there but to me you’ve got to have space. People feel trapped if they’re all concrete and all tall buildings around them, so to me you need to build so that you’ve got [to] landscape the built environment.

Different kinds of built environment are contrasted in the response; the negative image of an ‘...all concrete and all tall buildings...’ is contrasted with a landscaped built environment with designed ‘spaces’, thereby implying a better kind of built environment.

The Nature nodes similarly reflect a multifaceted nature. Metaphors are used to describe nature in biological terms (i.e. “fundamental backbone of the natural systems in Flat Bush which is the lung of Flat Bush”, Planner), or in terms of building material (i.e. “the green finger networks were fundamental building
block” and “There’s quite a bit of random native bush around so... we’re looking to build on that ...”, Planner).

To work with or against nature becomes a point around which decisions are made. For example, nature is fluid in character (e.g. description of possible sand dunes moving back and forth into the built environment at Ruakaka Marsden Point – Community Activist H), which implies consideration of the practicality of building in such a location, or it is an omnipresent being with particular properties, for example:

Nature has a lot of natural buffer systems and which means that the natural systems can absorb quite a lot of abuse in initial stages and because we’ve been able to abuse nature and get away with it in the initial stages, um we don’t seem to appreciate that when we’re reaching threshold levels that when we go past those um nature just sort of flicks us off the shoulder. [Interviewer: Nature?] Just gets rid of us. Just won’t tolerate us anymore you know? (Community Activist L).

Working against ‘threshold levels’ sees negative consequences, forcing decisions about the ways to work with nature; that is, whether to stay within or go past (assessed) threshold levels? The relationship between these three groupings of free nodes under the general tree node of Discourse shows multiple ways in which either the built environment or nature is discursively constructed.

Tree Node: Relationship

The Relationship tree node covered a number of relationships between different entities; between the Actor and nature, between the natural and built environments, and between processes and the natural environment for example.

The Consultant for example made the following statement, which was coded

Nature – examination for development purposes:

... but there’s some areas which are inviolate so they can't be sacrificed, so those are judgments to say that is an ecology which is so fragile or so valuable that be it landscape or ecological symbiosis that you shouldn't be developing them, and as a corollary of that you shouldn’t be developing high density close to that because of the impact of high density on that, where the other landscapes which in a sense are totally sacrificial.
The landscape of the reference area is parcelled into areas that are ‘inviolate’, and some that are ‘totally sacrificial’, which implies certain actions associated with such labelling. The act of designating things as one thing or another stems from a transcendent relationship with nature. In the following table (Table 4.6) the nodes assigned to the Relationship tree node are grouped into four sub-nodes that characterize the kind of relationship seen in the node (i.e. transcendent, methodological, outcomes based or miscellaneous).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nodes for tree node: Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transcendent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power – organizational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power – socio-economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE – Engineering of NE for development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE – a product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature – management of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature as a product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature – examination of for develop purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power – rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules affecting natural environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE – managed growth of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE – nestled within nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE – created by rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE – affected by rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature – influenced by rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values – NE and BE a set of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic system – process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE – effect on nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE – affected by BE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature – influence on BE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role – links</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link between BE and nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE – capitalism links</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Free nodes grouped under sub-nodes to the Relationship tree node.

The concepts represented here perform several functions that prepare nature for use. Nature is placed within a transcendent relationship, where it is examined, for example, for development potential, or managed and/or engineered in some manner, or seen as a product (e.g. “A lot of that impetus for putting the city there is because of an intention to expand the deep water port to alleviate the Ports of Auckland…” and “...you recognise upfront that that is not a natural landscape, first of all, it doesn’t have the value, so you can build on it ...” Consultant).

Methods such as the exercise of power through the creation of District Plan rules that specify the ways in which nature is to be managed (e.g. “You drive around all
those canals, it was just a swampland, I mean good for the birds and that sort of thing but they got it rezoned to make this canal high class development.” (Councillor) supports this relationship. Other methods include valuing nature according to a particular view (e.g. “you can sit in an apartment on the 16th storey in the middle of Queen Street [Auckland] but you still want to walk in the forest, go to the beach etc. so you can divorce the space but you can’t deny that there’s a physical, emotional, spiritual man/land path, components of the man/land relationship”, (Consultant)).

Any kind of relationship between two entities, such as nature and the built environment, will have outcomes. Actors note the effect of the built environment on nature (e.g. “We both agree that almost certainly Ruakaka has the highest carbon footprint in the whole of Northland thanks to the developer xxxx [name redacted] digging up all that peat.” (Community Activist H)), or conversely, the effect of nature on the built environment (e.g. “and I’m talking about dynamic uni systems so you can put up that particular suburb which is up there, but you know every couple of years you’d be sweeping sand dunes out [of] the streets which they do…”, Consultant).

These three aspects of Relationship establish nature within a transcendent relationship with the speaker, supported by methods such as the creation of rules. The outcomes of the nature / built environment relationship are noted by Actors, and are a result of various methods (i.e. a high carbon footprint is a result of clearing land for development purposes).

Tree Node: Self

The nodes here (in Table 4.7 below) indicate the dimensions of the role an Actor played within the discourse. These contributed towards definition of the role. This view of the self as a particular professional role was of significance in terms of the statements made. In contrast, the view of the self in relation to the natural environment was of lesser significance, and somewhat more ambivalent.

In response to the question how the CEO viewed himself in nature, he responded by explaining how he used nature as a place of enjoyment.
I enjoy nature. I spend a lot of time on the sea recreationally and I'm quite involved in the preservation of recreational areas for non-privatisation of beach and coastal areas ...

He went on to describe the effects of seeing houses built in formerly isolated bays and the effect on his feelings about the space concluding that

I think that's [non-private or public space] important because otherwise you get exclusion[ary] places where people don't feel they can go even though they've got every right in the world to go there because they actually own [i.e. the foreshore is public space] the nature space.

For the CEO nature is not something that one is part of, it is an object in certain states that one enjoys.

This contrasts with the ease (evident in the interview) with which the dimensions of the professional role is enumerated by the CEO:

...we will be measured on whether we've been successful in delivering to the community good or not.

...we have a contract in the form of an SOI, Statement of Intent which is updated every year.... we report to quarterly and its updated, it's modified to the extent that the business changes....

...we are a conduit to the private sector....

...so we can control it commercially, we can control the outcome commercially....

Our prime motivation is to make a good community place.

...the process by which we go through in developing our master plan, concept master plan and our stage plans....

The examples of, firstly, the use of nature and, secondly, the professional role are instances of self-identification. That is the process is undertaken in relation to an external other: the natural environment in the former, and becoming nature-self, and the object of responsibilities in the latter, becoming professional-self. The interpretation which can be made is that identification with a discrete item such as the ‘role’ played in an organization points to the relatively easy manner in which identification of self within a larger socio-economic framework is carried out, as opposed to identification of self as being part of a wider natural environment. Identification of responsibilities or actions in relation to one’s
professional role is seen as easier to explain than identification of the self with the natural environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nodes for tree node: Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role - dimensions of role played</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role – individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role – organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role - Perception of self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role – professional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: Free nodes grouped under Self tree node.
This tree node illuminated the fact at some point during the interview, that the NS group expressed a physical experience of nature that had an impact on themselves, or on others (e.g. the beach experience described by the CEO above). This was revealed on examination of the Nature – affecting feelings node.

This examination revealed that the Planner expressed how nature affected feelings in the context of making a distinction between ‘pristine’ and ‘urban’ nature, stating: “I think you say well we can’t have perfect pristine but we can still have an amazing environment that brings nature so children can grow up experiencing nature and can wander down and see an eel in the stream…”.

While the Planner is referring to a future state, the reference to the psychological impact of wandering down and seeing an eel in the stream is such that it is included in the discourse. Seeing an eel in a stream is a powerful experience of nature for many people as eels hold particular fascination (as clearly was the case for the Planner), as they are long, and dark in colour. They live in streams but are able to slither across a paddock, for example, to reach food or another stream. As a cultural icon, they also reference images of ‘old’ New Zealand, where
experiences of walking across the paddock at night to the stream to see or catch eels was common, and still is in parts.

On first observing this feature of discourse by the Planner, it was further observed that each of these Actors within the NS group expressed similar experiences of nature. The experiences were either referred to in the abstract, or given as examples of personal experience. These experiences were variously expressed in the interviews but were not recognised at the time as being of significance, and were not necessarily coded, unless the experience was part of coded text which had another meaning embedded in the text.

These experiences can be seen as another discursive construction of nature. Nature here is constructed as providing particular kinds of emotional experiences that have a significant impact on the Actors. These experiences are labelled EN (experiential nature). Interesting though these descriptors of experiential nature were, the realisation of significantly more interest was that for each Actor, the expression of experiential nature was linked to descriptors of built environments that incorporated the Actor’s experience of nature. We turn to examine these instances of experiential nature as they emerged for the applicable reference area (e.g. Flat Bush or Ruakaka Marsden Point).

**Flat Bush**

For the Planner, the consequences of actions performed within the role to achieve the outcome of seeing an eel in the stream included protecting existing streams found in the development area - “the green finger networks that is something in the order of 45 kilometres of gullies, streams that will be protected.” and the purpose was explained as:

They have a storm water management, flood management role. They have a recreational amenity role, there’s open space, we have walk ways and cycle ways running down the edges of them so yeah they have a lot of functions that bring the built in environment and the natural environment together and in a way people can live in Flat Bush, no matter where you are you’re no more than a five minute walk to get to the nearest green finger corridor and so you have that ability to connect and contact with nature more so than most places...
Clearly, protection of a network of streams and gullies alongside other management measures to enhance the physical condition of the network will enable ‘children to see an eel in the stream or gully’, replicating an experience the Planner had. This may mean that such children will in turn go on to include this experience in a later discourse of their own.

The CEO noted (as previously indicated) an enjoyment of “…nature. I spend a lot of time on the sea recreationally and I’m quite involved in the preservation of recreational areas for non privatisation of beach and coastal areas…” The experience of nature here lies in the powerful experience of being on the sea, seeing the rolling landscapes meeting the sea, and, conversely, experiencing seascapes from being on the shore at isolated bays and coastal areas, where landscape frames the view. Effects of this experience are strongly held within the personal imagery of many New Zealanders, and references cultural views of NZ as a maritime nation.

Views, then, clearly are a part of the experiential nature for the CEO, which is then sought in the built environment, albeit for specific commercial purposes:

...there is one other aspect of nature I suppose that’s important for the site and that is the views that are available from the site. Because it sits on a relatively modest flat plain it’s got very good views from about second floor you can see Manukau Heads and all sorts of things and the Waitakeres and Rangitoto and da-de-da so it’s actually, that’s another feature of the nature that’s been recognised by the designers that will be capitalised upon...

Referencing regionally important sites that have significant cultural meanings in terms of *turangawaewae*\(^{20}\) for European (and Maori) such as Rangitoto, a dormant volcanic island in the Waitemata Harbour that has, from certain angles, a uniquely identifiable symmetrical sloping and spreading form, the CEO makes the point that there are views, not just of the general surrounding landscape, but significantly important views, which will be important to prospective purchasers of built form products.

**Ruakaka Marsden Point**

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\(^{20}\) Meaning ‘the land you *stand* on’, and refers to the strong sense of connection people have with the place where they *grew up* on, or currently live.
Water was a dominant theme for the Councillor, exemplified by the statement that “I've got a daughter ... and I'd just stick her in the shower box full of water and she'd splash away there and float her ducks and everything when she was little and she'd be fine [relaxed and happy].” This idea was reinforced, empathetically stating, “I mean water is a wonderful leveller. Water is a great pacifier”.

The idea of water being a great pacifier is then applied to the built environment, and while not explicitly stated, the underlying motive is clear in the Councillor’s idea that

... at one stage it was mooted to actually redevelop the canal because that all used to be just a mud flat and it was actually a canal. It came right up to XX Street where the Mall is and I would like to see one of those streets going back to being a canal so that you bring the water right into the centre of the district [downtown area] because this little stream down here goes right through the town anyway and you could kind of link it.

While this example of putting into action an experience of nature does not relate directly to the Ruakaka Marsden Point area, it does highlight the link between personal observation and experience of water, as part of nature, and the desire to incorporate this experience into the built environment form.

In a similar manner of experiencing views from the position of the self (CEO position), the Consultant stated that “You just go and sit out on the cliff and look at the sea and get high, it's a spiritual resource.” The Consultant was the only interviewee to make reference to the immateriality of the experience saying, “It's [the experience of sitting out on a cliff] value is not material. It's beyond material. It could be emotional, it could be spiritual etc.”, and elaborating that

I've just got to get back to the theme we're talking about is a man/land relationship. I don't think that goes away you know and you can sit in an apartment on the 16th storey in the middle of Queen Street [Auckland] but you still want to walk in the forest, go to the beach etc. so you can divorce the space but you can't deny that there’s a physical, emotional, spiritual man/land path, components of the man/land relationship so that's part of my sort of planning ethic.

The emotional and spiritual experience of being in the forest or on the beach was then incorporated into his view of the built environment by segmenting nature
into ‘no-go’ and ‘go’ areas:

One is pure nature or let’s call it untouched nature, no go areas to which you provide access ..., be it roads or access ways or some things physically, ... because it would be no good having a fantastic piece of space which is pure nature with a fence around it, well there is some use to it ...

Emotional and spiritual nature is set aside and fenced off with provision of access to it, to enable use of such nature for that specific purpose.

The expression of EN and the use of that experience to shape the built environment, in contrast, did not extend to the NI group. The two Community Activists did not express any experiences of nature, describing instead nature as an independent entity, while built form outcomes were ‘woven in’ with nature, rather than nature being ‘woven in’ with the built environment. For example, Community Activist L stated that:

[T]he built environment should be located on land which is geologically stable enough um to be able to support that built environment and the scale of those built environments um should be scales, should be built at a scale where the necessities for life um are easily accessed like you know water catchments, water reservoirs, waste disposal, um building supplies, access to infrastructure ...

The lack of experiential nature by the NI group is interesting. Both Actors did not necessarily see themselves as apart from nature but, instead, saw themselves as part of nature. If one is a part of nature, that is, the self and nature form one continuum, then experiences of nature cannot be gained, as such experiences rely on a sense of self distinct and separate from nature.

Experiential nature was ‘hidden’ within the built environment discourse, and none of the NS Actors made conscious reference to it, even when given opportunity to do so. The questions did not probe for such nature, but the last open-ended question, “How do you see yourself within nature?” enables the Actor to choose any response. The major lines of consideration for the Actor would be the self and nature, and this could include descriptions of experiences of nature by the self.
The significance of this part of the analysis is twofold. Firstly, instances of EN within the discourses points to a Deep Ecological relationship model between the self and nature. In particular, in each of the cases of EN held by the Nature Serves group there is an implicit recognition of both the nature's influence on the self, and the acknowledgement of nature, the latter by incorporation within the discursive built form.

Secondly, in contrast, the absence of EN within the Nature Independent group points to the Immanence model, where nature is accorded a recognition of 'over there', a specific entity with its own Nietzschean 'Will to Power'. That is, the entity has its own internal forces that enable it to act independently within the world.

These two points are revealed if one we view the NS and NI perspectives through the existence (or absence) of experiential nature. For the NS group, presence of EN ‘shifts’ the self-nature relationship model from transcendence to Deep Ecological basis. For the NI group, the absence of EN similarly ‘shifts’ their self-nature relationship model from Deep Ecological to immanence. The difference between these groups’ experiences of nature and their subsequent expression within built environment discourses informs the findings, and this will be discussed in Chapter Five.

4th Stage: Analysis of beliefs about nature

The final stage tested the way in which Actors 'constructed' nature within their discourse. This step is not continuation of the previous steps but rather is a move back towards the transcribed interviews to examine the data afresh. The purpose of the test is to discern the cognitive construction of nature within the discourses. Thinking about the production of meaning influenced this stage; what are the discursive features of beliefs?

Approach and terminology

The transcribed text was studied for the different kinds of sentences. It was found that these could be typified as one of three kinds, suggested as declarative statements, belief statements, and statements of justification.
Declarative statements express a condition about the world. They enumerate attributes or make some observation about the world. Belief statements express beliefs about the world; that the world is made this way (and implicitly not that way). Beliefs shape the world as perceived, and shape our reactions to that world. Justification statements provide a necessary bridge between the declarative and belief; because of this, I believe that.

Examples of these kinds of statements, made by different Actors are given in the following:

**Declarative**

Well it [structure plan] takes up everything virtually. I’ve got an actual separate map... But it takes up the whole of this area like this, the structure plan and basically it destroys everything of ecological value.

Yes it would destroy everything of ecological value because if you put heavy industry adjacent to the coastline, you put the marine coastal environment at risk (Community Activist II).

In this statement, the Actor declares that “...it [the structure plan] takes up the whole of the area... destroy[ing] everything of ecological value.” and goes on to justify the statement by creating situations of risk.

**Belief**

I think that’s important [keeping beach areas free] because otherwise you get exclusion[ary] places where people don’t feel they can go even though they’ve got every right in the world to go there because they actually own the nature space (CEO).

Belief statements typically contained the words ‘think’ or ‘guess’ or similar, indicating a thought process about the subject under discussion. TheActor has undertaken a process of cognitively examining the various aspects of the subject, utilizing criteria unique to that individual (a contextual model, following van Dijk) to arrive at a conclusion as to a view about the position of the subject vis-a-vis the wider world. Here the CEO believes that areas of coastline to which people may visit by boat should be kept ‘free’ of any sense of exclusionary structures or practices, as it is believed that “I think people actually own the nature space.”
Justification

...because to me if we hadn’t dredged it [the harbour] and you know the councils didn’t want to put any money into it, if we didn’t dredge it we’d wind up with a mud flat ...(Councillor).

We posit statements that offer an ‘either / or’ choice, where the outcomes attached to each choice are either positive and negative alternatives, or two positive or negative alternatives, and the choice chosen by the speaker is the ‘correct’ alternative in the situation, to justify a course of action. Here, the Councillor justifies the action of modifying nature, firstly in this case dredging the harbour to enable yachts to sail up the harbour, by stating the alternative choice, to not dredge, would lead to an outcome that she implies is negative for society – a mudflat that does not allow yachts to sail up the harbour (i.e. something that is not functional or of use to society), and secondly, given the location of the harbour near to the city, the unattractiveness of mudflats versus a (sparkling) harbour.

The majority of statements made by Actors were declarative statements, while a minority were belief statements. Declarative statements functioned to support belief statements, while justification statements were typically used to justify a belief. Belief statements are taken here to reflect an Actor's cognitive contextual model that contains beliefs. Discussion of this assumption is contained in the following chapter.

Belief statements were tightly defined as those statements that indicated a speaker’s position on nature. Sentences that used the words ‘I think’, ‘I believe’, ‘I guess’ or ‘I know in fact’ were assumed to be certain indicators of belief. This tight definition was used in examination of text coded natural environment or nature for all Actors. It is assumed that these belief statements to be what the Actor thought about the essence of nature.

Tables (4.8 to 4.13) presenting analysis of belief statements made by Actors, grouped by Reference area.

The belief statements found in the interviews are shown in the following tables, grouped according to reference study area. The first column indicates all the
instances where the Actor expressed a belief, noted by the words ‘I think’, ‘I believe’, ‘I guess’ or ‘I know in fact’. The second column notes the symbolic referents (Hahn 1973), expressed in that belief, which is assumed to have an influence on future behaviour (i.e. actual behaviour that will occur at some point in the future concerning the subject referred to in the belief).

Hahn notes the weakness in undertaking analysis of beliefs, suggesting that while “intuitive processes are legitimate, as they are in any analytic enterprise…”, the results of that process cannot stand as being necessarily correct in respect of the research undertaken (ibid, p.207), lest intuition eclipse more rigorous methods of testing for beliefs.

Given this, the method of observing the symbolic referent relationship is critical. The first step is to tightly define belief statements as explained above. The second step is to identify the symbol contained in the statement, for which there must be a referent, in a manner similar to a signified / signifier relationship. Hahn notes that symbols may not have a corresponding referent, and therefore defines beliefs as those statements only having a symbol – reference relationship.

Within the following tables for ease of comprehension, the phrase ‘[symbol]’ will be placed immediately after the identified symbol that is underlined in the belief statement, while ‘[referent]’ will be placed immediately following the underlined reference, to which the symbol refers. The presence of both a symbol and a referent will make the statement a valid inscription of a belief statement, following Hahn. A description of the Actor’s role is stated at the top of the table. This is to test for a link between the Actor’s role and any beliefs about nature they may express, indicating influence of the role on belief.

While Hahn does make mention of the temporal nature of belief (Chapter Two), he does not analyse this aspect. It is assumed here that the beliefs expressed by Actors are specific to the interview, and are subject to cultural changes in standing beliefs. Beliefs here are also assumed to be integral to the cognitive contextual models outlined by van Dijk.
Flat Bush

Planner

This Role creates and guides built form and natural environments through use of planning tools that are subject to public plan making process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belief statements with symbol and referent highlighted</th>
<th>Symbolic referents (theoretical influence on behaviour)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Well I guess nature [symbol] is a big part of Flat Bush [referent]</em></td>
<td>Equivocation. Nature has a role to play in the development of Flat Bush, alongside other ‘big parts’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I guess to some degree it [existing landscape of development site] [symbol] will be modified nature by man [referent]</em></td>
<td>Degrees of modification of nature by humans for a reason.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>So yeah that’s [streams network] [symbol] a significant part of Flat Bush identity [referent] and I think it [symbol] really is the fundamental building block [referent]</em></td>
<td>Nature is a building block. Building blocks are used to create something new, something that was not there before. Building blocks can also be manipulated – placed here, and there, to achieve certain outcomes. Nature (represented by streams) is also identity. It creates identity for specific areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I think we also acknowledge that it’s not realistic [symbol] to try to recreate pristine nature in a natural untouched sense [referent]</em></td>
<td>A human conception of nature can be created, and created to particular levels. Desire for ‘pristine nature in a natural untouched sense’ cannot be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is real is that nature is always ‘touched’. Nature is ‘touched’, able to be ‘created’, but innate, deep desire for pristine nature cannot be created.

Conception of nature as an independent object outside of the subject – a pristine nature.

| Nature and urban environments can co-exist together quite well. | Nature as the green finger corridor perseveres for centuries. Enduring presence gives specialness and strength to an urban development ‘pattern’. |
| Nature is ‘do[ne] well’ – created at the same time as the urban environment. Qualities of nature (‘impressive’) can be equalled by urban qualities. It works as a system, as much as an urban system does. Nature is both an environment and a system. ‘Can co-exist together quite well’ – belief that nature and urban environments can co-exist, which implies that they are not at the present. |

In many ways I guess if you think about well how many cities in the world, towns [symbol] can do both well where you can have this great urban environment but at the same time you have this natural environment [referent] that is equally impressive and at your finger tips, it’s in your face every day if you’re living there as a resident you can’t help but be aware that there’s a natural environment, natural systems at work as well as an urban system and that the two can co-exist together quite well. | I think it [symbol] will be something quite special [referent] although the houses in the built form will come and go the green finger corridor [symbol] will persevere for centuries and really will become the strength [referent] of the whole pattern. |

accommodated.

I think it [symbol] will be something quite special [referent] although the houses in the built form will come and go the green finger corridor [symbol] will persevere for centuries and really will become the strength [referent] of the whole pattern.
I still don’t believe it’s possible [symbol] to have pristine nature and urban together [referent]. I just don’t believe that’s possible.

Negation of belief that it is possible for pristine nature and urban to co-exist. Subtext is that it is possible to have modified nature and urban together. Splits nature into modified and pristine.

I think you say well we can’t have perfect pristine but we can still have an amazing environment [symbol] that brings nature so children can grow up experiencing nature and can wander down and see an eel in the stream [referent] then I think it [symbol] all helps then to create greater awareness of nature and the natural environment in the world that we live in [referent].

Can have amazing nature but cannot have pristine nature. Creation of less than pristine environment still offers experiences to children growing up. These experiences enable children to acquire awareness of the world that they live in. Acquisition of experiences in (amazing) nature is key to awareness of nature.

| Table 4.8: Planner’s beliefs, and symbolic referents. |

Here, the Planner expresses a core belief; “I think we also acknowledge that it’s not realistic to try to recreate pristine nature in a natural untouched sense”. This then opens the way for the Planner to ‘recreate’ nature within the context of an urban environment, which he expresses by stating a belief that nature and the urban can ‘co-exist together quite well’. Nature is the creative expression of the Planner in his role. One means of expression is to create personal experiences of nature (e.g. seeing an eel).

**CEO**

The CEO produces the built form products for sale on the residential and commercial market. This is done through negotiation with others and arrangements of goods and services suppliers so that the built form is created, which is then placed on the marketplace.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Belief statements with symbol and referent highlighted</th>
<th>Symbolic referents (theoretical influence on behaviour)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>I think that's [free access to nature] [symbol] important because otherwise you get exclusion places where people don't feel they can go even though they've got every right in the world to go there because they actually own the nature space</em>[referent].</td>
<td><em>'that's important' – refers to notion of free access to 'nature' e.g. beaches. This refers in turn to the notion of non-exclusivity of spaces lying outside of private property. People have right to experience nature – because they 'own' it.</em></td>
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</table>
| *I think that the place that I have chosen to live [symbol] is probably similarly reflective of my, of the importance of nature to me [referent] and the access of it etc. etc. so because I live on quite a busy road albeit not right on the road but on the beach but on a back section across a roadway where there is a beach and a lot of nice walking areas and those sorts of things.* | *Residential location reflects the value of nature to you, and access to it. Link between place/built form choices and importance of nature.*
| *Nature is intimately tied to where you live – physiological dimensions. The quality of 'nature' where you live determines the quality of your home life.* | *Strong vision for ‘treatment’ of natural areas/vegetation linked to differentiation for development.*
| Strong vision in the sense of marketing – use of nature for marketing purposes, and differentiation. Nature is 'bits of relief' in a place you ‘have to live in’. Nature is left over* |
um, where those waterways are becoming alive and people are using them, the bush is growing up and the vegetation has grown and stuff like that, I think it [symbol] creates those sort of natural, I won’t say barriers, the natural bits of relief [referent] I suppose into the place you have to live in.

The only risk I see of them [walking paths through stream vegetation] is if they are to be used as, if they’re to be used for walking areas etc. it’s the conflict between that and vegetation and how that’s, [conflict] [symbol] I think that’s going to be challenging for a community at some stage in the future when the trees get [grow] up and they’re all dark and there’s not lights on the footpaths, how does all that work. Does that mean people, does that mean they should become dangerous places? So I don’t know. I think there’s a bit of, I think the community, I just think that there’s a risk about that [referent]. I mean wonderful thing to have and I think what will probably happen if that became problematic is they would just become vegetated areas and people would avoid them or walk through them, across them rather than, which is the concept is to use them as access ways - I think that, whatever I think, I

Even if nature does pose a risk to the community, ultimately the community is ‘better off’ for having it.

‘...whatever I [may] think’ – the benefits of these areas are greater. Experiential nature (EN) of nature trumps risk.
See the place [i.e. Flatbush] will be better off for having them rather than not having them.

I think of it as beachfront so it's sort of high quality land and it should be faced just like a beach should be and that should mean that it's not a private domain. That it's actually the interface, is a public domain but the ah, so the value isn't, the best value you can get is to own a piece of dirt that adjoins a piece of public interface with the public domain. It's probably going to be a boardwalk or something or footpath or something between the houses and the park or the vegetation proper. That's what I'm saying.

‘... it should be faced just like a beach should...’- Nature should be arranged, for a purpose, in this case to provide 'a public domain' with high quality land, which in turn provides 'best [monetary] value' for a person owning a 'piece of dirt' adjacent to that public domain.

I think what nature will bring, will bring something very special to the town centre because it is a big front and it is probably apart from, if you think about what Hagley Park does for Christchurch I suppose, its probably a bit, although I think the park, although Hagley Park is pretty active, I think that the areas around here will probably won't be quite as natural although my vision.

Nature ‘brings’ something special. But that specialness is not ‘quite as natural’, it is more of a created specialness, for example, a highly manicured green leading to more ‘intense bushes’. In essence what nature brings are qualities that can be manipulated to
is that they will almost be golf course like where they’re fronting onto the town centre itself so they’ll be accessible areas that will be well maintained and stuff but as soon as you get over the main waterway you’ll get into probably lesser, towards intense bushes and vegetation and stuff and that’s the more formal part.

create ‘something special’. Nature holds qualities that permit this to happen.

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<th>Table 4.9: CEO’s beliefs, and symbolic referents.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Here the CEO, in the role of a developer creating built form for sale in a marketplace, makes frequent reference to belief in nature in particular, the ‘special-ness’ of it. A ‘product’ is made more special by using this quality of nature, and therefore implicitly commands higher market prices. Nature becomes a marketing tool. Contrarily, nature is also something intrinsic to the public at large. The public ‘owns it’; nature cannot be privately owned to the exclusion of others. It can be created as a marketing tool, but not completely owned by a private individual.</td>
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Ruakaka Marsden Point

Councillor
The role of the Councillor within this context is to oversee the political process of creating plans and strategies for guiding the development of the Ruakaka Marsden Point reference area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belief statements with symbol and referent highlighted</th>
<th>Symbolic referents (theoretical influence on behaviour)</th>
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<tr>
<td>but then in Ruakaka we’ve got all the sand dunes and the ocean [symbol] and to my mind its vital that they be</td>
<td>Protection of nature for future generations.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I don’t think that would be any loss but</td>
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</table>
protected [referent] and kept for future generations as close to the way it is now as we can. Although I’d like to see DoC get rid of a few of their weeds out of the sand dunes. I don’t think that [symbol] would be any loss [referent] but you know we have to be able to, in here we think of that if we could develop that as a regional park so it was permanently protected.

Minimization (a few of their weeds) of vegetation, of Department of Conservation (DOC) status (their weeds) within wider context of creating a protected regional park of sand dunes is not a loss.

Nature minimized to create controlled nature (permanently protected regional park).

I don’t think every tree is a good tree [symbol]. A tree is a good tree if it’s in the right place and it’s the right type of tree [referent].

I don’t think every tree is a good tree.

Intrinsic valuation of trees, division into good / bad types of trees, inter alia good / bad type of nature. Good nature is something that ‘fits’ with superior concept, of ‘right place, right type’, while bad nature lies outside that fit.

Table 4.10: Councillor’s beliefs and symbolic referents.

In contrast to other interviewees, the Councillor did not offer many belief statements. However, the belief statements support the role in overseeing things, on the one hand, the creation of a District Plan, and on the other, creation of nature ‘in the right place’. To create this situation minimisation of nature is undertaken, which in turn minimises all that nature offers, and all the power of nature.

Community Activist H

The role here is to actively defend the environment from inappropriate development by participation in public plan making process.
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<th>Belief statements with symbol and referent highlighted</th>
<th>Symbolic referents (theoretical influence on behaviour)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>[Question: what is the meaning of nature to you?]</strong></td>
<td>Rejection of generalised ‘nature’ in favour of specificity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Well I personally don’t like too generalised terms like nature. I think you have to be far more specific [symbol] and you have to actually define exactly what you mean [referent]. Now when I talk, so I never use nature in any of my submissions at all. I talk about the natural environment and I talk about the ecology of an area so the natural environment is a relatively unmodified physical state of the environment and the ecology is the wildlife, the life that inhabits it. You know both flora and fauna, rather than just talking about nature and I think you know I think nature [symbol] is too generalised a term, I think you need to be more specific in the way you express [referent] what you mean by the natural world.</td>
<td>Nature is not a generalised Other, but a composite of specific items - a tree, a bird, which makes ecology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I consider in fact that our own survival [symbol] as a species is dependent on us actually allowing other species to live [referent] and if we foul our own nest, which we are actually working towards...</td>
<td>We are species, like other species, with mutual interdependency for survival.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We are interdependent with other species. Other species have a right, as much as we do, to live.</td>
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I don’t believe that we [symbol] will be totally extinct. I mean I think there will be pockets just as there were pockets of the dinosaurs [referent] but if we don’t stop growing [symbol] then the planet is going to get rid of us [referent] and we are arrogant to think that somehow we are more powerful than the natural forces...

Nature, (despite previous qualification as nature being a specificity) is rendered as an observant decision making entity – ‘going to get rid of us’. We are being watched for signs of ‘not growing’. Notions of control and punishment in return for thinking ‘we are more powerful than natural forces’.

I think ethically and spiritually we’re at quite a crisis [symbol] that we’re not accepting, we’re so obsessed with [the concept of] me [referent].

Underlying ethical and spiritual crisis in human-nature relationship is masked by obsession with the self.

Now and I’m thinking globally and whether New Zealand likes it or not it [symbol] is part of the planet [referent] and it can’t go off on a tangent as John Donne the poet said no man [symbol] is an island in itself [referent], well no country [symbol] is an island in itself either [referent].

Although talking about a country – reference can made to nature – we are part of it, not isolated from it.

We are not in ourselves entire – our wholeness arises from our relationships.

Table 4.11: Community Activist H’s beliefs, and symbolic referents.

The scientific training that this Community Activist enjoyed (and having worked as a scientist in the past) becomes clear when beliefs are expounded. Nature is an assemblage of discrete elements forming a holistic entity, enjoying a materialism and agency, which demands defence (by the Actor) from development. Participation in the plan making process by making submissions about inappropriate development expresses these beliefs.
Community Activist L

This Community Activist performs a similar role to Community Activist H in actively defending the nature from inappropriate development by participation in public plan making process.

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<tr>
<td>um I just think that we need [symbol] to, you know, treat the natural systems um with the same care that we should be taking with our bodies [referent], it's the [same] sort of systems and feedbacks. Okay so if you take that idea of nature as sort of systems um ah has constraints as ah working with nature um not having a sustainable relationship but having a relationship that gets more of a win-win scenario</td>
<td>Treat nature as we treat our bodies. Equivalence argument used, nature is equivalent to our bodies. Our bodies have systems, constraints that entails the establishment and maintenance of a sustainable relationship, that leads to ‘win-win’ outcomes. Equivalency of care, in the same way as we care for nature, also means we are part of nature.</td>
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<td>[Question: How do you see yourself in nature?] Well if I stop to think about it [nature] [symbol], its not how I interact all the time because you know we’re just an organism that lives off the back of nature [referent].</td>
<td>It’s not how I interact all the time – that is, thinking of nature as a separate ‘thing’, the alternate view is we are ‘just another organism’ like any other organism – ‘liv[ing] off the back of nature’ – like other organisms. Nature is supportive – has a ‘back’, which we live off.</td>
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for us to survive we have to make sure that the systems that we live off are healthy enough to maintain us. Personally how I interact with nature, I’ve decided not to breed, not to have children because I don’t think the, well I don’t think the planet [symbol] can sustain the numbers of people [referent] and secondly I don’t think it’s fair [symbol] on the kids for the future [referent] they’re going to be caught up into. But if we are actually going to um well its our life support system.

Even the population pressure already its getting, it’s difficult for the shore birds to nest at the Ruakaka River mouth and I think they’ve only got a couple of oyster catchers to breed this year I think um and ah yeah so I guess it [birds nesting] [symbol] sort of depends on how well you value nature [referent]. The bird life is like the canary in the mineshaft for people. You know if they’re doing, if we’re disturbing the natural systems you know well sooner or later we’re going to fall over.

Nature has limits beyond which life does not exist.
Belief in fair future for future generations.
Nature is not an inert, static, and infinite object, but something that has limits.

Table 4.12: Community Activist L’s beliefs, and symbolic referents.
Again, similarly to Community Activist H, nature is not simply an environment, but an entity with agency and materialism. There is belief in observation of a dynamic nature figured through the popular metaphor of a ‘canary in a mine shaft’. Proper observation will ensure a ‘win-win’ situation where nature and humans are in a balanced symbiotic relationship.
Consultant

The Consultant works for both private and public sector clients in the areas of urban development. The role creates the strategies, tools, and plans for the public sector that guide land development for private sector clients, and participates in public plan making process by directly writing Plan provisions.

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<tr>
<th>Belief statements with symbol and referent highlighted</th>
<th>Symbolic referents (theoretical influence on behaviour)</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>but there’s a man/land relationship which is the basis of my philosophical or my conceptual thought and so I [symbol] am an environmentalist but I am not into environmentalism and I am simultaneously pro environmental conservation preservation and also pro land development [referent], so that’s to me the art is striking a balance with this particular culture in this particular time frame accepting that societies change.</em></td>
<td><em>Art of striking balances between ‘environment’ and ‘land development’, that a balance can be gained, maintained.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>I think that’s part of what planners do [symbol], should be doing so in a sense the introduction of nature into the built environment has two sides to it [referent]. One is pure nature or let’s call it untouched nature, no go areas to which you provide access and the built environment, be it roads or access ways or some things physically, the way you create that relationship interfaces,</em></td>
<td><em>We physiologically need two kinds of nature – one ‘pure, untouched’ areas, the second ‘engineered’ nature within urban areas.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I think that’s part of what planners do [symbol], should be doing so in a sense the introduction of nature into the built environment has two sides to it [referent]. One is pure nature or let’s call it untouched nature, no go areas to which you provide access and the built environment, be it roads or access ways or some things physically, the way you create that relationship interfaces,</em></td>
<td><em>Both kinds are ‘introduced’ into the built environment. Nature is a separate object that can be ‘introduced’.</em></td>
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paths etc. becomes important because it would be no good having a fantastic piece of space which is pure nature with a fence around it, well there is some use to it but for the average urban person, so what. It’s just been removed from his reference run and the other thing is that recognising that very little un-engineered nature does occur at a microscope within the urban environment but that when you engineer that it doesn’t have to be pure nature its engineered. Okay so in a sense those are abstractions of nature, so we need both and the built environment has got to respond to it.

| The ‘engineered’ nature is an ‘abstraction’ of nature, subject to a process of ‘Engineering’. |
| Process of determining what is pure nature, what needs to be engineered. |

I’ve just got to get back to the theme we’re talking about is a man/land relationship. I don’t think that [symbol] goes away you know and you can sit in an apartment on the 16th storey in the middle of Queen Street but you still want to walk in the forest, go to the beach etc. so you can divorce the space but you can’t deny that there’s a physical, emotional, spiritual man/land path, components of the man/land relationship [referent] so that’s part of my sort of planning ethic...

| Belief in a man / land relationship |
| Components of this are ‘physical, emotional, spiritual’. |
| Acknowledgement and incorporation of these components into a particular ethic – a professional planning ethic. |

Now you can get your spaces when there is a different balance of relationship [symbol] of what we call pure nature.

<p>| Art of planning creates different balances between nature and urban in |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>When you’re out on the top of Mt Aspiring you’re really not interested in you know a café around the corner but when you’re in the middle of Ponsonby you’re not really interested in sitting in the middle of the National Park [referent] but you still require those aspects in your life and I think that’s [symbol] the art of planning [referent]...</th>
<th>different kinds of spaces. Space is a continuum, where at each point, different balance is found between nature and built. There is a need by humans for both kinds of environments. Planning is about knowing these spaces.</th>
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<tr>
<td>So how do I see myself within nature? Using it [symbol] to the extent that it fulfils the material, emotional and spiritual requirements [referent] and on that basis I’ll respond to the need for material wellbeing by utilising it [nature] [symbol] as a resource [referent] on (unclear 1:42:52) processing and I will utilise the wilderness [symbol] for my spiritual wellbeing [referent] as I need to but I think as a planner [symbol] I have a responsibility to make those distinctions in the way people use nature [referent] and therefore I have a responsibility to treating the natural wellbeing in different ways. It’s not a universal uniform green patch out there you know. I certainly believe it [symbol] should be and all the things like sustainable use are subjective [referent]. You know sustainable use in</td>
<td>Nature fulfils my needs, and is treated in different ways according to need. From material wellbeing to spiritual wellbeing, nature is extracted, ‘engineered’ to respond to that need.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nature is an inert thing, which is treated according to whatever need is to be satisfied at the time.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Planning is about making distinctions in the way people use nature.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tension in such a human-nature relationship is negated by belief that need and use of nature to satisfy need can ‘co-exist’.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Appropriate treatment of nature within ‘sustainable use’ parameters to satisfy needs.</td>
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the Abel Tasman Park is 8000 people a day max through the trail. Sustainable use in a forestry plantation is harvesting it for 23 years. It’s completely different versions of sustainable so accepting that we have to be sustainable, that you cannot over exploit resources, all those things are sort of inherent you know and yet and I come back to where we started off, I’m pro development, I’m pro economic development, pro material wellbeing and I’m pro conservation. I think that they can co-exist. I believe in a sense that planning [symbol] is common sense [referent]. It just requires a bit of a lateral view on what life is about rather than a sort of singular narrow view you know.

If you go back 3,000 years ago the gods were all symbolic natural gods, be it Ra be it whoever it was, the sun the Nile whatever, so those are early environmentalist movements which they recognise the natural environment as the Mother Earth as the supporter of life. It’s very different to what’s going on today where you can actually rub out entire forests and then politically assume that, so that’s an anti-environmentalist thing, it’s over exploitation of resources but then the political event is that that’s justifiable

| There is an appropriate ‘long-term and constant understanding of nature’ and its resources that underpin how these resources should be used and protected in order to procure economic gain. |
| Having understanding of the long-term limits of nature within which it can be used to satisfy physiological needs. |
for some other reason. I don’t think that’s a, to me its [environmentalist movements] [symbol] an inappropriate understanding of the long term and constant nature of resources how they should be used, how they should be protected and for what economic gain [referent]. That’s a sort of philosophical, we all have to take position you know. ... but you have to have a philosophical base for doing it. It’s a choice.

Table 4.13: Consultant’s beliefs, and symbolic referents.

Of all the Actors, the Consultant gave the most thorough exposition of beliefs about nature. Essentially, nature is split into two purposes that respond to people’s needs; nature that is good, providing spiritual sustenance and services for wellbeing, or alternatively, nature that is engineered within an urban environment to provide for urban development. In both situations, nature is an object external to the Consultant, and used for either purpose. The Consultant’s role as a planner is reflected in a dualism of nature, where a planner both nominally protects nature and also creates it within an urban environment.

Discussion of the beliefs and symbolic referents of the Actors

The beliefs and symbolic referents exhibited by the Actors about nature are varied and diverse, and tended to support their role and their narratives. The notable observation is the feature of EN in beliefs held by the CEO, but this feature supports the narrative for the CEO.

In all cases except for two, as discussed previously, nature is an entity to which things are done (e.g. managed, categorised, or shaped). For Community Activist L, nature is not separate from us; consequently beliefs focused on the limits and systems found in nature, and the necessity of pastoral care for those systems and
limits. For Community Activist H, nature is an assemblage of discrete elements that make up a holistic entity with agency.

In some instances on review of the interview transcripts, it was noted that the Actor unconsciously offered evidence of their belief in action during the interview, further strengthening or underlining their beliefs. Community Activist L, in line with beliefs about nature being made up of discrete items, indicated at one point during the interview that instead of being in an interview would normally been down at the beach counting the breeding pairs of endangered birds. The Councillor stated that in the past when acting as part of a ‘gang of people’ they cleared mangroves from a particular area so that boats and yachts could come upstream further.

With regard to the theoretical models of self-nature relationship, the beliefs can be seen as means of functionally supporting the models, giving life to them. The range of beliefs only supported two of the three self-nature relationship models, that is, the transcendent and Deep Ecology models. No indication of beliefs was found to fit the immanence model. The NS group offered beliefs that indicated a placement of nature outside of the self, to which actions are done; these are indications of a transcendent model. In contrast, the NI cases held beliefs, for example, that nature has limits or that it is inter-dependent with us, placing nature as an independent entity. This points to the Deep Ecological model.

**Summation of outcomes of the methodological process**

At this point the thesis has presented some complex material by stages. It is useful to undertake a review at this point of the outcomes from each stage.

The initial NVivo coding process during the Data Preparation stage (Chapter Three) saw the creation of 93 nodes, each of which contained text from across the interviews related to the theme of that node. This provided the raw material for further work in the following stages, outlined in this chapter. The nodes provide a ‘snapshot’ of the kinds of themes relating to built and natural environments (or nature) and role, and indicate the complexity of concepts found within each broad area.
Once coding was done, simple quantitative analysis of the nodes in stage one reveals the relative importance of nature ‘talk’ versus built environment ‘talk’, which varies according to the particular role an Actor plays and seems to be influenced by the relevant document that the role is involved in.

Extracting a plethora of coded text that expressed different ideas and concepts about nature, and the built environment, while a function of the technology used, did provide benefit in providing the raw data needed for analysis, in the Data Preparation stage. The isolation in the second stage of the concepts from a general textual flow enabled a level of conceptualization and thought about the construction of nature by Actors. A critical review was undertaken of the data focusing particularly on the text coded against the multiple nodes featuring Nature as a concept, seeking to understand how the coded text could be further investigated. A process of decomposition and recombination, based on an Actor’s coded text, established a narrative for each Actor about nature. This took advantage, as explained above, of the fact that the process of coding isolated particular parts of the text from its context, and placed the text against a node enabling the text to be closely analysed. The resulting narrative points to individual and unique constructions of nature. Two kinds of constructions were observed. The first construction saw interviewees attempt to modify and control nature in a variety of ways. The second saw interviewees relating to nature as a separate entity with inherent qualities and values.

A refocus on the nodes and the concepts they represent is the subject of the third stage. NVivo conceptualises nodes in two ways, as containing coded text that could be analysed as done in stage two, and as representing concepts within the coded text, which can be manipulated to uncover relationships, as was done in the third stage. Although this process in stage three did not reveal anything different or new regarding the conceptual relationships between the nodes, one important finding from this stage was the fact that the NS group interviewees described an intense experience of nature by the self. This experiential nature was furthermore reflected in sought built environment outcomes expressed within discourse.
The fourth stage, an analysis, following Hahn (1973), of Actor beliefs about nature revealed that these beliefs underpinned the narratives found in stage two, and following Hahn (1973), could be seen as precursors to action.

**Observations on development of the methodological process**

Essentially the overall four stage process engaged in was one that arose ‘organically’ from a combination of factors in addition to the thesis question asked; from the interview questions and their responses, from literature reading and from the NVivo coding tool. The process of analysis was one of a constant revisiting of results, and probing for further analysis.

It is important to recall that van Dijk (2009) and Fairclough (2009) note that discourse itself is a wide ranging field, spanning different contexts, contents and scales, and that any one particular analytical approach may not be suitable for the data a researcher is looking at. The researcher has to be open to developing alternative methodological approaches, as suggested by D’Cruz (2001), Higgs (2001) and Thompson (2006) in the previous chapter. One possible approach is that the data and the context of the research drive the methodological approaches. This was seen in the development of four distinct stages. Each adopted different views of the data, resulting in different methodological outcomes, enabling cross-validation of the data.

The fact that it is only the interviewees who can engage in discourse and it is therefore interviewees who are able to be analysed, while nature remains ‘mute’, is a limitation to the methodology, as outlined in Chapter Two. The organic way in which the method arose from the limitations of the research is suggested as an appropriate response to the problem of nature being mute. The resulting outcomes indicated that far from being a ‘mute’ object, nature in fact exercised a subtle influence on Actors, revealed through disclosure of intense personal experiences of nature, by each Actor in the NS group. In a sense, this can point to the ways in which nature can exercise some kind of discourse, albeit not one that is fully understood.

While the interview questions were focused on three broad subject areas – the built environment, the natural environment and individuals’ role, plus one sub-
area of the view of the self within nature, effort was made to adopt an open
attitude to the answers given, stating at the beginning of the interview that ‘there
were no right or wrong answers’ to the questions. The oblique and open-ended
questions enabled a good set of full and comprehensive answers, avoiding
suggestion of bias that might affect findings.

The resulting transcribed interviews were approached with an open mind during
coding, permitting the development of a range of nodes, although within the
context of the three broad areas of categorical coding. The nodes were developed
from within the text itself, following GT (Grounded Theory) and informed by
contextual categorisation of broad concepts (that is, built and natural
environments, role, and self). This approach was taken to see if the text itself
revealed the existence of particular discursive constructions.

Accordingly the nodes were reflective of what the text, (transcribed interviews),
was suggesting about nature (or the built environment or role), in a process
outlined in the previous chapter (Coding Process). The data for subsequent
analysis was the nodes, and the coded text they contained, giving confidence in
the results of further analysis that used the contents of the nodes (that is, coded
extracts from transcribed text). The use of GT minimised any kind of inadvertent
‘reading into’ the text any preconceived ideas about nature, the built
environment or roles by the researcher, and consequently affect analytical
results.

**Observations on the method**

The method followed produced the results needed to obtain an answer to the
thesis question - is there a discursive construction of nature within the built
environment discourse? The critical aspect of this question is how to determine
discursive construction?

Determining the process by which social reality is constructed answers the
question as to whether or not there is a construction of a part of that reality.
Multiple means by which social reality is constructed was discussed in Chapter
Two. The use of the signifier and signified model to place signifiers on objects
within the surrounding world, the use of power to endow objects with signifiers,
and the reinforcement of that process with meaning making based on developed beliefs about the surrounding world all play a part in constructing a social reality.

The themes indicated in the nodes arising from the coding process point to the way in which various subjects are signified by the NS group. In a clear example from the data, the *Built environment - created by rules* node indicates that the rules contained within a District Plan, or other statutory documents, set out the parameters by which a proposed building is constrained, and hence ‘constructed’ both as a physical object and as a conceptual object. The building is signified by way of rules as indicated by the Planner:

...we [planners] set the basic bulk and location rules. You obviously get a subdivision and there's a series of buildings and assessment around that and then there's the building of houses that usually follows after that and um that's subject to bulk and location rules.

The bulk and location rules (in the District Plan) provide the constraints that results in a particular building ordered to specific aspects of the rule, while the building itself is conceptually signified by the imposition of rules regarding its style.

How power is exercised is indicated within coded text seen against nodes. The nodes that focus on nature indicate the ways in which nature is obliquely constructed and shaped by reference to the tools used to describe it:

- Minimization (e.g. ‘just pampas grass’)
- Reduction to conceptual elements (e.g. ‘go, no-go areas’)
- Placed into legal management regimes such as the District Plan,
- Observed and measured
- Accorded independent status by use of metaphor (e.g. ‘mother’, ‘or shrugs us off shoulders’)

These significations of nature reflect the power to shape nature; nature becomes a mute recipient to which things are done. It is minimized, or placed into management regimes. These actions see nature being reduced from something that surrounds us without boundaries (i.e. where does nature end? or begin?) to
something manageable, with defined and imposed discursive boundaries. The signs seen here are linked to the beliefs seen in the fourth stage of analysis.

The coded text became the means by which beliefs could be uncovered and investigated, by firstly, establishing a explanatory narrative that encapsulated the Actor’s position in relation to nature, then secondly, by focusing on specific belief statements within the interview transcript, and analysing these to see if they reinforced the narrative. This method returned positive results that will be discussed in Chapter Five.

The use of GT to uncover the construction of nature was a major strength of the coding method. The alternative method of examining the data with a pre-conceived and developed model could have produced similar results, but the risk is that such an approach may skew the interview process in some manner (e.g. encouraging answers that confirm the model, or discouraging others), which would result in less useful data for analysis.

Other CDA methods outlined in Chapter Three seen in the field, for instance, the Social Actors approach, or the Discourse-Historical approach, use specific aspects of discourse as basis for a specific methodological approach (e.g. examination of social actors, or examination of the wider historical contexts of discourse). The basic understanding of discursive built environment construction, which arises from theorised cognitive models, and the possible application of similar models to a discursive construction of nature predisposed the use of van Dijk’s DCS approach.

The open-ended questionnaire and use of GT guided the methods towards investigation into the ways in which nature is cognitively and discursively constructed. Although with modification, an approach such as the Social–Actors method (e.g. conceptualizing nature as a ‘actor’), could see similar results. These would have different perspectives, given the starting point of the approach that sees discursive construction occurring between ‘actors’ in the social sphere. However, the underlying premise of the research here was not to ‘force’ the data to fit any particular chosen approach as suggested by a Social –Actors method.
The results of the methodological observations can be generalized to a degree by reference to transcendence. The various discursive constructions of nature reflect the self-nature transcendent model as explained in Chapter Two. Nature forms one part of the human-nature relationship, and is rendered inferior to humans within the discourses seen in the NS group. A general principle could be that nature is more likely to be discursively constructed in a transcendent manner to serve particular purposes by professionals who participate in the planning field, while nature is less likely to be transcendently constructed by those who are not necessarily ‘professional’.

**Limitations of method**

As with any methodological analysis, there are limitations to the method followed in this chapter. Consideration of the limitations by stages, results in the following.

**Preliminary Stage – Data Preparation**

Computer aided coding enabled relatively easy ‘cut’n’paste’ coding, using standard highlighting, and then ‘right-clicking’ on the mouse functionality, which permitted efficiency, but sometimes at the expense of thoughtfulness, which possibly would be more likely to occur under a manual coding process.

The main issue in coding is the subjectivity inherent in the process, indicated previously. Other issues include the method of coding. Coding was done over a period of days, rather than in one session. Doing coding over time minimized factors such as mental fatigue, but also increased the risk that not all possible text was coded, nor that text was coded correctly (i.e. a mistake in interpreting the coded text, or coded to the wrong node). Since this is not a quantitative study with the intention to generalise across a population, requiring precision in coding, this is not a critical issue. Additionally, the easy functionality of ‘cut’n’paste’ enabled easy correction of identified mistakes.

Understanding the concepts behind the nodes took time to coalesce as the concepts arose from the texts themselves, and conceptual definitions were
mutable, which may affect decisions about which text to code at different points of the coding process.

Stage one – preliminary reading

A review of stage one outcomes, the nodes and associated coded text, may miss important concepts, but further coding and creating additional nodes, given the ease with which this could be done, rectified this.

Stage two – Explanatory narrative development

The results (i.e. the explanatory narratives) were not crosschecked with interviewees. The justification for not doing so was that Actors may attempt, via argumentation and pressure, to ‘correct’ the interpretation to a perceived more favourable one. This may result in incorrect interpretation of the Actor’s understanding of nature, which would not give accurate results. The results of the investigation suggest however, that a plain reading of the meanings in the transcribed text gives an accurate interpretation of an Actor’s position.

Stage three – re-engagement with the nodes

Understanding the concepts lying behind the nodes, seeking to discern how these concepts could be ontologically organized and to probe for their relationships was the challenge in this stage. The limitation lay in the fact that the nodes themselves were descriptors of concepts, but did not have full details about the concepts. This limited the degree to which relationships could be uncovered. Only the relationships between broad concepts (nodes) could be seen.

Stage four – belief investigations

Care needed to be taken in deciding which were declarative statements and which were belief statements. A statement by interviewees that expressed enjoyment of nature through use of walkways, or that a certain stream would be adversely affected by nearby development is not the same as expressing a belief about nature. Declarative statements tended to make assertions about the state of nature, in contrast to belief statements that made claims about nature.
Summary

Investigation into the discursive construction of nature by a variety of actors from within a built environment discourse through applying a qualitative methodological Discourse Analysis to the data to was the purpose of this chapter. Four methods of analysis (Table 4.1) were employed in analysing the prepared data, sourced from Chapter Three. Each method used different ‘lenses’ to approach the data, and the results of the specific method revealed different aspects to a discursive construction of nature, and fleshes out aspects of the three theoretical self-nature relationship models described in Chapter Two.

The results of the analyses indicate that nature is variously approached, described and constructed by different persons, within a built environment discourse. The first stage revealed that some Actors spoke more about the built environment than others. This could be linked to the role that the Actor played, and the ‘closeness’ of the relationship with a District Plan.

Narratives for each Actor were derived from text that was ‘lifted’ from the transcribed interviews, permitting a clearer view of their motivations towards nature. The third stage organised the nodes into larger groups of nodes, called tree nodes. Organisation of concepts can reveal unseen relationships between concepts; none were seen. However, in undertaking the conceptual organisation, experiential nature was discovered the NS Actors interviews.

The existence of this discursive nature has implications for the underlying constructions for each group. The existence of EN for the NS group, or absence thereof for the NI group, results in a temporary ‘shifting’ of the self-nature relationship model. The NS group saw a shift in the model from transcendence to Deep Ecological, while for the NI group, it moves from Deep Ecological to immanence. Finally, in the fourth stage, an analysis of beliefs seen in the transcribed interviews reveals the cognitive structure that underpins the results of stages one and two.

The results indicated the way that nature is placed as an other by some Actors fits the self-nature transcendent model, while alternative placements of nature by other Actors fits the Deep Ecological self-nature relationship model.
What is of interest at this stage are the implications are of the primary discursive construction (NS or NI). These are discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter Five

Second-level Critical Discourse Analysis, Results, and Critique of Research Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapter carried out first-level discourse analysis. The analysis established the various features and structures of a discursively produced nature and assessed these against the three theoretical models outlined in Chapter Two. We now move onto a second-level analysis here that features criticality. That is, an adoption of a critical analysis and commentary on the results of the previous chapter.

We undertake critical analysis in response to an aspect of society that generates or contributes towards an injustice, or situation that creates negative effects. Being critical allows examination and insight of the ways that the situation is created and as a result, opens the space for resolution of negative effects. In this instance, we are interested in casting a critical eye over the discursive construction of nature generated by the Actors.

As indicated in Chapter Three, van Dijk’s Discourse-Cognition-Society (DCS) methodology is suitable for undertaking a critical analysis of the discourses seen in the previous chapter. In a sense, this chapter undertakes a fresh and different data analysis, resulting in a second-level analysis within the thesis.

The data are the results of the previous chapter, while the method is DCS. As required by the underlying ethos of CDA, I outlined my critical analytical position at the end of Chapter Three. Being critical here means applying a DCS analysis to the structures of the discursive construction of nature. The chapter also analyses the methodology, critiquing the method in terms of its efficacy and the results obtained. Additionally, there are several questions as indicated in Chapter Two arising from theoretical viewpoints. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summation and recommendations.
The hermeneutic perspective informs the analysis, which raises questions about the interpretation of the data. Structuring interpretation, and giving form to the analysis is done through the use of the DCS method. Such consideration underscores the complexity of interpreting a person’s words and worlds from within a particular analytical perspective and consequent structuring of the analysis. Despite the DCS framework, it can seem that the discussion of the results may appear to be repetitive, returning to ideas that on the face of it are similar.

This is not the case. Discourse, cognition and society, in the DCS triangle, while yet separate, are part of a complex interweaving, each supporting the other. To borrow from Foucault’s exposition of 16th Century world-views of one’s surrounds as being a system of *resemblances* (things resembling one another), the results here resemble gems, buried in the ‘dirt’ of the data, and the discussion here catches glints of the gems as they are recovered from the dirt. The glints are different, reflecting different faces of the gems, just like the discussion of the three sides of the DCS triangle (Fig. 3.1) is different, reflecting different sides of the same data. Greater clarity and understanding to what is a very complex situation made up of different but inter-related strands is the aim of this chapter. To assist in understanding, a sketch (Fig. 5.1 and 5.2) is made of the situation facing NS Actors as they participate in the process of transforming the reference area into an area with urban attributes.

It should be noted that the discursive constructions discussed here are seen to be temporal in nature following Hahn’s condition (as noted in Chapter Two) that beliefs are temporal in nature (1973). On the face of it, this means that the understandings developed here are specific to the particular place and time of the research. However, this is not to suggest that they have no weight if we consider the dimensions of temporality within the consequent operationalisation of those beliefs. The ongoing built environment development reflects the concrete form about that belief, which suggests, temporality about the built form spans across significant time periods. That is, beliefs about the built form endure through significant periods of time, to the point of being physically manifested.
From this perspective, the following discussion can be seen as having some sense of permanence and weight.

**Summary table**

As an initial starting point, Table 5.1 summarises the results of the discourse analysis from Chapter Four against the three theoretical self-nature relationship models as discussed in Chapter Two. The columns indicate the three models, while the rows indicate the cases. The final column indicates whether the thesis question can be positively answered or not.

The purpose of the table is to lay out the critical aspects of the thesis to demonstrate the intersecting dimensions of each aspect, and how these provide different understandings of the research enquiry. The cases are listed vertically, while the three models are ranged in three columns. The final column poses the thesis question.

Succinct responses summarising evidence from the investigation populate the table, which illustrates the variety of ways that nature is discursively constructed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Theoretical Models</th>
<th>Aspects</th>
<th>Enquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FB - Planner</td>
<td>Yes. Nature is shaped to create environments where people can see eels in a stream</td>
<td>Yes – relations with the eel (Experiential nature)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FB - CEO</td>
<td>Yes – views &amp; experiences of nature – marketing exercise</td>
<td>Yes – relations with regional viewscapes (Experiential nature)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMP - Consultant</td>
<td>Yes – divided into go and no-go areas</td>
<td>Yes – relations with conceptual nature (experiential nature)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMP - Councillor</td>
<td>Yes – right nature is right place and right kind</td>
<td>Yes – water (Experiential nature)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMP – CAH</td>
<td>No – ‘shrug us off’</td>
<td>Yes – relationship with Other</td>
<td>Yes – nature shrugs us off (absence of experiential nature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMP - CAL</td>
<td>No – systems / mother</td>
<td>Yes – relationship with Other</td>
<td>Yes – systems/feedbacks effects (absence of experiential nature)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Summation of Discursive Analysis results (Chapter Four) against theoretical models (Chapter Two).
The summary of each aspect (transcendence, immanence, Deep Ecology) results in a positive answer to the thesis question showing clearly that there is a discursive construction of nature. However, the variations in the summaries show that the dimensions of that construction vary according to the role, and according to the way in which nature is constructed; that is, either following immanent perspectives establishing nature as an independent entity (the two community activists), or following transcendent perspectives constructing nature as a subservient other (the Councillor, Consultant, CEO and Planner).

Recalling Figure 3.3 in Chapter Three that showed the location of the role vis-a-vis a hypothetical District Plan, we can see that the Figure echoes and supports this table. One group has particular kind of construction, the other a different kind.

**Socio-economic system-process node revisited**

Each of the different stages in the methodology in Chapter Four pointed to evidence of Actors creating a discursive construction of nature. The nodes, which arose from a GT coding process, indicated the various concepts about nature on view in the transcripts. For example, nature was affected by rules, examined for development purposes (i.e. the constraints and opportunities afforded by the reference areas in terms of development potential), was placed into management regimes (a District Plan), or examined as a product within a socio-economic system.

We recall that one of the nodes found in the top three nodes all of the Actors (except for the Councillor), was the socio-economic node (Table 4.3), even though the interview questions did not specifically ask about the socio-economic aspects of the built and natural environments. The high numbers of instances of coded text by Actors about the socio-economic structure and its links with either the built or natural environments placed this node within their top three nodes by numbers of instances of coded text. For example the Councillor/RMP case clearly indicates a primary driver for seeking development of the Ruakaka Marsden Point study area:
You know we need development to come because we need the economic drivers or we haven’t got jobs for our kids but it needs to be good development that brings jobs and doesn’t bring environmental problems with it, so that and to me that’s my role with the structure plan (Councillor).

This response indicates the manifestation within a discourse of the underlying socio-economic system dimension, influencing the extent to which an interviewee will locate their answer within a framework that places nature and the built environment as elements in a process of socio-economic development.

On examination of this feature of coding, only the following Actors exhibited discursive constructions of nature as it interacted with the socio-economic system:

**Planner:**

> It’s one of those green finger networks, it’s this one up there um that basically when the development happens they have to set that aside, they’re required to vest that with council. It will be offset against their reserve contribution and they also will pay a storm water contribution for the area so we create back for that as well. Basically the development process pays for the protection and the enhancement, restoration of these green corridors...

For the planner, nature (land) is ‘set aside’ and vested with Council within a socio-economic process to ‘offset’ required monetary contributions for reserves (parks). Nature becomes something that is used within a transactional process to secure reserves that benefit the public, and with a monetary contribution from developers for stormwater development, secures stormwater outcomes (i.e. through the protection of natural stormwater drainage systems).

**CEO:**

> So what you have to do is you have to create an environment where Joe family man says that’s the place I want to be and that’s the place of the future, that’s where I want to bring up my family, that’s where I’m going to go and buy a new house...

Here, for the CEO, nature becomes a site for creating a desirable place where people bring up families, and where new houses are built and marketed.

**Consultant:**
I’m not saying in five years time we’ll develop, in 50 years but it’s a logical, it has logical or it has understandable inherent natural capabilities from the point of economic, in the economic box so to speak.

So there’s a context of a unique natural asset, flat land available, deep-water port and a regional demand for to decant bulk functions, distribution functions out of Auckland...

For the Consultant, nature here functions as a service tool for economic development. A ‘unique natural asset’ is classed as an asset, and becomes part of a transformation, via the socio-economic system, of the reference site for economic purposes (that is, creating industry and housing using the natural qualities of the reference area as a drawcard).

Community Activist L:

I’ve tried to make the point that they should be, instead of going ahead with this project and then once they do sort of realise that climate change is real and they are going to have sea level rise then rather than investing all of these hundreds of millions of dollars into this area and then having to abandon it and then build housing and industry somewhere else, why not just build the housing around industry further up the hill in a more suitable location...

And

Also if um our sewerage systems could be producing methane for electricity, what else can sewerage systems be used for, well and composting, it’s just the whole um process of human life should be looked at being able to recycle because all of the natural systems recycle and we’re part of the natural systems um so we might as well just work in with it and its likely to create a lot of local industries...

In contrast, Community Activist L constructs the built environment as an object that responds to nature. Nature is seen as being dynamic over a period of time (in contrast to the Consultant’s concept of time that sees nature as being stable enough to receive the built environment over fifty years), and contains opportunities for humans and the built environment to work within natural systems.

Explication of the socio-economic process node is necessary here as it illuminates one broad discursive construction of nature, as previously indicated in Chapter Four, the Nature Serves (NS) construction. That is, this construction is associated
with the Planner, Consultant, CEO and Councillor. It indicates the extent to which underlying economic social paradigms influence discursive constructions. This paradigm is delivered through the RMA, which is the arena within which all of the Actors operate in terms of engaging in discourse within the reference area.

Essentially this paradigm attaches economic value to and places objects within a framework that enables the object to perform in service of realising economic value. What is interesting is why should this paradigm, which is pervasive throughout society, only affect these four Actors but not the remaining two?

The fact that four Actors share this view of nature as being within a socio-economic system points to evidence of an underlying shared belief system that sustains such a view amongst the Actors, who share a common position of being close to a District Plan process. The essential character of this process (outlined in section 5 of the RMA) is to enable economic development to occur, while allowing the natural environment to be minimally compromised. This places nature as a resource for economic development, a common economic viewpoint. This can account for the reason why these four Actors mention socio-economic factors in their responses.

For the other group, associated with an alternative construction labelled Nature Independent (NI), there is evidence of a model of Deep Ecology, where a process of self-realisation can re-situate the self in relation to nature in terms of values. Nature in this view has a value beyond pure socio-economic interests. Again this points to an underlying belief system supporting such view. These two Actors are further removed from the District Plan process, while still remaining within it.

The underlying economic viewpoint that figures nature as a resource for economic development is pervasive through society (as exemplified by the RMA) and there is no reason to suspect that these two NI Actors were exempt from knowing about this viewpoint. Indeed, Community Activist L uses a variation of this view to argue that economic development can use natural processes and systems for beneficial outcomes. However, there is a rejection of the social economic model in favour of a different model for society-nature relationships as demonstrated in the discursive construction of nature. The adoption of
alternative models would have particular reasons, however these are unclear from the data, and beyond the scope of this study.

The differences between underlying belief systems seen here supports Hahn’s condition that beliefs are temporal in nature (they can change). Because there is evidence of two contrasting viewpoints, no argument can be made that one or other viewpoint is a permanent and unchanging viewpoint; belief systems contain the possibilities of change; critically these changes can prompt different outcomes from the discourse. This has implications which will be discussed in Chapter Six.

However, there is a third construction of nature, experiential nature (EN), as explained in Chapter Four. This is associated with the Planner, Consultant, CEO and Councillor. Each of the three kinds of nature (NI, NS, and EN) is discussed in the following sections as they relate to the ideas being discussed.

**Application of DCS to Discourse Analysis Results**

As explained above, application of DCS to the discourse analysis results from Chapter Four enables critical analysis and informs a considered perspective on the discursive creation of nature. Contextual models about self-nature relationship underlie the socio-cognitive triangle, and are now examined as a preliminary step, before the discussion turns to the application of the triangle to the data.

**DCS Contextual Model**

Within a Socio-cognitive framework, contextual models are theorised as long term and stable cognitive constructions that serve to ‘frame’ understandings about social matters. They are theoretically seen as part of an individual’s cognitive framework, but they are also theorised as being shared amongst groups of people. It is unknown how context models are created or formed; however, society informs the individual contextual model that in turn, informs the discourse expressed by an actor (van Dijk 1993a).

Notwithstanding difficulties of establishing the cognitive model of any one actor, it is necessary to establish the means by which a contextual model can be
inferred. The probable existence of contextual models in discourses can explain particular discursive constructions within the research.

Discourse occurs within particular contexts that relate to the discourse. To illustrate the point, a person speaking about cake baking when responding to a legal question about a fraud case in a court of law is obviously a ‘nonsense’ discourse. Both the physical structure of the court (the particular positions of the judge, jury, lawyers, witness, and public) and the idea of the court (a methodological process to establish facts within a context of natural justice) establish the contexts for what would be an appropriate discourse in the courtroom. Unless the cake instructions were presented as an analogy of the way in which the fraud operated, such instructions would not be in conformance with the contextual functions of the courtroom, and viewed as ‘out of context’.

On the other hand, statements made in response to lawyers questions about the fraud that are ‘in context’ would reflect acknowledgement of the context in the manner of delivery and choice of words by which the response is given. That is, the response is structured by a particular form of discourse (answers to questions by lawyers) and by a particular conceptual understanding of the function by which answers are given (to establish the truth of a situation). In this manner, we can reasonably infer that there is a shared cognitive contextual model about the purpose and function of a courtroom that then shapes discourses and practices within the courtroom.

The discourses within the courtroom then represent two states. The first is society, in that it contains expressions of meta-narratives about objects or subjects within wider society (justice), and the second state is the social contextual model that serves to order a framework for considering and constructing a subject (being a juror). The commonality of particular discursive constructions and practices, amongst a group of people, indicates the likely existence of a shared context model serving all members of the group.

This conceptualisation can be transferred to a consideration of nature. There is a meta-narrative within society that specifies the discursive outlines of nature, and orders the way in which it is discursively constructed, as seen in results arising
from stage two in the previous chapter. Such meta-narrative informs the
cognitive self that in turn produces narratives about nature. For the Nature
Serves group, nature, as the name suggest, serves particular purposes. For the
Planner, it is to assist in shaping the built form and create great environments.
Nature becomes part of a marketing tool that assists in adding value to created
built environments for the CEO. The Consultant splits nature into conceptual ‘go
/no-go’ blocks, each of which has particular values, and the ‘go’ blocks are
rendered valueless, and worthy of urban development, while the Councillor
places nature within a value framework whereby nature is assisted to become
‘good’ nature (through a two-step process of minimising and placing a negative
value on unwanted nature, and then removing such nature).

In contrast, the narratives for the Nature Independent group sees nature
constructed more ambivalently and with respect for the powers of nature.
Nature has powers and agency to the extent that it will ‘shrug us off’ should we
fail to respect the observed limits of nature is suggested by Community Activist
H, while Community Activist L constructs nature as a separate entity from
humans, with agency and independence (a mother), yet intertwined with
humans to a degree that means nature can be killed (and by implication, humans
alongside) if we fail to respect that limits of nature.

Socio-economic frameworks influence beliefs of the NS group, as discussed, but if
we turn to the RMA we can theorise a similar influence on context models. If we
match the NS and NI positions with the role of each Actor, we locate first the NS
group roles as being close to the District or Structure Plan, and secondly the NI
group being further away (Figure 3.3). The distance a role has to the District Plan
determines its influence in terms of plan writing, those closer having greater
influence.

An explanation for the context models of the NS group can be found in the
overarching influence of the Resource Management Act (RMA). That is the RMA
specifies what nature is (that is, among other things, ‘natural and physical
resources’) and outlines the broad conditions on the use of the resource, which is
implied to be for socio-economic purposes. If we take the District Plan as a meta-
narrative form about nature, then it could be seen that there is a link between the ways in which a statutory plan exerts an influence on the cognitive contextual models within the self, the models in turn informing a discourse about nature. Since all of the NS Actors have roles referring to the RMA, such as writer of a plan, or an overseer of the plan writing process, in conforming to these roles the RMA’s meta-narrative about nature appears to have influenced a cognitive context model held by NS Actors. These Actors then engage in a discourse that resembles the transcendence self-nature model.

The NI group in contrast, are found farthest from the District or Structure Plan process. Their contextual model about nature differs from the NS group, positing an ambivalent and nuanced construction, where nature is independent, outside and separate from the self. This context model appears to receive influence from alternative discursive constructions of nature, and consequently their discourse fits with a Deep Ecology self-nature model. Future research would need to uncover sources for this alternative context model of nature.

There is one further context model that needs explication. The research uncovered the existence of experiential nature for the NS group; however, such construction of nature does not fit within the parameters of an RMA influenced context model. Experiences of nature are emotional, involving feelings about particular aspects of nature. Each member of the NS group described experiential nature, which indicates there must be a contextual model that accounts for such description. It is likely that biophilia (discussed below), where strong physiological attachment to nature is found to be a human feature, is being expressed. This feature of these discourses points as indicated to a Deep Ecology self-nature relationship.

Context models (both societal and individual) form a base on which the DCS triangle (Figure 2.2) rests. The models have relationships with each side of the triangle. Given the influence of different underlying context models, we then turn to an application of the DCS triangle to the data.
Critical Discourse Analysis: DCS Approach

Recalling van Dijk's Socio-cognitive analytical triangle of cognition-discourse-society, the results of the data can be analysed for each side of the DCS triangle.

DCS enables critical analysis by distinguishing discourse as three different but related parts shown in the triangle; cognition, as the source of a discourse; society, as constructed by discourses, which then consequently shape discourses; and thirdly, discourse itself as the means by which society is constructed (expressed through a variety of modes such as speech, documents, etc.), and as a product of the cognitive self. By breaking discourse into these constituent parts, critical attention can be paid to how the studied data can be assessed against each of these parts.

For DCS analysis to be useful within this thesis, the three sides need to be defined within the context of this thesis. For the society side of the triangle, we can define it as Transcendence as explained in Chapter Two. Transcendence is a social structure and serves to order ways in which society currently operates. Discourse within the triangle can be defined as the signifier / signified relationship, as discussed by Foucault. For the cognition side, we can map the three self-nature relationship models introduced in Chapter Two. How one sees oneself in relation to others requires cognitive understanding of the contexts and frameworks surrounding the relationship. Meanings and beliefs as discussed by Hahn are also mapped to cognition. As each of the three sides of this triangle is discussed in turn, discussion is undertaken within these definitions.

DCS Triangle: Discourse side

Discourse contains, amongst a myriad of elements such as style, method, genre, and forms, a basic method of a signifier placed on the signified object or subject by humans, thus creating transcendence. We recall (in Chapter Two) the shifts in language as described by Foucault 21 where language moved away from being influenced by nature. The shift in language opens the way for nature to be divorced from humans. Foucault pointed out the move was towards a model of

21 See also Abrams (2007), and Poletti (2002)
signifier and signified (disregarding the conjuncture). The previous ternary structure of signifier, signified and conjuncture, linked the signifier of an object or thing and the object itself via a system resemblances to other objects or things bearing a similarity. In this way, objects were linked to each other in a long chain of resemblances (the example given in Chapter Two is of man being like a daisy).

A signifier / signified discourse structure contains the power to enable the creation of new objects and structures that benefit society such as equal civil rights for gays and lesbians. Equally it also has the power to place signifiers, attached to meanings generated by beliefs, on objects that serve to place that object as the lesser in a transcendent relationship. This power indicates why discourse is significant in the triangle. It dictates how our society structures itself and operates, creating benefits for some, disadvantages for others.

**Discourse & NS, NI, EN constructions**

On examination of the narratives, and the interviews, it is noted that the NS group used a binary system to describe nature, while the NI group used a ternary system to construct nature. A binary system places the signifier nature (i.e. the named components of nature) on aspects of the natural environment. This was seen in the way members of the NS group described their experiences of nature:

...we can still have an amazing environment that brings nature so children can grow up experiencing nature and can wander down and see an eel in the stream then I think it all helps them to create greater awareness of nature and the natural environment in the world that we live in. (Planner)

Nature here is represented by the signifier eel, which is placed on an animal found within the stream environment. Each of the NS group used similar binary structures, and in doing so, placed nature as a distinct other.

A ternary structure was used to construct nature by the NI group in contrast. For Community Activist H, Nature is “is going to get rid of us”, which indicates that the signifier is natural forces (involved in ‘getting rid of us’), while the unspoken conjuncture (a resemblance) is a person getting rid of something because they are annoyed by it. The object nature is signified as natural forces that get rid of humans because it is annoyed by human activity.
For Community Activist L, the signifier ‘mother’ signifies the object nature; “Well if you kill the mother you kill the foetus you know and the way that we’re behaving we’re behaving like cannibalistic foetuses really...” The conjuncture is the use of the graphic image of ‘cannibalistic foetuses’. Nature is figured as a mother at risk from the cannibalistic behaviour of her foetuses, to whom she grants sanctuary within her nurturing womb.

These readings bring forward Abram’s contention that the development of writing, and language put a barrier between man and nature so that there is ‘no respiration between the inside and the outside’ (Abram 1997, p. 257). The inside lies within the self, and the outside is everything exterior to the self for the NS group, but in the case of the NI group, there is a ‘respiration’ between the self and nature in the recognition of nature as an independent other, that has agency, by either ‘dying’ or ‘shrugging’.

The existence of EN for the NS group means that a strict binary inside and outside dichotomy is frustrated by such experiences. Nature in some manner affected the Actor, but this experience could not be articulated clearly, even when given opportunity to do so during the interview when asking how the Actor saw himself or herself in nature. Notwithstanding this, experiential nature raises possibilities of recognition of different aspects to nature, but the right signifiers and the right contextual models need to be generated for the recognition gained through experiential nature to be observed.

Those exercising the power to create and place signifiers on the surrounding world have the privilege to create objects in society for their own or other’s benefit. Within a broad sphere of CDA, we can see this happening in the creation of welfare beneficiaries for example. The signifier, a welfare beneficiary, is applied to a signified person who is receiving unemployment benefits. The signifier is currently endowed with a suite of meanings that serve to place the person in an inferior position relative to those who are working, or critically, those who display evidence of conventional success such as having an excess of money and physical assets. Within the thesis, each of the Actors exercise the
power to endow that we call nature with signifiers and each signifier is varied and serves particular purposes.

**DCS Triangle: Cognition side (The self)**

Turning to the cognitive side of the DCS triangle and another ‘research glint’, we recall the definition of ‘self’ in Chapter One. Within the thesis we encounter the contextual self of the Actor that engages in a professional discourse regarding the built environment and nature, but equally, there is the physical self that experiences nature. The self utilises cognition to make sense of nature, and experiences of it, incorporating beliefs about the world surrounding us and using those beliefs to generate meaning for ‘nature’ and ‘experiences of it’.

Cognition in van Dijk’s model (Figure 2.2) is the mediating factor between society and discourse. Taking the self as representing cognition, we understand that society influences the self through a variety of means such as use of discursive power structures (for example, a parliament enacting laws), and cognition is implicit in expressions of discourse produced by the self.

The interview question, “Turning to yourself now – how do you see yourself within nature?” constructed the Actor as an individual *within* nature, drawing on Naessian conceptions of ‘[wo]man as a knot’ equal to all other ‘knots’ in the relational field. To see oneself within nature is to cognitively construct and think of a self, within nature. Posed with this construction, NS Actors responded by using their role, as described by them primarily at the beginning of the interview, as a way of giving an example of how they saw themselves within nature. For example, the Councillor’s conception of self was as a professional protector of nature, and someone who shapes nature to achieve certain outcomes. This relates to the role of Councillor that has oversight of the way communities develop.

Community Activist L and H responded, however, by positioning themselves respectively as observers of nature, placing them in a relationship with nature, where observations about nature influenced their actions. One Activist baldly stated that:
I’ve decided not to breed, not to have children because I don’t think the, well I don’t think the planet can sustain the numbers of people and secondly I don’t think it’s fair on the kids for the future they’re going to be caught up into.

In other words, it is believed that nature cannot be expected to sustain the numbers of people, and consequently, the ability for sustenance will be severely curtailed, leading to shortages of food, or climatic instability. This is a ‘dark’ future to which Community Activist L is unwilling to subject any child to. The cognitive position of the self within this group saw a direct relationship between the self and nature.

The lack of expected answers (description of a self-nature relationship) to the interview question from the NS group may be explained by the fact that the interview was carried out on the basis of an interview with an Actor playing a professional role. Such roles do not encompass disclosure of personal cognitive selves, for example, as how one sees oneself within nature could be. Another explanation could be the fact that the self referred to in the question was not clarified; was it the professional self or the individual private self? This confusion may account for the fact that the interviewees responded by positioning the contextual professional self within nature, not the internal experiencing personal self.

Re-examination of the beliefs (which underpin cognition) expressed by the NS group, as reported in the previous chapter, indicate that the professional self of the NS group (with the exception of the Councillor) displayed beliefs that generated ‘emotional’ non-factual aspects of nature i.e. beliefs were expressed about the arrangement of the built form in a way that gives rise to the generation of such EN experiences. For example, the CEO explained that:

I think of it [public park] as beachfront so it’s sort of high quality land and it should be faced just like a beach should be and that should mean that it’s not a private domain.

Experiential nature for the CEO included visiting beaches by boat. Here the park is arranged in a way that ensures the qualities of ‘beachfront’ are available, which includes the fact that beachfronts (in NZ) are not private, but are public domain.
Critically, professional selves did not rigidly adhere to the facts of a built form (as would be expected), but paid attention to the need for such experiential nature within the built form as indicated in the results of stage three in the previous chapter. The cognitive NS self here is fluid as the role slips between creation of the built form and the desire to create opportunities for experiential nature.

**Self-nature relationship models**

Turning to how the cognitive self relates to nature, we return to consider the three self-nature relationship models developed in Chapter Two evident within the data.

**Transcendence model**

A transcendent self-nature model was evident in the NS group, but not the NI group. This is demonstrated through the use of the transcendent relationship and structure to position nature in a particular place in relation to the self; distinctively separate from the self in a position *over there*.

The transcendent relationship is a limited one. The direction of interaction is one way, and the signifiers placed on nature ensure that it becomes constrained and limited to particular functions. For example, referring to Tables 4.8 to 4.13 that analysed the beliefs displayed by the Actors, we can see that the Planner saw nature as a ‘building block’, or that the CEO suggested nature would ‘bring something special’ to the built form he was creating, and the Consultant would use nature for his ‘spiritual wellbeing’. Each of these views uses nature for particular purposes, that is, to satisfy a need.

While receiving a benefit from nature is normal expectation in a relationship, the beliefs held by the NS group did not reveal a corresponding cognitive action of giving benefits to nature; that nature is respected for provision of ‘building blocks’ or for being a source of ‘spiritual wellbeing’. Such respect could encompass practical actions that see nature not treated as ‘building blocks’, but simply as a place where nature is free to be.

**Deep Ecology model & NS, EN constructions**
Deep Ecology premises its theoretical stance on a basic re-orientation of attitudes towards nature. Instead of a ‘taken-for-granted’, and invisible nature implicit within the Western capitalist framework that serves humans, Deep Ecology makes nature visible. It becomes something that lies at the heart of discussion and thought, and becomes something to be considered and responded to.

The NI group cognitively saw nature as a separate and independent entity with integral systems and agency; “…shrugs us off…” is the phrase that encapsulates this position. This implies that we have a precarious position on the shoulders of nature, and nature at some point could make a decision to ‘shrug’, thereby displacing humans from whatever position it occupies within nature. This scenario formed the basis for the relationship that the two NI Actors saw with nature. It became a part of their discourse.

The NS group also had a relationship with nature, but this was an unconscious relationship, rather an explicitly acknowledged one, as was done by the NI group. In each of these Actors, nature functioned to provide essential experiences of Nature. All Actors spoke of experience of nature, but in terms that did not define specific nature but rather in terms of experiential description that pointed to an indescribable connection with wider nature. The Planner spoke of children being able to see eels in the stream, the CEO of pulling up at a remote beach. Nature here is not a space within which the out-of-world experience takes place; it is part of the out-of-world experience. It becomes the respondent, the other with which we create experiences. Here nature has qualities that perform an essential function for people. This could be explained as biophilia.

The Encyclopaedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy defines biophilia:

The Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson, who popularized the term biophilia, describes it as an “innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms” (Wilson 1993, p. 31). Two aspects of that definition are especially important. First, Wilson argues that biophilia is innate and therefore part of humans’ genetic heritage and evolved nature. Second, biophilia is an emotional response that can be an end in itself (feeling a sense of pleasure and well-being), or it can stimulate emotions that motivate various kinds of behavior (interest motivates exploration) (Heerwagen 2009).
The experiential nature described by the NS group is seen as an emotional response primarily; nature serves to provoke feelings about nature, and about the relationship between the Actor and nature. These feelings clearly, for the NS group, provoked particular behaviour (Heerwagen 2009), to the extent that each member of the NS group sought to shape the discursive built environment to replicate the particular aspect of nature they experienced. It is noted that biophilia offers cognitive benefits, though the exact mechanism of such benefit is not understood (Heerwagen 2009).

In this light, it can be argued that the NS groups hold positions basic to Deep Ecology in their attitudes towards nature. The emotional response those individuals have towards nature positions nature, if not consciously, at least playing a significant part in their experiences of nature.

The conscious acknowledgement of nature by the NI Actors by explicit reference to an Other, differentiates this group from the NS group, yet, they find themselves in common with the NS group; their discursive construction of a relationship with nature is explicit while the NS group exhibited an unconscious construction of a relationship with nature.

This situation of a hidden discursive construction of nature supports Plumwood’s criticism of Deep Ecology (Plumwood 2000) where Deep Ecology can be ‘co-opted’ by capitalism due to insufficient political economy criticism within Deep Ecology that prevents such ‘take-over’ (of experiential nature) by capitalism. Such criticism examines the wider context within which the self’s relation with nature (whether explicit or not), is situated, noting the larger socio-economic framework that constructs nature as a resource to be used for private gain. If we examine the wider context of the particular discursive construction of nature for the NS group, discursive experiential nature is placed within a larger framework of socio-economic development. For example, the CEO, in constructing nature as a viewing experience that satisfies certain emotions, places such experiences explicitly within a marketing context and consequently biophilia is entered into a capitalist framework (after Foucault):

Because it [proposed building] sits on a relatively modest flat plain it’s got very good views from about second floor you can see
Manukau Heads and all sorts of things and the Waitakeres [sic] and Rangitoto and da-de-da so it’s actually, that’s another feature of the nature that’s been recognised by the designers that will be capitalised upon ... (CEO)

The discursive construction by the NS group of a nature that serves, alongside a hidden experiential nature, benefits a wider socio-economic framework, and is a feature of this group. Community Activist L however was notable for attempting to use this socio-economic capitalist framework as a means to bring nature to greater prominence within it:

... just the whole um process of human life should be looked at being able to recycle because all of the natural systems recycle and we’re part of the natural systems um so we might as well just work in with it and it’s likely to create a lot of local industries. If we had hemp fibre as hemp fibre mills and made a lot of stuff out of hemp rather than cotton and linens. We could probably do a lot of furniture and wallpaper and um clothing and all sorts of stuff and they could even use hemp as a fibre in composite building materials. You know there’s lots of options that haven’t even been investigated, you know it’s huge, you just think of all the way that natural organisms produce things like shells or whatever, feathers or bones or whatever it is. There must be ways with bio technology and all of that, that we can actually take elements from the, straight from the earth and synthesise them into useful materials that can degrade back into the natural environment but in the interim the and probably planting trees that have got their own natural resins so we don’t require to impregnate them with toxic materials. (Community Activist L)

Nature becomes a model for how to structure economic systems so that it recycles in the same way as nature does, where by-products of all systems become material for other kinds of biological processes, in contrast to by-products in a capitalist system that become landfill waste if not recycled into other products.

In terms of the thesis question, a discursive construction of nature tends to incorporate either experiential nature, or nature as an independent other with agency and motivation. But this construction is not sufficient without wider contextual understanding and placement of that particular construction.

Immanence
There was no evidence of an immanent self-nature relationship within the two groups.

Particular aspects of nature, such as trees, or fish, within this relationship would be understood to be as one of many attributes arising from a plane of immanence, alongside the self. Each attribute would be recognised by the self as an expression arising from the plane, equal in terms of being, to all other expressions, and the self as well. Cognitive understanding of this situation would see discourse change to recognise the inter-connected nature within immanence; nature becomes both over there, and within the self. Language would need to change to accommodate such cognitive constructions, but how this change would occur and what the outcome would be is unknown.

**DCS Triangle: Society Side (Transcendent relationship)**

May (2005) outlined two criteria for transcendence; firstly, two objects or concepts. Secondly, that one of those two is superior to the other in some manner (Chapter Two). In this thesis the discursive constructions of nature and the built environment form the two objects. There are two aspects on view here, a transcendent relationship and a transcendent structure. These are discussed in turn.

The social is a distinctive and important part of discourse (and consequent analysis); society arranges the construction of the built form within a western capitalist structure that specifies the process for constructing such environments. One principal way of doing so is by creating and sustaining models of transcendence at all levels of the process. Recalling the example from Chapter One of a building being talked about and then constructed, we can note the transcendence within this process. This is seen in a built form discourse taking precedence over a mute nature that will be prepared to receive the building.

Society also contains within it the roles required to enable the production of this discourse, and the production of the built environment. The thesis sees these roles as the Actors who were identified as having a part to play in the transformation of the reference area to a proposed urban area. The roles
exercise power between themselves (i.e. in terms of who does what) and over nature, and work to produce and reproduce spheres of transformations that value and privilege the built over nature, such as establishing legal frameworks, or organising supply chains of resources such as concrete or wood.

**Transcendent Relationship & NS construction**

What is interesting is that the NS group (and incidentally the two documents coded, the Flat Bush Variation, and the Ruakaka Marsden Point Structure Plan as well) discursively expressed actions that aimed to reduce nature in order to manage nature. That is, the integrated and complexity of nature was reduced to a simple one-dimensional object that could be discursively handled and manipulated.

Nature is variously, to be rendered as conceptual building blocks, graded and scaled into two kinds of nature – good/bad, materially useful/spiritually useful (Consultant). It is entered into science and various management regimes and undergoes actions of identification, measurement, and observation (Planner), or to be moulded by sheer physical power (cutting, chopping, moving) into a different form or function (Councillor). Nature is subject to land clearance to enable creation of building platforms for development or physically sculptured to suit the (marketing) requirements of a rational socio-economic paradigm (Councillor and Consultant) or indirect economic use, for example, creating wildlife stream corridors that function as stormwater energy dissipation corridors, obviating the need for stormwater pipes to be purchased and installed (Planner and Consultant). It is formed and shaped to provide for a variety of uses, or given different kinds of values (Councillor). Finally, it is rendered as a multi-functional product that serves the economic system (Planner).

Nature is reduced and placed into a transcendent relationship with the built environment as the inferior partner to that relationship by each of these discursive actions. For example, nature is transformed by the CEO in two ways; firstly to allow the construction of a building that will have views from its upper floors, and secondly, enabling greater economic value to be captured from the sale of the commoditised views.
Nature here is discursively ‘shrunk’ to fit humans, contrary to a Naessian view that sees humans grow to fit a larger web of nature. The outcome is to divorce humans from nature, and to place humans as ‘master’ of both the built and natural environments, having power to manipulate both for certain outcomes.

**Transcendent Relationship & EN construction**

Despite the clear sense of a strong discursive transcendent relationship on view, there is a different construction of nature that is hidden within the larger transcendent discourse - experiential nature. As indicated, this alternate construction was seen in the NS group.

This construction of nature is unique and different from the first construction, because nature here exercises power over the Actors to an extent that they sought to incorporate their experiences of nature within the built environment. As such it can be seen as representative of Foucauldian omnipresent power whereby power is exercised amongst and between the built environment and nature.

This power (of experiential nature) is hidden and not acknowledged. The effect of marginalising or downplaying such power is to privilege other constructions and to deny knowledge or understanding of experiential nature within the built environment discourse. This denies any opening for discussion of ways in which the dominant transcendent relationship can be challenged, or questioned.

The move to erase or not acknowledge such transcendent relationship (that of nature over humans) reflects desire to ensure primacy of a transcendent relationship of the built over nature, a continuation of long-standing cultural processes that places humans over nature. A ‘death of God’ process that sees the replacement of God (nature) by humans (the built), using Descartian analytical methods (as discussed in Chapter Two), explains this relationship.

This process is given primacy through the built form discourse by actors playing a transcendent God-like role. Actors assume powers to minimise, enter nature into particular regimes, to value nature according to certain socio-economic needs or place it in service of a capital marketplace. By this, a transcendent
relationship is maintained and accorded primacy, eclipsing and minimising the experiential nature relationship.

However, the primacy of the transcendent built over nature relationship does not completely eclipse the transcendent nature over built relationship. This relationship (nature over built) was unconsciously expressed, and therefore hidden, by the NS Actors. The existence of such nature may offer hope in terms of moderating the dominance of a transcendent built over nature. We could expect to see that the Actors would attempt to engage in subsequent behaviour that would unconsciously reflect their experiences of nature, if we are to accept Hahn’s theory that actions arise from belief (Hahn 1973), resulting in built forms that didn’t merely incorporate experiential nature, but instead, provoked it as well.

This is not entirely proven in the research as experiential nature was not expressed as definitive belief (that is, experiential nature is important within built environments), but merely described as an emotion or state of feeling. Nevertheless, a summary of the research on emotions (De Sousa 2012) finds that overall, emotions influence beliefs: “In all cases emotions “color the world” and hence regulate beliefs and desires.” (Wollheim 2000, in De Sousa 2012, no page).

Exploration and understanding of how experiential nature within the built environment discourse can influence built forms would be fascinating and challenging to uncover, and is left for future research. For now, having explored transcendent relationships, we turn to another ‘glint of the ‘research gems’, the structure that governs these relationships.

**Structure of transcendence**

The power to determine the kind of relationship between the two entities, outside of the superior/inferior principle, rests with the superior, who reserves privileges for itself, and determines the privileges of the inferior. By these conditions, a structure for transcendence is formed.

It is noted that the pervasiveness of a superiority over nature stems from strong cultural modes that finds expression initially within Judeo-Christian religion,
then tracing a broad cultural history to the current socio-economic system that establishes and adopts the principle of transcendent structures as a foundation of the system, mirroring the religious form that the new system supplanted (while Diamond’s book doesn’t directly touch on this idea here, he offers a context from which this idea can be seen in *Guns, germs, and steel: the fates of human societies*, (Diamond 1999), while Wright explores the trajectories of civilisations in *A Short History of Progress*, (Wright 2005)).

As Jacobs (2006) indicates “discourses establish regimes of truth that to a large extent determine the acceptable formulations of problems and their solution” (Jacobs 2006, p. 44). The acceptable ‘truth’ and therefore the idea of a transcendent structure is given by discourses that implicitly claim such structure operates within relationships by placing one object inferior to the other.

**Transcendent Structure & NS construction**

Within a built environment discourse this can occur by employing planning tools such as zoning or planning objectives as the following two excerpts show:

**Planner**

... it’s a while since I’ve looked at the objectives there but they’re very much trying to deal with objectives that deal with you know high quality urban living environment but also a high quality natural environment um Objective 7.10.3.7 to protect, sustain, restore and enhance where practical the remaining terrestrial and aquatic ecology of remnant native vegetation and waterways ...

The objectives referred to here are found within the Variation 13 of the District Plan that governs the transformation of Flat Bush into an urban area. Existing remnant nature here becomes part of the District Plan, and is subjected to regimes of ‘protect[ion], sustain[ing], restor[ing] and enhance[ment].’ Nature becomes something that requires such actions, and is accordingly placed in a position where it will receive such actions, as part of a transcendent structure.

**Consultant**

Interviewer:

Yes so if we think about the structure plan ... so the structure plan has the power to zone certain land for certain purposes, just trying
to see if there is a relationship between that power to zone between the built environment and nature, how is that expressed?

Response:

Well part of the planning document is zoning, for buffer zones to allow for the natural environment, and any particular feature will be part of a buffer zone so that this wetland area will be zoned as a buffer zone. I mean it's not a logical area to build on anyway and there's quite a few of those areas there so they'll be zoned.

Interviewer:

It's not a logical area?

Response:

Yeah because its low lying and peaty and that sort of thing so when you're looking at the whole area that's a logical buffer zone between an industrial area and a residential area. So that's how we've tried to construct this plan.

‘Low lying and peaty’ areas as part of a planning document become buffer zones between various land uses. The attributes of these areas are assessed within a framework of satisfying built environment needs rather than a framework of other parts of the natural environment. The assessment results in “that sort of thing”, a dismissal of low-lying peaty areas to areas for buffer zone uses. In this manner, the dismissal is casually effected as part of a transcendent structure that sees it logical to undertake such dismissal.

The long history and duration of the transcendent structure and its pervasive use within our societies means that this structure displaces any alternative structures, such as co-operation or negotiation between entities or parties to a relationship. The transcendent structure dominates our considerations to a point that we unconsciously engage in performing such relationships with others, and by extension, nature. Mills (2007) highlights this aspect to a transcendent structure. A discursive outcome such as transcendence is not seen, or as Mills points out, it feels natural and normal to a degree that one cannot consider any alternative to the relationship or structure. It feels entirely normal to construct nature both in a relationship and a structure that renders it powerless in the face of our assumed powers to shape it. Such structure rigidly holds the two entities in a transcendent relationship in place through regimes of language, denying
consideration that the roles may be reversed, or alternative constructions could be considered.

The powerlessness of nature within the transcendent structure may be ascribed to an understanding that nature does not engage in discourse. That is, there is a regime of truth established by discourses that by their very construction deny alternative positions such as a discursive nature. Constructing alternative discursive constructions that embody alternative or different kinds of relationships, and measuring reactions of stakeholders within the planning process could test this regime as these different constructions are revealed to them.

Transcendent structures and relationships play a fundamental role in the built environment discourse. Without such a state, demonstrated by the Actors in the NS group as ‘gesturing over nature’, it would not be possible to undertake the reductionist construction of nature. Engaging in a transcendental state enables the positioning of nature as below and subservient to the built, and makes possible for the physical construction of the built, and a re-construction of physical nature to accommodate the built.

**Models: sketch of cognition, discourse and society relationships**

The purpose of CDA is to uncover the relevant and salient points of interest in a given discourse that illustrates the ways in which that discourse ‘produces’ or ‘constructs’ a discursive reality about a particular aspect of society. Implicitly it is assumed that there is a strong link between the construction of a discursive reality, and any eventual physical or tangible outcome of that construction, in this case, the construction of the built environment. We can attempt to sketch out these links in the following pages.

There are two kinds of reality on view here. Firstly, there is the metaphysical discursive reality that contains the symbols and referents that work to create and shape a particular kind of world, mediated in a variety of ways as researched in Chapter Four. This reality is hidden, and pervasive, and because of its non-materiality, is located in the discursive sphere.
Secondly, there is a two-layered physical reality that in part reflects the metaphysical reality constructed by discourse. Power plays a part in the shaping of the first layer, the built environment reality, where tools and technologies that use power to change things are used to shape our environments. As already mentioned, we shape our landscapes to insert the built form within the landscapes. Abundant evidence can be discerned in our immediate environments, living and working within urban environments, as a majority of us are.

The secondary physical layer of reality exists beyond our physically constructed built environment. This is simply the wider biosphere that contains the world we see around us; the birds, the rivers and ocean, the worms, the mountains and the flowing currents of air. It is clearly not constructed by any human agency, however it is subject to the metaphysical discursive reality in terms of the (eventual) built environment impact. Development of an area near a tidal creek may have an impact on the performance of the tidal creek through disruption of surface water runoff for example.

The position of the role-playing and cognitive self in relation to nature is related to the power found within the relationship with nature; all Actors except for Community Activist L and H saw the self as being over nature, while the two Community Activists saw the self as being in relationship with nature. What is of interest is the former, the NS group, because they display within their discourses a tension between the two-layered discourse of talking about an eventual built form, and an already existing nature. This is to say that there are two models on view within their discourses. Firstly, as explained, a model of self in a transcendent mode with nature, where nature become servant to the transcendent self, enabling the self to participate within the socio-economic frameworks found throughout society. However, secondly, there is a more implicit and ‘private’ relationship on view where the self experiences nature, to a degree that the experience influences discourses about the built environment. This results in a tension between these two states of nature.
It appears to be resolved by modifying the discursive built environment to incorporate such experiences, while still giving explicit prominence to the transcendent position of nature. The primacy of the experience is not downplayed or minimised within the discourse, but is instead transformed within the transcendent framework to become part of the nature-as-servant model. This is seen in for example in the discourse of the CEO, where powerful experiences of sea/land views were incorporated as a building feature into discourse about the built environment, enabling the building to be more profitably sold.

The process of transformation is interesting, and holds a key to understanding how transformations in these discourses can occur. Therefore the model focuses on the position of the NS Actors within the model.

Power in transcendence is unidirectional, flowing from the superior to the inferior while Foucault’s omnipresent power sees it going both ways. We have at this point seen how transcendental power is exercised in discourses of the built environment and nature in the discussion above. How is this power exactly displaced within the complex human-built environment-nature discursive and physical relationships?

The purpose of the models is to sketch out, in two different but related stages, the kinds of relationships seen in the discursive construction of nature, and the built environment. The first stage (Figure 5.1) examines the situation that faces the interviewees as they ‘stand’ in the ‘vacant’ reference area. The second stage (Figure 5.2) examines the situation facing the same interviewees in the same location, but with the addition of a built environment on the ‘vacant’ land.

The entire model (being the two stages) represents a complete cycle of the unseen discursive built environment becoming seen, or material. The first stage is seen in Area X, where the metaphysical discursive built form, B, is created transcendentally onto a physical nature, N, represented discursively. Area X is a discursive reality. The Second Stage is seen in area Y, an area of material reality, where the metaphysical B becomes the material B, and in the process, become transcendent to a material N.
Not sketched out is a Third Stage that would see a return to the first Stage to create a new and different metaphysical B influenced by the material B created in the second Stage.

**First Stage**

The model is seen on the following page, with an explanation following.
Area X: here is a situation of planning and creation of a discursive built environment.

Figure 5.1: Stage one sketch indicating the discursive construction of the built environment, and inter-related features.
Stage One discussion

The solid ‘floor’, a reference area labelled (N) is an area of physical materiality represented by the reference area. Its discursive counterpart, represented by the dashed ‘floor’ has the addition of a dashed cube, representing the discursive built environment (B), and they lie in X, a situation of metaphysical reality, created by built and natural environment discourses generated by the indicative person(s) (an actor). We can describe area X as an ideal discursive state of planning. The solid lines found in area X indicate relationships between B and N and the actor.

The relationship between the discursive B and N is a transcendental one, demonstrated in the discourses. The actor cognitively creates B and N in this metaphysical reality and creates the relationship. There is a direct relationship flowing from the actor to B.

Transcendental power underpins this flow, in the sense that it is humans that dictate the flow. This flow does not exist unless it occurs cognitively that is, through the human mind. Within the metaphysical realm, B is placed transcendent over N, which is confirmed by NS Actors engaging in moves to shape nature for the establishment of B.

The red lines indicate the kinds of relationships; one way indicates a transcendent relationship, two ways indicate a non-transcendent relationship.

Outcomes arising from the transcendent B over N relationship within area X centre on the way in which nature is shaped to generate benefits for the built environment. For example, the Planner places nature into transportation and management regimes to achieve an outcome that includes psychological connections:

... the curves on the edge of the road here are following the landscape. That’s not necessarily a problem because they don’t fit, it’s more the roads that are connecting. They should connect more perpendicular to that green corridor [stream network] so they do maximise view chance and psychological connection and visual connection to the space.

This relationship is implicitly assumed by the NS Actors to be equal (B↔N), so the outcomes, of a discursive B constructed over discursive N, if defined or
acknowledged, are defined as benign. All Actors, with the exception of Community Activist L and H, in describing such outcomes, were silent in terms of any adverse effects of such built environments, or alternatively stressed positive effects. Another way to explain this is to say: ‘white lies’ are told, a story that minimises or ignores possible adverse outcomes. We strive to minimise any possible adverse outcomes, and use euphemisms. We engage in a falsity about the situation.

There is a reciprocal relationship between the actor and N. This is seen in the data where Actors engaged in discourse around nature, shaping it, but at the same time obliquely described experiential nature, which on investigation had an influence on the kinds of built environment they sought to discursively create.

The thin curved line indicates the flow and direction of influence such that material N influences a discursively constructed metaphysical N. It is noted here that a material N exists prior to its construction in area X.

Having considered stage one, we now move onto stage two, which represents a new situation where the discursive built is now physically built form within a physical N.
Area X here is a situation of planning and creation of a discursive built environment.

Area Y in contrast is a planned material reality.

Figure 5.2: Stage two sketches indicating the addition of a physical built environment to the reference area.

KEY:
B = Built environment
N = Nature (reference area)
1 = Physical Nature or discursive Built
2 = discursive Nature or physical built.
Dashed lines = discursive constructions
Thin curved solid lines = lines of influence
Thick solid lines = lines of transcendence
Stage two discussion

In this stage the notable feature is the replication and creation of a material built environment in area Y of the relationships found in the discursive metaphysical field between the actor and a discursive B and N.

A thin curved line at the top of the model indicates the flow and direction of influence such that a metaphysical B influences a physical B. The material built form here arises from the immaterial discursive built form. It is noted that in terms of existence, the metaphysical B always exists prior to a material B, while, as indicated, a material N always exists prior to a metaphysical discursive N. The implication is that the physical built environment has a constant ‘ghost’ image of itself in the metaphysical discursive reality, while the ‘ghost’ of a discursive nature is always the material reality.

The transcendent relationship of B over N seen in area Y is a material relationship with outcomes. These can be characterised for example as:

- Displacement of natural environment
- Shaping of natural environment to serve the built environment
- Extraction of materials from the natural environment to create the built
- Engineering of natural environment to serve built environment needs/ purposes
- Engineered drainage
- Loss of bio-diversity / resilience
- Power over

Nature is placed subservient to the built environment in the material world. The exception is for areas where we cannot do so, because nature holds a reactive or opposite power that is greater than an engineering or other power we hold to construct the built environment (e.g. unstable and steep hillsides preventing building activity). In these instances, we mould the built environment best as we can to the constraint (e.g. by building artificial terraces).
The flow of the immaterial B (in area X) to the material B (in area Y) represented by the thin curved line is a discursive flow. The direction of the line indicates that the discursive B is constructed prior to a material B. As indicated in Chapter One, provided the right conditions and resources are met, such as finance, materials, and labour, the built environment is materially constructed to fulfil its discursive construction. In this way, the built environment always has a ghostly other that exists. The cognitive idea of the built environment was created first, in the mind as concept, and the materiality of the built environment is always the second, being built.

The flow however is reversed when it comes to the natural environment. Nature firstly surrounds us. It presents itself to us as a totality, a comprehensive, integral complex whole that resists description, except for specific identifiable parts. Nature's immaterial and discursive other arises secondly, following an epistemological nature. But this discursive twin is changed. It is rendered with different characteristics. It undergoes a metamorphosis, changing from the epistemological and holistic reality to an ontological fantasy (following Sywengedouw).

This is seen in the NS Actors’ narratives about nature. It is both a specific identification of parts of nature and a result of specific experiences with nature. The evidence is seen in the extracted narratives (stage two in the previous chapter), and their belief structure (stage four in the previous chapter) about nature. The implications is that there is no ‘fixed’ nature, but something that is unstable, unfixed, mutable, according to the experiences of the person constructing it. This is influenced by role and context. It is a Lancanian (in Sywengedouw 2009) fantasy, an empty signifier into which we place meanings.

**Discussion of the models**

A re-reading of the reference to the biblical story of Job (Connolly 1993) enables a different perspective on the way in which nature is discursively constructed. That is, when Job is seeking answers to his misfortune and is confronted by God who demands ‘who is Job to know the dimensions to God’s plans?’ it is observed that at that point “There is more wildness inside and outside than Job and his
friends have heretofore imagined” (p. 205). Job could not hope to fathom the cosmic and unknowable forces (‘God’s plans’) operating within the universe.

It is this indescribable sense of nature for which the interviewees did not have the language, instead using their (limited, specific) experience of nature as a proxy for or description of this sense. For example, the CEO described the experience of power boating to a deserted beach and sharing a meal, where one could look out across the water and to the landscapes surrounding oneself. The combination of water and land at the edge where land meets water, and the absence of the built environment, is a powerful experience, having an effect on the senses in subtle ways.

In a sense, Nature is God. Nature causes sufferings, for example, the boils and lice suffered by Job and for us current weather events such as weather bombs, droughts and floods. Nature is indifferent to these sufferings. Not because it is immoral, or moral, but because our societal norms have discursively constructed a nature that is immoral, or moral, or needs to be ‘managed’ – eclipsing the ultimate indifference of nature. Nature is indifferent but we construct narratives to comfort us, to give us a sense of structure, to explain things.

We cannot afford a contrary discursive construction underpinned by a Naessian Deep Ecological relational-web view that sees us as ultimately one of many elements within the universe. That sees us lose our central place in the scheme of things, where we can direct and control nature. So we construct bailiwicks against such possibilities, where nature is mute, and silent. The narratives reflect such construction of walls to buttress against such (hypothetical) possibilities of being one of many connected and inter-related elements within the world. Consequently we live in an illusion.

However, that reality (of a mute and silent nature) lies inside cognition, rather than being anything material and external. This internal reality of an external indefinite materiality (what is nature? Is it that tree? Or my impression of that tree?) filtered through cognitive contextual models, renders nature as a fixed and constant object.
This is influenced by the wider meta-societal discourse that privileges capitalism, which categorises material objects and concepts by the degree that they are useful in the quest to generate an economic return. The views from the second floor of a building are of importance to the CEO – nature is placed, within a transcendent relationship, as an object of service to profit making. The Councillor’s statement that there is “only pampas grass ...” in a nature reserve minimises the nature found within the reserve. The material nature is objectified and categorised as ‘only’ pampas grass, an economically useless material.

This process can account for the way in which nature becomes an other, as experienced by the Actors. With the removal of context (that is, the wider sphere where nature is found) for elements of nature such as pampas grass, eels, and spiritual places, and the ‘amplification’ (Latour 1999 in Healy 2005) of discrete content (that is, pampas grasses, eels, and spiritual places), nature becomes divorced from a wider physical context which also includes humans, and our relationship with nature. Content such as the ‘nature’ of nature (i.e. the number of fauna in streams, the kinds of flora found in a particular field, or the temperature range of a bush stream) becomes visible, and becomes the focus of legal argument and regulation. Nature simply becomes an entity that is measured, observed, managed, and ultimately divorced from ourselves.

The ‘amplification of content’ is used by other disciplinary fields such as sciences that seek to understand the various parts of nature by isolating specific parts of nature, and subjecting these to a variety of social procedures. For example, pharmaceutical companies develop chemical (aspects of nature) responses to specific bodily ‘ailments’.

The influence of ‘content amplification’ was seen in the NS group but used in a different way by one Actor in the NI group. Community Activist L suggested that

... you just think of all the way that natural organisms produce things like shells or whatever, feathers or bones or whatever it is. There must be ways with bio technology and all of that, that we can actually take elements from the, straight from the earth and synthesise them into useful materials that can degrade back into the natural environment ...
In other words, nature by this Actor is specifically recognised in terms of its content, but as a basis for benefitting humans and ultimately the environment by degradation of content (fashioned as items for functional human use) back into natural elements that then can be re-used in other ways by other parts of nature.

The NS Actors saw the content of nature as means to enclosing nature within a legislative framework, even if the Actor did not distinctly state this. Such enclosure would be a function of their role. The clearest example of this occurring was by the Planner, when speaking from a position of his role: ... this corridor there you can see how significant that is. That follows that creek down through there. Now that was identified in the structure plan. Its one of those green finger networks, its this one up there um that basically when the development happens they have to set that aside, they’re required to vest that with council. It will be offset against their reserve contribution ...

Here a particular nature is identified (creek), and entered into a structure plan, forming part of a nature named ‘green finger network’ by the planner, who assumes the power to do so, and does so in spite of experiential nature.

**Summation of DCS analysis**

To this point there has been a second level Critical Discourse Analysis of the data arising from the analysis of the coded text. This analysis used the Socio-cognitive approach (van Dijk), and in particular the framework of the DCS triangle that incorporates broad notions of society, cognition and discourse as the three sides, supported by a context cognitive model.

A contextual socio-economic model, and the existence of experiential nature were established from the data. This means that Actors participate in a shared contextual model. The model forms the basis for the subsequent analysis that used the DCS triangle.

This analysis used the DCS triangle as a method by which to critically assess the various features of NS and NI discursive constructions. Each side of the triangle was made specific within the thesis; signifier/signified relationships represented Discourse, the self-nature relationship models, Cognition, while transcendence
stood for Society in the DCS triangle. Each aspect in turn was used to assess specific aspects of discursive constructions.

This shed critical light on the particular features of both the NS and NI discursive constructions, fleshing these out. Transcendent relationships and structures are constructed via discourse and serves to promote the dominance of an NS construction. This construction nevertheless is challenged by an alternative NI construction, and by the existence of a hidden EN construction. The cognitive self acts to place nature in a particular relation to the self, and this relation forms the basis of an NS or NI construction.

A simple two-stage model sketched out the different aspects of the construction, which lead to further discussion of those aspects. This brings to a close the data analysis, which is close and attentive. Attention now turns to a critique of the research methodology to determine if the analysis followed is sound.

**Research process critique**

This section examines and critically evaluates the research process drawing out several criticisms for further study. It undertakes a critical analysis of the methodologies used within the analysis, and addresses the issue of validity within small N research. Four other areas of concern were identified; subjectivity, interviews, discourse analysis, and overall process.

**Was the methodology appropriate to the question?**

There were two methodologies used; firstly, Discourse Analysis (as explained in Chapter Four), and secondly Critical Discourse Analysis, using the DCS triangle as a basis for analysis (as explained in Chapter Five).

The Discourse Analysis methodology, which was sequential in nature, was appropriate as it permitted the establishment of several perspectives on the data generated by the coding of the interviews, opening up lines of inquiry. Alternative methods for discourse analysis is limited by the researcher’s creativity in researching and analysing particular aspects of discourse (for example, the use of beliefs in discourse, or the use of hand gestures in combination with particular discourses that positions the subject relative to the
speaker), and applying these to the coded data. However the focus here is on the discursive construction of nature rather than for instance analysis of the results of that construction. The tight focus of the thesis question ensured that the Discourse Analysis engaged in was appropriate, and relevant.

Notwithstanding the fact that nature cannot ‘speak’, and hence cannot be interviewed in the same manner as the interviewees were, the two methodologies (Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis) held sufficient flexibility to account for this constraint. The developed methodology enabled identification of experiential nature for the NS group. Such character of nature could be seen to be an indication of a particular discourse of nature. That is, nature expresses particular attributes that affect the self to a significant degree, producing an effect (here, the incorporation of experiential nature into discursive built environments).

The methodological tool, NVivo, enabled a process of ‘deterritorialization’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2008) to take place. Deterritorialization is a state whereby “a mode of desiring that does not require an object to motivate it and give it direction. ... so to deterritorialize means to sever desire from its connection to the drive” (Buchanan 2010). For example, the desire to claim ownership of some (geographical) territory can be divorced from the drive to do so. This brings to light two things, a drive towards achieving something and the object of such drive. The combination of the two creates ‘territories’ of space, of objects, or of laying claim to various discursive constructions (Smith & Protevi 2011).

Applying territories of space within the thesis sees NVivo enabling severance of the drive exhibited by the Actors in the transcribed interviews from the object of placing signifiers on nature to simply placing signifiers on the concept of nature. More precisely, NVivo ‘broke apart’ the transcribed interview text, enabling study to be made of individual concepts that were seen within the text. This ‘decomposition’ or deterritorialization permitted the development of a narrative for each interviewee. The effect of this was to isolate the ways in which nature was discursively constructed by each interviewee, permitting extensive
examination and analysis that enables deeper understanding of the research object.

**Are there any gaps in the data sources or evidence to answer the question?**

The built environment discourse ranges across a number of different fields, as indicated in Chapter Two. This was narrowed down in the thesis to a specific field (planning), and specific people associated with two sites of interest. For reasons explained in Chapter Three no private property developer could be interviewed, which is one evident gap in the data sources.

However, given that the broad outlines of a NS discursive construction of nature discerned from the research interviews, and the likely influence of a socio-economic paradigm that encourages discrete and specific thinking about the use of ‘natural resources’ for profit, it is likely that any property developer (similar to a member of the NS group) would construct nature from a transcendent position, positioning nature as a product to complement their development, and would also, it is suspected, in similar manner to the NS group, unconsciously construct their development to reflect in part their personal experiences of nature.

This construction can be discerned from advertising materials related to proposed developments. These typically, in their wording, tend to position nature as a complementary product to the development. For example, the developer of the Grasshopper Development called The Lakes (a small scale development of tens of houses) in the Tauranga region stated in a product magazine aimed at new and prospective homeowners:

> Masterfully planned, The Lakes has been a true collaboration of commitment and dedication from our Grasshopper team members, planning consultants, Iwi\(^{22}\) and local body authorities. Our long term vision is to create the best natural environment, developed in a socially sustainable manner, ensuring we make this community a better place for all to enjoy for many years to come (Grasshopper Developments 1997).

\(^{22}\) Indigenous tribe of a particular geographical area
Nature is reframed at this location to be the ‘best natural environment’ that is ‘developed’ in a manner similar to how members of the NS group also developed nature within the two reference areas.

The other source of data that is lacking was the lack of interviews with ‘ecological’ property developers or companies, who undertake development within a framework that seeks to minimise impacts on surrounding nature. Typically these developments are small scale, tens of household units, and found within suburban or very rural location, which was a reason for excluding these from the prospective reference areas. However, there are few examples of these within New Zealand.

A prime (and best known) example, Earth Song Village in Ranui, Waitakere, Auckland\(^23\), was developed in a manner that paid attention to the landscape features of the site (an old apple orchard), the manner in which the buildings were built, and the operation of the development, which included a community ‘house’ where residents could gather for communal meals and events. Notably the development featured rammed earth houses and apartment blocks, with private outdoor spaces, and each having individual title (giving homeowners some privacy). This combination responded to the desire for individuality and privacy while offering ‘green’ living. Interviews with the main people behind the development may have revealed different constructions of nature, likely along similar lines to the NI group, where nature is independent and is incorporated with the built environment (e.g. through the use of earth as a building material).

While these gaps in the data are obvious, they are not injurious to the overall research. Given the shared cognitive contextual models (explained in Chapters Two and Five), the data obtained from these additional sources would likely to have been similar to the data obtained from the NI or NS group.

\(^{23}\) See [www.earthsong.co.nz](http://www.earthsong.co.nz) for more information.
Triangulation

One interesting observation to make of the research process was the extent to which triangulation as a methodological tool to validate research findings was used, even if the method was not initially chosen to be part of the research approach.

Triangulation is a methodological practice where several sources of data are analysed, or several methods are used to analyse data (Hastings 2010, p. 1537). This enables, where several different methods are used to analyse the same source data, different perspectives to be gained on the data, as each analytical method can offer up different perspectives on the data, providing for a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the data (ibid).

Within the research, there were four stages of first level analysis: a preliminary reading of the data; decomposition and recombination of the data; re-engagement with the nodes; and, finally, discursive interrogation of the data. Each methodological stage engaged with the same data (generated by a NVivo coding), but returned different kinds of results, as is expected. This method of ‘supra-analysis’, even at a basic level, enabled the research to uncover particular aspects of a discursive construction of nature.

The effect of the triangulation at the first level analysis within this process is to cross-validate the findings. The results from the first reading of the data indicated the particular themes around the placement of nature found in the discourses. This was echoed through the method of decomposition and recombination, and the discursive interrogation of the data through analysis of beliefs.

As a methodological tool, triangulation proved to be helpful in teasing out different nuances from the data, confirming the essential dimensions of a discursively constructed nature within a built environment discourse. The results of the triangulation are valid provided that a consistency of approach is used. The approach here saw the data remaining the same (the coded interviews), but the analytical methods changed, as indicated in Table 5.1. This resulted in an emphasis on the data as it appeared under different
methodological approaches, with consequential outcomes that were able to be

cross validated, and importantly, add to the rich understanding of the data.

**Subjectivity: coding process and narrative development**

One criticism is the subjectivity inherent in the analysis. This is seen at the initial
coding stage, and at the narrative construction stage within the first level
analysis. At both stages, the data was interpreted through a critical viewpoint
that established nature as an independent entity. This saw nature as something
independent and outside of human agency, and in effect, had a voice or language
and influenced the process of interview coding the data and the construction of
the narratives.

This viewpoint meant that the researcher saw the construction of nature within
the Actors’ discourse as a kind of constraint on an independent nature or
deliberate shaping of an independent nature, and consequently, the ‘truthful’
situation was that there were two independent and equal objects in a
relationship. This influenced how the data was coded. For example, coding was
done where the interviewee suggested that in some way nature influenced how
the built environment was designed, through geological constraints, or through
wind patterns. The reading of this constraint positioned the natural environment
as having an influence on the built environment, rather than the built
environment adapting to constraints seen in the natural environment.

There are other ways of the data being read. For example, the reading of
transcendent actions in clearing nature or creating areas of nature could be seen
moves designed to assist nature. The Councillor spoke about clearing mangroves
from inner harbour areas in order to enable yachts to sail up the harbour. This
was read as a move that satisfies the transcendent nature of the relationship
between the Councillor and nature. It establishes the boundaries of that
relationship (superior humans to an inferior nature that needs correction or
shaping to accommodate other human needs), and reaffirms the Councillors
sense of authority over nature. This action could be alternately read as an action
that assists nature, where removal of the mangroves may assist the ecosystem in
other ways, benefitting aquatic life. In this light, the Councillor’s action could be seen as positive, liberating nature in some way.

Undertaking actions that assist nature can be seen as a positive move, but it ignores two aspects. Firstly, nature as a whole, despite human efforts to understand it in a myriad of ways, is still elusive. The effects of global warming, to take a topical example, are dimly understood. Where, and how the effects might be displayed and felt, and the consequential effects are at a stage of broad understanding, but knowing precisely how the ecosystem will behave in specific areas of the earth is yet to be understood. Given this, clearing mangroves may be helpful, but may lead to unintended effects that militate against the helpful intention. The gesture against nature rests in a state of ignorance.

Secondly, the grand gesture against nature by the self ignores that ways in which the transcendent nature of the gesture eclipses the integral nature of the relationship between humans and nature as posited by Naess – that humans are an integral part, alongside nature, of a web that unites both, and underscored by the hidden experiential nature. Such gesture focuses on ways to shape nature for specific benefit, and in doing so, hides any alternative reading of the relationship by the self.

As Naess indicates, self-realisation accepts and understands that one is part of a web of nature where actions exercised by any part of the web has ramifications on other parts of the web; where organisms and non-organic object exist in a state of constantly shifting balance. Gesturing against nature ignores this delicate state of play, and reaffirms the grand construction of nature as other and subject to gestures.

To continue the mangrove example, a person could clear the mangroves to enable yachts to move up the harbour easily. This reveals a state of ignorance about the unknowingness of nature, and ways in which such moves may alter a particular equilibrium evident in the situation, and secondly points to the rigidity of the nature construction held by the Actor himself/herself. Nature, despite evidence to the contrary, is placed in a state of permanency by adopting particular beliefs - which the harbour was always free of mangroves to enable
yachts to sail up it. By constructing such state for nature, human interests are served, rather than nature’s interest.

**Case study: interviews**

Criticism can be made of the number of interviews conducted. In total there were six interviews. More interviews could have been obtained (up to a total population size of twenty across the two reference areas), but it was realised after the sixth interview the answers to the interview questions from existing Actors were very similar. One clue was the inability of Actors to cope with the question “*How do you see yourself in nature?*” Actors had difficulty in responding to seeing themselves in nature, rather than being apart from and above nature, or alternatively separate from it, as they situated themselves. Being in nature is a different standpoint from which to critically analyse one’s relationship with nature, requiring a person to define for himself or herself what the particular state of ‘being in’ nature is, which requires a re-conceptualisation of relationships with nature. The question may have been unfair in asking the Actor to construct a different mental model of their considered and understood relationship with nature. Faced with this request, an NS Actor may have chosen to reiterate their self-understood role in relation to nature (e.g. shaper and creator of nature). For the NI Actors, the position of the self within nature was not tied to role, but instead, tied to the fact that nature was independent; consequently, they were independent selves, a-part from nature in a relationship with nature, rather than within nature.

Another clue was the broadly consistent way in which interviewees responded to questions about how the built and natural environments interacted, or how the built environment came into being. This is linked to the fact that each interviewee played a particular role within the planning process. If planning is about the creation of future built and natural environments, then each role within that field supports some aspect of that creation. The Planner plans, the Property Developer (CEO) develops, or the Councillor shapes regulations (among other things) and the Community Activist makes submissions about various plans, and each role is cognisant of other roles. For example, the CEO referred to planners, other property developers, and the community during the interview,
while Community Activist H referred to property developers, planners and councillors. The raw material for each role is the built and natural environments, both seen and unseen, but the ultimate outcome is the creation of a built environment within a particular geographical site.

The Planner, for example, stated in relation to designing apartments:

...if you can do the apartment design first and say okay here’s my apartment design this is what and then what do I need in terms of a lot size to ensure the privacy and the relationships with the street and all the other things.

One function of the Planner’s role is to conceptualise the dimension of the built environment, as seen in this quote. Community Activist H suggested ways of screening off industrial environmental effects from residential housing as a way of using the built environment to achieve suitable outcomes in terms of amenity:

One of the ways you can do it I suppose is by having industry, central business and then residential so that you get the residential, you actually use a sort of commercial area as a buffer between industry and residential...

The discourse around the construction of the built environment was specific about the different elements found within such environment as seen in these two quotes. There are houses, the road runs in front, industrial development goes here, or the quality of the built environment affects amenity. These parts to the built environment are an ontological and metaphysical construction that claims specificity in a discourse about each specific element of the built environment. Lot sizes, privacy, relationship to the street, and industrial, residential, commercial zones or areas are features of the built environment discourses. They have the status of ‘standing belief’, that is, common social agreement about the attributes of each part of built environment. This specificity of each element has a common construction in terms of understanding what each built environment (or natural) element is functionally, and this understanding is built over time, notwithstanding cultural variations.

Given this broad outline of role and outcomes within a defined field, and the existence of standing beliefs and contextual models, it is perhaps not surprising that similar themes and responses emerged from Actors about the built environment.
environment, regardless of their particular role. This indicates the ‘theoretical saturation’ point observed by Esienhardt (Chapter Two), where a limit is reached within case study selection when similar data presents itself with each new case.

**Discourse Analysis**

A third criticism could be about the basis for analysis of the transcribed interviews. Existing methods of CDA assumes that discursive power is omnipresent because such analysis focuses on relations between humans, and humans engage in discursive practices that assert power over and enact resistance to exercises of power for example, between disabled people and non-disabled people. Such analysis would uncover the underlying social construction of disabled people, and non-disabled people, and identifies the ways in which that particular construction is subject to power and the exercise of it.

The theoretical foundation and starting point for the Discourse Analysis field is the Foucauldian idea of discursively created realities. This is implicitly limited to those that can speak a human language, and has as its outcome the identification of underlying systems of social construction. Foucauldian based discourse analysis assumes as a basis of analysis an omnipresent identifiable and discursive power flowing between agents exercising such power, each influencing the other: discourse is synonymous with the exercise of power between two parties. Problems arise in such analysis when the relationship is between humans and the natural environment. Power is asserted over nature, but it is assumed, because of the lack of a discourse exercised by nature, that the power is one-way or transcendent, solely emanating from and exercised by humans.

Mapping this methodology onto a relationship where one party, at a fundamental level, is assumed not to have the same ability to engage in discourse, such is the case in this thesis, can reveal the underlying construction of the ‘mute’ party, but from the point of view of the superior discursive party. We can see this clearly in the data, where nature is subject by the NS group to a variety of methods designed to place it within a socio-economic framework, and by the NI group as an independent entity. This discursive construction seems to confirm a
The shifting and ambivalent power expressed in any transcendental relationship between humans loses the fluid omnipresent nature of that power when we examine the relationship between man and nature. It is assumed that the power that lies with the superior party is potent and secure as there is no contestation to that power; the other party cannot speak. Because of this some carry out actions and gestures against nature, on a transcendent basis. Mangroves are ‘simply weeds’ to be removed for economic purposes, views to the Waitakere Ranges is captured by construction of the built form on a landscape that enables such views which are then incorporated in the built environment as means of creating capital / rent, or nature is ontologically divided into two kinds of nature, good and bad.

One way of acknowledging this problem was to examine the data for ways in which Actors spoke about the influence of nature on their actions (employing the critical viewpoint that nature is independent). Extra sensitivity in the process revealed the ways in which the Actors and their discursive built environments are shaped by the different kinds of power exercised by nature. As revealed in the research, nature influences the experiences that the NS Actors have of nature, and their efforts to recreate such experiences within the built form. While not explicitly explored here, such influences can be thought of as instances of a particular kind of discourse exhibited by nature, the broad characteristics of which are unknown at this time.

These influences undermine the unidirectional transcendent relationship between the self and nature and raise possibilities regarding the role of nature within our built environment discourses; is nature entirely mute?

**Process**

The research process reflects Thompson (2006), who points to the tensions between a hard masculine planning ethos that concerns itself with objectivities, facts, issues, resolutions and her insistence on exploring what is seen by men as a ‘softer’ side of planning that concerns itself with the experiences of women
(migrant women in her research), and the ‘social’, that is, relations between people within urban planning. The sensitivities in this research are similar with concern for nature in its widest sense, a nature that is seen as the uncomplaining (and willing) recipient of a planning system that affects nature through built form construction.

There are tensions within this research largely stemming from the underlying position of nature as a discursive entity within the built environment discourse – how best to capture the nuances of such construction? This tension was manifest within the coding stage as initial attempts to code provoked questions about the coding; where to start and how to code? This was addressed by developing a method (explained in Chapter Three) that focussed on key words in the transcribed interviews. This enabled the development of a base set of nodes, and gave confidence to develop other nodes pertaining to the research question.

Additional complexities arose from the choice of theory to inform the research. Clearly, Foucault was the default choice given an understanding of how the built environment was constructed. But was his argument about a discursive reality sufficient for this thesis? Foucault in his broad sweep of history pointed to instances of how mentally ill patients were ‘seen’ throughout different historical eras (as ‘freaks’, as criminals, or as health patients). I certainly experienced this insight during the Homosexual Law reform period in NZ of the mid-80s, where one day I was a criminal in the eyes of the state (and many others), governed by the Crimes Act, the next not. I remained the same.

A fault lay in understanding Foucault’s arguments. I labelled, in shorthand, Foucault’s theory as ‘discursively produced reality’ influenced by research I had read which examined for such realities. A mistake lay in thinking that Foucault described production of such realities, rather than his more broad argument for a discursively governed reality. Such argument accounts for the way in which discourse, in its various modes, governs our realities, determining how various subjects are seen, and consequently treated. It forms the structures, and dictates the methods by which subjects are constructed, and simultaneously deconstructed, as one set of construction is preferred and accorded privilege over
other sets. Governance also deploys the power to produce and re-produce
discursive realities of certain subjects or objects which accounts for the ways in
which some realities are dominant, others not. Foucault used mental health
patients and sexualities as ways of demonstrating such governance, but at the
same time, demonstrated the methods by which that governance was deployed.

The misunderstanding, once realised, was on examination, found not to have
materially affected the results. Constructing a discursive nature, at least within a
built environment discourse in New Zealand, is both an exercise in production
and governance of such reality, where governance embodies dispositions of
power by those engaging in signification of the subject. By constructing nature as
a nature that serves the interests of the socio-economic built environments, the
NS group also engages in governance of nature. A wider holistic nature is
reduced to such constructions (e.g. ‘go/no-go areas’, ‘just pampas grass’,
transformed into sites of family homes) and by such construction becomes the
recipient of power and associated governance. Any other aspect of nature that
comes to the attention of those engaged in such construction is similarly entered
into a simultaneous production and governance exercise. Additionally, nature is
also entered into District Plans, a governance tool that shapes the way in which
nature is treated during the construction of the built environment.

These observations of various aspects of the research process highlight the
complexity inherent within the overall qualitative methodology used in the
thesis. This is not to indicate that the methodology is flawed in some manner,
but instead to give an outline of the challenges that can face the qualitative
researcher in the course of their research. By bringing such challenges to light,
results gained in light of the limitations of methodological challenges gain
greater validity in terms of reliability and plausibility.

Summary
This chapter critically analysed (in a second-level analysis) the results arising
from Chapter Four. The development of the contextual models served to
underscore the view of how a discursively produced object, in this instance,
nature, may occur. The socio-economic context model is linked to the ongoing
and diverse methods of constructing nature, by the NS group, to serve particular socio-economic needs. An alternative context model draws inspiration from notions of biophilia and helps explain the existence of experiential nature seen within the discourses of the NS group.

Context models help underpin the DCS triangle. Each distinct side of the triangle contributes to an overall understanding of the way in which the Actors, for particular purposes, process and generate a metaphysical nature. Nature is shaped and formed, not only cognitively, but also discursively, and within the framework of social contextual models. The views of nature by NS Actors seen within the DCS triangle are sketched out for examination, using the self as a focus within the sketch. Relationships and influences between the self and a metaphysical nature, a discursive built environment and a discursively constructed nature are explored in a theoretical two-stage process of construction, by members of the NS group, of the built environment.

This assists in illuminating the complexity seen within the transcendent self-nature relationship. Lying behind the lines of influences between different objects in the sketch are instances of contextual models, of the signifier/signified relationship, and of the cognitive processes within the self, which combine to discursively produce nature within a built environment discourse.

A critique of the research process notes that methodological triangulation was engaged in, which gives confidence to the research findings, but also notes several areas of weakness in the process. Escaping the subjective viewpoint in data processing and analysis is one weakness all examples of coding or data analysis share, while analysis of the research process (numbers of interviewees, weakness in understanding theory, weaknesses inherent to discourse analysis methods) indicated that these did not adversely affect the research results.

This concludes the research process, started in Chapter One. We now move onto concluding the thesis in the following chapter.
Chapter Six

Conclusion

Introduction
This chapter will restate the contexts surrounding the thesis problem and the research question before casting an eye over the results of the research and linking these back to the theoretical discussions held in Chapter Two. Matters arising from the research and identification of the different contributions to knowledge will enable discussion of the results to take place within the context of the literature review in Chapter One.

Following this discussion will be suggestions, arising from the research, for future avenues of research that can potentially assist in fleshing out some of the larger dimensions of the research. Finally the chapter concludes with some brief concluding comments.

Overview of results
Exploration of the proposition that nature is discursively constructed within a built environment discourse formed the object of the thesis. That is, when the built environment is discursively being constructed, through the efforts of various planning stakeholders, is a discursive nature also being constructed?

The wider setting for this proposition is the recent and widespread concern about human impact on the climate from greenhouse gases generated by human activity, and associated realisations about the ways in which humans are adversely affecting natural environments (for example, through loss of habitats, or species extinction\(^{24}\)), along with recent rise in urban populations that now house over half of the world's populations according to research\(^{25}\). Given such


\(^{25}\) The CIA estimates that the urban population makes up 50.5% of total world population, and annual rates of changes in urbanisation are 1.85%.
concerns, renewed attention is being paid to the myriad of ways in which humans and nature co-exist.

There is a discursive construction of nature shown in the results by those stakeholders, such as planners or developers, associated with areas targeted for urban development, and who are closest to the process of creating a District Plan to guide such development. For those stakeholders who are associated with targeted areas, and have less influence over the creation of the plan and hence less influence over the kinds of development that are created, nature is also discursively constructed, but differently. Research into the discursive construction of nature brings to the fore the ways in which stakeholders construct nature, and consequently, implications for our ongoing relationships with nature, as the built environment of the District Plan is physically created.

Additionally, for the stakeholders closest to the process of plan making, there is a further discursive construction of nature, based on their personal experience of nature. Hidden within the interviews, this construction was revealed on examination of the data. It challenges the dominant discursive construction of nature by these stakeholders that positions nature in a subservient position inside a transcendent relationship.

The observed relationship between the built environment and nature remarked on in Chapter One is illuminated by the research. The benthic study referred to could be strengthened with an examination of the discourses made by different stakeholders surrounding the ongoing development in the Lucas Creek catchment. The examination in turn could lead to different ways of addressing the gap between the impacts built environments have on nature, and recognition of the impacts by the developers of the built environment.

The theoretical perspectives discussed in Chapter Two (discourse, transcendence/immanence and Deep Ecology) assisted in both understanding the data, and in enabling a view on the data. The discursive construction of

nature confirms basic Foucauldian premise that discourse does create realities, in this case, a discursive reality. The discursive reality is linked to physical realities through an understanding of the belief system of the self (Hahn 1973). Interrogation of the data under three different models of how the self could relate to nature revealed the different ways in which a material nature is discursively constructed. It is made an inferior to a superior built form, and consequently placed within a transcendent framework by certain actors.

Theoretical perspectives on immanence enabled an alternative view of the self-nature relationship. The conceptual idea of the built environment and nature being equal within a plane of immanence, and in a dynamic relationship serves to contrast with the embedded nature of the transcendent relationship seen in the data between these two objects. The data did not reveal any Actor that engaged in a relationship of immanence with nature.

The deep ecological perspective equally serves as a counterpoint to the transcendent relationship by refashioning the hierarchical structure into a network of ‘knots’ within a relational-web. Each object within the web has an integrity and holistic ‘self’, equal to others in the web, and actions of the self affects two parties, the self and the other ‘knot’ to which the action is directed. In this sense, there is inter-dependency between objects. This view enabled understanding of how nature, reflecting a self-nature relationship model with Deep Ecological characteristics, was discursively constructed by the actors in the NI group.

**Associated research questions**

The thesis question (*Is there a discursive construction of nature within a built environment discourse?*) prompted questions and wider thinking about the discursive production and re-production of nature (Sharp & Richardson 2001), the role of that beliefs play in discursive constructions (following Hahn 1973), and the self-nature relationship vis-a-vis nature. Methodological discussions prompted questions about the approach needed to select the data for examination, and the different approaches that could be undertaken in examining the data. These questions guided thought about various aspects of the
research project, and the results of investigations are discussed in the previous two chapters. However, results of wider thinking about the thesis question are interrelated in some manner; for ease of understanding, the interrelationships are grouped in the following sets:

**Signs, signifiers, signified**

- The production and re-production of nature lies in a conceptualization of nature as an ‘empty’ site that remains perpetually ready to receive whatever is given by the signifier to it (Swygendouw 2007).

- The ‘emptiness’ of the signifier ‘nature’ can be seen as extensive; no one signifier can exhaust the space where signifier reside, nor can nature be limited to particular signifiers.

- This points to the multiplicity of signifiers that could be placed on nature, and within the context of the thesis, the actors that engage in defining nature.

- Within a discursive world, nature, as is the built environment, is constructed by that discourse, but in terms of particular actors engaging in the discourse and that claim privilege in defining the signifier.

- The power to bestow signifiers, within this site of production of discursive nature (that is the reference sites), is seen to be transcendent for the NS group, while less so for the NI group.

- While the signifiers for nature may differ between all the Actors in the NS and NI groups, there is a broad underlying common theme regarding the overall approach to nature for each group (in accordance with the multiplicity of perspectives about nature).

**Role**

- The research indicated that roles (and Actors) that had significant input or influence over the District Plan (or its Variations) process constructed nature differently to those that had less input or influence.
• Decision makers with influence over statutory plan creation (e.g. a District Plan) create the metaphysical nature as an inferior party in a transcendent relationship between the built environment and nature.

• Such roles are linked to statutory plans that specify proposed built form development.

• The findings indicated that it is likely that the role played by an Actor influences to some degree their particular discursive nature but not completely.

• This is particularly so if one considers that a related finding found that amongst the NS group, experiences of nature by the self influenced the Actor to a degree where such experiences were sought to be incorporated into and re-created within their discursive built environments.

Power

• The power within the transcendent structure enables the NS group to claim privilege regarding signification of nature, however this is somewhat illusionary if nature as a site of signification is unlimited in its capacity to receive such signification from others.

• Others who may have, in light of the emptiness of the signifier ‘nature’, other discursive constructions, contest such signification, and in doing so, contest such transcendence. This is seen in the NI group.

• Such contestation may indicate the existence of self-realisation along Deep Ecological lines, that is, extension of the self to include nature within the self, and acknowledgement of the Naessian relational-web.

• For those who have less influence in terms of District Plan creation, nature is seen as an independent entity with powers of agency.

• There is a transcendent nature over human power seen.
Beliefs

- Beliefs are the property of the self.

- The beliefs underlying such signification of nature tended to support the different constructions by each Actor.

- Beliefs can be mapped to a cognition perspective in a Socio-cognitive approach (van Dijk), which also includes social and discursive aspects. The application of the approach critically analysed aspects of the construction of nature against three self-nature relationship models, which reinforced the main finding of the research.

- The self produces a discursive nature, based on cognitive beliefs that are influenced by social structures and cognitive contextual models within which the self operates.

These findings contributed towards answering the thesis question in a general sense; a discursive construction of nature does occur within a built environment discourse. But such construction relies on a tight and integrated ‘package’. This consists of a signifier / signified relationship that embodies qualities of transcendence, beliefs about nature influenced by contextual models, drawing on standing sentences, and a cognitive self that puts together these elements in a way that constructs nature. However, this package is not entirely tight; the existence of experiential nature enables plays of resistance to be enacted, and exploration of new dimensions to be entertained.

Communicative Planning

Part of the act of technical professional planning (concerning itself with guiding built environment development), is the examination of the implications for diverse communities, and spaces, as well as natural environments, of urbanisation. Planning theory provides the basis for such examinations. A recent turn in theory to a Communicative Planning perspective (where planning outcomes are the result of communication between stakeholders), addresses weaknesses of existing planning models in dealing with issues associated with urbanisation (Healey 1992, 1996, introduces the Communicative Turn in
planning, while Huxley & Yiftachel 2000, explore some of the shortcomings of such perspective).

Given the recent communicative turn of planning and its theoretical focus, this thesis, with its specific and narrow research (in the sense of having a specific research question, analysing a small number of case studies, and intensive focus on the interview data) into the discursive construction of nature can assist in focusing attention on new ways of reconceptualising human-nature relationships, within a communicative framework.

Communicative action supports the creation of arenas where various actors can collaboratively create shared planning outcomes; the shared act of creating particular outcomes ensures that multiple viewpoints are understood and conflicts between them are mediated. While this undoubtedly will bring benefits in terms of redressing the deficiencies seen previous models of planning, the risk is that nature, as a metaphysical reality, is ignored in the process of negotiating shared planning outcomes. This is not because nature is not talked about within such processes (often, nature, or the environment is the larger backdrop to or subject of discussion), but because there is the potential for the unconscious creation of a transcendent relationship with nature by various stakeholders, and consequently, nature becomes subject to transcendent desires. This risk is heightened more so if stakeholders are responsible for the process of plan making or writing which will guide development.

The different kinds of nature seen in the research are similar to ones seen in UK planning system. Using only texts drawn from a specific part of the UK planning system (written decisions on planning applications), the research question posed is: “How is the term ‘environment’ articulated within the planning discourse?” (Myerson & Rydin 1994)

They posit that the environment would be conceptualised in two ways; a ‘mundane’ place, the ordinary quotidian background upon which we carry out our business, including constructing the built environment, and a ‘sublime’ place, where the environment inspires within us senses of wonder and grandeur – not
in the sense of something being ‘grand’, but an indefinable character that brings out qualities within the self that are akin to lofty idealism.

The methodology examined written texts (which can be seen as a product of a particular communicative arena), broadly classifying statements found within the text to either one of the two conceptualisations. The research finds that these two kinds of environments exist within the written texts, which they argue is reflective of two kinds of discourse within planning process that occurred prior to the texts being written, each concerned with the environment as a mundane place or sublime place.

While these two conceptualisations of nature are similar to the kinds of nature found in the thesis research, how these different discursive constructions are brought to the foreground in Communicative Planning remains an issue. An answer would be to ensure that practices addressed both the underlying worldviews and beliefs of stakeholders, through a focus on the self-nature relationship, and actively work to bring these to the foreground, and be sustained, in ongoing discussion.

Location of thesis question within larger built-nature considerations

The thesis fits within a larger context about the ways in which the built and nature are constructed and can co-exist within a range of settings. This context is complex and dynamic. It is also a trajectory of multiple streams: urban design research; the ways in which architecture changes forms to become more ‘green’ (see Moughtin & Shirley 2005, for example); how urban planning can direct or encourage development that is more environmentally sensitive (LIUDD research program 2005-09); and ecological research into the interactions between human cultural systems and natural systems (Folke et al. 1997; Liu et al. 2007).

Each of these streams has a discursive aspect to it. That is, each stream constructs the problem within the field of interest, and research is undertaken investigating that problem, which is shaped by the discursive construction of both the problem (‘how the problem presents itself’), and the methods of investigation (‘what lenses to use?’) (Jacobs 2006). The thesis contributes to these multiple contexts, enabling a more fundamental examination of the ways in
which the self (the researcher-self, the environmentalist-self, the planner-self, or the politician-self for example) discursively constructs nature in each of these streams.

Within this thesis, the question pointed to a problem or tension within our milieu or surrounding world, as indicated in the book that was the genesis of this thesis. That is, Spirn (1984) outlined the ways in which the built environment affected nature: heat islands are generated by a concentration of built environment elements, while watercourses are altered, and changes in wind patterns are seen affecting various biotic communities.

Various studies have continued to point out this tension between the built and nature, at a variety of scales and contexts. An overview of these are seen in Folke et al (2007), discussing a basic problem of ‘fit’ between the variety of ecological problems caused in large part by the built environment (e.g. use of concrete in construction methods generating CO2 emissions), and the institutional systems created to ‘govern’ the biological sphere, which are mismatched in terms of scale and contexts. Although this research does not specifically concern itself with planning, institutional systems can be extended to include Habermasian discursive arenas, where planning stakeholders engage in communicative action. A new understanding of discursive nature within planning here could assist in resolving such evident built form problems.

**Contribution to knowledge**

As a result of the research, there are three contributions to knowledge, which offer new ways for thinking about how to approach the effects arising from construction of the physical built form. The effects include, for example, contribution to flora and fauna destruction through either clearing land, or arising from the operation of the built environment, contributions to CO2 emissions arising from either construction or operation, and construction on inappropriate sites.

The first contribution is noting that the thesis question was focussing on nature as an immaterial reality within built environment discourses, notwithstanding the definition used in the thesis of nature as a material reality. Making the
distinction between a material and immaterial reality an explicit realisation was an important insight in the research. This appreciation moved the investigation into the cognitive insights of the interviewees in two ways. Firstly by using the Socio-Cognitive approach, and second by taking beliefs about nature as a proxy for cognitive insights. This moved the investigation away from focus on a material reality of proposed built environments and nature. The cognitive self looks out into a surrounding world, and projects a cognitive built and natural environment onto it, as seen in Figures 5.1 and 5.2.

This insight can be used to tackle expected material tensions between the built and natural environments, by posing critical questions of the impacts that a discursively proposed built environment has on material nature. This emphasises the importance and role that a discursive environment plays in planning, as noted in Communicative Planning. Where there is the potential for problems to arise, such as proposed inappropriate development within sensitive local natural contexts (outside of statutorily protected areas), or the potential to adversely alter streams or creeks, then discursive arguments and tools can be developed to interrogate such constructions. Planners or other stakeholders can question such discursive constructions, their basis, and how they may be modified to reduce or eliminate tensions.

Decision makers, such as planners, can test proposed discursive built form constructions presented for approval. This would see a recasting of the discursive built form (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2) by stakeholders, taking into account principles such as self-realisation (recognition of others in a relational-web), and understanding the impact actions have on that web. Recasting can include, within the cognitive self, considerations of any adverse impacts of the built form cognitively and discursively created. Nature can be brought 'closer' to the self, through posing questions about how the discursively constructed built environment impacts on a discursively constructed nature. In this way, realisations can be gained into the ways nature is treated within such interactions.
Through a critical and key entry point of the existence of experiential nature, invitations can be made, as part of a test, to see nature as a part of the self. This may assist in changing discursive constructions of nature so that it is less subject to brute transcendent relationships that have adverse implications for nature. The discursive built form would theoretically respond to such test and consequently may result manifestation of more appropriate physical built forms.

As noted by critics of Communicative Planning, participants in a planning arena can deny knowledge or responsibility of any particular problem, or minimise the problem in a manner that gives reassurance to decision makers. Given that transcendent constructions of nature causes adverse effects on nature, such as removing bush remnants critical to flora and fauna linkages with nearby forests, the risk is that these transcendent constructions may not be revealed by stakeholders or recognised as such by other stakeholders.

Consequently, a critical approach focussing on a cognitive reality located within the self has the advantage that resolution of any problem or tensions in terms of built-nature conflict can occur within the self, rather than in a public arena. This removes attention from the 'surface' of discussions as seen in a public arena, and focuses attention on the cognitive self. Attention to the cognitive self ensures that there is opportunity for substantive change to occur within the self. This would particularly need to be in terms of the beliefs employed, and the individual or shared contextual models used to sustain particular discursive constructions of nature. This ensures that substantive change needed to remove tensions between the built form and nature is critically located at the discursive stage, generated internally, by the self.

This approach however, has two issues. A reliance on the force of an inherent normative moral law that guides the self; is the placement of nature in such discursive realities, in terms of the tension between the built form and nature, fair and just? And secondly, the method of critical questioning and commentary that focuses attention on the internal discursive construction of nature.

The focus on moral concerns brings the critical approach here close to a Habermasian ideal (discussed in Chapter One) where moral norms about the
world are the basis for communicative practices rather than reliance on frameworks around democratic communicative planning discussions, which can hide or obscure damaging views of nature. As a means of exposing such views, it is assumed that each participant in a communicative forum has similar conceptions of what is 'fair and just', and will participate on this basis, thus ensuring that outcomes reached are reflect substantially such moral dimensions.

Secondly, who undertakes, within a communicative forum, critical questioning and commentary regarding discursive constructions of nature and how is this method developed and applied? This issue would need to be resolved by participant stakeholders carefully through selection of agreed ‘moderators’ and agreed methods of questioning.

The second contribution to knowledge lies in the identification of a process whereby experiential nature was subconsciously expressed by the NS group then incorporated into a discursive built environment. This was an unexpected research finding, and prompts further questions. Firstly, to what extent is the existing built environment a reflection of such process? Secondly, how does this process contribute to our understanding of transcendent relationships between the built and natural environments? Answering these questions would help our understanding of the ways in which experiential nature influences built environments.

The first question is worthy of further research, as it will indicate the extent to which experiential nature influences the discursive constructions of the built environment, as measured by the physical built environment. Knowing the ways in which experiential nature is manifest in the physical built form can give greater understanding to the dimensions of a transcendent nature over built environment relationship.

However, it is the second question that is of particular interest here. The assumption that the built, and ipso facto, ourselves, are transcendent over nature is not correct in light of this question. The relationship is more complex than a simple reading of A is dominant over B. It is established that there is an explicit transcendent relationship of the built over nature, enacted by the NS group. This
relationship however obscures a secondary relationship where a physical nature is transcendent over the self (and by extension, the discursive built form), challenging the grounds of a self-nature relationship.

If this hidden and obscured relationship was made more explicit, through the use of appropriate language to identify the relationship, or by creating scenarios where the relationship can be identified and disclosed, then this may assist in creating more responsive discursive built environments that not only assist in creating experiential nature for users and occupiers, but also work with nature to create greater sensitive built – nature relationships such creating natural heating and cooling systems by use of heat from the sun, and cooling effects of wind. The challenge for decision makers (or stakeholders) lies in ensuring that this particular transcendent relationship is not obscured or downplayed by the dominant built over nature transcendent relationship, as it is currently seen within the interviews.

Finally, the three self-nature relationship models that can result in three particular kinds of built environments (of built environment transcendent over nature, as equal to nature, and experiential nature) is a third contribution of knowledge, as an indication of ways nature is constructed within a discursive built environment.

The following table (6.1) indicates the different kinds of nature encountered within the thesis. Latour, as noted in Chapter Two, rejects the idea of nature in favour of seeing nature as hybrids or assemblages. Swyngedouw, in the same chapter, claims nature is empty, ready to be filled with signifiers, while Naess, as explained, positions a physical nature within a relational-web framework.

In addition to the above theoretical constructions of nature, there are the three kinds of nature uncovered in the research. These are classified under Nature Serves, Nature Independent, and Experiential Nature in the table. These constructions point to the ways in which a self-nature relationship could develop.

The first column gives the author and name given to the construction, while the second illustrates or conceptualises in simple pictorial or diagrammatic form the
outcome of the theoretical construction. The third column indicates what the basis is for the conceptualisation – transcendent, immanent or Deep Ecology.

Figure 6.1: Picture of Beech Forest, South Island. Picture source, http://www.flickr.com/photos/mollivan_jon/5645417903/.

In order to provide a baseline representative of the physical nature, that is, a material reality that forms the starting point for the different constructions outlined in the table, reference is made to Figure 6.1, a photo of a beech forest typical of South Island sub-alpine forest.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name / Kind of nature</th>
<th>Illustration or conceptualisation</th>
<th>Basis – transcendent / immanence / Deep Ecology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latour:</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Latour Illustration" /></td>
<td>Immanence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemblages or hybrids (i.e. nature is seen as part of an assembly of items to create objects, in this case, a system of importing and exporting goods)</td>
<td>Picture source: New Zealand Herald, 5/1/12. Ports of Auckland on Waitemata Harbour, with Waitakere Ranges in far background.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swyngedouw:</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Swyngedouw Illustration" /></td>
<td>Transcendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty or metonymic (placing signifiers on empty nature)</td>
<td>(Word Cloud created by <a href="http://www.wordle.net/">http://www.wordle.net/</a>. Source of words: Actors narratives, without the words ‘nature’, ‘built’, ‘natural’ or ‘environment’ included in the word-cloud.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Naess: | Deep Ecology  
Relational-web  
(i.e. humans are part of a relational web, where knots are other elements within the total surrounding world. Knots are individual but have relationships with each other. They each together form a gestalt whole (web)). |
|---|---|
| Thesis: | Nature Serves  
(i.e. built over nature. Image of The Palm, Dubai, where the built is constructed over nature (the sea), ironically in the form of nature, and as a result of experiential nature – experiencing the palm tree) |
| Deep Ecology | Transcendent |
### Table 6.1: Different kinds of ‘nature’ encountered within the thesis, nature being represented by photos and pictorial forms that indicate the structure of nature within each theoretical row.

Table 6.1 indicates that nature is constructed differently by each theorist, and by the thesis research. No one theoretical construction of nature represents physical nature seen Figure 6.1. This contribution can assist in adding to the
multiplicity of ways of discursively constructing nature, including those done within a built environment discourse.

These contributions to knowledge assist in understanding better the state of human – nature relationships within planning, and in particular Communicative Planning. If these discursive constructions are identified and understood, planning outcomes may be more sensitive to nature overall.

**Could the contribution to knowledge inform development of planning skills?**

Within planning there are a number of skills that enable the creation of the built environment. Broadly speaking, these are observational skills, researching and noting the different social, environmental, cultural and economic contexts (popularly known as the four well-beings in a NZ context) that influence the built environment; skills in understanding the various forces and drivers that influence different stakeholders’ contributions towards the creation of the built environment; and thirdly, skills in fostering discourses that lead to creation of built environment futures within statutory plans that satisfy multiple stakeholders. These can be seen as knowledge, practice and implementation (Edwards & Bates 2011).

Knowledge skills can be enhanced with attention to the ways in which different stakeholders discursively construct nature, and how those constructions influence the real world context within which any development is proposed. These constructions are likely to be along the lines uncovered in the research: Nature Serves, Nature Independent and Experiential Nature.

To the three sets of skills listed, discursive skills can be added. These skills can be developed to find ways that particular discourses, if they demonstrate adverse effects on nature within the discourse, can be challenged by critically inquiring about how the self cognitively constructs nature. Understanding and identification of the different influences on the self, such as profit maximisation, or nature (as seen in EN), or recognition of nature can lead to greater holistic understanding of the role such influences play in the discursive constructions of nature, and open the way for such influences to be questioned. Challenges to the
self, as discussed, can force questions to be raised internally within the self about how nature is discursively constructed, and the possibility can arise that adverse constructions would be amended or discarded.

Could the research inform development of planning research skills? Critical Discourse Analysis (using DCS) formed the second-level analysis of the research data. As discussed in Chapter Two, CDA adopts a position of critically examining discourses that gives rise to how certain subjects or objects are constructed within society. The perspective is typically current, that is, examining a current critical problem in order to say something about it.

The research investigated not a current situation, but a prior situation, a discursive construction that occurred before any material problem arose. A focus of this prior situation is on the self, which engages in this construction. In a sense, critical analysis starts at the beginning of the production of the material built form with the discourses of various stakeholders. This perspective opens the way for critical analysis of the discursive construction before it becomes a reality. In this way, CDA, as a methodology, looks ‘backwards’ towards the source of the discursive construction – the self.

Van Dijk extends CDA so that it specifically engages with analysis of the self along socio-cognitive approaches (DCS). A return to the site of the self in discourse analysis can lead to better outcomes as (discussed above) any criticism of the discursive construction can be had with the cognitive self that is engaging in the construction, prompting deeper and critical understanding, by the self, and by others, such as planning decision makers, of the role of the self in any discursive construction.

The thesis research indicates the usefulness of such an approach in generating new ideas about the discursive construction of our worlds. For instance, research can be undertaken in focussing on the society side of the DCS triangle (Figure 2.2), and how it informs the discursive construction of trees in the urban environment. This can inform the ways in which trees benefit different kinds of urban and social environments beyond a strict ecological assessment of air quality or stormwater attenuation. DCS as a particular methodology used within
discourse analysis is found to be useful in isolating particular critical components of discursive constructions.

**Further research questions**

While the question - is there a discursive construction of nature within a built environment discourse? – is answered in the affirmative in this thesis, other questions arise from the research, providing grounds for future research.

**Link between Resource Management Act and discursive constructions of nature**

While the thesis research focused to a large degree on individual discursive constructions of nature, work could be undertaken in understanding the link between a District Plan or a statutory document which forms the legal instrument that guides built form development, and the discursive construction of nature by those participating in the writing of that instrument. Indications are that the experiential nature described by the NS group, and the independent nature described by the NI group is transformed into nature that is subject to legal definitions and consequently placed into a management regime that identifies and manages specific parts of nature according to the kind of development proposed.

This may offer fruitful discussion about the role of the District Plan (that ultimately obtains its inherent power and shape from legislation, the Resource Management Act), in shaping natural environments, and the flexibility it offers in influencing different constructions of nature (e.g. a Plan that is more demanding in terms of the way nature is discursively constructed and hence seen by various stakeholders, influencing proposed developments). This flexibility was noted in the contrast between the Whangarei District Plan ethos, and the Manukau District Plan ethos, as explained in Chapter Three, where nature was fundamentally framed differently between the two plans.

Critically, does the District Plan represent the best tool available for guiding development of the built environment within nature? Or are there other tools that should be employed in conjunction with it, such as those offered by Luce-Kapler and Deleuze discussed below – a more responsive and open Plan that
embodies ideas of a Naessian inspired relational-web for example? Or is a written plan even needed?

Possible investigation into changes in self in response to awareness of nature

The cognitive self clearly has an influential role to play in any discursive construction of nature, or the built environment. Naess theorised that the self would ‘enlarge’ in consideration of a specific construction about the world that placed the self within a ‘relational-web’. Investigations can be made examining how changes in self over time or in response to specific events, lead to changes in discourses about nature within built environment discourses or what are the influences and critical markers that lead to changes in cognitive self that would lead to self-realisation?

One of the interesting findings in the research was the existence of experiential nature, and how the NS group unconsciously recreated this experience within their discursive built environment. Could the existence of experiential nature construction seen in the NS group be used in a way that encourages the self to be enlarged? If the self were enlarged, would the discursive construction of nature change so that nature became an independent autonomous being with agency, as seen in the NI group?

Future directions - Alternative Theoretical Viewpoints

Here we look forward, out of the thesis. There are two aspects to this view. Firstly, questions can be asked that provide grounds for future research, and secondly, consideration of other theoretical viewpoints in relation to discourse, to transcendence and views of nature can provide pathways and contexts for future research considerations.

Luce-Kapler – Breaking apart language

Luce-Kapler writes about the ways in which written language constructs subjects – in her investigations – how women are framed by writing. She offers consideration of the ways in which the monolithic perception of written language or a text can be recast as fractured, building on the inherent nature of
language to be a dynamic system, responding to changes in contexts and meanings (Luce-Kapler 2004, p.19).

If we accept that language is a continuous ‘adapting and self-determining system’ that changes ‘directions’, then it is fruitful to consider the conditions under which statutory planning texts could change. This leads onto consideration of how such change can discursively re-cast nature from an inferior transcendent position to an equal status with built environments, or alternatively, re-cast the built environment to an inferior transcendent position, or as a knot of equal status within the relational-web.

This dynamism within language can change the meaning that is found within a word for a particular object (for example, coffee, an ‘evil drink’ in the 1600s to a consumer object late the 1800s), or change the word of a particular object to recast meaning (e.g. ‘gay’ meaning happy or cheerful, now means a person of homosexual orientation), or bring forth new words for new objects (e.g. mobiles / cell-phones / iPhones / Galaxy III’s to describe the product of new technological innovations).

The dynamism also reveals the power structures of particular meanings. For instance, computers were the preserve of technical computer science departments within universities and research institutes, so the creation of the meaning of different objects found within the computing realm rested with those working inside these departments and institutes. The term GUI, meaning Graphic User Interface (how the user interacts with the computer) was defined, at the time of the development within computer labs, as new ways of interacting with computers. This term embodying particular conceptualisations of the ways in which the user interacted with the computer, influenced the development of the Apple computer and its revolutionary screen desktop filing system. Marketing departments and by extension, the consumer culture, re-defines new technologies emerging from such research labs, creating objects such as the iPod, iPhone and iPad, the meaning of which references a particular brand, and a particular lifestyle. The power exercised by the consumer regulates the technical sphere to the background, to service a dominant consumer culture that has the
power to name things. Language in these examples is dynamic, and consequently is a site of resistance and ‘potential revolution’.

The “… shifting conditions and contexts…” of language lies within a larger social context, where “society’s many agents, discourses and institutions interact, collide and create perturbations that cannot be resolved into coherent narratives” notes Luce-Kapler (2004). The dynamism of cultures, technologies, or natural and human-made systems, as well the dynamism in language, evident in the world, permits continuous opportunities for various meanings to undergo transformation, where different concepts are attached to meanings according to the kind of contextual change that coalesce.

We recall here Swyngedouw’s (2009) argument that nature, as a noun, is an empty signifier into which meanings are poured. The current socio-economic construct privileges some meanings over others. These meanings hold greater power, and influence the ways in which nature is treated or discursively constructed. This meaning seems ‘natural’ (Mills 2007, p. 11). It feels entirely ‘natural’ and normal to speak of nature in one particular way or manner, to construct it thus. This privileged construction denies other alternative constructions, placing and contrasting these ‘abnormal’ views and positions against a ‘normal’ construction of nature.

The hegemonic normality of one privileged view of nature holds dangers for Luce-Kapler, who suggests that:

Kristeva (1980) described the importance of demystifying this desire for language to be universal and unifying. If language were so encompassing, interpretation would stop, leaving our lives stagnate and rigid. Instead, in a biological existence that is ever emerging and changing, our symbolic realm also must allow for the multiplicity of an individual’s identifications just as Grosz spoke about a multiplicity of pasts. As Kristeva pointed out, language is an open structure that one can transgress and which continually produces change and renewal through discursive practices … (Luce-Kapler 2004, p. 87).

Regardless of the debate and contestations over a privileged normalised meaning about nature, the opportunity to contest nature as created by the privileged discourse is constantly available. Firstly, any particular meaning
cannot fully and substantially enclose nature. There is, as May (2005) suggests, always something more. Artists and poets see essentialism within nature that influences their works, leading us to contemplate nature in various ‘moods’ or according to different aesthetic viewpoints. Or the dynamic systems of nature produces results that have an element of surprise (e.g. record snow melt, a result of record snowfall, in mid-western United States producing record breaking floods in the lower states in early-mid 2011, overpowering levees built to control such floods), leading to changes in language about nature.

Secondly, the multiplicity of beliefs about nature exhibited by people can be seen as a reaction to the hegemonic power displayed by the dominant (socio-political) construction. As Foucault notes, power is not a totalising dominant force of one over another; power is omnipresent and flows between and around things and objects, including concepts of nature. A will to impose particular meanings meets resistance and contestation by others, and opportunity for the creation of alternative constructions of nature. The text and language about nature is the site of contestation and of creation of alternatives. This can be seen in the multiplicity of groups concerned with various aspects of nature, for example, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of NZ.

The statements contained within discourse by a stakeholder such as Forest & Bird, and by a District Plan, create a ‘world’, the as if world (Luce-Kapler). This is the discursive world as seen in Figure 5.1 (Chapter Five), a world constructed within the discursive sphere which normatively lays out how the physical and visible natural world is to be. These statements can be re-worded, re-formulated or re-worked, in this case, to achieve greater balance in the tension between nature and built environment, following Luce-Kapler. This can be achieved through legitimisation and privileging of alternative constructions and views (contrary to and against the symbolic violence (Gunder & Mouat 2002) practiced by the RMA, which privileges certain discursive constructions about nature).

The question becomes who does the re-working? Is it the community for which the District Plan is created ostensibly as an expression of how they would like to
see development occur? Or could it be those for whom self-realisation is achieved (assuming one could measure it)? A related and larger question is if a discursive re-working using different words and signifiers, or recasting different meanings were achieved, would a different world be created?

Within this thesis we could preview such re-workings of discourse. If we take the Councillor’s narrative (Chapter Three) for example, and hypothetically change the narrative in favour of a NI cognitive contextual model, could this change the discursive construction of nature?

The original narrative is:

> To use a saying expressed by this interviewee, nature is good nature if it is in the right place and it is the right kind of nature. Nature is static, pristine. It provides people with psychological benefits, and can be seen as the essence of a place (turangawaewae). Despite this, nature is reduced to manipulated, manageable, discrete elements that are actively managed and protected (‘shoring up beach side cliffs’, ‘removing mangrove vegetation’) to support/protect economic benefits (views, access to harbour facilities). To do this, nature is minimized (‘just pampas grass’, ‘only mangroves’).

Hypothetical changes could see this kind of narrative being developed:

> To use a saying expressed by this interviewee, nature is good nature if it flourishes wherever and whenever. Nature is dynamic and wild. It provides people with psychological benefits, and can be seen as the essence of a place (turangawaewae). In addition, nature is seen as a holistic world that is passively observed and the built environment is

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26 Section 5(2) of the RMA outlines the purpose of the Act: “(2) In this Act, sustainable management means managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety...” (added emphasis).

27 Maori term that means a home place where a person comes from. Place is not limited to a geographical marker, but has a more encompassing aspect including physical and cultural landscapes.
managed where circumstances dictate (e.g. ‘letting beach side cliffs fall’ in recognition of natural processes and moving houses back from the edge or prohibiting development near the edge of the cliffs, or ‘leaving mangrove vegetation to grow and evolve’, again, in recognition of natural processes, but also making observations that the mangroves are flourishing because of excess nutrients from surrounding land uses such as farming or horticulture are washing into the harbour) to support/protect natural environmental benefits across a range of scales – holistic, through to local scales, and a range of processes, such as those found in coastal and harbour edges. To do this, nature is envisaged as a holistic and interconnected state (‘pampas grass’ in one area has (unknown) links with ‘mangroves’ in a different area).

This hypothetical change figures nature as a different entity, holistic and integral to human life. We could see that the Councillor could have engaged in a discourse that sees nature as such, but this may have required development of the self, along Naessian lines.

This example of a hypothetical shift in relationships between self and nature positions the self in dynamic movement with an active nature. The self responds to observations about the state of nature (e.g. not building near cliff edges that have a history of crumbling), and is animated by the forces of nature. The self moves from controller of nature to active participant in a creative, dynamic and fluid dance with nature. The creativity seen in this discourse leads us to consideration of immanence, as outlined by Deleuze.

**Hillier - Planning and planes of immanence**

Hillier also discusses transcendence within the context of planning, figuring it a ‘plane of transcendence’ (Deleuze 1987, Hillier 2010). Land use plans are transcendent and teleological in character, regulating land use, specifying where such uses are to be performed, or establishing and maintaining identities such as landowner, or residency. These actions are the expressions of ‘judgement and
identity’ that act to render a transcendent plane (Hillier 2010, p. 456). This view complements Deleuze’s conception of ‘planes of immanence’.

The ‘planes of transcendence’ are the mediating forms by which May’s qualities (superiority, two objects/things/concepts) of transcendence operate. The District Plan forms one example. A critical component of the creation of the Plan is a particular discourse about the subject of the Plan (i.e. guidelines for proposed development and built forms), and what desired outcomes are to be enacted within the Plan (i.e. that such development should not adversely affect natural and physical resources amongst other things). The context of the Plan, nature (as well as communities), is assumed (by planners, and stakeholders) to be a fixed, specific, definable and value free object (J. Hillier 2008), somewhere ‘out there’, and an un-complaining recipient of efforts to shape nature to suit built environment demands.

In contrast is a plane of immanence. It is defined not by the objects found within the transcendent plane, but generally by a myriad of forces and desires acting within the plane, constructing objects and the plane itself:

... It is the field of immanence of ‘actants’ desires. Desire is the mechanism of connection. The plane is open to ‘new connections, creative and novel becomings that will give it new patterns and triggers of behaviour’ (Bonta and Protevi, 2004: 62–3) (Hillier 2008, p. 30, original author references).

This ‘out there’ world of desires and forces (and not objects) is mediated through discourse that, as indicated by Foucault (Chapter Two) contains a signifier and a signified. These should be ‘decoupled’, suggests Hillier. Meaning found within the signifier/signified is

rather relational, contextual and contingent. Meaning cannot be ‘given’ as such, but is understood, often differently by different people (terms such as dense, village, park, sustainability and so on) (Hillier 2008, p. 25).

By arguing for a ‘decoupling’ between the signifier and the signified, Hillier signals not a move backwards towards the ternary language structure where things are linked together by resemblances, but a move forwards to open up a gap between the signifier and the signified whereby the fixed immobility of the
signifier can be challenged, disrupted, split apart and broken down to be reconfigured into new signifiers and meanings. This is a direct challenge to the power inherent within the transcendent structure; the strongest ‘talk’ designates things, but by exploiting hidden gaps in discourse, this power can be disassembled.

Deliberately unbalancing a signifier *becoming* the thing that it signifies is enables a new perspective on the world when the signifier adopts a different shade of meaning. Such moves open up possibilities, such that “…unexpected elements to come into play and things not to quite work out as expected…” as indicated where “…meaning is not ‘given’ as such, but is understood, often differently by different people” (Hillier 2008).

While Hillier applies this argument to spatial planning contexts, the characteristics identified here can equally be applied to a discourse about nature. If we discursively construct nature within a plane of immanence, removing it from the inferior position it occupies in transcendence as seen in the NS group, we can be more open to the real world contexts of nature. We note the forces that drive nature – the energy contained in wind that moves sand across a beach, the situation of temporary natures where landslides affect how watercourses run across the land, temporarily damming watercourses before water finds its way around the dam. We can observe how chances play a role in developing situations found within nature, a seed pod blown to its resting place where it sprouts, where the Puriri tree is both affected by and has effect on the contingent forces and materials surrounding it. We see how those forces are in flux on both a short and long term basis.

Nature, in this way, escapes the rigid nature of a transcendent relationship with the built environment, where nature is specifically assessed for specific purposes, or placed into management regimes that subdues and tames nature, becoming an object that is subject to forces from the superior in the relationship. Decoupling the signifier and signified relationship brings the vitality of nature into view. This is a concern of the next theorist.
Bennett - Political ecology of things

Bennett’s book “Vibrant Matter: a political ecology of things” (Bennett 2010) challenges the notion that the world is a mixture of discrete animate and inanimate objects. She explores the idea of objects and things not being discrete items, where each performs functions independently of the other, but that things are (following Latour) assemblages, made from many other things, each of which has particular energy and vitality, giving the final product a vitality that is hard to ignore.

The example in her book of the power outage experienced in north-eastern United States and south-eastern parts of Canada in August 2003 (the height of the northern summer) is expressed ontologically (and materially) as a “volatile mix of coal, sweat, electromagnetic fields, computer programs, electron streams, profit motives, heat, lifestyles, nuclear fuel, plastic, fantasies of mastery, static, legislation, water, economic theory, wire and wood” (ibid, p. 25).

Bennett’s vital materialism rests on a variety of concepts that is listed for further discussion (without irony, mirroring her example of the power outage); assemblages, Latour’s notion of actants, physics, the temporal dimensions to material, and critically, in a manner similar to a Naessian expansion of the self, extension of the recognition of the inherent material vitality of the self to other things and objects around us.

Essentially, objects around us, including ourselves, are assemblages of a variety of components, each of which have active physical properties (that is, atoms, chemical reactions), which act on and interact with other actants within the assemblage. The objects appear to us to be stable, but Bennett points out in a long-term view, what appears stable, is not. Concrete, as material, crumbles and cracks, glass shatters and is worn down by physical forces, and carbon dioxide accumulates in the atmosphere to a degree that it alters regional weather patterns. This process enables new assemblages and new forces of materialism to emerge.

Each of the concepts detailed by Bennett contributes to the idea that there is a vital materialism that animates the world around us, with a diverse actants. This
is an essentialist position, rather than a constructionist perspective, and offers a way past discursive constructions of nature. If the self recognises the vital materialism of the self and others in a relational-web, and the agency of the self in acting on and being acted upon by other objects that also have a vital materialism, then a more nuanced and sensitive discourse can be created about nature, and the built environment, with subsequent effects on both nature and the built environment. The discursive construction of nature would reflect the dynamic fluidity seen in nature, while built environments would be designed to respond to such dynamism. Bennett offers an opportunity to animate a constructionist perspective of nature, and the built environment.

Using the initial (and wholly unexpected) example of *assemblages*, an ontological list of objects found in front of a bagel store in Baltimore: “...one large men's black plastic work glove, one dense mat of oak pollen, one unblemished dead rat, one white plastic bottle cap, one smooth stick of wood” (Bennett 2010, p. 4), a reflection on the various forces that delivered and arranged this particular combination of objects, the forces inherent within each object, and the ways in which each object reflects different forces, Bennett concludes that there is “Not Flower Power, or Black Power, or Girl Power, but *Thing-Power*: the curious ability of inanimate to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle” (ibid, p. 6).

The *Thing-Power* is additional to the power found within animate objects, and Bennett’s contention is that this particular power, which animates life, should be recognised as a valid consideration for how humans arrange their lives. The *Thing-Power* of inanimate objects rests on the findings that at a certain level atoms or chemicals arrange themselves in particular ways to form the object that then is the expression of that particular arrangement, such as a painting, or a sage plant. Such power inherent within the object should not be dismissed or ignored, but instead recognised.

In this way Bennett argues for a primacy of an understanding about the *Thing-Power* that can create are more nuanced and deeper ecological ways of living. Nature in this light can be seen as having a *Thing-Power* that is equal to other
Thing-Powers (for example, human-made islands in the sea), and consequently the agency of nature can be incorporated into our discourse about the built environment. This ethically positions the self in relationship to other forms of power, and asking how should that relationship be formed and operates? Such a position is close to the Nasessian concept of the relational web, and is a fruitful avenue for exploring ways in which the self can, as Naess would have it, Self-Realise!

Each of these three theorists offers similar but different pathways forward from this thesis for examination of the nature–human relationship. Luce-Kapler reminds us that language is not a monolithic static framework frozen in time, but instead, we can explore the ways in which language can create different possibilities. Hillier examines the role of immanence in urban planning, arguing for recognition of the desires and forces acting with planes of immanence. Finally Bennett opens the way to a more holistic understanding of the world around us, through recognition of Thing-Power, the power of objects within the world to both affect and be affected by other kinds of power. In each of these perspectives, new directions could be found for the discursive constructions of nature.

**Concluding note**

We create our built environments through our discourses. Our built environments can be beautiful and can inspire feelings of joy. They can also harm our natural environments. Every time anyone discusses the creation of built environments, they also discuss nature. How it is to be, what its function should be. Such discussion can be transcendent, placing nature at the behest of the built environment. It can also place nature equivalent to the built form. And discussions may also hide the emotional experiences we have of nature, and how that affects us.

Examining aspects of the transcendent relationship could rework the dominant relationship of the built environment over nature. Using written and spoken language in different and unexpected ways can liberate nature from such a relationship, offering better outcomes for the relationship. Recognising and acknowledging the agency and materialism of nature, and by engaging with
nature, not within a field of transcendence, but on a plane of immanence, can support this change in the self, and consequently, the discursive construction of nature.

To quote a saying seen on a wall in Montreal, 1995 – *Tes yeux sont esclaves de l’ordinaire* (Your eyes are slaves to the ordinary). Given this thesis, perhaps it should be *Tes paroles sont esclaves de l’ordinare* (Your words are slaves to the ordinary). It is time to engage with nature in a more dynamic and holistic manner, and watch what we say blossom into a dynamic and fulfilling relationship for both humans and nature.
Bibliography


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