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QUICK GUIDE SERIES: Navigating risk and uncertainty in marine management

2 Worldviews influence people's perceptions of risk and uncertainty

This guide explains what worldviews are and why they matter when making decisions for the long-term good of our marine environment. This information is part of a series of quick guides based on Sustainable Seas National Science Challenge research.

To manage our oceans holistically and sustainably, and in a way that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi, we need to understand why it can be hard for people with different interests to agree on what to do.

Our research shows three 'invisible' factors influence people's perceptions of risk and uncertainty.

- Beliefs about how the world does or should work (their worldview)
- Previous learning or training (their discipline)
- Experiences and context (their positionality)

Worldviews shape thinking about risks and uncertainty

According to psychologists, a person's worldview underpins their attitudes and behaviours to do with the environment and other things. People bring different perspectives into a decision-making, or collaborative policy process based on their worldview. No worldview is 'right' or 'wrong' and worldviews may co-exist, overlap, or collide with each other.

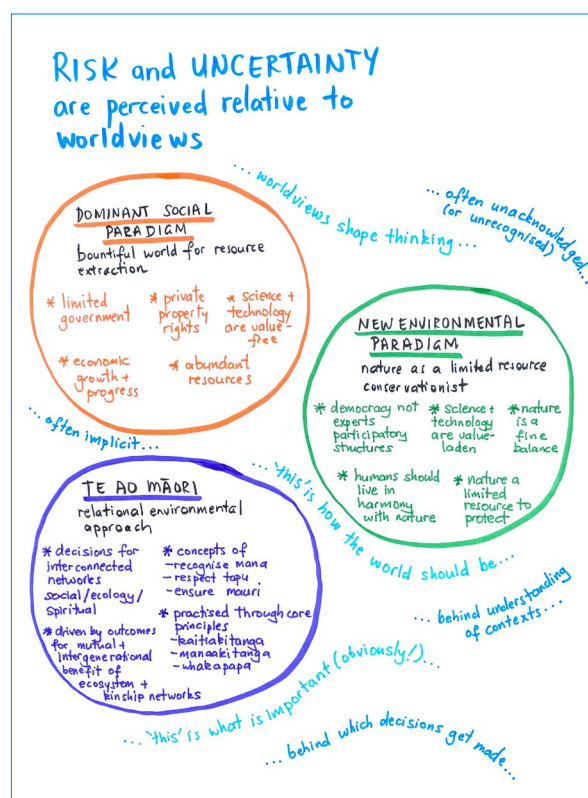
Understanding different worldviews can help identify why people disagree

When people disagree, their disagreements may stem from different worldviews that haven't been stated or acknowledged. By making differences in worldviews more visible, we can start to identify the origins of a disagreement, why it's happened, and what the potential sticking points or solutions might be.

Three main worldviews exist in Aotearoa

In Aotearoa, the research points to three environmental worldviews and they all include aspects of society, economy, and environment.

Figure 1: Worldviews influence perceptions of risk and uncertainty



» Turn over to find out more

These worldviews are:

Dominant social paradigm (DSP)

An ‘extract resources from a bountiful world’ worldview

In the dominant social paradigm worldview:

- economic growth and progress are paramount
- resources are abundant and can be exploited
- government interference is limited
- private property rights are supported and it’s ‘business as usual’.

New environmental paradigm (NEP)

A ‘nature is a limited resource’ worldview

In the new environmental paradigm worldview:

- protecting the environment is more important than using resources
- nature is seen as a delicately-balanced, limited resource
- people are less materialistic and favour participatory structures and safety
- people trust democracy rather than experts

- humans should live in harmony with nature
- science and technology are limited (and science is guided by human values).

Te Ao Māori (TAM) worldview

A ‘relational approach to the environment’ worldview

In Te Ao Māori:

- priority is given to outcomes of mutual benefit to kin groups and ecosystems
- extracting resources is okay if it builds intergenerational benefits
- ecology is conceptualised as a social relation, for example, te taio / the environment is always in relation to humans, as humans are actual relatives, related to, and descended from te taio
- human behaviour is regulated by concepts of mana / power or authority, tapu / sacredness, and mauri / life force
- core principles are kaitiakitanga (sustainable management), whakapapa (connectedness) and manaakitanga (reciprocity)

What’s your worldview? A short self-reflective exercise

Understanding your own worldview can help you understand other people’s. This table invites you to reflect on your worldview and what this means for how you interpret what’s important and how the world should work. There are no right or wrong answers — just differences among people. Read the statements in the left column of the table below. Decide if you agree or disagree with the statement, and how strongly. Tick the appropriate column.

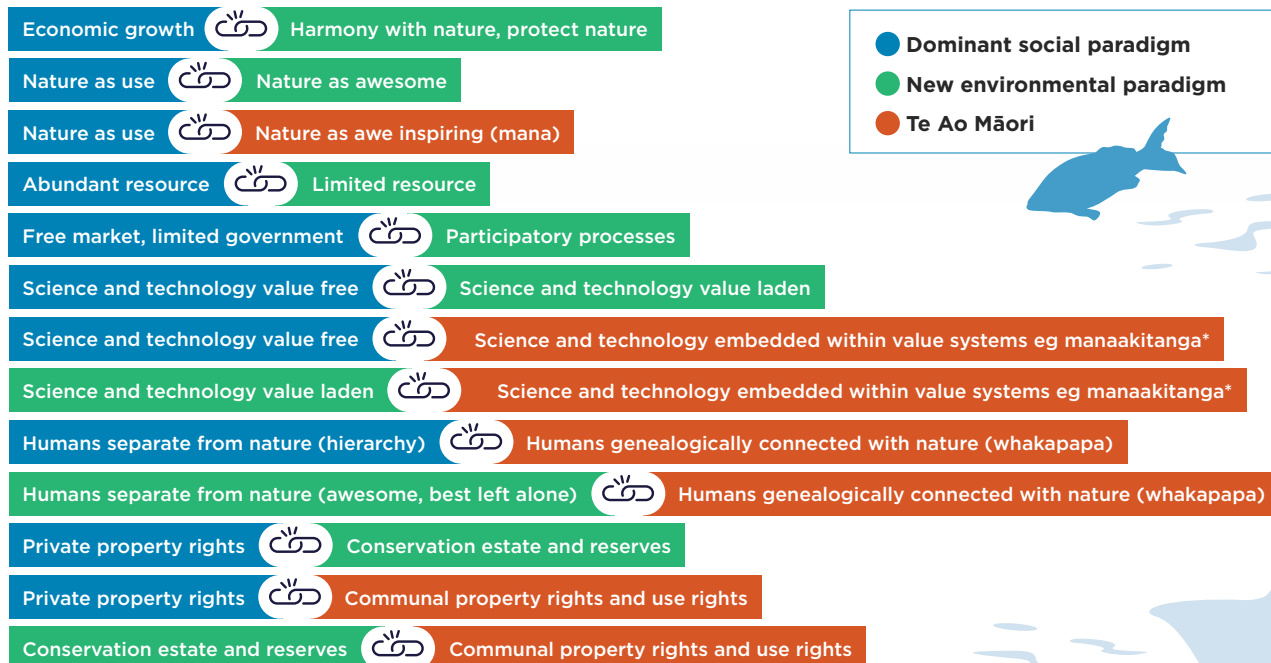
Table 1: Statements to guide your worldview self-reflection

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	? Don’t know
Statement	1	2	3	4	5	?
The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset						
Modifying the environment for human use seldom causes serious problems						
Plants and animals exist primarily to be used by humans						
The earth is like a spaceship with only limited room and resources						
There are limits to economic growth even for developed countries like ours						
Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature						
Present generations of humans have no moral duties and obligations to future generations						
The so-called ‘ecological crisis’ facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated						
We must take stronger measures to conserve our nation’s resources						
Plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist						
Humans have moral duties and obligations to other animal species						
Environmental regulations have placed unfair burdens on industry						
Natural resources should be used primarily to provide for basic needs rather than material wealth						
Humans have the right to alter nature to satisfy wants and desires						
Nature is valuable for its own sake						
Humans live on a planet with limited room and resources						

Worldviews can complement or contradict each other

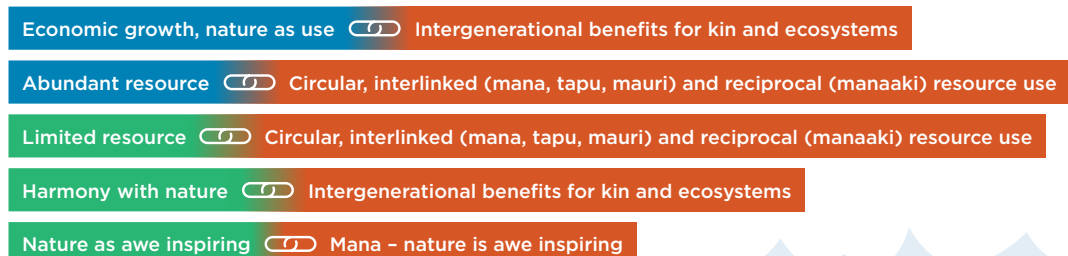
Think about the statements you strongly agree with and strongly disagree with. What do they say about your own worldview? The information below shows the complexities and competing motivations of common worldviews in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Dissimilar and sometimes opposing motivations



*Manaakitanga - reciprocal relations between people and the environment

Similar and sometimes aligning motivations



What's next?

To find out more about how to make decisions involving people with different worldviews, education, and experiences, read the other guides in this series. **Quick guide 3 has more on Te Ao Māori understandings of risk and uncertainty** and Quick guides 4 and 5 have tools and methods for navigating different perspectives of risk and uncertainty in decision-making.



» Read the full research document behind these quick guides on the Sustainable Seas website



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