

NATURE, SELF, AND BEING IN THE WORLD

**Revealing a flourishing ethics in landscape architecture through poignant
landscape experiences**

Van Thi Diep

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Abstract

Poignant landscapes are gateways to our existential belongingness because they allow us to be moved by the world. Landscape architects have the potential to shape the world's landscapes, as settings for poignant life experiences, and yet, an issue lies in the praxis of the profession.

Contemporary landscape architecture and environmental ethics, as part of contemporary society, are enmeshed in binary narratives. Because interpretations of landscapes are inseparable from notions of nature, which hermeneutically carry existential stories of human-world relationships, when an enigmatic natural world was abandoned for the objectivity of biology and space, the worldview of landscapes also split into binary narratives of human versus nature, sacred versus profane, and poetic versus practical. Moreover, with the expansion of secularism and nondualist cosmologies such as Daoism and Indigenous teachings into the Western world, polarised moral judgements, which are loosely based on past Christian narratives, become paradoxical and unsupportive towards resolving contemporary social and ecological disputes. Therefore, this project argues for an approach to ethics based on the idea of flourishing, which sees morality as relational and that ethical individuals make autonomous choices to flourish within a world of social and ecological systems.

To return to the roots of “being,” this research asks landscape architects what a flourishing life and a flourishing environment really means to them. Poignant experiences with landscapes are used to provoke memory and awareness of being in the world and the sense of connectivity with other existences in the human, ecological, or spiritual worlds. Through the analysis of professional codes and mandates, a survey of landscape architects, and interviews with flourishing landscape architects, the research explores how the “landscape architect,” as a professional identity and as an archetype in the collective consciousness, is interpreted, performed, and communicated in landscape architecture. A hermeneutic approach was used to unravel concepts of nature, landscape, experience,

poignancy, and ethical choice-making. The analysis reveals that a reflexive process that is simultaneously personal and collective can increase experiential awareness, expand horizons for meanings, and create opportunities for shifting paradigms essential to achieving a sense of human belongingness in the world.

Dedication

To all the poignant landscapes
that you and I have witnessed,
the ancestors who have shaped those lands,
and the spirit that lives within them.

Acknowledgements

Real life stories and fairy tales both progress by having their characters encounter friends and foe, supporters and challengers. Similarly, plays and movies have ensemble casts. I'd like to think of my dissertation as a story without antagonists but one where roadblocks have appeared intermittently to challenge me. Frankly, I had at one point in my PhD journey thought that the real project I was working on was *me* and not the research. But whether this journey was part of my life story or part of a research assignment, the journey is still one created from the support of contributors. This project is indebted to all those who have played a role.

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If I were to choose one highlight from my dissertation process, I would choose to acknowledge the value of conducting interviews. The interviewing experience was meaningful, inspirational, and attitude-changing for me in both professional and personal ways. In many cases, participants spent time before and after their interviews to further discuss my project and give me encouragement. In rare moments during the interviews, I even felt a sense of belongingness: even though participants shared perspectives that differed from mine at the detailed level, at a meta-level, we were communicating as members of a common humanity. For rhetorical reasons, I have decided to keep participants anonymous in the document, but for those participants who have waived their anonymity, I would like to sincerely offer my acknowledgements here: Bob Allsopp, Virginia Burt, Colleen Mercer Clarke, Real Eguchi, Chris Grosset, John Hillier, Michelle Lazar, Fung Lee, Jim Melvin, Raquel Peñalosa, Marc Ryan, Dennis Alan Winters, Carolyn Woodland and one anonymous landscape architect, thank you for making this project possible.

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List of Abbreviations

ASLA	American Society of Landscape Architects
BCSLA	British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects
CELA	Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture
CLARB	Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards
CSLA	Canadian Society of Landscape Architecture
IFLA	International Federation of Landscape Architects
LACF	Landscape Architecture Canada Foundation
LAF	Landscape Architecture Foundation
LARE	Landscape Architecture Registration Examination
NYASLA	New York American Society of Landscape Architecture
OALA	Ontario Association of Landscape Architecture

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1 Introduction

Have you ever felt like the world has gone crazy? Somehow, even as a child, I had the impression that there was something senseless about the world. As I grew up, the senselessness was proven again and again in the media, in personal conversations, and in institutionalised settings. Finally, I realised that the craziness that I had been observing had one commonality: human beings were the source of all the madness. Humans (as a collective) seemed to be always fighting against something or another, as if satisfaction could be found in disagreements. Although most of the world's problems have been created by humans, instead of looking at the source of the issues, we scramble to find solutions through an external resource (for example, new technology, new knowledge, and more consumerism).¹ I wonder if the reason for humanity's obliviousness is because we have so many ideas and so many solutions to the point that we cannot agree on them with each other. But if "language is the house of being, [and] in its home human beings dwell," as Martin Heidegger ([1967] 1998, 239) had said, then perhaps our tensioned dwelling in the world starts with the problems in our language.

This research study is about landscapes and landscape architecture, but this project is also about the language that embodies us. Human beings dwell in language but also dwell in the landscapes of the world. Language and the phenomenal world mirror each other, reciprocating and evolving as two interdependent systems (Fisher 2013b). Therefore, language forms our world of landscapes. However, the summative power of landscapes cannot be described merely through language (Edensor 2010). Language is also a function of our relationship with the land. As David

¹ Unless otherwise stated, the use of the pronoun "we" throughout this document generally refers to "we, collectively, as human beings."

Abram (1997) states, “language is no more the special property of the human organism than it is an expression of the animate earth that enfolds us” (90). Language is the inevitable filter that we use to assess and share our experiences as social beings. As humans, we cannot communicate about landscapes or about ourselves without language. If we cannot communicate, understand, and acknowledge one another, there will be no consensus to solutions for our human-made problems. But we have a choice to use language that “speak[s] to the world” or language that “deaden[s] that life” we have been given by the landscapes around us (Abram 1997, 71,72).

The words that I have chosen to “speak to” landscapes are *poignant* and *flourishing*. Embedded within these two words are inquiries of the meaning of nature, the process of experience, the significance of ethical choices, and the spiritual connection we have with a greater cosmos. In this project I have invited landscape architects to speak to their world using these two words I have selected. Together, we share a collective exploration of what it means to be in the world and how to make places in landscapes for human dwelling. Although we (myself and the research participants) each have our own life’s “truths” and a collective “truth” about being in the world, we are only a fragment in the continuum of human existence. From Ancient Greek and Daoist philosophies to the 20th and 21st century disciplines of phenomenology and ecopsychology, spiritual teachers, philosophers, and scholars have been explaining the same “truths” over and over again. So, while I am writing about “big ideas” about being in the world, I am only sharing “small snapshots” of the meaning of landscapes from the present moment. In this present moment (a special moment, no doubt, since we are still in the midst of a world pandemic as I write this), no matter if we are landscape architects, academics, or any human being, landscapes and language are here and ready to welcome us, patiently and wisely, into a reciprocal relationship that nurtures and enlivens our human world.

Language, landscapes, and being in the world

Poignant is one of my favourite words in the English language. Perhaps, I am charmed by how it disobeys the simplicity of the alphabet's phonetic decoding. When I enunciate the word *poignant*, I am transported into a pool of emotions, as if the silent “g” and the invisible “y” worked together to persuade me that there is magic to language. The emotions exist without language, and yet language opens the door to an intuitive way of being in the world. Although *poignant* followed me throughout my entire research process, its suitability was subjected to questioning at the beginning of my studies. While I deliberated over whether *poignant* was too suggestive of pain, some colleagues found the word too vague and suggested that I look for a term that was more specific. Alternative words such as *transcendental*, *sublime*, and *sacred* have been contenders, but these words have much narrower connotations and are loaded with both cultural history and present-day meaning. Thankfully, Peter Timmerman, my supervisor at the time and current committee member, insisted that *poignant* was appropriate. He shared with me an idea that differentiates mysteries and problems and reassured me that my project was from the realm of the mysterious. The distinction is that a mystery is something we are immersed in, while a problem is something outside of us—a philosophical notion from Gabriel Marcel:

A problem is something which I meet, which I find completely before me, but which I can therefore lay siege to and reduce. But a mystery is something in which I am myself involved, and it can therefore only be thought of as a sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and initial validity. (Qtd. in Treanor and Sweetman 2016)

My affinity to poignant landscapes, that is, landscapes that embody what the word *poignant* means to me, cannot be split into two distinct parts: me and landscape. Thus, poignant landscapes for me are always a mystery. *Poignant* is a word that embodies our non-linguistic way of being in the world, and

therefore, it is conceptually ambiguous. Its ambiguity also epitomizes the mystery of being human in a complex world.

At one time, I deeply wanted others to resonate with my passion for poignant landscapes. As a landscape architect, I secretly judged the profession of landscape architecture. I questioned why landscape architects, presumedly, did not care if the landscapes around us were not poignant. I wondered why landscape architects, presumably, did not intend to create landscapes that were poignant. But as much as I wanted everyone to think, make, and dream poignant landscapes, I knew deep inside me that this universal revelation was not possible. Or at least not in the way I had initially thought. Frankly, I did not know at the time what poignant landscapes really meant to me. I knew that I had the habit of yearning to find the feeling of a poignant landscape in an actual experience: a view of Lake Louise in Banff National Park; hiking up Mount Misen in Miyajama, Japan; waking up to the Alps of Switzerland on a tour bus; the stillness of an inlet on an Alaskan cruise in front of a glacier; all were beautiful landscapes that I had a chance to experience. They were almost poignant, but not the poignant landscape experience I was looking for. My yearning felt similar to a pilgrimage, but I did not know exactly my pilgrimage destination. Now I realise that the real pilgrimage that was waiting for me was the journey into myself. The form of the pilgrimage manifested as this dissertation.

However, pilgrimages are often taken with religious intentions. So, although my project is not meant to be theological, as a phenomenological and an ontological one, it is without a doubt a project about spirituality. But words relating to spirituality, or more accurately, words related to religion, can bring about much contention. For instance, when I was just starting my first comprehensive topic, the aesthetics of nature in Romantic landscape paintings, I said to Peter something of the sort: “I think I need to talk about God. How can I talk about nature and the sublime in Western history without talking about God? But I don’t think ‘people’ will like it if I do.”

Whether these “people” were real future critics or imaginary voices in my mind, the choice to use particular words can be intimidating. I do not remember Peter’s exact words, but he must have responded encouragingly because as my studies progressed, I got a little braver to use words deliberately yet not too prudently. Thus, I now choose to use triggering words like *God* intentionally. In the case of *God* as a word and a concept, there is an association with a holy figure as well as an association to the hermeneutic irony of our human existence to all else—our histories and our cultures (i.e., religion, science, and ideologies), the relationship to ourselves (i.e., faith and reason), and the nature around us. There is no other word, let it be the divine, the sublime, the sacred, or the magical, that embodies the impenetrable power and cultural conflict that the word *God* carries with it.

Just like *God*, all words can have multiple associations and interpretations. Just like *poignant*, all words have potential to trigger emotions and shape our intuitive non-linguistic understanding of the world. Effective communication about the world (even if the exchange is only a discussion within our own mind) needs to start with an acknowledgement of the speaker’s standing. Through the process of hermeneutic deconstruction and reconstruction, I have worked to clarify for myself how I would personally interpret keywords for this project, and I have created a glossary from these interpretations. Since this document is a form of communication, I have included the glossary to share with readers as additional reference (see **Appendix A**). My interpretations are not meant to impose any universal definitions, but instead, they are the foundations to my language in this project. They serve as a benchmark for alternative interpretations that some readers may bring with them.

Landscape and language are foundational to landscape architecture and to being in the world. But if communication is interpretative and a landscape experience is a personal encounter, how can a person advocating for the appreciation of landscapes understand and direct someone else’s experience of a landscape? This experience that I am referring to is not the type of experience

that we can report back on and then potentially choreograph through the design of a space. I am referring to lived experience. I cannot truly know someone else's experience because I cannot live out anyone else's experience other than my own. Still, even if we cannot live out each other's experiences, we can share the stories of our experiences so that we learn more about each other. Thus, language mediates our personal experiences with our collective existence as a linguistic species. Frankly, my initial desire for this dissertation was to collect stories of other people's poignant landscape experiences because I wanted to be moved by other people's stories. I also wanted others to be moved by their own stories, and all of us (i.e., everyone involved in this project) to be moved by each other's stories. However, I learned through the research process that "research" had to be more than an assemblage of stories; I also had to seek and find something of value through my investigation. So, if research is to *re-search*, then what I am seeking might be something that I (and we) already know. This knowledge might actually be part of an existential truth, or what Heidegger (1971; [1927] 1996; [1967] 1998) would consider as an unconcealing of Being. Therefore, perhaps what I have been searching in my personal yearning for emotional resonance with others is a self-discovery that is simultaneously collective: that is, our lives, played out in our experiences and our relationship with the world, do matter; amidst personal and collective apprehension, confusion, apathy, or trauma, there is an essence to being human that is worth living for.

Landscape architecture as a profession, landscape architect as archetype

Architecture and landscape architecture are professions that tackle human dwelling in the physical plane. However, human dwelling is also an existential matter. Thus, architecture and landscape architecture are meant to engage with human ontology. But unlike architecture, which has theoretical foundations that tie to ancient philosophy and anthropology, landscape architecture as a

“profession” has barely touched upon its philosophical roots. Landscape architecture theory is generally more specific to the era in which the theories were formed. For example, the classics of landscape architecture such as Ian McHarg’s (1969) *Design with Nature* and Jane Jacob’s (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* arise from the environmental crisis of 20th century modernity. Critical landscape theory, another area of research that examines human being’s relationship with landscapes, also stems from socio-political concerns found relevant in 20th century post-colonial studies. Otherwise, from my review of the most popular landscape architecture texts, the discourse on the discipline is quite scattered: including surveys of the history of the profession, contemporary meanings in landscape design, or the re-envisioning of concepts from relevant professions such as architecture, geography, environmental science, or horticulture. In stark contrast, architecture theory in the Western world goes back to 1st century BC Roman architect Vitruvius. “Starchitects” already flourished in the Renaissance with the likes of Brunelleschi (1377-1446), Alberti (1402-1472), and Michelangelo (1475-1564). However, Michelangelo was more than an architect. Like other “Renaissance men,” he was considered a genius in the arts and the sciences. Architecture was just another piece of his “genius pie.”

While the profession of architecture continued to build upon its historical prominence as a built artform, landscape architecture’s professional identity hesitates to celebrate its ancestral roots in the art of gardening. Many landscape architects’ hostility to being mislabelled as garden designers show hints of this dissonance. Even Frederick Law Olmsted, the “father of landscape architecture,” was reluctant to call his work “landscape gardening,” noting that the engineering work involved in his designs go well beyond the work of garden designing (Olmsted 2015). Ironically, the imperial gardeners of China and France did just as much engineering and yet they were celebrated as master

gardeners.² Moreover, formal texts on garden-making, in the form of agricultural gardening and meditative gardening, go back at least to the 10th century Byzantine *Geoponica* and the 11th century Japanese *Sakuteiki* (Kanzaki and Wise 2013). From examples such as the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and the Great Pyramids, remarkable gardens and architectural structures have been created since the rise of human civilisation. However, gardening and architecture, which both have sacred ties to anthropological human history, are not given equal celebrity status in the making of the modern professional identity. I speculate that the difference lies not in that architecture sought purposely for an ontological philosophy, but rather because Western thinkers found architecture easier to associate with an existential identity because architecture, unlike gardening and landscape architecture, is not a discipline tied to nature in everyday discourse. I reason that an existential identity tied to nature is too disruptive for a mindset that wants humans to be superior over the rest of the world.

While landscape is not synonymous with nature, a discourse on landscape also means a discourse on nature. No matter how nature is culturally or historically constructed, it always carries with it an existential question about a human-world relationship, even if the relationship is an inconsistent and paradoxical modern one: for instance, a nature that is simultaneously a peripheral bystander to busy city life, the herald of environmental catastrophes, and a therapeutic comforter for our mental and emotional woes. In most cultures, nature's essence is sacred. Therefore, landscape as a "processing" of nature in human perception (for whatever ideal nature takes on as a society), also has an element of sacredness. Although the concept of landscape has varied in relevance throughout Western thought, arguably most celebrated as a subject matter in the arts from the 17th to the 19th centuries, the fascination for an enigmatic kind of landscape was mostly abandoned in the 20th

²² Although imperial gardens are considered landscape architecture in landscape architecture history, for the sake of the discussion on the "landscape architect" title here, the designers of these gardeners are not formally considered landscape architects.

century for objectified nature and space. Edward Relph (1981) describes this dismissal as landscape being “quietly slipped into a straightjacket” (109).

Within the praxis of landscape architecture is then the same tension as one of binary modern thought: an animated sacred world versus a rational problem-based world; in other words, a worldview that landscape is sacred and existential in meaning and landscape architecture as impartial problem solving in the physical world. Criticisms in the design professions hint at an underlying issue: the neglect for experiential awareness. My study of poignant landscapes is found in personal experiences. The act of living, or dwelling in the world, is essentially the process of having poignant and not-so-poignant moments unfold through experiences. However, according to architect Botond Bogner (1985), design education and practice have been overly concerned with objective processes and rational solutions, and therefore, have been neglecting human experiences. He argues:

Designing is approached analytically, programmatically and scientifically—that is, primarily along rational principles and theories. Students are provided with a list of objective, well-defined goals and methods to achieve such ends as utility efficiency, economy, structural stability and formal appearance. The problems faced in reaching such ends are regarded as definable, analyzable, measurable, predictable, and solvable. (185)

I agree with his statement that this is what design professions, including landscape architecture, have succumbed to. However, the problem does not lie in the seeking of rational solutions, but that human experience, either individually or collectively, is not only rational. Life is not all “definable, analyzable, measurable, predictable, and solvable.” If it were, all problems in the world would have already been fixed by now.

Similarly, James Corner (2002) finds that “contemporary theory and practice have all but lost their metaphysical and mythopoetic dimensions, promoting a landscape architecture of primary

prosaic and technical construction” (20). I would reason that the degree of prosaic-*ness* or straightjacket-*ness* to landscape architecture is debatable, but the Cartesian worldview in which most of the world has predominantly operated from since the 17th century, with some exceptions during the Romantic era, certainly promotes an overarching level of binary thinking. Poignant landscapes move us into a realm beyond rational and binary explanations because neither poignancy nor landscapes can be easily defined by two-opposing perspectives. Like Corner, I longed for a mythopoetic version of landscape architecture. But upon reflection, I likely was longing for something much deeper: that is, a mythopoetic version of our current world that can be symbolised through an archetypal version of landscape architecture.

In Carl Jung’s (1970) theory of analytical psychology, the human psyche is comprised of the personal consciousness, the personal unconscious, and the inherited collective unconscious. So, while we live consciously as individuals, at a subconscious level, we are part of a greater collective essence. Ecopsychology extends our psychological interconnectedness further to include the rest of nature. Accordingly, human beings are part of a bigger shared *world psyche* (Hillman 1992). So, although my personal motive for this research is to disentangle one of the mysteries pertaining to my own life, I also live within a world of social and ecological systems that are linked together in conscious and unconscious ways. Therefore, my inquiry into this mystery is more than personal. At a core level, my mystery is also everyone else’s mystery. My journey to uncover an obscure “truth” of the world through poignant landscapes is also a gateway to the collective psyche’s “truth” of the world. However, just as I cannot live someone else’s experience, I cannot presume someone else’s relationship with poignant landscapes. What I can do is search for human connectedness within our personal relationships with landscapes. Therefore, I ask what poignant landscapes mean to others. More specifically, what do poignant landscapes mean to those who utilize “landscapes” in their status titles, and those who work with, by way of, and for landscapes?

To clarify, this project explores landscape architecture as a profession, but landscape architecture is not the ultimate subject of my inquiry. Landscape architecture is part of the bigger picture that I am working to unconceal. From a pragmatic perspective, landscape architecture can be considered a special case study of humanity's relationship with the world. But from a Jungian perspective of the collective unconscious, I consider the "landscape architect" as a kind of modern archetype, one who navigates the complexities of the social and ecological world through a relationship with landscapes. The ideal landscape architect (i.e., the archetype) is a co-creator of places for human dwelling, a steward of land and culture, a transdisciplinary professional, a compassionate individual who sees their work as personal growth and social responsibility, and a person who is wise enough to know their place in the world but also humble enough to know that they are always in a state of "becoming." Unmistakeably, none of these characteristics are unfamiliar to landscape architecture discourse, as readers will discover through the chapters of the dissertation, but as an integrated whole, the ideal landscape architect prevails as an archetype. Because the unconscious holds the parts of ourselves that our conscious psyche denies or represses (i.e., our shadows), landscape architects, as parts of our collective society, have inevitably also inherited the shadows of our collective unconscious. However, as an archetype, anyone can embody these qualities, because what I have described are aspirations for any human being engaging in our present-day world.

Flourishing as a new environmental ethic to landscape architecture

While the ideal human or ideal landscape architect makes perfect ethical choices, a real human or real landscape architect is constrained by personal and collective mental patterns, behaviours, and traditions. Environmental ethics, which is foundational to landscape architects' self-description as "stewards of the land," is not exempt from mental inconsistencies. These

inconsistencies stem from how conventional ethics is practiced as a binary judgement of good and bad actions. In order to make these judgements, a conceptual hierarchy needs to be established between “ethical advocates” and “ethical delinquents.” But if ethical advocates are fighting for equality within a social or ecological system, is it not an oxymoron for them to be ethically superior to another human being? Therefore, I argue that to really fight for justice and equality, for people and for nature, we need to envision an ethics that moves beyond binary and hierarchical thinking. I propose the notion of flourishing as an ethical framework because the process of flourishing is holistic, non-binary and non-judgemental.

Ethics is the basis for the profession of landscape architecture because what made Olmsted’s work different than master “gardening” was his social advocacy. He planted the seeds to landscape architecture’s professional mission (and also the framework of my landscape architect archetype) by establishing a career based on values of social awareness through the creation of public parks and the conservation of scenic areas from private exploitation. While landscape design was mainly a profession focussed on leisure gardens of the elite and extravagant royal gardens in Europe prior to the 19th century, the merging of nature, divinity (i.e., the Christian God), and the human-self in Romantic and Transcendental thought led to the consideration that nature was a source of divinity, and that humans were morally responsible towards nature. Simultaneously, the rapid growth of cities after the industrial revolution also demanded that moral conscience be applied to human well-being in the social urban realm.

But as much as Olmsted is portrayed as an environmental hero, he also exhibited blind spots typical of his time. For example, to create urban and national parks, Indigenous and minorities who inhabited these lands were overlooked and displaced (Fitzner 2018). While Transcendentalism and Romanticism attempted to unite individuals with a divine universe, their philosophical foundations paradoxically separate inner and outer world experiences through subject-objectivity. Thus,

Olmsted's original desires to enhance and preserve nature can also be seen as treading into the slippery slope of predicaments that form from modern binary thinking such as nature versus culture, wilderness versus city, and progress versus tradition. Even though enhancing and preserving nature look seemingly innocent, William Cronon (1996) gives warning that preserving "pristine wilderness" builds upon an illusion of a nature that is separate from humanity and has led to modes of commodification and colonisation. Carolyn Merchant (1996) also argues that seeing nature as needing to be subdued or tamed reinforces a controlling patriarchal perspective. Thus, the "authoritative nature" that many environmentalists want to advocate for is actually an oxymoron if nature is only given life through the self-authorization of human proxy via religion, politics, knowledge production, and even landscape planning and design.

Conversely, radical movements in environmental ethics since the 1970s suggest that solutions to our environmental crisis are not found in moral obligations but rather in the need to shift cultural ideologies. Arne Næss (2005) asks for a new worldview that encompasses the value of all life forms, including humans and non-humans. On the other hand, Murray Bookchin (1991) sees domination and hierarchy in mainstream worldviews as the problematic sources, and therefore ecology is a social issue. Chris Cuomo (1999) argues that moral value is relational and that moral agents are grounded in a society. Thus, ethical individuals make choices to flourish amid oppression in a real world of social and ecological systems (Hoagland 1999).

So, if morality and ethics are based on binaries that are trapped in contradictions, more liberating questions are necessary for us to get out of these paradoxes. Instead of asking what is right and what is wrong, a more useful approach would be to ask: "what is the best life for a person and how can I go about living it? What is a good society and how can we move closer to achieving it?" (Cafaro 2001, 4). Taking on the ethic of flourishing and seeing that ethical individuals make autonomous choices to flourish in the world, we can ask what a flourishing society, a flourishing life,

and a flourishing environment really means. Specifically, to find a new ethical foundation for landscape architects' mandate as "stewards of the land," we need more constructive questions, such as: What is the best life for a landscape architect and how can I go about living it? What is good landscape architecture and how can we move closer to achieving it? In other words: *What makes a flourishing landscape architect? And what is flourishing landscape architecture?* These questions set intentions for an ideal version of landscape architecture (and the archetypal human), but they are also guidelines to making practical ethical choices in a social and ecological world.

Research design and methods of inquiry

If the experience of poignant landscapes is a kind of *raison d'être* to living, and flourishing is a *way to live*, then poignant landscapes must also influence how we live. My research focus, therefore, is to understand how poignant landscape experiences may influence landscape architects' participation in the world through an ethic of flourishing. I ask specifically, how are landscape architects and their views of what constitutes a flourishing landscape architectural practice influenced by poignant landscape experiences? The mediator between the two concepts—a poignant experience and an ethic of flourishing in practice—is experiential awareness: self-awareness of the connectivity of individuals with society, humanity, and the greater universe. However, awareness is abstract and exists in a loop, as we are only aware of what we are aware of until we see things in another way. Accordingly, we are only able to express or share what we are aware of in the same manner until we see things in a different way. The study of phenomenology tries to mitigate this conundrum by contextualising and de-contextualising experience.

Phenomenology has been approached by philosophers in several ways. Each perspective adds on to another to make a more comprehensive study of experience. Edmund Husserl ([1913] 1982), who initiated the study of phenomenology as a 20th century philosophical movement, calls

on us to bracket experience: to return “back to the things themselves.” For instance, the attempt to bracket experience from biases and assumptions allows a point of direction. However, we are nevertheless socialized beings. Heidegger’s ([1927] 1996) phenomenology questions the validity of suspending experience and contextualizes human experience as an existential fragment of a social web. His existential ontology, *Dasein* (Being), he argues, is that we cannot remove ourselves from our worldview traditions. We are “thrown into the world” in which we exist, in an anxious paradox between awareness of our present existence and its linkage to our world’s past and future circumstances. Building upon Heidegger’s existential phenomenology, Jean-Paul Sartre ([1946] 2007) views consciousness as intentional and free. This freedom implies responsibility in choices, not just for oneself but also for all of humanity. Alternatively, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945) argues that experience is situated in the human body and its senses, and therefore, awareness is an embodied experience. The entangling between bodies, whether animate or inanimate, creates a “chiasm” that reciprocates and expresses itself in a phenomenological experience.

Each of these approaches to interpret experience is valid in their own ways: our bodies are the loci of experiences, and yet we have conscious intentions that impact others; we live in an intricately connected world, but experience needs to be confined in order to be studied. Moreover, how a particular notion is understood in a culture creates a worldview for individual and collective experiences. For example, whether nature is considered as a concept or tangible element that can be suspended in a study, something that is contextual, something that has moral implications, or something to reciprocate with determines how one relates with nature. An individual’s past as well as their personality affects their experience, but both of these factors are not independent of contextual circumstances. Even for the same person in the same environment, each experience is unique since temporal and environmental contexts change. Consequently, experience can only be understood through individual accounts of individual experiences, simultaneously acknowledging that all

experience is shaped by worldviews that are dependent on social-cultural pasts and presents. What remain are the interpretations that individuals have with these experiences. Therefore, my research required a phenomenological study of how individual landscape architects interpret their own experiences. My research also required a phenomenological reflection of how *I* relate to the research material and the participants' interpretations.

Several overarching questions were pertinent to my research design. Questions that related to poignant landscapes included: What poignant landscape experiences have landscape architects encountered? What are the characteristics of these landscapes? These two questions probe at how landscape architects interpret the notion of poignancy. Questions that related to an ethic of flourishing included: What kind of personal and professional values do landscape architects consider important to a flourishing landscape architectural practice? Based on their experiences, to what extent are these values reflected in the actual practice of landscape architecture? These two questions probe at how landscape architects interpret the notion of flourishing as an archetypal version of landscape architecture and as a present-day goal. How influential poignant landscape experiences are to an individual's feelings of interconnectivity with their greater environment, whether it is to society, humanity, or the universe, was an underlying inquiry to be analysed in the data.

I chose to limit my study to landscape architecture in North America. While physical and cultural landscapes are both similar and different between Canada and the United States, shaping two unique aspects of landscape architecture in North America, the two countries approach the profession with a shared foundation. Landscape architecture is a licensed profession in Canada and in the United States, requiring a degree from an accredited university program. The Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards (CLARB) oversees licensure standards and administers the professional exams (LARE). Canadian landscape architects are administered under nine component organisations across the country, which together constitutes the Canadian Society of

Landscape Architects (CSLA). In the United States, the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) administers its members through 49 chapters across the country. As the first method of data collection, a number of texts created by the CSLA, ASLA, and other non-regulatory landscape organisations in North America were reviewed with respect to ethics. The documents were analysed collectively for an overall impression of the formal ethics as published within the organised profession of landscape architecture. The findings were compared to the results from two other methods of inquiry. See **Appendix B** for a list of the documents reviewed and a detailed analysis.

The second method of data collection was an online survey created on the platform SurveyLegend to examine the general perspectives of landscape architects on the research topic. The survey asked participants what they considered as a poignant landscape, what landscape experience(s) from their past were poignant or memorable, their values for fulfillment as a landscape architect, what they considered as good landscape architecture, and their opinions on how well the profession is performing in accordance with these values. Additional information such as gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education, work location, and years of work experience were asked as variable factors that potentially influence responses. See **Appendix C** for the full list of questions, the results, and a detailed analysis.

A test survey was first sent to five landscape architects for their opinions. Their main concerns regarding the test survey were the survey length and the number of open-ended questions. In the final version of the survey, I revised some open-ended questions into multiple-choice with optional short-answer comments. I also added brief explanations of “poignant landscapes” and “good landscape architecture” as a follow-up to a test respondent’s inquiry. The survey link was then sent to landscape architects within my network and was also posted on various social media platforms (i.e., Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, landscape architecture Reddit page, and Land8Forum). With the help of CSLA, OALA, BCSLA, and NYASLA, the survey was also posted on several

associations' websites and/or linked to member e-newsletters. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous, taking approximately 20 minutes to complete. The survey was made available between May 9 and November 20, 2019, gathering a total of 53 completed responses.

The final method of data collection was the preparation of semi-structured interviews with landscape architects. Participants were invited for an interview based on my assessment of their suitability to be described as “flourishing” in the profession. I determined that a flourishing landscape architect in our current social structure needed to be an individual with a position of relative seniority, allowing them to make autonomous choices in work despite social and political limitations that need navigating. However, in my idealized version of a flourishing society, seniority does not need to be a prerequisite for individual flourishing. But according to existing social hierarchies, selected participants had relatively senior positions and worked as independent consultants, principals, or partners of established landscape architecture firms, or were recently retired. These participants were asked similar questions to the survey: to describe their poignant landscape experiences and other landscapes they consider as poignant, their values for fulfillment as a landscape architect, what they consider as good landscape architecture, and their opinions on how well the profession is performing in accordance with their values. Depending on time and how elaborate the answers became, some questions were merged, skipped, or revised on the spot. A total of 14 interviews were conducted between July and September 2019; eight were completed in person, seven through video-conferencing, and one through phone-call; 13 participants were from Canada, and one was from the United States; four were professional acquaintances, and five were recommendations from acquaintances and other participants. Interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 75 minutes. Audio recordings were saved for all interviews and then transcribed manually. All but one participant waived their anonymity on their research consent forms. See **Appendix D** for interview questions and a detailed analysis.

Disturbing biases to open up new horizons of understanding

I started my doctoral studies chock-full of assumptions and ambitions, many of which I would now consider as naïve. Through the PhD process, I learned a little bit about doing research but a lot about myself and the “way of the world” in the unravelling of the mystery I initially found myself in. Admittedly, what is acceptable as research in academia has been something that I had difficulty grasping. When I have been asked about my research and what a poignant landscape is, I felt an uneasiness as if I had trademarked a special academic term. That is, I was afraid that I had made “landscapes that are poignant” into something that could be objectified, categorized, and solved. Moreover, with the guilt of an underlying imposter syndrome, I occasionally wondered if someone might indeed have already branded “poignant landscapes” in their research in which I had failed to discover. My unease, I realise now, represents my apprehension to discern between authoritative knowledge and personal wisdom. Moreover, the idea of a poignant landscape, or *anything* poignant, has often meant so much more to me than it has meant to other people in my life, even if “poignant” can mean nothing or mean everything to someone else. Therefore, my research was also a process of finding clarity between what is meaningful wisdom for me, and what is meaningful knowledge for the people within the society I am part of.

Research using the scientific method assumes that knowledge is objective. Although qualitative research has reservations towards the idea of objectivity, a parameter for research in general is still to remain unbiased as much as possible. However, neither experiences nor our psyches exist in existential vacuums. Therefore, absolute impartiality is an illusion. As Hans-Georg Gadamer ([1960] 2004) states, “within understanding” is already the perpetual anticipation of textual meaning based on “fore-understanding” (293). Humans communicate through bias. Thus, my perspective is as limited as it is to my own experiences and conditioning, and I inevitably carry bias as much as anyone else in the world. Likewise, as much as I interpret the answers of research

participants, they are also interpreting my opinions and my research goals. But Gadamer explains that through prejudice and disturbance of existing bias, understanding can be achieved through a hermeneutic process since the “the task of hermeneutics has always been to establish agreement where there was none or where it had been disturbed in some way” (292). Therefore, my role as the researcher is not necessarily to remain impartial, but to find a common ground between prejudices in order to open “up new horizons” of understanding (301).

Disturbances to biases were first found in the survey responses. One of the limitations and realities of any given survey response is that I must accept it as the respondent’s truth. Validity comes from the fact that the respondent believed in their own answers. For example, to investigate how landscape architecture education affected ideas of poignancy or flourishing, I included a question that asked participants to select a number of landscape topics that I considered not part of landscape architecture programs’ core curriculum. While *I* would not have selected any of the options (except for ecology, which was added after the first draft of the survey) based on my memories of my landscape architecture training, I noticed that participants from my landscape architecture program had selected multiple topics (on top of ecology). My bias was apparently disrupted here, and perhaps, also the partialities of my peers. Rather than finding out how landscape architecture education influenced participants’ views of landscapes through the question, I learned instead that personal truth is relative. Memory can be misleading, or judgement of an event’s significance can be inconsistent. Sometimes, both can be a factor. Misreading (or disregarding) the instructions is also a possibility. For example, several respondents selected more choices than asked of them in several questions looking for a maximum of three selections.

Of course, to identify disturbances, I had to be aware of my own biases and how they differed from the perspectives of the research participants. One of the first signs of disruption for me is when my insecurity towards opposition encourages a defensive binary thought that insists that

only one “right” answer exists (either mine or the participant’s). Being aware of the internal process allowed me to move toward a position that is more comprehensive. For example, several “critical” comments regarding the use of “poignant” appeared in the survey. One comment noted that “by focussing on poignancy, you risk missing a lot.” Another comment noted to “be aware of the inherent biases you have created through your questions/answers.” One respondent left a more descriptive comment:

The framing of poignant seems embedded in assumptions that landscapes are William James-esque, transcendental, “American wilderness” scapes. But such an assumption is out of touch with critical landscape theory that examines the colonialism embedded in those assumptions. American slaves labored “in landscapes” and were hung from trees. That is part of our landscape history!

I will not be able to know all that I could have risked missing by focussing on poignancy, and neither can I be certain of all the biases that could have been read through my questions, but I can speculate what these comments assumed about poignancy. Indeed, my own catalyst for poignant landscapes is one that speaks of transcendence, but under no logical deduction does this motivation displace the relevance of critical landscape theory. Therefore, I ask rhetorically, is examining poignant landscape experiences, transcendental or otherwise, harmful to creating “good landscape architecture,” or is the study of poignant landscape experiences equivalent to trivialising the study of colonialism? Or does the idea of poignant landscapes trigger assumptions of wilderness, fantasy, or misplaced idealisation? Or are participants biased themselves?

Ironically, William James ([1902] 2009) used a pragmatist approach to studying religious experiences. His claim, “religious happiness is happiness” really means religious happiness is still happiness (22). That is, experience is still experience. Although these experiences can derive from mystical encounters in landscapes, conflating awe-inspiring notions of nature with the idealisation of

“wilderness” with the destructive history of colonialism only demonstrates that further examination is all the more necessary. Simplifying human psychological and epistemological associations with nature only maintains the human-nature split, which results in insensitive and nihilistic attitudes to those empathic of the world’s wounds, considering that psychological grief for an unspoiled world is mainly still described as “unreal” and “childish” (Kidner 2007). Condemning a particular stance through simplification also shuts down the sharing of alternative and authentic experiences that do not fit into the binary narrative.

To see beyond the oversimplification of identity and privilege, nature and colonialism, religion and spirituality, I offer parts of my own life story throughout the dissertation as examples of interruptions within hegemonic narratives of the world. However, I am not free from the tendency to over-simplifying words and concepts. For example, my initial discomfort with Andy Fisher’s (2013b) “radical” notion of ecopsychology stems from how I have associated the word *radical* with polarized politics. But Fisher’s insistence to use *radical* has changed my thinking to consider the evolution of words (and society), because radical in itself means to overturn the status quo and return to our roots, not divisiveness. According to Fisher (2019b), societies with nihilistic habits tend to distort neutral (or constructive) words and turn them into unpleasant connotations through subconscious social behaviours. Another example of such distortion in language is the distaste for the word *God* in parts of atheism. The history of human behaviour pertaining to religion has been conflated with the idea of divinity. Therefore, expanding interpretations is also a continuous process of reflection on language and meaning.

Truthfully, I did not plan for my research to be about language or hermeneutics. The varying interpretations of my project’s key themes in the interviews were what guided me towards this methodology. Furthermore, while certain interview participants attempted to “correct” what they perceived were my biases regarding landscapes, other participants repeatedly asked if they were

telling me what I wanted to hear. Accordingly, I realised that although we (that is, the collective in the research, not just me and an individual participant) were discussing the same subject matter and even resonating with each other, we were not always on the same page. For example, we may have similar goals towards making the world a better place, but we come with different motivations. Or we may have similar motivations and goals towards the world's well-being, but we believe in different solutions. As individuals, we come with our own stories and ways of interpreting the world, and these stories affect our goals, motivations, and inspirations. It became clear to me that the dissertation needed to be a hermeneutic one: to explore individual meanings (i.e., biases) of pertinent concepts within the language of landscapes in order to expand the horizon of a shared landscape meaning. Otherwise, we would not be able to understand each other enough to move towards flourishing as a collective. In the metaphorical sense, although we may not be on the same page, we can always be part of the same book.

A real world of challenges, triumphs, and research ethics

The idea of poignant landscapes acts as a hermeneutic disturbance, but it also provides the life-sustaining force for this dissertation. Going back to the critical comments from the survey, if I had not focussed on poignancy, I would have risked not going through such a deep-rooted journey. One life lesson that I acquired in the process was the acceptance of flourishing as a personal ethic. Admittedly, like many aspiring academics, advocates, and activists, with half satire and half naivety, I wanted to “change the world.” Sure, dissatisfaction with society coupled with the idealisation of something better brings momentum to getting work done, but my secret drive to “change others” in order to “change the world” was destined for failure if I was motivated by a self-righteous assumption to judge what is right or wrong with other people's choices. After being hit with humility and accepting that changing others using willpower was neither a feasible option in academia nor in

everyday life, I inverted the idea of judgemental ethics to one that is about personal accountability. With moral “shoulds” and “should-nots” overturned and reconsidered, my project and my life evolved into a process of reflexivity. My research and my actions have adopted an ethic that takes into consideration everyone’s self-responsibility and ability to do the “right” thing for ourselves as an entity within a greater whole.

Cuomo (1998) emphasizes that an ethic of flourishing is an ethic “without purity” (90). Therefore, flourishing as an ethic is always a process of assessing situations and making choices that may bring about imperfect results. Hence, the process of research, as a form of flourishing, includes setbacks and successes. For instance, my ambitious target for 190 survey responses, which is equivalent to one percent of licensed landscape architects in Canada (2,342) and the United States (16,740) turned out to be an unrealistic goal (CSLA n.d. ‘Advocacy’; ASLA 2018). This number was impractical because I had incorrectly assumed two factors: the ease of attracting respondents who would commit to completing the survey, and my own work capacity. Links from social media and landscape forums yielded very limited number of responses; only half of the 40 personal contacts who were sent the survey link completed it even with a second email reminder; only one of the 18 emails I sent to different ASLA chapters replied to agree to link my survey in their newsletter; and a series of communication obstacles occurred during my attempts to find help through the OALA and the CSLA, resulting in a less than ideal distribution of survey notices.

Moreover, I found that exposure to the link was not enough. There were almost as many unfinished survey responses as the total submitted, and the number of clicks that did not result in a participant starting the survey was more than double the number of completed submissions. Nevertheless, things worked out. Even before I closed the survey, I realised that the amount of information to sort was already substantial. Reaching my target would not only have been dreadfully overwhelming, but it would also have changed the entire tone of this project. Instead of focusing on

reflection and interpretation, which was necessary for a deep dive into existential questions about being human, I would have been focused on the categorization of empirical data.

Three outlier responses in the survey data (i.e., a landscape architect from Brazil, a graduate student, and an employee from a non-profit landscape organisation) also had me reflecting on whether legislative and traditional definitions of a (successful) landscape architect are relevant to flourishing. Thus, the institutionalisation of landscape architecture and how it shapes individual flourishing became an important theme in my chapter about ethics.

The recruitment of interview participants is also an example of serendipitous imperfection. When I first considered which landscape architects I wanted to interview, I associated flourishing with success. While the meaning of success is relative, my own experience in the profession limited how I saw success in landscape architecture. Consequently, I constrained potential interview participants to leaders of well-known landscape architecture firms or “star” landscape architects (who were also principals of their own firms). However, most emails to high-profile landscape architects that I sent out (mostly located in the United States) were unsuccessful. The need for interview participants had me opening originally closed options as I started reaching out to local Toronto-area landscape architects with good reputation and special interests. Subsequently, one participant recommended several other suitable landscape architects, creating a mini snowball effect in the recruitment process. He also suggested that I consider broadening my search to landscape architects in the public sector. As a result, the final group of participants cover a broader range of landscape architecture professionals than I had initially anticipated. Interview participants now include new and established business owners in public and residential landscape design, retired professionals from both private and public sectors, and consultants in climate change advocacy, Indigenous collaboration, and spiritual landscapes. Autonomy in their work, which is the primary condition I consider necessary for flourishing, was not compromised by any of these changes.

As it was much easier to recruit participants locally from acquaintances and recommendations, the project consists of more Canadian participants than American participants. The survey received 36 responses from participants working in Canada and 14 participants working in the United States. Also, only one American landscape architect was successfully recruited for the interviews because all other invitations to U.S. participants were declined. But in reality, landscape architecture in the U.S. is a much bigger industry than in Canada, with 7 times the landscape architects and 7.5 times more economic revenue (CSLA n.d. 'Advocacy'; ASLA n.d.). Therefore, the data collected for this project is not representative of large and nuanced differences between landscape architecture in Canada versus the United States. Although I had collected data on where participants studied landscape architecture, I neither had the resources nor did I find it pertinent to the scope of the project to examine the influence these locations or schools had on the participants' views.

Qualitative research in the social sciences often transpires when researchers attempt to "help" less-privileged social groups. Conscious or unconscious power barriers are inherently carried into the research process between researcher and research participants. Accordingly, as Irving Seidman (2006) notes, interviews are loaded with issues of power, which affect the interview process, the analysis of the data, and the benefits created from the research. However, power dynamics can also be found in projects involving elites. For example, older participants or those of higher social power may feel more secure in taking charge or directing interviews (Seidman 2006). My project has a dynamic more representative of the latter scenario. Although I did not find obvious tensions during my interviews, I did feel the subtlety of power dynamics because of my own social hierarchy. For example, all the participants had more landscape architecture experience than I did; many participants were much older and had higher professional statuses; and two participants were my former employers. Being a petite female immigrant of East-Asian descent, I have also

internalised physical, social, and historical undercurrents to marginalisation that become accentuated during the research of a relatively elite profession that is neither ethnically diverse nor gender equitable (Data USA n.d.; Davis 2018).

However, I do not explore equity issues in *landscape architecture* in this project for two reasons. First, this project is meant to be an unfolding of reflective experiences from research participants. Therefore, if equity was not a theme in the discussion, I did not impose the issue. Second, this project is also the unfolding of my reflections, and for me, equity issues of class, race, and gender go beyond landscape architecture. Therefore, when I do bring attention to issues of equity in my writing, the discourse comes from my own perspective as they relate to bigger social narratives about people and nature.

One way that equity is addressed in research institutions is through ethical protocols. But for me, the institutionalisation of ethics is a kind of dissonance between bureaucracy and real-life actions. The tangible aspect of ethics for institutional research is a set of research protocols and consent forms but considering ethics in a project *about* ethics prompts me to question whether the purpose of real ethics is the prevention of disaster by setting up regulations or the deliberation of empathetic choices. The difference lies in how we want to view our world: to “close in” on it or to “open it up.” My research participants were either bemused or indifferent to the number of signatures required of them to discuss topics relatable to their profession, but the main reason they proceeded, I imagine, is because they were interested in the topics and trusted me. I did not fully understand the empathetic aspect of ethics until I had to make a decision when things did not line up perfectly as I had envisioned. I had a naively opportunist notion that changing the world works easier if people of status also agreed to the initiative. So, I had originally planned to recruit mostly interview participants who would agree to waive their anonymity. I also considered that maybe participants would want to be credited in the research for business or personal purposes. As such, all

thirteen participants from Canada agreed to waive their anonymity on their research consent forms. But one high-profile landscape architect from the United States declined the option because of the possible impact and impartiality their words could bring to the research.

This imperfect scenario initiated my genuine consideration of research ethics. Do I continue my plan of identifying each opinion and quote to its speaker except for one participant? At a deeper personal level, I was so moved by some stories that I became uncomfortable with the idea of conveniently sharing these precious sides of the participants. On one hand, some messages may warrant professional recognition. But on the other hand, as a hermeneutic project, I analyse the tensions and assumptions behind the participant's words. Even if I do not intend to judge or embarrass, I acknowledge that having personal opinions challenged can sometimes be uncomfortable. Moreover, I find that as the critical interpreter of the data, especially given my "social hierarchy" as noted previously, to specify names would be even more distressing for me. However, as the honoured keeper of data, I had to make an ethical decision.

My conclusion: genuine ethical decisions are never as clear-cut as institutionalised protocols. Recalling the "impurity" of an ethic of flourishing, I decided to recognise all participants (by name or anonymously) in the acknowledgements page and have only cited them in the document under two circumstances: 1) by request because the information was part of the individual's published research; and 2) purposely in a discussion about names. Essentially, my overall strategy is more of a rhetorical experiment. I have refrained from using profile markers (i.e., interview #1, #2...) and all quote speakers are described vaguely. This is not due to anonymity (for the 13 non-anonymous participants) because the landscape architecture profession in Canada is relatively small. For a Canadian landscape architect reader, it may not be that much of a challenge to guess the speaker of any given quote. Instead, my approach is to let the words speak for themselves. Perhaps, without embedded status markers, a real equitable common ground can arise from the pages of the text.

Structure of the dissertation

Although my readers will likely be either landscape architects or academics in environmental studies, including students of the two respective groups, I am reluctant to categorize the readers of this document. From the perspective of my ultimate interests, that is, the struggles and the splendours of our collective humanity, I cannot envision my readers as anything other than real individuals with real human lives—people who care about their relationship with the world, whether it is through place-making, engaging with nature, or social interaction. Therefore, even with a small audience, starting with those involved in this project (i.e., research participants and examination committee members), those who may read this by recommendation (i.e., colleagues or students of the first group), and those who may stumble upon this document from the university's directory in the future (i.e., researchers with similar interests), I believe that a chiasmic phenomenon is nevertheless created through this document.

I have approached the writing in a style that is part dialogue, part literature review, and part autoethnography. The approach is my way of weaving knowledge and wisdom with experience and storytelling. Because much of this project is a personal reflection of what landscape architecture and human ontology means to me, I do not examine landscape architecture history, critical landscape theory, psychology, religion, or social political studies from a disciplinary perspective. However, I do interact with these subjects from a lived experience kind of way. Just like a ship's captain is conscious of the prevailing winds, I have allowed my participants' words, my dissertation committee's advice, and my life's trajectory, to guide me, although sometimes reluctantly, with the flow of the dissertation's course.

In the process of writing, I find myself returning again and again to certain authors because they address the crux of what it really means to be human. To me, the answer comes through three interdependent points: our roles as ecological beings, social beings, and spiritual beings. That is, we

have an interconnectedness with other living entities within ecological systems, with other human beings within social systems, and with a greater “oneness” with the world. While ecological and social connections occur in the spatial dimension, spiritual connection occurs through time. How the universe was created, the history of destructive and loving human behaviour, the uncertainty of humanity’s future, and the assumed eternalness of the universe’s existence are all collapsed into a present moment of existence. Although the modern world sees spirituality as a personal interest, Heidegger ([1927] 1996) made the connection between time, existence, and being human as his main philosophical message. Therefore, as a rare 20th century Western thinker to make this association, he has become my go-to author for this realm of thinking. Other writers to whom I often make reference, such as David Abram, Neil Evernden, and Andy Fisher, also acknowledge these areas of “beingness” in their own ways: Abram (1997)—through language, land, and magic—Evernden (1985)—through the ecological peculiarity of humanity—and Fisher (2013b; 2019b; 2019a)—through the connectedness of the human psyche with nature and society. Chris Cuomo (1998), one of the few writers to establish an ethical framework with the concept of flourishing, brings the interconnectedness of human existence into practical matters of living life and making choices. Her work, as well as Aristotle’s notion of human flourishing are foundational to my thinking about autonomy, interconnectivity, and ethical choice-making.

Perhaps my introspective approach to the research material necessitated a complementary systematic process, or more likely, I needed reassurance in a world more attuned to rationality than intuition. Therefore, I found that I much appreciated using a methodical approach to analysing data as a foundational step. Using QDA Miner Lite, a free data analysis software, I sorted through and coded (i.e., labelling data with key terms that signify relevant concepts) all the landscape architecture association documents, short-answer survey questions, and interview transcripts. Landscape architecture association documents generated 28 codes that were categorized under four headings;

survey responses for descriptors of poignant landscapes and how they influenced views of nature, landscape, or landscape architecture generated 88 codes under nine headings; and interview transcripts generated 151 codes under 10 headings (See Table 1 for the list of all headings). The most frequent codes from each of the three data sets were compared to each other to reveal the most popular themes in the research (See Appendices B, C, and D for coding frequencies corresponding to the three data collection methods).

Table 1: List of headings for codes in data analysis

Data Set/Method	Headings of Codes	
Landscape architecture association documents	Self Natural environment Society Universe	
Survey	Dramatic landscape (as poignant) Cultural (aspects of poignant landscapes) Subtle qualities (to poignant landscapes) Beyond Earth (aspects of poignant landscapes) Reflective (aspects to poignant landscapes) Material (aspects to poignant landscapes) Influence on view of nature Influence on view of landscape Influence on view of landscape architecture	
Interview transcripts	Landscapes (properties of) Human culture Places	Chapter 3
	Poignant landscapes Experience Influences and interests	Chapter 4
	Flourishing Ethics Work habits and choices Professional views	Chapter 5

But rationality and intuition are parts of a balancing process. Even though coding is systematic, it is still an act of personal interpretation. Coding is a heuristic process of filtering data through the researcher's perception of the world using a manual and subjective sorting procedure (i.e., coding is not computer-generated) (Saldana 2015). Similarly, the sorting of interview data is also an act of interpretation. In order to filter the mass of coded interview texts, I followed Seidman's (2006) advice to mark "what is of interest" (118). Seidman notes that passages can be compelling because of the dramatic story they unfold, their contradictions and inconsistencies with other passages, their connection with other interviews, or the way they relate to the literature already on the subject. Nevertheless, the researcher is always the one to determine the text's importance based on how appealing the messages appear. Thus, in the sorting of both survey and interview data, my worldview or bias of the world, created a particular lens for the research information. Excerpts that called out to me were pulled out, allocated into chapters, and organised into a skeleton of dialogues on various topics between myself, research participants and the literature that I had examined.

While the process of data analysis was methodical, the dissertation structure came to me spontaneously. Since I instinctively had started organising all the interview codes in a file under three groups, these groups naturally formed three thematic chapters in the dissertation. To sandwich these themes between the ever-encompassing relationship of the individual and the collective, I included two extra chapters: a personal chapter in the beginning that situates the dissertation through my own history and worldview, and a more socially-focussed chapter at the end to address the topic of change in landscape architecture. The structure of the dissertation chapters are as follows:

In Chapter 2, I start my narrative about nature, self, and being in the world with a short memoir. I share my own childhood memories of identity, place, and connection to poignant landscapes. Through my experiences of "not belonging," I paint a personal worldview of

undercurrents concealed behind my inclinations to find certain disturbances in the discourse about nature, society, and selfhood that appear throughout the rest of the dissertation.

In Chapter 3, I initiate an allegorical conversation on the first theme of this project: the idea of landscapes. The interpretations of nature and culture not only shape our interpretations of landscapes but also shape how we as human beings see ourselves as part of or separate from the rest of the world. The unravelling of discursive tendencies to see culture as separate from nature opens a dialogue for place-making, and what it means to dwell in the world as human beings.

In Chapter 4, I consider the human need for belongingness as our drive for poignant landscape experiences. In awe-struck moments, poignant landscapes bring attention to humanity's connection to a greater world beyond the human mind. Although experience can be considered to be defined as noteworthy influences that can accumulate throughout life, awareness of these experiences in the present moment is important to healing humanity's sense of non-belonging because poignant moments are those that bring out the beauty of being human in an interconnected world.

In Chapter 5, I focus on flourishing as a way to participate in this interconnected world of ecological and social systems. I explore the differences between a personal ethic of flourishing and institutional ethics that contribute to our social systems. How a landscape architect interprets their individual role in the systems determines what it means to be a landscape architect and the purpose of landscape architecture. Considering that landscape architecture and building healthy societies are acts of teamwork, I bring up questions about identity and competition among professions, and the limitations and relevance to the "landscape architect" title.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I share the ideas that research participants have expressed regarding shifting the status quo of landscape architecture. New horizons of understanding are expanded through paradigm shifts that cross established mental and professional boundaries. Holistic attitudes

such as increasing awareness, empathy, and finding common grounds are suggested in ways of use to landscape architectural practice.

Inarguably, we are amidst a changing world, demonstrated by strongly charged political opinions, polarized behaviours, and angst over the uncertainty of social and environmental prospects. Because I have strong aversions to the shame-based culture found in some areas of political discourse on environmental and social justice, I take a non-partisan and non-judgemental approach to widely debated ecological and social issues. Instead of focussing on “taking sides” or being hurled around in the “hurricane” of social change, I believe that shifting paradigms through awareness of our own participation in the world can steer change in the world for the better. For the profession of landscape architecture, key advocacy concerns include climate change adaptation and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. However, from the perspective of an ethic of flourishing and the concept of *Geworfenheit* (“thrownness” into the world) (Heidegger [1927] 1996), I consider these social-ecological-political issues as the contextual part of a greater ontological challenge. In other words, these problems are not the mystery; they are cues to a disturbance in the Being of the world. Therefore, I do not approach references to these global issues from research participants, even as experts on the topics, through a lens of political advocacy. Instead, I bring the concerns into the discourse as part of an ontological dialogue.

Similarly, I make critical distinctions between faith, spirituality, and religion to steer matters of religion away from controversial judgements. A discussion about morality, ethics, and nature is always embedded with notions of faith and spirituality, but not necessarily of religion. Within this dissertation, I will be referring to religious, spiritual, or philosophical teachings in the form of Christianity, Buddhism, Daoism, and Indigenous knowledge, but extensive analysis of these specific religions and cultures or the implications of my findings due to these teachings are not within the scope of the research. Instead, I approach the discussion in relation to Being, that is, how human

beingness finds itself in a variety of worldviews understood by myself or research participants. Often spiritual teachings across cultures will explain similar cosmological narratives of the world. For example, in the Buddhist tradition, a wave in the ocean is the analogy of an individual's consciousness within the world's consciousness; the spider in many Native American creation myths is the cosmological weaver of the web of life; and across cultures, a tapestry is metaphorical for the weaving of intricate threads enmeshed in a life story. All the analogies tell of inseparable individuality and connectivity. This research tells a similar story.

While many of my research participants and I aspire to serve the world, as real landscape architects and/or as human beings embodying elements of the ideal landscape architect, our poignant experiences and our ethical choices are not simple clear-cut narratives. That is because experiences are tied to interpretations of time and memory; knowledge is tied to interpretations of individual and collective history; and interpretations of nature, culture, and human experience overlap to create more personal and collective experiences, narratives, and memories that return as a cyclical process. From a broad experiential perspective, there are no borders between nature, humanity, and experience. Yet, linguistically, I find it challenging to talk and write about the intricateness of this boundlessness because a tension pulls the entities apart in every attempt to unravel what it means to be in the world through language. Hence, what follows is the tracing of this project's weaving, as I cautiously work to not disintegrate the whole, so that we can see both the thread and the tapestry of landscape's meaning.

Finally, on a trivial note: the colloquial translation of "crazy" in Chinese is "sticking threads," that is, the threads of the mind have stuck together. Just as I am careful with keeping the world's weaving together in this project, I also believe that to collectively flourish, each human being also needs to watch for unwanted knots in their mind of the weaving of our world's story.

2

The Origins of a Personal Worldview: A Short Memoir

This dissertation begins from my personal worldview. To introduce this worldview to you, the reader, I presume that you need to know a little bit about me. Although personal introductions often start with a name and a place of origin, these two supposed simple introductory statements are not so simple for me at all. Because of the ambiguity of my understanding of my name and origin, I realised rather young that name and place identity are parts of a personal storyline that gets edited depending on the situation. Here, in my own textual domain, I can be more elaborate: I was born in Vietnam, my ethnic background is Chinese, but I am Canadian; I go by the name on the cover of this document, but I resonate more with my original Chinese name (韻詩 meaning “rhyming poem”) prior to its distortion from the alphabet of the French-colonised Vietnamese language and the arbitrary pronunciation of its English rendition. My grandparents, who were originally from the southern Chinese province of Guangdong (formerly Canton), migrated to Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) in the 1930s due to China’s civil instability. Ironically, they had left one troubled country for another distressed one. I was one week short of 3 years old when I arrived in Toronto, Canada.

While Toronto has been my long-term home physically, my inner world is the home that I have had trouble finding security in for most of my life. Whether I was an elementary school student, a high school student, a landscape architect, or a graduate student, I had felt that I did not fit in, either from the perspective of a social identity or from the perspective of my personal interests compared to my peers. Thus, I resonate with Victor Turner’s (1969) description of liminality—in being “neither here nor there” (95). This feeling of not belonging has been a long-standing source of insecurity for me. While on one hand, this instability of accepting who I am has kept me from

participating in the world authentically, on the other hand, it has led me to deepen my search for the meaning of life. It was not until a few years ago, when I experienced what I would consider as an existential crisis, did I realise that “I” was the one denying myself of the joy and the security that I so desired. But this “I” was more than me. Without any proof other than my own inner knowing, I knew that this “I” was made of all the rules, expectations, and stories of the world that I had learned from others directly *and* indirectly. This “I” was the forces of my unconscious self.

According to Carl Jung (1968), a person becomes self-actualised through a process called individuation. In this process, the person integrates the separateness of their conscious and unconscious selves to become whole. Since the unconscious is comprised of both personal and collective traits, individuation is simultaneously the disentangling of the self from the collective *and* the awareness of the self as part of the collective. Therefore, individuation is an interplay between becoming more of one’s authentic self and being at one with the world. If my existential crisis is part of an individuation process, then this process is also a course of breaking through an old worldview.

However, individuation is challenging because the collective unconscious demands conformity—unless, as Jung (1970) describes, one can “bring forth values which are an equivalent substitute for [one’s] absence in the collective personal sphere” (para. 1095). Instead of contributing to the collective as an unconscious part of society’s unconscious psychological smog, the individual contributes to the collective by consciously accepting and delivering a unique role towards the betterment of society. What is unique for every individual is their own life experiences. Therefore, in the process of learning more about myself, I also learned that my experiences can benefit the collective consciousness. As if this dissertation had a life force of its own, beyond my expectations and planning, I have been guided into sharing parts of my life history here.

I bring a particular story into observation: a lived experience and a narrative of the world that knows the feeling of not belonging and not having privilege relative to a hegemonic social

standard. This narrative also knows about the miraculous moments of belonging through landscape experiences and the beauty of healing the pain that transpires out of the psyche's shadows. This evolving personal worldview, this biased narrative, is the kind of value that I can bring back into the world. But first, I acknowledge that I am affected by my family's history. Despite my hesitancy to listen to my mother's stories of the past, fragments of her memories cling on to me. Because she almost always flavoured her stories with a sense of pity, these fragments play out in my mind like unfortunate movie scenes. I picture:

- How my grandfather's wealthy family lost all their land and possessions from confiscation by the Chinese communists, and how his mother died of shock while his first wife died of famine.
- How my mother and her brother as teenagers laid under the bed, frightened by the sound of the guerilla bombings that were occasionally set off by the Vietnamese communists in Saigon.
- How the apprehension and instability of impending communism propelled my parents to find stability by getting married, symbolised by my mother's challenge to find a wedding dress in a dying capitalist market a year after the Vietnam war.
- And how my parents, who are usually so hesitant, found the audacity to start a new life in a foreign country with no money and no knowledge of English.

Then I picture the scenes from my mother's memories that involve me:

- How I passed out during our entire flight to Canada because someone suggested that tranquilizers would be good for a toddler on a long-distance flight.
- How my parents could not afford to buy me boots for our first winter in Canada.
- How I cried non-stop when I first started kindergarten and never got up to get my share of snacks in the classroom.

- And how the snacks my mother ended up packing for me got mistaken by the teacher as my sharing to the rest of the class.

My mother, who is noticeably more laidback now than a decade ago, still adds the phrase “how pitiful” to her stories. Yet now, she gives the expression with such personal detachment that her past commiseration sounds like dark comedy. The added details in the fragmented memories give another perspective. For instance, she “smartened up” and ended up packing individual portions of snacks for me to avoid having them being taken away again; her friends ended up finding her a wedding dress to rent for the wedding photos; and despite the occasional bombings in Saigon, she recalls her life at the time as relatively “peaceful.” In fact, my mother and her friend recently deliberated over why their fears around COVID-19 seemed even greater than having lived through a war.

Within my mother’s stories of our family’s past, I find more examples of life’s irony. According to my mother, many of those who were able to leave Vietnam after the Fall of Saigon in the late 1970s as “boat refugees” were middleclass young people who were able to purchase the promise of a decent spot on a refugee ship with a fair amount of gold. Heartbreakingly, the transaction was a rip-off: their life-risking trip across the ocean turned out to be overcrowded, malnourished, and unsanitary. My mother’s younger brother, who was scammed with the purchase of a non-existing ticket, ended up travelling north towards Hanoi, then into China, and finally into a Hong Kong refugee camp. Canada, which was a less popular first choice destination due to its rumoured cold winters, had a shorter wait period than the more popular destination of Australia where some of my mother’s other relatives ended up going. My uncle, who had selected Canada as his destination, was able to quickly leave the camp and resettle into Toronto. After a few years, he sponsored my parents, my grandmother, my older sister, and I into Toronto as well.

My childhood, frankly, is a big haze to me. I only remember a handful of memories, most of which would not be described as joyful. Therefore, whether my mother's stories were fact or fiction, it did not matter. They became my "memories" too, leaving me with a filter of the world that can be described in my mother's voice as "how pitiful!" In our first few years in Canada, both my parents worked in factories: my father in an automotive parts factory, and my mother in a garment factory. When my younger sister was born, my father became our family's sole financial provider. He worked at the same job until he retired. While we were considered "poor" under the government's published poverty income levels, there was never a time that we did not have enough to eat. Although I knew we did not have a lot in terms of material possessions, what I was more bothered by as a child was how different my lifestyle was compared to other "typical" North American children. For example, I never learned to ride a bike; I had the same packed sandwich for lunch every day; and if not for a friend's invitation one year, I would have never had a chance to go trick-or-treating. As a teenager, I never had a curfew because I knew that my parents' unspoken rule was for me to go home as soon as possible. The mixture of Confucianist righteousness and whatever traits my parents learned from their life experiences, such as scarcity, fear, and emotional withdrawal, felt suffocating to me growing up, especially as they were contrasted to what I saw as the freedom and the privilege of Western social life.

Although I see the world with a higher perspective now and find the use of the word "privilege" often oversimplified and carelessly applied in social discourse, the dreary lens in which my childhood self experienced the world still holds me hostage emotionally at times. But in contrast to this dreariness, one memory gleams radiantly. This memory is what I recall as my first encounter with a "poignant landscape." Symbolically, this memory marks the overlapping of my mother's and my ancestors' stories with my own. While the unconscious overlapping of memories has endured for decades, I am definite that the beginnings of my poignant landscape story starts here:

In grade 5, I was gifted through Toronto’s public school system a 5-volume set of *The Junior Encyclopedia of Canada* (1990). Fascinated with the new information, my 10-year-old self flipped ardently through the pages but stopped mesmerised by a particular image. This image was a reproduction, no bigger than 10 cm wide, of Lucius O’Brien’s *Sunrise on the Saguenay, Cape Trinity* (1880) (See Fig. 1). In retrospect, this must have also been the first time I encountered “God.” The immanent light depicted in the painting brought me into a state that can be described as expansion, hope, and belongingness.



Figure 1: *Sunrise on the Saguenay, Cape Trinity*, by Lucius O'Brien, 1880. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain.

Today, we have the conventional notion that connecting to nature is a spiritually healthy practice. Hence, a spiritual response to a landscape painting may not be a far-fetched idea. However, my childhood spiritual connection to the landscape painting does not align with conventional notions towards *learning* about nature. For instance, I had lived in the city my entire life. My family neither travelled nor did we own a car. Other than the occasional visit to the neighbourhood park,

that is, Toronto's Dufferin Grove Park, where I spent time in a playground under a grove of trees, I did not know the wonders of what 21st century environmental advocates call "being in nature." Despite living in an apartment building on Bloor Street West, one of Toronto's major arterial roads, and going to a school with a playground paved in asphalt, my young self was nonetheless moved by the serene morning light that beamed from the 19th century landscape painting. Consequently, I knew that the bond between landscape, nature, and spirituality for me was always instigated by an internal beckoning.

While I separate spirituality, religion, and culture hermeneutically and academically, I did not grow up in an environment that separated the three concepts through ways of life. At my parents' home, statues of Guan Yu (the Chinese God of War), Guan Yin (the Buddhist bodhisattva of compassion), Sun Wukong (the Monkey King from the 16th century Chinese novel *Journey to the West*), and plaques of the Landlord God and our ancestors sit on a customized altar. Two of the deities, Quan Yin and Sun Wukong, are considered my "godparents" because according to custom, newborns are symbolically gifted to deities as a means of protection. Every morning, my father burns sticks of incense for the deities. On traditional holidays, my parents perform longer rituals. But despite all my parents' worshipping practices, I never considered my family as religious. In fact, I remember describing my family to Western acquaintances as "culturally Buddhist." Our traditions go back to the Hoa people of Vietnam. Community groups established temples as meeting halls, community centres, and places of refuge, in addition to their religious purposes. For several years, my mother's family managed a temple for Mazu, the Chinese Goddess of the Sea. When the temple lost money from taking in too many refugees, her family took over the incense shop next door instead.

While I remember devouring all the palmistry and astrology books in the library during my middle school days, I would describe my high school self as predominantly rational. I was so at ease

with being rational that I achieved 100% in mathematics every year. But my alter-ego was an artist, even if I had difficulty with the expressionistic style of abstract art and appreciated the imitational process of still life. My memory of the connection I had with the power in landscapes also went dormant until I was ready to explore career directions. Ever since I was kid, I had been designing a dream home in my mind, so architecture or interior design were appropriate career choices. When I was given a project to build a model of a house in design and technology class, I decided to place the house in a big garden. While I searched the library for design inspiration, I came across an image of a glass house that looked out onto a beach. Instantaneously, I fell in love with the idea of “designing with nature.” I also discovered the profession of landscape architecture during my explorations. Although I was not entirely sure what landscape architecture was all about at the time, I was sure of the inner beckoning, telling me that I had to become a landscape architect.

But despite my inner calling, I took a short detour before becoming a landscape architect. Because my parents did not like the idea of me moving out of the city for university, and I felt an automatic defeat towards any potential battle to persuade them otherwise, I declined an offer for a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Guelph and instead accepted a Bachelor of Architectural Science at Ryerson University, which at that time still offered a landscape architecture option in the latter half of the degree. When I told one of my architecture professors that I was going into the landscape architecture option, he replied, “that’s too bad.” However, instead of giving me the impression that he was disappointed because the world would lose a potentially gifted architect, I perceived his comment as, “what a waste of your intellect.” Whether he thought that landscape architecture was less than architecture in some way, or I had projected those thoughts onto him, for the first time, I felt slightly insulted for my non-intellectual and purely heart-based affection for landscapes.

Despite my acute awareness of my own emotional sensitivity, I had found success at performing the role of a rational, impartial, and practical social being. I was recognised by people outside of my family as “smart” and “shy.” I had never once thought growing up that my gender, my race, or my sentimental nature was a disadvantage to achieving my professional dreams, because I trusted that I had the intelligence and the diligence to do well. I only recently realised that I was wrong. I had, in fact, took use of these labels given to me by others to keep myself in a safe impenetrable comfort zone, alternating between a cloak of invisibility and an armour of perceived legitimacy. Our collective unconscious, I believe, has also been keeping itself intact with the same invisibility cloak and intellectual armour. For example, “smart” people are stereotypically told to become doctors, engineers, scientists, and more recently, IT professionals. These are also the jobs that social movements have been encouraging girls to pursue as an attempt to balance the STEM gender gap. Somehow, two social stereotypes have merged together: a perceived notion that mind-based intelligence is social priority, and that gender affects intelligence. My take on the gender gap, however, is not about gender per say, but rather, I believe that our society has overly dismissed the “feminine” archetype of our collective unconscious—that is, the *yin* in Daoism, or the *anima* in Jungian psychology.

Put simply, the feminine archetype participates in the world by feeling, flowing, and intuiting with the processes of inner and outer world experiences. Within myself, I am often challenged with keeping the balance between the yin and yang of my own nature. But landscape architecture, a career that combines the structure of architecture and the fluidity of the earth’s processes, would ideally be an archetypically balanced profession. However, gender roles as they physically manifest in landscape architecture are incongruent, just like the gender inequality that occurs throughout most of the world. For example, my 2007 cohort for a master’s degree in landscape architecture at the University of Toronto consisted of 17 females and three males, yet I worked in offices with few

female seniority members. The Field, ASLA's Professional Network Blog notes that females generally make up half of landscape architecture graduates and LARE examinees, and yet only 36% of ASLA members are female (O'Mahoney 2016). The profession of architecture has an even bigger discrepancy. Close to 50% of American architecture graduates are female, but only 15-18% end up as licensed architects ('About %' n.d.). The discrepancy in architecture spurred a gender equity initiative called Equity by Design, which held The Missing 32% Symposium in 2012.

While equity initiatives attempt to give opportunity and voice to the marginalised, those who have *gone* missing will continue to be missing. Indeed, if it were not for this dissertation, and I had left landscape architecture quietly, I would have joined the ranks of the missing women in the design professions. Having a voice to tell your story from the multitude of missing stories is a challenge. In her celebrated essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) argues that under our world's (post-)colonial structure, specifically, in the industry of knowledge production, the subaltern cannot speak. The one who speaks, as a *representative* of the subaltern, either already possesses authoritative powers or must operate within the constraints of the hegemonic narrative. Building on Spivak's premise, I suggest considering that we are all subalterns from a psycho-spiritual perspective. In the context of *all* our cultural narratives and *all* our imposed social value systems, there is a myriad of ways that any given person does not fit in or has less than compared to others. And if we remove those narratives, we are left with the same essence—human beings with vulnerabilities. Thus, collectively, we are impeded from easily speaking our inner truths. To tell my version of the world I had to struggle past two obstacles: 1) the unconscious forces, both personal and collective, that want to keep me silent; and 2) the limitations of our language. To tell my own story, I had to break through the prison gates of the unconscious—by doing enough personal healing—to even have the courage to have a voice. To tell a collective story, my participants and I had to use language to describe feelings and experiences that language is frequently not adequate for.

Today, as I face the postcard image of *Sunrise on the Saguenay* pinned above my desk, I still do not have the language to fully describe how I feel. I am not merely seeing colours that imitate a scene from the Saguenay River in Quebec. Nevertheless, I am brought into an existential mystery that I share with 19th century artist Lucius O'Brien. These moments of mystery—these moments of connection with something bigger than ourselves—are ones that I hope others share as well, although not necessarily through the painting but in other ways. I went into landscape architecture with a similar wish, of encountering some version of a “God” that united us as sacred human beings, but sadly, I never found the divine in my work as a landscape architect.

Instead, I learned that politics is all encompassing. I am not referring to office politics, nor am I referring to parliamentary politics. The politics I am speaking of covers a broader concept of control: the politics of making decisions on behalf of others—the power struggles, big or small, that arise when individuals or groups are given the chance (or self-designated a chance) to make changes to other people's lives. Perhaps, from a disturbing perspective, this scenario can be considered a sinister metaphor for all of us struggling to be Gods for other people? But this version of the “almighty” does not warm my heart. Thus, despite the collegial and friendly atmosphere of my experience in the profession, I was disillusioned with any dormant ideas that I had held onto about finding God through landscape architecture. Despite landscape architecture being my dream job at 18 years old, I was convinced that I needed to leave it behind. Yet when I quietly searched for an alternative career, I was beckoned once again, through a doctoral degree, to return to my connection with landscapes. Perhaps, through a different route, one that already acknowledges the magic of landscapes, I could still find the divine in landscape architecture?

And with a leap of faith, this new journey began.

3

The Idea of Landscape: The Perpetual Dilemma of Nature-Culture

In mainstream cultures, adults often suggest to children that becoming a doctor, a lawyer, or a teacher is a worthy dream or ambition. But rather than dreaming to become landscape architects as children, many landscape architects have, instead, anecdotal stories of their *discovery* of landscape architecture in their late adolescent or early adult years. For some landscape architects the discovery of the profession occurred later in life during the pursuit of a second career. Out of the 14 landscape architects interviewed for this research, over half related their curiosity in landscape architecture to their longstanding interest in art. Many interview participants also had the intention of becoming architects before shifting to study landscape architecture. Nearly half of the interview participants mentioned that they did not know that the profession existed prior to their career search. And many participants expressed that learning about landscape architecture was a process developed through actual work experience. Landscape architecture's ambiguity, I believe, mostly comes from the ambiguity of landscape itself. The obscurity is so predominant that landscape's vagueness is a theme in landscape architecture literature. For example, the uncertainty around landscapes and the cross-disciplinary nature of landscape architecture are presented in the title and essays of Charles Waldheim and Gareth Doherty's (2015) book *Is Landscape...?: Essays on the Identity of Landscape*. The meanings derived from landscapes are what can be created out of landscape architecture.

What is landscape?

A landscape architect with many years of professional and life experience told me in his interview that “the word landscape is not a very good one.” He elaborated, “We use the term landscape very broadly [...] but landscape is often used to talk about environment. But my interest is

primarily on the urban landscape, and that's, I think, not the way that most people think of landscape. They see cities and landscape as opposites." A lot of assumptions about landscapes can be found embedded in his message: first, some people do not see landscapes as urban; second, some people do not see cities as landscapes; and third, landscapes are not necessarily the same as the environment. These assumptions are true in that there is variability in how people see landscapes. However, the opposites to these assumptions are also true: some people do see landscapes as urban; some people do see cities as landscapes; and landscapes can be interpreted as our environments. So, is the issue of the word *landscape* a problem of too much variability in meanings or is the problem found in people's discomfort of the word having many interpretations?

Having a broad range of meanings for the word *landscape* did not seem to be an issue among most research participants since nearly all the landscape architects I interviewed were interested in expanding the scope of landscape's meaning in landscape architecture. However, within our discourse of landscape was a conundrum: in every sentence, landscape *implied* something, and oftentimes that something was a notion that the speaker wanted to advocate against in landscape-thought. With or without much awareness from the participant, statements such as these were presented to me:

"I worked in a nursery, digging trees, and being right at the earth. [...] So that's not a landscape."

"There have been some pretty neat sunsets. I've seen that...now, they are not landscapes."

"I don't know if you grew up in a landscape too."

"If you don't see how humans fit in that natural landscape, that's not being a landscape architect."

“When I say landscape architecture, I don’t mean just the designed places or the urban places. For me, landscape architecture is also the wild places.”

Some suggested meanings can be deduced from these phrases: landscape is not human activity; landscape is not an astronomical phenomenon; one can grow up not in a landscape; there is a category of landscapes that is considered natural, which many humans do not see themselves as part of; designed places are different than wild places, which can be transposed as designed places being different than wild landscapes.³ As much as I try to avoid the trap of contradictory meanings with words such as *landscape* and *nature* in my writing, as a social being conditioned by language, I also have difficulty curbing my own inconsistencies all the time. Therefore, every instance of the word *landscape* used in this dissertation will imply a constructed meaning that may also challenge another meaning.

Perhaps *landscape* is indeed a problem. But the predicament of *landscape* is not because there is a better word to replace it. Instead, the predicament is created because language does not have the capacity to carry the weight of what landscape is meant to mean. Abram (1997) states that language is predominantly used as “a way of *representing* actual things and events in the perceived world” (77). However, phenomenological thinkers, including Abram, know that although certain things are seemingly invisible, they become visible if they were perceived in a different way. For example, wind is invisible to the eye, but we hear it and see its effects on other objects. Similarly, light is intangible, and yet we cannot see anything else without it. For anthropologist Tim Edensor (2010), landscape is affective precisely because of its resistance to being represented by language. Thus, landscape is more than what is visible. On one hand, landscape is about material entities—things that are tangible

³ Landscape and place are often used interchangeably in landscape architecture. Distinction between the two terms will be examined further in the chapter, but for this reference, it is fitting to consider them synonymously.

and real. On the other hand, landscape is about meaning and cultural ideologies—thoughts that are intangible and ever changing (Benediktsson and Lund 2010). Landscape can span between two, three, and four dimensions—as an image, as spatial experience, and as a temporal occurrence. Landscape morphs as it becomes whatever form of expression these ideas take for the person relating to them.

Originally, we are told that the word *landscape*, deriving from the Dutch word *landschap*, was used to describe administrative units of farm fields (Tuan 1990). As paintings of these fields arose in the 16th century, the term consequently became associated with the representation of land and nature. Today, landscape is sometimes considered synonymous to scenery. Scenery is visual and often implies a backdrop to something. One of the earliest usages for landscape imagery was the scenery found in the backgrounds of Greek and Roman theatres (Tuan 1990; Crandell 1993). Metaphorically, if landscapes were stage backgrounds to theatrical performances, then landscapes can also be interpreted as the backdrops to life's performances. Hence, the idea of landscape is also a metaphorical product of the conceptual split between humans and their environments since the ancient history of Western culture. Therefore, landscape is not only a historical-cultural narrative; it is one that tells the story of humanity's relationship with our world, which is also a parallel story to the story of nature.

A relationship with nature

In mainstream cultures, nature is told as a complex and disjointed story. Sometimes nature is described as separate from human civilization, for example, the “wilderness” is considered a place where people extract time from their busy lives to learn about nature or to relax in it. Sometimes, nature is described as fragments of wilderness found in human environments, for example, urban forests or songbirds in cities. At other times, nature is described as elements that are tended to by

humans such as animals on a farm or plants in a garden. Nature's complexity is carried into landscape architecture. While some research participants believed that landscape architecture is about working with nature, other participants believed that landscape's automatic association with nature is misleading because a lot of landscape architecture work does not include "natural" living elements. Although there is no consensus on what nature is and how nature shapes landscape architecture, I found that in the language of research participants, nature was generally something that each person "related" to. How a person relates to nature is shaped by how nature has shown up in their experiences of the world.

One way that nature shows up in our world regardless of where we are is through language. While one particular landscape architect expressed problems with the word *landscape*, Raymond Williams (1983) claims that "nature is perhaps the most complex word in the language" (219). Although nature is often associated with animals and plant material, in Williams' definition, nature refers to the essence of the world. He describes nature as "the essential quality and character of something; [...] the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both; [and] the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings." The first part of his definition implies that things generally have an essence to them; that is, there is a natural tendency towards something. The second part of the definition is a teleological idea that maintains the first part of the definition—the world is directed by a natural force to keep things as they are supposed to be. The third part defines the material world in which the first and second parts are implied to be true. None of the three parts of the meaning indicate living organisms such as plants and animals or of landscapes inhabited by these organisms, except for the mention of humans. Whether human beings and our creations are included in the material world is often the contentious aspect of interpreting the meaning of nature. Excluding human beings from the natural world has created a nature-culture binary. Including human beings into the natural world has created a lot of confusion

for the human mind. I believe that what we understand as being human is dependent on how we interpret nature. How we see nature is how we see ourselves as human beings.

A person living and working in urban environments would likely see nature differently than a person living and working in a rural environment. Because the binary thought of human versus nature shows up in the world as city environments juxtaposed with natural environments, a mental conflict exists in people who are accustomed to seeing nature in limited ways. According to CSLA's compensation study, more than half of landscape architects in Canada reside in large or major cities (The Portage Group 2019).⁴ Therefore, I assumed that the concept of nature would not be a high priority item or at least a conflicted subject for landscape architects who participated in the survey. However, I was incorrect in my assumptions because the results showed that nature was the most important subject for survey respondents. Nature “won” victoriously in many of the survey questions:

- Out of 9 images that included geological sites, built structures, and cultivated landscapes, a forest image ranked first as most poignant (See Fig. 2).
- When asked about the effects of a past poignant landscape experience, “it made me feel a special connection to nature” ranked first out of 11 multiple choice options.
- When asked about how a past poignant landscape experience influenced the participant, 56% of respondents said that the experience affected their views of nature.
- When asked about the most important goal for a fulfilling life as a landscape architect, “creating more natural habitats and sustainable ecological systems” ranked first out of 9 multiple choice options.

⁴ The more junior the landscape architect, the more likely they were to reside in a large or major city over 500,000 in population (i.e., 70% of junior landscape architects as opposed to 55% of firm partners).

- When asked about best ways to achieve a fulfilling life as a landscape architect, “by cultivating a stronger connection with the natural environment” ranked first out of 6 multiple choice options.
- When asked which goals were considered most important to doing good landscape architecture, “creating places that respect the natural environment and existing ecological systems” ranked first out of 12 multiple choice options.
- When asked about the best ways for the profession to aspire to good landscape architecture, “engaging with the natural environment” ranked first out of 10 multiple choice options.

The results of the survey strongly show that nature is important to the work of landscape architect participants. While the survey is not statistically representative of the landscape architecture profession, I think it is safe to conclude that the idea of nature is an integral part of a collective landscape architecture psyche.



Figure 2: Image of a forest – ranked 1st as most “poignant” in the 1st phase of images in the survey. Photo by Pixabay from Pexels.com.

At the foundation of the human psyche is the ability of the human species to survive. In the context of survival, nature is the environment that human beings need to adapt to. In one interview, a landscape architect described her childhood environment in a high-plateau desert as a juxtaposition between “natural landscape” and “man”:

I was raised in a place where you had to make an effort. [...] Water was controlled. Water was metered. It’s just a way of understanding that a landscape is created in many ways. Sometimes you come across a natural landscape, but sometimes you come across these types of landscapes that are between a natural landscape and man, and how the two interreact.

Within the participant’s description of landscape is a tug-of-war. I interpret her reference to “natural landscapes” as a place that exists independent of human beings and yet human survival is dependent on our adaptability within it. In most conventional thinking about nature, nature is something that human beings relate to. In the language of survey respondents, nature is described as a participant in the relationship. For example:

Nature can be harsh: “Nature feels separate and uncaring of human activity.”

Nature can be caring: “Nature was like a ‘mother’ to me, surrounding me in a nurturing way, providing protection despite being massive.”

Nature can be overwhelming: “It made me feel ‘small’, like what Yi-Fu Tuan describes in *Topophilia*, where we are diminished in the proximity of a grand natural feature.”

Nature can be symbiotic with humans: “It reinforced my belief that maintaining a connection to nature is critical to human well being.”

Nature is something pure and distant: “It instilled the notion that true nature can only be experienced in the wilderness away from other people, in ‘pure’ landscapes where the northern lights can happen.”

Nature can be ordinary and close by: “I felt that nature was part of my everyday life—just outside my home doorstep.”

From these comments, nature can be seen as a supportive participant (e.g. a nurturer) or a problematic participant (e.g. someone who is distant or aloof) in the relationship. The described dynamic reminds me of various parent-child relationships, which can operate within a spectrum between ultimate support and dysfunctionality. Therefore, I find the notion of human beings yearning for a connection with nature not unusual, because every child also yearns to be loved and cherished by their parents. Regardless of how a relationship plays out, if the dynamic is based on respect, there will be mutual appreciation. One participant’s comment illustrates an inclusive view of the human-nature relationship: “[The experience] made me realize how everyone sees and perceives nature differently but that most people appreciate it all the same.”

From a Westernized perspective, our relationship with nature is based on three stereotypes of nature: the wilderness, the countryside, and the city. Within the stereotypes are unresolved historical nuances and mental contradictions that keep the nature-culture binary in place. For instance, wilderness is usually the stereotype to describe the “ultimate” form of nature. However, the concept of wilderness is tied to both colonialism and religion. Prior to a frontier history, wilderness was associated with fear and sacredness. In Christianity, wilderness was the “cursed ground” of Adam and Eve’s eviction, and was also the place of the devil’s temptation (Tuan 1990). Wilderness was a place where the devil hid and also the place where Christ appeared (Cronon 1996). Therefore, wilderness was ambiguous, as Cronon describes, “In the wilderness, the boundaries between human and nonhuman, between natural and supernatural had always seemed less certain than elsewhere”

(73). On the other hand, wilderness as the recreational playground, the ecological classroom, or the outdoor sanctuary was not characterized until wilderness was conquered. In North America, the birth of a wilderness worth preserving can be found in the history of colonialism. The forces of capitalist exploitation that 19th century national park advocates fought against were the same forces that conquered these lands from their indigenous inhabitants. Cronon describes, “To protect wilderness was in a very real sense to protect the nation’s most sacred myth of origin” (77). Ironically, while the wilderness represented an escape from progressive civilized life, the nostalgia for the passing frontier also generated a sense of hostility towards modernity, which further strengthened the boundaries between places and things that were seen to be associated with human progress and the natural material world.

Similarly, the countryside represents the paradox of nature as work and nature as play. Growing up in England’s Midlands, an interview participant noted that he “had no other sense in that landscape was a functional thing.” He explained, “Early holidays, annual holidays were spent on a farm. [...] If we talk about wild landscape, what would come to mind would actually be an agricultural landscape.” From his childhood perspective of nature, the “wild” was not something to be found in the mountains and the forests of the frontier wilderness. His version of nature, which was equivalent to the countryside, was not to be feared or preserved in reverence. Nature as countryside is an idea that rests somewhere between human survival and human dominance. The countryside is a concept of nature where humans work on the land. But again, the ambivalence towards modernity has rendered the countryside as idyllic. Sought out as a place for recreation, leisure, and informal tourism, the countryside also became a commoditised definition of nature in modern societies. The notion that true nature is untouched by humans as portrayed in the concept of wilderness is not an issue that applies to the idea of nature as countryside. As Williams (1983)

notes, hedgerows that were made by humans long ago are considered “natural”; a plant that is not indigenous to an area but is self-sustaining in its new habitat is considered “naturalized.”

As wilderness and countryside became harder and harder to access for city-dwellers, the city became a stereotype for a place devoid of nature. One landscape architect complained about how frustrating it is to get out of the city to access the nature in the countryside. While it was once normal to suggest that going to the countryside was healthy behaviour for city-dwellers, the gridlock of highways in metropolitan areas make this habit impractical. The landscape architect argues that we have to change the way we see nature in cities. She says, “The idea that the city is part of nature, that’s the way we have to move forward. Otherwise, we can’t see our cities as separate.” Her assertion is particularly relevant considering the global concern for climate change and that cities, which cover 2% of the Earth’s land area, produce 60% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions (‘UN Climate Change Summit’ n.d.). However, the issue of cities as separate from nature lies deeper in the way nature is conceived, not only in the minds of a typical citizen, but also in the language of landscape architects. My hermeneutic analysis of a discussion on landscapes with one research participant shows this underlying challenge.

During the interview, one landscape architect (the same one who disapproved of the word *landscape*) stated his suspicion of my view of landscapes. He said to me, “I think when you are talking about landscape, I think you are thinking...what you are communicating to me anyway, is a landscape, maybe more like the one with palm trees [pointing to a photo on his wall]?” He was concerned that my classification of landscapes did not include the city setting. Considering my definition of *landscape* in my glossary, I deduce that his interpretation of my perspective on landscapes was not too accurate. Therefore, I further pondered over what I had said in my introductory preamble that would give him the impression that I did not see cityscapes as landscapes. I came down to two possible statements: my interest in the metaphysics of landscapes

and my view that landscapes are inevitably tied to the idea of sacred nature. I wondered if my mentioning of sacred nature had automatically brought into the discussion an association to Cronon's description of sacred wilderness. Or perhaps, the mention of sacred nature was evocative of the Romantic sublime? Either of the two associations could have led to notions about idealised forms of nature found in human history. But seemingly, the root of our discrepancy is not found in either of us seeing landscapes as urban or rural, but rather, our incongruence can be found in the way that our society has pared down the complexities of nature and simplified its meaning all together.

Designing nature

While landscapes may trigger notions of nature's beauty, the judgement of beauty, at least partially, is a practiced experience instilled by history and culture. According to landscape architect Gina Crandell (1993), we learn to find the beauty of landscapes through the pictorialization of nature. She argues, "we have defined and judged nature on the basis of its conformity with pictures. That which is most deserving of protection is that which is most beautiful," or rather, the "most pictorially satisfying" (3). Since perspectival techniques developed in the Renaissance, landscape as a subject matter evolved in Western art as a way to represent nature. From the Northern landscapes of Altdorfer (1430-1538), Patinir (1480-1524), and Durer (1471-1528); as well as the psychological landscapes of Da Vinci (1452-1519); to the idealistic Italianate landscapes of the 16th century, particularly of Carracci (1516-1609); to the 17th century classical biblical/mythological landscapes of Claude (1600-1682) and Poussin (1594-1665); and finally, to the humble Dutch landscapes of the 18th century; the composition of landscapes in paintings established a foundation for the *picturesque*. As a framework to how landscapes "should" be constructed, the picturesque has since influenced landscape aesthetics, including landscape photography and landscape architecture.

Eighteenth century English painter William Gilpin was the one who popularised the picturesque in Europe. While Edmund Burke ([1757] 1998) and Immanuel Kant ([1790] 1952) were philosophizing over their respective English and German interpretations of the beautiful and the sublime, Gilpin (1792) branched out from the inquiry of what is “beauty” to the question of “what makes paintings beautiful?” Unlike the characteristics that Burke assigned to beautiful objects, such as smoothness and regularity, Gilpin believed that attractive or picturesque paintings needed more visual interest. Accordingly, to turn a harmonious garden walk into a picturesque one, Gilpin (1792) remarked that a painter needs to “turn the lawn into a piece of broken ground: plant rugged oaks instead of flowering shrubs: break the edges of the walk: give it the rudeness of a road; mark it with wheel-tracks; and scatter around a few stones, and brushwood” (8). In addition to “roughening up” the landscape, Gilpin also canonized new rules for the beautiful landscape: the composition needed a foreground, a mid-ground, and a background. However, his writings, as much as they were influential for perceiving landscapes in the picturesque mode, they were not prescriptive of a singular way to see nature. What his writings did was suggest a connection between landscape image and the perception of nature. This connection allowed the Romantics, including the famous English nature poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850), “to discover Nature for themselves” (Wordsworth, Jaye, and Woof 1987, 88).

Landscape designer Uvedale Price (1796) was the one who applied the ideas of the picturesque into the practice of making landscapes. Unlike Gilpin, whose purpose for seeing nature as pictures was to make landscape paintings, Price’s theories encouraged nature to be re-made a certain way, and thus, reinforced the concept that nature itself could also be intrinsically beautiful and picturesque. Olmsted, who was born several decades after the publication of Gilpin’s and Price’s writings, adopted both the styles of the beautiful (or “the pastoral”) and the picturesque in his designs (Beveridge n.d.). These aesthetic rules about nature have since stayed with us, particularly in

North America. As John Jackson (1991) claims, “almost all of our parkways and larger city parks are modernized versions of the Romantic park, with winding paths, varied landforms, pastoral lawns and lakes and groves of beautiful trees, and isolation from the urban setting” (132). The irony of this condition, according to Jackson, is that picturesque landscaping flourished because of the Romantic rejection of the modern city, and yet, in our (post-)modern cities we find most of our nature through these picturesque landscapes. Therefore, much of what we consider as nature in cities has been designed or altered by human beings.

However, nature does not have to be limited to a patch of green space delineated on a city map. One landscape architect describes the city as a place “where sometimes landscapes and nature are in disguise a lot.” Rather than seeing the city as a stereotypical place that is devoid of nature, or that nature is a plot cut out of the urban fabric, the city can be seen, instead, as a place where nature appears as a complex and non-binary phenomenon. According to the previous participant, landscape architects can assist in uncovering this disguised nature. However, in conventional language, nature is regularly separated from human-made systems. Generally, nature is symbolised as green and human-built forms are symbolised as grey. By simplifying the colour palette of the city into two categories, much of the richness that can be experienced in the world is also diminished. Simplifying cities into a binary system also begs the question of whether landscape architects can design nature or even design with nature, since all human creations are automatically not “green” under a binary system.

The green-grey reference is used quite literally in infrastructure design. Grey infrastructure refers to centralised human-engineered systems and green infrastructure refers to infrastructure based on ecological systems. Sometimes, choices in landscape designs are made as if there are only two options: green (e.g. plantings) or grey (e.g. paving). Even worse, because of pre-conceived ideas about what standards a city should follow, the choices made available to designers are further

limited—as one landscape architect jokily mentions the City of Toronto’s urban design guideline for limiting surfaces to grey pavers or grey concrete for ease of operations: “It’s grey or grey!” From a metaphor of colour, limiting the world to green or grey (or only grey in cities), is like being colour-blind to all the other colours in the world. Moreover, the binary colour system is not logical. For example, stones along a riverbed, in various shades of grey and tones of other colours, are considered natural and attractive; a concrete planter in an urban plaza, which can also come in shades of grey or tones of other colours, is considered not natural and less appealing. The tree by the riverside and the tree in the planter are both supposedly considered natural, but the tree in the planter has less chance of surviving because it has not been given optimal conditions to grow in. If urban plazas were not considered as “grey spaces” and were treated as equally beneficial to what is considered “wild” nature, would landscape design change to accommodate the life of the urban tree? I am not sure, but for certain, with little thought, boundaries are continually placed instinctively between nature shaped by nature and nature shaped by humans.

Gardens, however, exist as liminal spaces along the boundary of nature and human, refusing to be split so easily. Exploring gardens as a philosophical concept can diffuse the need to allocate landscapes into binary categories. For example, the garden is portrayed as a paradisiac landscape that “ontologically exists apart from human agency” in both the Garden of the Sun in the Epic of Gilgamesh and the Garden of Eden in the Genesis (Johnson 1989, 2). The Garden of the Sun and the Garden of Eden were neither wilderness nor cultivated land. They were “holding” places for humans prior to their revival (for Gilgamesh) or their punishment (for Adam and Eve) into a world that needed culture as a taming of nature, especially, the taming of human nature. Accordingly, the garden is a type of “third” space. Without Gods, humans make their own gardens as in-between spaces for themselves. In Japanese, *niva* means a garden space adjacent to a residence, but it historically also meant a place for human activity; the term *shima* means a garden-like space, but it

contains the meaning of an island (Nakagawara 2004). From the paradise garden that embodies heaven and earth, to the courtyard between the public and the private, the garden is a dialectic synthesis that cannot be defined by binary notions of nature and culture, concealed and unconcealed, sacred and profane. The garden is the Zen *kōan* to the question, what is nature? (Nakagawara 2004; Stephenson 2005). As like all *kōans*, in which a paradoxical riddle is used to reveal the inadequacy of logic to provoke the realisation of life's greater truths, no "true" answer to the meaning of nature can come from the thinking mind. The "truth" of nature is found in experiencing it.

However, if we were to keep going in the mind to find an answer to what is nature, especially in the context of landscape architecture, we would likely come to a paradox that questions whether designing natural landscapes is possible. If nature is predominantly considered wilderness or untouched by humans, everything outside of this particular type of nature would be considered "artificial" regardless of how the space looks. Even Olmsted, in his advice to preserve the natural scenery of Yosemite Valley referred to certain practices as "artificialities" (Olmsted 2015, 674). One interview participant's appreciation for William Kent's work on the Stowe Gardens was also commended in a way that separates "natural" nature from "artificial" human-made nature. She described Kent's design approach as having "intensity in the way he worked with the land and with nature. [He] created a totally artificial park that looks somewhat natural [but] it's not natural." I assume that a part of her attraction to the gardens is the wonder for the paradox of designing natural landscapes as a human being. An imaginary conversation in a hypothetical mind may go somewhat like this: "Nature cannot be designed...or can it?" The doubtful mind says, "Yes...no...Nature is real, but so is artificial nature." Comparably, another landscape architect shared how the jarringness of the paradox becomes a memorable experience in a garden during a trip to Kyoto, Japan:

All of the plant material there is sort of the native stuff, [...] especially Japanese maples. You think of this as the epitome of the front yard of Rosedale. Everyone has their Japanese maple, right? It's like this very ornamental thing. So, to some extent, even walking through this woodlot of Japanese maples, it still felt very like...this kind of lying between design and nature, I suppose, kind of thing.

Here, the idea of nature is also grounded in a geographical place. Japanese maples in a woodlot in Japan are native geographically and distinctly considered natural. Japanese maples in a high-end residential neighbourhood in Toronto, Canada are ornamental and designed—an artificial nature of sorts. Put the two thoughts together and a *kōan* is created.

The interest in Stowe Gardens and the Kyoto garden for both landscape architects link to a fascination of human creation in contrast with primordial nature. One landscape architect expressed the appeal of such a tension in a landscape:

I think understanding that first of all, that nature and so on, the landscape, natural landscape, is pretty amazing. But also, things that have been built within it are also incredibly powerful. Like I mentioned the breakwater, which is about a mile long and huge, and waves crash over it. And the lighthouse, that kind of thing. The scale and strength of something that was manmade like that, that interacts with nature, I think I always found, I guess, I don't know if I appreciated it, [but] I was affected by it.

His description suggests to me a possibility that there is something inherently human to be enthralled by the juxtaposition of nature's forces with human power. Kant ([1790] 1952) formalizes this dynamic as the sublime effect of the human ability to reason over nature's strength. In Kant's mathematical sublime, nature's immeasurability comes from its greatness to overwhelm the human imagination. In Kant's dynamic sublime, there is a realisation that human reasoning or humanity's

inner nature is not limited by the powers of external nature. Thus, the sublime is a combination of pleasure, when reason surpasses nature, and displeasure, when imagination and physicality in turn becomes defeated by nature (Kant [1790] 1952). If the juxtaposition of primordial nature and human creation is so appealing that it becomes a sublime experience, perhaps, landscape architecture and designing nature are about bringing the two binary sides of nature and culture into a place that yields a kōan-like state of mind. Landscape architecture is, therefore, a mental paradox in itself.

A problem of separation

In one landscape architect's opinion, we already experience landscape as a mental puzzle. He says, "It's like a schizophrenic, slightly schizophrenic relationship to your expectations about landscape in one place versus another." This expectation is conceivably more directed to the idea of nature, and then applied to the interpretation of landscapes. He clarifies, "Many people [in Canada] have access to raw real landscapes, and come back to the cities, and most forget about those experiences." Moreover, many people would categorize those "raw real landscapes" as "real nature" in their minds, keeping them separate from any kind of nature that can be found in cities. Noticing that there is a mental conflict in the way we think and talk about nature and landscapes is the sign of a shift. The landscape architect notes, "I think maybe that's what's starting to change." Being aware of our own inconsistencies regarding landscapes and nature opens up a dialogue on an existential dilemma that can change an entire culture's worldview. As popular spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle (2008) remarks, Indigenous inhabitants considered themselves as belonging to the land, while European settlers (and modern capitalists) considered land as belonging to them in the form of property.⁵

⁵ In my oral exam, I was asked to refer here to an Indigenous scholar to make my point, rather than a White popular author. However, I cite Tolle in honour of my process of coming to the knowingness that is

Western Enlightenment thinking has created a foundation for a worldview that is based on binaries and considers the natural world including the land we live on as separate entities from the human mind. For instance, Kant's ([1781] 1998) transcendental idealism argues that experience is formed by "a-priori faculties" of the mind. The *phenomenal* world created in the mind through its interaction with sense data is separate from the *noumenal* world, an external world that is completely unknowable. While the phenomenal and noumenal worlds are indeed two realms of human experience, to interpret these worlds as binaries is problematic, especially if the mind-based world is considered superior. As an experimental exercise, I suggest that we imagine for a moment a world where every person and thing we cherish is unreal and unknowable. Likely, we will feel scared, depressed, and lonely. I know the feeling because I have envisioned this world at times as a child. Visualizing a life that is only lived within the mind, doubtful of the existence of an external world, is fearfully isolating, or even worse, apathetic. Yet, the challenge between mind and body has plagued the history of Western philosophy. René Descartes' mind-body dualism has even become an icon of pervasive Enlightenment thinking in the phrase "I think, therefore I am."

If the existence of nature outside of the mind is questionable, so are our own human bodies. In a binary mind-frame, the body is second-class to the mind. Furthermore, the body is difficult for the mind to categorize. The body consists of the symbiotic survival of multiple organisms and a composition of living and non-living elements (Evernden 1985). Evernden gives the example of our digestive system and its dependency on the symbiosis of our intestinal bacteria. The mitochondria that replicate independently of the cells in our bodies also illustrate a symbiotic relationship. Political

experienced as a "fateful" encounter that unfolds through relationships (in this case, between myself and Tolle's text). Tolle's writing changed my worldview of belonging when I first read his work years ago, and I still remind myself of this quote when I need to feel a sense of humility and connectedness. As an example of deliberating on what actions to take using an ethic of flourishing, this citation is also my conscious attempt to challenge hierarchical assumptions of what is valid knowledge, i.e., not just from "learneds" in the academy, and to blur the boundaries between knowledge and wisdom.

ecologist Jane Bennett (2004) even describes humans as “walking, talking minerals” (359). But perhaps, pondering over the sense of self, our existence in the material world in opposition to the intangibility of the mind is inevitable as a thinking species. However, it is the separation and then domination of inside over outside, mind over body, and human over nature that creates impenetrable boundaries. With domination, the subject of an experience becomes the only element with agency while the object is metaphorically and/or physically dead. Even if nature is something to “relate” to, this object is not granted agency in the relationship.

One landscape architect suggests that we re-evaluate the way we relate to nature so that we see ourselves as part of nature. She explains a preferred way to define landscapes: “The moment we see it, we objectivise, and we put a matter into it. That moment is not nature anymore. The definition that we [IFLA Americas] are trying to put on the table to move forward was a definition that is more—we are part of landscape. We are part of the natural systems.” Being part of landscape is resonant with Kōjin Katarini’s (1993) reference to people-as-landscapes in Japanese Meiji writer Masaoka Shiki’s *Unforgettable People*. In Shiki’s writing, trivial encounters with people are made memorable through the landscapes that they are part of. Katarini argues that landscape prior to representation is an inversion of consciousness. People-as-landscapes shift consciousness by blurring the boundaries between people, place, and nature.

However, the dominance of man over nature goes further than Western philosophy’s attachment to a consciousness of authoritative reasoning over materiality.⁶ In Genesis, Adam was given the task to tend to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). He had dominion over all animals and was also given the task to name all of them (Genesis 2:19). A basic form of conquest over nature has continued to be the ability to produce knowledge of the natural world through classification. In

⁶ The use of “man” here is meant to be gender specific, in reference to Adam (and God) in the Genesis, and the multitude of male philosophers throughout Western history.

Christianity's origin story, man was superior from the start. Therefore, a shift in consciousness is more than simple behavioural shifts such as bringing "nature" into the city. A shift in consciousness starts at questioning our inconsistent thought-patterns and the behaviours that arise out of these thoughts. One landscape architect gives the example of the hypocrisy that often comes with discussions about biodiversity initiatives in urban and suburban landscapes. For example, coyotes are welcomed as an emblem of a community's honourable movement towards biodiversity until someone's pet dog is attacked. The coyote is then considered too dangerous to be in the same vicinity as "man's best friend." A decision that was once considered virtuous can change on a dime if the results do not line up with a pre-conceived and accepted human lifestyle. Therefore, the attempt to live in harmony with nature is also an attempt to reconsider an imperfect human lifestyle that accommodates more-than-humans. The landscape architect states,

If we are going to make an effort to bring increased biodiversity to even our urban landscapes, or what I call cultural landscapes, then we have to explain the beauty of...it's not just a visual beauty. It's a beauty in which we're co-habiting with other species, and some of them are maybe unwanted, and some of them hopefully we enjoy. [...] There's sort of a need to accept nature into our cultural landscapes and along with that there's the fact that it doesn't conform to our notion of how our lives should be, which is culturally driven.

Culture is often an all-encompassing term for human societal patterns, behaviours, and ideals. Since not all human patterns align with other natural processes, culture and nature become a competition of ideals in binary-thinking. However, according to this landscape architect, if humans are to make effort towards a holistic worldview of nature, whatever form it may take, a humbling is required. Physically, we do not live in a Garden of Eden where all life forms are subject to

humanity's dominion. Humans have classified every part of nature that we are aware of, and yet, nature is still unknowable and still does not conform. Ironically, neither is the nature of humans.

Evernden (1985) suggests that humans may be biologically inclined to be “aliens” in our natural world. The term exotic is ecologically considered for an organism that lives outside of its native environment and often flourishes in the absence of natural predators. To Evernden, humans are in ways exotic because “we did not evolve *in* any existing habitat” (109). Humans have evolved to continuously develop new tools. By creating a tool, we extend ourselves and transform ourselves as predators. Technology proliferates and the human predator “cannot evolve *with* any ecosystem anywhere” (109). Instead, this predator instantly mutates into a new exotic creature within its ecosystem. This constant mutation is advantageous from a biological perspective against prey, but it is also problematic for the predator cognitively. The predator's self-identity within its environment is constantly in a state of confusion. As Evernden suggests, this sort of collective identity crisis brings about a desperation to “devise mythologies” as instructions to what behaviours to perform and what destinies to seek (110).

Humans also have a unique vertebrate development. Vertebrates generally produce either *nidiculous* offspring that are immature at birth and nest for long periods, or *nidifugous* offspring that have open eyes and are aware of the world at birth (Evernden 1985). Humans are neither one of the two. We require a unique social gestation period and are described as *secondary nidiculous*. Youthfulness in vertebrates, according to Dutch psychologist Frederik Buytendijk, is characterized by indeterminance, activeness, a pathic mode towards the environment, and an ambiguous “shyness” between home and outside, family and individual (Evernden 1985). In essence, youthful vertebrates exert a sense of placelessness. Concurrently, according to Evernden, “We are [...] indeterminate, always in motion, ambivalent, obsessed with the ‘how’ of the world, and uncommitted to an environmental context” (117). Heidegger ([1927] 1996) describes humanity's

consciousness of existence, that is *Dasein* or Being, as the awareness of non-existence, non-identity, and non-belonging. But Being is also to dwell in place (Heidegger 1971). Humans desire place and fear placelessness. In the feeling of placelessness is its complementary need to search for place and to make place. Landscape is often used synonymously to describe place. However, I see landscape as the mediator between nature and place. If the narrative of nature is the story of our human-world relationship, then landscape is the phenomenon of place-making—finding a sense of meaning and belonging—in context of this human-world relationship.

The nature of culture

I suspect that human beings' destructiveness as a species comes from our discomfort with placelessness. Without feeling the belongingness of being human in the world, not only do human beings have problems caring for humanity as a collective, we may also feel guilty for being part of a group that continuously destroys the lives and habitats of other humans and species. Sometimes human vices are unceremoniously blamed as “human nature,” which create notions that humans are defective in some way and that nature is also destructive. Alternatively, there may be validity to consider human flaws as “human nature,” but instead of seeing nature and humans in a negative light, human flaws could be considered “natural,” and therefore, not defects to be ashamed of. I believe that healing our shame of being human is necessary to fully appreciate landscapes, nature, humanity, and our own individual selves.

Personally, I had at one time felt guilty for adoring landscape images. A quote on the wall by Indigenous art scholar Jolene Rickard at the Art Gallery of Ontario's exhibit *Picturing the Americas: Landscape Painting from Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic* (2015) was the presumption of my guilt. It said: “From an Indigenous perspective, the genre of landscape painting is one of conceptual and visceral tools of colonization.” A year before the exhibit, I had returned to school after being a landscape

architect for seven years, and had for the first time read academic literature on post-colonial and critical landscape studies (i.e., the works of Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Alexander Wilson, Bruce Braun, and William Cronon). As a romantic-at-heart, an idealist, a landscape photography and painting admirer, and a landscape architect, I learned that I was in every way guilty of being a contemporary “colonialist.” While the writers’ goals were likely not to *intentionally* make readers guilty and instead to bring attention to colonialism and its unresolved social and ecological wounds, I had felt that I was *supposed* to feel guilty for admiring the beauty of landscapes because viewing nature from a nostalgic perspective or to “romanticise nature” was somehow a sign of “evil” colonial-based thinking. Accordingly, I felt that I was supposed to feel guilty because I had benefited from the atrocities made by past human civilisations. While the guilt was uncomfortable, the biggest dilemma was that my life-time enchantment with landscapes was up for trial. Today, I am glad that I ended up reconciling those feelings of guilt. I can now acknowledge that landscape images were formative to how I connect with the sacredness of nature and that the beauty I experience through two- and three-dimensional landscapes has helped me understand the sacredness of humanity. I do not claim that post-colonial and critical landscape studies are inherently shaming, but for me, they need to be studied in tandem with something else that is antidotal towards any disenchantment of life that these studies may bring. To start a practice of re-enchantment, I argue that we need to see nature and culture as parts of the world’s processes.

However, if humans are part of a greater system of nature, then what becomes of culture and all that is produced from human creation? Under logical deduction, culture is then also natural. All that is considered human-made, artificial or culturally produced, is then a subset of the wider natural world. While this deduction is sensible, I can imagine the social and ecological criticisms for accepting the perspective: if we accept all that is human as natural, then would we not be dismissing all the destruction produced by human behavior, such as social violence, ecological exploitation, and

environmental degradation? The answer to this question is that the question is based on a flawed assumption: a binary judgement has been made with the term *natural*. I imagine that within the contemporary mindset, we have an instinctive refusal to accept all of human behaviour, both beneficial and destructive, as natural because, within a concept of nature that is outside of culture, we have an association of nature with or as what is “good.” As long as the mental judgement is maintained, humans either cannot be completely part of nature or we must consider ourselves as natural pests, tragically here on the planet in order to destroy it.

I suspect that the judgement of pristine nature as “good” is not really about nature but instead is a marker of humanity’s self-judgement about humans as “bad.” While nature’s synonymous association with God in American Transcendentalism symbolizes a paradigm of morality for humanity in relation to nature, the idea of sin was already embedded in Christian interpretations of humanity’s existence on Earth from the origin. The word *nature* is also used to describe an “essential quality” or “inherent force,” and therefore, the natural is also something that “should be.” If humanity was destined to be sinful from our first touch on Earth, and sin is interpreted as a fault, then it is easy to believe that we should never have been here from the start. It is, therefore, also easy to arouse the dormant shame of being human when post-colonial and critical landscape studies remind us of humanity’s faults. But the persistent engagement of this self-judgement is a self-defeating narrative.

Alternatively, Daoism views moral values of righteousness, such as those within Confucianism, as “ineffective remedies in a degenerative society” (Moeller 2004, 117). By creating the category of goodness, there will always be badness, as the world operates in a *complementary* dualism of yin and yang. Nature, often translated as “self-so” (*ziran*), is not what should be (or must), but instead, what is the natural path to take: one’s “own course” without the need of morality (Moeller 2004, 35). Accordingly, I suggest that what is natural (i.e., self-so) for humanity is the ability

to choose actions and choose different narratives. Within this ability is the choice of declining the power of making a choice, although many of us at various times in our lives will not be aware of an available choice and will argue that we “have no choice” instead of saying that we are choosing not to make a choice. Nevertheless, accompanying each choice that we make are consequences that are within a broad spectrum of advantages and disadvantages. Within humanity’s nature is also the (high) probability of making damaging choices or sins, in the Christian sense. Accepting the balance of relative advantageous and disadvantageous actions is part of the Daoist yin and yang ontological system.

Using a binary approach to judge and evaluate the complexity of human behavioural choices and their consequences can sometimes lead to incomprehensible perplexity upon further investigation, especially in relation to how humans treat other natural beings and elements. One such conundrum is the subtle difference between maintaining and tending to nature. For example, lawn-care and Zen gardening are two different ways of relating to nature, but they both require deliberate and repetitive attention. One landscape architect recalled in her interview a memory of her lawn-infatuated neighbour from her suburban American childhood home:

The neighbour across the street, he was so obsessed with his lawn. He would wait in his living room, just wait there, looking out the window. If a leaf fell onto his grass, he would run out and grab it. He mowed his lawn all the time. One time I was riding my bike and I rode over the lawn. He ran out and he yelled at me. He told me that he was going to kill me if I [did] that again, when I was a kid. Anyways, I just watched him do that and live that lifestyle. I guess it stuck with me, that obsessive kind of trying to make nature perfect. Make your house...try and put this...make your lawn fit into this cookie cutter of what perfection is. It really pushed me to not fight nature and work with it. It really affected me, because I was watching him, and it consumed his life. What kind of life is that?

Obsessive lawn care is not unusual in North America because the lawn is a status symbol. A lawn's condition is attached to a property's value and the homeowner's sense of belonging. Krystal D'Costa (2017) writes, "To have a well maintained lawn is a sign to others that you have the time and/or the money to support this attraction [...] A properly maintained lawn tells others [that] you are a good neighbor." While maintaining the perfect lawn requires a lot of resources, it is the incessant need to control *against* the untamed that makes the endeavour analogous to human colonisation over nature. The behaviour is also an energy-losing war *against* natural processes.

Comparatively, Zen gardens are also about meticulous upkeep, but Zen gardening is given much more respect than lawn-care. In *karensansui* (dry stone) gardens, vegetation is perfectly trimmed, sand is regularly raked with unbroken patterns, and dead or loose vegetation is immaculately cleared. Nature is also "controlled" and not permitted to run its own course. The difference between the lawn and the Zen garden is based on the intent and quality of participation. In the maintenance of a lawn, the goal is to preserve a certain aesthetic for an external sense of approval. In the tending of a Zen garden, the purpose is to become part of a metaphysical process. Each task for the Zen monk, whether it is raking or weeding, is a meditative practice of being consciously present. Rather than controlling nature in the conventional sense, the monk becomes a participant in a *kōan* with nature. As Camelia Nakagawara (2004) describes, raking waves in the sand "is actually exercising being the wind that creates waves on the surface of the ocean" (98). The monk is "a creator, equally of the garden and of himself."

So, can the maintenance of a North American front yard become a Zen practice? Possibly, but the spiritual telltale of a proper intent is that a conscious practice of presence in the world would not result in more aggressive behaviour. In this example, the homeowner was likely not participating in a spiritual *kōan* with life. As the interview participant claimed, "he seemed very disconnected, so disconnected that he was willing to say such an awful thing to a child. Because she rode her bike

over?” I interpret the “disconnect” that the participant was referring to as the disconnection between human and nature, or culture and nature. By tying culture to the notion of tending a garden, I will further dissect the meaning of culture and where a binary diversion of thought occurs.

The word *culture*, deriving from the Latin word *cultura*, implies the act of cultivating, tending to, and the rearing of growing crops (‘Culture’ n.d.). According to Fisher (2013b), culture is “a kind of techne or artful attending to the life process” (120). Culture is not the opposite of nature because “our nature always anticipates certain kinds of culturing” (Fisher 2013b, 120). But if the word itself stems from 15th century agricultural practices, did culture not exist prior to that era in human civilization? For Heidegger (1992), culture is merely a modern phenomenon created by humanity’s egotistic will over the spiritual world. He explains that the opposite of barbarism for the Ancient Greeks was not culture, but was instead, dwelling within *logos* and *mythos* (which are sometimes simplified as speech and myth). To dwell within *logos* and *mythos* implies that using language in a way to embody a presence of a greater world is the highest essence of human existence. Since the modern world no longer uses language in such an embodied way, according to Heidegger, culture as modern technology is only a form of barbarism from the perspective of Ancient Greek thought.

While culture is described as opposite and contradictory for Fisher and Heidegger, I suggest that there is no discrepancy between the two positions. Essentially, Fisher’s idea of culture and Heidegger’s idea of non-barbarism (i.e., dwelling within *logos* and *mythos*) has been conflated with what we consider as modern culture (i.e., Heidegger’s interpretation of barbarism and culture). What we conventionally consider as culture today includes activities based on technological and consumptive tendencies, such as continuous cycles of breaking news, entertainment, tourism, and shopping. What I consider as “authentic” culture is the social cultivation of behaviours and thoughts that serve life holistically. The modern culture industry has goals that are not aligned with healing or growth, but instead promotes a form of consumerism that depends on continuous escapism and

gratification (Fisher 2013b). So perhaps, as Fisher (2019b) notes, what we have today in modern society is not culture but the absence of (authentic) culture, which could also be called anti-culture. Just like the barbarism in Ancient Greek thought, there is little life-serving essence to modern technology or information consumption. Superficial forms of connecting to life in modern culture such as “likes” on social media and TV ads set in beautiful landscapes are evolutions of romantic nostalgia. The need to yearn for a connection with nature, which was a characteristic of Romanticism, can also be said to be a form of a yearning for culture. As modernity grew out of an over-rationalised world that was also increasingly sterile of soulful presence, nostalgia appeared as a symptom of mainstream society’s denial of authentic culturing for itself and for nature beyond.

Landscapes as cultural legacy

Culture, authentic or not, is based on legacies passed down from generation to generation. Each generation adapts culture into trajectories that are more relatable to its members. Several interview participants believed that cultural legacy was important to understanding landscapes and had made references to historical restoration in our discussions. To answer my question regarding an experience that affected one’s worldview, particularly towards nature, society, or landscape, one research participant recalled an experience in Richelieu, France. She said,

[Richelieu was] a very important Cardinal under Louis XIV [sic: Louis XIII]. He had immense power. [...] He was the person that embodied what is discipline, and rightness, and correctness, and Whit Day in France.⁷ [...] Descartes came about the same period as Richelieu. [...] All of that was this historical period to try to pull out of the Dark Ages, and into after the Renaissance happened. But

⁷ Whit Day is the Monday after Pentecost, which is the 49th day after Easter Sunday. In 2005, Whit Day in France became a “solidarity day” where people could give up their holiday to fundraise for the elderly who were vulnerable to summer heat. In 2008, the policy was changed so that workers could choose any one holiday throughout the year as their “solidarity day.”

these people were sort of that junction between those two pieces. I'd visited [...] the site of Richelieu where the chateau was totally gone but there [were] footprints of everything. It was just...the canals were being overgrown. I just couldn't...why is somebody letting this go when it's such an important cultural piece of explaining what man has been doing over time with his religion, with his science? [Richelieu] built a new town that had the first-time sanitation. It had sewage control. It had fresh water to all the houses. It was all built on a grid. So, on an urban plan, [...] it] was extremely progressive.

When I heard the passage above, I was conflicted. While I normally have nostalgic tendencies for places that tell of past generations, I also have a contradictory view to the story above as well. Humanity's total embrace of Descartes' philosophy, for me, is as much tragedy (for humanity's complicated relationship with everything outside the mind, including all of nature) as it has been progressive. The predicament of why humans need to preserve our accomplishments at the expense of natural processes for the sake of human memory and knowledge is something I have trouble reconciling. But from another perspective, the unpacking of the existential meaning of culture within the framework of human nature allows me to appreciate a more authentic side to cultural legacy.

Several landscape architects were critical of how contemporary landscape architecture has been encouraging pretty graphics. The circulation of attractive images in social media and magazines tend to increase the statuses of designers and design firms, leading to awards and business offers. As a result, further emphasis is placed on the visual appeal of designs, sometimes at the expense of the time to consider deeper issues about place-making. One landscape architect who supports historical awareness argues that mainstream societies do not have a good sense of time and are pre-occupied with instant gratification. He claims that landscape architects generally do not give enough attention to consider a design's long-term prospects. He makes reference to older architecture, which often contains a sense of pride and legacy in the design product:

If you come into the city you will see buildings that are 100, 150 years old that are still in terrific shape if they've been looked after properly. People built them with a huge sense of, "This is my legacy. I'm building a building on Queen Street," let's say. "And it's going to be where I will have my shop or my business, and where I would live. And where I will present myself to the public as an individual, as a family, or as a company. So, it must be well made."

Legacy in historical pieces of architecture, according to this research participant, expresses the dignity of their past owners. Since I was curious to know the philosophical meaning behind the importance of legacy, I asked him if his interest in history came from the stance of future or past-oriented thinking. Is the relevance of legacy a consideration for the needs of future generations or is it a learning lesson from the past? Sure enough, his answer was both.

In abstract, legacy is not only about the product. Legacy is also about the material and energy that goes into creating something. He explains,

It's both. One is a greater appreciation of old things. Not just seeing them as kind of stuff but understanding that somebody made this. It's a result of somebody burning bricks or manipulating pieces of timber. But it's also projecting, saying you know, "so what are we doing now? How will this look 100 years from now? Will it still be here?" I think in most cases, we'll say, "well, it won't be here in 100 years from now," even though we've got stuff that we are taking care of that's well over 100 years old in Toronto.

In this interpretation of historical legacy, design is the process of dwelling within *logos*. According to Heidegger (1971), to build means to dwell. To dwell is not only about living but also to care for our home. The old German word *bauen* means dwelling by cherishing and protecting, and specifically, by tilling the soil and cultivating produce. By living and dying, mortals are already in relation with the earth, the sky, and the divine; hence, by dwelling authentically, Heidegger's notion of the

cosmological fourfold (i.e., earth, sky, mortality, divinity) is preserved. Dwelling brings presence of this fourfold into things by nurturing the things that grow and by constructing things that do not grow. If *logos* is “to make manifest” through the act of speech, language, and process (Heidegger 1992), a historical piece of architecture or landscape architecture that was built with care becomes more than a remnant of the past. Even if the item is not used in the same way anymore, and even if it has an undeterminable future, within its creation is a portion of humanity’s existential dwelling in the world. In other words, a piece of architecture or landscape architecture is also a timeless function of creating place. Accordingly, place-making is a form of authentic culture manifested through the cultivating of human needs that exist beyond time and space.

Place transcends time and yet it is interdependent with it. For instance, Yi-Fu Tuan (2001) describes space and place through experience, in which space and place are interdependent with time-action: “if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (6). Alternatively, Edward Casey (1993) distinguishes sites as locations where things are prospectively built while places are inhabited in present or retrospective time. Temporality is then a function of place. Memories are experienced by being embodied in a place and time, whether the memory comes from a reality or the imagination. A place will sometimes recall certain memories, while certain memories seek out places.

A lot of effort has been put into distinguishing the difference between space and place in academia. I would argue that great architects and landscape architects intuitively know place. That is because the ultimate goal of the designer is not to build structures, but instead, to make places. While function and visual appeal are the predominant drivers of contemporary design, there still remains an almost mythic poeticness to the concept of timeless place-making. The most influential notion of place in Western architecture theory is the ancient Roman concept of the *genius loci*. The

“genius” is the guardian spirit that protects every being in the world from its birth to its death and gives it essence and life energy (Norberg-Schulz 1980). Every place has a genius; the genius is the essence of place, distinguishing it from space or site. Finding the genius, or creating one, is the trick of architecture and landscape design. Spirit of place is a notion found in other cultures, for example, the spirits of the land in Indigenous cultures, the kami in the Shinto religion, and the guardian deities in Hinduism and Chinese folk religion.

A feature of place is its atmosphere. Atmosphere is an abstract feeling that most people can comprehend but may have difficulty describing. A place’s atmosphere is not completely tangible, but it is also not merely cognitive. For Merleau-Ponty (1968), a place’s atmosphere can be envisioned as the invisible “flesh” that manifests out of the experience of a body in a space of elements. According to Tonino Griffiero (2010), atmosphere is an in-between state of subject and object, and therefore, is a quasi-thing. He argues that we do not project onto the world the atmosphere of a place; instead, the atmosphere consumes the body. Atmosphere is part of understanding place, and at the centre of place is the “standing” body. As the permanent position of “here,” in place, the rest of the world is of relational context: beneath, above, behind, in front, to the left, to the right, and over there (Casey 1993). Nearness and farness also relate to the body. Casey suggests that the near-far polarity is spatio-temporal. Nearness and farness are shifting grades of attainability in relation to the physical body, the emotions, and memory. There is a level of attachment to places that are near such as the home. The body moves between here and there to become nearer or farther to meaningful places.

If atmosphere consumes the body’s senses, I wondered if history could be physical or emotionally felt within a landscape. I asked the previous participant if his sense of history was analytical or was something he could actually feel. Although he did not really describe what or how history can be sensed, he was certain that feelings come first, and analytics come after. He suggested that this intuitive knowing comes with age. Either one becomes more aware or becomes more

curious to what one is actually feeling. He said, “At a younger age, I don’t think you’re very analytical about these emotions or senses of things. It’s only when you have perspective and you look back and, ‘Ah, ha. That’s where that comes from. This is where...’ When you have a bit more insight or analytical about your memories.” After reflecting on his statement, I came to agree that the longer we have lived, the more potential we have to understand ourselves and our lives.

However, I believe that insight and reflectivity can be taught and practiced. One way to familiarize ourselves with our emotions and senses is through the awareness of the language and the stories we use to describe places of the past, present, and the future.

Beyond calendar and clock time, the language of time is quite abstract. The past and future are conceptual notions of existing in time. When history surpasses an ambiguous period, an era and its relics become “ancient.” Remarkably, things described as ancient are not merely old. Ancient things are considered to have a certain kind respect and magic to them. Whether it is the making of a thing’s presence in a cosmological fourfold of earth-sky-mortality-divinity, the geniuses or spirits of place, or the practice of traditional rituals, the notion of things ancient is simultaneously bound to a historical past and a timeless circumstance that speaks of humanity’s origins. In the survey, a question asking landscape architects to brainstorm places that they would consider as poignant and to list some characteristics of these places, *ancient* was a recurring term. While three respondents described the places they listed as *historical*, twelve respondents used the word *ancient* to describe their list. From Stonehenge, to Roman forums, to Muir Woods in San Francisco, to waterfalls in Vancouver Island, to cities in Croatia and Guatemala, *ancient* was used to depict the significance of places that varied among historical structures, geological features, and social processes. Combining these three aspects together, we get a kind of ancient geomantic practice such as Chinese *feng shui*.

Similar to the genius loci, feng shui is based on the notion of an underlying energy that makes a place. Unlike the overall stability of a genius figure, *chi* (energy) is ever changing and

malleable, making place open to creation and re-creation. During his interview, one landscape architect told me stories of the “landform dragons” that shaped Hong Kong and the Leaning Tower of Pisa. He described how Hong Kong had cut their dragon’s tail off during the city’s phases of development. On the other hand, the limestone taken from the neighbouring hills of the Pisa Bell Tower upset its dragon, resulting in a curse on the building’s structure. Although we often understand these stories as myths or allegories, at a deeper level, there is more to the narratives. From the Ancient Greek perspective, *mythos* was an existential way of being in the world (Heidegger 1992). From a Western empiricist perspective, feng shui may be just superstition but as we recall Abram’s (1997) quote from the introduction: “language is no more the special property of the human organism than it is an expression of the animate earth that enfolds us” (90), we are reminded that what is told of the land *is* part of the land.

Even though modern societies have lost these stories, from my perspective, a place’s significance can still be felt intuitively. The landscape architect with the dragon myths agrees that intuition is part of understanding place. He says, “there are some things that I feel about place. Something that just feels right, and somethings that don’t. [...] There are places [...] where you do feel more attuned, and there are places that you just don’t.” What he believes results from a geologically significant place is that it will become a dwelling that is cared for and nurtured. The place becomes habitat. He continues,

I look at a place and I say that’s special. There’s something about the configuration, the positioning that is special. I don’t know, and then I wind up going to that place, and in fact, it is. And often, it will be a geologically significant place, a unique place that will be revered by people indigenous to that area. That’s because it gives an expression of how nature is operating. I call them liminal landscapes. Where, where form meets space. Where high meets low. Where ravine meets water.

Similar to the liminality of gardens, where “pristine nature” meets “human culture,” for this interview participant, a geologically significant place is also a liminal place that brings two elements of nature together. The point between two sides of what could have been a binary relationship is a greater understanding of life. In his description of these geologically significant places, nature, culture, and place-making become part of the same process. These landscapes become a legacy for human existence. The power of the existential legacy can be felt in the atmosphere of the landscape in a present-day experience.

The most detailed description of the phenomenon of landscape as legacy comes from a landscape architect’s first visit decades ago to Northern Canada as a governmental representative to negotiate a discrepancy about place with the local Inuit community. The experience was so impactful that he continued to build his career as a planning consultant for Indigenous communities. In a place beautifully called Arctic Eden, he experienced first-hand the sacredness of a landscape that transcended conceptual notions of nature, culture, and time. The description below tells of the complexity of his landscape experience:

It was almost like I was standing in a place where there were various types of...like there were overlaps happening in that place. I don’t know if you’d call them nests of just energies, but there were things like...I could be in this place...this landscape that he was taking me to was vast. He was calling it Arctic Eden. From their perspective, the reason it was an Eden is because it was like the Garden of Eden, and that they could live there throughout the year and sustain themselves from the resources of the land or from the resources of the sea. There [are] very few places like that in the Arctic where all year-round people could live. [...]

When we were in that spot, you could understand that that area was one of the few places probably in the Arctic where Inuit or their ancestors could have lived

throughout the whole year and sustain themselves. That layer became really evident here. [...] We would see an area, and see an area, and they were all sort of...they seemed like unique areas, but from this island, the way it was, the physical topography of the island allowed you to see the vastness and the entire landscape in its whole. You could stand there, and you could see...where in the sea, what's called the flow edge. That's where there's open water all throughout the year. Those are really rich and important wildlife areas. [...] Then turning in the exact same spot, you could see the important caribou harbour grazing areas. You can see the important fishing area. All in one spot, all the resources of this surrounding landscape were visible from one spot. I don't think there [are] probably very many places like that in the Arctic. So, there was another layer. [...]

As we moved inland and up, we were going back in time basically to where the coastline used to be when the land was lower. Suddenly, as we were moving up, we were finding more and more evidence of human use. Every site we would see was one or two generations older than the last one, until we got to the very top where we were standing amongst what we were assuming a small village of these incredible sites that were the oldest occupancy of this island. So, you had a very profound...by just walking in a straight line from the coast up to the top of the hill, you had a very profound experience of human use and activity, and the importance of this place that has been sustained over generations and generations. It's hard to really understand how powerful the experience it is.

In his description, the power of the landscape finds itself in layers that are both visible and invisible. The layers of natural processes, cycles, and human engagement all come together in a personal experience. The profoundness of the experience illustrates how nature, culture, place, and time are part of a bigger cosmology that is palpably found embodied in the landscape. The landscape itself, is

therefore, able to demonstrate to humans how humans play roles in the world as ecological participants, social participants, and spiritual participants.

Therefore, the experience of landscapes is tied to how human beings relate to nature and how human beings consider their ontological sense of self. How we interpret nature is how we interpret ourselves as human beings. If nature is considered purely a resource used for commodities, human beings become consumers that deplete natural resources. If nature is considered a luxury, then only certain humans are worthy of nature's comfort. If nature is considered an enemy, then humans will want to dominate it due to fear. If nature is considered kin, humans become part of an ecological community. If nature is considered home, then humans belong in it. Landscapes are the stories of these interpretations of nature that get relived through experience. Putting a definition to the word *landscape* may be difficult because of its ambiguity but finding meaning in landscapes is not all that difficult; so much that meanings found in landscapes are so complex that simple definitions for nature, culture, place, and time are insufficient. The fascination with human history and landscape's legacy show that place-making, or more broadly, human belongingness in the world, is fundamentally important to the meaning of landscapes. Since place-making is dependent on the interpretation of the human-world relationship, it is necessary to evaluate how we want to participate in our world. For example, do we want to be apathetic? Do we want to be disheartened? Do we want to be fearful? Or do we want to be enchanted by the world? If the choice is enchantment, then I suggest that interpreting what makes landscapes poignant is one place to start.

Poignant Experiences: Finding Belongingness in Profound Encounters and in the Everyday

Using the word *poignant* as the framework for my research has sparked both curiosity and confusion from those around me. My initial intention in using the word was to inspire evocative emotions from significant memories of landscapes in order to have a discussion about the power of landscapes, but *poignant* often comes with elements of sadness. Usually, sadness is an unwelcomed emotion. One landscape architect noted in her interview that she prefers to use the word *uplifting* because *poignant* has “a little too much sadness to it.” After much consideration over the idea of sadness, I deduce that the connection between poignancy and sadness is important to explore because pain is a significant part of human existence. Poignant moments that arise from difficult life experiences have elements of pain. In fact, the word *poignant* has been associated with something sudden and painful since the 14th century (‘Poignant’ n.d.). The etymology of the word originates from the Latin word *pungere*, meaning to prick or pierce. The 13th century French term *poindre* and its present participle *poignant* carries the same meaning: something sharp and pointed that pricks. Interestingly, *poignant* is often used to describe scenarios that are *beautifully* painful. Although, the combination of beauty and pain is somewhat of an oxymoron, if we consider pain as the suffering that life offers for growth, beauty can find its way in as a type of healing process.

Frankly, I believe that we all come into the world wounded. Moreover, our world has been wounded for a long time, and even amidst the routines of everyday life, there is a general layer of pain. According to Joanna Macy (1995), nobody is “immune” to the pain of the world, but to embrace woundedness is difficult. For the most part, humans desire happiness and try to avoid sadness. The children’s animation *Inside Out* (Docter and Del Carmen 2015) illustrates this phenomenon fittingly as Joy (the emotion) insists on keeping Sadness inside a bounded circle in

order to keep their human girl happy. Then again, sadness is not the only emotion that is habitually denied. I would argue that emotions in general were never fully welcomed as part of the modern development of human civilization. Since the Middle Ages shifted into the Renaissance, the Western world has prized the thinking mind over sentimentality. For only a relatively brief period in the last 600 years or so of modernity has emotionality prevailed over reasoning in a major cultural movement (i.e., Romanticism from c.1770-1850). Not surprisingly, the fascination of nature also accompanied this time of emotional exploration because feelings are also part of human nature.

Still, even if the mind is in control, it does not mean emotions are non-existent. Fisher (2013b) suggests that instead of feeling pain, humans often deny or repress it. A society of humans with repressed emotions becomes nihilistic and loses its ability to participate in authentic culturing. Accordingly, to Fisher, “the more our living and feelings are blocked, the more we are estranged from our own bodily-felt nature, the more does the aggression within the life force press up against this repression” (88). In a patriarchal-leaning society, emotions, nature, and femininity are exiled together, and thus, nature gets “stripped of her authority” and becomes “a fictive creature that disguise[s] humanity’s own hidden desires and inclinations” (Richards 2002, 404). As Fisher (2013b) notes, there is absurdity to how contemporary society treats mental disorders, that is, having individuals appear at psychotherapist offices to get analysed concerning their independent life stories and traumas, while the social forces that brought them there continue to create violence, destruct the biosphere, and perpetuate the supply of more wounded souls.

This cycle of collective social violence almost seems inevitable. But for me, poignant moments are the moments when suffering becomes awareness (and perhaps even absurdity), and when beauty shows itself as wounds heal. The landscape architect who prefers the word *uplifting* also sees beauty as a constructive force for bringing people from one state to another. She explains, “to create even a small slice of beauty that uplifts people” is “a great moment.” However, beauty that

can heal a society's greatest wounds needs to come from something even greater than society itself. If creation, destruction, intimacy, and hate are considered parts of a greater cosmological structure, then the pain and beauty of life can co-exist together.

The reluctance of spirituality, healing humanity, and an all-pervasive spirit

To consider a greater cosmological structure that consists of both pain and beauty, humanity's relationship with this structure must also be considered. Therefore, asking the question, "what does it mean to be human?" is fundamentally also a spiritual question. According to Macy (1995), the challenges of humanity's collective wounding cannot be overcome without a spiritual practice. The desire to heal, personally or collectively, in order to recover the incompleteness of life caused by the detachment from nature and human nature is in itself a spiritual endeavour (Fisher 2013b). But in a fact-based society, there is generally a reluctance towards spirituality. I find this reluctance bizarre, but in my research and in other areas of social interaction, spirituality often comes with a clause. In my interview introductions, I mentioned the word *spirituality* in a sentence that defines landscape as "a phenomenon that intersects materiality, consciousness, and spirituality." I also mentioned that "landscapes tell a story of a *sacred* human-world relationship found in nature." I assume that this premise helped build rapport with certain participants because it aligned with their spiritual practices, but for some others, it seemed more like a disclaimer was necessary between us. I was told by several participants:

"I may not be very spiritual."

"I think that maybe in the British nature, that there's a kind of pragmatism that has...that's not easily led into spiritual areas."

"I'm not terribly religious. That didn't have much impact on me."

In the survey, spirituality was moderately common: 60% of participants acknowledged a religious or spiritual position (i.e., either monotheistic, pantheistic, or panentheistic); 20% claimed to be atheists; and 20% did not have a position or did not want to share it.

The hesitancy towards discussing spirituality perhaps stems from misunderstandings. In a qualitative research study with physicians who care for stage IV cancer patients, Megan Best, Phyllis Butow, and Ian Olver (2016) discovered that although “routine spiritual care would have positive impact on patients” (1), physicians are reluctant to discuss spirituality in their work due to: 1) patients and doctors confusing spirituality with religion; 2) peer pressure from colleagues who were not in favour of the topics; 3) the fear of forcing their beliefs on others; 4) institutional influences; or 5) historical factors. Similarly, a survey to American adults on why they were reluctant to discuss faith showed that people avoided the topic either because religious conversations seemed to create arguments due to the subject’s politicisation, they did not care or believed they had enough knowledge on the subject, or they did not want to be seen as “religious,” “weird,” or “fanatic” (Barna Group 2018). In the field of social work, Michèle Butot (2005) found that while many practitioners considered themselves spiritual, critical social work literature has not embraced a spiritual framework. Butot suggests that a dialogue on spirituality can reframe and emancipate the oppressive hierarchies that critical social work attempts to dismantle.

Best et al. (2016) refer to spirituality as “the way people engage with the purpose and meaning of human existence” (1). They also note that these views shape people’s personal values. Therefore, how we interpret what it means to be human and how we define the human-world-cosmos relationship, determines how we participate in the world as humans. I suggest an interpretation of spirituality that speaks of both interconnectedness and individuality so that societies can find leeways for healing. First, spirituality is the acknowledgement of a power, life

force, mystery, or unseen element within or encompassing the connections and relationships between entities in the world, including people, other organisms, things, and events. Second, this force is meaningful to the individual who acknowledges their interconnectivity with the world. For one landscape architect, “spirit is all-prevailing in all areas regardless of what you call it.” I agree, because spirit immediately becomes pervasive once an individual recognises and makes meaning of their interconnectivity with the world. Poignant landscapes are dependent on interconnections and meaning, because to feel the poignancy of a landscape is to allow one’s self to be moved by the pain and beauty of the world.

According to research participants, certain poignant experiences are geologically specific. A scientific rationale might be able to give details to the characteristics of a space, but rationale may not adequately explain why certain repressed emotions are triggered in a landscape. For example, one interview participant shared how the sacred Tibetan mountains triggered an inexplicable spiritual challenge for him. He described his experience:

I remember sitting at a certain point where behind me is Lake Manasarovar. This is the most sacred lake for a billion people. When you go swimming there you become enlightened in one lifetime. That’s what they say. It was pretty special. Right here is the formation of Mount Kailash. The monastery down there...this is the most sacred place in the world. I’m sitting here and I’m crying because I wonder why it feels so difficult. Why is it so hard? Because I’m supposed to have this ethereal awareness and all I was feeling was anguish.

His emotional challenge was a personal one, but it was also an existential challenge that expressed the impact of a human being in relation to something cosmological found in the landscape he experienced. He further clarified the experience: “part of the spiritual path is trying to work through all the emotional reflections. When I was in this place feeling...it’s right in my face, these

infections.” Being in a spiritually charged landscape in some way sounds as if magic occurs and an emotional switch turns on from an alchemical composition that lays dormant in a place. Merleau-Ponty (1945) would call this phenomenon the “chiasm” of bodies, living and non-living. Physicist Karan Barad (2003) would call the experience an ontological unit of phenomenon that arises from “intra-acting agencies.” Some people would call the phenomenon, spirit. Although Kant’s ([1790] 1952) theories claim that reason triumphs over nature in sublime experiences, the specific effect here is that there is no escape from nature: nature wins; human nature (i.e., emotions) responds. In a poignant experience that acknowledges an all-pervasive spirit, reason is the awareness of the connection between human nature and the nature of the world.

Another landscape architect shared a poignant landscape experience from a hiking trip in Cape Breton. When I asked him why the experience was so memorable, he told me that growing up as a Japanese child in post-war Toronto was rather emotionally traumatizing. Very few experiences had such (positive) impact on him, and this experience was one of them. Like the other participant’s encounter on Mount Kailash, the effect of his experience in Cape Breton was also influenced by the overcoming of pain and grief. Part of this overcoming was found in a situation that alludes to something divine. He recalled what happened that day:

Off to one side, there was another mountain. There’s a road that was meandering around it and below there were whales, and people running all over the place and boats chasing the whales. There, I could hear the sound of the whales. There were these steps that sort of went down the side of the hill and ended in these benches. There were very few people there. It was very quiet. You could hear the whales, several hundred feet below. I don’t know... it was like a ...it was quite a... it was a church-like experience. [...] It was almost like being in a church because you walked up to it...we walked up to it, we are chatting away, and all of a sudden, because everybody was quiet, you wanted to hear nature, in a sense, and listen to

it. Not just the whales but the whole experience. We were just brought into the moment, and it was a very peaceful experience.

The phrase “church-like experience” could be interpreted as religious reverence or a spiritual encounter. I interpret the phrase as an allegorical reference to a deeper realm of experience. Since the confusion between religion and spirituality is one of the most common reasons for the hesitancy to discuss spirituality, a personal distinction between the two terms is important. Interpretations of words between people can overlap and diverge. Re-interpretations are possible and necessary if change is desired. For instance, William James ([1902] 2009) describes religion as “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehended themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine” (27). I would consider James’ discussion about religion as spirituality. James argues that religious feelings should not be judged differently than other sources of feelings. He writes, “religious happiness is happiness. Religious trance is trance.” (22). Within my interpretation of spirituality, I re-interpret his argument as any kind of “happiness is happiness,” and any kind of “trance is trance,” since all feelings are part of human nature, and also part of a system that is much greater.

Finding home through poignant landscapes

To consider an all-prevailing spirit in the world requires an initial breakthrough of thought that transcends beyond the visible and attestable. However, the step of transcendence can also lead to binary thinking if it is taken too far. One landscape architect explained to me how the word *transcendence* often leads to assumptions of “this is profane, and that’s sacred.” Landscape, for him, is always “an expression of who we are.” Landscape is where “you give yourself more opportunity to become aware of your relationship.” He gives the example of the Japanese garden: “You enter a gate through the boundary, and you do feel a difference between what’s inside and what’s outside,

because you've given yourself the opportunity. You are no less sacred outside than you are inside.”

Referring to James Hillman, he cautions on the need to find sacredness elsewhere:

He speaks about the problem we've created for ourselves and the Earth with the notion of transcendence, suggesting the wish to be elsewhere rather than paying attention to...the sacredness of what we have here. He lists 5 or 6 different notions of transcendence. He says that's probably one of the biggest causes for the environmental difficulties we've had. We don't care enough about what we have here. We wish it away to be in this pure land. Elsewhere. Then the Buddhissagar says, “Well, dear. The pure land is right here.”

The pure land is home, and for many reasons, we are almost always seeking it. Why? Perhaps because we do not feel *at home*. Perhaps we, as humans, do not feel belonging. Therefore, the need to transcend to another world is the tension between the need to find home and the inability to feel at home exactly where we are.

Large numbers of people in the world are immigrants. People relocate their homes for employment, for their children's future, or for lifestyle changes. People also relocate in order to flee disasters, oppression, or violence. Thus, the idea of home does not necessarily relate to a place of permanence. Yet, to feel totally *at home* within a place is not common in the present-day world. According to Stephen Jenkinson (2015), human populations historically “wandered” across the planet: from Africa, along the coasts of the Middle East and South Asia, into Australia; following the mountains across Asia to the Americas; and along the coasts of the Mediterranean into and around Europe. These ancestral nomads did not move because they were forced to, but instead, they “collaborated” with the places they lived in. They moved with the wind, the water, and the animals. In other words, they belonged with the Earth's processes. Jenkinson states that there is a difference between wandering and fleeing: “Wandering is a way of being at home in the world that doesn't

require forty acres and a mule, and fleeing is a way of losing your home, your forty acres and your mule, and being driven across the face of the world” (248). Totally being at home in the world does not necessitate having possessions and an attachment to a plot of land. Being at home in the world requires the feeling of belongingness, either to a community, to the land, to the Earth, or to the cosmos. Belongingness requires a sensitivity to all elements of a place.

Sensitivity to place also means sensitivity to the people who have come to a place, whether as a result of wandering or fleeing. For one interview participant, the component of landscape architecture that is fixated with native species, a common theme for the following chapter on ethics, sparks a philosophical parallel to the “non-native” people seeking and making new homes in new places. Rigid ideas of *what* should be in a place, *who* should be in a place, and how to control a place, disregards the fact that notions of place, nature, and human beings are originally overlapping and fluid. He says,

Every one of us, I mean, when we’ve come from our places, we brought our landscapes with us. The particular plants and the particular vision that we have of what we want a place to be so that we feel comfort at being there. [...] We bring our place with us. And we set that up in some fashion that will enable us to feel comfort. [...] At the same time, we change. We talk about nature out there and living with nature. We are the operations, the operations of nature. Inside and outside are the same thing.

If we are the operations of nature, how much is the native/non-native plant discourse a by-product of human society’s tendency to judge people and their right to belong in a place? If I was metaphorically a plant, would I be dismissed in landscape designs due to my non-native status? Or is thirty-plus years in Canada enough to be “naturalised” as a “Canadian plant”? What about my parents who have never managed to “naturalise” and adapt to the English language or many North

American standards? What about new immigrants who come into the country? Can we ever find home if place has to be tied to where we were born, or even where our physical residence is located? I do not know how much the native/non-native plant discourse is tied to colonialist thinking, but I do know that each time the topic comes up, I do feel a sense of not belonging.

Still, the feeling of belongingness is possible even in a place outside our place of residence. A landscape architect recalled in her interview how humbled she became when her colleague mentioned how she had found solace in the landscapes of Nova Scotia. The landscape architect had presumed that her Jamaican-Canadian acquaintance would have little interest in her research on Canadian coastal landscapes, but she learned instead that poignant landscape experiences are not bounded by human-constructed jurisdictions:

I had said to her, “I know this won’t be a major interest to you because you’re not, you know, you’re not a coastal person.” She said, “I am offended. I am so offended. I live in Waterloo. When my son’s wife died, and we got through all of that—I really adored that girl.” And she said, “I needed some time. What did I do? My friend had a cottage on the North coast of Nova Scotia, and I went there for a month. I went there. I sat on the promontories. I walked the beaches, and I sat in the fog.” And she said, “I let the landscape heal me, and I own that landscape. It’s Canadian. It’s mine. Just because I live in Waterloo, doesn’t mean that’s not an important space to me.” She humbled me, and I think that that word poignant comes in there, where it’s not a designed or created or crafted landscape. It’s just a space that speaks to people emotionally.

The landscape architect’s colleague felt a connection with the coastal landscape of Nova Scotia. She claimed the landscape as rightfully hers, but at the same time, the landscape embraced *her* and healed *her*. Therefore, she felt belonging in the landscape. A poignant landscape experience could then be

considered as a moment of finding home and belonging in the world: from the process of desiring place, fearing placelessness, and then finding belongingness as a person within a landscape.

Many people experience homesickness when they have travelled away from home for some time, but in moments of extraordinary trepidation, home becomes especially necessary. One of the most poignant encounters for the previous quoted landscape architect was her experience of being trapped in rural Labrador for work during the 9/11 terrorist attack. Satellite communication to the region was shut off shortly after the community first saw CNN coverage of the collapsing World Trade Towers. She claimed that the scenario felt similar to an Armageddon—not knowing what was going on with the rest of the world, and not knowing if she would be able to see her loved ones again. In that moment, the need for home was profound. The awareness of one's place in the world was even greater. She reflected on her experience and what it meant to not be able to return to a familiar landscape:

That sense of needing to be a part of the landscape that I lived in, and being isolated from everything else, that was a pretty profound moment. That was... I don't think many people get to experience that in our cultures in North America today. I think many refugees, many people who are fleeing strife, who lose their families and significant events, they go through this. But most of us live pretty comfortable lives. Our parents went through wars, but we for the most part didn't. So, it just puts a different focus on who you are in the greater scheme of things.

The experience was made poignant for her because within the dread, there was also love and compassion. The Naskapi Innu community had taken her in for the evening. The next morning, she was accompanied on foot for hundreds of kilometers along the coast of Labrador to a port where she was able to take a ship home to her extended family in Gander, Newfoundland.

The landscape architect found her yearning for home in a frightening situation poignant. Her colleague found healing in a landscape poignant. Both landscapes were places that the individuals felt belonging. In essence, a place is where we want to create belonging or have felt belonging. For most of us, if not all humans, want to make the place we are in become home, figuratively, whether it is a transient place to find healing, or a stable place to settle down roots. But for certain, there is one home we all share: Earth. Therefore, the quintessential home that human beings want to belong in is our earthly home and our worthy existence as human beings in this home. Finding home requires us to feel welcomed and to be supported. Being at home requires us to feel that we have a right to exist. Yet, if we find ourselves in a society that is devoid of authentic culturing, if economic growth is valued over emotional and spiritual growth, and if every person who looks or thinks differently is considered an “other,” not much belongingness can exist in our experience of the world. In the context of home being a sense of belonging, poignant landscapes are the experiences that remind us that we indeed do belong. Placelessness and non-belonging is healed through the beauty of knowing that we belong as part of a community, a society, or as a human being in a cosmological structure that is much greater than us.

The imagery and language of poignant landscapes

The specific needs for belonging are different for everyone. Therefore, poignant landscapes can be interpreted differently by each person. To investigate how survey participants interpret poignant landscapes, I used two types of survey questions. The first method was to have participants select images that they found poignant among two phases of landscape images. The second method was to ask participants to specify places that they consider as poignant and to provide keywords to describe them.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the way we conceptualise nature has been shaped by landscape images. Therefore, my choice to use certain images and the participants' decisions to select certain images are both triggered by conscious and unconscious associations about how nature, place, and human participation in the world can be represented in two-dimensions. In my test survey, I selected six photos that I considered poignant. All photos had an element of mystery, reflectivity, or primordial timelessness: mists in mountains, alien-like rock formations, a reflecting pool in a religious building, a stone bridge reflected in water, an old growth forest, and a starry night sky. I also included three expressionistic paintings from the 19th and early 20th centuries by Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851), and Claude Monet (1840-1926). Based on my dissertation committee's suggestion to include more variety in the images, the first phase of the question became nine photos representative of different landscape archetypes, including: a forest, a desert, a canyon, a golf course, a Zen temple, a memorial, an abandoned building, some ancient ruins, and the antithesis of a beautiful landscape—industrial pollution. Four of my originally selected photos and the three landscape paintings were assembled into the second phase of the question along with 13 other attractive architecture or landscape images. Interestingly, the top four images chosen by respondents in the second phase were the four original images I had chosen in my test survey. This result suggests to me that there may be a collective unconscious imprinting of certain criteria for the meaning of “poignant landscapes” as portrayed in images.

While I do not wish to generalise an entire population of landscape architects and their views of landscapes based on a small number of research participants, and also when personal preferences, image composition, and coincidences could affect the rankings, the patterns extracted from the results have left me with some hypotheses. In my opinion, the first phase of the question consisted of images that were not very picturesque. Therefore, I assume that people's decision towards what is poignant in this phase was based on their conceptual interpretation of the landscape archetype.

Thus, the forest image being top choice and the pollution image being the lowest choice make sense if the interpretation of “poignant” refers to the desirability of the landscape. Images of human-made structures, which came out in the mid-rankings, have cultural value. The golf course and the desert were less popular, I reason, because they are conventionally described culturally as “unsustainable” and “barren,” respectively. In summary, among the two phases of images, forests and geological features were highly ranked. Images with architectural elements were also popular. These images contained a reflective component or represented a structure that was meant to incite contemplation, such as a stone bridge reflected in the water (one of my original test survey images, see Fig. 3), an illuminated reflecting pool in a religious building (also one of my original test survey images, see Fig. 4), a memorial commemorative of a world tragedy (Fig. 5), and an abandoned building reminding one of a lost time (Fig. 6). The results suggest that poignant landscapes allude to a conscious or unconscious connection with the natural world or an existential reflection of what it means to be human in the world. See Table 2 for the rankings of the first phase of images, and the highest and lowest rankings from the second phase of images.

I believe that the image selections worked to initiate the contemplation of what is poignant because many of the images are typical to what we have culturally learned as meaningful landscapes. However, some images break through our patterns of thought, add disturbance, and lead us (i.e., participants and I) to re-examine our biases. For example, the Zen garden image ranked low, breaking my assumption that places normally described as sacred would also be seen as poignant. Another example: I included one macro-image showing the close-up of a mushroom to suggest an alternative scale to landscapes other than our human scale, but the image was not very popular. And interestingly, all three landscape paintings in the second phase were the least popular images. Perhaps, this result suggests that the idea of a poignant landscape is more likely to be associated with “tangible” landscapes that can be embodied. If I had selected more eccentric, or alternatively,

mundane images, perhaps the idea of poignancy would have become too confusing. Or perhaps, more variables would have created more disturbance to our commitment to interpreting poignant landscapes in a particular and established way. I cannot be sure of where the tipping point to making sense of what is poignant in an image may occur. Therefore, language provides a different perspective into my inquiry.

Table 2: Survey ranking of poignant landscape images

Question	Image description and rank	# of clicks
Phase 1: Which of the following images do you feel are the most "poignant"? (Select up to 3/ out of 9 images)	1. forest	34
	2. canyon	26
	3. 911 memorial (New York)	23
	4. abandoned building or ruin	19
	5. Ancient Greek columns	16
	6/7. desert	9
	6/7. golf course	9
	8/9. Zen garden and temple	7
	8/9. polluting factory	7
Phase 2: Which of the following images would you consider as "poignant"? (Select all that apply/ out of 20 images)	Top 5:	
	1. arched bridge with water reflection	36
	2. starry sky with two rocks	34
	3. religious building with orange lights and reflection	32
	4. rock tower formations	29
	5. misty forest with vines	28
	Lowest 5:	
	16/17. forest with fallen tree and moss	17
	16/17. beach with cliffs	17
	18/19. Turner's Steamboat off a Harbour's Mouth	15
	19/19. Van Gogh's Landscape with Ploughed Fields	15
20. Monet's Waterlilies	12	



Figure 3: Bridge and trees reflected in water (Gablentz, Germany) – ranked 1st as most “poignant” in the 2nd phase of images in the survey. Photo by Martin Damboldt from Pexels.com.



Figure 4: Religious architecture with lights and reflection – ranked 3rd as most “poignant” in the 2nd phase of images in the survey. Photo by Tyler Hendy from Pexels.com.



Figure 5: 9/11 Memorial (New York) – ranked 3rd as most “poignant” in the 1st phase of images in the survey. Photo by Axel Houmadi from Unsplash.com.



Figure 6: Abandoned building – ranked 4th as most “poignant” in the 1st phase of images in the survey. Photo by Free Creative Stuff from Pexels.com.

While I did not give respondents the chance to explain why they chose certain images, I did ask them to share examples of what they considered as poignant landscapes and to suggest keywords to describe them. Answers included memorials, national parks, historical structures, and geological features. Keywords such as “majestic,” “wild,” “solemn,” and “imaginary” align with concepts associated with the most popular images in the previous question: that is, majestic nature and contemplative spaces. Keywords such as “ancient,” “sacred,” and “historical” relate back to the moderately popular images of ruins and temples. However, regardless of the type of landscapes that the participants listed, the keywords they used told me more about the impact of poignant landscapes to them than the images I asked them to choose out of my pre-selections. Words such as “anxiety inducing,” “breathtaking,” “intense,” “humbling,” “intimate,” or “destructive,” are able to bring me into a shared experience with the participants. Thus, the idiom stating that “a picture is worth a thousand words” is possibly incomplete. Perhaps, a picture might be described as being worth a thousand *possible* words. Accordingly, one deliberately chosen word is more powerful than a thousand potential words waiting to be prioritized. One word that embodies the actual feelings of an experience can have more clarity than an image loaded with unconscious historical suggestions.

Awe: the humility of finding home in an expansive world

If I were to use one word to embrace all the thousands of words in this document and in the landscape images, the word would be *home*. However, home is multifaceted. For instance, the most common keywords used by participants can be categorized into two opposing archetypes: the dramatic landscape (i.e., with the use of keywords such as “awe,” “majestic,” and “vast”) and the peaceful landscape (i.e., with keywords such as “peaceful,” “serene,” and “calm”). The polar contrast between the two archetypes can be explained with Tuan’s (1993) theory of home as concentric circles. At the centre of home is a place that is enclosed and textured for a multisensory experience,

which Tuan calls the “homeplace.” The feelings that homeplace evokes are attachment and loyalty. Beyond the homeplace is the “homespace,” a space that appeals to the eye. Homespace is appreciated on a more conscious level and is described by terms such as the beautiful and the picturesque. Beyond homespace is what Tuan calls the “alien space.” These spaces offer a type of dialectic aesthetics that is overwhelming. Instead of evaluating these places at a distance, the alien space pushes one to confront with emotions of fear, and self-awareness in the presence of a greater world of nature. Dramatic landscapes are like Tuan’s alien spaces, and peaceful landscapes are like Tuan’s homeplace. Both ends of spectrum are relevant to the notion of home on Earth and belonging in the world.

Alien spaces are similar to what art critics would call the sublime. Burke ([1757] 1998) described the sublime as the opposite of the beautiful. The characteristics of Burke’s notion of the beautiful include classical features such as lightness, smoothness, balance, and harmony.⁸ The sublime is characterised by darkness, uncontrollability, mystery, and evokes feelings such as fear and repulsion, especially towards a nature that dominates humans. The sublime or the alien landscape is a trigger for intense emotions, usually of fear. Often the disturbance comes with a mental conflict that arises when humanity is measured against a nature found to be greater than itself.

As a response to Burke’s theories, Kant ([1790] 1952) interpreted the sublime as a celebration for humanity’s ability to reason. According to Kant, the sublime is created from one’s internal judgement of size as the mind reasons over an element’s immeasurability and unimaginable quality. One can also engage in reasoning over the fact that humanity’s inner nature does not need to submit to the powers of external nature. The Kantian sublime implies an oscillating tension between humanity’s rational and emotional sides in the face of a nature that is outside of human control. Like

⁸ As a note of clarification, when I refer to beauty in this dissertation, I am not referring to Burke’s characteristics for the beautiful. Instead, beauty for me is a more subjective and open-ended sensation of an appreciation for the world’s exquisiteness in various forms.

poignant moments, the sublime occurs when a variation of pain meets beauty. For instance, one landscape architect preferred to use the term *awe* as a synonym to *poignant*. He explained that in the word *awe*, “there’s an element of wonder and delight, but also a bit of dread.” *Awe-inspiring* was also a popular term used by survey participants to describe landscapes that they found poignant.

“A bit of dread” can be encompassed in the emotion of fear. When fear, which essentially is a type of pain, meets beauty, an impression is created. One landscape architect recalled in her interview a memorable experience in the historical Sutro Baths of San Francisco. Describing the landscape as a beautiful heritage site of trails, slopes, and native plantings, she also wondered whether the immersive experience was partly a result of the fear that persisted in contrast to the place’s beauty. She described,

I’m also walking on the edges of this, whatever. I can’t believe that they let people do this. It would never happen in Toronto. Letting people walk around the edges of the walls of these former baths. I’m with my daughter and she’s 11 months old. I’m walking along this. It’s 2 feet wide and there’s water on either side of me. I’m walking along and then this young guy was walking the other way, but he wouldn’t move. So, we both had to both shimmy around each other. Anyways, maybe there was an element of that. I was for a moment...I was terrified that he was going to push me into the water with my daughter. But anyways, that’s also maybe why it’s still in my memory.

As I listened to her story, I recalled two similar experiences of my own. One was the experience of walking along a narrow path and avoiding stepping on the adjacent graves in Toronto’s St. James Cemetery. The other experience, which was very similar to the participant’s experience at the Sutro Baths, was along a breakwater wall that did not have enough space for two-way pedestrian traffic. Both places created tension in my conscious state as my body’s movement was constricted. Both

places were also set in a visually expansive landscape. Hesitation and adventure were juxtaposed, bringing out a fear-excitement type emotion that needed conscious awareness in order for the body to remain balanced.

Another kind of fear-excitement experience occurs when we are confronted with nature's scale, which Kant ([1790] 1952) describes as the mathematic sublime. Survey participants used words such as *vast*, *massive*, or *expansive* to describe these types of poignant landscape experiences. The theme of scale was also apparent in experiences shared by interview participants. Mountains and skies were the two most popular landscape archetypes. On Earth, the sky connects humans to greater natural processes. The two sources of life, water and light, both come from the sky. Rain and sunlight nourish life on Earth as part of natural processes that are outside of human intervention. At night, the sky is Earth's window to the greater cosmos. In mythology and religion, the sky is heaven and home to the deities. But even without mythical or religious references to spirits, angels, gods, and goddesses, a clear night sky still alludes to an expansive universe with the presence of glittering moonlight, stars, and planets. Human-made light has made this capacious scene obsolete in urban regions, but the affection to the night sky's cosmic portal is primordial. Thus, an image of a starry-night sky, which was also one of my original test survey photos, ranked second as most poignant among 20 images (Fig. 7).

In the interviews, references to the sky were about physical or mental expansion. One landscape architect remembered how fascinated he was with the sky when he first visited Manitoba. He exclaimed, "I think one of the memorable landscapes was on arrival of Winnipeg and seeing the prairie, how flat the prairie was and how different it was from the Ontario landscape. The prairie landscape, it's got big sky. That means, it's blue and it goes on forever. It's so flat." What was shared among memories of landscapes that featured mountains and skies was the acute sense of scale. Under the big sky, the feeling of humanness is inevitable. The human body is scaled in relation to

the rest of the world. While humans are limited and earthbound, under the vastness of the sky, humans are made aware that we are connected (and belong) to something much bigger. As Heidegger's (1971) writes, "Man, as man, has always measured himself with and against something heavenly" (218). Skyscrapers can be built to "block this spanning, trim it, and disfigure it, but he can never evade it."



Figure 7: Starry night sky (Enchanted Rock, USA) – ranked 2nd as most “poignant” in the 2nd phase of images in the survey. Photo by Rico Larroque from Unsplash.com.

Therefore, the sky is a measuring tool to an unknown realm. The feeling of connectedness with the sky is a state that exists between humbleness and potentiality. Many children, who are still innocent in their understandings of being in the world, who are free to use their imaginations in relation with the natural world, understand the connection to the sky intuitively as they engage in cloud watching. Most of us, if not all, can recall the childhood experience of fantasizing another world from the shapes of floating clouds. One landscape architect recalled a childhood memory from her family farm that depicted the liberating feeling of connecting with clouds. She described,

“[I was] laying back on my back and all I could see were the fronds of the wheat in the wind and the clouds going by, and thinking to myself, Oh, I can fly with those clouds.”

Being up in the mountains, is figuratively, being up in the sky and amongst the clouds. Landscapes with vast landforms such as Banff National Park, Yosemite National Park, and the Grand Canyon were popular places listed in the survey as poignant. Mountainous landscapes, including canyons, valleys, and fjords have been popular subjects in artwork for the last several centuries. These typologies have even become psychological icons for the landscapes of their corresponding nations. For example, from the 17th century, we have Jacob van Ruisdael’s (1628-1682) depictions of the Dutch rustic mountains. From the late 19th to the 20th century, Norwegian artist Hans Dahl (1849-1937) brings nostalgia to the Norwegian fjords (Fig. 8). Going back in time and further East, mountains hidden among mists were staples in Chinese art due to the early Buddhists and Daoists who were searching for temple sites that fit their need for solitude in nature (Sullivan 1979) (Fig. 9). In North America, it was Albert Bierstadt’s (1830-1902) numerous renditions of Yosemite Valley that prompted the establishment of the US National Park System (Olmsted 1865) (Fig. 10). Photographs replaced paintings in the 20th century with Sierra Club campaigns and the haunting images by Ansel Adam (1902-1984) (Fig. 11). In Canada, Lawren Harris (1885-1970) of the Group of Seven brought prominence to northern landscapes through “geometric abstractions” and “spiritual form” (Lawren S. Harris’ n.d.). Additionally, an image of Moraine Lake in Banff was even featured on the Canadian twenty-dollar bill from 1969 to 1993.



Figure 8: *On the Banks of the Fjord*, by Hans Dahl, no date. Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain.

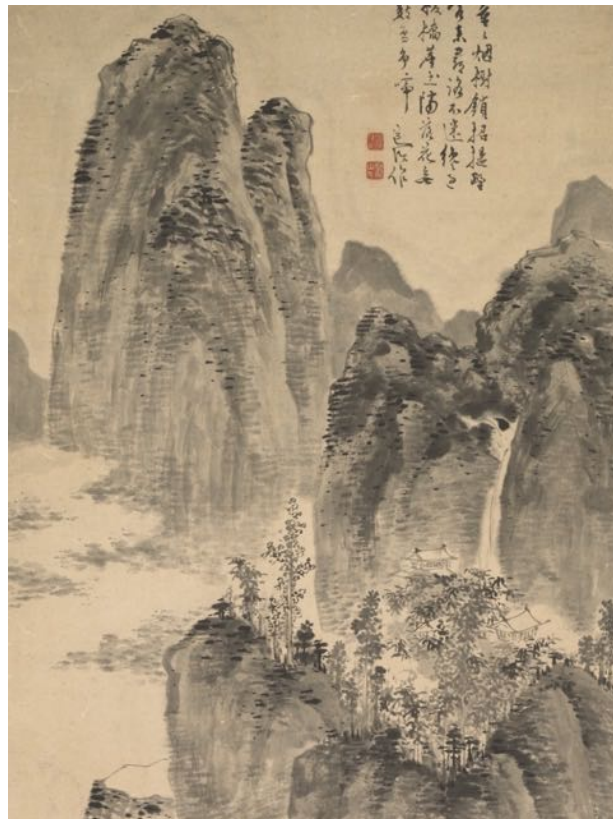


Figure 9: Top portion of *Looking for a Monastery in the Misty Mountains*, by Chen Chun, no date (Ming Dynasty). Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain.



Figure 10: *Yosemite Valley*, by Albert Bierstadt, 1868. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain.



Figure 11: Photo of Glacier National Park, by Ansel Adams (*National Parks & Monuments Series*), 1942. Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain.

According to Crandell (1993), “pictures influence behavior and perception, and we have learned to appreciate the beauty of actual mountains by first seeing pictures of them” (4). However, we use the metaphor of climbing a mountain to describe obstacles in life that need overcoming. Thus, would reaching the summit metaphorically mean that one has reached a greater connectedness with the world? Accordingly, is the fascination with mountain-like landscapes just honed by centuries of aesthetic production or is there a significance to mountains for the human psyche? I am inclined to believe that the mountain (along with many other types of landscapes) is an important archetype within humanity’s psychological and spiritual relationship with the world. As a measure of geological, physical, and temporal scales, mountains diminish humanity’s sense of hubris. Therefore, I interpret the fascination of artists across cultures for mountains as a symbol of its archetypal relevance. The process of aestheticization further influenced human behaviour such as conservation, pilgrimage, or recreation in mountainous landscapes. In the interviews, mountains were described as poignant for individuals who had grown up locally in the landscape as well as those who were foreign to the area.

Interview participants who had grown up in mountainous landscapes reminisced fondly of their childhood experiences. One participant described enthusiastically of the Acoma Valley from her childhood: “You have to see it to understand it. It’s [a] high plateau desert. It’s absolute stunning. The light, the shadows on the mountains, the orchard. It’s all [either] agricultural or high plateau desert. There’s no in between.” Another participant described the Colombian landscape of her childhood:

I grew up in a dramatic landscape, as I see it now. Because in Colombia you can move in one day, eight hours, moving from Bogota to Medellin, which is going west, northwest. You will go down to experience really tropical [landscapes],

being in the middle of bamboo forests and cascades, and birds of paradise. Then you go up in the mountains, and you walk in the clouds.

The enthusiasm for mountains were not just from childhood hometown memories. Mountains were also fascinating for participants who did not grow up in these landscapes. Seeing the mountains of Western Canada for the first time as a child was a wonder for a couple of interview participants.

One landscape architect described his childhood experiences travelling across Canada:

When I was a kid, my dad worked for the CN railway. We were able to get trips across Canada for like...my mom and dad were for free, but my sister and I would travel. We'd do these long train trips and we'd meet relatives in Saskatchewan and Alberta. And that, the big things there was the difference in the landscape that I was seeing. I'm just a kid too. But it was pretty dramatic when you come from Ontario to see mountains.

Another participant described his childhood experience of British Columbia's mountains:

I always got excited when I was in mountains as a kid. Half of my family was from BC. So, when we'd be there, the moment I almost came near a mountain, I would feel like I was getting excited. Again, a very strange...I remember that distinctly. Because Ontario, you know...Toronto. Growing up in here is like, you just don't feel that.

While participants described their childhood fascination with mountains with feelings of excitement and wonder, participants who recalled their poignant mountain landscape experiences from their adult life used more sensory-type descriptions. One landscape architect described her experience as textured, evocative, and inviting:

...looking at the mountains, and literally it was a perfect ski day in a perfect beautiful place, and it just took my breath away. I'll just say this. The mountains

on that day, they were vibrating with both power, beauty and calmness. I'll just say to you, it was just so...it was palpable how you felt like you could reach out and touch the surface of that...of those mountains, that mountain range right there.

Another participant described the beauty of her sensory experience in the hills of Scotland:

In Scotland, you get these very rounded mountains. You drive through these incredible rounded mountains and valleys, and the heather was blooming. The mountains and pastures and everything, it all turned purple. Like it was just amazing. I've never seen anything quite like it. It was...it was really wonderful. We stopped the car. We got out, and we climbed through it.

Overall, the affection towards mountains cover a range within Tuan's notion of home space.

Through the landscape archetype of mountains, the comfort and sensory aspects of homeplace, the visual appeal of distance, and the wonder and awe of an alien space can be experienced.

While mountains provide a sense of humility for humans because of their size, humility can be found in landscapes beyond the physical dimension. Landscapes are also markers of time. Considering the process of nature, time becomes relational, which is a strong contrast to rigid human constructed schedules and timeframes. For instance, mountains take a long time to form and are emblematic of the passing of aeons, but elements in alpine ecosystems change seasonally. Similarly, the sky changes constantly as cloud formations shift and as the sun moves across it, yet the sky goes through daily, monthly, and annual cycles. The duration of human life is a limited perspective of time if we were to compare our ninety plus or minus years of existence to the timeframes of the world's natural landscapes. For example, one landscape architect remembered and described to me a reflective visit to a 600-year-old tree in Vancouver's Bowen Island:

I walk up to it and I find this big plank at the base. It kind of has this funny...I'm like, that's not a bench? Then I realise it's a lounge, so that your head touches the trunk and the rest of your body, your feet go out from you. You look up, literally, looking at this disappearing perspective of a 600-year-old tree trunk that's 20 feet diameter. It feels like it's growing out of your head. When you look up there, what happens is, you literally feel out of sight, because it goes as far as it can and touches the sky, and you're like...that is 600 years. It has been there so many...10 times my lifetime and then some.

The design of this lounge made the figurative gauging between human life and natural landscape time real. At the physical and temporal scales, human rationality is no measure to the natural elements that have existed in the world much longer. In natural landscapes, we are reminded that we are just moments in time. Because of our insignificance, we are reminded that we are also part of a greater system.

The way humans experience time is through memories. Landscapes connect to home through memory, according to Virginia Burt (interview by author, July 19, 2019). Writing the word in upper case letters, HOME becomes an acronym for the HOuse of MEMories. She notes that everyone has precious memories. These memories are what keeps us close to home. In particular, people have precious memories within nature, “be that your youngest or first memory in nature...a spectacular sunset, a fabulous moment in time, [or] a memory of sitting beside somebody that they love and looking at that powerful, beautiful landscape.” The support of creating home is within the role of landscape architecture. The aspiration for landscape architects is, therefore, according to Burt, “how often we can...tap the memories of others and bring it to them in their landscape so that it becomes astonishing.” Memories, being fragments of the past, relived and revived in the present moment, are entangled with how we relate to what we experience.

Memories of poignant landscapes, conditioning, and finding the poignant in the everyday

Much of what we consider as our experiences come from our memories. When I asked for poignant landscape experiences in the interviews, several landscape architects referred to periods in their life when they learned something new about landscapes or when they were influenced by an accumulation of experiences. However, I had the intention in the interviews to hear stories that described moments of experience in a landscape. Therefore, I was a little flustered with a participant's take on poignant experiences in his life when he said, "I think for me, it's not...it's a gradual maturing of ideas or...I'm not sure if it's ideas. It's just an understanding, I guess, a greater appreciation, but it builds. It's not something, as I say, I don't think...it's kind of *wow*." I realised that although the meaning of *poignant* was not resonating between us, the more principal concern was our divergent interpretations for the meaning of *experience*. For one landscape architect, the interview started specifically with this divergence. She claimed, "sometimes you don't realise you're experiencing something until much later." Comparably, another landscape architect first mentioned interesting "job experiences" when I asked him to recall memorable landscape experiences from his past. When I clarified that I was hoping to hear about specific contained experiences, he responded: "[When] you are young. You are not thinking like that. Awe, this is an exciting moment. You don't think that way. [You] don't think that way when you are young." Evidently, the variations in how the word *experience* is interpreted also affects how poignant landscape experiences can be interpreted.

Personal experiences are often used as inspirations for landscape design. One interview participant expressed that the variables in landscape architecture offer layers and options for influential experiences. He said, "You are like a swirl. In our profession, we can swirl through these amazing traditions that are not our own, and just sort of find the things that connect or somehow connect in different ways. Part of that's our own experience, our travel, who our mentors were,

where we worked.” Past impressions or reflections over memories of experiences become part of the design process. One landscape architect explained,

I don’t know if there was an influence going forward, but I think there’s a reflection going backwards. Whereas a designer then, you start thinking about the various experiences in your life that influenced or impressed you and then you start in trying to incorporate some of those things into your...so, you go, boy, that little parkette that I sat at in Montreal, that was beside the Italian restaurant. That has a really neat little feel to it. And you start to try and capture those feels.

Oftentimes, however, the design process is much less clear. Past experiences become subconscious inventory that get retrieved through an intuitive design process. One landscape architect explained metaphorically that she “feeds the beast [i.e., the mind] with the empirical,” and intuition is like “having learned all these things that jumble up in your head, and one day they just tumble out,” creating something that is “harmony within the landscape.”

While some participants considered experiences as present moments that were pleasurable in and of themselves, many participants considered experiences, especially those relevant to their work, as accumulated influences and behaviours from their past. One landscape architect described the distinction between the two interpretations of experience:

I think there are moments where you say, “Oh I am experiencing this.” But pretty rare. It’s much more, these pieces that come together. And so, I think that there are obviously moments where you’re sitting at the foot of the pyramids and you’re just beyond expression. There are those poignant moments. But I think the ones that are actually more powerful are not the moments, but they are the accumulation.

As she mentioned, the “accumulation” of experiences is powerful, and moments of experiencing are rare. I am particularly interested in the rare moments because I believe that we can find greater (existential) belongingness through these moments. Consequently, I question if these moments *have* to be rare. But first, I will consider how experiences as an accumulation of memories and knowledge create a limited view of poignant landscapes.

Experiences accumulated during childhood, adolescent, or early years as a professional were for many interview participants particularly influential for their current insights in landscape architecture. Having parents who were avid gardeners was the most common of childhood influences mentioned. One landscape architect explained why her parents’ love of gardening was so relevant for her development into landscape architecture:

That’s that influence you don’t know is happening to you as a kid, but it’s slowly but surely...that influence of [my] mother and father being deeply interested in plants. That’s another aspect, that is...it’s like saying, it’s ok to do landscape because all your comfort zone loves it. It means you’re going to be ok. I think there’s a social psychological thing for me. It was like a protective thing for me, because my parents loved it.

Another landscape architect explained how her childhood neighbourhood left her with deep impressions of how beautiful landscapes can be:

I think the way that I was educated at home, and probably where I lived, where people appreciated the beautiful setting that we had, that made a big difference. There was a huge sense of community and so on. When my father changed his job and came into the city to live, and we grew up...when I went to university and high school, I was here in the city. It just seemed like such a devoid place to me of the kind of the beauty that we had grown up with. That beauty and the love of sort of nature, and trees, and everything that I was sketching, and drawing, and

painting, and so on, sort of came from...maybe it was a kind of a childhood fantasy. I don't know, but it certainly was important to me growing up for sure.

The two above examples show positive reinforcement towards appreciating beauty and nature. In other words, the two participants were conditioned in their childhood to appreciate beauty and nature. As human beings, we learn by the reinforcement of others in our environment towards specific behaviours that keep us feeling safe, conditioning us to continue to respond to the world with similar behavioural patterns. When experiences are reinforced in an accumulated manner without conscious analysis, they become a continuous part of an individual's conditioning and affects their worldview. An individual's environment, therefore, becomes very relevant to how they relate to the world.

Supportive experiences or childhood conditioning that reinforces positive impact on individuals are healthy. But what about unsupportive environments and experiences? If experience is only accessible as accumulated knowledge or conditioning through external influences, learning about beauty from experience is limited for those people who live in less than ideal circumstances. In the social sciences, there is constant talk about "privilege"—a comparison of people who are born with higher social statuses and people who are not. Generally, "the privileged" are considered to have more supportive environments and more resources to reinforce encouraging positions. "Privilege" is a sensitive subject because it often speaks about historical dominance and repressed pain. However, even "the privileged" go through pain and suffering in life. To move beyond concepts of privilege, or more accurately, the lack of it as a defeated life path, we need to see the beauty that arises from pain. In the experiencing of pain and beauty is the witnessing of overcoming. Wisdom is gained from this experience.

The witnessing of experience can be explained by Dana Amir's (2012) concept of the inner witness during a trauma. The inner witness functions as a gatekeeper between the "experiencing-I"

and the “reflective-I.” The overcoming of trauma requires a person’s inner witness to shift from “first person” to “third person,” allowing the experience to be *experienced* and to be *witnessed*. Although poignant landscape experiences are not necessarily traumatizing, and usually are not described in such ways, this theory is still useful to understand the discrepancies about experience between me and certain research participants. The notion of experience from the phenomenological perspective is always present: to live is to experience. Therefore, I went into the project with the perspective of the “experiencing-I.” I also expected others to see experience the same way. However, in everyday language, we also talk about experience as accumulated knowledge. For example, we say, “he has 10 years of experience as a landscape architect” or “she has experience working in public consultation.” Experience as a noun in this case is an accumulation of learning, and it is not necessarily of an event that the experiencing-I acknowledges during trauma or when one is not mindfully present. The entity that comes out of *experiencing*, the other kind of experience as a noun, is a slice of life moment that can be narrated as if it is still happening. If overcoming individual trauma needs both the experiencing-I and the reinforcing-I, then collective social trauma also needs both types of experiencing.

One landscape architect described experience as a life process: “I come to experience with what I’m thinking. Then, the experience sure influences what I’m thinking. But it’s not like it’s this revelation. It’s more that it’s a building, a building upon my own process, my life process.” Therefore, understanding experience is a complex blurring between what we understand as knowledge, what we reminisce as memory, and how we regulate our thoughts and behaviour through past influences. If we extend poignant experiences to anything that is considered poignant knowledge, poignant memories, or poignant influences, then anything made *meaningful* in a person’s life becomes interpreted as a poignant experience. A broad scope of interpretation is constructive, but interpretations usually remain in the state of the reflective-I when reflection is conducted out of

mental memories. The mind-body dualism is also further reinforced. Therefore, a fuller spectrum of *experiencing* experience can be found when the experiencing-I is strengthened.

Several landscape architects mentioned that poignant experiences can be ordinary moments that are not particularly dramatic or awe-inspiring. These moments are not experienced retrospectively through memory. Using Amir's (2012) terminology, these experiences can be considered moments processed by the experiencing-I. One landscape architect exclaimed, "I don't believe you have to experience grand things to be affected by it. Because if you just slow down, and if you just go in your backyard and just look, you can see all the different levels of life happening. That's poignant to me." But not everyone is accustomed to finding poignancy in the ordinary because ordinary moments that are also poignant explain the core operation of how landscapes become poignant: the source of poignancy does not lie in the external landscape; it lies in the viewer. How attuned a person is to their environment, and how much they appreciate the interaction is what determines the level of poignancy. The landscape architect clarified how the interaction is mutable: "the whole term poignant landscapes for me so far, it seems like it's more [about] how you see things, rather than that they're there." Moreover, she exclaimed that landscape architects have important roles in influencing the way people see. She said, "we need to be more advocates of the way of looking at things. Because it's more...we need to be more educators of that, of seeing the landscape differently and experiencing it, and the benefits of it." I believe that there are two directions that landscape architects can go in order to create shifts in people's perception. The first way is to practice awareness within themselves. The awareness gradually becomes part of their behaviour and affects others. The other way is to create opportunities in landscapes where users are encouraged to become more aware of their own experiences.

Being aware and creating moments of awareness

To investigate participants' awareness of the effects of an experience, they were asked in the survey to recall a memorable landscape from their past, and then asked to select options for how the experience affected them. The most popular answer for the question was that the experience made them feel a special connection to nature. The second most popular answer was: "It made me more aware of my physical senses (seeing, hearing, smell, taste, or touch)." Given that Casey (2000) has noted that memories are embodied and emplaced, our bodies and our senses are integral to memories of experiences. What ranked third in the answers was the option: "It made me feel emotional." Conversely, "It made me think" was one of the least chosen options (See Table 3).

Table 3: How memorable experiences affect survey participants

How did the (memorable) experience affect you?	Count	Percentage
It made me feel a special connection to nature	44	19
It made me more aware of my physical senses (seeing, hearing, smell, taste, or touch)	36	15
It made me feel emotional	33	14
It made me feel a special connection to the universe	27	11
It took me to a state beyond what I would normally take for granted (for example, it felt extra-ordinary or supernatural)	23	10
It made me feel something I cannot clearly explain (for example, a concept such as the "soul")	21	9
It made me think	19	8
It made me feel a special connection to humanity	12	5
Other, describe:	8	3
It made me feel a special connection to society	7	3
None of the above	0	0

Contrary to the Cartesian philosophy that suggests thinking as the central marker of consciousness, the results show that the mind is much less influential than the body in determining the significance of an experience. Sometimes the mind is even detrimental to maintaining awareness of an experience. For example, one interview participant recalled a scenario early in his career as an environmental analysis, when he was working in a wetland:

There was one occasion where I just...I'm walking along...sedges and my hip waders and so on. I'm able to get along pretty well. Then all of a sudden, I just start thinking, daydreaming of something else. What happened was that I just fell right in. And I realised that I was fine. The conditions hadn't changed, but what had changed was my relationship with this place. And as soon as I realised that, I was able to kind of get up [in the] water and continue.

The notable term that called out to me in his description of the experience was *relationship*. He realised that he had a relationship with his environment. In the relationship between person and place is a shared mutuality. For Merleau-Ponty (1945), experience is a reciprocal phenomenon between human and world. New materialists call this the agential power of materials, yet animism has long been a way of seeing the world in traditional oral cultures (Abram 1997; Barad 2003; Bennett 2004).

For example, in Japanese stone gardening, *sekitei*, the premise is to “listen” to the rocks for the design. The rocks will “speak” but not in the way that speech is usually comprehended. It is through silence that knowledge from a higher dimension gets distilled into the listener. However, deep listening does not have to be metaphysical. Traditional cultures practice listening as part of being connected to the world in order to live in it. For example, one landscape architect retold the story she learned at a food systems workshop presented by an Indigenous speaker in her interview:

[He said,] when you go hunting, it sounds like I have my blind fold and I could do it. You have to be aware. You have to be there. Then [he tells] the story of him as a small kid. His uncle not wanting to bring him because he was not ready yet. He goes in and they are moose hunting and he moves too fast. Then his uncle says, “You know what happened? You didn’t listen to the wind. This is the place where we have to watch. Because the wind is moving, we can smell him coming. And if the wind is moving, we can see his movement.” That sense of being surrounded, I think that’s a posture that we need to develop and there is a sense of having a meta-thinking of being part of...[something] holistic...

Whether one is in relation to a moose, a rock, or the wind, living holistically requires a type of “meta-thinking” similar to what the landscape architect described. Understanding human experience in a more-than-human world always requires a shift of seeing the world as a respectable exchange of give-and-take. As Abram (1997) writes, “To touch the coarse skin of a tree is thus, at the same time, to experience one’s own tactility, to feel oneself touched by the tree. And to see the world is also, at the same time, to experience oneself as visible, to feel oneself seen” (68).

Not knowing how to “listen,” or being too overwhelmed to tap into the mode of “meta-thinking” is pervasive in mainstream urban life. In 1903, Georg Simmel (1998) was already writing about how metropolitan lifestyles overstimulate the human psyche. Subtle changes in the environment help develop more sensitive ways of knowing which also create more lasting impressions in experiences. The contextual regularity of quieter habitats consumes much less mental energy than the “rapid telescoping of changing images” of busy cities (52). However, the rational conscious mind is more adaptable to surface conditions than the subconscious mind and internal emotions. Therefore, metropolitan people react to life predominantly within their mental spheres as a protective measure against inner disturbances caused by over stimulation.

Several landscape architects indicated that landscapes can provide relief to overstimulation and create “heightened awareness” in city settings. One landscape architect suggested that within the city, people are often searching for places to immerse themselves in a “heightened sensory experience.” Paradoxically, she also suggested that these experiences should be considered “muted” since the city is already full of stimuli. She claimed that what people often need is silence—that is, an “oasis” away from the rest of the city’s busyness. She considered poignant landscapes to be immersive experiences, because places that have “hit all the senses” and allowed for total bodily presence were most memorable for her. She explained that the effect can be simple interventions that are quite commonplace but often unnoticed, such as observing dappled sunlight through the leaves of trees, noticing how shadows are created, or feeling how the microclimate changes from one place to another.

City dwellers are also affected by urban form. One landscape architect suggested that there is too much repetition in the city. Furthermore, private development in cities as part of a globalised economic system has encouraged cities to look increasingly similar. He is aware of this generalised uniformity but also of the need for peak moments where people can become more aware of their surroundings. According to him, poignant landscapes in the city are those moments that break out of this monotony. He described,

This kind of ubiquitous layer of city. It’s like urbanisation that [has] become very neutral and very generic. It’s only when you...there are moments when things register. I’ve always been excited about those moments. [...] I’ve kind of always, in an awareness that most of the time people are not noticing their environment. I’m maybe more keenly aware of how we can in the right moment at the right time try to turn up the volume on certain landscapes, or certain phenomena, or certain aspects of nature or process, or an experience that could manifest and be

legible for people. So, I'm very interested in how we can make our environments legible at moments within a certain drift of daily life.

When he compared poignant landscapes in cities with other poignant landscape experiences in his life, he found a common factor. Hiking in mountains, being defeated by the ocean's waves while surfing, living in informal landscapes of Albania, or visiting South America and observing a different type of density and urbanisation, were also impressive experiences for him. But regardless of whether the places were remote or urban, there was a feeling of being charged by a ubiquitous force. He described the impact as "hitting":

I remember in some ways [there] are some parallels to the sort of feeling [of] those forces of nature but also those forces of cities. I felt like the most exciting or engaging landscapes for me have been these very surprising and more intense...whether natural or urban...but just are kind of hitting.

Unlike the piercing effect of the original definition of poignant, his descriptions of poignant landscapes were more forceful. Furthermore, he believed that moments of impact can be created when an appropriate intervention meets the right context through landscape architecture. In these moments, a person is able to connect more with the place around them and with themselves.

Many of these special moments are already present in the city, according to another landscape architect. She considered poignant landscapes as magical, and in the city region, there is a "wide range of magical experiences." These pockets of magic can be created by design and development, but there are "areas that are magical in and of themselves." She compared the magic of Sugar Beach (Fig. 12), the downtown Toronto artificial beach designed by Montreal landscape architect Claude Cormier, and the magic of walking on a natural beach on the Toronto Islands (Fig. 13):

If we ever want to have what you're studying in terms of those magical landscapes, there really has to be some real thought, I think, given about what needs to be protected, what needs to be restored, and then how you create new magical landscapes. Right? I think it comes at a cross-section of them. I mean, Sugar Beach is a wonderful urban magical landscape. To me, that is a magical landscape that's very urbanized. It's very artistic. It's beautiful through all the seasons. I've been down there at different seasons and it's quite magical. It's contemporary. People can use it in a variety of ways. But that doesn't mean that walking on a beach, a natural beach out on the island isn't also a magical experience.

Consequently, part of landscape architecture's role, according to the participant, is to protect and manage these magical landscapes for future generations. Prior to management is the need to recognise and acknowledge that these places exist and are already appreciated by residents. However, if poignant landscapes are intrinsically subjective, ambiguous, and dependent on far-reaching feelings of discovering awe and finding home, how can a pragmatic framework be applied for construction or preservation purposes? The participant even noted that she moved into policy and urban planning after realising that it was too idealistic to expect people to know what good design was or not. Therefore, I suggest that the answer to this predicament lies not in the spaces but in how magic, spirit, awe, or poignancy are conceptualised by the people who create, use, regulate, and teach about these places—which includes landscape architects.



Figure 12: Sugar Beach (Toronto), designed by Claude Cormier + Associés. Photo by the Author.



Figure 13: A view out into the water along the beaches of the Toronto Islands. Photo by the Author.

Soulful landscapes, soulful experiencing

The landscape architects in my study used a variety of words to talk about poignant landscapes. These words help bring value to landscapes. Some of the descriptions used to express the power and authority of landscapes were force, magic, and spiritual energy. Encompassing these descriptions is the feeling of an invisible entity that brings liveliness. While force, magic, or energy were not used in one landscape architect's description of San Francisco, the effect of these words could still be sensed through her narrative, because she described the city as a dynamic system:

I think [San Francisco] is one of the most powerful landscapes that I [remember] that touches me. [...] This sense of being [...] when you feel... when you are walking, and you have the geography of the city that takes you up and down. [...] Everybody in San Francisco, when you go there, [...] people take you to walk out to see the views. But I think the views are more to me going back to a kind of a subliminal place where you can [...] contemplate [that] there's a sacred. This connection between [...] this grandiose element of the sea, the rock...then you have this bridge that is part of what's connected there. [...] Then the fog that just takes on this dynamic of what's seen [and what's] not seen. Which side of the place you are in? [...] It's moving. It's a very dynamic and moving place. It makes you feel like you are part of a bigger...thing. That's what the word is, that you are part of a bigger [thing] and it makes you feel alive.

The city is portrayed as energetic and full of life force. Her depiction of San Francisco expresses the feeling of being alive within an environment that is also alive. This sense of aliveness can be felt in another of her city descriptions. This time she referred to a trip to Amsterdam:

I felt, wow, this is amazing. This is a city where even the way the landscape is, it's very wild. They just do wildflowers. I was walking by a place and they had to cut them all down, maybe twice a year, three times. But they have these

amazing...everything is totally different. And the way people move, the cyclists, the cars, the pedestrians, the trams. It's kind of like a dance. I was trying to figure out what's going on. What is this? What will be the words? There was a researcher from Mexico who said...he researched on the dynamics of transformation and change in the city, and he said, "this city has a soul." And I thought, that's what it is. This city is alive. This city has a soul.

On one hand, cities have been considered as monotonous: underwhelming in moving people outside of wearisome hypnosis. On the other hand, cities are also considered as overstimulating: overwhelming to the mind and senses to the point where people cannot feel themselves. Yet, here, the cities are described as engaging. Depicted as a dance, the description of Amsterdam envisions participation of all its dancers—the flowers, the people, and the air; all parts become the landscape. Furthermore, the narrator, this landscape architect, was a participant in this dance. Within the landscape that she experienced was the same entity that makes us who we are as human beings: not intelligence or hierarchical power, but simply, the exquisiteness of life.

Her statement, "the city has soul" is a powerful assertion. But not everyone believes in souls. The debate over whether souls exist has been an ongoing one in religion, philosophy, science, and popular culture since the birth of modern thought. From Britain's 19th century Vitalism Debate, in which scientists John Abernethy and William Lawrence disputed over whether animals had souls in the form of a magnetism-like force, to the present day inquiry on the Internet's Debate.org, we still do not have a consensus over the existence of souls (R. Holmes 2008; 'Does the Soul Exist?' n.d.). Amusingly, 48% of Debate.org users believe that the soul does not exist. Whether people are searching for souls and have not found it, or that they are not ready to accept the existence of souls without empirical truth is uncertain. But in my opinion, the debate is misguided since the relevance of soul is based on *making* meaning rather than finding a non-physical entity that may never be

found. Believing in souls is a choice to instill meaning into life (i.e., to make soul) or to eradicate meaning from life (i.e., to make things soulless). The same analogy can be extended to poignant experiences and poignant landscapes.

I choose to make soul through life and so do many of the research participants. When I had felt defeated by my guilt of “romanticising” landscapes or the shame of being human in an ecologically and socially damaged world, I found antidotal reassurance through Abram’s notion of magic. Abram (1997) describes both sleight-of-hand magicians and traditional shamans as mediators of perception. The audiences’ participation and their imaginations make magic possible. The magician’s imagination also directly impacts the believability of the performance. As a sleight-of-hand magician himself, Abram knew that those who did not want to participate in the performance would be entranced by logical explanations and analyses, such as hidden wires or mirrors. Therefore, both magic and soul are for those who want to believe. The enchantment of poignant landscapes, similarly, are for those who want to be enchanted by the world. I choose to keep my world poignant and the availability of this choice can be made apparent for others.

An area of life where we can learn to make insightful choices about how to live and see the world soulfully is through the contemplation of life’s finitude. Life’s preciousness, which can be felt as poignant moments is only made possible by its counterpart: death. To be alive is at the same time to be mortal and to be aware of human limitedness. Landscapes present this dichotomy as all living beings and elements eventually die. All constructed elements will also deteriorate (sometimes beyond the life of humans, which show-cases human mortality even more). When a landscape inherently expresses lessons of life and death, it manifests as a beautiful yet painful moment—a poignant moment—such as the falling of cherry blossoms in spring. This scenario is a teaching moment for one landscape architect. He describes,

Everybody goes to High Park to see that. But they don't realise that the true beauty of it is, it's not just how big and bright they are. They do sort of have a realisation that it's short term, but also the beauty of that is actually that you get to witness the process from that fullness and then wilting into the ground. So, it's the process of the cherry blossoms. The whole process. Not just when it's at its peak. And there's that element we talked about it, dread and to some extent sadness. It is a reminder that things don't last forever, including ourselves.

Indeed, none of us lasts forever. Part of existential phenomenology is the inherent dread of death. The cherry blossoms do not last forever, yet they bloom marvellously when it is time for them to do so. The cherry blossoms' beauty is an example of the poignant life lesson gained from a landscape. The time in between birth and death for a flower is a chance to flourish. Likewise, the time between birth and death for a human is also the opportunity to flourish. The process of life, the experience of flourishing, is the value of life itself, and it is an interlocked process that occurs between flower/person and their environment.

In my own life, this research project has become a component of my soul's flourishing. Since I started this project, I have noticed that I do not need to pilgrimage for poignant landscapes anymore. In the last few years, I have found that poignant landscape experiences have simplified and diversified for me. I somehow find extremely windy places fascinating; arduous hikes on park trails are extremely memorable; regular visits to a neighbourhood park are welcoming and healing; and even my balcony can sometimes feel comforting. Rather than a spectator longing to be embraced by the landscape, I have learned to become a participant in the landscape and allowed myself to be embraced by it. Learning to be aware of myself, my senses, the landscape's elements, my relationship with the landscape, and that I belonged in it, landscape has also become an acknowledged and respected counterpart of my life.

Flourishing in Landscape Architecture: Navigating Life Mission, Ethics, and Social Boundaries

One of the oldest arguments of human development is the one of nature versus nurture. The debate questions how much of what we are born with can determine our adaptability in the world. The Swedish idioms of the “dandelion child,” *maskrosbarn*, and the “orchid child,” *orkidebarn*, insinuate that a child’s emotional sensitivity and resilience are inborn traits (Ellis and Boyce 2008). Building on the metaphors, the Dandelion and Orchid Hypothesis is used by psychologist Bruce Ellis and developmental pediatrician Thomas Boyce to explain the serotonin transporter gene that controls emotional environmental sensitivity (Jawer 2012; Ellis and Boyce 2008). Children with the shorter gene, which has less transporters and more serotonin, are categorized as orchids. They are more emotionally sensitive, react to environmental stress easier, and need a supportive environment to flourish. Children with the longer gene, which has more transporters and less serotonin, are considered dandelions. These children are less stimulated by their environments and are able to thrive in a variety of conditions. About four-fifths of children tested in Ellis and Boyce’s studies have dandelion qualities (Fenn 2019). While the use of the dandelion and orchid metaphor to explain nature and nurture in human development can be appealing in its simplicity and clarity, upon further contemplation of the cultural connotations of the flowers, the metaphor becomes problematic.

Without Ellis and Boyce’s (2008) “Biological Sensitivity to Context” narrative, the idioms of the dandelion and the orchid child has the feel of a Brothers Grimm fairy-tale or a Mother Goose nursery rhyme. The stories are seemingly innocent, yet they have hidden disturbing qualities. The troubling narrative of the dandelion and orchid metaphor is that both flowers have strong cultural connotations. Seen as the antagonist of a well-maintained lawn, the dandelion is resilient but is also

considered an undesired weed. In comparison, the orchid is cherished as the exotic houseplant, an exquisite beauty that is prized even more because of its delicateness. However, if I were to solely categorize myself in terms of Ellis and Boyce's theory on emotional sensitivity, I would consider myself as an orchid child; my parents would undoubtedly agree. But being emotionally sensitive as a child within a world of resilient dandelions does not make an orchid child feel exquisite or prized. Rather, an orchid child would feel that they do not belong in this world. Ellis and Boyce recognise these feelings of insecurity in their theory and depend on them to argue for more nurturing environments for orchid children. But again, 80% of children are considered dandelions: on one hand, they are labelled as strong and adaptable, but on the other hand, they are unwanted weeds in a garden. Thus, who would want to be a dandelion? Therefore, in the grand scheme of the metaphors, can either orchids or dandelions feel that they belong? When cultural narratives go the wrong way, that is, they are destructive to notions of self and notions of nature, they bring with them hidden complications.

In reality, both flowers live because of distinct habits of light, temperature, moisture, soil and proximity to and from other flora and fauna, including humans. As vigorous as the dandelion may be, it does not grow where many orchids thrive. Dandelions also have medicinal qualities and have been traditionally used as a beneficial herb. Conversely, orchids are not rare—a family composing of over 22,000 species is comparable only to the Aster family, home of the dandelion genus *Taraxacum* ('Orchid' n.d.; 'Dandelion' n.d.; 'Asteraceae' n.d.). Rather than being stuck with the narrative that the dandelion is more naturally adaptive, and the orchid is more culturally dependent, the reality is that the biological nature of each plant shapes how either responds to its environment. Each plant has different needs, but still tries its best to flourish in the conditions given to it. An adult is conditioned to pass judgement on the flowers, but rarely do children have this issue.

Collecting bouquets of dandelions and blowing at their fluffy seeds are delightful to children because they experience the intrinsic beauty of the flowers.

The word *flourish* means to blossom or to grow ('Flourish' n.d.). A flourishing plant grows to its utmost potential. More than a metaphor, a human being, as a natural growing organism also flourishes. A flourishing plant can metaphorically be called a happy plant, but it does not think about being happy. It just grows. If asked what a person ultimately wants with life, most people would say they just want "to be happy." However, being happy for most people is a fleeting state, often dependent on the attainment of something external such as wealth, particular relationships, recognition, or pleasure. If happiness were to be based only on good fortune and happenstance, as defined by the etymology of the word *happy* ('Happy' n.d.), but if happiness was also meant to be life's greatest purpose, then happiness becomes a paradox: happiness can never be a universal human goal that can be achieved because of the limitations of external circumstances. Often translated as happiness, Aristotle's (1835) *eudaimonia* has also been argued to be a term to describe the state of human flourishing or well-being (Moore 2019). Therefore, *eudaimonia* or *flourishing* are perhaps more fitting ways to describe human being's ultimate goal towards happiness. *Eudaimonia* is the pursuit of the ultimate "good life." It is not a means to achieve something else. Therefore, the "good" is achieved through the *act of living*. Since *eu* means well and *daimon* means spirit (i.e., the soul in relation to a divine counterpart), *eudaimonia* is to live well in accordance to one's soul (Kraut 2018). A plant does not strive to be happy (or to be healthy, for that matter); it just strives to flourish as it is meant to despite the conditions it is given.

Much of a person's life is focused on their career. Therefore, the career process is part of living well or a pursuit of *eudaimonia*. When given the means, people usually choose careers based on their interests and aspirations. The choice to do work that aligns with a personal sense of fulfillment is a choice to flourish. Landscape architecture is a career that provides a sense of fulfillment for

many people who choose the profession. Among interview and research participants, the reasons to become a landscape architect were often a combination of interests in art, science, outdoor activity, ecology *and* the desire to contribute to making the world a better place. Because contributing to the world is a moral-based act, in choosing to be landscape architects, these individuals have engaged themselves as moral agents. Just as some people choose not to follow common human virtues (people who would be described as evil by Aristotle), I could also assume that not every landscape architect has virtuous intentions towards their career. However, the profession's portrayal of landscape architects as "stewards of the land" implies responsibility towards the natural world for all members of the profession. Therefore, part of a landscape architect's flourishing (ideally) would include making moral or ethical choices towards the well-being of the world.

Since the inception of the profession in North America with Olmsted's popularization of the title in the 1860s and the establishment of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) in 1899, landscape architecture has been associated with moral obligations towards the betterment of social and ecological environments. Although a formal Code of Environmental Ethics exists for the ASLA and not the CSLA, environmental ethics are inherent within the goals of North American landscape architecture. Environmental ethics in the 20th century has been concerned with how humans should treat the more-than-human world, in particular, by using ethical systems that are based on value judgements. Environmentalists often argue for non-anthropocentrism as an ethical obligation. However, the history of ethics in practice is often based on a presumption to self-impose a license to assign value and extend moral standing to those who have wrestled with demonstrating value, be it another race, gender, species, or habitat. In effect, whether a forest is considered to have intrinsic or instrumental value, the value is still a judgement made by the human ego. Accordingly, the problem of environmental ethics is not that it is too anthropocentric, but rather anthropocentric in a faulty way. As Chris Cuomo (1998) states,

only humans use ethics as we know them, and ethics have to be based on human-generated valuations and responses. [...] Indeed, we cannot truly separate human from nonhuman well-being without dramatically changing our conception of human physical, emotional, and social well-being, and the false belief that we can separate these has severely disrupted the physical thriving of both humans and nature. (49)

Hence, arguing that we should be less human-focussed in order to be better human beings is ineffective as an ethical premise. Making ethical choices as a human being first starts at considering what it means to be human in the world. Acknowledging humanity's connectedness to the rest of the world is a survival issue, a social issue, an ecological issue, and an existential issue. All these issues create circumstances for ethical choices. At the root of environmental ethics is the need for a different worldview than one that sees humans as separate and not belonging to the collective entities in the world. Murray Bookchin (1991) sees domination and hierarchy in mainstream worldviews as the problematic source of faulty ethics, and thus, ecology is also social. Similarly, Cuomo's ethic of flourishing argues that moral value is relational and that humans as moral agents are rational beings who are grounded in social implications.

Like Aristotle, Cuomo (1998) argues that flourishing is not just ideology. An ethic of flourishing is pursued through actions and deliberate choices. For moral agents to make flourishing choices, individuals need "a high degree of integrity and liberty" (75). That means flourishing individuals need autonomy to make decisions based on their connectedness with the flourishing of ecological and social systems. In a reciprocal relationship, an individual can flourish only if their environment allows for it; a flourishing individual as part of their environment will also strengthen the flourishing of their contextual system. Likewise, Aristotle (1835) states that *eudaimonia* requires human virtue but also sufficient external goods, that is, fortune in upbringing, wealth, relationships,

health etc., to support the feats of virtuous actions. Going back to the dandelion and the orchid, both flowers need different types of nurturing. Each will flourish in the right conditions, bringing with them advantages that only a supportive environment can benefit from.

Flourishing in an institutionalised setting

According to Cuomo (1998), flourishing should “include attention to consequences, and assessments of which actions and institutions are likely to produce and contribute to flourishing” (75). Institutions are places to nurture opportunities and growth, but they are also where walls are metaphorically and physically built. For example, from an outsider’s perspective of academia is the notion that academia is a socially advantaged and sheltered “ivory tower.” But what holds institutions such as research institutes together is not protectiveness but the norms and regulations that are either assumed or enforced upon its members. If flourishing requires autonomy as well as nurturing conditions, then institutions are places that paradoxically support and restrict an individual’s chance to flourish. Since landscape architecture is an institutionalised profession in North America, the flourishing of individual landscape architects and the profession as a whole are both influenced by the institutional structures created for the profession.

Advocacy for the general society to see landscape architecture as a valuable asset is a top priority for both American and Canadian landscape architecture associations. ASLA’s mission is to “advance landscape architecture through advocacy, communication, education, and fellowship,” while CSLA’s mission statement declares that it stands to “advocate for landscape architecture in Canada” and is “dedicated to advancing the art, the science and the practice of landscape architecture” (ASLA n.d.; CSLA n.d.‘About’). In the landscape architecture documents that I reviewed from various associations and organisations in Canada and the United States, building community through advocacy, either socially or professionally, was the second most mentioned goal.

I consider this objective as an externally focussed one, based on what an outsider would perceive of landscape architecture's flourishing. The top concern expressed in the documents, which indicates the profession's main internal objective, is the mandate for every individual member's honesty and transparency.

While it is generally safe for me to assume that everyone agrees on honesty and transparency as necessary virtues for living well in the Aristotelian sense, to adopt an ethics that *commands* honesty and transparency also assumes that something is "off" in the first place. As Hans-Georg Moeller (2004) states, "morality is a virtue of latecomers" (117). From a Daoist perspective, the obligations of moral values such as Confucianism's humanity, righteousness, knowledge, and filial piety are only "ineffective remedies in a degenerative society." Flourishing is based on a self-determined life path, similar to Daoist notions of the Way (*dao*) and "Self-So" (*ziran* or the "natural"). Therefore, I question whether the institutional structures of landscape architecture are setting the right ambitions towards flourishing that can fulfill the aspirations of their members and their desires to create value within the greater social sphere. To consider a broader range of objectives in the profession, I asked research participants questions about ethics with the idea of flourishing in mind. Landscape architects expressed a range of opinions that related to their own concerns and life experiences as well as how these concerns apply to the profession and society at large. Hence, an ethic of flourishing in landscape architecture is self-determined and personal but also consequential to the environment in which choices are made.

Separating institutionalised ethics from a more personal ethic of flourishing is not straightforward because the concept of ethics is so tied to professional codes of conduct, laws and regulations, and sometimes even social norms. In fact, one interview participant started off the discussion jokingly with the statement, "You're talking to the wrong guy. I have no ethics." As a business owner, he explained that "he has to bend his ethics" to make a living. This notion implies

that ethics are malleable, but also inappropriate if not carried out in a certain way. The deeper question is whether he has been bending *his* personal views on ethics or instead a set of ethics imposed on him by regulatory bodies. I imagine that he has been bending the two interpretations of ethics to make compromises. The example he referred to is a typical case that many landscape architects deal with regularly: the task of plant selection.

Ethical movements are usually initiated as a way to help deteriorating social or environmental conditions but often they lead to prescriptive requirements or even rigid rules. While I have already discussed the philosophical notion of comparing non-native plants to non-native people in Chapter 4, the ecological movement towards native plants also impose practical ethical dilemmas for some landscape architects. The movement has created a challenge for landscape architects working on landscape designs in urban areas because native plants are not necessarily the most suitable plant choices for the environmental and aesthetic conditions of the landscape project. These landscape architects are then faced with social, political, and regulatory pressures to fit their designs into pre-selected planting lists. The interview participant explained,

I can appreciate the fact that you want to have native plant material, but in that movement, they forget that where the plant material is going to be planted isn't a native condition. I think there's been an influence of plant biologists and scientists that have created quite a climatological response in plants that may be more disease resistant and pest resistant, or more resistant to salt, or more resistant to urban conditions that make them not native. But that doesn't mean they are a poor choice for plants. So, there's this opinion of the public that all of native plants are good, and then as a designer you have to make the decision that well, yeah, I could specify them, but they won't provide the visual interest. They won't provide the fragrance. They won't even survive in some conditions. So

why are you making us do this? As a designer and a plants person, I think I can make adequate choices without falling into your categories that are so stringent.

In addition to limiting plant choices, the interview participant also implied in his comment that the movement limits a landscape architect's professional sovereignty by giving doubt to their expertise. Nevertheless, within an institutionalised setting, as a professional and as a service to the public, which is also governed by institutions, landscape architects must follow certain regulations despite any personal discomforts. In some cases, following guidelines also means to sacrifice one's own perspective and insight towards an action. As this research participant stated, "you can understand their opinions, but you may not agree to [them]." Therefore, ethical individuals make choices to flourish amid oppression in a real world of social and ecological systems (Hoagland 1999). Finding ways to meet regulations that do not perfectly align with one's opinions, in a compromised manner that does not deny one's personal ethics, is part of a landscape architect's flourishing in an integrated social dynamic world.

Another area of consideration for landscape architects is planning and construction regulations. These are often promoted because of their social or ecological value but following these regulations without discretion leaves ethical responsibility to institutions and assumes that the larger social system is adequately flourishing. For example, an interview participant brought up the urban planning notion of density as an all-encompassing solution. Yet, in reality, intensification is also part of the larger social and ecological problem. She stated,

Everybody thinks intensification is the way to go out there. That's the buzz word. But in my experience in the development industry as a landscape architect, all that means is people are cramming in more units. It doesn't mean that they've added anything back to the environment, whether it's a ravine system, whether it's additional parks, whether it's new forest areas.

The landscape architect's statement implies that intensification may prevent the destruction of additional ecological areas, but it is done at an expense to human living conditions through the exploitation of consumers and the expansion of condo development within a capitalist market. Green standards, new developments, and revitalisation projects are used to mitigate damage and create more liveable spaces, but as this landscape architect states, "the whole growth industry out there is not about preserving landscape. It's about chewing it up. [...] And the landscapes are never the same... You can't just destroy it all and then think that you can replant it somewhere." As I have explained in Chapter 3, landscapes are in part cultural legacy. They are natural habitats for the more-than-human world, *and* they are the place of human dwelling. Losing landscapes, especially to de-cultured consumerism, is also losing a sense of place in the world.

One participant described such dilemmas as "ethical battles." Most landscape architects work in the private sector (i.e., 70% of ASLA members), and thus, work under the direction of clients (ASLA 2018). Even those who work for the public sector are subject to the interests of private stakeholders. When a decision cannot be resolved by legal regulations, landscape architects have to navigate between client or stakeholder requests and personal ethical choices, which often feel like choices between individual needs and choices that may serve the greater good. In many cases, as this landscape architect states, "you ethically argue with a client." Her rationale is inherent in the role of the professional. She says, "I really believe that if you were a professional, you serve first the public good. That is a statement in all professional codes of ethics. First, I serve the public good." The parameters of what is considered good for the public is also tied to what landscape architects envision as their roles as landscape architects.

Landscape architecture as life mission

The idea of contributing to society is a large part of many landscape architects' personal ethics. In fact, many of the research participants noted that they chose the profession because of landscape architecture's function to serve the greater good, either socially or ecologically. For example, one interview participant decided to change career directions from fine arts to landscape architecture in order to contribute pragmatically in the world. She explained, "I knew I didn't want to be a fine art artist, and I wanted to do something a bit more contributing, I guess, if you want to put it that way." Similarly, another interview participant recalled how her art teacher suggested landscape architecture as a career because she would eventually become "disenchanted as [an art] teacher" if she had followed her teacher's footsteps. For another participant, landscape architecture "is a higher level of service." She described it as a "calling," and "not just a job." For one participant who considered architecture first as a career, described the appeal she found in landscape architecture as something connected to the sense of humanity:

I really feel like landscape architecture does this in a much more direct way [than architecture], and that it does have an undisputed kind of element of humanity to it. Because yeah, humans need to live in a box, but they also need to live in a place. I guess it's really about in a place or in nature and that relationship.

According to the research participant's comment, landscape architecture is interconnected to humanity because landscapes are integral to a human being's need for dwelling in a place. In essence, landscape architecture is a type of place-making. Therefore, being able to be part of helping others in finding home and finding comfort in a place is something that many landscape architects aspire to as a life mission.

Creating a sense of home was also an indirect theme of the survey results. For the question, “what goals do you think are the most important for a fulfilling life as a landscape architect?” the following choices ended up as the top three in close proximity:

- Creating more natural habitats and sustainable ecological systems (top);
- Creating inspiring or meaningful landscapes (tied for second); and
- Creating attractive and comfortable places for people to live, work, or play (tied for second).

All three goals are suggestive of a broader sense of “home” through connectivity, either as the creation of place for social connections through community, the creation of place for spiritual connections within landscapes, or the creation of place for holistic living on Earth in connectivity with other more-than-human species. Not surprisingly, “making a good living” and “creating well known and acclaimed landscapes” were the lowest choices (See Table 4). Although making a living and getting recognition are ambitions that many people including landscape architects strive for, they are not top priority for “fulfillment.”

Table 4: Survey ranking of goals for a fulfilling life as a landscape architect

Which of the following goals do you think are the most important for a fulfilling life as a landscape architect?	Count	Percentage
Creating more natural habitats and sustainable ecological systems	34	18
Creating inspiring or meaningful landscapes	33	17
Creating attractive and comfortable places for people to live, work, or play	33	17
Making social change through the creation of landscapes	27	14
Preserving natural habitats and ecological systems	23	12
Educating people through landscapes	11	5
Making a good living	11	5
Other, describe:	10	5
Creating well-known and acclaimed landscapes	1	0

When I asked one landscape architect how he applies ideas of flourishing in his work and life, he revealed that landscape architecture for him was more than a means to make money:

I mean, one can treat the profession as essentially a career where you earn enough money to raise a family, and invest, and retire, and all of those things. That's not something that ever drove me particularly. Once we seemed to be taking care of paying the bills, then you want to do something that, you know, relates to those things that I just mentioned.

Once the basic finances were covered, according to the research participant, his main role as a landscape architect is to contribute to the world socially and ecologically. What he considered as important for a fulfilling and flourishing life as a landscape architect included the goals covered in the survey's top three results for the same question. He explained,

This was brought home when [my business partner] passed away, of what value there was in what we did. The expression I used at the time was "making a difference," and along with that, the assumption that you're treating the environment in a way that improves the environment, climate change, all of those things that we are challenged with at the moment. That's kind of on the ecological side, but on the plus side, or sort of the humanistic side, of inclusion, making places accessible, and usable, and providing environments that fulfill the experience of being in a landscape. I guess to me, the sense of whether you've accomplished anything comes back to this making a difference question, and enriching, enhancing people's lives, the population and so on, while at the same time, treating the Earth in the way that we're not bringing it to a short end.

Frankly, I get emotional every time I re-read his comment. The reason is likely because I also knew the person he had mentioned and the contributions that this departed individual made to

architecture, urban design, and landscape architecture. The thought of a person's life as a precious dedication to enriching other people's living environments is profound.

I have heard landscape architects being proverbially described as the jack-of-all-trades in the design/environmental sector: they come with a little bit of art, a little bit of engineering, and a little bit of horticulture. However, through listening to and reading the aspirations of the research participants, I realise that there is an extra ingredient to flourishing in the profession, and that is, a lot of heart. Accordingly, I believe that compassion and a loving desire to create a better world is an essential element to flourishing as a landscape architect. Of course, not every landscape architect will consider their work as a life mission towards creating a better world, and moreover, project challenges will not always be resolved, but among the landscape architects who had participated in my study, a lot of hope was available.

Although no research participant had specifically said that a loving heart was an important trait for a flourishing life as a landscape architect, several participants noted other favourable character traits that were necessary for fighting ethical battles and advocating new ideas. These traits included courage, confidence, and integrity. One landscape architect argued for the need to have courage: "I really think for landscape architects in the future, the amount of courage you have to stand up to [development pressures] and to [...] come up with some solid ideas about balancing nature and intensification in our city and in our suburbs is a really huge issue." However, before one can have courage to stand up for or against an issue, one needs to know *where* they stand. Another landscape architect argued for the need to have personal integrity: "You have to have your own internal principles. Then you aren't swayed by...you have to be self-motivated and guided by your own." However, life circumstances will influence a person's view of ethics. One landscape architect recalled a time when a junior colleague asked her to teach him about ethics. Bewildered, she recalled ethical influences from her life. She stated,

You know, it was...there was a girl guide leader when I was a kid, who taught [me], a scared kid how to swim, and then brought me out to swim in the lakes. It was a high school teacher. It was my next-door neighbour. It was my parents. It was like...I mean your ethics come from so many different places that you garner over your life.

In her description, ethics is like a discovery that is built through experience. Ethics is variable. According to Aristotle (1835), people have intellectual virtues and intuitive virtues. Intellectual virtues can be reasoned with, but intuitive virtues are deeply inherent to who we are. Therefore, ethical principles shaped through personal and social virtues are comprised of both “nature” and “nurture,” not a set of popular opinions imposed by society or a set of rules set out by authority. These landscape architects recognised the importance of individual sovereignty and that lessons in their life also add to their ethical standing. Building courage and confidence to stay integral to one’s ethical beliefs comes from fostering comfort in one’s own direction. Thus, flourishing as a landscape architect also means developing self-determination.

Self-development, for one interview participant, is considered “one of the greatest things” that a landscape architect can do for the profession. However, self-development is interpreted as *professional* development in the institutionalised setting of landscape architecture. Professional development comes in the form of mandatory continuing education programs, webinars, lectures, and advocacy initiatives. Within the reviewed association documents, “learning” is a key responsibility for landscape architects. Specifically, learning in these documents is about adopting knowledge from others or learning to be more innovative, creative, or skillful. In the survey, “learning from available knowledge or available research” and “by being creative and coming up with new ideas and approaches to design” were the second and third choices for best ways to achieve a fulfilling life as a landscape architect. In contrast, autonomy, which is necessary for

courage, confidence, and integrity, is only mentioned twice abstractly in 17 organisation documents; first, as disclaimer for personal responsibility; and second, as guidance to take leadership. In the OALA Code of Ethics (2016), a statement reads: “Such a document is no guarantee of ethical and professional conduct and is not meant to diminish or replace the right and the duty of members to take personal responsibility for their actions.” And in the LAF Action Plan (n.d.) is the directive: “Lead by example. Reduce your ecological footprint at home and in the office. Curate your practice for diversity and create an equitable and inclusive work environment. Team with others who share these values. Love where you live and practice in your community. Steward others into leadership roles. Embrace messiness.”

Self-development, as one landscape architect participant knows, goes much further than the “data input” of new skills and knowledge. Self-development is learning about the value of oneself. He explained in his interview,

I used to work because I wanted to be loved by others, by clients or the public or whatever through my projects. [...] I was also like an eco-activist who wanted to change the world. I’ve come to realise that it’s just...it’s me that has to change. So now when I do my work, it comes from a place of, this is who I am, and this is my presence in the world that I’m sharing.

Flourishing for him is part of knowing who he is and what he can share of himself. The notion of contributing to the world from his perspective is about offering and not obligation. The same idea can be extended to the profession of landscape architecture: What can landscape architecture share, and what can each landscape architect share to the world?

Interview participants’ ideas of flourishing suggest two common areas that landscape architects are suited for sharing: communication and consideration. A discussion with renowned

American landscape architect Martha Schwartz was mentioned in one interview. The participant relayed how Schwartz saw communication as the real skill of landscape architects:

What she said was that our real role as landscape architects—our real skill, the real gift that we bring to society—is our ability to communicate. [...] We see landscapes in our mind. We see what we can create. It doesn't exist physically off the...but we see it. And we see how things can be. And then we develop communication skills, whether they're verbal, or they're computer models, or they're hand sketches. But we do two things: we manage to communicate what we see as the possibility to the audience, be it a client or be it a community, but we also manage to gain the trust of that audience to allow us to do this, when many of them can't visualize what we see." We can do...they trust us. Leave us with it. Trust us.

Another landscape architect echoed the same message in her fascination and gratitude for her clients' trust in her vision:

I truly value and I have a profound respect for my clients, because people who come to hire me, they can't see what I see. So, I consider myself a steward of also their vision. [...] It's interesting because many times this has happened for me where a client will come back to me and just say, "You know, I heard what you said and somehow, I knew inside that you were right, but I had no idea how, how fabulous it could become manifest." [...] It was fascinating, the level of trust that people put in...that they have put in me.

Rather than self-imposing a vision onto someone else, this ability to communicate is about listening to the needs of the client, interpreting those needs, translating the needs into a vision, and then conveying that the results will be satisfactory, not to mention the actual process of getting the project constructed. Within the communication process is sensitivity and thoughtfulness.

Sensitivity and thoughtfulness are important because each human being is intricately tied to a larger web of systems, be it social and ecological systems that are tied by dominant worldviews or by eco-psychological subconscious structures (Bookchin 1991; Cuomo 1998; Hoagland 1999; Hillman 1992). As the world became increasingly globalised, the social world also became increasingly connected. As humans became increasingly resource dependent, the ecological world also became increasingly vulnerable. The action of one individual can and will affect the world's dynamic in subtle or not-so-subtle ways. For one landscape architect, flourishing is about considering what effects these actions will have on others. He said, "whenever anything done is done, it's always a question at whose expense is something being done. Whenever we make any kind of modification, it's always at someone's expense." Moreover, we often do not know the full extent of the consequences of our actions, particularly, at a global ecological and psychological level. The participant gave an example of the environmental damage he witnessed over the Himalayas in the 1970s as an environmentalist:

Most of the mass wasting, which is the geological term for erosion and everything, was happening in areas that were not touched by people, but 75, 80 percent of the land forests coming down because of the natural causes having nothing to do with what was happening by people. And this said to me, as an environmentalist, that while we're screwing up our homes, we have no idea of the carrying capacity of the Earth to deal with what we're doing. [...] We have no sense of the enormity of the capacity of change here. So focussed on me as a society. "Yes. I'm doing this. I'm contributing to messing up my home." As far as the Earth's concern, frankly, it doesn't really matter. I think...I think of, fuller...this is part of the fuller awareness of what we're doing and the effect that we are having on everything else. We are affecting our home, but don't tell me we're saving the planet.

His statement resonated with me because the environmental slogan of “saving the planet” always had a ring of anthropocentric arrogance for me, as if the Earth was something to be patronised and humanity’s responsibility as inhabitants was not recognised. The recognition of our world’s interconnectivity is a prerequisite to knowing that human actions have wider consequences. If every human action has a consequence, the deliberate actions of conscientious professionals are even weightier because the landscape designer is a temporary intervention. Whether one considers themselves a steward of a client’s needs or a steward of the land, there are consequences that go beyond landscape design itself. One landscape architect says, “you can get back in your car, get on your plane and leave. At the end of the day, you have to leave something that people love and cherish.” Therefore, the landscape architect asserts, “with great power in the design pen comes great responsibility.”

Flourishing landscape architecture

However, if we (landscape architects and all other human beings as moral agents) have responsibility and yet do not always know the full implications of our actions, how can we ever choose the “correct” moral action? Cuomo (1998) stresses that flourishing is also about adapting an ethic “without purity” (90). Using an imagined story of *Sisterwomanchainsaw*, she illustrates that an ethic of flourishing is about making choices and reflecting on them. Two women (one of whom is intended to be the reader of her story) are walking in the woods. Upon hearing gunshots during hunting season, they run to start a chainsaw in an attempt to scare the deer away. Upon contemplation, the women do not know if the fleeing deer would become more vulnerable to the hunters, or if the deer was meant to feed a needy family for weeks. In their deliberation to disrupt “a sport of racist patriarchy,” they made a choice and acted on it (90). By discussing the situation, new

perspectives and ethical options became available. Therefore, an ethic of flourishing is a continuous process of reflection, interpretation, and decision making.

Similarly, the landscape architects interviewed also reflected on whether their work has been worthwhile, and even in the case of setbacks, what circumstances really mattered at the end of each project. One participant told me, “I think you get to a point where you wonder if you’ve made that difference, and whether that effort was worth it. But having chosen the direction you’re doing what you think is right, back to the ‘will it make a difference,’ then I think you just keep trying.” For another landscape architect, the conclusion of a project’s value is about having been sincere and aligned with one’s own conscience. She stated,

That, as a landscape architect that you ...I guess you can live with yourself with what you’ve designed and put out there and contributed. That it’s not something that...like I kind of say sometimes, that we design things here in earnest of making whatever project it is the best thing that it can be. That it can contribute, [whether] it’s socially or environmentally, and that we encourage with our clients or even internally that no idea is off the table if everyone’s in earnest of it being the best thing that it could be in. And about the best, I mean again, in a very earnest way.

Therefore, flourishing in landscape architecture can be considered not a goal towards a certain product, but a wholesome process. This is particularly true for one landscape architect whose role is more consultation-based than design. For him, landscape architecture is “a way of thinking.” A good landscape architecture project “has a clear purpose, a wholesome process...and an outcome that is beneficial.” In reflection to how much demolition and new construction occurs in the city, he realised that landscape as product-making is temporary. By shifting the focus to something broader, such as “healing, or giving back to the community through landscapes,” then even if the landscape

disappears, the effect can be still enriching and meaningful for those who had the chance to experience the landscape.

One interview participant believes that good landscapes should “encourage people to be who they are.” The creation of places that are “community based or is a response to an individual’s or a group’s wishes, dreams, and needs, [that] helps them realise that they are innately good” is more important than fashionable landscapes that provide superficial gratification. To pursue landscape architecture that helps people flourish, one has to appreciate the potential power that landscapes have on people mentally and emotionally. Good landscapes connect “small and local things to larger things,” according to one participant. Flourishing landscape architecture for him is about “stirring dialogues that are pointing to bigger issues [...] like landscapes that make you think, landscapes that make you feel, landscapes that engage and not just for a moment but keep engaging.” If this ideal is universal among landscape architects, then it is a very tall order for the profession. But another landscape architect thinks that “we don’t design the monumental experiences. We design ways that people can get to them and experience them.” Accordingly, from the perspective of this landscape architect, landscape is the main feature of landscape architecture, not the landscape architect.

I suggest we imagine the possibility that landscapes have full agency in our landscape experiences. In Chapter 4, I proposed the idea that a poignant landscape is the threshold between the beauty of belonging and the pain of non-belonging, which is overcome by witnessing experiences. Buddhism’s Four Noble Truths are based on a similar principle: suffering ends with *nirodha* (the third Truth) in which the action of “witnessing” brings awakening. From Fisher’s (2019b) ecopsychology perspective, *nirodha* can be applied as a collective social practice through the creation of social “containers” or non-judgemental and empathetic communities that allow for reflective and authentic experiencing, including the release of complex emotions such as anger or grief. If landscapes are powerful places that can help us feel belonging, then good landscapes can

also be “witnesses” and “spiritual containers” for flourishing human experiences. Therefore, landscapes can also be empathetic agents that work with flourishing landscape architects in the pursuit of the world’s well-being.

To participate in the pursuit of the world’s well-being with landscapes, a flourishing landscape architect needs to balance concerns that may be at times conflicting, for example, the need to balance creativity and practicality, or the need to balance business and personal interests. One interview participant believes that “creative brilliance and common sense” are important qualities for landscape architects. To be able to capture a “magical whimsy” while accommodating very practical issues such as creating usable landscapes that can survive Canadian winters is often a challenge. With all the ethical battles or conflict mediation that many landscape architects go through each day, especially working between the interests of public and private stakeholders, burn-out becomes inevitable. At a certain point, self-care needs to be the priority, but in a hierarchical society, it may take years for a person to accept that ultimate self-contentment is possible and also necessary if one wants to contribute more to the world. One interview participant who has worked for decades can now say, “I’m also at an age where I do things if they are going to be fun. If they aren’t going to be fun, I don’t really want to do them anymore.” Although balancing internal joy and external demands is important, how many adults are able to say that they will only do work that is fun?

Ideally, the world would be in a much better state if we were all doing things we liked. We would all be flourishing. But realistically, there are limitations to environments that support our flourishing and the best circumstance is to flourish within those environments by having the opportunity to choose what work is worth the effort while continuing to honour one’s own truth. One participant explained how time used for work is a compromise from time with family or other interests. Thus, choosing fulfilling work is imperative. He stated,

I think it's about how we...the kind of projects we chose, we try to take on, the clients that we partner with. The engagements that we...that we make and ensuring there's sort of compatibilities with outlook. Because our work is so slow and takes so much time. The investment, especially us as a small office, we can only take on so many projects and then they're going to last for quite a long duration. We have to be so careful about those commitments, because they are long commitments. So just to be...we are really selective about the clients and the kinds of work we're doing, so that it just feels good to our soul and our integrity.

Accordingly, to do good work, I think it is important to seek personal fulfillment in work.

Landscape architects who are fulfilled are able to share to society, that is, to offer something of themselves through their work.

Identity and Competition

Passion and compassion were found in individual landscape architects who were interviewed, so extending the belief that all landscape architects have the same qualities would be an ideal notion. But realistically, even if all landscape architects did consider their work as their life missions, the profession of landscape architecture is still not metaphorically equivalent to a group of guardian angels here to miraculously transform the Earth. Our present conditions show that landscape architecture is nowhere near being the miracle wonder that a naïve part of me wishes for. For example, at an aesthetic level, a walk in any city outside of recently redesigned areas will show that a lot more landscape work could be done; street trees continue to die; ultraviolet radiation through sun exposure is still a concern for public spaces; and from the global ecology perspective, climate crisis concerns are at a historical high. An underlying question beneath our troubled landscapes is whether landscape architecture has failed as a profession. In defence of landscape architecture, I would say that even if landscape architects were awarded all the projects that could

change the spatial existence of the entire world, the result of their work would still not meet the idealised change we desire, because landscape architects are just pieces in a bigger puzzle.

As much as landscape architecture shapes the world's landscapes, our social environment also shapes landscape architecture. As social needs change, landscape architecture also adapts to respond to these changes. However, a large part of landscape architecture's difficulty in addressing a core piece of the world's puzzle is the profession's wavering sense of identity. According to Richard Weller (2016), the answer to whether landscape architecture has failed the 1996 Declaration of Concern stating that landscape architecture is key to the environmental crisis is both yes and no. The indeterminant yet ambitious identity of the profession in the face of its noble goals leaves the profession of landscape architecture perplexed at its best and divided at its worse. To Weller, positivism and constructivism create two contrasting ecological paradigms for landscape architecture: 1) a solution is available through empirical study and objective goals; versus 2) all knowledge is socially constructed and thus, design should be more focused on meaning and experience. According to Weller, three models of landscape architecture identity were created out of the divergent goals: the regional planner (e.g. Ian McHarg); the artist (e.g. Peter Walker); and the urbanist (e.g. Charles Waldheim). Weller believes that all three models are needed in the Age of the Anthropocene. Yet, I believe that inherent in the problem of establishing a greater landscape architecture identity is the profession's need to *affirm* an identity amidst a pool of other worthy professions. A fine blurry line exists between wanting to show the world what landscape architecture is capable of (coming from a defensive position of being undervalued by its own professional body or the public) and wanting to serve the world through the gifts of landscape architecture.

Nevertheless, many interview participants expressed their view that landscape architecture is the appropriate profession to advocate solutions to current social and ecological issues. One participant noted that "landscape has a capacity to engage" with the "monumental issues" that this

generation of humans is posed with. Another participant believed that landscape architecture's "time is now," and the profession "has spent a lot of time navel gazing." In the past, many landscape architects have been complaining about not getting "better work" or getting hired too late in the design process. Yet, a lot has changed and opportunities to lead large and small projects are increasing for landscape architects (D. Holmes 2018). However, unease over landscape architecture's identity in comparison to other professions is still an ongoing issue. Two sides of an argument were apparent from the opinions of research participants: 1) the profession needs to distinguish itself; or 2) the profession needs to stop comparing and just do. Although the claims seem like contrary perspectives, I consider the positions as two sides of the same coin. Landscape architecture as a profession acknowledges a shift in the opportunities and its impact on current social and ecological landscapes; the question lies in how best to see the profession flourish.

One landscape architect argues that it is landscape architecture's "ethical purpose" and "connection to the natural environment" that sets the profession apart from architecture and engineering. Yet, it is the profession's "connection to architecture and engineering principles that sets [it] apart from horticultural design, garden design, and landscape design." She does not believe that the profession's standard of testing (the LARE) reflects the role and impact that landscape architecture can and should have in society:

I feel that we're testing in the profession...what we're doing is we're educating for and testing for this narrow perspective set of exams that really isn't defining who we are as a profession. If we're not careful, society in Canada will forget who we are. They will not remember us because we [prepared] that [road] survey. They will not remember us because that road is articulated [...] wonderfully. They will not remember us for the absolute simplicity and the wondrousness of that curb edge design. [*laugh*] They remember us because we were at the fore lines of the creation of Banff National Park and the national parks system in Canada. That's

what they remember us for. If we do not stay out there in front in those kinds of roles, we fade.

To clarify, the LARE consists of four sections: 1) project and construction management, 2) inventory and analysis, 3) design, and 4) grading, drainage and construction documentation. The purpose of the exams, as noted by CLARB (2017), the examination board across Canada and the United States, is to ensure “sufficient knowledge, skills and abilities to provide services without endangering the health, safety and welfare of the public.” Heavily leaning towards technical and utilitarian tasks, the LARE exams are more damage control than aspirational. Given such limited expectations of young landscape architects, how can the profession meet its bigger challenges, whether it is to not perish amidst competition or to better serve its purpose?

For another landscape architect, the concern over competition is unnecessary. He believes that knowing one’s own value is the way to move forward. He says:

the side that I think we have to get over is our sort of comparing ourselves to architects and engineers and all that stuff. That sort of self-doubt that we have. Or that sort of, oh, you know, they’re taking all our jobs. I think we have to get over that and move much more towards some of the innovative projects that we can move forward [with] and how we can teach [them].

Like some of the other interview participants, he was optimistic about the profession. He noted that the increase of landscape architecture led projects, new innovative technologies in urban design, and the deepening awareness of the needs of marginalised communities are signs that the profession is heading in a good direction. A moderate degree of assurance regarding the profession’s direction was also found in the survey. The most popular rating (mode average) for how well the profession is succeeding in the goals most valued by the survey participant was 7 out of 10. The question of how the profession is succeeding in accordance with what participants considered as aspirations for

“good landscape architecture” had a slightly lower common ranking of 6 out of 10 (See Table 5). Although the profession was acknowledged as “making great strides” and “doing excellent work” in the survey comments, many admitted that there is “room for improvement” and “we can always do better.” Limitations to reaching full potential included superficial intentions (e.g. “money,” or “glossy spaces”) and project environments (e.g. “budget,” lack of “authority,” “elite clients,” need to “educate” public and clients on the “value of design”).

As one landscape architect mentioned, “we [as a society] are addicted to perfection.” He suggested that beauty can bring landscape concepts together to move beyond this perfectionism. A beauty that is “more nature-based, process-based” is where “we can celebrate the imperfect.” Striving for perfection is almost like striving for failure since there is only one chance for one possible outcome. If perfection were achievable, humanity would not be continuously striving and continuously failing to achieve faultlessness. Therefore, considering whether a person, a landscape project, a profession, or a society has failed does not acknowledge that life is a process of “mistakes” and challenges that yield knowledge, wisdom, and new behaviours. Considering that landscape architecture does not need a perfect identity but instead needs an identity that permits imperfect processes gives room for exploring new ways of approaching landscape architecture as a type of social teamwork.

Table 5: Survey evaluation of the landscape architecture profession

Question	Mode average/10	Mean average/10
How well do you think the profession is succeeding in the goals you selected (for good landscape architecture)?	7	6.2
How well do you think the profession is succeeding in the aspirations you selected as best (ways to aspire to) good landscape architecture?	6	5.8
How well do you think the profession is succeeding in making poignant landscapes?	5	5.2

Common ground

Whether landscape architects, architects, engineers, and other professionals come together for the purpose of development or stewardship, the project is a process of teamwork. At the larger perspective—the life process on Earth, although experienced individually, is also a figurative teamwork of cohabitating people and species. Since flourishing is a reciprocal phenomenon (i.e., an individual flourishes in a flourishing environment; a flourishing environment flourishes with individuals who flourish), interview participants' ideas of flourishing cover the scope of their involvement at different scales of environment. Landscape architects collaborate with others as professionals in the professional context, as community members in a social context, and as a human being in the ecological and existential contexts. In an ethic of flourishing the scale of an environment can vary: the whole world does not need to flourish to have flourishing individuals. A small community that provides good support can give opportunity for individuals to flourish (Cuomo 1998). Accordingly, a collaborating team of professionals could yield promising results towards flourishing team members or a flourishing landscape project. Any flourishing landscape that is created out of the process then becomes support for the growth of yet-to-flourish people who are then part of bigger social and ecological systems. Thus, good teamwork is more relevant than the project's initial purpose of bringing people together towards creating a product. As one landscape architect states, to do landscape architecture productively, the “more and more, we're going to have to have a real value system about collaboration and how to capture the best out of other professions as well.” Beyond the group of professionals, community clients and user groups are also part of the team, because she notes, “a lot of great ideas really come from the community.”

Working with people from different backgrounds inevitably brings conflict. Interview participants suggested two key points in healthy collaboration. The first is the awareness of the

differences, and the second is the awareness of the commonalities. One landscape architect who works with Indigenous communities learned the process of engagement firsthand. He explained:

Understand what the differences are and then work to create awareness of those differences. You can't just understand it, because you can read something, and go, I think I understand it. But if you don't become aware that means you don't take the information or their worldview into consideration, right? So, I worked hard...all my life, I was taught to work hard on understanding, developing awareness and then from there you can start to find action or move forward. Only then should you kind of move forward [with actions].

As the landscape architect noted, awareness is unlike empirical understanding. If theoretical knowledge of differences is mistaken as *comprehensive* understanding (i.e., awareness) by focusing on the mind's retention of information, no foundation is available for the second point, since it is much harder to see commonalities between people who disagree with us than seeing and accepting the differences! He noted that "we might have differences, or we might understand things differently, but we have a common ground from which to work together." The project or the goal is the common ground. At a larger scope, humanity is the common ground among people of different political ideologies, ethnicities, genders, and races. From the ecological perspective, our home, the Earth, is the common ground for all the living species that exist on the planet. Therefore, in landscape architecture and beyond, there are always two applicable steps to resolving conflicts: awareness of differences and acceptance of commonalities.

Often in ethical issues, disagreeing parties are stuck on their differences. Sustainability has become a buzzword in environmental ethics, but according to the previously quoted landscape architect, sustainability in the Western worldview is the search for a common ground that individuals and communities can work with. He compared the 1987 book *Our Common Future* (The Brundtland

Report) with Indigenous interpretations of sustainability. He explained to me one of the traditional teachings called *Avatittinnik Kamatsianrniq*, which demonstrates the notion of being a land steward:

You have to take resources from the land for your own survival, but you have to do it in a way that thinks about your needs the next year, or the needs of your children or your grandchildren, or the next seven generations of children. So you don't only take what you need today, but you do it in a way that doesn't harm or disturb the landscape or the wildlife, the animals, or the environment, so it's a continually replenishing landscape.

For him, *Our Common Future* resonates the same way. Having common goals towards flourishing ideals such as sustainability, equity, and peace is one aspect of moving forward with awareness as a species. However, before sustainability, equity, and peace are possible, we as a species need to recognise that we, *all of us* human beings in the world, indeed *always* have a common ground.

While we cannot get every person on Earth to be on board with our commonality in this moment in time, we can start with smaller communities of awareness. The profession of landscape architecture is an appropriate community to work with since its members are already thinking about landscapes as commons. One landscape architect found insight while exploring the definition of stewardship. She found the description of steward as a “caretaker of the commons” reflectively thought-provoking. She affirms, as a landscape architect, “you are responsible for the commons, for everybody. That sense that it's just not you. There are the commons...our common home.” The notion of home goes back to place-making as human beings dwell in nature through culture (Chapter 3), and finding home through poignant memories and landscapes (Chapter 4). While each person searches for home, metaphorically or existentially, collectively we are also searching, exploring, creating and re-creating our common home.

Having an interest in systems theory and the writing of Fritjof Capra, one landscape architect expressed that landscape is “holistic,” “transversal,” and about “connections.” Capra, originally a physicist, combines quantum physics, metaphysical philosophy, and ecological systems thinking in an array of books such as *The Tao of Physics* (1975), *The Web of Life* (1996), and *The Systems View of Life* (2014) to explain the interconnectedness between the world’s life systems and the greater universe (‘About’ n.d.). Impermanence, as a main teaching in Eastern philosophy, emphasizes that life as a system includes death. Accordingly, death is not just “gone forever,” but is instead the step before rebirth. For this research participant, “regenerative” is a complimentary word to describe landscape architecture that flourishes. She explained the term with the idea of working with systems, including social, ecological, and quantum systems:

We are serving the system. So, we have to understand what is the system, and we just work with it. We should be involved in that system for a long period until it regenerates, and it becomes self-sustaining. To me that will be flourishing, to be connected and to understand in a systematic way.

“Regenerative” as a concept suggests that flourishing is not a one-directional endeavour. It is cyclical. Similarly, Cuomo (1998) argues that flourishing ethics should not be teleological because an environmental ethics towards a pre-determined teleological and harmonious state is not necessary and also encourages unwanted binary thinking.

My path to flourishing—from landscape architecture to the unknown

Landscape architecture (or any profession), if engaged as a life mission or a “calling,” is ever-changing. As landscapes die and regenerate, so do desires, ambitions, and perspectives. Flourishing is a continuous process. Regardless of whether one identifies as a landscape architect, a steward under another professional title, or just a human being performing as a moral agent, flourishing is

always a course of evaluating one's stance and choosing how to navigate one's aspirations, all within a world that is already existing with complex and ever-shifting social and ecological processes. For instance, in the process of completing this research, I come face to face with a decision about my direction in landscape architecture. I ask myself how much of my landscape architect identity is required for me to continue to flourish. In tandem with my own personal question, I also ask myself how relevant the choice between participant anonymity and name identity is pertinent to the flourishing of this project.

My conversation with Raquel Peñalosa (interview by author, July 11, 2019) puts these abstract thoughts into anecdotal context. She recalled an incident at a National Reconciliation Gathering where an Indigenous man came up to her and asked her "who are you?" She said, "I'm a landscape architect." She recalled how the answer just came to her. She did not know why she said that instead of replying with her name. The man said in response, "Oh, I'm also a landscape architect. I take care of the land," even though he did not work as a professional landscape architect. To me, his response exemplified the idea of the landscape architect as archetype in human form. I assume Raquel felt the same way, because this encounter illuminated her and gave her a "deep sense of why [she] chose this [career]." She was reminded that the primary meaning of being a landscape architect goes beyond the professional status, and in this scenario, the meaning of stewardship and "taking care of the land" were primary purposes. When I brought up the concept of flourishing, she marvelled at how we "become" the professional through a social construct. She was amused at how in "in Latin America, [she's] not Raquel anymore." People call her "Architect Raquel." She said, "It's really amazing when I go there. Architect. Architect. Architect. And I'm like, wow." However, she considers landscape architecture as a process within social and world issues. Therefore, she has been striving to mentally detach herself from the professional title.

Given that research participants consider the scope of landscape architecture as broad, fluctuating, and for the most part, expanding, a firm social construct of the “landscape architect” status is limiting. However, the local professional association has been going in the opposite direction. In recent years, the OALA has been pursuing a “practice” act that would only allow members of the association to “practice” as landscape architects. Since 1984, the *Ontario Association of Landscape Architects Act* has been in place with a “title” act that allows members of the association to call themselves a landscape architect. The supposition of a “practice” act is to protect the status of the professional body, and theoretically, the public from harmful practitioners. The Practice Legislation Committee (PLC) of OALA notes that “a practice act would prohibit both the use of the title and any of the activities that are included in the scope of practice, restricting the practice of landscape architecture to licensed individuals or firms” (OALA 2018). However, what “practicing” means is unclear. OALA members have asked for clarity on the legality of non-licensed staff members continuing to work on landscape designs, grading plans, or other landscape work under the potential act. The PLC has clarified the questions with what I consider as a new hermeneutic puzzle. They responded that an employee with a title other than “landscape architect” is permitted to “prepare” landscape work under the “supervision” of a “landscape architect.” Doing landscape work, preparing landscape work, and practicing landscape architecture are interpreted as different tasks, but their definitions of each are unclear. The only definite point that I can derive from this puzzle is that all “practicing landscape architects” must be members of the OALA. Logistically, someone can still *do* landscape architecture without *practicing as* a landscape architect or *calling* oneself a landscape architect.

Some landscape architects would likely find my questioning of the terms unnecessary because semantics that follow normative structures are usually not examined. Identifying with titles and names do matter in society but they also do not have to. A name like any other word, can

animate or deaden the thing or being it signifies. For example, Mother Earth and Father Sky are found with different names in different cultures: as Prithvi Mata and Dyaus Pita (Hinduism), Gaia and Uranus (Ancient Greek), and Wākea and Papahānaumoku (Hawaiian mythology). Humanity's greatest forces such as love, truth, and strife are also enlivened in Ancient Greek mythology as God Eros, Goddess Alethea, and Goddess Eris. Nature, as primordial elements of the world or as humans' way of life, are animated through names. But, is a "rose" always a "rose"?⁹ Perhaps not. Raquel's story at the National Reconciliation Gathering reminded me of a scene from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's classic story *The Little Prince*. In the book, the Little Prince asks the flowers he meets in a garden on Earth, "who are you?" (de Saint-Exupéry 2000, 54). The flowers, which look exactly like his nameless flower from Asteroid B-612, reply, "we're roses." Disappointed that his flower was not the only one of her kind in the whole universe, the Little Prince mistakes the interchangeableness of his beloved flower and the 500 roses he meets on Earth. But he soon realizes that his rose was not the same as these roses. He and his rose have "tamed" each other and bonded through time of nurturing.

The roses on Earth in the story identify as roses while the rose on Asteroid B-612 identifies as one-and-only. I ask myself, who (rather than what) do I identify as? Who do my research participants identify as? Who do you (the reader) identify as? And how do our names, our titles, and our words alter the world? The answer to these questions, I presume, will be vague. But if "anything essential is invisible to the eyes" (de Saint-Exupéry 2000, 63), then all that matters is the heart's intention...to flourish. I believe that the words of my research participants speak for themselves, with or without their names. Their words speak *to* the world, *for* the collective, and *for* the individuals who spoke them. On the other hand, the title "landscape architect," for me, speaks of my previous

⁹ In reference to Gertrude Stein's commonly known quote, "a rose is a rose is a rose," meaning that things are what they are.

ambitions to find identity through a job. It speaks of an external sense of self-worth placed on accomplishments and the investment I had to put in to retain the title. The reality is that I have spent more than five years on this project about landscape architecture, but since I am not currently paying for full membership, under legislative definitions, I am not, or rather cannot say that I am “practicing landscape architecture.” Yet, I am still flourishing through this project. The biggest irony to this social-institutional limitation is that I only realised the irony after I heard the interview participants speak about how the profession should expand the interpretations of landscapes and landscape architecture. The landscape architect title has been part of my flourishing in the past, but life mission, stewardship, and serving the life world is not dependent on this title.

Detaching from a professional title, either literally (by leaving the association) or emotionally (by perceiving beyond the title), means shedding the need for an identity. While the consideration is my own personal problem, I extend the questioning to the profession of landscape architecture and even all designations and disciplines that humanity has created. Can we really feel our commonality if we remain fully identified with our roles in a sub-group? And then, can we care for the world’s common grounds if we do not feel our world’s commonality? Abram (1997) notes that language and the way we describe our relationship with the land can “deny or deaden” our senses (72). The reason is because the alphabet, as mental symbols, “short-circuits” our relationship with the land in which we belong (Fisher 2013b, 130). Comparatively, if the alphabet is the gatekeeper to (phonetic) language, then human identity is the gatekeeper to the soul.¹⁰ Maybe he or she guards the land of the invisible. And maybe, sometimes, we want the gatekeeper out of the way. I have yet to fully reconcile this idea, but as part of this identity dies, I sometimes find myself mourning for it. However, certainly, I am ready for regeneration.

¹⁰ In Buddhist terminology, human identity is considered the “ego.”

6

Shifting Paradigms: Expanding Horizons in Landscape Architecture

The pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus is commonly quoted as having said that change is the only constant in the world. However, change for mainstream society is a conflicted phenomenon. On one hand, modern technology seems to be ever-changing and becoming obsolete before much of the world can catch up to use it. While on the other hand, moving outside of normative structures and conventions is often challenging. In the midst of contradictory social tensions to either promote, allow, control, or even prevent change in social and ecological structures, landscape architecture plays an important facilitating role. In 2010, the International Federation of Landscape Architects declared that “a great number of landscapes around the world are subject to significant environmental, social and economic transformations” (CSLA 2019). As such, landscape charters across the world were created in order to establish holistic definitions of landscapes and to highlight towards which landscape protection values landscape architects should advocate. The Canadian Landscape Charter has adopted five core principles: to “recognize that landscapes are vital,” to “consider all people,” to “inspire stewardship,” to “expand knowledge,” and to “show leadership” (CSLA 2015).

Research participants have recognised that major social changes are indeed in the air.¹¹ Therefore, I think the need to shift the status quo of the profession is more about responding to present and imminent social changes rather than the advancement of the profession itself. Although interview and survey questions did not inquire into research participants’ visions of a changing

¹¹ Note that participatory research was conducted in 2019, prior to the emergence of current world issues that appeared in 2020. However, just like how other animals can sense a storm coming, I am inclined to believe that humans can also sense impending changes at a deeper intuitive level.

landscape architecture field, the notion of shifting paradigms was found in the data through themes of community building, finding opportunities in-between established boundaries, experiential learning, and re-visiting cultural narratives. These themes correspond to the Canadian Landscape Charter's use of the terms: "recognize," "consider," "inspire," and "expand." For example, building community is dependent on the *consideration* of the needs of all people towards communal kinship and opportunities for such kinship can only occur by *expanding* beyond existing boundaries towards a state of non-hierarchical interaction and empathy. Also, *recognizing* the values of landscapes come from individual and collective practices of awareness, which are shaped by the transformation of theory and praxis in the profession of landscape architecture. While experiential learning is a critical step, the foundation to this step is our narrative of the world. The story we create for our world, including the interrelationships of nature, people, and society, is the blueprint for how *inspired* we are to participate in the world. How the story can be re-interpreted and whether flourishing can become part of this story are pertinent questions within my research.

Liminal spaces, boundaries, and opportunities for reflection

In 2016, the Landscape Architecture Foundation created a New Landscape Declaration—a manifesto that states, "this is our call to action," and "together we can transform the world through design" (LAF n.d.'Declaration'). Like all manifestos, the language in the declaration is assertive. Still, even if language can change the world, are the texts from manifestos and declarations enough to change the story we have of our world? And to build off Heraclitus' notions of constant change, would change not occur in the world even without human intervention? However, human actions impact change in a variety of predictable and unpredictable ways. Therefore, I have come to wonder how much impact ardent and zealous words promising change can actually have on societies. Specifically, are these documents only preaching to the converted, or are they the consumption of

human resources towards a product that few people will read (which I am cautious of since there is a similar assumption for PhD dissertations and other academic writing), or the energetic propeller to social, psychological, and behavioural shifts in the direction intended? All of these assumptions are possibilities, but to steer the direction of change more intentionally, I believe we need a different strategy.

Indeed, one interview participant expressed that declarations are not enough. She recalled a talk that she had attended recently. At the event, Martha Schwartz was discussing how landscape architects need to address climate change in their work. In the interview participant's opinion, assertions such as the ones made by Schwartz at the event are only addressing the obvious. Instead, the participant believed that collective action for tangible change is more helpful. She exclaimed, "Shouldn't we all be coming together and use our numbers to sway the politicians? We should be doing that instead of one [individual] trying to convince us of something that we already [know]... We need to do more rather than competing with each other." She also expressed that nobody "does enough [to call] the professionals [and] the profession together." She likened landscape architects to the role of a teacher based on something her mother, a former teacher, had said: "it can be kind of isolating being a teacher because you're in this classroom, the only grownup. You can't talk to many other grownups. Nobody knows what you know about these students. I think landscape architects are kind of like that because you are dealing one-on-one with these clients." In effect, she felt that the isolation of individual practices was not supportive of the profession's greater goal. She had found my project unique because in the process of speaking to a variety of landscape architects on a shared theme, and analysing their viewpoints, I somehow create a "network" that "joins" them together. While a part of me felt honoured to hear her positive comments about my research, as if I had been complimented for some praise-worthy ingenuity, a deeper and more vulnerable side of me felt grateful that someone also shared my sense of isolation

and need for deeper professional connections. So, while I cannot claim to have created a network that joins landscape architects together, I do feel that I have created a constellation of genuine connections within the profession of landscape architecture for myself through this project.

However, from a greater social level, what I understood through this interview participant's comments is the implication for the need of community within the profession of landscape architecture. The task of creating a professional community is usually assigned to the local professional association, but in her opinion, the OALA has not succeeded in this regard. She exclaimed: the "OALA doesn't do that" (that is, bring landscape architects together) but "should." To be fair, the OALA does provide networking opportunities such as social events (e.g. annual ski day, curling nights, holiday socials), professional gatherings (e.g. annual general meetings and conferences), and occasional continuing education workshops. *Ground*, the quarterly magazine published by the OALA also gives opportunity for roundtable discussions and seminal article topics. However, I interpret her desire for a network as an appeal to a community that is based on the life-serving nature of authentic culturing (see Chapter 3), which is also something that references the idea of commonality, where differences are accepted, and people find space to be understood. Gathering for social or professional events is not sufficient to feel a sense of authentic community. The social phenomenon of feeling lonely in a room full of people is the individual example of how bringing people together in the same physical space is not enough to create the sense of belonging.

Community requires consideration for others. Although we share a common ground as humans and share common landscapes as citizens of a country, in the current political arena there is no doubt that nationally and globally there is little consensus. In a divided political environment where the creation of an opposition is normal behaviour, one is encouraged to assume that another person is either on one's side or else they must be treated as an opponent and become part of the "other." Therefore, structured society is made of hierarchies. However, in a true community, or

what Victor Turner (1969) refers to using the Latin term *communitas*, members are equal (i.e., non-hierarchical) and share a common experience. Authentic communities can only be made when individual differences are not used as excuses to negate the commonality shared among all members of the community. Landscape architects, like all groups of people, are not homogenous in their positions. Thus, to create authentic communities within landscape architecture, there is a prerequisite to recognise both collective values and conflicting values.

Although the research participants in this study do not actually come together as people-in-flesh, their thoughts and values are connected in this document as equals in their professional role and as human beings. Rather than a fervent manifesto to instigate change, this project is more of a momentary intervention in their daily lives to ponder over what is worth supporting and sustaining. One advantage of my position to create a common sharing space is my own liminality in the profession. While Turner (1969) describes liminal entities as “neither here nor there,” they also combine “lowliness and sacredness” (95, 96). In a rite of passage, the phenomenon of how “the high could not be high unless the low existed” is revealed (97). Thus, liminality permits equality. From ecological to psycho-spiritual views, in-between spaces are also often depicted as places of opportunity. For example, the Chinese character for in-between (*jiān* 間) illustrates the sun between doors, portraying a threshold of a new beginning. The same character in Japanese (*ma*) is the negative space of consciousness. It is the silence that speaks. Likewise, Heidegger’s (1971) void within the fourfold of earth-sky-mortality-divinity is the origin of Being. This void is resonant with the originator of all things in Daoism. And for Merleau-Ponty (1945), the “flesh” of the world is entangled in-between animate and inanimate bodies. Poignant landscapes, I would argue, are also experienced in moments when in-between states of being in the world are made visibly significant and meaningful.

In ecology, ecotones are transitional areas between two biological communities. Ecotones often have higher biodiversity than the habitats they integrate. For one interview participant, landscape architecture is like an ecotone—a “third” space. She explained, “The ecotone, which is the ecosystem that comes when two different systems come together [...] is not the sum of those. It’s a new system. I always feel that that’s where we should position ourselves.” She believes that the profession has to transform. Her comment suggests that landscape architecture should take advantage of a liminal zone where something unique can be born. However, Turner (1969) argues that there is a developmental cycle to society: “social life is a type of dialectical process that involves successive experience of high and low, *communitas* and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and inequality” (97). Liminality is a case of “statuslessness.” Opportunities are abundant, but the state is not permanent. Landscape architecture as a profession requires a degree of permanence and status. However, rather than the pursuit of a singular third space, recognition of the liminal spaces within the profession is important. For example, this particular landscape architect, some of the other research participants, and myself are already playing roles in these spaces. Since liminal development is cyclical, initiatives to expand on these transitional areas could use a structural metaphor more aligned to a plant’s spiralling growth rather than the upwards construction of a building. Accordingly, edges along a spiral are the places to look for inspiration. Because spirals are repetitive but different at the same time, they also offer chances for reflection.

Because landscape architecture is part of a bigger social dynamic, boundaries for reflection can be easily found between landscape architecture and other disciplines. In 2002, the European Council of Landscape Architecture was funded by the European Union to begin a project titled *Landscape Education: New Opportunities for Teaching and Research in Europe (LE:NOTRE Project)* (Bell, Herlin, and Stiles 2012b). The *Journal of Landscape Architecture* (JoLA), which was established in 2006 through this initiative, commissioned academics from neighbouring disciplines

to comment about landscape architecture. The book *Exploring the Boundaries of Landscape Architecture* (2012) unites twelve of these neighbouring disciplines in the discussion. The book's editors note that between the years of the European Landscape Convention (2000) and the European Science Foundation's new Science Policy Briefing, titled "Landscape in a Changing World" (2010), "landscape has moved towards the centre of both political and academic concern" (Bell, Herlin, and Stiles 2012a, 5). Similar to the ecotone analogy, editors Simon Bell, Ingrid Sarlov Herlin, and Richard Stiles also note that landscape architecture is arguably positioned as the "third culture" between the sciences and the humanities. However, they argue that the profession also has no real foundation to provide this bridge. Instead, "fault lines driving the main domains of knowledge, across which landscape and the discipline of landscape architecture are positioned, continue to turn right through the discipline itself" (6). The call out to neighbouring disciplines to write about landscape architecture in the context of a bigger picture regarding landscapes is what the LE:NOTRE Project considered as a call for "strategic reflection" from the landscape architecture profession in order to claim this "third culture"(2).

My research has been in many ways a call for strategic reflection. While I posed a lot of reflexive questions in the dissertation, the liminality of the research is first and foremost based on the contemplative questions asked in the survey and the interviews. Those questions were not typical questions that landscape architects discuss regularly at work. Hence, some individuals found the questions difficult to answer. A comment in the survey reads: "These questions were very philosophical, which is something that I don't often consider a part of my day-to-day landscape architecture work/profession. Some of the questions were so large in their scope that they were very hard to answer." Similarly, a few of the interview participants noted that certain interview questions were hard, and they had wondered if they had "answered them well." But given that "truth' is never 'in itself,' available by itself, but instead must be gained by struggle," according to Heidegger (1992,

17), this project must have been a fruitful exercise since participants and myself have struggled through the process.¹²

Consequently, some individuals expressed that working through the survey was rather reflective. For example, respondents wrote:

“It was healthy to be reminded of the bigger picture.”

“Loved the use of the photos to stimulate and not just words.”

“It has let me reflect.”

“It had triggered some thoughts.....”

Some other comments reflected on spirituality and landscape architecture, while others considered the meaning of poignancy in their work:

“The survey has made me remember/reconsider the connections between spirituality, the human role in the universe, and the practice of landscape architecture.”

“[The survey] made me reflect on landscape architecture in relation to the effect it has on the spirit.”

“Reminds me to remember that poignant landscapes can exist outside of untouched landscapes.”

“It made me consider that the word ‘poignant’ doesn’t really work for what I think it was trying to get at—but perhaps that was the point.”

¹² Heidegger references the ancient Greek word *aletheia* as “truth” unconcealed. Unconcealedness is something that needs to be wrestled out of concealedment through primordial thinking and Being (i.e., the ontological humanness of being in the world).

Lastly, some others reflected on their desires for the profession's future:

“Good questions! Wish we as landscape architects discussed this stuff more with each other.”

“I realized we still have much good work to do and many people we need to convince that it's important work to continue to do.”

While I do not have direct control over what individuals decide to reflect upon, I have found that there is a hint of an inexplicit “truth” that the collective landscape architects and I share. This inexplicit “truth” that I refer to manifests as acceptance of differences in pursuit of a common goal towards the caring of humanity and the world.

Although liminal spaces are good for reflection and landscape architects may have collective intentions towards a common goal, boundaries are still areas of limitation. As the concluding chapter in *Exploring the Boundaries of Landscape Architecture*, landscape architect Maggie Roe (2012) reflects over the twelve essays from neighbouring professions. While she notices that crossing boundaries are often perceived as too risky, it can be very rewarding because knowledge “breakthroughs of long-lasting importance” are usually made at these crossroads (301). However, separation between disciplines is formed in two ways. First, she notes that separation is often “emphasized or even enforced by professional bodies and codes of conduct” (299). Second, problems arise in communication methods and language barriers. Roe quotes the English scientist and novelist C.P. Snow on the divide between the “two cultures:” a major roadblock lies in that “our society [... has] lost even the pretence of a common culture. Persons educated with the greatest intensity we know can no longer communicate with each other on the plane of their major intellectual concern” (300). I believe that miscommunication goes beyond intellectuals, just as collaborating is more than people just coming together. Roe illustrates that while interdisciplinary work crosses subject boundaries and

participatory work exchanges knowledge, transdisciplinary work is where boundaries are crossed scientifically, academically, and professionally to integrate knowledge. I believe that the “third culture” that landscape architecture needs to take on is the communal goal of crossing boundaries in order to make a common ground.

Theory, practice, and experiential learning

One of the messages that Roe (2012) found in the essays was the perception that landscape architecture was weak on theory, especially for landscape architects in practice. The aversion to theory in landscape architecture perhaps comes from the dilemma of crossing boundaries. Within a disciplinary mindset, the profession instinctively protects itself from other disciplines, but the boundaryless aspect of landscapes inadvertently gets carried over into landscape architecture. Traditionally, landscape architecture theory has been focussed on particular approaches within the profession, for example, regional landscape ecology and planning in Ian McHarg’s (1969) *Design with Nature*, urban design in Jane Jacob’s (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and the history of landscape design in Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe’s (1995) *The Landscape of Man*. Rather than theory as elemental, other books often opt for an anthological approach to landscape architecture theory, for example, Simon Swaffield’s (2002) *Theory in Landscape Architecture: A Reader*. In recent years, the recognition for the need of a comprehensive theory seems to be growing. In 2016, Michael Murphy published *Landscape Architecture Theory: An Ecological Approach*, and in 2017, Susan Herrington published *Landscape Theory in Design*. In different ways, both books look at landscape architectural theory at its origin: simultaneously ecological, social, experiential, and personal (Murphy 2016; Herrington 2017).

Ideally, theory should be used as a springboard for reflection and inspiration. Theory then, ideally, becomes praxis. If theory becomes scientific and procedural, or in contrast, is assigned as

superfluous to practice, then theory becomes ineffective in influencing beneficial shifts in behaviours or ways of seeing the world. And thus, the status quo is maintained. For one landscape architect, teaching landscape sometimes involve “knocking people out of that box again of what they think they know.” She believes that landscape can be used to inspire and to challenge, not just for the client or user, but also for landscape architects. She exclaimed,

I think the message to young people, especially, is [in order] to really embrace this profession you have to grow outside yourself and outside what you know to be true. Because the big thing is what you don’t know is learning all of the things you don’t know, or even being aware that you don’t know a lot of things is some of the most important parts.

Therefore, learning about landscape is a process: the process of discovery oneself and the world. Theory provides some context for the world, and the rest comes from experience.

Experience means to be embodied in landscapes. Archaeologist Christopher Tilley (1994) argues that most academics cannot understand landscapes, or at least can only understand landscapes vicariously because of the lack of experience *in* landscapes. In many cases, landscapes are observed analytically at a distance through historical or social discourse, maps, or images. The object of observation is on paper and the analysis is reported on paper. Inevitably, the results are “paper landscapes, paper perspectives” (27). In the digital era of landscape design, Tilley’s idiom can be modified to “digital landscapes” and “digital perspectives,” represented by the beautifully rendered drawings of landscape architecture students’ studio assignments and the glorious marketing material for new landscape construction proposals. One interview participant addresses the disconnect between the strengths of recent graduates and what he believes is necessary as a landscape architecture professional:

The students, the majority of graduates I see today, don't know grading, don't know their plant material, but they know how to really do great Photoshop. And I'm going; that doesn't help get things constructed. I'm a constructor. I like construction and making sure it all works together. But I can see there's more reliance on pictures and precedent studies that don't necessarily match the context, and then the need to be able to detail all of those things that makes the construction happen.

Speaking from my own experience, collecting precedent images is typical in the profession for idea generation and communication. The task is helpful for the creative brainstorming process, but I also believe that collecting images is a by-product of the disassociation between the real landscape out-there and the work environment inside an office. As a result, contextualization of a landscape is overshadowed by the pursuit of visual stimulation.

Vision is distinct from other senses because of its simultaneity, neutralization, and distance (Evernden 1985). Evernden states that "vision permits us the luxurious delusion of being neutral observers with the ability to manipulate a distant environment" (84). Manipulating a distant environment is exactly what designers do in an office. Photography, as a replicate of vision which further frames a particular narrative and captures it in time, extends the illusion of truth in the image. As Susan Sontag (1977) has stated, "Paintings invariably sum up; photographs usually do not" (166). Thus, photographs carry an authority to *imply* truth (whether it is true or not) and has the ability to establish evidence of some sort. Using images of existing landscapes that have been framed to show a particular narrative can give the illusion that this narrative is "perfect" and also applicable elsewhere. However, precedent images as design evidence can be beneficial. Images from the Internet or design magazines decontextualize landscape photos from their place of origin, but personal photographs can evoke emotions or ambience from experiential memory. For example, the

previously quoted landscape architect recalled taking numerous photos of paving patterns in a trip to Portugal. Unlike a photo from a magazine, these precedent images were induced by an experience and a reflection upon the experience. He reiterated how he explained the purpose of his paving pattern obsession to his bemused spouse: “Every street has a different pattern and it’s another subconscious way to understand that you are on this street and not that street!”

Although there are advantages and disadvantages to using photographs in landscape design, photographs are limited to showing only a distinct moment in time. However, several research participants expressed that ephemerality is what makes landscape experiences special. The different hues in a sunset, the dappling light through the trees’ foliage, plants moving with the wind, the glistening of water, and the change in the weather are all what make landscapes beautiful. Moreover, most of the poignant landscape memories recalled by survey participants were not two-dimensional; only two out of 53 (3.8%) survey respondents said that their memorable landscape was from an image. Although I can relate to these two individuals because of my own life-time affinity to landscapes in art, the more I have been able to access physical landscapes, the more I have come to appreciate how ephemerality in landscapes affects my sense of place. Therefore, while landscape images are great as artistic expressions of poignant moments, but as a representation or a communication tool, images have a limited scope in showing landscape’s extensive characteristics. However, two out of 53 survey respondents mentioned that their poignant landscape experience came from movie scenes. So perhaps, the “moving picture” can eradicate some of the limitations found in still images. As an enhancement to landscape images, one landscape architect suggested that digital technology could help in teaching landscape’s ephemerality, regional connectivity, and even landscape’s magic. She explained,

When I went to school, it was all slides. It was all sort of moments in time. But I think the younger generation has a way of using videos and all kinds of digital

technology to look at and actually help people travel through landscapes or see ephemeral landscapes, like the mists on the water, or the heather blooming, or the northern lights, and things like that. We have a way of now capturing those kind of experiences for people. I think there's a really important shift that needs to happen about talking about those magical events in the landscape. I think as educators that might be something to really think [about].

In considering this landscape architect's suggestion, I think that technology can be used more to its advantage. However, a balance needs to be made between interpreting the world through "digital perspectives" (i.e., seeing landscapes as purely visual and replicable) and digital technology used as a tool for representation and inspiration. Rather than a method of producing marketing material where landscapes are made to become commoditised "eye-candy," technology can serve as a teaching method for landscape elements that people may have not yet learned how to see but will be inspired to seek out when the experience becomes available.

While landscapes can be represented through images and videos, interview participants have been adamant about the importance of having in-situ landscape experiences. For the question of how one would go about teaching the significance of landscapes to a younger generation of landscape architects, most participants expressed that there is no better way than having students experience landscapes personally. Analogous to Tilley's (1994) argument that working with landscapes on paper is a limited approach, one landscape architect expressed that to only talk about landscapes and not be in them, keeps landscapes in the conceptual realm. She stated, "How can we talk about landscape and sit in a room and just look at it? Because this is just a narrative that we put on the table. I think we need to go out and experience it. Get the rain on your hands." Another landscape architect stated that "one of the most difficult things is to talk about three dimensions and explain a space verbally." Therefore, designers use visual tools to help convey the message. Yet C.P

Snow's (Roe 2012) observation of modern culture's tendency to miscommunicate and Everden's (1985) argument that vision is disengaging can explain how depending on visual tools can be problematic. If modern people already have problems communicating and vision is potentially dissociative, talking about landscapes through representational material can be both challenging and distorting. Therefore, the landscape architect added, "to truly experience, you've got to be in it." Being in the landscape adds another layer of comprehension through reflexivity. He continued, "I think the best thing is to...there. Stand there. See if you can get something from that. Or to share what your own experience has been and see if you agree with me or if that's meaningful."

Field trips are one way that students can experience landscapes. A couple of interview participants recalled, even after decades, how memorable field trips were for them. For one landscape architect, field trips were fun and beneficial, especially because they brought students outside of everyday disciplinary routines. He recalled, "even when I was in high school, I loved the field trips. You learn...you always learn more out, even if you're goofing around. You feel like you're goofing off, [but] you're experiencing stuff that you wouldn't have experienced. That's really important." Part of experiential learning is to understand how things work by immersion and experimentation. Field trips allow engagement in various environments that range from urban locales to more rural settings within or beyond city boundaries. But for one interview participant, learning landscapes is fundamentally about experiencing the wonders of nature. Because of the mental disconnect between human and nature in the city, learning about nature is especially important in the city context. For starters, he exclaimed, "you can't beat nature." Instead, we need to "share wonder with the magic of what happens naturally in the natural world." He expressed that although people are starting to recognise the human-nature disconnect and the "perils of not caring," we have also begun to notice landscapes more in the city. Part of the role of landscape architecture for him is to build people's relationship with landscapes earlier in their lives. Learning

about landscapes and nature may be as simple as going outdoors and growing things. He exclaimed that in being a gardener, one could “understand how hard it is to grow something, or also how easy it is.” Similarly, many interview participants also mentioned their parents’ interests in gardening as a major influence on their own interests in natural systems.

The value of experiential learning also applies to social systems. One landscape architect explained that learning to interact in communities is important in landscape architecture because most of what gets built in the city goes through a process of community engagement. He exclaimed, “getting experience on your feet in front of a crowd, communication, all of those kinds of things, I think are hugely important.” He believed that the studio projects he was assigned in his educational training at the University of Toronto during the 1970s was helpful in developing these social skills. His description of studio courses is similar to my own experience of the program in the mid-2000s. Traditionally, students are assigned studio projects that are based on real environments with real social issues and are critiqued by field experts. The process helps to nurture confidence and communication skills. For another landscape architect, interdisciplinary studio projects helped him learn how to collaborate with people from other disciplines during his studies at the University of Manitoba during the 1970s. Given the same design project, landscape architecture, architecture, urban design, and interior design students in the same faculty formed teams to complete a collaborative assignment. Since landscape architects are always part of a team in the professional world, students get a chance to learn how to contribute and respect each other’s ideas and skills.

Since the scope of this research project does not include the evaluation of landscape architecture curriculum, I do not know how much of these studio processes have evolved for current students. However, I suspect that an element of experiential learning that involves phenomenological and intuitive processes is still overlooked in landscape architecture because empirical thinking permeates all of mainstream culture in our society. From the memories of my

own education in landscape architecture a decade-and-a-half ago, I recall my disappointment and internal criticism of the lack of phenomenological engagement in the curriculum. Although my classmates and I went to field trips and we had studio projects based on real landscapes where we would do site visits, we were not taught how to relate *with* the landscape. Through drawing, photography and making diagrams, we learned *about* the site, what it was made of, how it operated, and how it could be changed to meet the needs of potential users, but there was little discussion of how the landscape made us feel and how that affected design. My own intuition knew that the landscape could *speak* to us and tell us where the opportunities were if we would just be there and soak up its wisdom. I have come to understand this approach as a form of phenomenology, but at the time, without the institutional support, my intuition wavered and doubted itself. At that time in my life, phenomenology was only a peripheral subject that I briefly discovered in architecture theory, and ideas of animism, pantheism, and shared consciousness were not part of my knowledge database.

I believe that a discussion on language can change how landscapes are taught and perceived. Landscape architects and architecture students are usually taught to engage with *sites*. However, I would argue that landscapes and places are experienced while site is not. My claim was disputed in my own doctoral committee meetings, but I maintain the belief that disengagement lies in the difference between *perceiving* landscape as site or as place. Casey (2000) defines site as the area where things are prospectively built. I also include within the definition, locations where things have already been built. But human dwelling is not inherent within the meaning of site. Alternatively, places are inhabited, whether it is in present, retrospective, or even imaginary time. Referring back to the previous chapters, making place is about finding home and creating belongingness. Since landscapes are perceived in the environment either through tangible or intangible means, places and landscapes are inherently immersive and participatory. Viewing the world through sites is akin to

taking places and interpreting them into Tilley's (1994) notion of "paper landscapes, paper perspectives" (27). Materially, we are talking about the same thing: the soil, the topography, the microclimate, the flora and fauna, but sites and places are of different planes of consciousness. To create more belongingness through places, a shift of consciousness needs to occur.

Several interview participants suggested that somatics and mindfulness in nature can shift conscious perception. One landscape architect believes that in order to flourish, we need to experience the world through our bodies as much as we do through our minds. Landscapes, in his opinion, can help us connect back to our bodies and help us experience life more. But first, we need to acknowledge the wisdom of our bodies beyond the capacities of the mind. He says,

I've read some things where science is saying that there is neurological density in our guts and in our heart actually, so the idea of taking action through our heart or through our gut feeling, there seems to be...some value in that. I think landscapes can play a huge role in that because there's a real physical thing that we experience.

Shifting the paradigm of consciousness from the mind to the heart is now backed by scientific research. Although science has now found that the heart communicates dynamically with the mind and not as a servant to the mind ('Chapter 01: Heart-Brain Communication' n.d.), the word *heart* has figuratively meant the inner-most central part of something since the 14th century ('Heart' n.d.). The significance of the heart beyond the mechanics of pumping blood is not new knowledge. Buddhist teachings, such as the Heart Sutra and the "beginner's mind" (i.e., *shoshin*, which literally translates as "beginner's heart" in Chinese) recognises the heart as the place of consciousness.

The way landscapes connect to human consciousness is certainly complex. Anthropologist Tim Edensor (2010) uses the experience of the northern lights to explain landscape phenomenon as more than material and more than language. The northern lights can be explained by the physics of

electromagnetic particles or by mythical interpretations, but under the dancing lights, one is spellbound in silence. Edensor refers to this stillness as the attunement, a heightened contemplative condition created in the configuration of people, place, and things of an “affective field.” This attunement in the landscape is not only individually experienced, but also found collectively. He describes, “The gestures of bodies, their postures, and especially their stillness, set the tone for experience and practice of the landscape, acting upon their bodies to maintain the collective disposition” (237). According to Edensor, not only do landscapes create an affective “excess that disrupts and disturbs” (quoting Ben Anderson), landscapes in general carry this excess in its resistance to be represented by language.

The northern lights are aesthetically and scientifically awe-inspiring phenomena, but for one landscape architect, poignant experiences do not need to have such magnitude of incredulity. As such, landscape’s “affective excess” can be found in everyday activities through states of awareness. She had noticed that a shift in her perception occurred after she started taking her kids to an outdoor education course. One of the activities taught in the course was the routine of having a “sit spot,” which is the practice of visiting a particular place regularly, usually in silence, to observe the changes in the natural environment over time. Practising awareness has made her more attuned with greater environmental patterns. She explained,

...sometimes there’s an urge when you’re with your kids to try to make every moment exciting. But I just wanted [... to] talk to them about, oh, can you feel...just being mindful about what you’re experiencing. When I say it builds upon itself, it really does. [...] All of a sudden, I have more of a memory of time passing. Like [...] before I couldn’t remember what happened four winters ago. Was it icy? Was it super cold that winter? Honestly, for the past probably 6 years, I can tell you...I can tell you, oh, were there a lot of bees that year, or were there

a lot of...Because I've been more...it builds on itself. It makes you realise there's more.

Attending to a sit spot is a type of meditative exercise. Architect Heinrich Hermann (2005) argues that contemplative places have the ability to trigger people into a condition of “‘disconnecting’ the brain from sensory impulses” (37) through silence. In the absence of distracting stimuli, the mind disconnects from the senses and opens up to inner perception. However, in landscapes, no matter how secluded, there is no silence because sounds of nature persist. A meditative state in landscapes, therefore, is when the senses become so attuned that the body and the mind is at one with the surroundings. Awareness practices in natural settings such as “forest bathing” (i.e., the Japanese tradition of meditative forest walks called *shinrin-yoku*) or “sit spots,” as this landscape architect mentioned, help cultivate a state of mind that allows for more stillness, and consequently, more attunement with the surroundings.

Retelling the story of nature through awareness

The growing awareness for silent meditation and the benefits of attuning to nature's processes has created a recent trend in ecotherapy practices. However, the connection between human health and nature has been around for quite a while. One landscape architect mentioned Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911) as a memorable landscape experience from his childhood. He recalled how fascinating it was to read a story about landscape's restorative and healing power. The notion that nature could heal stuck with him. While the health benefits of being out in nature has been widely researched and now commonly accepted, the idea is almost intuitive as human beings to feel this therapeutic process. As another landscape architect states,

We are healthier when we exercise in nature. We learn faster when we have access to green spaces. [...] We are better when we have had the opportunity to be

outside and immerse in nature [...] and the biophilic, the biophilia hypothesis is being proven out. We feel better, perform better, are healthier in nature. I think in my opinion, that's pretty heavy duty. [...] We think intuitively, oh, take it outside. We'll feel better. We actually do, and the research proves it.

Accordingly, many interview participants brought up the need for personal experiences in nature, particularly at a young age. One landscape architect mentioned her involvement in the International Union of Conservation for Nature (IUCN) and their #NatureforAll program. #NatureforAll is a global movement launched in 2016 by IUCN "to inspire love of nature" for the purpose of supporting conservation practices ('Frequently Asked Questions' n.d.). However, its hashtag speaks more than conservation. One of the aims of #NatureforAll is to assist in breaking down barriers for people to connect with nature in all kinds of contexts.

#Natureforall suggests seven strategies to work with for those who want to get involved or build partnerships. These strategies can be adapted for particular contexts: 1) "Bring children into nature at an early age;" 2) "Find and share the fun in nature;" 3) "Use urban gateways to nature;" 4) "Embrace technology;" 5) "Share cultural roots and ancestry in nature;" 6) "Seek out diverse partnerships;" and 7) "Empower a new generation of leaders." ('Frequently Asked Questions' n.d.) While the movement is a great steppingstone for healing the human-nature divide, there is an elephant in the room that is not addressed. "Nature for all" proposes equity for one (if not the most important) of humanity's most basic needs, but access to nature has never been equitable. As long as civilization has been hierarchical, the concept of nature has also been a by-product of social class dynamics. Access to nature carries different social connotations for different people: a traditional hunter who confronts wild animals in a forest; a labourer sweating from the scorching sun in a field of crops; a middle-class family on a camping trip; a wealthy elite who owns a vast estate; a child in war-torn country; or a millennial struggling financially in a small apartment of a capitalist-driven

metropolis. These examples are archetypes in suspended time, but access to nature as a social-hierarchical problem is intergenerational, racialized and class-based.

The term “nature-deficit disorder” was first devised by Richard Louv in his book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* (2005). A prompt for the recent decades’ nature connection movement, Louv claims in the book that a childhood alienated from nature produces lasting physical and psychological effects (Whiting et al. 2017). In Jordan Wyant’s (2018) reading of Louv, among the conditions of nature-deficit disorder are “poor health, lack of imagination, and the failure to develop an environmental ethic” (1). However, Wyant argues that Louv’s stance is based on an idealised version of nature established from the European settler-frontier history, which also promotes a normative “Whiteness” to environmental education. Accordingly, marginalised individuals are dismissed; nature becomes “escapist” for privileged individuals; and disregard for historical links to exploited communities in producing this idealised concept of nature risks reproducing the same social hierarchies. I found Louv’s (2008) argument for the nature connection movement rather comprehensive and convincing, but agreeing with Wyant, I also found his use of the phrase “the fourth frontier” to describe the movement to be oblivious to the language of colonialism.

The problem with the nature-deficit disorder and the nature-connection movement is not that nature does not have healing properties or that there is not a need to connect more with nature. The predicament, as Wyant (2018) suggests, is that the solution is not so simple. Research of ethnic behaviour in American national and state parks show that ethnic groups have varying preferences for nature recreation, but Jason Bryne (2012) claims that there is a “cultural politics” of race and social exclusion in park non-use. While conservationists may perceive non-use as “under participation” from ethnic minorities, Marjolein Kloek, Birgit Elands, and Matthijs Schouten (2017) have found that nature conservation organisations have been reinforcing the hegemonic stereotype

in their promotional materials. In their research of images produced by Dutch conservation organisations, 94% of images consisting of people were White only. Less than 2% of images consisted of non-Whites only, and the rest had groups of Whites and non-Whites. The researchers also found that the non-White people in the images generally looked similar, portrayed with light brown skin and conventional clothing.

Indisputably, I would have been one of those children diagnosed with the nature-deficit disorder under Louv's description: I lived in an apartment in the city all my life; I never owned a pet; the first time I went camping was 18 years old; I have only gone camping three times in my life; and I have a history of killing houseplants. But I also became a landscape architect; I love landscape paintings; and I am here writing about nature and environmental ethics. The fact is, I only realised the depth of the complications that a hierarchical society can have on belongingness in nature was when I was faced with the opportunity to jump right into a nature connection "privilege," not as a child, but as an adult, a scholar, and a professional. The training course in ecopsychology that I participated in not too long ago was located on the Frontenac Arch in a 550-acre property with private lakes, forests, and trails.¹³ For four weekends in the year, my colleagues and I spent time on the property learning ecopsychology while "connecting" to nature. Strangely, I would return home somewhat uncomfortable and confused. Eventually, after recognising that I was the only visible minority and participant of Asian ethnicity, I realised that the discomfort I felt was the shame of my nature-deficit disorder—and more accurately, the shame of my "unprivileged" childhood.

I share my personal story not because it is just a good story but because I believe that it can disturb a normative set of ideas about connecting with nature. In doing so, a gap in the present horizon of landscape architecture and landscape studies can be filled—at least in this research

¹³ The Frontenac Arch is a granite arch that runs between the Canadian Shield in Algonquin Park, Ontario and the Adirondack Mountains in New York State.

project. For Fisher (2019a), ecopsychology is a decolonial praxis. He states, “ecopsychology needs to be seen [...] as a kind of decolonial politics that both learns from and commits itself toward Indigenous decolonization” (2). On the other hand, Wyant (2018) argues that Louv’s advocacy for nature connection is embedded with colonialist hegemony, based on idealised Settler-Indigenous undercurrents. While I agree with Fisher that ecopsychology needs to be a decolonial project, I also side with Wyant’s sensitivity to the hidden predicaments of the nature-connection movement. Accordingly, I argue that we need to expand the definition and scope of decolonisation in order to create a more inclusive story about connecting with nature.

An example of the problem in over-simplifying Settler-Indigenous discourse is the paradox found in the identity of urban Aboriginals. As Belanger and Dekruyft (2017) explore the issues of political engagement of urban Aboriginals, they discover that “assimilation is the key to heightened social visibility” (18). The individual must choose between “municipal citizen of Aboriginal descent” or “band member living in the city.” For the normative individual, this choice may not sound disruptive. But for me, this choice is not really a choice because it forces one to remain invisible: the message in the discourse is that there is no place to be seen exactly as who you are. To complicate matters, as an immigrant to Canada, my political identity in the long-standing Settler-Indigenous disharmony is also one of invisibility. Unless I agree to assimilate and identify as a “Settler of Asian descent,” I am not part of the story. Going back to my supposed nature-deficit disorder, a part of me yearns to assimilate: to go hiking in the woods; to get a dog and take it on daily walks; to move to the suburbs for a house with a garden. But a part of me knows that my childhood and my past non-experiences *need* to be seen and recognised in order to move forward. Otherwise, I am merely carrying around the baggage of repressed pain that may even be trans-generational and role-playing towards an idealised lifestyle. Moreover, if nature was indeed ready to embrace me, how ready am I to accept the offer and reciprocate gratefully if I am haunted by my social invisibility? Thus, I argue

that assimilation and the promotion of connecting to nature without addressing hidden and underlying sorrow is the continued act of colonialisation.

Still, I am only one story out of 7.8 billion stories in the world. We will not be able to know all these stories but knowing that we do not know is part of the decolonial process. However, what does this all bring to landscape architecture? I believe that the act of bringing people who have become invisible into visibility is already a major move. To be seen is an essence of belonging. In one interview, a landscape architect recalled her experience working on the Regent Park Parks and Open Space Masterplan. While the city tried to encourage public consultation, not many people showed up. Instead, being an immigrant to Canada herself, she found insight in observing the people in the neighbourhood. She described the experience,

...what was actually kind of wonderful was just how much creating social spaces and areas for people to perch and sit, [where] small group[s] or large group[s] gather, was really neat. It was really neat. Just walking around Regent Park before, every little curb or a short wall that was retaining some loading dock, they were all, [...] they were just sitting on every ledge that they could. [...] And you know, much like some of these cultures, there's this...you can see all the dads and the husbands are kind of chit chatting, and the moms are chit chatting. The kids are just running all over the place and playing, kind of thing. It was kind of wonderful. It's just kind of realising, as newcomers to a city, as much as they need real resources in terms of...in terms of help and housing and all that stuff, but really in public spaces too. They also need places to gather that's free and available, I suppose...for families. So that was one thing that I feel like...that I feel strongly about too that is sometimes not addressed.

While her narrative of the experience is simple, that is, landscape architecture can help create social spaces for immigrants and newcomers, I feel as if there is something to be read between the lines.

Perhaps, my own history plays a role in these feelings. There is empathy and sensitivity in her recollection of the memory that speaks to complex social-humanitarian issues that do not and probably cannot be fully expressed in words, yet they can still be recognised at the same time. Due to many unforeseen factors, the landscape that gets designed out of her observations may not necessarily give the users the feeling of total visibility, but the process needs to start from a place where the landscape architect sees the user's deservingness to belong in the place.

In contrast to the fluidity of empathy and sensitivity, the human mind generally wants answers, certainty, and uncomplicatedness. One landscape architect noticed that professionals often approach projects through a problem-to-outcome lens, which include responding to a client's wants, working on a site, and solving a problem. The context of the site, the unspoken needs of the clients, and the broader perspective of landscape are lost in the process. When I asked him about his values for a flourishing life as a landscape architect, he told me about the Inuktitut word *sila*, which he learned from an acquaintance. He explained,

Sila is sort of like the sky or the air, the atmosphere. [...The] reduction of that word has been more of a practice that has become a contemporary view of the world. But [...] traditional knowledge talked about *sila* as the life-giving force. [...] *Sila* wasn't [...] about air and oxygen and the atmosphere, but it was more about its properties as it moves through all of us. It moves through the plants. It moves through the air. It moves through the wildlife. The idea of the word traditionally was its connection. We had to understand that we were...everything in the environment was connected. One of the ways that [it] was connected was *sila*. It wasn't the only way, but it was the notion of it—this incredibly rich link between all living things and our environment. [...] How much do we lose in our understanding and our knowledge of the land if we reduce the word *sila* just down

to air, for instance? You discard all of that deeper understanding of your world that comes with your relationship in nature as a human being.

The story of *sila* can be applied to everything: the words we use every day; the people we think we know and see; the solutions to problems that we believe we have the answers to. The story can also be applied to the idea of landscapes. Landscapes have horizons, so it makes much sense that landscape architecture also has horizons. For Benediktsson and Lund (2010), a landscape's horizon is a metaphor for its fluidity and unfixed limit to perception. The paradox of the horizon is that it is unreachable: no matter how much we move forward, it responds to our efforts to get closer by continually remaining out of reach. This phenomenon describes humanity's existence in the world—the meeting of sky and earth is not attainable and yet we live between them. Life is inevitably a continuation of changing perspectives. Thus, there is always room to expand horizons in life and in landscape architecture.

Reintegrating the narrative of flourishing through poignant landscape architecture

Looking out into the horizon is at the same time being aware of where one is standing. Therefore, the process of de-commoditizing and re-interpreting landscapes as home requires a reassessment of our social psychological behaviours, similar to what Fisher (2013a) describes as “turning the psyche inside-out” (170). In *Exploring the Boundaries of Landscape Architecture*, Roe (2012) refers to Ian Thompson's notion that landscape architectural values derive from overlapping areas of ecology, community, and delight. In its ideal form, landscape architecture is inherently interdisciplinary. Remarkably, this triad aligns perfectly with Fisher's (2019a) ecopsychology triangle of psyche, society, and nature (Fig. 14). Fisher argues that to maintain our “modern world system,” conceptual and behavioural dualisms must be in place: the psyche/nature dualism, the psyche/society dualism, and the society/nature dualism. Radical ecopsychology is a call to mend the

abstract divisions found in the triangle within our lives in order to reveal and reintegrate the interconnectedness of psyche, nature, and society. In parallel, landscape architecture, in its ideal form, is also the process of reintegrating humanity's interconnectedness with the world.

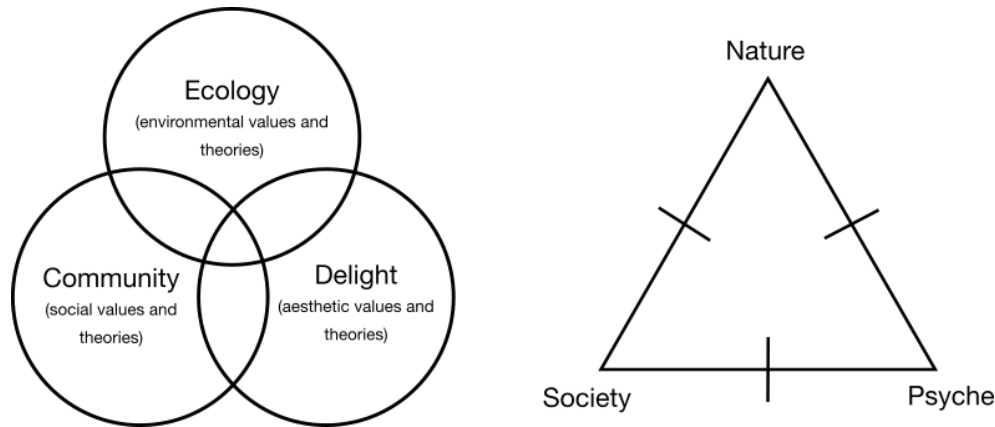


Figure 14: Ian Thompson's overlapping values in landscape architecture (Roe 2012, 305) in comparison with Andy Fisher's (2019a, 2) ecopsychology triangle. Fisher's original diagram has Psyche on top and Nature on the right. Adjusting the labels aligns ecopsychology with landscape architecture theory and reinterprets nature as the primordial element.

Just as ecopsychology works to mend the divisions in the world system, landscape architecture requires a re-balancing of the values found in Thompson's Venn diagram. While documents from landscape architecture associations and research participants have expressed the impact of the profession in ameliorating ecological and social landscapes, less is mentioned on the importance of delight and aesthetics. Most landscape architects appeal to make things beautiful, but they are often met with challenges in promoting beauty as more than decoration. Perspectives have been changing, as one interview participant exclaimed: people are realizing that landscape architecture is "not just parsley around the pig." But certainly, in a survival-based world, which capitalism (and even more so, neoliberalism) needs as a foundation, aesthetics becomes a luxury that can only be commoditised. However, James Hillman (1996) argues that aesthetics is both an ethical and a cosmological concern. He states,

Ugly environments repress our reactions and repression is exhausting—[...] We deny our aesthetic responses by closing down our senses, our perceptions, and we anesthetize ourselves—with loud music in the ears, with Advil and Xanax, with sleeping pills and caffeine and Prozac, with alcohol with ice cubes before every meal so that we’ve already anesthetized our tongues since we don’t know what we’re eating anymore, and high sugar and high salt.

Denying our basic need for beauty as a society has been detrimental, considering that mental health issues have been increasing all over the world. To “turn the psyche inside-out,” recognition of delight as an underpinning of landscape architecture is crucial. Furthermore, landscape architecture that has taken delight seriously as a design philosophy has been appreciated by the public. For instance, Claude Cormier’s success as a landscape architect is not surprising. From the ecopsychology perspective, he has mastered the aspect of delight in landscape architecture and takes “fun seriously” as a design principle.¹⁴ Fun has also been a part of many renowned landscape architects’ palette of design elements, such as Martha Schwartz’s use of pop art and Adriaan Geuze’s use of bold structural forms.

In mainstream culture, having fun is a domain mostly left for children (unless, of course, fun corresponds to Hillman’s descriptions of anesthetisation). Children generally do a better job at having fun than adults, mainly because they are permitted to do so. Many children’s books are also prized for bringing out the essences of humanity in genuine and charming ways, for example, *The Little Prince* and *The Secret Garden* mentioned in this dissertation. Thus, I was not surprised that the notion of flourishing reminded participants about children. The discussion on flourishing steered

¹⁴ Claude Cormier was the 2018 Michael Hough / OALA visiting critic for the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design. His presentation was titled “Serious Fun.” A book about his work proposed by Marc Treib and Susan Herrington will have the same name.

one landscape architect into considering landscapes that would allow children to flourish. She remembered a “fun experience” at a park in Paris. She described,

One day, I turned the corner and [saw that the park] had laid out these long low tables of sand. Then there’s all these bins full of sort of natural stuff: pinecones, and moss, and twigs, and rocks, and seashells. Then there were kids. Each kid got a part of the sandbox to create a landscape. So, they were flourishing. The flourishing was understanding the elements of the landscape. Flourishing was the creativity that they were allowed to do or discover.

She believes that flourishing is about creating opportunities for discovery. She considers four aspects to flourishing: challenges, movement, discovery, and learning. Despite cultural differences and that one-size-fits-all solutions cannot be applied everywhere, there are always ways to create situations for people to flourish because there is an abundant of things that individual humans can continue to discover about themselves, others, and the world.

Good landscape architecture in its broadest sense provides opportunities for flourishing. Although the consideration of the concept of flourishing can lead landscape architects into rethinking things in different ways, participants already have rich opinions on what good landscape architecture means to them. One landscape architect deliberated on numerous benchmarks for good landscape architecture. She questioned,

...has it successfully connected itself to the city? Has it given some element of comfort and nature, and is it accessible to everybody? Can people meet there and feel safe there, either alone or in a group kind of thing? And is there flexibility in it as well? [...] Is it stuck in the moment? Is there some flexibility to it in terms of the community that might be changing around it or is it densifying around it? Is this space accommodating that flexibility? Or [...] had it been designed as this iconic thing that’s inflexible? That kind of thing.

For another landscape architect, good landscape architecture lies in relationship building. She referred to her work as “soft design,” in contrast to the hardscaping that landscape architects do with “hard” materials such as paving and furnishing. The “soft” materials are the people involved in the project and the interactions that come with teamwork. She explained,

If we are all there for our common grounds, we are all humans. We all bring into this conversation certain knowledge, but we are connected together, putting, creating something together. That’s why I’m going more into process design and that’s why I was calling it the soft design. The human relationships. If we connect and we all bring everything, we have the centre. What’s at the centre? What’s the project? What are we all doing together? [...] I think the connection in the practice has to come to this. To me, to come back to human beings connecting and acknowledging that we are all part of the same system, and we are creating something that has to be alive.

From the two perspectives of good landscape architecture, I see three aspects to flourishing in the profession: the flourishing of relationships within a team, the flourishing of the landscape project created, and the potential flourishing of the users of the landscape. The last aspect anticipates that good landscape architecture can inspire reflection, move hearts, awaken spirits, or motivate personal or social change, which are all qualities that can possibly be found in poignant landscape experiences. However, flourishing and poignant landscape architecture needs landscape architects who believe that all these good qualities are possible.

The answers to the survey question on whether the profession is succeeding in making poignant landscapes were rather ambivalent. The average rating from survey respondents was 5.2 out of 10 (see Table 5, Chapter 5). Comments in response to the question tended to be of resignation. First, there is the belief that poignant landscapes are more “natural” and therefore:

“Everyday landscapes are not poignant.”

“I prefer to make *useful* places in urban environments.” (emphasis mine)

“I don’t see us doing much of anything [that could be poignant] at that scale.”

“Not much of our work falls into that category. Maybe try a different term?”

Second, there is the belief that budget constraints and regulations stifle the creation of meaningful and poignant landscapes:

“Much of the design out there is utilitarian, budget-strapped, and uninspired because the mandate for the work is not to inspire, but to fulfill basic functional needs.”

“There are so many barriers to creating meaningful space, that sometimes I think that it’s sheer accident when one actually works out.”

“Only large projects have the budget and space to be poignant.”

“The opportunity to provoke and create poignancy is rarely welcomed.”

“Only rarely is the profession engaged by community groups to help design other assets.”

There were a couple of more optimistic comments—those who saw the efforts of landscape architects so far and the room for improvement. Still, for the most part, survey participants had envisioned a status quo of landscape architecture that did not include poignant landscapes in their work. Poignant landscapes did not belong in their horizon of thought. However, one respondent provided an alternative position that sums up the idea of poignant landscape architecture as an

expanding horizon exercise. The comment reads, “they are not doing it because they have not recognized it as a goal.”

In comparison, interview participants, by interpreting poignancy in their own ways, saw poignant landscape architecture as an inherent goal of the profession, integral to the pursuit of good landscape architecture. Through their stories, I am reminded that poignancy can be found in different parts of the creator-landscape-user dynamic. One participant’s story illustrates how poignant landscape architecture is also about being moved by her role as a landscape architect in affecting other people’s lives. As she recalled a poignant moment from her career, she remembered an experience at the Halifax Public Gardens. She had previously worked on restoring the pastoral cascades in the garden after Hurricane Juan. When she returned to the gardens four years later, she noticed an elderly woman in tears beside her on a bench. She asked the woman what the matter was, and the elderly woman said, “I’m perfectly happy. You see that bridge up there? I was married on that bridge in 1928, and it hasn’t looked as beautiful as it did then till now.” The landscape architect thought to herself at that moment, “I’m done! I fixed the bridge. She loves it. I can retire!” The story was moving to her because it reminded her of how her work could reach people. She reflected on the meaning of the word *poignant*:

Poignant, I think is something that tugs at your heart. Because of that, you can’t define it as this or that or something else. It’s something that speaks to you. Like that lady crying on the park bench. For me, it was just a lovely vista. For her it was poignant. [...] We’re responsible for so many different things, and I think we’re responsible that natural communities will flourish and that human society flourishes. Without immersing ourselves in the emotions of others, without reaching out empathetically, whatever we build, we can build anywhere. What makes it special is how the people who live in it, who work in it, who interact with it, feel about it.

The use of poignant landscapes for my research implies a perspective that poignant landscape architecture is possible. But because poignancy is interpretative, poignant landscape architecture has no design formula. However, one characteristic of poignant landscape architecture is certain. Poignant experiences are humbling experiences, as we have witnessed from the examples shared by research participants. Therefore, poignant landscape architecture, if achieved, would also be a humbling practice.

Despite all this discussion about physical places and physical landscapes, my own life experience tells me that physical landscapes are not the instigator of poignant landscapes. Contrary to the survey results, my top three poignant landscapes are fictional. The first two landscapes were images and the third was already mentioned by one research participant: the story of *The Secret Garden*. A story that tells of children healing from landscapes is alluring but what is particularly special to me is that the book reminds me of the metaphor that a secret garden resides in a person's heart. And then the reflexive questions: How beautiful is the garden blooming? Have we buried the keys and neglected the garden due to fear and heartbreak? Or have we tended it gently? What if we could open the garden to others and share the beauty? Or help another nurture their own garden? If it is possible for our "secret gardens" to be nurtured and shared, then the role of poignant landscapes in landscape architecture is not fantasy or indulgence. The process supports the flourishing of our "secret" and "public" gardens (both metaphorically and physically). Only we can choose the paradigm that allows for this flourishing. Therefore, I admire the bluntness of one landscape architect's remarks. He stated,

How could you imagine the opposite? Imagine if there were none. What would you be doing? I can't really imagine if we...if we...I can't imagine landscape architecture without poignant landscapes. Like, what else would we be doing?

What else would we really be doing? Making certain things just work, I guess. I guess, we'll just be making things work.

I believe that most people deeply desire more than a life that *just works*. As this landscape architect suggested, if we were to already put effort into making things just work, why not make them poignant as well?

7 Conclusion

A landscape architect (who was not an interview participant) once said to me that people were “too busy with life” for philosophy. When I told them about my survey, they were concerned that there would be little interest from landscape architects to participate because people were “too busy with work” to spend the time thinking over challenging questions. Naturally, I was discouraged by our conversation because I consider philosophy as a quest for understanding life and my project as a humble means to this quest. While I would like to think that this person’s perspective is an anomaly, I recognise that much of the world’s population views their life the same way. Certainly, much of the world’s population does need to focus on their own survival, but collectively as a species, humanity’s reflection of life is necessary in order to continue our worthy existence on Earth. Contrary to any thoughts that this project is too indulgent for practical matters in landscape architecture, I consider my research as a reflexive exercise for an important profession that directly links to being human and belonging in the world.

I started the research claiming that landscape architecture is impacted by two divergent mindsets. As a professional body, as a transactional business, and as a product of modern society, landscape architecture often manifests as a problem-solving enterprise. As a steward of nature and of human life, landscape architecture, ideally, is also intrinsically cosmological, poetical, and spiritual. I believe that the profession of landscape architecture has not yet fully acknowledged its role in the latter mentality, and therefore, not fully embodying its role as a sacred place-making profession. Consequently, the literature around landscape architecture shows a certain scatteredness about the profession, considering that the majority of publications are either anthological collections of individual essays, books that emphasis on specific approaches to design theory in response to a

changing modern world, or retrospective reviews of landscape design throughout history. However, the essence of human life and its relationship to place is found in experience, suggesting that the answers to landscape architecture's hesitant foundation lies in the study of human experience, and more specifically, how one interprets experience beyond binary modes of thinking. Experience is the essence of being in the world and is perpetual throughout life. Just as the heart has a pulse, the act of experiencing life plotted on a metaphorical electrocardiogram would also have intervals of wave activity. I would consider the waves as poignant experiences. They are points of awareness to life itself. Without them, there would be no pulse and no life.

In an abstract way, landscape architecture is a profession about life and death. This association is apparent when we compare landscape architecture with architecture. One interview participant suggested that a similar study could be made for architects. I believe that the study would make an interesting research project, but I also wonder, how would architects as allied professionals to landscape architecture interpret and respond to the questions in this project compared to landscape architects? Would there be fundamental differences between the way the two professions see poignant experiences and how their roles play differently in the flourishing of the world? I imagine that there would be similarities and also pertinent differences. First, both professions have the same goal of making places. Second, both professions involve people who want to make the world a better place. But notably, some research participants have said that landscape architecture had somehow enticed them away from architecture. Moreover, landscape architecture continues to give them something that inspires meaning in their work. Of course, the boundaries in actual practice are not always clear. For example, architects occasionally work on landscape projects in multidisciplinary offices and landscape architects also work on the design of architectural elements. In my opinion, what makes landscape architecture unique is that within landscapes there are abundant opportunities to witness the marvels of life and death. A similar comparison to

architecture was brought up by research participants. For instance, a couple of landscape architects mentioned that a building is at its prime on its opening day and then starts to decay; a landscape starts growing after construction is complete, but decay is considered part of the landscape's changing process. Although a landscape still needs tending in order to balance growth and decay, a well-designed landscape is meant to continue to flourish.

Summary: a narrative of poignant landscapes and an ethics of flourishing

Allegorically, our world can be considered to be made of internal and external landscapes. In the contemplation of my own internal landscape, I have sometimes wondered if I had made the wrong choice in becoming a landscape architect. Perhaps, I was meant to be a landscape photographer? Or a botanical illustrator? Or a poet? Just like one survey respondent reflectively questioned whether meaningful landscapes created by landscape architects have only occurred because of “sheer accident,” I wondered if my “calling” into landscape architecture was also “sheer accident.” Furthermore, did the two seemingly unrelated terms, *poignant* and *flourishing*, end up in my research as mere coincidence? However, when I recall my life's trajectory from the poignant landscapes of Lucius O'Brien's painting and the beach house image, to my education and disillusion of landscape architecture, to learning about flourishing as a life ethic, I know that poignant landscapes, landscape architecture, and an ethic of flourishing are not coincidental entities. They are parts of a synchronistic unfolding of my life and of Being.

I was guided into this unfolding through an internal non-linguistic process of knowing, but I participated in much of this unfolding through language—that is, thoughts, speech, and other forms of communication. Human beings use both linguistic and non-linguistic ways of being in the world, but language, like an existential filter, affects perspectives, interpretations, and beliefs about ourselves, the world, and our relationship with the entities in it. These perspectives and

interpretations also affect the belief of our non-linguistic way of being, as well as override our ability to access this intuitive knowingness. Whatever comes out of the balance between the two ways of being becomes knowledge and wisdom, at personal and collective levels, both consciously and unconsciously. This mixture of knowledge and wisdom becomes the foundation to making ethical (and non-ethical) actions in the world.

In between language and intuition, knowledge and wisdom, individuality and collectivity, as well as consciousness and unconsciousness, are states of liminality where the “truth” of Being resides. Poignant landscapes, as phenomenal examples of liminal experiences, are gateways to the belongingness that one can existentially feel when one is aware of the interconnectedness of the world. Landscape architecture, in my opinion, is then the archetypal process of making this interconnectedness apparent in the world through place-making. Thus, poignant landscapes, ideally, would also be important parts of a landscape architect’s repertoire of understanding in regard to making landscapes and flourishing environments. The core of my research, therefore, was to consider how landscape architects envision a flourishing landscape architectural practice and how their views of landscape architecture are influenced by their own poignant landscape experiences.

While there were overlaps between how survey and interview participants saw poignant landscapes and their relevance to landscape architecture, I discovered that in general, survey participants expressed more conservative views of the possibilities for poignant landscapes to occur in landscape architecture. In contrast, interview participants were generally more ingenious with their thinking towards the relevance of poignant landscapes in landscape architecture. I suggest two possible reasons for the differences between the two participant groups. First, interview participants were selected based on their apparent autonomy in the profession, which was an important characteristic for my interpretation of an ethic of flourishing. Thus, they were already practicing the research theme and were able to respond to the ideas from their own work experience. Second, the

communication methods used likely affected their thinking processes. For instance, the surveys were more likely to be completed casually during work hours, and therefore, would have inspired more instinctive responses. Moreover, the written formats of multiple-choice questions and short answers suggest the need to apply simple thinking and simple responses. On the other hand, interview participants had time to consider the topic ahead of the interview, which they had to give priority to for a duration of time in their work schedule. Additionally, verbal communication, in person or virtually, was a more intimate way to discuss philosophical topics than short written answers on a survey. Therefore, interviews allowed for a process of reflexivity and reiteration.

Nonetheless, both methods of inquiry were necessary for a comprehensive analysis of the research topic. Based on the various viewpoints I found in the data and my own interpretation of the world as a participant in the collective human (and landscape architecture) consciousness, I provided a narrative of how poignant landscapes and flourishing ethics relate to being in the world. While my background and worldview were foundational to this entire narrative, much of Chapter 2 was not written until the rest of this document had been revised multiple times. In the writing and sharing of my own past, I experienced a revelation: all the passages and texts that called out to me and all my inclinations to elaborate on certain study themes in the research found a place to “ground” themselves. Consequently, I realised that the missing piece of the puzzle was “me” all along. And thus, I now recognise that my story is just as crucial as the stories I had collected from research participants. Conversely, the inverse of this revelation is also important: “I” am relational; with landscapes, with nature, and with other people, “I” exist because there is a connection between us.

Therefore, in Chapter 3, I start with the root of landscape and humanity’s mystery: the meaning of nature. While research participants generally promoted a heterogenous understanding of landscapes and often intentionally probed at the construct of the meaning of nature, binary concepts

of nature and culture were still prevalent in their discourse about landscapes. Understandably, this pattern goes beyond landscape architecture and is a discursive thought pattern of the modern human mind. Instead of seeing nature and culture as opposites, I contrasted participants' comments with literature on the nature of humans to consider the perspective of culture as a component of nature. Thus, nature and culture are two sides of the same coin that tells the story of how humans relate to the world. Making place and finding belongingness in landscapes are contingent on how this story gets told by humans.

In Chapter 4, I used the etymology of the word *poignant* to explain that pain and beauty are intricately connected to the feeling of belongingness. In a world full of pain, consciously acknowledged or repressed into the depths of the subconscious, human beings yearn to heal and feel that we belong in this world. Consequently, the most common examples of poignant landscapes are those experienced as awe-inspiring or sublime moments. In these remarkable memories, participants encountered glimpses of a connectedness to a greater world of existence. As such, poignant landscape experiences were usually described with humility and awareness. But while I saw experience as moments in time, some participants considered experience as accumulated knowledge or influences from the past. Considering that social conditioning can diversely affect how a person sees the world, and subsequently tell an unfavourable story of themselves and the nature-culture dynamic, I argue that experience should be a balanced act of participatory witnessing and reflection in the moment so that pain can be overcome by beauty. Accordingly, some participants found that by being mindful of their day-to-day experiences, they could find poignant landscapes embedded in ordinary circumstances.

Poignant landscapes as the signal to finding our existential home are about us allowing ourselves to be moved by the world. In doing so, we are in a reciprocal relationship with the world. As participants in this relationship, we make choices. In Chapter 5, I explored how landscape

architects make ethical choices towards their roles as “stewards of the land.” Using an ethic of flourishing that considers ethics as autonomous choice-making in a world of ecological and social systems, I explored how landscape architects navigate between their own personal ethics and institutional ethics established by the professional body and existing social political structures. Participants saw meaning in their work and developed values to support good landscape architecture from their own sense of responsibility and ability to contribute. However, collectively, the profession of landscape architecture wavers over its identity and worthiness in comparison to allied disciplines, which I would argue limits landscape architecture’s unique role as a sacred place-making profession. In tandem, I wonder about my own ambivalent position with the profession and how identity and name status are no longer sustaining forces for my own life’s flourishing.

Some participants expressed that landscape architecture is simply a part of a bigger team. In parallel, the world is the common ground where all of humanity exists. To make changes we need to shift paradigms. In Chapter 6, I considered how the horizons of landscape architecture could expand based on the themes expressed by the participants. For example, crossing boundaries and exploring liminal spaces in the profession could usher in new ways of thinking. While the suggestions of participants are “new” ways of envisioning the profession of landscape architecture, they share the same arc: that is, encouraging a sense of shared humanity within a comprehensive view of the human plus more-than-human world. Paradoxically, connecting with nature, being mindful of our environment, and being empathetic to fellow human-beings are not new ideas. I would call these “origin”-al ideas that are universal traits for the flourishing of humanity and the rest of the world. Unfortunately, these traits have been de-prioritized for much of the world’s population as an expense to capitalism and self-preservation. Therefore, going outside-the-box is simultaneously going back to the basics. Going back to the basics is returning to our roots and taking a “radical”

stance. Instead of being “radically” polarized, we need to be doing the total opposite—to radically find the commonality of being in the world.

Discoveries, lessons, and relevance of the research

Being in the world is also the act of experiencing the world. To study experience, I needed to consider that there are multiple facets to the manifestation of phenomena in the human consciousness, which include the ontology of things in the world (e.g. Husserl), our existence contextualised in a social world (e.g. Heidegger), and our sensory experience of the social and material worlds (e.g. Merleau-Ponty). If nature is considered the origin of the world, and nature is interpreted by humans in various ways, then the meaning of landscape is also interpreted out of the conception of nature. Therefore, the meaning of landscapes, in its most philosophical and abstract form, is also the relationship one has with the world. Reality for each person is created out of this relationship.

Two interrelated belief systems form the basis for a relationship with landscapes. I refer to these belief systems as spirituality and morality. The two themes in the research, poignancy and flourishing, correspond to the two belief systems. Through spirituality, a person reflects on their role and significance within an existential world structure. Cosmological and theological narratives across cultures are foundations to individual spiritual beliefs. Through the juxtaposition of human emotions and thoughts against larger spiritual, theological, and cosmological beliefs is the manifestation of an awareness that one is an interconnected part of something greater. Through a position of morality that acknowledges that one is indeed part of a greater system, a person reflects on how their behaviours will affect constructive outcomes for themselves and the rest of the world. As experience is made of the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of how one relates to the world and how they should behave in the world, hermeneutics as a study of interpretation was

necessary to understand key ideas embedded in the meaning of landscapes. Using a pseudo group discussion, I created a reflexive analysis of how a particular group of people known as landscape architects understand and relate to landscapes.

From my study, I deduce that if spirituality and morality have been relegated as extraneous to landscape architecture and to any other practical activities that human beings do, this dismissal is mainly because of limited binary perspectives that modern societies have adopted. In my personal reflection, I realised that my original disappointment in landscape architecture mirrored the distress I had towards parts of my unconscious self: the parts of myself that did not believe in the world's magic, that doubted my intuition, and supported my reluctance to feel vulnerable in my emotions. These unconscious beliefs (or also, non-beliefs) were based on binary views of the world. Analogously, binary beliefs affect and limit landscape architecture and its greater role in society. These thoughts may include:

- (Urban) landscape architectural work is not about nature (i.e., nature versus culture)
- Only nature can be poignant (i.e., nature versus culture, sacred versus profane)
- Human beings are not nature (i.e., human versus nature, culture versus nature)
- Poignant experiences of landscape architects are private matters and are not relevant to the public sphere of work (i.e., life versus work, private versus public)
- One person's experience, thoughts and actions have little impact on collective change (i.e., me versus them, singular versus whole).
- Certainty, knowledge, and proof of change are needed before we can believe that something is happening (i.e., reason versus intuition; truth versus false; visible versus invisible)

While poignancy and flourishing do not have fixed meanings, the binary attitudes listed above encourage rigid connotations to these terms. In a self-referential fashion, binary attitudes reinforce limited interpretations of key terms that these beliefs originate from, such as conflicting

interpretations of *landscape, nature, ethics, and spirituality*. Among research participants' comments were various interpretations of these words. Sometimes the interpretations of the words' meanings were firm, sometimes they were fluid, and at times, they were even contradictory. As such, the research findings do not reveal definite answers or theories to landscape architectural design or practice, but rather, they provide an opportunity to review the status-quo and re-question existing assumptions.

While my original research question was to find a correlation between poignant landscape experiences and flourishing landscape architecture, the answer that was revealed to me through the study lies in neither of the concepts. The key to the research findings is a shared function that poignancy and flourishing both depend upon, and that is, the ability for perspectives to expand. For instance, when a landscape architect allows for a more flexible characterization of poignancy, especially with a description that is self-determined, the more meaningful poignant landscape experiences are for that individual. Consequently, the greater horizon of meaning a landscape architect has for poignant landscape experiences, more of the world (including landscapes, users, their needs, and their experiences) become part of the individual's potential scope of work. Moreover, if poignant experiences are the waves in the pulse of life, they can conceivably be larger waves or smaller waves. For example, the grand vista of Niagara Falls and the subtleness of water cascading through a small brook can both be poignant experiences. Similarly, the experience of a Gothic cathedral with its high arched ceilings and stained-glass windows does not discount the poignancy of morning light shining through a cabin window. When a person can recognise the smaller waves of experiences, and is simultaneously able to appreciate the larger waves, their scope of perception increases.

The same analogy of variable waves can be used for a person's attitude towards life's events. For example, if I had to choose the most personally meaningful finding from the research, it would be my discovery of how limiting my original perspective of landscape architects was, because I had a

rather narrow and pessimistic view of how landscape architects saw themselves and their work. But through my research, I learned that as a collective, landscape architects were more contemplative and consciously connected to a greater meaning and purpose than I had previously imagined. I was only able to break out of my old assumptions by first asking thought-provoking questions that were not typically asked in everyday practice and then listening to personal sentiments from landscape architects that were not frequently given a sharing platform. My self-discovery is important because it reminds me that I cannot assume that my perspective is always correct, especially regarding other people's thoughts, experiences, and intentions. Although being insensitive to others is problematic, one major implication from assuming self-correctness is the missed opportunity to see things in a more positive light. What is wasted are the inspiration, creativity, and motivation for improvement that come out of encouraging attitudes.

I would also consider the conventional approach to ethics as a defeating attitude. Throughout history, across many cultures, ethics and morality have been approached in a binary manner. Seeing the world through the lens of a rulebook or with the belief that actions are either good or bad is counter-productive to the betterment of humanity because the focus is on preventing the "bad" that comes along with the "good."¹⁵ Instead of seeing ethics as binary, a broader perspective beyond binary thinking is necessary for both reflection and inspiration. Using the term *flourishing* in association to ethics brings human actions back to an interrelated view of the world. Thus, ethical choices become aligned with the processes of nature, of which humans are a part, and of life itself.

The combination of a broader field of awareness (to poignancy) and a holistic mindset of conscience (through flourishing) supports virtues for ethical behaviour that research participants

¹⁵ Interestingly, there are very few words in the thesaurus for "improvement" that do not imply a one-directional binary approach to human advancement or progress. "Betterment" is one of the few suitable terms in this case.

have noted as important for being fulfilled as landscape architects. These virtues, which are relational and developed through life experience, include effective communication, skillful listening, courage to stand up for personal integrity, and empathy. While some landscape architectural projects are exclusively non-human oriented, such as mitigating wildlife habitat or ecological restoration, for the most part, landscape architecture involves human societies, cultures, and places. Moreover, the work process is always a course of human relationships between an assortment of players such as employers, employees, co-workers, clients, consultants, stakeholders, administrators, authorities, benefited users, and marginalised community members. Being able to relate to other people's experiences help design outcomes as well as the process of landscape architecture itself.

As a person or a group becomes more malleable in their interpretations of the world, the more they can become conscious that there is choice in seeing things in different ways to bring about more compassion, insight, and innovative solutions. However, the expansion of interpretations often comes through actual practice. Just as one landscape architect suggested that growing things could reveal how easy *and* how hard nature's processes could be, the research process has revealed to me personal strengths and challenges. On paper, everything reasonable in a proposal can be feasible. Indeed, the intentions and procedures outlined in my research proposal were largely achieved, but prior to the actual process, the words written in the proposal all had the same impact. They were easy visionary schemes not yet grounded in a reality. For instance, I did not fully understand how reaching out in a quick email to people I had never spoken with or contacting people I had lost touch with, which is an even more awkward scenario in my opinion, would be such a challenging task. On the other hand, I did not imagine that speaking with people I had just met or with people I had known in a different capacity in the past would be as comfortable as the experience had been in the interviews in spite of the deep and often neglected topics. As the research participants have noted, there is nothing like being in the landscape and getting our hands

soaked and dirt-covered to really learn about landscape. Similarly, there is nothing like doing research to learn about research. And fundamentally, there is nothing like actual experience to learn about life.

Whether we are experiencing landscapes, research, or life, ambiguities and disturbances exist. Because there can be a multitude of interpretations for a situation, sometimes experience of a phenomenon can be paradoxical. For instance, I sometimes faced contradictions in my response to the research data. One example is the significance of the idea of nature for landscape architects in the survey. On one hand, I did not expect the connection to nature to have such a high priority for participants given that contemporary lifestyles, attitudes, and the majority of daily tasks for many landscape architects do not involve mainstream concepts of nature, such as the wilderness or the countryside. On the other hand, at a rational level, I was not alarmed to see that landscape architects (and human beings in general) would value nature as a priority concern. Truthfully, I am not sure if the incongruent beliefs occur purely in my own mind or because I am part of a collective human consciousness. More importantly, I do not think that I can fully disentangle the interconnectedness between my subconscious beliefs and the collective's. That is the reason why I started my study with an uncertainty about research and knowledge. Now that I have completed the research, the perplexity still remains, yet I am able to validate my confusion with the reflexive question: what makes knowledge? My answer: we learn what we are exposed to until something breaks open in our own outlook.

In the past few years, life experience had led me to envision knowledge in different ways including academic knowledge, traditional knowledge, popular culture, and what is deemed as “new age.” These theories all work together to explain existential mysteries that I often contemplated about. However, not all knowledge is considered equal in social structures. Just as professions and disciplines utilise boundaries to protect a certain identity to survive in competition, boundaries are in

place to protect the identity of certain bodies of knowledge. Just as crossing boundaries in landscape architecture opens to potential breakthroughs, I also question how bodies of knowledge, particularly in the academic and the professional spheres, are defending particular hegemonic traditions that also function unfavourably against collective human flourishing. For example, if the theories found in ecopsychology or the ethic of flourishing never made it to academic literature, would my research and any new-found knowledge be invalidated? If Eastern philosophy and Indigenous knowledge have not become accepted as forms of scholarly education, would the wisdom of my research participants and my own life experiences be less legitimate? And also, is it a matter of time before knowledge becomes creditable to certain institutions?

My answer for the questions from outside-of-me is “yes.” Knowledge is institutionalised and is metaphorically, let into the building when it becomes worthy. But my innate answer within is “no.” Not all knowledge (such as those closer to wisdom) will be part of an institutionalised setting. Furthermore, I do not believe that I (or human beings in general) have no intuitive intelligence in response to the mysteries of the world. The reality is that the appropriate framework was presented to me through academic and social encounters that helped package ideas into something more communicable and appropriate for the circumstances that I am navigating through. Much like a curator, I managed the stories shared by the research participants into an academic project. But the most poignant part of the experience is that I have been enriched by their telling of these experiential stories. Regretfully, but also in gratitude, no-one else will have the same level of enrichment as I have had through the collection of their shared storytelling. As the curator of these stories, I have become a new storyteller. You, the reader, have read something that is not equivalent to the individual parts but instead is a new entity that was formed through them. I assume that your experiences and your stories will add to the information that I have presented to make new knowledge or wisdom once again. This process of expansion and mutation of knowledge-wisdom is,

in my opinion, much more valuable than what is conventionally considered as teachable in discipline-defined academic literature.

An appeal to those enthralled by mystery and those on a mission

However, there was once a time when I would have insisted that all landscape architects be taught what I considered important in academic literature about landscapes. I would also have insisted that all landscape architects *should* care about what I have written about landscape architecture. As a matter of fact, Peter Timmerman, my former supervisor, had once aptly asked if what I sought after was the formation of a cult rather than a research project. Specifically, did I want to persuade and form a group of people ardent towards a set of beliefs? Certainly, even now, I believe that it would be *nice* if all landscape architects considered what I had to say, because the world's flourishing is a collective endeavour. But my perspective has broadened through the research process and I have accepted that not all landscape architects have the same priorities. Even if they did have the same priorities, each one would have different opinions and approaches to their behaviour. Consequently, I have adopted the attitude of an ethic of flourishing in that each person is their own moral agent. Each person is responsible for the flourishing of their own life while knowing that they play a role in the flourishing of their society and environment. Therefore, it is okay that I (and we) cannot change everything and everyone that does not fit into an idealised version of the world.

Because my research considers values relevant to landscape architecture and an evaluation of the profession's status-quo through participant contribution, many landscape architecture professionals *would* likely be intrigued by the research findings. The purpose, I assume, for people with a casual interest in the research results will be towards a general understanding of the attitudes currently existing in landscape architecture and to gauge their own viewpoints in contrast to these

perspectives. The addendums at the end will provide satisfactory information on the data collected. However, my approach to use *poignant* and *flourishing* as the two exploratory terms calls for deeper introspection. Each of the terms appeal to two overlapping life purposes. *Poignant* appeals to the parts of us that are intrigued by the great mysteries of life. *Flourishing* appeals to the parts of us that want to make choices and direct our lives on a path that feels worthwhile and beneficial to the world.

Therefore, I believe that there are two types of people, or two aspects of people's personalities, regardless of whether they are landscape architects or not, who would find what I have written so far valuable. First, people who choose to consider the world through reflexive, philosophical, and spiritual lenses may be drawn to contemplate concerning the notion of poignant landscape experiences because the framework encapsulates the mysteries and complexities found in nature, human experience and meaning making. Personally, I do not think there is anyone who has never asked themselves why they exist and what it means to be human, but I also believe that not everyone is at a phase in their life, or ever gets to be in their lifetime, to explore deeper into these questions. For those of us who have the opportunity to consider who we really are, poignant landscapes may be another niche to find the gateway into the Great Mystery of our existence.

The second group of people who would find meaning in this study are people who consider their work as a life calling, life dharma, or life mission to the betterment of society. I would include in this category individuals who have chosen careers that are intended to serve the public. In our contemporary society, from politics, to activism, to education, and to journalism, discord among groups is common and sometimes even encouraged. Yet, harmony and cooperation are prerequisites to any kind of teamwork. Certainly, the making of a good society is immense teamwork. The concept of flourishing provides a simple framework for considering life purpose, morality, and social responsibility because flourishing is intuitive to lifeforms. When humans can recognise that we are

lifeforms, similar to plants and animals, we have the ability to flourish individually and collectively. I suspect that the framework appealed to interview participants because the idea is intrinsically growth-oriented, holistic, and non-judgemental. Therefore, the exploration of any profession's ethics through the notion of flourishing is useful since an ethic of flourishing questions assumptions about conventional ethics and morality and realigns ethical actions as a practice of individual reflexivity that is simultaneously a collective endeavour.

Introspection on why we exist and how we should act essentially leads to one purpose: to know that we belong in this world. Some people find belonging by identifying with other people while others find belonging by rejecting others outside their groups. This project is about finding belonging in the assertion that we already belong. Landscapes are guides to support us towards this belief and place-making nurtures a continued sense of belonging. The overall appeal I make through this research are to people who make place—whether place is metaphorically a location within our souls, or literally a place on Earth. If everyone were to assist in making place, we would all be “landscape architects” and “stewards of life.”

2020: A year of reflection

If greater understanding comes out of disturbances, then the year 2020 was a great time for new horizons of understanding. A week before Ontario universities went exclusively online and Toronto went into essential business mode due to the COVID-19 world pandemic, I was writing about liminality, rites of passage, and the meaning of community for the first draft of Chapter 6. As the whole world turned upside-down in response to the shared threat of an unwanted virus and its complementary economic and psychological damage, I could not help but consider the synchronicity of the messages I attained in my brief review of Victor Turner's writing. For an unprecedented time in history, much of the world recognised that we indeed share common grounds. Specifically, we are

vulnerable as human beings and that we need to work together to make it through the pandemic. In the face of the virus, we are stripped down to our nature or our biological humanness. In that aspect of conquering the pandemic, we are all equal. But in the face of institutional structures and existing social hierarchies used to control the virus, the inequalities of human-made systems are evident. Certainly, the world is going through a rite of passage. The silver-lining that can be found in the circumstances: in a liminal statusless state, a new world of opportunities could be born; *authentic* community bonding could be built; and for the apprehensive part of many of us, stability is eventually going to be found again.

For many people, months of unexpected constraints have left them little choice but to focus their awareness of what was close by—their internal selves and the nature around them. Almost like an archetype of an individual awakening to the consciousness of magical nature, National Geographic photographer Maggie Steber (2020) shared on Instagram how quarantining shifted her scope of work:

The whole world has come to a standstill. It's quiet. I feel this is something we needed to do, or that I needed to do, to catch up with myself. I'm using this gift of time to work on an ongoing project called From the Garden. I collect things from my garden and surrounding areas and organize them on my worktable to create scenarios and stories to keep my imagination active. There are feathers and cat skulls, and a small snake someone ran over.

She also shared the delight of discovering a secret world in her garden that would have never been realized without such deliberate attention:

This week I've been watching the activities of nature's smallest creatures that live in my garden. Each day brings something new: lots of bees coming to drink water from my cat's water bowl, a lizard showdown until I broke up the fight! Another

day a curly-tail lizard that lives in my garden finally let me feed her bugs from my hand. As worried as I am about the world and work and life in general, this hiatus has also given me a calmness and reconnection. (National Geographic and Steber 2020)

Some people like Steber found beauty that was previously overlooked. Other people found neglected problems in their previous habits and structures. And still, other people found new routines and learned new ways of doing things. Steber referred to her circumstances as a hiatus—a break from the norm that helps an individual reconnect to something worthwhile. Spiritual author Eckhart Tolle (2020) echoes this thought, likening the situation to an “enforced stillness,” a situation that many human beings need to experience because the business routine that much of the world has been operating from has given us little opportunity to acquire inner stillness. As human societies slowed down for stillness, opportunities were also given to urban-rural ecotone animals to explore their boundaries. From private residences, Great Orme goats were witnessed racing through a town in Wales and coyotes were seen venturing into the streets of San Francisco (Garcia 2020).

From humans to suburban animals, the pandemic has forced lifeforms to adapt to their circumstances. Humans adapted at home and at work. Among occupations that were forced to work from home, landscape architects also hustled to adapt to the changing conditions. For example, landscape architecture associations cancelled their Annual General Meetings and conferences and launched guidelines and toolkits to support members for working remotely. Although OALA’s position was cautionary on whether landscape work could be categorized as “essential business,” the association in principle, left the message to members that they were competently responsible for their own decisions (Welsh 2020). In uncommon fashion, for institutions and businesses alike, human well-being became the focus of official correspondence. Remarkably, the tips for working

while social distancing were very aligned to the findings of this research. Tips from CSLA (2020) include:

1. Be mindful
2. Seize opportunities for growth
3. Get creative
4. Diversify your work
5. Reach out to your community

In the official association documents of the past, self-development and self-care were scarce. During a world pandemic, professionals were encouraged to “take time to check in with how [they] are feeling.” Mindfulness activities such as “walks, practicing meditation, [and] journaling” had become justifiable professional advice. And “pick[ing] up projects that you wouldn’t usually have time for, or to work on a skill you have been meaning to develop” were not indulgence but guilt-free opportunities for growth in a more sluggish business cycle. I do not know if the tone of these communications will stay after the pandemic, but for the sake of human flourishing, I hope they do.

On March 27, 2020, The Landscape Architecture Foundation presented a webinar titled “Practice in a Time of Physical Distancing,” inviting three principals from established landscape architecture offices in the United States to discuss immediate and foreseeable changes in their practice as a result of the pandemic (Jencek, Cadley, and Nielsen 2020). The messages in the webinar were similar to CSLA’s tips and also relate to themes from the previous chapter on shifting paradigms. Brian Jencek of HOK noted that people around him have become more “we centric.” Specifically, his meetings with stakeholders and clients have become more courteous because of a sense of shared humanity. Rebecca Cadley from Cadence noted that her office’s Monday morning meetings had become virtual Meditation Mondays because she had decided that the well-being of human capital was the highest priority. Interestingly, Signe Nielsen from MNLA found that her

younger team members were the ones who were most challenged by the stress of uncertainty. To follow up on her comment, all three panelists remarked that previous setbacks in their careers and life in general had taught them about resilience and helped them develop skills to discern what is in their control to act upon and what is not.

Notably, Jencek (2020) suggested that landscape architects are effectively adaptable because of the work that they do professionally. Whether a project uses natural materials or needs community consultation, within landscape architecture work are processes of change and disruption. Expanding these skills of adaptability in projects or in a landscape architect's scope of work can help diversify personal career prospects. Similarly, Cadley (2020) foresees that the pandemic will lead landscape architects to reinvent ways that they can serve the community. This may mean breaking away from traditional firms and integrating into other fields such as healthcare. Jencek and Cadley's comments are supportive of my research's suggestion to cross borders and re-evaluate the boundaries of landscape architecture. Re-evaluation will not be exclusive to defining what is part of the professional role of a landscape architect. City planning will also need reconsideration. The panelists noted that the contradiction between the necessity for fresh air and open space during self-isolation will likely lead to a discourse on de-urbanisation. Landscape architects and allied professionals in the urban planning realm will play important roles in the discussion of (re-)building healthy and balanced cities.

Since the pandemic and its after-burn will be on-going for the near future, new revelations, ideas, and structures will be experimented, adapted, and adopted in the years to come. Aside from pandemic-specific disturbances, 2020 was also earmarked for disturbance in the social realm as racism and authoritative power came once again into the forefront of social agendas. The previous year of 2019, perhaps, could be considered as the year of ecological disturbance in the form of climate change and related increase in activism. If humanity is indeed going through a rite of passage

to uncover disturbances for new breakthroughs, what is in store for 2021? Regardless of the themes for each year, or the social disturbances that make continuous news headlines, I notice a similar pattern of binary storytelling in conventional narratives of our social problems: there is always a good and a bad party; and there are allies and enemies. The biggest “enemy” of all these stories, in my own book of wisdom, is that we as human beings do not feel as though we belong. We are uncomfortable with our “beingness” in the world, either personally or collectively. Until we feel comfort and belonging, we will always cast ourselves or others away to reflect this uneasiness.

Therefore, it is a time for reflection. Previously, reflection for me was associated with looking back towards the past, embodied in Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana’s commonly known quote, “Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” Certainly, history has in various ways repeated itself over again and again. Human beings must have not learned our history very well. I suspect that our failed attempts to learn from history is because history of the “past” does little to our own sense of being in the world. Experiential awareness is found in the present, even if experience comes in the form of a reflective memory of the past. Thus, like an epiphany that came to me one day, I realised the essence of reflection to be “what is.” This realisation almost seems too much of an overlook for me as I envision a caricature of myself holding mirrors throughout this project. The mirror reflects what is in the present moment. Within this image of the present moment is embedded the completed past and the potential future. When we think of time and experience in this way, reflectivity and reflexivity are the same thing. Whether we reflect on the status-quo of landscape architecture, the state of the world, or the flourishing of our individual lives, we must be go through a process of acknowledging exactly where we are now: all that is dreadful, all that is mundane, and all that is poignant.

Looking towards the horizon

When we have established our presence on our metaphorical landscape of life, we can then look out towards the horizon. Despite the unfortunate private and social implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am consoled by the fact that many people have learned constructive lessons from this collective event. Because of this shared experience, I believe that the recommendations I put forth here will be acknowledged by more people than if we were not forced into a reflection period. The recommendations that I am proposing fall under two categories: the personal sphere and the professional sphere. Both spheres are meant to consider a path to flourishing.

In the personal sphere, I recommend a consistent practice of self-awareness for one's own life flourishing and for the flourishing of one's community. In recent years, mindfulness has become mainstream advice for emotional and spiritual health teachings, but mindfulness is not merely a wellness trend. Paying attention to feelings, thoughts, experiences, and how we operate in the world opens up different perspectives and life horizons. Experiencing is more than doing things or having things happen to us. Experiencing is also about learning how we experience through attentiveness and reflexivity. If we can expand our sensitivity to encompass the large and small waves of life experiences, the change in perspective inevitably changes how we see ourselves and our role in the world. Thus, we are able to make better choices that align to the flourishing of our own lives and other's lives as well.

In the professional sphere, I recommend a re-evaluation of landscape architecture education. As research participants have noted, their early days in the profession, either as a career seeker, a landscape architecture student, or a young professional, had great impact on their future approach to landscape architecture. Therefore, education is truly an essential phase in the flourishing of a professional. While the "grown-up" realm of business budgets, approvals, and meetings often seems *so* impossible to revolutionize, education is a time and place where there is room for the profession

to *intentionally* make shifts. Of course, there are the same “grown-up” limitations in university offices and boardrooms, but there is also a mandate for educational institutions to innovate. For a profession that is all about the relationships between individuals and the world, either the so-called “natural” world, the “human-constructed” world, or the social dynamics world, the study of experience is quintessential. Therefore, I see phenomenology as a pertinent aspect of landscape architecture and any occupation that deals with space, place, and human well-being. Thus, learning to be attentive, self-aware, and reflexive of things, places, and people should be part of the foundational curriculum in landscape architecture programs.

An important aspect of reflexivity relevant to landscape architecture education is a discourse on morality. If ethics is the framework for moral beliefs in the professional and public spheres, then professional ethics really starts at a personal level. Institutional ethics, that is, policies, codes, and judgements of what is correct or not as set by an authoritative group, needs to be separate from personal ethics (and morality), which is based on personal integrity. Conventional and institutional ethics can only serve the status-quo. If flourishing is the goal for an individual or the society and environment that the individual is serving, then personal ethics is more relevant than any socially established or institutionalised ethics that have not been examined by the person’s own internal discernment. The purpose of an ethical discussion in education is to practice personal reflection. For a student or a young professional, a discussion on ethics is also a prospective thought exercise. Questions should include: Why did you choose this career? How can you contribute to society, humanity, or the world at large? What and where are your limitations within greater social and ecological systems? While research participants have stated that professionals learn on the job, literature and research participants have also noted that the world is rapidly changing. Collectively, we are the ones to decide if we want to wait decades for individuals to realise their ethical roles, or instead, start the professional journey with these significant questions.

Lastly, I will share my insights regarding institutional structures and the role that professional associations can do to shift paradigms in support of the world's flourishing. Although COVID-19 is a physical health threat, governments and professional associations have noticeably focussed much of their attention to support people's mental and emotional health due to the detriments of social isolation. The pessimistic (and probably, objectively neutral) part of me believes that this focus is only temporary. Institutional paradigms are hard to change because the role of institutions is to provide structure and stability, and not nurturing. Even after a disturbance, norms will continue to be established and new formations of hierarchy and authoritative power will continue to present social boundaries or regulations for ethical agents to navigate. Despite any shifts for increased compassionate institutional practices, they cannot provide authentic community. Turner's (1969) idea of *communitas*, which I consider as authentic community, is made of equal members. Authentic community is also the formation of authentic culture, which is life-serving and cosmological (Fisher 2013b; Heidegger 1992). Authentic community can only be created when self-aware and reflexive people engage together in honest and non-judgemental discussion. These opportunities are initiated by individuals who want to share their flourishing selves in a flourishing community. I recommend that those who want authentic community, and are ready to share, to step up to the plate and lead the way.

In the case of landscape architecture, professional bodies such as the CSLA and the ASLA will continue to provide administrative and professional support. The areas where they can shift to better support flourishing are in initiatives that help members become more secure as *human beings*, first and foremost, before any prescribed assets as landscape architects. For example, professional development programs can focus more on personal and interpersonal qualities such as listening, courage, and self-worth. Mid-career professionals or landscape architects who have lost any innocent and idealistic views of the world or cannot find a niche to express themselves in their work will be

disillusioned and apathetic towards the sacredness of making place and being a steward of life. Therefore, support for mental, emotional, and spiritual health, either through employers or directly through associations are areas that landscape architecture organisations could assist towards nurturing and maintaining personal morale, empathy, and confidence. Approaches to mental health, for the most part, have been treated in modern societies as band-aid solutions to personal problems. However, I would argue that mental health starts with emotional and spiritual health and is pertinent to flourishing. If landscape architects are to contribute towards place-making, they need to come from an internal place of emotional security and enthusiasm.

In addition to encouragement and verbal support, some interview participants have given suggestions on how this project could lead to further research. Although my personal prospects in the profession of landscape architecture are not clear, these research ideas are meaningful to share here and ponder over. One interview participant thought that identifying places that the public already finds poignant and magical is important for city planning. A research project directed towards the city's citizens and their relationship with the city's landscapes could help landscape architects and planners recognise and advocate for these places. Another interview participant suggested that the research could be transformed into a process-design platform. The research could become the hermeneutics of poignant landscape design in action, for example, creating a prototype design project for a spiritual space (i.e., a church was mentioned as an example in the interview) with a group of participants. Since the purpose of the research is less about the finished product and more about the process, this project idea could potentially reveal a certain praxis for poignant landscapes and a flourishing ethics through the observation of how a group works together to interpret and implement the creation of a poignant place that also contributes towards team flourishing. The two research ideas are quite different. One focusses on actual landscapes and the

other focusses on people's behaviour. However, a project about poignant landscapes and flourishing is always about relationships, either between people or between person and land.

Since I started this concluding chapter with one landscape architect's suggestion of adapting my research to architecture, I am closing the chapter with a final consideration of the commonalities present in landscape architecture and in other vocations. My conclusion: there is not a career that is considered a life calling that does not consider ethics and the flourishing of people and societies. Therefore, professions or disciplines that "serve" humanity's greater good are always bigger in scope than the definition of the profession itself. One research participant, who was also my former employer, noted that my research interests have outgrown landscape architecture. He told me that my research reminded him of the late Anthony Bourdain who used cooking as a channel to connect society, culture, and landscape together. He believed that landscape architecture is a steppingstone for me to a much broader message. I certainly agree that landscape architecture has been a steppingstone for me to much greater insights and experiences. Through his comment, I felt seen despite the fact that I did not need to say specific words to lead him into this perception of me.

A study area that I am particularly interested in, now that I have allowed myself to be seen through this project, is the research of marginalised or untold stories of people's poignant relationships with nature. The idea came about as I listened to the audiobook version of Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*. As Kimmerer ([2013] 2016) weaved Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, with her own experiences as a descendant of the Potawatomi, a scientist, and a mother, I began to wonder about the narratives outside and around the "mother nature" archetype. While I resonated with Kimmerer's linkage of motherhood with nature, even though I am not a mother, I feel intrigued to explore how "mother nature" interfaces with ethnic and gender hegemonic stereotypes. For instance, I know of older East Asian mothers, like my own, who see nature as either frightening or as an unbearable reminder of low-class agricultural work. And since I see nature as a

human-world relationship, and poignant landscapes as gateways to existential belongingness, I cannot imagine that fathers, and men in general who have been stereotyped as being patriarchal over nature, would be left out of this vulnerability of being human. For me, nature is more than the “green space” out there; nature is a place within our hearts, the story we tell of ourselves, and the way we relate to the world. I hope that more of these stories can be told so that more people can be seen and heard, together enriching our greater story of humanity.

Finally, I end with the question: what if landscapes could help us be seen? Accordingly, landscape architecture would be the creation of moments and places where we can be seen, be heard, or even just “be,” because landscape architecture would be *part of*, and not a means to, something immensely profound in being human. I hold this vision, because I imagine that landscapes will always continue to be inspiration for myself and for others who inhabit this world, including those who call themselves landscape architects and those who do not.

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APPENDICES

The sun is shining—the sun is shining. That is Magic.

The flowers are growing—the roots are stirring. That is Magic.

Being alive is the Magic—being strong is the Magic.

The Magic is in me—the Magic is in me.

It is in me—it is in me.

It's in every one of us. It's in Ben Weatherstaff's back.

Magic! Magic! Come and help!

- Francis Hodgson Burnett ([1911] 2010, 265), *The Secret Garden*

Appendix A: Glossary

In my dissertation, I use common and philosophical terms in various ways. Sometimes these words are used in accordance to their standard meanings, but inherent in these normative definitions are inherent contradictions. Through my own process of hermeneutic deconstruction and reconstruction, I have worked to clarify how I would personally interpret these keywords. My interpretations are not meant to impose any universal definitions, but instead, they are the foundations to my language in this project, and therefore, serve as a benchmark for alternative interpretations that some readers may bring with them. The definitions noticeably self-reference each other, forming a hermeneutic circle of meaning.

Being: (Heidegger) The ontological essence of being human.

Culture: A society's tending of flourishing attitudes, behaviours, and practices. Artificial culture or anti-culture is considered a society's negligence to tend for these attitudes, behaviours, and practices, or the tending of non-flourishing attitudes, behaviours, and practices.

Ethics: An individual or a group's consideration of appropriate behaviours and practices in recognition that they, that is, the individual or group, are part of a social unit that affects the world. Ethics may be influenced by morality.

Experience:

1. (verb) The act of living moment-to-moment in awareness.
2. (noun, from the past) Memories of accumulated knowledge or wisdom.

3. (noun, in the present) A lived moment in a person's life.

Flourishing: A healthy growth process for plants, people, and communities.

Hermeneutics: A methodological process of analysing how words are interpreted and made into meaning. Words can be from written text, oral speech, or thought processes.

Judgement: The dualistic evaluation of a person, event, or thing. An inevitable "positive" or "negative" stance is placed.

Contrast with **discernment:** Making a choice towards the most appropriate action or position in order to act or not act.

Knowledge: Facts, information, and skills acquired through external sources, such as people, events, and instructional procedures.

Contrast with **wisdom:** Truths acquired through personal experience in relation with the external world (e.g. people, places, events) or internal processes (e.g. intuition, overcoming pain, connecting to a divine source).

Landscape:

1. (philosophical) An impression of a place through tangible and intangible perceptive cues; how an individual processes nature (i.e., the human-world relationship and its physical manifestation) in their consciousness.

2. (physical): A portion of the material world that embodies the meaning of place and nature as described in the philosophical definition above, which is experienced by a person or a group; the

representation of the meaning of place and nature as described in the philosophical definition above (e.g. a landscape painting).

Logos: (Ancient Greek via Heidegger) The manifestation of the world through the act of speech and language.

Morality: An individual's consideration of appropriate behaviours determined by one's spiritual position in the world.

Mythos: (Ancient Greek via Heidegger) Myth as narrative of the manifested world.

Nature:

1. (philosophical) A society's explanation for the human-world relationship.
2. (physical) The manifestation of the material world, which may or may not include humans and their creations depending on definition #1 above.
3. (process) 'Natural' refers to cycles and processes that are self-directed (or divinely directed depending on theological or spiritual position) and usually with little or no human imposition.

Ontology: The study of the essence of things; existential meaning to what a thing "is."

Phenomenology: The study of experience and how it manifests between elements of a person's internal and external world.

Poignant: The acute evoking of reflective emotions during an experience. Emotions can be triggered by thoughts or sensations.

Place: A physical and emotional environment where a person or community feels belonging and connectedness.

Sacred: A place, person, or thing that acts as a prompt towards a strong spiritual connection.

Sublime: An overwhelming aesthetic experience; an aesthetic response that reflects nature's dominance over humanity (Burke); or an aesthetic response that reflects humanity's struggle of rationality with the power of nature (Kant).

Soul:

1. (human and animals) The immaterial presence of Being or similar.
2. (other) The immaterial and animate presence of a place or thing.

Spirituality: The belief of a meaningful power, life force, or invisible element within or encompassing the connections and relationships between entities in the world, including people and other organisms, things, and events.

Contrast with **faith:** An individual's belief of a divine entity; a certain type of spiritual commitment.

Contrast with **religion:** Organisation of specific doctrines of faith among a group of people, usually following a leader.

Truth: Nuggets of awareness towards the meaning of Being.

Appendix B: Landscape Architecture Association Documents Review List and Analysis

Summary

The following is a list of the documents/texts that I reviewed from landscape architecture associations/organisations. The list is not inclusive of all documents available from these organisations, but these texts were selected based on how the documents represent the profession through the organisation’s values, policies, and ideals.

Table 6: List of landscape architecture documents reviewed

Type	Organisation	Document	Last amendment
About the profession	ASLA	About (webpage)	No date, accessed 2019
	CSLA	About (webpage)	No date, accessed 2019
	CSLA	Value of Landscape Architecture in Society (webpage)	2015
Professional codes and ethics	ASLA	Code of Ethics	2017
	ASLA	Code of Environmental Ethics	2017
	CSLA	Professional Conduct (webpage)	No date, accessed 2019
	OALA	Code of Ethics	2016
Strategic plans	CSLA	Strategic Plan 2018-2020	2018
	LACF	Strategic Plan 2016-2019	2017
	CELA	Strategic Plan 2012-2018	2016
Charters, manifestos, and declarations	ASLA	Smart Policies for a Changing Climate	2017
	CSLA	Canadian Landscape Charter Initiative	2019
	CSLA	Canadian Landscape Charter	2015
	LAF	New Landscape Declaration	2016
	LAF	Action Plan	No date, accessed 2019
Accreditation	ASLA	Accreditation and Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (webpage)	No date, accessed 2019
	OALA	LARE Info (webpage)	Accessed 2019

Coding analysis

Table 7: Coding list and frequency from landscape architecture documents

Category	Code	Count	% Codes	Cases	% Cases
Self	creative and holistic approach	7	3.90%	4	23.50%
	learning	6	3.40%	3	17.60%
	landscape architecture (l.a.) definition	5	2.80%	3	17.60%
	autonomy	2	1.10%	2	11.80%
Natural/ physical environment	health of natural resources	14	7.90%	5	29.40%
	policy and governance (of environment)	9	5.10%	5	29.40%
	sustainability	8	4.50%	5	29.40%
	traditional knowledge	4	2.20%	2	11.80%
	cultural heritage and value	4	2.20%	2	11.80%
	aesthetics	4	2.20%	2	11.80%
	agricultural	3	1.70%	2	11.80%
	technology	3	1.70%	3	17.60%
wildlife	2	1.10%	2	11.80%	
Society	honesty and transparency	28	15.70%	3	17.60%
	building community and advocacy	17	9.60%	8	47.10%
	unbiased and conflict of interest	8	4.50%	3	17.60%
	healthy lifestyle	8	4.50%	4	23.50%
	follow the law	7	3.90%	4	23.50%
	raising standards	6	3.40%	4	23.50%
	confidentiality	6	3.40%	2	11.80%
	equality	5	2.80%	5	29.40%
	reputation	5	2.80%	3	17.60%
	protect clients and public	4	2.20%	2	11.80%
	reporting	3	1.70%	3	17.60%
	security	1	0.60%	1	5.90%
	use of the title	1	0.60%	1	5.90%
non-association	1	0.60%	1	5.90%	
Metaphysical	spiritual and humanity	7	3.90%	5	29.40%

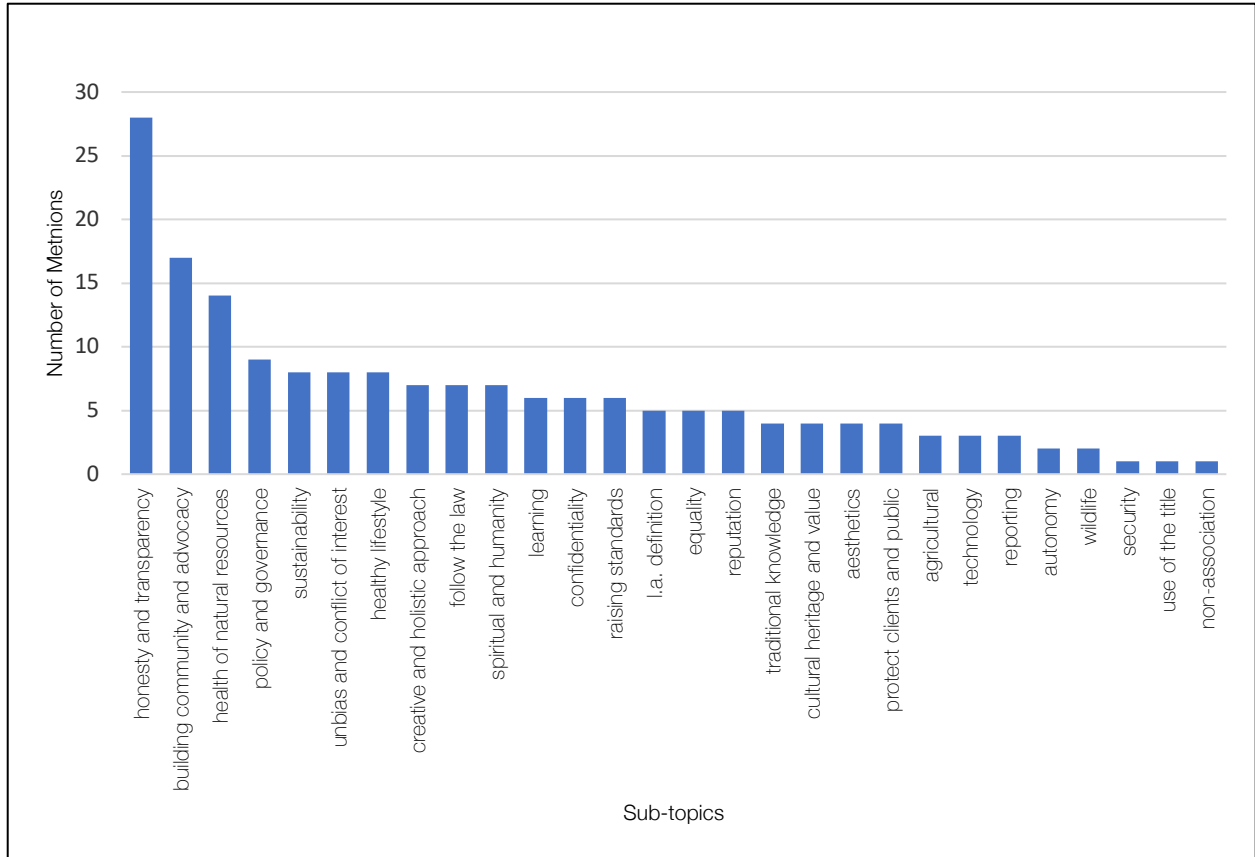


Figure 15: Frequency of subtopics in landscape architecture documents

Appendix C: Survey Questions, Results, and Analysis

Summary

Title: Landscape Experiences and Values of Landscape Architecture

Date available: May 2019 to September 2019

Total number of responses: 53 (33 Canada, 17 USA, 1 Brazil, 2 unknown)

Disqualified responses (incomplete/not submitted): 44

Distribution methods: Direct email (mass); email to participants who declined an interview; included in e-news/website for CSLA, OALA, BCSLA, NYASLA; Twitter; Instagram; Reddit (Landscape architecture); Land8 Forum; LinkedIn

Description to Participants

Summary of the research and survey:

My name is Van Thi Diep (OALA, on leave of absence). I am currently completing a PhD at York University in the Faculty of Environmental Studies. I would like to invite you to take part in this study, which concerns the relationship between poignant landscape experiences and the values of landscape architects. You are being asked to voluntarily complete this online survey involving questions about your landscape experiences and your opinions on what good landscape architectural practice is. Additional demographic questions will be asked in order to consider variable factors that influence survey responses. The survey should take about 20 minutes to complete. Your answers will be collected when you click “submit survey” at the end. Clicking “I agree to participate” in the next page will demonstrate your full consent to participate.

[Consent agreement details – omitted in appendix]

Questions and Results

“Poignant” Landscapes:

I am interested in landscapes as a phenomenon that intersects materiality, consciousness, and spirituality. For me, landscapes tell the story of a sacred human-world relationship found in nature. Therefore, landscapes can be powerfully poignant and evocative. In this research, a “poignant” landscape is a place that moves us, makes us think and feel differently, or makes us appreciative of where we are in the world.

1. To start, which of the following images do you feel are most “poignant”? (Select up to 3)

Table 8: Rankings for poignant landscape images in survey (phase 1)

Image description (multiple choice selection)	Count	Percentage
Forest	34	22
Canyon	26	17
911 Memorial	23	15
Abandoned building / ruin	19	13
Ancient Greek columns	16	10
Desert	9	6
Golf course	9	6
Zen garden and temple	7	4
Factory pollution	7	4

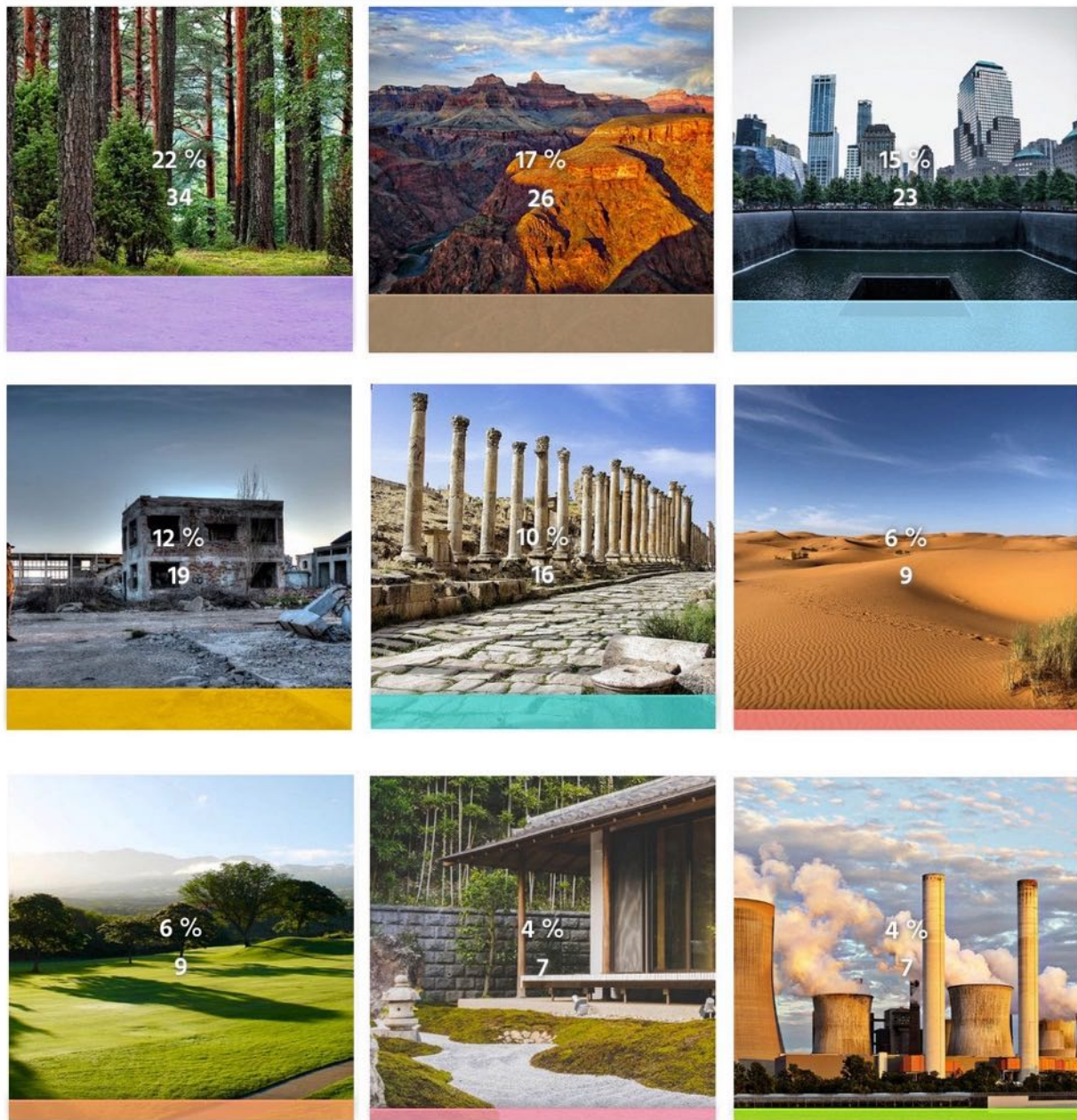


Figure 16: Images and rankings for poignant landscapes in survey (phase 1)

2. Which of the following images would you consider as “poignant”? (Select all that apply.)

Table 9: Rankings for poignant landscape images in survey (phase 2)

Image description (multiple choice selection)	Count	Percentage
Arched bridge with water reflection	36	7
Starry sky with 2 rocks	34	7
Religious architecture with orange glowing lights and water reflection	32	6
Rock towers	29	6
Historical building ruin with mountains (at sunset)	28	6
Forest with mist and vines	27	5
South Asian temple ruin with tree roots	25	5
Red torii gates, Kyoto	24	5
Alps (farm, hills, and mountains)	24	5
White atrium with peak cathedral roof	23	5
Bamboo walkway	22	4
Fall North American mountains	21	4
Middle Eastern castle and desert with camel (at sunset)	20	4
Close up of red mushroom	19	4
Waterfall	19	4
Forest with fallen tree and mossy groundcover	17	3
Beach with cliffs	17	3
Turner's painting <i>Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth</i>	15	3
Van Gogh's painting <i>Landscape with Ploughed Fields</i>	15	3
Monet's <i>Waterlilies</i>	12	2

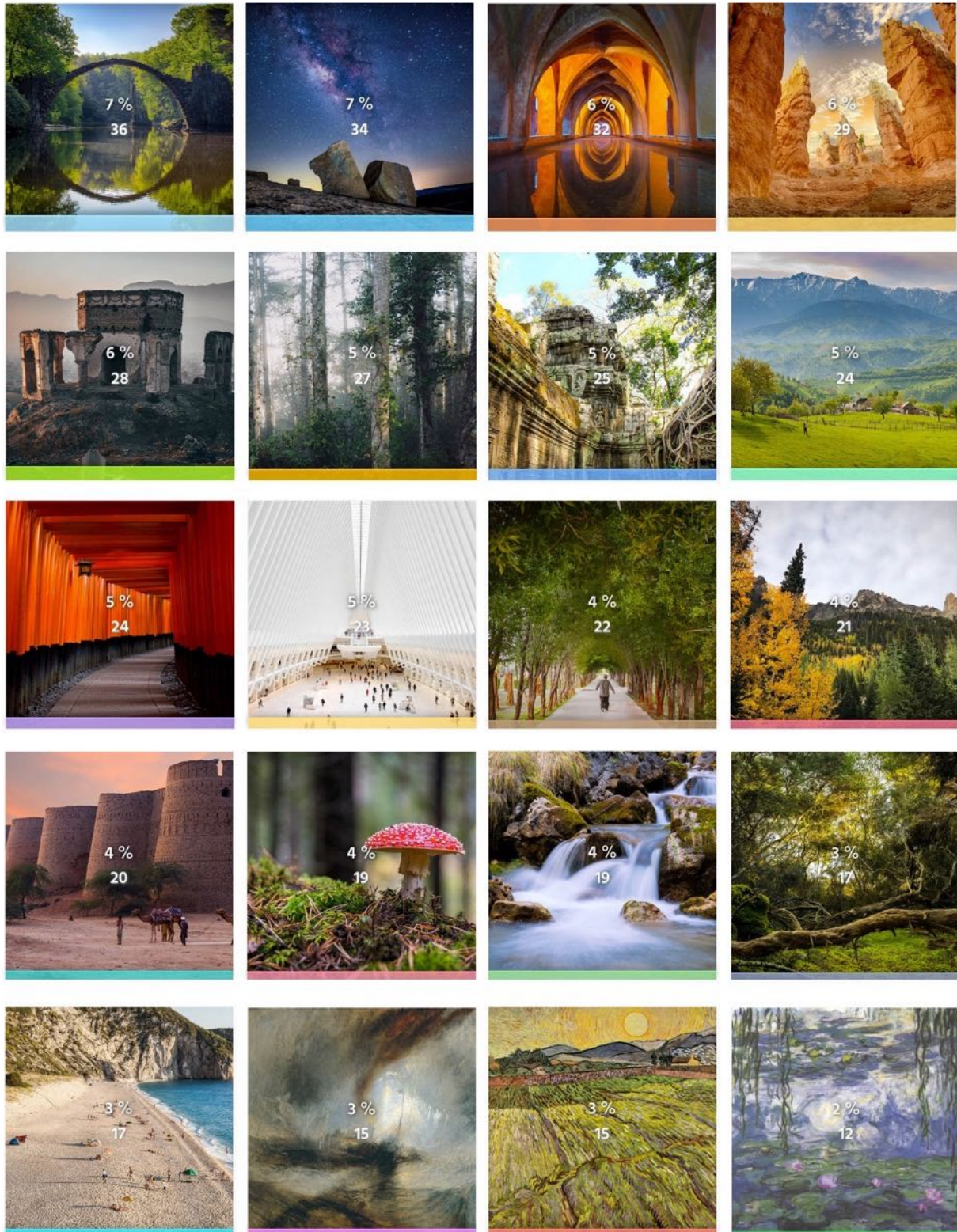


Figure 17: Images and rankings for poignant landscapes in survey (phase 2)

3. What places, local or around the world, would you consider as “poignant”? They may be places you have been to or places you have heard about. Include some keywords or characteristic to describe them (eg. serene, majestic, geometrical, flowing, etc.)

List up to 3. Example: Stonehenge – monumental, sacred, mysterious

- Answers were coded and analysed for their frequency.

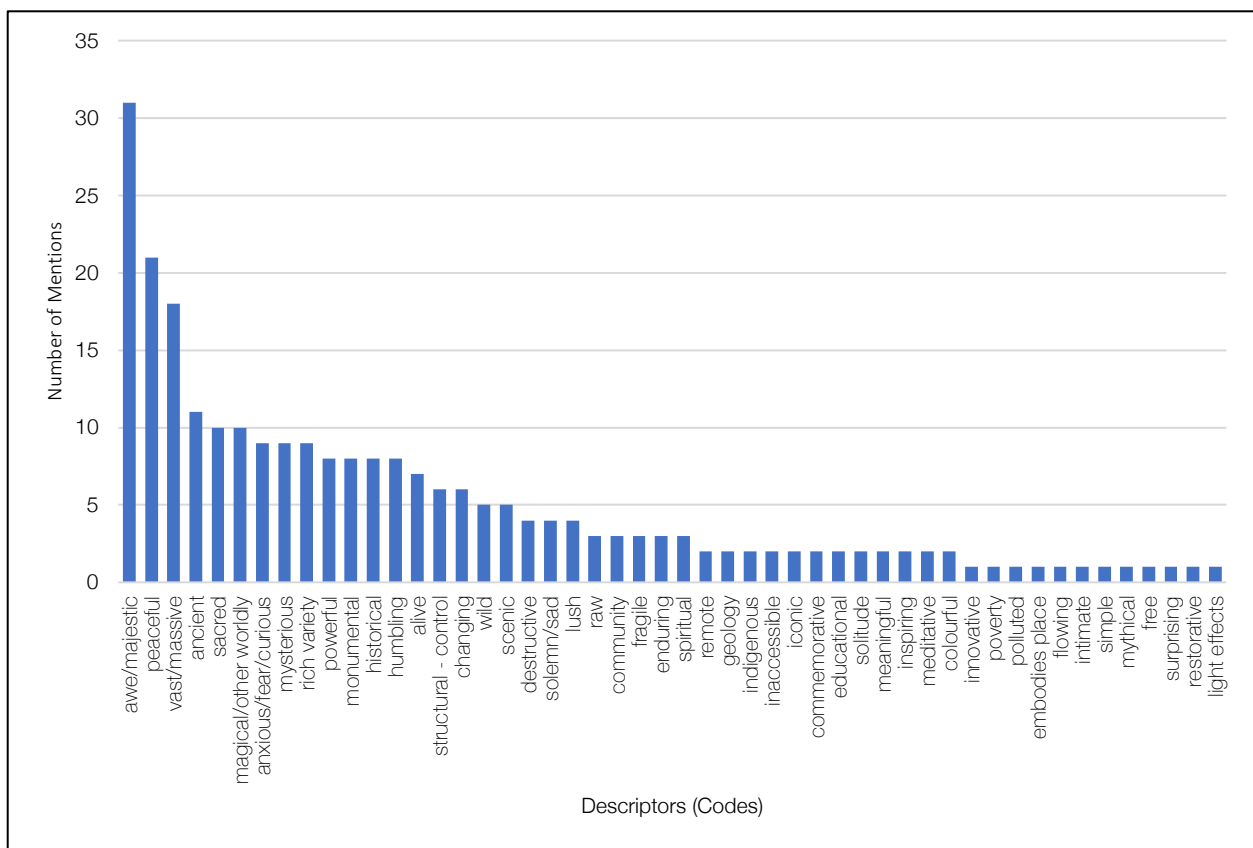


Figure 18: Frequency of descriptors for "poignant" landscapes in survey

4. Think of a memorable landscape experience from your past. This is an experience relating to a landscape that you still find special. It can be related to a real physical landscape or a virtual one, such as movie scene, a place in a book, or a painting.

Where was this landscape? (For example, a view of El Capitan at Yosemite, or Lawren Harris’ painting ‘Lake and Mountains’...)

- Answers were reviewed non-systematically. Majority of participants listed national parks or “nature” areas in North America. Some other answers include backyards, movies, and cityscapes.

5. What type of landscape was it?

Table 10: Type of poignant landscape that survey participants experienced

Type (multiple choice selection)	Count	Percentage
A real physical one	47	90
A virtual one from a movie or a painting	4	8
An imaginary concept from a book or a story	1	2
Other, describe:	0	0

6. How did the experience affect you? (check all that apply)

Table 11: How survey participants were affected by a poignant landscape

Affects (multiple choice selection)	Count	Percentage
It made me feel a special connection to nature	44	19
It made me more aware of my physical senses (seeing, hearing, smell, taste, or touch)	36	15
It made me feel emotional	33	14
It made me feel a special connection to the universe	27	11
It took me to a state beyond what I would normally take for granted (for example, it felt extra-ordinary or supernatural)	23	10
It made me feel something I cannot clearly explain (for example, a concept such as the "soul")	21	9
It made me think	19	8
It made me feel a special connection to humanity	12	5
Other, describe:	8	3
It made me feel a special connection to society	7	3
None of the above	0	0

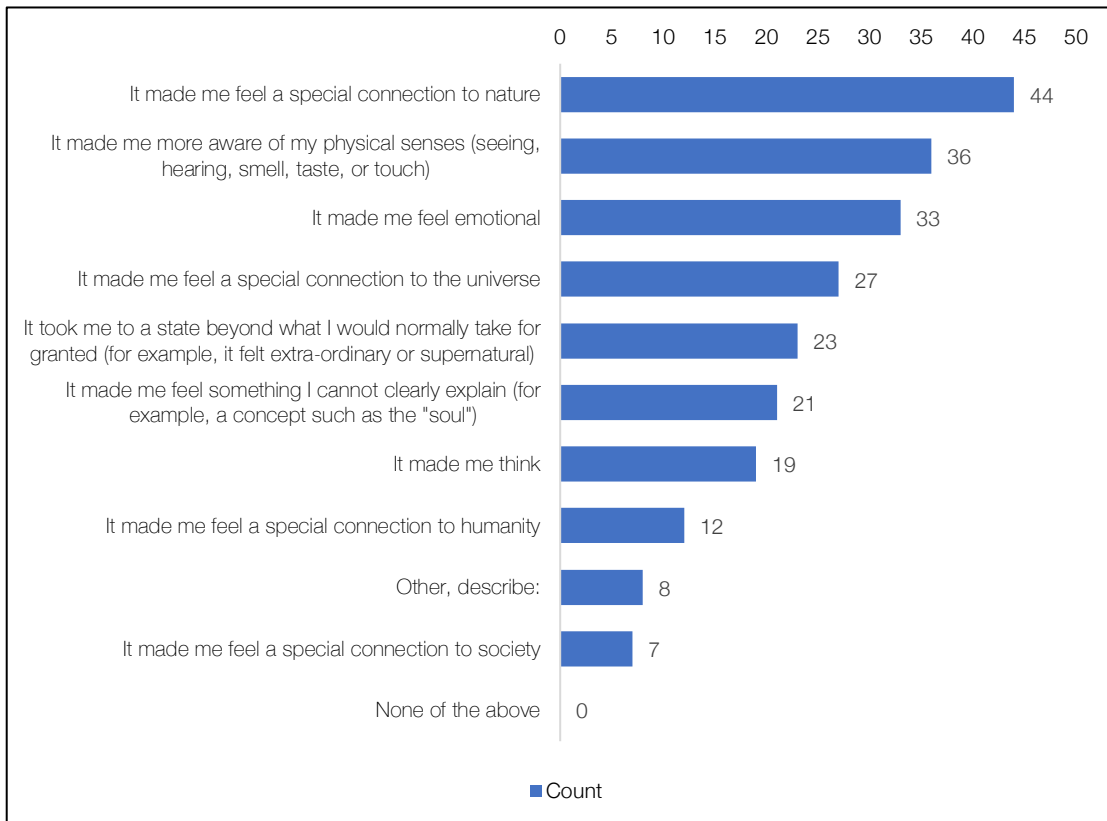


Figure 19: Ranking of how survey participants were affected by a poignant landscape

7. When did this landscape experience occur?

Table 12: Age when survey participants experienced their poignant landscape

Age groups (multiple choice selection)	Count	Percentage
Early adult years (20-29)	21	40
Adult years (30+)	15	28
Adolescent years (12-19)	9	17
Childhood years (0-11)	7	13

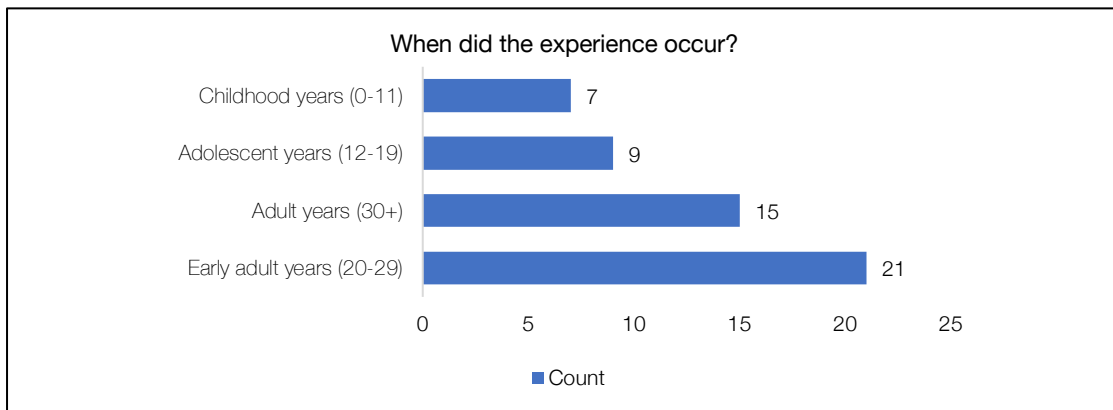


Figure 20: Age when survey participants experienced their poignant landscape

8. Did this experience affect your view of what is “nature”?

Table 13: Influence of poignant landscape experiences on view of nature in survey

Did the experience affect participant's view (multiple choice)	Count	Percentage
Yes. Explain how.	29	54
No	18	33
Not sure	6	9

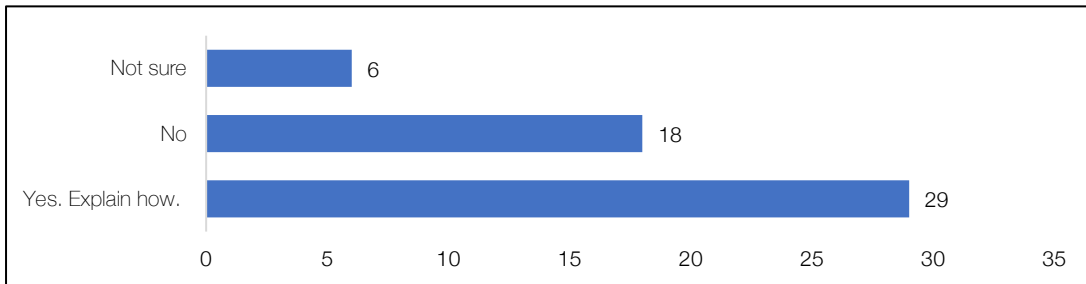


Figure 21: Influence of poignant landscape experiences on view of nature in survey

9. Did this experience affect your view of what is “landscape”?

Table 14: Influence of poignant landscape experience on view of landscape in survey

Did the experience affect participant's view (multiple choice)	Count	Percentage
No	23	43
Yes. Explain how.	18	33
Not sure	12	22

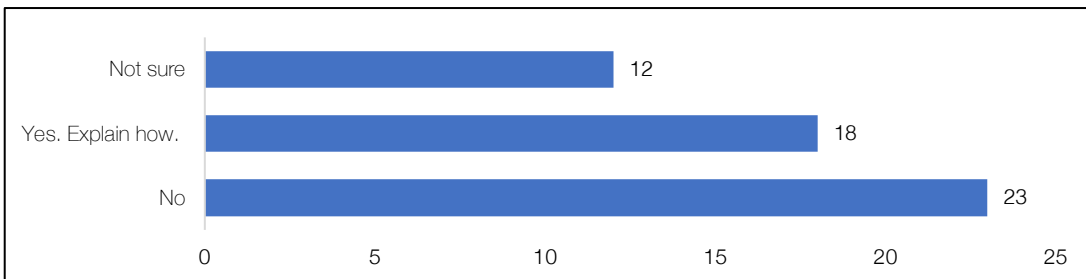


Figure 22: Influence of poignant landscape experience on view of landscape in survey

10. Did this experience affect your view of landscape architecture?

Table 15: Influence of poignant landscape experience on view of landscape architecture in survey

Did the experience affect participant's view (multiple choice)	Count	Percentage
No	26	49
Yes. Explain how.	21	39
Not sure	6	11

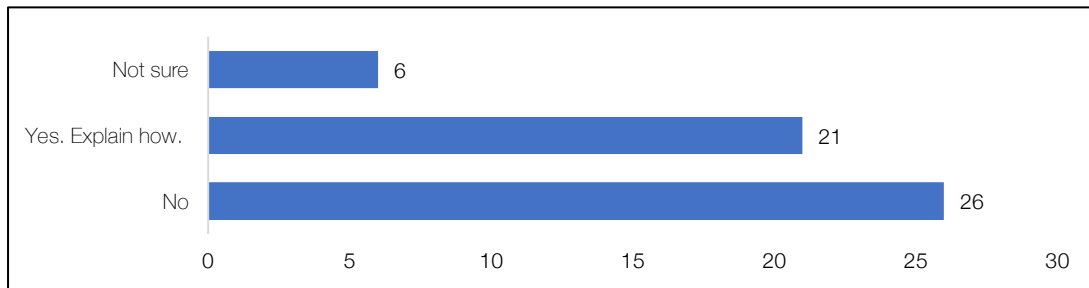


Figure 23: Influence of poignant landscape experience on view of landscape architecture in survey

- Answers for Questions 8, 9, and 10 were coded and analysed for their frequency

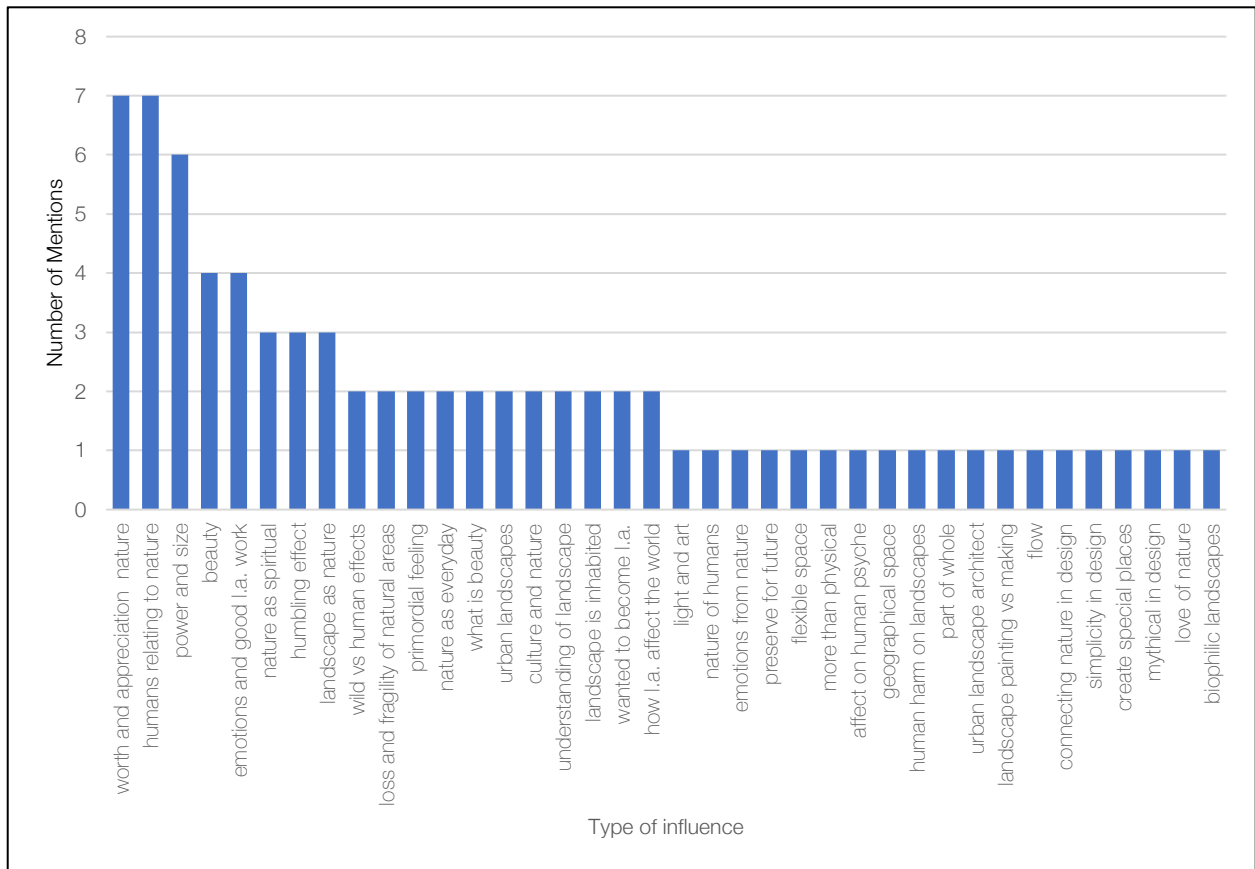


Figure 24: Frequency of influences affecting view of nature, landscape, or landscape architecture

The Role of a Landscape Architect

I would like to understand more about your views on the role of being a landscape architect.

11. Which of the following goals do you think are the most important for a fulfilling life as a landscape architect? (Choose up to 3)

Table 16: Goals for a fulfilling life as a landscape architect from survey

Goals for a fulfilling life as a landscape architect (multiple choice)	Count	Percentage
Creating more natural habitats and sustainable ecological systems	34	18
Creating inspiring or meaningful landscapes	33	17
Creating attractive and comfortable places for people to live, work, or play	33	17
Making social change through the creation of landscapes	27	14
Preserving natural habitats and ecological systems	23	12
Educating people through landscapes	11	5
Making a good living	11	5
Other, describe:	10	5
Creating well-known and acclaimed landscapes	1	0

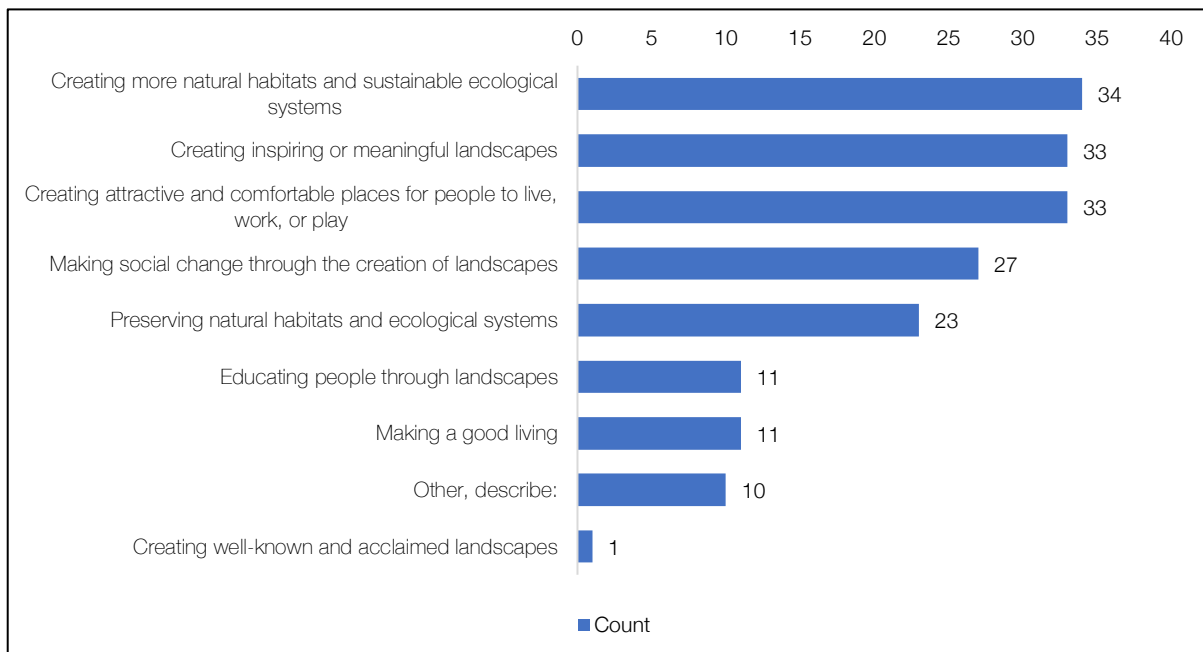


Figure 25: Ranking of goals for a fulfilling life as a landscape architect from survey

12. What do you think are the best ways to achieve this fulfilling life as a landscape architect?
 (Choose up to 3)

Table 17: Best ways to achieve a fulfilling life as a landscape architect from survey

Ways for a fulfilling life as a landscape architect (multiple choice)	Count	Percentage
By cultivating stronger connections with the natural environment	40	24
By learning from available knowledge or developing research	35	21
By being creative and coming up with new ideas and approaches to design	29	17
By cultivating stronger connections with relevant societies and cultures	24	14
By working hard	18	10
By cultivating a stronger spirituality or connection to the universe	13	8
Other, describe:	7	4

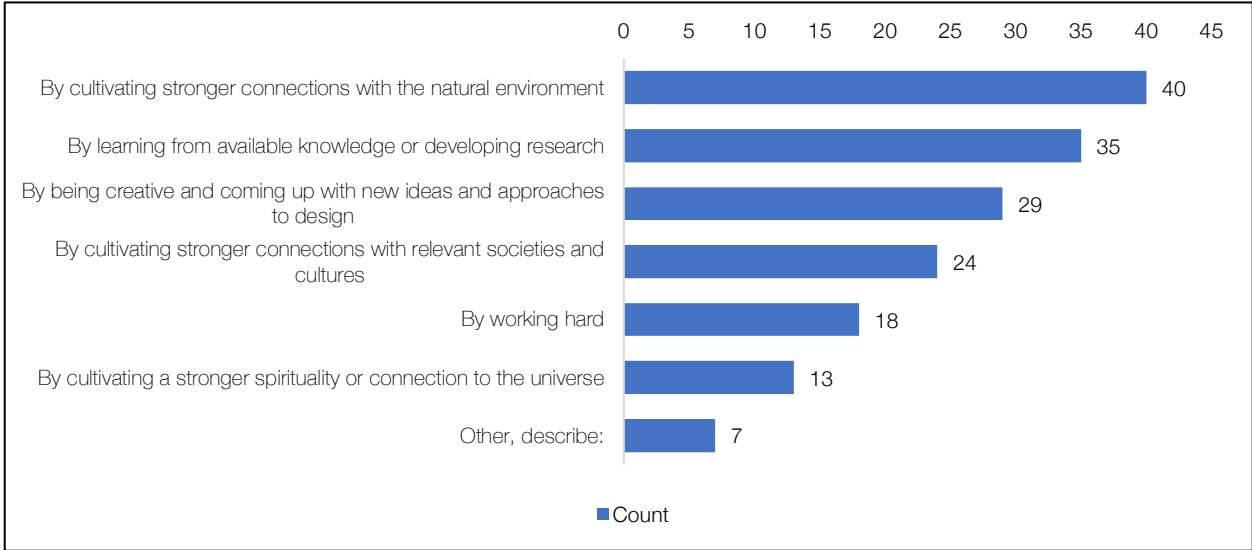


Figure 26: Ranking of best ways to achieve a fulfilling life as a landscape architect from survey

13. Why did you become a landscape architect?

- Answers were reviewed non-systematically and compared with interview transcripts.

The Profession of Landscape Architecture

In this section, I would like to understand more about your values regarding doing good landscape architecture, and how well you consider the profession is fairing in relation to those values. The meaning of “good” is personal to you, but it could be considered along the lines of *admirable, honorable, sincere, responsible, or commendable* landscape architecture.

14. Which of the following goals do you consider most important to doing good landscape architecture? (Choose up to 3)

Table 18: Goals important to doing good landscape architecture from survey

Goals important for good landscape architecture (multiple choice)	Count	Percentage
Creating places that respect the natural environment and existing ecological systems	34	20
Creating places that are inspiring or meaningful	23	13
Creating well used places	22	13
Cultivating stronger connections with the natural environment	20	11
Creating more natural habitats and sustainable ecological systems	17	9
Creating places that respect existing cultures and societies	15	8
Cultivating stronger connections with societies and cultures	12	7
Finding a good balance between client needs (e.g. budget) and design	11	6
Being innovative and using new technology or techniques	5	2
Other, describe:	5	2
Creating places that are educational	2	1
Cultivating a stronger spirituality or connection to the universe	1	0

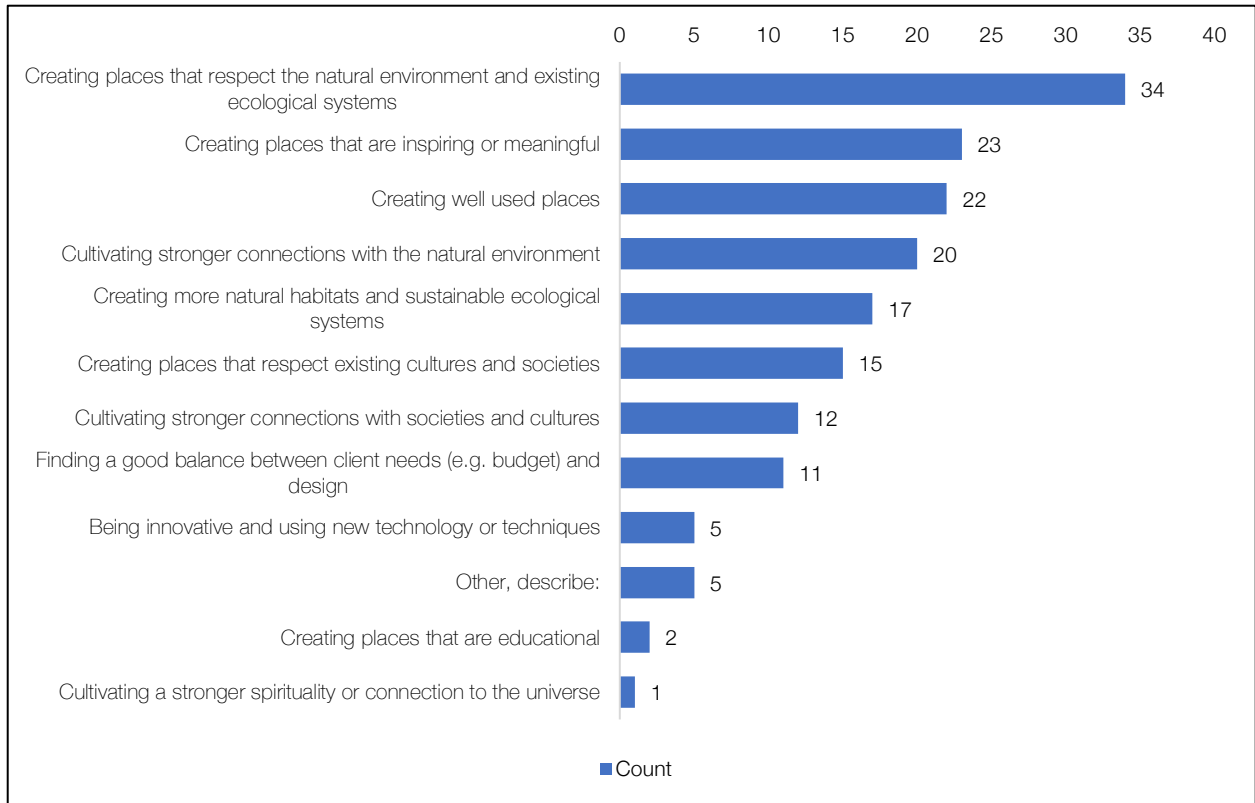


Figure 27: Ranking of goals important to doing good landscape architecture from survey

15. How well do you think the profession of landscape architecture (in North America) is succeeding in the goals you selected? (1 star: least succeeding, 10 stars: most succeeding, 0 stars: prefer not to answer)

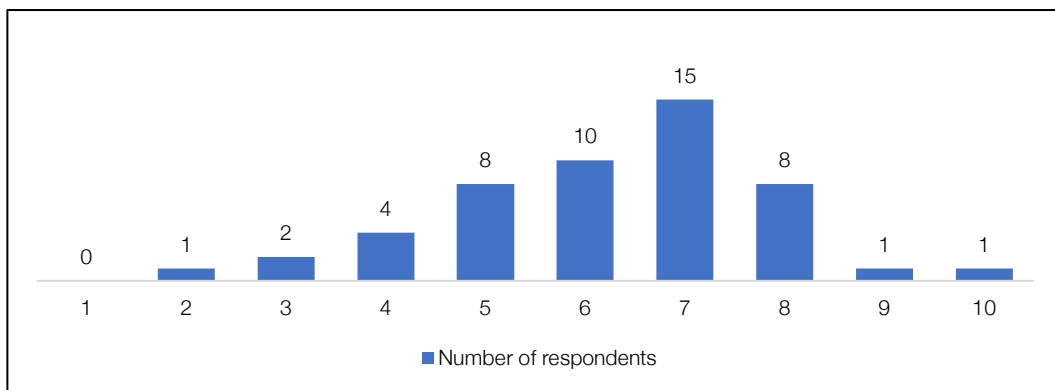


Figure 28: Rating of landscape architecture profession in accordance to goals selected as important to doing good landscape architecture in survey

Optional comment for your rating above:

- Answers were reviewed non-systematically and compared with interview transcripts.

15. What are the best ways for the profession to aspire to good landscape architecture?

(Choose up to 3)

Table 19: Best ways as a profession to aspire to good landscape architecture from the survey

Ways to aspire to good landscape architecture (multiple choice)	Count	Percentage
Engaging with the natural environment	32	19
Encourage creative and imaginative approaches to design	25	15
Engaging with communities	24	14
Encourage designs that engage with the physical senses and emotions of users	20	12
Exploring new places as individuals (e.g. travelling) and then collectively sharing experiences to understand the wonders of the world	17	10
Promote new technology and innovative techniques	13	7
Self-reflection as individuals and then collectively sharing the gained wisdom to understand our place in the world	12	7
Learning from older traditions	11	6
Other, describe:	8	5
Promote efficiency	2	1

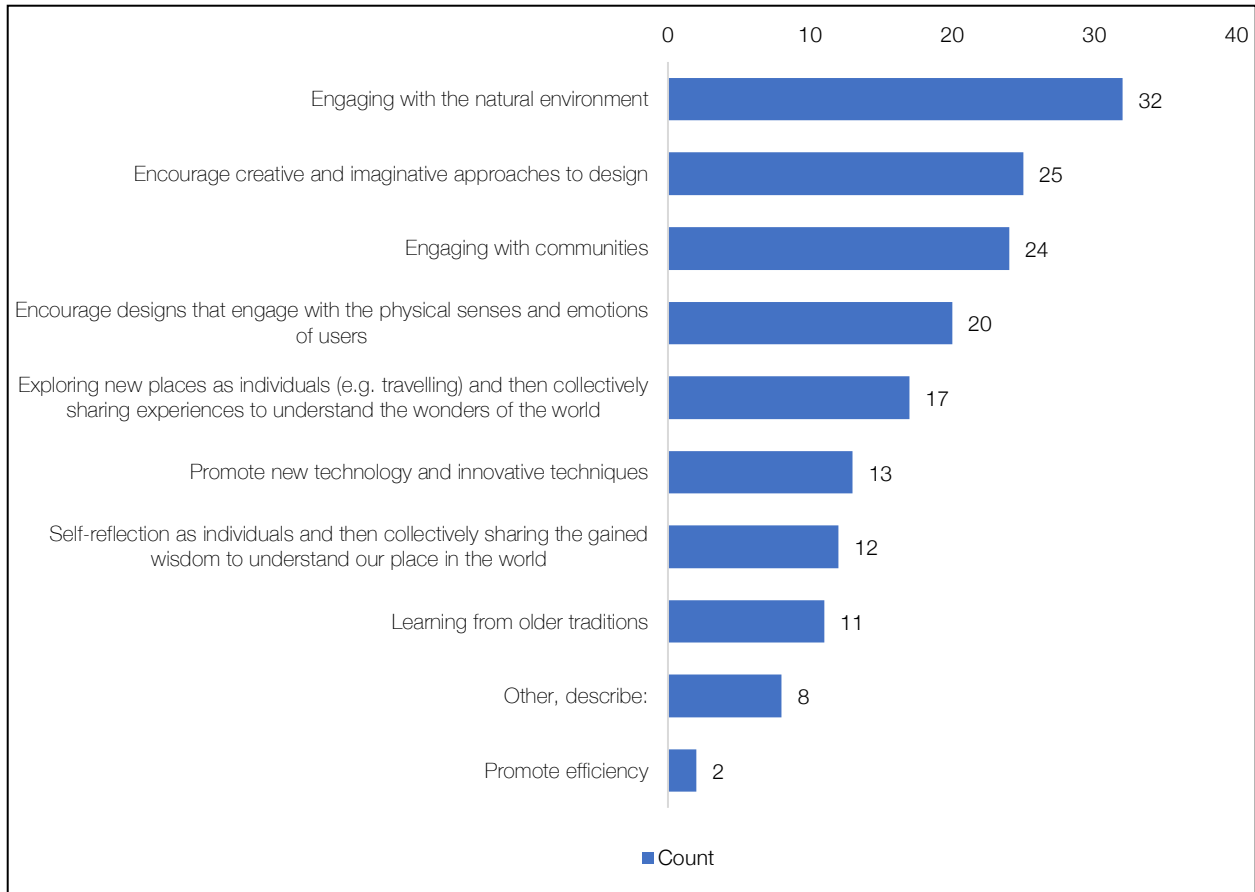


Figure 29: Ranking of ways to aspire as a profession to doing good landscape architecture from survey

16. How well do you think the profession (in North America) is succeeding in the aspirations you selected as best for good landscape architecture? (1 star: least succeeding, 10 stars: most succeeding, 0 stars: prefer not to answer)

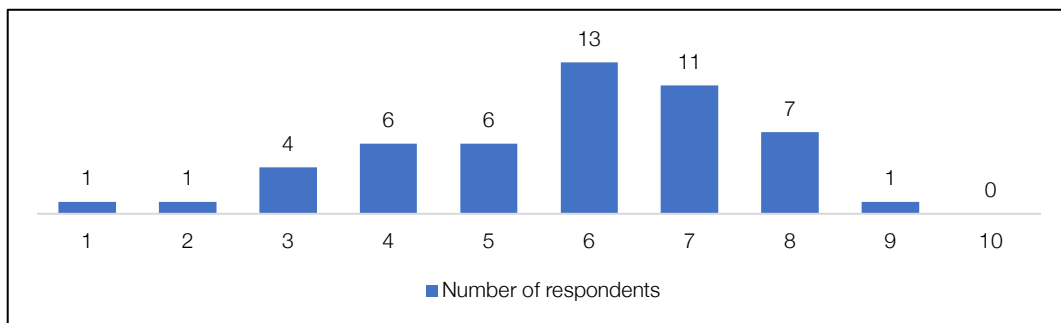


Figure 30: Rating of landscape architecture profession in accordance to aspirations for good landscape architecture from survey

Optional comment for your rating above:

- Answers were reviewed non-systematically and compared with interview transcripts.

17. In relation to my research interest, how well do you think the profession of landscape architecture (in North America) is succeeding in making poignant landscapes?

(1 star: least succeeding, 10 stars: most succeeding, 0 stars: prefer not to answer)

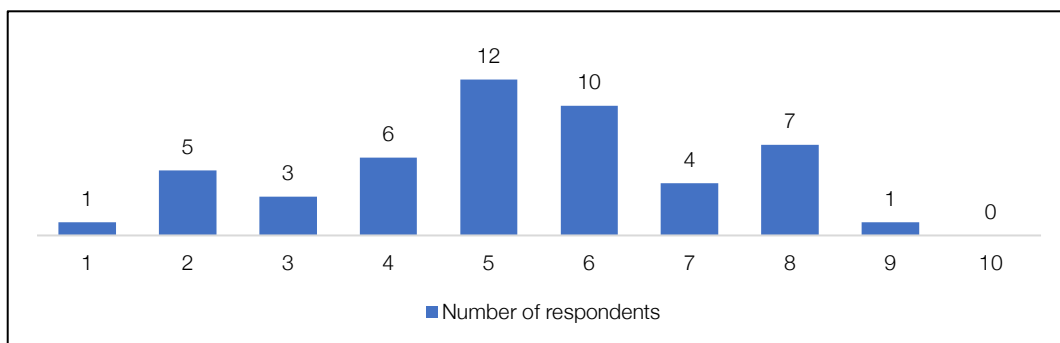


Figure 31: Rating of landscape architecture profession in making poignant landscapes from survey

Optional comment for your rating above:

- Answers were reviewed non-systematically and compared with interview transcripts.

Background and Demographics

The following questions are about your background in landscape architecture and your demographics.

18. Where do you presently practice?

(City/Town; Province/State; Country)

- Answers were reviewed non-systematically.

19. How many years have you worked in landscape architecture?

- Answers ranged from 0-40 (average 16.5)

20. What position do you hold within the profession?

Table 20: Career positions of survey participants

Position (multiple choice selection)	Count	Percentage
Senior landscape architect or equivalent	10	18
Landscape architect or equivalent	10	18
Other, describe:	9	17
Partner, principal, or owner of a practice	9	16
Junior, recent graduate, or intern	6	11
Academic or educator	5	9
Associate or managerial role	4	7

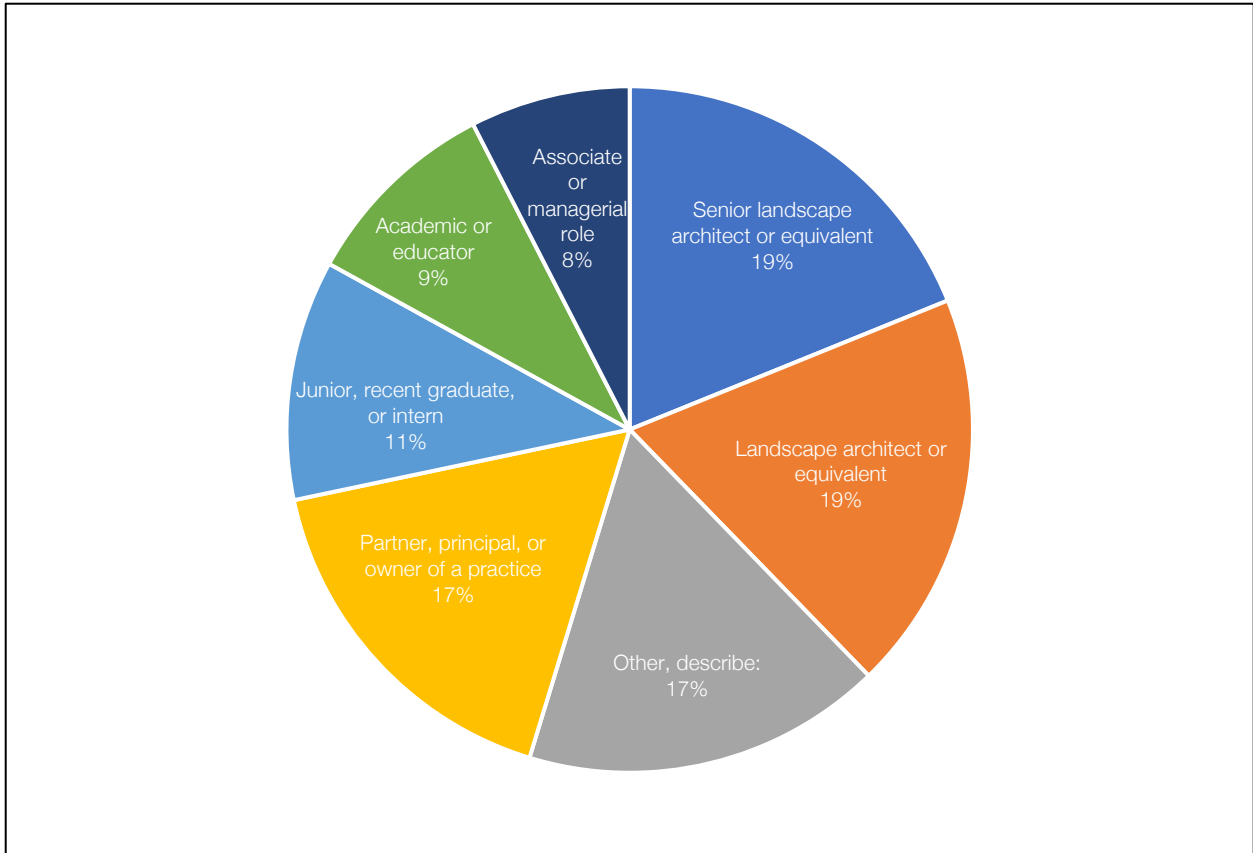


Figure 32: Distribution of career positions of survey participants

21. Where did you study landscape architecture?

(School; City; Country)

- Answers were reviewed non-systematically.

22. Which of the following topics were taught as part of your education/training in landscape architecture? (Check all that apply)

Table 21: Topics taught as part of landscape architecture training from survey

Topics (multiple choice selection)	Count	Percentage
Natural sciences (ecology, botany, physics, chemistry, geology, and/or biology)	43	20
Landscape history, before 1800	42	20
Environmental ethics	31	15
Social and/or political sciences	23	11
Philosophy (metaphysics, phenomenology, epistemology, and/or aesthetics)	22	10
Art history	19	9
Non-Western traditions and worldviews	11	5
Other, describe:	10	4
Theology, religion, and/or spiritual practices	5	2

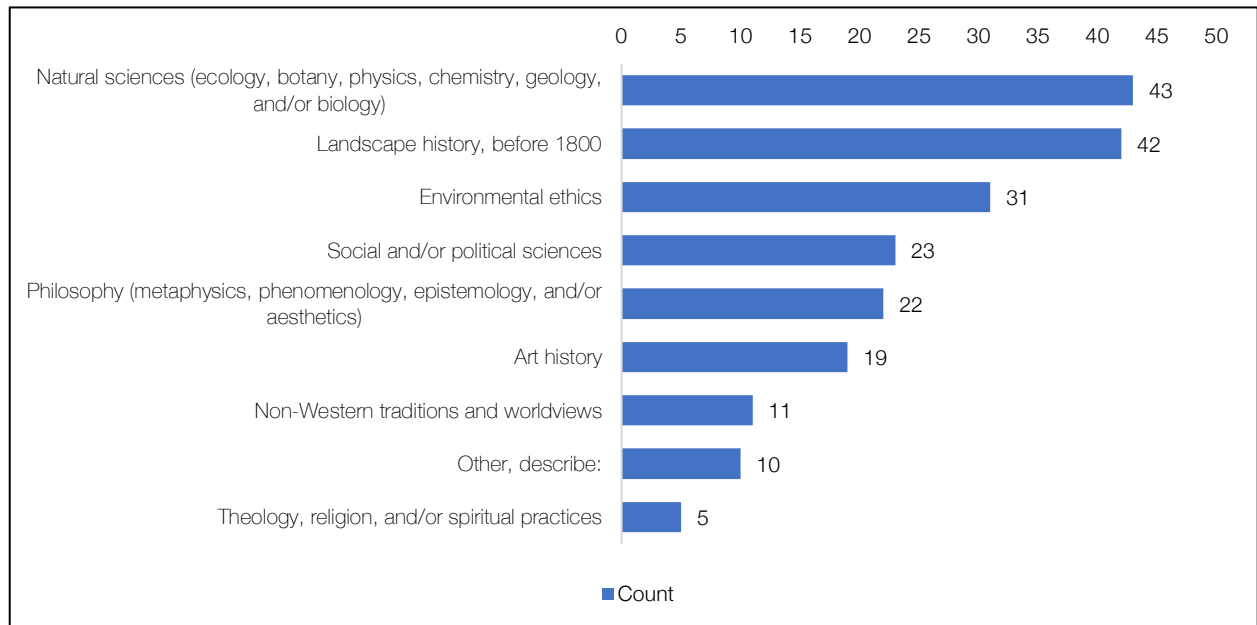


Figure 33: Ranking of topics part of landscape architecture training from survey

18. What gender do you identify with?

Table 22: Gender of survey participants

Gender	Count	Percentage
Female	29	55
Male	21	40
Prefer not to answer	1	1
Prefer to self-describe:	1	1

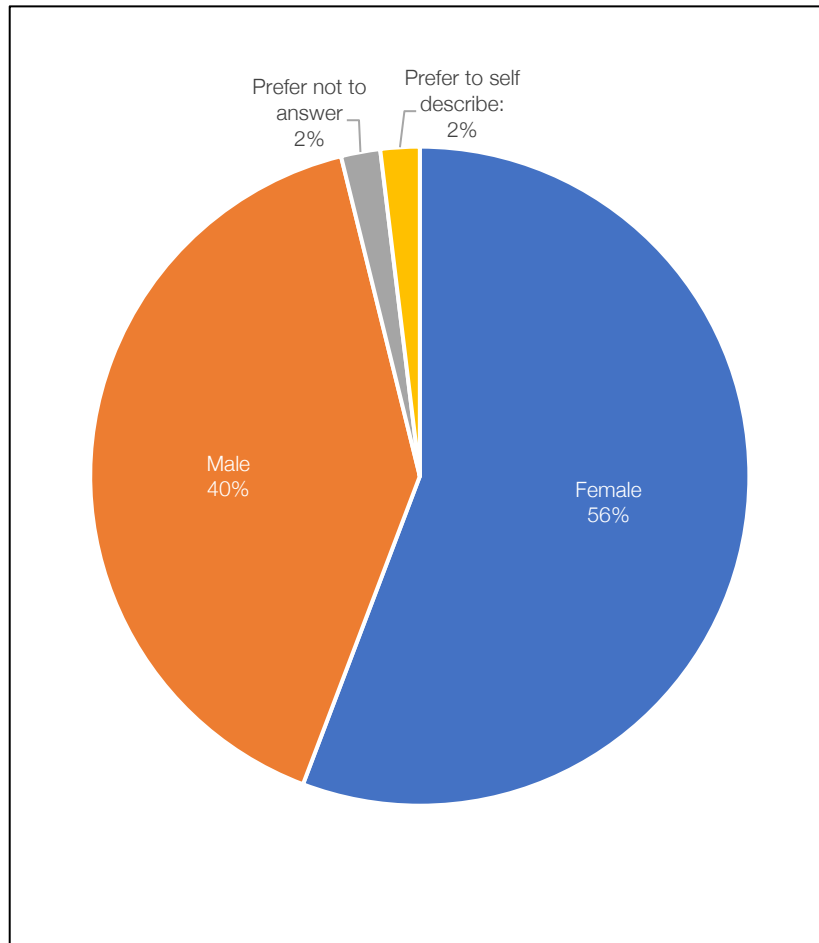


Figure 34: Gender distribution of survey participants

19. What ethnic background(s) do you originate from?

(For example: English, French, Chinese, Indian, German, Scottish, Cree, Mi'kmaq, Inuit, Filipino, Irish, Dutch, Ukrainian, Polish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Korean, Jamaican, Greek, Iranian, Lebanese, Mexican, Somali, Colombian, etc.)

- Answers were reviewed non-systematically; most common answers were English and a mix of Western and Central European, with the occasional South European, North American, Indigenous, and Chinese ethnic origins.

20. What spiritual/theistic position do you identify with? (Note: the term “God” in this survey is a general umbrella term for “divine source” and does not identify with any specific religion)

Table 23: Spiritual/theistic positions of survey participants

Spiritual/theistic position (multiple choice)	Count	Percentage
Monotheism (belief in one God)	12	19
Atheism (belief that God(s) do not exist)	11	17
Agnosticism (belief that existence of God(s) are unknowable)	11	17
Pantheism (belief that the physical universe is the manifestation of God)	9	14
Prefer not to answer	6	9
Panentheism (belief that God includes the universe but also extends beyond it - usually by an overarching divine interrelationship)	6	9
If you identify with a specific religion or belief system, please specify	5	7
Apatheism (not interested in considering the existence of God)	3	4
Polytheism (belief in a set of Gods or deities)	0	0

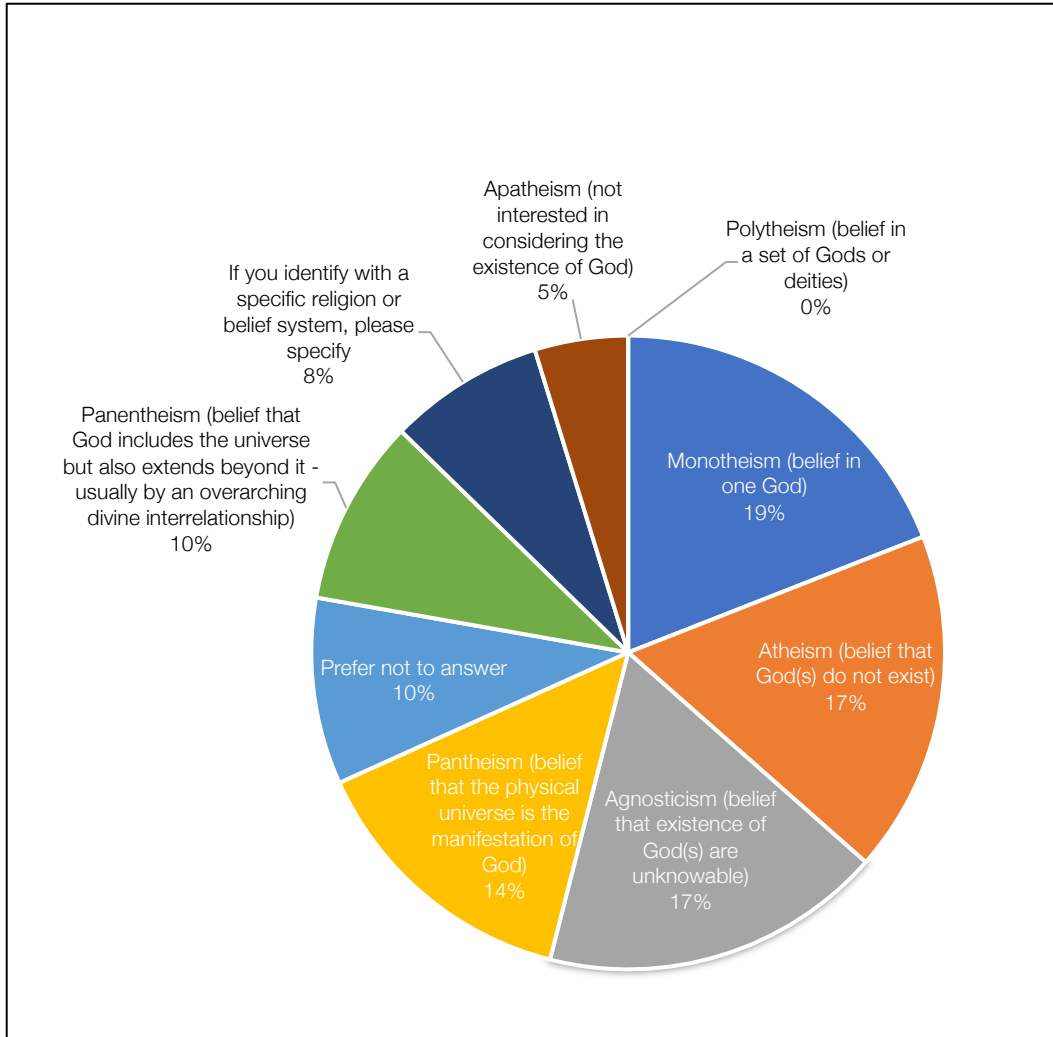


Figure 35: Distribution of spiritual/theistic positions of survey participants

21. Has anything in this survey changed your approach or thoughts about poignant landscapes?

- Answers were reviewed non-systematically.

22. Do you have any additional comments about the survey?

- Answers were reviewed non-systematically.

Appendix D: Interview Questions and Analysis

Summary

Number of interviews: 14

Time period: July to September 2019

Modes: 8 in-person, 5 web conference, 1 phone

Anonymity: 13 waived anonymity, 1 anonymous

Recruitment methods: 4 acquaintances, 5 referred by either acquaintance or participant, 5 from larger professional network

Participant's locality: 9 local (Toronto), 3 regional (Ontario), 1 non-local Canada, 1 USA

Interview script

[The following script was used as a guide. Occasionally, questions were skipped because the answers from the previous question already covered the scope of another question. Sometimes, questions were adjusted or revisited to help build on the discussion that transpired during the interview or for time management purposes.]

Introduction:

Hello. I'm Van Thi. I used to work as a landscape architect in Toronto. I mainly worked on urban design projects such as waterfront and streetscape developments. I'm now doing a PhD at York University looking at how landscape experiences, especially profound and poignant experiences, influence how landscape architects see their work. I see landscapes as a phenomenon that intersects materiality, consciousness, and spirituality, and I believe that landscapes tell a story of

a sacred human-world relationship found in nature. I'm here to interview you today in order to understand how you see landscape experiences and landscape architecture.

About poignant landscapes:

Before we begin, I'd like to explain to you briefly about my concept of poignant landscapes. I've always been interested in the "more-than-physical" aspects of landscapes, particularly the elements that I would consider inexplicable or magical. I think that landscape as a concept is tied to nature, and nature is something kind of existential—in every culture; it explains a narrative of how human society relates to the world around them. We live through experiences and landscapes provide settings for a variety of experiences. What I'm interested in are those peak experiences. I refer to the term "poignant" to describe these experiences in my research, because terms such as sacred, transcendental, or contemplative, which are traditional to describing spiritual experiences of nature, come with certain cultural baggage. I'm interested in seeing how these poignant landscape experiences, particularly the awareness of them, affects how landscape architects relate to the profession.

First set of questions:

1. I'd like to know about you as a landscape architect. Can you tell me a bit about yourself?
How did you get into landscape architecture and what do you currently do in your work?
2. Is there a memorable landscape experience from your past that you would consider as significant, profound, or poignant? It could either be a physical or a virtual landscape, such as a picture or a scene of a book, and hopefully, a meaningful landscape experience for your life. If it doesn't bother you to tell me about it, that is, if it isn't too private, can you describe it?

3. Has this landscape experience influenced your view of the world? Particularly, has this experience affected your perception of nature, society, and/or the universe?
4. Has this landscape experience influenced your view of landscape architecture or your role as a landscape architect? If so, how?
5. What other types of landscapes do you find poignant? Why? Do you have any specific examples?
6. How much of your background, that is, your gender, race, ethnicity, belief system, or lifestyle do you think influences the way you view the world, and in effect, the way you perceive landscape architecture?

About ethics:

You've heard of the motto that landscape architects are "stewards of the land," right? Ethics play a significant role in environmentalism, but from my review of Western morality and ethics, there is a paradox that is unsolvable in polarized judgements, such as rigid views of what is right and what is wrong. I've been looking at the term "flourishing"—used by Aristotle and contemporary feminist theories, and something we would normally use in describing the natural growth of plants. I believe it gives a better description of "good" ethical choices without passing judgement. Flourishing applies to individuals, who make their best choices within their circumstances. A flourishing society is made of flourishing individuals, but a flourishing society also gives better opportunities for individuals to flourish. So, I've borrowed the term and applied it landscape architecture to consider things like how best to live as a landscape architect and how to best aspire as a profession in hopes of a flourishing society.

Second set of questions:

1. What values do you consider as most important for a fulfilling or flourishing life as a landscape architect?
2. How do these values influence the way you live and work?
3. With the same consideration of flourishing societies and environments in mind, what do you consider as “good” landscape architecture? The meaning of good is personal to you.
4. Where do you think the profession of landscape architecture (at least in North America) is heading, particularly in relation to these values? How can we aspire to these values as a profession?
5. If you were to teach the significance of landscapes, how would you go about it?
6. Do you see a role for poignant landscapes in landscape architecture?
7. Do you have anything else you’d like to add?

Coding analysis

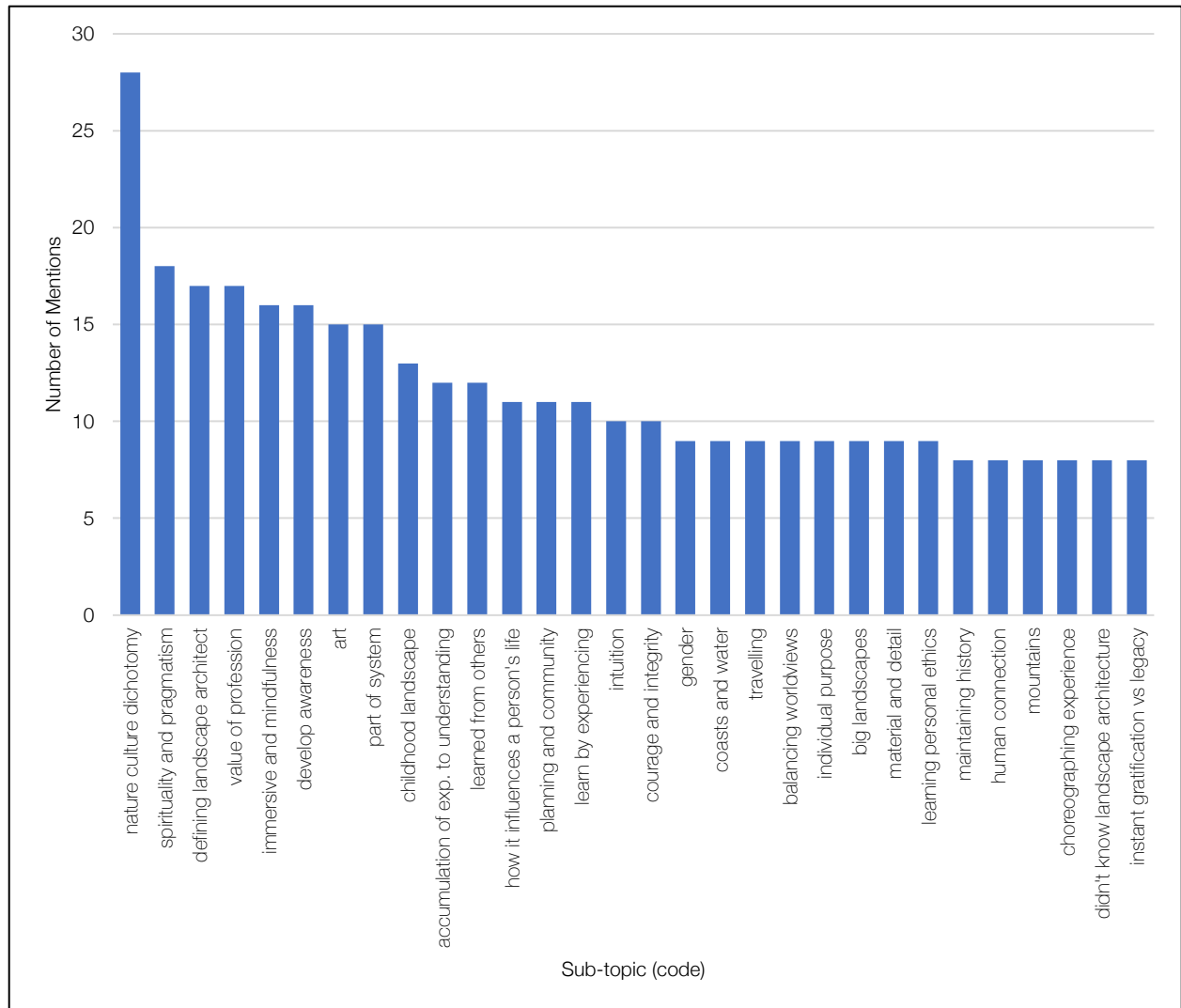


Figure 36: Frequency of sub-topics mentioned in interviews (top 30)

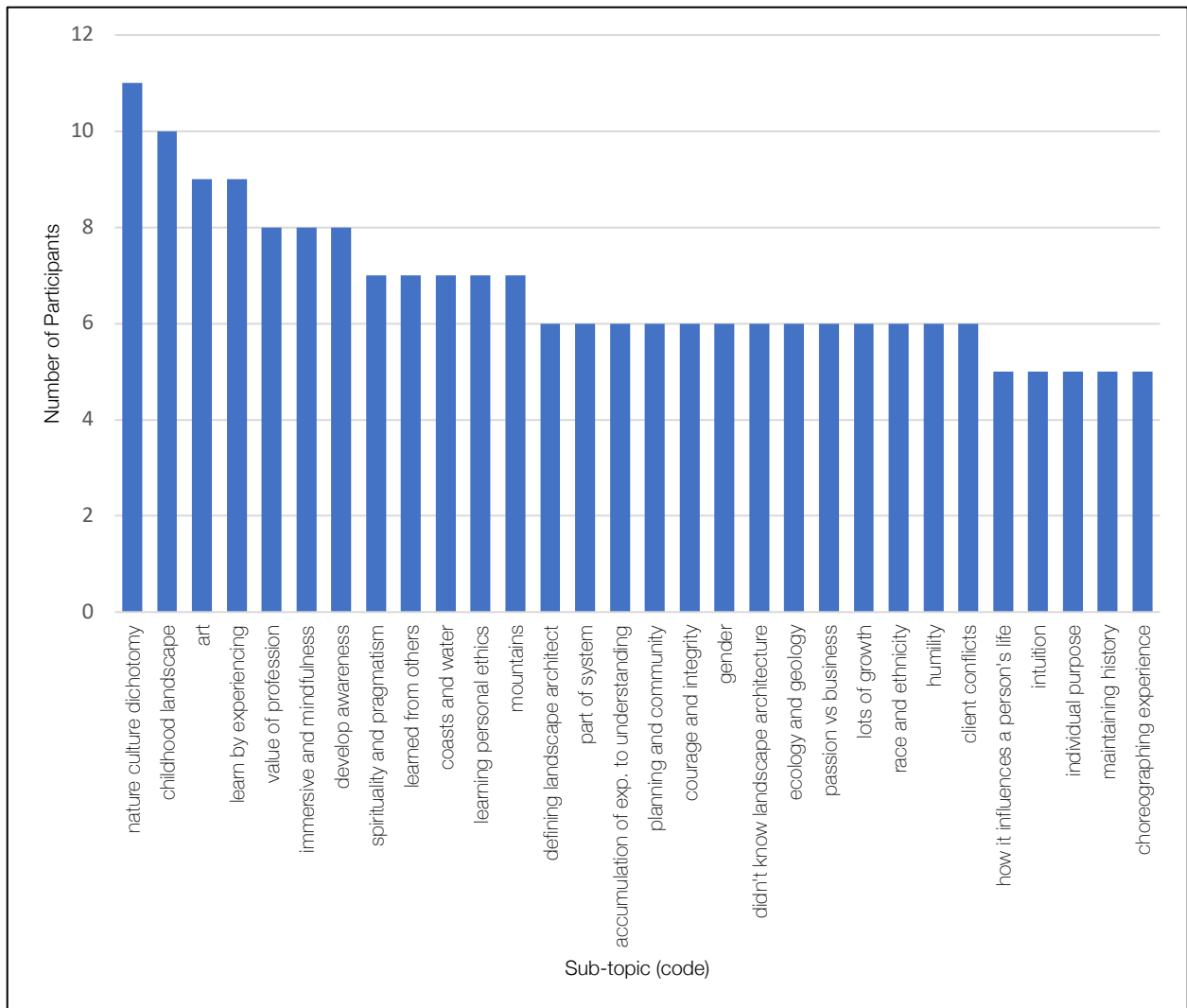


Figure 37: Frequency of interview participants mentioning sub-topics (top 30)