

Caring for Our Special Places and Relationships

Guidance on relational approaches
to environmental governance in Aotearoa.

For Policy and Decision Makers.

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June 2023

This Policy Guidance is based on a research thesis conducted as part of New Zealand's Bioheritage National Science Challenge, Ngā Koiora Tuku Iho, Strategic Outcome 7, Adaptive Governance and Policy.

E., Tapsell (2022) Transitioning Environmental Governance in Aotearoa: Tikanga Māori and a Political Ethic of Care. Victoria University of Wellington: Wellington. Unpublished Masters Thesis. <https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.21685091>

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Introduction -

1. We can have a future where our special places, native plants, wildlife, and people flourish. We can live in a society that values caring and reciprocal relationships to each other and the environment; where we are all valued for who we are and the different knowledges and experiences we have. We can all work collaboratively to care for and enjoy our special places and communities.
2. However, current governance systems and the ideals that support these systems do not always prioritise care or reciprocal relationships. This lack of care in governance systems causes imbalances in relationships to each other and to the environment.
3. For example, mana whenua (local hapū) are the kaitiaki (guardians) of the lands in Aotearoa and have for generations worked to maintain caring kin-centric relationships with their lands and waterways. But, when some people in government and business prioritise their worldview and block mana whenua from practising knowledge and wisdom, these communities suffer, and the land suffers jointly. For instance, supported by government policies and public infrastructure our waterways have been heavily polluted and abused, despite the importance of healthy waterways for human survival. The government and settler populations have often gained economically and socially during this process of pollution (housing and agricultural developments). In contrast, for many Māori communities the pollution of waterways was detrimental to their communities way of life, having had special reciprocal relationships with waterways for generations.
4. New research by Tapsell (2022) suggests that to care for our environments effectively, we must also care for each other in fair and equitable ways – acknowledging the different intersections of power, privilege and history facing different groups and communities. This includes caring for Te Tiriti o Waitangi relationships – one of the most special and unique relationships in Aotearoa New Zealand.
5. This guidance presents a briefing on the research undertaken by Tapsell (2022) which explored the dual issue of care (for each other and for the environment) that needs to be addressed in environmental governance and policy systems. The guidance explains the need for a Political Ethic of Care Toolbox to be used by policy, planning and decision makers in environmental governance to support more caring and sustainable relationships.



Aerial view of Mt Maunganui, beach and city in the distance, New Zealand

Key points



'Care' is devalued in our governance and policy systems. This impacts on our relationships, including relationships to the environment and between Indigenous, non-Indigenous and the state (or specifically, Māori and the state and non-Māori).



Governments, leaders, and organisations want to better care for environments and communities. But harmful values, ideas and historic patterns are institutionalised.



Tikanga Māori is increasingly being used to voice 'care' based narratives in Aotearoa.



Māori knowledge and communities undertake extra care labour, while being left out of decision making in environmental contexts.



To have caring relationships to our environments, we must have caring relationships between Te Tiriti o Waitangi partners, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous.



If we cannot care for each other, we cannot care for our environments.

Key policy implications



Policy shouldn't focus on caring for the environment in isolation. It must recognise the need to have caring (equitable and fair) relationships across communities too and this specifically includes Te Tiriti o Waitangi relationships.



Policy needs to explicitly name and address past grievances and social issues (Te Tiriti breaches, racism, sexism, classism, privilege, and power structures) to address them.



Reflection and responsiveness are needed for care-based relationships.



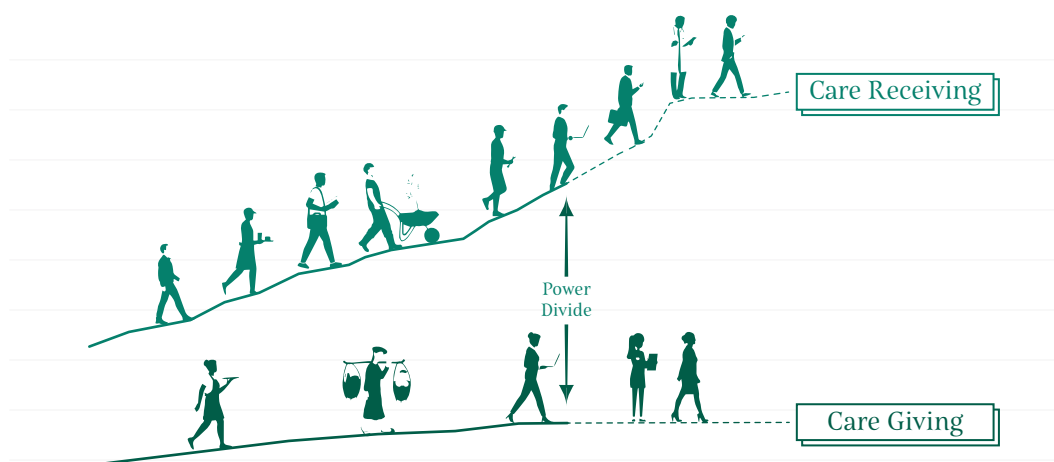
Accountability measures: valuing care and reciprocal relationships in practice not just words.



Recommended Toolbox (page 9-21) for policy makers to assist in the creation of caring and 'tika' environmental policy and decision making.

Understanding the Issue – a lack of care

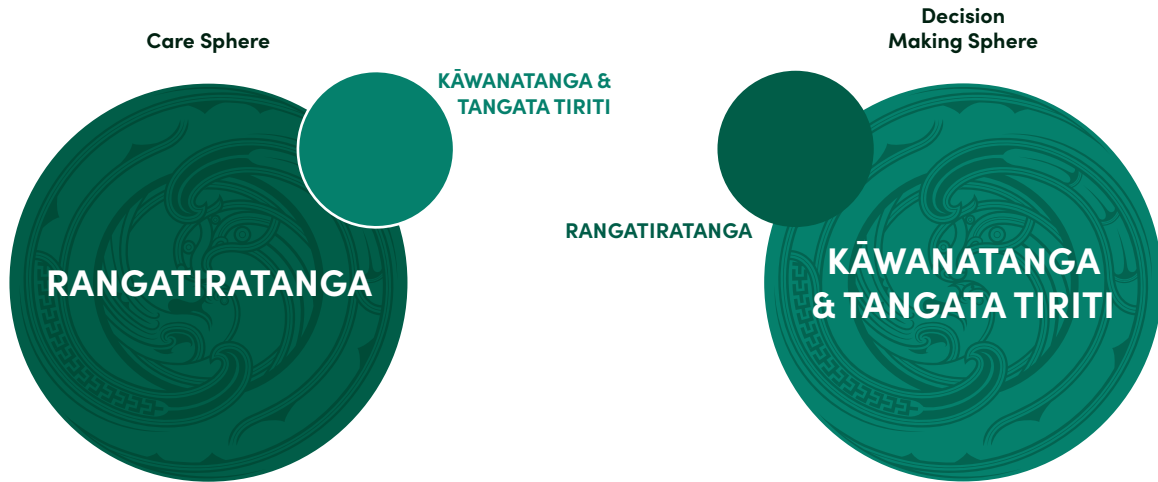
6. Locally and globally, we are seeing the consequences of governance systems that are inadequate at caring for environments, with an accelerating decline in biodiversity loss and rising pressures from climate change. The rise in misinformation, social division, homelessness, health, and wealth inequities also express the systematic failure to care for communities too.
7. Care Ethics are relational feminist theories that originated in the twentieth century as a direct response and challenge to more traditional and 'universalistic' moral theories of earlier centuries. Colonial ideologies developed within this universalistic moral framework, and they saw women and the work of women, as relatively unimportant to political life. The environment, often gendered female was also seen in this way. Care theories challenged these individual beliefs and argued for the importance of relational political theories.
8. For many decades, Care Ethics theorists have highlighted the simultaneous significance and devaluing of care and relational work in Western society and politics. Care theorists have further argued that those who hold the least power in society (women, Indigenous and non-white communities, immigrants, and lower-class communities) provide the most care and receive the least care from government policies and systems. Whereas those who are the most privileged or wealthy, have the best access to 'care infrastructure' (health care, transport, food etc) but provide the least care work.



9. Tapsell (2022) suggests that this imbalanced pattern of care giving and receiving is evident between Indigenous and settler governments and communities in Aotearoa. Whereby, those within the Rangatiratanga Sphere of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi relationship (iwi, hapū and Māori) provide more care and receive less, whereas those within the Kāwanatanga Sphere (Crown, Government, and Settler populations) receive more care and provide less.
10. One example (see Indigenous Knowledge and Care in Aotearoa page 6) of this care imbalance is the use of Mātauranga Māori and tikanga within environmental governance without adequately providing for the authority or rangatiratanga of the Māori communities from which this knowledge and practice comes from.

11. *Figure 1* is based on and continues the diagrams as part of *Matike Mai Aotearoa* (2016) and *He Puapua* (2019). *Figure 1* compares the Decision Making Sphere with a new Care Sphere. This comparison highlights the amount of carework undertaken by the Rangatiratanga Sphere but without equal decision making abilities.

Figure 1. Care Sphere and Decision Making Sphere of Te Tiriti o Waitangi Partners.



Indigenous Knowledge and Care in Aotearoa

12. Tikanga is increasingly being used and provided for in policy, legislation and planning surrounding environmental management and governance in Aotearoa. In these instances, tikanga Māori is providing a care-based narrative and framework for managing the environment. For example, the use of “mauri” and “mana” in National Policy Statement on Freshwater 2020 (2019) and New Zealand’s Biodiversity Strategy (2020) or the use of ‘kaitiakitanga’ in the Resource Management Act 1991.
13. Outside of environmental governance tikanga Māori is also being used to guide well-being initiatives and other social aspirations (such as He Ara Waiora Framework by Treasury 2020 and the Well-Being Budgets). This reflects a broader motivation by communities, governments, and leaders to be more caring and equitable and this is a positive and hopeful step. **However, it is nearly impossible to use tikanga Māori within Crown or government processes in a way that is neutral or removed from wider colonial histories and their implications.**

14. There has been a historic disregard for tikanga and uncaring relationships between settler states and Indigenous communities in Aotearoa. A fundamental aspect of this uncaring relationship has been power binaries brought to Aotearoa with settler colonial traditions and common law. Despite decades of change and significant steps towards better Te Tiriti relationships, the legacies of these power binaries remain, including power imbalances and inequities between settler communities and Māori. Often, these legacies are ignored or invisible, believed to be in the past rather than acknowledging the way these issues still affect communities and environments.

Unhelpful and Entrenched Binary Beliefs

superior	inferior	self	other
Male	Female	logic	illogic
individual	collective	mind	body
power	care	civilised	savage
culture	nature	settler	Indigenous

This table was inspired by Ngāhuia Murphy’s table in *Te Awa Atua* (2013:31)

15. Sometimes, this has and can mean that Māori communities and their knowledges and traditions are providing un-reciprocated care for Aotearoa. For example, in the early settler colonial era this care work included the use of Māori labour and land to support and care for colonial communities and industries, often to the detriment of Māori communities and lands. In more recent times this might include providing culture knowledge to non-Māori for free, performing cultural roles in the workplace and being accountable to both non-Māori systems and workplaces as well as tikanga systems and communities.
16. Tapsell (2022) has described this care work as “cultural care work” or labour and their research indicates that despite the good intentions for incorporating tikanga or te reo Māori in policies and processes this can sometimes continue to replicate power imbalances. For example, Māori communities who provide crucial knowledge (such as tikanga), time and resources to support government initiatives or policies, are undervalued and left out of critical decision making about their special places with government and the Crown holding the purse strings and veto power. Many scholars and researchers in Aotearoa have pointed to similar issues (Margaret 2016; Bennett 2020; Haar and Martin 2021; Ruckstuhl et. al 2021; Rauika Māngai 2022; Tadaki et. al 2022)
17. Therefore, when using Māori knowledge and legal systems to support better environmental and social outcomes we must also ensure that the use of this knowledge is equitable, respectful, and caring to the communities that it comes from. This requires governments, policy workers, organisations, communities, and individuals to reflect and reassess what it means to be in caring relationships with Māori, as was envisaged when signing Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Including, reflecting and acknowledging the harm and privilege that has resulted for different communities within Aotearoa’s history.

Care Ethics and Tikanga - Utilising a Political Ethic of Care Alongside Tikanga Māori in Environmental Governance and Policy

18. A Political Ethic of Care (as described by Joan Tronto 1993) recognises the inequity in care and the systematic failings to provide for or value care due to Western and colonial ideologies of women and care labour. A Political Ethic of Care argues that to enable a more equitable and just society care must be included not just in our personal or private lives but also in our political theories and systems. But, that this requires critical engagements with history, power, privilege, class, gender and race and how this impacts on the way we provide and are provided care in society. It also requires a focus on what care actually means in a relational sense, as often terms like care, love and kindness are used within settler colonial narratives to explain harmful and uncaring processes.
19. A Political Ethic of Care explains that rather than a paternalistic or dominating view of care, 'attentiveness, responsibility, competence, responsiveness and caring with' each other is vital to practicing caring relationships and politics (Tronto 1993;2013).
20. Tikanga Māori guides political and private process within te ao Māori. Tikanga Māori contains knowledge, legal frameworks and concepts that are based in a relational philosophy whereby communities and ecosystems have kin-centric relationships based on reciprocal care. Mana, manaaki, utu, rangatiratanga, kaitiakitanga, aroha, mauri, rāhui, whakapapa, whanaungatanga (amongst many other aspects of tikanga) express and maintain the interdependency between environments and people. Therefore, Care Ethics and tikanga have shared relational qualities. However, as found in Tapsell's (2022) research, when tikanga is used alone within our current governance and policy systems (which do not prioritise care) this practice can continue imbalanced relationships and result in Māori communities and tikanga providing extra care that is not adequately valued or reciprocated.

Helpful values and beliefs



21. This policy briefing therefore provides a toolbox for decision makers to support a care based and tikanga informed transition within environmental governance. The Toolbox is based on A Political Ethic of Care concepts and aims to support bridging the care gap in current environmental governance relationships.
22. This guidance has explained just one aspect of care in policy and governance, further areas outside of environmental governance may similarly benefit from applying some of these frameworks, questions, and concepts (See page 9-21 for Toolbox and page 21 for Transition Diagram).
23. When we fail to care for environments, we fail to care for communities, but equally, when we fail to care for each other we are unable to care properly for the environment. If we strive for caring and reciprocal Te Tiriti relationships, the founding relationship of Aotearoa New Zealand, then we will be better at practicing caring relationships across other communities and environments.

Political Ethic of Care Toolbox for Environmental Policy, Planning and Decision Makers

Why should you use it?

A Political Ethic of Care analysis helps you to:

- Improve the policy and plan's ability to build reciprocal relationships and make decisions that are care-based towards environments and communities.
- Inform a Te Tiriti approach that is based in good-will and true partnership.
- Help decolonise practices within your organisation or Ministry and its planning and policy.

What it involves?

- Applying a critical lens to the way power and privilege impact your decisions, planning, policy, or governance.
- Naming and being explicit about colonialism, sexism, racism, and classism to help stop these reappearing in policy and planning.
- Acknowledge and account for historic imbalances particularly towards Māori land and environmental rights and responsibilities.
- Critically analysing how care is or will operate within your policy or plan.
- Prioritising mana whenua relationships to environments.
- Writing out your initial thoughts and then reassessing and reflecting on this again with a set of questions based on a Political Ethic of Care.

What will you get out of it?

- Policy that aims to value care and relationships to each other and the environment.
- Policy that aims to account for those who have too much power and privilege as well as considering historically marginalised groups from a strengths-based and mana affirming perspective.
- More effective policy and planning for tackling systematic inequities.

What are the ideal circumstances for use?

- When seeking cultural advisors or when using tikanga Māori in your policy.
- When working with environmental policy, planning and decision making.
- When following a Tiriti framework and analysis (which is now entrenched in Public Service Act 2020).
- When policies, plans or strategies do not appear to have immediate care issues, or need for discussions about power and privilege. Using a Political Ethic of Care becomes more necessary as less obvious issues are likely to be missed or invisible to policy writers.

What are the limitations?

- A Political Ethic of Care analysis does not replace engagement, co-designing and working with iwi, hapū or whānau directly.
- A Political Ethic of Care will require some self-reflection from policy writers.
- The effectiveness of this framework and analysis relies on the willingness and desire for those using it to want to work in more caring ways with mana whenua communities.

STEP 0: Key Reading & Toolbox References

Note this is not an exhaustive list. This is just a small sample of key readings more can and should be sourced.

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Blue Spring along Te Waihou Walkway in Hamilton, Waikato, New Zealand

STEP 1.

CARE WORKSHEET/GUIDE

Write out the core aspects your plan/project/policy is focused on by answering the initial questions below.

Attentive - caring about

What is the issue you are focusing on?
E.g. Wetland loss, sea-level rise, or biodiversity.

What is the history of this issue/context?

What are the obvious power dynamics and how is care involved?

What has already been raised by mana whenua communities about this project, plan, or policy in previous years?

Write your response

Write out the core aspects your plan/project/policy is focused on by answering the initial questions below.

Caring with
- Solidarity, trust, respect, plurality, communication

How will this policy nurture relationships between Māori and government?

How will you support mana whenua responsibilities and rights to the whenua in your plan, policy, or decisions?

What care services will you provide to ensure more balanced Te Tiriti partnerships with mana whenua?

How will you work alongside tangata whenua, mana whenua and tangata Tiriti communities fairly, acknowledging past imbalances?

Write your response

STEP 2. REFLECTION

Looking at the answers given in STEP 1 or by analysing your draft policy or plan – see how you have or have not addressed the questions below. And what issues or contexts you may have ignored? What might you need to add, rethink, or redevelop?

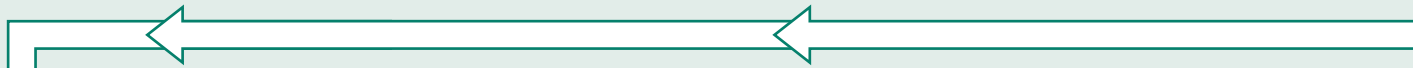
1 Has colonial history and the specific effects of this to your plan/project been acknowledged explicitly- including steps to address this?

2 Reflect on your own positionalities of power, privilege, gender, and class – how might these affect your thinking and planning policies?



8 Is there flexibility in the plan, policy and decision for mana whenua and minority groups? What is the specific context and capacity of mana whenua and how can you respect this?

7 How are mana whenua and local communities being engaged, involved, and given agency in the issue you are working on?



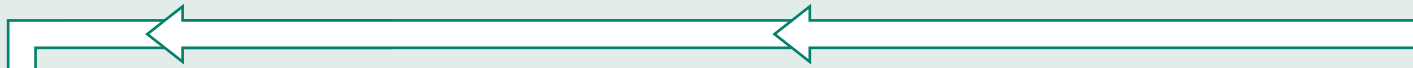
9 How are resources being allocated - is it equitable?

10 What assumptions are being made about tangata whenua, women, or other marginalized communities?

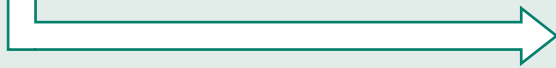


16 Is the use of tikanga neutral or is it acknowledged within its political position and history?

15 How have you included tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake in your goals?



17 In the focus on protecting the environment, are relationships between communities and environments being forgotten- specifically tangata whenua relationships?



3 What is your relationship to history and the lands in Aotearoa – how might this affect your perspectives and thinking?

4 Have you acknowledged the positionality of your department, group, team and discussed any educational activities you might need to undertake to adequately care for your Te Tiriti partner in this context?

6 What is not being said about the context of this issue - i.e pressure from large companies, industry?

5 Do you know the histories of the mana whenua, lands, environments you are making decisions or planning for?

11 If you are using tikanga Māori or te reo in your plan, project or policy how will you provide for the communities from which this knowledge came? How will the outcomes reflect them?

12 How might you be assuming power or the right to use certain knowledge or information? Name the history of your ideas and values.

14 How will the relationships developed continue? Or are you assuming an end goal?

13 Where is the patriarchal bias in this decision, plan, policy? How might gender binaries be being weaponized?

STEP 3. CHECK AGAIN

Checklist for finished plan, report, project outline.

- Negative effects of colonial laws and history been acknowledged or considered- Including the breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the effects this had on the environment and Māori communities

- Outcomes and goals focused on addressing colonial power dynamics, histories, and assumptions

- Patriarchal assumptions been named and outlined

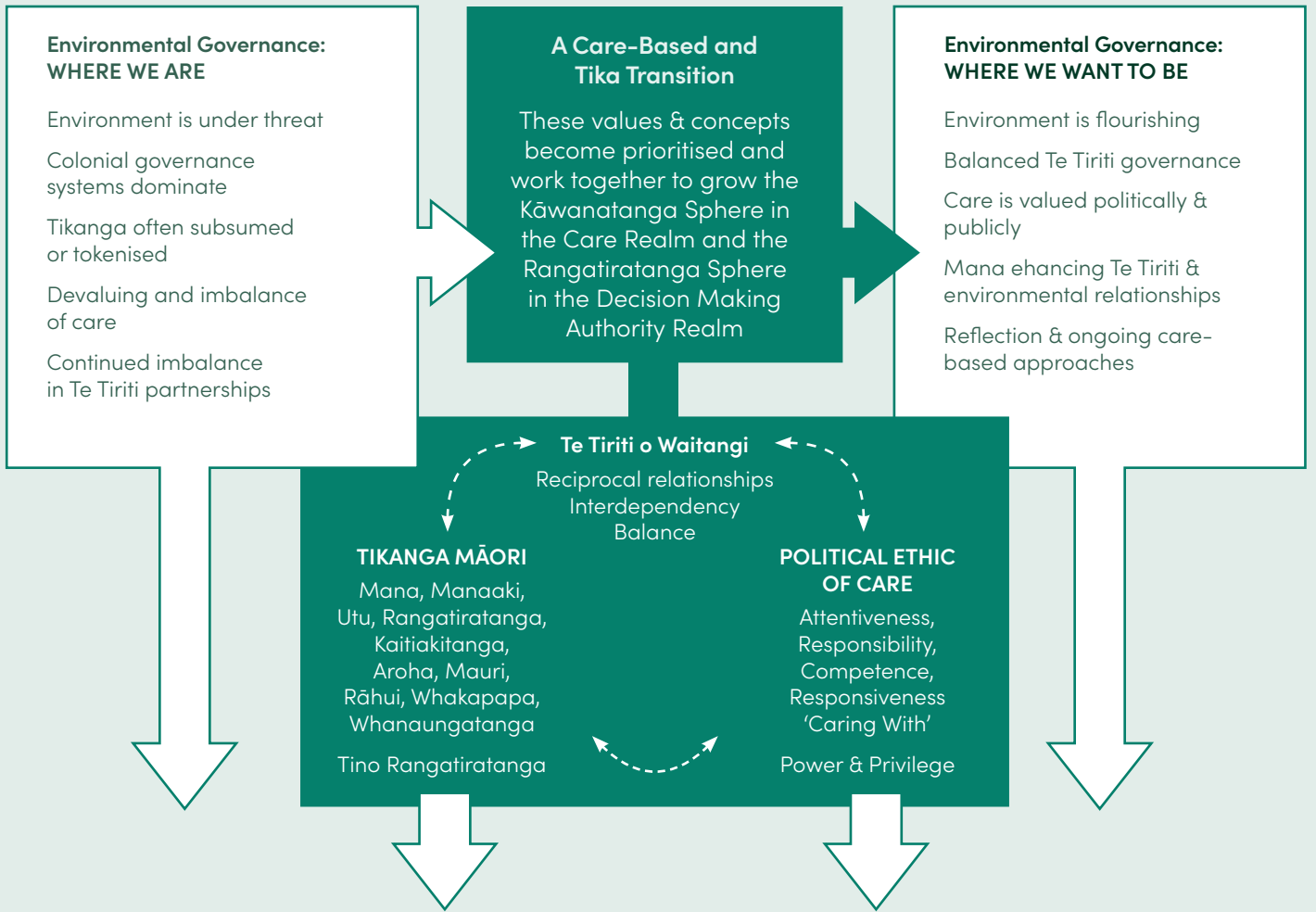
- Race, class, and gender assumptions been named and outlined

- The diversity of experience and lived reality in Aotearoa are outlined and there is a plan to meet these different experiences and likely effects

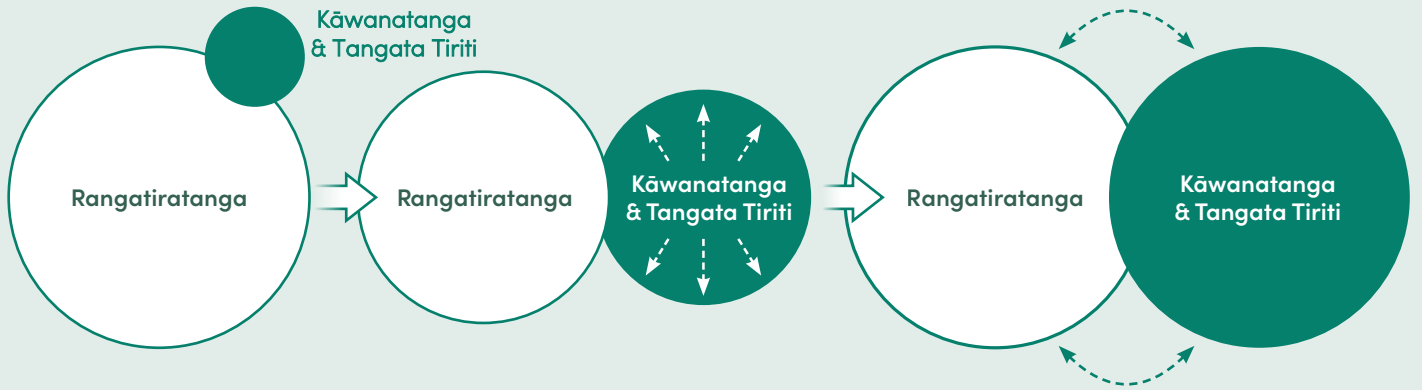
- Tino rangatiratanga or mana motuhake acknowledged and argued for in relation to the use of tikanga and te reo Māori

- Nurturing relationships between Crown, Māori and community is prioritised and planned for

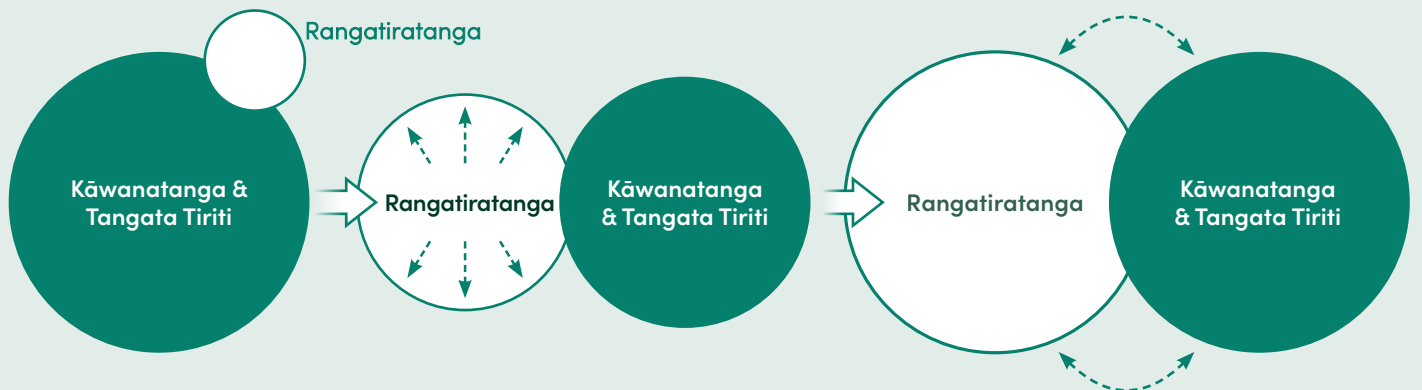
- Relationships between Māori and their ancestral lands are prioritised and planned for



Care Realm



Decision Making Authority Realm



References:

Please note: There are many more relevant references included as part of the thesis and research that support this Policy Guidance. The below references are only those which were specifically referenced in-text.

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